



# eVALUate for benchmarking partnerships

**C**urtin University of Technology's eVALUate is an online system for student evaluation of teaching which was devised and developed by the university (CR, 09.10.07). Its main feature is a unit survey which gathers and reports student perceptions on the effectiveness of semester-length courses of study. The system works well, the implementation has been smooth and the eVALUate team have been recognised with a Carrick Citation for Outstanding Contribution to Student Learning. There's just one thing missing – benchmarking partners.

Curtin uses CEQ data for national benchmarking but, like other universities, experiences the frustration of using data which are at least two years old. But this will be solved when another university adopts eVALUate, says Dr Beverley Oliver, manager of the Teaching Development Unit.

"Data is available just weeks after semester, and so benchmarking for specific courses could be much faster with partner universities," said Oliver.

And even though the financial outlay to develop eVALUate has been significant, Curtin is keen to offer eVALUate free to other universities willing to become benchmarking partners. The offer includes the survey instrument, the technology that drives the system, and the resources aimed at helping teachers improve the student experience.

There are several standout features in eVALUate, said Oliver.

"The unit survey is brief and focuses on what helps students to achieve learning outcomes, their motivation and engagement, and their overall satisfaction with the unit. There are also two standard qualitative items about the best aspects of the unit and how it might be improved. Research so far shows that eVALUate give clear and statistically defensible indications about

student perceptions," she said.

Reports are available at several levels: a full unit report shows all quantitative results (percentage agreement and histograms, and comparisons with institution-wide data) and verbatim comments. Authorised staff can publish for staff and student online access a summary of the quantitative results and a free text response to close the feedback loop (Dear students: thanks for completing the survey – here's what we intend to do as a consequence of your feedback). Course summary reports show quantitative results for all units in a course or major. All reports are calculated dynamically when requested.

Oliver says the eVALUate team has created a suite of supporting resources for teaching staff. All reports have fully detailed guides which relate directly to the survey items, with titles such as 'How to write clear learning outcomes' and 'Creating engaging learning experiences'.

The technology behind eVALUate has been created in-house as a JSR168-compliant portlet and this can readily be shared with other universities using similar systems.

"Curtin envisages that sharing of the technology will take some careful consideration, but a co-operative might be a way forward. This would mean that any member university could share the eVALUate portlet, and then have access to a host of other portlets from the members. The finer details are yet to be determined, but this portal co-operative could be available to all Australian universities," Oliver said.

"We'd welcome benchmarking partners to continue to research and refine the system."

**For information on eVALUate, go to [www.evaluate.curtin.edu.au](http://www.evaluate.curtin.edu.au) or contact Dr Beverley Oliver at [b.oliver@curtin.edu.au](mailto:b.oliver@curtin.edu.au)**



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