Student-centred learning: approaches to quality assurance

Anna Gover
Helene Peterbauer

22 November 2019
1.3 Student-centred learning, teaching and assessment
Institutions should ensure that the programmes are delivered in a way that encourages students to take an active role in creating the learning process, and that the assessment of students reflects this approach.

1.5 Teaching staff
Guidelines:
The teacher’s role is essential in creating a high quality student experience and enabling the acquisition of knowledge, competences and skills. The diversifying student population and stronger focus on learning outcomes require student-centred learning and teaching and the role of the teacher is, therefore, also changing (cf. Standard 1.3).
What do you associate with the term ‘student-centred learning’?
Student-centred learning

- **Education that is** geared towards student learning and success
- **Education provision that is** defined by intended learning outcomes and most fit-for-purpose learning process
- **Taking into account the** student’s individual background and ensuring they take part in shaping the learning process
- **Defined by** “new approaches to teaching and learning, effective support and guidance structures and a curriculum focused more clearly on the learner [...] leading to high quality, flexible and more individually tailored learning paths” (EHEA, 2009, p. 3).
Elements of student-centred learning

- Strategies and policies
- Teaching methods and pedagogical training
- Flexible learning paths curriculum design
- Student services and learning resources
- Student assessment
- ...
TRENDS 2018

Learning and teaching in the European Higher Education Area

By Michael Gaebel & Thérèse Zhang

Co-authors:
Lúcia Bunescu
Hennette Stoebner
### Strategy elements

What elements does your institutional learning and teaching strategy/policy address or include? (Q. 9.1; N = 260)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Element</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Providing international opportunities</td>
<td>87%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Academic staff development</td>
<td>86%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Measures to improve teaching</td>
<td>84%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Curriculum design, approval and/or evaluation</td>
<td>80%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Student support services</td>
<td>78%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Learning environment</td>
<td>71%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Modes of delivery (e-learning, lectures, group work, flipped classrooms, etc.)</td>
<td>71%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Providing lifelong learning opportunities</td>
<td>67%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Course design, approval and/or evaluation</td>
<td>65%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The role of students in their learning</td>
<td>57%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Quantitative goals/benchmarks to reach the strategy/policy goals</td>
<td>53%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>An operational plan for implementing the strategy/policy</td>
<td>52%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>4%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Trends 2018, Q. 9.1
Learning outcomes for all courses

Trends 2018. Q. 22
Trends 2015. Q. 36
Trends 2010. Q. 19
Flexible learning paths

Trends 2018, Q. 16

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Is it possible for students to... (Q. 16: N = 300)</th>
<th>Yes, it is commonly done across the institution</th>
<th>Yes, but very limited across the institution</th>
<th>No</th>
<th>I don’t know</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>have some flexibility with respect to the time it takes to complete a degree (without financial or other penalties)</td>
<td>41%</td>
<td>34%</td>
<td>22%</td>
<td>3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>switch between full-time and part-time provision</td>
<td>38%</td>
<td>33%</td>
<td>25%</td>
<td>4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>choose optional courses in their study programme</td>
<td>80%</td>
<td>17%</td>
<td>7%</td>
<td>2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>change optional courses during their studies</td>
<td>59%</td>
<td>31%</td>
<td>7%</td>
<td>2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>change study programme during their studies</td>
<td>49%</td>
<td>42%</td>
<td>6%</td>
<td>1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>have some flexibility when studying some courses (e.g. no obligation to take course B after course A)</td>
<td>42%</td>
<td>34%</td>
<td>19%</td>
<td>6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>decide whether or not to physically attend a class</td>
<td>36%</td>
<td>33%</td>
<td>30%</td>
<td>1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>suggest the topics s/he wants to study in a course</td>
<td>13%</td>
<td>44%</td>
<td>38%</td>
<td>6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>have choice between different types of assessment for a given course</td>
<td>9%</td>
<td>54%</td>
<td>5%</td>
<td>5%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
**Teacher training**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Topic</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Introduction into pedagogy/didactics</td>
<td>77%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Student-centred learning</td>
<td>67%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Development of learning outcomes</td>
<td>62%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ICT environment (how to use the technology/tools)</td>
<td>60%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Assessment of intended learning outcomes</td>
<td>60%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Advanced courses (as part of continuing professional development)</td>
<td>56%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ICT-based pedagogy (how to teach with ICT)</td>
<td>52%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teaching enhancement for specific disciplines</td>
<td>51%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Making learning and teaching more research-related</td>
<td>49%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teaching diverse student groups</td>
<td>44%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Assessing teaching

Trends 2018, Q. 36

Which of the following means and criteria are used for the assessment of teaching? (Q. 36; N = 275)

- Student feedback surveys: 88% Yes, throughout the institution, 10% Yes, in some parts of the institution, 2% No, but we are planning to do it, 1% No, we do not use this
- Engagement with students (face time, mentoring, thesis supervision): 92% Yes, throughout the institution, 4% Yes, in some parts of the institution, 3% No, but we are planning to do it, 1% No, we do not use this
- There are processes in place to intervene in case teaching performance is constantly poor: 51% Yes, throughout the institution, 22% Yes, in some parts of the institution, 9% No, but we are planning to do it, 16% No, we do not use this
- Heads of departments/deans of faculties regularly discuss teaching performance with individual academic staff: 47% Yes, throughout the institution, 33% Yes, in some parts of the institution, 5% No, but we are planning to do it, 6% No, we do not use this
- Self-evaluations: 44% Yes, throughout the institution, 21% Yes, in some parts of the institution, 8% No, but we are planning to do it, 22% No, we do not use this
- Completion of teaching enhancement courses: 36% Yes, throughout the institution, 27% Yes, in some parts of the institution, 11% No, but we are planning to do it, 21% No, we do not use this
- Students’ progression: 34% Yes, throughout the institution, 24% Yes, in some parts of the institution, 7% No, but we are planning to do it, 31% No, we do not use this
- Peer assessments: 31% Yes, throughout the institution, 26% Yes, in some parts of the institution, 6% No, but we are planning to do it, 33% No, we do not use this
- Engagement with industry/business sector, community engagement: 23% Yes, throughout the institution, 39% Yes, in some parts of the institution, 7% No, but we are planning to do it, 29% No, we do not use this
Learning spaces

Are the physical spaces at your institution well adapted to new forms of learning and teaching? (Q. 26; N = 292)

- Libraries: 72% Yes, for the whole institution, 26% Yes, to some extent / for some parts of the institution, 2% No, 1% Information unavailable
- Computer labs: 53% Yes, for the whole institution, 35% Yes, to some extent / for some parts of the institution, 5% No, 1% Information unavailable
- Science labs: 18% Yes, for the whole institution, 44% Yes, to some extent / for some parts of the institution, 13% No, 4% Information unavailable
- Spaces for student-student interaction and collaboration: 34% Yes, for the whole institution, 56% Yes, to some extent / for some parts of the institution, 8% No, 3% Information unavailable
- Learning resource centres: 33% Yes, for the whole institution, 41% Yes, to some extent / for some parts of the institution, 19% No, 7% Information unavailable
- Rooms where chairs and tables can be moved – depending on the teaching approach: 26% Yes, for the whole institution, 64% Yes, to some extent / for some parts of the institution, 9% No, 2% Information unavailable
- Spaces for staff-staff interaction and collaboration: 26% Yes, for the whole institution, 51% Yes, to some extent / for some parts of the institution, 19% No, 4% Information unavailable
- Spaces for increased student-staff interaction: 24% Yes, for the whole institution, 55% Yes, to some extent / for some parts of the institution, 19% No, 3% Information unavailable

Trends 2018, Q. 26
What about QA?

Three approaches to quality assurance (of student-centred learning)

• Back to basics
• Beyond the obvious
• A role for everyone
Back to basics

Plan → Do → Check → Act
Beyond the obvious

Adapted from Kivistö, J. and Pekkola, E., 2017, Quality of Administration in Higher Education (Sveriges universitets- och högskoleförbund (SUHF))
Three dimensions

Primary QA: explicitly about ensuring student-centred approaches to education provision

Secondary QA: embedding student-centred learning into existing QA processes

Latent QA: policies and practices that are not named as QA, but still implicitly contribute to student-centred learning

Examples?
## One step further...

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Plan</th>
<th>Do</th>
<th>Check</th>
<th>Act</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Primary QA</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Student survey on teaching methods</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Secondary QA</td>
<td>Programme design</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Latent QA</td>
<td></td>
<td>Recruitment</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Primary QA**: explicitly about ensuring student-centred approaches to education provision  
**Secondary QA**: embedding student-centred learning into existing QA processes  
**Latent QA**: policies and practices that are not named as QA, but still implicitly contribute to student-centred learning
A role for everyone

Student-centred learning

- Teaching staff
- Support staff
- L&T centre
- QA office
- Students
- Leadership

...
Final thoughts

- Engage with stakeholders for a common, context-sensitive understanding of student-centred learning -> use that to inform approaches to quality assurance
- There are links and synergies between different quality assurance processes (and ESG standards) -> don’t approach student-centred learning in isolation
- Implications for external quality assurance?
Student-centred learning: approaches to quality assurance

By Anna Gover, Tia Loukkola and Helene Peterbauer

Full report available at: www.eua.eu/resources/publications
Questions/comments?