

VU

Learning and Teaching Quality and Standards

Framework

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1. Introduction

Victoria University is committed to ensuring that it systematically undertakes quality assurance and quality improvement strategies in relation to course delivery and the student learning experience. For this purpose, the University has recently embarked on a process to outline key quality measures that will be used to judge success while monitoring the learning and teaching instruments that will be used to carry out quality assurance.

The result is the VU Learning and Teaching Quality and Standards Framework, an overarching structure that draws on the AUQA commended framework implemented at the University of Western Sydney, as well as the work of a National Senior Teaching Fellowship. It reflects the result of national and international benchmarking and standards approaches to institutional-wide quality assurance in learning and teaching.

The University has adapted these approaches to the VU context drawing together recent initiatives to streamline and enhance quality and standards activities across the University. The goal is a fit-for-purpose framework that provides an effective, clear and practical mechanism for underpinning a variety of quality assurance activities. The Framework is cognisant of our diverse student body, and is designed to empower the University's academic, teaching, professional, sessional and casual staff to identify, articulate and embed good practice in learning and teaching. Further, it aligns with current learning and teaching policy directions, and is supported by a series of policies, procedures, guidelines and instruments, such as those established for Annual and Comprehensive Course Monitoring.

This Framework should be viewed as a guiding tool for assuring quality and standards in learning and teaching at VU, broadly applicable to higher, vocational and further education and international delivery. In stage 1 of implementation, the Framework is designed to address undergraduate higher education and vocational education contexts. It is anticipated that stage 2 will consider implications for graduate research offerings.

The ultimate aim of the Framework is to ensure that the University's courses undergo continual improvement, review and monitoring to meet state and national minimum standards and to ensure a rewarding outcome for our diverse student body.

2. The Framework

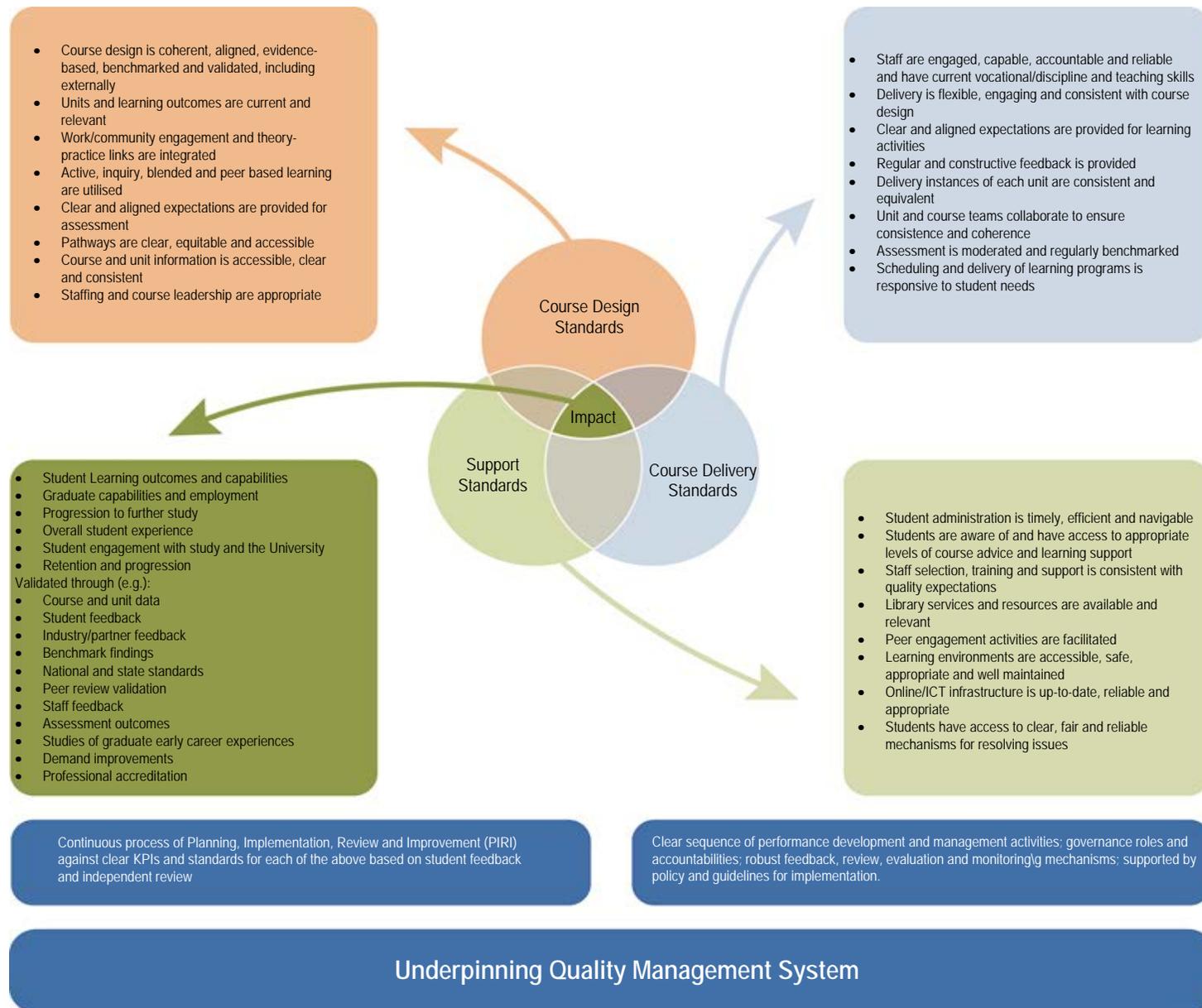
The Framework is underpinned by a set of standards that guide quality assurance and quality enhancement and enable the University to meet and exceed state and national threshold standards for teaching, learning and staff and student support. The advantage of this approach is that it empowers staff to make judgements about the quality of course design and delivery. A set of exemplars will be developed to support staff in implementing the Framework.

The key tenets of the Framework can be seen in Figure 1. This depicts a framework that operates at multiple levels. It outlines *what* is to be given priority and is made up of four interdependent components, including:

1. Course design standards
2. Support (student and teacher) standards
3. Course delivery standards
4. Evidence of Impact of standards on quality and outcomes

The Course Design, Support and Course Delivery components provide an indication of the minimum (or threshold) levels and expectations (minimum standards) of quality learning and teaching activity. The final component – Impact – focuses on ways in which standards outlined in each of these three components impact on student outcomes as learners and graduates, along with the sources of data to evaluate, monitor and manage the University's performance. 'Impact' also provides a broad view of mechanisms by which to gauge the overall effectiveness of the Framework and its effectiveness in embedding quality and standards in learning and teaching at VU.

Figure 1
The VU Learning and Teaching Quality and Standards Framework



The components and sub-components of the Framework operate as part of an overall system directed toward the achievement of desired impact and based on evidence from a range of data sources. Together, these mechanisms form a holistic picture of the environment in which the design, delivery and ongoing tracking and improvement of VU student learning, support and outcomes can occur as part of an overall system. By taking this view of the components of learning, teaching and support for students and staff, the multiple influences on student experience can be seen as part of the larger system, interdependencies managed and risks identified. In short, these components of the overall system provide the basis for the University to ensure that design, delivery, support mechanisms and outcomes are evidence-based, relevant, aligned and mutually supportive.

Importantly, the thresholds in this Framework should be envisaged as a base level of activity upon which staff should feel empowered to build and apply innovations and creative approaches to teaching and learning that exceed the standards and result in positive outcomes in terms of learning, teaching and graduate outcomes.

3. Quality review

The attainment of the standards outlined in the Framework will be monitored by review processes that are both formal and informal.

Informally, the Framework provides staff with a tool to regularly and independently undertake quality reviews, while guiding evaluation against an agreed set of high level concepts that are state and nationally benchmarked and validated. Formally, regular course monitoring and analysis of quality and standards will support staff to carry out extensive reviews at course level. These formal course review processes align with the evidence-based approach inherent in the Framework and ensure that:

- Data reporting is fit-for-purpose and streamlined and targeted to College and staff needs
- Processes are sufficiently flexible to ensure that staff can highlight areas of strong performance and engage in conversations about potential improvement areas
- Achievement and accountability are clear and supported by both review and reporting processes.

4. Implications for policy and procedures

The introduction of a coherent Quality and Standards Framework provides an opportunity to review the ways in which Learning and Teaching is understood and quality assured across the University. Effective quality frameworks involve consistent application and language across domains. Each domain of the Framework will need to be supported by a suite of policies and procedures, along with accountabilities that clarify roles and responsibilities in implementing the Framework

The Framework aligns with the intent of existing policy, course approvals, review processes/criteria and data collection, analysis and reporting, but will require some change to achieve alignment. It is expected that the overarching framework will provide a good fit for all sectors (vocational, further and higher education). However, procedures may differ for vocational education as a consequence of varying regulatory requirements. Ongoing consultation across the University will ensure that each component is aligned with the respective needs of the sectors while remaining coherent in approach.

Appendix A Standards and Impact

Course Design Standards

- Course design is coherent, aligned, evidence-based, benchmarked and validated, including externally
- Units and learning outcomes are current and relevant
- Work/community engagement and theory-practice links are integrated
- Active, inquiry, blended and peer based learning are utilised
- Clear and aligned expectations are provided for assessment
- Pathways are clear, equitable and accessible
- Course and unit information is accessible, clear and consistent
- Staffing and course leadership are appropriate

Course Delivery Standards

- Staff are engaged, capable, accountable and reliable and have current vocational/discipline and teaching skills
- Delivery is flexible, engaging and consistent with course design
- Clear and aligned expectations are provided for learning activities
- Regular and constructive feedback is provided
- Delivery instances of each unit are consistent and equivalent
- Unit and course teams collaborate to ensure consistence and coherence
- Assessment is moderated and regularly benchmarked
- Scheduling and delivery of learning programs is responsive to student needs

Support Standards

- Student administration is timely, efficient and navigable
- Students are aware of and have access to appropriate levels of course advice and learning support
- Staff selection, training and support is consistent with quality expectations
- Library services and resources are available and relevant
- Peer engagement activities are facilitated
- Learning environments are accessible, safe, appropriate and well maintained
- Online/ICT infrastructure is up-to-date, reliable and appropriate
- Students have access to clear, fair and reliable mechanisms for resolving issues

Impact

- Student Learning outcomes and capabilities
- Graduate capabilities and employment
- Progression to further study
- Overall student experience
- Student engagement with study and the University
- Retention and progression

Validated through (e.g.):

- Course and unit data
- Student feedback
- Industry/partner feedback
- Benchmark findings
- National and state standards
- Peer review validation
- Staff feedback
- Assessment outcomes
- Studies of graduate early career experiences
- Demand improvements
- Professional accreditation