

Course Portfolio Management Good Practice Benchmarking Summary

University Market Insight Conference 2019

Prepared by:

David Roberts

The Knowledge Partnership
www.theknowledgepartnership.com

Introduction

At the workshop on portfolio management facilitated by David Roberts from The Knowledge Partnership, delegates were shown a series of good practice statements/benchmarks for university portfolio management, derived from the evidence from the HEFCE funded i-MAP project (2012) that TKP was instrumental in delivering.

This was an instant poll rather than a reflective activity. There were 22 responses and most respondents rated every component.

The sample of respondents cannot be regarded as representative of the UK university sector. First, only an estimated 60% of institutions have at least one market insight professional, although most have data analysts in planning teams that may contribute to portfolio related work. Second, those completing the poll had opted to attend a workshop on portfolio management; it can be assumed they would be more engaged with this type of work than their peers.

Nonetheless, some interesting insights have emerged.

Delegates were presented with 10 statements of best practice and asked to rate their university on the following scale. Responses were captured via a mobile app.

1 = weak or non-existent

2 = new or patchy practice

3 = in place across the institution but improvements are required

4 = well established effective process in place

Summary Results & Commentary

Across the 10 benchmarks the modal and mean rating was 2 which equates to "new or patchy practice".

Overall, this suggests that the trend is towards a more systematic and market-based management of the course portfolio but that practice is not yet embedded and might be inconsistent across institutions and/or over time.

This feels about right from TKP's experience and reflects the fact that universities (in England at least) have been trying to come to terms with a more market-led environment, whilst retaining many of the cultural characteristics of the public sector.

Where are the perceived areas of relative strength when it comes to portfolio management?

Benchmark 2 and 6 had a median rating of 3 and an average rating of 2.7 which suggests these processes/practices are in place but that they need further development or enhancement to be optimal.

It appears that new courses are now being developed/proposed in a more systematic context appears th

Tabulated Benchmark Results

No	Best Practice Statement	Mode	Mean
2	The flow of new courses from concept stage, through development, to final approval and launch, is integrated into the academic and business planning processes of each academic unit (e.g. school or faculty/College) rather than being a rolling "ad hoc" activity.	3	2.7
6	The committee charged with new course approval is chaired by a member of the senior leadership team. This committee also has responsible for the academic strategy and the periodic review of the programme portfolio, so as to facilitate an integrated approach.	3	2.7
1	There is an overarching academic strategy that provides a useful context in which new course ideas can be evaluated, academic unit development planned and the existing portfolio reviewed.	2	2.3
3	There is a regular review of the portfolio of programmes from a market/business case perspective to ensure ongoing sustainability. If this process is nested in the schools/colleges, its results are reported to/considered by the university leadership.	2	2.3

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