Hunters & Gatherers: Strategies for Curriculum Mapping and Data Collection for Assurance of Learning.

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Abstract

Assurance of learning is a predominant feature in both quality enhancement and assurance in higher education. Assurance of learning is a process that articulates explicit program outcomes and standards, and systematically gathers evidence to determine the extent to which performance matches expectations. Benefits accrue to the institution through the systematic assessment of whole of program goals. Data may be used for continuous improvement, program development, and to inform external accreditation and evaluation bodies. Recent developments, including the introduction of the Tertiary Education and Quality Standards Agency (TEQSA) will require universities to review the methods they use to assure learning outcomes.

This project investigates two critical elements of assurance of learning: 1. the mapping of graduate attributes throughout a program; and 2. the collection of assurance data. An audit was conducted with twenty five Business Schools in Australian universities to identify current methods of mapping graduate attributes across degree programs and their impact on the curriculum, followed by a review of the systems used to collect and store data.

Our findings indicate that external drivers like professional body accreditation (for example: Chartered Professional Accountants (CPA); Association to Advance Collegiate Schools of Business (AACSB)) and TEQSA are important motivators for assuring learning, and those who were undertaking AACSB accreditation had more robust assurance of learning systems in place. It was reassuring to see that the majority of institutions (96%) had adopted an embedding approach to assuring learning rather than opting for independent standardised testing.

The main challenges that were evident were the development of sustainable processes not considered a burden to academic staff, and obtainment of academic buy in to the benefits of assuring learning rather than assurance being seen as a tick box exercise. This cultural change is the real challenge in assurance of learning practice.

Keywords – Assurance of Learning, Curriculum Mapping, Staff Engagement