Teaching and Learning Standards

*Issues, challenges, opportunities (and elephants in rooms)*

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Kerri-Lee Krause (PhD)
Griffith University

Overview – teaching & learning standards…

1. Defining terms

2. Issues and challenges

3. Opportunities and implications
Defining Terms

- **Teaching standards**: ‘process’ or ‘delivery’ standards. e.g., curriculum design, quality of teaching, student learning support, infrastructure supporting teaching and learning (p.3)

- **Learning standards**: ‘outcome standards’ (p.3)
  - Nature and levels of student attainment
  - What graduates know and can do
  - Learning outcomes
  - Competencies
  - ‘Learning standards apply to desired areas of knowledge and skills and the levels of attainment required for graduation and for the award of grades at pass level or above.’


2. T&L Standards: Issues and challenges

1. Defining standards
   - Differentiating between processes and outcomes
   - UWS L&T Standards Framework

2. Operationalising standards

3. Acknowledging the elephant in the room

Source: http://www.elephantroom.info/
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Recommendation 19

• ...new quality assurance arrangements involving the development of standards and implementation of a transparent process for assuring the quality of learning outcomes across all providers of higher education...


2. T&L Standards: Issues and challenges

• 4. Managing perceptions and realities
  – “monitoring standards adds to my workload”
  – “what’s in this for me?”
  – “how will I be judged?”

• 5. Traversing the policy landscape
  – TEQSA, DEEWR performance-based funding framework

• 6. Standards or standardisation?
  – Respecting and fostering institutional diversity

• 7. Transparency in action – what does it look like?
Academic peer review and monitoring of learning standards

- ALTC Leadership project (in progress)
  A sector-wide model for assuring final year subject and program achievement standards through inter-university peer review and moderation

- Project universities:
  Griffith University, Australian National University, Macquarie University, University of Western Sydney, The University of Melbourne, Queensland University of Technology, Charles Darwin University, La Trobe University

- 10 disciplines: Law, Marketing, Physics, Environmental Science, Economics, Chinese, Civil Engineering, Nursing, Philosophy, Music.

About the project

- Universities identify comparable final year subjects in each discipline
- Convenors share subject outlines and assessment samples for review by two other partner universities.
- Blind peer review and moderation of student assessment
- Peer review of inputs (e.g., subject outlines, assessment tasks, marking criteria)
- Moderation of outcomes (i.e., assessment samples in 4 grade bands).
- Subject-level standards and how these compare with comparable final year subjects in other universities.
- Program learning outcomes also considered
- Reporting: a) individuals & b) discipline groups – deidentified patterns
Selected responses so far...

- ‘it’s a window on others’ practices’ – professional development
- ‘we do moderation in the unit, but getting feedback from other universities is really helpful’
- ‘there’s the elephant in the room – do you expect the standards to be the same at my university as at university X?’
- ‘very difficult to find comparable units – content becomes more distinctive as you approach final year’
- ‘our grade bands are different to our partner universities’

**Acknowledgements:** thank you to all our academic staff partners in this project – we couldn’t do it without you.

Review – teaching & learning standards...

1. Defining terms
2. Issues and challenges
3. Opportunities and implications
3. Opportunities and implications

1. Pilot test and validate models and reporting mechanisms
2. Review and align institutional policy and practice
3. Prioritise staff engagement & institutional capacity building
4. Factor in student engagement with the standards agenda
5. Engage with government and decision-makers through informed, evidence-based input
Concluding thoughts: productively manage tensions

- standardisation ↔ standards
- external, performativity measures ↔ collegial peer review in disciplines (academic judgement)
- one size fits all ↔ diversity
- private/individual ↔ public
- quality assurance ↔ quality enhancement
- government policy & processes ↔ institutional policy & processes

Source: blog.webosas.com

Thank you.