UniSA Employer Feedback Survey Pilot Project

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"Qualities that the University values as outcomes for its graduates need to be identifiable and measurable if UniSA is to confidently state that graduates will possess each of the seven Graduate Qualities. The Employer Feedback Survey will support this aim."

As part of the ALTC Teaching Quality Indicators project, UniSA piloted an Employer Feedback survey tool and process in 2008. This tool supports the need to measure the veracity of UniSA's mission of 'Educating Professionals' and 'Engaging the Community'.

**Project aim**
To develop a survey tool and process that enables UniSA to measure employer satisfaction with Graduate Qualities at a discipline level.

**Key Challenge**
The project made use of Alumni data to locate employers of UniSA graduates, however the graduate could not be identified to the employer respondent due to confidentiality. This limited the capacity of some employers to be involved and the accuracy of some data, in particular the discipline of the graduate. This challenge identified an important outcome of the project: that UniSA needs to more accurately track its graduates.

**Solution**
The solution to this limitation was found during the pilot. Gaining permission from graduates to use their details for research by UniSA will improve data collection and accuracy in future surveys. The inclusion of a question seeking this permission has been trialled in UniSA's Australian Graduate Survey (AGS) of 2007 graduates. 19% of respondents have agreed to be contacted. Data is currently being collected for 2008 graduates. The results of this trial will be reported at the end of 2009, ahead of the improved Survey being run again in 2010 using this graduate data to target employers.

Use of specific graduate and employer details will provide more reliable and flexible data about graduates by discipline in future surveys.

**Respondent profile**
A total response rate of 56% was achieved, from 189 completed surveys out of 333 surveys sent to employers of UniSA graduates.

Respondents were from a range of organisations:
- 39% with over 201 employees
- 46% from private enterprise
- 25% from government departments

Broad industry categories represented in the survey data largely mapped onto UniSA major faculty areas, with a large representation of health graduates.

**Measuring Graduate Qualities**
Graduate Qualities need to remain relevant to graduates, the community and industry. Twenty-four graduate qualities statements were listed for employers to indicate the importance they place on each, and the performance of the UniSA graduate/s they had supervised. The ‘gap’ between aggregates of ‘importance’ ratings and ‘performance’ ratings indicate areas of strength (smaller gap) and areas for improvement (larger gap).

**Improvement outcomes**
Key improvements to data collection and the survey tool have been identified and documented in the pilot project. A survey tool incorporating these improvements will provide more accurate employer feedback, and ultimately inform policy and curriculum where appropriate. The tool will be used to supplement data gathered about graduate outcomes through the AGS, and support Key Result Areas in Teaching and Learning at UniSA.

**Sustainability and transferability**
The next iteration of the Employer Feedback Survey in 2010 will achieve the necessary data quality to be a reliable indicator of Graduate Qualities in the workplace. It will become a more accurate and sustainable survey tool within UniSA, supporting institutional aims and contribute to benchmarking across schools. It will also become more transferable across the higher education sector.

**Questions**
- What approaches have institutions taken to measure graduate qualities and outcomes beyond quantitative completions and AGS data?
- What methods have been used to track of graduate movements into the medium and long term?
- How can employers be engaged to provide feedback about the importance and performance graduate qualities?