A brief guide to the (O)ADRI Cycle

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As you are probably aware, UTAS has recently revised its Quality Management Framework. Any such framework requires a set of tools to assist with the process of continuous improvement. Critical to the process is a tool for undertaking systematic and structured reviews and the University has defined the (O)ADRI Cycle for this purpose.

(O)ADRI is an adaptation of the Approach >> Deployment >> Results >> Improvement (ADRI) Cycle developed by the Australian Business Excellence Framework. ADRI has been used by the Australian Universities Quality Agency (AUQA) as part of its audit process for many years. The major difference between ADRI and (O)ADRI is that ‘Objectives’ has been taken out of the Approach phase and inserted into the cycle as a stand alone phase: (Objectives) >> Approach >> Deployment >> Results >> Improvement hence (O)ADRI. The reason for doing this is to ensure that objectives (or intentions or planned outcomes) are explicitly identified in any undertaking and considered as part of the review process.

How does (O)ADRI work?

There are two aspects to (OADRI).

In the context of continuous improvement, (O)ADRI should be used to review performance over a particular period: the performance of the University as a whole or some clearly identified unit, element, function, process or item within it. For example, (O)ADRI can be used to assess University performance against the goals identified in the strategic plan after five years. It can be used to assess the performance of the Academic Senate against its planned programme for the year; or the delivery of a course or a student support service. i.e. (O)ADRI can be used to assess any undertaking that has (or should have) an articulated objective or intended outcome that takes place over time.

There are five aspects of the undertaking that are the subject of review:

(Objectives): What is the intent? What goals/objectives have been established? How were they established?

Approach: What strategies, structures and processes have been developed and why have they been chosen? Has the approach taken been benchmarked against best practice? What performance indicators have been developed to track progress?

Deployment: How have the strategies, structures and processes been put into practice? What is the depth and breadth of their implementation? Have they been accepted and integrated into normal operations?

Results: What trends do the performance indicators show and how do you know this? How do results compare with best practice? How have you communicated these results?

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1 The author acts as the Australian Maritime College’s Quality Co-ordinator


ADRI is a variant of the Plan ➔ Do ➔ Check ➔ Act Cycle made popular by Dr W Edwards Deming in the 1950s.
Improvement: What is the process for reviewing the appropriateness and effectiveness of the Approach and Deployment? How do you use the Results to do this? What has been learned and how will this be used to amend Objectives and/or improve the Approach and its Deployment?

Each phase of the cycle can be scored - a generic assessment matrix is provided in Table 1.

(O)ADRI can also be used as a guide when any kind of initiative or endeavour is being planned: it is far better to plan quality in to what you intend doing than try to ‘bolt it on’ afterwards! Objectives, Approach and Deployment are obviously important in the planning phase, but consideration should also be given to Results and Improvement at this early stage also. In the context of results, it is important to identify how you will assess these: for example, what might you consider doing if performance indicators show a particular pattern or trend? It is also important to try to identify the sort of processes for improvement that you might put in place, although these will ultimately depend on results.

(O)ADRI is depicted below.

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3 The description of each phase of the cycle is derived from that in SAI Global Limited (2007) *op cit* p.33.
Table 1: (O)ADRI Assessment Matrix.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>OBJECTIVE</th>
<th>APPROACH</th>
<th>DEPLOYMENT</th>
<th>RESULTS</th>
<th>IMPROVEMENT</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Poor</td>
<td>• Limited evidence that objectives/intentions have never been articulated; • Understanding of objectives/intentions is anecdotal.</td>
<td>• No evidence that a structured Approach has been considered and the approach taken is generally reactive. • No evidence of performance indicators.</td>
<td>• Few if any strategies, structures and processes have been put in place.</td>
<td>• References to results and performance indicators are anecdotal, and they address few relevant areas.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Barely acceptable</td>
<td>• Objectives/intentions have been identified, possibly in an arbitrary fashion. • Limited reference to the University’s mission, vision and strategic goals.</td>
<td>• Approach is planned and some strategies, structures and processes have been developed • A defined sequence of Deployment is identifiable. • Some reference to performance indicators.</td>
<td>• Approach is applied to many areas and activities, including the major ones. • Approach is becoming part of operations and planning</td>
<td>• Positive trends in many areas, including the major ones. • Results are comparable with external organisations in some areas. • Some evidence that Results are attributable to the Approach in some areas. • Some consideration of Objectives and their appropriateness. • Approach and Deployment are subject to review. • There is evidence that Approach and Deployment have been improved.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Excellent</td>
<td>• Objectives/intentions have been fully developed and these link to the University’s mission, vision and strategic goals • Objectives/intentions are clearly communicated and are fully accepted</td>
<td>• Strategies, structures and processes have been fully developed and there is clear rationale for their choice. • Benchmarking indicates Approach is accepted as best practice in the field. • Performance indicators are appropriate and fully articulated.</td>
<td>• Approach is applied to all areas and activities and is widely understood. • Approach is totally integrated into normal operations and planning.</td>
<td>• Positive trends in all areas. • Excellent comparisons with external organisations in most major areas. Among ‘best-in-class’ in many areas. • Results clearly derive from the Approach in all areas. • There is a proactive and clearly articulated system for the regular review of Objectives and the efficacy of Approach and Deployment. • There is widespread and demonstrable evidence of continuous improvement.</td>
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\(^4\) Table 1 is based upon that in SAI Global Limited (2007) *op cit* p.34.