International Peer Review Benchmarking for Quality Higher Education

Proof of Concept 2015 – An overview
of the process and illustrative outcomes

AKÖ AOTEAROA
NATIONAL CENTRE FOR
TERTIARY TEACHING
EXCELLENCE

NPF
NATIONAL PROJECT
FUND
AKO AOTEAROA

UTAS

Particating institutions:

Auckland University of Technology

Lincoln University

Birmingham City University

The Arts University Bournemouth

Swinburne University of Technology

University of Tasmania

Victoria University

Project supporters:

Office for Learning and Teaching, Australia

Tertiary Education Quality Standards Agency, Australia

The Academic Quality Agency for New Zealand Universities

Higher Education Academy, United Kingdom

Contents

Foreword and acknowledgements

Organisational benchmarking can take many forms and can be used to drive a range of agendas. Universities and other tertiary institutions often invest considerable time and resources into benchmarking processes designed for funding, accountability or reputational benefit. Generally these focus on data collection about inputs, outputs (and very occasionally) outcomes.
They tend to be highly summative.

The benchmarking trialled here is different. This is process benchmarking designed to foster self-assessment, evaluative conversations and quality improvement. It offers an opportunity for institutions to reflect on what they are doing in a structured way and then test what they are doing and how they are thinking about an issue or objective for improvement against other institutions that are thinking about the same thing. Furthermore, undertaking an international exercise allows us to explore tacit national assumptions about the way we develop services for the benefit of learners. Often unpacking the different terms we use in similar contexts is one of the most valuable things we do.

A big challenge for any exercise of this type is to balance off the effort involved in doing the work with the potential value-add. One of the attractions of this methodology is that it is not over-onerous to prepare and, as set out in this report, the potential gains are significant.

Following a presentation on the methodology used here at the New Zealand Academic Quality Agency Conference, this project was initiated in November 2014. Originally it was framed against support for priority learners as identified by the NZ Tertiary Education Strategy 2014-2019 (New Zealand Government, 2014), in particular supporting success for Māori and Pasifika learners. However, this brief naturally expanded as the work developed and interests of the seven participating universities were aligned.

We would like offer our sincere thanks to staff from each of the universities who participated in this international benchmarking project and the key agencies from New Zealand, Australia and the UK who gave it their support. The universities and agencies are acknowledged on the inside cover and all individual staff participating are listed in Appendix A.

All participating staff undertook the project in a spirit of collaboration and openness. Their willingness to engage with the project led to clear outcomes and recommendations.

We believe this proof of concept project has been successful. It was a fascinating, uplifting and most enjoyable two days with much rich discussion and several 'take-home' actions identified by participants. We encourage you to read this report and consider undertaking a similar exercise (whether national or international) yourselves.

Dr Peter Coolbear
National Director, Ako Aotearoa
New Zealand

Dr Sara Booth
Strategic Advisor – Quality [External],
University of Tasmania

September 2015

Executive Summary

This report provides an account of a proof of concept of an international process benchmarking exercise involving seven universities from New Zealand, Australia and the United Kingdom. The universities were:

Auckland University of Technology, New Zealand
Birmingham City University, United Kingdom
Lincoln University, New Zealand
Swinburne University of Technology, Australia
The Arts University Bournemouth, United Kingdom
University of Tasmania, Australia
Victoria University, Melbourne, Australia.

The participation of universities in Australia and the United Kingdom was facilitated by the Office for Teaching and Learning (OLT), Australia and the Higher Education Academy, United Kingdom.

Work started in November 2014 and the exercise was completed via a two day face to face peer review workshop held in Wellington, New Zealand in mid-July 2015. The Office for Learning and Teaching (Australia), the Academic Quality Agency for New Zealand Universities and the Tertiary Education Quality Standards Agency, Australia supported the project and participated in the face-to-face workshop.

The type of benchmarking used in this project, process benchmarking, is a form of benchmarking that focuses on how results are achieved. It aims to examine, compare and improve performance of processes used in operations through a process of internal evidence-based self-review using a structured framework and then evaluative conversations around collated material from that framework. It is explicitly designed to be both formative and not too onerous for participants.

The value of these conversations is that they provide an external reference from which to re-evaluate internal self-assessment and thus share good practice, explore issues collegially and, where appropriate develop ideas for further action. Extending this to international colleagues further extends the external referencing and allows any institution to evaluate its practice and assumptions beyond those generally accepted within their own national system.

The participating universities were invited to undertake this benchmarking process against a choice of topics:

1. Strategies for increasing participation of priority (or non-traditional or disadvantaged) learners in tertiary education;

2. Provision of professional support for teaching staff;

3. Teaching quality;

4. Curriculum quality; and

5. Peer review of assessment.

The specific aims of the project were to:

1. Compare approaches to the priorities raised by New Zealand's Tertiary Education Strategy to approaches to equivalent issues in Australia and the UK;

2. To compare approaches to improving teaching quality, curriculum quality and assessment;

3. To identify areas of good practice, areas for improvement/or development and areas for sharing;

4. To identify any common issues across institutional and national boundaries

5. To enhance our understanding of process benchmarking for quality improvement and quality enhancement purposes across Australia, New Zealand and United Kingdom.

At the end of the two day workshop the aims of the project were achieved. Participants clearly valued the process and each has had areas of good practice affirmed and recommendations for internal action noted. Common issues across national boundaries were identified and areas for further sharing also noted. Each of these is summarised in the full report. There was particular interest in the United Kingdom's Professional Standards Framework for teachers in higher education.

A particularly useful part of the discussion was unpacking some of the differences in terminology used by different countries. For instance, current policy and practice in New Zealand refers to acknowledging and accommodating learner diversity and sets explicit priorities, while in the United Kingdom and Australia similar issues of supporting disadvantaged learners are addressed in the language of "inclusivity".

In planning this kind of work, consideration by peer-review partners needs to be given to the trade-offs between the range of topics to be covered and depth of discussion. Exploring fewer topics in more depth allows opportunities for better unpacking of the links between national and institutional policies and the effectiveness of the implementation of those institutional policies. It also allows for a more formal process of re-appraisal of self-ratings once each part of the peer review discussion has been completed.

Essentially, the methodology provides a structured and cost-effective framework for purposeful self-evaluation and then validation of that self-evaluation through discussion with external peers. There is a risk that different institutional contexts might prompt some discussants to talk past each other. This risk can be mitigated effectively by ensuring that at the start of the peer review process, each participating university has a broad understanding of key drivers and context for the others.

Our conclusion is that this is a methodology that has value both for national benchmarking exercises and international ones. It does, however, rely on considerable levels of mutual trust and a genuine enthusiasm for and open-mindedness about how best to serve our students in the future. We thank all our participants for being so ready to share their practice and ideas so openly. We thank their institutions for allowing them to do so.

1. Introduction

Universities are increasingly moving towards using benchmarking for quality improvement and quality enhancement purposes, particularly being able to compare academic standards across the higher education sector. Benchmarking can be defined as:

'A learning process structured so as to enable those engaging in the process to compare their services/activities/products in order to identify their comparative strengths and weaknesses as a basis for self-improvement and/or self-regulation.' (Jackson & Lund, 2000)

Having followed with considerable interest the work being done on peer review benchmarking in Australia, Ako Aotearoa commissioned an international benchmarking project using the benchmarking methodology developed by the universities of Tasmania, Deakin and Wollongong (Booth et al., 2011).

In this benchmarking project, Ako Aotearoa wanted to trial 'a proof of concept' benchmarking process not only across New Zealand universities but also involving universities in Australia and the United Kingdom. With the support of the Office for Learning and Teaching, Australia and the Higher Education Academy (HEA) in the UK, Swinburne University of Technology, the University of Tasmania, Victoria University, Melbourne, Birmingham City University and The Arts University Bournemouth joined Auckland University of Technology and Lincoln University in this peer review exercise.

Following individual self-evaluations by each institution, the culmination of this Benchmarking Project was a face to face peer review event hosted by Ako Aotearoa in Wellington, New Zealand on 15-16th July 2015.

The project supported the seven participating universities to compare their responses to priority[1] or non-traditional learners as well as teaching quality, curriculum quality and assessment across Australia, New Zealand and United Kingdom universities. Information on institutional contexts [including strategic plans and geographic information] for each participating institution are provided in Appendix B and C. Representatives from each of the participating universities attended face-to-face with the exception of the Arts University Bournemouth who sent through responses prior to the workshop.

The peer-review workshop was supported and also attended by representatives from Ako Aotearoa, the Office for Learning and Teaching, Australia (OLT), the Academic Quality Agency for New Zealand Universities (AQA) and Tertiary Education Quality Standards Agency, Australia (TESQA). A Glossary of Terms and acronyms is available in Appendix D (page 22).

The specific type of benchmarking used in this project is referred to as **process benchmarking**. Process benchmarking is a form of benchmarking that focuses on how results are achieved. It aims to examine, compare and improve performance of processes used in operations. In contrast, outcome benchmarking is a form of benchmarking that is results or 'outcome' focused and examines high level aggregate measures of performance (Stella and Woodhouse, 2007). As this was a 'proof of concept' benchmarking process, the decision was to test the benchmarking process only rather than benchmarking both processes and outcomes. The benchmarking methodology is derived from the Australasian Council on Open, Distance and e-Learning (ACODE) Benchmarking Framework (2014).

The specific aims of the project were to:

1. Compare approaches to the priorities

---

[1]   Priority learners (in this context Māori and Pasifika, but also at risk young people) are identified in the New Zealand Tertiary Education Strategy 2014-2019 (New Zealand Government, 2014)

raised by New Zealand's Tertiary Education Strategy to approaches to equivalent issues in Australia and the UK;

2. To compare approaches to improving teaching quality, curriculum quality and assessment;

3. To identify areas of good practice, areas for improvement/or development and areas for sharing;

4. To identify any common issues across institutional and national boundaries; and

5. To enhance our understanding of process benchmarking for quality improvement and quality enhancement purposes across Australia, New Zealand and United Kingdom.

2. Project Methodology

The benchmarking project began in November, 2014 and ran over 9 months. It engaged its participating universities over six distinct phases, including:

1. Development of key performance indicators and performance measures;

2. Self-review phase (using the online benchmarking tool);

3. Peer review phase (face-to-face workshop);

4. Post-validation phase (Workshop summary sent to participants for verification);

5. Reporting phase including a summary of workshop outcomes and recommendations for improvement; and

6. Evaluation.

The benchmarking methodology behind each of the six phases is now described in greater detail below (the Evaluation phase is summarised in Section 7).

2.1 DEVELOPMENT OF KEY PERFORMANCE INDICATORS AND PERFORMANCE MEASURES

The benchmarking framework (Appendix E) was informed by Ako Aotearoa's strategic initiatives, OLT's strategic initiatives, and quality assurance initiatives in higher education (AQA and TEQSA). The main objective was to trial a 'proof of concept' benchmarking exercise across three countries to learn about the benchmarking process. The benchmarking framework has five Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) which include:

1. Strategies for increasing participation of priority (or non-traditional or disadvantaged) learners in tertiary education;

2. Provision of professional support for teaching staff;

3. Teaching quality;

4. Curriculum quality; and

5. Peer review of assessment.

Universities had a choice of focus areas to benchmark. These could be any one (or more) of the Performance Indicators. Each Performance Measure provided structured questions under each of the KPIs (see Appendix E for an example). The institutions were not required to respond to every KPI, but there had to be a comparator (at least 2 institutions) for each KPI.

Benchmarking format: The format for the benchmarking project includes a scoping statement, performance indicators, good practice statements and performance measures which are derived from the Australasian Council on Open, Distance and E-learning (ACODE) benchmarking framework (2014). The key performance indicators have been drawn from the New Zealand Tertiary Education Strategy (2014-2019) supplemented by international HE policy and literature in the area.

Scoping statement describes what is considered in the benchmarking as well as clarifying what lies outside the scope of the project. The scope of the project covers an investigation and comparison of access and participation for priority leaners; teaching quality, curriculum quality and assessment.

Performance measures identify actions which lead to the achievement of good practice in performance areas.

Rating: The self-review process includes making a rating against each measure. To facilitate the self-review process, questions are provided under each measure to clarify their scope and provide guidance for the self-review teams. These questions were designed to elicit specific information to enable processes and

practices across participating institutions to be compared (Appendix E). The ratings for the performance measures are between Level 4 and Level 1, with Level 4 being the most evident of quality outcomes and Level 1 showing the least amount of the evidence of quality (Table 1).

Table 1. Performance measures self-review guiding questions

Level 4	Yes	Effective strategies are implemented successfully
Level 3	Yes, but	Good strategies in place, some limitations or some further work needed
Level 2	No, but	This area hasn't yet been effectively addressed, but some significant work is being done
Level 1	No	No effective strategies *e.g.* not addressed, addressed only in isolated pockets, notionally addressed but major barriers to implementation

Rationale provides institutions an opportunity to document key reasons for the performance rating and rationale under each performance indicator.

Evidence: There needs to be a strong correlation between the rating and the evidence provided. A high rating cannot be supported without evidence.

2.2 SELF-REVIEW PHASE (USING THE ONLINE BENCHMARKING TOOL)

Each university undertook a self-review process. This process required each university to appoint an institutional coordinator to facilitate the coordination of the benchmarking project. These individuals liaised with Dr Sara Booth who coordinated the project across all universities. It was the responsibility of each university to organise a reference group for developing a coordinated university response for each key performance indicator using the self-review template (Appendix E). Each institutional coordinator was assigned access to The University of Tasmania's online benchmarking tool. Using their unique username and password (to ensure data security) participating institutions entered their self-review data into the online benchmarking tool. Final self-review reports were sent back to each institution for validation and checking.

2.3 PEER REVIEW PHASE (FACE-TO-FACE WORKSHOP)

The benchmarking project was underpinned by a peer review methodology (ACODE, 2014), based on process benchmarking. As described previously, process benchmarking is a form of benchmarking that focuses on how results are achieved. It aims to examine, compare and improve performance of processes used in operations (Stella & Woodhouse, 2007). The peer review phase included the following activities and documentation:

• In preparation for the peer review workshop, a peer review workshop document was prepared which included: A summary of key performance indicators, ratings and measures across all universities and areas of good practice, areas for improvement/ development and areas for sharing (Appendix E).

• The peer review workshop documentation was sent out by email to the participating universities prior to the peer review workshop in preparation for the workshop.

• A face-to-face peer review benchmarking workshop was held over two days to benchmark the five key performance indicators, processes and data.

• At the start of the workshop universities were asked to provide a 15min presentation on their individual institutional contexts and rationale for being involved in the benchmarking project.

• A summary of the peer review workshop outcomes was recorded during the workshop and presented in draft form for all participants in the last session of the workshop.

2.4 POST VALIDATION PHASE (WORKSHOP SUMMARY SENT TO PARTICIPANTS FOR VERIFICATION)

The post validation phase gave all participants the opportunity to review the peer review summary outcomes following the workshop. Following the peer-review discussions at the workshop and reflections on self-review data, participants were invited to alter their ratings, supporting statements and add any additional evidence.

2.5 REPORTING PHASE INCLUDING WORKSHOP OUTCOMES AND RECOMMENDATIONS FOR IMPROVEMENT

Workshop participants were invited to review and comment on a draft final report. Participants were provided with the report and their institution's self-review report (results from the online tool) and encouraged to consider the recommendations and determine an implementation plan for their institution.

3. Results

The results from the benchmarking project were validated by participants in the peer review workshop [some changes were made to ratings at this stage] and also later validated by email by workshop participants.

A summary of each KPI is presented below. Appendix F provides full detail of the KPIs and an anonymised summary of the self-assessment ratings for illustrative purposes. Participating institutions have all received a validated detailed summary of peer review workshop outcomes.

3.1   KEY PERFORMANCE INDICATOR 1: STRATEGIES TO INCREASE PARTICIPATION OF PRIORITY LEARNERS

There were three agreed performance measures under KPI#1: 1) Strategic planning for stakeholder needs; 2) Strategies to improve successful participation of priority learners; 3) Collaboration with Tertiary Education Organisations (TEOs) and other Networks.

Participating universities were: The Arts Univeristy Bournemouth (AUB), Auckland University of Technology (AUT), Lincoln University (LU) and Victoria University (VU).

Table 2. KPI#1 Areas of Good Practice

All	• Strategic Plans and policies are focussed on priority learners, equity and access • University marketing and dissemination of information on support programs and course offerings crucial to development of relationships with principals, parents and prospective students • Strategic Plans are evaluated on a regular basis and reported to university governance committees.
AUB	• Very strong focus on employability and careers. Excellent outcomes in the Destination of Leavers from Higher Education (DLHE) survey • AUB takes a long term, whole of institution approach to widening access with various strategies [Access Agreement for UK and non-UK EU students, Fair Access Agreement Management Group] • AUB runs a Foundation Diploma in Art and Design which is a preparatory qualification for post A-level students that have not identified their specific area of expertise or interest.
AUT	• AUT has practices and initiatives in place to support the transition of Māori and Pacific students into higher education: School Partnership Programme; Mentoring Programme; pilot on the South Campus targeting Pacific students; transition programme with Counties Manukau District Health Board [AUT] with more teaching hours but students are funded the same way • AUT has multiple approaches to widening access for priority learners. It has a long history of enabling pathways for students who have completed qualifications with other HEIs as well as internal staircasing towards higher qualifications • AUT offers a number of resources and networks to improve participation; *e.g.* iMAPS, Pasific Learning Villages; student academic support; financial advice and assistance; student mentors.

LU	• Career guidance is built into initiatives for Māori and Pasifika students.
VU	• Whole university is built on the platform of equity and diversity (2014 Equity and Diversity for Staff Policy, the 2015 Student equity and Social Inclusion Policy, the 2015 Social Inclusion Access Participation and Success Plan; The Indigenous Strategy, Disability Action Plan) • University of Opportunity • Alternative entry program Portfolio Partnerships Programme and Achievement Scholarships are available • The University has a range of strategies in place to improve successful participation of students from different backgrounds such as the VU Agenda and Blueprint for Curriculum Reform; Social Inclusion Access Participation and Success Plan 2015-2017; Indigenous Strategy 2012-2016; Victoria University Disability Action Plan 2011-2015; Student Participation and Success Framework 2014-2016. The University also has a number of initiatives (Portfolio Partnership Program and a number of Commonwealth Government HEPPP funded programs). The University has a strong history of pathways between VET and HE as well as between HE courses • To create a pathway into a professional degree, we create twin programmes, where the twin is taught with greater support and longer hours. The equity issue is dealt with in that a student can choose to do either. Students with greater need are funnelled into the twin programme but other students are given the choice. • VU has a range of mentoring and outreach programs, including Orientation Programme, First Year Experience programme and Student Link Programme • Diploma programs provide additional paths between degree programs. HE diplomas mirror the first year of the degree, but may be taught with greater support and longer hours • VU is currently reviewing its pathways strategy to ensure all pathways are streamlined and there is sufficient capacity for formal pathway activities.

Table 3. KPI#1 Areas for Improvement and/or Further Development

AUB	- The university is currently developing an alumni plan - Current Equalities Strategy is concluding with new plan in preparation. No data to support equity and diversity - AUB provides support to school students but it is not as coordinated or as strategic as it could be - Some students' progress from the Preparation for Higher Education Programmes but it is hard to identify success of this - Some work with other providers of art and design as part of the National Arts Learning Network but this is about sharing practice rather than advice to students.
AUT	- The university has always had a dedicated career centre with staff assisting Māori and Pacific students. More recently the focus is moving towards student and graduate employability rather than primarily career counselling and this is still to be embedded. We do a lot of this at local programme and faculty level and this is often not explicitly recognised - The Diversity Strategy and Action Plan includes strategies for successful participation of priority learners but there is no specific mention of under 25's without academic preparation. This no longer seems to be such a focus for TEC as well.
LU	- Pacific Strategy Plan is yet to be completed and MAPAS and Te Awhioraki class representative-MAPAS to be re-established - A full career development and employment service is run by a dedicated careers advisory person and provided to all students and recent graduates. However there are no specific provisions for Māori or Pasifika students - We have a Māori and Pasifika Committee that has set protocols for Māori responsiveness and this has to do with the employment process. There are certain statements in there, but we haven't yet seen them in action - No equity or diversity plan but lots of policies and processes - Poutama Strategy Pathways to enhance regional delivery of programmes to support Māori students is variable - When we look at the strategy, there still needs to be something in the form of information to professional and academic staff when dealing with Māori students, and also to discuss with staff the Māori responsiveness matrix, to incorporate values to help improve where we are with Māori students - Some initiatives in place for mentoring and outreach programmes: Powhiri, Mihi Whakatau; Noho Marae and Whenua Kura Programmes. Nothing at this stage for domestic Pasifika students: waiting for Pacific Strategy - The Whenua Kura Programme has a framework but it is not used for movement between institutions.

VU	• The University Indigenous Strategy aims to widen participation by the indigenous population • There is scope for exploring a more comprehensive approach to pathways as part of a College structure, including development of further partnerships.

3.2 KEY PERFORMANCE INDICATOR 2: PROVIDING PROFESSIONAL SUPPORT FOR TEACHING STAFF

There was one performance measure under KPI#2: Professional academic support and teaching qualifications.

Participating universities were: Lincoln University (LU), Swinburne University of Technology (Swin) and Victoria University (VU).

Table 4. KPI#2 Areas of Good Practice

Swin	• Extensive professional development opportunities in the Learning Transformations area (blended/online is a major focus) • Learning Transformations are the University's central provider of professional development for academic staff, including e-moderation; design courses for online environment; resources for online learning and trialling peer review of assessment where teaching staff mentor the staff of underperforming units.
VU	• VU offers a range of programs for academics to improve their teaching practice: Induction to Teaching Program, Graduate Certificate in Tertiary Education and ongoing professional development activities. Support is also provided from the centre in course design, pedagogy and blended learning with limited resourcing • Moondani Balik, Indigenous Centre further supports indigenous staff and students. Recently introduced Indigenous cultural awareness online training program called Yulendji Wurrung • Dedicated support to teaching staff via participation in the First Year Experience Program, mentoring by FYE coordinators and professional development activities • Academic Development and Support provide resources and guidance to staff on diverse student cohorts.

Table 5. KPI#2 Areas for Improvement and/or Further Development

LU	• General induction for new staff, report back to staff through evaluation system, some responsibility for ensuring good teaching practice. Exploring potential for embedded Māori curricula • Staff development is a work in progress. The Responsiveness Matrix Framework needs to be activated through training.

3.3

KEY PERFORMANCE INDICATOR 3: TEACHING QUALITY

There were 5 performance measures under KPI#3: 1) Appropriate strategic and operational planning documents and policies; 2) Supporting academics to enhance teaching quality; 3) Adequate financial resources to monitor and support teaching quality; 4) Evaluation of teaching quality; and 5) Recovery plans and procedures to facilitate continuity of teaching and learning.

Participating universities were: Brimingham City University (BCU), Swinburne University of Technology (Swin), University of Tasmania (UTAS) and Victoria University (VU) .

Table 6. KPI#3 Areas of Good Practice

All	• Universities have appropriate strategies, plans and policies in place for student achievement, academic standards and teaching quality • Universities have in place internal teaching awards and they align to national awards/reconition • Vast majority of Resources to support online teaching are in place [VU, Swin, UTAS] • Universities have in place internal surveys to evaluate teaching [VU, Swin, BCU and UTAS] • Universities have in place external surveys to monitor teaching quality [BCU, UTAS, Swin, VU] • Universities have a sharpened interest in performance monitoring through instruments such as the annual and comprehensive course reviews.
BCU	• Deliberate decision to reduce strategic documents: target indicators and secondary indicators. Used to have a Teaching and Learning Strategy and now a L&T Manifesto (short document) for students and staff. The L&T Manifesto statements talk to students and the language will have buy in. • BCU received a 72% response rate on the National Student Survey (NSS). They have people calling students and monitoring responses across all courses. They have national targets • BCU has recently gone through a restructure of academic job descriptions. There are now only 7 academic job descriptions which are fully aligned to the different levels of HEA fellowship • There is a target that all fulltime staff involved in learning and teaching be HEA accredited by 2020 (80% by 2017).
Swin	• Swinburne changed their internal surveys to be much shorter: Check in (or pulse) survey which is formative with only three questions and the end of semester survey has 3 questions for the unit and 4 questions for teaching. They had a 43% response rate which is reasonably high for an Australian university • Swinburne has a Business Continuity Service for their Learning Management System.
UTAS	• Comprehensive framework of teaching expectations, which now includes rubrics and will be available online • UTAS has a Blended Learning Model to underpin delivery of Technology Enhanced Learning and Teaching which is outlined in the TELT White Paper • Information Technology Services has a disaster recovery plan for IT infrastructure; there are also business continuity plans. For *e.g.* TILT has BCP for the Learning Management System.

VU	• The University has a suite of strategic and operational plans. Quality and Standards and policy is in development
	• VU has mobility plans in place to enhance teaching quality: Overseas and visiting teachers; Offshore teaching programs; Exchange/MOA Real Madrid; Special Study Program. The University is systematically expanding the international experience of staff and recently revised the Special Study Program policy to allow more frequent opportunities for international experience
	• VU has developed a university-level peer review of teaching process in the early stages of development and take up. It is currently enbedded in the Graduate Certificate in Tertiary Education.

Table 7. KPI#3 Areas for Improvement and/or Further Development

All	• Reduce number of strategies and plans
	• Universities have a number of policies that support teaching quality, however, many are being reviewed and redeveloped
	• Challenges in obtaining data on the qualifications of academic staff [from HR], including sessional staff
	• More work could be undertaken in increasing staff participation in mobility programs and staff exchanges.
BCU	• BCU is in the process of reorganising schools and faculties which has had an impact on existing planning and policy documentation [sometimes three versions]. There is not much resistance to the centralisation of planning as people recognise the need for more consistency
	• Support for staff with poor quality teaching is a work in progress
	• Opportunities with the Erasmus scheme are open to all staff, but uptake is relatively low but is increasing –in 2014/2015, 29 were for teaching mobility and 8 for training. A Task and Finish group has recently been set up to look at ways to increase the uptake of the Erasmus scheme
	• BCU has an ad hoc process for blended online learning and needs to develop a strategy. At the moment, resources are going into providing tools.
Swin	• Swinburne are about to commence some data modelling to identify unit metrics that can be used as lead indicators of course quality *e.g.* which units predict external student satisfaction. They are fine tuning the use of a BI tool, to provide data on a real time basis to Unit Convenors
	• Swinburne are in the process of clarifying teaching expectations as part of a review of workload models.
UTAS	• Some significant documents in learning and teaching are very hard to track in terms of use [*e.g.* LTAS@UTAS and UTAS Assessment Standards]
	• UTAS is in the process of using data from their LMS to identify which students have engaged in their L&T sessions
	• UTAS will do a mapping exercise with all teaching and learning policies to identify gaps
	• We offer workshops and drop in sessions for sessional staff, but numbers are low
VU	• There is a need to consolidate and complete work on policy renewal
	• Further work on ensuring consistent processes across moderation and benchmarking activities would be beneficial as would development of resources to support staff and increasing partnerships in this area

- Sessional staff support is strong in the area of formal L&T development, but gaps and opportunities for more general support should be explored.

3.4 KEY PERFORMANCE INDICATOR 4: CURRICULUM QUALITY

The performance measure under KPI#4 was curriculum approval, development and review.

Participating universities were: The Arts University Bournemouth (AUB), Birmingham City University (BCU) and Lincoln University (LU).

Table 8. KPI#4 Areas of Good Practice

AUB	• AUB uses the Quality Assurance Agency (QAA's), Framework for Higher Education Qualifications (FHEQ) to set out the national reference points for course approval [known as validation and review]. An internal panel validates each programme that is developed and each programme is reviewed every five years • The peer observation process encourages the sharing of practice and discussions on pedagogy. The dissemination of good practice by QAA is a useful catalyst • Many committees are replaced by a Task and Finish Group, identify what is your task, this is what you have to implement, and then the task is finished, you write a report. This is most effective.
LU	• LU have annual reviews of programmes and courses. When a new course is being developed the rationale for why it is needed has to be provided, showing how it fits within the programme and meets industry needs. Once it has gone to an internal committee, it goes the Committee on University Academic Programmes (CUAP) for approval. • LU has a very strong link with its local Māori community/industry. Programmes are strongly linked to industry • Teaching teams, collegiality and teaching excellence awards including for team teaching • The Academic Policy Refresh Project is in the process of reviewing all academic policies at Lincoln and Telford • Open access to teaching material.

Table 9. KPI#4 Areas for Improvement and/or Further Development

AUB	• Benchmarking is done at the programme level but there is a question mark how effectively it is used.
BCU	• BCU asks people to map the benchmarks but people tend to use them more as a tick-box exercise to say they have looked at them. Benchmark statements are not consistently used in practice • The outcomes of the Annual Review process is impacted by the stage of maturity of programmes. Needs the commitment of Senior Management to ensure that staff are given the time to devote to the activity. Strengthen the function of CELT as a collegial support for curriculum development and review.
LU	• Address the challenge of incorporating the whenua strategy into Lincoln's programmes.

3.5 KEY PERFORMANCE INDICATOR 5: PEER REVIEW OF ASSESSMENT

The performance measure under KPI#5 was peer review of assessment.

Participating universities were: The Arts University Bournemouth (AUB), Auckland University of Technology (AUT) and Victoria University (VU). Note that the focus for benchmarking comments was for specific programmes as reflected in the comments below.

Table 10. KPI#5 Areas of Good Practice

All	• Assessment data is kept in a secure database with processes in place for exam boards.
AUB	• Examiners from other institutions are appointed at least once year to attend an exam board and look at samples of work. It usually occurs over three years. For AUB, there are examiners for ARB and RIBA (Architecture). Many courses are accredited by Creative Skillset and have to submit work to support accreditation.
AUT	• AUT has a range of peer review moderation processes in place: » International Tourism internal pre-moderation and post moderation of assessment; a regular cycle of external moderation by an external academic from another university; » Paramedicine has moderation policy which includes pre-moderation/assessment committee. Process includes pre-marking, mid-marking, cross marking and post marking; External moderation is carried out by industry Medical Consultants, Intensive Care Paramedics and Paramedics. The CAA accreditation process also involved external academics reviewing assessment. » Visual Arts includes capstone assessment and pre-moderation which are studio briefs, in third year students write their own project brief; studio work is marked by a team of staff; an external review » Digital Design has capstone assessment, pre-moderation with student briefs and each studio paper is assessed by a team of staff and pre-moderated by the Head of Department and/or Programme Leader » In both Art and Design majors the final exhibition of student work involves sharing of student assessment outputs with the art and design community. This is an important informal form of peer review.
VU	• Peer review of assessment occurs in the disciplines, international activities are underway in paramedics and business • The professional accreditation of paramedics includes a national set of documents, although there is no formal requirement for peer review of assessment • The University utilises external moderation and benchmarking processes for all courses as part of the Comprehensive Course Review (every five years). Professional accredited courses require additional external benchmarking and review processes. *e.g.* Bachelor of Business uses an internal review of the accounting major with other universities in Australia.

Table 11. KPI#5 Areas for Improvement and/or Further Development

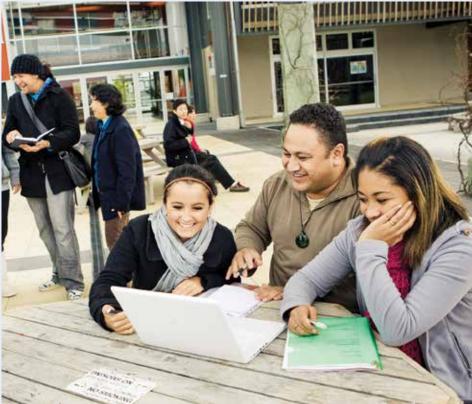| All	• While there is external moderation involving the professional community, it is hoped that this project will lead to wider international relationships.
AUB	• External examiners are appointed to all course leading to an award of the University. Current national discussions suggest that external examining may be strengthened. Examiners in Architecture are approved by the accrediting body and have to confirm that work meets the national standard for these awards
AUT	• Not all subject areas have a professional accrediting body. Paramedicine does not have a NZ body but has been accredited by The Council of Ambulance authorities (CAA) an Australasian accrediting body. • There are no professional accrediting body for international tourism in NZ, accreditation is available through the United Nations World Tourism Organisation (UNWTO). AUT are considering this. Art and Design programmes do not have professional (employer) accrediting bodies as is expected given the nature of these programmes. • The benchmarking of learning standards and assessment standards is an ongoing process. Visual Arts and Digital design The assessment expectations were reviewed by an external academic as part of a cyclic review process. External Industry Rep (WETA) meets with final year students and talk to them about their work providing individual student feedback and provides staff with feedback but this process is not formally documented. The area for further development is to set up reciprocal arrangements. The Paramedic and Tourism courses are currently taking part in a pilot in the international benchmarking project with VU. Visual Arts and Digital Design are looking to this with AUB.
VU	• The Paramedic and Tourism courses are currently taking part in a pilot in the international benchmarking project with AUT. This activity will be then rolled out across courses with national and international partners as part of our Comprehensive Course Review process

4. Key similarities and differences across three countries

The peer review workshop identified some **key similarities across** three countries outlined in Table 12 below.

Table 12. Key Similarities across three countries

- To inform **University Plans we rely heavily on analysis of internal and external data**. The biggest challenge is that data from some sources may not be available for 3 years
- **Partnerships with schools** are an important part of assisting students' transition into university
- **Focus on blended learning in professional development**
- Very difficult to get **consistency in approach in strategic and operational plans.** The challenge is when you have multiple plans over areas. Quite often there is overlap and disconnect with plans
- **Access to teaching surveys for quality assurance purposes** is a challenge
- **Having externality on programmes is essential** for credibility and validation.

Some **key differences that were identified** across three countries are outlined in Table 13 below.

Table 13. Key differences across three countries

- **Language in national policies on equity and access is slightly different:** Australia and UK focus on social inclusion for different cohorts, NZ focus on priority learners (Māori, Pacifica, under 25's) and recognising diversity
- **Core professional development programs** for academic staff [optional vs mandatory]
- **Language around courses/programmes/papers/subject/unit/modules**
- **Funding for teaching quality** varies across universities [varies between $70K a year to $3M].

5. Areas for sharing

During the peer review workshop the following areas were identified for sharing:

- Booklet for sharing for UK PSF [BCU]

- We have writing days, twice a year for UK PSF [invitation to attend] [BCU]

- National teaching standards: Australia and NZ are extending the discussion with the UK

- Teaching Expectations Framework and Rubrics [UTAS]

- Swinburne Student Charter

- UTAS has a Blended Learning Model to underpin delivery of Technology Enhanced Learning and Teaching which is outlined in the TELT White Paper.

- Shareville: online town and simulations [BCU]

- QAA Framework for Higher Education Qualifications as a reference point for course approval. The FHEQ includes expectations of a graduate at each level of the Framework and benchmark statements for curriculum areas. QA Handbook [AUB]

- CUAP are on approval, development and review a form of benchmarking that occurs in New Zealand [AUT and LU]

- BCU has developed a "Rough Guide to Curriculum Development".

6. Key recommendations for institutions resulting from the benchmarking process

The key recommendations have been self-identified by each university and are proposed as a result of the evidence collected and subsequent discussions in the benchmarking process. They relate directly to the KPIs that each institution chose to do. These recommendations are, of course, open for discussion and change by each of the respective universities.

Table 14. The Arts University Bournemouth (AUB) Recommendations

Recommendation 1	Consideration is given to the Plan that replaces the current Equalities Plan to include key data measures that track equity and diversity
Recommendation 2	Develop a coordinated strategy for supporting school students to university
Recommendation 3	Work with the National Arts Learning Network to support students coming into AUB
Recommendation 4	Develop process to track benchmarking data [including benchmark statements] across the University for quality assurance purposes
Recommendation 5	Develop process to track benchmarking data [including benchmark statements] across the University for quality assurance purposes

Table 15. Auckland University of Technology (AUT) Recommendations

Recommendation 1	Formally recognise the career advice role provided at the faculty/academic level
Recommendation 2	Clarify whether students in the under 25's without academic preparation programmes are still a target priority group
Recommendation 3	Consider professional accreditation for International Tourism
Recommendation 4	Widen and broaden external peer review of assessment internationally

Table 16. Birmingham City University (BCU) Recommendations

Recommendation 1	Continue process of reorganising schools and faculties, but ensure that there is centralisation of existing policies and planning
Recommendation 2	Provide support for academic staff with poor quality teaching
Recommendation 3	Increase opportunities for staff mobility with Erasmus
Recommendation 4	Develop institutional strategy for blended online learning
Recommendation 5	Provide professional development to staff on external peer review of assessment
Recommendation 6	Strengthen the function of CELT as a collegial support for curriculum development and review

Table 17. Lincoln University Recommendations

Recommendation 1	Progress the completion of the Pacific Strategy Plan and re-establish MAPAS and Te Awhioraki class representatives
Recommendation 2	Develop strategies to support Māori and Pasifika students in career development
Recommendation 3	Progress the development of statements in protocols for Māori responsiveness
Recommendation 4	Review Poutama Strategy to ensure consistency of delivery of programmes to support Māori students
Recommendation 5	Disseminate the Māori responsiveness matrix with staff
Recommendation 6	Improve induction and professional development of staff in teaching quality

Table 18. Swinburne University Recommendations

Recommendation 1	Progress data modelling to identify unit metrics which can be used as lead indicators of course quality
Recommendation 2	Progress clarification of teaching expectations as part of the review of workloads
Recommendation 3	More work to be undertaken in increasing staff participation in mobility programs and staff exchanges

Table 19. The University of Tasmania Recommendations

Recommendation 1	Progress tracking of data analytics in the Learning Management System to identify just in time data for student progression and success
Recommendation 2	Undertake mapping of all teaching and learning policies to identify gaps in teaching quality
Recommendation 3	Identify strategies to increase sessional staff numbers in professional development sessions
Recommendation 4	More work to be undertaken in increasing staff participation in mobility programs and staff exchanges

Table 20. Victoria University Recommendations

Recommendation 1	Progress tracking of data analytics in the Learning Management System to identify just in time data for student progression and success
Recommendation 2	Develop more comprehensive approach to pathways, including further development of foundations and HE diploma programs that provide clear entry points
Recommendation 3	Develop consistent approaches and resources for staff across moderation and benchmarking activities
Recommendation 4	Identify strategies to improve support for sessional staff and to engage them in early professional development

7. Project evaluation

Feedback on the benchmarking project was collected through feedback at the peer review workshop and also through an online survey if they wished to provide further reflection (two universities did). Project participants provided the following evaluation of the project and peer review workshop:

Value of the process

- Very useful exercise, particularly the information gathering in the self-review phase.

- Important to come away from institution in one place to have these discussions. Size of group was quite nice, not too big. A number of things I will take away.

- Nice to know there are more similarities than differences. Alive and useful. Had made a lot of lists.

- Really enjoyed it. Thanks for organisation, one of the best organised events I have been to for a long time. Very useful when you are an external examiner and you learn more when you give.

- Every minute has been worthwhile. Have written lots of notes. I am passionate about benchmarking, we know we don't do it well and I am excited about it.

- I think the process of seeing how the information comes together and then meeting has been really useful. Really well organised.

- Very useful and it has been about broadening our outlook. Hope to be able to influence decision makers and go down the path of improvements that we have identified.

- Benchmarking methodology has huge potential. APN network did a project a few years ago and we never got to evaluate. Methodology has lots of applications.

- It was very valuable. TEQSA was set up as an arm's length model, it is important for us to get out there and hear the collegial discussion. Devil is in the follow up, we will be looking to see if collegial discussions took place and were followed up by actions.

- Having two days to talk about excellence in teaching in such depth with such openness was an inspiration. For me, when I think of the last few days: all the hallmarks that OLT aspires to. I did have a deep belief that collaboration, particularly across institutions and internationally, is what builds innovation and leadership for innovation and I saw all that here today.

- Meeting and discussing with people face-to-face. The opportunity for collegial discussions on emerging areas of good practice.

Areas for consideration where the process might be improved

- Some challenges in terms of benchmarking tool and questions being repeated

- One thing that I would do differently, is to have a discussion on ratings. I would suggest that these be left blank (others felt the initial grade was important as a starting point for discussion).

- One suggestion I would make for future exercises would be to consider having a more reflective analysis upfront, drawing out the major themes of good practice and major needs for improvement in aggregate, *i.e.* not necessarily broken down by provider. This would help see the wood for the trees, so to speak.

- Perhaps less items and more time to discuss. Each discussion to conclude with a re-appraisal of the 'grade' given.

- In the outcomes table, the format could distinguish under each criteria between the framework of policies, procedures and practices in place on the one hand, and the effectiveness of the framework in practice on the other. These could be separate sub-sections in each phase.

8. Conclusions

This international benchmarking project was a 'proof of concept' that was trialled with 7 universities across Australia, New Zealand and the UK. Interestingly, the key findings across the HE institutions and three countries identified:

- Many similar challenges across HE irrespective of national constituency. These include: time lag in survey data; inconsistency in approach in strategic and operational plans; accessing teaching surveys for quality assurance processes; and funding for teaching quality;

- Similar strengths/and or agreement on priorities across HE: partnerships with schools; importance of blended learning; and the externality of programmes is essential for creditability and validation.

At the end of the two day workshop the aims of the project were achieved. Participants clearly valued the process and each had areas of good practice affirmed and recommendations for internal action noted.

A particularly useful part of the discussion, in our view, was unpacking some of the differences in terminology used by different countries. For instance, current policy and practice in New Zealand refers to acknowledging and accommodating learner diversity and sets explicit priorities, while in the United Kingdom and Australia similar issues of supporting disadvantaged learners are addressed in the language of "inclusivity". There was particular interest too in the United Kingdom's Professional Standards Framework for teachers in higher education.

While generally highly favourable, the evaluation suggested that this exercise was possibly too ambitious in the range of topics covered in one exercise and that there may have been additional value to be gained in exploring fewer topics in more depth. In particular, this may have allowed better unpacking of the links between national and institutional policies and the effectiveness of the implementation of those institutional policies.

The value of initial self-rating was also discussed, with a general view that this was an important first step in helping focus self-review and following peer review discussion, but here may have been value in a more formal process of re-appraisal of self-ratings once each part of the peer review discussion was completed. Again time constraints prevented this in this instance.

Essentially, the methodology provides a structured and cost-effective framework for purposeful self-evaluation and then validation of that self-evaluation through discussion with external peers. While it is important to structure the questions with some care, it is not necessary to develop them with undue precision. It is inevitable they will be interpreted differently in different institutional contexts and, as some participants pointed out in this instance, may risk becoming repetitive. On the other-hand, they should be viewed – and proved to be – very much as starting points for progressive discussion.

Initially too, we had some concern that very different institutional contexts might prompt some discussants to talk past each other. Having gone to some lengths to provide a high level overview of the demographics and mission of each university, so that each participating university had a broad understanding of key drivers and context for the others, this proved not to be the case.

Our conclusion is that this is a methodology that has value both for national benchmarking exercises and international ones. It does, however, rely on considerable levels of mutual trust and a genuine enthusiasm for and open-mindedness about how best to serve our students in the future. We thank all our participants for being so ready to share their practice and ideas so openly. We thank their institutions for allowing them to do so.

Possible areas for future collaboration across Australia, New Zealand and the UK universities include: benchmarking employability processes and data; student experience surveys and processes; and peer review of assessment.

9. References

ACODE. (2014). The Australasian Council on Open, Distance and e-learning. *Benchmarks for e-Learning in Universities and Guidelines for Use*. Retrieved 27 May, 2015, from http://www.acode.edu.au/pluginfile.php/579/mod_resource/content/3/TEL_Benchmarks.pdf

Booth, S., Melano, A., Sainsbury, H., & Woodley, L. (2011) 'Articulating and comparing standards through benchmarking of assessment', Proceedings of the Australian Quality Forum 2011, 29 June – 1 July 2011, Melbourne, pp. 38-47.

Jackson, N. & Lund, H. (eds.) (2000) *Benchmarking for higher education*. Society for Research into Higher Education & Open University Press, United Kingdom.

Stella, A., & Woodhouse, D. (2007). *Benchmarking in Australian higher education: A thematic analysis of AUQA audit reports:* Citeseer.

Tertiary Education Strategy (2014-2019). Ministry of Education and the Ministry of Business, Innovation and Employment. New Zealand Government, Wellington. Retrieved 05 August, 2015, from http://www.education.govt.nz/further-education/policies-and-strategies/tertiary-education-strategy/

Appendix A: List of participants

Organisation Representatives	University Representatives
Dr Peter Coolbear, Ako Aotearoa	Dr Ineke Kranenburg, Auckland University of Technology (AUT)
Daniela Theodorou, Ako Aotearoa	Linda O'Neill, Auckland University of Technology (AUT)
Rhonda Thomson, Ako Aotearoa	Christine Ma'auga, Lincoln University, Christchurch (LU)
Michael Tomlinson, Tertiary Education Quality Standards Agency (TEQSA), Melbourne, Australia	Jo Frew, Lincoln University, Christchurch (LU)
Heather Kirkwood, The Academic Quality Agency for New Zealand Universities (AQA), Wellington	Jenny Eland, Birmingham City University (BCU)
Dr Jan Cameron, Academic Quality Agency for New Zealand Universities (AQA), Wellington	Dr Graham Lowe, Head of Learning and Teaching Practice (CELT), Birmingham City University (BCU)
Di Weddell, Branch Manager Office for Learning and Teaching (OLT), Australia	Wayne Jencke, Swinburne University of Technology
Donna Bell, Higher Education Consultant	Assoc Prof Natalie Brown, University of Tasmania (UTAS)
	Dr Sara Booth, University of Tasmania (UTAS)
	Assoc Prof Nicolette Lee, Victoria University, Melbourne (VU)
	Susan Young, Victoria University, Melbourne (VU)
	Jon Renyard, The Arts University Bournemouth (AUB) [sent through valuation, but unable to attend in person]

Appendix B: Institutional strategic statements

Auckland University of Technology (AUT): The Vice Chancellor's priorities for 2013 reflect the five themes in the 2012-2016 Strategic plan; http://www.news.aut.ac.nz/publications/strategic-plan

1. Learning and teaching – increasing student success rates for all groups of students at all levels of study

2. Research and scholarship – advancing knowledge and stimulating learning

3. Staff – being a workplace that is great for all staff by supporting achievement, involvement and development

4. Engagement with communities – Business, industry, professions and employers through knowledge exchange, staff opportunities and research and development

5. Continuous development and capacity building – contributing to environmental sustainability through research, innovation and the practices and operations as a large organisation

AUT is a university for the changing world, an increasingly powerful force for learning and discovery. A contemporary, connected and relevant study destination, it has differentiated itself through its commitment to widening university access and participation, and its engagement with business, industry and communities.

Lincoln University (LU) From the Lincoln University Strategic Plan (2014-2018) accessed at http://www.lincoln.ac.nz/Documents/Marketing/Publications/LincolnUniversity%20Strategic%20Plan%202014-2018.pdf outlines;

Mission: Deliver a great whole-of-university experience for students, clients and staff.

Vision: A specialist land-based university that's a great place to learn, discover and share.

Objectives:

• Vibrant, successful student experience and highly-employable, entrepreneurial graduates,

• who will embrace life-long learning and continuing professional development

• High engagement with clients

• Energetic, high-performing, well-rewarded staff

• Innovative and responsive curriculum

• Creative, productive, high-yielding research that informs policy and practice

• Modern equipment and facilities

• Culture that engenders quality

• Achieve surplus with annual growth in revenue of 5%.

Strap line: Feed the world, protect the future, live well

Birmingham City University (BCU)
Birmingham City University Strategic Plan (2020) accessed at http://www.bcu.ac.uk/about-us/corporate-information includes;

Vision

- To be recognised as the leading University for creative and professional practice-based education in UK

- To have highly employable graduates with knowledge, attributes and practice skills to successfully progress in their lives and careers

- Through applied research and knowledge exchange create advantage for students, organisations, our city and region, and for wider society

- To be recognised as the sector leader in student engagement

- To be the University FOR Birmingham and with a global reach

- To continue to be an employer of choice and attract innovative and enterprising staff

Mission: To transform the prospects of individuals, organisations and society through excellence in practice-based education, research and knowledge exchange.

Swinburne University From the Swinburne University of Technology 2020 Plan accessed at; http://www.swinburne.edu.au/about/strategy-initiatives/2020-plan/

By 2020, Swinburne will be Australia's leading university of science, technology and innovation.

To achieve this, we will:

- embrace a university-wide commitment to growth through excellence

- engage our students through quality, personalised education

- produce outstanding research that is relevant and internationally-recognised

- be the partner of choice for the industries and communities we serve.

Values: Innovation, Integrity, Accountability, Diversity, Teamwork, Sustainability.

The Arts University Bournemouth Arts University Bournemouth Strategic Plan 2014-2019 accessed at; http://webdocs.aucb.ac.uk/Strategic%20Plan.pdf

Mission: To be the leading professional arts university dedicated to turning creativity into careers.

Vision: Within five years to be distinctive for our maker culture and leadership in creative learning.

Values: Innovative, Collaborative and Connected.

The Arts University Bournemouth is a specialist provider of high quality teaching, learning and scholarship in arts, design, media and performance. Students develop professional capabilities which are aligned to the creative industries and the university achieves high rates of progression by graduates to employment.

This strategic plan maps the aims of the university, the factors which support and enable their achievement.

Our values, identity and shared sense of purpose will ensure that AUB is capable of exploiting future opportunities and remains a destination of choice for students and staff. It will be recognised internationally as a professional arts university.

AUB has an Equalities Strategy accessed at; http://aub.ac.uk/about-us/legal-governance/equalities/

University of Tasmania Open to Talent (2012 onward), accessed at http://www.utas.edu.au/vc/strategic-plan outlines;

UTAS Mission The University of Tasmania continues a long tradition of excellence and commitment to free inquiry in the creation, preservation, communication and application of knowledge, and to scholarship that is global in scope, distinctive in its specialisations and that reflects our Tasmanian character. The University will provide leadership within its community, thereby contributing to the cultural, economic and social development of Tasmania.

UTAS Vision The University of Tasmania will be ranked among the top echelon of research-led universities in Australia. The University will be a world leader in its specialist, thematic areas and will be recognised for its contribution to state, national and international development. UTAS will be characterised by its high-quality academic community, its unique island setting and its distinctive student experience. UTAS graduates will be prepared for life and careers in the globalised society of the twenty-first century.

UTAS Values We subscribe to the fundamental values of honesty, integrity, responsibility, trust and trustworthiness, respect and self-respect, and fairness and justice.

We bring these values to life by our individual and collective commitment to:

• Creating and serving shared purpose

• Nurturing a vital and sustainable community

• Focusing on opportunity

• Working from the strength diversity brings

• Collaborating In ways that helps us be the best we can be

Victoria University (VU) Strategic plan (updated April 2014) accessed on the VU website: http://www.vu.edu.au/about-us/vision-mission

Our vision is to be excellent, engaged and accessible. We aim to be internationally recognised for our leadership in:

• empowering our students to grow their capabilities and transform their lives

• engaging with industry and community to make the world a better place, through the creation, sharing and use of new knowledge.

We will achieve our goals through our distinctive approach to curriculum, the student experience, research and knowledge exchange, and engagement with industry and the community.

Mission: Through its distinctive approach to curriculum, the student experience, research and knowledge exchange, emphasising engagement with industry and the community, Victoria University will be renowned for:

• empowering students from diverse countries and cultures, socioeconomic and educational backgrounds, to be successful lifelong learners, grow their skills and capabilities for the changing world of work, and be confident, creative, ethical and respectful, local and global citizens;

• finding creative and evidence-based solutions to important contemporary challenges in Australia, Asia and globally, relating especially to education and lifelong learning, to health and active living, to the cultural diversity and well-being of communities, to economic development and environmental sustainability, and to the success of particular industries and places, especially our heartland of the West of Melbourne, Australia's fastest growing region.

Appendix C: Institutional demographics

Institution	Country	No. Faculties	Faculty areas	No. Students
Auckland University of Technology	New Zealand	5	Business and Law, Culture & Society, Design & Creative Technologies, Health & Environmental Sciences, Te Ara Poutama	27,688
Lincoln University	New Zealand	5	Agribusiness & Commerce, Agriculture & Life Sciences, Environment, Society & Design, University Studies & English Language Division, Lincoln-Telford Division	6,000 individual students 3000 EFTSL
Birmingham City University	United Kingdom	4	Arts, Design & Media, Health, Education & Life Sciences, Computing, Engineering and Built Environment, Business, Law & Social Sciences	22,500
The Arts University Bournemouth	United Kingdom	2	Faculty of Art, Design & Architecture, Faculty of Media & Performance	3,300 400 pre-degree foundation diploma
Swinburne University	Australia	3 (rationalised from 6)	Faculty of Business & Law, Faculty of Health, Arts & Design, Faculty of Science Engineering & Technology	35,126 onshore >6000 online students
University of Tasmania	Australia	7 Faculties & 14 schools	Arts, AMC, Education, Health, IMAS, Law, Menzies, Science Engineering & Technology, Tas. School of Business & Economics	30,000 25,000 bachelor students
Victoria University	Australia	7 Academic Colleges, VU Colleges, VU Institute of Tech, 13 Research Institutes, 7 Transnational education partners	Academic Colleges; Arts, Business, Education, Engineering & Science, Health & Bio-Medicine, Law & Justice, Sport & Exercise Science, VUIT, VU College	48,992

No. Internat. Students/ (%)	5000 (18%)	23%	Students from 80 countries	10% are overseas	4716 enrolments at Sarawak campus	4500 (15%)	5000
No. Staff	2204	Over 600	2440	330	2141	5900	2300
Strategic Plan includes Priority Learners/ Evidence of consideration of priority learners.	Yes. Priority 1. Delivering new skills for Industry, Priority 2. Boosting achievement of Māori and Pasifika, Priority 5. Strengthening Research-Based institutions, Priority 6. Growing International linkages.	Yes. Priority 3. Boosting success of Māori and Pasifika	Yes. University values: Inclusive education, providing opportunity for those with the abilities & motivations to benefit and to transform their lives, particularly taking a pro-active approach to raising aspirations among socially & economically deprived communities.	Not explicit in Strategic plan itself. However, does have an Equalities Plan http://aub.ac.uk/about-us/legal-governance/equalities/	Yes. Our Students: Reaching more students. Our Research: Personal & Societal Wellbeing.	Yes. Our Priorities Students (S1, S4) Community (C1, C3) Supporting & Enabling Open to Talent (E2)	Yes. 2.2 Mission, 2.3 Values-Access, 2.4 Behaviours, 4.1 The University of Opportunity, 5.1 Learning & Teaching and Student Experience

Appendix D: Glossary of terms

ACODE: Australasian Council on Open, Distance and e-Learning

AQA: Academic Quality Agency

AQF: Australian Qualifications Framework

AUB: The Arts University Bournemouth (United Kingdom)

AUT: Auckland University of Technology (New Zealand)

BCU: Birmingham City University (United Kingdom)

Course: unit, module (multiple required to gain degree or programme qualification).

eVALUate: Internal student evaluation system at the University of Tasmania

LU: Lincoln University (New Zealand)

OLT: Office for Learning and Teaching (Australia)

PD: Professional Development for teaching staff

Process benchmarking: A form of benchmarking that focuses on how results are achieved.

Programme: Overall program of study *e.g.* degree, course

PSF: Professional Standards framework

Swinburne: Swinburne University (Australia)

TEQSA: Tertiary Education Quality and Standards Agency

Unit: Individual component of study

UTAS: University of Tasmania (Australia)

VU: Victoria University (Australia)

Appendix E: Priority learners benchmarking framework: Example

PI#1: Strategies to increase successful participation of priority learners in tertiary education

The New Zealand Government has introduced the Tertiary Education Strategy 2014-2019 to assist tertiary education and its users (learners and businesses) towards a more productive and competitive New Zealand. Tertiary education encompasses all post-school learning, including higher education, applied and vocational training, and training in foundation skills. These learning opportunities occur in a range of settings, including workplaces, universities and polytechnics. It is recognised that all individuals from all backgrounds have the opportunity to realise their talents through tertiary education. Key features of increasing participation of priority learners in New Zealand include evidence of strategic planning; strategies to improve participation of priority learners and collaborative networks.

PERFORMANCE MEASURES	RATING [Four point scale] Yes, Yes BUT, No BUT, No	RATIONALE [Use dot points to identify practices that support this rating]	EVIDENCE [Provide name and web reference, data sources]
1.1 Strategic planning for stakeholder needs Consider and address: a. How does the institution meet stakeholder needs in the Strategic plan (prospective and enrolled learners, communities, employers and industry? *e.g.* Māori, iwi, Pasifika, Aboriginal, Torres Strait Islander, other) b. How does the institution address career guidance and support for students in the Strategic Plan? *e.g.* initiatives that are in place to support priority learners. c. Are the Equity and Diversity Plans in place to address the needs of a diverse learning community? d. How often are these strategic plans and initiatives evaluated? **1.2 Strategies to improve successful participation of students** Consider and address: a. What Strategies are in place to improve successful participation of students from different backgrounds and different learning experiences? b. What information, support and advice are given to school students about their study choices, tertiary transition and benefits of moving to higher education? c. What mentoring and outreach programmes are available to support them in their transition to higher education?			

Appendix F: Summary of quantitative responses (traffic light report)

KEY
1 No
2 No but
3 Yes but
4 Yes
NYR – not yet rated

Performance Measures	Institutional Responses							Mean Response for each PM
	A	B	C	D	E	F	G	
1. Strategies to increase successful participation of priority learners in tertiary education								
1.1 Strategic planning for stakeholder needs								
a. How does the institution meet stakeholder needs in the Strategic plan (prospective and enrolled learners, communities, employers and industry? *e.g.* Māori, iwi, Pasifika, Aboriginal, Torres Strait Islander, other)	4		3	4			4	3.75
b. How does the institution address career guidance and support for students in the Strategic Plan? *e.g.* initiatives that are in place to support priority learners.	3		3	2			4	3
c. Are the Equity and Diversity Plans in place to address the needs of a diverse learning community?	4		3	2			4	3.25
d. How often are these strategic plans and initiatives evaluated?	4		4	4			4	4
Mean Institutional Response	3.75		3.25	3			4	3.5
1.2 Strategies to improve successful participation of students								
a. What Strategies are in place to improve successful participation of students from different backgrounds and different learning experiences?	3		4	3			4	3.5
b. What information, support and advice are given to school students about their study choices, tertiary transition and benefits of moving to higher education?	4		3	4			4	3.75
c. What mentoring and outreach programmes are available to support them in their transition to higher education?	4		2	2			4	3
Mean Institutional Response	3.67		3.25	3			4	

KEY
1 No
2 No but
3 Yes but
4 Yes
NYR – not yet rated

Performance Measures	Institutional Responses							Mean Response for each PM
	A	B	C	D	E	F	G	
1.3 Collaboration with other partners and networks a. What collaboration is undertaken with partners to ensure there is an overall provision of support which provides a range of pathways for students?	3		3	3			4	3.75
b. What pathways are available for students to access and succeed in higher level tertiary study? (esp. priority learners *e.g.* Māori, iwi, Pasifika, Aboriginal, Torres Strait Islander, other)	4		3	4			4	3
c. What other resources and networks are used to support students to improve participation in higher education?	4		4	3			4	3.25
Mean Institutional Response	3.67		3.33	3.33			4	

KEY
1 No
2 No but
3 Yes but
4 Yes
NYR – not yet rated

Performance Measures	Institutional Responses							Mean Response for each PM
	A	B	C	D	E	F	G	
2. Providing professional support for teaching staff								
2.1 Professional academic support and teaching qualifications								
a. What professional academic support is provided to teaching staff to improve student participation in higher education?				2	3		4	3.75
b. What programmes support academics with understanding culturally responsive teaching practices and other student communities?				NYR	3		4	3
c. What professional practice programmes are provided to academics to improve and enhance their teaching qualifications?				32	3		4	3.25
Mean Institutional Response				2.5	3		4	3.5
2.2 Targets & Pathways for Priority Learners (eg.) Teaching Staff								
a. How many teaching staff from Priority Learner communities (eg. Māori, Pasifika, Aboriginal, Torres Strait Islander, Other) work within the tertiary education organisation?	NYR							
b. What appropriate targets are in place to increase the number priority learner community teaching and research staff employed in HE?	NYR							
c. What pathways are available for priority learner community medium teachers?	NYR							
d. What role does teacher training have in raising participation and achievement for levels of priority learner students?	NYR							
Mean Institutional Response								

KEY
1 No
2 No but
3 Yes but
4 Yes
NYR – not yet rated

Performance Measures	A	B	C	D	E	F	G	Mean Response for each PM
3. Teaching Quality								
3.1 Appropriate strategic and operational planning documents and policies								
a. What are the strategic planning documents related to student achievement, academic standards and teaching quality?		4			NYR	3	4	3.67
b. What are the operational planning documents related to student achievement, academic standards and teaching quality? (For e.g. department/faculty planning documents)		3			3	3	4	3.25
c. What are the key performance indicators for teaching quality?		4			3	3	4	3.25
d. What policies are in place to support teaching quality?		3			3	3	4	3.25
Mean Institutional Response				2.5	3		4	3.5
3.2 Supporting academics to enhance teaching quality								
a. What processes are in place to monitor the qualifications of academic staff?		3			3	3	4	3.25
b. What university processes support academic staff in teaching with an appropriate framework for teaching expectations that align with promotions, performance management and human resources processes?		4			3	4	3	3.5
c. What professional development is provided to academic staff to enhance teaching quality?		3			3	4	4	3.5
d. What professional development is provided to sessional staff to support them in enhancing their teaching?		4			3	2	4	3.25
e. How is quality teaching rewarded and recognised?		3			3	4	4	3.5
f. What mobility plans are in place to enhance teaching quality (For e.g. staff exchanges and secondments)?		3			3	2	4	3
Mean Institutional Response		3.33			3	3.17	3.83	

KEY
1 No
2 No but
3 Yes but
4 Yes
NYR – not yet rated

Performance Measures	Institutional Responses							Mean Response for each PM
	A	B	C	D	E	F	G	
3.3 Adequate financial resources to monitor and support teaching quality a. What targets are set to monitor teaching quality (student: staff ratio)?		3			3	3	1	
b. What financial resources are put aside to support professional development, reward and recognition of staff? Provide examples of projects.		4			3	4	4	3.75
c. What resources are put in place to support online teaching?		3			3	3	3	3
Mean Institutional Response		3.33			3	3.33	2.67	
3.4 Evaluation of teaching quality a. What processes are in place to evaluate teaching? (For e.g. student evaluation, peer review of teaching).		3			3	3	3	3
b. What external surveys are undertaken to benchmark teaching quality with other universities?		4			3	4	4	3.75
c. How is this evaluation data used to improve teaching quality?		4			3	3	4	3.5
Mean Institutional Response								

KEY
1 No
2 No but
3 Yes but
4 Yes
NYR – not yet rated

Performance Measures		Institutional Responses							Mean Response for each PM
		A	B	C	D	E	F	G	
3.5 Recovery plans and procedures to facilitate continuity of teaching and learning.	a. What recovery plans and procedures are in place to facilitate continuity of teaching and learning?					3	4		3.5
	b. What processes are in place for specific infrastructure (IT systems going down)?					3	4		3.5
	c. What processes are in place for infrastructure failure (electricity)?					NYR	4		4
	d. What disaster impact processes are in place (fire, flooding, earthquake)?					NYR	4		4
Mean Institutional Response						3	4		

KEY
1 No
2 No but
3 Yes but
4 Yes
NYR – not yet rated

Performance Measures	Institutional Responses							Mean Response for each PM
	A	B	C	D	E	F	G	
4. Curriculum quality								
4.1 Curriculum approval, development and review. a. What quality processes are in place to support curriculum approval, development and review?			4	4				4
b. What policies and procedures are in place to support academics in curriculum quality?			4	NYR				4
c. How often are these processes reviewed?			4	3				3.5
Mean Institutional Response			4	3.5				

KEY
1 No
2 No but
3 Yes but
4 Yes
NYR – not yet rated

5. Peer review of assessment

Performance Measures	Institutional Responses							Mean Response for each PM
	A	B	C	D	E	F	G	
5.1 Peer review of assessment								
a. What external benchmarking and peer review processes are in place? (For *e.g.* professional accreditation). Who are your external partners? When was the most recent peer review conducted?	2		4				4	4
b. What internal peer review moderation processes are there? (For *e.g.* assessment moderation, double marking, external marking)	4		4				4	4
c. What benchmarking of learning standards and/or assessment standards against similar courses of study offered by other higher education providers is undertaken?	3		3				3	3
d. What processes are in place to ensure confidentiality, security of data and calibration of assessment?	4		4				4	4
Mean Institutional Response	3.25		3.75				3.75	

AKO AOTEAROA
NATIONAL CENTRE FOR
TERTIARY TEACHING
EXCELLENCE