Centre for the Study of Higher Education

Options to enhance the quality of teaching and learning across Australia's expanding higher education system

Report to the Australian Universities Accord Panel

27 October 2023

Sophie Arkoudis, Chi Baik, Wendy Larcombe, Gwilym Croucher, Raoul Mulder and Chris Ziguras
(Centre for the Study of Higher Education)
Produced in co-design with the Australian Government Department of Education

Contents

Executive Summary

Enhancing teaching quality to support student learning and success in Australian higher education: Eight options for reform

This report presents the findings from research and analysis conducted by the Melbourne Centre for the Study of Higher Education (CSHE), with input from representatives of the Department of Education (DoE), over a six-week period from August-October 2023. The aim of the commissioned research was to identify and evaluate options to enhance teaching quality in Australian higher education. The findings and policy options identified in the Australian Universities Accord (AUA) Panel's Interim Report formed the basis for the research and analysis provided by the CSHE. In particular, the Interim report signalled that the Panel was keen to identify ways to encourage the sector to pursue systemic excellence in learning and teaching. The report further highlighted that learning and teaching for both domestic and international students is sometimes falling short of students' expectations.

The focus of this project was therefore on identifying sector-level reforms to strengthen the quality of teaching.

The research questions addressed by the project were:

1. How should best practice in learning and teaching be identified and promoted across Australia's expanding HE system?
2. How can we ensure the higher education teaching workforce is able to deliver for the new system, in both size and capability?
3. How can best practice, innovation and collaboration in teaching and learning be encouraged?
4. How can learning and teaching quality be better measured?

The CSHE conducted an extensive review of the Australian and international literature on mechanisms that aim to promote and monitor effective learning and teaching in higher education was conducted. We worked in partnership with the DoE and in consultation with the Panel to develop options to support enhanced teaching quality in a rapidly changing higher education landscape. We also consulted with leading experts in higher education teaching and learning, digital education and quality measurement. This process of working with the DoE and consulting with the Panel member has culminated in the eight options discussed in this report. We emphasize that these options are presented for consideration and do not represent the recommendations of the CSHE authors to the Panel.

While the report discusses several options, the first two have the potential to facilitate systemic change within the sector. These are the establishment of a National Centre for Higher Education Advancement (Option 1) and a Professional Standards Framework to guide higher education teaching (Option 2). These two options provide a framework for institutional uplift in relation to the peer review of teaching and professional development initiatives (Options 3 and 4). Building on evidence for effective student learning in Australian HE and sharing best practice resources are the focus of Options 5 and 6. The last options (Options 7 and 8) discuss possible new measures of teaching quality for the sector, including an option to explore the development of an Australian Teaching Excellence Framework (TEF).

Summary overview of options

Issue 1: How to coordinate and support initiatives to enhance the quality of teaching and learning across Australia's expanding HE system

Option 1. Establish a national Centre for Higher Education Advancement

Since the closure of the Office for Learning and Teaching (OLT) in 2016, Australia has not had a national body coordinating and driving initiatives to improve quality in Higher Education (HE). This puts Australia out of step with international best practice. It also means that government and sector-led initiatives to advance quality teaching and learning in HE lack national coordination, amplification and impact.

Johnson et al.'s (2023) submission in response to the AUA Discussion Paper, and earlier research by James et al. (2015), recommend development of a new national body in Australia – that we provisionally call the National Centre for Higher Education Advancement (NCHEA) – to address emerging challenges to quality in higher education and to build on current sector-wide strengths and opportunities.

The existence of such a body – representing the diversity of HE teaching staff – is a key enabler for implementation of a number of the Options proposed in this work package. The NCHEA could be funded in part by institutional subscriptions/contributions.

Issue 2: Addressing the job security, career advancement and professional esteem issues that inhibit development of teaching excellence and innovation in Australian HE.

Option 2. Adopt a national Professional Standards Framework to guide HE teaching staff.

Currently, Australia does not have a national statement of the expected teaching-related knowledge, skills, experience and values of HE teaching staff at progressive levels of expertise and responsibility. This contributes to the under-valuing of teaching knowledge and skills and undermines the status of teaching-focussed roles in HE. International experience indicates that a voluntary Professional Standards Framework (PSF) for HE teaching benefits individual staff by enabling them to demonstrate expected teaching-specific expertise and plan professional development; it also enables HEIs to signal the value they accord to quality teaching and learning. A working group would need to be commissioned to consult and advise on implementation options for development and monitoring of a PSF in Australia. The NCHEA (proposed in Option 1) would be an ideal mechanism to foster engagement with the PSF and monitor its impacts.

Issue 3: Maintaining minimum standards in teaching and learning in an expanding HE system

Option 3. Initiatives to increase the quality and uptake of Peer Review of Teaching.

In Australian HE, student evaluations of teaching (SETs) are the current prevailing measure of teaching quality. This is despite a wealth of evidence demonstrating that SETs are not an appropriate measure of either teaching effectiveness (student learning gains), or teaching competency (teacher knowledge and skills) (see, e.g. Boring, Ottoboni & Stark, 2016; Carpenter & Tauber, 2020; Uttl, White & Gonzalez, 2017).

In place of SETs, Peer Review of Teaching (PRT) should be established as the preferred measure of HE teaching effectiveness and teacher capability in Australian HE. PRT typically involves review of a teacher's 'teaching portfolio' (evidence of understanding and application of effective teaching and learning principles) alongside classroom observations (to evidence effective teaching practices) and, ideally, evidence of students' learning gains (teaching effectiveness) (see Schweig, 2019).

In Australia, while PRT is widely practised across the compulsory education sector, its adoption in HE policy and practice is unsupported nationally, meaning that its uptake is piecemeal and reliant on institutional policies and champions. Two initiatives are explored to improve the quality and uptake of PRT in Australian HE. They would achieve synergies if delivered in tandem.

Initiative 1. Develop and pilot a scheme for national accreditation of Higher Education Institutions' PRT programs.

Initiative 2. Commission a national project to synthesise and disseminate research findings on effective, efficient and ethical means of evaluating HE teaching effectiveness and teacher competency.

Issue 4: Enhancing the professional development of HE staff in teaching

Option 4. Initiatives to improve the teaching-related professional development of existing and future HE teaching staff

Induction, initial training, mentoring, supervision and professional development of the teaching-related capabilities of HE staff are currently a matter for institutions – often devolved to faculties or departments and addressed at varying levels of commitment, resourcing and expertise. This means that the quality of professional development and support for teaching staff varies widely within and across institutions.

To achieve the aims of the Accord process and deliver on the government's ambitions for equitable, inclusive and flexible (online, hybrid) learning across an integrated HE ecosystem, the sector will need to ensure that all current and newly-appointed HE staff have access to high-quality professional development that enables them to establish and continually improve their teaching-related knowledge, skills and competencies.

We outline five potential initiatives to address the professional development needs of the HE workforce.

- Initiative 1. Mandate minimum teaching qualifications for HE teaching staff, with an initial focus on newly-appointed academic staff (taking up ongoing roles).
- Initiative 2. Establish a dedicated program to support PhD 'teaching fellowship' positions that offer doctoral candidates training, experience and certification in university teaching alongside their research training.
- Initiative 3. Create a mechanism for certification (quality assurance) of institutional and sector-based professional development programs for HE teaching.
- Initiative 4. Investigate creation of a portable professional development entitlement for sessional staff.
- Initiative 5. Require all HEIs to report to TEQSA on the implementation, uptake and effectiveness of their strategies and programs designed to ensure that all teaching staff have access to relevant, high-quality teaching-related professional development opportunities.

Issue 5: Facilitating dissemination and take-up of best practice in HE teaching and learning

Option 5. Enable identification and uptake of 'what works' to improve student learning in Australian HE.

Available research into best practice teaching and learning approaches in Australian HE needs to be updated to take account of the rapid changes currently taking place in HE, including advances in educational technology and generative artificial intelligence, wider participation of students from all

walks of life, and changing patterns of student engagement. That new research also needs to be translated into policy and practice via accessible implementation guides and tools that enable strategies to be readily adapted for different institutional contexts and missions.

We propose two initiatives that have an uptake strategy hard-wired into the project design to ensure that research findings on evidence-based best practice are actually translated into practice and benefits for students.

Initiative 1. Commission a repository of 'what works' evidence for effective student learning in Australian HE, curated by a panel of experts and embedded within teaching networks and communities of practice. A model for the proposed repository and network is the Best Practices Repository initiative of the US-based Healthy Minds Network (https://healthymindsnetwork.org/best-practices-repository/).

Initiative 2. Pilot a 'Student Success Project' that: a) analyses available data to identify institutions with better- and poorer- than-expected outcomes for equity-bearing students, b) appoints a Panel of Experts (POE) to explore factors driving student success in the high-performing institutions, and c) enables the POE to mentor leaders and staff from 'under-performing' institutions to take-up the learnings from more successful HEIs. Participation in the mentoring program could be monitored by TEQSA, consequent on the HESF (*Threshold Standards*) requirement that HEIs' learning and teaching programs 'create equivalent opportunities for academic success regardless of students' backgrounds' (HESF, 2021, 2.2.1). This initiative is based on the work of the US Foundation for Student Success (FSS) Project.

Option 6. Share best practice educational resources through discipline-based learning and teaching repositories, housed in Centres of Excellence for learning and teaching.

We currently lack the infrastructure, protocols, conventions and rewards that are needed to facilitate and encourage sharing and reuse of educational content materials in HE. This results in sector-wide inefficiencies and inconsistency in the quality of students' educational experiences.

Internationally, sharing of educational resources through digital repositories has become a widespread practice over the past decade, aimed at advancing student learning and promoting global access to higher education. Missing from that landscape of open access resources are quality-assured, research informed and student-centred learning materials designed in and for Australian HE institutions, aligned with AQF standards and course-specific intended learning outcomes, and reflecting Australian social, geographic, environmental and economic contexts.

To meet that need, we endorse Austin's (2023) proposal to establish collaborative, discipline-specific Centres of Excellence (COEs) for creating and sharing educational resources through purpose-built digital repositories (2023, p. 4). Each COE would have a home institution that hosts the learning repository and acts as a 'hub' for cross-institutional collaboration.

In addition, the NCHEA would be tasked with co-ordinating and supporting the COEs and distilling lessons from the early trial phase of the project to inform subsequent roll-out of further COEs.

Issue 6: Improving metrics and data which measure learning and teaching quality

Option 7. Consider an Australian Higher Education Teaching Quality Framework.

Australia does not currently have a national measure of learning and teaching quality in Higher Education (HE), notwithstanding the fact that Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) are required to

report a wealth of data about students to the Department of Education. *Is it possible to develop a comprehensive measure of learning and teaching quality in Australian HE using available data?* International experience suggests any attempt to develop a national indicator of learning and teaching quality in HEIs needs to carefully consider the intended policy aims, availability of appropriate indicators and the potential for unforeseen consequences.

With that caution in mind, we suggest that an Australian Framework's aim could be to make transparent to government, students and the public who contribute to the funding of the HE system how and whether those funds are effectively expended in the advancement of student learning and attainment for students from all walks of life. With that purpose in mind, a Learning and Teaching Quality Framework could draw on data about institutional decision-making that reveal the value HEIs place on student learning, and whether HEIs' learning and teaching programs 'create equivalent opportunities for academic success regardless of students' backgrounds' (HESF, 2021, 2.2.1).

We outline 7 dimensions of such a framework:

1. Institutional investment in learning and teaching programs
2. Diversity of the student cohort
3. Student academic attainment and attainment gaps for equity-bearing students
4. Employment outcomes, fee costs and education value gaps for equity-bearing students [optional]
5. Institutional expenditure on staffing of teaching mission
6. Teaching staff skills, experience and diversity
7. Teaching staff professional development

This Framework would impose a minimal additional administrative burden on HEIs, beyond the routine data collection and reporting they currently do.

Option 8. Consider new metrics for measuring learning and teaching quality in Australian HE

Are there new measures that could usefully be implemented at a national level to inform and drive quality improvement in HE learning and teaching? This paper considers options for new metrics within and beyond the current Student Experience Survey (SES).

New indicators within the SES:
Education research identifies various student-side factors that influence learning and are modifiable by institutions (see, e.g. Yorke, 2016; Zimmerman & Kitsantis 2007; Pintrich 2004; Pintrich et al. 1993; Kuh, 2009). Among those, the three that we would identify for potential inclusion in the SES are:

- **Commitment to learning** (Learning behaviours self-assessment) – e.g. *How often did you skip classes this semester?*
- **Confidence as a learner** (academic self-efficacy) – e.g. rates of agreement with statements such as: *I believe I am a capable student*.
- **Learning and teaching climate** (perceived climate) – e.g. rates of agreement with statements such as: *My institution … cares about students and their learning.*

New indicators beyond the SES:
Initiative 1. A Survey of HE Teaching Staff.

Other industries' efforts to drive quality improvement at a system level commonly include staff surveys – e.g. Your Voice in Health – WA Health https://www.health.wa.gov.au/Reports-and-

publications/Your-Voice-in-Health-survey. The fact that the voice of teaching staff is currently absent from measures of educational quality in Australian HE is a sign of the endemic under-valuing of the knowledge, skills and expertise of teaching staff. To address that gap, we propose development of a national survey of HE teaching staff (sessional and continuing) asking them to reflect on factors impacting teaching and learning in their unit/course – including the quality of:

- Learning environments, curriculum and teaching resources;
- Teacher induction, skills development and mentoring programs and opportunities;
- The support they receive from colleagues and supervisors;
- Students' preparedness and engagement, and their academic and wellbeing needs; and
- The climate for learning and teaching at their institution – including the extent to which teaching staff feel valued, recognised and rewarded.

Such a survey would assist the sector to identify the extent to which teaching staff feel equipped, supported, rewarded, trusted, and able to work flexibly alongside experienced colleagues. That is, it would identify opportunities to improve the working conditions of staff, which inform the learning conditions of students.

Initiative 2. Expert peer evaluations of educational quality.

A second initiative to improve program and teaching quality is to make expert, external evaluations of learning programs and institutional learning strategies (expert benchmarking) more widely available. While external benchmarking of student attainment and course quality is often practised within disciplines to assure and enhance quality, it is possible to conduct elements of an external quality review at the institutional level with a 'lighter touch', as is current practice in Scotland (see the Productivity Commission Inquiry Report, 2023, p.110). External peer review of institutional teaching policies and programming would need to be undertaken by appropriately qualified, skilled and knowledgeable HE educators. Such a group could be recruited, trained and certified by the new National Centre for HE Advancement (Option 1)

Table 1: Overview of options

	Option	Strength	Weakness	Cost
1	Establish a national Centre for Higher Education Advancement	A national body dedicated to enhancing teaching quality at a national level. A key *enabler* for implementation of Accord proposals to advance educational quality and equity in Australian HE. Drive innovation and quality in teaching and learning.	Will require significant upfront investment. Will require long-term commitment and cooperation from government to be successful. Not feasible for the Centre to ever become wholly self-sufficient financially.	Significant upfront investment from government will be required for at least a 3-year period. The funding model will vary depending on whether the Centre is independent of government or located within the TEC.
2	Adopt a national Professional Standards Framework to guide HE teaching staff	A mechanism for development and recognition of HE teaching expertise to raise the status of HE teaching, appropriately value the skills and expertise of the teaching workforce, and facilitate staff advancement and movement within and between institutions. Offers a framework to inform institutional policies and practices regarding the recognition and reward of teaching.	The PSF could be seen as a mechanism of control and increased administrative and reporting burden. Risk that any common standards across a diverse HE sector are so generic that they are unable to stimulate quality improvement in teaching practice.	If Option 1 (new Centre) is accepted, then the responsibility and costs of PSF will be with the national body.
3	Initiatives to increase the quality and uptake of Peer Review of Teaching (PRT)	Regarded as a 'gold standard for assessment of teaching effectiveness and teacher competency.	If peer review is made compulsory, then it could be perceived as over surveillance of academic staff.	If Option 1 (new Centre) is accepted, then the responsibility and costs of PSF will be with the national body. Additional

		Good evidence to suggest it is a useful mechanism for improving the quality of teaching. Can help to address the limitations and over-reliance on student evaluations of teaching.	For voluntary schemes, take-up may be slow without strong incentives. Wide variation in existing PRT programs and take-up across institutions, and may not lead to sector-level uplift in teaching quality.	costs will be required to conduct pilot scheme and/or evaluation as discussed in the report.
4	Initiatives to improve the teaching-related professional development of existing and future HE teaching staff	This will strengthen the knowledge and skills that teaching staff need to teach diverse students, especially in online, hybrid and technology enhanced environments. PhD teaching fellowships provides training, experience and certification for graduate researchers.	Mandating professional development for existing staff could be met with some resistance from those experienced in teaching.	There will be costs associated for institutions. If a new Centre is established (Option 1), it can carry out some of the training and oversee certification of programs.
5	Enable identification and uptake of 'what works' to improve student learning in Australian HE	A focal point for research on what works best, will emphasise impact of teaching on student learning. The evidence will be curated by panel of experts and embedded in teaching communities of practice.	Further development and scoping will be required to build a business case. There is the risk that it may lead to 'busy' work with little evidence of take-ap and impact within the sector.	Costs of establishing and maintaining the repository will need to be provided by government.
6	Share best practice educational resources through discipline-based learning and teaching repositories, housed in Centres of Excellence for learning and teaching	Open-access resources that are quality-assured by the national body and aligned with AQF standards and course-specific learning outcomes. Will fill the gap in disciplinary-based examples of good practice in Australian HE.	Institutions may seek to maintain competitive edge by offering 'exclusive' curricula and learning experiences. Will require incentives to promote both contributions to, and use of materials.	Costs for establishing and maintain the repository will need to be provided by the government.
7	Consider an Australian Higher Education Teaching Quality Framework	May potentially provide transparency and accountability.	Research and experience of UK TEF indicates that these types of ratings frameworks can be 'gamed' by institutions and may have	Government would bear all the costs involved in researching, developing, piloting, evaluating,

		Could draw on data institutions already collect to evaluate the 'value' placed on student learning (how HEIs allocate resources) and whether programs create equitable opportunities for students from diverse backgrounds.	undesired consequences in higher education contexts. Widespread negative sentiment about the TEF and no evidence of impact.	rolling out and maintaining the Framework.
8	Consider new metrics for measuring learning and teaching quality in Australian HE	Additional metrics can provide more detailed information regarding the quality of teaching and learning, including from teachers' perspective, and identify areas for improvement.	Institutions may view additional measurement of the quality of learning and teaching as unwarranted government interference in their autonomy.	Government would need to fund these costs.

Introduction

Interest in the quality of higher education has grown around the world following its expansion in the latter part of the 21st century in most countries. Promoting high-quality teaching and learning has become a long-term commitment by universities and their leaders and a key concern of governments that fund and regulate them. Seeking to improve quality, with associated accountability measures, is now a common feature for all major higher education systems worldwide.

In Australia, enhanced approaches to teaching and learning will be required if Australia is to succeed in meeting the Accord Panel's stated ambitions of substantially increasing participation in higher education while expanding access for under-represented sections of the population. The increasing prevalence of digital and hybrid modes of course delivery represents a further challenge to learning and teaching quality. Ensuring graduates are equipped with the skills they need to succeed in a rapidly changing workforce requires educators to continually engage with industry and community expectations, as well as embedding the development of strong generic skills within curriculum.

Quality in teaching and learning can imply different dimensions depending on the context. At times quality can be a demand for graduates with particular skills sets and competencies, at others a requirement that courses are 'fit for the purpose' and produce desired student learning outcomes, or that it promotes broader objectives such as personal growth. While the relationship between teaching quality and learning outcomes is complex and multifaceted, research consistently shows that teachers' approaches to teaching greatly influence students' approaches to learning and consequently their learning outcomes[1]. Effective teaching practices thus have a positive effect on student learning. [2] Research has also revealed a strong association between teaching practices and sense of belonging and wellbeing, which are critical for student engagement and success.[3] The present challenge for Australian higher education is to establish what interventions at the institutional and sector levels are both possible and most likely to succeed in improving the quality of teaching and learning and supporting the learning, attainment and wellbeing of students from diverse backgrounds.

A cornerstone of quality assurance for teaching and learning in Australia is the Higher Education Standards that are administered by TEQSA. The HES requires all higher education providers to have effective quality assurance arrangements across their operations, encompassing systematic monitoring, review and improvement including evidence of ongoing self-review and self-correction. While the HES provides the overall framework to assure quality, it does not itself provide insight into quality in the system.

Moreover, the HES framework is based around minimum thresholds which providers are required to meet in order to maintain accreditation. It is not designed to drive improvements to quality beyond

---

[1] Trigwell, K. & Prosser, M. (2020). *Exploring University Teaching and Learning* Springer International Publishing; Biggs, J., Tang, C. and Kennedy, G, (2023). *Teaching for Quality Learning*. McGraw Publishing.

[2] Hattie, J. (2015) The applicability of Visible Learning to higher education. Scholarship of Teaching and Learning in Psychology 1(1):79-91.

[3] Baik, C., Larombe, W. & Brooker, A. (2019). How universities can enhance student mental wellbeing: the student perspective, *Higher Education Research & Development, 38(*4), 674-687.; Larcombe, W., Baik, C. & Finch, S.(2022). Exploring course experiences that predict psychological distress and mental wellbeing in Australian undergraduate and graduate coursework students, *Higher Education Research & Development, 41*(2), 420-435.

these threshold standards. As a result, Australia currently lacks any systemic approach to improving the quality of higher education learning and teaching. Ultimately, any quality enhancement will depend on the efforts of individual educators and institutions who actually deliver higher education courses. But more can be done to encourage these efforts, promote successful approaches and measure their impact at the systemic level.

The Quality Indicators of Learning and Teaching (QILT) provide the most widely used insights into quality teaching in Australia. QILT is derived from a variety of data sets, including the Student Experience Survey (SES) and Graduate Outcomes Survey (GOS). While the stated aim of the QILT suite of surveys is to help 'education institutions and the government improve teaching and learning outcomes for students', this provides an important but limited window into quality. QILT does not capture the perspective of educators or institutions and is not designed to directly measure learning and teaching quality, rather using student experiences and employment outcomes as proxies for quality learning and teaching. Some of these limitations—such as directly measuring student learning gains on a national scale—are likely hard to address. International projects that had similar aspirations, such as Assessment of Higher Education Learning Outcomes (AHELO), have been abandoned. There are limits to *what* can be measured. Nonetheless, improved approaches to measuring quality should be attempted, and the current project considers some options for doing so.

Despite these challenges, there are opportunities for interventions to help improve the quality of teaching and learning in Australian higher education. There are opportunities for better supporting the educational environment for students as well as building the knowledge, skills and expertise of teaching staff.

This report identifies and evaluates sector-level reform options to promote high-quality learning and teaching in an expanded Australian HE system. It summarises research undertaken by the Melbourne Centre for the Study of Higher Education (CSHE) with input from the Department of Education over a six-week period from August-October 2023.

The findings and policy options identified in the Australian Universities Accord (AUA) Panel's Interim Report formed the basis for the research and analysis provided by the CSHE. The Panel's report emphasised the mission for higher education to evolve and expand including in the access and participation of students from all walks of life and promoting high-quality learning and teaching to support the success of student from diverse and underrepresented backgrounds. In particular, the Panel identified the following policy areas for consideration:

> To promote high-quality learning and teaching across the higher education system, the Review will continue to give consideration to the following policy areas:
>
> a. encouraging and rewarding effective learning and teaching practices, including best practice for digital and hybrid delivery modes and use of new technologies and structures, particularly artificial intelligence and knowledge repositories
>
> b. enhancing the professional development of academic staff in teaching, especially for those newly employed to teach
>
> c. promoting collaboration and shared best practice in learning and teaching
>
> d. ensuring the system encourages improvements in quality learning and teaching, responds to new curriculum approaches that take account of the pace of new knowledge production, and provides for appropriate teaching infrastructure. [4]

---

[4] Australian Universities Accord Interim Report, 2023, p. 89

While the AUA Interim report acknowledged positive stakeholder satisfaction with the quality of learning and teaching in Australian HE, as well as positive employment outcomes for graduates, it noted (p.17) that learning and teaching for both domestic and international students is sometimes falling short of students' expectations. This was particularly evident during the Covid-19 move to emergency online teaching.

A 2022 review of the modes of delivery in HE (ISSR & ITaLI, 2022), commissioned by the Department of Education, confirmed that the 'sudden shifts towards online delivery during the Covid-19 pandemic were based on insufficient capabilities and capacities for delivering quality teaching online in the sector' (p. 39) given the variability across HEIs in IT infrastructures, staff capabilities, and relevant support structures for both staff and students. On this basis, the review concluded that some HEIs may need to re-consider whether the practices they used for online delivery during the pandemic enable them to meet the Threshold Standards established in the Higher Education Standards (HES).

The Interim report also notes that employment conditions for HE teaching staff need to be improved to secure and expand the HE workforce of the future; a workforce that will need to be knowledgeable, skilled and supported if it is to design and deliver high quality and effective teaching and pedagogical approaches suited to diverse students' needs and objectives.

Finally, the Interim report identifies that the Review is keen to identify ways to encourage the sector to pursue systemic excellence in learning and teaching. Possibilities that will be considered in its Final Report include:

- Establishing a new body (an OLT 2.0 or National Learning and Teaching Committee) to share best practice and drive high quality learning and teaching with a focus on equity of access and attainment, evidence-based approaches and innovative use of data (p.87, p.90)

- Encouraging all institutions to provide high-quality accredited professional development in teaching for academic staff, especially new appointments, and including casual academics and postgraduate students involved in sessional teaching (p. 90)

- New and more collaborative approaches to learning and teaching, including 'a competitive funding program across multiple institutions (universities and TAFEs) with material produced to be available under open access. This concept could be modelled in terms of collaboration and advisory boards on the ARC Centres of Excellence' (p. 90), resulting in 'leading edge knowledge repositories and developing high-quality pedagogical material' (p88).

- Designing new measures of teaching quality, especially 'excellence', that will reward 'institutions taking a leadership role in learning and teaching, fostering excellence and improved performance across the sector' (p. 90).

The CSHE worked in partnership with the Department of Education (DoE) and in consultation with the Panel to develop options to support enhanced teaching quality in a rapidly changing higher education landscape.

The research questions addressed by the project were:

1. How should best practice in learning and teaching be identified and promoted across Australia's expanding HE system?
2. How can we ensure the higher education teaching workforce is able to deliver for the new system, in both size and capability?
3. How can best practice, innovation and collaboration in teaching and learning be encouraged?

4. How can learning and teaching quality be better measured?

Building on the AUA Interim Report, options have been developed around professional development for staff, sharing best practice pedagogy and curriculum, and measurement of teaching and learning quality. An additional focus that emerged from the research was the need to improve the professional standards of teaching staff, both to enhance the skill level of educators and to raise the prestige and profile of career paths in higher education teaching. Increasing the take up and consistency of peer review of teaching has been identified as a key measure to support continual improvement activities of both individual educators and system-wide initiatives.

This report presents options for consideration, rather than specific recommendations by the CSHE authors to the Panel. As already discussed, systemic measurement of higher education quality is challenging. As a result, definitive evidence that a particular policy initiative has meaningfully raised quality across a national higher education, either in Australia or overseas examples, is generally lacking. Nonetheless, these options have been proposed as a package of achievable interventions which taken together could work towards enhancing learning and quality over the medium term. Any options that are adopted into policy would need to be carefully considered for the Australian context, and should include milestones for evaluation.

Approach

This project paid careful consideration to the context for higher education in Australia and internationally, including:

- The broad and deep body of work that has been done in Australia on advancing and recognising teaching effectiveness and excellence through the work of Office for Learning and Teaching and predecessor agencies.
- The growing international literature on measurement of teaching quality, including the development of teaching effectiveness frameworks, and challenges and opportunities in implementing such frameworks.
- The Higher Education Standards Framework and its potential relationship to frameworks for measuring teaching quality and for tertiary teaching professionalisation.
- The diversification of programs and providers and the consequent limitations of any attempt to propose a 'one-size-fits-all' approach, which we will vigorously avoid.
- The dramatic character of the emerging digital technologies and opportunities, being fuelled by new authoring tools and AI.
- The increasingly non-linear nature of academic careers, making it important to examine how capacity-building might be undertaken for academics in different phases of their careers.
- The continuing differentiation of the higher education teaching workforce.
- Finally, the need to understand learning and teaching and the teaching workforce in the context of major disciplinary variations — it is the traditional disciplines that have defined distinctive teaching and learning practices, and career development pathways, although interdisciplinary and multi-disciplinary opportunities are growing.

Drawing on international knowledge of effective teaching, international professional standards frameworks, and exemplary case studies, the project proposed options that are theoretically robust and practically attainable to advance the quality of learning, teaching and the student experience in Australian higher education.

We built on and further explored the evidence-based work from CSHE researchers identifying elements of professional recognition including options around[5]:

- An Australian recognition system for higher education teaching qualifications and experience
- Diverse opportunities for education and training
- Support for innovation and recognition of excellence in teaching and learning
- A code of professional practice for higher education teaching
- Explicit national standards and regulation
- Trusted evaluation of professional practice.

We also built on our earlier work to prepare an analysis of the future character of the academic workforce and propose options for professionalising higher education teaching in a dramatically changed higher education context.

Methodology

This section outlines the methodology used to develop the option papers. Weekly meetings were held with the DoE to discuss the direction and progress of the workstream.

An extensive review of the Australian and international literature on mechanisms that aim to promote and monitor effective learning and teaching in higher education was conducted. This involved analyses of diverse approaches adopted within higher education systems, including a wide range of government policy and regulatory measures, institutional strategies, educational approaches, credentialling, and various forms of monitoring and evaluation. The review also focused on measures design to ensure effective teaching for an increasingly diverse and larger student cohort who are learning in various teaching and learning environments including workplace learning and online learning. This review built on the systematic reviews co-authored by the project co-director Chi Baik, that:

- investigated high-impact teaching practices in higher education[6] and
- examined how teaching quality is typically measured or assessed in higher education [7].

The main findings and draft options informed by the review were presented to the Panel (on 6th September 2023) for discussion and further direction.

The options were further investigated and detailed in a series of eight options papers, which incorporated feedback from nine leading experts and researchers in higher education teaching and learning, learning sciences and digital education. Following is a list of those consulted and the dates:

- Professor Michael Prosser (Eminent scholar in learning and teaching theories, and CSHE honorary) 27 September 2023
- Professor Liz Johnson (Leading expert in higher education teaching and learning and Senior Deputy Vice-Chancellor Academic) 26 September 2023
- Professor Simon Marginson (Leading expert in international higher education, University of Oxford and Director of Centre for Global Higher Education) 2 October 2023

---

[5] James, R., Baik, C. & Booth, S. (2015). *Advancing the quality and status of teaching in Australia Higher Education*. Office for Learning and Teaching.

[6] Smith, C. & Baik, C. (2019). High impact teaching practices in higher education: A best-evidence review. *Studies in Higher Education,* 46(8), 1696-1713.

[7] Slade, S., Baik, C., Bearman, M., Carbone, A., Hughes-Warrington, M., Neumann, D. & Smith, C. (2014) Systematic review: What is reported regarding the development of instruments which assess the quality of teaching quality in higher education? Australian Learning and Teaching Council.

- Professor Sally Kift (Leading expert on transition pedagogy and elected President of the Australian Learning & Teaching Fellows) 28 September 2023
- Professor Kerri-Lee Krause (Leading expert on student engagement, and VC, Avondale University) 22 September 2023
- Professor Sarah O'Shea (Leading expert on engagement of first in family and low SES students) 27 September 2023
- Professor Philip Dawson (Leading expert in Academic Integrity and digital learning) 26 September 2023
- Dr Daniel Edwards, (Leading expert on university student experience surveys and Head of Educational Research and Policy Development, Australian Council for Educational Research) 1 October 2023
- Dr Sarah Richardson, (Expert on international education and Executive Director of Asia Education Foundation) 26 September 2023.

The eights options and a summary overview of the papers were presented to the Panel for discussion (10 October 2023). These are presented in the following sections.

OPTIONS PAPER 1: Enhancing the quality of teaching and learning across Australia's expanding higher education system.

Option 1. Establish a National Centre for Higher Education Advancement

Since the closure of the Office for Learning and Teaching (OLT) in 2016, Australia has not had a national body coordinating and driving initiatives to improve quality in Higher Education (HE).

This means that government policy objectives and sector-led initiatives to advance quality teaching and learning in HE lack national coordination, amplification and impact. And institutions' efforts to address certain system-wide challenges are uncoordinated. For example, there were no national mechanisms to develop and share effective responses to the requirement for emergency online teaching during the Covid-19 pandemic. And there is no national body working to address the job security, career advancement and professional esteem issues that currently inhibit development of teaching excellence and innovation in Australian HE.

Critically, although Australia is a strong contributor to international HE research, as Johnson et al. (2023, p.2) identify, we have 'no national mechanisms for translation to practice'. This will impede implementation of recommendations arising from the Universities Accord process. In particular, efforts to identify and embed evidence-based inclusive education practices that support learning and attainment for students from all walks of life would benefit from a national body tasked with sector-wide professional development and best-practice guidance.

In the absence of a national HE advancement body, many Australian HE teaching staff and HEIs have turned to the UK's globally-focused Advance HE (formerly the UK Higher Education Academy) for guidance, accreditation, quality assurance and professional development. While beneficial to engaged individuals and institutions, this practice cannot achieve consistent, system-wide uplift of educational quality in Australian HE, nor address issues that are specific to the Australian context, including national defence and energy needs, our place and role in the Asian region, improvement of cultural safety for First Nations students and staff, and inclusion of First Nations' knowledges, history and culture across the curriculum.

What needs to change?

The submission to the AUA Discussion Paper from Johnson et al. (2023), echoing earlier research by James et al. (2015), proposes that a new national body – that we provisionally call the National Centre for Higher Education Advancement[8] ('the Centre') – is a key enabler for implementation of Accord proposals to advance educational quality and equity in Australian HE. (Such a body is discussed as a necessary enabler of several subsequent options in this work package – see Options 2: A Professional Standards Framework; 3: Peer Review of Teaching; 4: Professional development of teaching staff; 6: Shared learning and teaching resource repositories).

The Centre's activities could be targeted to address national policy objectives, including:

- Building the teaching knowledge, skills and expertise of Australia's HE workforce, including learning and teaching leadership (capability development).
- Improving the quality of learning and teaching in HE across the sector (enhance educational quality).

---

[8] Johnson, Kift and Lodge (2023) use the provisional name 'National Centre for Student Success', while James et al. (2015) used the provisional name: 'Australian Higher Education Academy'.

- Identifying and promoting evidence-based practices that close HE participation and attainment gaps for students from all walks of life (improve equity and attainment).
- Advising the sector and regulators on issues that require a sector-wide response, such as threats and opportunities arising from generative artificial intelligence, HEIs' increased use of third-party providers (and sub-contractors) and the increasing casualisation of the HE workforce (identify threats and opportunities).

For example, the Centre could build workforce capabilities by using its expertise and resources to:

- Develop and accredit quality professional development programs for HE teaching staff, including micro-credentials, with a focus on the learning needs of new HE teaching staff (sessional and ongoing).
- Train and accredit teaching performance assessors to enable roll-out at scale of formal Peer Reviews of Teaching (PRT) (see Option 3).
- Establish minimum professional standards (competencies and values) for teaching and supporting learning in Australian HE (see Option 2) and accredit individuals under a professional recognition scheme (such as the Advance HE Fellowship program).

What does the evidence tell us?

Internationally, there are several examples of national bodies dedicated to advancing learning and teaching in HE. The UK's Advance HE is perhaps the best known, as a result of its global reach. Established as the Higher Education Academy in 2003, and expanded to address equality and diversity in 2018, Advance HE now adopts an international leadership role in advancing HE inclusion, learning and teaching, professional development and accreditation of HE teaching staff, as well as institutional leadership and governance. Other national bodies with more modest missions include New Zealand's Ako Aotearoa, and Ireland's National Forum for the Advancement of Teaching and Learning in Higher Education.

What would it take to make it work?

The Centre could be established as either a) an independent not-for-profit national association, similar to other professional associations and the UK's Advance HE, or b) as an Office within the proposed Tertiary Education Commission (TEC), similar to the previous Office for Learning and Teaching (an OLT 2.0), with funding capacity.

Each of these models has strengths and limitations. For example, the independence from government of a professional association may make it easier for the Centre to position itself as a trusted voice within, and representative of, the Australian HE community. However, an independent Centre would be expected to be mainly or wholly financially self-sufficient – reliant on government seed funding in its establishment phase, before progressively moving to greater reliance on other funding sources such as HEI contributions/subscriptions, consulting fees, revenue generating activities and philanthropic donations. Given the relatively small size of the Australian HE sector, it would not be feasible to expect the Centre to ever become wholly self-sufficient financially.

For that reason, it may be preferable to establish the Centre as a government funded OLT 2.0, sitting within the proposed TEC, with additional funding capabilities. It would then have power to leverage sector-wide action through financial incentives and rewards. The risk with this model is that it may be perceived (and experienced) as government intervention in the sector and as an inappropriate attempt to undermine or 'buy out' institutions' autonomy. If that perception prevailed, HEI engagement with the Centre would likely be strategic only, which would not contribute to genuine

collaboration and ground-up development of professionalism and a re-valuing of HE teaching and teaching staff.

Wherever located, the Centre's mission would be to advance learning and teaching quality across the Australian HE sector. To that end, it would need to have broad cross-sector governance, including students, and representing the diversity of the HE teaching workforce (sessional and continuing; early career and established academics; as well as teaching staff who are industry-based or expert practitioners).

In short, the Centre would need to be led by experienced and trusted HE teaching leaders while also giving voice to the majority of the HE teaching workforce who are sessional (employed on a casual, contract or adjunct basis) and bring diverse professional and disciplinary expertise to their HE teaching practice.

The Centre would need to move quickly to establish key relationships and build trust in the Australian HE community. Strong relationships with the industry regulators (TEQSA, HESP), the National Centre for Student Equity in Higher Education (NCSEHE), Universities Australia, professional associations (admitting authorities) and institution-based specialist centres (including the Melbourne Centre for the Study of Higher Education and Deakin's Centre for Research in Assessment and Digital Learning) would be critical to the Centre's success. The Centre would need to ensure that its activities *complement* and advance (rather than duplicating) the quality assurance and compliance guidance work of TEQSA, and the equity work of NCSEHE. Effective consultation and communication strategies will also be key.

Potential Risks:

Establishing a national Centre will require a significant upfront investment from government, and the return on investment will be difficult to assess in the short-term. To be successful, the Centre will also require long-term commitment and cooperation from government.

Engagement with the Centre by HE teaching staff and institutions will depend on the credibility, utility and value of the Centre's programs and resources – which will, in turn, depend on staffing decisions. Incentives to participation could be created through HEIs' use of the Centre's accreditation, performance evaluation and recognition schemes. However, if these are not high quality and beneficial for individuals, compliance will not deliver quality improvements.

Measuring success:

The Centre will have succeeded if, after a 3-year establishment phase, it has demonstrably contributed to: uptake of evidence-based practices that improve learning outcomes for diverse student cohorts; building the capabilities of HE teaching staff; and raising the status of teaching and teaching staff in Australian HE. To achieve this, the Centre will have established:

- Strong relationships with key stakeholders, who recognise the Centre's unique contribution to the HE ecosystem in Australia and internationally.
- Respected professional development and recognition processes that support the capabilities and career advancement of HE teaching staff.
- A central access point for repositories, research evidence, accessible resources, and translation tools that facilitate uptake of best practice in learning and teaching in HE (see Option 5).
- Expertise in its target areas of activity, making the Centre a valued source of information about and guidance on HE workforce and quality issues.

Implementation timeframes

- A planning phase (at least one year) of consultation, agenda setting and relationship building would be needed to refine the model for the Centre and establish funding.
- An establishment phase (perhaps two to three years) would then be needed to establish the Centre's operations and complete work to deliver on short- and medium-term goals. A review and evaluation process should be engaged at the end of the first two years of operation. Extensive forward planning should take place at the end of the third year, to design longer-term goals, expanded operations, and the Centre's funding sustainability.
- A maturing phase (years 4-6) would see the Centre's credibility established in the sector, core programs established and an increased focus on proactive engagement and longer-term goals.

Summary of costs and options for funding

The funding model to support the Centre would need further investigation. It will vary depending on whether the Centre is independent of government or located within the TEC. In either model, the Centre would likely need some level of ongoing government funding, notwithstanding the potential in time to generate income from other sources. As an indicator of costs, the 2014-15 annual report for The Office for Learning and Teaching (OLT) reported a budgeted expense of around $18m in 2014-15 (but an actual outcome of $14m). Accounting for inflation to today, this would translate to a rough estimate of **$22m in 2022/23** if the Centre were to be funded at the same level as the previous OLT.

References

Johnson, Liz, Kift, Sally and Lodge, Jason. (2023). *A big idea for Australian higher education: the National Centre for Student Success*, Submission to the AUA Discussion Paper.

James, Richard, Baik, Chi, et al. (2015). *Advancing the quality and status of teaching in Australian higher education: ideas for enhanced professional recognition for teaching and teachers*, Melbourne Centre for the Study of Higher Education, 2015. http://nla.gov.au/nla.obj-3071416775

OPTIONS PAPER 2: Addressing the job security, career advancement and professional esteem issues that inhibit development of teaching excellence and innovation in Australian HE.

Option 2. Adopt a national Professional Standards Framework to guide HE teaching staff.

Currently, Australia does not have a national statement of the expected teaching-related knowledge, skills, experience and values of HE teaching staff at progressive levels of expertise and responsibility.

The Productivity Commission Inquiry report '5-year Productivity Inquiry: From learning to growth' (no. 100, 7 February 2023) notes that 'universities and their staff have mixed incentives to perform their teaching function well' (p. 111). HE funding schemes, university ranking indexes and academic promotion metrics generally prioritise research quality; as a result, excellence in research is incentivised across the HE sector while 'adequacy' in teaching is accepted.

The lower rewards (including pay, job security, career advancement and professional esteem) for teaching excellence, compared with research excellence, affect the prestige of teaching and the respect for teaching specialists and teaching scholarship across HE institutions and the wider community.[9]

There are, however, powerful non-pecuniary incentives for quality teaching in HE (see Productivity Commission Inquiry, 2023, Report no. 100, p. 101). Institutions and teaching staff often have intrinsic motivations for teaching excellence, despite weak external incentives – including the satisfaction of doing a job well, the fulfilment of a deep-felt commitment to and valuing of students' attainment, and the sheer enjoyment of facilitating transformative learning. In short, most HE teachers want to do their job well, but they are currently not recognised and rewarded when they do so.

The lack of an agreed set of professional standards for HE teaching contributes to the under-valuing of teaching work, the desirability of teaching-focussed roles in HE, and the weak incentivisation of teaching skill development. In particular, the absence of professional standards means:

- There are no stated minimum requirements (teaching-related knowledge, skills, qualifications or equivalent experience) for staff new to or seeking to enter academic teaching, implying that 'anyone can teach'.
- There is no map for career progression for teaching-focussed academics (TFAs), which undermines the job security and satisfaction of sessional academics and maintains the primacy of research as a preferred career path for staff in continuing academic roles.
- It is difficult for sessional staff and TFAs to collect and communicate evidence of their teaching capabilities and impact, referenced to their roles and appointment levels, which limits the recognition and portability of their skills and experience.
- HEIs' capacity to identify staff development needs, and to recognise and reward performance above expectations, is impaired by the lack of agreed standards and benchmarks.

---

[9] Note that the Productivity Commission advises against adopting performance-based funding of HE providers on the basis that past schemes have 'proven problematic in Australia and globally, including encouraging gaming (such as enrolling fewer students from groups less likely to perform well), lack of impact, and unfairness.' (2023, p. 115)

What needs to change?

To meet the government's aims for an expanded, capable and sustainable HE teaching workforce, we need to raise the status of HE teaching, appropriately value the skills and expertise of the teaching workforce, and facilitate staff advancement and movement within and between institutions. In particular, we need better incentives to encourage talented early career academics to develop their teaching-related knowledge, skills and values as an important element of their overall professional development and career trajectory. We also need to better recognise the value and contributions of sessional teaching staff and enable their progression to more secure roles.

Trusted and reliable mechanisms for development and recognition of HE teaching expertise are central to achieving these objectives. At present, the lack of understanding and recognition of the unique skills inherent in high-quality teaching practice, pedagogy and curriculum design makes HE teaching a marginalised and under-valued form of academic work.

What does the evidence tell us?

International experience indicates that a voluntary, nationally consistent Professional Standards Framework (PSF) that establishes agreed expectations for teaching-related knowledge, skills, experience and values at progressive levels of expertise and responsibility could assist to achieve the government's HE objectives by facilitating development and recognition of HE teaching staff capability.

Case study: The UK Professional Standards Framework (UKPSF) for Teaching and Supporting Learning in HE, first launched in 2006 and then revised in 2011 and 2023, has had significant impact on institutional policies and is extensively embedded in probation, promotion criteria and teaching awards for HE teaching staff (Bradley, 2022).[10] More than 165,000 individuals have applied for Fellowships that recognise attainment of benchmark standards at varied levels of experience and responsibility, aligned with the PSF (https://www.advance-he.ac.uk/teaching-and-learning/psf). Institutional membership of Advance HE (the custodian of the UKPSF)[11] is also expanding, as it enables HEIs to signal the importance of their teaching missions and the quality of their CPD programs (through accreditation with Advance HE), as well as affording access to externally benchmarked peer-reviews of institutional teaching quality (https://www.advance-he.ac.uk/teaching-and-learning/psf). Institutions are also able to set up their own Advance HE-

---

[10] The UK PSF contains 4 Descriptors that signal the extent of practice, knowledge and skill required at increasing levels of responsibility (Associate Fellow; Fellow; Senior Fellow; Principal Fellow). Each Descriptor comprises 15 statements of threshold performance (benchmarks) for Core Knowledge, Professional Values and Areas of Activity (demonstrated experience). The hierarchy of attainment in skills and professional knowledge that the framework outlines enables HE teaching staff can plan their professional development and career progression. Over 169,000 staff in more than 100 countries have applied for professional recognition through the Advance HE Teaching Fellowship program. https://www.advance-he.ac.uk/teaching-and-learning/psf Perhaps also describe that accreditation comes through an assessment of evidence that a teacher has met the requirements of the framework and/or successfully completed accredited training.

[11] The UKPSF was developed in 2006 by the Higher Education Academy (HEA) on behalf of the UK HE sector. The HEA has expanded to become Advance HE, which aims to support the professionalisation of HE teaching globally by certifying the teaching knowledge and skills of academic teaching staff (as 'Fellows') and accrediting HEIs' alignment with and embedding of the framework. Recognition entails responsibility: Advance HE Fellows must adopt a 'Code of Practice' that sets out the conduct expectations of professional HE teachers (see https://www.advance-he.ac.uk/knowledge-hub/fellowship-code-practice). Advance HE has an Australasian Strategic Advisory Board, currently chaired by Alfred Deakin Professor Liz Johnson, DVCA, Deakin University.

approved accreditation schemes that align with the UKPSF (rather than having individuals apply directly for Advance HE fellowships) (Horrod, 2023, p.22).

Increasing use of the UKPSF as a signal of teaching and learning quality has drawn criticism, especially when some form of accreditation/fellowship is adopted as a key performance indicator for teaching staff, meaning that participation is no longer voluntary and so may become yet another 'tick-box' compliance exercise for staff (see, e.g. Horrod, 2023, p. 22). Also, while the UKPSF has had a significant impact on the status (recognition and reward) of learning and teaching in HE, its impact on the quality of teaching and learning within institutions – and hence its benefits to students – is less clear (e.g. van der Sluis, 2023). In short, the UKPSF provides an effective means for both individual staff members and HEIs to signal their alignment with expected standards; its claims to improve teaching and learning quality by encouraging reflection and continuous improvement (among both teaching staff and institutions) are not able to be independently assessed.

What would it take to make it work? The need for and potential benefits of an Australian Professional Standards Framework was recognised by two projects funded by the former Office for Learning and Teaching (OLT):

- Advancing the quality and status of teaching in higher education: ideas for enhanced professional recognition for teaching and teachers, James, Baik et al., 2015 (http://hdl.voced.edu.au/10707/534606.)
- The Australian University Teaching Criteria and Standards Framework (see http://uniteachingcriteria.edu.au/) – a national project led by five Western Australian universities.

This work provides a useful starting point for potential development of Australian professional standards framework for HE teaching. In the intervening years since the de-funding of the OLT, however, a number of Australian universities have applied for international membership of Advance HE and numerous Australian Teaching-Focussed Academics (TFAs) have applied for 'Fellowship' of Advance HE as a means of certifying their skills, capabilities and professional values (https://www.advance-he.ac.uk/fellowship/fellowship).

Adoption of a nationally consistent PSF for HE teaching in Australia could thus proceed by either:

- Endorsing the UKPSF and establishing an Australian body (affiliated with Advance HE) with power to a) accredit Australian HEIs' professional development programs that align with the PSF and b) evaluate Australian applications for individual Fellowships or institutional membership of Advance HE, or
- Developing an independent Australian PSF, aligned with the UK model, but taking account of the Australian context and distinct features of HE in Australia, implemented by a National Centre (see Option 1) the same accreditation, development and recognition functions as those currently provided by Advance HE.

There are pros and cons to each implementation path. For example, there are unique factors that influence HE provision and practice in Australia that would only be captured by an Australian-specific PSF for Teaching in HE. In addition, the consultations and collaborations involved in development, administration and maintenance of an Australian PSF may help to develop a sense of professional identity among Australia's HE teachers and contribute to the professionalisation of HE teaching nationally. Against this, the wide international acceptance and uptake of the UKPSF means that an Australian PSF may be viewed as reinventing the wheel, or even as a sign of parochialism. It is unlikely that an Australian-developed PSF for HE teaching would differ significantly from the UK PSF.

To resolve this issue, we recommend that a working group be established in the first instance to consult widely across the Australian HE sector and develop advice on the best mechanism for adoption of a PSF for HE teaching in Australia. Whichever implementation path is adopted, an Australian PSF would need to be supported and disseminated by an independent national body representing the HE teaching workforce and committed to advancing student learning – such as the new National Centre for Higher Education Advancement (Option 1). That Centre would need to be adequately funded to undertake the certification and quality assurance work associated with implementation of a PSF.

Potential Risks:

- Adoption of an Australian PSF for HE teaching may be experienced as an attempt to control, and increase the administrative and reporting burden on, rather than a mechanism to support and recognise the professionalism of HE teaching staff.
- A PSF for HE teaching needs to articulate standards for quality teaching and professional conduct across an increasingly diverse HE sector and highly differentiated teaching and learning support roles. This may mean that any common standards are so generic that they are unable to stimulate quality improvement in teaching practice.

Measuring success:

A PSF would have been successful if, after an initial implementation phase, there was:

- Good engagement with the PSF by Australian HE teaching staff (in particular Early Career Academics) and HEIs, as evidenced by applications for fellowship/membership (or equivalent).
- A take-up of the opportunity to have HEI-based professional development programs for HE teaching staff formally evaluated and accredited (in line with the PSF).
- A high level of satisfaction with the instrument and its associated recognition mechanisms as measured by a survey of HE teaching staff and HEI leaders.

Implementation timeframes

- Dependent on the sector-wide consultation with HE teaching staff and HEIs (at least 6 months).

Summary of costs and options for funding

- Costing of the proposed national body representing HE teaching staff is considered in Option 1.

References

Bradley, Sally. (2022) A brief history of the *Professional Standards Framework for teaching and supporting learning in higher education: stages of development*, Advance HE Report, https://www.advance-he.ac.uk/knowledge-hub/brief-history-professional-standards-framework-teaching-and-supporting-learning-0, accessed 19 September 2023.

Horrod, Sarah. (2023) *Learning and Teaching in Higher Education: Policy Discourses and the Illusion of Best Practice*, Palgrave Macmillan, Switzerland.

van der Sluis, Hendrik. (2023) 'Frankly, as far as I can see, it has very little to do with teaching'. Exploring academics' perceptions of the HEA Fellowships, Professional Development in Education, 49:3, 416-428, DOI: 10.1080/19415257.2021.1876153

Option 3. Initiatives to increase the quality and uptake of Peer Review of Teaching.

We need better mechanisms to assess teaching performance to ensure that teaching capabilities and effectiveness are appropriately developed and recognised.

In Australian HE, student evaluations of teaching (SETs) are the current prevailing measure of teaching quality. This is despite a wealth of evidence demonstrating that SETs are not an appropriate measure of either teaching effectiveness (student learning gains), or teaching competency (teacher knowledge and skills) (see, e.g. Boring, Ottoboni & Stark, 2016; Carpenter & Tauber, 2020; Uttl, White & Gonzalez, 2017).

SETs are also known to be influenced by external factors unrelated to student learning including personal biases based on gender, age, attractiveness, extraversion, ethnicity, language background and disability (see Boring, Ottoboni & Stark, 2016; Carpenter & Tauber, 2020; Uttl, White & Gonzalez, 2017). In this context it is unsurprising that a recent Canadian arbitration decision rejected the use of SETs as a measure of teaching effectiveness for the purposes of confirmation and promotion of academic staff, and determined that review of a teaching portfolio and in-class observations are the best way to assess teaching effectiveness (for an extended discussion of this case, see Marychurch et al., 2023).

This decision is confirmation that Peer Review of Teaching (PRT) should be regarded as the 'gold standard' for assessment of teaching effectiveness and teacher competency in HE. PRT typically involves review of a teacher's 'teaching portfolio' (evidence of understanding and application of effective teaching and learning principles) alongside classroom observations (to evidence effective teaching practices) and, ideally, evidence of students' learning gains (teaching effectiveness) (see Schweig, 2019).

Internationally, PRT is recognised 'as an important component of HE teaching scholarship, akin to the peer review of research' (Johnston, Baik & Chester, 2020, p. 2). It is considered an important mechanism for both *improving* the quality of teaching in HE and *measuring* it. Research evidence supports the positive relationship between the use of targeted, structured PRT programs in HE and enhanced teaching outcomes including increased teaching effectiveness and improved student learning outcomes. At an institutional level, use of PRT processes is also associated with an increased focus on teaching quality (see summary of findings in Johnston, Baik & Chester, 2020).[12]

In Australia, while PRT is widely practised across the compulsory education sector, its adoption in HE policy and practice is unsupported nationally, meaning that its uptake is piecemeal and reliant on institutional policies and champions. Moreover, in the absence of a Professional Standards Framework for teaching in HE (see Option 2), there is little incentive for HE teaching staff to participate in PRT as it has no explicit link to professional competency statements or professional advancement. While some HEIs mandate PRT as an element of their staff performance appraisal processes, this summative form of PRT can be resented by teaching staff – especially, in the absence of mechanisms to assure the consistency and quality of the review process. Given that the skills,

---

[12] However, the form, structure and scope of the PRT program makes a difference to its impact and outcomes. For example, discipline-specific, collegial models of PRT have stronger teaching development outcomes than large-scale, generic institutional initiatives (Johnston, Baik & Chester, 2020, p. 7). It is unclear, however, whether discipline-specific reviews have advantages in comparison with cross-disciplinary reviews or reviews undertaken by an expert educational developer.

knowledge and achievements of effective teaching staff are under-recognised and rewarded in Australian HE, it is understandable that institutional requirements for PRT solely for professional *development* purposes (implying that teaching staff need to improve their competencies) may be resented and resisted.

These disincentives will need to be addressed if Australian HE is to broaden the use and utility of PRT. Given the unreliability of SETs and increasing recognition that their direct use in staff appraisal and promotion processes is invalid and even unethical, it is imperative that Australian HE explores initiatives to increase the quality and uptake of PRT (Johnston, Baik & Chester, 2020).

What needs to change?

PRT, including evaluation of student learning gains where possible, should be established as the preferred measure of HE teaching effectiveness and teacher capability in Australian HE.

Two initiatives to advance this aim are explored independently, although they would achieve synergies if delivered in tandem.

Initiative 1. Develop and pilot a scheme for national accreditation of HEIs' PRT programs

All HE teaching staff should be able to access elective, expert developmental and (separately) evaluative PRT in order to inform and facilitate professional development and career advancement. It is particularly important to ensure that sessional and early-career academics, as well as ongoing teaching staff applying for confirmation or promotion, are able to have their knowledge, skills and performance expertly assessed, against agreed professional standards.

To enable this, a national body (ideally, the National Centre for HE Advancement (NCHEA) – see Option 1, but otherwise the TEC) could be tasked with implementing a pilot project to develop a scheme for national certification of HEIs' PRT programs with the following elements:

- Collaboratively develop training for PRT program designers and individual practitioners (reviewers).
- Collaboratively develop a process and agreed standards for accreditation of HEIs' PRT programs.
- Develop and maintain a database of certified PRT programs, noting whether they are open to cross-institutional participation.
- Develop a national awareness campaign directed to HE teaching staff to promote the objectives and benefits of participation in accredited PRT programs.
- Monitor uptake of PRT and evaluate HE staff and PRT practitioner satisfaction with the PRT process.

The advantage of this option is that it would introduce some *national consistency* and quality standards into HEIs' PRT programs designed to evaluate and develop HE teaching effectiveness and competency.[13] In time, greater consistency in and improvements to the design and delivery of PRT across Australia's HEIs would help to increase staff confidence in the quality and benefits of PRT.

---

[13] It is important to note here that demonstrations of teaching effectiveness will vary depending on a range of factors including the educational context, student needs, program learning outcomes and institutional mission. Hence, it should not be expected that effective teaching would look the same nationally.

As participation in PRT would not be mandated by this initiative,[14] it is unlikely to be opposed or resisted by HE teaching staff.

What would it take to make it work? The pilot would need adequate funding, appropriate staffing and independent evaluation.

Potential risks: minimal if established as a pilot.

Timeframes: the pilot could be set up within 12 months and should run for a minimum of 3 years.

Measuring success: The pilot would be successful if, at the end of 3 years:
- It had established agreed standards for accreditation of PRT programs and some standardisation of PRT program design and practice.
- Uptake of PRT steadily increased (where it is not mandated) and both participants and practitioners report strong satisfaction with HEIs' programs.
- An independent evaluation of the pilot found that satisfaction with PRT programs had increased over the 3 years of the initiative and that PRT programs had made a positive contribution to teaching development (individually and institutionally) and improvements in HR processes.

Costs: The cost of the pilot would need to be government funded, however a proportion of the costs might be offset by institutional subscriptions. It would be vital to the success of the initiative that individual HE teaching staff do not have to pay for PRT. The cost implications of the proposed national Centre for Higher Education advancement, which would be an appropriate host of this pilot, have been addressed in Option 1.

Initiative 2. Commission a national project to synthesise and disseminate research findings on effective, efficient and ethical means of evaluating HE teaching effectiveness and teacher competency.

This project would aim to meet HE sector needs for:

1. Authoritative guidance about the different forms and uses of PRT, and about program and organisational factors that contribute to effective use of PRT for teaching development and accreditation across different contexts in Australian HE.
2. Authoritative guidance about the essential (and non-essential) elements of an effective PRT process, to ensure that its administrative burden is minimised.
3. Authoritative guidance on the uses of PRTs alongside SETs in staff selection, appraisal, confirmation and promotion processes.
4. Better mechanisms to enable HE teachers, program designers and HEIs to assess student learning gains.[15]

In particular, it will be important for this project to collect and analyse further evidence to determine which elements of teaching practice are essential for inclusion in an effective PRT and which are not (Objective 3 above), given that the range of material that can potentially be included in both

---

[14] Some HEIs mandate PRT for their teaching staff, while others do not. This initiative would neither encourage nor discourage mandating of PRT at an institutional level.
[15] Such as enabling comparison of student work completed early in a unit of study with that completed at the end of the unit.

teaching portfolios and the PRTs that review them is currently overwhelming.[16]

What would it take to make it work? An appropriate budget for research, analysis and communication; expert staffing (both academic and communications staff).

Potential Risks: None.

Implementation timeframes: This project should have funding for at least 18 months, preferably 2 years.

Measuring success: The project will have been successful if, at the end of its term:

- PRT is more widely used as a preferred means of assessing teaching effectiveness and teacher competency by Australian HE teaching and HR staff.
- The processes for participation in PRT have become more efficient and standardised to focus on essential indicators of teaching effectiveness, while still taking account of diverse teaching practices and contexts.

Summary of costs and options for funding

- The government would need to fund this project through a direct commission, or an earmarked grants scheme.

References

Boring, Anne, Ottoboni, Kellie & Stark, Phillip B. (2016). Student evaluations of teaching (mostly) do not measure teaching effectiveness. *ScienceOpen Research,* DOI: 10.14293/S2199-1006.1.SOR-EDU.AETBZC.v1

Carpenter, Shana K., & Tauber, Sarah K. (2020). On students' (mis)judgements of learning and teaching effectiveness. *Journal of Applied Research in Memory and Cognition*, 9, 137-151.

Johnston, Alexandra L., Baik, Chi & Chester, Andrea. (2022) Peer review of teaching in Australian higher education: a systematic review, *Higher Education Research & Development*, 41:2, 390-404, DOI: 10.1080/07294360.2020.1845124

Marychurch, Judith, Burton, Kelley, Nancarrow, Michael & Laurens, Julian (2023). Student evaluations of teaching: Understanding limitations and advocating for a Gold standard for measuring teaching effectiveness. *Legal Education Review*, 33:1, 107-125.

Schweig, Jonathan (2019). *Measuring teaching effectiveness: Understanding common, uncommon and combined methods.* Research report, Rand Corporation. https://doi.org/10.7249/RR4312.4.

---

[16] For example, a PRT can review any and all of the following:

- Elements of classroom teaching practice (e.g. classroom management, handling student questions, clarity of exposition etc.);
- Aspects of curriculum and assessment design (including effective formative feedback);
- Use of student-centred pedagogical approaches (e.g. creating inclusive classroom environments);
- Self-reflection tools and practices, including teachers' reflection on SETs to identify ways to improve student experiences
- Evidence of student learning gains, including comparison of student work completed early in a unit of study and on completion of a unit
- Evidence of student learning outcomes including employer satisfaction with graduates' knowledge and skills
- Letters of recommendation from colleagues, practitioners or other industry and educational experts
- Evidence of pastoral care and support for students' individual learning needs.

OPTIONS PAPER 4: Enhancing the professional development of HE staff in teaching

Option 4. Initiatives to improve the teaching-related professional development of existing and future HE teaching staff

Better mechanisms are needed to ensure that HE teaching staff have the knowledge and skills needed to teach diverse student cohorts, especially in online, hybrid and technology enhanced learning environments.

Induction, initial training, mentoring, supervision and professional development of the teaching-related capabilities of HE staff is currently a matter for institutions – often devolved to faculties or departments and addressed at varying levels of commitment, resourcing and expertise. This means that the quality of professional development and support for teaching staff varies widely within and across institutions.

What needs to change?

To achieve the aims of the Accord process and deliver on the government's ambitions for equitable, inclusive and flexible (online, hybrid) learning across an integrated HE ecosystem:

- The Australian HE teaching workforce will need to expand, requiring additional entry pathways and associated professional development opportunities.
- The sector will need to ensure that all *current* HE staff have access to high-quality professional development that enables them to continually improve their teaching knowledge, skills and competencies.

We outline five potential initiatives to address the professional development needs of the HE workforce.

Initiative 1. Mandate minimum teaching qualifications for HE teaching staff

Some international jurisdictions, including a number of European countries, now mandate teaching qualifications for HE teaching staff. Several HEIs in Australia, including Deakin University, have also introduced such a requirement for newly appointed academic staff (ongoing positions).[17] This raises the question of whether minimum HE teaching qualifications should be mandated nationally in Australia in order to ensure that HE staff are, as the AUA Interim report identifies:

- Equipped to teach students from all walks of life with varying academic backgrounds, especially through use of inclusive and high-quality digital and blended/hybrid delivery models.
- Able to incorporate into their teaching practice principles of student-centred teaching, contemporary learning theory and evidence-based pedagogical approaches.

A mandatory requirement for certified teaching knowledge and skills could be introduced in Australian HE by amending the *Higher Education Standards Framework (2021)* s3.2.3 b) to require that staff with teaching responsibilities have '***certified*** skills in contemporary teaching, learning and

---

[17] Expectations around teaching qualifications vary at faculty and departmental levels, and also by discipline. There are also various exemptions to the mandatory requirement.

assessment principles relevant to the discipline, their role, modes of delivery and the needs of particular student cohorts'.[18]

It would then be up to TEQSA to provide guidance on the forms of certification that would satisfy this requirement. Given the diversity of the HE teaching workforce – including sessional, casual and adjunct staff, academic staff, and professional, industry and clinical experts – the requirements should be flexible and certification should be transferrable across institutions.

For example, the appropriate level of teaching knowledge and skills could be certified by:

- A formal Peer Review of Teaching (PRT) – see Option 3.
- Completion of a certified course of study such as a Graduate Certificate in University Teaching.
- Completion of a structured and supervised PhD teaching fellowship (see below).
- Completion of accredited micro-credentials in HE teaching.

It must be noted that there is not widespread support for the introduction of mandatory teaching qualifications among HE experts in Australia, however. In general, overly prescriptive and mandatory mechanisms, especially those that assume a 'one-size-fits-all' or even 'one-size-fits-most' approach are likely to provoke a compliance response rather than engaging HE teachers in a collaborative, collective effort to develop professional expertise. Requirements to obtain teaching certification may also impose an increased burden on already time-poor HE teaching staff.

For these reasons, a phased, stepped approach that only imposed a requirement for certification of teaching knowledge and skills on those newly-entering HE teaching (in ongoing roles, to complete within their probation/confirmation period) would face less resistance than a blanket requirement for all HE teaching staff. This is the approach adopted at several universities, and one that was endorsed by some leading HE experts interviewed for this project.

A panel of experts should be commissioned to consult further on this initiative and assess the feasibility and desirability of mandating teaching qualifications for HE teaching staff.

Initiative 2. Establish a dedicated program of PhD 'teaching fellowship' positions that offer training, experience and certification in university teaching.

At present in Australia a significant proportion of tutoring, lecturing and demonstrating in universities is undertaken by doctoral students employed on a casual basis. While this can provide a valuable opportunity for these graduate researchers to undertake relevant employment for a future academic career, casual staff members' employment is uncertain, and they are not always provided with professional development opportunities to develop teaching-specific expertise.

The proposed PhD Teaching Fellowship initiative would establish a dedicated program of structured 'teaching fellowships for doctoral students'.[19] Key features of the program include:

- PhD Teaching Fellows would be employed by universities as fixed-term staff members, with associated superannuation and benefits.

---

[18] Note that staff who do not meet the upgraded standard for '*certified* skills' would not be prevented from teaching under the Australian *Higher Education Standards Framework*, however they would be required to 'have their teaching guided and overseen by staff who meet the standard' (s3.2.4).

[19] This initiative articulates with the AUA Research Training workstream and should be read in conjunction with that streams' other recommendations to improve research training in Australian HE.

- Fellows would be required to undertake a specified number of teaching hours over the course of their candidature or within a specified timeframe.
- Fellows would be supported to teach during the period of their candidature; they would also undertake teaching-related professional development leading to completion of a certified university teaching qualification.
- The total number of hours of teaching would be limited to ensure successful completion of doctoral studies.
- To be eligible for a doctoral teaching fellowship a PhD candidate would need to show satisfactory academic progress toward their degrees. Teaching fellowships would not be available after the cessation of candidature.
- Teaching Fellows may elect to reduce their PhD candidature to part-time to accommodate their teaching activities and development of the additional knowledge and skills. The proportional reduction in PhD stipend would be offset by the Fellowship income.[20]

In addition to supporting interested PhD candidates to develop their teaching knowledge and skills, and providing them with a guaranteed supplementary income, the PhD Teaching Fellowship program would offer a sustainable alternative to sessional academic appointments in Australian universities. PhD Teaching Fellowships would also be intentionally designed to provide a transitional pathway for early career academic staff into either teaching-and-research or teaching-focussed academic appointments.

Funding of the Teaching Fellows program, and any amendment to RTP Guidelines, would need further exploration (see also the Research Training workstream package recommendations).

Initiative 3. Create a mechanism for certification (quality assurance) of institutional and sector-based professional development programs for HE teaching.

There is an increasing need for academic teaching staff to have certified (quality assured) teaching qualifications or credentials to support appointment, confirmation and promotion applications or to facilitate movement between institutions internationally. Internationally, HEIs are also increasingly requiring their teaching staff to obtain certified teaching credentials.[21]

In this context, and more broadly to assure the quality of institutional and sector-based professional development programs for HE teaching, the proposed National Centre for Higher Education Advancement (see Option 1) could be tasked to undertake quality-assurance of HEIs' professional development programs (including micro-credentials that do not constitute academic qualifications), aligned with a professional standards framework (see Option 2) and appropriate for diverse teaching-related roles.

The Centre would need appropriately qualified HE education experts to develop criteria for certification of professional development programs, and to assess applications for certification

---

[20] Experiences of three participants in the University of Melbourne's Graduate Researcher Teaching Fellowship Scheme are reported here: https://blogs.unimelb.edu.au/soll-talk/2022/10/14/looking-back-on-the-one-year-teaching-experience-interviews-with-three-graduate-research-teaching-fellows/

[21] For example, expectation that HE teaching staff would have teaching credentials is reflected the University comparison tool U Multirank (https://www.umultirank.org/), which enables prospective students to compare more than 2,200 universities (including Australian universities) on a range of metrics includes (within the Teaching and Learning rankings) the proportion of staff who have certified teaching credentials ('Pedagogically skilled teaching staff'). The website describes this indicator as: 'A rating indicator looking on requirements to teaching staff to have certified pedagogical and didactical skills plus the percentage of teaching staff holding a recognized certificate of pedagogical and didactical skills.'

against the PSF. The costs of assessing applications for certification could be borne by applicants (HEIs and other professional education providers) once the scheme is established.

Initiative 4. Create a portable professional development entitlement for sessional staff.

Estimates vary, but some indicate that as much as half of the teaching taking place in Australian HE is undertaken by staff employed on a sessional basis (including casual, short-term, adjunct, sub-contracted arrangements). These staff members have poor job security and career progression prospects (see Option 1). They also have little if any paid access to quality, teaching-related professional development.

While incentives for HE teaching staff to focus on developing teaching knowledge, skills and practices are currently weak (see Option 2), for sessional teaching staff *lack of access* to paid professional development is an additional barrier. Internationally, while induction and initial compliance training for sessional HE teaching staff has received some attention, there are few examples of schemes to support the ongoing professional development of sessional academic staff.

Creation of a portable professional development entitlement for sessional staff may help to address this problem. The model for such a program has been developed and elaborated by the Centre for Future Work at the Australia Institute, for application in the Disability Support sector (see Ryan & Stanford, 2018).[22] In outline, sessional staff would accrue continuing professional development (CPD) entitlement points at a specified rate (relative to their FTE fraction) – for example, the rate could be set so that one day of CPD entitlement is accrued for every 12 weeks of FTE service. The entitlement amount would be set to cover both staff time (100% of FTE salary) and a loading for reasonable professional development program costs. The staff member could draw on the entitlement to attend certified teaching-related professional development programs of their choice. The cost of the professional development entitlement would be borne by HEIs who employ sessional staff.

The proposed TEC could be tasked with investigating whether such a scheme for HE sessional teaching staff would help to address current skills challenges in HE teaching and establish ongoing professional development for all HE teaching staff as the cornerstone of learning and teaching quality in HE.

Initiative 5. Require all HEIs to report to TEQSA on the implementation, uptake and effectiveness of their strategies and programs designed to ensure that all teaching staff have access to relevant, high-quality teaching-related professional development opportunities. Reports should detail:

- Mechanisms used to ensure that every member of staff who teaches or supports student learning (ongoing and casual, academic and industry-based) has completed a high-quality induction program and has access to ongoing, paid professional development (pro rata) including teaching mentoring, certified training programs and peer review of teaching (PRT – see Option 3).
- The scope, nature and quality of the teaching-related induction and professional development (PD) programs provided to staff.
- Rates of staff participation in and satisfaction with those programs, including a breakdown of participation by staff group (e.g. continuing, sessional).
- Strategies adopted to incentivise staff participation in and increase satisfaction with PD programs.

---

[22] The recent review of the NDIS is considering adoption of this scheme.

- Evidence collected (without burdening staff) to evaluate the effectiveness of PD programs, such as measured increases in staff use of a tool or strategy, or increases in online innovation.

This initiative would aim to ensure that HEIs fulfil their responsibilities to provide high-quality initial and continuing professional development to all their teaching staff as an essential means of assuring the quality of their learning and teaching programs.

References

Ryan, Rose, & Stanford, Jim. (2018). *A Portable Training Entitlement System for the Disability Support Services Sector.* Report. The Centre for Future Work at the Australia Institute, Canberra, April 2018. https://futurework.org.au/report/a-portable-training-entitlement-system-for-the-disability-support-services-sector/

OPTIONS PAPER 5: Facilitating dissemination and take-up of best practice in HE teaching and learning

Option 5. Enable identification and uptake of 'what works' to improve student learning in Australian HE.

We need stronger evidence about 'what works' to improve student learning outcomes in an expanding and diversifying Australian HE system, and we need that evidence to be taken up in teaching practices and policies so that the system delivers better learning outcomes for all students.

Available research into best practice teaching and learning approaches in Australian HE needs to be updated to take account of the rapid changes currently taking place in HE, including advances in educational technology and generative artificial intelligence, wider participation of students from all walks of life, and changing patterns of student engagement. That new research also needs to be translated into policy and practice via accessible implementation guides that enable strategies to be readily adapted for different institutional contexts and missions.

Following the closure in 2016 of the Office for Learning and Teaching (OLT), there has been no organisation in Australia charged with commissioning and disseminating research into best practice in HE teaching and learning. Examples of excellence at the individual and teaching-team level abound and are recognised through the Australian Awards for University Teaching. However:

- There is currently no mechanism to distil from diverse examples of 'teaching excellence' a systematic understanding of 'what works' for effective learning in HE teaching.
- There is limited understanding of what works at an institution-wide level to cultivate and support 'whole-of-university' teaching excellence.
- Current mechanisms that facilitate translation and sector-wide uptake of best practice principles, methods and approaches – such as discipline-based teachers' associations and communities of practice – are underfunded and limited in reach.

What needs to change?

We need stronger evidence and improved mechanisms to enable uptake of evidence-based strategies and approaches known to advance student learning. HE teaching staff and institutions need to know what works and why (Carbone, 2016).

The Productivity Commission Inquiry recommended that new research to address this need could be commissioned by expanding the remit of the Australian Education Research Organisation (AERO) or earmarking a stream of ARC grants to focus research into effective HE teaching practices (see Productivity Commission Report, 2023, p. 113). However, commissioned research may simply add to the number of studies that investigate the effectiveness of a particular strategy or approach with either inconclusive results or positive findings that are not able to be replicated in other institutions or contexts. Simply commissioning new research is also insufficient to ensure improvements in teaching quality – there needs to be a dedicated uptake (implementation) strategy, or we will risk, yet again, having knowledge about effective HE teaching methods and approaches left sitting on a shelf (or in a repository).

To circumvent this issue, we propose two initiatives that have an uptake strategy hard-wired into the project design to ensure that research findings on evidence-based best practice are actually translated into practice and benefits for students.

Initiative 1. Commission a repository of 'what works' evidence for effective student learning in Australian HE, curated by a panel of experts and embedded in teaching networks and communities of practice.

'What works' repositories are designed to make research evidence easily accessible and implementable by a wide range of practitioners (see e.g. What Works Wellbeing UK https://whatworkswellbeing.org/). That is, they aim to accelerate research uptake in practice. By taking a user-friendly, toolkit-building approach, these discoverable, searchable and topic-based repositories are a useful advance on more basic repositories that simply host copies of or links to scholarly publications.

The uptake of research findings can be further accelerated, however, by embedding a 'what works' repository within a network or community of practitioners who are encouraged to 'take ownership' of the repository resources in various ways – for example, by providing comments on or ratings of individual resources, or developing case studies that report experiences of implementing evidence-based strategies. In this way, the network provides a feedback loop for the evidence-base that can refine understanding of what works in different contexts and with diverse stakeholders.

The Evidence-Based Teachers Network (https://ebtn.org.uk/) is one example of this approach. However, it is not designed for HE teaching and its evidence-based repository (Evidence Bank) is limited.

A better model for the proposed repository and network is the Best Practices Repository initiative of the US-based Healthy Minds Network (https://healthymindsnetwork.org/best-practices-repository/). Key features of that initiative (in development) include:

- The repository is exclusively focused on collating and publishing research reporting *evidence of effectiveness*, rather than examples of innovation or new approaches, or other contributions to scholarly literature.
- All research included in the repository is critically assessed by an expert panel who comment on the strength of the evidence and the size and nature of the measured effects.
- The repository owners develop 'meta-analyses' that compile and synthesise information about program or policy effectiveness from a range of published sources.
- The repository is highly discoverable and searchable.
- The repository is embedded in a network of stakeholders supporting active use of the repository resources. This means that the repository will be both interactive (inviting questions and comments) and evolving – stakeholders can report successes and challenges implementing evidence-based strategies in specific contexts (which can lead to refinement of the evidence) and also identify evidence 'gaps' that need to be addressed by further research.

What would it take to make it work? The proposed National Centre for Higher Education Advancement (see Option 1) would be the ideal host of the proposed *What Works in HE Teaching: Repository and Network for Evidence-based Practice*.

The WWHET Repository + Network would need adequate funding for staff and infrastructure to establish, maintain and support its different elements and activities, including:
- Establishing the network of teaching program designers, institutional leaders and HE teaching staff who are the intended users of the repository resources and consulting them

on how they would like to engage with such a repository and what features they would like it to have.

- Building a highly discoverable, searchable and user-friendly repository that will meet the network's needs.
- Commissioning academic experts to undertake the necessary research to populate the annotated repository and undertake independent meta-analyses (see, e.g. Smith & Baik, 2019).
- Curating the repository and facilitating user interactions.
- Establishing within the network specialist sub-groups for learning and teaching staff with specialised roles – for example, staff who support students' academic skills development; learning designers; educational technology developers; curriculum and program designers; educational policy developers.
- Establishing close connections with discipline-based communities of practice for teaching and other existing teaching networks linking HE teaching staff in Australia.

There should also be funding for a communication strategy to launch the Repository, and for an external review of the Repository's uptake and impact.

Potential Risks: The investment in development and maintenance of the repository would be non-negligible and so there is a risk that the impacts and effectiveness of the initiative do not represent a good return on investment. A business case for the initiative should be developed in the scoping stage.

Measuring success: The initiative will have been successful if, at the end of a 3-year establishment phase:

- The repository has a wide user-base (as evidenced by site visits, downloads, interactions etc.).
- The associated network includes members from across the HE sector in Australia.
- Members are providing examples of the ways that they have implemented the evidence and are reporting their challenges and successes.
- Trends are evident in the topics that members search and comment on, which can inform additional research and resource needs.

Implementation timeframes: This initiative could be scoped and established within 12 months. It should be reviewed and evaluated after an initial 3-year establishment period.

Summary of costs and options for funding: The costs of establishing and maintaining the repository would need to be borne by government in the first instance, with the possibility to raise institutional subscriptions once the initiative was established. Given that the aim of the initiative is to encourage uptake of evidence-based teaching practices, however, any subscription or paywall barrier may be counter-productive.

Initiative 2. Pilot a 'Student Success Project' that uses data to identify institutions with better-than-expected student outcomes, and then engages a panel of experts to identify lessons from those institutions in order to mentor leadership teams in under-performing institutions.

This initiative is based on the work of the US Foundation for Student Success (FSS) Project which analyses widely available HEI performance data[23] to identify institutions that graduate significantly

---

[23] Including student characteristics, course enrolment, progression, completion and attrition rates, employment outcomes – see NCHEMS, 2020. The formulas used to identify outstanding HEIs takes students' backgrounds

higher-than-expected numbers of students in particular equity groups (for example, students of colour). The FSS project then engages with the leaders of those institutions to invite them to participate in a mentoring scheme aimed at enabling similar but 'under-performing' institutions (mentees) to improve. If institutions agree to participate, they engage in a 2-year mentorship program, facilitated by staff from the National Centre for Higher Education Management Systems (NCHEMS, see https://fssawards.org/initial-research-project/final-report/).

There are several advantages to this project's approach to sharing best-practice to improve learning outcomes for equity-bearing students, including:

- It does not determine in advance what effective learning and teaching would look like or comprise (as most research studies must) and attempt to replicate that. Instead, it looks only for outstanding student outcomes (based on data analysis, not institutional self-reports) and, again making no assumptions, asks those high-achieving institutions what factors they identify as contributing to their equity-bearing students' success.
- Through this process, institutional climate and culture, including diversity in the staff body, consistently emerge as strong determinants of student success. Yet these factors are rarely explored in the HE scholarship of teaching and learning (SoTL).
- The uptake element of the project (mentoring of under-achieving HEIs), with a focus on the identified factors, is hard-wired into the project ensuring that sector-wide improvement in student outcomes is the goal, not mere identification and rewarding of HEI teaching 'excellence'.[24]

What would it take to make it work in Australia? Given the different size and culture of Australian HE, this project would need to be adapted for the Australian context. We suggest two adaptations:

- Instead of underperforming institutions being directly mentored by leaders from institutions with outstanding student success rates, the project may be more successful if a Panel of Experts (POE) is appointed to investigate the drivers of success in the outstanding institutions and then draw on those findings to mentor underperforming institutions.
- In place of a voluntary scheme, the project may be more successful if there were compliance incentives for underperforming institutions to participate in mentoring by the POE – for example, HEIs' participation, and improvement on equity-gap indicators, could be monitored by TEQSA consequent on the HESF requirement that HEIs' learning and teaching programs 'create equivalent opportunities for academic success regardless of students' backgrounds' (HESF, 2021, 2.2.1).

The pilot Project could be a collaboration between TEQSA and the National Centre for Student Equity in Higher Education (NCSEHE).

Government may need to provide funding within the scheme to enable underperforming institutions to undertake the necessary institutional change (this funding could be conditional on demonstrated actions towards change). Grants should also be provided to the outstanding institutions in consideration for their work with the POE to identify transferable lessons for student success.

---

and circumstances into account in estimating expected rates of progression completion, attrition etc. For a detailed account of such a procedure see NCHEMS, 2020, pp.40-44 (California Case Study).

[24] 'Exemplar' schemes such as teaching excellence awards and institutional ratings schemes designed to recognise and reward outstanding performance have been shown to have little impact in inspiring sector-wide uptake of the 'exemplary' practices (see, e.g. Ashwin, 2022).

Government would also need to provide adequate staff funding to ensure the Project and the POE have the necessary expertise to undertake the different elements and activities, including:

- Consulting with key stakeholders to identify the student cohorts that should be prioritised in the pilot stage of the project – for example, Indigenous students or Low SES.
- Designing the statistical model to classify HEI's performance on retention and success of target cohorts (taking various student and institutional characteristics into account).[25]
- Communicating with institutions about the aims of the Project.
- Establishing processes that support and facilitate the investigation and mentoring stages of the Project.
- Reviewing the mentee institutions' activities and identifying enablers and barriers to change.
- Developing a communication strategy to communicate Project activities and findings.
- Undertaking an external review of the pilot Project's activities and outcomes.

Potential Risks: Institutions identified as 'under-performing' in terms of their equity-bearing students' success, and who are expected to participate in mentoring for improvement, may be **resistant and mount a compliance response rather than engaging with the opportunity to improve their students' learning outcomes**. As discussed above, compliance and financial incentives may assist.

Measuring success: The pilot Project will have been successful if, at the end of its 2-year term, evaluation of the pilot reports that:

- Engagement in the mentoring processes was high among most underperforming institutions.
- There are sector-wide learnings arising from the pilot about the institutional factors that contribute to the academic attainment of equity-bearing students.
- There is some initial evidence that the changes being undertaken at mentee institutions are having a positive impact on student learning and attainment.
- Participant experiences of the project are positive.

Implementation timeframes: This initiative could be scoped and established within 3 months. The Project would run for an initial 2-year period, after which it should be reviewed and evaluated.

Summary of costs and options for funding: The costs of the project would need to be borne by government.

References

Ashwin, Paul. (2022) Developing effective national policy instruments to promote teaching excellence: evidence from the English case, *Policy Reviews in Higher Education*, 6:1, 27-45, DOI: 10.1080/23322969.2021.1924847

Carbone, Angela. (2016). Teaching in higher education – there isn't enough evidence to tell us what works and why. *The Conversation* (October 18, 2016), https://theconversation.com/teaching-in-higher-education-there-isnt-enough-evidence-to-tell-us-what-works-and-why-66771

Smith, Calvin D., & Baik, Chi. (2019). High-impact teaching practices in higher education: a best evidence review. *Studies in Higher Education*, DOI: 10.1080/03075079.2019.1698539.

---

[25] For a detailed account of such a procedure see NCHEMS, 2020, pp.40-44 (California Case Study).

OPTIONS PAPER 6: Facilitating dissemination and take-up of best practice in HE teaching and learning: *Sharing best practice*

Option 6. Share best practice teaching and learning resources through discipline-based digital repositories.

We currently lack the infrastructure, protocols, conventions and rewards that are needed to facilitate and encourage sharing and reuse of educational content materials in HE. This results in sector-wide inefficiencies and inconsistency in the quality of students' educational experiences.

Internationally, sharing of educational resources through digital repositories has become a widespread practice over the past decade, aimed at advancing student learning and promoting global access to higher education. The Massachusetts Institute of Technology OpenCourseWare (https://ocw.mit.edu/), that makes lectures, learning resources and exams from across the MIT curriculum openly available to teachers and learners globally is an often-noted example. There are also a number of high-quality open-access knowledge repositories designed specifically to support teaching staff in HE, for example:

- The Purdue Repository for Online Teaching and Learning (PoRTAL, Purdue University, https://www.purdue.edu/innovativelearning/tools-resources/portal/)
- The UK National Teaching Repository (https://figshare.edgehill.ac.uk/The_National_Teaching_Repository)
- The Advance HE's Knowledge Hub (https://www.advance-he.ac.uk/knowledge-hub)

In Australia, the Universities Australia Learning and Teaching Repository (LTR, https://ltr.edu.au/vufind/) houses a collection of learning and teaching research and resources produced by Australian higher education practitioners and agencies, including materials produced by Australian government-sponsored projects from 1994 to the closure of the Office for Learning and Teaching in 2018. However, much of the LTR content, as well as the site architecture and functionality, is now out-of-date.

Missing from this landscape of open access resources are quality-assured, research informed and student-centred learning materials designed in and for Australian HE institutions, aligned with AQF standards and course-specific intended learning outcomes, and reflecting Australian social, geographic, environmental and economic contexts.

In recent years TEQSA has attempted to address this gap by housing curated guides and resources on teaching and learning on its website (https://www.teqsa.gov.au/guides-resources), including a link to curated resources for educators from the Society for Teaching and Learning in Higher Education (Canada). However, there is a lack of discipline-based, Australian 'good practice' examples among this collection.

Some Australian curriculum and learning materials have been added to the international Open Educational Resource (OER) repositories by OER enthusiasts. However, these are difficult to 'discover', depending on the searchability of the selected repository, not quality assured, and their currency and relevance in different Australian jurisdictions and contexts is not certain.

How could Australian HEIs work together to facilitate sharing and uptake of high-quality learning and teaching resources, with the dual aim of uplifting the quality of education across the sector and achieving efficiencies in teaching preparation?

What needs to change?

As Austin (2023) identifies, academic culture 'does not prioritise sharing of teaching resources' currently, except in the commercialised form of the academic textbook (p.3). As a result, HEIs and teaching teams most often work in isolation to develop teaching and learning resources, even for courses that are commonly taught by many HEIs and which have foundational knowledge and skills content. This means that learning and teaching resources are of varying quality, depending on the expertise of the teaching staff and the funds available for resource development within each HEI. In particular, high-end learning resources are out of reach for many teaching staff, such as simulated learning environments in which students can practice skills and receive immediate feedback on their performance or choices – for example, patient examinations (health sciences) and client interviewing (law).

Sharing access to such digital assets would ensure that all HE students have opportunities to engage with interactive learning resources that stimulate enquiry and experimentation, which can be customised and adapted to facilitate attainment for diverse student cohorts. Complex disincentives prevent this outcome.

Indeed, the only incentives for making teaching resources available to other academics currently are the personal rewards of collegiality and good will. However, as Austin (2023) argues, that culture can be changed if incentives are introduced – such as appropriately valuing the activity of sharing teaching resources – and the disincentive of materials being reused without acknowledgement or credit are removed. To encourage uptake and reuse of shared learning and teaching resources, we also need to build trust in the quality of the resources and make them easily discoverable and traceable.

Austin's proposal: Establish collaborative, discipline-specific Centres of Excellence (COEs) for creating and sharing educational resources through purpose-built digital repositories (2023, p. 4). Initially, perhaps three pilot COEs, comprising experienced academic teaching staff and learning designers, would be funded (for 3-5 years) to develop and share foundational teaching and learning materials for large programs (such as Science, Arts, Commerce) where the curriculum is reasonably standardised and student numbers are strong. Each COE would have a home institution that hosts the learning repository and acts as a 'hub' for cross-institutional collaboration.

In addition, Austin proposes that a national co-ordinating body be tasked with supporting the COEs and distilling lessons from the early trial phase to inform subsequent roll-out of further COEs. In the Australian context, this could be the proposed new national Higher Education body (see Option 1).

What does the evidence tell us? There are examples internationally of effective discipline-based, open-access or shared (restricted access) educational repositories including:

- Scottish Dental Education Online https://www.sdeo.ac.uk/
- The Curriculum Open-access Resources in Economic (CORE) Econ knowledge repository for Economics teaching https://www.core-econ.org/

What would it take to make it work?

It would be essential to the success of the COEs that:

- COE leaders:
  - Have high standing in their disciplinary communities and are trusted educationalists.

- - Engage widely with academics, professional associations and industry partners to enable the development of shared understanding of current challenges and opportunities within fields of practice and disciplines.
- Resources selected or developed for inclusion in the repositories are:
  - Quality-assured, research-informed and appropriate (or able to be adapted) for diverse Australian contexts.
  - Built on Universal Design for Learning (UDL) principles.
  - Informed by co-development with students from diverse backgrounds.
  - Designed for teaching diverse student cohorts in online and technology-enhanced learning environments.
  - Aligned with international entry-to-profession standards, where applicable.
  - Developed to agreed standards and specifications to meet technical/ethical/legal requirements.

In addition, the work of developing, quality-assuring and maintaining current high-quality resources need to be appropriately funded, as well as recognised and rewarded within the participating institutions' staff performance frameworks. The work of designing and maintaining state-of-the-art repositories also needs to be appropriately funded and recognised. Repositories should be readily discoverable, searchable, and accessible, as well as capable of monitoring views, downloads, citations and reuse of resources (see, e.g. LTR, https://ltr.edu.au/vufind/) so that contributing educators can assess the impact of their work.

Recognising and rewarding *contributions* to development and maintenance of the repository resources will be essential and could be done through confirmation and promotion processes as well as teaching excellence awards. *Uptake* of the resources would also be assisted if use of repository resources were considered as 'good practice' in teaching evaluations.

Potential Risks:

> Institutions may seek to maintain competitive advantages by offering 'exclusive' curricula and learning experiences. For this reason, it will be essential to attend to the incentives needed to promote both contributions to and use of the COE educational resources.

Measuring success:

- Improvements in student persistence and attainment in their first year of HE in the disciplines and institutions using the COE resources.
- Improvements in student satisfaction with teaching quality (SES sub-scale) in the disciplines and institutions using the COE resources.

Implementation timeframes

- The initial implementation phase would see three pilot COEs established with funding for 3-5 years, and developing plans for future sustainability beyond the funding period.
- The national body would support the pilot COEs, identify learnings from the pilot phase, and conduct an independent evaluation of the program at the end of the initial implementation phase.
- The subsequent implementation phase (years 5-7) would see 5 further COEs established with initial funding support (2-3 years) and achieving sustainability thereafter.
- The final implementation phase (years 8-10 of the project) would see COEs funded for a single year only before moving to a sustainable basis.

- All COEs would receive ongoing support and national visibility from the new national HE body.

Summary of costs and options for funding

The initial costs of establishing the COEs would need to be largely government funded aside from some in-kind contributions from the collaborating institutions. Once established, and the model had proven effective, COE costs could be offset through institutional subscriptions (or licence fees), industry contributions and philanthropic donations.

References

Austin, Ellen. (09 Aug 2023): Sharing the wealth: a proposal for discipline-based repositories of shared educational resources, *Perspectives: Policy and Practice in Higher Education*, DOI: 10.1080/13603108.2023.2240731

OPTIONS PAPER 7: Improving metrics and data that measure learning and teaching quality: *A national quality framework*

Option 7. Consider an Australian Higher Education Teaching Quality Framework.

Australia does not currently have a national measure of learning and teaching quality in Higher Education (HE).

This should not imply that learning and teaching quality is not valued or assured in Australia. TEQSA undertakes quality assurance processes in line with the requirements of the AQF and the HES, and it provides regular sector updates on threats to HE quality and opportunities for improvement.

We also have the QILT suite of surveys, which provide public information about students' experiences of HE and about graduate employment and employer satisfaction. Data from those surveys are integrated in the ComparED tool, which enables prospective students to compare institutions based on student experiences and employment outcomes for particular fields of study. There are several limitations to the ComparED tool, however – for example, you cannot find whether satisfaction ratings or employment outcomes varied in a particular field of study or institution by demographic or equity variables.[26]

It is also recognised that QILT data do not directly measure learning and teaching quality in HE (Productivity Commission, 2023, pp. 105-6); instead, student experiences and employment outcomes stand in as proxies for quality learning and teaching. This is problematic as there is some evidence suggesting that student evaluations (perceptions) of teaching do not correlate with learning outcomes (Productivity Commission, p. 106), which may be counter-intuitive, until we remember that students can be entertained and stimulated in class – and hence rate teachers highly – without achieving the desired learning outcomes.[27] Similarly there is no direct correlation between student learning and employment outcomes. Students may experience substantial learning gains and attain all course learning objectives and still not be able to secure employment in their preferred field, depending on the size of the field and the vacancy and turnover rates within it (among other factors).[28]

What needs to change?

It is felt that we need to develop better measures of learning and teaching quality in Australia. Certainly, Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) are required to report a wealth of data about students to the Department of Education (https://www.education.gov.au/higher-education-statistics). We have been asked to investigate whether that data could provide the basis for a set of metrics that

---

[26] This is a notable limitation when compared to the data dashboards published by the UK Office for Students (OfS) – which make HE data on access and participation, student outcomes, and student experiences searchable by split indicators for age, disability, ethnicity, deprivation quintile and eligibility for free meals (among others) (https://www.officeforstudents.org.uk/data-and-analysis/data-dashboards-faqs/). See also the U Multirank tool, https://www.umultirank.org/, which enables the user to refine search queries and compare institutions on multiple indicators of learning and teaching quality.

[27] The aim of high quality education must be to ensure first, that students achieve the desired learning outcomes and second, that they feel safe, encouraged and stimulated while doing so. Both learning outcomes and positive experiences are essential; and one does not guarantee the other – each must be addressed independently.

[28] Performing arts and music are a prime example – learning attainment cannot guarantee employment in a field where there are a high number of applicants for very few jobs.

identifies HEIs who deliver outstanding teaching programs and achieve strong learning outcomes for diverse students.

What does the evidence tell us?

International experience would caution to tread very carefully with any attempt to develop a national framework (or set of metrics) for measuring learning and teaching quality in HE. The abandonment of the Assessment of Higher Education Learning Outcomes (AHELO) project[29] and critical assessments of the UK Teaching Excellence Framework (TEF) (e.g. Gunn, 2018; Ashwin, 2022) provide salutary lessons.[30] First, there are limits to *what* can be measured that simply need to be respected. In particular, measurement of students' 'learning gains', not only degree completion/attrition or learning outcomes (which reflect prior learning attainment), have proved highly elusive.[31]

Second, the *effects* of measurement need to be kept in mind. This is Goodhart's law which states, 'when a measure becomes a target it ceases to be a good measure' (Stumborg et al., 2022), largely because stakeholders will focus on finding ways to 'hit the target' (game the system) some of which, if not anticipated by the policy developers, may have undesired consequences.[32] Critical evaluations of the UK TEF (see e.g. Hayes & Cheng 2020; Ashwin, 2022; Gunn, 2018) argue that its main effect has been to focus institutional attention on hitting the TEF metrics – unsurprising if Goodhart's law is understood – creating a lot of work for managers and administrators focussed on preparing effective TEF submissions (and appeals against less than Gold-standard TEF ratings). This focus on the 'management of metrics' may even detract from 'enhancement of day-to-day teaching' (Ashwin, 2022, p. 38).[33]

There is a need for particular caution if 'student satisfaction with their learning and teaching experience' is to become a 'target' metric, keeping in mind that all measurement systems invite 'gaming' and the stakes may be high if a measure impacts HEIs' reputations and incomes. The UK TEF includes the National Student Survey (NSS) sub-scales for teaching, assessment, and academic support.[34] Unfortunately, student satisfaction measures can be gamed by reducing standards and

---

[29] Australian government plans to use the Collegiate Learning Assessment were also dropped (Productivity Commission, 2023, p.106) after it was determined that 'we do not have standardised definitions of what students are supposed to learn' (Coaldrake & Stedman 2016, p.99). The Productivity Commission's review concludes, it would be desirable to measure the 'value-added of higher education providers' – if only it were feasible to do so (p. 106).

[30] Intended to improve educational quality across the sector and inform student choice, the TEF publishes ratings (gold, silver, bronze) of institutions' performance against select metrics including: student perceptions of teaching, assessment and academic support (NSS scales) plus dropout rates, and rates of employment/highly skilled employment or further study (Ashwin, 2022, p.32). In some respects the Australian ComparED tool is similar to the TEF, although it does not condense results to a gold/silver/bronze rating.

[31] As noted in the Productivity Commission Report, 'attempts to measure learning gain have generally stalled or been abandoned due to methodological flaws and high costs' (2023, p. 106)

[32] A classic example of Goodhart's law is the experience of British officials in colonial India who offered a bounty on cobra skins with the aim of reducing the cobra population. The initiative backfired because locals began breeding cobras – an easier way to collect skins than trapping wild cobras to be sure – which they then released when necessary to avoid penalties for their actions being discovered, which led to an increase, rather than a decrease, in the cobra population (Stumborg et al., 2022).

[33] See Appendix 2 for more information on the UK's Teaching Excellence Framework and other metrics for teaching quality used internationally.

[34] This is appropriate in the UK context, it must be noted, as it is a condition of regulation as a higher education provider that students 'receive a high quality academic experience' (B1.2), specified to require as a minimum that the course content is up-to-date, provides educational challenge, is coherent, effectively delivered and develops relevant skills (B1.3). The NSS is designed to measure compliance with this regulatory requirement.

making it easier for students to 'succeed' (grade inflation and lowered standards). In that context, it is notable that the UK OfS is undertaking work to address 'grade inflation' in HEIs – 32.8% of students in 2021-22 (across 144 providers) were awarded the top grade (a first class honours degree) compared with only 15.5% in 2010-11. An OfS analysis found that 16.4% of the first class awards were unexplained after accounting for known variables that might affect levels of attainment (https://www.officeforstudents.org.uk/news-blog-and-events/press-and-media/university-grade-inflation-starts-to-drop-but-half-of-top-grades-still-unexplained/). Grade inflation at these levels is likely to undermine the international reputation of a national HE system, notwithstanding the presence of a national 'teaching excellence' framework intended to bolster it.

In the Australian context it has also been questioned whether actions taken in response to QILT results lead to quality improvement – for example, some have questioned the extent to which institutions divert resources to areas that could attract high student satisfaction ratings rather than more important areas such as course design, teaching methods, and monitoring the academic outcomes of all cohorts of students (Shah and Richardson, 2016, p. 362).

Third, the policy *objectives* for measuring must be clear so that the measurement framework can be designed to meet its purpose. The TEF again is a salutary example. One of the policy objectives of TEF was to drive quality improvements across the sector. Setting aside the problems noted above with the 'proxy' metrics for quality teaching included in the TEF, the instrument cannot provide information on progress towards that objective because only a fixed percentage of 'Gold' (consistently outstanding) ratings are awarded. This means that institutional ratings can change – if performance relative to other institutions improves or declines – but the TEF does not reveal whether all the effort on the part of HEIs to comply with its requirements has made any measurable improvement to performance on those metrics across the sector.

Fourth, the policy *levers* (theories of change) must be accurate. For example, it has been assumed that publishing information about HEIs' teaching quality will inform students' choice of institution and so reward strong performers with increased applications and, in a demand-driven system, increased student income revenue. Poor performers, by contrast, will be forced to either improve their teaching performance or lose market share (see, e.g., Productivity Commission, 2023, p. 105). Publication of QILT data does not appear to have had that effect on institutions in Australia, however. Indeed, the Productivity Commission review concluded that 'naming and shaming' is not a strong motivator for institutional improvement (Productivity Commission, 2023, p. 108).

Certainly, national ratings based on students' satisfaction and employment outcomes do not appear to influence prospective students' decisions about choice of institution. In the UK, surveys of prospective students have found that most are unaware of the TEF ratings and, of those who had heard of it, most said it would not influence their choice of institution (Ashwin, 2022, p.34). This may be because TEF only assesses teaching excellence at the institution level, despite wide acceptance that teaching quality can and often does vary significantly within institutions across programs and students are most commonly choosing programs rather than institutions. The planned expansion of TEF to the course/subject level – which might have been more helpful in informing student choice – was abandoned after a 2021 review, owing to the cost and administrative burden it would impose.

In Australia, there is no evidence that the QILT results influence students' choices. For example, Bond University rates highly on the QILT student experience measures while The University of Melbourne rates poorly: this does not drive students away from Melbourne towards Bond – understandably, because the institutions are not otherwise comparable. In considering development of a national framework to measure the quality of learning and teaching at an institutional level, it must be

remembered that teaching quality is only one feature of higher education that might influence students' choices – many students also value prestige, connections and cultural capital, and/or convenience, amenity and location. Against these factors the weight of a relatively poor (but still 'good') result on a student experience survey will be negligible.

We note that a National Quality Framework (NQF) has been introduced in other sectors in Australia such as Early Childhood Education (https://www.acecqa.gov.au), and while the regulatory system differs from tertiary education, it may be worth examining how external assessments are carried out in the NQF and explore possibilities for higher education (possibly by TEQSA).

What might an Australian Learning and Teaching Quality Framework look like?

With these cautionary lessons in mind, is it possible to identify potential measures of quality learning and teaching, drawing on available data in Australia? It is essential to first determine what the purpose of such a Framework would be, especially now that it is clear that quality metrics do not consistently improve learning and teaching quality, nor influence student choices (Ashwin 2022). Transparency and accountability are perhaps the best (remaining) reasons for developing a national teaching quality framework that aims to rate institutional performance. More specifically, the Framework's aim could be to make transparent to government, students and the public who contribute to the funding of the HE system how and whether those funds are effectively expended in the advancement of student learning and attainment.

With that purpose in mind, a Learning and Teaching Quality Framework could draw on data about institutional decision-making that reveal the value HEIs place on student learning, and whether HEIs' learning and teaching programs 'create equivalent opportunities for academic success regardless of students' backgrounds' (HESF, 2021, 2.2.1). This Framework would impose a minimal additional administrative burden on HEIs, beyond the routine data collection and reporting they currently do.

Appendix 1 outlines 7 dimensions of such a framework:

1. Institutional investment in learning and teaching programs
2. Diversity of the student cohort
3. Student academic attainment and attainment gaps for equity-bearing students
4. Employment outcomes, fee costs and education value gaps for equity-bearing students [optional]
5. Institutional expenditure on staffing of teaching mission
6. Teaching staff skills, experience and diversity
7. Teaching staff professional development

In addition to DOE collected data, this Framework would draw on the QILT employment outcomes data but not the QILT student experience data because there is no regulatory standard related to 'student experience' in the Australian HESF (Threshold Standards, 2021) that would provide a mandate for its inclusion, unlike in the UK where the regulatory framework for HE requires HEIs to demonstrate that their students 'receive a high quality *academic experience*' (B1.2, OfS Regulatory Framework 2022).

The HESF provides a direct mandate for investigating and reporting on all dimensions of the draft Framework[35] other than No 4: Employment outcomes and education value gaps. That metric is a

---

[35] For example, the HESF requires HEIs to demonstrate that:
- Trends in rates of retention, progression and completion of student cohorts through courses of study are monitored to enable review and improvement (1.3.5).

measure of the *educational quality* of an HEIs' programs – and their relevance to labour market needs – rather than an indicator of learning and teaching quality. For this reason, we consider it an optional inclusion in an educational/teaching quality framework.

In terms of providing transparency and accountability to government, students and the public, the draft Framework would answer (to the extent possible, using available data) the following questions:

1. To what extent does this HEI invest in and prioritise learning and teaching?
2. Does the HEI educate a diverse student population?
3. Do students from diverse backgrounds have equal opportunities for academic success at this HEI?
4. Do students from diverse backgrounds enjoy equal benefits from their education at this HEI?
5. Does the HEI offer appropriate rewards (pay and promotion) to teaching staff?
6. Is the HEI able to retain qualified, experienced teaching staff from diverse backgrounds?
7. Does the HEI invest in teaching related professional development for all its staff who teach or support learning?

What would it take to make it work?

- TEQSA, who could be responsible for implementing and publicising results of the Framework, should be consulted about how introduction of such a measure would affect their current regulatory approach and ways of working with HEIs
- Adequate funding for researching, developing, piloting, evaluating, rolling-out and maintaining the Framework will be needed (and considerable)

- Students have equivalent opportunities for successful transition into and progression through their course of study, irrespective of their educational background, entry pathway, mode or place of study. (1.3.6)
- Institutional policies, practices and approaches to teaching and learning are designed to accommodate student diversity, including the under-representation and/or disadvantage experienced by identified groups, and create equivalent opportunities for academic success regardless of students' backgrounds (2.2.1)
- Specific consideration is given to the recruitment, admission, participation and completion of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples (2.2.2)
- Participation, progress, and completion by identified student subgroups are monitored and the findings are used to inform admission policies and improvement of teaching, learning and support strategies for those subgroups (2.2.3)
- The staffing complement for each course of study is sufficient to meet the educational, academic support and administrative needs of student cohorts undertaking the course (3.2.1)
- The academic staffing profile for each course of study provides the level and extent of academic oversight and teaching capacity needed to lead students in intellectual inquiry suited to the nature and level of expected learning outcomes (3.2.2)
- Staff with responsibilities for academic oversight and those with teaching and supervisory roles in courses or units of study are equipped for their roles, including having:
  a. knowledge of contemporary developments in the discipline or field, which is informed by continuing scholarship or research or advances in practice
  b. skills in contemporary teaching, learning and assessment principles relevant to the discipline, their role, modes of delivery and the needs of particular student cohorts, and
  c. a qualification in a relevant discipline at least one level higher than is awarded for the course of study, or equivalent relevant academic or professional or practice-based experience and expertise (3.2.3).

- Minimal additional administrative burden for institutions, beyond the routine data collection and reporting they currently do.
- A public education and awareness campaign
- Sector-wide consultation and expert statistical input.

Potential Risks:

- One could expect significant opposition to the implementation of a LTQ Framework from HEIs across the sector.
- It can be anticipated that HEIs will insist on making institutional submissions to counter findings from the metrics, which will increase administrative costs for both HEIs and TEQSA (who it is imagined would be responsible for hosting and maintaining the framework).
- Legal challenges could be anticipated.

Measuring success:

The Framework would be successful if:

- There was public buy-in and utilisation of information from the Framework.
- Nationally, over time, the proportion of the income that HEIs derive from student fees and invest in learning and teaching *increases,* while the attainment and value gaps for equity groups in HE *decrease*

Implementation timeframes:

- Consultation and evaluation of any proposed LTQ Framework should be extensive and well-funded – if such a Framework is implemented rashly the unintended effects could be highly costly.

Summary of costs and options for funding:

- Government would have to bear all the costs involved in researching, developing, piloting, evaluating, rolling-out and maintaining the Framework

References

Productivity Commission, Australia (2023) *Inquiry Report: from learning to growth* (Volume 8, Report no. 100, 2023)

Ashwin, Paul. (2022) Developing effective national policy instruments to promote teaching excellence: evidence from the English case, *Policy Reviews in Higher Education*, 6:1, 27-45, DOI: 10.1080/23322969.2021.1924847

Gourlay, Lesley & Stevenson, Jacqueline. (2017) Teaching excellence in higher education: critical perspectives, *Teaching in Higher Education*, 22:4, 391-395, DOI: 10.1080/13562517.2017.1304632

Gunn, Andrew. (2018) Metrics and methodologies for measuring teaching quality in higher education: developing the Teaching Excellence Framework (TEF), *Educational Review,* 70:2, 129-148, DOI: 10.1080/00131911.2017.1410106

Hayes, Aneta, & Cheng, Jie. (2020) Datafication of epistemic equality: advancing understanding of teaching excellence beyond benchmarked performativity. *Teaching in Higher Education*, 25(4): 493-509.

National Student Survey (NSS) 2023 Questionnaire,
https://www.officeforstudents.org.uk/media/c2ddb4c1-34cf-4df4-8c26-b6469412768f/nss-2023-questionnaire.pdf, accessed 12 September 2023

Sumborg, Michael F., Blasius, Timothy D., Full, Steven J., & Hughes, Christine A. (2022) *Goodhart's Law: Recognising and mitigating the manipulation of measures in analysis*, CNA, a division of the Centre for Naval Analyses, Occasional Paper (September 2022).

OPTIONS PAPER 8: Improving metrics and data that measure learning and teaching quality: New metrics

Option 8. Consider new metrics for measuring learning and teaching quality in HE

While the QILT suite of surveys provides a useful overview of students' university experiences and employment outcomes, results do not drive educational quality improvement across the sector.

The stated aim of the QILT suite of surveys is to help 'education institutions and the government improve teaching and learning outcomes for students' https://www.qilt.edu.au/surveys/Data-Visualisation/ses). There are several reasons why the current QILT indicators are not able to drive this outcome, however (see Option 7: A Teaching Quality Framework), including the fact that the surveys do not directly measure student learning gains or teaching effectiveness.

As discussed in Option 7: A Teaching Quality Framework, it may not be possible to directly measure student learning gains at a national level through a series of metrics (see also Howson, 2022). And teaching effectiveness is also best measured at an individual, unit or program level through a comprehensive process of self-reflection, peer review,[36] external audit[37] and consultation with stakeholders, including students.

Are there measures that could usefully be implemented at a national level to inform and drive quality improvement in HE learning and teaching? This paper considers options for new metrics within and beyond the Student Experience Survey (SES).

New indicators for the SES

The Productivity Commission inquiry into HE (2023) recommended that the government should refine and validate new indicators for QILT, including possible use of peer review processes for validation (Productivity Commission, p. 106), . We agree that it may be useful to extend the SES's measurement of students' experiences of learning and teaching by including additional modules, which – like the existing ones – target factors that institutions can modify, and which are theoretically posited and empirically demonstrated to influence student learning outcomes.

What does the evidence tell us? Education research identifies various student-side factors that influence learning and are modifiable by institutions (see, e.g. Yorke, 2016; Zimmerman & Kitsantis 2007; Pintrich 2004; Pintrich et al. 1993; Kuh, 2009). Among those, the three that we would identify for potential inclusion in the SES are:

- **Commitment to learning** (Learning behaviours self-assessment) – e.g. *How often did you skip classes this semester? How often did you take up opportunities for academic support or enhancement? How would you rate the level of effort that you put into your studies this semester? All things considered, how would you rate your level of commitment to your studies this semester?* This potential addition to the SES would be intended to prompt students to reflect

---

[36] See Option 3 Peer Review of Teaching for consideration at individual and unit levels
[37] That is, 'benchmarking' of teaching practices, curriculum design, learning resources, academic support, student assessments and formative feedback provision by academic 'peers', typically from a comparable institution.

on their attitudes to learning and the priority they have afforded to their studies, giving them insight into ways they might 'improve' their learning attainment in future.[38]

- **Confidence as a learner** (academic self-efficacy) – e.g. rates of agreement with statements such as: *I believe I am a capable student; I expect to do well in my course; I am sure I can master the concepts and skills being taught in my course; I am not confident about my academic abilities (reversed).* This potential addition to the SES would give HEIs insight into the (modifiable) academic confidence of their students, and how it varies across fields and modes of study and equity groups.

- **Learning and teaching climate** (perceived climate) – e.g. rates of agreement with statements such as: *My institution … cares about students and their learning; …acts on student feedback and concerns; …values inclusion and diversity; … encourages students to work cooperatively.* This potential addition to the SES would give HEIs insight into the (modifiable) perceived climate for teaching and learning at their institution, and how it varies across fields and modes of study and equity groups.

Theoretically, these three modules address topics that are understood to be 'upstream' determinants of students' teaching and learning experiences. They are also common to all students across diverse fields of study and study contexts. Available research indicates that improvements in Learner commitment, Confidence and perceptions of the Learning climate can improve student persistence, attainment and wellbeing. Hence, it would be interesting to explore statistical associations between each of these three modules and existing SES modules including Student support, Skills development, Learner engagement and Teaching quality. Data modelling may reveal that positive ratings of Learner Commitment, Confidence and perceptions of the Learning climate are key to improving performance on the other metrics.

To keep the SES instrument to a reasonable length – a major consideration – it may be desirable to rotate modules in annual administrations, or split them across the sample. Even a few items on learner-side factors would provide important insights that are currently missing from the SES. See Appendix 3 for more information on 'learner-side' metrics for possible inclusion in the SES.

Indicators beyond the SES

Initiative 1: A survey of HE teaching staff

What does the evidence tell us? Other industries' efforts to drive quality improvement at a system level commonly include staff surveys – e.g. Your Voice in Health – WA Health https://www.health.wa.gov.au/Reports-and-publications/Your-Voice-in-Health-survey

In this context, it is striking that no equivalent survey is currently used at a national level to inform quality improvement efforts in HE. Striking because, after all, teaching staff not only have knowledge, skills and experience in learning and teaching; they have lived experience of the conditions that enable or inhibit quality learning and teaching in HE. That lived experience would likely tell us that it is not lack of information that currently inhibits improvement of learning and teaching in HE; rather, it is the chronic lack of time and resources to implement changes that teaching staff know would make a positive difference to student learning.

---

[38] The module 'signals' that learning is not a consumer good: students must work to earn learning gains, they cannot 'buy' them. The current focus on what students 'receive' from their institutions tends to encourage a counter-productive student-consumer mentality.

The fact that the voice of teaching staff is currently absent from measures of educational quality in Australian HE may even be interpreted as a sign of the endemic under-valuing of the knowledge, skills and expertise of teaching staff. Hence, one possible initiative that would afford insight into ways to improve program and teaching quality from a generic national measure is a national survey of HE teaching staff (sessional and continuing) asking them to reflect on factors impacting teaching and learning in their unit/course – including the quality of:

- Learning environments, curriculum and teaching resources;
- Teacher induction, skills development and mentoring programs and opportunities;
- The support they receive from colleagues and supervisors;
- Students' preparedness and engagement, and their academic and wellbeing needs;
- The climate for learning and teaching at their institution – including the extent to which teaching staff feel valued, recognised and rewarded.[39]

Such a survey would assist the sector to identify the extent to which teaching staff feel equipped, supported, rewarded, trusted, able to work flexibly and alongside experienced colleagues. That is, it would identify opportunities to improve the working conditions of staff, which inform the learning conditions of students.

Initiative 2: Expert peer evaluations of HEIs' educational policies and programming

A second initiative to improve program and teaching quality is to make expert peer evaluations of learning programs and institutional learning strategies more widely available. While 'external benchmarking' of student attainment and course quality is often practised within disciplines to assure and enhance quality, it is possible to conduct elements of an external quality review at the institutional level, as the Productivity Commission identified:

> *For example, in Scotland, a central agency appoints a team of staff and students to review a subset of providers on a five-yearly basis. The review's primary focus is whether the institution as a whole has effective arrangements for 'enhancing the quality of the student learning experience and for securing the academic standards of its awards' (QAA Scotland 2017, p. 14). The team determines this through meetings with staff and students* (Productivity Commission Inquiry, 2023, p.110)

We suggest that these two initiatives would work well hand-in-hand – that is, that an external review of an HEIs' policies and programs to assure learning and teaching quality may well be more productive if informed by a survey of the experiences of teaching staff, as well as the latest results from a student experience survey.

External peer review of institutional teaching policies and programming would need to be undertaken by appropriately qualified, skilled and knowledgeable HE educators. Such a group could be recruited, trained and certified by the new National Centre for HE Advancement (Option 1).

---

[39] The psycho-social safety 'climate' of an organisation is increasingly recognised as a key determinant of employee and client satisfaction and wellbeing. It is easily measured and existing studies in education show that it is an important factor shaping students' experiences, in particular influencing their relations with peers (cooperative or competitive), take-up of support opportunities and sense of belonging. Periodic surveys of students and staff ratings of the teaching and learning climate in their institutions would assist to identify opportunities for improvement as well as existing strengths. For more information about Psychosocial Safety Climate and its importance for workplace health and safety, productivity and job satisfaction see the University of South Australia's Stress Cafe (see https://www.stresscafe.net/).

What would it take to make these options work?

- Adequate funding
- Wide consultation – possibly coordinated by the proposed National Centre (Option 1)
- Statistical expertise to inform development of pilot instruments and robust testing and validation of new survey modules, items and scales
- Support from HEIs, TEQSA and other regulatory bodies
- Sector leadership – again, the new National Centre (Option 1) may be able to provide this.

Potential Risks:

- Institutions may view additional measurement of the quality of their learning and teaching as unwarranted government interference in their autonomy. A careful communications strategy will need to be developed to explain how the new measures are beneficial for institutions, their staff, the sector, and ultimately, students.
- As for any measure, once it is made a 'target', it may cease to be a good measure (see Option 7: An Australian HE Teaching Quality Framework).

Measuring success:

- Feedback from HEIs about the usefulness of the national survey data in informing institutional policies and practices to improve teaching and learning quality.
- Response rates for the new national Teaching staff survey.
- Take-up and participation in expert peer evaluation of HEIs' learning programs and institutional learning and teaching strategies and policies.

Implementation timeframes

- Development and piloting of new modules for the SES and a national Teaching staff survey would likely take 1-2 years.

Summary of costs and options for funding:

- Government would need to fund these measures.

References

Productivity Commission, Australia (2023) *Inquiry Report: from learning to growth* (Volume 8, Report no. 100, 2023)

Howson, Camille K. (2022). Is educational gain the 'dark matter' of student outcomes? *WonkHE* comment (14/02/2022) https://wonkhe.com/blogs/is-educational-gain-the-dark-matter-of-student-outcomes/

Kuh, G. D. (2009). The National Survey of Student Engagement: Conceptual and empirical foundations. In R. M. Gonyea & G. D. Kuh (Eds.), Using NSSE in institutional research. New Directions for Institutional Research, 2009(141), 5–20.

Pintrich, P. R., Smith, D. A. F., Garcia, T., and Mckeachie, W. J. (1993). Reliability and predictive validity of the motivated strategies for learning questionnaire (MSLQ). *Educ. Psychol. Meas.* 53, 801–813. doi: 10.1177/0013164493053003024

Pintrich, P. R. (2004). A conceptual framework for assessing motivation and self-regulated learning in college students. *Educ. Psychol. Rev.* 16, 385–407. doi: 10.1007/s10648-004-0006-x

Yorke, M. (2016) The development and initial use of a survey of student 'belongingness', engagement and self-confidence in UK higher education, Assessment & Evaluation in Higher Education, 41:1, 154-166, DOI: 10.1080/02602938.2014.990415

Zimmerman, B. J., and Kitsantas, A. (2007). Reliability and validity of Self-Efficacy for Learning Form (SELF) scores of college students. *Z. Psychol.* 215, 157–163. doi: 10.1027/0044-3409.215.3.157

Appendix 1. What might a comprehensive Australian Learning and Teaching Quality Framework look like?

Cautiously, we propose that useful topics to analyse and report in a comprehensive, disaggregated set of learning and teaching quality indicators (each of which could be summarised by a star-system or gold/silver/bronze rating, based on cut points TBD) might include the following. This measure would aim to improve transparency and accountability for student and public investment in Higher Education. All indicators could be reported by calendar year OR for a 3-year period.

1. **Overall measure: Institutional investment in learning and teaching programs**
   RQ: To what extent does the HEI invest in and prioritise student learning and teaching?
   a. % total student fee-income (including CSP funding) expended on learning and teaching.

2. **Diversity of student cohort**
   RQ: Does the HEI educate a diverse student population?
   a. Current student socio-demographic variables: e.g. %Indigenous (ATSI); % multi-lingual; % Female + Non-binary gender identification; % LGBTIQ+ (NB: this variable is to be included in the QILT wellbeing module); % Disability; % Refugee; % International; % Carers
   b. Background student socio-demographic variables: e.g. % from regional/rural/remote; % Low SES; % born outside Australia; % NESB
   c. Major entry pathways – e.g. % Yr 12 students; school-leavers; mature-age entry; % completed alternative entry/enabling program; % completed VET quals; % transferring-in; % entering with equivalent industry experience
   d. Cohort breakdown for each course/program – are equity-bearing students proportionally represented in high-income earning programs (e.g. medicine, engineering, MBA)?

3. **Student academic attainment and attainment gaps for equity-bearing students**
   RQ: Do students from diverse backgrounds have equal opportunities for academic success?
   a. Attrition: % attrition/non-completion for each degree type
   b. Timely completion: (Of those who complete) % < 4 years FTE: % > 4 yrs
   c. Fails: % of students who fail one or more subjects/units for each degree type
   d. Attainment reporting method at end of course – 1) Ranked class list or normative (A, B, C, D etc or Honours First class, second class etc); 2) criteria/competency-based (A, B, C, D etc); 3) Competent/NA (non-graded). For each reporting method, average % in highest bracket – e.g. % First class hons; % Competency-based 'A'; % Competent (non-graded)
   e. *For all of the above, report any attainment gaps/increased risks for equity-bearing students including Indigenous; NESB; Female; LGBTIQ+; Disability; Low SES; First in family.*

4. **[optional] Employment outcomes, fee costs and education value (ROI) gaps for equity-bearing students**
   RQ: Do students from diverse backgrounds enjoy equal benefits from their education?
   a. For each degree type – % graduates employed: unemployed within year after graduating (GOS and GOS-L)
   b. Of graduates who are employed – % in jobs that require tertiary quals: in jobs that do not require tertiary qualifications
   c. Average annual salary of graduates from each degree type cf average annual salary of workers without tertiary qualifications

d. For all of the above, report any education value gaps/increased risks for equity-bearing students including Indigenous; NESB; Female; LGBTIQ+; Disability; Low SES; First in family.

5. **Institutional expenditure on staffing of teaching mission (including staff who support student learning)**
   RQ: Does the HEI offer appropriate rewards (pay and promotion) to teaching staff?
   a. % of student fee income expended on teaching staff salaries
   b. % staff at each level of appointment (Professor, AP, Senior Lecturer, Lecturer, Associate lecturer, etc) in teaching-focused or teaching specialist roles
   c. % of staff at each level of appointment involved in teaching design and delivery (and fraction dedicated to teaching activities)
   d. % of teaching staff who are sessional cf ongoing appointments.

6. **Teaching staff skills, experience and diversity**
   RQ: Is the HEI able to retain qualified, experienced teaching staff from diverse backgrounds?
   a. % certified teaching skills/qualifications; no certified teaching skills/qualifications
   b. % < 1 year (new-to-teaching); 1- 5 years; > 5 years experience teaching
   c. % Indigenous (ATSI); NESB/multi-lingual; Female + Non-binary gender identification; LGBTIQ+; Disability – for the staff body overall and the Professoriate.

7. **Teaching staff professional development**
   RQ: Does the HEI invest in teaching related professional development for all staff who teach or support learning?
   a. % of new-to-teaching staff (< 1 year experience) who participated in a supervised teaching foundations, mentoring or equivalent program (not including compliance training)
   b. % of teaching staff (including sessional staff) who undertook > 3 days per year (FTE) certified teaching-related continuing professional development (CPD): % < 3 days per year CPD
   c. % of teaching staff who have participated in formal Peer Review of Teaching (PRT).

Appendix 2. Additional information about the UK's Teaching Excellence Framework and other indicators of quality teaching used internationally

It would be advantageous to develop better measures of learning and teaching quality in Australia, if it were possible to do so. The UK Teaching Excellence Framework (TEF) provides one example of a national measure of institutional teaching quality in HE. The pros and cons of this framework are outlined in our paper *Option 7: Consider an Australian Higher Education Teaching Quality Framework*. Pursuant to this, the Panel requested further information about the development and current administration of TEF, as well as other indicators of quality teaching used internationally.

This appendix provides that additional information. It summarises the TEF and then outlines the indicators for teaching and learning quality included in the European U Multirank universities comparison tool.

The UK Teaching Excellence Framework (TEF)

A key driver for development of TEF in the UK was the 2012 increase in the HE tuition fee cap from £3,225 to £9,000. When a majority of HE providers charged the top rate, the Government wanted a way to signal where students could find good 'value for money' in HE.

In early versions of the TEF, Teaching quality was assessed using 2 key metrics (proxies):

- Student experience (NSS survey scales)
- (Benchmarked) Student outcomes (rates of continuation, completion and progression (to professional occupations))

By these metrics, institutions' levels of performance on Teaching Excellence (above minimum) and benchmarked against institutions with similar student profiles were rated as Gold – Outstanding; Silver – Excellent; or Bronze – Very high quality. Institutions who did not exceed the expected minimum standards were 'not rated'.

Participation in TEF was initially 'voluntary'; however, as it was made a condition for HEIs wanting to increase student fees in line with inflation, most HEIs participated in the three initial rounds of assessment between 2017-19. For a range of reasons, institutions who did not participate or did not record at least a Bronze TEF rating were not prevented from raising fees in line with inflation.

TEF underwent a major overhaul of inputs and results following an independent review in 2021. The 2023 administration marks the launch of the 'new TEF', which is now planned to occur on a 4-year cycle. Institutional and student submissions about learning and teaching quality now 'balance' the metrics and the ratings are described as a 'desk-based expert review exercise' by a 44 member Panel of Experts (see https://www.officeforstudents.org.uk/advice-and-guidance/the-tef/about-the-tef/).

The inability to enforce a funding mechanism to incentivise participation meant that participation in TEF was made a mandatory condition of HEP registration in England from 2023. HEIs in Wales, Northern Ireland and Scotland were able to take part in TEF 2023 but none did.

There are now 3 separate indicators of performance ('aspects of TEF'): Student experience rating; Student outcomes rating; and Overall Teaching Excellence – a combination of the two measures.

The Student experience rating includes scores from the NSS subscales on Academic support, Assessment, Support, Teaching and Student Voice. The Student outcomes rating includes results on rates of degree continuation, completion and progression (to professional occupations or higher study).

Ratings of Gold, Silver, Bronze or Requires Improvement are recorded for each aspect of the TEF from 2023. This means that the highest rating is now 'triple gold'. TEF 2023 results were published 28 September 2023. The distribution of overall ratings was: 20% Gold; 44% Silver; 13% Bronze; with 23% Pending (appeal still in process).

Lessons to learn from the TEF

Commentators agree that there is no evidence that TEF has led to improvements in HE learning and teaching in England. Moreover, specific flaws with the design and implementation of TEF have been identified, including:

- Because TEF measures the relative (benchmarked) performance of HEIs, it cannot reveal system-wide trends in teaching quality even though one of its purposes was intended to be that it drive quality improvement across the sector.
- TEF has concentrated HEIs' attention on 'monitoring their performance on the TEF metrics' and developing persuasive submissions, rather than improving day-to-day teaching and learning quality (Ashwin, 2022, p.36).
- With 'student experience' as a key indicator, there is a risk that TEF has contributed to the UK 'grade inflation' problem (see OfS website).
- There is no evidence that TEF informs prospective students' choices – another policy objective. For example, surveys of prospective students find that they are typically unaware of the TEF and would not give it much consideration in any event (Ashwin, 2022, p.34).

Other problems and issues with TEF to date:

- Intentions to develop TEF to measure teaching excellence at course/subject level have been abandoned as not feasible.

- TEF's exclusion of graduate coursework programs (it investigates undergraduate only) is criticised by providers who focus on delivering courses at that level.

- What and how TEF measures teaching excellence is widely misunderstood – e.g. people assume it would involve classroom observations (it does not) – see Dickinson, 2023 (https://wonkhe.com/wonk-corner/ten-reasons-why-tef-signals-are-downright-dangerous-for-prospective-students/)

- Some commentators suggest that celebrating 'teaching excellence' may be tone deaf when so many HE students are struggling with cost-of-living rises, housing and food insecurity, and personal safety issues (sexual assault and harassment).

Lessons for Australia to bear in mind

Australia can take-away several valuable lessons from the UK TEF experience. First, a single measurement instrument is not able to achieve complex policy objectives. Hence it is imperative to be clear about what such an instrument can and cannot do.

Second, there is a need to anticipate 'paradoxical' effects when developing such an instrument – for example, an instrument intended to measure teaching quality may lead to institutional actions that detract from teaching quality. HEIs can and will 'game' a system that impacts their reputations and incomes to achieve success, if that is possible. For example, the TEF includes the NSS student satisfaction scales (teaching, assessment, academic support). Such measures can be 'gamed' by reducing standards and making it easier for students to 'succeed' (grade inflation and lowering standards). While it is unclear whether introduction of the TEF is a contributing factor, the UK OfS

has had to undertake a separate piece of work to address 'grade inflation' in HEIs (see https://www.officeforstudents.org.uk/news-blog-and-events/press-and-media/universities-must-not-allow-a-decade-of-grade-inflation-to-be-baked-into-the-system/)

Third, HE institutions will not participate 'voluntarily'. Participation in the early TEF was driven by it being a condition for approval of tuition fee increases. When that mechanism failed, the 2023 TEF was made a mandatory condition of HEI registration in England. HEIs who are not required to participate do not choose to do so, indicating that the exercise is not perceived as a valuable use of resources even among HEIs who may be confident of receiving a Gold or Silver rating.

Fourth, ratings of Gold, Silver, Bronze etc will be disputed by HEIs (more than 23% of ratings were still pending appeal in England at the time of the release of TEF 2023 results). HEIs can also be expected to oppose the introduction of a performance ratings system. Legislation enabling the introduction of a provider ratings scheme had to be enacted in England to establish the TEF. This should be factored in to the cost of establishing and administering such a framework, alongside the cost of supporting a 44-person Expert Panel to assess the HEI applications.

Finally, the mandate for the TEF metrics is derived from the UK regulatory framework – for example:

- ◦ B1.2 requires all HE providers to ensure that their students receive a 'high quality academic experience'
- ◦ B1.3 and B1.5 elaborate on what a 'high quality academic experience' includes – the NSS is strongly tied to these indicators
- ◦ B3.2 requires all HE providers to deliver 'positive outcomes for students'.

The Australian HESF (Threshold Standards, 2021) in its current form would not authorise use of 'student experience' metrics in a 'teaching excellence' framework.

Indicators of Teaching and Learning Quality in the U-Multirank Universities Comparison Tool

The U-Multirank universities comparison tool enables users to compare data from more than 2,200 higher education providers in 96 countries. Unlike global rankings of universities (league tables), U-Multirank compares universities on the different activities they undertake: Teaching and Learning; Research; Knowledge Transfer; International Orientation; and Regional Engagement (see Figure 1). It does not produce a combined, weighted score across these different dimensions (see https://www.umultirank.org/about/methodology/our-approach/).[40]

U-Multirank users are able to construct customised searches and university comparisons by country, field of study (more than 30 subjects), study level or institutional performance for any of the five activity domains, including Teaching and Learning. 'Readymade rankings' are also available for Teaching and Learning by field of study, or by country.

Of note, under Teaching and Learning, % expenditure on Teaching is one of the available filters (see Figure 2). Users can also filter by the proportion of graduate students (masters and beyond) at the institution, or the degree of specialisation at the institution.

Further indicators for Teaching and Learning reported in U-Multirank include (see Figure 3):

---

[40] U-Multirank was first administered in 2014 and is funded by the European Commission. It is currently implemented by a cross-institutional consortium led by Professor Frans van Vught from the Centre for Higher Education Policy Studies (CHEPS) at the University of Twente, Netherlands.

- Bachelor graduation rate
- Masters graduation rate
- Graduating on time (Bachelor)
- Graduating on time (Masters)
- Gender balance – meaning, the likelihood of female/male students to take a PhD degree at the HEI
- Digital education investment (as a % of the total budget of the institution)
- Pedagogically skilled teaching staff (requirements for teaching staff to have certified pedagogical and didactical skills plus the % of teaching staff holding a recognized certificate in pedagogical and didactical skills)
- Outreach programs targeting participation and attainment by underrepresented groups of students
- Staff-student ratio
- The proportion of academic staff holding doctorates.

For example, users can select outcome indicators of interest such as Bachelor graduation rate, Digital education investment, and Pedagogically skilled teaching staff (proportion). U-Multirank also reports on student satisfaction with overall educational experience, quality of teaching provision, and feedback given by teachers (from student satisfaction surveys).

While data for some of the U-Multirank metrics is currently available for Australian HEIs (such as graduation rates), reporting the % of Pedagogically skilled teaching staff and HEIs' investment in Digital education would be novel indicators in the Australian context. The limited Australian data available for some of these metrics (see Figure 4) may prevent Australian institutions and programs rating well in this tool (see Figure 5).

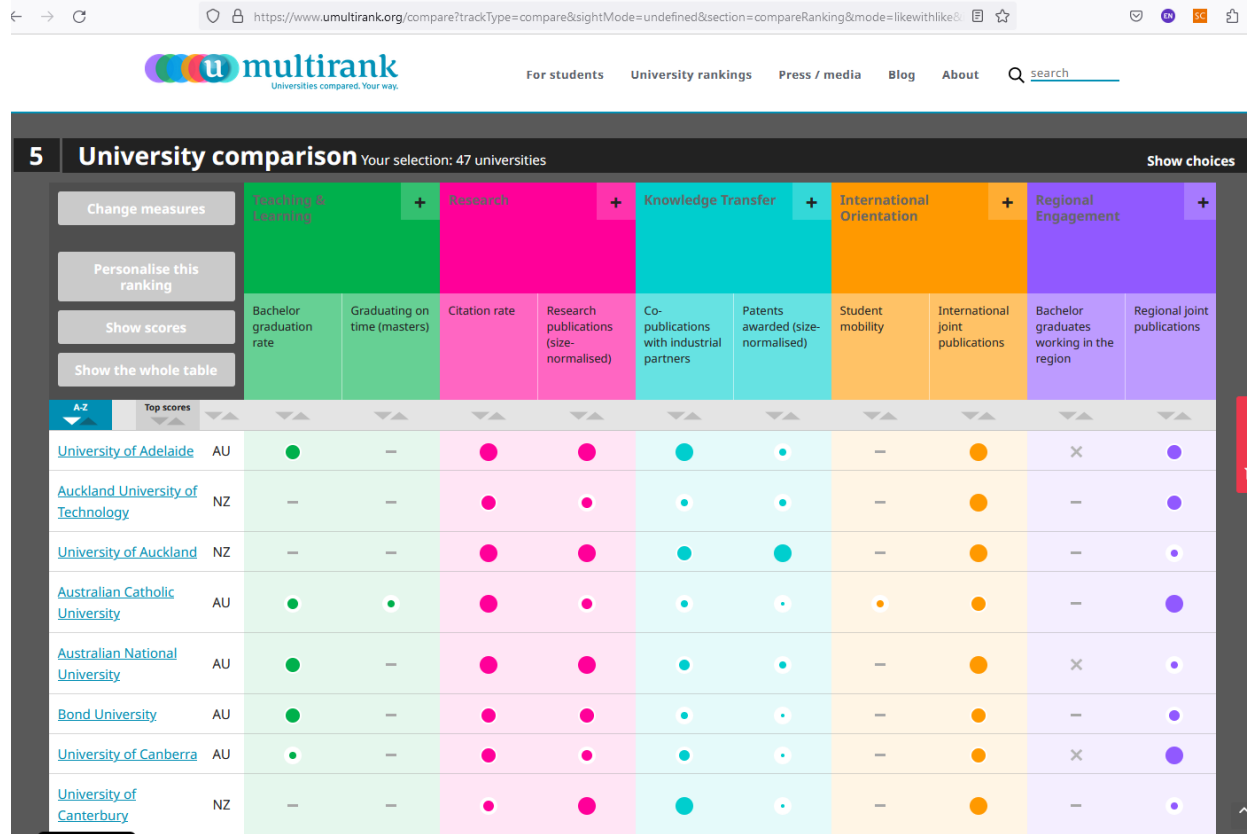*Figure 1. U-Multirank comparison of universities across 5 domains of activity*

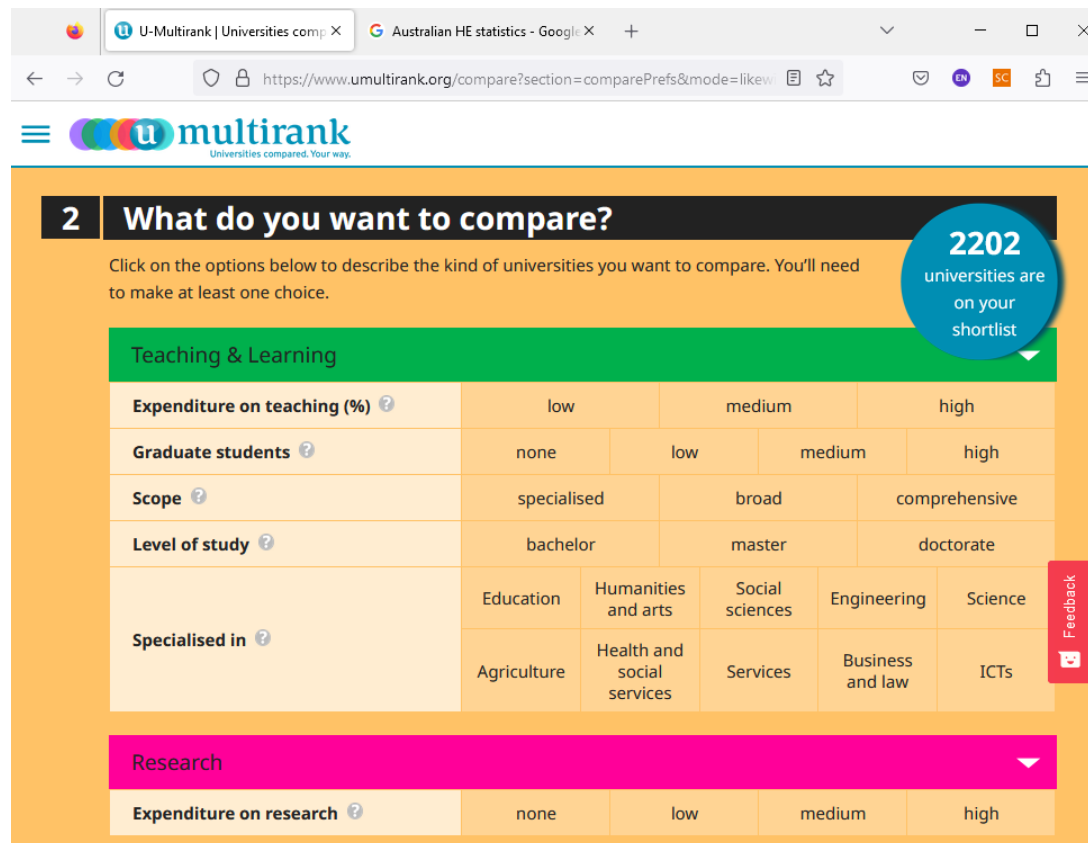*Figure 2: Teaching and Learning filters in U-Multirank*

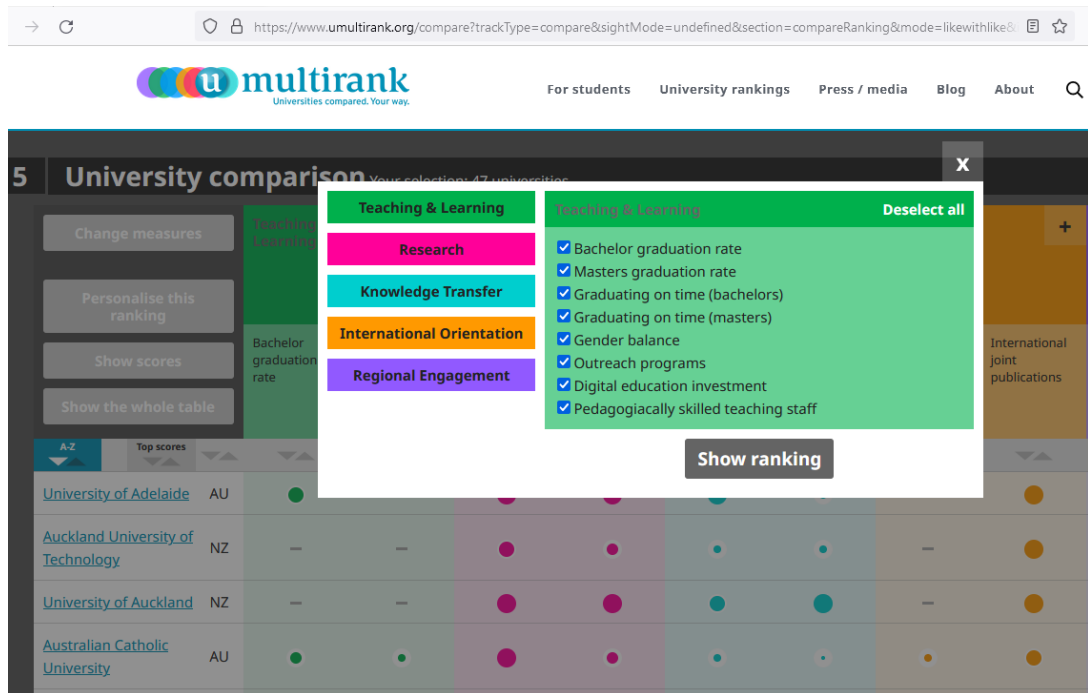*Figure 3. Teaching and learning indicators included in U-Multirank*

Figure 4. Data on Teaching and Learning metrics for Australian universities as displayed in U-Multirank

Figure 5. Teaching and learning rankings for Medicine programs (U-Multirank)

References and further reading on this topic

Ashwin, Paul. (2023). What use is TEF to applicants? WonkHE comment, 02/10/2023
https://wonkhe.com/blogs/what-use-is-tef-to-applicants/

Ashwin, Paul. (2022) Developing effective national policy instruments to promote teaching excellence:
evidence from the English case, *Policy Reviews in Higher Education*, 6:1, 27-45, DOI:
10.1080/23322969.2021.1924847

Ashwin, Paul. (2019) Transforming university teaching. Centre for Global Higher Education working paper, no.
49 (April 2019).

Dickinson, Jim. (2023). Ten reasons why TEF signals may not be helpful for prospective students, WonkHE
corner, 28/09/2023, https://wonkhe.com/wonk-corner/ten-reasons-why-tef-signals-are-downright-dangerous-
for-prospective-students/

Gourlay, Lesley & Stevenson, Jacqueline. (2017) Teaching excellence in higher education: critical perspectives,
Teaching in Higher Education, 22:4, 391-395, DOI: 10.1080/13562517.2017.1304632

Gunn, Andrew. (2018) Metrics and methodologies for measuring teaching quality in higher education:
developing the Teaching Excellence Framework (TEF), *Educational Review,* 70:2, 129-148, DOI:
10.1080/00131911.2017.1410106

Kernohan, David. (2023) TEF results 2023, WonkHE 28/09/2023, https://wonkhe.com/blogs/tef-results-2023/

Kernohan, David. (2023) The unanswered TEF questions, WonkHE analysis, 02/10/2023
https://wonkhe.com/blogs/the-unanswered-tef-questions/

Kwok, Kathryna & Potter, Jacqueline. (2022) Gender stereotyping in student perceptions of teaching excellence: applying the shifting standards theory, *Higher Education Research & Development*, 41:7, 2201-2214, DOI: 10.1080/07294360.2021.2014411

National Student Survey (NSS) 2023 Questionnaire, https://www.officeforstudents.org.uk/media/c2ddb4c1-34cf-4df4-8c26-b6469412768f/nss-2023-questionnaire.pdf, accessed 12 September 2023

Office for Students, About the Teaching Excellence Framework (TEF), https://www.officeforstudents.org.uk/advice-and-guidance/the-tef/about-the-tef/

Tomlinson, Michael, Enders, Jürgen & Naidoo, Rajani. (2020) The Teaching Excellence Framework: symbolic violence and the measured market in higher education, *Critical Studies in Education*, 61:5, 627-642, DOI: 10.1080/17508487.2018.1553793

Appendix 3. Additional information about 'learner-side' metrics for inclusion in SES

In *Option 8. Consider new metrics for measuring learning and teaching quality in HE,* we suggest that it may be useful to extend the SES's measurement of students' experiences of learning and teaching by including additional modules. Like the existing SES modules, new indicators should target factors that institutions can modify, and which are theoretically posited and empirically demonstrated to influence student learning outcomes.

Education research identifies various student-side factors (as distinct from institutional inputs) that influence learning and are modifiable by institutions (see, e.g. Yorke, 2016; Zimmerman & Kitsantis 2007; Pintrich 2004; Pintrich et al. 1993; Kuh, 2009). We identified three such factors for potential inclusion in the SES. Further information about each factor is provided here.

1. **Commitment to learning** (Learning behaviours self-assessment)

This indicator would target behavioural dimensions of students' 'engagement' with their academic studies.

Student academic engagement is a multi-dimensional construct, commonly defined to include three elements: cognitive, emotional and behavioural engagement – or students' thoughts, feelings and actions related to their learning (see Bond et al., 2020). For review and criticism on the different perspectives on student engagement see Kahu 2013.

The current SES 'Learner Engagement' subscale has some items that relate to behavioural engagement, including 'to what extent have you felt prepared for your study?' and 'how frequently have you participated in discussions online or face-to-face?'. However, these items are intermixed in the subscale with items addressing peer engagement, cultural engagement and 'sense of belonging'.

We suggest that a subscale with a sharper focus on students' behavioural engagement with their studies would provide important information about (different) students' levels of commitment to their studies in terms of time and effort devoted to academic tasks and attainment. Such a scale may also prompt students to reflect on their attitudes to learning and the priority they have afforded to their studies in the current year, giving them insight into ways they might 'improve' their learning attainment in future.[41]

Possible questions targeting self-rated behavioural engagement might include: *How often did you skip classes this semester? How often did you take up opportunities for academic support or enhancement? How would you rate the level of effort that you put into your studies this semester? All things considered, how would you rate your level of commitment to your studies this semester?*

It would be particularly interesting to investigate the relationship between a behavioural engagement subscale and the Teaching Quality subscale in the SES, given that students who rate themselves poorly on the former are likely to find it difficult to follow instructional material and participate in class activities.

Examples of university student behavioural engagement scales include Yorke's 2016 brief scale of Student Engagement and Moroco et al.'s 2016 University Student Engagement Inventory (USEI).

---

[41] The module 'signals' that learning is not a consumer good: students must work to earn learning gains, they cannot 'buy' them. The current focus on what students 'receive' from their institutions tends to encourage a counter-productive student-consumer mentality.

Student behavioural engagement as measured by these scales consistently predicts higher self-rated academic achievement, academic persistence (cf drop out intentions) and course satisfaction.

2. **Confidence as a learner** (academic self-efficacy)

This indicator would measure students' sense of academic confidence or 'self-efficacy'. Academic self-efficacy comprises university students' beliefs and attitudes about their capabilities to learn complex material, master new concepts and skills, and achieve academic success.

Students' self-efficacy beliefs are a key component of Expectancy-Value theory (EVT) – one of the most prominent theories of student academic motivation, widely used to predict and explain students' task and study choices, as well as academic persistence and performance (Wigfield & Eccles, 2000). EVT posits that the most proximate influences on students' academic choices and outcomes are expectancy of success and subjective task values. Expectancy of success (I expect to do well on future tasks) is closely related to ability beliefs or confidence (I am good at this), academic self-concept (I am a capable student) and domain specific self-efficacy beliefs (I can do what is required by this task). In empirical studies, items measuring expectancies and perceived abilities (Eccles & Wigfield, 1995) or ability beliefs and academic self-concept (Marsh & Craven, 2006) have loaded (in CPA) to a common factor, and different measures of these constructs are used interchangeably in research (Loh, 2019).

We suggest that the addition of a learner confidence or self-efficacy subscale to the SES would give HEIs insight into the (modifiable) academic confidence of their students, and how it varies across fields and modes of study as well as across equity groups.

Possible questions targeting students' academic self-efficacy might include rates of agreement with statements such as: *I believe I am a capable student; I expect to do well in my course; I am sure I can master the concepts and skills being taught in my course; I am not confident about my academic abilities (reversed).*

Examples of university student self-efficacy scales include Yorke's 2016 brief scale of Student Confidence and Greco et al.'s 2022 Academic Self-Efficacy Scale. Student perceptions of self-efficacy consistently predict higher academic achievement (see Honicke & Broadbent for a systematic review).

3. **Learning and teaching climate** (perceived institutional/school climate)

This indicator would measure students' perceptions of the climate for learning at their institution, including perceptions of the extent to which students are valued and respected, and student learning is core to the institution's mission.

'School climate' is a multi-dimensional construct that typically comprises the social atmosphere, institutional values and inter-personal relationships within an educational environment (see Marraccini et al., 2020 for a systematic review). Depending on the context and purpose, measurement of school climate may investigate students' perceptions of discipline and personal safety (pre-conditions for effective learning), whether the academic environment is encouraging and enables all students to do their best, and/or the promotion of respect for diversity and inclusion of all students within the school community. As Rudasill et al. (2017) identify, despite the wide

attention given to school climate in both research literature and educational policy, there is little conceptual consensus underpinning its measurement and improvement.

We suggest that the addition of a learning climate subscale to the SES would give HEIs insight into their (modifiable) students' perceptions of the climate for student learning and success at their institution, and how it varies across fields and modes of study as well as across equity groups.

Possible questions targeting students' perceptions of the learning climate might include rates of agreement with statements such as: *My institution … cares about students and their learning; …acts on student feedback and concerns; …values inclusion and diversity; … encourages students to work cooperatively.*

Existing scales that assess school climate (see Marraccini et al., 2020) could be adapted for the HE context. Most of the available research investigating institutional climate in HE assesses the cultural climate for particular racial groups, or for women (see, e.g. Parker & Trolian, 2020). It would be useful to expand on the cultural climate dimension to also assess other dimensions of Psychosocial-Safety Climate (PSC) in organisations, including perceptions of the extent to which management cares about students' wellbeing and resources learning (see e.g., Stress Café resources at https://www.stresscafe.net/8203psychosocial-safety-climate-psc.html)

Student perceptions of school climate consistently predict positive student outcomes, including increased persistence, academic engagement and academic attainment (see Marraccini et al., 2020). Ratings of school climate would theoretically predict levels of learner confidence (self-efficacy) and behavioural engagement (learner commitment) – that is, 'climate' is understood as an 'upstream' determinant of engagement and capability beliefs in PSC theory.

Staff perceptions of school climate are also typically investigated in assessments of school culture and we recommend that a survey of teaching staff that includes a module on institutional climate would be a valuable complement to a student measure of institutional learning climate.

References and further reading on this topic

Bond, M., Buntins, K., Bedenlier, S. *et al.* (2020). Mapping research in student engagement and educational technology in higher education: a systematic evidence map. *Int J Educ Technol High Educ* 17, 2. https://doi.org/10.1186/s41239-019-0176-8

Eccles, J. S., & Wigfield, A. (1995). In the mind of the actor: The structure of adolescents' achievement task values and expectancy-related beliefs. *Personality and Social Psychology Bulletin, 21*(3), 215–225. https://doi.org/10.1177/0146167295213003

Freda, M.F., Raffaele, D.L.P., Esposito, G. *et al.* (2023). A new measure for the assessment of the university engagement: The SInAPSi academic engagement scale (SAES). *Curr Psychol* **42**, 9674–9690. https://doi.org/10.1007/s12144-021-02189-2.

Greco, Andrea, et al. (2022) Self-efficacy beliefs of university students: Examining factor validity and measurement invariance of the new Academic self-efficacy scale. *Frontiers in Psychology*. Vol 12. https://doi.org/10.3389/fpsyg.2021.498824

Honicke, Toni & Jaclyn Broadbent (2016). The influence of academic self-efficacy on academic performance: A systematic review, *Educational Research Review, Volume 17*, Pages 63-84, https://doi.org/10.1016/j.edurev.2015.11.002.

Howson, Camille K. (2022). Is educational gain the 'dark matter' of student outcomes? *WonkHE* comment (14/02/2022) https://wonkhe.com/blogs/is-educational-gain-the-dark-matter-of-student-outcomes/

Kahu ER. Framing student engagement in higher education. *Stud Higher Educ*. 2013;38(5):758–73. doi:10.1080/03075079.2011.598505.

Kuh, G. D. (2009). The National Survey of Student Engagement: Conceptual and empirical foundations. In R. M. Gonyea & G. D. Kuh (Eds.), *Using NSSE in institutional research*. New Directions for Institutional Research, 2009(141), 5–20.

Loh, Elizabeth K.Y. (2019). What we know about expectancy-value theory, and how it helps to design a sustained motivating learning environment, *System*, vol 86 (November 2019) https://doi.org/10.1016/j.system.2019.102119

Maroco, J., Maroco, A.L., Campos, J.A.D.B. *et al.* (2016). University student's engagement: development of the University Student Engagement Inventory (USEI). *Psicol. Refl. Crít.* 29, 21. https://doi.org/10.1186/s41155-016-0042-8

Marraccini, M.E., Fang, Y., Levine, S.P. *et al.* Measuring Student Perceptions of School Climate: A Systematic Review and Ecological Content Analysis. *School Mental Health* 12, 195–221 (2020). https://doi.org/10.1007/s12310-019-09348-8

Marsh, H. W., & Craven, R. G. (2006). Reciprocal effects of self-concept and performance from a multidimensional perspective: Beyond seductive pleasure and unidimensional perspectives. *Perspectives on Psychological Science, 1*(2), 133–163. https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1745-6916.2006.00010.x

Parker, E. T. III, & Trolian, T. L. (2020). Student perceptions of the climate for diversity: The role of student–faculty interactions. *Journal of Diversity in Higher Education, 13*(4), 333–344. https://doi.org/10.1037/dhe0000132

Pintrich, P. R., Smith, D. A. F., Garcia, T., and Mckeachie, W. J. (1993). Reliability and predictive validity of the motivated strategies for learning questionnaire (MSLQ). *Educ. Psychol. Meas.* 53, 801–813. doi: 10.1177/0013164493053003024

Pintrich, P. R. (2004). A conceptual framework for assessing motivation and self-regulated learning in college students. *Educ. Psychol. Rev.* 16, 385–407. doi: 10.1007/s10648-004-0006-x

Productivity Commission Inquiry Vol 8, Report No. 100 (2023) https://www.pc.gov.au/inquiries/completed/productivity/report/productivity-volume8-education-skills.pdf

Rudasill, K.M., Snyder, K.E., Levinson, H. *et al.* Systems View of School Climate: a Theoretical Framework for Research. *Educ Psychol Rev* 30, 35–60 (2018). https://doi.org/10.1007/s10648-017-9401-y

Wigfield, A., & Eccles, J. S. (2000). Expectancy–value theory of achievement motivation. *Contemporary Educational Psychology, 25*(1), 68–81. https://doi.org/10.1006/ceps.1999.1015

Yorke, M. (2016) The development and initial use of a survey of student 'belongingness', engagement and self-confidence in UK higher education, Assessment & Evaluation in Higher Education, 41:1, 154-166, DOI: 10.1080/02602938.2014.990415

Zimmerman, B. J., and Kitsantas, A. (2007). Reliability and validity of Self-Efficacy for Learning Form (SELF) scores of college students. *Z. Psychol.* 215, 157–163. doi: 10.1027/0044-3409.215.3.157