Achievement Matters

Project Update Report March 2012

Report on key project activity and outcomes for participating pilot universities.

Introduction and update from project leaders

It has been great to see participating universities holding their own activities around achieving standards. This includes workshops at Monash (100 participants), Griffith (40 participants), RMIT (40-50 participants) and planned workshops for UWS and the Universities of South Australia and Adelaide later this year. The general feedback is that these workshop conversations are creating greater shared understanding around academic standards (and good for team-building too).

The project team has received positive feedback from professional accountants participating as external peer reviewers, which indicates that understanding and commitment to assessing achievement is widening. In addition there has been an article published in Campus Review and the project mentioned in Krause issues paper about implementing learning standards. There is ongoing discussion in other professional bodies and networks.

With marketing as the next business discipline to establish learning standards there is a growing awareness across business higher education that once standards have been set, then the next step is to assess their achievement. The recent TEQSA legislation provides an added incentive: "The academic standards intended to be achieved by students and the standards actually achieved by students in the course of study are benchmarked against similar accredited courses of study offered by other higher education providers."

Six universities will receive data for review in April as most participating universities were unable to collect suitable data for a 'live' review up to this point. However, it is anticipated that live data (covering the learning standards of written communication and knowledge) from all participating universities will be submitted in June (following semester 1 2012) for external review in August. The fourth calibration workshop is planned for September and will focus on the threshold standard for knowledge.

Milestones

- Three successful workshops have now been held
- As indicated by statistics collected from the workshops we are achieving a shared understanding of the standard for written communication at both the bachelor and master levels

Challenges

- Establishing consensus as to what constitutes a 'valid assessment task' that enables students to demonstrate the learning standard.
- Identifying assessment tasks which are concise and reflect the learning standard.
- Developing a shared understanding of an appropriate standard of student work in relation to a specific learning standard.
- Finding appropriate meeting times and locations for our large groups of reviewers. Consistency in attendance is critical to developing the shared understanding of the standard.
- Ensuring data provided is properly de-identified.

Third calibration workshop

Adelaide, 10 February

The pilot process has been successful to date and this was reflected in the Adelaide calibration workshop in February.

The process has had some excellent learning amongst reviewers especially around task design to demonstrate evidence of learning outcomes. A number of participants have changed their assessment tasks based on feedback and learning from the workshop process, including the redesign of assessment tasks to better reflect the learning standards. The learning is around how to better design assessment task requirements and clarity so students can demonstrate achievement, e.g., communication with specialist and non-specialist audiences.

A key benefit of this project process is that in addition to 21 academics, the project has practicing accountants giving industry feedback – both as workshop participants and through pre-workshop assessment on SPARK. These professional reviewers provide an independent industry perspective on the sorts of tasks graduates should be able to do and the standards that should be exhibited.

Key impacts from workshops

1. People attending are being calibrated.
2. Improvement in assessment practice (through having to discuss how assessments demonstrate threshold learning outcome/s).

Feedback from participants at Adelaide workshop

What changes have you made to assessment practices at your university since starting as a peer reviewer on this project?
(Consolidated response – may be more than one key activity)

Key activity	No responses
Considered change in assessment (not implemented yet)	2
Changed assessment design, mark weighting or marking to accommodate TLOs	9
Conducted workshops internally to look at TLOs and assessment	2
Communicated with colleagues about project and TLOs	3
None to date	

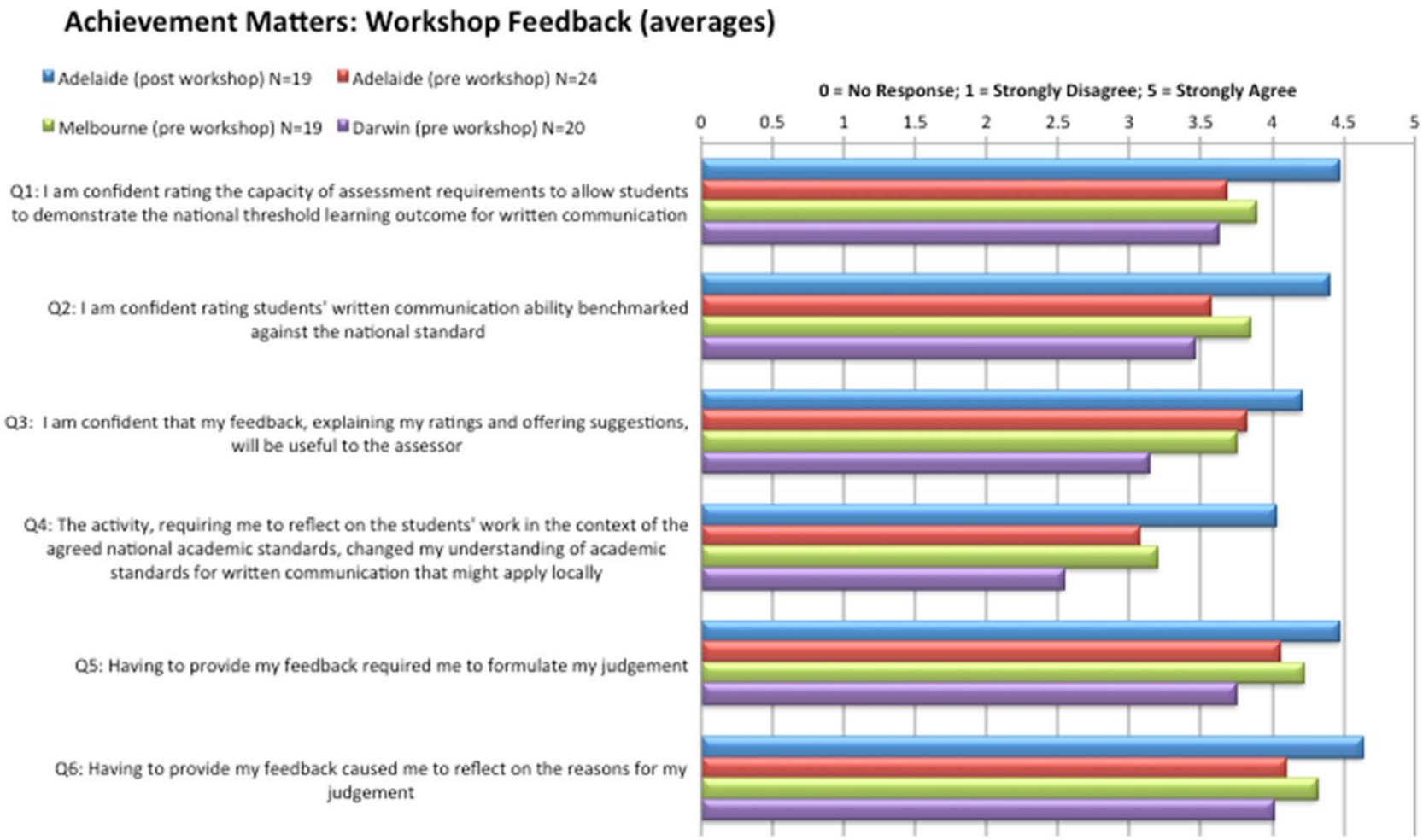
Q8: What actions do you plan to implement at your university in the next six months as a result of participating in this project?
(Consolidated response – may be more than one key activity)

Key activity	No responses
Changed assessment design, mark weighting or marking to accommodate TLOs	8
Conducted workshops internally to look at TLOs and assessment	5
Communicated with colleagues about project and TLOs	7
None	

Other Comments (selected)

- Great day. We're getting closer and closer to realistic, workable guidelines for reviewers.
- I found the workshop increased my ability to consider different issues and formulate more objective assessments.
- All workshops have provided useful insights into how academics define their standards.
- Evidence today during small group & larger group discussions that variations in or shared understanding of what the TLO for communication represents has reduced. Consensus was reached more quickly with fewer extremes even where views differed.
- While the TLOs are known by almost all accounting academics, many do not yet understand the implication for assessment in their courses.

Changes in reviewer confidence through participation in project



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Participating Pilot Universities

Curtin University

Deakin University

Griffith University

Monash University

RMIT University

Southern Cross University

University of Adelaide

University of Southern Queensland

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