



news

September 2016

Te Pokapū Kōunga Mātauranga mō ngā Whare Wānanga o Aotearoa

Quality Enhancement

There are just under two weeks to go before the **2016 Support for Quality Conference**. The conference is being held in Te Wharewaka o Pōneke on the Wellington waterfront. The keynote speaker is Dr Sara Booth from the University of Tasmania who will discuss her recent work on standards and peer-benchmarking. Sara will be joined by other speakers from New Zealand universities and further afield. AQA is also pleased to welcome Dr Stanley Frelick to his first Support for Quality conference as the Director of Ako Aotearoa.

The day for the Support for Quality conference is structured into five sessions. The first session will reflect on Cycle 5 with a view to considering how Cycle 5 should inform the development of Cycle 6. This is followed by a session that considers what aspects of other systems New Zealand universities may wish to explore further. Sessions before and after lunch examine some current issues in quality with keynote speaker Dr Sara Booth discussing her work on peer-benchmarking and presenters from New Zealand universities addressing topics including academic integrity, development of graduate attributes and student evaluation. The day concludes by considering options for a sixth cycle of academic audit.

Support for Quality Conference

Date: 13 October, 2016
Times: 0900 registration and coffee
1630 Scheduled finish
Place: Te Wharewaka o Pōneke
Odins Square, 109 Jervois Quay
Wellington waterfront

Further information, programme and registration information at www.aqa.ac.nz

National External Peer Review of Assessment Network:
<http://www.utas.edu.au/student-evaluation-review-and-reporting-unit/peer-review-of-assessment-network/national-peer-review-network>

Student Voice and Quality at Universities

The day before the Support for Quality Conference, AQA is collaborating with Ako Aotearoa and the New Zealand Union of Students' Associations (NZUSA) to host a summit on the role and contribution of the student voice in academic quality in universities. One of the recommendations of the 2015 External Review of AQA was that AQA consider ways to enhance the student voice and the engagement of students with the audit process. Further information can be found at <https://ako.aotearoa.ac.nz/student-voice-and-quality-universities>.

AQA | About

The Academic Quality Agency for New Zealand Universities (AQA) was established in 1993 to carry out audits of the processes in universities which underpin academic quality. The mission

of AQA is to contribute to high quality New Zealand university education by engaging as a leader and advocate in the development of universities based on high quality, internationally acceptable,

academic practices, and by providing quality assurance and quality enhancement services which assist universities in facilitating excellent student experience and learning outcomes.

Cycle 5 Academic Audits

The Cycle 5 Academic Audit report for the University of Otago was released on 20 September, 2016. The Panel was chaired by Emeritus Professor Roger Field and the panel members were Emeritus Professor Debbie Clayton (Australia), Associate Professor David Crabbe (Victoria University of Wellington), Professor Robyn Longhurst (University of Waikato) and Associate Professor Catherine Moran (University of Canterbury).

The Panel made 12 commendations, 7 affirmations and 6 recommendations. This reflects the Panel's view that the University of Otago is performing well across the activities and areas that are the subject of the Cycle 5 Academic Audit. The full report is available from the AQA website: www.aqa.ac.nz

The Panel commended the University for its Academic Development Programme, its approach to strategic planning, its culture that recognises that developments should be thoughtful and supported by research and data, its commitment and systematic approach to gaining student input, its development of graduate profiles and processes to embed attributes, efforts to seek and use feedback on the attainment of graduate attributes, its commitment to enhancing student engagement and encouraging students to develop a sense of social responsibility, commitment to creating a safer and more inclusive campus environment, staff review processes, its research-led approach to teaching development and commitment to supporting innovative teaching and the University's support and recognition of teaching excellence. Recommendations concerned the role and contribution of the Committee for the Advancement of Learning and Teaching, progressing intentions to review course advice, progress on the University's Māori Strategic Framework, early identification of students at risk of under-performance, ensuring that students are aware of changes and improvements that are informed by their feedback and assessing and considering impacts of variations in availability of support for postgraduate students.

The panel for the Cycle 5 academic audit of Lincoln University met during the week of 8 August, 2016. The Panel members for the Lincoln University audit are Emeritus Professor Dugald Scott (Chair), Professor Jeanette Baird (international panel member), Fiona Coote (Massey University), Associate Professor Pat Cragg (University of Otago) and Professor Ajit Narayanan (AUT). It is anticipated that the report will be released in November.

The Cycle 5 Academic Audit framework has also been used as a basis for audits conducted outside of New Zealand. In February, 2015 a site visit for an audit of the National University of Samoa took place and the report was published on the AQA webpage in June 2015. The Chair of the Panel, Emeritus Professor Roger Field and the AQA Executive Director recently travelled to Samoa to discuss the University's draft follow-up report.

The 1-year follow-up report for the University of Canterbury was considered and accepted by the AQA Board at its meeting of 12 July, 2016.

It is expected that the one-year follow-up visit for the University of Waikato will take place in December 2016. Professor Vernon Squire will take on the role of Chair of this Panel, replacing Sheelagh Matear who is now the Executive Director of AQA.

Other audits

AQA is undertaking a 5 yearly review of the Committee on University Academic Programmes (CUAP). The self-review process is underway and is expected to be submitted before the end of the year.

Outcome Standards

This column considers topics of interest to New Zealand universities. Topics may be prompted by analysis of audit reports, developments in other jurisdictions or policy initiatives and, in turn, are intended to prompt further consideration among New Zealand universities.

The issue of outcome standards was raised during discussions with universities about Cycle 5 Academic Audit and issues that might be considered in cycle 6. It has received prominence in other jurisdictions, notably Australia, where TEQSA has promoted the development of threshold standards (by discipline/field of study) as part of the Higher Education Standards Framework (HESF) and in the UK with the development of subject benchmark statements.

The new Australian HESF, which comes into effect on 1 January 2017, includes standards for learning outcomes and assessment, including a "requirement for credible external referencing of the outcomes against national/international comparators". The guidance notes comment that the risks to quality that these standards are seeking to prevent include potentially diminishing "the standing of Australian higher education if international comparisons cannot be made, as do learning outcomes that are not informed by international comparators".

Of the six New Zealand universities audited at the time this analysis was undertaken, five have received either recommendations or had affirmations with respect to the guideline statements that provide insight into the processes that NZ universities use to assure themselves that the outcome standards of their graduates are appropriate (GS 3.5, 3.6, 3.7, 7.4). Overall, the audit reports to date indicate that universities have appropriate policies, internal moderation is, with some exceptions, practiced to an appropriate standard and there are no particular concerns about assuring internal equivalences. Where practices that do not conform to expected standards have been identified, universities are addressing these issues.

Considering the emphasis placed on learning outcomes in other jurisdictions and the current status of practice in New Zealand universities as identified through the Cycle 5 academic audit suggests the following points for further consideration:

- Do New Zealand universities wish to be confident that, within disciplines, learning standards (grades) are comparable between universities?
- Are New Zealand universities confident that, within disciplines, learning standards (grades) are comparable between universities?
- What evidence do they use to demonstrate or assure themselves of this?
- What processes might universities employ to become confident that outcome standards are comparable between universities?
- External examination and moderation processes?
- Should GYR processes be amended?
- How many 'points of comparison' are required to have confidence in the comparability of outcome standards across the university system?
- Should any assessment of comparability of outcome standards extend beyond universities?

Dr Sara Booth's presentation at the Support for Quality Conference will contribute to the discussion on this topic. Further information is available at <http://www.utas.edu.au/student-evaluation-review-and-reporting-unit/peer-review-of-assessment-network/national-peer-review-network>

Have You Seen This?

- Universities New Zealand have released a Key Facts and Statistics Information booklet, with an accompanying table of information sources.
<http://www.universitiesnz.ac.nz/keyfactsandstats>
- New Zealand readers will no doubt have noticed the hefty weight of the Productivity Commission's report into new models of tertiary education consuming megabytes in their digital spaces. Submissions on the report are due on 21 November, 2016. See <http://www.productivity.govt.nz/inquiry-content/2683?stage=2> for (a lot) more information.
- Continuing the theme of possible changes in New Zealand tertiary education, an exposure draft of a Tertiary Education Amendment Bill was released on 23 September, 2016. Further information, including how to make a submission can be found on the Ministry of Education website at <http://www.education.govt.nz/ministry-of-education/consultations-and-reviews/exposure-draft-of-the-education-tertiary-education-and-other-matters-amendment-bill-2016/>
- Legislative change that impacts on quality assurance is a topic of considerable debate in the UK. The Higher Education and Research Bill 2016-17 has now progressed to the committee stage and is expected to be reported back to the House of Commons by 13 October, 2016. There will be a lot of coverage of this, but one site that is worth keeping an eye on is www.wonkhe.com
- Susanna Karakhanyan has been elected President of the International Network of Quality Assurance Agencies in Higher Education (INQAAHE).

Meetings and Conference Calendar

- 12 October 2016**
Student Voice and Quality at Universities summit hosted by Ako Aotearoa, NZUSA and AQA in Wellington.
<https://shop.ako.aotearoa.ac.nz/SVQU16>
- 13 October 2016**
AQA Support for Quality 2016 in Wellington.
<http://www.aqa.ac.nz/2016SFQprogramme>
- 17, 19 and 21 October, 2016**
Emeritus Professor Geoff Scott is delivering a series of FLIPCurric workshops in Wellington, Auckland and Christchurch in conjunction with Ako Aotearoa.

Further information on this and other Ako Aotearoa workshops and events is available at <https://shop.ako.aotearoa.ac.nz/events>
- 9 November, 2016**
TEQSA Conference – Sharing Excellence: Assuring Quality, in Melbourne. Conference and registration information can be found at <https://www.eiseverywhere.com/ehome/qualityforum2016/416730/>
- 22-24 November, 2016**
APQN and the Macao Polytechnic Institute are jointly organising a conference on "The New Frontiers of Teaching and Learning Quality Assurance in Higher Education in Macao from. Further information including the call for papers is available at <http://www.ipm.edu.mo/heconf2016/>



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For New Zealand Universities

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We welcome feedback on this newsletter and the AQA website, along with news and suggestions for newsletter items.

AQA News is published quarterly (March, June, September and December). To join or be removed from the subscription list, please email comms@aqaa.ac.nz or follow the links on our website www.aqa.ac.nz.