Keynote Presentation

Academic Standards using External Reference Points – when did this happen and how does it affect me?

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It’s great to spend time up here with you. I have a huge admiration for Griffith and the work that has been done in through my colleagues here, in the Business School, as well as the long history that Griffith Institute for Higher Education has had in this area. So I’m so pleased to hear Sue mention that these encouragements have been reflected now in the academic promotions policies and things like that.

If I can just start with a little bit of a survey, show of hands. I’m interested in how large your largest cohort has been that you’ve assessed. So, you’ve been in charge of a cohort, whether it’s 20, 40, 60, 80, 100 whatever. Can you put your hand up if you’ve assessed a cohort, let’s just say 50 and above? Put your hand up. Great. Keep your hand up if it’s 100. Two hundred? Four hundred? Five hundred? Eight hundred?

Okay. Thank you. Well I had to focus on assessment, and particularly the use of technology in assessment because my classes went in my first year of teaching in 1984 from 130 to ten years later to 1,300. And then in the year 2000 my largest cohort was 3,459. And I had 100 tutors. And it was Australasia wide. So I had to look at assessment practice very carefully and to try and think about it. And today I’ve moved on from that journey because what I’d like to talk about today is really reflecting a different focus. Sue’s talked about internal Griffith perspective. I want to bring to you what is happening at a national and an international perspective because we are going to be required to show evidence of the learning standards of our students as part of the new TECSA regime. It’s quite a different focus to AUQA.

So I want to just reflect, ask you to reflect, for just 30 seconds. Just answer this question for me: why did you become an academic? I became an academic because I was working in financial analysis and I was keen to help others learn about that. I became an academic though mainly because I could see that many businesses went bust and when they went bust families broke up. And it was a common outcome. It went belly up either financially as well as often there was huge hardships on family. So it was important to me to become an academic. I wanted high standards amongst my students. Because I wanted them to be able to go out and be good financial analysts and accountants.

And I think that same desire is in me, as I’m sure it is in many of you. You want your students to reach a high standard. Not to be, some of those concerns that Sue was talking about, students complaining about rote learning etc. So it’s about reaching these high standards that we expect of those who do a Bachelor or Masters degree.
I want to just leave you have a read of this, this is the outline. I’m going to go through first of all what is the context that we have, why we’ve been led to this particular perfect storm. Why that has led to a national perspective on setting learning standards. How we’re now assessing them and why that will impact you. And what some of the challenges are.

Have a look at this cartoon that I picked up. Linus is talking to Charlie Brown.

Too often when we talk about teaching we talk about what we’re telling students. What we’re covering. There is now a much greater focus on what the students can do. Just like Snoopy, it’s not important whether we’ve taught somebody, it’s important whether they have evidence of those learning outcomes. And this has been particularly notable in Australia because of the following few bullet points.

And you have these by the way, copy of my PowerPoints, so that I can go reasonably quickly sometimes. Can I encourage you though to take a few notes? I’d be really interested at the end to ask you what’s the most important learning, and secondly what’s the muddiest point. Okay.

So the Government has an agenda to expand higher education and to expand it in particular from 36% to 40% of Australians under 35. But particularly amongst low SES. And you and I know when we have people who come from disadvantaged backgrounds it’s harder to teach. It’s much harder to teach. But we’ve not only got more diverse students coming in the door, we’re getting many more providers coming in the door. We often think of universities as being all about higher education but we only make up 25% of the players. There’s another 160 out there, of higher education providers, that come from the TAFE sector and the private provider sector, and the Government’s opening it up and you will have seen just last week the first announcement of a new university in Australia, the first in 25 years. First in 25 years down in Adelaide.

There’s more providers and they’re competing in this space. We no longer have a monopoly. So employers and graduates are going to be looking, “Well where can I get those outcomes that are going to get me employable? Where am I going to get those?”. And there’s been a huge uncertainty of the international student market, because of the whole visa situation. And there’s greater competition as of 2012 because of demand driven funding.

As a result of these changes, performing the Bradley Review, the Government has said “Well we’re going to open this up but at the same time we’re going to take a closer look. We’re going to incur a whole bunch of extra new changes. There’s going to be more consumer protection, this new agency with TEQSA. We’ve got this new framework, Australian Qualifications Framework, which universities up until now have ignored”. It’s now going to be main game. The 165 providers in the TAFE sector and RTOs, they’ve been looking at AQF for years. They can’t get their licence without it.

And there’s going to be more transparency. The My University website coming up in about April next year is going to have all this data just like My School’s website. That will enable graduates, sorry, student, parents, employers, to be able to check and see what are the comparable outcomes benchmarked. And of course tighter performance for universities with the compacts.

And we had the ALTC closing which was not good.

Well here’s a bunch of quotes from important academics about assessments, who’s already raised some of these. We know your own Royce Sadler who was here, and many others have been publishing about how many things that we do in assessment don’t get challenged and they compromise integrity of those results. And I call the first one Marks for Effort, class participation. Come to class, you breathe and if you’re going to get 10% participation marks you’ll typically get more than five. Just simply for breathing. Now if you think about it, it proves you can’t do anything and that’s what grades and marks are about. But there’s all sorts of deviant behaviour that is totally inappropriate for assessment, which if you think about it should be about learning outcomes.

And then there’s a whole bunch of other concerns that have been raised in the literature. You can see here wasted resources, huge variability of standards, no discourse. No conversation about assessment or too little. And then woefully inadequate national processes. And as a result of that there’s been several national and international experts getting together. The first one was 2008 in the UK and they
came up with an assessment manifesto and there was about 40 international experts and 70 assessment 2020 last year.

But here’s a few other indicators of what’s happening with graduates. 39% apparently of academics surveyed said that they felt under pressure with standards to just simply pass. And then we had the research from Bob Burrell that showed that one third of students who’d got an Australian degree, who subsequently applied to get permanent residency came in with a lower English language level than when they were first admitted, and how could that be if they’ve finished their whole degree at an Australian university? And then we’ve got the professional bodies who are making these concerns and saying “Well you guys seem more interested in a testamur. A record of completions”. Just thumping their hands on the table, review after review, saying “We’re more interested in demonstrable competence. What can they do at the end of the degree?”.

So just with your neighbour, what evidence would you provide to refute an allegation about the quality of the learning outcomes of your Griffith graduates? Just with the person next to you. Can you just quickly have a discussion for the next minute or so?

Thank you. So having a process as well is crucial. Absolutely. Somebody up the other side? Up the back row there.

Excellent. Okay. Employability. Thank you.

Well there’s no doubt that employability is one of the seven stats that were put up by the Government and they’re going to be on My University. CEQ data, good teaching, overall satisfaction, employability rates, they’re all going to be there and searchable. And of course AUQA was concerned about processes, having good processes. But TEQSA wants more than that. They want external reference points, not your own processes. So it’s moving from internal quality assurance to external verification, or some form of peer review.

Well this is not just happening in Australia. In the UK they’ve been developing assessment benchmarks or minimum threshold learning outcomes, for over ten years. There’s now 57 statements of minimum as well as typical learning outcomes within disciplines.

In the European Union, which was 27 countries, there’s now 47 countries that have joined part of the tuning process, and they’ve developed it in 12 disciplines and they’re trying to implement these across. It makes sense if you think about it. Because if you get a degree in Germany you want to be able to get a job in France. Don’t you? Just like the Euro currency. And you want to be able to do a higher degree in France. So they want this professional and academic mobility. So it’s a big thing over there.

And then in America you’ve got the voluntary standards of accountability. A system of where 350 universities so far joined this voluntary accountability using a common test called the CLA.

And you may be aware of international accreditation processes such as AACSB. And this is where people have to show evidence that they’ve got processes in place, that was suggested before. And the last one that I’m not sure you may have heard of, but is huge in the mind of this government, is the OECD project. Which is 30,000 students, 15 countries, and they’re about to test them and compare the results from different countries on their learning outcomes. The learning outcomes in two ways: generic skills using a collegiate learning assessment, a common test, and then disciplinary assessment using standardised or common test. The economics test is 90 minutes, 50 multiple choice questions and one constructive response. And so that you could imagine what will happen when the media gets hold of some of these results.

But TEQSA has said this comment: “All graduates must meet minimum levels of attainment”. Well it’s a new agency replacing nine existing agencies, and AUQA, combining regulatory and quality improvement. And they’ve got three important principles. They won’t interfere unless it’s necessary and they will interfere according to the level of the risk and they may have a proportionate response. And that includes right up to criminal I understand. Okay. So it’s a very different beast to AUQA. They’re not just going to name and shame.
Now of course universities should be fined. It will be these new providers. But they’ve got this new risk assessment and the risk assessment’s not going to be “We visit you once every five years”. It’s going to be continuous. A dashboard and it going to have these little lights with little information about what’s going on. And so if they hear a whole bunch of complaints about a particular discipline or a particular degree, or a particular process, it’s likely that they will, as you can see here, act at any level including a sector wide or institution wide, or a program wide. So if they hear complaints about course work Masters in Information Systems or Physiotherapy or Accounting or whatever, they could well do and ask for evidence. What external reference points have you got to show that your students meet the standards. So there’s a need to look at TEQSA and what they’re driving.

So in addition to the first two thresholds which are threshold standards, AQF is now the second one. Somehow we are going to be held accountable for AQF. Which has got particular learning outcomes or standards that bachelors and course work masters degrees must achieve. The one I’m, and you, probably should be interested in is the teaching and learning standards. And that’s a very important one. We’ve had one discussion paper and we’ve got some insights but we don’t know how it’s going to look because the higher education standards panel which has not been formed or announced yet, they are going to be a separate body that will determine these standards. And then the commissioners, of which there’s five, will enforce them. And that’s going to be the way it works. So it’s moving from fitness for purpose, which is what AUQA was about, to saying “Show us that you meet these minimum level outcomes”. And we’re very fortunate that Carol Nichol is the Chief Commissioner. She was the CEO of ALTC, well respected person who understands what it’s all about. And she said “Well we don’t know. Teaching and learning standards might become threshold”, in other words you must meet them.

What they have said in the discussion paper they suggest we separate teaching standards, which are process standards, from learning standards, which are minimum levels of attainment. Teaching processes, in other words we have those conditions that should help the students pass. And we should be checking that they’re passing and achieving. But that’s quite different from learning standards, which is meeting this explicit level of attainment or achievement.

And of course Royce has made the very valid point that these standards are established by authority consensus or customs. And so it was important that the project that I was involved with was getting consensus about what should be these minimum levels of achievement in a discipline. And there’s been a whole bunch of these projects. We have these new national frameworks, the AQF and they’re happening right around the world. We’ve got standards being developed within disciplines, the LTAS Project, the learning and teaching academic standards project is the one I was working on and others. And then we’ve got these projects looking at assessing, monitoring and assessing standards. Or there’s the Macquarie University led project, which is looking at teaching processes, and then there’s three others. Government hasn’t yet made the decision on which way they’re going ahead. One proposal, and there is that they will use external surveys, external reference point surveys. And we know that the Government’s going down this track already because they’re developing a new first year survey, the university experience survey. And that’s likely to end up on the new My University website. So asking students their perceptions of the student experience of assessment and as Sue mentioned, it hasn’t been terribly good. Nationally not just here. It’s the worst thing at Sydney as well.

And then there’s common tests. These common tests of generic skills and common tests of discipline specific skills. There’s a big lobby movement to encourage these to be used by the Government. If you think about it you can put everybody through these standard common tests. And the rationale is well many of them have to do them when they want to get a job anyway. And that the CLA, the Collegiate Learning Assessment is one of those and it is happening for Australia, and it’s going to be, the results are going to be on the My University website in 2013. So it’s coming.

And then the last of the approach is external peer review. Now in the UK they have individual academics externally reviewing another institution that’s sort of an individual arrangement. But there are a number of international proposals that we go to consensus moderation. Not just one individual institution with another, with one individual from each, but getting a consensus within the discipline.

So again, with two or three people beside you, can you answer this question: if you had to advise TEQSA on the best way to really evaluate learning standards, which would you advise them? Go with
surveys, go with common tests or go with external peer review? Okay. I’ll give you two minutes to make a decision and then I’m going to ask you to put their hand up. Talk away.

Thank you. Thank you. I know I haven’t given you long enough. I know that. However, I’d like you to put your hand up once, for either (a), (b) or (c). Okay. This is the, imagine if you had to advise the Government. It’s (d).

All of the above. Yeah. Well does anybody really, let’s start. Does anybody think that the best measure is the survey of graduates? Okay. Excellent. Thank you. Who thinks having a standard common test of all graduates on their learning outcomes as they graduate?

No, I’m sharing. Okay. Thank you. And who thinks external peer review? And the people who thought (d)? Well (d) wasn’t there. Okay. You want a combination do you?

Okay. Can I just remind you that the Government’s after solutions that are efficient, economic and reliable, and the one that they brought in at the school level was NAPLAN.

Wasn’t it?

And we’ve seen the impact of that haven’t we? And what has been the impact?

Teach the test.

Diagnostic.

Correct. Yeah. And you could imagine that a government, and the Government is at the moment, looking at this OECD international project. It’s in fact being project managed out of Australia. They’re very interested in it and in fact they’ve already agreed that there’s going to be generic skills test called the collegiate learning assessment. That is coming. And it’s going to be administered to the first years, and then to third years, and you do a value add. Okay. That’s how much you’ve learnt. That’s the collegiate learning of generic skills. And then we’re going to have the other one at the discipline level.

So how do we move assessment forward? Well this is what these experts that I mentioned before, said. International experts all got together and this is what they proposed. Read that one. I think it’s quite insightful.

We know assessment is not a precise science when it comes to learning. It’s not a precise science. Even though marks 63.2, 63.8 get rounded differently, we know that actually it’s really hard to make those sorts of distinctions between a student. And yet the numbers imply that. But we know that we’re making professional judgments. And in fact there’s been some terrific research about that from people in this institution.

No. What they’re proposing, these national experts, is if we want to really encourage students to continue to learn and to learn that lots of the graduate qualities, capabilities that we want, then it’s the opportunities for professionals to get together to have those discussions, and come to a consensus about a good piece of work. It’s a bit like wine connoisseurs. They don’t go through and rate these 500 items and then add them all up and say “That’s the best bottle of wine” do they? They actually taste wine and they compare it. And because they’re experts they can make those, they can notice the important things. So they can have conversations about what’s better and what’s worse. And they come to a consensus about it and go “Well that’s the winner. The gold label this year”. Well Chris Rust suggested that disciplines take up that challenge, and that’s what happened in 2010. And this model is there. It’s in the research paper. I want to encourage you to read it because it talks about moving from a traditional model where there are so few students if you had relationships and consensus all the time, dialoguing with them, the Oxford Cambridge approach, to quadrant number two where we started specifying everything of these criteria, and we got caught up with criteria, to model three which is where they’ve got evidence now that that’s what seems to work. Where people have conversations around real pieces of work. And then the last model, quadrant four, which is where I’m doing my research on, is how
do we get communities to be cultivated so they use this as an ongoing way of working? And it's obviously what you're doing here at Griffith as well.

But I just want to throw up there, these are the core principles of the draft paper that came out about teaching and learning standards. Please note number three. Number three's terribly important. And it basically says that standards at this institution are not going to be determined just by this institution. In fact there's joint custodianship and it's not just other higher education institutions. It's the discipline community and TEQSA. Okay. So if we want to look at learning standards we can't just say "Well that's okay for us". We actually are part of a wider community so we should be having conversations.

So the first project that I was involved in was, with the ALTC, is this one. And this came out of a direct quote from the Government's original proposal. Can you see that it's not just Griffith on their own? It's Griffith with your professional communities, and other institutions. So in other words you got to have conversations. You've got to come to consensus. What is the outcome that is necessary? We need to work out what are the learning standards that should be set nationally, and how are we going to assess those? Now ALTC project there were, we came up with a, there were nine discipline groups and we each developed a demonstration discipline. In fact there were issues happening at the time. Theology for example has been developing their own. And the LTAS project had four aims, and that the first aim was to get the discipline together to realise how important it was, and to facilitate them coming up with a set of threshold learning outcomes, minimum attainments, minimum achievements. But we wanted to also allow them to have their diverse niche. And then the other two aims were to provide resources to help them prepare for the new environment and for demonstrating that assessment at a national level.

And all that was supposed to promote autonomy. So we want to get national standards but still give people diversity and autonomy. How do we do that? Well there are nine discipline groups, four waves, 11 sets were defined and they all finished at the end of last year, or the last one finished about a month ago. And there are little booklets that you can get which have these national standards for your discipline or these 11 disciplines, and there are others now on their way. Biology's under way, some of the chemistry I think, et cetera. Mathematics, a whole bunch of them.

In business I was told I had to do accounting. And you can see that's one of about 16 or 18 disciplines. And the way we did that we looked at Bachelors degrees at the same time as course work masters degrees, and we used the AQF, the Australian Qualifications Framework, and said "Well what's the difference between a bachelors degree, the minimum standard? And then what's the difference with a masters degree?". And we did this in four cycles. Set the agenda, awareness raising, consultation and dissemination. And you can see we had over 2,000 people involved in having conversations around Australia. But they weren't just academics from these Australian universities.

There were 21 other providers and 20 other organisations, including employers, professional bodies, et cetera, because they're joint custodians now. So we haven't come to consensus about what are these learning standards that we're going to have. And so here's a pictorial of what it looks like. Let's just say there are four providers, A, B, C, D, and that my particular group that I worked with, of academic colleagues and accounting, came up with, after working many months, came up with these five. They won't surprise you. They're all fairly straightforward.

Accountants that needed to be able to make sensible judgments. They needed to be able to have a basic core knowledge, be able to apply that, work with others, communicate with the others, and then be responsible for their own learning.

Now this new regime says well that all four institutions have to meet those, but let's just say provider A is in a particular location and has a quantitative and a public sector focus. Provider B is going to have a very professional focus. And provider C is going to have a small business or regional focus. And they might decide "Well we want to really produce graduates that are tremendous communicators and team workers. So yeah we're meeting the minimum but we want our minimum of our institution to be up here on that number four". And then of course you've got the last institution, provider D, that says "Well we're just going to be so, we're going to be the crème de crème. We're going to not admit students and get them out unless they're the absolute best". And there are, that allows for the autonomy and the diversity doesn't it?
And of course you can teach the way you want. So provider A can talk and talk, and B can do on business learning, and C can do problem based learning. It doesn’t matter. This allows for it through this approach.

And I’ve given you an example there of how the difference in the wording. But I got to tell you the wording does not really matter that much. It’s the conversations that translate those words into meaning. So what do we really mean when a student, a bachelor graduate, can exercise judgment under supervision to solve routine accounting problems in straightforward context using these - social, ethical, economic, regulatory and global? What does that mean?

Well we have to have conversations around real assessment tasks and students completion of those real assessment tasks. And we did this, and I’ve got this timeline because I want to show you how many times we had these conversations from 2009 until now. And you can see that over the 18 months we developed these learning outcomes, and then over 2011 people have been renewing their programs. They’ve been collecting examples that meet these national outcomes. And we’ve been calibrating as a discipline. Coming to a consensus, what does it mean. And that’s led to change. Because people have picked up really good ideas from other institutions that show how to do an assessment task that’s not going to be this big and kill people. There’s all these good practices being shared through these conversations with colleagues.

And 2012 TEQSA starts and these disciplines, sorry, these participants, hopefully will have data because they’ve got externally peer reviewed. So the red dot arrow just show you how many times we’ve been having these consensus conversations. Sometimes it’s been about design of the assessment. Sometimes it’s been about dissemination. But I want to now turn to how we’re going to assess those statements and there are five types of projects happening currently in Australia. And Griffith I have to tell you is involved in several of these.

First of all there’s the GO8, has been simply, they’re involved in what’s called the Quality Verification Project. And that involves another institution, it involves one academic from another institution, anonymously, sorry, reviewing the work as strata by sample. 5% of high distinction work, 5% of distinction, credits, pass and fails. And saying “Do I agree, do I verify that quality, that grade?”. And they’re looking not just at the student’s work but they’re looking at the assessment task. And then they’re writing a little report and they’re giving it to the other institution. So there’s not much in the way of conversation but there is some feedback. That’s the first project. And they’ve just finished their first cycle.

Then there’s the perceptions project that was led by Beverley Oliver and she’s asked the perceptions of at the same time, employers, graduates, students, and academic program teams. And she’s then calibrated or looked at, analysed the perceptions of all those four teams, four groups of people. She’s done it for several disciplines. So she’s looking at perceptions.

There’s the ACER, Australian Council of Education Research. They’re developing the national, sorry, the international common test for engineering in Australia. That’s for OECD. It’s about to be tested and I understand it’s got fewer multiple choice questions and more constructed responses, which have to be then coded.

And then you’ve got the other two moderation projects. The first one is the moderation project that Sue spoke about before, that Duncan and others are involved in, with the other eight other universities, and multiple disciplines where you’re looking at the inputs, the assessment tasks, and the students work. And again writing feedback. That’s only a small sample. It’s one high D, one distinction, one credit, one pass and one fail. And looking at all the description about for the specifications of assessment. And giving feedback.

How many disciplines are there? Duncan?

_Eight._
Eight. Thank you. I mean it’s fantastic and we already know from those who’ve been participating in it that this has again resulted in many good conversations, and it’s the beginning of professional development capacity, development at a national level. And what you’re developing here is the Griffith approach that’s completely consistent with that. And the last one is the one that I’m a co-leader of. And ours was funded by the Australian Business Deans Council and it’s funded by the professional bodies. Because the professional bodies said “Well we want to make sure that the standards that we developed last year are being met”. And so not only are academics involved in the peer assessment, the external peer review, but so are professional accountants. And that’s external referencing isn’t it? The standards of the work.

So I just want to tell you a little bit more about that last project. Which is called achievement matters. It’s got three aims. It’s to evidence those accounting learning standards that we developed last year. And it involves external, double blind, peer review. So Griffith is one of the participants, one of the ten universities in the pilot phase. So Griffith will submit their assessments, five randomly chosen pieces of work. And the assessment task that demonstrates that learning outcome. They’ll be peer reviewed by two anonymous external academics from these other ten universities. And then that feedback will be given back over time. We’re starting with bachelor’s degrees and moving to masters degrees in February next year.

At the end of the pilot cycle we’re going to expand it to all providers in Australia. So we got ten at the moment and then we’re going to expand it to private providers and TAFE sector. Because in accounting the TAFE sector have been coming into this space. They’re offering bachelors of accounting. So there’s a new, and it’s totally fantastic that they are coming in because they’re part of the consensus. And then the second aim was to develop a process, a model process for obtaining and using that evidence. So assessing both inputs and assessing the output. So not just looking at the student’s work but if the students are set a task that is 40 multiple choice questions it’s hardly going to demonstrate capability at a higher order outcome isn’t it? I mean it’s possible you can get something from multiple choice questions. Unlikely that you’re going to get high order assessment of communication ability or judgment. Okay.

So we’re looking at the assessment design, and then the assessment result. And what we’re noticing already is that it’s resulting in quality enhancement but it’s also giving us data for quality assurance. Because we got two external peers who are going to look at our data.

And the third outcome is professional learning. And we’ve found that this has been an unexpected but great outcome. Is that people get together and have these conversations about what is the standard. And I must admit a couple of times that we’ve employed at my institution we’ve employed people from North America, particularly US. We’ve employed some academics. And we found that some of them are used to grading at higher levels than we are. Now I suspect that that happens across Australia as well. But we can’t do that if we’ve got these minimum national levels that we have to achieve, because we have to be consistent with that.

So our whole aim is to prove that we can self regulate. That’s our aim because we don’t want anybody to tell us what is an appropriate graduate in accounting and how to achieve that. We actually think that the accounting community, practitioner community, and the accounting academic community should be able to work on that together. Because surely they know what is appropriate. And we also want to do it to avoid some of the perverse consequences of the other approaches.

How are we doing it? As I said it’s a three year project that during the pilot cycle we’re refining the process. And I cannot tell you how important that first word in brackets is. Coming to a consensus around people having the same view of a quality piece of work. Not the same piece of work, because each institution will have a different piece of work, but we need to be able to understand what is the right standard. We need to become calibrated so we can make judgments. But isn’t that what you do as a researcher? When you peer review a journal paper? You look at a different piece of work. There’s diverse pieces of work. So it’s the same model as research.
And so we’re refining the process. And there’s ten steps. I’ve mentioned before that each institution nominates their reviewers, they choose the task, we look at only five pieces of work and we look at the diverse types of inputs. But all data is de-identified completely. I’m the only one that knows who’s who. And my admin assistant, in case I get run over by a bus. And the reviewers are anonymised as well. And this has been fantastic because it’s stopped group thinking. It’s been really good. Bit like anonymity in research review. And that’s the role of what my role is.

Third step in the cycle was that we calibrate meanings of standards. And we calibrate what is a valid task. We’ve had two national goes at this because we thought it would be easy, but in actual fact it was really hard. So we had 20 academics review three pieces of work before they came to a workshop. Independently, anonymously. We then gave them all that data, and they got in small groups, and they did it as a small group. And then they did it as a whole group. We calibrated.

And then the second time we brought in professional accountants as well. And we brought in a control group of another 20 academics who aren’t part of the project. Because this is how we’re trying to get dissemination and the shared consensus about standards. We’re using a piece of software called ‘Spark’ as you have here. Which is used to collect the data and distribute the data. And we’re then getting people together, after they’ve independently evaluated, to returning the data and having conversations again. What did you learn? And then people go back and they implement the changes, and tell others.

And here’s an example of one of the screens. What was really useful about this piece of software is notice the grading, the orange bar can be anywhere. Under meeting or not meeting. But notice that the little square box is in red. And what we’re saying to people “It’s not good enough to tell a student whether they met it or not, or tell a colleague “Yes, the paper is publishable or not”.” If it’s not publishable you want to explain why don’t you? Feedback matters. So that red box is red and it doesn’t become green until you put in enough quantity of words to clarify. And by golly that’s been fantastic. Because we often hide behind our judgments, and this is how the real learning takes place.

And then here’s an example of the completed one. Notice it’s gone green. We then share those at the workshop in small groups and we ask them to come to a consensus. And you can see here the little dots showed, see the blue one on top? The little blue one on top showed you what the home university, the one who’s work it was, and the other four are different peers assessing the same piece of work. And then they have conversations about why. And that’s where it really is interesting. And there’s a lot of learning. And so you can see that there is a reasonable amount of consensus. Here’s an example with a student’s piece of work. Take the bottom one. You can see that most academics though it did not meet. And here’s what the practitioners thought about the same piece of work. The top one most practitioners thought it did not meet as well. And people’s feedback about the project.

Basically people are telling us that they think that they are confident in giving feedback. They found that having to reflect, the second one there, having to reflect on their rating, on their grading, has made them think about what it’s really worth and why. And then that helps them articulate what the standard is, and share it with a colleague.

So what have we learnt today? Firstly this has been a ground up development of learning outcomes by the discipline. It’s forced a much greater focus on programs. Not units or courses, but whole programs. How do we bring all that together? So we’ve had much better conversation about the whole program, and program teams getting together. It’s made us much more concerned, the third dot point, about what’s our niche. How are we going to put that flavour? Are we a regional or are we a quantitative, or what are we? And how are we going to make our flavour come through our learning outcomes at our degree, at our institution? It’s made us rethink assessment. And the first example there is the capstones. And I’m really impressed because Griffith have got an ALTC project about capstones. And it’s a fantastic project that’s just revealing some amazing stuff about capstones being right at the top. How do you provide evidence of what students have achieved across their degree.

We’re changing our language. We’ve noticed that we’re no longer an island. We’re not just an institution on our own. We need to have these conversations because there’s joint custodianship.
The second last dot point: but we need to make sure that we’re harmonising with accreditation, with the professional bodies. Because we don’t want to be doing three sets of every, do this multiple times.

And the last learning is how important this has been to have conversations, consensus moderation about both the inputs and the outputs, and that’s helped capacity build as well as quality assurance.

So can I leave you with the following questions? We don’t yet know how TEQSA’s going to set the standards and monitor them. We don’t know that. We know that they’re critically, at the moment your policy people here will be commenting about TEQSA’s discussion papers. We don’t know. We’ll know in the next three or four or five months or whatever it’s going to take. But here at Griffith, how are you going to engage in these national discipline setting standards projects, initiatives? How are you going to do it? Well you’ve already got some people in Accounting. Reza Monem and John Sands in Accounting are participating in that particular school.

Now once you have got those national standards how are you going to incorporate those in your curriculum renewal? And then how are we going to collaborate and participate in these assessment initiatives? And once we get the evidence how are going to report that so that people don’t get hurt? Because wouldn’t it be embarrassing? If we want to encourage good practice to be improved so we don’t want people individually affected by this. We want the whole institution, we want the disciplines to take responsibility for this improvement, for any improvement. And lastly what systems need to change. What professional development needs to change. And it’s looking at your program that I’ve looked at today, you’re doing these things. You’re thinking about these system-wide changes. And it’s very impressive. So I’m looking forward to hearing the rest of it.

Can I just say I’ve really enjoyed coming here and having this opportunity. Thank you very much for your time.