La Trobe University has devised a ranking that takes in measures of equity and diversity to give what it says is a truer measure of how well-rounded an institution is.

The QED ranking is an attempt “to redefine quality not according to narrow research metrics but to be more all inclusive”, said Andrew Harvey, head of La Trobe’s access and achievement research unit. “The table starts a conversation; it’s not meant to be definitive. The conversation is about what universities value, what they stand for and what do we really mean when we talk about quality.”

Monash tops the QED ranking. It performs poorly on equity but is among the top 10 universities on each of three other measures, including first for diversity. It is followed by Flinders and La Trobe, Sydney and the University of South Australia.
“To truly reflect the character and aspirations of a modern Australian university, we must focus on three themes whose interconnectedness is crucial to the future of higher education: quality, equity and diversity,” La Trobe senior deputy vice-chancellor Jane Long writes in today’s HES. “We must consider these three not as separate domains: rather, the interaction between quality and equity and diversity in a period of growth and widening access is pivotal in any assessment of the relevance of university education.”

To ascertain the ranking, Dr Harvey and Professor Long collated a range of measures. For equity, they used participation rates of students from regional, indigenous or poor backgrounds and those with a disability. For teaching and learning, it was student retention and success. For quality, it was the proportion of ERA fields rated at well above world class, and research revenue.

The diversity indicator looked at the proportion of international students as well as those from non-English speaking backgrounds, gender balance among students and the proportion of female senior academics.

“We are just trying to demonstrate that traditional measures of quality are very narrow and quality is informed by equity and diversity,” Dr Harvey said.

“We are interested in how embedded each of these indicators are. La Trobe, for example, now teaches indigenous culture to all first-year students. We’ve redesigned the curriculum. Other ways may be to redesign spaces to ensure students mix and other ways of breaking down what the Americans call ‘surface segregations’.”

QED is from the Latin *quod erat demonstrandum*, meaning “which had to be proven”.