Network Grant: External Peer Review Network
Dr Sara Booth, University of Tasmania

- To register for Peer Review Workshops: Contact Sara.Booth@utas.edu.au
- To register for the External Peer Review Forum (12 November, 2014): Contact Karen@hes.edu.au
- Website: http://www.utas.edu.au/student-evaluation-review-and-reporting-unit/nprn

Description of proposed activities and outcomes

Abstract

The purpose of the national Peer Review Network (PRN) is about establishing communities of practice for the peer review of assessment. There is increasing national interest in discussing and implementing robust approaches to assuring higher education subject and program standards. This network project will include key stakeholders across the higher education sector (DVCs, The Council of Deans, Quality Directors, academics experienced in external peer review of assessment, academics) coming together to discuss how the peer review of learning outcomes can be achieved effectively and efficiently within disciplines and across the higher education sector. The development of a PRN will include State-held workshops to discuss issues and challenges and areas for collaboration. The Higher Education Services (HES) will make a $30,000 contribution to the establishment of a two day annual Peer Review Forum which will showcase international and national speakers on peer review of assessment.

Introduction

Peer review is the responsibility of the provider not the regulator. We can't meet standards without peer review. It is a very important part of the Standards.
(Alan Robson, 14th May, 2014)

The chairman of the federal government's Higher Education Standards Panel, Emeritus Professor Alan Robson, highlighted the importance of the use of peer review in meeting standards at a recent national Higher Education Standards Panel Information Session on the proposed Higher Education Standards Framework. The rationale for establishing a national Peer Review Network (PRN) is that the peer review of learning outcomes is core to assuring standards in the higher education sector in Australia. The focus on assuring standards is not new, however, consideration about higher education quality has shifted from institutional *inputs* and teaching processes towards a more direct focus on the standard and quality of graduate outcomes (Krause et al., 2014). This in turn has led to an increasing national interest in discussing and implementing robust approaches to assuring higher education subject and program achievement standards. The aims of a national Peer Review Network (PRN) are to:

- Provide a fora for sharing and disseminating good practice in external assessment across different contexts through the development of communities of practice
- Identify key academics experienced in external peer review of assessment
- Provide professional learning opportunities for academics and benchmarking partners

This network grant builds on previously funded Office for Learning and Teaching (OLT) work; the Go8's Quality Verification System (QVS) (Pattison et al., 2012) and two national forums, National Learning Outcomes Standards Forum (NLOSF) (9 August, 2013) and the Universities Australia Satellite Event, Comparing Learning Outcomes Standards (CLOS) (28 February, 2014). The NLOSF identified the following concerns: 1) Identify how to make assessment moderation scalable and sustainable; 2) identify how students, other faculty and external stakeholders can be involved in the assessment moderation process, and 3) develop a network of peer reviewers. The UA Satellite Event focused on comparing learning outcomes standards. 64 key representatives in learning, teaching, assessment and quality in higher education participated in the national event. Michael Wells, TEQSA Commissioner, in his presentation highlighted assessment as the main measure of learning outcomes and pointed out that the '*conversation about these methodologies had previously been rarely discussed.*' A summary of the event includes: 1) peer moderation is core to standards; 2) need to get pubic confidence; 3) when and how are important questions of moderation; 4) infrastructure, resourcing and costs to the institutions; 5) network of peer reviewers: models to fit the Australian context; 6) how can we make it work? ; 7) and the challenge of calibration and the concept of judgement (Royce Sadler's work). Feedback collected after the UA Satellite Event includes:

I have discussed this with [DVC] and she supports the establishment of a multi-disciplinary, multi-institutional peer-review of assessment network (not unlike the ALTF). The network should include advocates for and experts in the range of approaches discussed on Friday. The network could be formed from members of the project teams represented on Friday, other participants and people in the sector interested in implementing one or more approaches in their institution. (Email Correspondence, 2/03/2014)

I've discussed the topics canvassed at the satellite event with our DVC (Teaching, Learning and International), and we would be interested in being involved in a peer review network. What would be the next step in that process? (Email Correspondence, 11/03/2014)

This network proposal will focus on the development of communities of practice in the peer review of assessment. Setting standards is seen as mainly an individual activity (Price, 2005), however, assuring standards should be a collective activity, that is, communities of practice. Lave and Wenger, cited in Price (2005), emphasise the importance of participation in communities of practice as a way of developing a shared understanding on a particular topic. In relation to the peer review of assessment, Rust (2009, 126) argues that,

If we are to have any chance of establishing whether a degree from one institution is of a comparable standard with that from another, this can only be done through the development of communities of disciplinary assessment practice…. We need to establish appropriate forums for the development and sharing of standards within the disciplinary community.

Taking this argument one step further, it is critical that higher education sector in Australia develops communities of practice *within* disciplines to ensure that we are comparable in assessment standards as well as *across the sector*. The implication for developing higher education communities of practice in assessment is that 'universities will be organised into groupings that are based on academic interest rather than on institutional function.' (Smith & Rust, 2011)

Senior Fellowship with Australia's Office for Learning and Teaching

The project is also aligned to Emeritus Professor Geoff Scott's Senior Fellowship with the OLT. This Senior Fellowship will develop the capacity of the sector to ensure that the quality of the graduates being produced by our universities is relevant to the rapidly changing needs of the 21st century. Particular focus will be given to developing the change leadership capability of A/Deans and Directors (L&T) and Program Heads in the area and to how multiple reference points might best be used to ensure the graduate capabilities developed in different FOEs are both relevant and desirable.

This capacity-building work will commence from the first day of the Fellowship with a user-tested design process at UWS. What emerges there will be enhanced through international benchmarking, followed by the delivery of state/territorial workshops on the program across Australia with the culmination of the Fellowship being a national conference on what has been learnt. The strategy used will build on 40 years' experience in change leadership and learning and the findings from a wide range of earlier ALTC/OLT projects.

Overview of Proposed Activities for the Peer Review Network

EXTERNAL PEER REVIEW NETWORK	ANNUAL 1 DAY PEER REVIEW FORUM
PHASE 1: ESTABLISHMENT • **MAY, 2014**: Establish a national external reference group to drive this initiative (with diagonal representation such as OLT representative, Discipline Scholar, DVC representative, Private Provider representative, Associate Dean (L&T) representative, Director Standards/Quality, academics experienced in peer review, PRN Coordinator) • Identify individuals to be part of Peer Review Network Team who are experienced academics in peer review methodologies to participate in the peer review network/and or Quality Directors • Set up a Peer Review Network website on the UTAS webpages with links to the OLT Network website and HES website. • Late May, external reference group meeting by Skype/teleconference	**PHASE 1: ESTABLISHMENT** $30,000 has been identified by HES for funding a national day forum • **MAY, 2014:** Establish Peer Review Forum Organising Committee (including HES representatives) • Identify and invite key speakers such as Prof Alan Robson (HESP), international speaker Prof Chris Rust (ASKE), Higher Education Standards Fellow, Private Provider representative, OLT representative; Assoc Prof Mark Freeman (Final Report) • Liaise with HES with conference organisation and planning

PHASE 2: CONSULTATION
• **JUNE/JULY, 2014:**
• Peer Review Network Team meeting (teleconference)
   • Identify academic coordinators/other networks/interest groups interested in being involved in a peer review network of assessment.
   • Contact Quality Directors and key stakeholders in the HECQN to identify key issues
• Contact and present at Deputy Vice Chancellors' Network (Universities Australia) on the establishment of the PRN with academics within their institutions.
• Contact and present to the Deans Councils to put on their agenda.
• Contact and present to the Regional Universities Network (RUN)
• External reference group meeting by Skype/teleconference
	PHASE 2: CONSULTATION
	• **JUNE/JULY, 2014:** Identify peer reviewers for the PRF
	• Set up on the Peer Review Network website on the UTAS webpages information on the PRF
	• Send out through the HECQN networks and other networks (HERDSA) information on the PRF and invite abstracts to be submitted
	• Liaise with HES with conference organisation and planning

• **AUGUST/SEPTEMBER, 2014:**
• Peer Review Network Team meeting (teleconference)
• Run 5 State-based workshops across Australia with key representatives in the external peer review of assessment for academics.
   o Identify key issues for academics/quality directors/DVCS etc.
   o Identify tools/resources/exemplars for peer
	• **AUGUST/SEPTEMBER, 2014**: Liaise with HES with conference organisation and planning

review of assessment o Identify networks for peer review of assessment	
• **OCTOBER, 2014**: • Peer Review Network Team evaluates success and impact of the PRN workshops (teleconference meeting) • Report back to the National External Reference Group (teleconference meeting)	• **OCTOBER, 2014:** Peer review of papers/presentations/posters • Liaise with HES with conference organisation and planning
PHASE 3: DISSEMINATION • Findings from the impact of PRN workshops will be disseminated at the national PRF.	**PHASE 3: DISSEMINATION** • **NOVEMBER, 2014**: Hold an annual Peer Review Forum (PRF) focusing on key issues and challenges in peer review of assessment • Special interest workshops: (for e.g.)identifying possible benchmarking partners • Evaluate feedback from forum for future events

Anticipated Deliverables and Outcomes

The anticipated deliverables are:
- **Good Practice Framework for Networking: (May-December, 2014):** Development of a Good Practice Framework for networking peer review of assessment
- **Good Practice website (May-December, 2014):** Identification of tools/resources/exemplars for peer review of assessment (UTAS website, linked to the OLT Network webpage and the HES webpage)
- **Reports, presentations and papers(July-September, 2014)** to targeted State-based workshops and Deans Councils
- **National Forum on Peer Review (12 November, 2014:** Establishment of a national forum for peer review of assessment with invited presenters and a networking dinner.
- **Final Report to OLT (December 19, 2014)**

The main outcome of this network project is the establishment of a national peer review network on assessment within disciplines and across the higher education sector. A register is currently being put together to develop a database for academics interested in the peer review of assessment.

Progress Report
Table 1 outlines the progress of the external peer review network to date.

Table 1. Progress on External Peer Review Network

External Peer Review Network	
Phase 1: Establishment	**Actions**
Establish a National Peer Review Network Forum 12 November, 2014	14/03/2014 Higher Education Services will provide $30, 000 funding for External Peer Review Network Forum[12 Nov, 2014]
Establish a National External Reference Group	**29/05/2014 External Reference Group:** − Kerri-Lee Krause (UWS) − Chris Rust (Oxford Brookes) − Richard James (UniMelb) − Mike Evans (Kaplan) − Royce Sadler (UQ)

	− Di Weddell (OLT) − Sara Booth (UTAS, PRN Coordinator) − Teleconferences scheduled for July, September and October
Establish Peer Review Network Team (PRN)	**29/05/2014 PRN Team:** − Sara Booth, PRN Coordinator − Mark Freeman (UniSyd) − Heather Alexander (Griffith) − Ron Oliver (ECU) − Mark Thompson (ECU) − Jane Fernandez (Avondale) − Meetings have been organised for the rest of the year
Appoint a Project Officer	− Dr Jeff Beckett, UTAS
Set up a Peer Review Network website on the UTAS webpages	**PRN Website and PRN Wiki** http://www.utas.edu.au/student-evaluation-review-and-reporting-unit/nprn
Present at Regional Universities Network (RUN)	17/04/4014 − Teleconference with RUN who expressed interest in the external peer review network and wanted to be kept notified of developments
Present at DVC (A) Universities Australia on external peer review	16/05/2014 Key items discussed: − Matter of scalability: What can we realistically do? − Recommendation that the national Peer Review Forum is web streamed − Encourage an internal stocktake of peer review/external referencing − Recommendation that this is a regular item on this agenda − Interest in online moderation tool for internal/external purposes − HESP view on expert judgement; 5.3.3 is a massive standard in the sector − Is peer review the right word, it may not convey the gravity of the situation − Recommendation to change to Peer Review of Assessment − Understand the internal, national and international processes for moderation
Email to Private Providers (COPHE)	29/05/2014 − Adrian McComb distributed an email for the external peer review network and forum
Email to the Intensive Research Universities (IRU)	4/06/2014 − IRU have expressed interest in the external peer review forum and UTAS online moderation tool
Poster presentation at the Office for Learning and Teaching National Conference 10th June, 2014	− Poster presentation, information booklet and flyer on the external peer review network forum − A lot of interest in the project
Presentation the Victorian Quality Managers Network 26th June, 2014	− Presentation, information booklet and flyer to Quality Directors and Managers − A lot of interest in the project
Contact the Council of Deans	

Association of Architecture Schools of Australasia (AASA)	– Following up with AASA, waiting on a response
Australasian Association for Engineering Education (AAEE)	– Following up with AAEE, waiting on a response
Australasian Council of Deans of Arts, Social Sciences and Humanities (DASSH)	– Meeting with Prof John Germov (27th June, 2014) – Action: Sara to present at the national conference for DASSH in September, 2014 – Action: Contact Australian Academy of Humanities and Australian Academy of Social Sciences
Australasian Society for Computers in Learning and Tertiary Education (ASCILITE)	– Meeting with Dr Caroline Steel (8 July, 2014) – Action: Information for Bulletin, Facebook and Twitter – Action: Interested in how ASCILITE can contribute with e-assessment
Australian Business Deans Council (ABDC)	– Meeting with Prof Michael Powell (27th June, 2014) – Action: Sara to present at the national Learning and Teaching Committee 24th-25th July, Melbourne
Australian Council of Deans of Agriculture (ACDA)	– Meeting with Prof Holger Meinke (18th June, 2014) – Action: Sara to set up a meeting with John Rice and Holger Meinke to develop a coordinated approach with Agriculture and Science
Australian Council of Deans of Education (ACDE)	– Meeting with Prof Brenda Cherednichenko (4 July, 2014) – Very useful for reaccreditation – Action: Present at national conference in September
Australian Council of Deans of Information and Communications Technology (ACDICT)	– Meeting with Prof Leon Sterling (18 June, 2014) – Action: Sara to send information on external peer review network for national Dean's meeting on 7th July – Submitted a report to Council for funding the peer review of assessment
Australian Council of Deans of Science	– Meeting with Prof John Rice (17 June, 2014) – Would like to use Science as a test bed – Project is seen as hugely beneficial
Australian Council of Engineering Deans (ACED)	– Meeting with Prof Daryoush (7 July, 2014) – Support for benchmarking tool and external moderation – Action: Present at the Council of Engineers Deans Meeting on 24 November
Australian Council of University Art and Design Schools (ACUADS)	– Following up with ACUADS, waiting on a response
Australian Deans of Built Environment & Design (ADBED)	– Following up with ADBED, waiting on a response
Australian Institute of Physics	– Meeting with Andrew Hopkins and Marc Duldig (20th June, 2014)
Committee of Chairs of Academic Boards/Senates of Universities in NSW and ACT	– Meeting with Assoc Prof Paul Wormell (20th June, 2014)
Council of Australian Directors of Academic Development (CADAD)	– Meeting with Kylie Readman (27th June, 2014) – Action: Sara to present at the CADAD conference in October on what CADAD can do to support the national peer review network
Council of Australian Law Deans (CALD)	– Meeting with Prof Steven Graw (8 July, 2014) – Action: Sara to send information to Steven on PRN
Council of Deans and Directors of Graduate Studies Australia	– Meeting with Prof Laura Poole-Warren (12 June, 2014) – Action: Sara invited to present on evaluation/peer review of

(DDoGS)	supervision at the national DDoGS meeting in November
Association of Australian Medical Research Institutes (AAMRI)	– Meeting with Dr Nicole den Elzen (8 July, 2014) – Interest at the postgraduate level; not undergraduate level
Council of Deans of Nursing and Midwifery (Australia and New Zealand) (CDNM)	– Meeting with Prof Wendy Cross on 7 July, 2014 – Action: Present at October meeting and identify assessment champions
Medical Deans Australia and New Zealand	– Meeting with Prof Judith Searle (17th June, 2014)
National Council of Tertiary Music Schools (NACTMUS)	– Meeting with former Chair, Prof Richard Vella (23 June, 2014) – Database of people in assessment of music
Royal Australian Chemical Institute	– Following up with RACI, waiting on a response
Chairs of Academic Boards of Non-University Providers	– Meeting with Prof Wayne Robinson (July 24th, 2014)
Other contacts suggested by Deans Councils	
Astronomical Society of Australia	– Meeting with Andrew Hopkins and Marc Duldig (20th June, 2014)
Wollongong Academy of Tertiary Teaching and Learning Excellence (WATTLE)	– Meeting organised for Prof Patrick Crookes in July, 2014

Peer Review Network Workshops

Date	Location
13 August	CSHE - University of Melbourne
18 September	University of Western Sydney
14 August	University of Tasmania
25 September	Edith Cowan University
19th September	Griffith University