PEER REVIEW OF ASSESSMENT NETWORKS:

Sector-wide options for calibrating and assuring achievement standards within and across disciplines and other networks

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AAC&U:	Association of American Colleges and Universities
ABDC:	Australian Business Deans Council
ACCLAiM:	Australian Collaboration for Clinical Assessment in Medicine
ACDA:	Australian Council of Deans of Agriculture
ACDE:	Australian Council of Deans of Education Inc.
ACDICT:	Australian Council of Deans of Information and Communications Technology
ACED:	Australian Council of Engineering Deans
ACODE:	Australasian Council on Open, Distance and e-Learning
ACODS:	Australasian Council of Dental Schools
ACP:	Academic Calibration Process
ACPET:	Australian Council of Private Education and Training
AIP:	Australian Institute of Physics
AITSL	Australian Institute for Teaching and School Leadership
ANA:	Assessment Network Advisory
ALTC	Australian Learning and Teaching Council Ltd
AQA:	Academic Quality Agency
ARC:	Australian Research Council
ASCILITE:	Australasian Society for Computers in Learning in Tertiary Education
ASKe:	Assessment Standards Knowledge Exchange
CADAD:	Council of Australian Directors of Academic Development
CALD:	Council of Australian Law Deans
CDNM:	Council of Deans of Nursing and Midwifery (Australia & New Zealand)
COPHE:	Council of Private Higher Education
DASSH:	Australasian Council of Deans of Arts, Social Sciences and Humanities
DVC:	Deputy Vice-Chancellor
EfS:	Education for Sustainability
EN:	Economics Network
FTE:	Full-time equivalent
Go8:	Group of Eight
HE:	Higher education
HEA:	Higher Education Academy
HECQN:	Higher Education Quality and Compliance Network
HEQC:	Higher Education Quality Council, the forerunner of the QAA
HERN:	Higher Education Research Network
HES:	Higher Education Services
HESF:	Higher Education Standards Framework
HESP:	Higher Education Standards Panel
IRU:	Innovative Research Universities
L&T:	Learning and teaching
MOU:	Memorandum of Understanding
NHMRC:	National Health and Medical Research Council
NILOA:	National Institute for Learning Outcomes Assessment
NUHEPs:	Non-University Higher Education Providers
OLT:	Office for Learning and Teaching
OSCEs:	Objective Structured Clinical Examinations
PRAN:	Peer Review of Assessment Network
QAA:	Quality Assurance Agency
QCT:	Queensland College of Teachers
QUT:	Queensland University of Technology

QVS:	Quality Verification System
RUN:	Regional Universities Network
TaLS:	Teaching and Learning Standards
TEQSA:	Tertiary Education Quality and Standards Agency
TSBE:	Tasmanian School of Business and Economics
UK:	United Kingdom
US:	United States
VALUE:	Valid Assessment of Learning in Undergraduate Education

This report documents the outcomes of an Australian Government Office for Learning and Teaching (OLT) project on peer review of assessment networks. The project aimed to develop and field test a sector-wide framework for calibrating and assuring achievement standards both within and across disciplines through the establishment of a peer review of assessment network.

The project has clearly demonstrated a need to support the Higher Education (HE) sector, particularly those HE institutions that are non-aligned to university networks, in using peer review to enhance and assure the quality of both the inputs to and the outcomes of assessment. Building on the achievements of the Group of Eight (Go8) and the Innovative Research Universities (IRU) university networks in setting up peer review of assessment processes, the value of a peer review of assessment network for non-aligned HE institutions was widely endorsed by the sector and affirms the need to carefully establish the next phases of development. Different models of peer review of assessment that build on the tradition and rigour of peer review of research were reviewed and tested. This project also builds on the work on the learning and teaching standards and the lessons learnt from the UK external examiner system. With an increasingly deregulated HE sector involving over 185 higher education providers Australian HE is in a unique position to establish collaborative networks to ensure the scalability, efficiency and comparability of standards in the peer review of assessment.

In this report, peer review of assessment is defined as:

'the practice of colleagues providing and receiving feedback on one another's unit/subject outlines, assessment tasks and marking criteria to ensure that assessment is aligned to intended learning outcomes and includes a calibration process to ensure comparability of achievement standards and an opportunity for professional learning'.

In the current project, the process of peer review of assessment also incorporated the moderation of at least two examples of student work, thereby providing an opportunity to validate and calibrate student grades. In seeking to establish a robust and feasible approach to internal and external peer review a range of tensions have to be balanced. They include how best to balance different preferred approaches to fee deregulation; the funding systems of universities with those of private providers; quality enhancement with compliance; and competition with collaboration. This project encountered each of these tensions and found they fall into four dimensions (see Table 1 below).

Table 1. Points of Tension

Dimensions	Points of Tension
Sector	Collaboration vs competition Compliance vs quality enhancement/best practice
HE Institution	Light touch, consistent process vs workload and scalability Resourcing vs significant budget cuts
Discipline	Enhancement and value of disciplinary communities vs aligning discipline to institutional priorities Professional development vs cost implications
Individual	Recognition and support for course/program and/or discipline coordinator vs workload and performance management

The project has identified three options for building our capacity to use peer review of assessment effectively. These options are:

1. Good practice principles in the peer review of assessment;
2. Peer Review of Assessment Network (PRAN); and the

3. Colleges of Peers within the Australian Deans Councils and societies.

It is suggested that collaboration between different communities of practice will need to occur at the sector, institution, discipline and individual dimensions, each with a different set of checkpoints. The three options put forward are intended to assist the HE sector in providing consistency in the practice of peer review of assessment [good practice principles]; support for academics through aligned and non-aligned national networks and an opportunity for professional learning within the disciplines.

Need and rationale

"Peer review is the responsibility of the provider not the regulator. We can't meet standards without peer review. It is a very important part of the standards."

[Emeritus Prof Alan Robson, Higher Education Standards Panel (HESP), 14th May, 2014]

These words, spoken by Emeritus Prof Alan Robson (Former Chair of HESP) at an information session on the proposed Higher Education Standards Framework (HESF), highlight the importance of peer review of assessment for the Higher Education (HE) sector. The proposed HESF asks HE institutions to undertake regular external benchmarking against a range of reference points including comparable courses of study. This implies that HE institutions need to develop efficient and effective ways to collaborate to compare standards in student achievement and learning outcomes. The new regulatory environment has placed an increased emphasis on how HE institutions can provide evidence of how they monitor quality.

Peer review of research in HE is a firmly established and internationally recognised cornerstone of academic scholarship. In contrast, peer review of assessment has not received the same recognition or focus, although some promising initiatives have been undertaken by various university groups and in the OLT initiatives in recent years. Given the proposed HESF emphasis on external peer-review to measure and provide evidence higher education institutions are monitoring and assuring learning standards, the development of robust and consistent processes to quality assure and review student achievement of learning outcomes at the course and unit level is of significant import. Moreover, it is important that these processes are as rigorous as the peer review of research.

This project builds on parallel work in earlier OLT projects (e.g. that of Krause et al (2014) and of Watty, Freeman et.al (2013) on calibration). It also has links with the work of Emeritus Prof Geoff Scott's (Scott, Coates et al. 2008) in his national senior teaching fellowship; Emeritus Prof Chris Rust in his review of the external examiner system in the UK (Rust, Price et al. 2003); Emeritus Professor Christine Ewan's fellowship study for the Higher Education Standards Panel Research Fellowship (HESP 2014). It has addressed the change agenda outlined above.

With the introduction of uncapped places and the current proposal to deregulate fees currently being proposed, there will be greater concern from students and external stakeholders that the quality of courses across the HE sector meets graduate employability and other desired outcomes.

Finally, the project has sought to address the need to support academics (at the individual, institutional, discipline and sector dimensions) to build capacity and confidence to meet this changing HE assessment and outcomes environment and to work collaboratively, productively and efficiently in order to avoid unnecessary duplication of effort and enhance quality. The following feedback is from a participant at one of the workshops undertaken as part of the project in indicative:

"The national development [PRAN] fosters confidence in the practice of assessment. The network should build a collegiate approach. Australia is a small place and we really need to share!

Membership would increase my understanding of the issues and avenues to progress." (Melbourne Workshop, 13th August, 2014)

The underpinning rationale for establishing a national Peer Review of Assessment Network (PRAN) is that the peer review of the relevance, desirability and clarity of learning outcomes is core to assuring standards in the HE sector. The aims of the emerging Network are to:

- Provide a forum for sharing and disseminating good practice in external peer review of assessment across different HE contexts.
- Identify key academics experienced in external peer review of assessment.
- Provide professional learning opportunities for academics and benchmarking partners and,
- Identify the key checkpoints for effective networking on the area.

Project approach

This 'proof of concept' project was used to test the need in the HE sector for a national network for the peer review of assessment. The project was implemented from May-April, 2015 and took place in three phases:

- Establishment Phase [May-June, 2014]
- Consultation Phase [May-December, 2014], and
- Dissemination Phase [November, 2014-April, 2015]

The project team engaged with a wide range of different stakeholders including the Australian Deans Councils; and University networks (Go8, IRU, RUN, and the Deputy Vice-Chancellors (Academic) ACPET, COPHE). 7 State-based workshops and a Peer Review of Assessment Network Forum were held to consolidate, share and test what emerged. The 'proof of concept' was further tested at a Universities Australia Satellite Event [13th March, 2015].

Outcomes

The project has successfully achieved its aims of developing a forum for sharing and disseminating good practice in the external peer review of assessment across the HE sector, and in identifying areas of good practice and professional learning opportunities. The project has generated five major outcomes:

- The development of an overall framework for effective use of peer review of assessment
- The development of a national network in peer review of assessment
- The establishment of a relationship with Higher Education Services to progress the implementation of a national Peer Review of Assessment Forum.
- The establishment of a relationship with Ako Aotearoa and New Zealand Academic Quality Agency to explore the potential to implement a peer review of assessment network across New Zealand's HE institutions and,
- The establishment of a relationship with the UK Higher Education Academy to progress implementation of the peer review of assessment through a proposed project.

Importantly, these 5 outcomes are highly inter-related and identified a significant number of resources (in terms of people and support resources) to support the HE sector to address effectively the HE standards agenda.

Deliverables and dissemination

The project has produced the following deliverables:

- A project website [which received 6060 hits and 2505 downloads from June to November, 2014] http://www.utas.edu.au/student-evaluation-review-and-reporting-unit/nprn
- An Overall Framework for the Effective Use of Peer Review of Assessment
- Presentations to the Australian Council of Deans, key Australian university networks and the successful delivery of 7 State-based workshops.
- A National Peer Review of Assessment Network Forum [12th November, 2014] which consolidated and engaged key players across the sector with the outcomes [134 participants from 36 universities and 22 private providers].
- Universities Australia Satellite Event [13th March, 2015].
- The Final Report to OLT.

RECOMMENDED NEXT STEPS

With an increasingly deregulated HE sector with over 185 higher education providers this places Australian HE in a unique position to participate and leverage off collaborative networks to ensure scalability, efficiency and comparability of standards in the peer review of assessment. This report puts forward a number of options for consideration.

It is recommended that:

1. Consideration is given to establishing a Peer Review of Assessment Steering Group to oversee the implementation of a set of sound good practice principles in the peer review of assessment for the HE sector; and further consideration is given to including these good practice principles in the proposed, revised Higher Education Standards Framework as an external reference point, not unlike the good practice principles developed by the Council of Deans and Directors of Graduate Research.

2. Consideration is given to establishing the Peer Review of Assessment Network (PRAN) as an option to complement existing networks and support capacity building for non-aligned HE institutions and Deans Councils in the peer review of assessment. The PRAN option would be underpinned by a Framework on the Effective Use of Peer Review of Assessment so that the network has a common purpose. The objectives of PRAN would be:
   a. Provide a forum for sharing and disseminating good practice in external peer review of assessment and associated resources across different HE contexts.
   b. Identify key academics experienced in external peer review of assessment.
   c. Provide professional learning opportunities for academics and benchmarking partners.

   For the PRAN option to be sustainable, it is proposed that annual subscriptions be put in place (for e.g. the UK Economics Network) to fund professional learning opportunities for members of the network.

3. Consideration is given to the establishment of a College of Peers process, in association with the Australian Council of Deans and other HE disciplinary networks. The College of Peers option would be about building capacity in potential peer reviewers and the involvement and participation of accreditation bodies and industry to ensure peer review of assessment processes are integrated with professional requirements for accreditation and industry reviews.

4. The project team liaise with the OLT and Higher Education Services (HES) to investigate the feasibility of establishing an annual Peer Review of Assessment Forum, which provides professional learning opportunities in calibration and moderation, as well as collaboration across discipline networks.

5. The project team built its relationship with Ako Aotearoa to assist in the establishment of a process for the peer review of assessment in New Zealand to broaden the network and benchmarking internationally, with consideration of Academic Quality Agency's (AQA's) Cycle 5 audit. It is also recommended that the project team liaise with the Higher Education Academy who are interested in furthering this project as well as collaboration with Teaching and Learning Canada be investigated.

CONTENTS

LIST OF FIGURES

LIST OF TABLES

CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

The Review of Australian Higher Education some six years ago, commonly known as the Bradley Review (2008), was instrumental in setting the context for change in accountability and transparency across the Australian HE sector. The sector has since seen significant change in assuring quality assurance and standards, including the establishment of a national body for regulation and quality assurance, the Tertiary Education Quality and Standards Agency (TEQSA) (TEQSA, 2011), and the establishment of an independent Higher Education Standards Panel (HESP) that is responsible for the development and monitoring of the Higher Education Standards Framework (HESF) 2011. The current HESF outlines the roles and responsibilities for HE providers and is composed of Threshold (i.e. Provider and Qualification) Standards and Non-Threshold (i.e. Teaching and Learning, Research and Information) Standards[1]. The HESF specifies the minimum acceptable requirements that HE providers must meet in order to be registered and reregistered by TEQSA to operate in Australia and underpins the regulation of HE providers by TEQSA in relation to registration and course accreditation. Of particular relevance to this project are Provider Course Accreditation Standards 5 and 6. These highlight the importance of external review in ensuring that assessment is valid, appropriate, effective, that expected learning outcomes are achieved and that course monitoring, review, updating and termination are appropriately managed (Table 1).

Table 1: Provider Course Accreditation Standards

Standard 5: Assessment is effective and expected student learning outcomes are achieved
5.3: Course management and coordination, including moderation procedures, ensure consistent and appropriate assessment
5.5: The academic standards intended to be achieved by students and the standards actually achieved by students in the course of study are benchmarked against similar accredited courses of study offered by other higher education providers
Standard 6: Course monitoring, review, updating and termination are appropriately managed
6.1: The higher education provider ensures the course of study is systematically updated, through internal revision and external reviews, and that its coherence is maintained

While the overall architecture of the HESF has recently been reviewed and is currently being finalised (expected to be fully implemented in early 2016), the proposed HESF maintains the importance of external review for quality assurance purposes, particularly in relation to learning outcomes and assessment (Table 2).

Table 2: Draft standards in the *proposed* HESF (currently under review)

Standard 1.4 Learning Outcomes and Assessment
1. The expected learning outcomes for each course of study are specified, consistent with the level and field of education of the qualification awarded, and informed by national and international comparators.

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[1] The HESF, including its overall architecture, is currently under review. A revised HESF is currently being finalised and includes the replacement of the Threshold Standards and removal of the concept of Non-Threshold Standards (*Proposed* Higher Education Standards Framework, Consultation Draft April 2014). Full implementation of the revised HESF is expected in early 2016.

3. Methods of assessment are consistent with the learning outcomes being assessed, are capable of confirming that all specified learning outcomes are achieved and that grades awarded reflect the level of student attainment.

Standard 5.3: Monitoring, Review and Improvement
1. All accredited courses of study are subject to periodic (at least every seven years) comprehensive reviews that are overseen by peak academic governance processes and include external referencing or other benchmarking activities.
2. A comprehensive review includes the design and content of each course of study, the expected learning outcomes, the methods for assessment of those outcomes, the extent of students' achievement of learning outcomes, and also takes account of emerging developments in the field of education, modes of delivery, the changing needs of students and identified risks to the quality of the course of study.
4. Review and improvement activities include regular external referencing of the success of student cohorts against comparable courses of study, including: a. analyses of progression rates, attrition rates, completion times and rates and, where applicable, comparing different locations of delivery, and   b. the assessment methods and grading of students' achievement of learning outcomes for selected units of study within courses of study.

A critical issue for HE providers has been how to demonstrate compliance particularly around standards relating to assuring learning outcomes. A recent Office for Learning and Teaching (OLT) project identified a growing demand for mechanisms to foster 'peer review' in assuring the quality of student achievement and academic standards (Krause, Farrell et al. 2008). Building on this work, is the Teaching and Learning Standards Project (TaLS) which involved 'blind' Inter-university peer review of the quality and relevance of assessment inputs as well as outcomes and the identification of a robust and feasible approach to external moderation for assuring the validity (fitness of purpose) of what is being assessed as well as the quality of its measurement and grading (fitness for purpose) (Krause and Scott 2012). This project addressed the sector's search for a valid and efficient way to assure sector standards in relation to academic achievement and sought to identify a collegial approach for reviewing unit/subject 'inputs' such as unit outlines, learning objectives and assessment items, along with samples of student assessment outcomes. The project was characterised by a discipline-based 'blind' peer evaluation of assessment items and highlighted that peer review may be used to provide evidence that learning standards are monitored and assured using colleagues teaching the same course in another university (Krause and Deane 2012). Emeritus Professor Geoff Scott is building on this work in his 2014 OLT National Senior Teaching Fellowship on graduate capabilities and capacity-building.

The National Learning Outcomes Forum (August, 2013) also highlighted that the HESF standards are difficult to regulate without peer review. The proposed revised HESF standards which lend themselves specifically to peer review are:

- Learning outcomes
- Assessment and results/'grading'
- Research training
- Course approval/accreditation
- Progression, completion, success
- Monitoring, review and improvement activities
- Academic and corporate governance, and

- Setting institutional quality benchmarks (Siddle 2014).

Recent changes in quality assurance and standards have also taken place in the United Kingdom (UK). The HEA was revolutionary in its development of the national Professional Standards Framework in 2006 to enable quality teaching for all students and, more recently, the Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education (QAA), an independent body entrusted with monitoring, and advising on, standards and quality in UK HE, has developed the Quality Code for Higher Education to replace the set of national reference points known as the Academic Infrastructure, from mid-2012 (QAA 2012). The Quality Code provides institutions with a shared starting point for setting and maintaining the academic standards of their programmes/courses and awards, and, similarly to TEQSA's Threshold Standards, sets out formal expectations that all UK HE providers are required to meet, of which external examining is an integral component (further discussed in Section 2.1.4). The Quality Code also calls for the use of multiple reference points when validating course outcomes and provides indicators to assist providers in meeting those expectations, a number of which directly relate to the external review of assessment processes:

Awarding institutions expect their external examiners to provide informative comment and recommendations on:

> *- Whether or not the assessment process measures student achievement rigorously and fairly against the intended outcomes of the programme(s)* (indicator 2)*; and*

> *- Good practice and innovation relating to learning, teaching and assessment* (indicator 3)

An important element of the external examiner's role is to provide assurance that the assessment process is properly designed and applied, and is carried out in a manner that is fair and equitable to all students concerned as well as supportive of achieving the intended learning outcomes. Fundamental to the external examiners carrying out this part of the role is to provide feedback on whether the: 1) Types of assessment are appropriate for the subject, the respective level of study and the expected outcomes; 2) Assessments in modules of the same level are of a comparable standard, and; 3) Assessment criteria, marking schemes and arrangements for classification are set at the appropriate level.

Adding to the increased need for Australian universities to demonstrate robust quality assurance processes, including the use of peer review, is the recent uncapping of undergraduate student places. With 43 universities and 133 HE providers, students already have a range of HE options (Norton 2014). However, the uncapping of student places has led to further 'marketisation' of the sector which, in turn, has increased competitive pressures between institutions and made concern for what contributes to both national and international reputations *de rigeur* (Nagy 2011). The significance of where students choose to study will be further exacerbated by the proposed deregulation of fees for domestic undergraduate courses, a topic at the political forefront. The ability for HE providers to set their own course fees will result in providers no longer being considered 'comparable' or even seen to be such. All pretence will be removed in the face of international and national competition. Prospective students will need to decide whether universities charging premium fees offer value for money (Norton 2014) – that they focus on the most relevant outcomes and that they assess these validly and reliably. The concept of 'prestige' is seen by many as being particularly influential in Australian HE, where quality has traditionally been difficult to measure. It reflects perceptions, justified or not, about where the highest quality is to be found. While it has been found that, for Australian graduates, field of study affects full-time employment prospects and has a greater impact on full-time starting salaries and lifetime earnings more than the type of university attended, students looking for the 'best' courses and employers looking for the 'best' graduates are likely to use university prestige to help make their choices (Norton 2014). As a result of this, it is highly likely that potential students will become more

judicious and demanding in terms of the outcomes and quality of HE that they expect to receive. The legal ramifications for providers associated with increased student expectations is already becoming evident with one university reportedly being recently sued by a student for failing a unit due to "educationally defective" assessment design (Hare 2013). It was claimed there was a "lack of alignment between the stated objectives of the unit, the curriculum, the marking criteria, the assessments and legible comments from (the tutor)" (Hare 2013). While cases of this type are comparatively rare, there have been several (unsuccessful) attempts in recent years by students using the legal system to get a refund. There have also been several instances of students litigating against their university in Britain and Canada (Hare 2013). The fact that this sort of legal action is becoming increasingly common provides further incentive for HE providers to become more accountable and transparent down to the unit level.

Adding to the increased competitive pressures between HE institutions is the rapid growth of non-university higher education providers (NUHEPs), which make up a significant part of Australian HE. A 1999 survey identified 78 private NUHEPs, however, by mid-2014, 129 were registered with TEQSA, indicating a growth of more than a third. Student enrolment numbers have also significantly increased in this timeframe, with slightly less than 15,000 FTE students in 1999 compared to the equivalent of at least 54,000 FTE students in 2013 (Norton 2014). One reason for this growth is the profitability of the private sector.   Students can frequently also finish their courses more quickly, studying for three trimesters a year rather than the two semesters offered by most universities. The NUHEPs also tend to specialise in what they teach, with many including a specific field of study, industry or occupation in their title. Subject specialisation can build brand reputations in particular niche areas. It has also been recently recommended that private universities and NUHEPs become eligible for demand-driven funding, further increasing market competition (Kemp and Norton 2014)[2].

External peer review provides an important mechanism to measure comparative course quality, equivalence and performance, demonstrate that the focus, outcomes and assessment is comparable with courses at the same level in similar fields at other Australian HE providers. It can also be used to ensure consistency across both private providers and universities and ensure that courses meet equivalent academic standards.

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[2] The recommendation has been accepted by the Federal Government, but has yet to be approved by the Senate.

2.1 MODELS OF PEER REVIEW OF ASSESSMENT

2.1.1 QUALITY VERIFICATION SYSTEM

In its fourth year of operation in 2014, the Quality Verification System (QVS) (Figure 1) is a model developed and run by the Group of Eight (Go8) universities in Australia. Its stated objectives are to assess and confirm the appropriateness of the standards of learning outcomes and grades awarded in Go8 universities and enable comparisons among Go8 universities; to maintain and lead to the improvement of Go8 universities academic standards, and promote discussion of good practice in teaching and learning in Go8 universities (Go8 2013).

Peer review in this model is performed by a single, randomly assigned but non-blinded reviewer (Level D or higher), external to the university being reviewed, but with a demonstrated understanding of academic standards in similar universities. The reviewer is selected randomly from a panel by the secretariat and receives an honorarium.

Two core final year units (ideally one capstone) are reviewed using randomly selected, de-identified graded assessment items. Between 1 and 5 samples of work from each grade band are assessed. The peer reviewer verifies the grades awarded to the sample work compared to Go8 benchmarks; agreeing or disagreeing with the grade, but not re-grading or re-marking the work. Feedback to the home university is provided on unit content, assessment design and criteria. Information on grade verification in each band is also provided (distribution of too low/too high/agree). The reviewer provides an overall summary judgement of appropriate/some risk/immediate risk; action required, relating to the quality assurance of each unit and its assessment.

One of the strengths of this model is the assessment of a relatively large sample of student work, thus providing a reasonable representation of student work at the different grade bands from the home university. For individual academics, participating as an external reviewer and being exposed to teaching and learning practices in other institutions also offers a professional development opportunity.
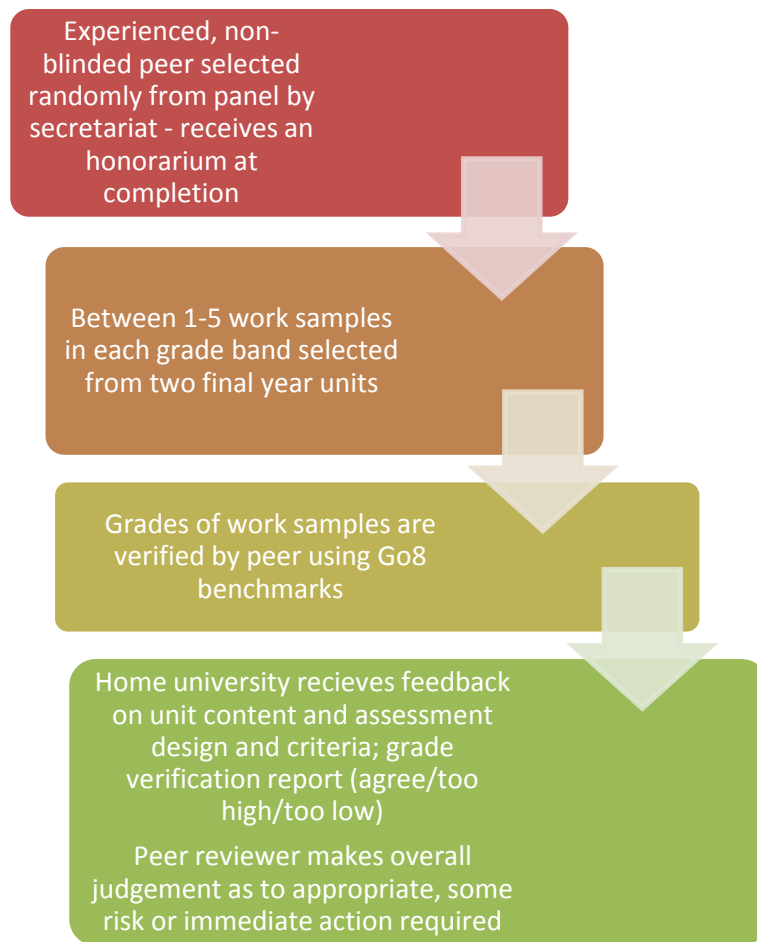
Figure 1: Overview of the Quality Verification System process

2.1.1.1 ACADEMIC CALIBRATION PROCESS

The QVS model has also been adapted for use by the Innovative Research Universities (IRU) Academic Calibration Process (ACP) (Figure 2). The ACP, which differs primarily in the selection of peers and the amount of student work that is sampled, is in the second year of a trial in undergraduate and postgraduate degrees among the members of the IRU. The goal has been to embed the peer review process within the regular degree program review cycle.

In the ACP, the home university selects a final year capstone course or unit for peer review and is involved in the selection of a peer reviewer from the IRU peer database - in this model, the academic peer is specified as level C or above. The peer reviews the unit content, course and unit learning outcomes, assessment plan for the course and marking guidelines, as well as three examples of marked student work in each of four grade bands for a total of twelve pieces of work. The work reviewed can be of any format, including those from the creative and performing arts. Feedback from the verification process and the assessment of course materials follows the format set out by the QVS model. The peer reviewer receives an honorarium.
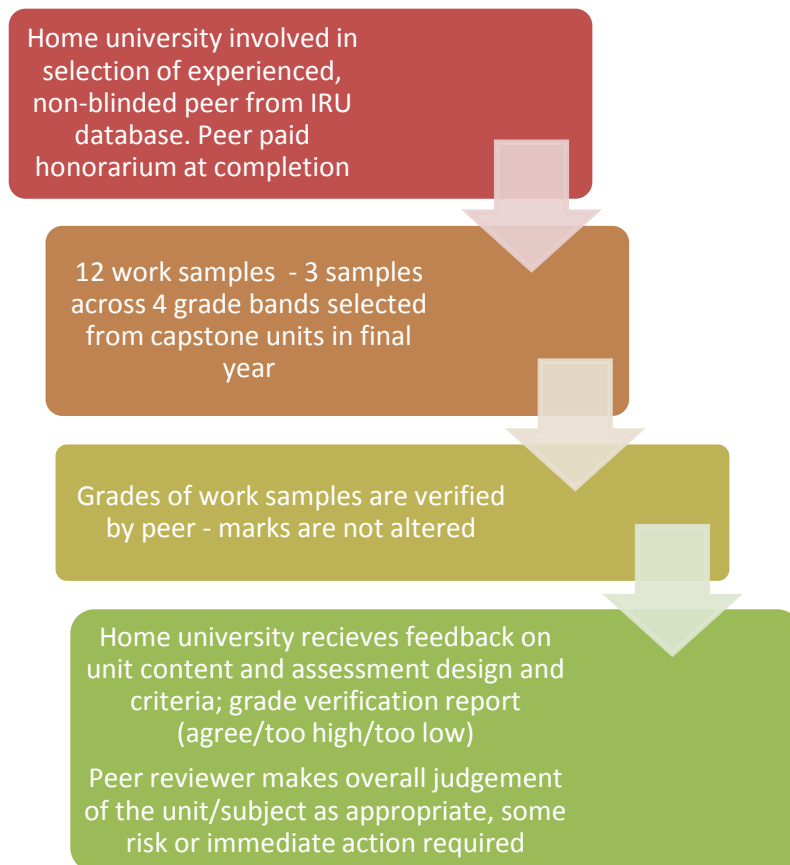
Figure 2: Overview of the IRU Academic Calibration Process

2.1.2 ACHIEVEMENT MATTERS: EXTERNAL PEER REVIEW OF ACCOUNTING LEARNING STANDARDS PROJECT

The Achievement Matters: External Peer Review of Accounting Learning Standards project (Watty, Freeman et al. 2014), supported by the OLT and the Australian Business Deans Council (ABDC), developed a model of peer review to enable benchmarking of learning outcomes against national thresholds for accounting graduates across multiple institutions (Figure 3).

The Achievement Matters process incorporates a double blind peer review of a representative final year task performed by 2 external experienced (Level C minimum) academic peers. De-identified unit materials are assessed along with 5 random samples of student work across different grade bands. Reviewers provide feedback on teaching standards with justifications and recommendations. Grades are allocated on the assessment samples but do not impact actual student grades.

A feature of the Achievement Matters model that is not incorporated into other current models is a calibration process that the reviewers undertake prior to providing the final peer review of the assessment material. Calibration is a two part process undertaken around the assessment task and then around student work and benchmarked against standards agreed in 2010, sector-wide across the discipline as threshold learning outcomes and fulfilling AQF descriptors. First reviewers judge the assessment task and then assess the sample student work and anonymously submit their judgements (and rationale) online using Self and Peer Assessment Resource Kit (SPARK). After comparing with other peer reviews online, the peer reviewers then participate in a face-to-face workshop where the reviewed pieces of work are discussed in groups of 4-5 peers with a focus on the judgement and justification of the reviews, until a consensus is reached within the group. A

discussion then takes place between groups until consensus is reached across all groups. New samples are then assessed in a repeat of the process to ensure that the calibration process has been effective. Calibration workshops involve not only academics from participating institutions acting as peer reviewers but also key industry bodies and other professional volunteers.

After the calibration process is complete the project coordinator allocates two external reviewers and one home university reviewer to perform the final blind peer review of submitted material. Should the two external reviewers disagree, a third calibrated external reviewer will be assigned to determine majority. The reviewers provide assessment to the home university on the validity of the tasks and achievement against standard in the 5 graded items of student work.

There are several advantages of this approach. The final review is performed blind by several experienced academics that importantly have taken part in a calibration process which aims to ensure a level of consistency between reviewers. Secondly, judgements of assessed material related to agreed benchmarks. Thirdly, the involvement of industry and professional volunteers during calibration helps to ensure these standards reflect the expectations of employers and those external to the institutions. Fourthly, an online tool significantly eases the data collection, aggregation and analysis burden and facilitates anonymity. Fifthly, random sampling student work reduces possible bias since reviewers have no incentive to rank into stratified grade bands. Sixthly, the participants of the calibration process benefit from potentially significant professional development enhancing teaching and learning in their home universities.
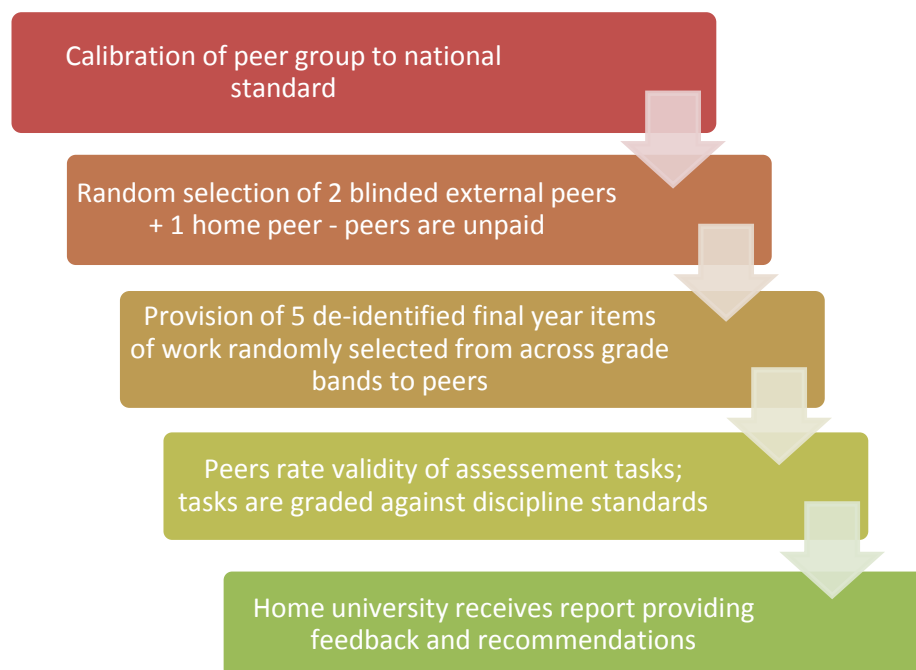
Figure 3: Overview of Achievement Matters process

2.1.3 INTER-UNIVERSITY 'BLIND' PEER REVIEW AND MODERATION OF COURSEWORK PROJECT

The OLT supported TaLS project (Krause et al. 2014) developed a model for use in multiple disciplines across universities, in order to meet the Australian Government's aim to provide validity,

reliability and comparability of assessment outcomes and learning standards in equivalent universities in Australia (Figure 4).

The peer review is performed 'blind' by two randomly assigned reviewers teaching the same course from two partner universities (reviewers should be experienced and preferably be unit coordinators). The peer reviewers are chosen by a project officer and receive a small honorarium.

Peer review occurs in one final year unit of study of the same name taught at both the home institution and at the institutions from which the peer reviewers come. Reviewers are provided with de-identified unit input materials including the unit's outline, the outcomes being assessed, the assessment tasks to be completed and the rubrics used to grade the tasks, along with randomly selected assessment samples (grades removed) in four grade bands. Importantly the reviewers first review with justification the quality, relevance and validity of the inputs before they grade the de-identified samples against using the provided rubric. The home university receives the peer feedback on the quality and relevance of the inputs along with the grades allocated to the selected assessment items by the colleague reviewers.

A relative strength of this model is that it provides feedback to the home university on the quality, validity and relevance of not just its assessment outcomes but its assessment inputs - that is the fitness *of* purpose of its assessment not just its fitness for purpose or reliability. It also provides feedback on the assessment items across the grade bands from two blinded, external reviewers who mark the student work without knowledge of the original academic's score. While assessed using the home university's criteria, it is performed in the context of national benchmark standards. The relatively small amount of material assessed confers a smaller workload (and cost) than the QVS, for administrators of the review, as well as the reviewers themselves. Exposure of the reviewers to the views of colleagues teaching the same subject/course in another institution was seen by the participants from the 11 universities and 12 discipline areas involved as being an unexpected and significant highlight of the process.
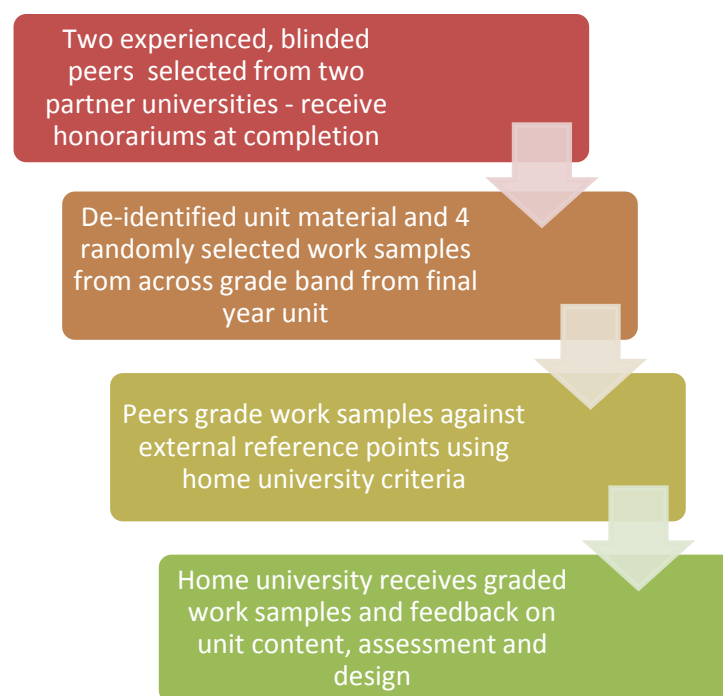
Figure 4: Overview of Inter-Institutional Peer Review and Moderation process

2.1.4 EXTERNAL EXAMINER SYSTEM

The utilisation of external examiners is commonplace in many countries for the assessment of research higher degree work. In the UK and some other countries, external examiner systems are currently, or have previously been, used in the assessment of academic standards in undergraduate programs, with external examiners playing varying roles (Figure 5). In the UK, external examining has been in place in some form since the early 1800s and is one tool used to assure academic standards in undergraduate studies across universities.

In the mandatory UK external examiner system, external examiners are recruited from academia or industry by the home institution to provide ongoing oversight over four year tenures. Suitability to serve as an examiner is reliant on meeting criteria that includes possessing relevant qualifications or experience, thorough understanding of the UK HE sector academic standards, knowledge in the design of assessment tasks and assessment procedures, and sufficient professional standing so as to command respect from academic peers. Examiners should also be free of conflicts of interest.

The UK Quality Code for Higher Education (chapter B7), (QAA 2012) lays out the expectations of the examiner to provide commentary and suggestions as to the extent which:

- *the institution is maintaining the threshold academic standards set for its awards in accordance with the frameworks for higher education qualifications and applicable subject benchmark statements;*
- *the assessment process measures student achievement rigorously and fairly against the intended outcomes of the programme(s) and is conducted in line with the institution's policies and regulations;*
- *the academic standards and the achievements of students are comparable with those in other UK higher education institutions of which the external examiners have experience.*

Examiners are generally appointed at a discipline level but may also work at sub-discipline or award level. As the home institution appoints and coordinates examiners, the specific functions of examiners can vary between disciplines and institutions. Some institutions also appoint a chief examiner, in addition to other examiners, who has responsibilities across multiple faculties or pathways. For transparency, the examiner is named in unit or program information available to students; however students are advised that approaching the examiner is inappropriate.

Examiners typically assess later units in a discipline, drawing upon experience in other UK HE institutions to make judgements as to the currency of the curriculum and the comparability of units of the same level. Examiners also determine if program components are aligned with relevant qualification frameworks and benchmark statements. Commentary on observations of good practice and innovation in teaching and learning, as well as opportunities for improvements in these areas is also expected.

More specifically, examiners verify marks, grades and award classes prior to confirmation by the home institution, and where necessary, can propose module-wide changes. Likewise, examiners may also be tasked with assessing and verifying proposed exams, and making recommendations for change.

A critical component of the examiners role is to provide an annual written report to the institution on their observations of institutional practices in assessment and of students' assessed work. The institution will consider this report and act, or with justification decide not to act, on any recommendations made. In the rare case that the examiner has very serious concerns over the quality or standards at the institution, they may choose to provide a confidential report directly to the head of the institution. Should the examiner remain dissatisfied they can bring the issue to the attention of the Quality Assurance Agency who will investigate if there is evidence of systematic

failings in institutional management of quality or standards. Non-confidential examiners reports are available to students to review.
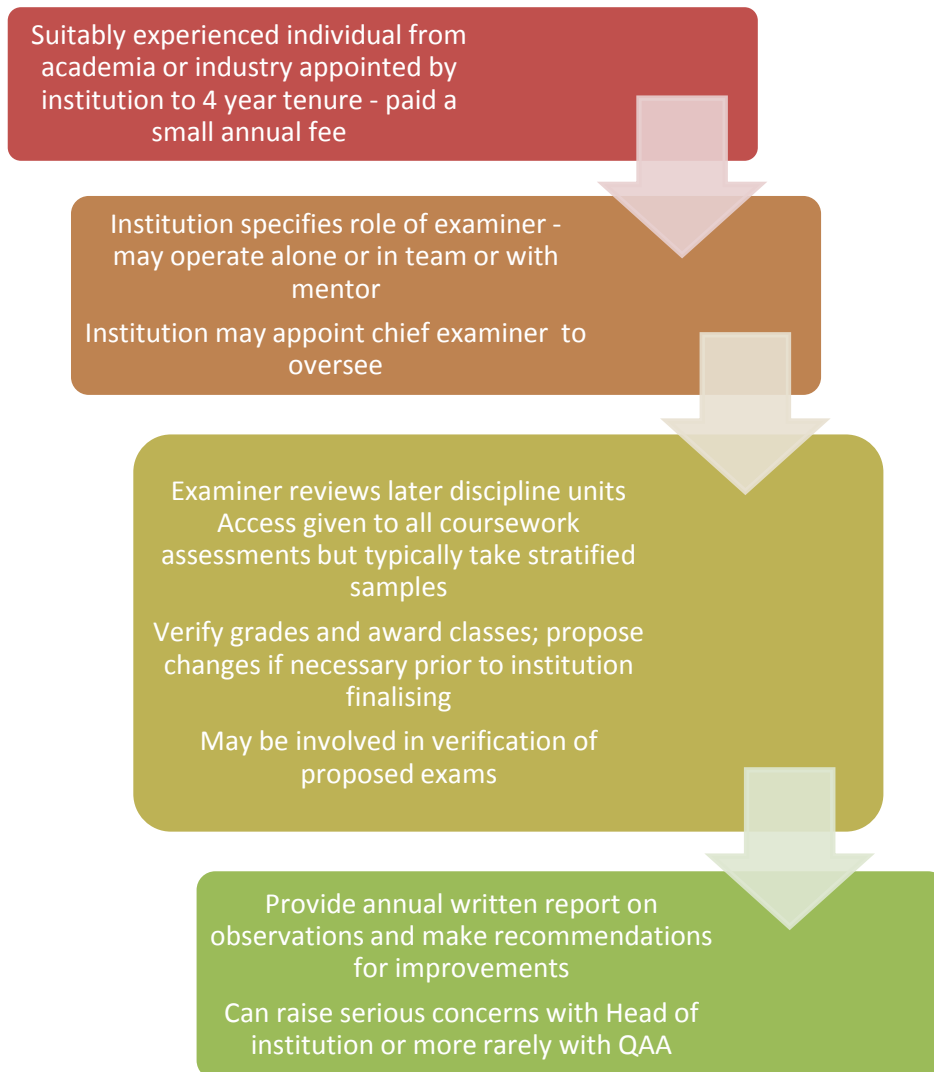
Figure 5: Overview of the External Examiner review process

2.2 LEVELS OF PEER REVIEW OF ASSESSMENT

The adoption of a single model of review and moderation is unlikely to meet all requirements of HE institutions, professional, accrediting and regulatory bodies as well as the proposed HESF, regardless of the model's relative strengths or weaknesses. Instead, a multi-level approach incorporating different peer review and moderation methodologies has been proposed (Figure 6) as a means to better meet the requirements of the HE sector (Krause, Scott et al. (2014)).

This multi-level approach would have as its foundation, processes already commonly employed such as internal moderation and calibration, external benchmarking, and then built upon by processes such as those being developed by the recent national projects:

- Go8 QVS
- Achievement Matters: External Peer Review of Accounting Learning Standards project
- TaLS project

Under this framework, ongoing internal moderation and calibration of academic staff would occur within an institution, ensuring grade consistency at the unit level. The next level sees a regular cycle of external benchmarking of learning and teaching standards with other HE institutions meeting the requirements of professional and accrediting bodies. The next cyclical level incorporates a QVS-style process that provides an institution with grade verification by an un-blinded external assessor. This process, which involves the sharing of graded final year assessment items, gives an indication of comparability with another similar institution. The next cyclical level incorporating the TaLS methodology introduces a double blind review by two external peer reviewers who grade final year assessment items using the home institution criteria and provide feedback on the unit content and assessment design.

These two levels of external peer review are performed by academics that are suitably qualified and experienced in their field but not necessarily calibrated to national discipline standards. The adoption of the Achievement Matters calibration practice in a cyclical or ongoing process would provide institutions with staff calibrated, along with other external staff, to disciplinary standards.
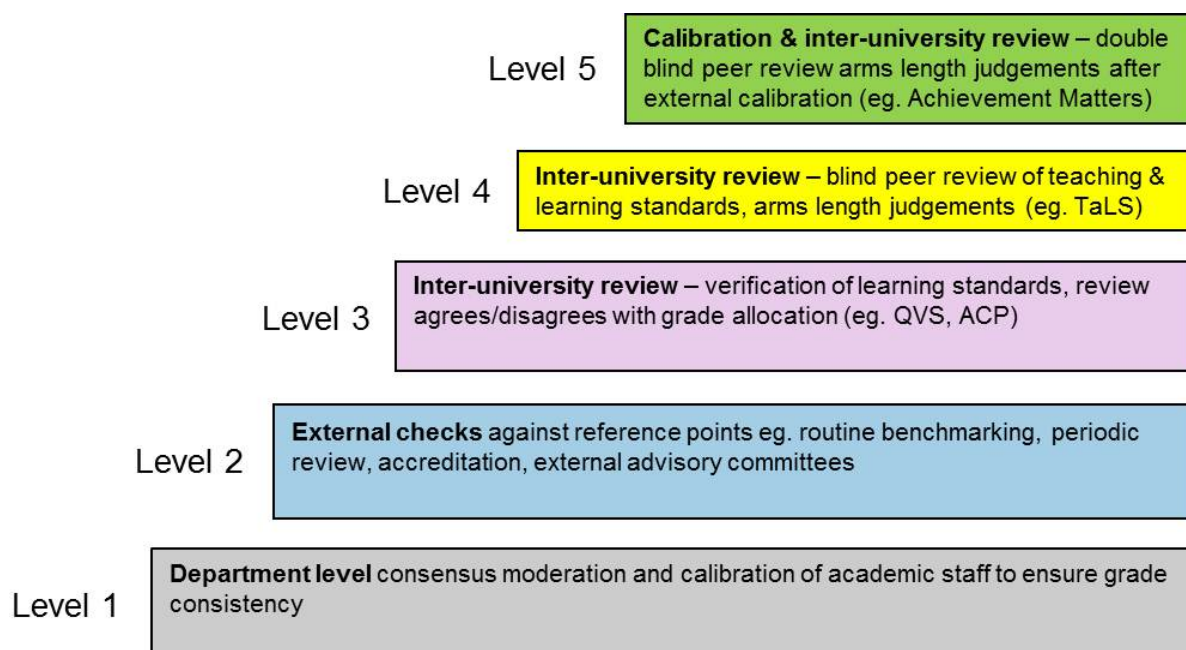
Figure 6: Proposed multi-level approach to peer review of assessment

2.3 LESSONS LEARNT FROM DIFFERENT PROCESSES OF PEER REVIEW OF ASSESSMENT

2.3.1 PEER REVIEW OF ASSESSMENT PROCESSES IN THE UK

While the external examiner system is much admired (Watson 2006) and considered central to maintaining academic standards in the UK (Gaunt 1999) and several other countries, recent reports (QAA 2009, Coates 2010, Bloxham and Price 2013, QAA 2013) have questioned the effectiveness of the external examiner system as currently used in the UK, for reaching this goal.

Bloxham and Price (2013) contend that "external examining rests on six assumptions which are considered to be significantly open to challenge". These assumptions relate to the overall conceptual context of external examining as well as the general nature and operation of external examiners:

1. A community consensus on academic standards can have enduring stability over time and across programmes, departments and universities.

2. There is a common understanding of the external examiner role.
3. There are processes in place that support the development of consensus regarding standards which enables them to be understood and consistently applied by examiners.
4. External examiners have "extensive knowledge of academic standards, at least within a discipline or subject area, and across the sector".
5. External examiners can represent community standards reliably and consistently and do not suffer from the same type of frailties exhibited by other assessors.
6. External examiners understand the complexity of professional judgement and HE assessment processes.

Although the basic principle of the external examining system may be sound, the assumption that individual external examiners, operating within an increasingly more diverse and variable framework, calling on understandings of standards influenced by personal experiences can assess the comparability of academic standards is potentially flawed. This concern about lack of consensus around standards is illustrated by the findings of the jointly QAA and HEA-funded research report from the University of Cumbria and Oxford Brookes University: *External examiners' understanding and use of academic standards* (QAA 2013). In a study of 24 UK academics from 4 disciplines, 20 pieces of student work were assessed and demonstrated quite poor inter-examiner agreement. Only one example of work was judged to have the same rank (either best or worst) by all six examiners in a discipline. A further 9 pieces of work were ranked as both best and worst by different examiners. The study also mapped the examiner's provenance of the standards they used as external examiners as well as their ideas on what they considered external examining to entail and what standards should be employed. Perhaps unsurprisingly, there was considerable variation in the perceived provenance of standards; explicit standards documents internalised in the individual, in community processes or in student work. Individual examiners also saw their role differently; some as a custodian of the discipline, some as a custodian of assessment procedures. There were also differences in the extent to which they referred to the institutions stated standards or their own.

The external examiner system therefore relies on examiners possessing a shared knowledge of standards but the variation between examiners in their perceived role and the standards applied in their role imparts an inherent variation in the judgements made during the external examination process. A primary finding of the University of Cumbria and Oxford Brookes University research (Bloxham, Hudson et al. 2015) was that "an external review process without a calibration of standards cannot serve the purpose of assuring comparability and consistency of standards". In this report, researchers recommend that academics involved in external examining should regularly engage in a calibration process to align themselves with relevant references within their disciplinary community. This calibration process to develop a shared knowledge and understanding of standards is a social process, not a technical process, whereby individual experience is integrated with, rather than over-ridden by, established disciplinary standards.

The idea that understandings and judgements of standards in HE are socially constructed is not new (O'Donovan, Price et al. 2004) and is central to the development of the social constructivist assessment process model developed by researchers at Oxford Brookes University's Assessment Standards Knowledge exchange (ASKe) (Rust, O'Donovan et al. 2005). The model put forward by ASKe as best practice proposes that the immersion of academics in a collaborative group culture leads to a continual development of knowledge of disciplinary standards in academic staff. This model also considers the engagement of students in the process of understanding standards and assessment as crucial to ensuring student academic success.

2.3.2 INTER-UNIVERSITY PEER REVIEW AND MODERATION OF COURSEWORK PROJECT

The inter-university peer review and moderation of coursework project (Krause and Scott, 2012) identified some key strategies and factors that impact on the successful implementation and dissemination of the external moderation process. Some of the success factors; unexpected, positive outcomes and challenges identified in the project include:

Success factors

- Expert Steering Group with national and international representation to give overall direction and sector level promotion to key groups and committees
- Ensure the peer review and moderation process is scalable, located in a broader agenda and sustainable
- Liaise with OLT, the HESP and TEQSA to support implementation of recommendations
- Link to the work of international groups like the International Association of Universities and national groups like Council of Australian Directors of Academic Development (CADAD)
- Facilitate ongoing national discussion, possibly in partnership with Universities Australia or OLT
- Link and leverage what is being undertaken in the area of assessment standards and quality
- Seek advice from key stakeholders on ways to scale up the peer review of academic standards methodologies
- Commitment of senior leaders to influence policy and governance in their institutions
- Project officer pivotal to large-scale moderation projects to liaise with academics and other institutions and maintain data collection
- Funds for peer reviewers to function as part of the project
- Embed peer review and moderation models in institutional policies and practices (role of Associate Deans L&T, assessment moderation award, run a train-the-trainer project, use assessment focused learning guides)

Unexpected but positive outcomes

- Academic staff capacity building: professional development
- Value of collegial conversations
- Scholarly outcomes

Challenges

- Culture change
- Reducing the feeling of threat to academics
- Workload
- Thinking at the course/program level
- Unit selection
- Disciplinary differences
- Reference points
- Challenging the notion of academic peer review (Krause and Scott 2012).

2.4 OTHER INTERNATIONAL DEVELOPMENTS

As access to HE becomes more widespread globally, the need to assure quality and comparability among institutions is felt widely, and initiatives in this area are not confined to the UK/Europe and Australia. In the United States (US), where HE institutions receive less steering from government in comparison to Europe and Australia, major contributions have been made in this area by the VALUE

(Valid Assessment of Learning in Undergraduate Education) Rubric Development Project as part of the Association of American Colleges & Universities (AAC&U) LEAP initiative (AAC&U 2014), and the Lumina Foundation-funded Degree Qualifications Profile Project (Adelman, Ewell et al. 2014).

The VALUE initiative aims to provide the resources to improve the assessment of student work and ensure their progression towards employer and institutional standards in graduation-level achievement across varied institutions and pathways. Between 2007 and 2009, the project, in collaboration with academics from over 100 institutions across the US HE sector, developed the 16 VALUE rubrics; each established from the most commonly identified characteristics and criteria for 16 different learning outcomes. Following a long development period the rubrics were tested among participating institutions before final release. Since this time the rubric documents have been accessed by over 5600 educational institutions across the US and internationally. The rubrics were developed for the purpose of institutional evaluation of student learning, rather than for determining grades. They provide fundamental criteria for each of the learning outcomes and include performance descriptors for the demonstration of progressively higher levels of learning achievement. It is hoped in the US that the use of the rubrics will provide a national framework of expectations around undergraduate learning.

The Lumina Foundation is a private independent philanthropic foundation with an endowment in excess of US$1 billion. It jointly funds the National Institute for Learning Outcomes Assessment (NILOA) and in its GOAL2025 statement aims to "increase the proportion of Americans with high-quality college degrees, certificates or other credentials to 60% by 2025" (Lumina 2013). Lumina recognised that this achievement would be less meaningful if the quality of learning was substandard. Surveys by the AAC&U and NILOA found that around three quarters of HE institutions in the US had developed broadly worded outcome statements designed to guide teaching and learning but evidence as to the implementation of processes relating to these statements, and their effectiveness was lacking (Ewell and Schneider 2013). As a result the Foundation set about developing the Degree Qualification Profile, a qualifications framework which sets out what every student completing associate, bachelor or masters degrees should learn and be capable of doing, irrespective of the discipline studied. The Profile proposes sets of competencies in five areas of student learning—Specialised Knowledge, Broad Integrative Knowledge, Intellectual Skills, Applied Learning, and Civic Learning.

The project also acknowledged there were numerous examples at institutional and disciplinary level in the US, of the innovative competency-based education that it wanted to foster but found they were mostly separate initiatives generally unknown to the public and student alike. As well as setting a benchmark of what was required at each degree level, the project aims to bring together and promote these examples of good practice that are already in use across the HE sector, in a transparent and open way.

2.5 NETWORKS AS A COMMUNITY OF PRACTICE

Assessment continues to be a major challenge to institutions around the world, not least in terms of transparency, reliability and validity (Price, Rust et al. 2014). Much work around the development of an evidence-based approach and good practices to support HE institutions in sharing understandings of assessment standards has been done in the UK, particularly by the ASKe, which was established in 2005 as a Centre for Excellence in Teaching and Learning based at Oxford Brookes University Business School. In 2007, ASKe brought together a group of international assessment experts to discuss the state of assessment and ways in which practice may be improved. It was agreed that assessment standards reside in the practices of academic and professional communities and in the nature and level of tasks in which learners engage and resulted in the development of a six tenet manifesto for change (Table 3) (ASKe 2008).

Table 3: Assessment standards: A Manifesto for Change (ASKe 2008)

Tenet 1:

> The debate on standards needs to focus on how high standards of learning can be achieved through assessment. This requires a greater emphasis on assessment *for* learning rather than assessment *of* learning.

Tenet 2:

> When it comes to the assessment *of* learning, we need to move beyond systems focused on marks and grades towards the valid assessment of the achievement of intended programme outcomes.

Tenet 3:

> Limits to the extent that standards can be articulated explicitly must be recognised since ever more detailed specificity and striving for reliability, all too frequently, diminish the learning experience and threaten its validity. There are important benefits of higher education which are not amenable either to precise specification of standards or to objective assessment.

Tenet 4:

> Assessment standards are socially constructed so there must be a greater emphasis on assessment and feedback processes that actively engage both staff and students in dialogue about standards. It is when learners share an understanding of academic and professional standards in an atmosphere of mutual trust that learning works best.

Tenet 5:

> Active engagement with assessment standards needs to be an integral and seamless part of course design and the learning process in order to allow students to develop their own, internalised conceptions of standards, and to monitor and supervise their own learning.

Tenet 6:

> Assessment is largely dependent upon professional judgement, and confidence in such judgement requires the **establishment of appropriate forums for the development and sharing of standards within and between disciplinary and professional communities** (own emphasis).

While tenets 1-5 argue for changes that could be made by an individual institution, departments or units/subjects, tenet 6 can only be achieved across institutions and requires a sector-wide approach (Rust 2009). Tenet 6 asserts that the only way to make comparisons of standards between institutions and/or disciplines is through the establishment and development of communities of disciplinary assessment practice (Rust 2009, Rust 2014)[3].

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[3] The HEA has since endorsed the Manifesto by adopting it as the basis of a new initiative called 'A Marked Improvement', designed to support HE institutions to transform their assessment practices. The Manifesto's tenets are used both to set out the new ways necessary to think about assessment across the UK and also to frame a self-evaluation tool for the HE institutions and program leaders to assess their own practices and areas for development (Price, M., C. Rust and B. O'Donovan (2014). "ASKe Manifesto seven years on: So what did

"*Common standards can only be achieved through discussion amongst peers, in appropriate forums, looking at real examples of student work, and discussing each other's assessment decisions. Without the cultivation of such communities of assessment practice, discussions about standards can only be limited to conjecture and opinion*" (Rust 2014a).

Rust (2009) further emphasises the need to develop assessment 'literacy' in HE institutions through the establishment of disciplinary communities of assessment practice.

The term 'community of practice' was first coined by Jean Lave and Etienne Wenger to refer to the communities of practitioners into which new apprentices enter and attempt to learn the sociocultural practices of the community (Lave and Wenger 1991). The concept was further developed and extended by Wenger (1998) and is now a widely accepted part of organisational development. The foundation of a community of practice is that learning occurs in social contexts that emerge and evolve when people who have common goals interact as they strive towards those goals. They have become associated with knowledge management as people have begun to see them as ways to develop social capital, nurture new knowledge, stimulate innovation or share existing tacit knowledge. According to Wenger (1998a), a community of practice has three key dimensions: it is a 'joint enterprise' involving the 'mutual agreement' of its members, who are bound together as a 'social entity' with a shared repertoire of communal resources developed over time (Smith and Rust 2011). In HE, the notion of an 'academic' community of practice is typically used to refer only to academic staff and, as a rule, fragments along disciplinary lines. Academics openly acknowledge they have more allegiance to their disciplinary community than to their institutional community. A true community of practice should be made up of a group of academic staff, administrators, policy makers and researchers brought together because of a focus on a subject or discipline (Smith and Rust 2011). The implication of a truly inclusive community of practice is that universities will be organised into groupings that are based more on academic interest than on institutional function (Smith and Rust 2011).

The importance of establishing a community of practice to compare assessment standards across institutions is not novel. As far back as 1997, the UK Higher Education Quality Council (HEQC) recognised that "consistent assessment decisions among assessors are the product of interactions over time, the internalisation of exemplars, and of inclusive networks" (Higher Education Quality Council 1997a). It was further recommended that "subject groups and professional networks should develop or extend opportunities to build common understandings and approaches among academic peer groups e.g., maintaining "expert" panels for validation/accreditation/external examining/assessing" (Higher Education Quality Council 1997). Ramsden (2009) also highlighted the need for new systems to ensure comparability of standards, not only within subjects but across them and proposed the development of 'colleges of peers' in different subject areas, possibly coordinated through the subject centres, which would involve regular meetings among academics to read assessment outputs and arrive at a common understanding of standards at various levels.

In addition to establishing networks for the comparability of standards in assessment, it is critically important that they are effectively formulated, coordinated, implemented and supported if they are to be productive and efficient. Scott (2014) has identified the key features of effective networks in higher education, which include:

- Having a clear framework to know what we are networking about
- Sharing a mutual interest and a shared change objective
- Having clear roles and complementaries

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change?" Brookes eJournal of Learning and Teaching **6**(1). ASKe's work around assessment, assessment standards and assessment literacy in HE continues at the ASKe Pedagogy Research Centre.

- Ensuring that the network is deftly led
- Participants feeling valued and praised that you have done a good job
- The provision of positive, just-in-time and just-for-me constructive feedback
- The presence of reciprocal, personal relationships
- Participants having access to successful approaches in their specific area of practice and key area for improvement, facilitated by searchable websites of good practice
- Having access to guides written by 'successful travellers' in the same field of practice and improvement priority area. These have been found to be a key learning resource
- Ensuring that the network operates as a nested system – with senior and local leaders working in partnership
    - It is no good being part of an external network if one is not located well within internal networks. Failure to do this and external network members will have only limited impact locally, and
- Apply the motivators known to engage both students and staff in effective change. It is about engaging with the disengaged.

2.6 PEER REVIEW PROCESSES IN AUSTRALIA THAT ARE COMMUNITIES OF PRACTICE

In Australia there are several established national peer review processes around competitive grant programs from which cues may be taken in the development of a national PRAN. The main purpose of the Australian Council for Arts, the Australian Research Council (ARC) and the National Health and Medical Research Council (NHMRC) is providing support through grant funding and so while peer review is not the primary concern, it is a critically important component of the process of determining the successful applicants for funding. In each of the three peer review processes, peer reviewers are maintained as members of a register, panel or college and are readily available to participate in peer review processes. Each of these peer review processes also has an established community of practice. For example, the ARC has a College of Experts who play a key role in moderating external assessments through assisting in recruiting and assigning assessors as well as implementing peer review reforms in established and emerging disciplines.

Having supporting processes in place to ensure the sustainability of the peer review process is imperative. Each Council has developed their own framework of processes and resources around: the management peers and their allocation to material requiring assessment; guidelines for the conduct of the review, conflict of interest, remuneration, length of peer appointments; and the actual process of reviewing and ranking submitted applications (Table 4). In addition to the processes and resources specifically supporting peer review, the Councils also conduct research within their area of expertise for the purpose of producing guideline documents for the sector, ranking universities by performance, for identifying best practice and innovation, and to ensure they remain at the forefront of knowledge within the field.

Table 4: Summary of established peer review processes in Australia

National Peer Review Processes	Peer Review Roles and Participants	Peer Review Process	Assessment Process	Research Process
Australia Council for the Arts	- Panel selection - Register of peers - Pool of peers - Peers assessors with rolling peer juries (depending on funding rounds): benefit is that peers are appointed for short periods of time	- Code of conduct - Conflict of interest - Confidentiality of information - Peer responsibilities - Remuneration and entitlements for peers	- Application Material - Scoring - Reporting and Approval - Notification and Feedback - Submit online peer nomination - Appeal process	- Research and Strategic Analysis Department informs strategic planning, monitoring and advocacy work of the Australia Council - Research Strategy Panel advises on research needs and monitors outcomes
Australian Research Council (ARC)	- ARC College of Experts - Assessors - Disciplinary groupings	- Release of guidance material - Submission of proposals - Receipt and assessment of proposals - Conflict of interest - Remuneration - Workload	- Assessment forms - Selection criteria - Scoring - Rejoinder - Selection - Ranking of proposals - Appeal process	Excellence in Research for Australia (ERA): evaluation of research quality by discipline in Australian universities against national and international benchmarks
National Health and Medical Research Council (NHMRC)	- NHMRC Assigners Academy - Peer Review Honour Roll - External Assessor's Outstanding Contribution Honour Roll (Chairs/members)/broad research group) - Research Committee Members; Assigners Academy Members; PRP Chair; Assistant Chair; Community Observer; PRP Member; Primary spokesperson; secondary spokesperson - Additional experts - External assessor	- Principles of peer review: Fairness, transparency, independence, appropriateness and balance, research community participation, confidentiality, impartiality, quality and excellence - Guide to NHMRC Peer Review Process - Guiding Principles for NHMRC Peer Review Panel Membership (3 years and 1 rest year; goal to retain 60% membership from one year into the next year's membership) and Appointments - Membership from diverse (location and size) administering institutions	- Receipt and initial processing of applications - Identification of applications requiring Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Assessment - Applications assigned to Panels - Peer Review Panel Composition - Allocation of Spokespersons - External Assessors - Briefing - Initial Scoring - Applicant Response - Removing less competitive applications from further consideration - Peer review panel meetings - Notification of outcomes	- Expert working committees convened for the development of national guidelines on population health, ethics and clinical practice - NHMRC Statistics Unit reports funding statistics and outcomes from NHRMC funded research

CHAPTER 3: PROJECT APPROACH

This was a 'proof of concept' project testing the need for a national network for peer review of assessment that, similar to the system of external examiners in place in the UK, would operate across the HE sector in Australia, providing assurance on standards and quality of assessment. The project undertook a period of extensive consultation with academics and other representatives from universities and private higher education providers, with discipline leaders and experts in assessment, peer review and network building, in order to determine the needs of the sector and identify key individuals in the area and exemplars of best practice.

The project progressed through three phases:

- Establishment Phase: Establish external reference group, Peer Review Network Team, website and resources; ethics approval
- Consultation Phase: Presentations, meetings and communications for project; Workshops and survey
- Dissemination Phase: Peer Review of Assessment Forum and survey and Universities Australia Satellite Event.

3.1 ESTABLISHMENT PHASE

The Establishment Phase (May-June, 2014) for the project included the following activities:

- establishing an external reference group (with diagonal representation such as an OLT representative, Discipline Scholar, Deputy Vice-Chancellor (DVC) representative, Private Provider representative, Director Standards/Quality, academics experienced in peer review of assessment and the PRAN Coordinator
- establishing a PRAN team who are experienced in peer review of assessment methodologies and quality to assist in the coordination of state-based workshops
- setting up a website for the project which includes resources, such as presentations, workshop material etc. (See http://www.utas.edu.au/student-evaluation-review-and-reporting-unit/nprn)
- establishing a Peer Review of Assessment Organising Committee (including HES representation) to organise a national PRAN Forum and;
- receiving ethics approval from the Tasmania Social Science Research Ethics Committee [Ethics Ref: H0014306] for the collection of project participant responses (anonymous) to focus questions around the establishment of a PRAN and for evaluation of project workshop and forum events.

3.2 CONSULTATION PHASE

The Consultation Phase (May, 2014–April, 2015) for the project involved 101 consultations (See Table 5).

Table 5: Consultation Phase

Date	Institution/organisation/individual	Details
17/04/2014	Regional Universities Network (RUN)	Teleconference meeting: Expression of interest in peer review of assessment network and keep notified of developments
16/05/2014	DVCs (Academic) Universities Australia	Presentation: Key items include: • Regular agenda item • Matter of scalability: What can we realistically do? • Recommendation that the network be web streamed • Encourage external stocktake of peer review/external referencing • Interest in online moderation tool • 5.3.3 is a massive standard for the sector • Recommendation to change to peer review of assessment
29/05/2014	COPHE	Teleconference with Adrian McComb
10/06/2014	OLT National Conference	Poster presentation, information booklet and flyer on the external peer review of assessment forum A lot of people expressed strong interest in the project
14/06/2014	Council of Deans of Theology and The Australian and New Zealand Association of Theological Schools Ltd	Teleconference meeting with Dr Raymond Nobbs
17/06/2014	Medical Deans Australia and New Zealand	Teleconference meeting with Prof Judith Searle
17/06/2014	Australian Council of Deans of Science (ACDS)	Teleconference meeting with Prof John Rice • Would like to use Science as a test bed • Project seen as hugely beneficial
18/06/2014	Australian Council of Deans of Agriculture (ACDA)	Teleconference meeting with Prof Holger Meinke • Link Agriculture to Science work

18/06/2014	Australian Council of Deans of Information and Communications Technology (ACDICT)	Teleconference meeting with Prof Leon Stirling • Information on project sent for the national Dean's meeting on 7th July • Submitted report to Council for funding for the peer review of assessment
20/06/2014	Committee of Chairs of Academic Boards/Senates of Universities in NSW and ACT	Teleconference meeting with Prof Paul Wormell
20/06/2014	Australian Institute of Physics (AIP) Astronomical Society of Australia	Teleconference meeting with Andrew Hopkins and Dr Marc Duldig
26/06/2014	IRU	Teleconference meeting with Grant Kennett
26/06/2014	Victorian Quality Managers Network	Presentation, information booklet and flyer to Quality Directors and Managers A lot of interest in the project
27/06/2014	ABDC	Teleconference meeting with Prof Michael Powell
27/06/2014	Australasian Council of Deans of Arts, Social Sciences and Humanities (DASSH)	Teleconference meeting with Prof John Germov • Presentation to national conference for DASSH in September
27/06/2014	CADAD	Teleconference meeting with Dr Kylie Readman • Presentation at the CADAD conference in October
3/07/2014	National Council of Tertiary Music Schools (NACTMUS)	Teleconference meeting with Assoc Prof Don Lebler
3/07/2014	Australian Council of Deans of Education (ACDE)	Teleconference meeting with Prof Brenda Cherendinciko • Very useful for accreditation • Presentation at national conference for ACDE in September
4/07/2014	ACDICT	Teleconference meeting with Dr Tony Koppi

7/07/2014	Australian Council of Engineering Deans (ACED)	Teleconference meeting with Prof Daryoush Habibi • Support for online moderation tool and external moderation • Presentation at the Council of Engineering Deans meeting in November
7/07/2014	Council of Deans of Nursing and Midwifery (Australia and New Zealand) (CDNM)	Teleconference meeting with Prof Wendy Cross Presentation at the Council of Deans of Nursing and Midwifery in October
8/07/2014	Australasian Society for Computers in Learning and Tertiary Education (ASCILITE)	Teleconference with Dr Caroline Steele Discussion with Matthew Hillier on e-assessment network
8/07/2014	Council of Australian Law Deans (CALD)	Teleconference with Prof Stephen Graw
8/07/2014	OLT Senior Fellowship	Teleconference with Emeritus Prof Geoff Scott Link both projects together
16/07/2014	Study Group and the Australian Council of Private Education and Training (ACPET)	Teleconference meeting with Dr George Brown
21/07/2014	National Sustainability Network	Teleconference meeting with Dr Colin Hocking to discuss network building
23/07/2014	AIP	Teleconference meeting with Dr David Hockley and Prof Stephen Collins
23/07/2014	Queensland University of Technology (QUT)	Teleconference meeting with Georgia Smeal to discuss the QUT Higher Education Research Network
24/07/2014	ABDC	Presentation to Associate Deans Learning and Teaching meeting
24/07/2014	Chairs of Academic Boards of NUHEPs	Face-to-face meeting with Prof Wayne Robinson
25/07/2014	ASCILITE	Teleconference meeting with Dr Matthew Hiller to discuss ASCILITE involvement
05/08/2014	Earth Sciences, University of Tasmania	Presentation to Learning and Teaching meeting

06/08/2014	Sydney College of Divinity	Teleconference meeting with Dick Audley to discuss moderation processes at Australian College of Theology and Sydney College of Divinity
13/08/2014	Melbourne PRAN Workshop, University of Melbourne	56 registrations from 21 institutions
26/08/2014	IRU	Teleconference meeting with Grant Kennett: IRU have expressed interest in working with UTAS to revise online moderation tool and trial with opportunity for further online development nationally
28/08/2014	Senior Fellowship with TEQSA	Teleconference meeting with Emeritus Prof Christine Ewan to discuss synergies with her project and this project
29/08/2014	Senior Fellowship with TEQSA/OLT Senior Fellowship	Teleconference meeting with Emeritus Professors Christine Ewan and Geoff Scott to establish a combined Universities Australia Satellite Event on March, 2015
4/09/2014	Go8	Face-to-face meeting with Prof Ian Young to disseminate project with the DVC(As) in the Go8
10/09/2014	AQA, New Zealand	Presentation at the AQA conference on the project
12/09/2014	Queensland College of Teachers (QCT)	Teleconference meeting with John Ryan. One of the tasks of the College is to accredit initial teacher education programs of QLD's higher education institutions. The College is working with the Queensland Deans of Education to strengthen initial teacher education programs and ensure assessment of preservice teachers is rigorous against the Australian Institute for Teaching and School Leadership (AITSL) standards.
12/09/2014	Australasian Council of Dental Schools (ACODS)	Teleconference meeting with Prof Chris Peck Presentation to ACOD meeting in October
17/09/2014	DASSH meeting	Face-to-face workshop on the project
17/09/2014	Canberra PRAN Workshop, Australian National University	30 registrations from 5 institutions

18/09/2014	Sydney PRAN Workshop, University of Western Sydney	81 registrations from 25 institutions
19/09/2014	Queensland PRAN Workshop	53 registrations from 14 institutions
22/09/2014	UK, Emeritus Prof Sue Bloxham	Skype meeting to discuss peer review of assessment network and findings from the HEA/QAA report on external examiners
25/09/2014	Perth PRAN Workshop	59 registrations from 8 institutions
26/09/2014	Adelaide PRAN Workshop	25 registrations from 6 institutions
28/09/2014	ACODS	Teleconference meeting with the Deans from ACODS • Need to include Australian Dental Board, Medicine etc. • Contact Lyn La Blanc on how it could apply to the accreditation process in dentistry • Accreditation Committee has put it on their agenda
28/09/2014	TOP Education	Teleconference meeting with Prof Peter Flood, Provost
29/09/2014	Australian Institute of Professional Education (AIPE)	Teleconference meeting with Stephen Davies
30/09/2014	ACDE	Teleconference meeting with the Deans from ACDE
6/10/2014	ACODS	Teleconference meeting with Prof Mike Morgan • Contact Lyn La Blanc, CEO of Australian Dental Council (ADC) and Michael Carpenter, Director of Accreditation at ADC • Alignment to National Registration and Accreditation Scheme (NRAS) for health professions Review • Organise Health Professions Council Forum: Peggy Sanders, Secretariat
7/10/2014	Australasian Council on Open, Distance and e-Learning (ACODE)	Teleconference meeting with Helen Carter • Presentation to ACODE in November

10/10/2014	Council of Deans of Theology	Presentation to Deans of Theology
16/10/2014	Faculty of Science, Engineering and Technology (SET), University of Tasmania	Presentation to Faculty Learning and Teaching (L&T) meeting
20/10/2014	Avondale College	Presentation at Avondale Learning and Teaching Week
24/10/2014	CADAD	Presentation to CADAD meeting
28/10/2014	Faculty of Education, University of Tasmania	Presentation to Faculty L&T meeting
29/10/2014	CDNM	Presentation to Deans of CDNM
4/11/2014	ACDA	Presentation to Deans of ACDA
5/11/2014	Australian Maritime College, University of Tasmania	Presentation to Faculty L&T meeting
7/11/2014	ACODE	Presentation to ACODE
7/11/2014	Faculty of Arts, University of Tasmania	Presentation at Planning Day
24/11/2014	ACED	Presentation to the Deans of ACED • Align with accreditation processes • Contact Elizabeth Taylor in relation to accreditation
03/12/2014	Tasmania PRAN Workshop	30 registrations from 3 institutions
10/12/2014	Tasmanian School of Business and Economics (TSBE), University of Tasmania	Presentation to TSBE
10/12/2014	CADAD	Assoc Prof Ian Solomonides, President of CADAD, very supportive of project and taking it their Executive meeting in December
10/12/2014	CDNM	Prof Wendy Cross, President of CDNM is very supportive of the project, arranging an appointment in the New Year to discuss proposal.
11/12/2014	AASA	Teleconference meeting with Prof Diego Ramirez-Lovering, President AASA. Executive are very supportive of the project. Meeting in February to discuss funding model.

11/12/2014	NACTMUS	Teleconference meeting with Prof Matthew Marshall, President of NACTMUS, who was taking the proposal to the national conference on 12th December, 2014
11/12/2014	ACODE	Teleconference meeting with Karen Halley to discuss subscription. A Collaborate Forum on 21st January has been arranged.
12/12/2014	ACDA	Arranged with Prof Jim Pratley a meeting with the Executive of ACDA in Canberra 10-11th March to discuss subscription
12/12/2014	CALD	Teleconference meeting with Prof Carolyn Evans, President of CALD and she is interested in seeing the funding proposal. Linked contacts from the Legal Education Associate Deans (L&T)
17/12/2014	DASSH	Teleconference meeting with Clare Sidotti and Assoc Prof Joy Wallace to discuss subscription. Arranged for a presentation with the Bachelor of Arts Conference (12-13th March, 2015)
17/12/2014	ACUADS	Executive gave broad support for the proposal. Meeting with Prof Marie Sierra, President in the New Year.
17/12/2014	ASCILITE	Meeting with Assoc Prof Caroline Steel, President ASCILITE, to discuss subscription on January, 16th, 2015
18/12/2014	ACDE	Arranged with Prof Tania Aspland a meeting in the New Year to prepare for the Executive Board meeting in January and a presentation to the AD (L&T) early in the New Year.
19/12/2014	Australian Deans of Built Environment & Design (ADBED)	Teleconference meeting with Prof Stephen Loo who is very interested in ADBED participating. Arrange a meeting in February with the Deans Council.
19/12/2014	Committee of Chairs of Academic Boards/Senates of Universities in NSW and ACT	Arranged a possible presentation to the Chairs of Academic Boards/Senates on 13 March at UA Satellite event and involvement of NSW/Territories Committee of Chairs and national ozcab mail group in January, 2015

19/12/2014	Council of Deans of Theology and ANZATS	Teleconference meeting with Dr Raymond Nobbs and arrange a presentation for the Deans Council on 27th March, 2015
19/12/2014	COPHE	Teleconference meeting with Adrian McComb, CEO, COPHE to present at the Board meeting 24-25 February, 2015
19/12/2014	IRU	Arranged a meeting Conor King, Executive Director, IRU to discuss proposal on 13th January, 2015
19/12/2014	RUN	Arranged a meeting with Caroline Perkins, RUN on 11th January, 2015
12/01/2015	RUN	Meeting with Caroline Perkins
14/01/2015	ACDS	Meeting with Prof Liz Johnson
23/01/2015	CALD	Teleconference meeting with Alex Steele about the Legal Education Associate Deans (L&T)
27/01/2015	CADAD Executive	Teleconference meeting with CADAD Executive
11/02/2015	ACDE	Teleconference meeting with Prof Tania, President ACDE and Prof Mary Mooney, Chair of NADLATE
16/02/2015	2nd Annual Future of Learning in Higher Education Summit: Panel discussion on assuring learning outcomes	Panel discussion on assuring learning outcomes, Sydney
10/03/2015	ACDA	Presentation to Deans of Agriculture in Canberra
10/03/2015	IRU	Presentation to DVC (As) in Canberra
10/03/2015	RUN	Presentation to RUN in Canberra
12/03/2015	Bachelor of Arts Conference	Presentation to the Arts Program Coordinators and Associate Deans (L&T) in Melbourne
13/03/2015	Universities Australia Satellite Event	Presentation to Senior Executive in Canberra
13/03/2015	ACDE	Presentation to the ACDE in Canberra
20/03/2015	CDNM	Presentation to the CDNM in Melbourne

27/03/2015	Council of Deans of Theology and ANZATS	Presentation to the Deans of Theology
31/03/2015	COPHE Workshop	Presentation to COPHE members in Sydney
9/04/2015	ACDICT	Presentation to ACDICT in Canberra
23/04/2015	ACODS	Teleconference meeting with ACODS Executive

A paper-based survey was distributed to each of the state-based workshops for feedback (Appendix A). Focus questions were also distributed as part of the state-based workshops (Appendix B).

3.3 DISSEMINATION PHASE

The Dissemination Phase was a culmination of the extensive feedback provided during the Consultation Phase. The project leader liaised closely with HES to bring together key stakeholders for the inaugural PRAN Forum (12 November, 2014) at the Park Royal, Melbourne Airport. A copy of the program is attached (Appendix C). The Forum attracted 133 participants from 36 universities, 22 private providers, 2 international universities, as well as TEQSA and OLT representation. Feedback was collected from focused group discussion (Appendix D) and an evaluation form, which has been used to inform the progress of this project and the recommendations (Appendix E). Feedback received is further discussed in Chapter 4. Further dissemination of the project was also undertaken through a Universities Australia Satellite Event (13 March, 2015) in liaison with the OLT, and Emeritus Professors Christine Ewan and Geoff Scott.

CHAPTER 4: FINDINGS

4.1 PEER REVIEW WORKSHOPS

All participants in the 1-day peer review workshops were given the opportunity to provide feedback on the day's proceedings; 117 completed evaluation forms were received. Quantitative data was computer-analysed to generate descriptive statistics. Qualitative data arising from open-ended questionnaire responses was analysed through a process of progressive categorisation and data coding designed to identify and refine data themes.

4.1.1 OVERALL SATISFACTION

The majority of participants (63%) indicated that they were satisfied with the workshop (Figure 7). A further 29% of participants reported a high level of satisfaction.
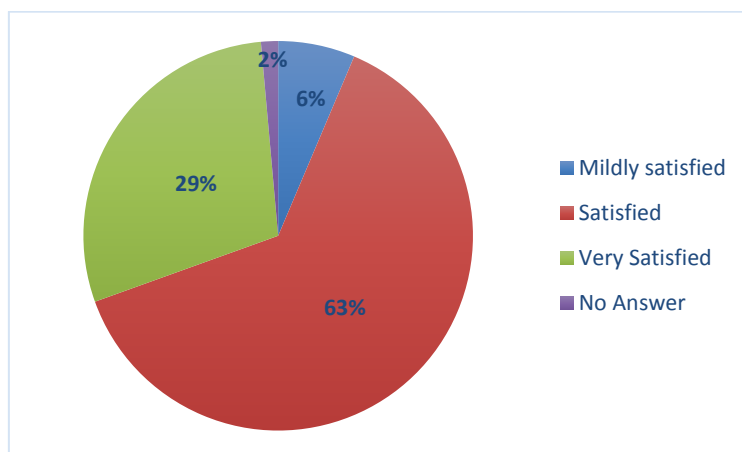
Figure 7: Participant satisfaction with the 1-day peer review workshop

4.1.2 BEST ASPECTS

Five key areas were identified as the best aspects of the workshop:

1) The interactive group discussions which fostered a collaborative approach and facilitated engagement with the workshop content;
2) The opportunity to share ideas and experiences related to the peer review of assessment;
3) The opportunity to network;
4) Being provided with an overview of recent and current national projects which provided participants with a greater contextual understanding of what is happening in the peer review space both nationally and from a cross-disciplinary perspective; and
5) Learning about the different models of peer review of assessment.

4.1.3 AREAS FOR IMPROVEMENT

Participants were asked to suggest any areas of the workshop that could be improved. The analysis of responses identified a key theme area: To provide more opportunity for group discussions. This aligns with the best aspect of the workshop above as the interactive session was considered the most engaging part of the day. Respondents also suggested that this could be achieved by

increasing the pace that the introduction was delivered, reducing the amount of content and limiting the amount of information that repeated what had already been provided in pre-reading material.

4.1.4 FURTHER LEARNING

Five key areas that were covered in the workshops that participants wanted to learn more about were the:

1) Practical aspects related to the process of peer review of assessment and how to implement it at their respective institutions;
2) Policy and processes that have been identified as best practice;
3) Online Moderation Tool and other resources available;
4) Models of peer review of assessment, their progress and how to implement them; and
5) Strategies for identifying peer review partners.

4.1.5 VALUE OF A NATIONAL PEER REVIEW NETWORK

In terms of being a part of the national peer review network, the five key areas that participants valued the most are the:

1) Opportunity to share understanding and experiences of standards and peer review processes across the sector, thereby ensuring consistency of approach across both universities and private providers;
2) Contribution to quality assurance at their respective institutions, in particular the improvement and enhancement of peer review implementation and practices both at the institutional and course level;
3) Professional development opportunity for staff, which also aligns to performance management and promotion processes;
4) Opportunity to network and form a collaborative group of like-minded peers; and support provided by peers.

4.2 PEER REVIEW FORUM

The majority of participants (58%) indicated that they were satisfied with the Forum (Figure 8). A further 40% reported a high level of satisfaction.

Many positive comments about the Forum were received. Of these, five key areas were identified, the:

1) Presentation content was informative and covered a diverse range of topics and viewpoints that are highly relevant to the current clime across the HE sector;
2) Quality of the presentations by highly knowledgeable individuals who are considered experts in their relevant fields;
3) Opportunity for networking and facilitation of collegiality;
4) Collaborative approach which provided an opportunity to share and discuss ideas with others; and
5) Opportunity to learn about National and international initiatives and build knowledge around peer review of assessment.
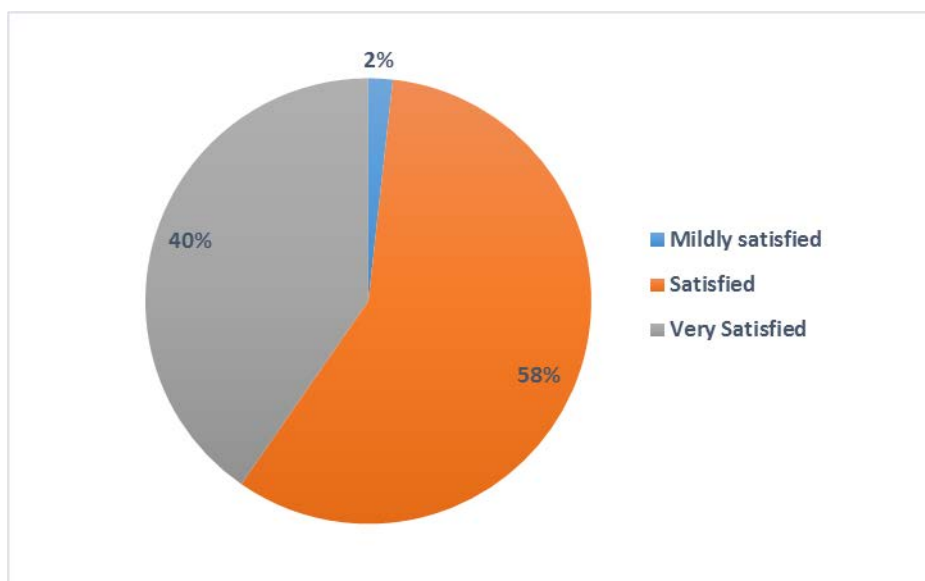
Figure 8: Participant satisfaction with the 1-day peer review Forum

Many participants considered the establishment of a national peer review of assessment network a good idea that will address a gap within the sector. An online portal/clearinghouse as a shared repository to house collaborative work and resources was also strongly supported. It should also be noted that, as a result of this Forum, a number of institutions have signalled their interest in piloting the online Moderation Tool developed by the University of Tasmania. One institution has indicated their readiness to provide funding for the further development of the tool.

There was overwhelming support (88% of respondents) for the Peer Review of Assessment Forum to be made into an annual event.

When asked to suggest any areas that could be improved, there was a strong consensus that the Forum should be spread over two days in the future to allow more time in each session to develop ideas, consider and discuss the presentations and share institutional practices. It was also suggested that the Forum be attached to another conference, such as HECQN, to reduce travel costs. Participants also felt that longer breaks between sessions were needed to facilitate networking and that, due to the size of the group the interactive session was of limited value. The establishment of break-out sessions for Special Interest Groups, such as the discipline networks, was suggested for future Forums. Moving forward, participants now want to participate in more interactive workshops where they can undertake calibration activities and learn how to peer review.

4.3 AREAS OF GOOD PRACTICE: DISCIPLINARY NETWORKS

In Australia and the UK, there are several examples of good practice established within disciplines.

4.3.1 INTERIOR DESIGN AND ARCHITECTURE

In the field of interior design and architecture, the Interior Design/Interior Architecture Educators Association leads a process of national benchmarking and moderation of both student work and School teaching frameworks at the University of South Australia. In a process established in the 1990s to ensure comparability of assessment standards across the School's different design studios, up to 5 days of moderation occurs each semester with review and assessment of student work drawn from each studio; all academics within the school are included in the process. At the end of the moderation period, academics from interstate institutions are invited to visit (funded by the School) and provide feedback to assist further in the assessment of student work and teaching

structure within each studio. Moderation practices vary; involving academics or practitioners only or may include student presentations. Moderators may be asked to provide reports on the teaching and assessment practices of individual studios depending on school requirements.

4.3.2 MUSIC

In the discipline of music, an OLT funded project Assessment in Music, established a consensus moderation process for assessment of music performances at the undergraduate level and provide an alignment with Australian National Creative and Performing Arts Threshold Learning Outcome statements. In a process informed by similar exercises in Europe (Greece, Finland and Austria), academics from participating institutions (Queensland Conservatorium Griffith University, University of Newcastle and the University of Tasmania) are provided with assessment items using an online storage service (such as Dropbox) and information outlining the process. After assessing the examples individually, discussions are held within local groups and the academics then participate in a videoconference where each group provides their views on the performances leading to consensus. As a component of this project a website has been developed (http://assessmentinmusic.com.au/) which provides background literature that informed the project and information on methodology and results, but also access to a repository of performance standard exemplars to assist in the development of consensus around standards in music performance.

4.3.3 THEOLOGY

In theology, external moderation is a long established practice between affiliated colleges with the aim of achieving comparability and equality in similar programs within the discipline. In this process moderators are experienced academics from external institutions (mostly interstate theological colleges) that firstly provide validation on the appropriateness of assessment items and grade descriptors for assessing learning outcomes for a given mode of delivery. Samples of examination manuscripts, and in some cases the entire cohort, are assessed by the moderators who report on student performance in each unit and the suitability of allocated grades; the moderators have the ability to recommend the adjustment of grades in a grade band. Summaries of moderator's observations of teaching and learning practices are also submitted to quality management committees and the colleges.

4.3.4 BUSINESS

As well as the development of the Achievement Matters model of calibrated peer review, the discipline of business in Australia, via the ABDC, provides further example of good practice in the form of a disciplinary Learning and Teaching Network. The network is active, meeting at least twice per year; its membership includes associate deans, deputy deans and learning and teaching coordinators from ABDC member business schools and faculties. The primary aim of the network is the implementation of good practice for learning and teaching in business higher education. Network meetings provide networking opportunities for members and presentations and interactive sessions are held on topics such as standards, accreditation, benchmarking and quality assurance. The network also supports the activities of the ABDC Scholar in developing threshold learning outcomes for undergraduates and coursework masters students in the business disciplines of accounting, economics, finance, marketing and tourism, hospitality and event management.

Establishing discipline Learning and Teaching networks within the Australian Deans Councils appears an ideal instrument for fostering a disciplinary community of good practice and promoting a shared understanding of standards among its academic leaders, who can then drive progress in this area at their home institutions. In Australia, several other disciplines in addition to Business, including

Science; Education; Law; and Arts, Social Sciences and Humanities, have established Learning and Teaching networks at the discipline level, and others that are contemplating it. However, at this stage it is estimated that at least half of the disciplinary Deans councils in Australia do not have associated Learning and Teaching networks; this is potentially an area where significant progress may be achieved in relation to assuring standards across the Australian HE sector.

4.3.5 CHEMNET

The Chemistry Discipline Network (ChemNet) was funded from 2011-2013 by the Australian Learning and Teaching Council Ltd (ALTC) to progress a number of objectives across chemistry educators: 1) to share successes and frustration in teaching chemistry to students; 2) to improve our teaching by building on ideas and strategies from one another; 3) to develop a community of practice as a strong voice for chemistry teaching; 4) to agree standards to present to TEQSA; 5) to implement the Chemistry Threshold Learning Outcomes (TLOs) and; 6) to reduce the isolation of chemistry academics at smaller institutions. ChemNet has undertaken a mapping exercise cross Australian HE institutions.

4.3.6 THE ECONOMICS NETWORK

The Economics Network (EN) in the UK is supported by a funding model based on member subscription. The Network is supported by the Royal Economic Society, the Scottish Economic Society, the University of Bristol and a number of economics departments across the UK. In 2013/2014, 53 UK economics departments subscribed to the Network. The cost of subscription is based on the department's FTE staff numbers. There is a management board in place and the network supports the HE sector in economics through: an early career teaching symposium, workshops, conferences, collaborative research projects, newsletters, publications, EN website, and discussion papers. The EN has two publications, the International Review of Economics Education and the Economic Review. The network is comprised of Associates and Patrons. Associates assist the EN with the planning and running of workshops and teaching symposiums provide general advice on service to the HE economics community (with an annual meeting of associates). Patrons contribute to events and publications.

4.3.7 ACCLAIM

The Australian Collaboration for Clinical Assessment in Medicine (ACCLAiM) is an OLT-supported collaboration (see https://acclaim.edu.au/) which commenced in 2010, and in 2014 included 17 medical schools from Australia and New Zealand. The project aims to provide participating schools with the means to benchmark the attainment of competencies in key clinical areas by their medical students, and improve inter-examiner reliability.

The main feature of the ACCLAiM process is the development and embedding of Objective Structured Clinical Examinations (OSCEs) in early and exit level exams in participating schools. In the first step of the process, OSCEs are recorded and provided to assessors for online pre-exam training. Once exams have been undertaken, student performance data from OSCEs is produced and analysed for each school; schools receive a confidential report of their performance relative to other participating schools. By 2014, the project will provide data from 28 OSCE stations. In addition each school hosts a Quality Assurance assessor who provides a report to the school on exam process, assessor/role player performance and overall quality of stations in the exam.

The process is seen as a relatively cost effective approach as it primarily utilises existing school staff and processes. The schools maintain autonomy in the assessment process but are able to

benchmark student performance, and have the opportunity to have assessors receive training to assist in reducing inter-school variability in OSCE assessment.

4.4 AREAS OF GOOD PRACTICE: OTHER NETWORKS

4.4.1 HIGHER EDUCATION RESEARCH NETWORK

At the institutional level, the QUT's Higher Education Research Network (HERN) was recently established to drive HE research within the university and align with TEQSA imperatives 2.4, 2.5 and 2.6.

> 2.4 The higher education provider demonstrates the commitment of teachers, researchers, course designers and assessors to the systematic advancement and dissemination of knowledge.
>
> 2.5 The higher education provider demonstrates sustained scholarship that informs teaching and learning in all fields in which courses of study are offered.
>
> 2.6 The higher education provider identifies and implements good practices in student teaching and learning, including those that have the potential for wider dissemination nationally.

Although light touch, the HERN executive, consisting primarily of OLT Fellows, Deans and Associate Deans and reports on activities to both DVCs (Research) and (Learning and Teaching). Major early outcomes from the initiative are the establishment of HERN subgroups within faculties linked to the executive, as well as numerous academic writing and reading groups. Publications emanating from network members are tagged with HERN tags permitting easy searching within institutional ePrint repositories. Annual HERN symposiums attracting 150 staff provide opportunity for presentations of research in HE, networking and capacity building, panel presentations by senior academics and Higher Education Research awards.

4.4.2 SUSTAINABILITY NETWORK

The OLT-supported Sustainability Network was established to develop a national network of Education for Sustainability (EfS) Practitioners. With a primary focus on enhancing the uptake and the overall quality of EfS in tertiary courses in Australia, the network aims to share best practices to support the incorporation of EfS into diverse discipline and university contexts.

Led by Latrobe University, the network counts more than ten Australian universities as members. The network presently consists of six discipline based hubs (Teacher Education, Pre-School Educations, Engineering, Business, Health, Early Childhood) and three cross-discipline hubs (Campus and Communities as Sites of EfS, Identify & Audit, Professional Development for EfS). Hubs consist of 4-5 people (or more) across different institutions.

The network facilitates regular teleconferences between member institutions for the sharing and promotion of practices, provides an online (see http://sustainability-ed.blogs.latrobe.edu.au/) forum for the promotion of network activities and access to curriculum and teaching resources, and links to recent and key publications in the area. The network also holds an annual forum and intends to develop a handbook on tertiary EfS. The most recent online symposium involved over 80 academics from across Australia.

A key issue emerging from this project involves making sure that we link and leverage what is being undertaken in these many parallel networks for mutual learning and more consistent implementation. Networking the networks involved in aspects of assessment in Australian Higher

Education has been identified by participants in this project as being a key area for action over the coming five years.

CHAPTER 5: OUTCOMES

The project has generated a number of important outcomes against the project's objectives.

5.1 OUTCOME 1: THE DEVELOPMENT OF AN OVERALL FRAMEWORK FOR EFFECTIVE USE OF PEER REVIEW OF ASSESSMENT

This chapter puts forward an option for assisting HE institutions, particularly the non-aligned HE institutions, in meeting the new proposed regulatory environment and developing a shared understanding of assessment standards, through the establishment of an overall framework for the effective use of peer review of assessment. The proposed Framework for Effective Use of Peer Review of Assessment has four distinct dimensions (Figure 9). Scott (2014) argues that for a network to be effective, a clear framework to know what we are talking about needs to be in place (Figure 9). The proposed objectives of the Framework are: 1) enhancement of the quality of assessment of student achievement through a shared national objective to improve assessment of achievement standards and; 2) assistance to HE institutions, particularly those not aligned to university networks to identify the key checkpoints to ensure the quality and relevance of assessment.

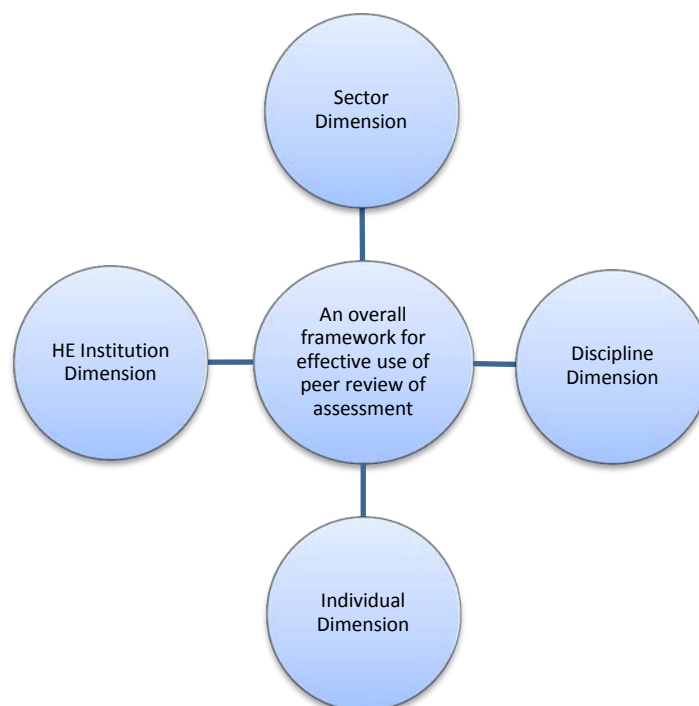**Figure 9:** An Overall Framework for Effective Use of Peer Review of Assessment

Consultation with the HE sector has identified some key points of tension around these four dimensions. These points of tension are briefly outlined in Table 6 below.

Table 6. Points of Tension

Dimensions	Points of Tension
Sector	Collaboration vs competition
	Compliance vs quality enhancement/best practice
HE Institution	Light touch, consistent process vs workload and scalability
	Resourcing vs significant budget cuts
Discipline	Enhancement and value of disciplinary communities vs aligning discipline to institutional priorities
	Professional development vs cost implications
Individual	Recognition and support for course/program and/or discipline coordinator vs workload and performance management

The Sector Dimension has identified the HE sector's (both universities and private providers) hesitation in collaborating with potential competitors on the peer review of assessment. This is justifiable, particularly strong from the private providers, who are concerned that the information will be used for competitive recruitment purposes. Another point of tension is how external peer review of assessment is viewed by many academics as either a purely compliance exercise or a quality enhancement and best practice process. The HE Institution Dimension identified two points of tension. The first tension is that most HE institutions would like a light touch, consistent process in place (as undertaken by the Go8 and the IRU) versus how do HE institutions manage workload expectations and scaling the process upwards. The second tension which is a key concern with the Deputy-Vice Chancellors (Academic) is about the resource implications for setting up the organisational structure and processes across the institution versus competing budget cuts across the sector.

At the Discipline Dimension, a tension that surfaced was the need to enhance and value the role of the disciplinary communities (such as the Deans Councils) versus the role of the Deans within an institution and aligning those interests to the strategic priorities of the institution. Discussions with the Deans Councils also highlighted the tension between offering members professional development versus the cost implications for holding such forums across the sector. Lastly, a key tension identified at the Individual Dimension is on the one hand, about the recognition and support for course/program or discipline coordinators in the central role they play in external peer review of assessment, but on the other hand, questions arise around workload implications and performance management.

5.1.1 SECTOR DIMENSION

Feedback received during the project identified the following key checkpoints for the Sector Dimension (see Table 7 below). To assist in the shared understanding of achievement standards at the sector level, it is proposed that these strategies be implemented for different levels of support.

Table 7. Key Checkpoints for the Sector Dimension

Sector Dimension	
Support Networks	• University Networks e.g. Go8, IRU, RUN, ATN • Peer Review of Assessment Network e.g. Option for non-aligned HE institutions and Deans Councils for professional learning and networking

Leadership Support	• Strong, deft leadership and coordination of the network • Clear complementary roles for different players, e.g. Institutional coordinators
Policy Support	• Good Practice Principles in the Peer Review of Assessment • Framework for Effective Use of Peer Review of Assessment • Peer Review of Assessment Steering Group
Effective Support Resources	• National, searchable clearinghouse of good practice in assessment • National, online benchmarking tool

A key consideration for the HE sector, in light of the proposed regulatory agenda, is building capacity to support the external peer review of assessment through existing or potential new networks. The University Networks, particularly the Go8 and the IRU, have already instigated a process for supporting their institutions and academics through their respective peer review of assessment processes and networks. The IRU has in place institutional coordinators to ensure there is a consistent point of contact across each of the universities.

In terms of support networks, one option for other HE institutions which are non-aligned is to participate in the Peer Review of Assessment Network (PRAN) as one way of establishing external networking relationships as well as providing support for staff on the peer review of assessment. For the PRAN to be sustainable, it is proposed that annual subscriptions (not unlike the Economics Network in the UK) are sought from non-aligned HE institutions and Deans Councils to fund professional learning opportunities for members of the network. It is also helpful to consider a Framework for the Effective use of Peer Review of Assessment as part of PRAN.

More importantly, with the proposed regulatory climate is the establishment of a set of good practice principles in the peer review of assessment, not unlike the peer review of research. This feedback was provided at a Universities Australia Satellite Event [13th March, 2015], which was later endorsed by 26 private providers at a Council of Private Higher Education (COPHE) workshop [31st March, 2015] which identified the need for good practice principles due to the competitive context of private providers. In the UK, 3 principles of general good practice were developed for external examiners :1) HE institutions are responsible for setting the standards of its degrees [such as Subject Benchmark Statements, professional body requirements] and are required to undertake internal quality review process and external review by QAA. External examining is only one part of this process; 2) HE institutions are responsible for setting and maintaining standards, and include institutional reviews which should test if external examining is effective; and 3) the role of the external examiner should be effective, transparent and credible to a range of stakeholders, such as students, the media and the general public (QAA, 2012a). Interestingly, the HESF does not include good practice principles in the peer review of assessment as a reference point.

In line with proven national peer review processes, such as the ARC and NHMRC and identified factors for the successful implementation of external moderation processes (Krause and Scott 2012), the establishment of a Peer Review of Assessment Steering Group would have oversight on the development of these good practice principles in peer review of assessment.

For the peer review of assessment to be sustainable, efficient and scalable across the HE sector it is important to consider resources to support HE institutions and academics. The challenge of scalability also highlighted at the Universities Australia Satellite Event [13 March, 2015] aligns with feedback received during the project about having some common set of online resources to support the peer review of assessment such as:

- A national, searchable clearinghouse of good practice in assuring the quality of assessment validity and reliability;
- A national, online benchmarking tool for comparing practice in assessment.

One of the key challenges HE institutions face is establishing a rigorous process for external peer review which is sustainable, efficient and scalable across the HE sector.

5.1.2 HE INSTITUTION DIMENSION

Table 8 outlines the key checkpoints for HE institutions to consider when setting up an institution wide process for the peer review of assessment. QUT has in place a Higher Education Research Network (HERN) which supports academics through an institution wide network which offers forums, writing sessions and recognition for learning and teaching and research through a HERN research tag initiative. The Executive is made up of OLT Fellows, Associate Deans in learning and teaching and research and reports are received from senior executives in both learning and teaching and research.

Table 8. Key Checkpoints for the HE Institution Dimension

HE Institution Dimension	
Support Networks	• University networks and/or other support networks, e.g. QUT's Higher Education Research Network (HERN)
Leadership Support	• Strong, deft leadership and coordination of the network • Senior Executive leadership of academic governance processes in external peer review of assessment • Clear complementary roles for different players, e.g. institutional and/or disciplinary coordinators
Policy Support	• Good Practice Principles in the Peer Review of Assessment • Alignment to academic governance processes and committees • Alignment to assessment, course review and accreditation policies and processes • Alignment to workload, probation, performance management and reward and recognition policies and processes
Effective Support Resources	• Professional learning opportunities, e.g. workshops for sessional staff • Institutional register of trained assessment support peers and reviewers • Online benchmarking tool • Integrate with other forms of peer review • Internal grant process • Consideration of paying an honorarium

Senior executive responsible for learning and teaching within HE institutions are tasked with the coordination and academic governance of external peer review of assessment. Consultation with the Deputy Vice Chancellors Universities Australia Network [May, 2014] highlighted the significant resource implications for HE institutions in developing the infrastructure and systems to support the peer review of assessment. HE institutions will need to align learning and teaching policies and procedures to the peer review of assessment process, such as course review, accreditation and

assessment. Other policies and processes such as probation, promotion, workload, reward and recognition will need to be aligned to the peer review of assessment. Effective support strategies include workshops for academic staff, including sessional staff, and the integration of peer review of assessment with other forms of peer review. Reward and recognition processes such as research grant applications and consideration of paying honorariums can also support the implementation of external peer review of assessment. Some institutions, such as the University of Canberra and the University of Tasmania, have developed online benchmarking tools to ensure an efficient and secure process is in place for data collection.

5.1.3 DISCIPLINE DIMENSION

Table 9 highlights the key checkpoints for the Discipline Dimension. A feature of this Dimension is the proposed establishment of Colleges of Peers through the Australian Council of Deans networks and other HE networks and societies. The Colleges of Peers would have national oversight of assessment in their discipline and would align this work to their discipline's Threshold Learning Outcomes. Not unlike the peer review process in research, the College of Peers is about developing a rigorous process for disciplines to calibrate achievement standards within their discipline. The key role of the College of Peers is to build capability in potential peer reviewers. Also, critical to the establishment of the Colleges of Peers is the involvement and participation of accreditation bodies and industry to ensure peer review of assessment processes are integrated with professional requirements for accreditation and industry reviews.

Table 9. Key Checkpoints for the Discipline Dimension

Discipline Dimension	
Support Networks	• Colleges of Peers, e.g. Associate Deans L&T Network • Direct links with University and institutional networks
Leadership Support	• Strong, deft leadership and coordination of the network • Clear complementary roles for different players, e.g. Discipline coordinators/ Associate Deans (L&T), Chairs and Executives of Australian Deans Councils and other Academic Committees and societies
Policy Support	• Good Practice Principles in the Peer Review of Assessment • Alignment to accreditation and industry requirements
Effective Support Resources	• Key role in building capability for peer reviewers, such as professional learning opportunities, e.g. Annual Forum on calibration • Alignment to Threshold Learning Outcomes (TLO) projects

An important area for consideration in establishing Colleges of Peers is aligning this process to the Australian Deans Council's Associate Deans (L&T) network. Presently, the following learning and teaching networks exist within the Deans Councils:
• Australian Business Deans Council has a Learning and Teaching Committee;
• Australasian Council of Deans of Arts, Social Sciences and Humanities has an Associate Deans (L&T) Network;

- Australian Council of Deans of Education has an Associate Deans (L&T) Network;
- Australian Council of Deans of Information and Communications Technology has a Learning and Teaching Academy;
- Australian Council of Deans of Science an Associate Deans (L&T) Network;
- Council of Australian Law Deans has a Legal Education Associate Deans L&T Network.

The Australian Council of Engineering Deans and the Council of Deans of Nursing and Midwifery (Australia and New Zealand) are in the process of setting up Associate Deans (L&T) Networks. Many of the Councils also supported the establishment of a funding scheme, not unlike the UK Economics Network, to enable PRAN to operate in a sustainable and cost effective way to support their members. Feedback received from the Deans Councils also recommended the establishment of a national group of Australian Deans Councils representatives on peer review of assessment so that there was a national discussion on key strategic initiatives in each of the disciplines on assessment.

Table 10 provides an overview of the support garnered from 21 out of 22 Australian Council of Deans, as well as a number of disciplinary committees, institutes and societies.

Table 10. Australian Council of Deans Support

The Australian Council of Deans	Council Support for the Project
Association of Architecture Schools of Australasia (AASA)	The Council is supportive of the initiative and potential funding for the Peer Review of Assessment Network
Australasian Council on Open Distance and e-Learning (ACODE)	The Council is supportive of the initiative
Australasian Council of Arts, Social Sciences and Humanities (DASSH)	The Council is supportive of the initiative
Australasian Council of Dental Schools (ACODS)	The Council is supportive of the initiative
Australasian Society for Computers in Learning and Tertiary Education (ASCILITE)	The Council is supportive of the initiative and opportunity to have a special interest group as part of ASCILITE
Australian Business Deans Council (ABDC)	The Council is supportive of the initiative and possible inclusion of ABDC colleagues as part of the Network to provide professional learning opportunities to other disciplines
Australian Council of Deans of Agriculture (ACDA)	The Council is supportive of the initiative and are interested in a proof of concept for a national online benchmarking tool
Australian Council of Deans of Education (ACDE)	The Council is supportive of the initiative and possible benchmarking across teacher education
Australian Council of Deans of Information and Communications Technology (ACDICT)	The Council is supportive of the initiative and how the Peer Review of Assessment Network can support ICT

Australian Council of Deans of Science (ACDS)	The Council is supportive of the initiative and how the Peer Review of Assessment Network can support Science. The ACDS is working through (sub)-discipline networks which are developing and translating standards to specific disciplines- e.g. Chemnet for the Chemistry discipline.
Australian Council of Engineering Deans (ACED)	The Council is supportive of the initiative and how it aligns with accreditation
Australian Council of University Art and Design Schools (ACUADS)	The Council is supportive of the initiative and potential funding for the Peer Review of Assessment Network
Australian Deans of Built Environment (ADBED)	The Council is supportive of the initiative
Committee of Chairs of Academic Boards/Senates of Universities in NSW and ACT	The Committee is supportive of the initiative
Council of Australian Directors of Academic Development (CADAD)	The Council is supportive of the initiative
Council of Australian Law Deans (CALD)	The Council would like to be kept informed
Council of Deans of Nursing and Midwifery (Australia & New Zealand) (CDNM)	The Council is supportive of the initiative, how it aligns with accreditation and is assisting in the coordination of a national L&T Conference to discuss further
National Council of Tertiary Music Schools (NACTMUS)	The Council is supportive of the initiative
Council of Deans of Theology and ANZATS	The Committee is supportive of the initiative
Chairs of Academic Boards of Non-University Providers	The Committee is supportive of the initiative
Council of Higher Education Private Providers (COPHE)	The Council is supportive of the initiative
Deans and Directors of Creative Arts	DDCA is supportive of the initiative
Astronomical Society of Australia	ASA is supportive of the initiative

5.1.4 INDIVIDUAL DIMENSION

Table 11 below outlines the key checkpoints for the Individual Dimension. Scott (2014) argues that it is important to have an internal institutional network which is linked to an external network. To

support academics in building capacity for peer review of assessment, the role of support networks such as learning and teaching networks are critical for professional and peer learning. The role of the course/program and/or discipline coordinators in peer review of assessment will need to be clearly identified and align with other course quality elements (such as course outcomes, mapping, assessment, and grading, calibration and learning design).

Table 11. Key Checkpoints for the Individual Dimension

HE Institution Dimension	
Support Networks	• University networks and/or other support networks
Leadership Support	• Clear complementary roles for different players, e.g. course/program and/or discipline coordinators
Policy Support	• Good Practice Principles in the Peer Review of Assessment • Alignment to course outcomes, mapping, assessment, grading, calibration and learning designs • Recognition in workload, probation, performance management and reward and recognition processes
Effective Support Resources	• Feedback from other disciplinary or cross-disciplinary peers • Feedback from and to students on changes made to the unit as part of the peer review process

An important feature of this dimension is feedback from staff and to students on the peer review of assessment process. Students can play a vital role in providing feedback on the peer review of assessment process. HE institutions will need to recognise the peer review of assessment in academic workload, individual performance management and career conversations, including promotion and reward and recognition.

5.2 OUTCOME 2: THE DEVELOPMENT OF A NATIONAL NETWORK IN PEER REVIEW OF ASSESSMENT

An outcome of this project has been the establishment of a national network in peer review of assessment. The project to date has received the contact details of 1,200 people in HE through various forms of consultation. The findings from the State-based workshops, presentations to Deans Councils and Forum overwhelmingly support the establishment of a network to support HE institutions meet with the proposed, revised HESF.

"The national development [PRAN] fosters confidence in the advice and practice. The network should build a collegiate approach. Australia is a small place and we really need to share! Membership would increase my understanding of the issues and avenues in progress." (Melbourne Workshop, 13th August, 2014)

"Building a network of likeminded peers in my own discipline. Better co-operation across institutions." (Queensland Workshop, 19th September, 2014)

"Good value to establish a national network; cross disciplinary comparability; contemporary information and sharing of best practice." (Queensland Workshop, 19th September, 2014)

The lessons learnt from various projects (Bloxham et al, 2014; Rust, 2014c; Rust, O'Donovan, and Price, 2005, Scott 2014) identifies the importance of networking and collaboration so as to ensure

calibration for assuring comparability and consistency of standards. To ensure that the network remains sustainable it is proposed that a management structure and funding scheme be put in place to manage the operational elements of the network [e.g. The Economics Network] so that PRAN can support the Colleges of Peers and the non-aligned HE institutions in building capacity for the peer review of assessment.

5.3 OUTCOME 3: THE ESTABLISHMENT OF A RELATIONSHIP WITH HIGHER EDUCATION SERVICES TO PROGRESS THE IMPLEMENTATION OF NATIONAL PEER REVIEW OF ASSESSMENT NETWORK FORUM

Higher Education Services (HES) has been instrumental in setting up the PRAN Forum. The relationship between HES and the Project Team has been truly collaborative and critical to the success of the Forum. HES provided $30K in funding for the Forum which assisted with lowering the forum costs as well as covering the costs of 11 presenters. HES has advised that it will provide funding to support another forum in 2015. A key outcome has seen the alignment of the Forum to the HECQN so that it is accessible to a greater audience in quality assurance. Feedback suggests that that both events run over 2-3 days.

"Yes [to value of annual forum for the peer review of assessment], but only if it could be attached to another conference, like HECQN, because travelling from interstate is an expense and would prevent attendance by some institutions if it were too costly". [Evaluation Form, November 12th, 2014]

5.4 OUTCOME 4: THE ESTABLISHMENT OF A RELATIONSHIP WITH AKO AOTEAROA AND THE ACADEMIC QUALITY AGENCY (AQA) TO PROGRESS THE IMPLEMENTATION OF A PEER REVIEW OF ASSESSMENT NETWORK ACROSS NEW ZEALAND'S HE INSTITUTIONS

Dr Jan Cameron, Director, AQA invited Dr Sara Booth to give a keynote presentation at their AQA Forum on benchmarking quality, including the peer review of assessment network, so as to align with their Cycle 5 audit. Dr Peter Coolbear, Director, Ako Aotearoa, also attended the AQA Forum and is in the process of developing an international benchmarking project on teaching quality and assessment with the University of Tasmania. Both New Zealand HE organisations have expressed interest in aligning the peer review of assessment network with their Cycle 5 program benchmarking. This outcome will be progressed in 2015.

5.5 OUTCOME 5: THE ESTABLISHMENT OF A RELATIONSHIP WITH THE HIGHER EDUCATION ACADEMY TO PROGRESS THE PEER REVIEW OF ASSESSMENT NETWORK

Prof Philippa Levy, Deputy Chief Executive (Academic Practice), with the Higher Education Academy has expressed interest in being involved in a project in 2015 on the peer review of assessment network.

5.6 DELIVERABLES

The project has produced the following deliverables:
- Project website [which has received 6060 hits and 2505 downloads from June to November, 2014] http://www.utas.edu.au/student-evaluation-review-and-reporting-unit/nprn
- An Overall Framework for the Effective Use of Peer Review of Assessment
- Presentations to the Australian Council of Deans, university networks and 7 State-based workshops
- The Peer Review of Assessment Network Forum [12th November, 2014]
- Universities Australia Satellite Event Presentation [13th March, 2015]
- The Final Report to OLT.

The current project has linkages with other projects currently underway and focussing on the topic of assuring national standards in HE assessment; Emeritus Professor Geoff Scott's OLT Senior Fellowship and Emeritus Professor Christine Ewan's Higher Education Standards Panel Research Fellowship. Another project which has close linkages to this project is Associate Professor Mark Freeman's and Emeritus Professor Christine Ewan's *Good Practice Report: Assuring Learning Outcomes and Standards Final Report.*

Geoff Scott's Fellowship aims to build on and refine the methodology developed by a previous OLT funded project: *A sector-wide model for assuring final year subject and program achievement standards through inter-university moderation*, with ultimate goals of "assisting the higher education sector to establish policy and practice frameworks to embed inter-institutional peer review of teaching and learning standards" and "identifying and disseminating the most effective assessment practices identified through peer review in each professional or disciplinary area". Geoff Scott's investigation of the implementation of peer networks and inter-university review processes to assure standards in graduate attributes, ties in strongly with the goals of the current project. Outcomes from his recent meetings and workshops in Europe, UK, North America, East Asia, New Zealand and the Pacific, include: strong interest in using peer review and multiple reference points to validate program level outcomes, including use of results of successful early career graduates and the use of employer and other stakeholder feedback and support for the establishment of a common good practice clearing house which is searchable (Scott 2014).

Similarly, Christine Ewan's Research Fellowship will explore the issues around maintaining standards and assuring quality in non-traditional models of courses of study. Its approach includes an investigation of the nature of existing and emerging learning models at course and unit level with a view to determining the academic viability of non-traditional courses of study, the means to maintain high quality outcomes from non-traditional models as well as methodology for verifying the learning outcomes and standards in online units, and how these relate to the setting of minimum HE standards.

Lastly, Mark Freeman's and Christine Ewan's *Good Practice Report: Assuring Learning Outcomes and Standards Final Report* puts forward the following recommendations which align directly with the recommendations in this report:

Recommendation 1: Developing, researching and testing:
- 1.3 harmonisation between external assurance of learning outcomes and standards with professional and disciplinary accreditation systems;
- 1.5 methods of collaboration between networks of public and private higher education providers for the purposes of external referencing.

Recommendation 3: Acknowledge the essential role of networks in defining learning outcomes and standards, sourcing exemplars to develop good practice guides, developing benchmarking skills, harnessing collaboration between academics and practitioners, and developing discipline-relevant methods for inter-institutional comparability of course learning outcomes and standards. Evidence confirms that peak bodies (e.g. Deans Councils and groups of higher education providers) are well placed to establish, resource and provide leadership for such networks.

Recommendation 4: The OLT expand international collaboration with similar international agencies such as Higher Education Academy and Ako Aotearoa and develop systematic approaches to sharing good practice particularly when it comes to external assurance of learning outcomes and standards.

Recommendation 5: Considerable effort needs to be expended in improving accessibility, currency and technical sophistication of many useful [online] tools (Freeman & Ewan, 2014).

6.1 EVIDENCE OF IMPACT ON THE HIGHER EDUCATION SECTOR

6.1.1 IMPACT WITHIN AUSTRALIA

In light of the tight schedule for the project (May-December, 2014), the positive impact from the project can be measured by the following indicators:

- 36 universities and 22 private providers asked to participate in the peer review of assessment network (See Appendix F)
- 4 university networks have engaged with the project [Go8, RUN, IRU and Universities Australia Deputy Vice-Chancellors (Academic)]
- 21 Deans Councils have expressed strong interest in the Colleges of Peers and alignment to their accreditation processes and contribution in funding
- ACDICT Executive has approved funding to support members in professional development in peer review of assessment
- 468 people participated in the State-based workshops and Peer Review of Assessment Network Forum. These fora were instrumental in raising awareness in the sector on options in peer review of assessment as well as beginning a conversation on the establishment of a national network.
- 1,200 people are currently on the contact list for the peer review of assessment network
- The QCT are interested in strengthening the initial teacher education programs to ensure assessment of pre-service teachers is rigorous against the AITSL standards.
- HES and ESA are interested in supporting and progressing the outcomes of the project
- The project website attracted the following hits and downloads (Google Analytics):

Month	Number of Hits	Downloads
June, 2014	134 hits	51 downloads
July, 2014	742 hits	298 downloads
August, 2014	1838 hits	766 downloads
September, 2014	1884 hits	738 downloads
October, 2014	977 hits	370 downloads
November, 2014	485 hits	282 downloads
Total	6060 hits	2505 downloads

The project has endorsement from the HESP with Prof Richard James on the External Reference Group. TEQSA was represented at the Forum by TEQSA Commissioner Michael Wells and Sarah Logan (Director, Regulation and Review Group). The project was also showcased at the Office for Learning and Teaching National Conference (10th June, 2014).

6.1.2 INTERNATIONAL LINKS AND IMPACT

A number of international links have been initiated and awareness for the project due to Emeritus Prof Geoff Scott's Fellowship outcomes of recent meetings and workshops in Europe, UK, North America, East Asia, New Zealand and the Pacific, including:

- Strong interest in using peer review and multiple reference points to validate program level outcomes, including use of results of studies of successful early career graduates and more systematic gathering and use of employer/other stakeholder feedback.
- Support for the establishment of a common good practice clearing house search and assessment component, Field of Education and contact with potential link with the HEA, US National Institute for Learning Outcomes Assessment and Ontario Council of Universities, Ako Aotearoa (Scott 2014)

In the UK, Emeritus Prof Chris Rust (2014b) has published an article in the *Times Higher Education Supplement* on the international impact of the Achievement Matters Project and the peer review of assessment network forum. Emeritus Prof Sue Bloxham has also made comment about the network in an article submitted to HERD (Bloxham et al. 2014).

6.1.2.1 NEW ZEALAND

The project methodology and approach was discussed in a keynote address to the AQA by Dr Sara Booth to New Zealand and Pacific universities (10th September, 2014). Ako Aotearoa and the AQA are interested in progressing the peer review of assessment network and processes in New Zealand in 2015. This was endorsed at the December 2014 symposium of the Ako Aotearoa Academy of Teaching Excellence Award Winners led by Emeritus Prof Scott.

CHAPTER 7: CONCLUSIONS AND FINDINGS

This report documents the outcomes of an Australian Government's Office for Learning and Teaching (OLT) project on peer review of assessment networks. This project has clearly demonstrated a need to support the Higher Education (HE) sector, particularly those HE institutions that are non-aligned to university networks, in the peer review of the quality of both the inputs to and the outcomes of assessment. Building on the achievements of the Group of Eight (Go8) and the Innovative Research Universities (IRU) university networks in setting up peer review of assessment processes, the value for a peer review of assessment network for non-aligned HE institutions was widely endorsed by the sector and affirms the need to carefully establish the next phases of development.

With an increasingly deregulated HE sector with over 185 higher education providers this places Australian HE in a unique position to participate and leverage off collaborative networks to ensure scalability, efficiency and comparability of standards in the peer review of assessment. This report puts forward a number of options for consideration.

It is recommended that:

1. Consideration is given to establishing a Peer Review of Assessment Steering Group to oversee the implementation of a set of sound good practice principles in the peer review of assessment for the HE sector; and further consideration is given to including these good practice principles in the proposed, revised Higher Education Standards Framework as an external reference point, not unlike the good practice principles developed by the Council of Deans and Directors of Graduate Research.
2. Consideration is given to establishing the Peer Review of Assessment Network (PRAN) as an option to complement existing networks and support capacity building for non-aligned HE institutions and Deans Councils in the peer review of assessment. The PRAN option would be

underpinned by a Framework on the Effective Use of Peer Review of Assessment so that the network has a common purpose. The objectives of PRAN would be:

    a. Provide a forum for sharing and disseminating good practice in external peer review of assessment and associated resources across different HE contexts.

    b. Identify key academics experienced in external peer review of assessment.

    c. Provide professional learning opportunities for academics and benchmarking partners.

    d. For the PRAN option to be sustainable, it is proposed that annual subscriptions be put in place (for e.g. the UK Economics Network) to fund professional learning opportunities for members of the network.

3. Consideration is given to the establishment of a College of Peers process, in association with the Australian Council of Deans and other HE disciplinary networks. The College of Peers option would be about building capacity in potential peer reviewers and the involvement and participation of accreditation bodies and industry to ensure peer review of assessment processes are integrated with professional requirements for accreditation and industry reviews.

4. The project team liaise with the OLT and Higher Education Services (HES) to investigate the feasibility of establishing an annual Peer Review of Assessment Forum, which provides professional learning opportunities in calibration and moderation, as well as collaboration across discipline networks.

5. The project team build its relationship with Ako Aotearoa to assist in the establishment of a process for the peer review of assessment in New Zealand to broaden the network and benchmarking internationally, with consideration of Academic Quality Agency's (AQA's) Cycle 5 audit. It is also recommended that the project team liaise with the Higher Education Academy who are interested in furthering this project as well as collaboration with Teaching and Learning Canada be investigated.

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Peer Review of Assessment Network - National Workshop Series

Workshop Evaluation

1. Please rate your overall satisfaction with the workshop (on a scale of 1-5; 1 being lowest, 5 being highest)

1	2	3	4	5
Unsatisfied	Not very satisfied	Mildly satisfied	Satisfied	Very Satisfied

2. What were the best aspects of the workshop?

3. What aspects of the workshop do you think could be improved?

4. What areas covered in the workshop would you want to learn more about?

5. What value do you see in being part of a national network and what would you want to get out of your membership of such a network?

Focus Questions - Peer Review of Assessment Workshop

1. How can we establish peer review of assessment networks at the institutional, disciplinary, interdisciplinary and national levels?

2. What processes are needed to establish and maintain an ongoing national network supporting Peer Review of Assessment?

3. Why do we need to develop a network?

4. What is effective practice in doing this?

5. What incentives would make an effective network? How will you know that this network has been effective?

6. Do we align the peer review of assessment to accreditation processes? If so, how can we do this?

7. What processes need to be put in place at the institutional level to ensure that the peer review of assessment is sustainable?

8. What professional development should be considered for the peer review of assessment?

9. Should peer reviewers be accredited?

National External Peer Review of Assessment Network Forum

12th November, 2014

Park Royal Hotel, Melbourne Airport

'Assuring Grades across Course Boundaries'

The inaugural Peer Review of Assessment Network Forum will be of keen interest to university and other Higher Education Providers concerned with sharing and disseminating good practice in the peer review of assessment across different contexts. With the new proposed Higher Education Standards Framework, emphasis has been placed on the importance of external referencing in assuring standards across the higher education sector.

Aim: This Forum aims to: (1) provide a forum for sharing and disseminating good practice in external peer review of assessment across different contexts; (2) identify key academics experienced in external peer review of assessment, and (3) provide professional learning opportunities for academics and benchmarking partners. This Forum is open to academics interested in peer review of assessment at the discipline level and national level; Chairs of Academic Senates/Boards; Quality Directors; and Deputy Vice Chancellors (Academics) across the higher education sector.

Program	
Time	**Session and Aims**
8.45am	Tea/coffee
9.00am	**Introduction and aims of the External Peer Review Forum** *Professor David Sadler, University of Tasmania*
9.10am	**Higher Education Standards Framework and Peer Review** *Aim: To provide participants with an up-to-date on the national standards, as well as the proposed Higher Education Standards Framework* *Professor Richard James, Pro Vice-Chancellor (Academic), The University of Melbourne & member of the Higher Education Standards Panel*

9.30am	**Peer review of assessment is core to assuring standards** *Aim: To provide participants with TEQSA's role in assuring standards are met through the peer review of assessment* *Michael Wells*, TEQSA Commissioner
9.50am	**Higher Education Standards Panel Research Fellow** *Aim: To provide participants with an overview of the planned national consultation on the ways in which institutions can demonstrate to themselves and the regulator that their engagement in alternative, disaggregated and distributed delivery methods for award courses is compliant with the current and proposed Higher Education Standards Framework.* *Emeritus Prof Christine Ewan, HESP Research Fellow*
10.15am	**Assuring the quality of achievement standards and their valid assessment in Australian Higher Education using peer review** *Aim: To provide participants with an overview of his Senior Fellowship with the OLT* *Emeritus Prof Geoff Scott, University of Western Sydney*
10.45am	**What happened to *achievement standards*?** *Aim: A true quality assurance program (for any product or enterprise) works to constant standards, not just getting peer consensus from occasion to occasion. How can we be rigorous in doing this?* *Prof Emeritus Royce Sadler, The University of Queensland*
11.15am	**Morning tea**
11.30am	**Panel Discussion: Comparing different models of peer review of assessment: Future directions for the Australian Higher Education Sector** • Quality Verification System • Inter-institutional Review • Achievement Matters • External Examiner System *Aim: To provide participants with information on the current models of peer review of assessment* *Prof Pip Pattison, Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Education), The University of Sydney* *Prof Kerri-Lee Krause, Interim Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Education), University of Western Sydney* *Prof Chris Rust, Oxford Brookes University* *Assoc Prof Mark Freeman, The University of Sydney* *Emeritus Prof Geoff Scott, The University of Western Sydney*
12.30pm	Lunch and networking

1.00pm	**Keynote: Developing a Community of Practice for the peer review of assessment** *Aim: To provide participants with information on the ASKe and the importance of developing a community of practice for the peer review of assessment* *Prof Chris Rust, Oxford Brookes University*
1.50pm	**Challenges and opportunities for Private Providers: Building bridges, expanding pathways** *Aim: To provide participants with information on the challenges and opportunities for non-university higher education providers (NUHEPs)* *Dr George Brown, StudyGroup*
2.30pm	Afternoon tea
2.50pm	**External networks in peer review of assessment** Provide a summary from the State-based workshops and group activity on the establishment of external networks in peer review of assessment. *Aim: To open discussion on how to establish external peer review networks at the national, disciplinary and interdisciplinary levels* *Dr Sara Booth, University of Tasmania* *Emeritus Prof Geoff Scott, University of Western Sydney*
3.50 pm	**Institutional and national initiatives in peer review of assessment and achievement standards** Discuss institutional and national initiatives in peer review of assessment and achievement standards. *Aim: To provide participants with information an institutional models of peer review of assessment and national initiatives in peer review of assessment and achievement standards.* Prof Kerri-Lee Krause, University of Western Sydney TBC other participants
5.00 pm	**Network Forum summary close**
6.30pm	**Networking Dinner**

National External Peer Review of Assessment Network Forum

12th November, 2014

Park Royal Hotel, Melbourne Airport

'Assuring Grades across Course Boundaries'

1. Discuss the merit of a nested series of networks for peer review of assessment (individual, institutional, disciplinary, national and international)

2. What are your thoughts on the establishment of a College of Peers?

3. What do you find the most valuable about networks?

4. Where are the gaps in the networks?

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Forum Evaluation

1. Rate your overall satisfaction with the Forum (on a scale of 1-5; 1 being lowest, 5 being highest)

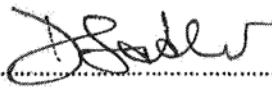| 1	2	3	4	5
Unsatisfied	Not very satisfied	Mildly satisfied	Satisfied	Very Satisfied

2. What were the best aspects of the forum?

3. What aspects of the forum could be improved?

4. What other feedback can you provide on the establishment of a national peer review of assessment network?

5. Would you find value in having an annual forum on the peer review of assessment?

Academy of Design
Alphacrucis College
Australian Catholic University
Australian College of Applied Education
Australian College of Applied Psychology
Australian College of Ministries
Australian College of Theology
Australian National University
Avondale College
Blue Mountains International Hotel Management School
Central Queensland University
Charles Sturt University
Curtin College
Curtin University
Deakin University
Edith Cowan University
Federation University of Australia
Flinders University
Griffith University
International College of Management, Sydney
James Cook University
Jazz Music Institute
JMC Academy
Kaplan Business School
La Trobe University
Macquarie University
Monash University
Murdoch University
Nan Tien Institute
Open and Distance Learning Association of Australia
Perth Institute of Business and Technology
Queensland College of Teachers
Queensland University of Technology
RMIT University
Southern Cross University
Swinburne University of Technology
Tabor College
TOP Education Group
University of Sunshine Coast
University of Adelaide
University of Canberra
University of Divinity

University of Melbourne
University of New England
University of New South Wales
University of Notre Dame
University of Queensland
University of South Australia
University of Southern Queensland
University of Sydney
University of Tasmania
University of Technology, Sydney
University of the Sunshine Coast
University of Western Australia
University of Western Sydney
University of Wollongong
Victoria University
Worldview Centre for Intercultural Studies

I certify that all parts of the final report for this OLT grant provide an accurate representation of the implementation, impact and findings of the project, and that the report is of publishable quality.

Name: .... D. SADLER .... Date: 19/12/14