

Assuring and Enhancing Course and Teaching Quality Guideline

Section 1 - Purpose and Scope

(1) This Guideline supplements the [Programs, Plans and Courses Quality Assurance Policy](#) and supports the application of the [Student Evaluation of Course and Teaching Procedure](#).

(2) The University of Queensland (the University or UQ) has a variety of mechanisms and processes in place to ensure its students' educational experience is of the highest standard and quality. The University is also subject to various regulatory requirements, including the [Higher Education Standards Framework \(Threshold Standards\) 2021](#), that require its accredited course and teaching to be continuously monitored, reviewed and improved.

(3) The [Annual Programs, Plans and Courses Quality Assurance Procedure](#) and [Academic Program Review \(APR\) Procedure](#) establish formal quality assurance mechanisms and processes to review and monitor the quality of Programs, Plans and Courses. The University also implements evaluation tools called Student Evaluation of Course and Teacher (SECaT) and Student Evaluation of Tutor (SETutor) surveys that are administered at the end of semester or at the completion of a course via standard questionnaires.

(4) These formal quality assurance mechanisms and processes reflect the University's commitment to "offer rich and varied educational experiences that are designed to foster a sense of belonging while equipping our students to be leaders within their fields with the agility to thrive in a global environment". However, the University acknowledges the end of semester evaluations do not enable teaching staff to understand and make much-needed changes before the completion of courses, nor do standard questionnaires always help schools or staff identify targeted needs for developing teaching capacity and enhancing practice.

(5) Additionally, some courses, for example, clinical courses, are exempt from the SECaT process. Evaluation of these courses is recommended, and the practices outlined in this Guideline may be appropriate to gather feedback from students and/or colleagues.

(6) This Guideline suggests a framework for good practice around ensuring and enhancing course and teaching quality by explaining contrasting and complementary evaluation options. By outlining the different mechanisms available to measure minimum teaching standards, this Guideline aims to help university staff develop their capacity as teachers while also providing supplementary evidence that satisfies the University's quality assurance responsibilities.

(7) The Guideline also provides information about a variety of existing evaluation and enhancement methods that go beyond and before mandatory end of semester student evaluations. Faculties, schools, and academic staff may wish to consider using multiple methods when designing, reviewing, and developing courses and enhancing the quality of their courses and teaching. In addition to other strategies, staff can use self-reflection, peer-review (observation) of teaching, and interim evaluations of students' feedback collected during the course to enhance their course content and quality of teaching.

(8) To enable UQ's strategic vision and quality assurance requirements, course and teaching quality assurance and enhancement mechanisms are outlined below and can also be used as formative evaluations. These mechanisms can collect data and inform the formal quality assurance processes such as APR and accreditation reviews. They are

typically designed and administered at a school and faculty level, and address local needs and questions, rather than through a central organisational unit.

Section 2 - Evaluation Methods for Assuring and Enhancing Course and Teaching Quality

(9) Interim evaluations typically respond to data collected while a course offering is in progress, helping teaching staff make appropriate adjustments and amendments before the course finishes.

(10) Interim evaluations require additional time and resources but should not be a barrier to engagement. They should be viewed as a valuable investment that improves the likelihood of achieving a successful and productive iteration of the course.

(11) UQ supports a range of evaluation methods for course and teaching quality assurance and enhancement, including;

- a. peer feedback on teaching and self-reflection;
- b. informal student feedback:
 - i. custom designed surveys administered during the course;
 - ii. qualitative data;
- c. external surveys or moderation required or requested by external agencies including federal government and professional/accreditation agencies.

Peer Feedback and Self-reflection

Peer Feedback

(12) Peer feedback is a voluntary and collaborative process in which academic partners work together to understand and improve their teaching practices. Comprehensive peer feedback on teaching quality can address classroom teaching as well as intellectual and scholarly work. A peer might provide comment on an academic's course-related written materials, teaching and assessment practices, scholarly work around teaching, professional development, and educational research. School communities may commit to introducing peer observation schemes as part of their own internal processes. Peer feedback can be organised and conducted at school and/or faculty levels, as well as through services provided by Institute for Teaching and Learning Innovation (ITaLI) for professional development purposes.

(13) UQ supports mechanisms for peer feedback, including:

- a. Peer Observation: Teachers invite colleagues (internal and external to UQ) into their classes to observe what their students are doing before reflecting and meeting to discuss ways to enhance teaching and learning. Peer observers assist in the reviewing and reflection processes, with the aim of improving teaching and highlighting good practice for wider dissemination. Peer observation materials can be found on the ITaLI website: [Peer Observation](#).
- b. Peer Review through Higher Education Academy (HEA) Fellowship The HEA Fellowship Scheme, offered through ITaLI, provides recognition of expertise in academic practice through a robust peer review process. The HEA Fellowship is a form of international recognition and staff may apply for recognition as a HEA Fellow at one of several levels depending on their expertise, experience, and impact. Application for HEA Fellowship recognition involves writing of a reflective portfolio of achievement; this writing process is a valuable professional development opportunity. The portfolio is benchmarked and reviewed against accepted standards of practice. For more information, visit the ITaLI website: [Higher Education Academy Fellowship at UQ](#).

(14) Peer feedback provides an important stimulus for self-reflection. The process of self-reflection is individual and support is available from the ITaLI website: [Reflective learning](#).

Open Course Scheme

(15) The Open Course Scheme (OSC) provides an opportunity for staff to visit classrooms to observe high standards of teaching at UQ. Observing colleagues allows staff to witness new ideas, see pedagogies being implemented, rediscover traditional approaches, or validate current practices.

(16) For more information, visit the ITaLI website: [Open Course Scheme](#).

Informal Student Feedback

(17) Methods to collect informal student feedback can be administered by schools or teachers with the aim of improving course design and teaching during course implementation. Staff can seek advice and consultation from the Student Surveys and Evaluations Team to assist in the designing and administering of in-class student feedback using the survey method.

(18) Staff do not need to seek approval for the administration of surveys, qualitative data collection, or polls, that seek in class student feedback, but may need to seek UQ ethics approval if there is consideration of future publications or presentations of any data collected in this manner. Please refer to the details in the [Student Survey Guideline](#).

(19) The University supports tools that invite and collect student feedback. See ITaLI's website for [University-licenced tools and platforms](#) that can be employed for in-class student feedback.

Interviews

(20) Interviews can be one-on-one interactions between an interviewer and an interviewee or a group interview. Unlike a focus group, an interview is designed to extract individualised experiences, not a consensus. Interviews can be conducted via telephone, video conference (like Zoom), or face-to-face.

(21) Interviews may be used for:

- a. eliciting narratives
- b. verification of facts in context
- c. measuring attitudes
- d. exploring individual differences between participants' experiences and outcomes
- e. understanding the meaning of a program to its participants.

Focus Groups

(22) Focus groups usually involve 8-10 people but the minimum effective size is 5-6. They are highly structured interactive and the facilitator needs to be attentive to group interaction. Unlike group interviews, the focus group aims to attain a consensus view. Focus groups should be conducted face-to-face or via video conference as the interactions and non-verbal responses are as important as the verbal.

(23) Focus groups may be used for:

- a. informing the design of survey instruments
- b. drawing insights on specific issues
- c. accessing perspectives of the reluctant
- d. examining or investigating events as they unfold
- e. testing new ideas/products/services.

Students as Partners Activities

(24) [Students as Partners \(SaP\)](#) can provide crucial insights and evidence of learning. When students are positioned as partners in learning, they become active participants with valuable expertise to shape learning, teaching, and assessment.

(25) The Faculty of Science has a formalised student partner activity whereby students are employed to observe a course or initiative to provide a fuller picture of learning and engagement within the course.

(26) These in-class observations by trained student observers, combined with surveys and focus groups, can be used to gather evidence and share observations and data with course teachers.

Open Response Questionnaire

(27) The Open Response Questionnaire consists of five open-ended questions: two relating to the teaching, and three relating to the course.

(28) Academics may use the completed Open Response Questionnaire to receive feedback. The University will ensure that all data is collected and managed in accordance with the relevant University policies and privacy legislation, including the [Information Privacy Act 2009 \(Qld\)](#).

Status and Details

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