

First Learner Advisory Panel Discussion:

We had 120 participants in the first discussion, divided into five regional panels, and generated 143 contributions. The discussion took place over five days in October 2013.

The Learner Advisory Panels are a project of the New Zealand Union of Students' Associations to give effect to the student voice and are supported through a grant and oversight to ensure the procedures are robust by Ako Aotearoa, the National Centre for Tertiary Teaching Excellence.

Following discussion with the Board of the Tertiary Education Commission and Ako Aotearoa, we prompted discussion on the question of teaching quality.

The process consisted of NZUSA providing some prompts to get the discussion going and some ongoing facilitation through the discussion to help provide focus. Learners were encouraged however to initiate new conversations, or to comment or express approval of others' thoughts.

The results have been shared by sending them to participants, posting on the NZUSA website www.students.org.nz and sending to our partners who contributed to determining the focus for the discussion.

Students' Consensus

- **We've been asked to get student feedback on the question of teaching quality at tertiary institutions. To get it going, what are the qualities that you value most in a teacher?**

Knowledge and experience of the subject that the lecturers are teaching is the most important feature of teaching quality. Learners wanted lecturers who know their material and do not just read from prepared notes; they should be enthusiastic about teaching and also be familiar with relevant technology. Students like it when their lecturer takes time after the class itself to discuss the information in the lecture. They liked down to earth lecturers who are available to meet with groups of students after the class to clarify any information. Smaller classes provide higher quality learning outcomes.

- **Is there something you've experienced that you would definitely do differently if you were the teacher?**

Act like teaching is important. Provide information into a practical how-to-use format. Use better and more up-to-date technology. Use student directed seminars to break up the monotony of lectures. Use humour or other engagement opportunities to break the monotony of dry material. Use workshop based class discussion with difficult ideas. Sample Online Youtube

videos to give students a taste of what the course is like so that learners can choose courses with greater surety that it will be what they want.

- **Lecturers are employed as experts of their field. They are not employed by the institution to be teachers as such. What do you think of this? Do you think there should be a requirement to have specific teaching qualifications as part of the employment conditions of a tertiary teacher?**

Lecturers should be trained on how to use the basics of technology when conducting teaching i.e. Powerpoint and the on-line document systems, etc. If they are going to be expected to teach large classes, new lecturers should have attended seminars on how to do this, and how to get engagement in both small and large settings. New lecturers should start out as guest lectures to get used to lecturing to big classes. However, there was not support for a requirement to have achieved a specific tertiary teaching qualification, but rather it needs to be part of an on-going process of professional development.

- **Teaching Quality of Tutors and Teaching Assistants**

Students said that they want tutors who are approachable and liked those that assisted them on meeting the requirements of the course through giving good advice in the tutorials. Teaching Assistants were generally really useful at providing more information about the course requirements. English as a Second Language Students commented, though, that the teaching staff tended to go a bit too fast for their English to comprehend. They liked tutors who were enthusiastic and knowledgeable about the topic.

- **Class Reps Systems**

Students liked it when the class representative process is integrated into the formal structures of the institution, although there were mixed views on the value of it being supported by an independent students' association or run entirely internally to the institution. What students want, overall, is for it to be taken seriously. The class representative system needs to be linked into larger systems, for example having representatives meet with heads of programmes, chaired by a faculty member and with a professional minute taker, and connected to faculty and Academic Board representatives. They don't like it when the appointed class representative for a paper doesn't turn up to meetings or fails to organise to get class responses to issues that have arisen from the course.