

Report from Ontario Universities Council (OUC) on Quality Assurance Conference on Learning Outcomes: Evolution of Assessment, Toronto, ON, October 17 – 18, 2016

by Peter Mahaffy, Co-chair Campus Alberta Quality Council (CAQC) and Paul Gooch, Chair, Ontario Universities Council on Quality Assurance (OUCQA), and member of CAQC

Background: The 2016 conference was the fourth Ontario Universities Council conference focusing on effective practices in the use of learning outcomes and their assessment in quality assurance procedures at the institutional and system levels in Ontario. Participation by Alberta in this conference was considered important as follow-up to the first Alberta Post-Secondary system forum on effective practices in the use of student learning outcomes. The Alberta forum was held on May 17-18, 2016 and jointly organized by Campus Alberta Quality Council, the Council on Admissions and Transfers, and the Ministry of Advanced Education. At that forum, the need to give more attention to the assessment of learning outcomes by institutions and the system in Alberta was identified as a priority. CAQC is grateful to the Ministry of Advanced Education for providing support for Alberta representation at the OUC conference, to help ensure that next steps and actions in Alberta are informed by effective practices in other jurisdictions.

Overview of the 2016 OUC Conference

Conference attendees included 256 individuals from 19 universities, 19 colleges, and various other organizations. The conference was organized into 48 plenary and concurrent sessions, including both presentations and workshops over the course of two days. Due to the large number of concurrent sessions, we have not attempted to provide a comprehensive record of the conference, but rather provide highlights that seem relevant to the Alberta context. The detailed conference program is found in **Appendix A**, and electronic versions of the [detailed program](#) and speaker materials and some handouts are also available at <http://oucqa.ca/event/learning-outcomes-evolution-of-assessment/>.

Select Conference Highlights

The conference opened with a plenary panel on ***Communicating Learning Outcomes: Employer and Institutional Perspectives***, moderated by the OUCQA Executive Director, and featuring panelists from the Ontario Undergraduate Student Association, Western University, Fanshawe College, and the Business Council of Canada (***Plenary Panel 1, October 17***). The Business Council of Canada and Ontario Student Association perspectives both highlighted the importance of students being able to articulate to employers and graduate and professional schools the value of what they have done. In a recent Business Council survey, employers indicate that students are generally coming into the workforce with reasonable preparation, and employers particularly value skills such as collaboration, communication, functional knowledge, problem-solving skills, and people and relational skills. In the discussion that followed the short presentations, emphasis was placed on the importance of students developing metacognitive awareness during their academic programs, of intercultural communication, and empathy and effective domain outcomes. The view was expressed that more attention needs to be placed on helping students step out of their disciplines to articulate what they have learned, and to be able to “sell” their own strengths and skills as they enter the workforce or further education. The assessment of learning outcomes can play an important role in achieving this.

International Trends and Activities (Session 1 Workshop B, October 17) were addressed by speakers from the Ontario Postsecondary Education Quality Assurance Board (PEQAB), the Council for Aid to Education (CAE), and the Educational Testing Service (ETS). The presenter from PEQAB highlighted findings on international trends in learning outcomes policies in quality assurance, including her recent thesis research study (2015) on the sparse evidence for how learning outcomes policies are being used in regulatory schemes, and the impact they have had. She surveyed 330 regulatory agencies, carried out a case study of 9 policy evaluations, and a meta-evaluation of policy evaluations. The findings indicate limited impact of learning outcomes policies, and the reasons for their failures were analyzed. These include “*policy design (the policies being misaligned, misapplied, or misdirected), and the incongruence of regulatory agency roles, goals, and spheres of power with the desired impact of learning outcomes policies.*” An example of misalignment is building learning outcomes assessment into audit processes, but then involving reviewers who are unfamiliar with learning outcomes approaches and can’t helpfully assess them. A draft report of this study (not for wider circulation yet), is included in **Appendix B** of this report. The Collegiate Learning Assessment (CLA+, <http://cae.org/participating-institutions/cla-references>) was presented as an example of an assessment of the critical thinking and written communication skills of college students. The third presentation discussed the context and concept of CALOHEE (Comparing Achievements of Learning Outcomes in Higher Education in Europe), a project to develop transnational instruments to measure and compare learning outcomes in five disciplines, working from the ground up, engaging faculty in those disciplines in setting goals (<https://www.calohee.eu>).

Trends and Insights from Analyzing Program Review Self-Study Documents (Session 2, Workshop A, October 17). Speakers from Queen’s University’s Centre for Teaching and Learning, Office of the Provost, and the Faculty of Health Sciences presented an informative summary of a comprehensive analysis of 39 cyclical program review self-study documents. The goal of the project was to step back and take a look at what the impact of five years of working under the OUCQA Institutional Quality Assurance Process (IQAP) has been, and to inform both the ongoing development of quality assurance processes and institutional strategic planning. Queen’s has used this analysis to identify high impact processes and share these with faculties and programs. The analysis identified general weaknesses in tracking graduates of programs, and gave data on the extent to which articulation of learning outcomes changed over the four year period of the study. This workshop suggested some strategies that could be used by institutions in Alberta, and that give some mechanisms to follow up nicely on discussions held in the 2015 *Campus Alberta Quality Assurance Workshop: Sharing Effective Practices*, jointly organized by CAQC, the CARI institutions, and the Ministry.

Assessing the “Whole Person”: Creating Common Rubrics to Assess Learning Outcomes Across the Entire University Experience (Session 3, Workshop C, October 17). Presenters from Brescia University College, Western University, introduced participants to a model of creating common institutional learning outcome rubrics that can be used to go beyond classroom-based academic skills to assess the “whole person.” In working to move the institution toward an outcomes based educational model, presenters shared information on how they tried to engage the whole campus in affective learning outcomes, beginning with the university college mission statement to “lead with wisdom, justice, and compassion in a changing world.” Seven institutional learning outcomes were identified as key to fostering the development of these attributes in graduates.

Supporting the Evolution of Assessment: Authentic Assessment, Accessibility, and Deepened Course Alignment (Session 4, Workshop A, October 17). Participants in this hands-on workshop were invited to focus on authenticity and accessibility in course design by taking on the perspective of an assigned student avatar in reading sample course syllabi used at the University of Waterloo. The experience raised awareness of affordances and possible obstacles in the delivery of courses for individuals in light of the positionality of their avatar.

Day 1 ended with a keynote talk, ***“Between the Rock and the Hard Place: Lessons Learned from Working between External Demands and Internal Resistance to Improve Student Learning,”*** by two presenters from the Center of Inquiry at Wabash College in the USA. The talk reported on how, in response to the push into assessment by outside forces, key faculty, staff, and administrators at institutions can be supported in their choices to lead assessment efforts – and to do so not simply to keep their institutions in good standing with outsiders, but because they see it as an opportunity to improve student learning. Beyond the longitudinal Wabash National Study that involved some 17,000 students, a program called the Teagle Assessment Scholar Program was created to support assessment leaders at the institutional level. Key strategies for effective assessment leaders included: (a) Reframing assessment from “outsiders are making you do this” to internally driven, inquiry-focused frameworks that help faculty and staff in their work with students. Experience highlighted the need to understand the complexity of university and college systems, the change strategies that are compatible with each unique system, and to ground assessment in conversations that make sense of assessment data rather than focusing mostly on spreadsheets or reports. Change strategies need to involve long term, sustainable interventions that energize faculty and staff by giving them information to help them benefit students; (b) Effective strategies meet staff and faculty in a consultative fashion and connect what staff and faculty know from their disciplines and professions to assessment; (c) To be sustainable, assessment needs to be structured so faculty and staff can fit it into their regular workloads.

Session 1 on Day 2 (October 18) began with workshops, one of which was ***“Creating Learning Outcomes based on the Recommendations of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission,”*** led by administrators from Carleton University. Four of the 94 calls to action of the TRC report targeted “education for reconciliation,” and Call 62 and 63 targeted education at the post-secondary level. Modelling Murray Sinclair’s approach of working by building relationships, Carleton is developing a set of TRC-inspired learning outcomes that speak to indigenous issues and indigenous ways of knowing, that could be adopted by any academic unit on campus. The focus is on teaching indigenous issues. Instructor capacity was identified as a large challenge, and appropriate pedagogies, such as consensual decision making, that match the content, can create discomfort among both instructors and students.

A keynote talk, ***“Aligning Goals, Assessment, and Pedagogy: Assignment Design as a Key Faculty Activity,”*** by the past president of the National Center for Higher Education Management Systems (NCHEMS) in the US, focused on the intentional alignment that is needed among (a) clear goals for students in outcome terms, (b) carefully designed curricula and pedagogical strategies to achieve those goals, and (c) reliable ways to assess student attainment of those goals that can lead to both improvement and accountability. The presentation gave a broad and thorough overview of the growing quality agenda in international higher education policy, highlighting concerns about graduate achievement, alignment of outcomes on national and international levels, and stakeholder concern about graduate quality, especially from the employment community. Six incarnations of conceptions of

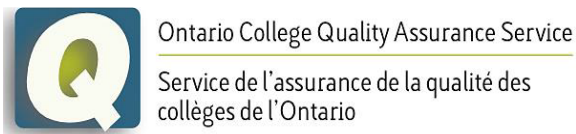
quality were identified and summarized (1. Reputation, 2. Resources, 3. Selectivity, 4. “Fitness for Purpose,” 5. Outcomes Assessment, and 6. Exit Proficiencies.) The speaker suggested a hope that post-secondary education move toward a common set of graduation proficiencies adopted by all providers. One of the keys to implementation is embedding “signature assessments” in the regular teaching and learning processes that are used both as a portion of a class grade and to provide a portfolio demonstrating overall standards of achievement, using standard rubrics. The speaker ended with outlining a vision for the key features of an intentional curriculum, what is needed to accomplish those features, and work toward a national qualifications framework. Examples were given of the role of curricular mapping and how specific assignments that are embedded in subject knowledge, can be developed to address two or three proficiencies.

An overview of “**Mapping the Terrain of Learning Outcomes,**” for those relatively new to the learning outcomes conversation, was given by a representative of PEQAB (*Session 2, Workshop D, October 18*). A matrix of learning outcomes policy development was presented on a spreadsheet, and participants were invited to map examples of policy activities onto this matrix. The matrix is attached to this report in **Appendix C**.

The conference ended, as it began, with a plenary panel discussion – this one entitled “**State of the Union.**” Representatives of the Ontario post-secondary sector (Humber College, Western University, and the University of Ottawa) reflected on achievements, challenges, and emerging questions in the development of the assessment of learning outcomes. International initiatives where social partners play an active role in defining new courses and programs were mentioned. The audience was reminded that in Ontario the IQAP framework of the OUCQA is only 5 years old, but the use of learning outcomes and their assessment has helped to shift the focus from faculty to students. A new skills agenda coming from the College sector was discussed that features analytical skills, problem solving, teamwork, written communication, conscientious, work ethic, flexibility/adaptability, self-confidence, verbal communication, leadership, interpersonal skills, personal attributes, organization, detail oriented, and creative thinking. It was suggested by one panelist that New Zealand is doing some of the best work on quality assurance at the tertiary level. Finally, considerable audience discussion was catalyzed by presentation of the work being done at Western on professional development for graduate students, which has led to important re-examination of the PhD credential. A review of all 50 PhD programs is underway with a view toward using a learning outcomes approach to guide better understanding of the competencies that students graduate with, and to frame professional development for all PhD students. It was suggested that an effective practice is to build in formal self-assessment by students of their competencies at the beginning, throughout, and at the end of a PhD program. This can lead to helpful reflection on the role that professional development can play in helping students to meet those competencies.

Appendix A: Learning Outcomes: Evolution of Assessment

A print version of the detailed program is included here. Electronic versions of the [detailed program](#) and [speaker materials and some handouts](#) are also available



Learning Outcomes: Evolution of Assessment

October 17 – 18, 2016
DoubleTree by Hilton Hotel
Toronto, Ontario

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Monday, October 17, 2016

REGISTRATION AND BREAKFAST**MANDARIN BALLROOM****7:30 a.m. – 8:15 a.m.****WELCOME AND INTRODUCTIONS****MANDARIN BALLROOM****8:15 a.m. – 8:30 a.m.****ALICE PITT**, Chair, Conference Planning Committee**PLENARY PANEL 1****MANDARIN BALLROOM****8:30 a.m. – 10:00 a.m.*****Communicating Learning Outcomes: Employer and Institutional Perspectives***

PANEL: **JAMIE CLEARY**, President, Ontario Undergraduate Student Association,
NANDA DIMITROV, Acting Director, Teaching Support Centre, Western University,
TRACY GEDIES, Director, Centre for Academic Excellence, Fanshawe College, and
VALERIE WALKER, Vice President, Innovation and Skills, the Business Council of
Canada

MODERATOR: **BRIAN TIMNEY**, Ontario Universities Council on Quality Assurance

Although universities and colleges have done a very good job at defining and assessing learning outcomes, there is still a gap in the way that these are expressed by students in terms of their understanding of the competencies that are needed within the workforce. Panelists (from the business, university, and college sectors, including students), will discuss the competencies that are expected from students as they transition into new jobs, and ways in which they might better articulate to their (potential) employers the learning and skills sets they have obtained through the course of their studies. The emphasis will be on the development of best practices to ensure that students' capabilities are recognized after they leave their educational institutions.

COFFEE BREAK**10:00 a.m. – 10:30 a.m.****ALL CONFERENCE ROOMS**

WORKSHOPS – DAY 1, SESSION 1**10:30 a.m. – 11:00 a.m.****WORKSHOP A****VICTORIA A & B****Informal Discussion*****Accommodation, Learning Outcomes and Graduate Studies*****DISCUSSION LEADER:** **LINDA MILLER**, Vice-Provost, Graduate and Postdoctoral Studies, Western University

In this informal discussion, participants will consider how to meet and measure program-level learning outcomes for graduate students needing accommodation. Participants will share best practices and approaches for ensuring student success while also maintaining program rigour and essential requirements.

WORKSHOP B**TORONTO BALLROOM****(10:30 a.m. – 12:15 p.m.)*****International Trends and Activities*****SPEAKERS:** **ROGER BENJAMIN**, President and CEO, Council for Aid to Education (CAE), **MARY CATHARINE LENNON**, Senior Policy Advisor, Postsecondary Education Quality Assurance Board (PEQAB), **TOM VAN ESSEN**, Executive Director, Educational Testing Service (ETS)**CHAIR:** **CHARLES BLAICH**, Center of Inquiry at Wabash College and the Higher Education Data Sharing Consortium (HEDS)**LEVEL:** All

A wide range of learning outcomes assessment activities are supporting global understanding and comparisons of student capacities, and furthering best practices in policy development supporting these goals. Three presentations will focus on different aspects of the international environment. The first presentation approaches learning outcomes as a policy issue in system-level quality assurance activities, and discusses findings from a global study on the trends and impacts of different types of learning outcomes goals and activities. The next considers the value of generic skills and discusses the OECD's second phase of worldwide testing using the Collegiate Learning Assessment (CLA) as a means of capturing educational quality. The final discussion shifts the focus onto discipline specific assessments, presenting the work of the EU-funded Measuring and Comparing Achievements of Learning Outcomes in Higher Education in Europe (CALOHEE) project that is developing Europe-wide assessments of students in five different disciplines. Together these three presentations will highlight global activities in learning outcomes assessment, demonstrate the variety of rationales for learning outcomes activities, and introduce the second generation of large-scale assessments.

WORKSHOP C**VANCOUVER*****Building Trust in the Adoption of an Outcomes Assessment Based Process for Curriculum Improvement*****SPEAKERS:** RANIA AL-HAMMOUD, SAMANTHI SOORIYABANDARA, and DEREK WRIGHT, Civil and Environmental Engineering, University of Waterloo**CHAIR:** PHIL BATES, Royal Military College of Canada**LEVEL:** All

The outcomes process is a fairly new methodology that has been introduced to the engineering curriculum in Ontario. The novelty of the process has created a sense of mistrust and misunderstanding about its value in program assessment, making wide spread acceptance/adoption within the faculty of engineering at the University of Waterloo a challenge. In order to overcome this barrier the accreditation and graduate attributes team has proposed a three pronged approach: Garner stakeholder support by 1) comparing the engineering departments' outcomes process to a successful change management model from the business world. One of the models used in this comparison is Demming's Plan-Do-Study-Act cycle; 2) creating a need for change by presenting assessment results from the pre and post outcomes process, with related business cases in an effort to enlighten stakeholders of the cyclic, continuous testing and scientific nature of the outcomes process; 3) highlighting the advantages of supporting and sustaining the outcomes process, all the while drawing parallels from successful business concepts such as stakeholder engagement, value addition, pooling of resources, etc. The above approach will prove to be of tactical advantage in fostering an environment accepting of changes that will result in continuous improvements.

By the end of this session participants will be able to: (i) Create a platform on which to garner support from faculty and staff for the outcomes process, achieved by comparing the departmental outcomes process to a successful continuous improvement model from the business world; and (ii) Generate ideas on the use of assessment results from the pre and post outcomes process to enlighten stakeholders of the cyclic, continuous testing and scientific nature of the outcomes process.

WORKSHOP D**HONG KONG*****From the Ground Up: A Decision Aid for Outcomes-Based Assessment – Introduction and Use*****SPEAKERS:** NATALIE CHOW, KENNETH MCKAY and MEHRDAD PIRNIA, Management Sciences, University of Waterloo**CHAIR:** JEFFREY BERRYMAN, University of Windsor**LEVEL:** All

In response to the Canadian Engineering Accreditation Board (CEAB) requirements for measuring graduate attributes, the Department of Management Sciences at University of Waterloo has created an innovative outcomes-based assessment (OBA) tool and implemented it for two academic terms. This workshop will introduce participants to the functionalities of the tool. Designed and developed alongside instructors through one-on-one consultations, the OBA workbook offers flexibility and robustness. It can be customized using course-specific indicators and assessment methods that align with CEAB graduate attributes. Instructors are asked to report students' marks at the end of each academic semester, whereby the input of students' marks enables a direct analysis of overall class and individual performance. While we are in the preliminary stage of data analysis, we are hopeful that this process will help inspire pedagogical reflection and discussion across the Department. In

addition to describing the tool, the facilitators will share insights from using a bottom-up approach and welcome feedback from participants. The software can be made available to attendees, upon request.

By the end of this session participants will be able to: (i) Gain insight into an Excel-based tool specifically designed for CEAB outcomes-based assessment through a live demonstration; and (ii) Reflect on the complexities of implementing a bottom-up approach in the continuous program improvement framework.

WORKSHOP E**SHANGHAI****Informal Discussion*****Does the "A" - "F" Letter Grading System Serve Outcomes Based Pedagogy?***

DISCUSSION LEADERS: CHRIS SINCLAIR and CONNIE WINDER, Office of Academic Excellence, George Brown College

This informal discussion will focus on the appropriateness and applicability of current grading systems in postsecondary institutions that embrace “outcomes-based” pedagogy. There have been significant changes in the way colleges and universities conceptualize learning and construct courses over the past 25 years. One of the most impactful and widely embraced changes is the move towards clear articulations of course and program objectives stated in terms of the specific skills, knowledge, values and attitudes that students will be required to demonstrate at the conclusion of a course and/or program. These outcomes are generally developed within the context of a set of conditions related to a discipline, profession or trade. There is a well-established and growing body of research focused on the utility and limitations associated with outcomes-based learning and the extent to which it promotes more learner centered pedagogy. There has been far less scrutiny of grading systems that have, for the most part, remained static despite these significant pedagogical shifts. In this discussion, we hope to re-examine the purposes of grading (for simplicity we'll focus on the “A” – “F” system) and explore the compatibility between existing systems and outcomes-based learning.

WORKSHOP F**DENVER****Informal Networking****WORKSHOP G****SAN FRANCISCO****Informal Discussion*****Communicating Learning Outcomes: Employer and Institutional Perspectives
(continued from Plenary Panel)***

DISCUSSION LEADER: VALERIE WALKER, Vice President, Innovation and Skills, the Business Council of Canada

Participants will have an opportunity to discuss in more depth some of the themes and issues that arose during the morning's Plenary Panel presentation.

WORKSHOPS – DAY 1, SESSION 2

11:15 A.M. – 12:15 P.M.

WORKSHOP A

VICTORIA A & B

Trends and Insights from Analyzing Program Review Self-Study Documents

SPEAKERS: **KLODIANA KOLOMITRO** and **CLAIRE O'BRIEN**, Centre for Teaching and Learning, **JILL SCOTT**, Office of the Provost, and **DENISE STOCKLEY**, Faculty of Health Sciences, Queen's University

CHAIR: **JULIA COLYAR**, Council of Ontario Universities

LEVEL: Intermediate / Advanced

Five years into the new quality assurance process, Queen's University has undertaken a comprehensive analysis of cyclical program review self-study documents. The goal of the project has been to identify key issues and trends, and to use those findings to inform the ongoing development of quality assurance processes and to inform institutional strategic planning. Cyclical Program Review provides an opportunity for academic programs to articulate or validate their program learning outcomes and map their entire curriculum to ensure alignment of course- and program-level LOs, and to articulate any key innovations. Queen's has invested substantial resources into quality assurance, thus it is important to evaluate the overall impact of the process on program quality and to identify gaps, opportunities and lessons learned. Our methodology for this project has been a process of qualitative analysis grounded in a developmental evaluation framework (Patton, 2010), of all 35 self-study documents using the Atlas.ti program. In this session we will share with the participants particular trends that have emerged, as well as areas that require further attention.

By the end of this session participants will: (i) Identify emerging trends and gaps in the development and assessment of learning outcomes; (ii) Examine your institutional quality assurance processes in light of study findings; and (iii) Explore opportunities for your institution to engage in evaluation of quality assurance processes.

WORKSHOP B

VANCOUVER

The Reluctant Leader: Encouraging and Including Librarians in Learning Outcomes Development and Assessment

SPEAKER: **HEATHER CAMPBELL**, Advanced Learning and Teaching Centre, Brescia University College, Western University

CHAIR: **EILEEN DECOURCY**, Humber College Institute of Technology & Advanced Learning

LEVEL: All

Thorough development and assessment of learning outcomes is a time-intensive process: a recent survey by Queen's University found that the majority of Teaching and Learning Centres do not have sufficient resources to dedicate to assessment, and frequently need to forgo authentic or learning outcomes assessment as a result (Kolomitro, 2016). Kezar and Lester (2009) argue that re-organizing our institutions for collaboration, rather than traditional silos, is the best way to address such 21st century educational priorities. While campus partnerships are being identified and explored on many campuses, one group often overlooked are librarians. Their experience with authentic

assessment, articulating non-disciplinary or work-ready learning outcomes, and faculty mentorship make them potential leaders in outcomes development and assessment; but this proficiency is often lost behind the other services they provide. This interactive session will challenge participants to reconsider the expertise of librarians and collaboratively explore strategies for fostering their inclusion in learning outcomes development and assessment. Participants will be introduced to one university where librarians helped to lead the adoption of an outcomes-based model of education, and will be encouraged to match their own learning outcomes assessment needs with opportunities for librarians.

By the end of this session participants will be able to: (i) Identify the learning outcomes development and assessment expertise of academic librarians by engaging in workshop activities and discussion; and (ii) Through small and large group discussion, participants will identify and evaluate opportunities for including librarians in the development and assessment of learning outcomes.

WORKSHOP C**HONG KONG*****Evaluation Mapping: An Interactive Workshop to Create and Review Alignments in Your Course***

SPEAKERS: MELISSA BARNARD and PATRICIA KAYE, Centre for Academic Excellence, Fanshawe College

CHAIR: KAREN BELFER, Ontario College Quality Assurance Service

LEVEL: Beginner / Intermediate

The Evaluation Mapping Tool was designed at Fanshawe College to support faculty in course design and development incorporating alignments of vocational learning outcomes, course learning outcomes, level of skill, domain (cognitive, affective, psychomotor), and the corresponding evaluation and weighting of evaluation. This tool was developed in support of the longstanding trend in Ontario, and indeed globally, toward outcome-based education that promotes learning towards those identified outcomes created with student success in mind. This session will provide an overview of the Evaluation Mapping Tool and will engage participants in a mock application of the Tool to a course outline. An overview of the results of the pilot study conducted at Fanshawe on faculty perception and reception of the tool will also be shared along with plenty of opportunity for questions and answers. Feedback from participants on the use of the Evaluation Mapping Tool will be sought. Participants will also receive an electronic copy of the Evaluation Mapping Tool itself for future reference and application.

By the end of this session participants will be able to: (i) Identify the relationship between Vocational Learning Outcomes and Course Learning Outcomes; (ii) Determine the domain(s) associated with the course outcomes in accordance with Bloom's Taxonomy (revised) and relationship to evaluation; and (iii) Explain the relationship between time spent teaching and weighting of evaluation.

WORKSHOP D**SHANGHAI*****Integrating New Accreditation Standards***

SPEAKERS: ELIZABETH DEMARSH and HEATHER FARMER, Centre for Teaching and Learning, Sheridan College

CHAIR: DAPHNE BONAR, George Brown College

LEVEL: Intermediate

Programs must evolve over time to remain relevant and current in order to meet the needs of graduates entering into the workplace. What does it look like when an existing program is faced with integrating a new accreditation standard? Join us to hear about the exciting story of one brave degree program that underwent program review, accreditation and consent renewal in one fell swoop. As well, we will examine some of the successes and learning points this program had on their voyage as a group. Through round table discussions and small group activities, participants explore the critical alignment between Accreditation Standards, Program Learning Outcomes and Course Learning Outcomes and how we can map these alignments to inform each of our program stakeholders. No matter the credential, many programs within the system have outside bodies that they need to be accountable to. E.g., Arts, IT, Health, Engineering etc. If you have an accrediting body and your program learning outcomes are not melded together, then you are answering to two masters: PEQAB + CVS + accreditation body > Program Outcomes.

By the end of this session participants will be able to: (i) Describe the benefits of tying accrediting standards to PLOs for both the students and industry; (ii) Discuss the critical alignment between Accreditation Standards and Program Learning Outcomes and the impact on course development; and (iii) Define ways to map the alignment of Accreditation Standards and PLOs to inform program stakeholders.

WORKSHOP E**DENVER**

***The Evolution of Assessment on Creativity:
Defining What “A” Means in Creativity Assessment***

SPEAKER: BERNIE MURRAY, Fashion, Ryerson University

CHAIR: BRIAN TIMNEY, Ontario Universities Council on Quality Assurance

LEVEL: All

In this workshop participants focus on criteria to measure creativity or creative products. The question to guide discourse in this session is: What does “A” mean in terms of assessing creativity in process work, performance, or product? Additionally, the findings from a research study on the assessment of creativity informs this presentation. Problems for creativity assessment include the identification of assessment criteria, different perceptions and definitions of creativity, or clarity of the assessment goals. This session will engage the audience by exploring how individuals and groups are creative. Using visual exemplars the audience will examine the evolution of creativity assessment from the past and present, and make recommendations about how innovative work may be assessed in the future. The audience will compare their results and produce a list of criteria. The second goal of the session will include a short presentation on students’ perceptions about assessment and learning in a design and communication program in higher education. Discussion will focus on how to assess process, performance, and product. Finally, the third goal engages the audience by developing individual and group assessment for a performance or product.

By the end of this session participants will be able to: (i) Explore how individuals and groups are creative. How have they been assessed in the past, present, and the future; (ii) Report and examine criteria to assess products including artwork, installations, designs, and conceptual ideas from a creativity study. Criteria may include process work, products, and group work; and (iii) Discuss and develop assessment standards for individual and group creativity: What does “A” mean in creativity assessment?

WORKSHOP F**SAN FRANCISCO*****Evaluating and Mapping Course and Major Progressions
using a Learning Outcomes Framework***

SPEAKERS: JOHN DAWSON and PAISLEY WORTHINGTON, College of Biological Science Office of Educational Scholarship and Practice (COESP) and DALE LACKEYRAM, Centre for Open Learning and Educational Support, University of Guelph

CHAIR: JOHN DOERKSEN, Western University

LEVEL: Intermediate

Widely-accepted student learning outcomes (LOs) assessment tools that can inform curricular discussions and resourcing decisions are not available. In this session we present the findings of applying a LO framework as one such tool. Undergraduate students collected course LOs (CLOs) and 1,574 questions from eight interconnected core courses and assigned Bloom's taxonomy cognitive levels and CLOs to all questions. Connections between CLOs, major LOs (MLOs), and question cognitive levels were then examined. During this session we will present baseline data describing the emphasis and cognitive level of assessments for different CLOs in the core courses. We will also facilitate discussion about the limitations of our work and break out into groups to brainstorm ways to determine an appropriate emphasis of LOs within courses and majors and the desired cognitive level of assessments through a progression of core courses. Finally, we will also discuss how the LO framework provides data revealing resource issues within courses and programs and how these data might impact resourcing decisions.

By the end of this session participants will be able to: (i) Describe the LO framework used in the work, its limitations, and the importance of undergraduate student input into LO application in courses and programs; (ii) Develop ideas for determining the appropriate emphasis of LOs in courses and programs through discussion, brainstorming, and prioritizing ideas; and (iii) Examine how the LO framework provides data revealing resource issues in curricula and informing resourcing decisions through discussion of the implications of the collected data.

LUNCH**12:15 p.m. – 1:15 p.m.****MANDARIN BALLROOM****WORKSHOPS – DAY 1, SESSION 3****1:15 p.m. – 2:15 p.m.****WORKSHOP A****VICTORIA A&B*****Assessing and Addressing Prior Knowledge to Support Student Learning***

SPEAKERS: CONNIE WINDER and CHRIS SINCLAIR, Office of Academic Excellence, George Brown College

CHAIR: ARLENE WILLIAMS, Ontario Council on Articulation and Transfer

LEVEL: Beginner / Intermediate

This workshop focuses on strategies that instructors might employ to assess aspects of students' prior knowledge and beliefs in order to identify gaps and misconceptions that may hinder the learning of new material. Students enter postsecondary classrooms with diverse experiences, knowledge, skills, beliefs, and attitudes, all of which influence how they interpret, organize and understand new information. David Ausubel (1968) argued that prior knowledge is the most important influence on learning and that teachers must accurately assess it in order to teach effectively. Prior knowledge acts as a filter; it provides a foundation or bridge when new information is congruent and creates impediments to accurate understanding when new information is inconsistent with prior understanding (Winder & Corter, 2016). Effective preliminary assessment of prior knowledge provides vital information that allows instructors to remove barriers and leverage existing knowledge to help students achieve a deeper understanding of key concepts in support of the achievement of learning outcomes. Participants will work in small groups to identify and share potentially problematic aspects of prior knowledge, discuss the usefulness of a variety of methods to assess students' prior learning and consider how students' pre-existing conceptualizations might be used to facilitate the achievement of learning outcomes.

By the end of this session participants will be able to: (i) Identify, based on the current research and your own experience in the discipline in which you teach, common examples of prior knowledge students bring to your classroom that act as impediments to learning; (ii) Discuss and assess the usefulness of a variety of strategies to assess the breadth and depth of students' prior learning related to your discipline; and (iii) Outline potential strategies to more effectively incorporate students' pre-existing conceptualizations to facilitate the achievement of learning outcomes.

WORKSHOP B**TORONTO BALLROOM*****Barista or Better? Where a College or University Diploma Will Take You –
A Tax Data Linkage Approach***

SPEAKER: ROSS FINNIE, Graduate School of Public and International Affairs, Education Policy Research Initiative, University of Ottawa

CHAIR: PAUL GOOCH, Ontario Universities Council on Quality Assurance

LEVEL: All

This presentation is rooted in the construction of a new and unique dataset which links administrative data on students from 14 colleges and universities in four different regions across Canada with tax record data. This allows the post-schooling labour market outcomes of graduates to be tracked on a year-by-year basis for all those who graduated from 2005 through 2012, with all graduates followed through to 2013. Earnings profiles are broken down by graduating cohort, area of study, gender, and in other ways so that patterns in starting earnings levels and earnings growth can be identified and compared. The results point to the continuing overall value of post-secondary education, although notable and interesting differences in these patterns across cohorts and groups are also identified.

By the end of this session participants will be able to: (i) Gain an understanding of the labour market outcomes of recent PSE graduates from the presentation and from the follow up questions and discussions; (ii) Gain an understanding of various methodological approaches, including how to use existing datasets to extract the data needed for an analysis of this type from the presentation and from the follow up questions and discussions; and (iii) Gain an understanding of the implications for further research and related policy issues from the presentation and from the follow up questions and discussions.

WORKSHOP C**VANCOUVER*****Assessing the 'Whole Person': Creating Common Rubrics to Assess Learning Outcomes Across the Entire University Experience*****SPEAKERS:** HEATHER CAMPBELL and JOHN MITCHELL, Advanced Learning and Teaching Centre, Brescia University College, Western University**CHAIR:** DANIELLA MALLINICK, University of Toronto**LEVEL:** Beginner / Intermediate

This workshop will introduce participants to a model of creating common institutional rubrics that can be used to assess 'the whole person' – learning outcomes that cover the entire student experience, not just classroom-based academic skills. Participants will have a chance to review Brescia University College's rubrics before discussing with colleagues how the model can be customized to their own institutions. Participants will also be encouraged to discuss the benefits and challenges of assessing affective or values-based learning outcomes at an institutional level.

By the end of this session participants will take away concrete examples to: (i) Articulate the value (and challenge) of developing institutional assessment methods that suit both curricular and co-curricular learning opportunities through small- and whole-group discussion; and (ii) Discuss strategies for developing rubrics to assess affective or values-based learning outcomes by applying a model of rubric development to their own institution.

WORKSHOP D**HONG KONG*****Online Rubric Builder - "BASICS," A Starting Point for Assessment of Cognitive Skills*****SPEAKERS:** JILL SCOTT and NATALIE SIMPER, Office of the Provost, Queen's University**CHAIR:** SOFIE LACHAPPELLE, University of Guelph**LEVEL:** Beginner / Intermediate

Instructors at post-secondary institutions are increasingly recognizing the importance of developing cognitive skills like critical thinking, creative thinking and problem solving. The challenge for some however is designing assessment rubrics that clearly describe the expected outcomes for students. A web application was built at Queen's to meet this challenge. Data and lessons learned from the Learning Outcomes Assessment project were leveraged to design and create a rubric building web-application to support instructors. The tool is called "Building Assessment Scaffolds for Intellectual Cognitive Skills" (BASICS). It is based on assessment dimensions from the American Association for Colleges and Universities (AAC&U), Valid Assessment of Learning in Undergraduate Education (VALUE) rubrics (Rhodes & Finley, 2013). In this session, participants will use the tool to create a rubric for a specific task, and then reflect on best practice for rubric creation, and the alignment of performance criteria for desired outcomes. BASICS provides a professional development opportunity, empowering instructors to engage in a process of backward design (Wiggins & McTighe, 2005).

By the end of this session participants will be able to: (i) Define components of critical thinking, creative thinking and problem solving; (ii) Use the BASICS rubric builder to compose a rubric for a performance task; and (iii) Utilize the principles of backward design to reflect on the alignment between the rubric and performance assessment.

WORKSHOP E**SHANGHAI*****Documenting and Assessing Learning Outcomes with Sesame*****SPEAKERS:** CAMILLE RUTHERFORD, Centre for Academic Excellence, Brock University and MARY WILSON, Faculty of Education, Niagara College**CHAIR:** MARCIA MOSHÉ, Ryerson University**LEVEL:** Intermediate

Join us for a hands-on exploration of innovative approaches for collecting, curating and assessing evidence of student achievement of learning outcomes. Innovative assessment strategies allow students and faculty to document student learning in any form, importing directly from their favorite applications. As a result educators can easily provide immediate feedback to students using their own assessment tools and curriculum standards. An innovative approach used at Niagara College and Brock University is to use Sesamehq.com as a visual means to capture dynamic learning, provide feedback and document learning outcomes in one place. Sesame offers access to common learning outcomes frameworks, but can also be used to import program specific learning outcomes and evaluation criteria, as well as those from certifying and accrediting bodies. More than just an e-portfolio, it allows faculty to connect collected evidence to curriculum materials including learning outcomes, syllabi, lesson plans, assessments, rubrics and faculty can choose to share their materials with colleagues to support scaffolding across courses and to inform collaborative work on integrated curriculum design and delivery.

By the end of this session participants will be able to: (i) Have the opportunity to compare and contrast traditional learning outcome assessment methods with innovative approaches that use a variety of technology resources; (ii) Gain an understanding of the ways in which the quality of student learning can benefit from timely feedback on learning that is explicitly tied to learning outcomes and standards. Session attendees will have opportunity to experiment with the platform, as a student would to collect, reflect upon, curate and share evidence of their own academic accomplishments; and (iii) Critically examine how access to a repository of evidence of student achievement of learning outcomes can be used by educators to reflect upon and improve constructive alignment in courses and curriculum.

WORKSHOP F**DENVER*****Partnering for Student Success: Creating Course Outcomes that Integrate Institutional Information Literacy Learning Outcomes*****SPEAKER:** KIM MCPHEE, Western Libraries, Western University**CHAIR:** HEATHER BUCHANSKY, University of Toronto Libraries**LEVEL:** Intermediate

Librarians and faculty regularly collaborate in order to improve student learning. But how deep is that learning? Are the covered topics meaningful and contributing to lifelong learning? What are the elements of engagement for the students? The traditional one-shot database demonstration in a guest lecture style can feel disjointed from the class in question and appear like an optional component rather than a substantial piece of the larger course puzzle. We will argue that librarian-faculty collaboration can and should be much more substantial and that this collaboration should be reflected in course learning outcomes. That is, by partnering to determine the information literacy needs of students in a course, and across a program, the pair can create a seamless learning experience for students that allows them to make connections between information literacy concepts and course material, thus increasing student learning. Also, such integration leads to thoughtful assessments and learning activities that “count” in the course and are therefore more engaging and

motivating. Participants are requested to attend this workshop with a particular course in mind (please bring your syllabus, if possible, or use a provided sample), ready to consider students' information literacy needs.

By the end of this session participants will be able to: (i) Demonstrate how information literacy learning outcomes can be integrated into a course by systematically mapping information literacy learning outcomes onto their own (or provided) course outcomes.

WORKSHOP G**SEATTLE**

***Assessing International Graduate Students' Evolving Academic Literacies:
Reflections on a Collaborative Model***

SPEAKERS: KATHERINE ANDERSON, STEPHEN ARMSTRONG, JAMES CORCORAN, ANGELICA GALANTE and BRUCE RUSSELL, International Foundation Program – New College, University of Toronto

CHAIR: BRENDA BROUWER, Queen's University

LEVEL: All

Drawing on experiences preparing international, multilingual (English as an additional language) graduate students for their professional Master of Engineering program at the University of Toronto, this presentation provides reflections on the efficacy of a collaborative model aimed at assessing students' language-based (reading, writing, and research skills) and content-based (core Engineering course) learning over the course of a semester-long bridging program. Following a brief overview of the bridging program, instructors responsible for the four foundational courses reflect upon the efficacy of their individual and collective assessment practices, highlighting various course-specific learning outcomes and assessment rubrics. The session includes interactive elements where participants reflect upon the potential and limitations of our model in relation to their particular Ontario post-secondary contexts, resulting in knowledge construction and exchange regarding the assessment of international graduate students' evolving academic research and writing skills. This presentation will be of interest to policy makers, educational leaders, English for academic purposes instructors, and all those interested in providing effective, targeted, and equitable support to the increasing population of international, multilingual scholars in Ontario Universities and Colleges.

By the end of this session participants will be able to: (i) Better understand the needs and academic learning trajectories of international multilingual students; (ii) Critically reflect on a collaborative instructional and assessment model in relation to home educational context; and (iii) Develop a tentative action plan for improving the efficacy of assessment of international students' learning outcomes at Ontario Universities.

WORKSHOP H**SAN FRANCISCO**

How Do I Assess Critical Thinking, Anyway?

SPEAKERS: JOHN DAWSON, DALE LACKEYRAM and PAISLEY WORTHINGTON, College of Biological Science Office of Educational Scholarship and Practice (COESP) and Office of Open Education, University of Guelph

CHAIR: JOHN SHEPHERD, Carleton University

LEVEL: Intermediate

The ability to think critically is an essential skill for the next generation of leaders. Post-secondary institutions are required to teach and assess critical thinking (CT) in our programs, but what is CT exactly

and how do you assess it? Many existing definitions of CT contradict each other, creating confusion about what CT is and what it looks like in practice. We developed the Model of Integrated Thinking Skills (MITS) based on common recurring themes about CT in the literature and have proposed this as a common definition to alleviate some of this confusion. In this seminar, participants will discuss the MITS definition of CT and how it can be applied to different disciplines. We will also talk about the struggles associated with facilitating student development of CT skills.

By the end of this session participants will be able to: (i) Understand the rationale behind the MITS definition of CT. This will be achieved through a brief summary of existing CT models that are represented by the MITS model; (ii) Identify and brainstorm solutions to the challenges associated with teaching/assessing CT; and (iii) Leave with an idea of how they may enhance students' development of CT skills.

WORKSHOPS – DAY 1, SESSION 4

2:30 p.m. – 3:30 p.m.

WORKSHOP A

VICTORIA A&B

Supporting the Evolution of Assessment: Authentic Assessment, Accessibility, and Deepened Course Alignment

SPEAKERS: SHANNON DEA, Department of Philosophy and TREVOR HOLMES, Centre for Teaching Excellence, University of Waterloo

CHAIR: NANDA DIMITROV, Western University

LEVEL: Intermediate

Traditional assessment is not always well-aligned with intended learning outcomes at the course and program level. At Waterloo, we co-designed and piloted an advanced workshop for alumni of a week-long course design academy. Using accessibility and authentic assessment as conceptual tools, participants deepened the course alignment that they had previously worked on. An assessment is authentic if it invites learners to engage in disciplinary or “real world” practices. In addition to providing students with excellent practical training, authentic assessments can increase accessibility by reducing distractors that are irrelevant to the capacities being taught and learned. Moreover, emphasizing authentic assessments in course design supports deeper alignment between intended learning outcomes, learning activities, and assessments. In this session, we describe the UWaterloo workshop so that attendees can consider its applicability at their home institutions. Participants will experience short versions of the activities we use, and explore the relationships between authentic assessment, accessibility, and alignment.

By the end of this session participants will: (i) Explore the relations between authentic assessment, accessibility, and alignment in course design; and (ii) Consider how to apply this deepening of course design to the assessment of learning outcomes at their home campuses.

WORKSHOP B**TORONTO BALLROOM*****Queen's Learning Outcomes Assessment Project: Tracking Student Achievement and Comparing Utility of Tools***

SPEAKERS: **BRIAN FRANK**, Faculty of Engineering and Applied Science, **JILL SCOTT** and **NATALIE SIMPER**, Office of the Provost, Queen's University

CHAIR: **PATRICIA TERSIGNI**, University of Guelph

LEVEL: Intermediate / Advanced

Transferable cognitive skills are essential outcomes for undergraduate education, for employability and broader contribution to society (Johnson, 2009). Queen's University is nearing the end of a four-year longitudinal study assessing the development of the transferable skills of critical thinking, problem solving, written communication and lifelong learning. This session will highlight lessons learned from the Learning Outcomes Assessment Project (Frank, Simper & Kaupp, 2016). Specific discussion points include the logistical obstacles; challenges to reliability; effort, time and motivation as significant factors for test scores; and the relative effectiveness and utility of the tools for evaluating student learning and providing feedback to instructors. In addition, task type and scaffolding of assignments will be discussed as factors for achievement on rubric assessment. Results from the project are provided to instructors to demonstrate comparative growth in specific areas of their students' skill development, leading to better informed evidence-based decision-making for course improvement.

By the end of this session participants will be able to: (i) Compare various approaches to skills assessment; (ii) Identify issues relating to skills assessment in post-secondary institutions; and (iii) Discuss current obstacles to implementation of skills assessment initiatives.

WORKSHOP C**HONG KONG*****Developing a New Rubric to Assess College Degree-Level Learning***

SPEAKERS: **TRACY GEDIES** and **WM. PAUL MEAHAN**, Centre for Academic Excellence, Fanshawe College

CHAIR: **JULIA COLYAR**, Council of Ontario Universities

LEVEL: Intermediate

In PEQAB's Handbook for Ontario Colleges (2015), the Program Content Standard outlines the importance of introducing and then further developing students' theoretical and practical knowledge of the core subjects. For non-core courses, Benchmark 7(b) indicates that students will experience "more than introductory knowledge ... outside the core fields of study" (p.21). In pursuit of PEQAB approval for the non-core degree-level curriculum, Fanshawe College produced a rubric that helped differentiate between "introductory" and "more than introductory" knowledge, primarily by working with faculty designing and delivering the non-core programming to outline the level of learning outcomes, the types and complexity of assigned readings, and the assessment methods used to validate the students' mastery of those outcomes. The next stage of our project, which forms the basis of this proposed workshop, is to take this rubric and to apply it to the core curriculum of degree proposals and renewals. Our goal is to outline the "types ... of student assessments" used to satisfy the program content benchmark of "provid[ing] exposure to increasingly complex theory at the degree level" (p.21, 20). Participants will engage with this rubric to advise on the correct level for a proposed course change within an existing college degree program.

By the end of this session participants will be able to: (i) Explain the relationship between course outcomes and level of skill to evaluation; (ii) Apply learning outcomes, assigned readings, and their

complementary assessments to the different levels of college degree-level core curriculum; and (iii) Evaluate the degree-level learning using the rubric to ensure the core-course programming offers sufficient rigour and depth to achieve the degree-level standard.

WORKSHOP D**SHANGHAI*****Beyond the Collection of Data: Meaningful Mapping of Program Outcomes***

SPEAKERS: **GENEVIÈVE GAUTHIER**, **JOVAN GROEN** and **PATRICK MILOT**, Centre for University Teaching, University of Ottawa

CHAIR: **ANDRE LOISELLE**, Carleton University

LEVEL: Intermediate / Advanced

The concerns of curriculum design specialists have increasingly shifted from identifying and gathering program data (such as: learning outcomes, evaluation strategies and instructional approaches) to its visualisation and its interpretation (Veltri et al. 2011; El-Khawas, 2014; Hall, 2013; Mendez, 2014). In this context, the University of Ottawa uses two different tools: 1- An online survey template tool to provide a snapshot of the underlying structure of a program and its function; 2- A syllabus mining tool to provide an evolving view of curricular changes. While developing and improving the curriculum analysis tools at the University of Ottawa, it has become ever more evident that the main goal of the program evaluation and development support services involves more than gathering and presenting curriculum data, it also involves fostering meaningful discussions among instructors about teaching and learning that are essential to concrete changes and the development of a culture of continuous program enhancement (Cardoso et al., 2016; Kleijnen et al., 2015). In this session, we will situate and present two curriculum analysis tools and share sample outputs. Via small-group activities, participants will discuss data interpretation and the implications for program review support and share strategies that foster participation and reciprocity in the curriculum analysis and enhancement process.

By the end of this session participants will be able to: (i) Describe the characteristics and choices behind two curriculum analysis tools; (ii) Analyze and evaluate the output of curriculum mapping software via different case studies. Discuss how these can be interpreted and the implications for program review support; and (iii) Discuss, exchange and explain strategies that will foster greater participation and reciprocity in the curriculum analysis and enhancement process.

WORKSHOP E**TOKYO*****Course-Level Assessment of Learning Outcomes:
Variety, Transparency, Alignment***

SPEAKERS: **CATHY BRUCE** and **ROBYNE HANLEY-DAFOE**, Centre for Teaching and Learning, Trent University

CHAIR: **PIERRE ZUNDEL**, Laurentian University

LEVEL: Intermediate

This session will support faculty, instructors, and course designers in developing practical and effective methods for analysing course design in order to increase the alignment of assessment practices with course-based learning outcomes. The session will introduce case samples from Trent University to illustrate different assessment approaches that are transparent, student-centered and practical for instructors, and that align with the course learning outcomes. Garrestson and Golson (2005) reported that curriculum-embedded assessment tools improved the teaching and learning experiences for both students and instructors. Rhodes (2012) furthered the discussion by reporting

that student motivation and performance also increased when assessment was integrated into existing course activities. An identified challenge to authentic assessment practices is time, both for the evaluation itself and for instructors to provide meaningful feedback. Common challenges and potential solutions will be explored collaboratively in this session. Participants are encouraged to bring a syllabus or other course assessment samples to the session as artefacts.

By the end of this session participants will be able to: (i) Explain the importance of curriculum embedded assessment and provide examples how to incorporate these assessment practices into course design; (ii) Align and map learning outcomes to assessment practices while developing a deeper understanding of the importance of variety and transparency in course-based assessments; and (iii) Communicate how the assessment practices align with the course learning outcomes.

WORKSHOP F**DENVER**

***Revitalizing Graduate Attribute Initiatives Across the Faculty:
A Panel Discussion***

SPEAKERS: RANIA AL-HAMMOUD, MICHELE BRISTOW, JASON GROVE, ANDREW MILNE, MEHRDAD PIRNIA and DEREK WRIGHT, Faculty of Engineering, University of Waterloo

CHAIR: SOFIE LACHAPELLE, University of Guelph

LEVEL: All

The Faculty of Engineering at the University of Waterloo has hired six full-time Graduate Attributes Lecturers (GALs) and four Accreditation Assistants to respond to the challenge of Canadian Engineering Accreditation Board graduate attributes assessment and continual improvement criteria. Over the last year, the attributes team worked in a distributed as well as coordinated manner to find effective and efficient strategies to scaffold outcomes assessment into curriculum development processes. In this panel discussion, we will provide an overview of the varied approaches used in our departments. Specifically, we will shed light on the complexities of incorporating learning outcomes into our current programs as we navigate through the terrains of existing program structures, departmental cultures, and the partially developed graduate attribute systems we inherited. We will also present examples of assessment mechanisms that have been created and piloted to measure program-level outcomes. It is our goal that this session will help spark timely conversations pertaining to learning outcomes and graduate attribute measurement initiatives. As such, the presentation component of the session will intentionally be kept short to maximize time for questions, brainstorming, and feedback from the audience.

By the end of this session participants will be able to: (i) Articulate the challenges in applying the theory of outcomes-based assessment to practice in an undergraduate engineering context (13 programs, each with cohorts of 60-200 students); and (ii) Generate ideas for how to overcome the difficulties in building a program assessment mechanism within a large, existing institution (6 departments, each with 30-90 faculty complements).

WORKSHOP G**SEATTLE*****Curriculum Revolution or Evolution:
A Case for Ongoing Curriculum Improvement Processes***

SPEAKERS: JOANNE HEWSON and KERRY LISSEMORE, Ontario Veterinary College, and DALE LACKEYRAM, Centre for Open Learning and Educational Support, University of Guelph

CHAIR: MICHEL LAURIER, University of Ottawa

LEVEL: Intermediate

In this presentation we make a case for ongoing curriculum assessment and improvement versus stop-start standardized curricular review processes. Effective curriculum improvement requires each course to have clearly defined intended learning outcomes and closely aligned assessments that are relatable at both the course-level and program-level. In order to improve the alignment of the curriculum numerous questions/gaps are examined, such as: Where and how often in the curriculum is an outcome delivered? How is the outcome evaluated? How does student performance compare with what was intended? Etc. For ongoing curriculum improvement processes we demonstrate how a continuous assessment paradigm using program outcomes can be used to evaluate students formatively and summatively and simultaneously provide information about overall program alignment. Key Findings and Implications: Developing outcomes and program assessment approaches that link performance at the student-level and course-level to proficiency at the program-level is critical to effective ongoing curriculum improvement and alignment.

By the end of this session participants will be able to: (i) Identify strategies for adapting and aligning curriculum; (ii) Identify key stakeholders involved in ongoing curriculum improvement processes; and (iii) Analyse and discuss outcomes data and the implications for ongoing curricular improvement.

WORKSHOP H**SAN FRANCISCO*****Building Inquiry and Research Skills: Librarians as Partners in Developing Outcomes and Formative Assessment Strategies***

SPEAKERS: JACKIE DRUERY, Humanities & Social Sciences Library, CORINNE LAVERTY, Centre for Teaching and Learning, and VICTORIA REMENDA, Faculty of Arts & Science, Queen's University

CHAIR: KIM MCPHEE, Western University

LEVEL: All

The session will provide a short introduction to inquiry-based learning as a high impact educational experience, how we define it at Queen's, and how teaching librarians work to support development of inquiry skills in assignments, courses, and across programs. Librarians analyse research assignments to identify intended learning outcomes based on standards for the program. They identify opportunities for feedback on discrete pieces of the research process in a course and/or across a program so that inquiry skills can be built gradually. Using two existing inquiry-based assignments, participants will identify the inquiry skills that would be needed to successfully meet the intended assignment outcomes. A Researcher Skill Development Framework (Willison, 2016) will be used as a model for the research process. Having identified specific skills, participants will discuss the anticipated research process and its component parts where feedback on inquiry skills can be given sequentially as students complete the assignment. Examples of how librarians might scaffold

this feedback will be compared. A discussion of the role of teaching librarians and how librarians can work with faculty and educational developers to provide support for building inquiry skills developmentally will close the session.

By the end of this session participants will be able to: (i) Deconstruct inquiry-related assignments to determine specific research skill learning outcomes; (ii) Map the process stages of an inquiry assignment to identify opportunities for formative feedback; and (iii) Describe how librarians support university learning outcomes related to inquiry-based learning.

COFFEE BREAK

3:30 p.m. – 4:00 p.m.

ALL CONFERENCE ROOMS

KEYNOTE 1

MANDARIN BALLROOM

4:00 p.m. – 5:15 p.m.

Between the Rock and the Hard Place: Lessons Learned from Working Between External Demands and Internal Resistance to Improve Student Learning

KEYNOTE SPEAKERS: CHARLES BLAICH, Director, Center of Inquiry at Wabash College and the Higher Education Data Sharing Consortium (HEDS) and KATHY WISE, Associate Director, Center of Inquiry at Wabash College and the Higher Education Data Sharing Consortium (HEDS)

CHAIR: PAUL GOOCH, Ontario Universities Council on Quality Assurance

Driven by regional and specialized accreditors, state and federal government, foundations, and other external stakeholders, assessment has become a fact of life for colleges and universities in the United States. While the quality and usefulness of assessment efforts varies, the external demands for quality assurance continue to push institutions, and their constituent departments, schools, and programs, to assess their impact. Yet, even as institutions are led, or pushed, into assessment by outside forces, there are faculty, staff, and administrators at these institutions who choose to lead assessment efforts not to keep their institutions in good standing with outsiders, but because they see it as an opportunity to improve student learning. These assessment leaders work to leverage assessment mandates to motivate and resource campus efforts to improve student learning. In this session, we will review the obstacles these assessment leaders encounter and the strategies they use to try and make assessment matter as much for their students as it does for meeting the requirements of external stakeholders.

WINE & CHEESE RECEPTION

5:15 p.m. – 6:45 p.m.

OTTAWA ROOM

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Tuesday, October 18, 2016

REGISTRATION AND BREAKFAST**MANDARIN BALLROOM****7:30 a.m. – 8:00 a.m.****WORKSHOPS – DAY 2, SESSION 1****8:00 a.m. – 8:30 a.m.****WORKSHOP A****VICTORIA A&B*****Leveraging Your Learning Management System to Inform Curriculum Improvement***

SPEAKERS: JOHN DONALD and RICHARD ZYTNER, School of Engineering, RICHARD GORRIE and JASON THOMPSON, Centre for Open Learning and Educational Support, University of Guelph

CHAIR: ERIN ASPENLIEDER, McMaster University

LEVEL: Intermediate

The effective use of a learning management system (LMS) can be helpful in the successful delivery of a course. Being successful has many meanings, including content delivery, communicating with the class, tracking/measuring student learning and maintaining grades. In addition, an LMS such as D2L-Brightspace has features that enable the capture and reporting of learning outcomes for course and program level improvement. Using these learning outcome features can be very challenging and requires an approach that is planned as well as integrated with the full program curriculum improvement cycle. The proposed session will share, as a case study, experience using D2L-Brightspace in the delivery of the Capstone Design Course in the School of Engineering (SOE) at the University of Guelph. The discussion will then be expanded from the case study to explain how the SOE captures, compiles and utilizes outcomes based assessment data (e.g., exams, reports, presentation results) within its overall outcomes based curriculum improvement process. To make the process work there are also forms and custom software tools and spreadsheets developed and implemented for both faculty and administration. These operational issues will also be discussed.

By the end of this session participants will be able to: (i) Identify opportunities to support the program level curriculum improvement process, leveraging a Learning Management System (LMS) to track learning outcomes; (ii) Identify methods for faculty to use the LMS to provide learning outcome assessment data; and (iii) Identify strengths and limitations of available technologies to support program learning outcome assessment.

WORKSHOP B**TORONTO BALLROOM*****Called to Action: Creating Learning Outcomes Based on the Recommendations of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission***

SPEAKERS: KAHENTE HORN-MILLER, School of Indigenous and Canadian Studies and ANDREA THOMPSON, Office of the Vice-Provost and Associate Vice-President (Academic), Carleton University

CHAIR: RICHARD MCCUTCHEON, Algoma University

LEVEL: Intermediate

With the release of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission Calls to Action last year, Canadian Universities have been grappling with ways to make Indigenous Studies (IS) part of every students' educational experience. While some institutions have created stand-alone courses in IS that students must take to graduate, others have looked for ways to integrate IS within students' current programs of study. At Carleton we are currently exploring this latter approach through the development of learning outcomes rooted in the 7 Grandfathers' Teachings (Wisdom, Love, Respect, Bravery, Honesty, Humility, and Truth) that can be adopted and adapted by any program, regardless of academic discipline. This workshop will familiarize attendees with the TRC recommendations related to education, and outline our highly consultative approach to translating the TRC Calls to Action into observable abilities students will be able to demonstrate upon graduation. Attendees will learn techniques for integrating IS and Indigenous ways of knowing into their own learning goals and assessment techniques and will be invited to discuss similar initiatives taking place at their institutions.

By the end of this session participants will be able to: (i) Recognize the TRC Calls to Action relevant to post-secondary education. An overview of the TRC Calls to Action will be discussed during the presentation; (ii) Compare different approaches to implementing the TRC Calls to Action within post-secondary education; and (iii) Recognize how learning outcomes can be used to further the objectives of the TRC commission.

WORKSHOP C

HONG KONG

Rhapsody on Graduate Program Diversity: Linking Music Program Learning Outcomes With Graduate Degree Level Expectations

SPEAKER: CATHERINE NOLAN, Don Wright Faculty of Music, Western University

CHAIR: JENNIFER MACTAVISH, Ryerson University

LEVEL: Advanced

Like themes in a musical rhapsody, our graduate program in Music at Western embraces a range of intersecting, yet distinctive fields that demonstrate individual identities while functioning in a larger cohesive whole. The fields of musicology, music theory, and music education share goals, aspirations, and understandings of knowledge associated with the humanities and social sciences, while the fields of composition and performance share goals, aspirations, and understandings of knowledge with the fine and performing arts. Music education, music theory, and musicology in particular encourage interdisciplinary engagement; composition and performance hold a dual view of music as both non-temporal text (musical scores) and temporal event (recitals, concerts, and productions). Knowledge of musical repertoire is essential to all five fields alongside divergent understandings of musical objects and cultural contexts. In short, our graduate program is characterized by diversity in the ways its fields relate to each other and to larger disciplinary alignments. The expression of learning outcomes facilitates the balance of goals in academic and artistic excellence and allows for nuances specific to each of the five fields to emerge. Similarly, linking nuanced program learning outcomes with Graduate Degree Level Expectations facilitates the expression of distinctive program supports and aspirations.

By the end of this session participants will be able to: (i) Understand the challenge of balancing goals in academic and artistic excellence in graduate program learning outcomes in Music; (ii) Understand program diversity in Music both internally and externally through the complex affiliations of Music with other disciplines in the arts, humanities, and social sciences; and (iii) Understand how linking program learning outcomes with Graduate Degree Level Expectations can facilitate the communication of program diversity in other disciplines.

WORKSHOP D**SHANGHAI*****Measuring Student Learning Outcomes in Higher Education: HEIghten Approach*****SPEAKER:** **JAVARRO RUSSELL**, College Programs Unit, Global Education Division at Educational Testing Service (ETS)**CHAIR:** **JAMES BROWN**, Postsecondary Education Quality Assessment Board**LEVEL:** Intermediate

Increasingly so, institutions are interested in the extent to which students are attaining the specified learning outcomes that are inextricably connected to student success. Doing so allows those institutions to highlight the effectiveness of their educational activities, programs, and support systems in improving student learning, and ultimately increase student success. During this session, we will discuss how institutions are using next generation learning outcomes assessments and large scale assessment processes to gather evidence of student learning for demonstrating accountability, but more importantly improving student learning.

By the end of this session participants will be able to: (i) Identify attributes of assessments that produce evidence of student learning for the purpose of learning improvement at the program or institution level; and (ii) Identify the attributes of assessment processes that lend themselves to the production of evidence of student learning for the purpose of learning improvement at the program or institution level.

WORKSHOP E**DENVER****Informal Discussion*****Inclusive Assessment Aligned to Outcomes*****SPEAKERS:** **SANDRA CARDINAL** and **THERESA STEGER**, Program Planning, Development and Renewal, Humber College (Institute of Technology and Advanced Learning – ITAL)**LEVEL:** Beginner

In this guided informal discussion, participants will be asked to examine learning outcome statements aligned across the Ontario Qualifications Framework to uncover and address covert barriers to inclusive assessment practices. Participants will discuss and critically analyze multiple assessment pathways that enable all students to demonstrate the achievement of essential learning outcomes by minimizing barriers and maximizing accessibility, without sacrificing rigour and validity.

WORKSHOP F**SEATTLE****Informal Networking**

WORKSHOP G**SAN FRANCISCO****Informal Discussion*****Assessing Outcomes of Faculty Development Programming*****DISCUSSION LEADER:** **NATASHA HANNON**, Centre for Academic Excellence, Niagara College

The Western Region College Educator Development Program has recently undergone significant review and revision and this 2 year, inter-institutional undertaking is now an outcomes-driven program of professional instructional development for all new, full-time faculty hires at Conestoga, Fanshawe, Lambton, Mohawk, Niagara, and St. Clair colleges. Participants will be led in informal discussion regarding assessment of learning outcomes for instructional development programming.

KEYNOTE 2**MANDARIN BALLROOM****8:45 a.m. – 9:45 a.m.*****Aligning Goals, Assessment, and Pedagogy:
Assignment Design as a Key Faculty Activity*****KEYNOTE SPEAKER:** **PETER EWELL**, President Emeritus, National Center for Higher Education Management Systems (NCHEMS)**CHAIR:** **ALICE PITT**, Chair, Conference Planning Committee

Effective collegiate learning experiences are not easy to create because they demand intentional alignment among three things: a) clear goals for student attainment stated in outcomes terms, b) carefully designed curricula and pedagogical strategies structured to yield these goals and, c) reliable ways to assess student attainment of these goals that can be aggregated for purposes of both improvement and accountability. Based on a range of projects in the U.S. funded by the Lumina Foundation, this session argues that carefully designed assignments, created by faculty and “embedded” in regular classroom settings, represent the best approach to useful assessment consistent with these ideals. Doing this well, though, requires systematic attention to constructing sound assignments that are capable of generating consistent and comparable student responses that can be scored to yield generalizable information.

COFFEE BREAK**9:45 a.m. – 10:15 a.m.****ALL CONFERENCE ROOMS**

WORKSHOPS – DAY 2, SESSION 2

10:15 a.m. – 11:15 a.m.

WORKSHOP A

VICTORIA A&B

From College to Graduate School — Experiences from the Trenches

PANEL: AMANDA BOYD, Conestoga College, SARAH HORSFORD, St. Lawrence College, NICHOLAS JOHNSTON, Sheridan College, STEPHANIE LAMANNA, Seneca College, ANDY PRINCE, Fanshawe College

MODERATOR: JOAN CONDIE, Sheridan College

LEVEL: All

A panel of Ontario college degree graduates who went on to graduate school discuss their experiences. Coming from a wide variety of disciplines, these panelists will discuss why they chose to do their undergraduate degree at a college, the preparation they felt they received for tackling graduate work, and any comparisons they observed with colleagues from a university undergraduate degree background. Given that their "applied" degree learning outcomes focused both on theory and professional application, they will discuss how that combination served them well to succeed in the demanding context of graduate work.

By the end of this session participants will be able to: (i) Articulate the specific benefits expressed by college degree graduates regarding their college experience preparing them for graduate degree work; (ii) Describe the challenges experienced by college degree graduates who went on to university graduate work; and (iii) Consider the implications of the expressed benefits and challenges for both college degree preparation and for the receiving university graduate schools.

WORKSHOP B

TORONTO BALLROOM

Including Diverse Perspectives: Analyzing Curriculum Mapping Data for Gaps and Opportunities

SPEAKERS: PATTI DYJUR and FRANCES KALU, Taylor Institute for Teaching and Learning, University of Calgary

CHAIR: LORRAINE DAVIES, Western University

LEVEL: Intermediate

In this hands-on session we will approach learning outcomes within the context of curriculum review. Using a scenario in which National Survey of Student Engagement (NSSE) data reveal a weakness in "discussions with diverse others" within a fictitious program, we will show how curriculum review could be used as a process for further inquiry into the issue. Mapping learning outcomes relating to diverse perspectives could provide further insight and identify gaps in the program. Three different charts and graphs will be used in the session as examples of how learning outcomes relating to diverse perspectives might be presented. Participants will analyze them individually and in small groups to discuss possible strategies that would strengthen the program in terms of student learning experiences and assessment. Since participants in the session will be well versed in learning outcomes and curriculum review, our intention is to keep presentation time to a minimum, allowing ample time for people to share their perspectives and experiences.

By the end of this session participants will be able to: (i) Interpret data from three curriculum maps to identify gaps in the area of 'diverse perspectives'; and (ii) Gain strategies for mapping and presenting curriculum data to inform specific questions about a curriculum.

WORKSHOP C**HONG KONG**

Evolutions in Curriculum Mapping: Changing Practices to Support Program Learning Outcomes Assessment

SPEAKERS: ERIN ASPENLIEDER, McMaster Institute for Innovation and Excellence in Teaching and Learning, McMaster University, LORI GOFF, McMaster Institute for Innovation and Excellence in Teaching and Learning, McMaster University, JOVAN GROEN, Centre for University Teaching, University of Ottawa, CLARKE MATHANY, Open Learning and Educational Support, University of Guelph, GAVAN WATSON, Teaching Support Centre, Western University

CHAIR: MARY WILSON, Niagara College

LEVEL: Intermediate / Advanced

In this panel discussion, educational developers from four different Ontario universities describe the evolution of institutional curriculum mapping tools between 2011-2016. The initial curriculum mapping tool developed at the University of Guelph influenced the development of the tools at Western University and the University of Ottawa, which subsequently influenced the tool used at McMaster University. The panel will discuss both the institutional choices that influenced the implemented tool and the ways the tool has evolved in response to user needs with respect to learning outcomes assessment. Attendees at this session can expect to engage in discussion on the role of curriculum mapping in influencing and documenting program learning outcomes assessment for a variety of audiences, including accreditation and IQAP processes, as well as for internal and public stakeholders.

By the end of this session participants will be able to: (i) Compare the evolution of curriculum mapping tools used at four different Ontario universities; and (ii) Describe the way curriculum mapping tools can be used to influence program learning outcomes assessment.

WORKSHOP D**SHANGHAI**

Mapping the Terrain of Learning Outcomes

SPEAKERS: MARY CATHARINE LENNON, Postsecondary Education Quality Assessment Board (PEQAB)

CHAIR: SARAH FUCHS, Council of Ontario Universities

LEVEL: Beginner

New to the area of learning outcomes? Trying to understanding the basic ideas of what they are, how they're used and for what purposes? Or maybe you 'get' what you're doing, but you've had conversations about learning outcomes and felt the other person was speaking a different language? Or that their project was so different from yours it was difficult to recognise the relationship to your own work? This workshop will demystify learning outcomes by mapping the landscape of initiatives. It will unpack ideas of how learning outcomes initiatives can be of different types, focus and level, and how policy choices serve distinct goals, stakeholders, target audiences and purposes, and can be enacted through a variety of activities. Participants will be provided with a framework to work though these ideas, and will engage with examples of learning outcomes initiatives from Ontario and around the world in order to explore the concepts. Participants will then apply the framework to their own institutional/agency activities in order to situate their work in the broader context. The workshop is not

about semantics. It's about understanding the broad concepts that underpin learning outcomes initiatives so that its easier to translate local, national and international conversations and recognise types of activities.

By the end of this session participants will be able to: (i) Recognise and map a range of learning outcomes initiatives; (ii) Articulate where their institution/agency learning outcomes initiatives are situated in the landscape; and (iii) Reflect on the policy goals and choices of their initiatives.

WORKSHOP E**TOKYO*****Learning Outcomes Assessment of Master and PhD Theses***

SPEAKER: **KAMRAN SIDDIQUI**, Mechanical and Materials Engineering, Western University

CHAIR: **BRIAN TIMNEY**, Ontario Universities Council on Quality Assurance

LEVEL: Intermediate

Master and PhD theses comprise a major portion of graduate curriculum and hence their assessment is a key parameter in the overall assessment of the graduate degree outcomes. The thesis work covers all six graduate attributes unlike graduate courses that individually cover few of these attributes. Hence, the assessment of these attributes in the thesis work is a strong indicator of the fulfilment of degree level expectations by individual students. This session will focus on the development and implementation of tools to assess the learning outcomes of six graduate attributes in Master and PhD theses. In this session, details of the work that has been conducted at Western University in developing, implementing and evaluating theses learning outcomes will be presented and discussed. The challenges and future directions will also be discussed.

By the end of this session participants will be able to: (i) Thesis assessment rubric for graduate attributes; and (ii) Utilization of the learning outcomes data.

WORKSHOP F**DENVER*****Integrating Game-Based Elements in Assessing Learning Outcomes***

SPEAKERS: **ROBERT BAJKO**, School of Professional Communication, **DAVID CHANDROSS** and **LEONORA ZEFI**, the G. Raymond Chang School of Continuing Education, Ryerson University

CHAIR: **JOHN MITCHELL**, Brescia University College, Western University

LEVEL: Beginner / Intermediate

Designing meaningful assessments and integrating engaging tools in the assessment process can help motivate students and accomplish learning outcomes. The affordances of social media and other technological tools allow for technology-based assessments that can measure student learning beyond physical and temporal confines of the classroom. In education, gamification is the application of game concepts such as narratives, quests, levels, leaderboards, and avatars to educational material and classes (Detering et al., 2011). When correctly implemented, gamification can inspire the target demographic to carry out tasks they would previously have found uninteresting or undesirable (King et al., 2013) In this interactive session, participants will learn about recent and ongoing research work and findings in the field of gamification as it applies to use of social media at the university undergraduate level. Design concepts, creation of narrative and testing of the narrative/gameplay interfaces will be reviewed and discussed, alongside with some proven strategies on how to select and integrate different gamified elements for effective assessment of learning outcomes. A demonstration of how a given LMS was used to implement those strategies and integrate them with

grading and communication systems will be provided along with a discussion on how some institutional challenges were mitigated by the instructors.

By the end of this session participants will be able to: (i) Demonstrate creative approaches to assessing learning outcomes using technology-based assessments; (ii) Identify some gamified elements that can be used in assessments in own setting; and (iii) Understand the design concepts and creation of narrative in gamified courses.

WORKSHOP G**SEATTLE**

A Flexible Framework: Developing Institutional-Focused Information Literacy Learning Outcomes

SPEAKERS: **HEATHER BUCHANSKY**, Faculty and Student Engagement, Chief Librarian's Office, **EVELINE HOUTMAN**, Roberts Reference Library, and **COURTNEY LUNDRIGAN**, John W. Graham Library, University of Toronto

CHAIR: **HEATHER CAMPBELL**, Brescia University College, Western University

LEVEL: All

Many post-secondary institutions recognize information literacy, the ability to find and use information critically and ethically, as one of the core competencies for an undergraduate degree. Until recently, the Association of College and Research Libraries (ACRL) promoted a standards-based approach to information literacy that included a set of prescribed learning outcomes. In 2016, ACRL adopted a new Framework for Information Literacy for Higher Education based on threshold concepts, ideas that shape how students view and work with information. The Framework focuses on developing knowledge practices and dispositions in students, and instructors develop relevant learning outcomes locally. Inspired by an institutional priority to transform undergraduate education, a working group of librarians created a set of learning outcomes aligned with the Framework. The outcomes promote a flexible approach to implementing the Framework, while leaving room for disciplinary information literacy strategies and instructors' teaching goals. This interactive workshop will introduce participants to the Framework and associated learning outcomes, as well as explore opportunities for Framework implementation.

By the end of this session participants will be able to: (i) Familiarize themselves with the new information literacy Framework; (ii) Identify intersections between the Framework and course materials/learning outcomes; and (iii) Articulate opportunities and collaborations to incorporate the Framework into course and/or departmental curriculum planning.

WORKSHOP H**SAN FRANCISCO**

Facilitating the Creation of Optimal Transfer Pathways: Using NVivo for Qualitative Analysis of Learning Outcomes in Curriculum Documents

SPEAKERS: **NANCY NOLDY-MACLEAN** and **HEATHER RAIKOU**, Academic Quality, Georgian College

CHAIR: **NICOLE FALLON**, Ontario Council on Articulation and Transfer

LEVEL: Beginner / Intermediate

The process of determining credit transfer between credential levels is complex. Institutions struggle with the process of determining which learning outcomes have been met by another program, where the gaps in learning are and which courses should be credited. At an operational level, the process of comparing learning outcomes to give credit for prior learning and optimize transfer pathways includes: identifying similarities, extracting themes, highlighting differences and acknowledging relationships. Similarly, Qualitative Data Analysis programs, like NVivo, allow the user to manage

data from numerous sources, explore themes, find patterns, and create meaningful reports. However, to our knowledge, NVivo has never been used for this application. Supported by ONCAT research funding, we are looking at NVivo as a potential tool for facilitating these processes to determine credit transfer between credential levels. Participants in this workshop will be engaged in a manual process of comparing learning outcomes to determine if a potential student would get credit for a degree course based on learning from a high affinity diploma program, and then participate as a group in a demonstration of a pilot protocol for using an NVivo process to determine the same transfer pathway. A discussion comparing these processes will conclude the workshop.

By the end of this session participants will be able to: (i) Apply a manual protocol for determining credit transfer between diploma and degree courses; (ii) Discuss an NVivo protocol for determining credit transfer between diploma and degree courses; and (iii) Compare and appraise a manual and NVivo protocol for determining credit transfer between diploma and degree courses.

PLENARY PANEL 2

MANDARIN BALLROOM

11:30 a.m. – 1:00 p.m.

State of the Union

PANEL: EILEEN DE COURCY, Associate Vice-President for Teaching and Learning, Humber College, JOHN DOERKSEN, Vice Provost (Academic Programs and Students), Western University, ROSS FINNIE, Professor, Graduate School of Public and International Affairs, University of Ottawa, LINDA MILLER, Vice-Provost, Graduate and Postdoctoral Studies, Western University

MODERATOR: ALICE PITT, Vice Provost (Academic), York University

Panelists representing aspects of the Ontario post-secondary sector are invited to reflect on achievements, challenges and emerging questions in relation to the development of the assessment of learning outcomes as these contribute to a shared commitment to producing and documenting quality in post-secondary education. As institutions have moved towards greater emphasis on articulating and assessing learning outcomes at the level of the credential and programs leading to credentials, can we now identify gaps within and between institutions that may challenge other priorities, such as access and student mobility? What can we learn from labour market outcomes that might direct our research, policy and institutional development efforts over the next few years? To what extent do labour market outcomes reflect the skills and knowledge identified by our educational learning frameworks, particularly as these relate to transferable skills? Are there developments in other jurisdictions that might inform our context?

CLOSING REMARKS

MANDARIN BALLROOM

1:00 p.m. – 1:15 p.m.

ALICE PITT, Chair, Conference Planning Committee

LUNCH

1:15 p.m. – 2:00 p.m.

MANDARIN BALLROOM

Boxes will be available for those needing to depart right away

Appendix B: Mary Catharine Lennon, PEQAB, Learning Outcomes: Moving Past the Hype (Draft paper presented at the EAIR 38th Annual Forum in Birmingham, UK)

Learning outcomes: Moving past the hype

Paper presented in track 5 at the

EAIR 38th Annual Forum in Birmingham, United Kingdom

31 August till 3 September 2016

Mary Catharine Lennon, PhD

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Key words

Assessment/Evaluation, Higher education policy/development, Quality, Institutional performance measures, National systems of higher education

Abstract

Learning outcomes: Moving past the hype

Evidence on the impact of learning outcomes policies in quality assurance is sparse. A 2015 study determined how learning outcomes policies are being used in regulatory schemes and what impact the policies have had. The research employed a global survey, case study analyses, and meta-evaluation. When triangulated, the findings indicate limited impact of learning outcomes policies. Reasons for failures include policy design (the policies being misaligned, misapplied, or misdirected), and the incongruence of regulatory agency roles, goals, and spheres of power with the desired impact of learning outcomes policies. These results show the need for focused learning outcome policies.

Presentation

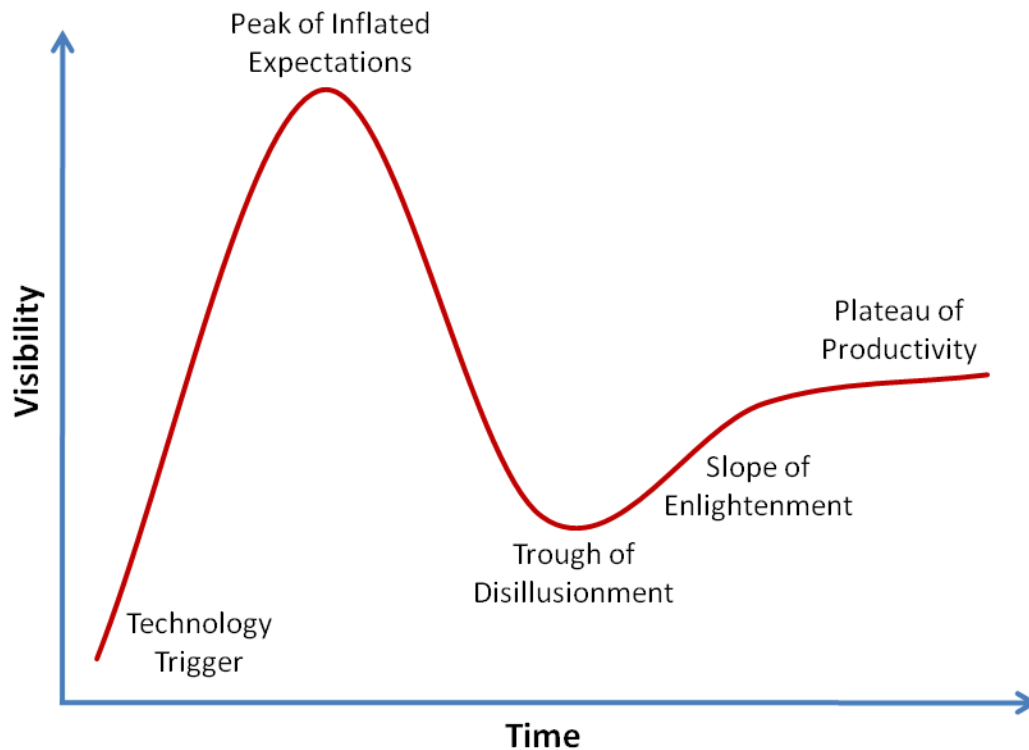
Learning outcomes: Moving past the hype

Learning outcomes are believed to have the potential to demystify the processes and outcomes of higher education and benefit students, programs, institutions, and the wider public and international community. With these expectations, the number of learning outcomes policy and research initiatives has swelled in the past decade. Institutions, governments, quality assurance agencies, and international organisations have been developing policies for learning outcomes with the expectation that they can be used to further policy agendas. Despite years of work in the area, there is very little information on if, and how, policies are having an impact on system-level educational quality.

The result is an absence of understanding both in academic literature and in public policy of how learning outcomes policies work in supporting educational improvement, coordination, transparency or any other intended goal. Given the amount of energy, time and funding provided by governments, quality assurance agencies, and institutions around the world, the blind faith is surprising.

The 'Hype Cycle' is a business term that describes the uptake of innovations (Gartner, 2015). It is a heuristic that describes how new technologies (or ideas) are introduced and adopted (see Figure 1 below). Typically new ideas that are met with enthusiasm quickly develop inflated expectations of application. Following this peak is a period of disillusionment when the innovation or idea does not perform as expected (because it's being pushed beyond its natural capacities), which prompts questions of whether it is valuable at all. This is followed by a time of focused experimentation and an acceptance of strengths and limitations, before there is a measured acceptance of appropriate applicability and the technology or idea finds its comfort zone of effectiveness.

Figure 1: Hype Cycle



(Gartner, 2015)

The past 10 years of learning outcomes activities epitomise the 'peak of high expectations', where there have been a number of success stories and expectations that learning outcomes policies will be the 'silver bullet' that will capture educational quality. Increasingly, however, there are more and more stories of failure, and a growing atmosphere that discourages application and innovation sending us into the 'trough of disillusionment'. In order to understand the ways in which learning outcomes are maximally valuable, there needs to be focused research, thus climbing the Hype Cycle's 'Slope of Enlightenment'.

The presentation, and this related paper, present the results of a 2015 study seeking evidence of how learning outcomes policies are being used in higher education regulatory schemes and what, if any, impact the policies have had¹. The goal of the research was to uncover the myths and realities of what learning outcomes are able to do, and to push the policy conversation forward. Rather than present the detailed results of the global survey, case study analysis, and meta-evaluation research (some of which was presented at the 2015 EAIR conference and can be found elsewhere), this presentation briefly highlights key findings before focusing on the primary conclusions and the implications.

When triangulated, the research findings reveal that policies on learning outcomes in higher education regulation are not having the intended impacts. This is a significant finding considering the amount of time, effort and political will being put into learning outcomes efforts. The finding

¹ For the complete study see Lennon, 2016

calls in question the value of learning outcomes as a means to contribute to higher education quality and regulation. This rapidly brings the dialogue down towards the 'Trough of Disillusionment'. But more practical options must be considered in order to move the conversation forward.

Learning outcomes policies are just that - policies. Any policy is essentially a formulated response to a problem with intended goals, short term and long-term impacts, and associated activities/strategies to achieve them (Inwood, 2004; Patton, 1998; Rossi et al., 2004). There is a policy cycle by which the policy is formulated, implemented and evaluated, and any good policy employs the full cycle (Cerych & Sabatier, 1986; Coates & Lennon, 2014; Inwood, 2004).

Though tentative, findings from this research identified issues with learning outcomes policies at each of the three stages of the policy cycles, where policies were misdirected in concept during formulation, misapplied in implementation, or misaligned in the planned activities and evaluation. The two latter issues are relatively straightforward to address, while the former calls into question the role of learning outcomes policies in regulation.

The implications of the findings also suggest that policy goals may not align with the broad mandate of regulatory agencies. There are three primary modes of regulation in higher education: accreditation, quality assurance (audits/assessment) and accreditation; each with distinct relationships with the institutions. Thus, it is possible that the agencies' sphere of control, ability to implement policies in institutions (either by carrot or stick), or the model of regulation, that actually influences the ability of learning outcomes policy to exact change. This suggests that it's not poor policies, but rather that certain policy types and goals more compatible with some agency types, and only when properly matched will the policies even have the chance to be successful.

Research summary

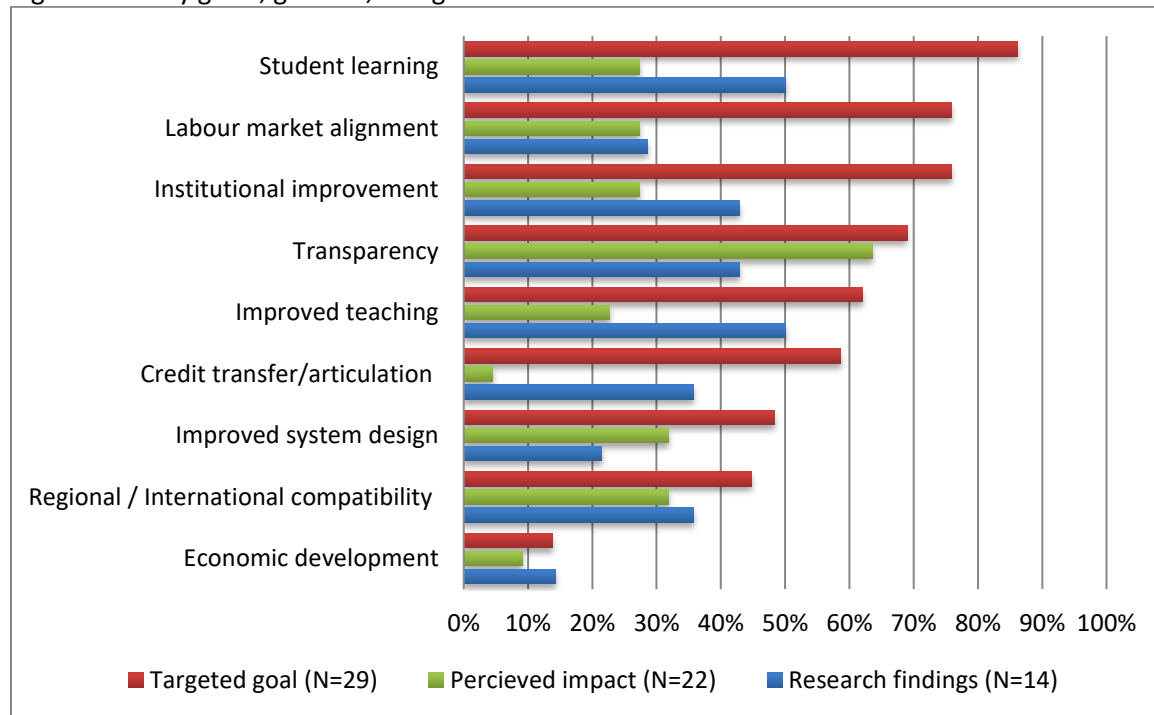
The survey

In February 2015, members of the International Network for Quality Assurance Agencies in Higher Education (INQAAHE) and the Council for Higher Education Accreditation International Quality Group (CIQG) were invited to participate in a short survey. The 74 respondents were geographically diverse coming from 43 different countries around the world.

Seeking to understand the specific goals for the regulatory body policies, the participating organisations were asked to identify what were cited as anticipated benefits – the long-term goals – of introducing a learning outcomes policy or framework for both their organisation and their constituent institutions)². They were also asked if they had conducted research, and what the results of the research showed (gains). Finally, for those agencies that had not conducted any research on their policies they were asked what their impressions of impact had been. Figure 2 below shows the combined results of these questions.

² The data presented here reflect the goals the agency sought for the institutions, rather than the goals the agency had for itself.

Figure 2: Policy goals, guesses, and gains in the institutions



Readers should first note the wide range of goals established by agencies, which range from very targeted classroom issues to wide ranging public policy and economic issues. Next, consider the differences between the perceptions of impact and the research findings on impact as a significant finding. It demonstrates the need to look at empirical data of policy and program evaluations to fully understand the value of the policies, not just our impressions of impact.

Further findings from the survey suggest that accreditation and quality assurance bodies have different approaches to learning outcomes policies and activities. For example, every accreditation organisation indicated that they collect information on both implementation and student success activities. Fewer quality assurance agencies collect evidence of implementation, and a very small number require evidence of student success. This may reflect the different priorities of the regulatory models, where those quality assurance agencies indicate a focus on policy and procedure, which allows for peer evaluation of student success rather than more formal means.

The case studies

The survey supported the identification of nine learning outcomes policy evaluations conducted by agencies. The case study analyses examined and coded the nine policy evaluations³ for positive, neutral or negative implications of the policy on the intended goal. The case studies showed the range of activities that are taking place within distinct policy environments and provided information on the strengths and weaknesses of particular policy choices. The case

³ Policy evaluations cases include: Foundation Higher Education Quality Evaluation Centre (AIKNC), The Centro Interuniversitario de Desarrollo (CINDA), QAA credential level (QAA FHEQ), QAA subject-based standards (QAA SBS), QAA program standards statements (QAA PS), NOQA Denmark, NOQA Finland, NOQA Norway, NOQA Sweden

studies explored the qualitative narrative provided by the research cases to uncover perceptions of why policies are succeeding or failing, specifically noting challenges of implementation. Primary interpretations from the case study findings include:

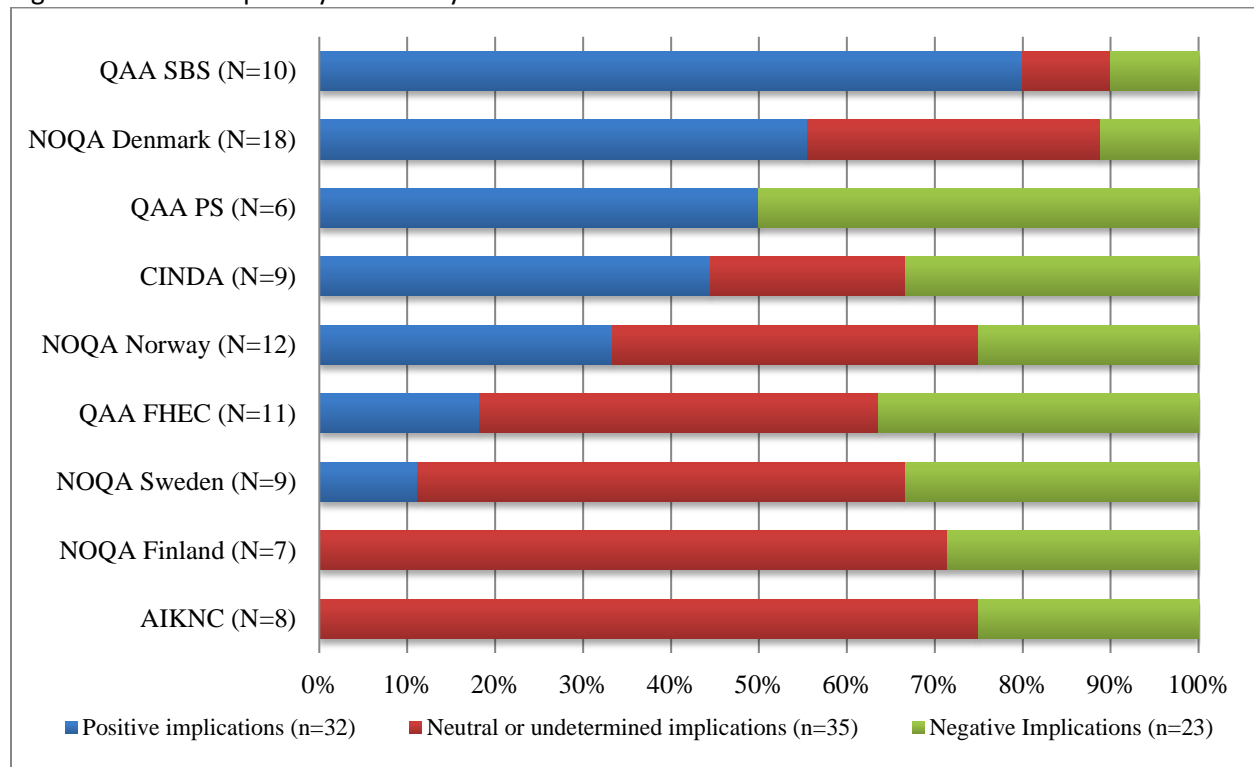
- Learning outcomes policies may be unsuited to quality assurance audit regulation
- Fair and valid assessment of student achievement is challenging though promising
- Policy goals and activities are not always properly aligned.

The meta-evaluation

A meta-evaluation is a process by which findings from existing evaluations are pooled (Pawson & Tilley, 1997; Rossi et al., 2004). This research applied a meta-evaluation to the case study findings in order to distil common patterns of impact based on the type of implications (positive, neutral/undetermined or negative), seeking trends in how policies are, or are not, achieving their stated goals. The primary finding was that the policy impacts were found to be ‘neutral or undetermined’ in most cases.

As an example, in Figure 3 below, each case study was simply tallied for its number of positive, negative and neutral implications to see the overall impact of the policies. For example, we see that the QAA SBS case was successful in impacting 80% of its goals (where N=the number of goals established). Yet, 7 out of 10 policies were unsuccessful 50% of the time.

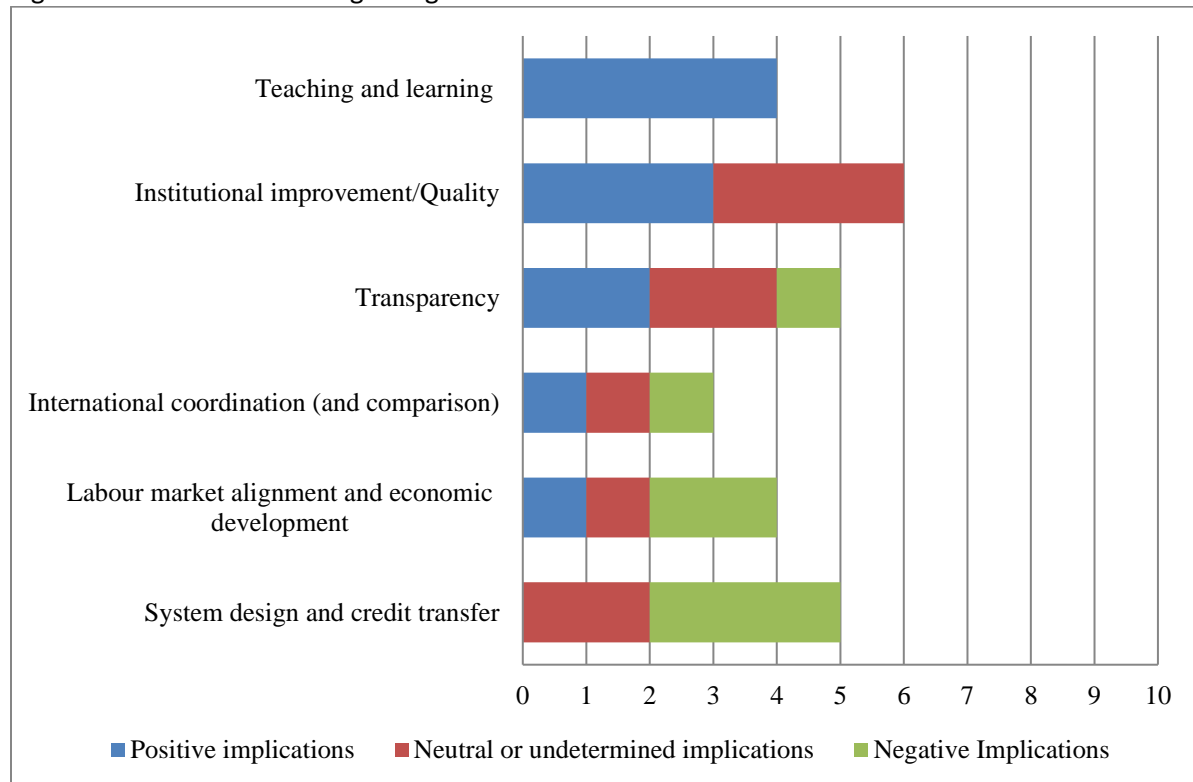
Figure 3: Overall impact by case study



The final component of the research sliced and diced the data to understand what factors were associated with successful policies. In order to tease out elements that might impact success, both structural features (i.e. regulatory type, level of regulation such as generic skills, program, or

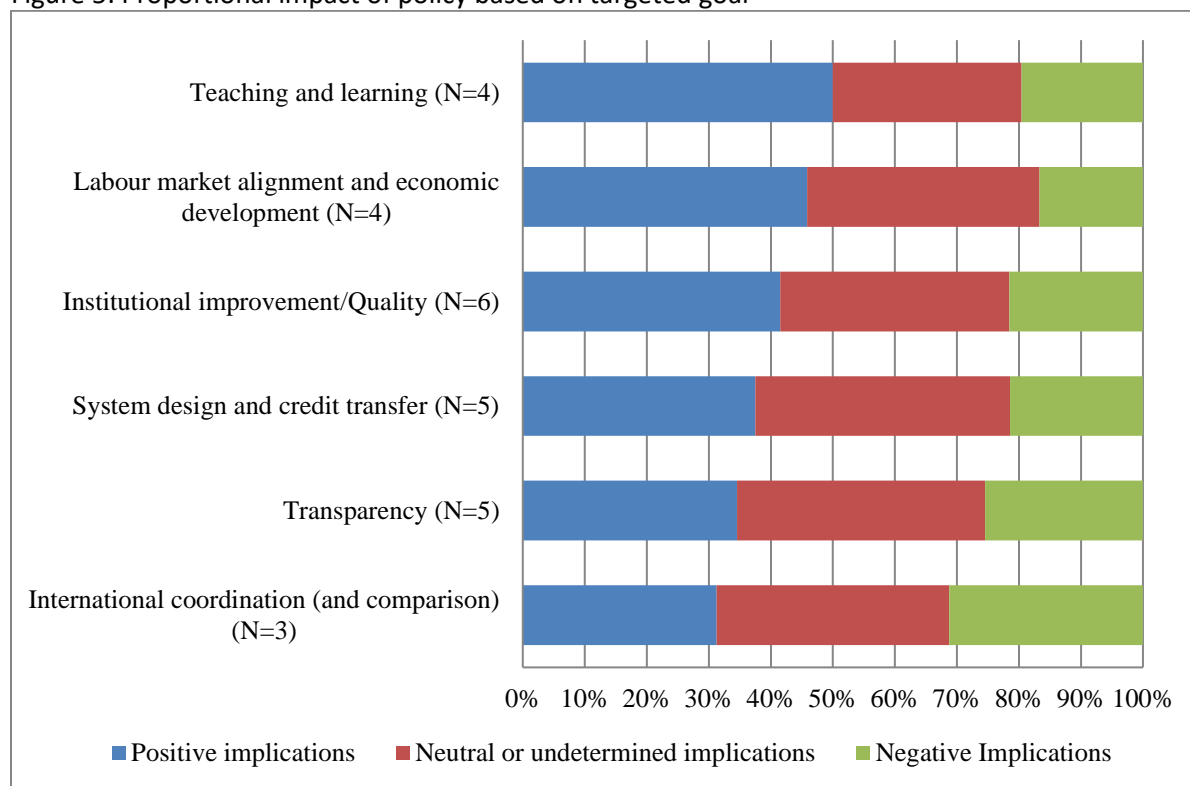
credential-level) and policy choices (i.e. goals, activities, targets) were analysed. One analysis technique examined whether a policy factor was positively impacted when it was identified as factor. For example, Figure 4 below shows that teaching and learning was positively impacted whenever it was a target, where policies never successfully achieved improvement on system design or credit transfer.

Figure 4: Achievement of targeted goals



The data was also examined to see how successful the policy was, overall, when certain goals were indicated. Figure 5 below, for example, shows that, policies that targeted teaching and learning were successful in positively impacting all of their goals 50% of the time, whereas those that included a focus on international coordination and comparison were successful 30% of the time.

Figure 5: Proportional impact of policy based on targeted goal



Triangulating the results of the research findings reveals that policies on learning outcomes in higher education regulation are not having the intended impact. This is a significant finding considering the amount of time, effort and political will being put into learning outcomes policies. The findings call into question the value of learning outcomes as a means to contribute to higher education quality and regulation. Yet, before discarding the entire field of learning outcomes, it is more practical to first consider that the failure is a policy issue.

Implications for policy

Literature suggests that a policy should have an established goal, long-term targets, short-term targets, benchmarks, and evaluations appropriate to capture change (Patton, 1998; Rossi et al., 2004). There are, of course, variations on this, but the basic cycle is a feedback loop. When one of those elements is not well executed the cycle cannot work and the policy will likely fail.

The basic feedback loop of a policy cycle mimics the role of learning outcomes – establish what the expectations are (formulation), incorporate them into the programing (implementation) and measure whether students have gained the expected knowledge, skills and competencies (evaluation). When one of those elements is misaligned the cycle cannot work. For example, if learning outcomes are written but not implemented, there will likely be no change in student achievement. Similarly, there is no valuable information gained if student achievement is measured but expectations and indications of success are not clearly defined. The concept of ‘plan it, do it, measure it’ is simple and many learning outcomes policies employ it.

Findings from this research have identified issues with learning outcomes policies at each of the three stages, where polices were misdirected in concept in formulation, misapplied in

implementation, or misaligned in the planned activities and evaluation. The two latter issues are relatively straightforward to address, while the former calls into question the role of learning outcomes policies in regulation.

Policies are misaligned

Policy choices must be able to lead to the desired outcomes – if the choices do not support the ultimate goals the policies will fail. Examples from the case studies find this is not always happening. For example, one case study noted that the goal was to use learning outcomes as a tool for employers and the labour market, yet the strategy did not involve employers or develop ways of demonstrating achievement to the labour market (focusing instead on curriculum mapping). In another example, an agency failed to achieve the goal of supporting transparency for students and employers, perhaps because it focused on writing program-specific outcomes for curriculum rather than focusing on outward facing activities of demonstrating achievement through something like an e-portfolio or learning passport.

Other alignment issues are found in the use of evidence, data collection and evaluations. Policies need to have clearly identified data collection methods with clearly identified targets. Furthermore, it is also critical that the data are able to reflect change and, moreover, that change can be directly attributed to the policy. For example, expecting learning outcomes to improve labour market outcomes and using national data on employment rates to prove it, may provide suitable information on the impact of learning outcomes policies as it could be a reflection of any number of other factors.

Hence, the alignment of goals, purpose, activities and evaluation is a useful way to consider policy failure in the cases presented in the research. It suggests that somewhere between setting the goal and evaluating impact there may have been one or more components that were not suitable. Identifying these alignment issues could inform a better policy – one that is targeted, with appropriate activities, and reasonable indications of impact.

Policies are being misapplied

For the purposes of this discussion let's assume that a learning outcomes policy was well founded with reasonable rationales, achievable goals, targeted purposes and benchmarks; and yet still did not succeed. When even the best-planned policy is misapplied, success is hindered.

A number of examples from the case studies demonstrate how implementation can impede achievement. For example, one case found it was a challenge for institutions to integrate and map the learning outcomes, particularly to the labour market. Another found it was difficult for the programs to develop internal learning outcomes and align their programming with the national regulations. Issues of implementation are simple to understand as an impediment to success and, with appropriate formative evaluations and attention, can be straightforward to rectify.

Policies are misdirected

If it is assumed that the learning outcomes policies included in this research were properly aligned and implemented, the implication is that learning outcomes policies are not working because there is a fundamental disconnect between the desired and the actual outcomes. In this case a policy is misdirected: it has been formulated to achieve an unattainable goal.

The survey results demonstrate differences in the goals organisations set for policies as well as in the perceptions of impact and actual research findings on impact. Other than one factor⁴, none of the goals set for the agencies for themselves or the member institutions had high success rates.

The meta-evaluation demonstrated the general failure of the policies to achieve the espoused goals. Figure 5 for example, shows that only 'Teaching and learning' was positively impacted every time it was a chosen goal. 'Quality and institutional improvement' was successful in half the cases, while those that focused on improving 'System design and credit transfer' were never successful.

The case studies also reveal that the goal choice may influence the success rates. An example of how different goals can have different outcomes is seen in two policies that came from the same jurisdiction, had the same structural features and each had a similar number of policy choices and targets. One was established as a qualifications framework with goals to improve 'Transparency,' 'System design and credit transfer' as well as 'International coordination and comparison'. Overall the policy had less than a 20% success rate. The other focused on subject-based issues of the 'Teaching and learning', 'Institutional improvement/quality', 'System design and credit transfer', and 'Labour market alignment and economic development'. The policy was successful in positively impacting 80% of its targets.

The different outcomes of the two policies are remarkable, and yet are somewhat consistent with other research. Allais, for example, has contended that national qualifications frameworks are not achieving their system-level goals of improving qualification transparency or credit transfer decision-making (Allais, 2010). Hattie, on the other hand, presented a meta-evaluation to show the positive impact of learning outcomes on teaching and learning (2009).

Hence, although the findings in this research are descriptive, and there were no statistically significant differences in the types of policy goals, it is reasonable to suggest that the goals of the learning outcomes policies should be seriously considered prior to any planning or implementation. It is vital to ensure goals reflect the reality of what could be reasonably expected.

Implications for regulation

The previous section considered the issues of policy alignment, implementation, and direction, supposing that the policy process is the critical factor in the success or failure in learning outcomes frameworks. If it is assumed that the policies evaluated were intended to be influential rather than symbolic (as suggested by Bemelmans-Videc, Rist, & Vedung, 2011), it is rational to expect change was desired. Hence, another consideration is that it is not the policies themselves, but rather the structural confines of the regulatory body that hinders policy impact. Perhaps it is the agencies' sphere of control, ability to implement policies in institutions (either by carrot or stick), or the model of regulation that influences the ability of learning outcomes policy⁵.

⁴ Improving economic development.

⁵ The study established and applied three models of regulation: accountability, accreditation and quality assurance. The term accountability refers to government supervision of multiple aspects of institutions. Accreditation is a process of validating explicit external standards, and Quality Assurance is a process of evaluating institutionally designated goals utilizing two primary forms: assessments and audits.

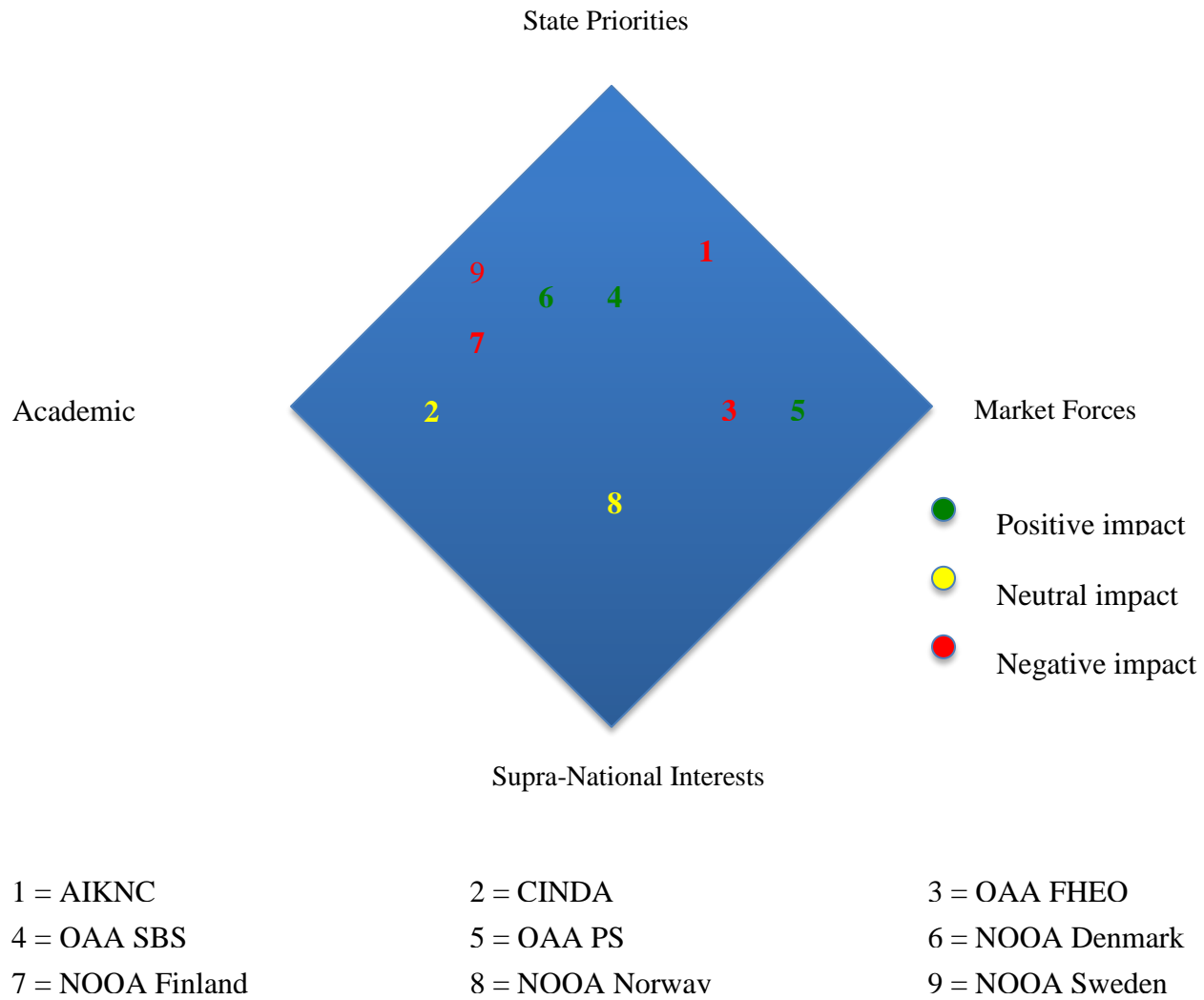
Having found that policy activities do not always align with broad goals, it is also possible to consider that policy goals do not align with the broad mandate of agencies. Therefore, it is worthwhile to examine the goals of the agencies to see if certain trends in the type of goals were more likely to succeed.

The Accountability Diamond put forth by Middlehurst (2011) is one way to better understand how the policies are aimed to support the priorities of regulation. Building on Clark's work, Joseph Burke presents an Accountability Triangle for higher education. The Accountability Triangle is a tool to "assess the responsiveness of accountability programs to the three interests and pressures" that affect higher education: State Priorities (political), Academic Concerns (professional) and Market Forces (market) (Burke, 2005: 21). Middlehurst included the international to highlight the important influence of international and trans-national issues (Middlehurst, 2011). Given the international nature of learning outcomes and quality assurance policies, this is a suitable model to consider.

In

Figure 6 Figure 6 below, the Accountability Diamond is used to assess the underlying focus by demonstrating where the learning outcomes policy goals fall. The placement of the research cases (1-9) are determined through the goal choices established in Chapter 6. The goal options of 'Teaching and learning' and 'Institutional improvement/quality' are closely related to Academic Concerns. 'System design and credit transfer' is aligned to State Priorities, where 'Labour market alignment and economic development' is situated between State Priorities and Market Forces. 'International coordination and comparison' clearly aligns with Supra-National Interests. 'Transparency' as a tool to support student choice, market awareness, etc. is placed closest to Market Forces. Based on the combination of the goals the cases are placed on the diamond, and the colours (green, yellow and red) reflect their success.

Figure 6: Learning outcomes policy goals in the accountability diamond



Examining the nine cases mapped against the Accountability Diamond shows that the underlying focus of learning outcomes policies varies, as do the impact results. This is particularly interesting as the majority are quality assurance audits⁶. Based on the capacities and goals of quality assurance audits, it could reasonably be expected that the majority of the cases would lean towards Academic Concerns. The placement of the cases shows that the policies are, arguably, out of line with the role and abilities of quality assurance agencies.

For this reason it is possible that the policies are not the problem, but instead that it is an issue with the nature of the agencies (as organisational bodies) aligning with the policies. Bush describes the structural model⁷ of organisations, suggesting that organisations exist to accomplish goals and that inefficiencies are the result of inappropriate structures or inadequate systems (2003: 39). It is possible to consider then, that the way the regulatory agencies operate is the hindrance to policy success.

Implications for quality assurance

The findings of the case studies and meta-evaluation suggest that learning outcomes policies are not successful when used in quality assurance audits. Only when intended to support teaching and learning were the policies at all effective. Perhaps, this is because the activities fall on the improvement side of the accountability/improvement spectrum as they focused on structural and organisational issues (Amaral & Rosa, 2011). Gallavara et al. note “quality audits focus on the institutions internal quality assurance system” (2008: 41). In other words, procedures are in place to continuously improve teaching, research and other activities. Audits do not evaluate the quality of teaching or research itself but the quality procedures and the way in which they are operated – they focus on the formative.

This requires that systems be in place to support the activities associated with learning outcomes policies. Yet, implementation issues are found to be a significant barrier throughout this study. Furthermore, it also demands that the auditors are skilled in learning outcomes and are trained in order to fairly judge the quality of learning outcomes, and the implementation and measurement techniques employed within institutions and programs. This was found to be a significant issue in at least on case.

It follows, then, that learning outcomes policies in quality assurance that are outside of the realm of teaching and learning may be not effective as they are unable to support or influence change, or judge impact. A learning outcomes policy intended to improve labour market outcomes, for example, may not be achievable because it is outside the sphere of control and influence of a quality assurance agency. In related research, Amaral and Rosa (2011) found that when examining the use of audits in the Institutional Evaluation Programme of the EUA, the activities did not contribute to the transparency and comparability of programming across the EU (despite being an explicit purpose of the programme).

Another issue to consider is that quality assurance mechanisms may be ineffective at identifying low quality, as the purpose is to support not to judge (Amaral & Rosa, 2011). Therefore, it begs the question of how can learning outcomes – which are intended to support quality improvements by providing tangible evidence of student achievement – be useful to a system that is known to be unable to assess success?

⁶ Cases 2 and 6 were accreditation agencies, and case 9 employed accountability processes

⁷ He puts forth five basic models for organisation and leadership: structural, systematic, bureaucratic, rational, and hierarchical.

It becomes apparent that for learning outcomes policies in quality assurance to have any likelihood for success, they should be focused on supporting the processes of activities, using multiple feedback loops to support that purpose.

Implications for accreditation

The findings of this research project indicate that there is a great deal of work in writing learning outcomes, and that their implementation presents the most significant challenges. However, until an assessment of the outcomes is completed, there is no tangible understanding of the abilities of students.

This is most clearly seen in the perceived versus actual impact of the learning outcomes found in the survey. The differences between what is believed to be true and what is actually true can be very different. This corroborates other studies on the assessment of learning outcomes. The OECD's Assessment of Higher Education Learning Outcomes Assessment Feasibility Study (AHELO), for example, found that although a Civil Engineering test was developed by an international team, vetted in nine countries by hundreds of faculty members and students, the results – globally – were much lower than anticipated (Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development, 2013). This demonstrates that the expected learning outcomes do not always translate into actual student achievement, and shows that assessment is critical to identifying the discrepancies.

The measurement component presents the most potential for accreditation to have impact on the quality of education, as summative assessments are in the wheelhouse of accreditation style regulation (see Ewell, 2009). It also presents a significant challenge to identify appropriate assessments and ways of demonstrating student achievement as well as program or institutional success. One country, for example, noted the difficulties in ascertaining the 'pass line' and how to enact the standard across the country. Another, similarly, found it extremely difficult to balance background noise⁸ with program success, and overall found it extremely costly.

Some case studies also found that the professional programs were better able to assess student achievement. For example, the one case focused at the disciplinary level was found to be the most successful policy overall. These two findings suggest that perhaps there is value in focusing on discipline/subject areas, where it is more likely to be possible to identify both generic and specific learning outcomes, and come to terms with valid and reliable assessments. Given the challenges in learning outcomes policies identified throughout this research, it is possible that disciplinary accreditation agencies are perhaps the best suited to have successful policy impacts.

A significant amount of work is taking place at the disciplinary level. For example, the suite of Tuning projects are establishing norms across disciplines in regions all over the world, and smaller, independent, activities such as the ATLAS project which maps learning outcomes and assessments across public policy programs (Clark, Eisen, Lennon, & Pal, 2015). Similarly, Engineering Accreditation associations around the world have come together to establish expectations and indications of evidence. It is important to acknowledge the important role of the disciplines in managing expectations of student learning outcomes, as they are (either directly or indirectly) responsible for establishing the norms within their own their field.

Acknowledging the role of other agencies in the higher education regulator landscape is a reminder of why the agency type should be an indicator of what the learning outcomes priorities should be. There should be a connection between the model of regulation and the priorities place on learning outcomes policies. Accreditation agencies should, quite rightly, require actual information on student abilities, where audits others need only establish that appropriate strategies are in place.

⁸ I.e., Institutional characteristics such as diversity of students, entering GPA's, etc.

The focus of the expectation for which an agency is responsible should also have an influence on the activities. This study included only a few agencies that used learning outcomes policies in accountability frameworks. However, it would be expected that disciplinary agencies and governments should have different priorities and abilities. For example, accredited, professional programs tend to be developed in a modular, cohort type curriculum model, which is well suited to student learning, but not supportive of student mobility, accessibility, flexibility, etc. which are issues for which a government is responsible. Respecting the confines of the agency type, policies should be targeted at what is reasonable to expect from their existing mandate.

Ultimately, evaluation is critical for understanding student achievement and accreditation agencies are poised to be able to ascertain the impact through evaluations in a way that quality assurance cannot. This finding is corroborated by the literature that notes accreditation has been a major driver of reform and development of learning outcomes (Banta, 2007; Gannon-Slater et al., 2014; Kinzie, 2010; Wright, 2002). When there are clearly agreed upon identifiers of achievement and quality, there is less need to monitor the organisational and process functions (which is the primary function of both accountability and quality assurance activities). Similarly, according to Stensaker, Rosa, & Westerheijden, “when you’ve got standards you don’t need instruments controlling and coordinating complex relationships” (2007: 252).

Considering the role of agencies as drivers of quality improvement or ‘keepers of standards’, this highlights the important difference between formative and summative research activities in the types of results they produce, and the uses of those results. Formative evaluations are useful for quality improvement activities, where summative results have more value to assessment activities. It is the primary difference between how learning outcomes policies should be developed with the regulatory type in mind.

Conclusion

Findings triangulated by the survey, case study and meta-evaluation research suggest that learning outcomes policies or frameworks issued by regulatory bodies are not successful. Success, in this case, was judged by determining if the targeted goals were positively impacted by the policy. The overall failure could be attributed to the fact that learning outcomes, in fact, are useless.

Yet, considering that learning outcomes policies are just policies, it is more logical to consider that is a policy failure rather than a conceptual problem with learning outcomes. The research identified issues with learning outcomes policies at each of the three stages, where policies were misdirected in concept during formulation, misapplied in implementation, or misaligned in the planned activities and evaluation.

Recognising that a policy is not independent of its environment, it is also important to consider where the policies are being developed. Perhaps the goal of the policies and their associated activities do not align with the broad mandate of regulatory agencies. Acknowledging that different agency types have different roles and purposes in the higher education regulatory landscape is important to consider when identifying policy priorities and implementation. There should be a connection between the model of regulation and the priorities placed on learning outcomes policies.

The ‘hype cycle’ (Gartner, 2015) that peaks when innovations are both exalted for their possibilities and condemned for their failures is precisely where learning outcomes activities are today. The survey of activities around the world shows how much interest and hope there is for improving quality provision and regulation of higher education through learning outcomes, and the meta-evaluation shows that the results of the activities have not been particularly successful. Following the ‘hype cycle’ pattern, it is now time to climb the ‘slope of enlightenment’, with the development of second and third generation policies improving on the ones before, in order to settle into the most effective manner in which learning outcomes policies can be applied.

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Appendix C: PEQAB Matrix of Learning Outcomes Policy Development

