



Aide-Memoire: Rate My Qualification (MyQ) – Talking Points

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| To: | Hon Chris Hipkins, Minister of Education |
| From: | Tim Fowler, Chief Executive |
| Date: | 28 August 2018 |
| Reference: | AM/18/00601 |

This aide memoire provides you with talking points regarding Rate My Qualification (MyQ)

1. You are meeting with Dr. Sandra Grey on Friday 31 August 2018 at 4.30pm.
2. We recently received a letter from Dr. Grey on behalf of the Tertiary Education Union (TEU) regarding the publication of Rate My Qualification (MyQ) results.
3. We responded to this letter as attached on Monday 27 August 2018.
4. Dr. Grey may raise the content of this letter with you in your meeting on Friday 31 August 2018.
5. We have attached talking points for your reference.
6. We recommend that this aide memoire is proactively released in full.

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'Tim Fowler'.

Tim Fowler

Chief Executive

Tertiary Education Commission

30 August 2018

Hon Chris Hipkins

Minister of Education

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Talking Points - Rate My Qualification (MyQ)

Overview

- The Tertiary Education Commission (TEC) launched the MyQ graduate satisfaction survey in December 2016 and actively promoted the survey to graduates through multiple channels.
- MyQ is an online graduate satisfaction-based survey. It gathers feedback from recent graduates about their tertiary and qualification experience.
- More than 12,000 recent graduates have completed the survey. The results tell a positive story for tertiary education in New Zealand, with 93% of respondents feeling satisfied with their qualification.
- MyQ results become publishable when the number of eligible responses is reached, as shown in the table below.

| Graduate pool (number of graduates that completed the qualification in the last 3 years) | Number of eligible responses required to publish MyQ results |
|---|--|
| 250+ graduates | 50 |
| 51 – 250 graduates | 25 |
| 50 or less graduates | 5 |

Publication model and approach

- MyQ publication is based on a voluntary model. All tertiary education organisations (TEOs) may opt out of publication at any stage. All TEOs may opt back in to publication at any stage.
- The universities have opted out of MyQ at this point, though we are working with individual universities on MyQ.
- MyQ displays two levels of information:
 - **National level results** will be published by Narrow field NZSCED and Qualification Type as per the existing KIS data and EOTE data.
 - **Detailed level results** will be published for each specific TEO qualification that meets the publication threshold.
- In this first publication, national level results will be displayed for 1,151 qualifications. Of these, 26 qualifications will display detailed TEO-specific MyQ results, with a further 45 close to meeting the threshold.
- There is no search capability to enable a user to search or sort by MyQ ratings across qualifications or providers. Each MyQ result is contained within a qualification page.

Potential Concerns that could be raised

1. **Intention of MyQ** - The TEC provides information to help prospective students make decisions about tertiary education. This is part of the Tertiary Education Strategy (TES), and TEC's role as champions to enable all New Zealanders to be active in the education system. Satisfaction-based surveys are used across many industries.

The MyQ survey will not be the single source of information a prospective student would use to make a decision about their tertiary education. Prospective students will also find other information on TEC, Ministry of Education and TEO websites, the Occupational Outlook tool, along with talking to friends and whānau.

- 2. Methodology and sample size** - TEC engaged four recognised organisations with expertise in survey methodology and development, research and evaluation. Each organisation provided expertise in ensuring the methodology is sound for the peer-to-peer satisfaction survey that is offered through and by MyQ.

The MyQ publication rules incorporate these recommendations, and furthermore have increased the minimum sample size for graduate pools greater than 250 students to 50 individual responses.

The Chief Education Scientific Advisor Stuart McNaughton has reviewed the MyQ methodology and is satisfied with the position TEC is taking with regard to the publication of results, methodologies applied and the considered approach related to ensuring the information is utilised to support learner decisions.

- 3. Learner Evaluations** - learner evaluations were conducted with a mix of current learners and graduates covering a range of ages, life stages and ethnicities. Overwhelmingly, the linkage between qualifications and career prospects were deemed to be the most useful when making study choices. From these evaluations it is clear learners want honest, real opinions from graduates, not just rankings and numbers; this is the aim of the MyQ.

The learner evaluations were also conducted on the design of MyQ results and ease of use. 73% of the 300 learners aged 15 – 50 years old found the results somewhat easy to very easy to understand. Furthermore, 63% of the same learners found the design and user experience of the MyQ results engaging.

- 4. Bias in student opinions surveys** - Over 12,000 responses to the MyQ survey to-date have been received. The variation in overall result percentage is less than 1% across different age groups, ethnicities and gender. This indicates the MyQ questions do not cause bias in particular subsets of the population demographics.
- 5. TEOs will utilise MyQ information to inform personnel/resourcing decisions** – This issue wasn't addressed in TEC's response to Dr. Grey's letter. However, student satisfactions surveys are completed by individual providers on a regular bases. How they are utilised is at the discretion of the tertiary provider.

Appendix 1: Correspondence MyQ - Dr. Sandra Grey TEU

25 July 2018

Tim Fowler
Chief Executive
Tertiary Education Commission

By email

Dear Tim,

Many thanks for inviting thoughts on Rate My Qual.

To begin, it is necessary to note that the survey is statistically small and subject to bias. Further, the proposed publishable reports are presented in a confusing fashion, and there is a high risk that such data will be misused by employers. The format you are proposing for publication also allows for results, specific courses, and programmes to be identified and linked to specific institutions. For these reasons alone, survey results should not be published in their current format. To further illustrate why, below I address the myriad problems with student opinion surveys, and the detrimental impact they have on staff.

The bias in student opinion surveys

You have stated that the intention of the MyQ website is to help prospective students make decisions about the course they will study and where. Whilst this is a laudable aim, MyQ as currently proposed will not achieve it.

Ratings systems based on opinion surveys, in education as well as elsewhere in the human and social services, are fraught with problems. International research shows that quantified measures of success and blunt student evaluations result in the sharing of narrow and frequently biased viewpoints.

Student surveys conducted by tertiary education institutions often generate inaccurate and misleading results. One of the most persuasive reasons provided by evaluative research as to why you should not further the use of such data is because student opinion surveys have both gender and race biases. It would be a huge mistake to advise students on where to study using data that is laden with such bias.

This bias is exacerbated when there are small numbers of respondents and no qualitative information available. To illustrate this, I refer to the one results page we have seen – the one for the Bachelor of Landscape Architecture at Unitec. That report was based on the responses of six graduates out of 35. Even so, and much to our surprise, the results were presented as a percentage. Presenting results in this way can be confusing for potential students because it down plays the importance of other information. For example, all six respondents said they felt the qualification improved their chances of getting a job, but two of them said they would not recommend the qualification to others. The lack of further information about these students' experience means there is no way for a reader to understand why respondents said they would not recommend the qualification.

We applaud efforts to ensure that prospective students can find information about places to study that is unfettered by the marketing techniques that dominate our current tertiary education system. The MyQ platform as currently set out fails to provide that space. There is also a risk that you will encourage institutions to revert to using MyQ as a marketing tool. In part, this is because the quantification of results will allow tertiary education institutions to draw up 'league tables'. This is not useful for students or the taxpayers who fund tertiary education.

Impact on staff

Added to concerns about the validity of results for prospective students, you must consider the impact quantitative evaluations have on staff in tertiary education.

There is a very high risk that an employer will use this rating system as a disciplinary measure. One reason we are so concerned about this is because we know that employers have used PBRF rankings for disciplinary purposes. This is despite PBRF guidelines being explicit about the fact that this is prohibited. Employers have also attempted to use student evaluations to discipline staff. With Rate My Qual you will be adding another measure that can be used against individual staff members. To help students choose courses of study in a way that is accurate and fair, survey results should be reported at the national level. The sample would then be bigger and the report could link students to all the institutions that offer the qualification.

Further, the decision to limit the scope of the survey to ask about students' employment is misguided. It also goes against this Government's commitment to broadening people's understanding of the benefits of tertiary education. As you know, tertiary education is much more than a means to gain a qualification that will help with employment; it is about developing engaged, information, critically-thinking citizens. It is not helpful to reinforce the narrative that tertiary education is simply a route to work. Student choice over what and where they study should not be reduced to employment outcomes. As the the Unitec example above shows, student satisfaction with a course is about so much more than employment outcomes.

Next steps

More discussion is needed with students about what they need to help them make study choices. This needs to be part of a more thorough debate about quantification and its impact on quality teaching and learning.

I look forward to hearing from you.

Yours sincerely,



Dr. Sandra Grey
President of the Tertiary Education Union





27 August 2018

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By email: sandra.grey@teu.ac.nz

Dear Sandra,

Re: Rate My Qualification (MyQ)

Thank you for providing feedback on Rate My Qualification. I appreciate the concerns you have raised, and would like to address these below.

Intention of Rate My Qualification (MyQ)

The TEC provides information to help prospective students make decisions about tertiary education. This is part of the Tertiary Education Strategy (TES), and our role as champions to enable all New Zealanders to be active in the education system. This aligns with the government's education manifesto and broader education portfolio work programme to ensure we place learners at the centre of the education system, equipping them with the resources to make informed decisions.

Satisfaction-based surveys are used across many industries. The MyQ survey will not be the single source of information a prospective student would use to make a decision about their tertiary education. Prospective students may also find information on Tertiary Education Organisation (TEO) websites, the Occupational Outlook tool, along with talking to friends and whānau.

Methodology and sample size

We engaged Kantar TNS who has expertise in survey methodology and development, research and evaluation. We also engaged other specialist companies: Compass, Research Now and Nielsen's who peer-reviewed the survey. Each organisation provided expertise in ensuring the methodology is sound for the peer-to-peer satisfaction survey that is offered through and by MyQ.

Kantar TNS advised us to use a scaled sample size per graduate pool, with the largest sample size of 40 individual responses. The MyQ publication rules incorporate these recommendations, and furthermore we have increased the minimum sample size for graduate pools greater than 250 students to 50 individual responses. This is double that of Australia's Quality Indicators for Learning and Teaching (QILT) website where the minimum sample size is 25 individual responses. The MyQ publication rules were discussed on 8th June 2017 with the MyQ working group, which is comprised of representatives from across the tertiary sector.

The Chief Education and Scientific Advisor Stuart McNaughton has reviewed the MyQ methodology and is satisfied with the position TEC is taking with regard to the publication of results, methodologies applied and the considered approach related to ensuring the information is utilised to support learner decisions.



Publication model and approach

The MyQ publication model and approach has been designed based on the advice and feedback throughout the design and development of MyQ. MyQ publication is based on a voluntary model and will display on TEC's careers.govt.nz website for all qualifications that meet the publication threshold. All TEOs may opt out of publication at any stage. We will publish two levels of information; national and detailed level MyQ results:

- › National level results will be published by narrow NZSCED and qualification type as per the existing Key Information for Students (KIS) and Employment Outcomes from Tertiary Education (EOTE).
- › Detailed level results will be published for specific qualifications that meet the publication threshold.

The MyQ publication threshold as advised:

| Graduate pool (number of graduates that completed the qualification in the last 3 years) | Number of eligible responses required to publish MyQ results |
|---|--|
| 250+ graduates | 50 |
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Learner evaluations

Ogilvy & Mather and Research Now, experts in marketing and market research, were engaged to provide independent quality assurance on the development of MyQ. This included conducting learner evaluations on the MyQ survey tool and design of results.

The learner evaluations were conducted with a mix of current learners and graduates covering a range of ages, life stages and ethnicities. Overwhelmingly, the linkage between qualifications and career prospects were deemed to be the most useful when making study choices. For example, from one evaluation, 47% of the 500 learners aged 15 – 50 years old deemed the type of job gained by a graduate to be the most useful piece of information. Rationale of why qualifications were selected were deemed to be less useful. From these evaluation it is clear learners want honest, real opinions from graduates, not just rankings and numbers; this is the aim of the MyQ.

The learner evaluations were also conducted on the design of MyQ results and ease of use. 73% of the 300 learners aged 15 – 50 years old found the results somewhat easy to very easy to understand. Furthermore, 63% of the same learners found the design and user experience of the MyQ results engaging.

Bias in student opinion surveys

We have received over 12,000 responses to the MyQ survey to-date. The variation in overall result percentage is less than 1% across different age groups, ethnicities and gender. This indicates the MyQ questions do not cause bias in particular subsets of the population demographics. As mentioned, the MyQ survey will not be the single source of information a prospective student would use to make a



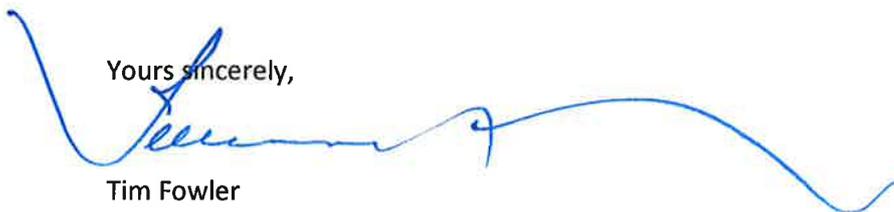
decision about their tertiary education. The MyQ survey will provide an additional information for decision making.

Next steps

I would like to assure you that we have engaged with the relevant experts throughout the project lifecycle to advise our approach, methodology and design. We have placed learners at the centre of MyQ to ensure prospective learners can make informed decisions on study choices.

Thank you once again for your feedback. I look forward to continue working together to further enhance and strengthen the level of tertiary information available to New Zealand's prospective learners.

Yours sincerely,



Tim Fowler
Chief Executive Officer
Tertiary Education Commission



We ensure New Zealand's future success.

