Governing Quality of Online Content Through Threshold Standards:
Facilitating a Consistent Learning Experience

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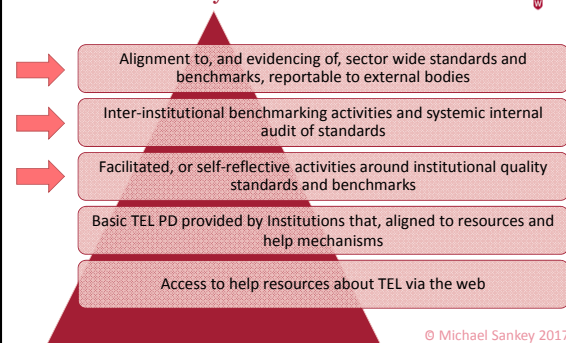WESTERN SYDNEY
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Part of this work was completed while working at RMIT University

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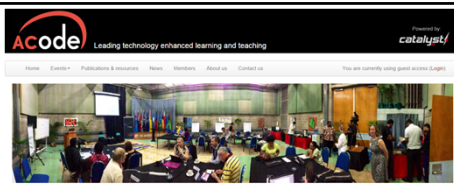UNIVERSITY

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- Now that digital L&T has become main-stream, a new balance has emerged for those pushing hard to maximize the affordances of the online space.
- It relates to the level of 'control' an institution wants to have, against providing sufficient freedom for staff to maximize the online classroom and innovate.
- It is imperative to approach this development with a student first perspective, so the learner experience is not compromised.
- We will look at some initiatives designed to ensure the provision of quality learning environments at HE institutions.

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'Consistency is not sameness'

The TEL hierarchy of needs

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Alignment to, and evidencing of, sector wide standards and benchmarks, reportable to external bodies

Inter-institutional benchmarking activities and systemic internal audit of standards

Facilitated, or self-reflective activities around institutional quality standards and benchmarks

Basic TEL PD provided by Institutions that, aligned to resources and help mechanisms

Access to help resources about TEL via the web

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What is ACODE

ACODE's mission is to enhance policy and practice in open, distance and e-learning in the Australasian higher education sector by:

- disseminating and sharing knowledge and expertise;
- supporting professional development and providing networking opportunities;
- investigating, developing and evaluating new approaches;
- advising and influencing key bodies in higher education; and
- promoting best practice.

Australian Government
Tertiary Education Quality and Standards Agency

TEQSA

TEQSA Guidance Note Benchmarking

Overview

Benchmarking can be defined as a structured, collaborative, learning process for comparing practices, processes or performance outcomes. Its purpose is to identify comparative strengths and weaknesses, as a basis for developing improvements in academic quality. Benchmarking can also be defined as a quality process used to evaluate performance by comparing institutional practices to sector good practice.

Benchmarking needs to accommodate the significant contextual variations that exist in the Australian higher education sector between providers with different missions, educational and student profiles, and scale of operations. It is important for higher education institutions at the outset to identify the purpose of benchmarking. The purpose of benchmarking is not to standardise all courses and all assessment outcomes, but to reveal variations, and establish whether those variations arise from the individual nature of the courses or the student cohorts, or from variations in quality or academic standards.

Concept → Plan & Design → Self Review → Peer Review → Communicate Implement improvements → Evaluate and review

As outlined above, benchmarking is more than the comparison of data. It is a process of continuously monitoring and evaluating the quality and effectiveness of a provider's operations.

The Threshold Standards do not prescribe any particular process, but here are some indicative elements that would contribute to meeting the expectations for benchmarking in the Threshold Standards:

- Identify areas for improvement and areas of good practice
  - Evidence could include benchmarking reports
- Analyse the reasons for any variation or commonality
  - Evidence could include benchmarking reports and follow-up interviews
- Formulate improvement strategies
  - Evidence could include action plans or elements of other plans
- Report the results and analysis of benchmarking, which should be internally considered by the appropriate governance body or person.
  - Evidence of consideration could include minutes of meetings, emails, or file notes
- Implement the agreed action plans
- Review the outcomes of the implemented actions, both against the expected outcome as well as against subsequent benchmarking results
  - Evidence could include progress reports back to managers and governance bodies.

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ACODE Leading to Technology Enhanced Learning and Teaching

Benchmarks for Technology Enhanced Learning

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ACODE Benchmarks

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1. Institution-wide policy and governance for technology enhanced learning;
2. Planning for institution-wide quality improvement of technology enhanced learning;
3. Information technology systems, services and support for technology enhanced learning;
4. The application of technology enhanced learning services;
5. Staff professional development for the effective use of technology enhanced learning;
6. Staff support for the use of technology enhanced learning;
7. Student training for the effective use of technology enhanced learning;
8. Student support for the use of technology enhanced learning

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1st ACODE Inter-institutional Benchmarking Summit June 2014

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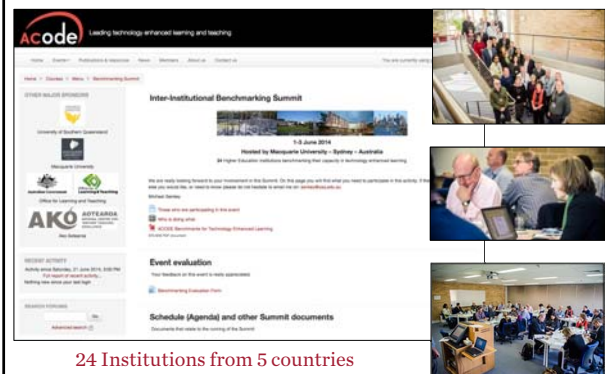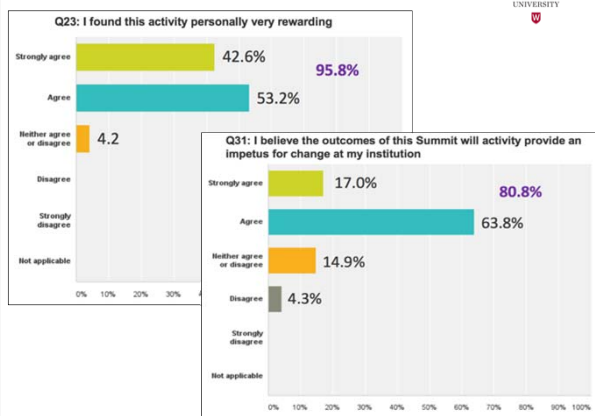
24 Institutions from 5 countries

University of Canberra 29-30 June 2016

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27 Institutions from 5 countries

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Institution	BM 1	BM 2	BM 3	BM 4	BM 5	BM 6	BM 7	BM 8
1				X			X	
2					X			X
3	O	XO			XO	XO		
4	XO			XO				
5			O	O				
6	X			X				
7		X			X			
8	O	O	O	O	O	O	O	O
9	X				XO	XO	O	XO
10		X		X				
11		O	O	O				
12	O	XO	O	XO				
13	O		X	O	XO			
14	O	O	O	O	O	O		
15	X	X	XO	XO				
16	X				X			
17					O	O		O
18					O	O		
19		O	X	O	O			
20	XO	O			X	O		O
21					O	O		
22	X		O	O	XO	O	X	X
23				O	O			
24	XO	XO	XO	XO	XO	O	O	O
25	O	O	O	O	XO	XO	X	X
26	XO		XO		XO			
27			X	X	O	O		
28		O	O					
29	O		O					O
30		X		X	O			
31			X		X			
32	X		O	XO	X		O	
33					X	X	X	X
34	X	O		O	O	X		
35	XO	XO	XO	XO	XO	XO	XO	XO
Total (2014)	11	8	8	10	12	9	5	6
Total (2016)	12	12	14	16	19	13	6	8
Total	23	20	22	26	31	22	11	14

How effective?

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Q23: I found this activity personally very rewarding

Strongly agree — 42.6% **95.8%**
Agree — 53.2%
Neither agree or disagree — 4.2

Q31: I believe the outcomes of this Summit will activity provide an impetus for change at my institution

Strongly agree — 17.0% **80.8%**
Agree — 63.8%
Neither agree or disagree — 14.9%
Disagree — 4.3%
Strongly disagree —
Not applicable —

ACODE UK 2017

ACODE-UK
TEL Benchmarking
Summit
June 2017

Benchmarking Approaches

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The next slide shows the major tools and frameworks used to engage with TEL quality.

They fall into 2 major types, theory-based quality frameworks and pseudo-standards or heuristics.

A major issue is the quality of the tools; as there is little evidence many have been empirically validated, by correlation studies/longitudinal case studies. Some methods include:

- reviewing the research literature related to effectiveness in online learning;
- seeking input from an expert panel;
- undertaking empirical research;
- undertaking survey research;
- conducting pilot projects; and
- drawing on case studies. (Inglis,2008)

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e-learning quality and benchmarking tools

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Framework/ Tool	Description	Change Theory	Validation	References
ACODE Benchmarks for TEL	Set of 8 benchmarking statements created by ACODE to assist HEIs to improving the quality of TEL. Statements of good practice provided with a ranking scale. Focus is on a team-based self-assessment. CC.	Collaborative Benchmarking	Face validity supported by expert review. Revised following implementation	Sankey et al. (2014)
EADTU E-xcellence Next	Benchmarking framework operated by the European Association of Distance Teaching Universities (EADTU). Set of quality indicators / benchmarks provided to engage in self-assessments which may be referenced by external Quality Assurance schemes. CC.	Collaborative Benchmarking	Face validity supported by expert review. Revised following experience in implementation	Ehlers (2012) EADTU (2012)
EFMD Certification of E-learning (CEL)	Accreditation scheme for e-learning management programmes by the European Foundation for Management Development (EFMD). The process includes a mix of self-assessment & a detailed accreditation audit that lasts for 3 years with an 18 month review.	None	Face validity supported by expert review.	Ehlers (2012)
EFQUEL UNIQUe Certification	European quality certification by the European Foundation for Quality in E-Learning (EFQUEL). It assesses courses, programmes & systems to certify the whole institution. They come with supporting questions, including a mix of self-assessment & peer review process similar to an accreditation audit. Restricted to eligible institutions.	None	Face validity supported by literature review and extensive reviews undertaken by experts and quality assurance bodies.	EFQUEL (2011) Ehlers (2012)
e-Learning Guidelines (eLG)	A guide to designing, implementing and enhancing eLearning. A framework of questions designed to encourage reflection by a range of key stakeholders. No detailed guidance provided on good practice. Licensed under Creative Commons.	None	Face validity supported by expert review & literature review. Revised following implementations.	Suddaby and Milne (2008)
e-Learning Maturity Model (eMM)	Quality improvement framework incorporating a benchmarking process and extensive knowledgebase. Extensive set of processes broken down into detailed organisational practice statements. Licensed under the Creative Commons.	Maturity Model	Process/practice set revised by 3 rounds of international expert consultation, a set of cases & peer-reviewed analyses.	Marshall (2012a; 2012b) Neal & Marshall (2008)
Taking the Lead	Not a quality framework as such, but rather a tool for identifying the strategic goals for e-learning that can be improved.	None	Face validity supported by literature review & case studies.	
Quality Matters (QM)	Quality checklist designed for individual online courses through an audit process. Supported by descriptions of good practice & applied by reviewers, following training. Focus is on staff PD for online course teaching & quality assurance. Not for profit, requires a license to use.	None	Face validity supported by literature review and case studies.	Varonis (2014)

Slide 1

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VISIT EDUCAUSE

Educational Technology Leadership and Practice in Higher Education: The Emergence of Threshold Concepts

by Adam Barger · Monday, May 22, 2017 · The Professional Development Commons

Navigating the world of educational technology in higher education environments is an increasingly rewarding, yet challenging, endeavor. What must leaders know in order to thrive in the ever-changing space of educational technology? How can leaders and practitioners alike excel in cultivating and utilizing powerful educational technology applications, tools, and resources? In this blog, I explore these questions through the lens of threshold concepts as applied to technology in higher education teaching and learning. I propose three threshold concepts in our field, discuss their prevalence at the 2017 ELI Annual Meeting, and suggest their implications for leadership and practice.

Threshold Concepts

SHARE

outsystems

Keep up with

Slide 2

Benchmarking Quality Open Distance eLearning Systems Technology Help Enhanced Learning Policy Planning Development Delegation Communications Teaching Learning Management Integration Infrastructure Support Pedagogy ICT Development Staff Students Benchmarking Quality Systems Distance eLearning Help Technology Systems Enhanced Learning Policy ICT Planning Courses Development TEL Open Delegation Communications Teaching ACODE Quality

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ACode — Leading in Technology Enhanced Learning and Teaching

Threshold Standards for Online Learning Environments

Draft 1.2

Slide 3

1. Course design and course shells	8. Technology and online tools	9. Support for learning
2. Welome and course information	7. Learning activities, engagement and alignment	10. Usability and WC3 complience
3. Orientation and getting started	6. Learning Resources	
4. Learning outcomes / course objectives	5. Assessment and Feedback	

ACODE Threshold Standards 2017

M/D	Content	Y/S/N	Comment
M 1.1	The course design conforms with the institutions good practice guidelines, consistent with institutional policy, or procedures		
M 1.2	The course conforms to the institution's design standards (style guide)		
M 1.3	A course syllabus (study schedule / overview / plan) is populated, providing a logical (step-wise) study path for students		
M 1.4	Terminology used within the course is consistent with other courses in the same discipline and for core institutional services		
M 1.5	A direct link is available to the approved, current course guide and is positioned in the agreed location (consistent across all courses)		
D 1.1	All resources are available from day 1 of the course, or as directed by institutional policy / procedure		

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Threshold standards for online course environments

Draft

March 2017

Slide 5

Quality Matters

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The Eight General Standards:

1. Course Overview and Introduction
2. Learning Objectives (Competencies)
3. Assessment and Measurement
4. Instructional Materials
5. Course Activities and Learner Interaction
6. Course Technology
7. Learner Support
8. Accessibility and Usability

QM QUALITY MATTERS — Standards from the QM Higher Education Rubric, Fifth Edition

Slide 6

OLC Quality Scorecard Suite

OLC ONLINE LEARNING CONSORTIUM

INTRODUCING THE OLC QUALITY SCORECARD SUITE

As the leader in quality digital learning, OLC continues to find new ways to support higher education institutions who are seeking best practices for advancing quality. OLC offers a robust suite of Quality Scorecards to meet this growing demand which can be used to demonstrate elements of quality within the program, as well as an overall level of quality, to higher education accrediting bodies.

This comprehensive Quality Scorecard Suite provides institutions the necessary criteria and benchmarking tools to ensure online learning excellence for the *entire* institution in the following areas:

Administration of Online Programs: Launched in 2011, this Scorecard has been used by over 400 institutions to measure the effectiveness of their online learning programs. Handbook, rubric, and interactive dashboard available. *Learn more and access this Scorecard.* This Scorecard is also available in Spanish. *¿Español? Haga clic aqui.*

The OLC Quality Scorecard Suite

THE QUALITY SUITE

ADMINISTRATION OF ONLINE PROGRAMS

BLENDED LEARNING PROGRAMS

QUALITY COURSE TEACHING & INSTRUCTIONAL PRACTICE

DIGITAL COURSEWARE INSTRUCTIONAL PRACTICE

OSCQR COURSE DESIGN REVIEW

QUALITY SCORECARD HISTORY

QUALITY SCORECARD TESTIMONIALS

EXCLUSIVE QUALITY SUITE FEATURES WITH MEMBERSHIP

Slide 1

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- A new balance has emerged to help us maximize the affordances of the online space.
- It's not about 'control' but about institutions providing a level of consistency, whilst providing sufficient freedom for staff to innovate.
- Student are, and always will be, our first perspective.
- We have seen some examples of how some institutions are working to ensure the provision of quality learning environments.

'Consistency is not sameness'

Slide 2

5

"Good ideas with no ideas on how to implement them are wasted ideas"
Geoff Scott

Learning Technologies Leadership Institute

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