Chapter XXI

Authentic Teaching and Learning Standards That Assure Quality Higher Education

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Abstract

Quality assurance is becoming a necessary aspect of many institutions of higher education. Teaching and learning is a major area of scrutiny and requires institutional agreement on the benchmarks and standards by which quality will be determined. This chapter provides a framework for conceptualising the elements of teaching and learning that need to be accounted for in any quality assurance process, with particular focus on teaching activities that reflect an authentic approach to learning.

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Introduction

This book is evidence of the exemplary approaches to authentic teaching and learning that are being implemented by individual teachers across all discipline areas in higher education. Over time these endeavors and their students’ successes will flow on to the practices of their colleagues and the policies of their institutions. However, this effect can be facilitated by institutional policies that can guide and motivate the principal activities of teaching and learning while at the same time providing direction for secondary support structures such as professional and resource development. These institutional policies are being developed in an economic and political climate that demands transparent processes of quality assurance.

Quality Assurance in Higher Education

The movement to ascertain and assure quality in higher education appears to have grown from activities in the UK where quality assurance processes have been in place for some time. The document *Quality Assurance for Higher Education* prepared by the Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education (QAAHE) in the UK describes the intention of the objectives of quality assurance of teaching and learning in higher education as:

a. To contribute, in conjunction with other mechanisms, to the promotion of high quality and standards in teaching and learning.

b. To provide students, employers and others with reliable and consistent information about quality and standards at each higher education institution (HEI).

c. To ensure that HE programs are identified where quality or standards are unsatisfactory, as a basis for ensuring rapid action to improve them.

d. To provide one means of securing accountability for the use of public funds received by HEIs. (QAAHE, 2001, p. 2)

The current quality activity in higher education in Australia commenced in December 1999 when the Minister for Education, Training and Youth Affairs, announced plans for the establishment of the *Australian University Quality Agency* (AUQA) with a brief to conduct regular quality audits and to provide reports on the quality assurance arrangements of self-accrediting higher educa-