Quality Management at UTAS

UTAS is embedding a Quality Management Framework (QMF) across all the activities of the University.

A QMF is a straightforward, commonsense and beneficial approach to management in any organisation. Just as importantly, it is a methodology that focuses on the attainment of excellence across all of an organisation’s activities. A QMF, when implemented and maintained effectively, is an approach that ensures all organisational units and their activities meet organisational goals, achieve best practice processes and procedures, and attain excellence in outcomes. Embedding the UTAS QMF will not only furnish the University with the tools to lift standards and perform at the highest levels, but will also supply the means to demonstrate that it has done so.

In simple terms, the principles of quality management describe a cycle from the establishment of objectives, through planning to meet those objectives, the implementation of actions to meet the plans, the identification and analysis of outcomes, and the subsequent establishment of improvement processes. Although terminology may vary, this overall methodology is entirely familiar to teachers and researchers in universities – teaching and research projects have objectives and are planned, delivered, evaluated and, where relevant, improved. The reflection on and improvement of academic practice is de rigueur for universities. Further, although higher education providers have particular foci on research and learning and teaching not present in most other sectors, there is nothing complex in the concepts involved in quality management, the processes for achieving outcomes that are achieved, or the approaches to implementation.

However, successful implementation of an all-of-organisation QMF does require full and consistent ownership from senior management and the involvement of all organisational units and the staff within them. It is the universal nature of the QMF across all activities – management, support, teaching and learning, research, partnerships and governance - that underlies the most significant challenge for a complex organisation such as a university.

Also, a QMF requires the consistent application of a set of key principles across all activities in an organisation rather than the development of separate and perhaps ad hoc processes dependent on individuals or separate groupings. Ensuring the alignment of quality management processes utilised by the various organisational units within a university, with their differing agendas and areas of responsibility, with all-of-organisation quality principles while at the same time preserving the freedom to be innovative, creative and to develop and apply contextualised initiatives, is the second major challenge. The importance of this challenge is underlined by a consideration of the meaning of ‘quality’ in a higher education setting:

...quality is a relative concept, that different interest groups or 'stakeholders' in higher education have different priorities and their focus of attention may be different.... For example, the focus of attention for students and lecturers might be on the process of education while the focus of employers might be on the outputs of higher education. It is not possible, therefore, to talk about quality as a unitary concept, quality must be defined...
in terms of a range of qualities, with recognition that an institution may be of high quality in relation to one factor but low quality in relation to another. The best that can be achieved is to define as clearly as possible the criteria that each stakeholder uses when judging quality and for these competing views to be taken into account when assessments of quality are undertaken.\(^1\)

Thus, although the underlying principles may be common, what is meant by quality processes and outcomes in an administrative organisational unit may differ from the positions held in a School, for example. These differences and similarities need to be encompassed in implementing an all-of-organisation QMF.

Finally, successfully establishing a systemic change in conceptualising and conducting management practices across an organisation requires effective information, support and, where relevant, professional development for responsible staff. The third major challenge in implementing a QMF is the development and maintenance of the required professional and resource infrastructure.

The following articles are available at [http://www.dvc.utas.edu.au/quality/utas-quality-management-framework](http://www.dvc.utas.edu.au/quality/utas-quality-management-framework) to give information on and explain key aspects of the development and implementation of the UTAS Quality Management Framework:

- Quality Management in Higher Education
- Quality Management in Higher Education in Australia – the Changing Landscape
- Embedding a Quality Management Framework
- Prerequisites for the Successful Implementation of a Quality Management Framework

For further information on these articles or their contents contact the Manager, Quality Processes and Improvement: [http://www.dvc.utas.edu.au/quality/manager.-quality-processes-and-improvement](http://www.dvc.utas.edu.au/quality/manager.-quality-processes-and-improvement)

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\(^1\) The Analytic Quality Glossary: [http://www.qualityresearchinternational.com/glossary/quality.htm](http://www.qualityresearchinternational.com/glossary/quality.htm)