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**Department of Education,  
Science and Training**

# **LEARNING AND TEACHING PERFORMANCE FUND**

**ISSUES PAPER**

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## Abbreviations

AUQA	Australian Universities Quality Agency
ACER	Australian Council for Educational Research
AUTC	Australian Universities Teaching Committee
AVCC	Australian Vice-Chancellors' Committee
CAUT	Committee for the Advancement of University Teaching
CEQ	Course Experience Questionnaire
CQAHE	Committee for Quality Assurance in Higher Education
CSDF	Commonwealth Staff Development Fund
CUTSD	Committee for University Teaching and Staff Development
DEST	Department of Education, Science and Training
DETYA	Department of Education, Training and Youth Affairs
GCCA	Graduate Careers Council of Australia
GDS	Graduate Destination Survey
GSA	Graduate Skills Assessment
HEFCE	Higher Education Funding Council for England
HEC	Higher Education Council
HERO	Higher Education Research Opportunities
NBEET	National Board of Employment, Education and Training
NESB	Non-English Speaking Background
QAA	Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education
UAI	Universities Admission Index

## Introduction

The Government's response to the Higher Education Review, *Our Universities: Backing Australia's Future*, was announced on 13 May 2003 as part of the 2003-04 Budget. The package of reforms includes \$2.6 billion over the next five years in additional funding to the higher education sector linked to progressively introduced reforms. These reforms will establish a transparent and consistent policy framework in which universities are able to pursue their own strategic mission, capitalise on their strengths and further engage with their communities. Students will have increased opportunities and greater choice through more equitable financing arrangements and a renewed emphasis on teaching and learning outcomes.

A major finding of the Review which culminated in the *Our Universities: Backing Australia's Future* package was that although teaching is recognised as a core activity of all higher education institutions, current Australian Government funding, internal staff promotion practices and institutional prestige tend to reinforce the importance of research performance rather than teaching performance. The Government believes that rewards and incentives for excellence in learning and teaching will promote the overall quality of the sector, enabling excellence in learning and teaching to be placed alongside delivery of research excellence in terms of contribution to Australia's knowledge systems. The Government has emphasised that there is no intention for any Australian university to become 'teaching-only'. It is envisaged that an increased focus on learning and teaching will foster diversity and help to ensure the ongoing high quality of the Australian higher education sector.

This renewed focus on teaching quality in Australian universities is exemplified by three programme initiatives under *Our Universities: Backing Australia's Future*.

1. *A National Institute for Learning and Teaching in Higher Education* will be established as a national focus for the enhancement of learning and teaching in Australian higher education institutions. The Institute will receive \$22 million per year from 2006. Interim funding will be available for the establishment of the Institute in 2004 and 2005.
2. *The Australian Awards for University Teaching* will be enhanced to heighten the status of teaching and support the centrality of teaching in institutional missions. The number of rewards to teachers who demonstrate excellence in teaching will be increased at a cost of \$8 million over 2006 to 2008.
3. *A Learning and Teaching Performance Fund* will be established, with funding of \$54 million in 2006, increasing to \$83 million in 2007 and \$113 million in 2008. In announcing the Fund, the Minister for Education, Science and Training noted that it was established "to reward those institutions that best demonstrate excellence in learning and teaching." (Nelson 2003, p.29).

It should be noted that DEST does not anticipate any significant involvement for the National Institute for Learning and Teaching in Higher Education in the initial development and implementation of the Learning and Teaching Performance Fund. The Fund will be administered as a Departmental programme, with guidelines and funding allocations to be approved by the Minister. While some synergies may develop between the Fund and the National Institute in the future, these are expected to be incidental rather than integral to the Fund's operations.

## 1. Rationale

The Australian Government has introduced the Learning and Teaching Performance Fund to reward institutions which best demonstrate excellence in teaching and learning. The Government believes that this will promote the overall quality of the sector, by enabling excellence in learning and teaching to achieve equal status with research excellence in terms of contribution to Australia's knowledge systems.

Research excellence is rewarded through two major Australian Government programmes which include performance-based elements. The Institutional Grants Scheme (IGS) supports institutions' research and research training activities. Funding is distributed across universities on the basis of a performance based formula comprising research income, publications and higher degree research student places. Under the Research Training Scheme (RTS), funding to institutions for higher degree research places is distributed according to performance: successful research student completions, research income and research publications.

There are no comparable, large-scale rewards or incentives for excellence in learning and teaching. While the Australian Government's Australian Awards for University Teaching celebrate and reward excellence in university teaching, the correlation between excellent teaching by individuals or small teams and the quality of teaching at the institutional and sectoral level may not be significant. The main driver of excellence in teaching and learning is currently universities' and individual academics' desire to offer a high quality learning experience to their students.

There is a substantial body of research literature on effective learning, and a number of institutions and expert groups have used the findings of the research to develop principles and guidelines for good teaching practice (for example, HERDSA 1992, AVCC 1993).

Universities evaluate their courses on a continuous basis, using a range of internal and external measures. A number have developed innovative systems to provide financial rewards for good performance by faculties, groups of academics or individuals. Similarly, some institutions use a teaching portfolio approach to assess the performance of individual teachers for promotion purposes.

There is, however, clearly no universally agreed and absolute definition of excellence in learning and teaching. Excellence may be assessed through a range of models and methodologies, based on performance indicators, peer review, the 'value' added to students by their learning experiences, or a combination of these.

It should be emphasised that the stated intention of the Learning and Teaching Performance Fund is to reward excellence. This means that a performance improvement model is not appropriate.

Given the availability of the Higher Education Equity Programme and the Indigenous Support Funding Programme, elements of which distribute funding on the basis of performance in achieving equity objectives, it may not be appropriate to include an access/equity/participation dimension in the measurement of excellence.

Similarly, given that institutions are already rewarded under the RTS for research student outcomes, it is suggested that the initial focus of the Learning and Teaching Performance Fund be on undergraduate students. The focus of the Fund may evolve over time, so it may be possible in the future to include data on students undertaking postgraduate coursework qualifications. It is also suggested that data collection for the purposes of the Fund should be limited to domestic students at this stage, given the methodological difficulties of collecting data on outcomes for overseas students.

Another important dimension is the way in which funding will be allocated according to performance. Institutions could be benchmarked or ranked; funding could go to every institution which achieved a certain prescribed score, or to the top X performers. Results could be compared across institutions for the same year or for each institution across years. In addition, performance could be compared on a whole-of-institution basis or by discipline. Results could be adjusted for the impact of student and course mix on each institution's crude score, or compared within groupings of similar institutions.

There are clearly a number of options to be discussed and explored. The next steps in the consultation process are an invitation for submissions in response to this discussion paper and a series of consultations in major State capitals in June and July 2004. A number of questions to guide consultations are provided in Section 6.1.1.

## 2. What we have learned from previous experiences in assessing excellence in learning and teaching in higher education – Australia

In recent years there has been increasing interest both in Australia and internationally in assessing the quality of the higher education sector. This has been driven by a number of factors: to inform prospective students and guide their choice of institution in an increasingly competitive market; for institutions to compare their performance in key areas with others; to illustrate the diversity among institutions; and to contribute to greater public accountability for Government funding and assist in the future development of higher education policies (DETYA 1998b). This section and the following section provide a snapshot of developments and findings in Australia and a number of comparable overseas countries.

### 2.1. Discipline-based reviews

The Commonwealth Tertiary Education Commission conducted a series of one-off reviews of major fields in Australian universities from 1985 to 1991 to determine standards and to improve quality and efficiency. Reports were published on a range of disciplines including Engineering, Science and Mathematics Teaching, Accountancy, Law, Computing, Information Sciences Education and Agricultural Science. Evaluations of the impact of the discipline reviews found mixed results as to whether the recommendations of the reviews had been acted upon.

The Australian Vice-Chancellors' Committee (AVCC) also undertook a series of discipline reviews through its Academic Standards Program, established in 1987 in response to concerns about apparent variations in standards and criteria for the award of degrees. Seven reviews were undertaken (Biochemistry, 1993; Computer Science, 1993; Economics, 1992; English, 1994; History, 1991; Physics, 1990; Psychology, 1992). The reviews were undertaken by small panels of experts who undertook visits to universities, analysed annual statistical outcomes and produced a final report assessing standards across the nation in that field.

### 2.2. Linke report

In 1989 the Australian Government appointed a research group, chaired by Professor Russell Linke, to undertake a comprehensive examination of performance indicators in higher education. Linke's 1991 report canvassed a wide array of possible performance indicators of institutional context, teaching and learning, research and professional services, and participation and social equity. The Research Group examined three categories of indicators on teaching and learning: quality of teaching; student progress and achievement; and graduate employment. Indicators in each of these categories are listed in Table 1.

**Table 1: Categories of indicators on teaching and learning, Linke Report**

Category of indicator	Performance indicator
Quality of Teaching	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Perceived Teaching Quality – the Course Experience Questionnaire</li> </ul>
Student Progress and Achievement	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Student Progress Rate</li> <li>▪ Program Completion Rate</li> <li>▪ Mean Completion Time</li> <li>▪ Research Higher Degree Productivity Rate</li> </ul>
Graduate Employment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Graduate Employment Status</li> </ul>

Source: (Performance Indicators Research Group 1991)

### 2.3. Quality reviews

The amalgamation of universities and colleges of advanced education into one unified national system in the early 1990s heralded a period of great structural change in the Australian higher education sector. Concerns were expressed by the higher education sector and the wider community about the perceived decline in the quality of higher education associated with the reduction in funding and rapid expansion of the 1980s. In 1991 the then Minister for Higher Education and Employment Services asked the Higher Education Council to advise on quality in higher education and particularly on mechanisms to evaluate the effectiveness of institutional quality assurance.

This culminated in the announcement in 1991 of a new Quality Assurance Program with funding of \$76.7m in 1993, \$71.3m in 1994 and \$50.0m in 1995. These funds were additional to the operating grant and were available to institutions which could “demonstrate effective quality assurance practices and excellent outcomes” (CQAHE 1995a, p.26). A Committee for Quality Assurance in Higher Education (CQAHE) was established to advise the Minister on the allocation of programme funds, and undertook three rounds of reviews for this purpose. Each round had a specific focus: an overview of teaching, learning, research and community service in 1993; teaching and learning in 1994; and research and community service in 1995. Participation in the programme by eligible institutions was voluntary, and all eligible institutions elected to participate.

The review process consisted of: submission of a portfolio by each institution; examination of data provided by the institution and other publicly available data; a review visit to each institution to test the evidence presented in its portfolio; and the professional judgements of the review team and Committee members. Equal emphasis was placed on institutions’ quality assurance processes and on the quality of their outcomes. Further details of the quality rounds are discussed in Section 4.3.1.

### 2.4. Profiles process

From 1998 onwards, quality improvement was integrated into the annual educational profiles process – the yearly negotiations between the Australian Government and institutions on funding for the next triennium. All triennially-funded institutions have been required to include quality assurance and improvement plans in their profiles documentation.

### 2.5. Australian Universities Quality Agency (AUQA)

The Australian Universities Quality Agency (AUQA) was established in 2000 as an independent, not-for-profit national agency to conduct whole of institution audits of self-accrediting institutions on a rolling five-year basis. The approach taken by AUQA focuses on institutional quality assurance processes in place to achieve the organisation’s mission and objectives. The audits focus on key areas of teaching and learning, research and management, and on the adequacy of a university’s quality assurance arrangements. The audits assess a university’s success in maintaining standards consistent with university education in Australia. AUQA audits pay particular attention to:

- program approval and monitoring;
- research activities and outputs;
- overseas operations, including comparability of standards, on-shore and off-shore;
- communication with stakeholders; and
- systematic internally-initiated reviews (eg of departments, themes), including the rigour and effectiveness of the review mechanisms employed.

Audits are based on a self assessment by the institution and a site visit by AUQA reviewers. The audit panels include experts with substantial senior academic and administrative experience in higher education (in Australia and abroad).

A focus for the first round of audits is the way in which institutions set and assess standards, including their moderation methods, formal benchmarking and less-structured institutional comparisons. However, the audit process is not designed to probe these matters in detail at the level of particular courses.

Institutions are required to submit a Teaching and Learning Plan and their schedule of and procedures for reviews (including external reviews, such as professional body accreditation) as part of their audit documentation. AUQA may request further information such as copies of review reports, recommendations and subsequent actions.

Institutions may also provide Key Performance Indicators, graduate employment data, student and other stakeholder satisfaction data, student entry qualifications, non-completion rates and degree results. Interviews with staff and students are conducted. AUQA audits are not used to generate rankings of institutions.

### **3. What we have learned from previous experiences in assessing excellence in learning and teaching in higher education – Other countries**

This section focuses on the assessment of excellence in learning and teaching in three countries whose higher education systems have some features in common with Australia. Following a decade of external subject reviews, England is moving to a system similar to Australia's AUQA audits. The United States has a long history of accreditation and outcomes based assessment, and has recently renewed its focus on assessing student learning outcomes. Recent work in New Zealand to introduce a performance-related element into tertiary education funding offers an additional valuable perspective.

#### **3.1. England**

Structural changes to UK higher education in the early 1990s led to the creation of three central funding bodies for higher education in England, Scotland and Wales, which were given statutory responsibility for maintaining teaching quality in publicly funded institutions. A separate body, the Higher Education Quality Council (HEQC), was made responsible for quality audits of institutions. In 1997 the two strands were brought together under the auspices of a single agency, the Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education (QAA).

##### **3.1.1. Teaching Quality Assessments and Subject Reviews**

The funding councils and the QAA carried out external reviews of student achievement and learning experiences in each subject between 1993 and 2002. The processes for undertaking 'Teaching Quality Assessments' and 'Subject reviews' evolved during these years, however common features included a self-assessment by the institution; a visit by a team of assessors, including subject specialist assessors; and a report. The reviews began with selective visits of institutions but moved to universal visits on a five-year cycle, and a grading profile system was adopted for reporting purposes.

During the review visit the assessor/review team scrutinised documentary evidence, attended meetings with relevant staff and could, if they wished, directly observe teaching. The review team met current students and could also meet former students, their employers and representatives from relevant industries or professions. The review team used this information to test statements made in the institution's self evaluation document and to formulate their own judgements on the standards and quality of provision.

Throughout the process review teams reviewed various aspects of provision such as:

- curriculum design;
- teaching, learning and assessment;
- student progression and achievement;
- learning support;
- learning resources;
- quality management and enhancement; and
- effective utilisation of learning resources.

It is interesting to note that, of the grades awarded as a result of reviews conducted in 2001-02, 66 per cent were grade 4 (the highest grade), 30 per cent were grade 3 and four per cent were grade 2. Of the grade 2s, 13 were in higher education institutions and 42 in further education colleges. Only 4 grades of 1 (failing) were awarded, representing 0.3 per cent of the total; these were all in further education colleges (QAA 2003, p.5).

In March 2001, the Secretary of State for Education and Employment announced a new 'lighter touch' in quality assurance which would entail significantly less subject review activity – a reduction of some 40 per cent. Given the general unpopularity of the subject review process, and what was claimed by the Agency as evidence of the high quality of higher education provision, it was concluded that there was no need for further comprehensive external reviews of subjects in England, provided that institutions' own internal quality assurance mechanisms could be shown to be working effectively and rigorously. It was decided that the public interest could be adequately served by a robust system of institutional audits and the publication of an agreed set of reliable and verified information which would be easily accessible by stakeholders. If there was any evidence of a serious cause for concern, then full subject reviews would be carried out.

### **3.1.2. Publicly available information on quality and standards in higher education**

The QAA and the Higher Education Funding Council for England (HEFCE) agreed that the new quality assurance framework would include a new set of published information on quality and standards in higher education so that students and other stakeholders could make informed choices. A Task Group, headed by Professor Sir Ron Cooke, was formed to review and make recommendations on how this information would be collected and published. The Cooke Report recommended a quality and standards website drawing together information from independent higher education institutions and national statistics (HEFCE 2001). As a result a national Teaching Quality Information (TQI) website has been developed as part of the Higher Education Research Opportunities (HERO) website at [www.hero.ac.uk](http://www.hero.ac.uk). The first full set of information including summaries of the findings of external examiners, should be available on the TQI site by December 2004.

All higher education institutions in England will be required to publish the following information on the TQI:

- the institutional context (including the institution's learning and teaching strategy);
- student admission, progression and completion; and
- internal procedures for assuring academic quality and standards.

An important aspect of the 'lighter touch' approach is a reduction in costs under the new system.

The overall direct cost to the sector of the previous QA system based on subject review, has been estimated at £45-50 million per year. The annual cost of implementing TQI, added to the cost of institutional audit and other elements of the new QA framework, should be substantially lower than that, and will be kept under review (HEFCE 2003, p. 12).

### **3.1.3. National survey of graduate satisfaction with teaching quality in higher education**

The Cooke Report also suggested collecting information on student satisfaction with their higher education experience. HEFCE commissioned a project team to investigate the development of a national survey of graduate satisfaction with teaching quality in higher education. The project team recommended the development of a national survey based closely on Australia's Course Experience Questionnaire (CEQ) as it has successfully addressed the methodological issues surrounding student feedback on teaching quality (Centre for Higher Education Research and Information (Open University), NOP Research Group and SQW Ltd 2003). It is anticipated that full-scale implementation of the survey will occur in 2004. HEFCE expects that HERO will publish the results when they are available and integrate them with other TQI data. (HEFCE 2003, p. 8)

### 3.1.4. Centres of Teaching Excellence

The UK Government's White Paper on reform of higher education, *The future of higher education*, signalled a focus on rewarding teaching excellence (DfES, 2003). The proposals included the designation of departments at single institutions or collaborations between two or more universities or colleges as Centres of Teaching Excellence (CETLs).

The purpose of CETLs is to reward excellent teaching practice and to invest in that practice further in order to increase and deepen its impact across a wider teaching and learning community (HEFCE 2004, p. 1).

CETLs will attract funding of £200,000 to £500,000 per year over five years and £800,000 to £2 million for capital. Approximately £315 million in total will be made available to fund CETLs over the five-year period from 2004-05 to 2008-09, including £140 million for capital in the first two years of the funding period. HEFCE expects that more than 70 CETLs will be established, with each CETL having a distinct focus reflecting its track record of successful student learning.

An assessment panel has been formed to advise the HEFCE Board on the selection of CETLs. The panel comprises a subgroup of the HEFCE Quality Assurance Learning & Teaching Committee and senior staff selected from nominations received from institutions as part of the consultation on the CETL initiative.

Institutions will bid for funding in a two stage process. The first stage will focus on providing evidence of identified excellent practice and the rationale for the CETL's focus. Bids that succeed at the first stage will be assessed at the second stage on their business case for developing the area of excellence and increasing its impact on teaching and learning.

The purpose of a CETL initiative is to reward demonstrable excellence and to invest in its further development and application. We do not attempt to define excellence in absolute or 'gold standard' terms. This is not only difficult in itself but is more likely to constrain than encourage institutions to select excellent practice in a local context that has had a demonstrably positive impact on student learning. It is more instructive to ask how excellence is recognised across the sector, what makes it distinctive, where and how it shows itself and whose judgements are pertinent in relation to successful learning. Key judgements lie with students, teachers, employers and institutions (HEFCE 2004, p. 13).

Evidence of identified excellent practice may be demonstrated in stage one bids through a wide range of factors including engagement with learners' needs and requirements, scholarly underpinning of practice, active engagement with learning process and successful learning outcomes, and mentoring for teaching and learning effectiveness.

### 3.2. The United States

Higher education funding and supervision is predominantly a State responsibility in the USA and quality is largely ensured through an accreditation process. There are six regional accrediting agencies which cover the whole nation as well as several national associations for particular types of schools, such as religious schools which provide accreditation at the institutional level. Accreditation by the relevant agency is an institution's public guarantee of quality. The accrediting agencies have no connection with government but are recognised at both State and Federal level. Regional accreditation is used by the federal government to determine an institution's eligibility for federal funding.

The accreditation process is typically on a five or ten-year cycle with an extensive institutional self-study followed by a site visit by a team of peer reviewers. Processes and requirements vary among the six regional accrediting bodies but accreditation is intended to certify that institutions

meet certain basic resource and performance criteria, to strengthen educational quality, to encourage self-examination, to support self-regulation, and to assure the public that an institution meets certain minimum standards of quality.

Concerns and increasing demands for accountability for public funding have led to the development of externally driven quantitative performance indicator systems at the level of state or university systems. A state survey of performance measures for 1996-97 showed that 37 states reported the use of performance measures in higher education and seven additional states indicated that they were planning to implement performance measure systems in the near future. Twenty-three of the states reported that performance measures were used in the distribution of funds to institutions by states and eight states indicated that some portion of institutions' state allocations were linked directly to performance measures (Stanley and Patrick 1998). Indicators typically found in accountability reports include enrolment trends, student performance on admissions examinations, retention and graduation rates, pass rates on licensure and other professional examinations, job placement rates, and student and alumni satisfaction. Indicators are used to help demonstrate an institution's progress toward or achievement of institutional, system, or state goals.

Throughout the period 1980 to 1990 there was also an increasing emphasis placed on the assessment of learning outcomes at post secondary institutions. The National Education Goals Panel of 1990 called for the development of valid and reliable assessments of critical thinking, problem solving, and communication skills at collegiate level and the majority of states had adopted assessment mandates for public colleges and universities by the mid-1990s. Many state authorities and regional accreditation authorities now require higher education institutions to provide detailed student outcomes information focusing on the 'value' which has been added to students by their educational experiences at the institution. According to Donald:

Universities are being questioned in North America and elsewhere about a basic educational issue: what are students learning and what will they be able to do when they graduate from university? The universities appear to have taken one of two approaches to answer this question. The first, the psychometric approach, consists of testing programs instituted by universities and colleges or by state legislature to ensure that educational institutions have added knowledge and skills to their students' repertoires...The other approach is more developmental in nature and focuses on the organization of curriculum to enable students to develop competence in generic abilities such as communication, analysis and problem solving...What underlies both approaches is the idea that student knowledge and skills can be measured in a way that can be generally understood (Donald, 1986, p.267).

The American Council on Education identified 27 national assessment instruments and services in 2001 (Borden & Owens 2001). These include assessment tools associated with student proficiencies and learning outcomes and alumni achievement and status as well as instruments which collect data on the profiles of entering students, measure the experiences of enrolled undergraduates, track changes in student attitudes and behaviours and assess institutional quality by exploring the views of academic staff and others about their institutions.

Despite ongoing interest in outcomes assessment from the 1980s there have been no consistent national approaches in the US. In 2000, the National Center for Higher Education Management Systems noted that:

Since about the mid-1980s, states have been seriously concerned about examining what students learn in college. But how the states act on this concern varies substantially. Most approach the task indirectly by asking each public college and university to administer a locally designed or locally chosen assessment and to report on what they find. Often this is done in loose partnership with regional accrediting bodies, all of which require colleges and universities to undertake some kind of student assessment.

Fewer than ten states administer a common test to large numbers of college students.... states employ very different methods when they assess college students, if they do so at all (Ewell 2000, p. 174).

In 2001 the Pew Charitable Trusts sponsored the National Forum on College-Level Learning. Prompted by the “Incomplete” grades every state received on student learning in the Measuring Up projects of 2000 and 2002, the Forum is gathering nationally comparable information on college-level learning state-by-state and piloting data-collection models with the hope that they will be able to measure and grade states on college-level learning for Measuring Up 2006.

### 3.3. New Zealand

A new funding system for tertiary education in New Zealand was announced in 2002. A key element is the Integrated Funding Framework, (IAF), designed to bring together all the funding mechanisms across the tertiary education sector, which includes higher and vocational education, and private and public institutions.

There are three major elements within the IAF: funding for teaching and learning, funding for research (including the performance-based research fund and the centres of research excellence) and the strategic development component.

The largest stream within the teaching and learning element is the Student Component which includes a performance element. In March 2002, a Technical Working Group was set up to advise on performance measures and indicators to be used to distribute funds within the performance element.

The Working Group reported in December 2003. It considered that “... rather than seek to develop a single indicator or a complex set of indicators, it is better to start with a small set of readily acceptable indicators which together provide an acceptable proxy for educational gain by learners” (Technical Working Group 2003, p.8). It recommended the following performance indicators be used: successful course completions, student retention and graduate experiences. Results would be collected for all students and for other categories of students (see Table 2) and assessed against the following benchmarks.

**Table 2: Performance Indicator/ Learner/Proposed Benchmark matrix**

Performance Indicator	Learner Dimension	Proposed Benchmark
Successful course completions (averaged over all courses offered by the Tertiary Education Organisation)	All learners	60%
	Maori learners	60%
	Pacific learner	60%
	Learners with Disabilities	60%
Course retention (averaged over all courses offered by the Tertiary Education Organisation)	All learners	75%
	Maori learners	75%
	Pacific learners	75%
	Learners with Disabilities	75%
Graduate Experience Questionnaire	All learners	90% of programmes with mean score on four scales (good teaching, clear goals and standards, generic skills and overall satisfaction)
	Maori learners	
	Pacific learners	
	Learners with Disabilities	

Source: Technical Working Group 2003, p. 23

The Working Group proposed that institutions must report satisfactorily against all indicators. An institution which met all benchmarks would receive the full Performance Element, an

institution which did not meet all benchmarks would receive a Performance Element directed to improving performance in areas where benchmarks were not met, and an institution which did not meet all benchmarks for a second year running would not receive the Performance Element.

The Working Group's proposals will be considered by a sector representative group, which will work during 2004 to consider the Working Group's proposals and make recommendations to Ministers.

## **4. How we measure excellence in learning and teaching**

### **4.1. Principles**

It is suggested that any chosen methodology for allocation of learning and teaching funds should be capable of meeting the following set of principles. The methodology should:

- be transparent and auditable – the methodology selected should be clear and relatively simple in terms of public accountability;
- not add unnecessarily to the resource burden on universities and avoid duplication of data collected;
- make maximum use of existing data sources and any proposal to collect further data should be carefully costed and justified;
- be of relatively low cost to institutions and the Government;
- have ‘face validity’ – appear appropriate, relevant and to measure what it is supposed to measure;
- be fair in terms of ensuring no particular institutions or categories of institutions are favoured in the allocation of funds; and
- accommodate the differing missions and circumstances of institutions.

It is further suggested that preference should be given to methodologies which demonstrate satisfaction of stakeholders (students, staff, employers, industry and the community) with institutional performance.

### **4.2. Issues to consider**

#### **4.2.1. Benchmarking or ranking**

Once an allocative model for the Learning and Teaching Performance Fund has been adopted, and performance of institutions measured on that basis, funding will be allocated. The way in which this will be done needs to be determined. Two possible methodologies – benchmarking and ranking - are outlined below.

Benchmarking is a systematic process for measuring and comparing the work processes of one organisation with those of another (Liston 1999). To date, Australian higher education institutions have primarily used benchmarking for quality improvement, using self-assessment against external comparisons. For example, the Australian Technology Network institutions have benchmarked their CEQ and GDS data and quality management processes (DEST 2002a). In the Learning and Teaching Performance Fund context, a particular benchmark could be set, and institutions which perform at or above that level could be allocated funding. The prescribed level could be the sector average or other benchmark selected for the purpose.

An alternative method is to rank institutions according to their results. The top X could be rewarded in proportion to their position in the ranking.

#### **4.2.2. Use of Single vs Multiple Indicators**

Use of a single indicator of performance in learning and teaching would have obvious advantages in terms of auditability and transparency in the allocation of funding under the

Learning and Teaching Performance Fund. However, given the limitations of individual indicators, it is unlikely that key sector stakeholders would agree that a single indicator captures the essence of learning and teaching quality or provides an adequately triangulated assessment. In addition, a single indicator would be open to inappropriate manipulation by institutions seeking to maximise their funding and could have results detrimental to quality.

In 1991, Linke commented on the inadequacy of single indicators:

It is simply not possible to specify single indicators of teaching and research quality which are analytically coherent and defensible. In the matter of teaching, for example, judgements of quality must flow from the analysis of multiple characteristics, and ideally involve a variety of procedures including qualitative peer and student evaluation. ... In no area of academic performance is it possible to routinely generate systematic data to adequately serve as a single source of information leading to an acceptable evaluation of quality. This is not to say that the issue of quality cannot be addressed. Rather, the measurement of quality must be viewed in the context of the adoption of multiple indicators, sensitively attuned to the specific needs and characteristics of particular disciplines, and which adequately reflect the underlying purpose for which the assessment is required (Performance Indicators Research Group 1991, pp.129-130).

A formula-driven approach, while requiring more complex computation, allows each indicator to be considered in conjunction with others which seek to define quality from a different perspective. A formula would have built-in safeguards against inappropriate manipulation - it is less likely that a range of indicators could be manipulated with a uniformly positive result. If, for example, an institution attempted to increase retention and progress rates by reducing academic standards, this could well have a negative impact on subsequent graduate employment rates and starting salaries.

In addition, a range of indicators allows institutions to express different aspects of their performance which reflect their character and mission. A formula therefore could counter criticism that indicators encourage, either implicitly or explicitly, uniformity rather than diversity in institutional activities.

#### **4.2.3. Adjustment of Indicators**

Commentators have argued that inter-institutional comparisons reflect, at least to some extent, the different student mix and characteristics of individual institutions rather than the 'value added' by the institution. For example, internal students have higher retention rates than external students, so institutions with relatively large numbers of internal students will generally appear to exhibit higher retention rates. The institution's retention rate will reflect students' intrinsic retention as well as the mix of students within that institution (DETYA 1998b).

The Department of Education, Science and Training (DEST 2001) and its predecessor the Department of Education, Training and Youth Affairs (DETYA 1998b) have addressed this issue through the development of methodologies to control for differences in student and course characteristics across institutions.

DETYA (1998b) constructed a set of national benchmarks for each student/course characteristic. The crude score of each institution on a range of indicators was then adjusted to derive an "expected score" for that institution on the basis of its particular student and course mix. The characteristics adjusted for were gender, age, Indigenous status, Non-English Speaking Background status, field of study, course type, basis of entry and type of enrolment, which had all been shown to influence performance against indicators. An institution's 'expected score' was then compared with the crude score and a 'performance score' derived. If the crude score was higher than the expected score, the institution was considered to have performed better against that indicator than might have been expected, given its mix of students and courses.

This methodology represented an innovative attempt to use indicators in a 'fairer' and more sophisticated manner. However, it proved to be computationally difficult and was criticised on the grounds of auditability. The subsequent publication (DEST 2001) therefore revised the adjustment methodology, by using regression techniques to control for a range of student background characteristics and then estimate the independent influence of the institution on performance. The adjustment process incorporated additional characteristics: socio-economic status, rural and isolated status and disability status, student ability (as measured by Tertiary Entrance Ranking), labour market conditions and size of institution.

This development again represents an attempt to increase the reliability and transparency of the performance indicators. Clearly the 'value added' by an institution can never be completely isolated and data is not collected on all factors which might influence educational behaviour. DETYA noted that:

... there are potentially a multitude of student characteristics that could influence performance indicators. It is possible to make allowance for the effects of many factors, but not all, because not all are directly measurable. The approach taken here is to make allowance for those factors that are measurable and are commonly thought to have some bearing on performance indicators. (DETYA 1998b, p.71)

#### **4.2.4. Institutional vs discipline-based performance measurement**

Performance measurement could be undertaken on a whole-of-institution basis (as for the 1993 95 'quality' rounds) or by discipline.

Each approach has advantages and disadvantages. A whole of institution based approach could present an overall assessment of university activity in terms of processes and/or outcomes, without the sensitivities involved in identifying specific areas of strength or weakness. It could also be an effective vehicle for change, by involving the university as a whole in regular processes of self-analysis, leading where necessary to institution-wide changes. It would be more cost effective than a series of discipline reviews. An obvious disadvantage would be that it loses the richness of detailed analysis by discipline (CQAHE 1995b).

Indicators may not lend themselves to meaningful aggregation at institutional level. For example, Ramsden (2003) has suggested that CEQ and GDS results aggregated to university level are hardly distinguishable between universities.

It is generally meaningless to make comparisons except within fields of study. Comparing universities except within fields is a most hazardous occupation. The differences between universities are generally small and probably unimportant. Similarly, much of the divergence over time is simply random variation. (Ramsden 2003, p.7)

An alternative might be to allocate funding to the best performers in particular disciplines or Fields of Education, with the Australian Government nominating priority areas annually. This approach has the potential advantage of enabling development of examples of best practice in particular areas, with results available for widespread replication across other universities and possibly other disciplines. It would also allow the Australian Government to align priorities in Learning and Teaching with priorities which it may nominate from time to time in other areas (eg. priorities nominated in the research field, National Priority Areas), and would encourage discipline reviews on a rolling basis. However, this approach may disadvantage institutions which do not offer courses in the nominated thematic areas, or be seen as too similar to aspects of the Australian Awards for Teaching.

Alternatively, performance by Field of Education could be compared across groups of like universities.

#### 4.2.5. Assessing performance within groupings of institutions

Adjustment methodologies such as those outlined above seek to control for the impact of student and course mix on each institution's crude scores against indicators. An alternative approach could be to compare performance within groupings of like institutions. This would acknowledge the wide range of missions and objectives within Australia's higher education sector, and go some way towards addressing criticism that performance indicators discourage diversity.

As the Committee for Quality Assurance in Higher Education observed, "there is a significant degree of similarity in the mission and objectives of those universities which share a similar background, history and stage of development" (CQAHE, 1994, p.10). A number of universities have formed links with others on the basis of shared histories and missions (see Table 3).

- The **Group of Eight (Go8)** includes the older universities which undertake a high percentage of the research conducted in Australian higher education institutions. ([www.go8.edu.au](http://www.go8.edu.au))
- The **Australian Technology Network (ATN)** consists of universities which place an emphasis on industry and technology. ([www.atn.edu.au](http://www.atn.edu.au))
- Another group has established itself as **Innovative Research Universities Australia**. This group includes institutions that were established during the period of expansion in the 1960s and 1970s. ([www.flinders.edu.au/about/irua.html](http://www.flinders.edu.au/about/irua.html))
- Recently a coalition has emerged between the self-defined **New Generation Universities**, defined as universities which have achieved university status since 1970.

A number of universities remain unaligned. In October 2003 Central Queensland University announced a proposal for a new national network of regional university campuses.

**Table 3: Groupings of Institutions**

<b>Group of Eight (Go8) Universities</b>	<b>Australian Technology Network (ATN) Universities</b>
The University of New South Wales The University of Sydney Monash University The University of Melbourne The University of Queensland The University of Western Australia Adelaide University The Australian National University	University of Technology, Sydney RMIT University Queensland University of Technology Curtin University of Technology University of South Australia
<b>New Generation Universities (NGU)</b>	<b>Innovative Research Universities Australia (IRUA)</b>
Southern Cross University University of Western Sydney University of Ballarat Victoria University Central Queensland University University of Southern Queensland University of the Sunshine Coast Edith Cowan University University of Canberra Australian Catholic University	Macquarie University The University of Newcastle La Trobe University Griffith University Murdoch University The Flinders University of South Australia

Source: [http://www.avcc.edu.au/policies\\_activities/resource\\_analysis/key\\_stats/index.htm](http://www.avcc.edu.au/policies_activities/resource_analysis/key_stats/index.htm)

#### 4.2.6. Domestic and overseas students

A further issue to consider is the inclusion or exclusion of onshore and offshore overseas students in the assessment of institutional learning and teaching performance. The availability of data for this group of students and the way in which it might impact on the choice of indicators or methods needs to be addressed.

DEST collects data on both onshore overseas students and offshore overseas students. The CEQ/GDS however, is not administered systematically to offshore overseas students. While some universities have delivered the survey to their offshore students the GCCA cautions universities against this because of issues surrounding language and culture vis-à-vis survey design. Some universities and the GCCA are investigating ways in which they might be able to survey these students more effectively.

The CEQ/GDS is distributed to onshore overseas graduates as for Australian residents, ie. the survey is sent to a graduate's home address four months after graduation. The response rate for overseas graduates, however, is significantly lower than Australian resident graduates. In 2002 the response rate for Australian resident graduates was 60.7 per cent, compared with 29.5 per cent for overseas students.

The main cause of the lower response rate for overseas students is believed to be difficulties with home addresses. Many universities do not have up-to-date home addresses for overseas students and following them up would be a costly exercise. While email is an alternative delivery method, many overseas students record their university email addresses under their contact details and these usually expire on graduation. It is therefore difficult to know how many overseas students receive their survey. The GCCA is currently examining the issue with the hope of improving the response rate for overseas students.

The starting salary component of the GDS is also problematic as overseas graduates often record their responses in local currency. For this reason it is not included in the GCCA analysis.

The above suggests that data collection for the purposes of the Learning and Teaching Performance Fund should be limited to domestic graduates at this stage.

### 4.3. Methodologies

#### 4.3.1. External peer review model

It could be argued that qualitative assessment by acknowledged experts offers a more sophisticated approach to measuring excellence than a formula-driven model. It allows a wide variety of performance information to be incorporated into the decision-making process. It does, however, have several disadvantages. Firstly there is an issue about the lack of transparency involved in subjective assessment. Judgements may be criticised as arbitrary, and may not provide institutions with clear incentives to engage in particular types of desired behaviour (Jones, cited in Ewell 1999). Such an approach is also likely to be more expensive and labour intensive than formula approaches.

External peer review was used in Australia between 1993 and 1995 to allocate funding under the Australian Government's Quality Assurance Program (see section 2.3). It is useful to explore that process as a possible model for allocation of funding under the Learning and Teaching Performance Fund.

Under the Quality Assurance Program, the onus was on an institution to demonstrate quality through self-assessment and associated evidence. The Committee for Quality Assurance in Higher Education noted that its quality reviews did not "... seek to measure or judge institutions by reference to a single, externally-imposed 'gold standard' of higher education outcomes"

(CQAHE 1994, p.11), but within a context of institutional responsibility and autonomy, the way in which available resources were used, and the Committee's assessment of the degree of difficulty in achieving outcomes consistent with the institution's mission and goals. Review teams used a scoring matrix against which each institution's performance was rated, with ratings informed by the team's judgement as to the achievability of the institution's mission. The scores from this matrix were used as an analytical tool to aid final judgements and recommendations.

In its report on the 1993 rounds the Committee ranked the 36 institutions in six bands on the basis of assessed performance. While programme guidelines specified that only about half the universities should be rewarded, the Committee recommended that all 36 receive funding, on a differential basis for each group. Groups 1 to 5 were to receive a percentage of their operating grant (eg. Group 1 institutions received 3 per cent of their operating grant, Group 2 received 2.5 per cent and so on). Group 6 institutions were to receive a flat grant which took into account the size of the operating grant, and were required to spend the funds on a project basis for improvement purposes.

In 1994 the Committee focused on the quality of teaching and learning, with the overall context "...the production of graduates with attributes which enable them to operate anywhere in Australia and overseas at standards consistent with best practice in their fields" (CQAHE 1995a, p.28). The 1994 review considered: overall planning and management of the undergraduate and postgraduate teaching and learning programme; curriculum design; delivery and assessment; evaluation, monitoring and review; learning outcomes; use of effective teaching and learning methods; student support services and other teaching support services such as library and computer services; staff recruitment, promotion and development; and postgraduate supervision.

The Committee consulted with a range of peak groups, developed programme guidelines for approval by the Minister, held briefing sessions for university representatives and training sessions for Review members. Review teams, consisting of two Committee members, two other co-opted experts and team secretaries, undertook institutional visits over a two month period. Team reports were drafted and sent to vice chancellors for comment before being finalised.

The Committee gave equal weight in its assessments to process and outcomes. It sought answers to the following basic questions through each institution's portfolio:

- What quality assurance policies and practices does the institution have in place or is developing for assuring the quality of its teaching and learning performance?
- How effective and how fully deployed are these?
- What processes does the institution have to evaluate and monitor the quality of its outcomes?
- Which quality related indicators does the institution use and why?
- What are the institution's priorities for improvement?
- What quality initiatives has the institution undertaken since the 1993 review and what evidence of improved performance is there?

The Committee took into account the diversity of institutions' missions and circumstances by focusing on the use of self-assessment by institutions, for consideration by the Committee. It also undertook rigorous moderation processes to try to ensure equitable results across institutions.

It again placed significant emphasis on self-assessment by institutions, which were expected to determine for themselves the evidence which they wished to present to demonstrate effectiveness of their policies and quality of their outcomes. A process and scoring matrix was again used to rate each institution's performance against the criteria in the guidelines, and ratings were moderated in a number of ways against the findings from other institutions visited.

The Committee designated all the institutions as performing effectively as universities. It grouped them into three groups, and recommended funding levels in the ratios 4:3:2 based on target EFTSU.

Stakeholders such as the Higher Education Council (HEC) of the National Board of Employment, Education and Training (NBEET) and the AVCC expressed mixed views about the effectiveness of the approach. For example, quality reviews in themselves can have a positive impact on performance through a 'halo' effect, and the CQAHE found this to be the case.

All institutions have demonstrated marked improvements in their documented processes in teaching and learning, with clear evidence of significant advances against the results of the initial overview round. Greater attention is also being paid to the development of outcome performance criteria. It is the Committee's judgement that there is now less differentiation between institutions in the area of teaching and learning than was found in the first round (CQAHE 1995a, p.13).

The Higher Education Council (HEC) echoed this view: "There is general agreement in the sector that the Quality Assurance initiative of the last three years has been very beneficial to the higher education system" (NBEET 1995, p.20). However it reported that the sector was more convinced about the impact on process than on outcomes, and had concerns about presentation of results.

There was some concern [in the sector] that while the CQAHE has identified significant improvement in quality assurance processes and management in the sector, it is less clear that actual improvement in performance and the quality of programs has been achieved as a result of the three years of review. The need for intensive audits was also questioned and some doubted whether they added anything to the information presented in the portfolios (NBEET 1995, p.20).

A strong view emerges from the submissions and the consultations that the use of rankings or ranked groups for publication of the outcomes of the quality process is detrimental to overall improvement in the system ... the quality groupings have been interpreted by the press and the university community as rank orderings and have been used by some institutions in advertising. In addition, there is evidence that the publication of the groups has been disadvantageous to the lower grouped institutions in their international marketing and has had financial implications for their future operation (NBEET 1995, p.22).

The AVCC publicly supported the findings of the 1994 review and urged the Minister to continue the Quality Assurance Program into its third year, but it also expressed concerns about the presentation of the results:

Despite the fact that the report has placed universities into three groups, the important information about their performance is in the individual reports. The issues of quality in teaching are too complex to be represented in a single set of categories (AVCC 1995).

Anderson et al. (2000, p. 17) also reported mixed views within the sector about the usefulness of the quality exercise.

It is clear that the process itself was labour and time-intensive. It is also open to challenge against the principles set out above. In particular, the scoring matrix which the review team used to rate individual institutions was not published; it can be argued that the process therefore lacked transparency and auditability.

### 4.3.2. Outcomes based model

Assessment of excellence in learning and teaching through educational outcomes requires measurements of the outcomes of learning experiences. An outcomes based model focuses on the 'value' which has been added to students by their educational experiences at the institution. In Australia, there are currently several sources of public performance indicator information that include a focus on learning outcomes (see section 4.3.5):

- statistical data – the DEST collection;
- exit tests – the Graduate Skills Assessment;
- student satisfaction surveys – the Course Experience Questionnaire and Postgraduate Research Experience Questionnaire; and
- employment data – the Graduate Destination Survey.

In determining the 'value' added however, there is no consensus on what indicators should be measured, how they should be measured, whether they should be quantitative or qualitative or both, when they should be measured, or what variables compromise indicators and measurements. A detailed discussion of performance indicators and their strengths and weaknesses in terms of the Learning and Teaching Performance Fund follows in Section 4.3.5.

The Graduate Destination Survey (GDS), the Course Experience Questionnaire (CEQ) and the Graduate Skills Assessment (GSA) survey instruments are managed by the Graduate Careers Council of Australia (GCCA) in association with all Australian universities. GCCA is independent of the government, though it is supported with funding from the Australian Government. These could be used either singly or in some combination to assess universities' performance for the Learning and Teaching Performance Fund.

#### Exit tests – the Graduate Skills Assessment

The Graduate Skills Assessment is discussed in detail in Section 4.3.5. As noted in that section, changes in GSA scores of individual students at entry and exit points can serve as a proxy for 'value added' by the higher education institution. However, the potential value of the GSA in this context is limited by the fact that initial take-up was low and has declined further over recent years (see Table 4).

**Table 4: Participation in the Graduate Skills Assessment tests**

YEAR	Number of students		Number of universities	
	<i>Exit</i>	<i>Entry</i>	<i>Exit</i>	<i>Entry</i>
2000	1597		19	
2001	698	2028	8	20
2002	493	943	6	11
2003		512		4

Source: DEST

#### Student Satisfaction Surveys

The CEQ is a one page adjunct to the GDS. It is an annual survey that has been administered by the GCCA since 1992 about the attitudes of graduates towards their courses and the skills they acquired whilst undertaking tertiary education. The bulk of the CEQ consists of a core set of items measuring graduates' satisfaction with various aspects of the quality of teaching and

learning in their courses using a 5 point rating scale. Graduates are invited to express satisfaction with the quality of teaching, and enhancement of generic skills, as well as to indicate their overall satisfaction with their course. In addition, individual universities may include questions about their satisfaction with clarity of goals and standards, nature of assessment and level of workload. A further five optional scales were introduced in April 2002 covering questions on student support, learning resources, the learning community, graduate qualities and intellectual motivation. GCCA publishes the results of the CEQ in an annual report.

The Australian Government also publishes performance indicators based on the results of the CEQ. These are published at institutional level, with results adjusted for the influence of a range of student characteristics such as field of study, level of study, age and gender which have been shown to influence results.

Some universities use CEQ results in house to monitor and assess faculty performance and to assist planning processes within the institution, indicating acceptance within the sector of the robustness and validity of the CEQ.

However, use of the CEQ in the Learning and Teaching Performance Fund context is open to criticism on a number of grounds. Some argue that student satisfaction is not necessarily a valid indicator of the quality of teaching, and that students are not best placed to comment on matters such as subject content, teaching pedagogies and assessment. In addition, the CEQ is a lagging indicator. The latest CEQ results are from the 2001 survey of students whose final year of study was in 2000, although the CEQ 2002 results are due out in the near future. In addition, CEQ data refer to student satisfaction with the whole course rather than individual subjects.

The United States has a tradition of using outcomes based assessment models. A number of instruments have been developed to elicit their level of satisfaction with various aspects of their university experiences or their views on their learning experiences, for example: the College Student Survey (CSS) administered by UCLA's Higher Education Research Institute (HERI) and the College Student Experiences Questionnaire (CSEQ) and the National Survey of Student Engagement (NSSE) administered by the Indiana University Center for Postsecondary Research and Planning.

The NSSE survey instrument, *The College Student Report*, is designed to collect, on an annual basis, information to assess the extent to which students engage in a variety of effective educational practices.

The NSSE project is grounded in the proposition that student engagement, the frequency with which students participate in activities that represent effective educational practice, is a meaningful proxy for collegiate quality (NSSE 2003a, p. 1).

The survey instrument covers five indicators or benchmarks of effective educational practice that research studies show are linked to desired outcomes of college:

- Level of academic challenge
- Enriching educational experiences
- Student-faculty interaction
- Active and collaborative learning
- Supportive campus environment

The survey was piloted with approximately 70 colleges and universities in 1999. In 2000, 276 colleges and universities were involved and in its first three years more than 430,000 first-year and senior students at 730 different four-year colleges and universities have participated. More than 460 institutions are registered for the spring 2004 program. The average response rate for paper and Web versions is about 43%, with a range of 15% to 89%.

NSSE also collects information on how the student engagement results are being used at various levels as a catalyst for improvement and accountability. NSSE reported in its 2003 Annual Report that governing boards and state oversight agencies are incorporating NSSE results as a performance indicator, a use they anticipated when designing the project. In addition a number of institutions are developing programmes to enhance student engagement with an eye toward improving student success rates on the basis that student engagement, persistence, achievement, and satisfaction are positively correlated (NSSE 2003b).

### **Employment data – the Graduate Destination Survey**

The GDS was first administered in 1972 and is a study of the activities of new university graduates around four months after the completion of their qualifications. The survey provides a range of data on the employment and study destinations of graduates and their starting salaries. Reports produced from these data include one on destinations and another on graduate starting salaries (a study of earnings of new graduates aged 25 and under in their first full employment in Australia). An electronic version of a report called *Grads, Jobs and Dollars* will also be available at the end of 2003 based on the 2002 survey. Some argue however that graduate employment is not an adequate measure of excellent learning and teaching as it is often dictated by factors such as availability of employment in a particular area in a particular field.

#### **4.3.3. Composite model**

Excellence in learning and teaching could be assessed and rewarded using a combination of the two methods discussed. Programme funds in any one year could be divided between two components, for example, an external review in a nominated area and rankings against nationally consistent performance data. Institutions could choose to participate in either or both components.

#### **External peer review (see Section 4.3.1)**

Each year the Australian Government could select a theme as a focus. This could be discipline or institution based, and potentially aligned with a current Australian Government priority. For example, given that teaching and nursing have been designated as National Priority Areas under the Commonwealth Grants Scheme, the theme for the initial year of the Learning and Teaching Performance Fund could be excellence in teaching and nursing courses/disciplines. Alternatively, the Fund could focus, for example, on excellence in teaching and learning for a particular equity group. This approach would encourage development of examples of best practice, with results available for replication in other institutions and disciplines.

Participating institutions would be asked to submit a portfolio documenting evidence of their claims to excellence in the chosen theme. These could be assessed by DEST or by peers, and a team of external assessors visit the institution to validate claims by attending teaching sessions, assessing curriculum and other materials, speaking to students, graduates and employers, and so on. Courses and disciplines would then be ranked, with funding allocated accordingly.

#### **Performance data (see Section 4.3.5)**

The remaining programme funding could be allocated on a formula basis. The following sources of data may be used in the Learning and Teaching Performance Fund:

- student progress rate
- student retention/attrition rate
- student satisfaction
- graduate outcomes (employability, starting salaries, and/or further study).

The rationale for selection of these performance indicators is that they reflect satisfaction on the part of the three major stakeholders in higher education: students (student satisfaction, progress rate, retention/attrition); employers, including higher education institutions (graduate outcomes); and the Australian Government as the provider of the bulk of funding to the sector (progress and retention/attrition rates). They also meet the assessment criteria outlined in Section 4.1. They require minimal additional 'red tape'; involve data which are relevant, consistent and readily available; and are relatively clear and simple in terms of auditability and transparency. They can be adjusted if necessary. It has been suggested that scoring could be weighted equally between data reflecting satisfaction of the three stakeholder groups.

It could be argued that such a two-pronged approach combines the best elements of quality assessment practice, both in Australia and overseas. It combines the intuitive attractions of peer assessment with indicator-based assessment in a transparent and accountable way. Thematic reviews conducted on a rolling basis could minimise assessment 'fatigue' and reward excellence in identified areas of Australian Government priority. While universal peer assessment would be prohibitively expensive, focused reviews with voluntary participation would involve much lower costs and allow institutions to showcase outstanding disciplines, courses or approaches. This would also meet stakeholder preferences, expressed by Deputy Vice Chancellors and Pro Vice Chancellors (Academic) at a meeting in May 2003, for each institution to be at least partly assessed against its own teaching and learning objectives. While this approach might disadvantage institutions which do not offer courses in the nominated thematic area, this could be minimised by selection of a new theme each year.

The use of performance data would enable institutions to be rewarded for their responsiveness to stakeholder needs, using nationally consistent and reliable data, much of which are already used by the sector in internal reviews. One possible advantage of using performance data like those suggested is that it could minimise additional 'red tape'; institutions already supply DEST with statistical information enabling the calculation of progress and attrition/retention rates, and CEQ and GDS surveys are undertaken annually by the GCCA with the results readily available.

This approach could encourage development of examples of best practice in particular areas, with results available for replication. It would also allow the Australian Government to align priorities in Learning and Teaching with priorities which it may nominate from time to time in other areas (eg. priorities nominated in the research field, National Priority Areas), and would encourage discipline reviews on a rolling basis.

#### **4.3.4. AVCC model**

The AVCC Learning and Teaching Working Group considers that primarily quantitative assessment would not be an effective way to determine allocations under the Fund, due to the difficulties in defining suitable indicators which capture the diversity of the higher education sector. The Working Group therefore proposes that the model for assessing both stages be based on the following principles:

- respect for the diversity of the system - as manifested in diversity of institutions, courses, student mixes, educational practices and modes of delivery;
- demonstrable fairness such that universities recognise the rationale for and agree to work with the proposed approach;
- acknowledgement of the array of existing quality assurance and improvement, monitoring and reporting mechanisms that each university already has in place and of their potential value for this process;
- importance of devising a methodological approach that:
  - does not introduce a new set of measures, standards and processes as the basis for assessment in addition to those which universities are subject to already;

- does not rely on a set of standard quantitative measures that is readily convertible to a single simplistic ranking of all universities;
- identifies areas and/or measures for assessment that are central to teaching and learning in Australian universities and to institutional strategic directions and quality assurance plans, and hence have relevance over time, rather than ones that relate to particular specialist themes that might change from year to year; and
- choice of a combination of quantitative and qualitative measures so as to allow for the complexity and context to be reflected and considered in the evaluation of each university's performance.

The Working Group's proposed model is based on peer assessment of a learning and teaching portfolio produced by each university, addressing each of the following dimensions:

- alignment of learning and teaching with an institution's strategic plan;
- quality of teachers;
- quality of courses;
- learning support environment;
- student access and graduate outcomes.

A mix of quantitative and qualitative evidence would provide the basis for assessment against each dimension. Expert panels would be appointed by the Government to evaluate the portfolios against known criteria, with a separate panel for each dimension. The panel would place the institution in one of 3 to 5 bands, with the lowest representing an acceptable level of excellence and the highest reflecting outstanding achievement. Funding would be higher for placement in a high band and lower for a low band, with potentially no funding attached to the lowest level. Institutions could also potentially be assessed as not meeting the criteria for the base level.

Funding could be allocated either on the basis of a composite score across the dimensions or for each dimension. The Working Group favours the allocation of funding for each dimension, to recognise the different strengths and missions across institutions.

The Working Group also proposes that funding be weighted by funded student load to acknowledge differences in university size and provide an incentive to larger universities to seek the rewards. It suggests that all dimensions be assessed in year one, with half reviewed in each following year.

In terms of the principles set out above, the AVCC Working Group's approach has the advantage of recognising the different missions and circumstances of institutions. In addition, qualitative assessment by experts allows a wider perspective on performance to be incorporated into the decision-making process.

Preparation of a portfolio which addressed a number of dimensions could be highly labour intensive and create a significant resource burden on institutions and assessors. The Working Group's suggestion that institutions support their claims to excellence with a mix of national indicators, institution specific indicators and "the capacity to evaluate each within the operational context of the university" may raise concerns about comparability of performance between institutions. In addition, the AVCC methodology raises an interesting question as to whether the Fund should result in every applicant receiving a portion of funds or whether it should only reward institutions that best demonstrate excellence in learning and teaching.

#### **4.3.5. Performance Indicators**

DETYA noted in 1998 that interest in performance indicators for the higher education sector has grown over recent years both in Australia and overseas.

The indicators provide a measure of the common features of higher education institutions as well as their diversity. They also reveal a number of aspects of the student experience at higher education institutions and assess the performance of institutions in several areas which are relevant to the core purposes of higher education institutions. Other indicators, particularly those related to the financial performance of institutions, attempt to gauge the resources available to institutions (DETYA 1998b, p.1).

There are three main sources of data available on higher education at the national level. These are the DEST Higher Education Students, Staff and Finance Collections, DEST Research Data Collection and the Graduate Careers Council of Australia's (GCCA) annual Graduate Destination Survey (GDS) and Course Experience Questionnaire (CEQ). Data in the first two are collected by higher education institutions and provided to DEST, while the GCCA surveys students and graduates directly. The performance indicators derived from these data collections are nationally available and comparable.

There are limitations on the use of indicators in assessing performance. The robustness of a particular indicator will depend on the way in which it is constructed and the variable(s) which form(s) the basis of its calculation. Changes in most indicators over time are open to interpretation and often it is not possible to identify the underlying cause of the change. The behaviour and goals of an individual institution may also affect its performance against a particular indicator. The performance of an individual institution is also influenced by the context in which it operates, in terms of factors such as mission, history and strategic plan.

However, use of performance indicators in the Learning and Teaching Performance Fund has a number of advantages. An indicator-based approach to allocation of funds clearly offers benefits in terms of objectivity and transparency. While stakeholders may dispute the validity of particular indicators as a measure of excellence in learning and teaching, the adjusted data are nationally comparable and defensible. Quantitative data offers consistency over time, which is harder to achieve with qualitative data. The DEST indicators have consistent definitions and are accepted by the sector.

Many institutions make use of indicators for their own internal purposes. In 2003 the AVCC Secretariat invited member universities to identify the performance indicators they use for learning and teaching, and the purposes for which they use them. The results of the survey (AVCC 2004) show that universities use a broad range of indicators, which can be grouped into ten broad categories:

- graduate outcomes
- internationalisation
- reputation of courses/student selectivity
- retention and completion
- student satisfaction
- teaching resources
- support services
- financial resources
- teaching scholarship
- other.

The AVCC indicates that the main use of performance indicators is for strategic planning and management, reporting/accountability, to support the budget process and to facilitate the review and/or development of courses and curriculum. The AVCC document suggests that universities can use the summary to "place their own indicators in a broader national context and to facilitate benchmarking with other similar universities were there is agreement to do so." It also suggests that the summary provides important contextual information for the development of the Learning and Teaching Performance Fund.

Table 5 lists a number of possible indicators which could be used for the Fund. It draws on the AVCC summary and on international experience.

**Table 5: Possible Performance Indicators of Quality in Learning and Teaching**

**Student indicators**

- Student progress rate
- Student completion rate
- Student retention rate
- Student demand
- Student satisfaction
- Graduate destinations
- Graduate skills

**Staff indicators**

- Proportion of staff with teaching in higher education qualifications
- Number of teaching excellence awards received

**External assessment**

- Student prizes, competitive awards

**Student service indicators**

- Availability of academic support services

The following section assesses each of these indicators for use in the Learning and Teaching Performance Fund, against the criteria suggested in section 4.1.

Sources of data currently available are listed in Appendix B.

**A. Student progress rate**

- all students
- students from select groups, such as lowest tertiary entrance score decile and equity groups.

**Description**

Measures student load passed as a proportion of load attempted each year.

**Data accessibility**

The Australian Government publishes data on progress rates on an ad-hoc basis (see DETYA 1998b and DEST 2001). Progress rates could be produced annually with minimal additional workload to both DEST and institutions.

For all students, progress rates can be adjusted to take into account individual student characteristics such as age, gender, Non-English Speaking Background (NESB) and Indigenous status, field of education, level of study and mode of study, residency, disability status, socio-economic status, rural and isolated status, and student ability (as measured by Tertiary Entrance Ranking).

For students from select groups, while there could be differences between each institution's lowest decile which might make inter-institution comparisons difficult, these could be addressed in a number of ways such as grouping like institutions or adjusting by individual student characteristics. This would involve an additional workload for DEST, but is viable.

**Strengths*****All students***

- “The benchmark for the university as a whole, [student progress ratio], is a good overall indication of learning and teaching effectiveness” (McKinnon et al. 2000).
- Can be adjusted to make allowances for factors which may influence progress, for example, gender, age, residency, indigenous status, non-English speaking background status.

***Students from select groups***

- Intuitively attractive. Empirical evidence suggests that UAI/basis of admission is the most important predictor of progress. The argument follows that healthy progress rates among the lowest UAI decile are likely to be attributable in large part to the quality of the teaching they receive.

**Weaknesses**

- The extent to which progress rates can be adjusted is limited by data collection. The crude data could not be adjusted for some factors which may influence progress rates (such as students' expectations and personal circumstances) because not all the relevant data are currently collected.
- An increase in progress rates may indicate lowering academic standards rather than an improvement in teaching. However this may be offset by a university's desire to maintain its reputation and quality. Progress rates need to be considered in conjunction with other indicators.

**Assessment against Principles (see section 4.1)**

Meets most of the principles; however some comparison within groupings and/or adjustment might be required to avoid advantaging particular institutions or categories of institutions.

## B. Student completion rate

### Description

Proportion of commencing students who successfully complete all the academic requirements of a course, which include any required attendance, assignments, examinations, assessments, dissertations, practical experience and work experience in industry. Definition based on *Students 2002 – Selected Higher Education Statistics* (DEST 2002b).

### Data accessibility

DEST publishes statistics on total completions in its annual *Selected Higher Education Statistics*. The publication does not include completion **rates** because of the complex methodological issues involved in tracking individuals from commencement to completion. These issues include:

- time taken to completion – individuals do not necessarily complete a course in the minimum expected time; and
- the difficulties in allocating a “completion” status to students in articulated post-graduate qualification and double degrees (an individual may have more than one “completion”).
- minimum expected time to completion varies between similar awards in different institutions
- course IDs and student IDs change over time, making it difficult to track individual students.

In 1999 DETYA calculated the completion rate for undergraduate students who began an award in 1992 (Urban et al. 1999). This was a one-off study which was highly labour intensive and had technical drawbacks eg. it could not capture students who changed institution rather than withdrew. It is argued that computation of this indicator is too complex to undertake on an ongoing basis. Whilst the introduction of HEIMS would facilitate calculation to some extent, it would still be a complex process.

Another method is to calculate “synthetic” completion rates by comparing numbers of students commencing a course with the numbers emerging a nominated number of years later. However this is methodologically suspect as individuals are not tracked. Decisions would have to be made about the ‘average’ course length, or calculations of apparent completions undertaken for each course (eg. three-year bachelor degrees, four-year honours degrees, four or five-year double degrees). This would result in a significant level of additional workload on universities.

### Strengths

- A strong intuitive indicator of success (leaving aside methodological difficulties).

### Weaknesses

- Actual completion rates have very long lag times, and may reflect conditions prevailing many years earlier. It may not be equitable to ‘reward’ institutions for good performance many years ago. Actual completion rates are very labour intensive to calculate.
- The extent to which completion rates can be adjusted is limited by data collection. The crude data could not be adjusted for some factors which may influence completion rates (such as students’ expectations and personal circumstances) because not all the relevant data are currently collected.

### Assessment against Principles (see section 4.1)

Indicator has face validity. However current methodology for calculating it is complex and involves additional costs to government. Use of indicator may favour some categories of institution. This could be reduced by adjustment and/or comparison within groupings of like institutions.

**C. Student retention rate**

- all students
- first year students
- students with low tertiary entrance scores
- equity groups

**Description**

Percentage of students enrolled in one year who are enrolled in the subsequent year.

- Research shows that around half of all students who withdraw do so in their first year (Pitkethly and Prosser 2001) and it might therefore be appropriate to focus specifically on retention from first to second year.
- An alternative would be to rank institutions according to retention rates for particular groups of students, such as students with low tertiary entrance scores or equity groups. This would measure a university's achievements in terms of outcomes for groups which have not always achieved equality, and would arguably allow a judgement to be made about the quality of teaching.

**Data accessibility**

Derivation of retention rates involves comparing current and previous years' enrolment records, which are provided to DEST by institutions each year.

The Australian Government publishes data on retention rates on an ad-hoc basis (see DETYA 1998b). These data could be produced annually with minimal additional workload.

It is possible to adjust for factors which may affect retention, such as gender, NESB and Indigenous status, field of study, level of study and mode of study, residency, disability status, socio-economic status, rural and isolated status, and student ability (as measured by tertiary entrance score).

**Strengths**

- Timely - based on current cohorts and, in combination with progress rates it is a good proxy for completion.
- Can be produced on a Field of Education basis.
- DEST can control for major factors which may influence retention, such as different student course, field of study, mode and mix in each institution.

**Weaknesses**

- The extent to which retention rates can be adjusted is limited by data collection. The crude data could not be adjusted for some factors which may influence retention (such as students' expectations and personal circumstances) because not all the relevant data are currently collected.

**Assessment against Principles (see section 4.1)**

Meets most principles. May favour some categories of institution – this could be reduced by adjustment and/or comparison within groupings of like institutions.

**D. Student demand****Description**

Level of demand for entry to a particular institution.

Student demand could be measured in a number of ways, for example:

- Attractiveness of local universities to students from local area
- Percentage of top decile of tertiary entrance score captured by each institution
- First preference distributions: each institution's share of undergraduate first preferences through State Tertiary Admission Centres, with reference to the share of other universities in similar fields of education.

**Data accessibility**

DEST could calculate the first and second indicators from its current data collection.

However, the data on applications and preferences which DEST receives from State Tertiary Admissions Centres is provided in aggregate, not broken down by institution. In order to calculate the second and third indicators, DEST would need to request institution specific tables.

**Strengths**

- High demand (however measured) for entry to a particular course in a particular institution suggests a positive community perception of the quality of the university/teaching programme.

**Weaknesses**

- Students' and parents' perceptions of quality may be inaccurate or out of date. Student demand can be influenced by many factors which may be unrelated to institutional quality, such as location of campus, historical reputation and status, perception of number of places available, course availability or personal circumstances.
- Data cannot be adjusted for factors which may affect demand, such as student and course mix in each institution.
- Some applicants apply directly to institutions for entry – no data is available on this type of demand.
- Data might be more meaningful by Field of Education rather than aggregated to institutional level.

**Assessment against Principles (see section 4.1)**

Indicator is transparent, but collection of data would involve additional costs to government and a possible resource burden on Admission Centres. Face validity may be relatively low – student demand may be influenced by factors unrelated to excellence in learning and teaching.

## E. Student satisfaction

### Description

The Course Experience Questionnaire (CEQ) is administered to graduates four months after completion of their programme of study. It measures graduate satisfaction with various aspects of their courses including good teaching, generic skills, goals and standards, assessment and workload. Results are collapsed into three aspects of satisfaction:

- overall satisfaction
- good teaching - graduates' satisfaction with their course in terms of feedback, assistance, interest shown by teaching staff
- acquisition of generic skills - satisfaction with their course in terms of imparting analytical, communication, problem solving, team work skills etc.

The survey also offers respondents the opportunity to provide general comments on both the positive and negative aspects of their course. The 2003 survey will include an optional five extra scales relating to learning resources, learning community, student support, graduate qualities and intellectual motivation.

### Data accessibility

The CEQ has been conducted annually by the Graduate Careers Council of Australia since 1993, and crude data are published annually. DEST currently provides annual funding for administration of the CEQ. In 2001, DEST adjusted results for the influence of a range of student characteristics such as field of study, level of study, age and gender which have been shown to influence results. This exercise could be undertaken on an annual basis.

### Strengths

- The CEQ is also accepted by researchers as robust and credible. Mackinnon et al. (2000), in the guide to benchmarking, suggest that:  
  

there is an established correlation between its [the CEQ] results and other data about teaching quality. Moreover, it has been in existence sufficiently long enough to provide comparative within-institution data and between-institution data. It is most usefully used at the discipline level in inter-university comparisons. (p.75)
- The CEQ is conducted by all universities, enabling a national level between-institution comparison of satisfaction.
- A number of universities use CEQ results in-house to assess faculty performance and to assist planning processes within the institution. This indicates acceptance within the sector of the robustness and validity of the CEQ.

### Weaknesses

- Students respond to the CEQ on a voluntary basis and this could affect results.
- There is an argument that the student population mix influences results in surveys such as the CEQ. However, results could be adjusted to control for this factor.
- The CEQ is a lagging indicator, as it surveys graduates after they have left university. This

involves “consequential delays in its collection and publication and only partial returns” (McKinnon et al. 2000, p.75). To obtain immediate feedback on student satisfaction, the CEQ could be administered to current students but this would add to the “survey fatigue” already experienced by students through student evaluations of teaching and courses.

- Response rates for some Fields of Education/institutions may be too small.
- A number of points need to be taken into consideration when interpreting the survey data (see GCCA reports for more details).

**Assessment against Principles (see section 4.1)**

Meets most principles. May need adjustment and/or comparison within like grouping to ensure it does not favour some institutions/categories over others.

## F. Graduate destinations

### Description

The Graduate Destination Survey (GDS) surveys Australian and overseas students four months after graduation about their post-graduation experience. Key indicators are as follows.

- Proportion of *graduates in full-time employment* of those who are available for full-time employment.
- *Starting salaries of graduates.*
- Proportion of *graduates in full-time study.*

### Data accessibility

The GDS is conducted and published annually by the Graduate Careers Council of Australia (GCCA). DEST currently provides annual funding for its administration. The GCCA has conducted national surveys of post-graduation outcomes of students since the mid-1970s.

In its recent publication on performance of higher education institutions, DEST (2001) controlled for the impact of labour market conditions on destinations and salaries of new graduates by using unemployment rates by postcode as a measure of local labour market conditions.

### Strengths

- Post-graduation outcomes are an important aspect of the performance of the higher education sector. Outcomes indicate the degree to which educational services are responsive to the needs of individual students, industry, employers and the broader labour market. Outcomes also reflect a number of factors within the control of institutions, such as quality of teaching, educational standards, course content and support from teachers.
- A number of universities use GDS results in-house to assess faculty performance and to assist planning processes. This suggests acceptance within the sector of the robustness and validity of the GDS.
- The GDS is an external and nationally consistent measure of quality and cannot be easily manipulated.
- The GDS is accepted by researchers as credible.
- Results are available at a disaggregated level (Field of Education by institution).

### Weaknesses

- Students respond to the GDS on a voluntary basis and this could affect results.
- It has been suggested that inter-university variations in graduate destinations result from statistical factors. Johnes and Taylor (1990) found that 90 per cent of inter-university variations in the UK during 1983-86 could be explained by factors such as subject mix, age of university, number of students per employer visit on the "annual milk-round", whether a university was an ex-college of advanced technology, and labour market factors. They concluded that "differences between institutions are too small in the main to have any relevance for the measurement of performance" (p.143)
- The GDS is necessarily a lagging indicator of learning outcomes. The latest GDS results

are from the 2001 survey of students whose final year of study was in 2000.

- Response rates for some Fields of Education/institutions may be too small.
- The GDS only picks up immediate graduate destinations, rather than a longitudinal picture of a student's longer term employment experience. It can be argued that the benefits of a higher education may take years to become apparent.
- A number of points need to be taken into consideration when interpreting the survey data (see GCCA reports for more details).

**Assessment against Principles (see section 4.1)**

Fair and transparent. May need adjustment and/or comparison within like grouping to ensure it does not favour some institutions/categories over others.

## G. Graduate skills

### Description

The Graduate Skills Assessment (GSA) instrument is a test of generic skills which can be administered to individual students at the point of university entry and exit. It consists of two hours of multiple-choice items and one hour of writing tasks. Its four components are written communication, critical thinking, problem solving and interpersonal understandings.

### Data accessibility

The GSA was developed in 1999 by the Australian Council for Educational Research (ACER) on behalf of the Department of Education, Training and Youth Affairs (now DEST), and DEST currently provides annual funding for administration and ongoing development of the GSA. . Written communication, critical thinking, problem solving and interpersonal understandings were selected as the components of the test following consultation with university representatives and other stakeholders.

The first GSA test was offered to Australian universities in October 2000. Since 2000, it has been offered to universities twice yearly for first and final year undergraduate students. Between October 2000 and the end of first semester 2002, 5300 students from 29 universities sat the test.

Analyses of test results and a Validity study found that field of study and year level are amongst the variables related to test performance (Butler and Hambur 2002). However the researchers noted that more representative student samples are required to confirm these results.

### Strengths

- Changes in the scores of individual students from entry to exit point can serve as a proxy for the 'value added' by the higher education institution.
- The GSA has satisfactory general statistical properties (ACER 2001).
- It appears that results could be adjusted to facilitate comparison between institutions.

### Weaknesses

- Take-up by students has been slow and has in fact declined over recent years (see Table 3, Section 6.3). This suggests that the potential usefulness of the GSA in the context of the Learning and Teaching Performance Fund is limited.
- Participation is voluntary, so students may not be representative of a university's population. Caution therefore needs to be used in interpreting test results.
- Measures only a subset of graduates' skills.

### Assessment against Principles (see section 4.1)

This indicator is transparent and has face validity. However the low take-up rate reduces its validity in the Learning and Teaching Fund context. May need adjustment and/or comparison within like grouping to ensure it does not favour some institutions/categories over others.

## H. Proportion of staff with qualifications in higher education teaching

### Description

Teaching in higher education qualifications would only include formal qualifications at Graduate Certificate, Graduate Diploma, Postgraduate Certificate, Postgraduate Diploma or Master level, such as:

- Graduate Certificate in University Teaching and Learning
- Graduate Certificate in Tertiary Teaching
- Graduate Certificate in Tertiary Teaching and Learning
- Graduate Certificate in Higher Education
- Graduate Diploma of Tertiary Teaching and Learning
- Graduate Diploma of Higher Education
- Postgraduate Certificate in Education Studies - Higher Education
- Postgraduate Diploma of Educational Leadership - Higher Education
- Master of Educational Leadership - Higher Education

### Data accessibility

DEST does not collect data on teaching qualifications. This would have to be requested from institutions as a new data element.

### Strengths

- Would encourage institutions to take preparation for teaching in higher education seriously.
- A high proportion of staff with an appropriate teaching qualification suggests that an institution places a high importance on the teaching function. Trained staff could be expected to offer higher quality learning and teaching experiences to students.

### Weaknesses

- Could be manipulated by institutions seeking to maximise their 'score' for the purposes of the Learning and Teaching Performance Fund.
- A qualification in teaching may not be a guarantee of a high quality learning experience for students.

### Assessment against Principles (see section 4.1)

Transparent and auditable. However the collection of new data would add to the resource burden on both DEST and institutions. Good face validity although it does not guarantee a high quality learning experience for students. Accommodates different missions and circumstances.

<b>I. Number of finalists in Australian Awards for University Teaching</b>
<b>Description</b>
Number of staff/groups of staff who are finalists in the Australian Awards for University Teaching (AAUT) as a proportion of total academic staff.
<b>Data accessibility</b>
DEST could calculate indicator from existing data bases.
<b>Strengths</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Staff who have received awards for teaching excellence have already been recognised by the Australian Government as excellent teachers. Selection process for awards involves nomination by institutions, often on the basis that nominees have received internal teaching excellence awards.</li> </ul>
<b>Weaknesses</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Selection process for awards involves nomination by institutions. Some institutions might argue that they do not have the administrative capacity to prepare high quality applications for awards.</li> <li>• Correlation between excellent teaching by individual academics and the quality of teaching across the institution or in a discipline may not be significant.</li> <li>• Number of award recipients is a lagging indicator – some may move to another institution before or shortly after receiving their award.</li> <li>• The relatively small number of awards restricts the statistical validity of the awards as a means of allocating Learning and Teaching Performance Fund.</li> <li>• AAUT selection criteria may restrict the eligibility of some institutions for consideration. For example: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ An institution may have strong teaching programmes in areas outside the discipline categories prescribed in the AAUT criteria.</li> <li>○ The individual awards require nominees to submit 30 student questionnaires. Some teachers may be teaching in specialised areas or institutions and do not have 30 students available to enable them to meet this criterion.</li> </ul> </li> <li>• It may not be equitable to award Learning and Teaching Funds on the basis of one year's round of teaching awards, which may reflect chance factors in an institution rather than an ongoing commitment towards teaching excellence. There might therefore be a need for some adjustment process – perhaps a calculation could be undertaken which looked at provision of awards on a five-year rolling basis.</li> </ul>
<b>Assessment against Principles (see section 4.1)</b>
Transparent and good face validity, although correlation between excellence of individual teachers and excellence across the institution as a whole may not be significant. Selection criteria for awards and administrative requirements for nomination may favour some institutions/categories of institutions over others.

<b>J. Student prizes, competitive awards</b>
<p><b>Description</b></p> <p>Number of students who receive competitive external awards.</p>
<p><b>Data accessibility</b></p> <p>DEST does not collect data on numbers of students who receive competitive awards.</p>
<p><b>Strengths</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• It can be argued that this indicator would provide a consistent external measure of quality of teaching.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Weaknesses</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Could be manipulated by institutions seeking to maximise their 'score' for the Learning and Teaching Performance Fund.</li> <li>• Information on availability of awards would have to be collected as a one-off exercise. There may be some disagreement among stakeholders about whether particular awards should be included.</li> <li>• There may be more external awards offered in some fields of education than others. This could advantage institutions which have large numbers of students and/or specialise in these fields.</li> <li>• No necessary causation between student success in competing for awards and quality of teaching and learning in institutions.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Assessment against Principles (see section 4.1)</b></p> <p>Transparent. Data collection would add to the cost and resource burden for DEST and institutions. It may be difficult to achieve a consensus on which awards and prizes would be included for the purposes of the indicator. May favour institutions that attract greater numbers of students with high tertiary entrance scores or which specialise in particular fields of education. Comparison within groups of similar institutions may reduce this effect.</p>

<b>K. Availability of academic support services</b>
<p><b>Description</b></p> <p>Number of academic support staff per student or as a proportion of total staff.</p>
<p><b>Data accessibility</b></p> <p>DEST collects data on staff working in academic support units (eg. external study support units, libraries, audio-visual centres, computer centres). DEST does not collect a further breakdown of the work duties of staff in this classification.</p>
<p><b>Strengths</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• It can be argued that provision of academic support staff increases the resources available to assist students to develop academic skills and therefore indicates the importance which the institution places on teaching quality.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Weaknesses</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Staff are not classified by their particular work duties, so data is not available on level of support available to students.</li> <li>• Provision of academic support services in a particular institution may reflect historical factors rather than current policies.</li> <li>• Institutions have different models of student support services (eg. centralised or integrated into academic courses), and staff working in these areas may be classified in different ways for statistical purposes.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Assessment against Principles (see section 4.1)</b></p> <p>Does not meet most principles. Correlation between academic support services and excellence in learning and teaching may not be significant, methodological problems exist in classification of staff.</p>

## 5. Administration of the Learning and Teaching Performance Fund

Allocation of the Learning and Teaching Performance Fund will be determined in two stages. The focus of the first stage is evidence of institutional commitment to teaching and learning: institutions are required to establish eligibility for funds by demonstrating that they have appropriate policies and processes in place. The requirements of Stage 1 are set out below.

The focus of the second stage is learning and teaching outcomes; institutional performance in learning and teaching will be assessed using a range of methods, which may include performance indicators such as student progress and graduate employment outcomes, and will be developed in consultation with the sector. This discussion paper forms part of the consultation process, and will inform consultations over the next 12 months with the sector. An advisory group of academics and other experts has been formed to guide development of the Fund (see Appendix A for membership).

It should be emphasised that the criteria for both stages will be evaluated after two years and may change from that selected for use in 2006. Changes to Fund criteria could potentially be suggested by initial outcomes, changes in Australian Government or sector priorities for learning and teaching, or further research into evaluation of learning and teaching.

It is desirable to where possible make use of existing data such as the information provided to AUQA.

### 5.1. Process

Under Stage 1 it is proposed that institutions indicate interest in participating in the Fund by submitting a one page cover sheet certifying that they fulfil the eligibility criteria, and attaching documentation to validate their claims. It is anticipated that most institutions will already meet the Stage 1 eligibility criteria, or be able to do so without substantial additional effort.

Institutions approved under Stage 1 will be listed on the DEST website as satisfying the requirements under Stage 1 of the Learning and Teaching Performance Fund for the current year.

Institutions which meet the eligibility criteria for Stage 1 will then be eligible for assessment under Stage 2. The methodology for allocating funds under Stage 2 is currently being developed in consultation with the sector, and this issues paper is intended to inform that process.

The proposed timeframe for implementation of the Fund in 2006 is as follows.

Applications for Stage 1	Stage 1 assessment	Announcement of institutions eligible for Stage 2	Applications for Stage 2 (if required)	Stage 2 assessment	Announcement of allocations fund to institutions	Payment of funds
January 2005	February 2005	February 2005	March 2005	April – June 2005	July 2005	January 2006

## 5.2. Stage 1

In order to meet the requirements for Stage 1 of the Learning and Teaching Performance Fund it is proposed that institutions be required to submit the following documentation to the Department. It should be noted that in this context, the term 'systematic' is defined as an integral component of the institutions practices, not a 'one-off' event or practice.

1. A current and recent institutional learning and teaching plan or strategy.
2. Evidence of systematic support for professional development in learning and teaching for sessional and full-time academic staff.
  - Documentation on professional development policies and practices for sessional and full-time academic staff; and
  - Documentation showing staff development opportunities (eg. on-campus and external programmes, staff placements or exchanges etc.) provided for sessional and full-time academic staff in the preceding year.
3. Evidence of probation and promotion practices and policies which include effectiveness as a teacher.
  - Documentation on academic probation and promotions policies and practices that indicate staff are required to provide evidence of their effectiveness as a teacher (eg. student evaluations of teaching, portfolios etc.).
4. Evidence of systematic student evaluation of teaching and subjects that inform probation and promotion decisions for academic positions.
  - Documentation on the institution's policies and practices on student evaluation of teaching and subjects; and
  - Documentation that indicates student evaluation is a key part of the probation and promotions process (this could be provided as part of academic probation and promotions policies).
5. Evidence that the strategies, practices, policies and student evaluation results are publicly available on an institution's website.

Institutions must provide the Department with the website addresses where the public may find the following:

- the learning and teaching strategy;
- professional development policies and practices;
- academic probation and promotion documents; and
- student evaluation results.

Privacy concerns suggest that student evaluation results include only data aggregated by field of education as defined by DEST. It is not expected that data enabling identification of individual academics or student respondents be provided to DEST or published on an institution's website.

### **5.3. Stage 2**

The major focus of this paper is on issues relating to the development of Stage 2 of the Fund – the methodology for allocation of funds to particular institutions.

## 6. Next Steps

### 6.1. Consultation process

Consultation on the Fund will include written comments in response to the Issues Paper and a series of meetings in major capital cities over June and July 2004.

#### 6.1.1. Submissions

We invite comments on the issues raised in this paper and ask that you respond to the questions below.

1. Which model do you believe is the most appropriate for use in the Learning and Teaching Performance Fund?
2. Are there models not discussed in the issues paper which you would like to propose?
3. What are your views on the model proposed by the AVCC Working Party?
4. If you support an approach which includes performance indicators, what are your views on the indicators canvassed in the issues paper? Are there particular indicators you would like to see included or excluded in measuring excellence under the Learning and Teaching Performance Fund? Why?
5. If you support an approach which includes performance indicators, which would offer a more valid measure of excellence in learning and teaching – a single performance indicator or triangulation of data using a small set of indicators?
6. If you support an approach which includes performance indicators, should crude results for each institution be adjusted for the impact of student and course mix, or compared within groupings of like institutions?
7. If you support a peer review model, what are your views on the suggestion that such a model should focus on a specific theme, selected by DEST annually? What are your views on the possible themes suggested in the paper?
8. How should institutions' performance be compared – by benchmarking, ranking or on the basis of improvement over time?
9. Should performance be compared on a whole-of-institution basis, on a Field of Education basis or on some other basis?
10. If within groupings of like institutions, what should those groupings be?

Your comments should be emailed to DEST by **7 May 2004** at [LTPF@dest.gov.au](mailto:LTPF@dest.gov.au)

#### 6.1.2. Forums

A series of consultation fora will be held between June and July 2004 in major capital cities. Attendance at consultations will be by invitation, with each Vice-Chancellor invited to nominate up to three representatives to attend.

## **6.2. Finalisation of criteria for Learning and Teaching Performance Fund**

It is expected that administrative procedures for the Learning and Teaching Performance Fund will be finalised by the end of 2004.

## Appendix A: Advisory Group

<b>Member</b>	<b>Organisation</b>
Dr Carol Nicoll (Chair)	Branch Manager Funding Branch Higher Education Group Department of Education, Science and Training
Mr Hamish Coates	PhD student Centre for the Study of Higher Education University of Melbourne
Professor John Dearn	HERDSA President Pro Vice-Chancellor (Academic) University of Canberra
Professor Margaret Gardner	Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Academic) University of Queensland
Professor Sue Johnston	Pro Vice-Chancellor (Teaching and Learning) University of Tasmania
Professor Richard Johnstone	Pro Vice-Chancellor (Education and Quality Enhancement) University of Technology, Sydney
Mr Conor King	Director, Policy and Co-ordination AVCC
Professor Denise Kirkpatrick	Director, Teaching and Learning Centre University of New England
Professor Adrian Lee	Pro-Vice-Chancellor (Education and Quality Improvement) University of New South Wales
Professor Alan Lindsay	Deputy Vice-Chancellor and Vice-President (Academic & Planning) Monash University
Professor Craig McInnis	Director Centre for the Study of Higher Education University of Melbourne
Dr Janice Orrell	Academic Coordinator Staff Development and Training Unit Flinders University
Professor Paul Ramsden	Pro Vice-Chancellor (Teaching and Learning) University of Sydney
Professor Geoff Scott	Director, Planning and Quality Unit University of Technology, Sydney

## Appendix B: Data sources

### DEST data elements related to students

The following elements are included in one or more of the files provided to DEST by institutions.

Element No.	Element Name
316	Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander code
333	Academic organisational unit code
335	Academic organisational unit group code
334	Academic organisational unit name
410	Address of permanent home residence - part 1
411	Address of permanent home residence - part 2
412	Address of permanent home residence - part 3
413	Address of permanent home residence – postcode
327	Basis for admission to current course
477	Campus Postcode
459	Campus Location indicator
358	Citizen/resident indicator
455	Combined course indicator
476	Commencing Location
331	Concurrent/major course indicator
426	Contact facsimile number
424	Contact name – full
425	Contact telephone number
346	Country of birth code
307	Course code
328	Course commencement date
350	Course load
309	Course name – abbreviated
308	Course name – full
393	Course of Study Code
394	Course of Study Name
310	Course type code
422	Data type code
314	Date of birth
392	Differential-HECS indicator
386	Disability
464	Discipline group code
339	Equivalent full-time student unit value
368	Exemption/status institution code
461	Field of education code
462	Field of education supplementary code
315	Gender code
414	HECS, OLDPS, PELS, BOTPLS amount due for half year
381	HECS, OLDPS, PELS, BOTPLS amount paid – semester HECS, OLDPS, PELS, BOTPLS amount prior to exemption - excluding work
384	experience in industry
380	Liability-status
427	Institution address - part 1
428	Institution address - part 2
431	Institution address – postcode
430	Institution address – state

429	Institution address – suburb
306	Institution code
423	Institution name
348	Language spoken at home code
481	Loan Scheme Type code
320	Location code of permanent home residence
319	Location code of semester/term residence
329	Mode of attendance code
486	Name of Town/Locality
484	Occupation and Educational Background FATHER
485	Occupation and Educational Background MOTHER
480	On-line status code
390	Permanent resident status
409	Postal address – postcode
406	Postal address part 1
407	Postal address part 2
408	Postal address part 3
466	Postal address suburb/town
467	Postal address state code
468	Postal address country name
360	Prior degree course; year
366	Prior other qualification/certificate; year
359	Prior postgraduate course; year
365	Prior secondary education course at school; year
364	Prior secondary education course at TAFE; year
367	Prior studies exemption/status
362	Prior sub-degree course (at TAFE); year
361	Prior sub-degree course (not at TAFE); year
363	Prior TAFE award course; year
469	Residential address suburb/town
470	Residential address state code
471	Residential address country name
445	Revised HECS, OLDPS, PELS, BOTPLS amount due for half year
487	Scholarship Type
421	Submission date
353	Semester in which the load occurs code
415	Submission/year code
465	Separation Status code
475	Signature date
312	Special course type code
463	Specialisation code
403	Student given name – first
404	Student given name – others
313	Student identification code
402	Student surname
482	Student telephone number (OLA only)
405	Student title
416	Tax file number
369	Tertiary entrance score
379	Total EFTSU – semester
385	Total exemption granted
460	Total Previous RTS EFTSU
472	Total number of data records
473	Total amounts of original debts on this file
474	Total amounts of revised debts on this file
391	Tuition fee

330	Type of attendance code
418	Type of identity
483	Unit code (OLA only)
354	Unit of study code
478	Unit of study name
355	Unit of study completion status
479	Unit of study group code
446	Variation reason code
383	Work experience in industry EFTSU – semester
337	Work experience in industry indicator
347	Year of arrival in Australia

**DEST data elements related to staff**

<b>Element No.</b>	<b>Element Name</b>
300	Record type code
306	Institution code
335	Academic organisational unit group code
401	Person identification code
402	Sex of staff code
403	Staff date of birth code
404	Appointment term code
406	Work contract code
407	Current duties term code
408	Current duties classification type, level and increment code
409	Current duties classification type and level group code
410	Organisational unit code
411	Work sector code
413	Full-time equivalence - reference date
414	Actual full-time equivalence - prior year
423	Equivalent full-time annual salary - current duties
424	Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander indicator
501	Highest qualification
502	Place of highest qualification
503	Language spoken at home code
504	Country of birth code

## Other Sources of Data

### ***Australian Council of Educational Research (ACER) – Graduate Skills Assessment (GSA)***

The GSA assesses students in four areas:

- Critical thinking
- Problem solving
- Interpersonal Understandings
- Written communication

The test consists of five components. There are three multiple-choice components:

- Critical thinking
- Problem solving
- Interpersonal Understandings

And two writing components (for written communication)

- Report
- Argument

### ***Graduate Careers Council of Australia (GCCA) – Course Experience Questionnaire (CEQ) and Graduate Destination Survey (GDS)***

#### **Course Experience Questionnaire (CEQ)**

There are 25 statements to describe 5 key dimensions (or scales) which underlie the quality of learning and teaching graduates received in their courses. The 5 scales are:

1. Good teaching
2. Clear goals and standards
3. Appropriate Assessment
4. Appropriate workload
5. Generic skills

The 25th item on the questionnaire refers to Overall Satisfaction. In addition, graduates are provided with the opportunity to comment on the 'best aspects' and 'worst aspects' of their courses through two open-ended questions.

#### **Graduate Destination Survey (GDS)**

The standard GDS questionnaire is distributed by institutions to those who qualified for the award of a degree or diploma (including higher degrees or diplomas). The questions are in seven broad areas with subordinate questions to elicit details.

1. Your course
  - a. Title of award
  - b. Major fields of study
  - c. Level of award
  - d. Part of a combined or double degree
  - e. Enrolment as a HECS liable fee-paying student
  - f. Year commenced
  - g. Type of attendance – wholly or mainly full-time/part-time
  - h. Mode of study – wholly or mainly internal/external
  - i. Credit or advanced standing for study at TAFE/ another institution/ other reasons

2. Work in your final year
  - a. Any kind of paid job during your final year
  - b. Was this employment usually on a full-time or part-time/casual basis
  - c. Did your employer provide financial support for your studies
  - d. Did your employer provide time off in lieu
  - e. Are you still with that employer.
  
3. What you were doing on 30 April 2002
  - a. Full-time/Part-time study or not studying
  - b. Working/not working, seeking different job, seeking full-time/part-time work, unavailable for study or paid work
  
4. Main paid work
  - a. Employer details
  - b. In Australia or overseas
  - c. Type of employer
  - d. Starting date
  - e. Occupation
  - f. Main duties
  - g. No of hours per week
  - h. Permanent/short-term
  - i. Annual salary
  - j. First full-time job
  
5. Job search methods
  - a. Look for work in last year
  - b. Methods
  
6. Further study
  - a. Title of award
  - b. Major fields of study
  - c. Level of award
  - d. Attendance – full-time or part-time
  - e. Mode – internal or external
  - f. Name of institution
  - g. Month beginning award
  
7. About you
  - a. Sex
  - b. Age
  - c. Permanent resident of Australia
  - d. In Australia or overseas on 30 April previous year
  - e. Disability
  - f. Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander
  - g. Non-English speaking background
  - h. Highest previous qualification

## Appendix C: Glossary of terms

### Course Experience Questionnaire (CEQ)

The Course Experience Questionnaire is a 25-item survey that measures graduate satisfaction with various aspects of their courses including good teaching, generic skills, goals and standards, workload, assessment and overall satisfaction.

### EFTSU (Equivalent Full-time Student Unit) and EFTSL (Equivalent Full-time Student Load)

An EFTSU is a value representing the student load for part of a unit, or units of study, expressed as a proportion of the workload for a standard annual programme for a student undertaking a full year of study in a particular year of a particular course.

An EFTSL is the new unit of measure used in the Higher Education Support Act 2003 (HESA), and is an equivalent full-time student load. It is a measure of the study load of a student undertaking a course of study on a full-time basis.

### Field of Education

The Field of Education classification is the classification used to describe higher education courses, specialisations and units of study. The main purpose of the classification is to ensure courses, classifications and units of study with the same or similar vocational emphasis are reliably classified to the same “field of education”. This term has been used from 1 January 2001 and replaces ‘field of study’. The twelve field of education classes are:

- 01 Natural and Physical Sciences
- 02 Information Technology
- 03 Engineering and Related Technologies
- 04 Architecture and Building
- 05 Agriculture, Environmental and Related Studies
- 06 Health
- 07 Education
- 08 Management and Commerce
- 09 Society and Culture
- 10 Creative Arts
- 11 Food, Hospitality and Personal Services
- 12 Mixed Field Programmes

### Generic skills

Generic skills relate to broad and measurable skills which university students might expect to develop/enhance throughout their university experience. These attributes, which cross disciplines, may include critical thinking, problem solving, communication skills and interpersonal understandings. A number of generic skills are measured in the Course Experience Questionnaire (CEQ) and the Graduate Skills Assessment (GSA).

### Graduate Destination Survey (GDS)

The Graduate Destination Survey surveys Australian and overseas graduates four months after graduation about the post-graduation experiences. Key indicators are as follows.

- Proportion of graduates in full-time employment of those who are available for full-time employment.
- Starting salaries of graduates.

- Proportion of graduates in full-time study.

### **Graduate Skills Assessment (GSA)**

The GSA is a test of generic skills which can be administered on a voluntary basis to individual students at the point of exit and entry to university. It measures written communication, critical thinking, problem solving and interpersonal understandings.

### **Performance indicator**

Performance indicators are either quantitative (objective) or qualitative (subjective) measures of an aspect of a university's operations. Examples include progress rate of students (quantitative) and results of the CEQ (qualitative).

### **Postgraduate student**

Postgraduate students refer to students undertaking the following courses:

- Higher Doctorate
- Doctorate by Research
- Doctorate by Coursework
- Masters by Research
- Masters by Coursework
- Postgraduate Qualifying or Preliminary (for Master's, PhD or Higher Doctorate)
- Graduate Diploma/Postgraduate Diploma
- Graduate Certificate

### **Undergraduate student**

Undergraduate students refer to students undertaking the following courses:

- Bachelor's Graduate Entry
- Bachelor's Honours
- Bachelor's Pass
- Associate Degree
- Advanced Diploma
- Diploma
- Other award course

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