LA TROBE
Educational Quality Framework

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The Educational Quality Framework

1 – Overview

The La Trobe Educational Quality Framework (the Framework) guides educational quality assurance and enhancement activities at La Trobe University. It outlines the University's academic assurance principles and the cyclical processes to achieve quality objectives.

The Framework supports the University to formulate strategies for quality assurance and quality enhancement within the context of its statutory obligations under Commonwealth and state legislation, including the Tertiary Education Quality and Standards Agency Act 2011; the Education Services for Overseas Students Act 2000, and regulatory instruments associated with these Acts, including the Australian Qualifications Framework; the Higher Education Standards Framework 2021; the La Trobe Act 2009. It also supports the University's core mission in relation to the quality of educational provision.

The Framework applies to academic and administrative areas of the university that provide services or support the environment of learning and teaching, research training, and student management. It is congruent with La Trobe's other learning and teaching, research and student support suite of policies, procedures, guidelines, and instruments.

2 - Approach

• La Trobe adopts a threshold-based approach to quality in course design and delivery, the learning environment and the student experience using the Quality Assurance Indicators (QAI) outlined in the framework.

• Quality assurance is evidence based, where performance is demonstrated by robust data of trends, external referencing and feedback from students, peer and professional bodies.

• Quality evaluation empowers staff to engage in continuous and periodic improvement where impact of adjustments will maximise the quality of experience and outcomes for students.

• Staff development in educational quality management is supported through career progression as set out in professional development frameworks, promotions and policies.

• Quality assurance identifies opportunities to promote and support equity within the diverse student body as part of the enhancement of the learning environment, academic and research training and student support.

• Continuous improvement is carried forward by a coherent system of university governance with mechanisms for setting and evaluating performance against informed thresholds.

3 – The Framework

The Framework provides an overarching structure to guide activities of educational practice through systemic quality monitoring and review to meet the requirements of regulatory frameworks, including the Higher Education Standards Framework (Threshold Standards 2021). It lays an assurance foundation across four key domains that holistically describe university activities. These are:

a. design for learning;
b. participation and support;
c. the learning environment.
d. teaching and delivery.

The domains cover all key educational activities that are assured within governance and management responsibilities. Monitoring and review of thresholds is embedded in each domain.

The cyclical improvement approach to educational quality can be described as plan-implement-demonstrate-review-evaluate-improve (PIDREI) and is embedded across all key educational activities. Each of these activities supports enhancement overseen by academic and professional staff and forums.

Plan. High quality practice in learning and teaching, the learning environment, and student experience is clearly set out in planning through policies and procedures, to ensure educational offerings meet high standards and legislative and regulatory requirements. University governance and oversight set expected quality thresholds for key assurance indicators through cyclical monitoring and review.

Implement and Demonstrate. The implementation of planned activities is undertaken by staff in schools, departments, and program areas including coordination and administration staff. Clear evidence of controls and decision making on activities that align to the framework is required. The university systematically demonstrates implementation of quality performance through data for monitoring and reporting by responsible staff in functional areas.
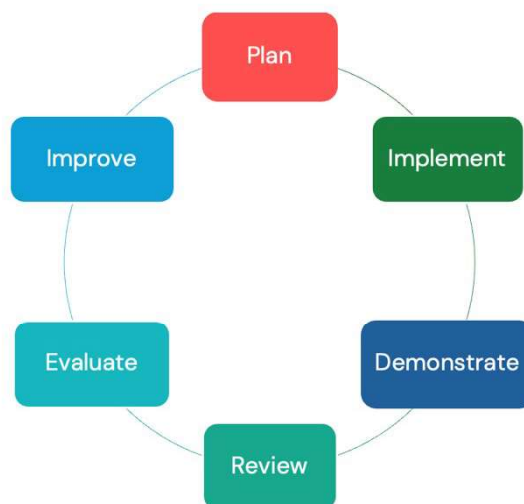
Review and Evaluate. La Trobe University Council has oversight of standards, quality, and improvement of educational provision. Delegations to boards and committees play a pivotal role evaluating standards and quality management through key assurance indicators mapped to audit and review activities outlined in the framework. The results of monitoring and review, including external referencing, are used to mitigate future risks to quality, and to guide and evaluate improvements to course design, teaching, supervision, learning and academic support. Where possible or required, evaluation benefits from the input of students, academic discipline experts internal and external to the University, industry, community and government.

Improve. Outcomes from quality assurance activities are reported and monitored in line with the management and governance processes according to the requirements of La Trobe policies and the framework. Direction setting and regular review will be retained by Council through its delegated boards and committees which will retain oversight of improvement plans, their implementation and outcomes as outlined in La Trobe policies and the framework. Improvements will be presented for consideration as recommendations, action plans, or policy and procedure revisions.

4 - Responsibilities

• Accountable staff in schools and divisions will apply the principles and requirements of quality assurance as set out in the Framework in their respective areas through continuous and periodic assurance practices.

• Divisional and School plans will identify the quality assurance requirements arising from annual and interim monitoring processes and undertake cyclical reporting of improvements.

• Academic management and governance bodies will monitor academic standards, taking account of all domains of the quality and standards framework.

• Academic and professional staff are provided guidance and support on quality and standards assurance processes, including principles and approaches to evidence-based enhancement by Quality and Standards in the Learning and Teaching portfolio.

5 – Quality Assurance Indicators (thresholds)

The quality assurance indicators (QAI) are the stated quality requirements in a range of teaching and learning, and research training activities at La Trobe, as outlined in academic and research training policies. The indicators are represented as a range of statements organised in areas of activity. Each indicator is monitored through the cycles of assurance, resulting in a reported evaluation of the thresholds using relevant data. This cycle starts when performance measures are gathered via La Trobe systems and processes. QAI are then presented as meaningful benchmarks of analysis and insight in reports. The results of evaluation are acted upon by La Trobe leadership and committees, which determines the improvement to La Trobe policies or processes. Each Indicator is mapped to the policies overseen by the governing structures of La Trobe, and to the regulatory frameworks in the Higher Education sector, such as the HESF and ESOS where relevant.

6 – Educational Quality Framework Management and Governance Map

The Governance Map is the indicative tabulated view of how the Framework is operationalised. Staff responsible for reporting use a dashboard, which the governance map depicts. The tools are administered from the Quality and Standards division in collaboration with areas with quality management and reporting accountabilities. The tools allow staff to align their reporting to the QAI that needs to be assured through data management and reporting, and where this should flow in the governance system. It shows the responsible division and related policy and legislation against which the activities are set.

Annexe 1. Quality Assurance Indicators (thresholds)

A. Design for Learning

A.1 Admissions

1.1 Admission and pathways requirements are clearly and accurately represented.

1.2 Entry requirements are designed to support student achievement and course integrity.

1.3 Recognition of prior learning is consistent and fair.

1.4 Advanced standing credit is monitored to inform future decisions.

1.5 Credit decisions are made in accordance with the AQF.

A.2 Transition Strategies

2.1 Orientation and transition design is tailored for cohorts specific to the university.

2.2 Early assessment is formative to support subsequent learning and success.

2.3 Course design and learning activities meet the needs of First Nations peoples.

A.3 Course Design

3.1 Academic qualifications are accredited and AQF appropriate.

3.2 Professional accreditation is met and maintained by course design and review.

3.3 Courses include emerging concepts, recent scholarship and generic knowledge and skills.

3.4 Course design is informed by external comparators.

3.5 Research degrees are the appropriate level, proportion and type for the research study.

3.6 Learning design embeds constructive alignment to achieve learning outcomes.

A.4 Assessment for Learning

4.1 Assessment is designed for progressive learning across each subject and the course.

4.2 Calibration of assessment methods is undertaken in subjects at each level of a course.

4.3 Assessments are validated and moderated in subjects to support progression.

A.5 Monitoring and Review

5.1 Entry requirements and student preparedness are monitored by course and cohort.

5.2 Early progress in learning is monitored and supported in areas of need.

5.3 Course reaccreditation involves a comprehensive, evidence-based review of all aspects of the course.

5.4 Interim reviews inform approaches to teaching, supervision, support and participation.

B. Participation and Support

B.1 Orientation to Learning

1.1 Students are admitted when prepared for their course, including in English language.

1.2 Supervised induction into research training is role specific and appropriate.

1.3 International students are fully supported in adjustments to study and living.

1.4 Transition strategies create an equitable learning experience within cohorts and locations.

1.5 Early assessment provides formative feedback on progress and identifies learning support needs.

B.2 Equity and Diversity

2.1 Students at risk are identified and provided, both academic and pastoral support.

2.2 Educational design and practices meet the needs of First Nations peoples.

2.3 Specific strategies are developed, implemented, and monitored for cohorts.

2.4 Evidence-based quality assurance occurs for improvement in diversity and equity.

B.3 Access and Support

3.1 Accurate and timely advice is available across all services that students use.

3.2 Learning support services are accessible for diverse course locations and modes.

3.3 Guidance for students on academic and research misconduct is available.

3.4 Student feedback on their educational experiences informs improvements.

C. The Learning Environment

C.1 Safety and Security

1.1 The university provides a safe and secure environment for educational activities.

1.2 External placements and third-party providers are fit for purpose and quality assured.

1.3 Educational and research facilities meet the needs of students who use them.

1.4 Academic and research integrity is promoted, and risks are actively monitored.

1.5 The quality and safety of the online educational environment is monitored.

C.2 The Learning Environment

2.1 Academic and scholarly interaction, online and in person, is supported.

2.2 The Learning Management System offers a high quality, accessible learning platform.

2.3 Grievance processes are assured for access, diversity, timeliness, safety, and fairness.

2.4 Learning resources are relevant, current and accessible for learning needs.

D. Teaching and Delivery

D.1 Delivery and Supervision

1.1 Course delivery is planned with adequate staffing, student support and academic services.

1.2 Supervision and resources required for research training are available.

1.3 Teaching staff have appropriate and relevant qualifications to lead academic learning.

1.4 Teaching staff are available to students for consultation about their learning.

D.2 Teaching Quality

2.1 Staff lead intellectual inquiry suited to the nature and level of expected learning outcomes.

2.2 Staff have current research or practice advancement.

2.3 Teaching demonstrates contemporary principles of academic teaching and learning.

2.4 Teaching staff review quality performance data including student feedback to improve teaching.