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**ACODE Benchmarking:  
Plotting a bright future**

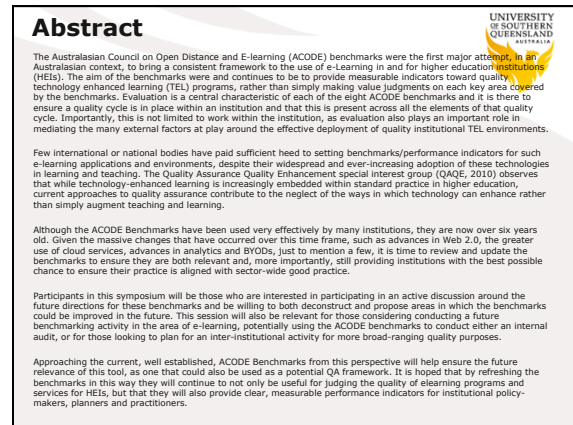
**Associate Professor Michael Sankey**  
Director, Learning Environments and Media  
Member ACODE Executive

**Helen Carter**  
President of ACODE

**Stephen Marshall**  
Vice-President ACODE

**Gordon Suddaby**  
Former President ACODE

**Rob Phillips**  
Former ACODE Executive Member



**Abstract**

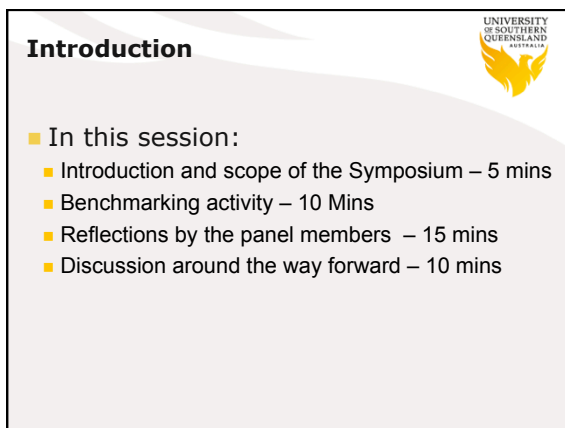
The Australasian Council on Open Distance and E-learning (ACODE) benchmarks were the first major attempt in an Australasian context, to bring a consistent framework to the use of e-Learning in and for higher education institutions (HEIs). The aim of the benchmarks were and continues to be to provide measurable indicators toward quality technology enhanced learning (TEL) programs, rather than simply making value judgments on each key area covered by the benchmarks. Evaluation is a central characteristic of each of the eight ACODE benchmarks and it is there to ensure a quality cycle is in place within an institution and that this is present across all the elements of that quality cycle. Importantly, this is not limited to work within the institution, as evaluation also plays an important role in mediating the many external factors at play around the effective deployment of quality institutional TEL environments.

Few international or national bodies have paid sufficient heed to setting benchmarks/performance indicators for such e-learning applications and environments, despite their widespread and ever-increasing adoption of these technologies in learning and teaching. The Quality Assurance Quality Enhancement special interest group (QAQE, 2010) observes that while technology-enhanced learning is increasingly embedded within standard practice in higher education, current approaches to quality assurance contribute to the neglect of the ways in which technology can enhance rather than simply augment teaching and learning.

Although the ACODE Benchmarks have been used very effectively by many institutions, they are now over six years old. Given the massive changes that have occurred over this time frame, such as advances in Web 2.0, the greater use of cloud services, advances in analytics and BYODs, just to mention a few, it is time to review and update the benchmarks to ensure they are both relevant and, more importantly, still providing institutions with the best possible chance to ensure their practice is aligned with sector-wide good practice.

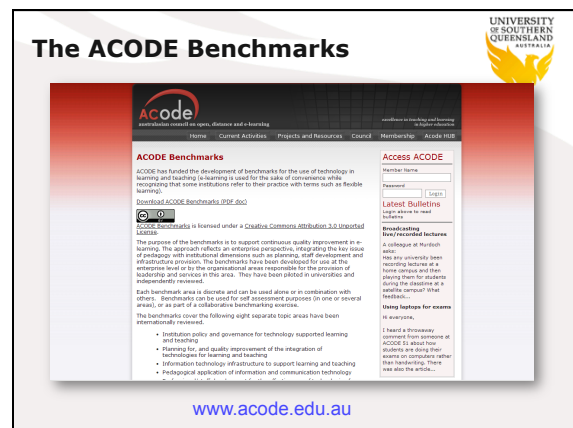
Participants in this symposium will be those who are interested in participating in an active discussion around the future directions for these benchmarks and be willing to both deconstruct and propose areas in which the benchmarks could be improved in the future. This session will also be relevant for those considering conducting a future benchmarking activity in the area of e-learning, potentially using the ACODE benchmarks to conduct either an internal audit, or for those looking to plan for an inter-institutional activity for more broad-ranging quality purposes.

Approaching the current, well established, ACODE Benchmarks from this perspective will help ensure the future relevance of this tool, as one that could also be used as a potential QA framework. It is hoped that by refreshing the benchmarks in this way they will continue to not only be useful for judging the quality of learning programs and services for HEIs, but that they will also provide clear, measurable performance indicators for institutional policy-makers, planners and practitioners.

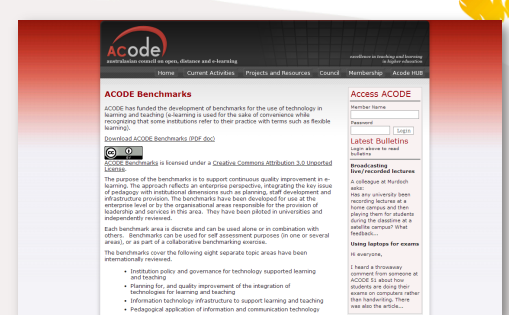


**Introduction**

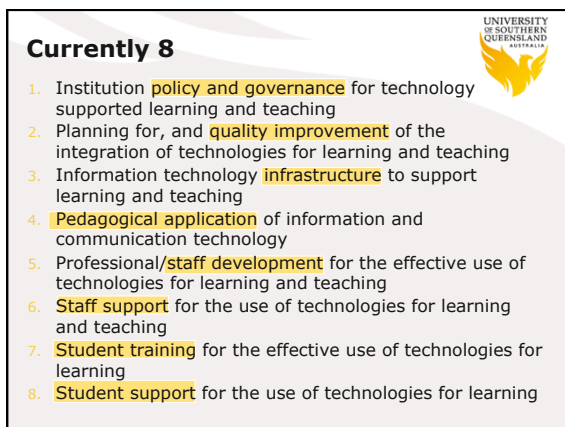
- In this session:
  - Introduction and scope of the Symposium – 5 mins
  - Benchmarking activity – 10 Mins
  - Reflections by the panel members – 15 mins
  - Discussion around the way forward – 10 mins



**The ACODE Benchmarks**

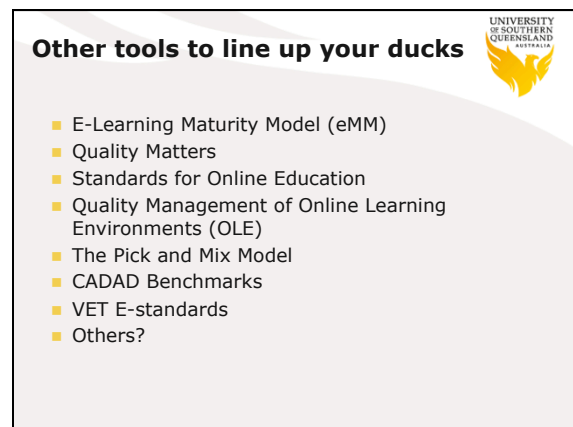


[www.acode.edu.au](http://www.acode.edu.au)



**Currently 8**

1. Institution **policy and governance** for technology supported learning and teaching
2. Planning for, and **quality improvement** of the integration of technologies for learning and teaching
3. Information technology **infrastructure** to support learning and teaching
4. **Pedagogical application** of information and communication technology
5. Professional/**staff development** for the effective use of technologies for learning and teaching
6. **Staff support** for the use of technologies for learning and teaching
7. **Student training** for the effective use of technologies for learning
8. **Student support** for the use of technologies for learning



**Other tools to line up your ducks**

- E-Learning Maturity Model (eMM)
- Quality Matters
- Standards for Online Education
- Quality Management of Online Learning Environments (OLE)
- The Pick and Mix Model
- CADAD Benchmarks
- VET E-standards
- Others?

### eMM process categories

Process category	Brief description
Learning	Processes that directly impact on pedagogical aspects of e-learning
Development	Processes surrounding the creation and maintenance of e-learning resources
Support	Processes surrounding the oversight and management of e-learning
Evaluation	Processes surrounding the evaluation and quality control of e-learning through its entire lifecycle.
Organisation	Processes associated with institutional planning and management

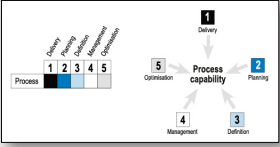
Fully Adequate

Largely Adequate

Partially Adequate

Not Adequate

Not Assessed



### Quality Matters


The eight general standards include:

- Course Overview and Introduction
- Learning Objectives (Competencies)
- Assessment and Measurement
- Instructional Materials
- Learner Interaction and Engagement
- Course Technology
- Learner Support
- Accessibility



### Standards for Online Education

- Mitch Parsell - Macquarie
- 2012 OLT National Teaching Fellow
- The online standards are designed to support quality teaching and can be used as
  - a guide for learning design;
  - a tool in collegial peer review; and,
  - a benchmarking instrument.



Mitch Parsell and Collaborators

### Focus

There are three foci: (i) students, (ii) staff and (iii) the organisation?:

- Students are supported in their online learning
- Staff are supported in their online teaching
- The Organisation supports online education

### Areas

Each focus has three areas:

Students	Staff	Organisation
Curriculum	Professional Development	Leadership
Interactions	Resourcing	Infrastructure
Support	Support	Evaluation

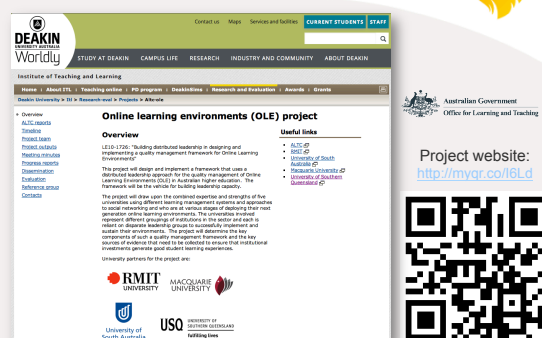
### Standards

Each area has one or more standards with three possible levels of attainment:

- Threshold:** The minimum standard has been attained
- Good:** The minimum standard has been significantly surpassed
- Excellent:** The minimum standard has been significantly surpassed and there is substantial evidence of innovation, leadership, impact or other forms of excellence.

The criteria for Threshold and Good are specified for each standard. For Excellent the required innovation, leadership or impact is not specified: this is to be included by the target organisation.

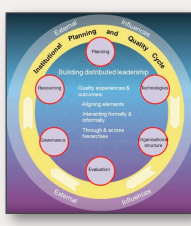
### Quality Management of Online Learning Environments (OLE)



Project website: <http://myqr.co/6Ld>

### OLE quality management

- QM as it relates to an HE institution:
  - Planning
  - Technologies
  - Organisational structure
  - Evaluation
  - Governance
  - Resourcing



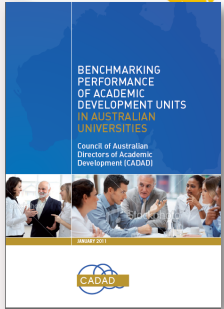
## Pick and Mix

- Consists of 18 criteria. Each criterion is scored on a scale of 1-5 with 1 = nil or base-level activity & 5 = maximum activity – extendable to 6 = “excellence”, “transcendence”, or “second wave” situations.

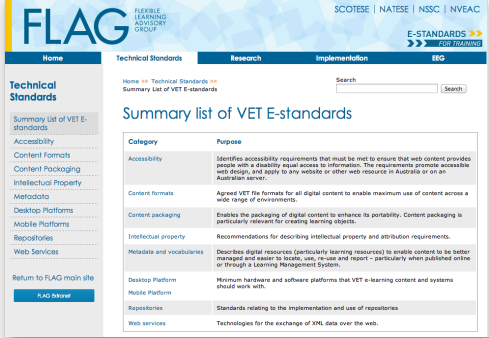
Factor	1	3	5	Instrument
01 Adoption phase overall (Rogers)	Innovators only	Early majority taking it up	All taken it up except some laggards	Interviews, surveys, documentation in IT reports, etc.
02 VLE stage	No VLE	VLEs reducing in number to around two	“One VLE”	Observation, purchase orders
03 Tools use	No use of tools beyond email, Web and the VLE minimum set	Widespread use of at least one specific tool, e.g. assignment handling, CAA	HEI-wide use of several tools	Interviews, cross-checking with RSC and CETIS, etc.

## CADAD Benchmarks

- More for ADU’s but elements and methodology consistent with the ADODE BMs
- Great extension activity



## VET E-standards



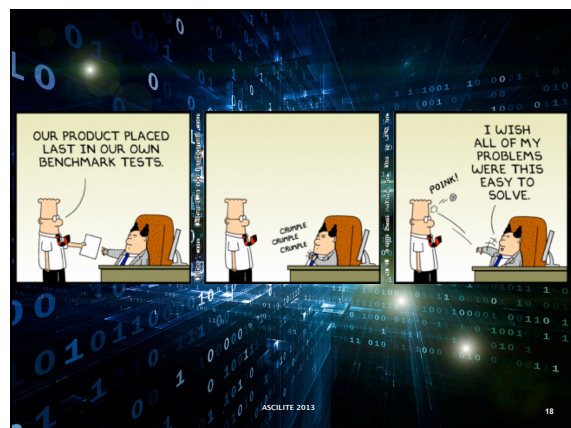
## Benchmarking activity

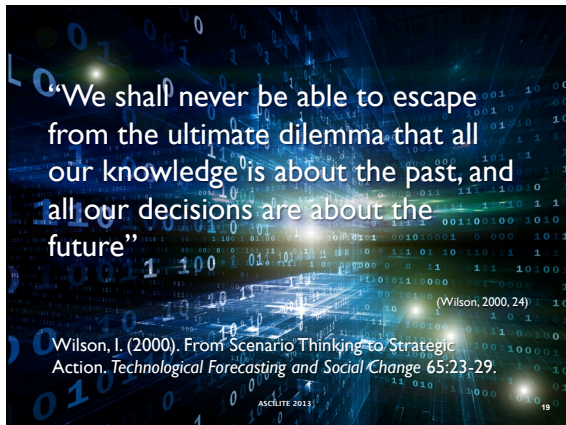
- Benchmark 2**
  - Planning for, and quality improvement of the integration of technologies for learning and teaching
- Good practice statement**
  - Institutions support and encourage the appropriate use of technology in learning and teaching through strategic planning processes at all levels of the institution. The focus is continuous improvement through systematic and regular evaluation of implementation strategies and outcomes. Such evaluation will in turn inform future planning.
- PI 1 of 8**
  - Institution wide processes for quality assurance are in place and in use to integrate technologies in learning and teaching.

## Reflections by the panel members

- Helen Carter
  - President of ACODE
- Stephen Marshall
  - Vice-President ACODE
- Gordon Suddaby
  - Former President ACODE
- Rob Phillips
  - Former ACODE Executive Member

### Discussion around the way forward



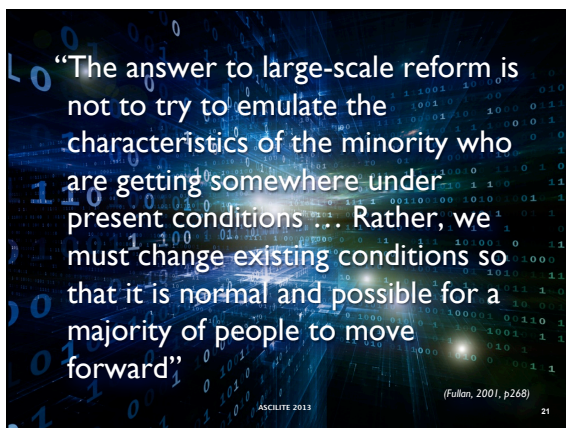


“We shall never be able to escape from the ultimate dilemma that all our knowledge is about the past, and all our decisions are about the future”

(Wilson, 2000, 24)

Wilson, I. (2000). From Scenario Thinking to Strategic Action. *Technological Forecasting and Social Change* 65:23-29.

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“The answer to large-scale reform is not to try to emulate the characteristics of the minority who are getting somewhere under present conditions ... Rather, we must change existing conditions so that it is normal and possible for a majority of people to move forward”

(Fullan, 2001, p268)

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**The beauty of the beast**



- The beauty of benchmarking is not around which tool or set of standards you are using, it's more about the dialogue that emerges and the sharing of practice that is the real winner for all concerned.
- It opens the door for further collaboration.
- It serves as a mechanism to facilitate discussion at senior leadership level.