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Towards teaching and research parity: a teaching quality and reward framework

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Publication Details

Lemass, B. & Stace, R. (2010). Towards teaching and research parity: a teaching quality and reward framework. *Perspectives: Policy and Practice in Higher Education*, 14 (1), 21-27.

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Abstract

It is well recognised in the literature that teaching is under-valued in status and financial terms when compared to research at most academic institutions. The emergence in Australia of a Research Quality Framework (RQF) risks further eroding the already fragile status of teaching and learning in Australian Universities by diverting academic attention away from teaching to the building of research reputations as a guarantee of future promotion.

Teaching is viewed as not bringing in money, compared to research, despite the fact that the bulk of university income comes from *per capita* funding of students by the government and from full-fee paying students. The prioritisation of research and prevailing promotion rewards for research output have created disincentives to the development of innovative teaching and learning processes. Workload allocation hours for teaching and learning activities are actively being capped, and our 'best' teachers may not necessarily be teaching our most important core subjects.

If teaching in Australia is to be valued equally with research, then domestic institutions will need to be more explicit in their recognition, and rewarding, of excellent teaching. The Teaching Quality and Reward Framework (TQRF) outlined in this paper provides a transparent mechanism for academic staff to plan and pursue a career path with a teaching focus (linked to research) that will be valued and rewarded by senior management.

Towards teaching and research parity: a teaching quality and reward framework (TQRF)

Introduction and background

It is well recognised in the literature that teaching is under-valued in status and financial terms when compared to research at most academic institutions. (Illing and Armitage, 2007; Young, 2006; Ramsden, 1998; Jenkins, 1995). The emergence in Australia of a Research Quality Framework (RQF) risks further eroding the already fragile status of teaching and learning in Australian Universities by diverting academic attention away from teaching to the building of research reputations as a guarantee of future promotion.

Teaching is viewed as not bringing in money, compared to research, despite the fact that the bulk of university income comes from *per capita* funding of students by the government and from full-fee paying students. The prioritisation of research and prevailing promotion rewards for research output have created disincentives to the development of innovative teaching and learning processes, and more teaching is being offloaded to postgraduates and casuals (Drennan, 2001; Tang, 1997). Workload allocation hours for teaching and learning activities are actively being capped, and our 'best' teachers may not necessarily be teaching our most important core subjects.

Anderson and Johnson (2006) reveal that 'two problems reported to afflict many institutions were: the lower status attributed to teaching compared with research; and poor communication and understanding between managers and academics.' The development of a transparent framework to reward quality teaching will need to address both of these problems.

We are fortunate in that we can learn from international experience. It is important to note that the Teaching Quality Assessment (TQA) in the United Kingdom '...has fallen short of its goal of raising the profile of teaching, as an activity in higher education, primarily because competing demands for research output have taken precedence over attempts to improve teaching' (Drennan, 2001).

If teaching in Australia is to be valued equally with research, then domestic institutions will need to be more explicit in their recognition, and rewarding, of excellent teaching.

The Teaching Quality and Reward Framework (TQRF) outlined in this paper provides a transparent mechanism for academic staff to plan and pursue a career path with a teaching focus (linked to research) that will be valued and rewarded by senior management. It results from collaborative work between three Australian universities, University of Wollongong (UOW), University of Technology Sydney (UTS) and University of Melbourne (UniMelb).

It is offered for consideration by the Carrick Institute in their \$6m project to help 'examine ways in which quality teaching [is] recognised and rewarded at the individual, institutional, national and international levels to help develop an Australian framework' (Illing and Armitage, 2007).

Recognising and rewarding quality teaching

Many Universities include teaching at the highest level in their planning statements. An example from the University of Wollongong Strategic Plan, 2008-10 relevant to this discussion includes the following, *inter alia*:

Mission: Excel through research and teaching of world-class standard and impact

Goal: Excellence and innovation in learning and teaching

Objective: High quality teaching

There are many ways in which universities acknowledge the value of quality teaching. These include declarations, such as those above, and others on matters such as acknowledging teaching activities in institutional publications like annual reports, and online news announcements. High-level committees such as the University Education Committee at UOW are given terms of reference that include functions such as:

- provide leadership in the development of policies and strategies aimed at achievement of the University's objectives in teaching and learning
- oversee and assist in the implementation of quality assurance processes in all aspects of teaching and learning throughout the University.

Universities may run events or hold forums on excellence in teaching that acknowledge the value of teaching to the institution. They have established publications that assist with raising the profile of teaching within the institution. Two such examples are the Journal of University Teaching and Learning Practice (JUTLP) at the University of Wollongong (established 2004, Carter, H. (Ed.) <http://jutlp.uow.edu.au/>) and the new International Journal for the Scholarship of Teaching and Learning (IJ-SoTL established 2007, Altany, A. (Ed.) <http://www.georgiasouthern.edu/ijstl/index.htm>) at Georgia Southern University.

The value of teaching may be explicitly contained in criteria and processes for appointment and promotion. Quality teaching practices are also supported by professional development programs to assist staff to develop their teaching skills. In many universities, compulsory programs are expected to be completed by new teaching academics. An example is the University Learning and Teaching Course (ULT) at UOW, which is offered to all teaching staff at UOW, including casual staff. Duty statements of senior supervising academic staff may include responsibility for the promotion of quality teaching and the professional development of staff. Institutional facilities may be made available to staff that enable them to evaluate and analyse the quality of their teaching. Universities may offer special teaching skills development opportunities to part-time and casual staff upon whom much reliance may be placed for the provision of teaching.

Yet despite such initiatives being in place in many universities, they are often not recognized as being of high value to academic staff within those universities. 'These [initiatives] tended to be regarded with some skepticism and perceived somewhat cynically in terms of the image the university sought to present to outside agencies. The actual impact of these initiatives was generally thought to be fairly limited.' (Young, 2006)

The landmark report by McKinnon (2000), lays down a benchmarking standard for tertiary teachers in Australian universities. Benchmark 6.3: Teaching Quality, recommends that to support the best possible teaching a university should ensure: 'a scholarly approach embracing well chosen, modern content; clear goals; adequate preparation; appropriate methods; significant impact; effective presentation; and a reflective critique' (McKinnon, 2000). The report further suggests that teachers need to be supported by organizational arrangements described in Benchmark 6.4: Teaching Environment, as: 'induction of new teaching staff; matching of staff workloads with their experience; a system of supervision; appraisal of teaching effectiveness; mentoring; and development opportunities' (McKinnon, 2000). There have been many expositions of ideas of what constitutes quality teaching in recent years, including Ballantyne (1999), Biggs (2001), Bradley (2001), Drennan (2001), Gosling (2001), Skelton (2004), Fenstermacher (2005), Andreu (2006), Coates (2006), and Gray (2006). Markers or criteria for quality teaching are also published by groups such as the Carrick Institute in Australia, the Department for Education and Skills (DfES) in the UK, and professional bodies like the Australian College of Educators.

Once quality teaching is recognised, how is it rewarded? Nelson asks 'can we not reward and celebrate teaching and scholarship excellence with the same enthusiasm we do that of research?' (DEST 2002), and Young (2006) argues that the 'consensus that teaching is under-valued in universities is matched by a consensus that the best way to improve teaching would be through rewards'.

Many attempts have been made to promote, describe and define how staff might be rewarded for quality teaching. The 'university reward system must be altered if we are to get university scientists to focus on the wide variety of tasks we as a society deem equally important as, if not more important than, the publication of basic research' (Boardman 2007). These rewards fall into several generic categories, which might be described as follows (adapted from Young, 2006).

National - Structural

- Centres– e.g. The Carrick Institute for Learning and Teaching in Higher Education
- Fellowships
- Citations
- Awards

Local – Structural

- Increased staffing levels (reduced class sizes)

Local - Professional development

- Awards
- Grants
- Centres of excellence
- Funded further education e.g. higher degrees in Education
- Promote, value and allow time for research into teaching

Local - Promotion

- based on excellence in teaching
- available through all levels, not just the lower end
- promote/appoint excellent teachers to teaching mentoring/consulting positions

Local - Salary

- incremental progression based on teaching
- bonus payments based on teaching
- retention schemes based on teaching
- parity of esteem and financial reward for lecturing staff (Young 2006)

There are, however, caveats with reward systems, such as 'many of the promotional rewards for excellence and teaching paradoxically take the recipients further away from teaching or, to put it more bluntly, reward excellent teaching by "buying out" teaching time' (Palmer 2006).

A proposed teaching quality and reward framework

In order for teaching to be elevated from the status of a 'poor relation' to research, the foregoing discussion has shown that it is critical that institutional quality expectations must be clearly defined and mapped, while rewards need to be based on both objective (preferably quantitative) and subjective benchmark compliance. The Teaching Quality and Reward Framework (TQRF) now presented consists of institutional quality navigation guides for teachers, and quantitative performance indicators for generic application by teachers and senior managers across Australia.

It is proposed that the TQRF described herein will be further developed, trialled at Australian universities, and subsequently refined to provide transparent guidelines to foster and reward quality teaching practice.

In addition to a 'fitness-for-purpose' quality navigation guide to suit widely differing university missions and student bases, quantitative performance indicators for generic evaluation of teaching excellence and revenue generation need to be included for objective and value-free comparisons between institutions and individual academics.

In the past, the real difficulty has been in teaching evaluation. Research grants are readily measured and quoted in dollars, whereas very few academics are famous for their teaching. The imbalance in the rewards for teaching and research was highlighted in the Higher Education Quality Council's report, Learning from Audit (HEQC, 1994) and continues to this day (Illing and Armitage, 2007).

Quality navigation guides (QNGs)

All Australian universities recognise the importance of quality teaching, and provide support to their staff on quality practice in teaching and learning. In many cases though, there is an overwhelming amount of information available, which can act as a big disincentive when new staff are trying to address the issues that are deemed to be the most strategically important for their home university, their students, and for their own career development. Experience at UOW, UTS and UniMelb reveals that there

has been no single 'quality navigation guide' readily available that integrates the disparate internal guides on quality in a career-focussed series of questions and answers.

An example of such an instructive guide that has been assembled from web links and relevant papers for University of Wollongong academics is as follows.

Teaching Quality & Reward Framework (TQRF) Quality Navigation Guide for UoW

Q1. What does UOW view as *quality teaching practice*?

- University Planning & Quality
Quality at UOW
- Guide for New Staff
UOW Learning and Teaching Strategic Plan
Teaching at UOW Handbook
- Learning and Teaching
Ensuring Excellence in Teaching
- Course Handbook
Teaching and Assessment Policy
Code of Practice – Teaching & Assessment

Q2. How can I enhance my teaching skills and performance?

- University Learning and Teaching Course
- Learning and Teaching
What you need to know
Good Practice Guides
- Skills Development Workshops
- Designing and Producing Resources
- Using AV Equipment and Spaces
- eTeaching
- Faculty Service Agreements

Q3. How do I evaluate my teaching performance?

- Evaluating Evidence of Good Teaching Practice
- Teacher Surveys and Subject Evaluation
- Financial Evaluation
- Peer Review
- Moving Away from One Size Fits All Academics

Q4. How can I effectively pursue teaching-related research?

- Learning & Teaching Grants
Annual Grants Calendar
Carrick Institute
Internal UOW Grants
- Teaching and Learning Fund Grants
- Faculty Teaching and Learning Scholars Grants
- Scholarship of Teaching
- The teaching-research nexus: Enhancing the links

Q5. How can I actively assist UOW in Quality Teaching and Learning development?

- Quality Teaching and Learning at the University of Wollongong
- University Planning & Quality
Strategic Projects / Faculty & Unit Planning
- Learning and Teaching
Subject Design & Development
- Faculty Education Committee involvement
- University Education Committee (and Sub-Committee) involvement
- Academic Senate
- Curriculum Review involvement

Q6. How am I rewarded for sustained quality teaching?

- Learning and Teaching
Ensuring Excellence in Teaching
Awards, Funding and Recognition
(eg, internal grants, Promotion)

It is clear from a comparison with a draft of a similar quality navigation guide for UTS, that while the quality-linked questions are generic for both UOW and UTS, the relevant data available for academics will be dependent on specific university missions and strategic objectives.

Teaching academics will be able to follow such guides (in consultation with their teaching directors/mentors) to plan viable career paths that will be of benefit to them, their home universities, and their students; a win-win-win scenario which is the best possible outcome.

Quantitative performance indicators - finance and teacher surveys

It is envisaged that Directors of Teaching and Learning would be nominated by Faculty Deans to review teaching and learning outcomes and provide real career development rewards based on:

- Teaching Survey results
- Teaching Revenue/salary ratios
- Internal/External Award outcomes
- Teaching and Learning Publications
- Teaching Grants

Using the first of these, if academic staff with high **Teaching Survey** results could be rewarded by being allocated core subjects to develop and teach. Workload allocation hours are higher for core subjects, and the impact of using our best teachers on our most important subjects will improve student satisfaction levels, exit survey results and enhance our respective reputations as quality teaching institutions.

Similarly, if subjects, teaching publications, awards and teaching grants are assigned 'equivalence' points or monetary units, and **revenue/salary ratios** are calculated,

career path development based on teaching would become easier to gauge relative to research.

To date, only accumulated grant income is commonly used as a quantitative gauge to measure the worth of an academic. In the future, teaching revenue/salary ratio data similar to that shown below will become critical for equitable broad-brush comparisons between teaching-intensive and research-intensive academics. This is an important first step in quantifying the **value** of teaching academics to their host institutions.

The following table (adapted from DEST, 2007) shows the base level Commonwealth Grant Scheme (CGS) funding cluster rates that are reflected in Funding Agreements for 2007.

Indexed rates for 2007				
Item	Cluster	Cwlth contrib	Student max contrib	Total Income
1	Law	\$1,528	\$8,333	\$9,861
2	Accounting, Administration, Economics, Commerce	\$2,515	\$7,118	\$9,633
3	Humanities	\$4,239	\$4,996	\$9,235
4	Mathematics, Statistics	\$5,006	\$7,118	\$12,124
5	Behavioural Science, Social Studies	\$6,729	\$4,996	\$11,725
6	Computing, Built Environment, Health	\$7,495	\$7,118	\$14,613
7	Foreign Languages, Visual and Performing Arts	\$9,217	\$4,996	\$14,213
8	Engineering, Science, Surveying	\$12,476	\$7,118	\$19,594
9	Dentistry, Medicine, Veterinary Science	\$15,638	\$8,333	\$23,971
10	Agriculture	\$16,624	\$7,118	\$23,742
11	Education	\$7,396	\$3,998	\$11,394
12	Nursing	\$10,189	\$3,998	\$14,187

**Commonwealth Grant Scheme Funding Cluster Rates for 2007
(Adapted from DEST, 2007; Australian Govt., 2007)**

This data can be used to prepare teaching revenue/salary ratios for university academics.

For example, if we prepare data for a Level B, Step 6 academic employed at the University of Wollongong, it can be readily seen that the teaching revenue/salary ratio for this particular academic of 7.4 compares very favourably with the corresponding ratios calculated for research-intensive academics with lower teaching workloads.

	Faculty Revenue - Engineering			
U/grad	Income per student	\$19,594		
Examples	Credit points per subject	6		
	Payment per subject	\$2,449		
		% taught	Students	Total
U/Grad	ENGG152	50.00%	150	\$183,693.75
	ENGG154	25.00%	150	\$91,846.88
	ENGG291	33.33%	90	\$73,470.15

	CIVL444	33.33%	52	\$42,449.42
	CIVL311	100.00%	60	\$146,955.00
P/grad	Income per subject @ \$300 per cp	\$1,800		
Examples				
P/Grad	ENGG950	100.00%	18	\$32,400.00
	Teaching Generated Revenue for period			\$570,815.20
	Salary for period - Level B, Step 6			\$77,476.00
	Revenue/Salary Ratio for period			7.37

Conclusions

Using the TQRF, assessors will be able to make a direct link between the performance indicator and quality in the future, and teaching rewards (ie, awards, teaching fellowships, educational grants and promotion schemes) directly linked to performance in a similar manner to rewards for research output.

This is the most objective way to raise the profile of teaching to help to overcome promotion and salary increases which have been based primarily on research output (Anderson and Johnson, 2006; Warren and Plumb, 1999; Volkwein and Carbone, 1994).

The expected outcomes outlined above can now be summarised:

- Further development of fitness-for-purpose quality navigation guides to suit widely differing university missions and student bases.
- Further development of quantitative performance indicators for generic evaluation of teaching excellence and revenue generation.
- Development and refinement of a collaborative TQRF framework that will be available for use across the Australian university sector.
- Development of cross-institutional networks to support the adoption and adaptation of the TQRF framework
- Raising of the profile of teaching in Australian universities.

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