

A Forced Collaboration Approach to Quality Assurance

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Why Quality Assurance?

- In 2014, there were 175 providers registered to deliver higher education qualifications in Australia, 43 of which were universities accrediting their own courses of study (Cremonini et al., 2015).
- Over 10 years domestic student numbers rose by 37 per cent and foreign by 56 per cent (Cremonini et al., 2015).
- Does massification lead to greater quality?
- Are universities increasing the amount they spend on educating each student?

What We Learnt

- Define, Align, Assess, Improve - Define, Align, Assess, Improve
- Force quality assurance beyond dominant paradigms.
- There will never be enough time.
- Reward and recognition are great but when they don't work or are not an incentive, coerce.

Initial Resistance

- Academic authors have railed against quality assurance, expressing the beliefs of many. Mårtensson et al. (2014) and Lucas (2014) state that academics resist engagement in quality assurance because it does not integrate with the reality of 'academic life'; it results in unpaid overtime, sleepless nights, loss of intrinsic motivation and disrupted career development.
- Our attempt to introduce a quality assurance process in 2014 fell flat with staff at all levels refusing to engage at the earliest stage in the process – Defining Course Level Learning Outcomes.
 - We presented at a faculty meeting, had the Dean reiterate the importance, sent discipline leaders and course/major coordinators a copy of the spreadsheet to be completed and ran several workshops (poorly attended) on QA and mapping.

Faculty Mission	Graduate Quality Statement	Sub-course Learning Outcomes	Course Learning Outcomes	AQF 2013	Threshold Learning Standards
		Level 100/200	Level 300		
<p>Offering our students the opportunity for a rewarding, personal learning experience.</p> <p>Linking our research and teaching across a range of disciplines, professions and industries.</p>	<p>1. Acquire subject, multidisciplinary and inquiry knowledge and skills:</p> <p>1.1. The ability to transfer knowledge to complex and uncertain business situations and transmit that knowledge to professional peers for critical discussion.</p> <p>1.2. Extensive functioning knowledge in:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ A specific discipline and its application to the business environment. ▶ The legal, regulatory and ethical framework of business and organisations in both Australian and international contexts. <p>1.3. Functional lifelong learner for professional and personal career aspirations.</p>			<p>Graduates will have:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • a broad and coherent body of knowledge, with depth in the underlying principles and concepts in one or more disciplines as a basis for independent lifelong learning. • the ability to adapt knowledge and skills in diverse contexts • responsibility and accountability for own learning and professional practice (and in collaboration with others) 	
	<p>2. Accomplished communicator:</p> <p>2.1. The ability to engage in persuasive, succinct oral and written discussions to communicate and defend a position held both individually and as part of a culturally and linguistically diverse group, and to effectively respond to audience questions.</p> <p>2.2. Written communication skills to create clear and detailed analyses and non biased</p>			<p>Graduates will have:</p> <p>communication skills to present a clear, coherent and independent exposition of knowledge and ideas</p>	

Unit Code	
Unit Name	

Course Learning Outcomes Met	Unit Learning Outcomes (5max)	Related Assessment Criteria or Module Learning Outcomes	Learning Method	Assessment Method

Why?

- Change fatigue
- Over-reliance on a few key drivers – according to Cross et al., (2016) the distribution of collaborative work is often lopsided, with up to 35% of collaboration workload done by 3 to 5% of employees. Our past key drivers of change were fatigued, overworked and disenfranchised.
- Quality assurance was not tied to performance management.

The Solution – Forced Collaboration

- Prins (2006) suggests that sometimes collaboration needs to be forced to ensure that all parties work together in the best interests of the organisation.
- Forcing people to work together strikes many academics as illiberal. However, we are born into forced associations – ethnic, cultural, religious, economic, etc.
 - The military, sporting teams and most businesses successfully force collaboration.
- Over time, forced collaboration encourages stakeholders to build relationships and negotiate and compromise to find solutions to problems (Hughes et al., 2013).

Forced Collaboration

- Forced collaboration is not uncommon in universities, particularly in research. Funding bodies often offer research grants only if projects are cross institutional. These collaborations can be productive, generating new friendships, data and ideas and resulting in future research collaborations (Ledford, 2008).
- Chazan et al. (1998), Holland & Adams (2002) and Irby (2012) all write about forced collaborations in learning and teaching that result in improvements.

Attempt 2

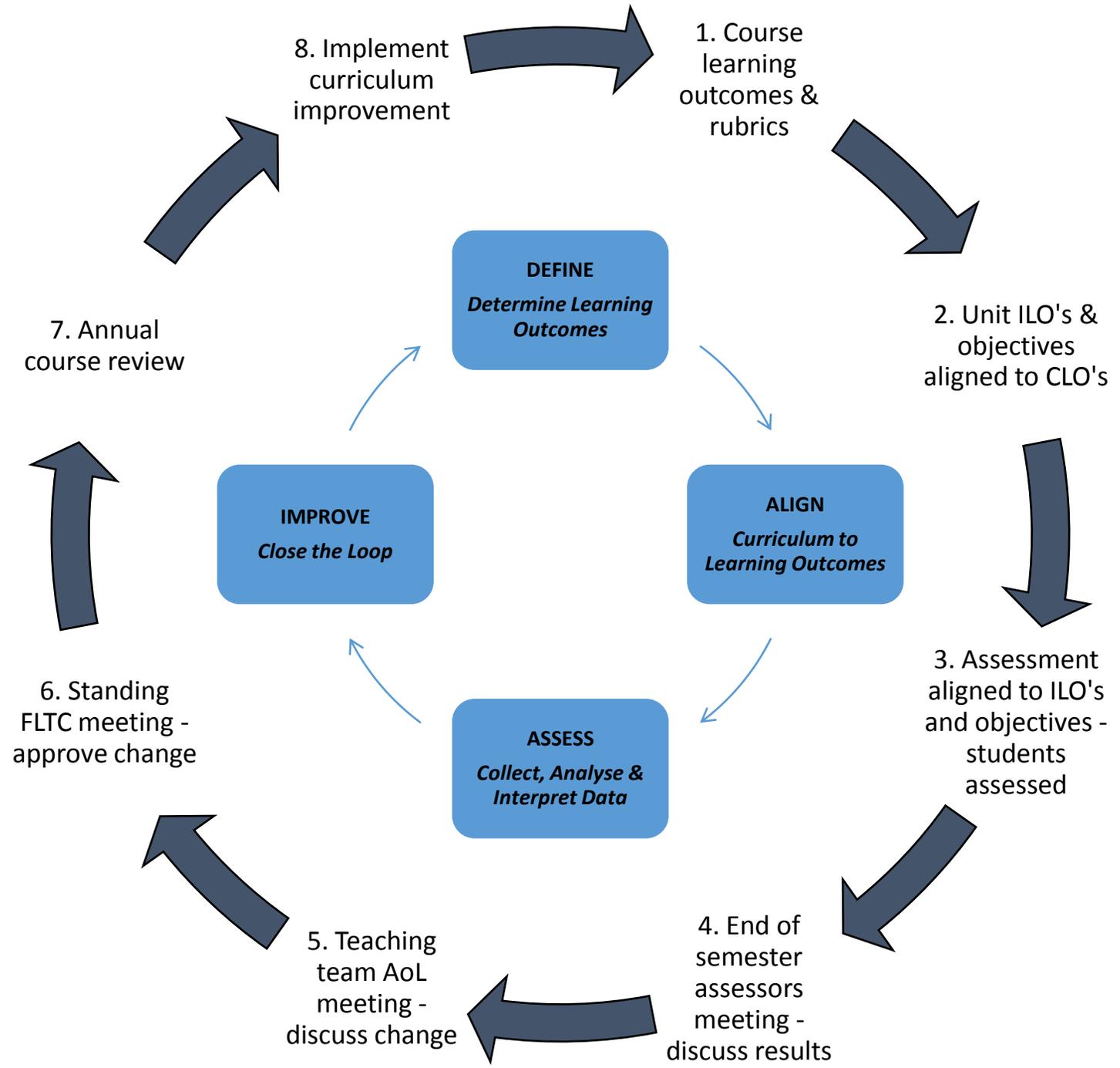
- Wrote emails for the Dean to send to staff expressing the importance of completing our mapping and quality assurance process.
- Developed a quality assurance guide instructing academics on the QA process with a clause on under-performance management for those that did not comply.
- Ratified the guide through Faculty Learning and Teaching Committee and Faculty Management Committee.
- Instructed members of both committees on their responsibility in informing disciplines and teaching teams about the guide and quality assurance process including disciplinary procedures.
- Asked each teaching team and discipline to include the ADLT or the Senior Teaching Fellow in all quality assurance meetings and copied the Head of School in on all emails.

Attempt 2

- Attended all teaching team/discipline quality assurance meetings to advise on process and ensure agreement by all present on changes to courses or units.
- Questioned discipline heads and course and major coordinators via email on why some staff were not at meetings and copied in the Head of School.
- Did not allow discussion on units (learning outcomes and assessments) if unit coordinator was not present at meetings.
- Continuously updated Head of School on each teaching team/disciplines progress, or lack there of.
- Organised a facilitator to take over from course/major coordinators when progress was too slow and ensured Dean and Head of School were aware of coordinators failure.
- Use of much positive language and positive reinforcement for those that were engaged in the process and ensuring Dean and Head of School were aware of who put in the most effort.

Lessons from the Front Line

- Continual change is not well received.
- Don't fall victim to apathy, you may need to force people to participate.
- Allow some flexibility but keep on message.
- Identify and involve key staff beyond the project team.
- Respect the autonomy of each discipline/teaching team but be willing to challenge their basic assumptions.
- Patience - the process is slow and at times cumbersome
- Make reflection and review a part of workplace culture – then next time it might be easier.



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