Longer-term benefits for those benchmarking technology enhanced learning: Facilitating excellence slowly but surely

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Benchmarking as a quality instrument

Almost all … quality management [activities] emphasise evaluation, and broadly this can only be undertaken in four ways:

1. against defined objectives or standards (set internally or by external bodies);
2. against measures of customer satisfaction;
3. against expert and professional judgement; and
4. against comparator organisations;

with analysis in all four approaches being undertaken over a defined time scale. (Schofield, 1998, p. 6).

- In many ways this is Benchmarking

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Benchmarking allows for:

- Continuous improvement (CI)
- Determining areas for development or growth (gap or opportunity identification)
- Developing strategy
- Enhancing organisational learning for improvement
- Increasing productivity or improving the design of a product or service
- Performance assessment
- Performance improvement through recalibration or setting of goal (Elmuti & Kathawala1997)

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- In a university situation, benchmarking is a means of "connecting up relevant stakeholders both within and outside the institution in such a way that leads to knowledge exchange about why, what, where and how improvement might occur" (Garlick & Pryor, 2004)

- Capturing performance metrics alone does not necessarily lead to understanding how the underlying processes enable results as it can lead to benchmarking being used incorrectly (Alstete, 1995; Boxwell, 1994).

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Types of benchmarking

Performance benchmarking
- the comparison of performance measures to determine how an organizations compare

Process benchmarking
- comparing methods & processes in an effort to improve an organization's own processes

Strategic benchmarking
- when changing an organization's strategic direction and the comparison with the competition is pursued in terms of strategy

Internal benchmarking
- comparisons made between an organization's own departments/divisions

Competitive benchmarking
- performed against ''best" competition to compare performance and results

Functional benchmarking
- compare the technology/process in one's own industry or technological area to become the best in that technology/process

Generic benchmarking
- comparison of processes against best process operators regardless of industry

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(Bhutta & Huq, 1999, p. 257)

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The ACODE 8 Benchmarks for TEL

1. Institution-wide policy and governance for technology enhanced learning;
2. Planning for institution-wide quality improvement of technology enhanced learning;
3. Information technology systems, services and support for technology enhanced learning;
4. The application of technology enhanced learning services;
5. Staff professional development for the effective use of technology enhanced learning;
6. Staff support for the use of technology enhanced learning;
7. Student training for the effective use of technology enhanced learning;
8. Student support for the use of technology enhanced learning.

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The ACODE Benchmarking approach echoes Garlick and Langworthy's (2008) view on benchmarking:

- … uses normative terms like "collaboration", "organisation learning", "inclusiveness", "reflection", "review", "leadership" and "improvement".
- It is about connecting up relevant stakeholders both within and outside the institution in such a way that leads to knowledge exchange about why, what, where and how improvement might occur (p. 6).

Supporting organisation	Country /Region	Benchmarks, benchmarking framework or equivalent	Accreditation, certification of professional development	Tool or Checklist
Australasian council on Open Distance and eLearning (ACODE)	Australasia	★		
Council of Regional Accrediting Commissions (C-RAC)	USA	★		
European Association of Distance Teaching Universities (EADTU)	Europe		★	
European Foundation for Management Development (EFMD)	Europe		★	
European Foundation for Quality in e-Learning (EFQUEL)	Europe		★	
E-Learning Guidelines (eLG) Tertiary Education Commission (TEC)	New Zealand	★		
ISO/IEC19796-1 Standard for IT in Learning, Education and Training	Switzerland	★		
Online Learning Consortium (OLC) Online Toolkit	USA		★	
Quality Matters (QM)	USA			★
Taking the Lead – TEC – NCTTE	New Zealand			★
ASCILITE – TALAS (not yet finalized)	Australasia		★	

The 3rd ACODE Inter-institutional Benchmarking Summit

25th-27th June 2018

Hosted by Griffith University - Southbank Campus - Qld - Australia

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- 24 Institutions
- Average 3.8

Institution	BM 1	BM 2	BM 3	BM 4	BM 5	BM 6	BM 7	BM 8
ACER Institute			X	X				
Australian National University	X			X	X	X		
Central Queensland University			X		X			
Charles Stuart University	X	X						
Curtin University	X	X	X			X		
Edith Cowen University	X	X						
Griffith University					X	X		
Lincoln University	X	X						
Macquarie University	X			X	X			
Monash College	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Murdoch University	X	X			X			
RMIT University	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Swinburne University	X				X	X		
University of Adelaide	X	X	X					
University of Auckland		X		X	X			
University of Melbourne	X				X	X		
University of New England			X	X	X	X	X	X
University of Otago						X		X
University of Queensland			X			X		
University of Southern Queensland		X			X			X
University of Sydney		X			X			
University of Tasmania	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	
University of the South Pacific	X	X						
Victoria University of Wellington	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Total	15	14	10	9	15	12	5	6

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2014-2018

Institution	BM 1	BM 2	BM 3	BM 4	BM 5	BM 6	BM 7	BM 8
Asia Pacific International College				1			1	
Auckland University of Technology						1		1
Australian Catholic University	2	1 2			1 2	1 2		
ACER Institute			3	3				
Australian National University	2 3			2 3	3	3		
Central Queensland University			3		3			
Charles Stuart University	3	3	2	2			2	
Christchurch Polytechnic	1			1				
Curtin University	3	1 3	3		1	3		
Edith Cowen University	2 3	2 3	2	2	2	2	2	2
Federation University	1				1 2	1 2	2	1 2
Flinders University		1		1				
Griffith University					3	3		
La Trobe University	2		2	2				
Lincoln University	2 3	1 2 3	2	1 2				
Macquarie University	2 3		1	2 3	1 2 3			
Monash College	2 3	2 3	2 3	2 3	2 3	2 3	3	3
Murdoch University	3	3			3			
Queensland University of Technology	1				1			
RMIT University	3	3	3	3	2 3	2 3	3	2 3
Swinburne University	3				2 3	2 3		
The Open University	1	1	1 2	1 2				
University of Adelaide	3	3	3					
University of Auckland		2 3	1	2 3	2 3			
University of Canberra	1 2	2				1	2	2
University of Melbourne	3				2 3	2 3		
University of New England	1		2 3	2 3	1 2 3	2 3	1 3	1 3
University of Notre Dame				2	2			
University of Otago	1 2	1 2	1 2	1 2	1 2	2 3	2	2 3
University of Queensland			3			3		
University of South Africa	1 2		1 2		1 2			
University of Southern Queensland	2	2 3	2	2	1 2 3	1 2	1	1 3
University of Sydney		3			3			
University of Tasmania	2 3	3	2 3	3	3	3	3	2
University of Technology, Sydney		1		1	2	2		
University of the South Pacific	3	3	1	1	2	2		
University of the Sunshine Coast		2	2		2			
University of Western Australia			1		1			
University of Wollongong					1	1	1	1
Victoria University	1	2		2	2	1		
Victoria University of Wellington	1 2 3	1 2 3	1 2 3	1 2 3	1 2 3	1 2 3	1 2 3	1 2 3
Western Sydney University	1		2	1 2		1		2
2014	11	8	8	10	12	9	5	6
2016	12	11	14	16	19	13	6	8
2018	15	14	10	9	15	12	5	6
Total	38	33	32	35	46	34	16	20

participation year:
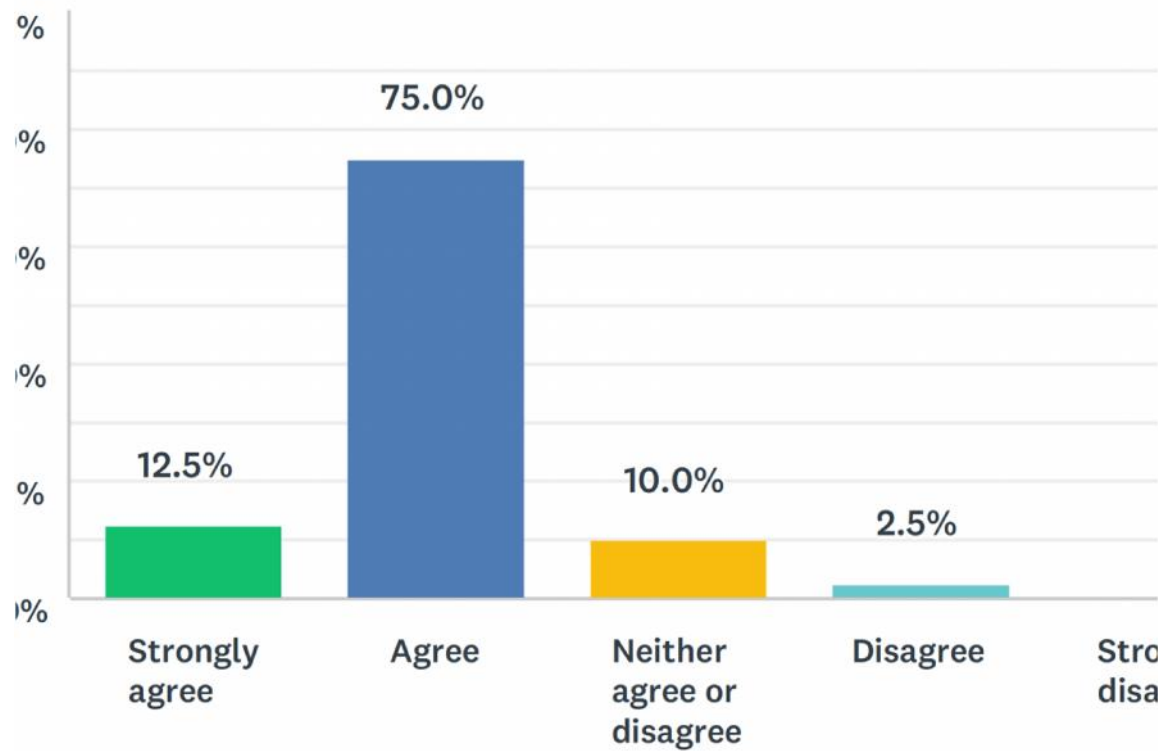1 = 2014;
2 = 2016;
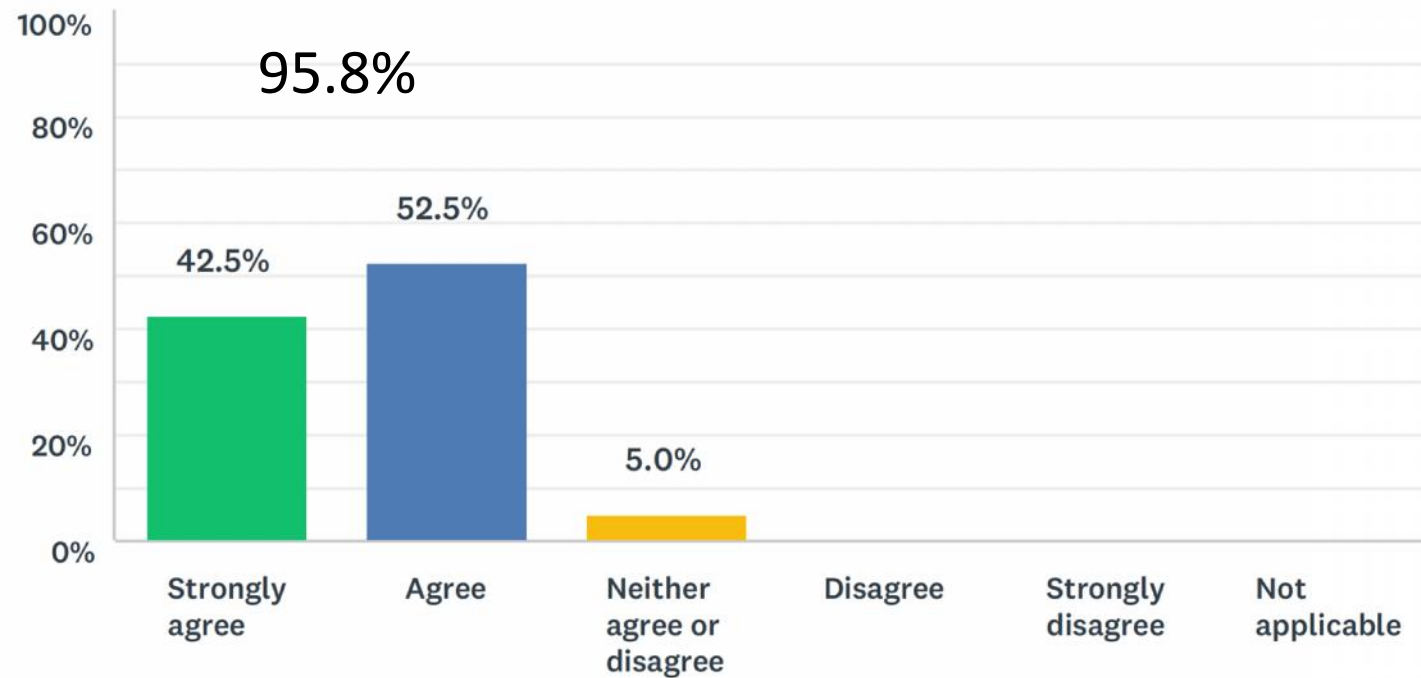3 = 2018.

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Sharing practice

87.5% agreed that the way the Performance Indicators within the Benchmarks made what was required clear and unambiguous.
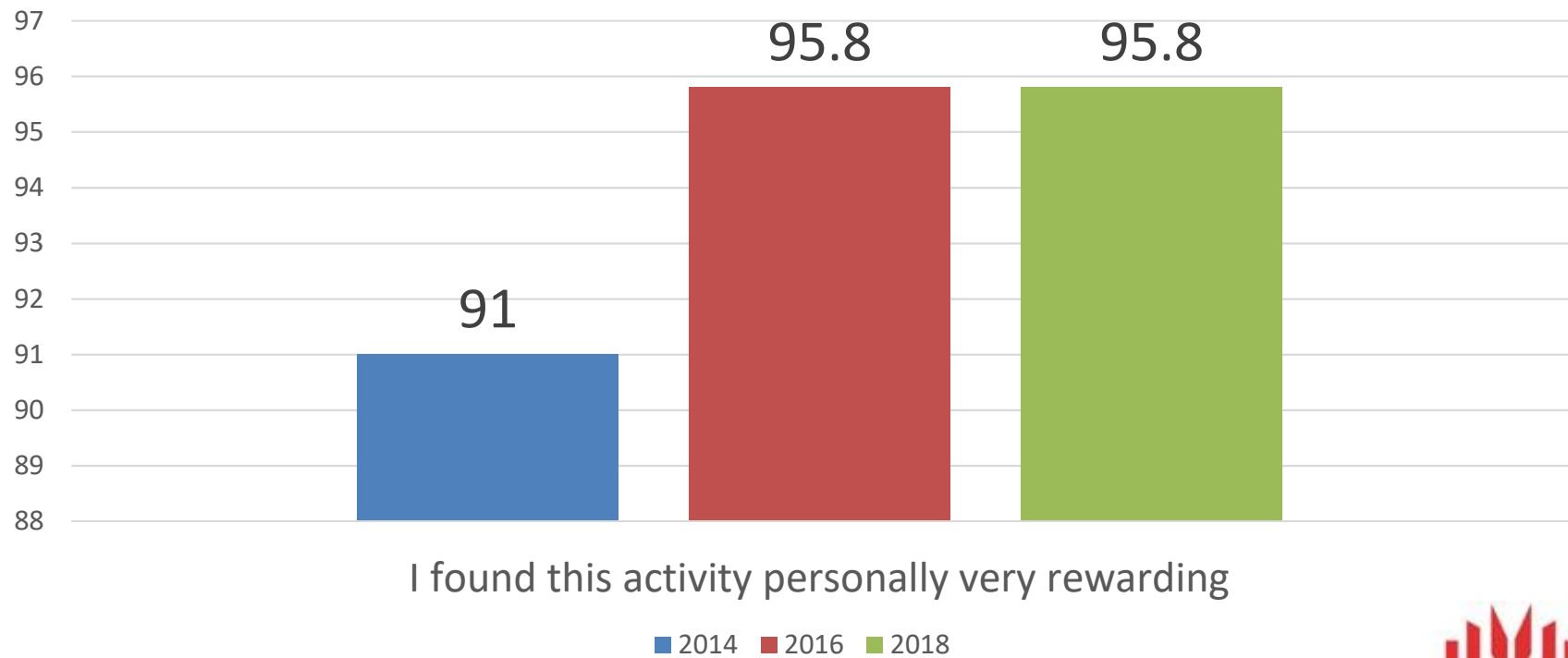
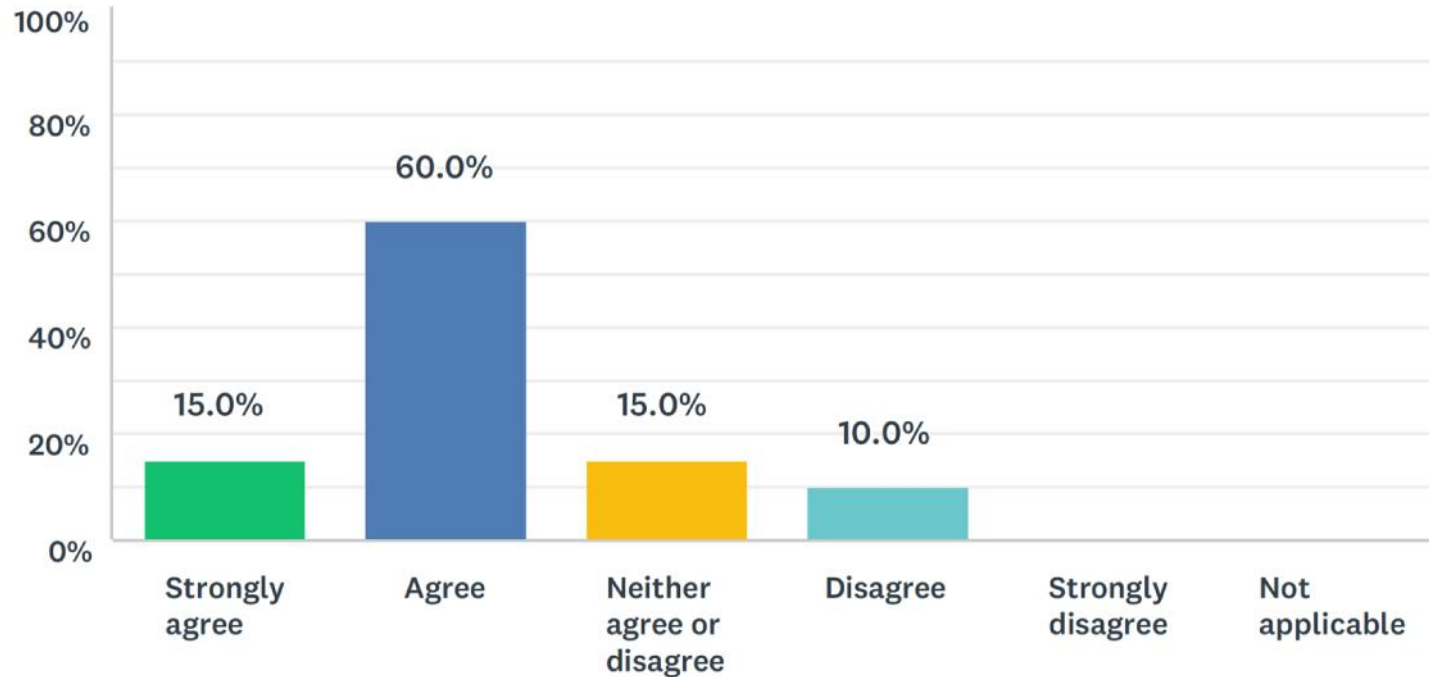# Q23 I found this activity personally very rewarding

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Over time

This could be due to the fact that 85.1% found what the other institutions share informative enough to make reasonable comparisons with their own institution (Q24). Herein lies the heart and the beauty of this type of activity.
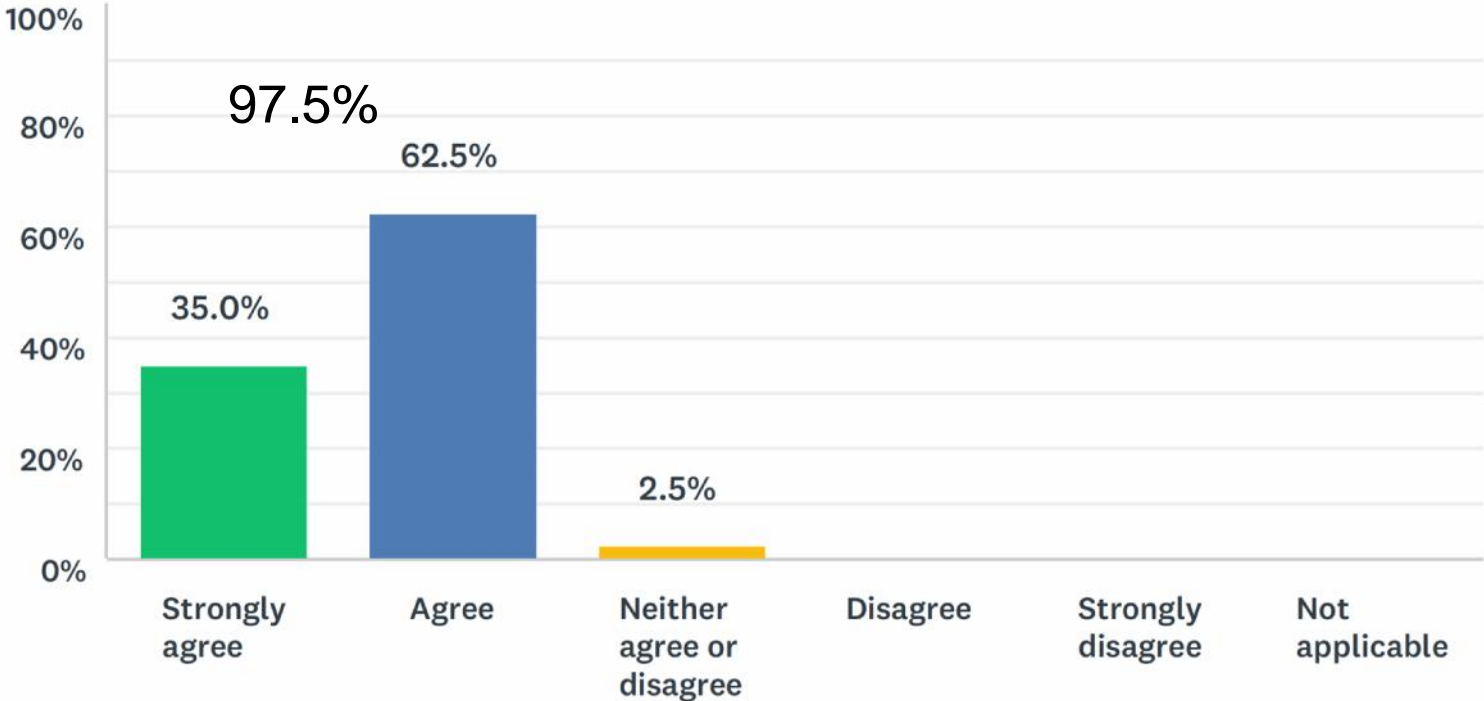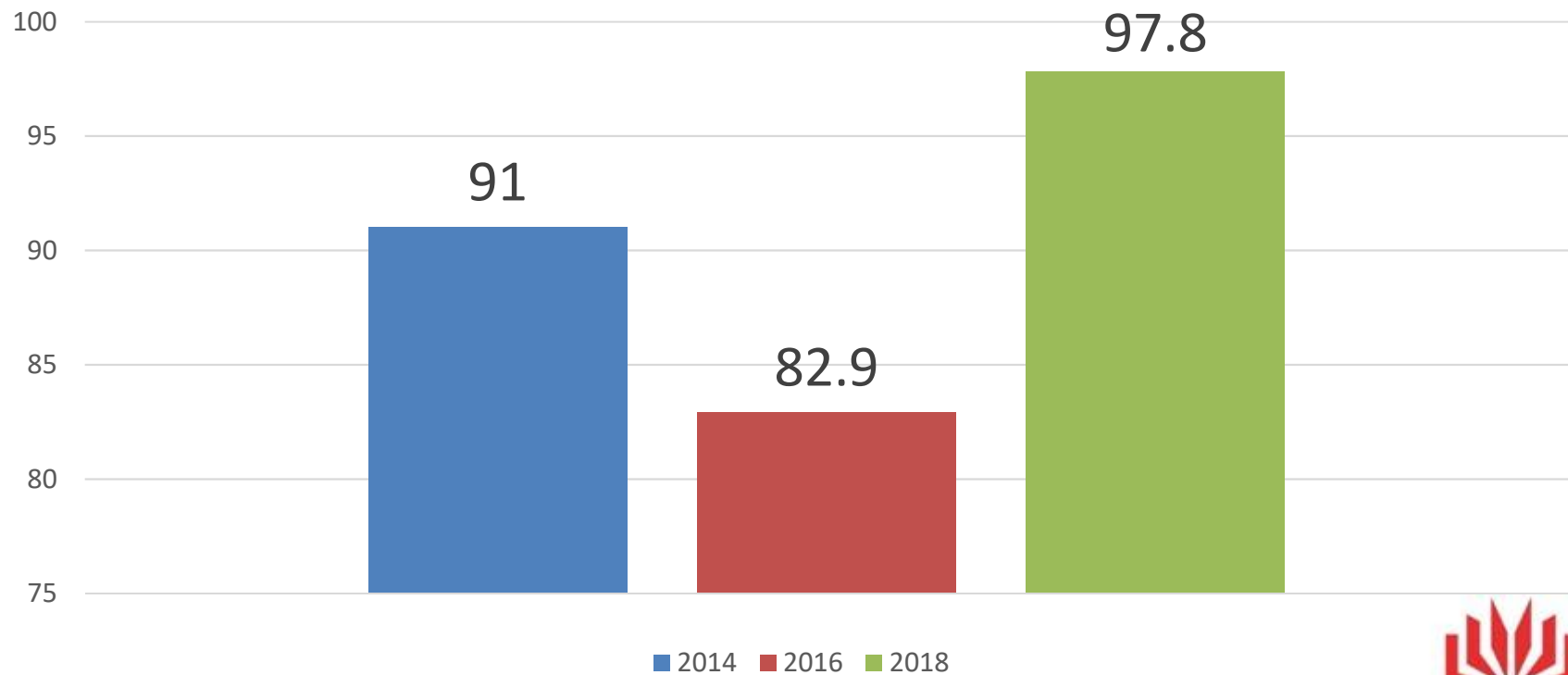
Q26 I learned a number of strategies from other institutions that I would like to see implemented at my institution

Q37 How many staff were involved in your institutional self-assessment and which sections/units/departments did they represent
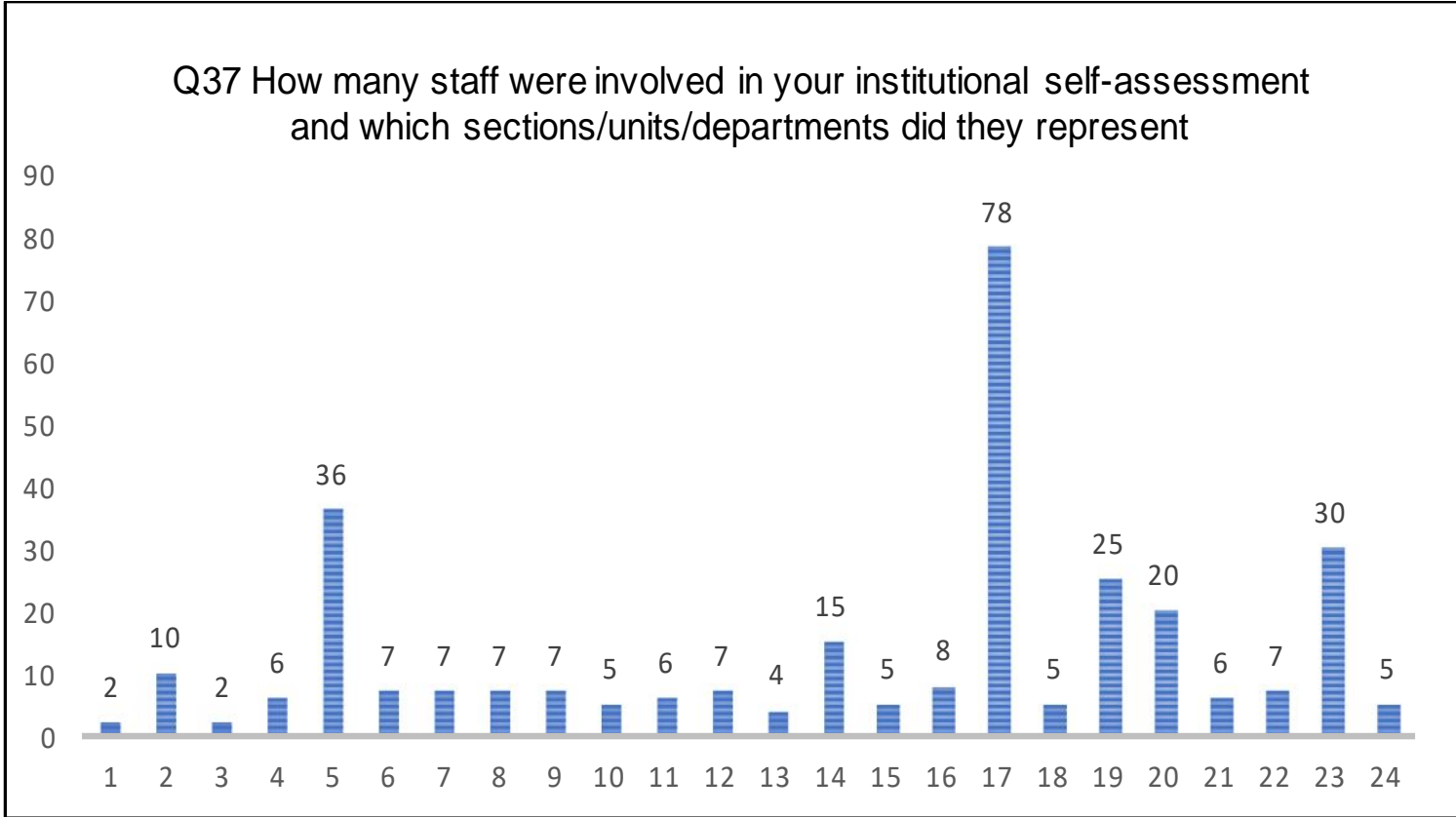
310 in all, so an average of 13 per institution

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Q12 I found most of the information I needed to provide credible evidence to address the performance indicators we undertook
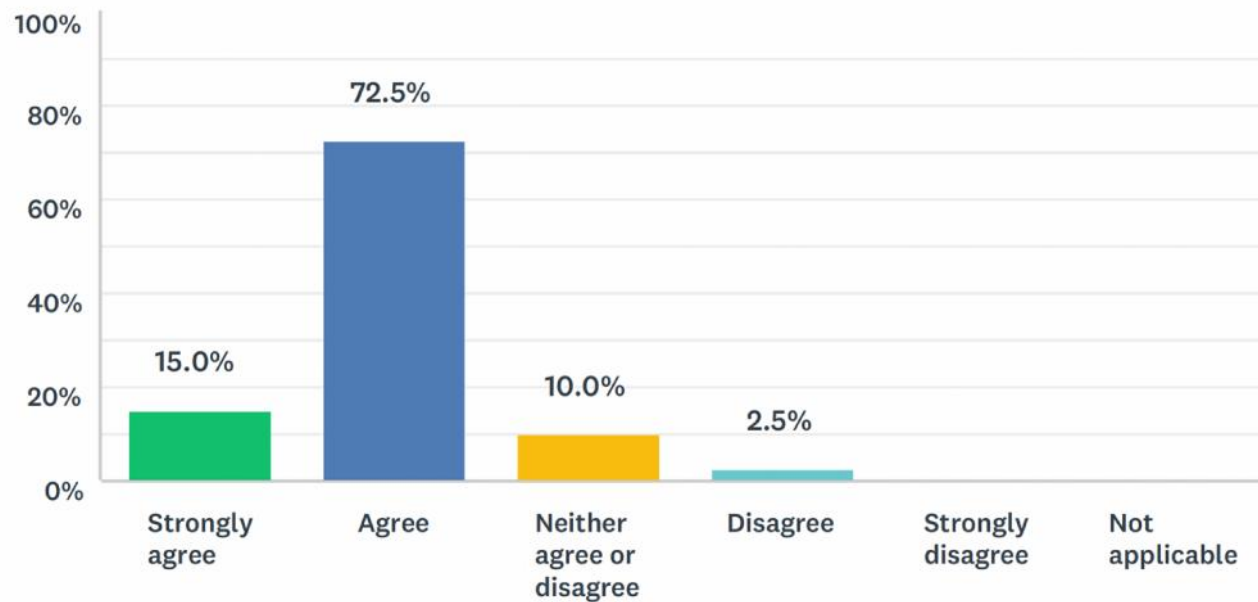
The majority of participants (87.5%) agreed. This is similar to 2016 (89.4%) and maintains the improvement from 2014 (69%).
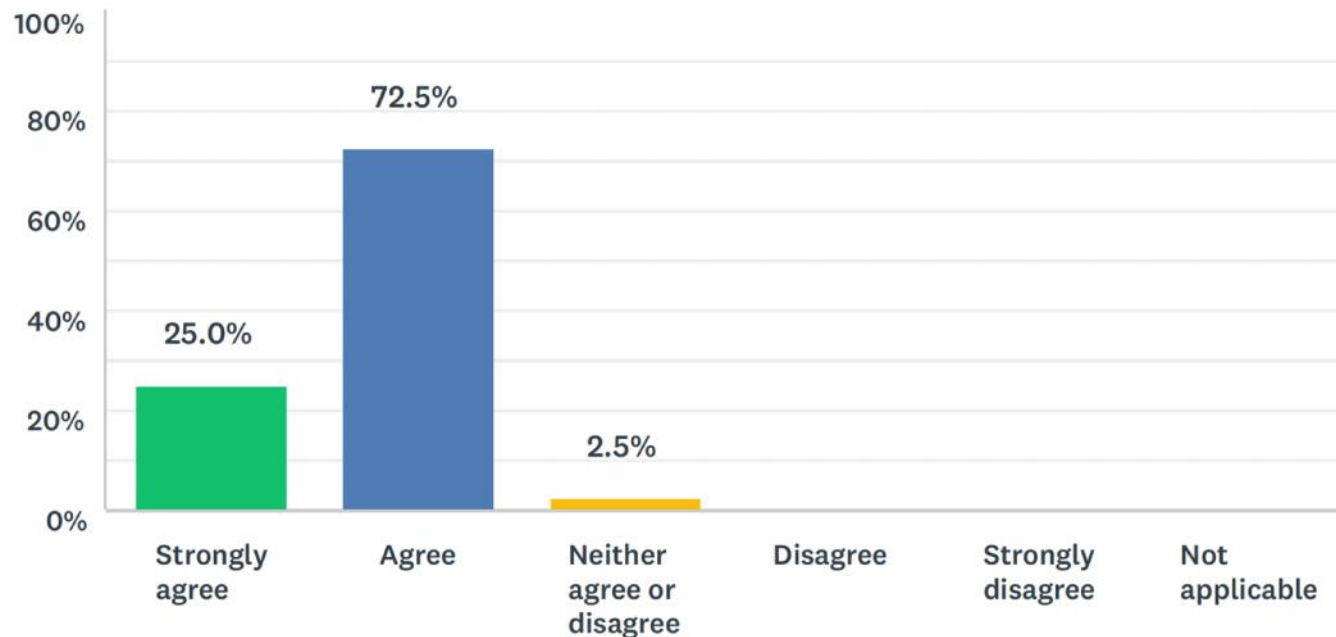
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Q13 There is sufficient scope within the current suite of performance indicators in the benchmarks to cover the TEL scenarios at my institution

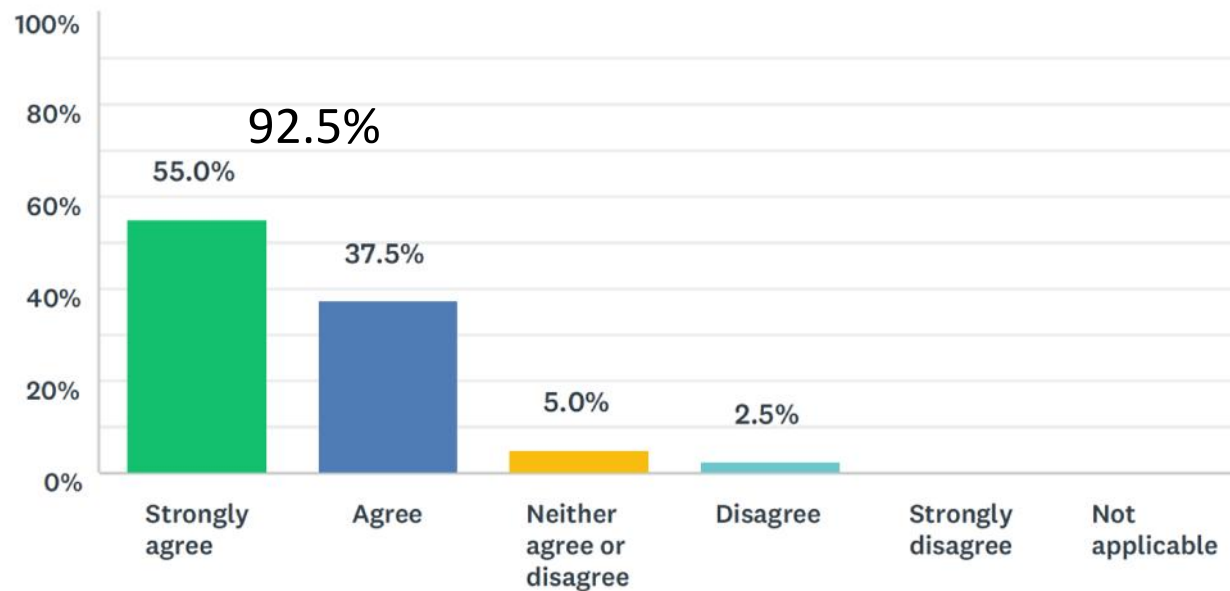97.5% agreed, an increase from 2016 (91.5%) and 2014 (91%)

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Q25 The ACODE Benchmarks made me think twice about what we as an institution are doing in relation to TEL

The benchmarks are designed to help institutions critically self-assess their capacity in TEL and this response clearly demonstrates that this is precisely what they are doing.

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Q30 This benchmarking self-assessment activity has provided an opportunity to stimulate a more in-depth discussion about TEL at institution
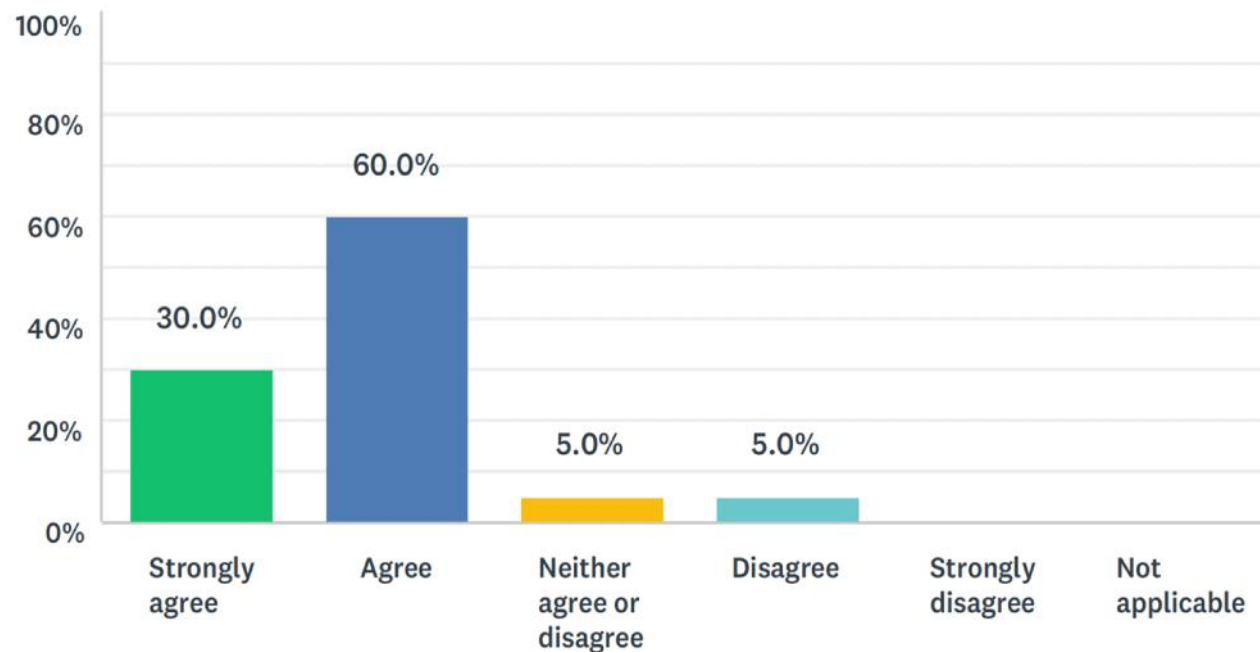
90.0% agree that this has provided opportunity for more in-depth discussion within their institutions

Lessons over time

Follow-up from 2016 12 months on

- All universities responded

- It has helped us to better align our activities with with Uni goals

- Informed the formation of a new unit and teams

- Help develop much better cross unit cooperation

- Development of a new TEL strategy, new TEL advisory group

- It got the conversation started for the first time

- Worked as a catalyst to address TEL at the institutional level

- The impact was least felt in those institutions undergoing restructures

	-5	-4	-3	-2	-1	0	1	2	3	4	5
2-1	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	22.2%	22.2%	44.4%	11.1%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%
2-2	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	11.1%	0.0%	33.3%	44.4%	0.0%	11.1%	0.0%	0.0%
2-3	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	44.4%	33.3%	22.2%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%
2-4	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	11.1%	55.6%	22.2%	11.1%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%
2-5	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	22.2%	44.4%	0.0%	22.2%	11.1%	0.0%	0.0%

Example Benchmark 2
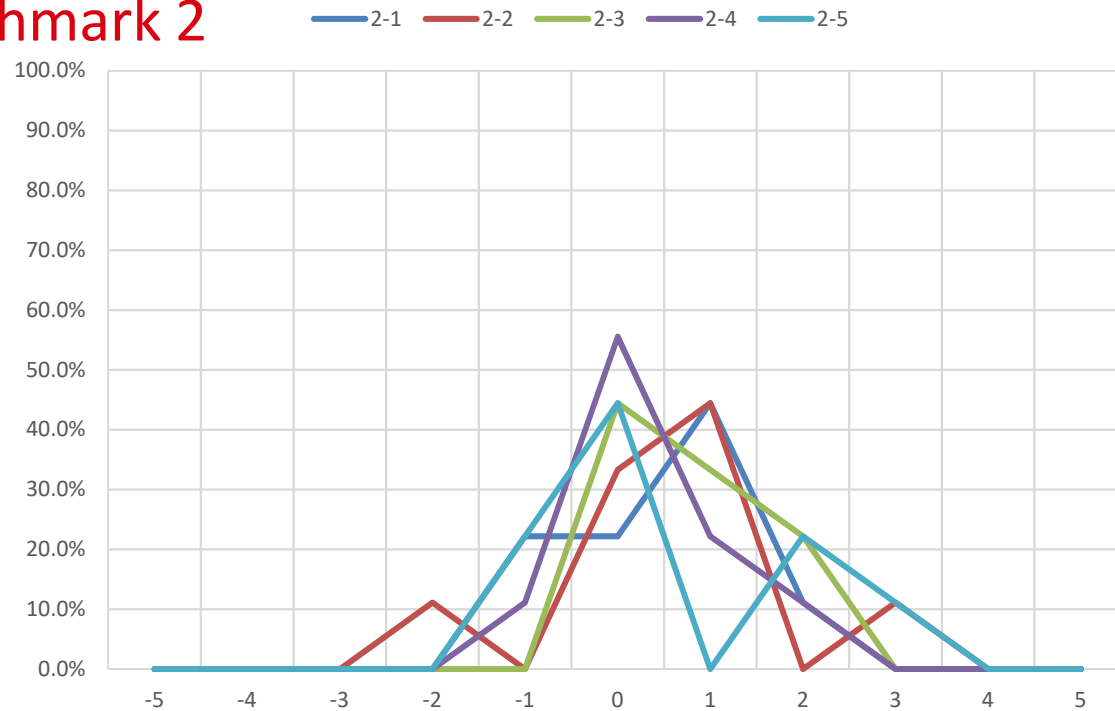
With thanks to
Stephan Marshall

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But still some room for improvement

- Increase the number of stakeholders involved within the institutions

- Not many institutions had a TEL Framework in place

- The online tool sucks more than it did last time

- More visualization of data

- More worked examples

- Some more networking time where we can tease out some issues

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A Companion

Point in time
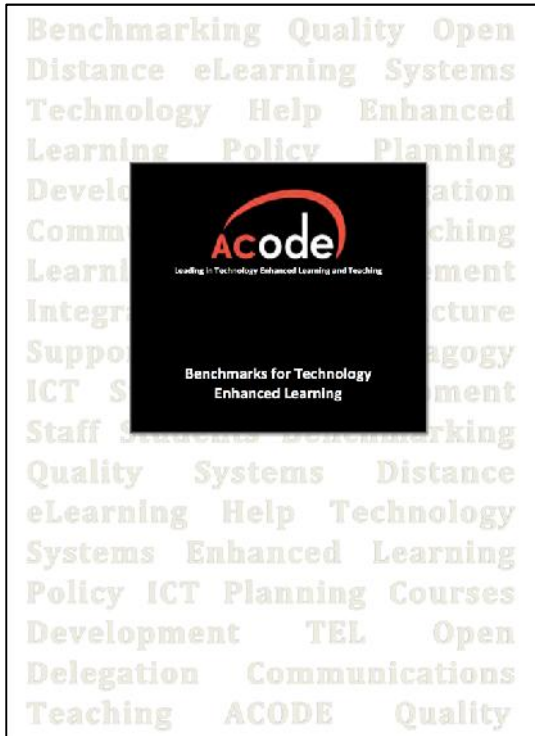
Across time

13 Institutions involved

THE WORKING PARTY

ACODE would like to extend praise and thanks to the members of the 2018 ACODE TEL Framework Working Party for their invaluable input and contribution to the development of the ACODE TEL Framework. Thanks are also extended to the Member Institutions these members represent.

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On behalf of the ACODE Executive, our special thanks go to:

Mr Colin Lowe	Senior Manager, Enterprise Learning Systems	University of Sydney
Dr Steve Leichtweis	Head of eLearning Group	University of Auckland
Mr Gerry Kregor	Senior Educational Designer	University of Tasmania
As Prof Philip Uys	Director, Learning Technologies	Charles Sturt University
Gordon Cunningham	Enterprise Learning Platforms Lead	Curtin University
Michael Fardon	Manager, Learning Innovations	Murdoch University
Dr Sarah Stein	Director (Distance Learning)	University of Otago
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Kulari Lokuge	Associate Director (eLearning)	Monash College
Ms Sue Atkinson	Manager, Learning Enhancement	University of Adelaide
Ms Julie Brunner	Academic Programs Coordinator, Learning Innovations	Curtin University
Mr Shane Nuessler	Manager, Scholarly Information Environments	University of Canberra
Ms Georgina Bardon	Team Leader, Support & Innovation	University of Canberra

Institutions Piloting the ACODE TEL Framework - 2019

- Griffith University (GU)
- University of Auckland (UoA)
- RMIT
- University of Canberra (UC)
- Australia National University (ANU)
- University of the South Pacific (USP) - to be confirmed
- Monash College - to be confirmed

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Conclusion

- It is by institution's undertaking regular quality activities, such as this, that they facilitate a level of design consistency, across their many evolving practices associated with TEL.

- The methodology has spawned a heightened willingness to share information across the sector, particularly relating to a range of quality services to students and staff.

- It is the methodology that is the big story here, as it could quite easily be applied across other contexts within Higher Education

- What comes next

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