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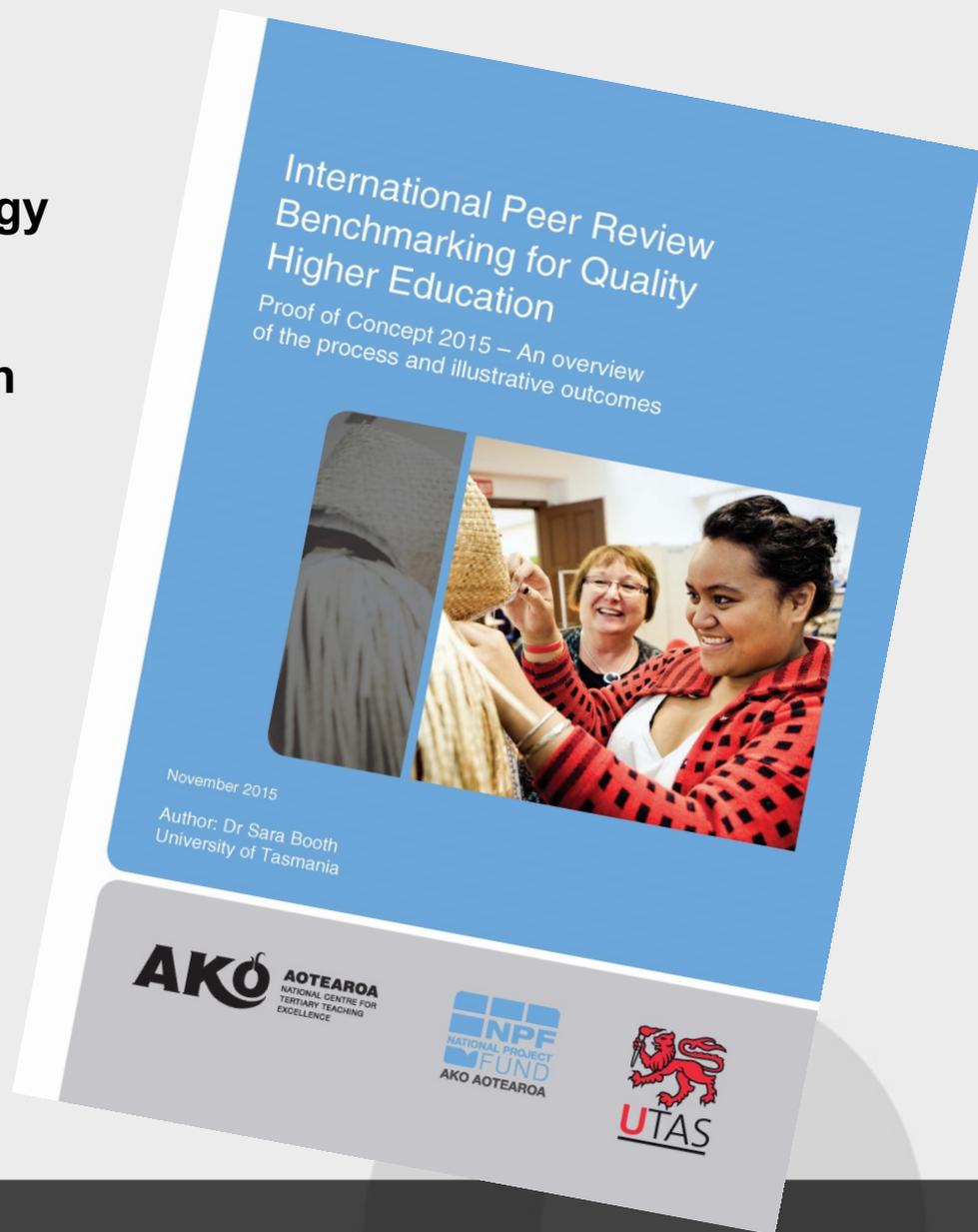TERTIARY TEACHING
EXCELLENCE

Enhancing our understanding of the potential of international peer review benchmarking for quality improvement

ADICT Learning and Teaching Academy Forum
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International Peer Review
Benchmarking for Quality
Higher Education
Proof of Concept 2015 – An overview
of the process and illustrative outcomes

November 2015

Author: Dr Sara Booth
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Process benchmarking why is Ako Aotearoa interested?

- Quality improvement and quality enhancement

- Repeated recommendation in Academic Audit reports conducted by the Academic Quality Agency for New Zealand's Universities (Cameron, 2015)

- Ako Aotearoa wanted to trial a proof of concept benchmarking process and making this an international event has appeal in the New Zealand context.

Benchmarking: why choose this methodology?

- Highly formative

- Compliance requirements are relatively low
  - ❑ Bench-marking in NZ is usually thought of as data intensive comparative resource or expenditure analysis

- International comparisons add a new dimension to thinking about the work
  - ❑ Challenge national assumptions
  - ❑ Have to take the time to explain (and think about) context

Focus areas in this exercise

- Strategies for increasing participation of priority (or non-traditional or disadvantaged) learners

- Provision of professional support for teaching staff

- Teaching quality

- Curriculum quality

- Peer review of assessment

Recommendations as a result of the exercise belong to each institution participating

- Initially developed by each institution for themselves

- Tested through the peer review benchmarking process

- Modified as necessary

- Taken back to the institution for further consideration

Findings – Sample: Teaching Quality

Areas of good practice

Included:
- Resources to share
- Internal teaching awards processes and their alignment of internal teaching awards to national awards
- Approaches to online teaching

Findings –Sample - Teaching Quality

Areas for improvement / further development
- Reduce the number of strategies
- Fragmented policies in T & L
  - UTAS will undertake a mapping exercise with all teaching and learning policies to identify gaps
  - VU needs to consolidate and complete work on policy renewal
- Support for staff with poor quality teaching is often a work in progress
- Swinburne is about to commence data modelling to identify unit metrics that can be used for course quality

Findings – common threads in T&L quality

- University strategic plans rely heavily on analysis of internal and external data with some data not available for 3 years

- Lack of consistency between strategic and operational plans

- **Hot topic:** Partnerships with schools area an important part of assisting students' transition into university

- **Hot topic:** Focus on blended learning - using the LMS as more than just a resource library

- Access to teaching surveys for quality assurance purposes is a challenge

- Importance of external referencing of programs

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Findings – unpacking differences

- Language in national policies on equity and access is slightly different (and unpacking it is valuable): *"priority" vs "non-traditional"*

- Core professional development programs for academic staff [optional vs mandatory]

- Funding for teaching quality varies across universities [*$70k a year to $3M*]

- Consistent use of external survey instruments

- Operational language is different (and unpacking it is necessary) [*courses/programmes/papers/subject/unit/modules*]

- Only New Zealand universities have a coordinated process for programme approvals

Lessons learnt

- Understanding the context of each institution is critical

- Unpacking the policy language in different constituencies has the potential to open up thinking

- Relies on open, collegial, reflective and safe conversation

- Relies on willingness to share good and poorer practice

- Needs good preparation beforehand

- Needs a very well structured workshop process

- Initial framing questions needn't be too precise.

Have a look at the report

https://akoaotearoa.ac.nz/ako-aotearoa/Peer-review-benchmarking

www.akoaotearoa.ac.nz

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