RMIT Quality Forum
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Listening productively in VET & Higher Education

Addressing the new quality agenda for Higher Education

Emeritus Professor Geoff Scott
OLT National Senior Teaching Fellow
Western Sydney University
Overview

Listening Productively

To:

- Students who leave at the end of year one
- The findings from the Accessing the Student Voice and Workskill Australia research
- Successful early career graduates
- VET & HE teachers and professional staff
- Carefully selected external stakeholders
- Government
- What next?
What does listening *productively* entail?

- Requires the use of a validated quality framework
- With a focus on what optimises not only the quality of inputs but of retention, positive outcomes and impact
- When ‘listening’ we can use
  - Surveys (qualitative & quantitative with importance and/or performance ratings), learning analytics data, views of student reps, informal student feedback, an early formative assessment task, a six week BA/NI survey, observation, interviews
  - Plus?
- Being clear on whose voice counts most or least
- Wise use of benchmarking – e.g. ACU students as co-creators of the curriculum project in 2016
An overall Quality & Standards framework for L&T

1. Learning design
2. Aligned support & infrastructure
3. Delivery
4. Impact

Aligned governance, policy, strategy, quality management & resourcing system
Some empirical data: From a First Year Exit Survey (n = 130)

Major reason for withdrawing (in rank order)
1. Course was not what was expected
2. Teaching and learning methods were un-motivating
3. Timetable made attendance difficult
4. Was pressured to enrol in a course I was not really interested in
5. Unclear assessment expectations
6. Bureaucratic run around
7. Difficulties in enrolment
8. Concerns not listened to or followed up
9. Family pressures/change of career/shift to another city
10. Not enough staff feedback or individual help
Student suggestions on how to improve retention

- Clarify what we want before we enrol and check the course fits this.
- At the outset explain how the course works from A to Z.
- Make sure we all understand what the census date means.
- Go through assessment in detail in the first class.
- Stage our assessment so we can learn how its works and get some feedback.
- Teach us to grade ourselves.
- Provide more learning options.
- Help us to minimise travel times and make classes as accessible as possible.
- Show us how the online learning system works – use ‘how to’ videos.
- Give us more direct support on how to adjust to uni life.
- Help shy people like me feel part of the university.
- Encourage students to talk to counsellors more.
- Use senior students from my background as mentors.
- Set up a student help line and use FAQs on our online learning site.
Accessing the Student Voice & Skill Olympics Data

- Relevant
- Active learning & peer support
- Theory-Practice Links
- Expectations clear
- Direction clear
- Capabilities and competencies that count are the focus
- Learning flexibility
- Assessment clarity and feedback
- Staff capable and responsive
- Support systems timely and helpful
- Access is easy
Studies of successful graduates
Using a validated professional capability framework
Professional capability subscales

Personal capabilities

• Self awareness and regulation
• Decisiveness
• Commitment

Interpersonal capabilities

• Influencing
• Empathising

Cognitive capabilities

• Diagnosis
• Strategy
• Flexibility and responsiveness
Top ranking capabilities successful graduates in 9 professions

1. Being able to organise work and manage time effectively (GSK)
2. Wanting to produce as good a job as possible (P)
3. Being able to set and justify priorities (C)
4. Being able to remain calm under pressure or when things go wrong (P)
5. Being willing to face and learn from errors and listen openly to feedback (P)
6. Being able to identify the core issue from a mass of detail in any situation (C)
7. Being able to work with senior staff without being intimidated (IP)
8. Being willing to take responsibility for projects & how they turn out (P)
9. Being able to develop and contribute positively to team-based projects (IP)
10. A willingness to persevere when things are not working out as anticipated (P)
11. The ability to empathise and work productively with people from a wide range of backgrounds (IP)
12. Being able to develop and use networks of colleagues to help solve key workplace problems (IP)

Code: GSK – generic skills & knowledge; P-personal capability; IP – interpersonal capability; C – cognitive capability
Listening with focus to teachers & professional staff
- studies of their successful engagement in desired changes

- ‘Just-in -time’ and ‘just-for-me’ support
- Timely and constructive feedback and warranted praise
- Access to ‘fellow travellers’ – lonely planet guides
- Leaders who listen, link, leverage and then lead
- Clear direction with focus on a small number of priorities
- Need to see the relevance, desirability, clarity, & feasibility of a change
- Recognising that all change is learning and that not all change is seen as progress
- How staff like to learn = how students like to learn
- Need to listen more to sessional staff and field supervisors
- Convenient, active involvement in course development and review
- Meet less but meet better
Listening to external stakeholders?

- The importance of deciding whose voice counts most or least in each FoE & why
  - Employers, entrepreneurs, peak industry groups, external advisory committees & reviewers, successful graduates, professional accreditation bodies, benchmarking partners, fellow teachers in other HEIs, TEQSA, Auditors, community organisations, parents, schools, incoming students, government, plus?

- Need to listen with a framework

- Benchmarking to prove and improve quality
Capabilities greater than 4/5 on importance for 147 Western Sydney employers

**Personal capabilities**

Willing to learn from errors; calm under pressure; perseveres; responsible; wants to do a good job; ethical practitioner; sustainability literate; adaptable; knows own strengths/weaknesses; can defer judgement; pitches in; has sense of humour & perspective

**Interpersonal capabilities**

Empathy – can work with diversity; listens; networks well; team-player; communicates effectively; understands organisations; not intimidated

**Cognitive capabilities**

Can set priorities; sees key point; diagnostic not fixed approach; can adjust plans in practice; independent thinker; creative & enterprising

**Generic skills & knowledge**

Can organise and manage workload; effective user of IT; effective at self-managed learning and professional development; sustainability literate
Attending to current government priorities

Overall

• More focus on the quality of outcomes not just inputs
• Work ready *plus* graduates for the ‘age of acceleration’
• Sharper regulation, admission and improved retention
• More ICT-savvy graduates

From the Aug 2017 Productivity Report ‘*Shifting the dial*’ ->

VET

• Proficiency-based assessment – grades not just a minimum standard
• Training packages too numerous & need more focus on work ready *plus*
• More just-in-time and just-for-me situated training
• Sorting out the right role for technology-enabled learning

Higher Education

• More focus on teaching not just research
Some L&T myths to be alert to in this area

- One size learning designs and assessment fits all
- MOOCs are the answer
- Information is learning
- Teaching is learning
- Learning is not a profoundly social experience
- Students will know how to use ICT for learning
- Assessment doesn’t count
- All change is progress
- Change is achieved through brute logic
- The ‘knight on the white charger’ myth
- When in doubt restructure
What next?

- A common capability framework for VET & HE at RMIT
- Work ready plus focus
- A common quality framework using FLIPCurric when developing and reviewing programs
- Being clear on whose voice counts most or least when seeking feedback – consider giving more voice to successful early career graduates
- Listen early and listen well
- More use of lonely planet guides – consolidated wisdom
- Remember that nothing is new only that which is forgotten
Further reading and resources


