

draft

## A. Education Committee and 'quality'

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### Background

'Quality' in relation to teaching and learning in this faculty is thought of, for the most part, as unit evaluations and MEQ. In a small way ALTC and vice-chancellor awards have counted as a 'quality' activity in an attempt to recognise teaching and learning achievements. But student perceptions appear to have become a primary arbiter of what is quality teaching and learning. The Faculty has an Education Quality Sub-committee but it has struggled to find things to pad out the agenda four times per year. It has opined the flaws of university student experience measures and ruminated about the need to implement positive strategies, but to date has not had a vision, or the required engagement of members, to generate any initiatives. But we are not alone.

Paradoxically, within universities, quality as demonstrated conformance to accountability requirements has been privileged over quality improvement as learning about how we can do better towards achieving our purpose. Substantial effort has been directed towards developing quality processes that, at best, marginally contribute to answering this fundamental question of quality improvement (Houston 2008).

While student experience data can provide some useful evidence of trends and the student perspective is a critical one, there are other activities in the faculty that are more directly about enhancing 'quality', in that they foster wide-spread innovation, experimentation, sharing of what works, collaboration and investigation, through aiming to inspire and transform teaching and learning. However, these could be more systematically and strategically conceived of by the Education Committee with a more deliberate approach to generating a widely embraced proactive 'breakthrough'<sup>1</sup> ethos across the Faculty.

Thus the proposals below are designed to further a rigorous discussion about a different and strategic approach to 'quality' in the Faculty of Education, on the basis that the approaches we have taken to date have inspired few, if any, of us and that the student evaluation data are indicating that perhaps we need to take a different approach. The proposals are intended to be the basis of a 'consultative' process that began with the Education Quality Sub-committee on 11 February, is to be furthered at Education Committee on 18 February and the Faculty Planning retreat on 19 and 20 February.

'The strategic choice of an organisation should be based on an equilibrium between outside and inside orientation on the one hand and between an orientation based on control and change on the other' (Hardojono, 1995). Breakthrough will only be possible if the organisation has enough control and enough stability as a solid base to build on. Community, continuous improvement and control are needed to get to breakthrough.' (Kemanade, Pupius et al. 2008)

### Funding proposals

The research portfolio has an annual budget allocation that is spent at the discretion of the Research Committee. This budget is initially developed via the Research Resourcing Sub-committee. The Education Portfolio has monies allocated through the Learning and Teaching Performance fund but which has constraints and restrictions tied to it, in particular a focus on undergraduate education. Other monies have been made available through leftover funding or are sourced on an ad hoc basis through funds such as the Strategic Initiatives Fund. These external sources have in-built constraints and limitations and they often occur as a fairly ad hoc response to offers of ad hoc funding for particular university or government initiatives.

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<sup>1</sup> Organisations with intellectual competence oriented to creativity (Kemanade et al. p181)

1. That an annual baseline amount of funding be allocated to the Education Portfolio to be spent at the discretion of the Education committee.
2. That an Education Budget working party be formed to develop a draft budget per annum for Education committee to approve.
3. That the budget be developed to support key long term strategic as well as annual priorities identified by Education Committee.

## **Student experience**

It is no doubt that students are a key 'stakeholder' and if a rights based values perspective is adopted, then students views must have a central place. Unit evaluation and MEQ data can now begin to provide some trend and comparative analysis over time and may increase in usefulness for identifying those issues and areas that appear intractable or resistant to positive trends and those areas of consistent strength that can be learned from. The Faculty has an action plan that ensures course directors are provided with detailed information about specific units and courses and it is proposed that this plan continue. Accountability for continued poor ratings is an issue for the Faculty to tackle but should not be thought of as the Faculty's key response to improving quality. The university requires that we utilize unit evaluation and MEQ etc information, and the data provides a valuable starting point, but we need a finer grained understanding of collective student perspectives. Creating opportunities for dialogue with students might enable generation of consensus based policies, for example, a policy on turn around time for submitted assessment tasks. Which in the long term may result in improved unit evaluation ratings.

4. That *Education Quality sub-committee* be renamed *Student experience sub-committee* and its Terms of Reference be amended to focus specifically on the management of unit evaluations, MEQ and MSEQ and design and implementation of tailored opportunities for dialogue with students and for student representation. Refer attached amended Terms of Reference. This smaller committee would have carriage of interrogating the available data and presenting it carefully to Education Committee to inform decision making in relation to strategic initiatives and specific actions.
5. That student fora be implemented on a trial basis as one of the activities of the *Student experience sub-committee*. The Director Student Affairs suggests the following: Student representatives would be sought to meet with Unit leaders/Course Advisors or Directors to have informal discussion about students' experiences of their learning. This could include Masters coursework units as well as Undergraduate units. Students would bring issues raised with them from students in their courses, about what is good/not so good to help build better picture of students' needs and concerns. An informal forum could be held twice per year (mid and end), around time of BOE. Responses from these fora would be analysed and recommendations forwarded to Education committee.
6. That a budget allocation be made for this sub-committee.
7. That a budget line be available to source data analysis support to prepare unit evaluation reports each semester and MEQ/MSEQ reports every two years. This proposal may not be required if proposed new data analysis formats from CHEQ are sufficient for our purposes. However, if not, and in those circumstances where the *Student experience sub-committee* or *Education Committee* seeks specific additional information, ready access to qualified assistance would facilitate timely and accurate data analysis upon which to build reports and recommendations.

## **Fostering creative curriculum and pedagogy**

The *Education Quality sub-committee* has had a very clear view that student evaluation data can be used as an indicator but not a sole source of evidence for either performance management or promotion or celebration of achievement. With the need to create a balance in mind, and with the specific focus on student experience now paid through proposals 4 and 5,

the following proposals have been developed to promote a collective faculty ethos of creativity and evidence based exploration for curriculum and pedagogy renewal:

8. That Education committee develop a strategic approach, with an on-going budget allocation, that supports and fosters creative ideas and efforts within the faculty. Activities could include:

- Identification of one key strategic focus per annum based on the evidence collected through unit evaluations, MEQ, focus groups among a range of other evidence gathering activities. A project plan would be developed including:
  - Development and design of an appropriate methodology or set of activities for each focus or project
  - Establishment of a representative reference group for each project
  - Employment of a project manager (part time) as a permanent part time position to manage each annual project
- Small grants for innovative or experimental teaching and learning initiatives: Each year, Education Committee would have available an amount of money to be provided to academic and professional staff as individuals or teams, to undertake projects that meet the following broad aims, and other specific criteria developed per annum by the Education Committee:

*Aims:*

- To contribute to the Monash University mission to improve the human condition by advancing knowledge and fostering creativity
- To foster and support transformative learning experiences for each Faculty of Education student
- To foster and support transformative teaching practices in each Faculty of Education teaching and learning instance
- To foster and support transformative learning experiences for each Faculty of Education teaching staff member and teaching and learning professional staff member

*Specific criteria:*

These might include that the proposals need to relate to the chosen annual focus or might include specific encouragement/involvement of certain cohorts of staff, ie. Sessional staff, those identified as priority ALTC citation and award nominees (see below).

Findings from these small projects would contribute to development of focal points/projects per annum.

- Showcases  
These could be based on the small grant projects from above, or another selection criteria. They could be developed around the annual focal points. They could be a requirement of the selection criteria for selecting priority ALTC citation and award nominees. A working party of Education Committee members or their nominees will be established for each showcase event.
- Priority ALTC (and other) Award nominees  
A process for identifying and prioritising potential Faculty ALTC citation and award nominees, VC showcase, VC Awards nominees will be established to provide selected nominees with a grant to buy out time to properly develop applications. Putting together the applications is time consuming and burdensome. A scheme for supporting professional staff nominees will also need to be developed. A working party would be established to develop a process for endorsement by Education Committee.

- Houston, D. (2008). "Rethinking quality and improvement in higher education." Quality Assurance in Education **16**(1): 61-79.
- Kemanade, E. V., M. Papius, et al. (2008). "More Value to defining Quality." Quality in Higher Education **14**(2): 175-185.
- Stensaker, B. (2008). "Outcomes of Quality Assurance: A Discussion of Knowledge, Methodology and Validity." Quality in Higher Education **14**(1): 3-13.



**B.**  
**Student experience sub-committee**  
**Terms of Reference**

**Background**

Throughout 2006, a small working party formed under the auspices of the then Curriculum Committee to consider management of the unit evaluation process and use of unit evaluation data. During this time it was considered important to broaden the consideration of 'quality' to take into account MEQ, MESQ, MONQUEST, TQAIC and other quality assurance measures as well as to position the Faculty with a principled and pedagogically sound approach to the 'quality' expectations of the university and funding bodies. Thus the Education Quality Sub-Committee was established as a standing committee of the Education Committee in 2007. Membership was deemed to be all Course Directors.

The committee met a number of times throughout 2007, however the timing of meetings and a range of other factors resulted in limited activities and achievements. Thus a renewed membership arrangement and Terms of Reference were proposed and approved by Faculty Board.

The sub-committee met throughout 2008 but did not generate new initiatives. Thus, after consultation with members, the Terms of Reference have again been revised to tightly specify the role of the sub-committee as managing student evaluation processes and analysis of data. The name of the committee was changed to reflect the specific student experience focus. Other quality initiatives, focusing on creative curriculum and pedagogy, became the direct remit of the Education Committee.

**Status, purpose and scope:**

The Student experience sub-committee is a standing sub-committee of the Faculty of Education, Education Committee. The Committee:

- oversees the implementation and data analysis of university-wide Unit Evaluation, MEQ and MSEQ student experience quality assurance activities
- designs and implements Faculty specific qualitative activities to further understand the student experience
- makes recommendations to the Education committee based on the data and evidence collected from the above activities.

**Aims and objectives:**

**Aims**

- To effectively gather and analyse meaningful information about student experience in the Faculty of Education to inform Education curriculum and pedagogy initiatives designed to promote creativity.
- To develop processes to facilitate dialogue between staff and students regarding student experiences in the Faculty of Education.

**Objectives**

- To maximize response rates to unit evaluations, MEQ, MSEQ and other university quality assurance initiatives where possible
- To provide analysis and reporting on the findings of unit evaluations each semester and MEQ/MSEQ every second year within one month of receipt of the raw data
- To generate recommendations for Education Committee in relation to the analysis and findings from the data
- To design and conduct faculty specific activities to generate targeted feedback from particular groups of students about particular matters.

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**Membership**

The Committee is made up of the following members:

Chair: Associate Dean Teaching

Director Student Affairs

Manager Academic Services and Quality

Assoc. Dean Teaching nominee

Seconded members as required (eg. Manager Admissions and student services, International Office, Placements Office representatives).

**Executive support**

Executive support will be provided by Manager Academic Services and Quality.

**Term of operation**

On-going with a review in 2010.

**Meetings and responsibilities**

Meetings will be held:

1. at the commencement of each year to plan strategies for maximizing response rates and to plan other student evaluation initiatives.
2. on receipt of raw data from CHEQ and thereafter as required until completion of reports for Education Committee.

**Reporting**

The Student experience sub-committee is expected to provide a report with recommendations to Education Committee within one month of receipt of raw data from CHEQ and at other appropriate times throughout the year.