Assuring Graduate Readiness for the 21st Century Workplace: An Alternative Quality Assurance Approach

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@QACommmons
CONGRATULATIONS!
You Get To Hire A New Entry-Level Staff Member!

What are the top 3 - 4 abilities or skills that will help this person be genuinely successful in their job and in your organization?
The Quality Assurance Commons for Higher & Postsecondary Education

**MISSION:**
To explore, develop, and test alternative approaches of quality assurance that respond to the changing landscape of higher and postsecondary education and will serve the needs of learners, employers, and the larger society.
With Gratitude To Our Funder
The QA Commons’ Team

• Ralph Wolff – former President of WASC; member of NACIQI; international expert on QA
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• Peter Ewell – NCHEMS; international expert on QA, assessment
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• Simon Boehme – recent graduate; member of NACIQI; Advisor for Student Engagement
• Erin La Ninfa – Executive Assistant
The QA Commons’ Advisory Board

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- Aaron Thompson – CAO, Council on Postsecondary Education, Kentucky
- Jason Tyszko – Executive Director, Center for Education and Workforce, US Chamber of Commerce Foundation
THE CORE QUESTION:

HOW CAN WE ADDRESS THE SERIOUS GAPS BETWEEN HIGHER EDUCATION AND EMPLOYERS?
Gaps Between Higher Education & Employers

98% of Chief Academic Officers rate their institutions as very or somewhat effective at preparing students for the world of work,

BUT …

Only 11% of business leaders strongly agree that graduating students have the skills and competencies they need.

Source: 2015 Gallup-Purdue Index
Students’ Perspectives

Only 25% of students are in a major with established career paths at their institutions

AND...

Only 40% of seniors feel their college experience has been very helpful in preparing for a career.

Source: McGraw Hill’s 2016 Workforce Readiness Survey
Students Want Jobs!

Since 2010, 86% of incoming freshman have said that getting a job represents a critical factor in their decision to enroll in college, compared with 73% of incoming freshmen between 2000 and 2009 who said the same.

(Gallup-Purdue Index, 2016)
Return on Investment concerns by

- Students
- Families
- Employers
- Other Funders
3 DIMENSIONS OF THE GAP

1. Skills Gap

2. Documentation of Students’ Abilities

3. Identification of Alignment with Employer Needs
Some Contributing Factors to The Gap

- Preparation
- Communication
- Cooperation
- Application
- Coordination
Closing The Gap

- **Preparation**: Learners develop knowledge, skills, and abilities for employability in a rapidly changing workplace;

- **Communication**: Graduates’ essential employability qualities are made more visible to external stakeholders and there is more trust in the programs preparing graduates;

- **Cooperation**: Colleges and universities cooperate with and align to employers’ needs;
Closing The Gap (cont.)

• **Application**: Students are able to apply their knowledge to and practice their skills in workplace or work-based problems and settings;

• **Coordination**: Coordination between academic programs and essential student service programs, such as career services and advising, is intentional and effective.
Developing a New Quality Assurance Approach to Bridge the Divide Between Higher Education and Employability
The Essential Employability Qualities Certification – or EEQ CERT – will certify programs that graduate individuals who have the essential qualities for 21st century employability.
What is Employability?

**Employability is** the ability to find, create and sustain work and learning across lengthening working lives and multiple work settings. [http://developingemployability.edu.au/about/](http://developingemployability.edu.au/about/)

*We are interested in graduates’ employability – not just in their employment (measured by job placement and salary).*
6 Core Design Principles

1. Need to bridge the gap between higher education and employers.

2. The essential employability qualities for a 21st century workplace need to become essential outcomes of academic and workforce preparation in addition to disciplinary content.

3. Measures of program effectiveness need to include evidence of graduates’ achievement through demonstration of postgraduate performance, assuring from disaggregated data that the program effectively supports and prepares all student groups.
6 Core Design Principles (cont.)

4. Results of performance need to be transparent to all stakeholders.

5. Students and employers, in partnership with academic experts, need to be substantively engaged in all dimensions of ensuring program effectiveness and quality.

6. Records of student performance need to include evidence of students’ achievement of essential employability qualities.
Graduates of the EEQ Certified Program are:

- Communicators
- Thinkers & Problem Solvers
- Inquirers
- Collaborators
- Adaptable
- Principled & Ethical
- Responsible & Professional
- Continuous Learners
EEQ Development & Validation Sources

The EEQs represent current and future employer expectations as reflected in numerous studies from:

- Burning Glass
- LinkedIn
- ACT
- Foresight Alliance
- Jobs for the Future
- Career Tech
- Business Roundtable
- O*NET
- third way
- National Network of Business and Industry Associations
- Institute for the Future
- And others…
Draft Criteria for Certification

Assuring Learners’ Essential Employability Qualities

• Outcomes of graduates’ preparedness in regard to the EEQs in addition to the effectiveness of program design and support to help develop graduates’ EEQs.

Public Information Regarding Program Employability Preparation & Outcomes

• Extent to which the program provides meaningful and validated information about the program to prospective students and other constituents.

Student Support for Employability

• Extent to which all students are supported throughout their program of study by the program and/or institutional services to aid in employability
Draft Criteria for Certification (cont.)

Employer & Student Engagement

• Extent to which employers and students are engaged in the design, development, and evaluation of the program to meet employer needs.

Program Integrity

• Extent to which program performance information is accurate, timely, comprehensive, transparent, collected over time (trend data available), and disaggregated. Additionally, the program behaves ethically and demonstrates operational and academic integrity.
The EEQ Certification would be awarded based on the evaluation of verifiable evidence that is primarily outcomes-based.
WHY AN EMPLOYER & STUDENT-CENTERED QA PROCESS?

Employers Want & Need Qualified Candidates / Employees

Students Want Employability & Their Diverse Perspectives Matter
THE EEQ CERT PILOT
September 2017 - June 2018
Pilot & Co-Design Process

Partnering with 27 programs from 14 institutions to co-design the review process and to determine how a new approach can be feasible and add value.

We will also collect and disseminate evidence-based good practices to support program development and improvement.

Partner Institutions include:

- Community College of Denver
- University of Central Oklahoma
- Texas Lutheran University
- IUPUI
- University of Wisconsin - Whitewater
- Guttman Community College
- Warren Wilson College
- Antioch University
- Strayer University
- Brandman University

And others!
Our Partner Programs Represent …

Institution Types

• Community college: 2
• 4 year public: 3
• Private non-profit: 6
• For profit: 2
• International: 1

Degree Types

• Associates: 6
• Bachelors: 19
• Institution-wide (STLR, Applied Learning Program): 2
They Are Geographically Dispersed...
They Represent Diverse Majors & Disciplines...

- Business (Business Administration, International Business): 5
- Liberal Studies: 3
- Criminal Justice: 2
- Education (Early Childhood Education, Special Education): 2
- Info Tech/Computer Info Systems: 2
- Across all degrees (STLR, Applied Learning Program): 2
- Forensic Science: 1
- Philanthropic Studies: 1
- Industrial Engineering: 1
- Sociology: 1
- Radiology: 1
- Medical Assisting: 1
- Law: 1
- English: 1
- Applied Physics: 1
- Political Science: 1
- Accounting: 1
Their Students Are …

**AGE**
- Majority of students 18-25: 19 programs
- Majority of students 26+: 8 programs

**FULL-TIME / PART-TIME**
- Majority of students full-time: 24 programs
- Majority of students part-time: 3 programs

**INSTITUTIONAL ENROLLMENT**
- >1000 students: 4 institutions
- 1,000-5,000 students: 3 institutions
- 5,000-10,000 students: 3 institutions
- 10,000+ students: 4 institutions

More than 35,000 total students represented by these programs!
PILOT RESEARCH QUESTIONS

• Do draft criteria reflect the needs of students and employers and support program effectiveness?

• What are the most relevant and useful indicators of success for each criterion?

• What data are publically available, relevant, and useful in identifying program performance and outcomes vis-à-vis the criteria?

• What is the best way to validate and evaluate data provided by an institution or program?

• What are the best ways to connect program outcomes with institutional support services, such as career services, student advising, etc.?
PILOT RESEARCH QUESTIONS (cont.)

• In what ways will the quality assurance process provide value to institutions and programs while not creating additional reporting burdens?

• How can EEQ Certification communicate program performance successfully to students, employers, community members, and other external stakeholders as well as to the institution and/or program being reviewed?

• How might the certification approach best be aligned with other quality assurance processes, such as program reviews and regional, national, and programmatic accreditation?

• AND MORE!
Your Feedback Please!

• From your perspective, what would make the EEQ CERT truly valuable and worth pursuing for programs at your institution?

• What do you see as the potential strengths of this new way of doing QA?

• What do you see as the potential pitfalls or barriers?

• What advice might you offer us to make this approach successful?

• What else do you want to know?
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