

Title: Breadth and depth: Understanding and identifying evidence that effectively substantiates claims of 'excellence'

Presenter: Peter Hill
Central Queensland University

Session Learning Outcomes

By the end of this session, delegates will be able to: (a) identify a diverse range of evidentiary sources for staff awards, promotion, and the evaluation of practice; (b) better reflect on what context means with respect to the quality of approaches and performance; (c) construct substantive evidence-based claims.

Session Outline

Key issues to be addressed are: (1) The nature of 'excellence' in Learning and Teaching; (2) context as it relates to better student learning outcomes; (3) the nature, scope, and application of evidence that supports claims of better performance, student engagement, and improved student learning outcomes.

We are all committed to evidence-based teaching and practice. Award nominations and promotion applications require that specific claims of better practice, performance and student outcomes be illustrated and substantiated by convincing evidence. How, then, can we broaden and deepen the evidence cite in ways that account for diverse contexts and that are convincing to assessors?

I. The old chestnut: What is excellence in Learning and Teaching?

The presentation commences with a tabular summary of 'attributes' of teaching 'excellence' (Bain (2004), Berk (2005), Devlin and Samarawickrema (2010); Gibbs and Habeshaw (2003); Kane, Sandretto, and Heath (2004); Matthew (2003); Ramsden (2003); and UKPSF (2011). Also, the concepts of 'context' and 'evidence' will be delineated.

II. A breadth and depth of evidence.

Given the contextual diversity of teaching situations, and the 'soft' nature of much evidence in Learning and Teaching, how can we access a breadth and depth of evidence that will substantiate claims of better performance and student outcomes? Can we move beyond the staples of student evaluations and anecdotal comments? To respond to these questions, we will look at the "4Q Model" of evidence, first presented by Smith (2008) and widely adopted, though in various iterations, by staff developers in Australia. The "4Q Model" as developed by the presenter and used at CQUniversity will be shared and explained. Using the model we will show that practitioners have ready access to a context-appropriate and

diverse range of evidentiary sources. Areas covered include: Self-reflection; Student learning; Student experience; and Peer and third party interactions.

III. The effective use of evidence

How we source and use evidence in our immediate context is part of the scholarship of practice (Macfarlane 2007; Probert 2014). Delegates will be invited to work through the examples supplied to see how various types of evidence can be integrated to support claims of better performance and student outcomes.

This will be an interactive presentation in which all delegates will be encouraged to ask questions and make comments to the extent possible in the time allocated.

Session Activities and Approximate Timings

Part I. (10 minutes) Display of table of 'attributes' of teaching 'excellence' will be displayed, briefly explained and discussed. With the aid of indicative diagrams, participants will also be invited to share their ideas about what context means (e.g. What are the contextual factors that most shape your practice? In what ways are students and peers contextual factors – i.e. how do they shape what you do and impact on the outcomes achieved?).

Part II. (20 minutes) Display and explanation of 4Q Model. Participants invited to discuss how they could access various items. What sort of time frame is required to source evidence that demonstrates a sustained contribution?

Part III. (15 minutes) Examples used by the presenter in staff workshops will be distributed to the participants and we will discuss and collectively work through them to see how items can be better integrated and triangulated to support specific claims.

References

- Alkema, A (2011), *A Tertiary Practitioner's Guide to Collecting Evidence of Learner Benefit*, Ako Aotearoa – The National Centre for Tertiary Teaching Excellence, Wellington. Available at: <https://ako.aotearoa.ac.nz/collecting-evidence>
- Bain K (2004), *What the Best College Teachers Do*, Harvard University Press, Cambridge, MA & London.
- Ballantyne, R, Bain J and Packer J (1997), *Reflecting on University Teaching: Academics' Stories*, Committee for University Teaching and Staff Development and the Australian Government Publishing Service, Canberra.
- Berk, RA (2005), 'Survey of 12 strategies to measure teaching effectiveness', *International Journal of Teaching and Learning in Higher Education*, 17 (1), pp. 48–62.
- Cranton, P and Carusetta, E (2002), 'Reflecting on teaching: The influence of context', *The International Journal for Academic Development*, 7(2), pp. 167–176.
- Devlin, M and Samarawickrema, G (2010), 'The criteria of effective teaching in a changing higher education context', *Higher Education Research & Development*, 29(2), pp. 111-124.
- Gibbs, G and Habeshaw, T (2003), *Recognising and Rewarding Excellent Teaching*, Second Edition, The Open University, Milton Keynes.

Israel, M (2011), *The Key to the Door? Teaching Awards in Australian Higher Education*, Fellowship final report. Australian Learning and Teaching Council, Strawberry Hills, NSW.

Kane, R, Sandretto, S and Heath, C (2004), 'An investigation into excellent tertiary teaching: emphasising reflective practice', *Higher Education*, 47, pp. 283–310.

Macfarlane, B (2007), 'Beyond performance in teaching excellence', in A Skelton (ed.), *International Perspectives on Teaching Excellence in Higher Education*. Routledge, London & New York, NY, pp. 48– 59.

Probert, B (2014), *Why Scholarship Matters in Higher Education*, Australian Government Office for Learning and Teaching, Sydney, NSW.

Ramsden, P 2003, *Learning to Teach in Higher Education*, Second Edition, RoutledgeFalmer, London & New York.

Skelton, A (2005), *Understanding Teaching Excellence in Higher Education: Towards a Critical Approach*, Routledge, London & New York.

Smith, C (2008), 'Building effectiveness in teaching through targeted evaluation and response: Connecting evaluation to teaching improvement in higher education', *Assessment & Evaluation in Higher Education*, 33(5), pp. 517-513.

UKPSF (2011), *The UK Professional Standards Framework for Teaching and Supporting Learning in Higher Education*, Higher Education Academy [and other bodies]. Available at http://www.heacademy.ac.uk/assets/documents/ukpsf/UKPSF_2011.pdf.