

# Getting to grips with university lifelong learning indicators

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(editors)





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# Getting to grips with university lifelong learning indicators



The global trend of quality assurance has found its way into universities and their lifelong learning. Quality projects are carried out at the institutional, national, European and global level. Quality systems are launched in universities and they will be audited or accredited by national or international bodies.

However, the issue of indicators and benchmarks in university lifelong learning has not been exhaustively examined. There seems to be a clear need for development both in terms of public accountability and also in terms of pointing the relevant foci of development within and by the institutions themselves.

A wide network of European universities explored the quality enhancement of university lifelong learning and its effects on adult learning and individual pathways in projects 'European Quality in Individualized Pathways in Education EQUIPE'<sup>1</sup> and 'European Quality in Individualised Pathways in Education Plus' EQUIPE Plus<sup>2</sup>.

The topic of indicators of quality in ULLL was not covered in the first Equipe network although there is a clear need to address the issues in academic LLL at institutional and faculty level. Therefore, the project partners decided to explore the issue as one of the streams in the EQUIPE Plus project. The project also produced reports about the ULLL quality arrangements in European countries and other materials about quality in academic lifelong learning. The core function of the project was organizing a series of quality forums for partners and stakeholders in the field. All the products of EQUIPE Plus are available on the website <http://www.equipeplus.org>

In the EQUIPE Plus indicator stream we have produced discussion papers about the problems and benefits of the use of indicators, drafted sets of indicators for ULLL and a list of do's and don'ts in using an indicator approach.

We have also collected EQUIPE Plus case examples of good practice and links to relevant websites and previous papers. EQUIPE Plus has provided an important forum in which to debate the issues and to involve LLL experts and quality specialists.

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<sup>1</sup> <http://equipe.up.pt/>

<sup>2</sup> <https://www.equipeplus.org>

We had an important opportunity to learn during the EQUIPE and EQUIPE Plus projects. We hope that the outcomes of our learning experience will support the quality enhancement in university lifelong learning, although we are most conscious that a lot of learning and development remains to be done in future projects.

Editors

# Definitions and Contexts

# II

**Collated and categorised by Kari Seppälä  
University of Turku, March 2008**

The following definitions of the performance indicators (PIs) used in the project and their key features provide a point of reference for some of the typical situations identified in the report in which PIs might be used. This exercise has not been straightforward.

## SOME DEFINITIONS OF PERFORMANCE INDICATORS

- a) An indication as to how progress towards a target is to be measured;
- b) PIs enable standardised and manageable performance targets;
- c) A representation, numeric or otherwise, of the current performance of an organisation or any of its constituent parts or processes;
- d) PIs measure the distance between the current and desired performance;
- e) An indicator that provides information (either qualitative or quantitative) on the extent to which a policy, program or initiative is achieving its intended outcomes;
- f) An indicator of the success of a government or corporate programme;
- g) A measure that shows the degree to which a strategy has been achieved;
- h) A criterion or measure for monitoring or evaluating the efficiency or effectiveness of a system or service, which may be used to demonstrate accountability and to identify areas for improvement.

## PERFORMANCE INDICATORS IN PRACTICE

PIs are associated with the following activities:

Targeting:

Performance, state, current and desired situation, progress, outcomes, degree of achievement, success;

Function:

Indication, representation, information, measurement, criteria, demonstration, identification, standard;

Focusing on:

Organisation: its constituent parts or processes, its policy, strategies, programmes or initiatives; government or corporate programmes, systems or services;

Featuring:

Monitoring or evaluating: numeric or otherwise, quantitative or qualitative, efficiency or effectiveness, accountability or improvement, manageability.

## **Typical uses and contexts for use of PIs in University Lifelong Learning (LLL)**

**Quality enhancement/assurance:** The system-wide assurance of quality is becoming commonplace in many universities. Where LLL is a part of the focus, PIs that take into account the essence of academic LLL will probably be more relevant than those that are more general.

**Programme development:** Although we would instinctively tend to reject quality systems as being something unsuitable for academic contexts, we are committed to the development of programmes in line with approved academic standards based on an agreed evaluation of relevant data.

**Evaluations and reviews:** Various institutional, programme-based, thematic etc. forms of evaluation take place in universities all over Europe. Successful evaluation calls for a clear idea of criteria or indicators.

**Accreditation:** Evaluation can lead to approval of an institute or programme in the public and/or professional domain. Accreditation, without a sound PI framework, will probably encounter difficulties in establishing credibility in these contexts.

**Accreditation of Prior Learning:** The shift in focus from provider-driven curriculum to student-centred learning outcomes is a major change. Here too, considerations of equality, justice and credibility are critical to the formulation of PIs.

**Strategic processes:** Although strategy development has become increasingly important in universities in recent years, they often encounter problems in the implementation of their strategies. A clear and logical set of PIs enable the monitoring, review and reformulating of the process.

**Structural development:** The need to use PIs can often be stimulated by external pressures at times of funding constraints, consolidation and the rationalization of programmes. Institutions that can define, develop and use PIs strategically will probably succeed with their plans.

**Competing for funding:** Another area in which PIs play a vital role is in the interaction with government agencies to secure and enlarge the resource base of academic LLL. The ability to quantify the volume, quality and usefulness of this work with supporting documentation has become a key success factor.

**Statistical requirements:** Statistics are a traditional form of PI and although a strong case is made for contextual and localised indicators, there is a constant need to provide core information in statistical format.

# Discussion Papers

# III

One of the key conclusions of our work is that the use of indicators is always strongly linked to specific contexts that are diverse and variable. Universities differ in outlook and structure, LLL provision differs from institution to institution, funding arrangements differ from one LLL department to another and no two are identical in the focus of their activities.

Indicators are only one tool to support the enhancement of quality of University LLL as such a diversity of approach and provision requires a variety of tools to aid improvement. For example, indicators that support the evaluation of professional training for experts will be different from those that measure the development of outreach activities in under-developed regions.

It is therefore inappropriate to propose only one set of indicators as the breadth of available provision requires an equally broad range of evaluation tools. Furthermore, the availability of a PI framework is not sufficient by itself; practitioners, researchers, decision-makers and other stakeholders, as well as the adult learners themselves, have the necessary knowledge and skills to use them in appropriate ways.

The following two papers consider the use of indicators in University LLL. Both look at the nature of Quality Assurance (QA) and explore the pros and cons of devising and implementing indicators. The sets of indicators proposed by the authors can be found in the section of the report entitled *Bank of Indicators*.

# ***Performance Indicators for Lifelong Learning: A Review and Recommendations***

Dermot Coughlan, University of Limerick, March 2008

## **Introduction**

With the wide use of quality systems across the manufacturing and services sectors, one would have expected that the concept could be easily transferred to the education sector. My research and that of others has shown that it has been implemented in areas of the educational system and indeed in Lifelong Learning but its application has not been smooth or easy. There are many reasons for this and it is not my intention to explore all of these features but rather to deal with a number of those which I view as important.

The introduction of quality systems has not universally been welcomed within the educational sector – especially the university sector – and the discipline of Lifelong Learning is no exception in this respect. The introduction of benchmarking and key performance indicators has been, and still is, viewed with suspicion. Like death and taxes, however, we can now add quality systems in education as a certainty. We can therefore choose to act in a Canute-like fashion and fight against the tide or embrace it willingly. I recommend the latter and in so doing also strongly urge that you play a very proactive role in designing the system that will best suit your needs. A key concern will be to ensure that it fully recognises the constraints and opportunities which the culture of your organisation will afford the system.

The primary focus of this paper is to share with you a bank of key performance indicators that will assist you in the task of designing a quality framework for LLL within your institution. I am, however, very conscious of two major issues that have governed my decisions concerning PIs: culture and terminology.

On the cultural side of the equation, the most fundamental issue is the acceptance or otherwise of the status of LLL in the various educational systems across Europe. The central question in this regard is whether LLL is viewed as a core function of a university or undertaken without real institutional support or commitment to the central tenets of the discipline. In the area of terminology, the issues are wider but perhaps less complex. Basic terms such as “part-time” and “continuing professional development” have very different meanings across the member states of the EU and beyond.

It is with some anxiety, therefore, that I have chosen to take the findings of my research and from this to outline what I feel is a reasonable set of indicators from which those involved in LLL can select a range that will work for them within their own culture. Prior to turning to the issues of indicators, we must sketch some important background information and definitions. The aim of EQUIPE Plus is not to draft a set of indicators in isolation from the

general philosophies of LLL and, indeed, from the individual learner. As a consequence, therefore, I will now address the basic principles of LLL which I will be using as the basis of the rest of my work.

## **Lifelong Learning**

The aim of this paper is to examine the role of and need for the use of indicators within a quality model for LLL. The first task, therefore, is to attempt to find a definition of LLL that would receive broad acceptance across the university sector in Europe. In manufacturing terms we need to know the product before we can put quality systems in place to ensure that it meets the standards set for its use or purpose. For those of you that take offence at my use of the term "product", I regret this but do not apologise for it.

LLL has many definitions and while the European Commission is much maligned for many reasons, LLL is not one of these areas and the Commission has published one of the better definitions:

"All learning activity undertaken throughout life, with the aim of improving knowledge, skills and competences within a personal, civic, social and/or employment-related perspective"

This was enhanced in the document entitled *A European Area of Lifelong Learning* with phrases like:

"Lifelong learning encompasses the full range of formal, non-formal and informal learning activity, from pre-school to post-retirement...."

"...with the broad objectives of personal fulfilment, active citizenship, social inclusion and employability."

"The implementation of lifelong learning must be guided by the centrality of the learner, equality of opportunity, quality and relevance of provision."

Despite this very neat definition and catchy phrases, and the confidence that we, as practitioners in the discipline, have that everybody understands what is meant by LLL and, more importantly perhaps, where it fits in the higher education or university systems, I suggest that this confidence may in fact be misplaced and indeed there is a body of research that supports this view.

The European University Association (EUA) in their *Trends 3* report published in 2003 noted that:

'Definitions of lifelong learning and its relation to continuing education and adult education are still vague and diverse in different national contexts.'

It further stated that the need for national lifelong learning policies was undisputed and pushed strongly by the European Commission's

memorandum but that the majority of countries had not implemented such policies.

At institutional level little change was observed with respect to teaching methodologies or access policies.

LLL provision is still generally marginalised and even where it is viewed as important it is not always recognised as being on an equal footing with other university activity.

It concluded with the recommendation that higher education institutions (HEIs) would have to make more of an effort to integrate LLL into their core development processes and policies.

That was in 2003 so the initial question for us to consider now is how have things changed since then. Those of us in the discipline when asked if things had changed would I suggest respond with a resounding "Yes". Are we correct in this assumption?

In its *Trends 5* report, published in 2007, this is what the EUA has to say. On the positive side of the equation it states that LLL offers ways to rethink approaches to higher education, in addition to offering HEIs opportunities to form relationships with other providers – both of formal and informal learning. It also indicates that the role and importance of LLL is once again moving centre-stage observing, however, that this is being driven by the economic imperative rather than those associated with social or cultural issues. These positives are tempered somewhat by remarks made in the introductory comments which I regret to report have not moved much since the *Trends 3* report of 2003. They state that there is still confusion and lack of clarity on what constitutes LLL. It is, according to the EUA, a term that is subject to conceptual misunderstanding, attempting, as it does, to cover the full range of learning from initial education for those from disadvantaged backgrounds and those who for one reason or another missed out on learning opportunities earlier in their lives right through to those with considerable learning who seek to upskill themselves or engage in continuing professional development. The level of confusion can be gauged by the fact that the EUA itself admits to using different questions in the 2007 report and accepts that the data collected in the *Trends 5* report cannot easily be compared to that collected in previous reports. Despite this difficulty, key issues have emerged for those of us engaged in LLL. The good news is that 16% of those who replied indicated that LLL is important in its own right or in conjunction with other issues. The bad news is that this shows no change from 2003 and only 17% consider it to be a very high priority. To conclude on this element of my paper, I quote from the Report:

*Thus, it seems that while rhetoric on lifelong learning has been a constant feature of policy discussion throughout the Bologna period, action has still to follow.*

And from this comes the key issue or recommendation:

*Institutions in the process of reconsidering their traditional curriculum need to give a higher priority to lifelong learning and to consider this agenda as a central element of institutional strategic development.*

LLL, therefore, is still a little unknown or, at best, known but not fully understood by all. It is equally important to recognise that it is not the priority that we in the field might think it to be and that our discipline still needs to be promoted amongst our peers and colleagues.

I will now move to the issues of quality, benchmarking, indicators and embedding a culture of quality into what we do. Perhaps the first question to be addressed in this section is, therefore, why have we become consumed by this culture of quality? The first point to make is that it is not new. We have operated quality controls for years. The concepts of the external examiner, second readers and other practices confirm that we, in the university sector, have been committed to quality systems for a considerable period of time. The emergence of quality is commented upon by Van Vaught and Westerheijden who in 1994 stated that in medieval times two models of quality assessment existed. It is not necessary to go into these at this point in time suffice to say that they have proved that quality has been around for a long time. What has changed, however, is the voluntary nature of our engagement with quality. For my own part, or from an Irish perspective, the need for quality systems in universities is enshrined in legislation with specific reference to quality in the *Universities Act* of 1999. In addition, successive Governments have also created markets within education. While historically there was always competition for students, in more recent times this has increased to cover programmes of study and of course research funding. A third issue, which has placed us on the quality road, is that of social partnership where in return for increased funding at institutional level for research and capital projects and at individual level, in terms of salary awards, governments are demanding greater accountability.

It is perhaps in the European arena that we have seen the greatest impact, or, according to some, the most significant level of interference, with policy papers such as *A European Area of Lifelong Learning* and, of course, the ultimate goal of the Bologna Process, the creation of a European Higher Education Area. With the quality agenda being driven at this pan-national level the real opportunity to influence the outcomes lessens significantly. What happens at this level will most certainly impact on national and ultimately institutional level. To some, this is seen as a light at the end of the tunnel, depending on how the national systems interpret and implement the pan-European policy papers. Personally, I am not that optimistic and remind you that light at the end of a tunnel can often be an oncoming train.

Quality, however, suffers from some of the same problems as LLL in that it, too, can be misunderstood and also has many definitions. For present

purposes, I am indebted to Jethro Newtown, who has written widely on the issue and who gives his definition by quoting McConville:

*There is no definition of Quality... You know it when you find it.*

He also highlights a very important point particularly in relation to LLL when he indicates that quality is a stakeholder-relative concept which demonstrates that it is not a unitary concept, and indeed is quite the opposite, and is open to multiple perspectives. And in a mirroring of LLL different groups of stakeholders have different views and, more importantly, different priorities. He concludes for this reason that we adopt the approach of Green, who suggested that:

*The best we can achieve is to define as clearly as possible the criteria that each stakeholder uses when judging quality and for these competing views to be taken into account when assessments of quality are undertaken.*

Despite highlighting these difficulties with definition, Green and his colleague Harvey have, as highlighted by Newton, come up with what might be referred to as a quintessential five-point categorization, and here I quote from Newton:

*First, quality as excellence is associated with distinctiveness or standards. It has various connotations, such as league tables, benchmarks, standards-checking, or even a "gold standard" of academic achievement. Assurance is achieved through external examiners, accreditation, or audit. With the notion of quality as perfection, or consistency, there is a shift from measurement of outcome standards, to measurement of process standards. This is a relative concept of quality more applicable to organisational and service standards than to academic standards. The notion of quality as fitness for purpose is in sharp contrast with elitist notions. The focus is on whether the product or service fits the stated purpose, e.g. the university's mission. This resonates with the requirement of an accrediting body or quality assurance agency for conformance to defined standards or, as in the UK, to subject benchmarks. In turn ENQA standards, for example, provide a basis for generic statements of judgements to be made on organisational standards. The fourth of Harvey & Green's categories, quality as a value for money, refers to quality judged against monetary cost and is seen by stakeholders in terms of return on investment. Typical assurance mechanisms include performance data, such as student completion or employment rates. The final category, quality as transformation, refers to the development or empowerment of the student through the learning process, or to institutional changes which might transform student learning. Various quality assurance mechanisms are applicable here; for example, accreditation may explore the value-added element of "widening access". The principal evaluation mechanism is improvement audit, which is forward-looking and agenda-setting and focuses on transformation.*

In 2006 the EUA organised the 1<sup>st</sup> European Forum for Quality Assurance and as part of this forum organised eight open discussion groups; the findings of these sessions were synthesised in a paper published as part of the proceedings. In this paper the author, Lee Harvey, highlighted a number of issues which brings this part of my paper to a conclusion. For me the key issues to emerge were as follows:

Quality culture is primarily about the behaviour of stakeholders rather than the operation of a quality system;

A quality culture places the students at the centre;

A quality culture is about partnership and co-operation, sharing experiences and team working which in effect is primarily in a university change management context;

A quality culture ensures the symbiotic relationship between the individual scholar and the learning community.

Lee concludes that a strong quality culture would ensure that learning and teaching innovation and quality processes, both internal and external, lock in together. In the end, quality culture is about adopting a self-critical reflective approach as a community: a community of students and staff. Quality processes, internally and externally, if they are improvement orientated should provide a framework for the effective operation of a communicative learning environment.

Excellent sentiments, but in today's environment that sees universities pitted together in a competitive and, perhaps from time to time, combative mode, can universities be self critical? Equally, as individual academics vie for promotion and research funding, will they embrace this new culture of self-examination? Having posed the questions, I will let you answer them.

Moving on to the specific issue of indicators - there are three main sources on the issue of indicators. The first is the UNESCO indicators; secondly there are the OECD indicators (both are general) and, finally, the quality indicators of LLL performance in Europe. For a quick overview of the use of indicators in HE, Tavenas's report for the EUA, published in 2003, is a good reference point. Like the issues of LLL and quality, the definition and use of indicators for HE is problematic to say the least. Having outlined the contentious areas, he then suggests some pre-conditions for the use of indicators, or, as he puts it, the methodological problems and practical limitations of indicators and their use, and suggests:

The statistical indicators of any university activity have to be regarded as elements that support a particular judgement rather than objective facts;

Indicators have to be used in complementary clusters so as to give a very precise and thorough picture of the activity concerned;

Indicators should preferably be concerned with the distinctive features of a particular institution or university sector and enable it to monitor its strategic orientation.

In concluding on the issue of methods he advises and urges us to consider the following when attempting to introduce PIs:

Everything that can be measured is not necessarily a good PI;

Everything that should be evaluated is not necessarily easy to measure;

The quality of university activities is more normally measured over the long term in relation to the subsequent careers of graduates or the repercussions of research on the development of society; by contrast, available indicators are generally drawn up in a short perspective;

When a complex activity is summed up in a few simple statistical indicators, a certain amount of information is lost; this may lead to a distorted picture of the activity;

There is a human tendency to defer to the impact of figures and the image they convey; experience has shown that once PIs have been published, they acquire a life of their own;

The use of PIs is an aid to good judgement and not a substitute for it. The numbers will not and never can speak for themselves. Mere inspection is not enough; interpretation is always necessary (British Universities Funding Council).

Based on this, we could adopt the ostrich approach and of course this is what some advocate. For me, and hopefully for you, the way forward is to accept the fact that we, as educators, are accountable and in this regard we should not fear examination. We should not, however, participate in the quality culture just for this reason or by virtue of the fact that legislation might dictate that we engage in the process, We should take the true meaning of the word *educate* and lead on the issue rather than follow and put our energies into ensuring that the system we put in place is the best for our institution, discipline and above all our students. Again I suggest that some of the work in this area is done for us also by Tavenas who gives us some headings from which to devise a good and robust system.

Institutions must assume greater responsibility and leadership in the area of quality;

Self-evaluation is a good and essential first step;

Peer evaluation should be the foundation of the system;

Publishing the results of evaluations is the platform for credibility;

Respecting diversity is an essential precondition for development.

Taking these principles as a foundation, we cannot just move forward but move forward with both confidence and authority.

For Dermot Coughlan's suggestion for relevant indicators, take a look at the *Bank of Indicators*.

## ***The Third Mission of Universities and Indicators***

Alfredo Soeiro, University of Porto, May 2008

### ***1. Why Indicators?***

There are several reasons why this topic has become important in LLL and especially in the project EQUIPE Plus. The main reason is that there has been a tendency in recent years to bring a managerial culture to universities and other public organisations. This culture implies the view that PIs could provide a measure of efficiency and effectiveness. In fact, this approach has been taken up as a measurement of performance against objectives set from the private sector. A second reason is that of the trend for ranking universities at national, continental or world levels. This has resulted in rankings, by universities and other organisations, using specific criteria to categorise institutions. A third reason concerns the fact that universities are interested in benchmarking their performance as a means of improvement and providing quality assurance.

When indicators are used as a tool to underpin their objectives and aims then they can be a powerful instrument to enable improvement in performance. They may help to promote and to provide evidence of the social and economic benefits of the public funding that most universities receive. LLL activities have historically been funded with private and with public funds. In both cases, the use of indicators is necessary for the reasons already stated. However there has been some confusion about the use of term indicators that needs clarification and proper contextualisation. If indicators are used without a proper context they may distort the value of the processes followed by universities.

In terms of institutions with LLL activities or third mission involvement, indicators may be utilised to provide evidence that these activities are Valuable, possibly in the form of financial benefits for institutions, of supporting institutions' work in enhancing social transformations, of evaluating the operating processes of LLL centres themselves or of implementing a quality benchmarking framework. Indicators are essentially statistics that can be used to evaluate an organisation, either globally or partially. Therefore, since there is a current tendency to evaluate universities from an economic point of view, the use of indicators in the areas of of LLL or third-mission activity has become quite widespread.

### ***2. Types and Nature of indicators***

Indicators can be used to evaluate progress made in the attainment of organizational aims and objectives. The aims of an LLL centre can be defined as being intended benefits or outcomes. Objectives are defined as the steps or phases necessary to achieve the aims. There are, therefore, indicators that help in the assessment of the progress made in achieving outcomes. Output indicators are defined as measurements of the progress made in this

process. This difference is significant when devising a system of indicators as they represent two different levels of achievement.

In fact, the nature of indicators typically used in LLL centres fall essentially into two categories: social and economic. Considering the short- and long-term nature of the education provided in LLL centres, there may be large discrepancies between the outputs of the indicators. Most centres have economic indicators that are driven by the managerial needs of their institutions and are generally either breaking even or profitable in terms of budgetary outcomes. LLL centres are also active in what is called the third mission of universities, defined as being everything other than initial higher education (first mission) and research (second mission). Although third-mission activities are not exclusively in the domain of LLL centres, they play a large role in the definition of their strategy and action plans.

### ***3. Advantages and Disadvantages***

The use of indicators has some advantages including the provision of data that can be used to evaluate LLL centres and place this information in the public domain. There are also disadvantages such as the over-emphasis of the importance of measuring outputs and the achievement of targets, the trend of measuring what is easy to evaluate and the ranking of different LLL centres. The positive and negative aspects of indicators should be taken into consideration when implementing such a framework.

A significant benefit is that institutions are able to introduce measurement systems to evaluate their actual performance outcomes against expectations including the quantitative and qualitative aspects of delivery. Another benefit is to publish the outputs of these processes as a means of demonstrating the achievements of LLL centres as well as their management systems. Yet another benefit is that indicators may help managers to concentrate on their objectives, enabling them to take strategic actions to improve the effectiveness of their performance and as a focus for staff development.

The disadvantages should also be considered carefully. A tendency to use indicators to determine standards can be counter-productive as it can discourage attempts to achieve standards higher than those initially specified and which, in any case, may not be applicable in all organisational situations. Another significant disadvantage may be that the implementation of indicators may distort the processes they are intended to enhance and may result in organisations focusing on the achievement of the indicators instead of working towards desired objectives.

### ***4. Performance Indicators***

In the final part of the paper there are several examples of possible indicators that can be used in LLL centres or in the evaluation of third-mission activities. It is necessary, however, to devise an appropriate PI model that ensures consistency in the evaluation of the activities of LLL

centres. PIs are defined as being specific measures used to document a characteristic of the performance of an LLL centre. Performance standards are agreed values that should always be attained by the LLL centres. These two concepts, if adopted, will provide the basis for the adoption of a model to be used in benchmarking activities.

The processes for the implementation of such a model include the definition of those outcome indicators, coupled with aims, which are significant for LLL activities. Outcome indicators are generally linked with internal management objectives and their formulation can be undertaken in a democratic and participative way that adds value to the work of most centres. The next phase is the formulation of PIs that enable standards to be defined and performance to be measured and which will create a baseline to guide future evaluation processes. This model can also be used to evaluate the quality of third-mission activities. Changes in society have stimulated the involvement of third-mission organisations with universities particularly in the areas of knowledge/technology transfer and continuing professional development. It is important that public awareness of universities' involvement with these organizations is raised.

### ***5. Evidence-Based Policy***

An example of an alternative evaluation framework to PIs is provided by the system devised by the non-profit Coalition for Evidence-Based Policy. It aims to provide an appropriate model for the evaluation of U.S. social Programmes, which have often been implemented with little regard for the need to provide quality assurance for their activities. The areas covered are the critical needs of society, such as education, crime, substance abuse and poverty reduction. A key element of the Coalition's system is to provide policymakers and practitioners with clear, actionable information on what actually works. This is demonstrated by their development of validated case studies that can be used as models to bring about improvements in the lives of the people these programs are supposed to serve. The findings of the Coalition's well-designed and managed trials provide evidence that can have particularly important policy implications and which demonstrate, for example, that social interventions can have major benefits or, on the other hand, that a previously widely-used intervention has little or no effect.

### ***6. Benchmarking University LLL and External Engagement***

In the USA, a number of surveys have been undertaken with institutions involved in third-mission work in their general mainstream activities, and in LLL activities in particular, that have provided a great deal of information about the implementation of certain types of indicators. These surveys have also involved the outputs of individuals in order to provide an overview of the scholarly work of the academic staff engaged in these activities. At institutional level, the indicators used are common to almost all institutions and for which specific funding is available, linked with, for example, the number of institution faculties, the number of departments participating in

this area of work, the percentage of members of the community participating in advisory or executive committees, the number of patents filed, the number of courses delivered, the level of investment in research in these areas, the number of students and learners engaged in these activities, the economic consequences of these activities such as the number of jobs created or income growth achieved, the volume of grants and donations received, the proportion of staff dedicated to these activities compared with the number of institution staff in general and the number of staff involved in evaluation. When consolidated, these statistics enable quantitative comparisons to be made between institutions and which may facilitate, as previously mentioned, evaluations of their achievement of their initial goals and benchmarking processes. Without a proper context and framework these statistics are meaningless in any attempt to evaluate where each institution stands.

*For Alfredo Soeiro's suggestions for relevant indicators, please refer to the Bank of Indicators.*

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# Some Do's and Don'ts of Indicators

## IV

**Dermot Coughlan, University of Limerick, May 2008**

Prior to setting out the do's and don'ts associated with the application of indicators, it is important to reiterate some fundamental reasons why we need a quality system and attendant indicators.

- ULLL must retain, maintain and develop its credibility with its individual customer or client – The Learner. Most of these will be recruited from organisations where the culture of quality will be endemic. Therefore, if we do not operate some form of quality system our credibility will be eroded.
- Like all areas of education the customer is more volatile, loyalty can never be assumed and competition is increasing rapidly. Our products, and I make no apology for using such a term, must be seen by the customer as being relevant, will improve the learners' store of knowledge, will make a contribution to the concept of the knowledge society and, above all, will represent value for money.
- Leadership acts as a catalyst for change and ULLL should be seen by its customers as taking a leader in this respect. Industry will not place a lot of store in an organisation that does not "walk the talk". Quality is second nature to industry and it will demand the same from those who will develop its workforce.
- Quality is not a badge you to put on the front of a prospectus or brochure or a brass plaque beside your entrance. Quality is about culture, a culture that says we care. We care about ourselves as providers of education. We care about our customers – The Learners, and we care for the society we serve.

### ***The Do's and Don'ts of Quality and Indicators***

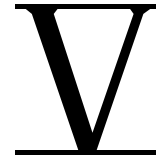
1. The introduction and application of indicators and attendant quality systems must be planned and managed carefully. The Do is: - Plan and Manage.
2. It must be accompanied by staff training. The Do is: - Train all Staff.
3. It must be driven from the top. The Do is: - Ensure senior management are visible in their support of indicators of quality.

4. It will be a long, difficult and tedious process. The Do is: - Do not underestimate the commitment required.
5. It must not be seen as an inorganic process. The Do is: - Integrate built-in reviews at all stages.
6. It must have staff involvement and participation. The Do is: - Ensure the involvement and participation of all staff
7. It must not be seen as an end in itself. The Do is: - Ensure your systems to underpin sustainability are applied.
8. It must be client- or customer-focused. The Do is: - Ensure a strong focus on the learner and that feedback from the learner is gathered and analysed.
9. Implementation does not ensure ongoing continuous improvement. The Do is: - Benchmark on a regular basis.
10. The introduction of quality will have costs. The Don't is: - Do not underestimate the cost of implementing and applying indicators of quality.
11. The philosophy must go beyond management. The Do is: - Do involve the Governing Authority/Senate of your university.
12. Quality and indicators may be new to your organization, but avoid the consultant syndrome. The Do is: - Rely on and acknowledge the competence within your own organisation. The Don't is: - Do not rely excessively on external consultants.
13. Indicators and quality systems will not of themselves yield improvement. It is the people that will make the system work. The Do is: - Ensure a strong people focus. The Don't is: - Expect the implementation of the system will of itself generate change.
14. Quality is not a quick fix. The Do is: - Remember that changes have to be integrated. The Don't is: - Do not disrupt resources and systems to the extent that they impact on outputs.
15. Indicators must be relevant. The Do is: - Make sure that they represent what is being done.
16. Moving to quality indicators will require a change in the culture of the organisation. The Don't is: - Do not forget that change has an impact on everyone.

17. Change may require a strategy of force and support. The Do is: If this is the case make sure that the support is there and is consistent.
18. Quality systems and indicators: s with all change processes, and particularly within large organisations such as universities, it will be difficult to convince all of those in positions of authority of the need for indicators and quality systems. The Do is: - Do respect this view but also do get them involved.
19. Most will not oppose change but may not necessary support it. The Don't is: - Do not assume that those who do not oppose the system really support it.
20. To really achieve support, the benefits must be clear. The Do is: - Do make the return on the investment obvious.



# Bank of Indicators



## ***Performance Indicators for Lifelong Learning*** **Dermot Coughlan, University of Limerick, March 2008**

These indicators are compiled specifically for use within the university sector to benchmark the performance of the LLL function in individual institutions. They do, however, contain some references to the national system in an attempt to put the function into a national perspective, thus enabling some comparison to be undertaken. This section will also enable the identification of the blockers and enablers within the overall system.

### ***National/Legislative Framework:***

- Does your country have a legislative framework for LLL?
- Does your Government have a Minister appointed with specific responsibility for LLL?
- Is the portfolio a stand alone function or a junior position within another ministry?
- Does your country have a legislative framework for quality in universities?
- Does your country have a national governmental institution governing the management and financing of the university sector?
- Does your country have a governmental agency regulating matters pertaining to qualifications?
- Does your country have a national qualifications framework?
- Does the university sector in your country have a national association or advocacy agency?

### ***Institutional Policy Framework:***

- Does your university have a LL policy?
- Does your university have a quality management policy?
- Does your university actively recommend and facilitate feedback from students?
- Does your university conduct customer satisfaction programmes?
- Is each department within your university subject to a quality review?
- How often are such quality reviews undertaken?
- Does your university have a quality office or a senior member of staff in charge of quality?
- What is the title of the person responsible for the function?

- Does your university have a Department or Unit with responsibility for LLL?
- Does your university have a senior staff member responsible for LLL?
- What is the title of the person designated to be responsible for the development of LLL at your university?
- Is this department or unit considered an academic department or a support department?
- Is LLL designated as a core function within your university's strategic plan?
- Did the development of the LLL plan involve a consultative process within the university and a wider stakeholder base?
- Is the Strategic Plan easily accessible within and outside the university?
- If it is a devolved activity within your University is there a designated individual within each faculty with responsibility for the function?
- Is your university fully compliant with the Bologna process?
- Are LLL programmes part of the process?
- Does your university have a system to award full academic credits to LLL programmes? <sup>3</sup>
- Does your university offer programmes through elearning or blended learning systems?
- Does your university have a policy in relation to work-based learning?
- Does your university offer its programmes on an outreach basis in association with employers and professional bodies or in collaboration with community or other groups?
- Does your university belong to a national body promoting the aims and objectives of LLL?
- Does your university participate in European projects in the area of LLL?
- Does your university participate in such activities on a wider international scale?
- Would you consider your university to be a learning organisation or an organisation of learning?
- Does your university have a training and development strategy for its employees?
- Does your university recognise or reward contribution to the wider community?
- What civic or public bodies are represented on your university's senate/board of governors?
- What civic bodies is your university represented on?
- Has your university encouraged or established the concept of learning partnerships?
- Has your university encouraged or participated in initiatives to have your city or region designated as a learning city or region?

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<sup>3</sup> Recognition of prior learning (RPL) in this instance encompasses all types of prior learning including, Accreditation of Prior Learning (APL), Accreditation of Prior Experiential Learning (APEL), Accreditation of Prior Certificated Learning (APCL), Accreditation of Prior Learning and Achievement (APL&A), Recognition of Current Competencies (RCC), Learning Outside Formal Teaching (LOFT).

- Has your university become involved in joint LLL projects with the civic authorities?
- Has your university participated in regeneration projects within your city?
- Does your university have formal initiatives with local primary schools?
- Does your university have relationships with local second level schools
- Has your university encouraged partnerships with other third-level providers in your area or region?
- Does your university engage in research in areas of LLL?
- Does your university disseminate or share the results of this research with the other educational and civic agencies?

***The Individual Learner:***

- Does your university have a flexible entry policy for individuals or groups from targeted areas who do not fulfil the minimum entry requirements operated by your university?
- Does your university have policies with regard to individuals with disabilities, immigrants, mature students (over the age of 23), married women wishing to return to education, gifted young people, those from socio-economic disadvantaged areas?
- Does your university offer special support for non-traditional students?
- Does your university offer mentoring programmes?
- Does your university offer a peer mentoring service?
- Does your university offer formal back to education programmes?
- Does your university offer an adult education guidance service?
- Does your university offer career guidance to its students?
- Does your university have a formal psychological service for students?
- Does your university have a multi-faith chaplaincy service?
- Does your university offer its students life skills modules?
- Does your university recognise to a student's contribution to the wider community during their course of study by the awarding of credits for this activity?

## ***Suggestion for Relevant Indicators***

### **Alfredo Soeiro, University of Porto, May 2008**

The following list of aims and indicators may be used to devise a model that may be appropriate for EQUIPE Plus participants. It is not an exhaustive list and is intended to be a collation of many different examples of their use observed in recent years.

#### ***Examples of Aims***

- Create permanent links with social partners;
- Improve two-way communication between universities and external constituencies through the use of such vehicles as advisory groups, round tables, etc;
- Reinforce the alliance with autonomous institutions, such as local government, secondary schools and professional associations to participate in the development plans of communities particularly in respect of their human capital;
- Developing contacts with the school system;
- Invite participants in the governing bodies of LLL centres from the community;
- Improve the interactions with professional, labour and cultural associations in order to be better informed about their requirements of the LLL service;
- Broaden relationships with the business community;
- Act as a globally-aware "knowledge broker" or "interface" with the business community, especially with SMEs;
- Encourage department heads and professors to participate actively in national professional associations;
- Broaden a cultural mission;
- Offer its resources as a repository for the use and benefit of the community;
- Improve continuing professional development (CPD) and technology transfer (TT) offices;
- Develop joint research programmes with enterprises in order to understand their needs and to devise the most appropriate training/education programmes delivered through LLL provision;
- Improve networks with and through alumni.

#### ***Examples of Outcome Indicators (Social)***

- Free and public library;
- Summer Free sport facilities for general public;
- Student volunteering;
- Public information and discussions of current issues;
- Emergency economic aid (food and books);
- Placement service of students in homes with elderly owners;
- Social integration of immigrants with NGOs;

- Non-profit events: dance, music, theatre, cinema, conferences, literary, exhibitions, bands, orchestras, jazz bands, choirs, painting, sculpture, photography;
- Allowing the use of conference rooms for public;
- Free entrance in museums;
- Community volunteering;
- Mandatory community and workplace experience on vacations;
- Health care services to the community as part of the curriculum;
- Solidarity foundation with Third World;
- Non-profit training for senior citizens and leisure;
- Universities show an interest and preoccupation about the environment that does not exist in other organizations;
- Use of public funds as a source of support for the poor;
- Social and cultural activities - "studia generalia";
- Training newly-elected politicians.

### ***Examples of Outcome Indicators (Economic)***

- Commercialisation of technology;
- Entrepreneurial activities;
- Advisory work;
- Commercialisation and use of university facilities;
- Contract research with non-academic clients;
- Flow of academic staff, scientists and technicians;
- Student placements and internships;
- Active alignment of teaching with social and economic needs;
- Development of programs developed from contract work;
- Revenue per ULLL student-learning hour;
- Revenue per ULLL staff member;
- Number of patents;
- Annual surplus generated by ULLL Centre;
- Additional income for the university.

**Examples of indicators used at Institut Universitaire de Technologie – Brest, France**

<b>Situation</b>	<b>Indicator</b>	<b>Focus</b>
Continuing Education	Annual number of hours per trainee	Department activities
	Annual receipts	
	Length of time necessary to answer a query	Department efficiency
	Average supervising time for a work experience recognition (VAE)	Making it easier to obtain an academic degree
	Candidates average waiting time before a planned interview	Department organisation
Continuing Education All programmes	Students' satisfaction rating in respect of overall department performance Students' satisfaction rating for each subject Students' satisfaction rating for individual tutors Average results and standard deviation for each subject	Identifying critical performance points and suggesting improvement measures for programmes
	% success rating: graduation, progression to the next level	Effectiveness of teaching/programme
	Success rating: student destinations during the year after graduation	Effectiveness of teaching/programme
	Ratio: actual timetable/ planned timetable	Supervision of various programme stages
Technological training	Trainees' skills assessment by companies	Improving the training framework Assessing the training efficiency
	Graduates' work integration average time	Assessing the training relevance

# Case Examples

# VI

European universities have taken a variety of approaches and reached different points in their use of benchmarks for university LLL. Some have wide experience in the development and use of indicators; others have a long way to go although they may have a wide range selection of LLL provision.

Because of the varying levels of implementation of PIs at institutional level, in the EQUIPE Plus project it was decided to collate examples that are, in various ways, relevant to the development of benchmarks. Partners were given guidelines for their contribution, but the instructions were deliberately quite general so that participants could share the diversity of their experience and approaches.

The case studies are very different in terms of focus and style. The diversity of the papers underlines the differences in contexts and approach in HEIs throughout Europe.

Additional case studies can be found at:

[https://www.cfp.upv.es/webs/equipeplus/index/indic\\_examples.jsp?local=ind](https://www.cfp.upv.es/webs/equipeplus/index/indic_examples.jsp?local=ind)

## ***EQUIPE Plus Case study – ULL Indicators***

Christiane Brokmann-Nooren

Carl von Ossietzky University, Oldenburg

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*Case study: "Studium Generale"(concerning the scope of work: "Public Understanding of Science and Humanities" [PUSH])*

The Carl von Ossietzky University, Oldenburg was one of the first universities in the Federal Republic of Germany to implement Bachelor and Master degrees for all its courses of study. LLL is of special significance in the university's mission statement.

LLL has not hitherto been integrated into the university's official Quality Assurance system as there are no agreed PIs for it. LLL has taken place in Oldenburg, however, since the beginning of the 1970s when, after the foundation of the university, non-traditional learning groups were first admitted to the campus. Particular attention was given to areas such as Access to Higher Education without "Abitur" (access via special examination "Z-Prüfung"), the opening of the university's courses of study (extra-mural adult education) to the North-west region and the "Studium Generale".

The Centre for Continuing Education (CCE) in Oldenburg is responsible for the work area "Opening up the University" ("Öffnung der Hochschule"). With the support of the University's faculties and institutes, the Centre organises and delivers LLL courses for different target groups. These courses are subject to internal Quality Assurance which deals with aspects of content and the organisation of programme evaluation (e.g. evaluation of seminars, adaptation of curricula with the help of expert advisory committees due to changing needs). The CCE and the University have not hitherto developed PIs for LLL. The CE courses, however, are subject to the demands of target groups and are thus a feature of the LLL provision.

Within the "Opening up the University" emphasis is laid on "Studium Generale", which is open to all interested people without the need to pass entrance examinations (visiting students). Each semester the "Studium Generale" offers a range of approx. 300 courses selected from the University's regular study programme. The CCE undertook a survey of the registered "visiting students" in the winter semester of 2006/07. Some LLL-indicators can be drawn from this evaluation and will be discussed at a later point.

Each semester, between 450 and 550 "visiting students" register at the University and join the undergraduate students in lectures and seminars; History, Philosophy and Protestant Theology are the most popular. Women prefer taking part in German Studies; men prefer courses from the Economics and Law areas. More than half of the "visiting students" are aged

between 60 and 69 years, the youngest being 20 and the oldest 90. Men and women participated in approximately equally numbers.

*LLL-indicator:* The group of "visiting students" demonstrated a preference for course topics which could relate to the students' own personal experiences and which raised questions concerning the meaning of life. Generally speaking, Arts subjects tend to provide this opportunity.

The University of the Third Age (U3A) provides interested people from Oldenburg and its region with opportunities to take part in scientific discussions. A large number of participants possess a (university) degree (60%) and many have a "Realschul-" (secondary-modern school) or "Hauptschul-" (general secondary school - all pupils not attending a secondary-modern school or gymnasium) qualification. The majority of the "visiting students" in Oldenburg worked or work as teachers (one in five). Other participants worked in management, technology, medical or legal fields. At the time of the evaluation most of the participants were pensioners (76.8%); only 9.1% were still employed.

*LLL-indicator:* It is necessary for universities to offer LLL courses that appeal to people who have a general interest in science regardless of their educational background or professional experience. The courses offered therefore deal mainly with subjects of general interest rather than those that have a technical or professional orientation.

Many "visiting students" take more than one U3A course and on average attend for 7 semesters. One person is recorded as having attended for 28 semesters.

*LLL- indicator:* LLL-offers should enable students to progress in their studies.

What motivates people who are fairly advanced in years to return to university or to consider undertaking such a course? "To exercise one's mind" was the most frequent response, followed by "to learn about specific scientific subjects" and "it's part of one's educational development". Some participants come to university in order to spend their free time in a structured way or to be "generally more well-educated" and to stay informed.

*LLL-indicator:* Students who are fairly advanced in years also want to be challenged and look for ways to prove they can do it. A broad variety of subjects should be offered to meet the wide range of interests and knowledge of these students.

More than three quarters of the people interviewed were content with the University's offers for the "visiting students". Most of them, however, would like more of the University's courses available to them as guests. Their main aim is to have the opportunity of studying alongside young students; 90% of the CE students interviewed would not like to study in course offered only to senior citizens. Most of them are not interested in participating in more

structured educational programme such as with fixed numbers of contact hours or on programmes that lead to an award. A quarter of the people interviewed would be interested in “semi-degrees”. The younger the participants, e.g. between 30 – 49 years, the more interested they are in degrees or “semi-degrees” (70%).

*LLL indicator:* Students who are fairly advanced in years prefer studying with young students. LLL-offers for “visiting students” should, therefore, be inter-generational in character.

*LLL-indicator:* Modular courses of study and “semi-degrees” provide “visiting students” aged between 30 – 49 years with the opportunity to participate and graduate in continuing educational. Oldenburg’s “visiting students” undertake in general 3 – 4 courses of study, spending up to two days per week on the university campus.

*LLL-indicator:* Students who are fairly advanced in years prefer LLL programmes that allow them to be flexible in their free time. They look for courses which are of longer duration but take less time; the majority are not interested in courses that are short in length and intensive in character.

## ***Evaluation and Self-Assessment Practices***

Göknur Çelik, Middle East Technical University

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### **National Context:**

In Turkey, since 2005, there has been a national programme to develop quality frameworks in HEIs. The process started with the publication of the *Regulation for Academic Assessment and Quality Improvement at Higher Education Institutions*, which was enacted on 20 September 2005. The Regulation establishes the principles for evaluating and improving the quality of educational, teaching and research activities and of administrative services at Turkish HEIs.

Under the framework of this Regulation, a National Commission for Academic Assessment and Quality Improvement in Higher Education (*Yükseköğretim Akademik Değerlendirme ve Kalite Geliştirme Komisyonu* - YÖDEK) was subsequently set up. It acts as the independent body for quality assurance and is responsible for establishing principles, standards and guidelines relating to internal and external quality assurance activities at HEIs.

YÖDEK prepared a manual for improving quality in HEIs and introduced regulations for preparing annual self-assessment reports. Every year since 2005, all course units of study within the university prepare these reports and submit them to the university administration.

The report includes self assessment based on 10 headings:

- inputs (resources and networks)
- evaluation of institutional qualifications and characteristics
- evaluation of educational processes
- evaluation of research and development processes
- evaluation of application and service processes
- evaluation of administrative and supporting processes
- evaluation of executive management structure
- evaluation of executive management strategy
- evaluation of all output statistics
- evaluation of performance in fulfilling its HE mission.

Under these headings, there are 126 sub-sections for each of which course units are evaluated by a Likert scale rating that includes the following statements: Much less than expected level/ Less than expected level/ Expected level/ More than expected level/ Much more than expected level. After ranking, the reasons for choosing the particular statement are evaluated and improvement targets for the subsequent academic year are specified.

Self assessment reports serve both as an indicator of quality improvement for each unit and contribute to quality improvement indicators for the

university as a whole. Each university's report is submitted to YÖDEK, which prepares the general annual *Academic Assessment and Quality Improvement in Higher Education Report* in order to contribute to the development of HE strategies at national level.

In preparing the self-evaluation reports, indicators are critical tools in clarifying the reasons for choosing a specific statement within the five statements of Likert scale. The task of drafting the indicators, however, is delegated to the authors of each unit of study and this situation can lead to a loss of rigour. The lack of critical overview at unit level in this self-regulated process can expose the process to criticism and dispute and to the charge that the processes are not as robust as those in other institutions.

Like the other departments within the Middle East Technical University (METU), the Continuing Education Centre (CEC) prepares annual self-assessment reports by defining its own indicators. In preparing the overall report, references are made to the statistics in programme-level annual reports and to students' views as indicated in their unit evaluation forms. It can still be argued, however, that the evaluations lack rigour as they do not include any comparison with similar types of activity at other universities nor is there any process of external audit.

### **METU CEC Context:**

Since its foundation METU CEC has implemented a number of QA initiatives, core elements of which are the annual and quarterly activity reports and evaluation forms and which include specific indicators for the evaluation of quality.

#### *Quarterly and annual reports:*

At the end of each three-month period, the METU CEC prepares a report in order to compare termly activity levels with the same period in the previous year. At the end of the year, the annual report is prepared so that the previous and current years can be compared. The Annual report also enables the centre to observe trends over a 10-year period.

Quarterly and annual reports include the details of all the courses organised during the specified period, the number of courses organised for the general public, in-service courses organised for employees of institutions, the total revenue received, the total fees paid to lecturers, allocations passed to the university and so on; this information is then compared with that of the previous year. The report is considered by the executive management committee of the CEC, the department's most senior body for internal QA monitoring. The executive committee evaluates the CEC's performance based on the changing statistical evidence. It is thus possible to compare the year-on-year development through qualitative and quantitative means and arrive at an overall view of the Centre's QA performance.

### *Evaluation reports:*

As part of the QA process, students complete evaluation forms at the conclusion of each unit of study. A function of evaluation forms aim is to survey student satisfaction levels with their courses. Students comment on 11 categories of classroom activity based on the following Likert-scale statements: I completely agree, I agree, I am not sure, I do not agree, I completely disagree.

Using these five statements, students evaluate the performance of each lecturer, course content and course management. For each of these categories, the following indicators are used:

- *The lecturer:* qualifications, teaching ability, responsiveness to the needs of participants
- *General course content and organisation:* suitability of teaching materials and aids, effectiveness of lecture notes, usefulness of the information provided in the course, overall course satisfaction, appropriateness of total course duration
- *Teaching accommodation:* suitability of classroom, cleanliness, responsiveness of institution to students' needs.

As a result of feedback on the evaluation forms, lecturers may be requested to update their material, revising course content or management if necessary and any other amendments as needed to improve quality.

In conclusion, it can be seen that METU CEC's quality indicators focus mainly on quantitative PIs so, it is necessary to develop them to include indicators that reflect the more qualitative aspects of evaluation.

METU CEC should therefore include two additional indicators. Firstly, surveys of previous students would enable the longer-term impact of the courses to be evaluated. Students would be consulted about the extent to which they were able to put into practice what they had learned during the course and to what extent it contributed to their personal and/or professional development. Surveys would also be conducted with employers who had previously supported their employees to undertake these courses. Secondly, the Centre would design and implement impact surveys with the intention of evaluating its contribution to the well-being of its geographical and cultural region. Such periodic surveys would demonstrate the long-term benefits of these courses and the contribution of the Centre to its region, which should be the two main quality indicators.

## ***The Use of Indicators within Academic Lifelong Learning and their Institution-Wide Relevance***

Anna Zbierzchowska, Warsaw School of Economics

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### Types of indicators - **Quantity indicators**

- the number of postgraduate courses
- the number of postgraduate students
- the number of part-time students
- the ratio of postgraduate and part-time students to the overall number of students at the university
- the ratio of postgraduate courses and students of our university to the overall number of postgraduate courses and students in the country or region
- the ratio of part-time courses and students of our university to the overall number of part-time courses and students in the country or region.

These indicators relate to the evaluation of quality in adult education (lifelong learning). They demonstrate the extent to which the provision of programmes and the distribution of postgraduate or part-time courses are adjusted to the needs of the student population.

**Indicators connected with specialisation** – demonstrate the extent to which postgraduates programmes offered correspond with students' needs.

In 2004-05 the postgraduate courses offered by the Warsaw School of Economics included 95 units – a varied range of subjects in the field of economics and management.

They were organised by the following faculties:

Faculty of Management and Finance – 53 course units (56%)  
Faculty of Business Administration – 18 course units (19%)  
Faculty of World Economy – 15 course units (16%)  
Faculty of Socio-Economics – 6 course units (6%)  
Faculty of Economic Analysis – 3 course units (3%).

The specialist postgraduate units correspond with the subjects of the respective faculties. Here, management studies are the largest offering, including a range of courses in the fields of business management, financial administration, banking and marketing. This provision is adjusted to the market and to the demand for postgraduate education in this area.

## **Indicators Used for Specific Postgraduate Units**

### **Quality indicators**

Research on a variety of evaluation methods have been undertaken in various departments. At a department of which I am in charge, a method of grading using a graphic scale is used. Individual teachers are evaluated - the quality of their lectures, at the conclusion of each class and the organisation of the whole study programme. Quality indicators are necessary to improve programme delivery as far as the selection of teachers and operational matters are concerned. Similar studies have been undertaken in our university and cover part- and full-time programmes. They are varied to accommodate courses for young people as well as for older learners.

As a teacher, I manage my own evaluation. I prepare the evaluation forms for the postgraduate programme that I direct.

The quantity indicators I have developed are also available for programme managers and those responsible for LLL at our university – deans of faculties and their representatives.

## **Advantages and Disadvantages in the Use of Indicators**

### **Advantages**

- The opportunity to implement quality evaluation, including the QA arrangements of various forms of LLL
- Data enabling the evaluation of the needs of adult students measuring the number of students studying certain subjects
- Evaluating the market – the number of adult learners studying at individual universities, the number of current postgraduate courses – as well as other institutions.

### **Disadvantages**

In general, there do not appear to be any disadvantages. The implementation of incorrect quality evaluation method may be a disadvantage as may be the misinterpretation of indicators or the wrong decisions taken on the basis of these indicators. The disadvantages are, therefore, to a great extent, an outcome of inexperience in implementing indicators.

## ***Quality Assurance Framework for Non-credit-bearing Courses (for internal use), and Quality Monitored Status (for use by external clients)***

Alison Hughes, University of Liverpool

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### **QA Internal Framework – Background**

Over recent years, there have been a number of changes in the way in which UK Universities have sought to maintain and improve the quality of the services they provide. The changes have been driven partly by specific pressures from individual funding agencies but also by an increasing general awareness of public accountability and the need to respond effectively and efficiently to the expectations of the many and varied client groups which the institution serves.

In terms of teaching, the provision of academic award-bearing courses has always been subject to rigorous quality assurance procedures, although there is a continuous drive to make these much more explicit and transparent. In the late 1990s, the University of Liverpool introduced a Quality Assurance Framework for Non-credit-bearing Courses in recognition of the importance of these courses and also, in terms of profile and income generation.

These courses include those run by the University for:

- External audiences – i.e. Lifelong Learning (LLL)- Continuing Education (CE) and Continuing Professional Development (CPD) courses
- Under- and postgraduates
- Staff of the University itself.

The high volume of activity, together with the growing sophistication of client groups, meant that the University wished to demonstrate to both the external market, and equally importantly to itself, that it is constantly and consistently working towards the highest possible standards of teaching and learning. Application of this framework by non-credit-bearing course providers is now a requirement of the University and the definition of 'non-credit-bearing courses' is:

“Any event which involves people coming together for the purposes of non-academic-credit-bearing learning irrespective of level e.g. meetings or seminars. In addition to courses for external clients, the definition specifically includes staff development for University staff – this will include events run by the Centre for Lifelong Learning, Computing Services Department, Training Office and by departments for Recognised Teachers.”

## **How the Framework is used**

Course providers use a matrix listing various quality indicators (listed below) to review their own QA procedures and course provision and to adapt and develop systems where necessary.

1. Institutional and Departmental Policy
2. Contractual arrangements
3. Market Research
4. Resources : staff
5. Resources : physical
6. Resources : financial
7. Course Design : content
8. Course Design : course costing
9. Course Design : delivery - format / timetable
10. Course Design : assessment
11. Course Design : evaluation and feedback
12. Participant guidance/ support : pre-delivery and during course
13. Codes of Practice
14. Promotion and Publicity
15. Staff Development
16. Participant Progression and Achievement.

Course providers then submit to the Working Group overseeing implementation of the Framework, a brief annual report on their provision with specific reference to the QA Framework. A pro-forma is provided for this purpose. The Working Group from time to time may request additional material to be supplied with the annual reports, for example samples of evaluation forms and marketing materials.

## **Quality Monitored Status (QMS) – for use by External Clients**

The Quality Monitoring Scheme is a quality assurance system which has been developed by the University of Liverpool to assist external organisations in maintaining and developing the quality of their training provision. A commercial charge is made for this service.

The Scheme recognises that employers and training providers do not necessarily require the outputs (qualifications) generated by credit-based provision. For example, the prescribed scope or content of courses may be inappropriate or the level of study commitment required of candidates too high. Non-credit-bearing courses are, of course, subject to the in-house quality assurance systems of the provider, but the University's Quality Monitoring scheme can provide an independent support mechanism to assist in the maintenance of standards and the establishment of a cycle of continuous improvement.

All providers must demonstrate that they are able to deliver a sound learning experience, whether to their own staff or external clients. The Scheme sets out a range of criteria that must be met and provides guidance documents to assist organisations in enhancing the quality of their provision. These follow quite closely the indicators used within the internal scheme.

Initial approval is achieved through the submission of documents which satisfy the University that the provider:

- is sufficiently well structured and resourced to deliver relevant, safe and equitable learning opportunities and experiences to participants
- evaluates and continuously improves the learning programmes that it provides.

Following approval, on-going monitoring focuses closely upon course activity and participants' experiences. It takes into account information such as the number of courses/participants, participant feedback and any changes arising from feedback.

### **Lessons learned from working with these quality indicators**

As the University has worked with both internal and external providers using these quality assurance procedures for some years, some lessons about the use of quality indicators have been learned:

- As the internal framework was developed it was essential to include academics delivering courses in LLL in order to reflect the real needs of the providers and also to draw upon their expertise. The Working Group continues to draw from both academics and administrators. This validates the process for the academic community rather than it being viewed as a centralised system imposed upon them
- When developing the indicators for the QMS system (for external client use) subtle alterations to the terminology were required. For example, external clients rarely refer to themselves as 'institutions' (as do many universities) but rather 'organisations' – so we altered the wording of the guidance documents accordingly.
- It also became clear in working with our external clients that there was a need to adapt the indicators used internally to allow different audiences to measure quality in slightly different ways. For example, within the University there were financial and personnel systems for ensuring that tutors met the requirements that would not be particularly relevant within an external organisation. Similarly, we felt unable to require external clients to provide evidence of their course costing and pricing mechanisms as this could be deemed commercially sensitive information, whereas this is required on a routine basis within the University.

- It also highlighted that flexibility of approach is required even within the internal constituency, as the purpose of the indicators is not to impose uniformity but rather to reinforce commonality of quality approaches to learner support. For example, over the years since its inception, the university has revised the annual report form to reflect the fact that there is a wide variation in the experiences of course providers using the system. Some departments run only a few very short seminars whilst others have an extensive programme. The reporting requirements now reflect this diversity of experience.
- It has been interesting to see how working with the indicators has been used as a change agent both internally and within an external organisation. Internal providers have noted that it has prompted them to revise their evaluation procedures and review their annual course provision more strategically within the department as a whole. In addition it has required changes of approach within the central quality monitoring systems and the guidance manuals have accordingly undergone a series of revisions. From the perspective of external training clients, one adopted some of its own clients' in-house personnel documentation and processes where it would clearly benefit the employees who were on the training programme.

# ***Programme-based Study Management: Assuring High Quality of University CE at the University of Tartu***

Ülle Kesli, University of Tartu

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## **Introduction**

In the area of continuing education, there is no substantive national quality control. An education license is required if the training is longer than 120 hours or 6 months. Universities do not have to apply for the license to administer continuing education courses. The Council of the university is entitled to establish broad groups of studies, structures and procedures for this provision.

In Estonia, an HEI assumes responsibility for the quality of the tertiary education it provides and for the maintenance of programme quality. Accreditation is the basis for the quality of training provided by the universities, but it does not directly concern the area of continuing education. When assuring quality of university continuing education, reference is made to the accreditation of the university and its curricula with reference only to the general assessment of this broad programme range and teaching staff.

At the national level, there are several initiatives to assure the quality of adult education. According to the *Lifelong Learning Strategy 2005-2008*, approved by the Government of the Republic in 2005, there is a plan to create out a new regulatory framework, create a decentralised self-evaluation system in adult education and update the system of issuing education licenses. At present, however, there are no additional requirements at the national level.

The universities have already understood some years ago that accreditation is not enough on its own to assure the quality of continuing education and have established internal regulations for the quality assurance of short courses.

## **Regulatory framework for the quality assurance of CE**

The University of Tartu has adopted an internal regulatory framework to assure the quality of continuing education provision. This framework stipulates a number of requirements for training programmes (the essence of the training programme, endorsement of the programme, etc) and the certification to be provided on course completion. The head of department organising the training, is responsible for the content and delivery of the programme. In the strategic plan for CE approved in 2005 (*Täienduskoolitusstrateegia ... 30/09/07*) one of the key strategies was to increase the quality of CE. The activities for assuring high quality included the adoption of course management practices, the development of systems designed to stimulate the potential of academic and scientific developments,

the provision of modern classrooms for CE, improved cooperation with organisations, unions, universities as well as developing the infrastructure, support and coordination of CE. In 2006 the University implemented a course management system for CE with the aim of encouraging the participation of learners, employers and unions in the development of CE programmes and to respond more flexibly to the needs of society.

### **Programme-based course management**

L. Harvey and D. Green have collated many definitions of quality in their article (Harvey & Green, 1993). Many are widely used for the assessment of quality in CE. In my opinion, the most important quality definition described by them is *Quality as fitness for purpose*. In the field of further education, it is most important to respond to the needs of students. This same objective is the principal goal for programme-based course management. According to this system, each faculty and department providing CE must appoint a programme leader who is responsible for all activities concerned with the delivery and quality of CE programmes: development, marketing, practical organisation of the courses, support services including finance, and must organise an election of a programme committee wherein learners, employers and/or unions as well as academics are represented. Depending on the workload, the programme leader may work alone or with a team. The committee liaises with the programme leader in the planning and development stage of the programme.

### **Assessment of CE quality**

Student evaluation questionnaires are commonly used to assess quality. The course leader develops the questions and participants give their opinions about different aspects of the teaching, its organisation, content, performance of the lecturer, handouts, etc. The lecturers are also asked to provide feedback. It is also important to obtain feedback from employers, but at present there is little cooperation with employers to assess the results of training. The analysis of the feedback obtained provides important information to the programme committee for the future development of the programme.

Another important aspect of university CE is that further education studies are also recognised by mainstream faculties as components of students' overall programmes of study. At the end of a course, different modes of assessment are used: tests, research papers, seminar reports, etc. to assess what has been learned. These forms of assessment are requirements for CE awards and are important prerequisites for accrediting prior learning in the APEL framework.

## Conclusions

The University of Tartu has always paid attention to the quality of its education. According to the feedback from students, CE courses have sometimes been too theoretical and include too much independent work. Employers claim that universities are too slow in responding to the educational needs of society. The programme-based course management system should help to provide a suitable balance between class teaching and independent work, theory and practical skills and, most importantly, a quicker response to the needs of society.

## References

Elukestva õppe strateegia / Lifelong Learning Strategy (2005)  
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Tartu Ülikooli täienduskoolitusstrateegia aastani 2008 (2005)  
[http://www.ut.ee/livelink\\_files/1838569.htm](http://www.ut.ee/livelink_files/1838569.htm) (in Estonian) 30/09/07

Harvey, L & Green, D (1993). Defining Quality. *Assessment and Evaluation in Higher Education*, vol. 18, pp. 9-34

## ***Quality Indicators for Educational Activities in University Continuing Education***

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The development of a set of performance indicators for university LLL provision is without doubt one of the most important outcomes of the EQUIPE Plus project for those stakeholders who are:

- Direct beneficiaries of this style of education – individual learners
- Educational providers – centres/institutes of continuing education as well as universities themselves because of their ability to hold up a mirror to academia and academic disciplines to bring about the need for changes in content, methodology, pedagogical approach, etc.
- Employers and other potential beneficiaries in society
- Policy- and decision-makers.

In general, the importance of the development of QA processes and the sharing of good practice among partner institutions and nations can help the formulation of national policies in university LLL and can enhance realignment and innovation in legislative and regulatory frameworks at national as well as at institutional level.

The continuous development of universal quality frameworks at universities, which includes also university continuing education, is in many countries a completely new approach as for many continuing education was considered a bolt-on activity and not an integral part of the mainstream education/LLL system. Such frameworks can help to produce important benefits for individual learners and to society in general in terms of a greater understanding of the value of such education.

Some strategic proposals have been implemented at national level (*Act on Further Education* (1997), *Framework for Lifelong Learning* in Slovakia (2004), *Strategy for Lifelong Learning and Lifelong Development* (2007), draft of the *Act on Lifelong Learning* (2007)). Nevertheless, these proposals can serve as a template for further developments at various levels, stages and institutions.

The European report on quality indicators for LLL (the Bratislava report prepared by a working group representing 33 countries of 2002), four key areas of common concern emerged:

- Skills, Competencies and Attitudes
- Access and Participation
- Resources for Lifelong Learning
- Strategies and Systems.

In the report, Quality (its enhancement, assurance, management and development) is included in the area of Strategies and Systems and is highlighted as a key component in strategic decision-making.

Institutional policy and commitment to the organisation and delivery of university LLL is considered to be the most significant recent development in Slovakia.

One of the most important aspects of the process of education is the assessment both of the achievement of the intended learning outcomes and of students' and other stakeholders' own perceptions of the relevance of these objectives to them. The general objectives of continuing education processes are derived from:

- The needs and aims (eg of employees/employers, organisations, geographical/political regions) that are needed to achieve targets in a specific time-frame through education
- Identified skills gaps of employees as a result of personal skills audits, work appraisals/assessment etc.

The processes involved in the achievement of learning objectives by specific target groups provide material for evaluating the quality of these processes.

If quality is defined as an amalgam of knowledge and the evaluation of its acquisition, the following aspects of the audit process are pertinent:

## **1. Quality of initial learning frameworks**

- **Appropriateness of specified learning objectives**
  - Are objectives formulated in response to an understanding of actual educational and developmental needs?
  - Are objectives and course content considered for their appropriateness for the delivery of expected level of achievement?

Appropriate indicators might include:

- Evaluation of fundamental objectives - for example:
- Evaluation of educational needs, development needs, employers' needs, employees' needs
- Evaluation of how and by whom objectives were formulated:
- Objectives set by employers, processes of formulating the objectives, objectives set by employees, objectives set by educational institutions/providers and the associated specific subjects.

The above elements of quality audit are important components in the evaluation of educational efficiency (a clear and focused approach with clear and achievable learning objectives).

- **Appropriateness of course delivery formats**
  - Are the course delivery formats appropriate for the achievement of the specified learning objectives?
- **Appropriateness of lecturers**
  - Are lecturers appropriately qualified?
  - Are lecturers appointed according to their subject knowledge and ability to deliver specific courses?
  - Are lecturers provided with a set of topics for inclusion in their courses and are preferred topics included?
- **Appropriateness of teaching materials**
  - Is the nature of the teaching materials appropriate to support course delivery?
  - Are prepared teaching materials up-to-date in terms of current subject theory and practice?
  - Are teaching materials subject to any internal approval processes?
  - Are teaching materials offered in user-friendly formats?
- **Appropriateness of teaching aids**
  - Are teaching aids appropriate for course delivery?

## **2. Quality of course delivery**

- Does the lecturer discuss the course learning objectives of at the start of the course?
- Does the lecturer discuss specified course assessment?
- Does the lecturer highlight important course themes?
- Does the lecturer set out all deadlines and other administrative matters?
- Does the lecturer present appropriate bodies of knowledge?
- Does the lecturer discuss the availability of further sources of learning materials: books, websites, specialist libraries and databases, etc?
- Does the lecturer integrate his/her own specialist knowledge and experience?
- Does the lecturer keep engage well with learners and did he/she respond appropriately to their questions?
- Does the lecturer demonstrate effective applications of classroom activities?
- Does the lecturer use lecturing techniques means?
- Does the lecturer vary the use of lecturing techniques according to the nature of the course?

- Does the lecturer use teaching materials?
- Does the lecturer present a concluding summary and request comments, suggestions and agree next steps with learners?

### **3. Outputs from educational activity**

The following activities can be evaluated:

Learner satisfaction with the achievement of learning objectives  
 Rate of assimilation of specified learning processes and their relationship with developing knowledge, skills, attitudes, behaviours, values, competences, etc.

The impact of the educational process can be monitored by using questionnaires that map students' knowledge and skills before and after their courses as a means of evaluating the success of the delivery process

- **Course follow-up monitoring**

Collation of feedback, comments from employers about the achievements and progress of their employees as learners  
 Changes in the nature of the particular subject area  
 Students' behavioural changes  
 Changes in the nature of particular professional fields.

### **4. Measurement of course delivery in the context of cost effectiveness**

Focusing on the following:

- Appropriateness of course duration
- Financial resources used in comparison with comparable activities
- Financial resources used as a proportion of overall educational budget
- Comparison of financial resources used with results received
- Comparison of financial resources used with delivery standards in this area of activity.

## ***Quality in LL e-learning in Higher Education: Benchmarks and Indicators***

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This short review provides an introduction to the *E-xcellence* project indicator framework. *E-xcellence* is a web-based tool that focuses on the quality of e-learning in Higher Education. It is the main product of a two-year project undertaken under the auspices of EADTU. (<http://www.eadtu.nl>)

Learning in the context of LLL can and will be delivered increasingly via the internet. The delivery of e-learning is more dependent than conventional face-to-face teaching on collaborative working across organisational boundaries and technical infrastructure. Although institutions may have embraced the use of information and communications technologies in the delivery of their conventional programmes, provision of e-learning will require the formulation of a strategic framework at institutional level.

The *E-xcellence* framework was introduced in several universities in 2007 and is being monitored by a number of national accreditation agencies such as the Dutch-Flemish accreditation agency NVAO (<http://www.nvao.nl>) and the European Association for Quality Assurance in Higher Education, ENQA (<http://www.enqa.eu>).

The framework includes benchmarks and indicators and is organised into six sections covering Strategic Management, Curriculum Design, Course Design, Course Delivery, Staff Support and Student Support. Each section follows a similar format setting out benchmarks, critical factors, performance indicators and assessor's notes.

The benchmarks provide a set of general quality statements covering a wide range of contexts with which programme designers and others work. It is intended that the benchmarks will be relevant to virtually all e-learning situations. These benchmarks might usefully form the basis for institutions' quality self-assessment exercises in which the full range of criteria and performance indicators are not judged to be relevant to the institutional context (eg in situations where e-learning developments are confined to a minority of courses or to specialist areas of the institution's work).

The critical factors and performance indicators that follow focus on particular topics relevant to the benchmark statements. Not all the critical factors will be relevant in all situations and several cut across more than one benchmark statement. Thus, there is not a one-to-one relationship between the benchmarks and the critical factors as they are pitched at different evaluation levels. Performance Indicators relating to the critical factors have been developed at both general and advanced levels.

The assessor's notes provide a more detailed account of the issues and the approaches that might be taken to meet the requirements in each situation.

Information on the project and the description of the different benchmarks and indicators can be found on the site:

<http://www.eadtu.nl/e%2DxcellenceQS>

The *E-xcellence* project manual describes the different indicators in detail and can be found at:

[http://www.eadtu.nl/e%2DxcellenceQS/default.asp?page=fs\\_assessment\\_to\\_ols](http://www.eadtu.nl/e%2DxcellenceQS/default.asp?page=fs_assessment_to_ols)

# Other Sources of Information

# VII

EQUIPE Plus has collected a range of web based sources of information to support ULLL work with performance indicators. These can be found in the ULLL Performance Indicators section of the EQUIPE Plus web site <http://www.equipeplus.org>

[https://www.cfp.upv.es/webs/equipeplus/index/indic\\_other.jsp?local=ind](https://www.cfp.upv.es/webs/equipeplus/index/indic_other.jsp?local=ind)