

Diversity through Quality Audit

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Australian Universities Quality Agency

Brief Outline

- Australian HE: Diversity or conformity?
- Quality systems for diversity
- Achieving diversity, avoiding conformity
- Practical outcomes
- Sampling



Part 1
Australian HE:
Diversity or conformity?

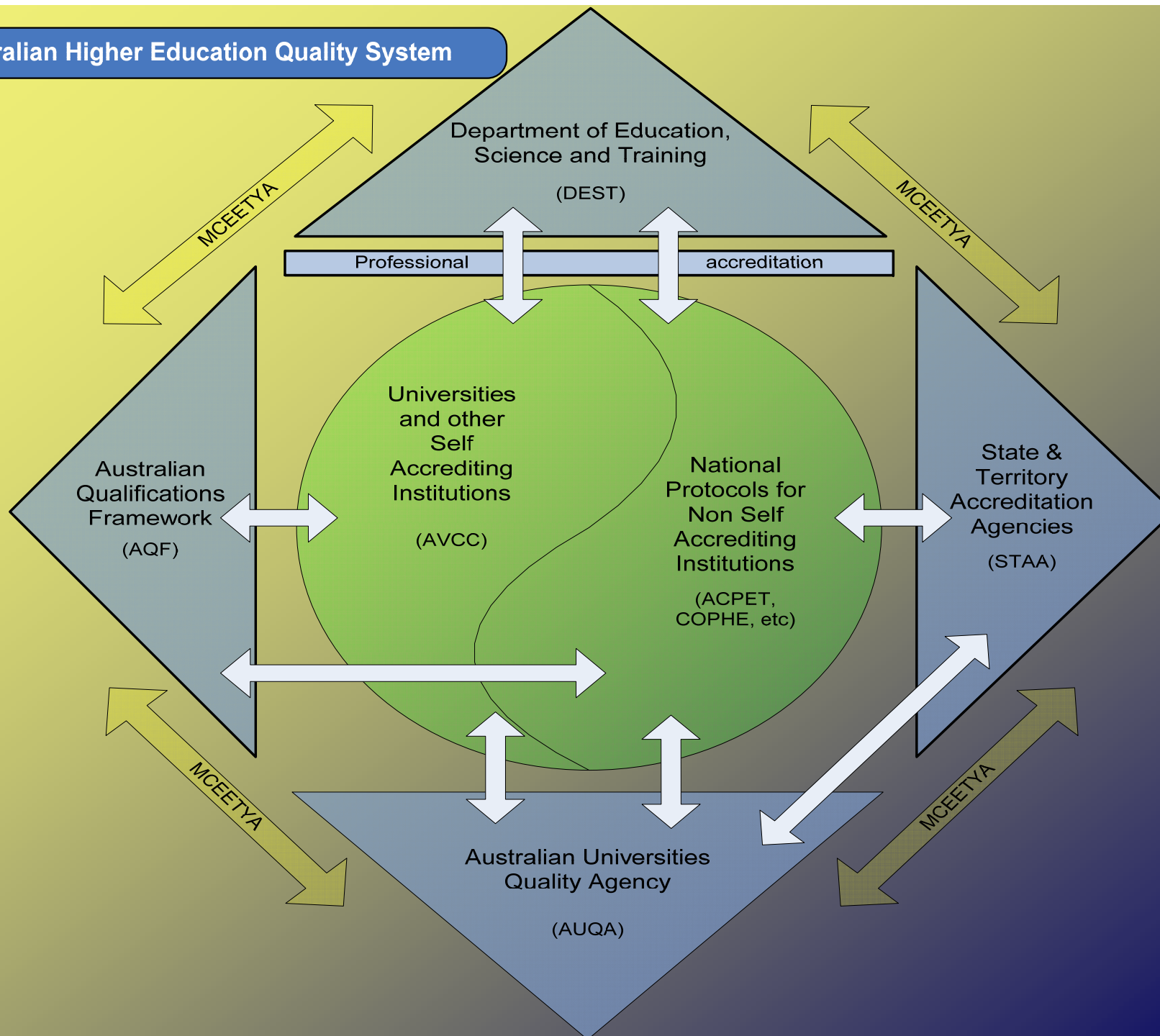


Brief History of Australian HE:

1. Self-Accrediting universities established some pre-dating Federation (C19th)
2. 1970s - Binary System of universities & CAEs; establishment of TAFE Colleges
3. 1990s – ‘Unified (uniform?) National System’
4. C21st – Greater Diversity: Public / Private; Research / Teaching-only Unis; TAFE Degrees



The Australian Higher Education Quality System



The Australian Higher Education Quality System

Key

ACPET	Australian Council for Private Education & Training: Representing some of the independent post compulsory education and training sector
AQF	Australian Qualifications Framework: A national register of awards
AUQA	Australian Universities Quality Agency: Audits the HEIs and accreditation agencies
AVCC	Australian Vice-Chancellors' Committee: Representing most of the self-accrediting institutions
COPHE	Council of Private Higher Education Inc: Representing some of the private institutions in higher education
DEST	Department of Education, Science and Training: Provides funding and monitors performance of institutions
MCEETYA	Ministerial Council on Education, Employment, Training and Youth Affairs
STAA	State & Territory Accreditation Agencies: Responsible for implementing the National Protocols

Part 1

Discussion or Questions?



Part 2

Quality systems for diversity

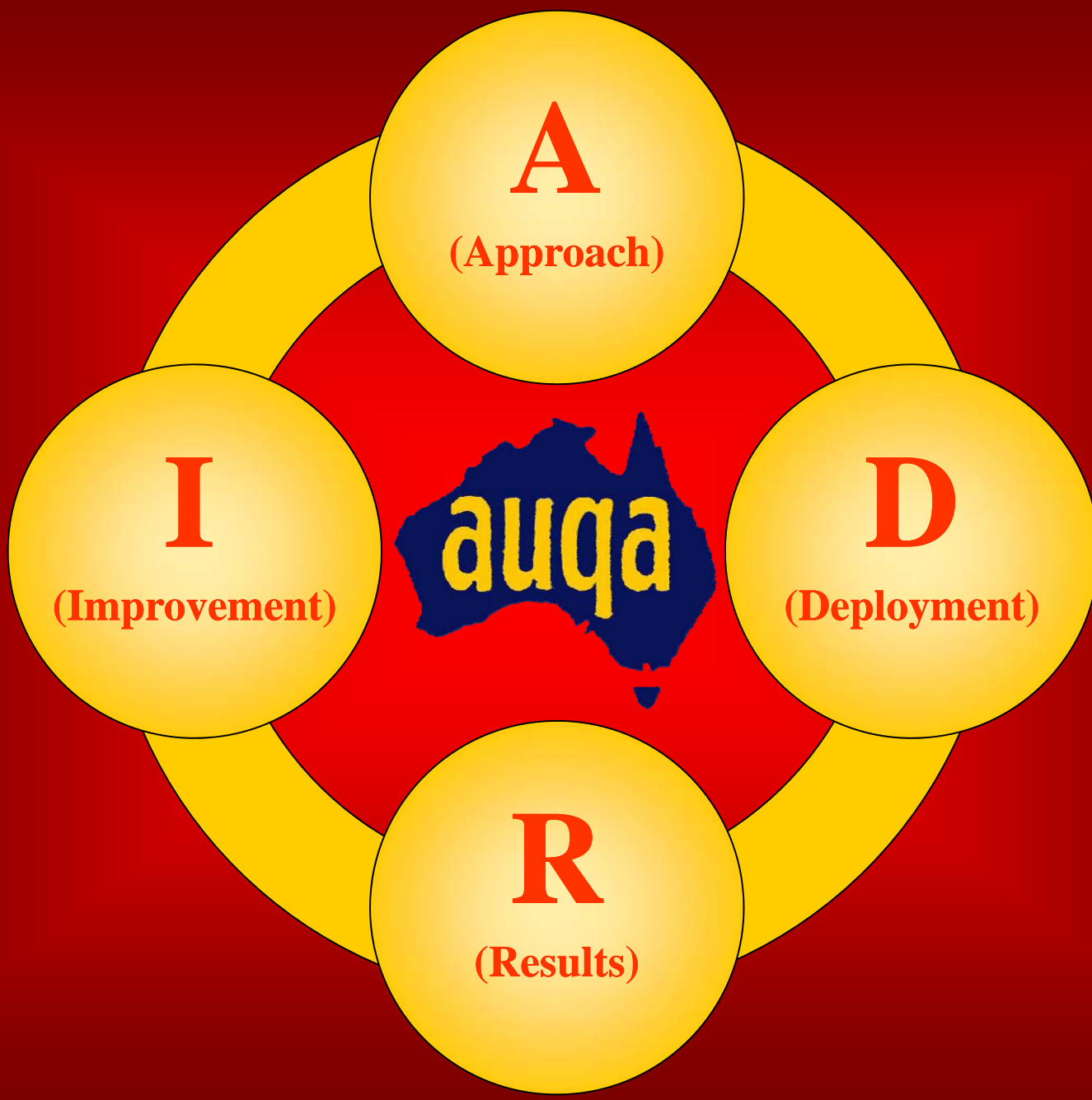


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Quality Audit:

1. Planned arrangements are suitable to achieve goals (Approach)
2. Actual practice conforms to planned arrangements (Deployment)
3. Arrangements achieve the desired results (Results); and
4. The Organisation is learning (Imp.)





Overview of the Argument

- Quality audit is ‘self-calibrating’ and hence is pro-diversity.
- Accreditation relies on conformance to externally mandated standards and hence tends to drive towards conformity.
- The need to set some boundaries.



Part 2

Discussion or Questions?



Part 3

Achieving diversity, avoiding conformity



Audit techniques for diversity:

1. Panel composition
2. Open sessions
3. 'Walkabout' sessions
4. Length of visit
5. Sampling * (see Part 5)
6. Moving from 'set piece' to 'a process'



Auditor training:

1. Stopping auditors driving towards the norm
2. Avoiding being directive
3. Avoiding commended good practices becoming mandatory
4. Avoiding culture of documentary compliance
5. Achieving equity: consistent or contrary to diversity?



Implications for EQA:

‘Research suggests that external quality assurance is more successful in terms of the external panel’s recommendations being accepted by the institution, when those recommendations resonate with the institution’s own understanding of itself.’ (p4)



Part 3

Discussion or Questions?



Part 4

Practical Outcomes



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Australian Catholic University:

- ACU is a 'National' multi-campus, public sector university
- 'Social, ethical and religious dimensions of questions' gives ACU 'a distinctive mission'
- Audit findings supported this distinctive mission
- Audit also found that the University needed to 'formally engage the student body in the life of the university as a whole'.



University of Queensland:

- UQ is a respected research-oriented ‘sandstone’ university with a devolved academic structure that the audit found was worthy of commendation.
- However, the audit also found that the research / teaching nexus was not well thought through.
- Audit Panel recommended that UQ clarify what it meant by ‘the distinctiveness of a research-based culture for teaching and learning’ and implement appropriate strategies.



University of South Australia:

- UNISA is a comprehensive ‘technological’ university founded on the amalgamation of an institute of technology and teachers’ colleges.
- Commended on QA system for students enrolled overseas (has more off-shore enrolments than any other Australian university).
- Distinctive approach to T&L – to focus on development of ‘Graduate Qualities’.
- Audit affirmed that UNISA was aware that it was falling short in this and recommended that it investigate ‘strategies to measure their level of achievement’.



Australian Maritime College:

- AMC is a dual-sector, ‘non-university’ SAI with a specialist industry mission.
- Well regarded for its industry-based training.
- At time of audit AMC had set itself an objective to achieve university status (not the purpose of audit).
- Audit found that the College would have to distort its mission to achieve this objective, but recommended that AMC should benchmark itself ‘against the leadership, planning and quality systems of successful dual-sector universities’.



James Cook University:

- JCU is a ‘regional’ university based in northern Queensland.
- Distinctive vision – to be acknowledged by 2010 to be in the top five universities in the tropical zone.
- University benchmarked itself against other universities in the tropics (using Shanghai J.T. Uni. Inst. & Thompson ISI / ESI)
- Audit verified benchmarking results and commended JCU ‘for making substantial progress towards achieving its vision as a world-class tropical university’.



Part 5

Sampling



A Sample of Sayings about Bananas!

- You cannot judge a banana by its bunch!
- You cannot judge the bunch by a single banana!
- You cannot always judge a banana by its skin!
- Yes, we have no (rotten) bananas!



M.Q. Patton, Qualitative Research & Evaluation Methods

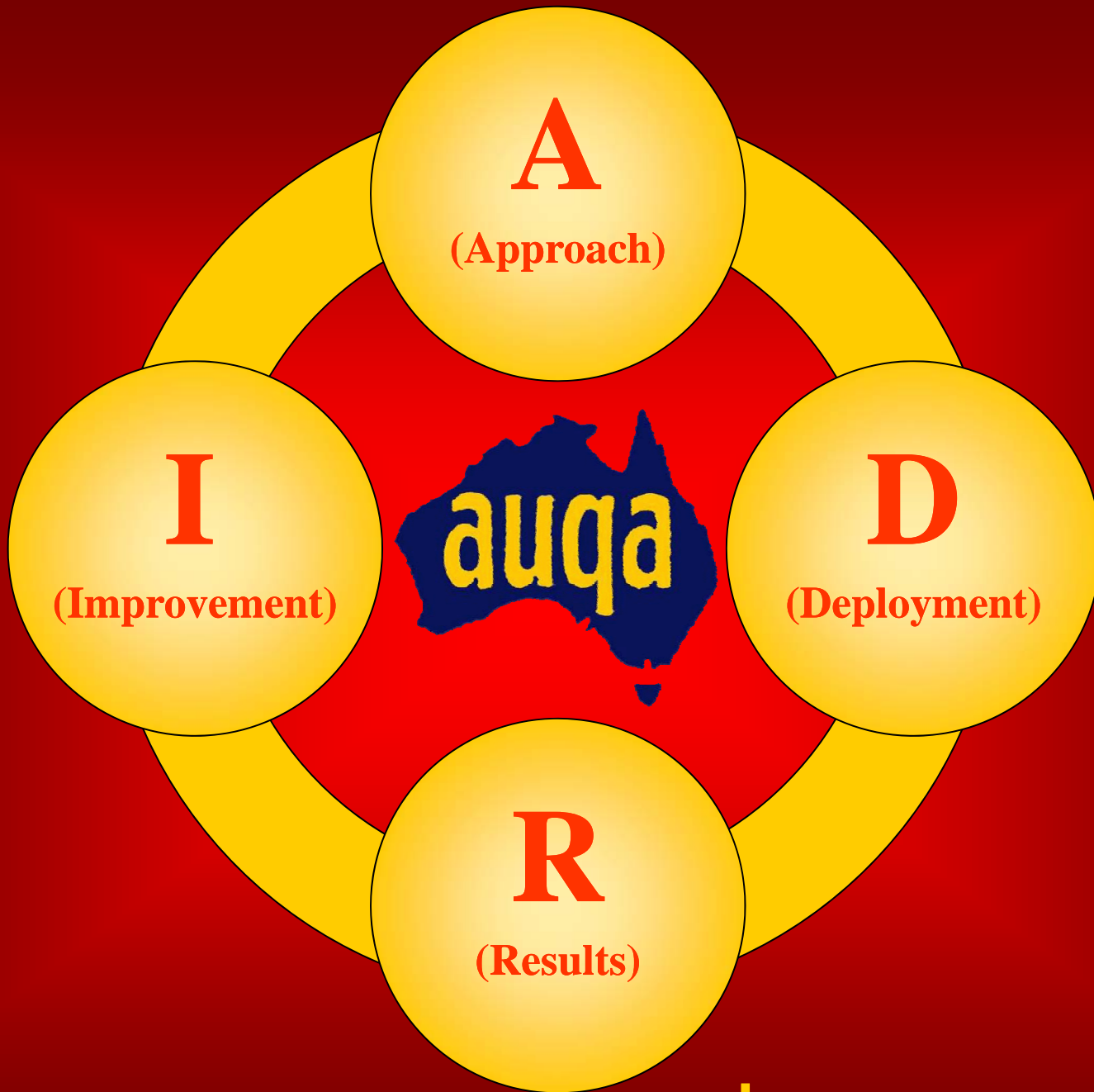
- Traditionally, sampling is based on the premise of achieving a ‘representative’ or ‘balanced’ sample.
- The quest for diversity sets us a creative challenge of sampling to discern ‘distinctive’ qualities and this might involve: sampling for the best; sampling for the worst; deliberately seeking to sample ‘the outliers’ CF the ‘average’; random sampling; etc.
- The key is to understand what the distinctive quality of an auditee is before deciding on the sample.



Conclusion:

- Accreditation is fundamentally concerned with evaluating against external criteria.
- Quality Audit on the other hand is primarily interested in examining ‘things in themselves’.
- In practice however, the two QA processes can work together harmoniously: ‘with accreditation setting the boundaries, within which audit can encourage a diversity of purpose’; dependent in part upon institutional maturity (p7).





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