



Meso: QAA Collaborative Cluster: Personalised Approaches to Resilience and Community (PARC)

Diagnostic Testing at Transition to HEI – Meso-level implications

How can faculty/schools utilise the diagnostic testing to ensure sustainability and enable student success?

PARC seeks to develop, implement and evaluate activities that better prepare the individual student to be successful through the adoption of diagnostic testing of students on pre-arrival/arrival.

This paper highlights some of the issues that could impact at the meso level (**e.g. school or faculty**). It discusses how utilising data from diagnostic testing at your school/faculty level could help address strategic plans (mission-vision-goals), sustainability and implementations at faculty level along with opportunities for inter-faculty collaborations.

Aligning faculty's strategic plans and priorities with individual learning needs is even more relevant at this time as faculty priorities have been more focused on sustainability, utilising resources and establishing platforms for blended approaches after the pandemic.

- **Keywords:** *personalisation, strategic plans, collaboration.*

Potential for impact on faculty/school priorities

- **Faculty/school's strategic plans:** as faculties set priorities for departments and monitor progress and measure success, diagnostics can be used to align with the longer-term strategies through communicating across departments, how they design their diagnostics, what they are doing with their diagnostics and why. While the first impact at departmental level is providing the department with personalised learning routes for the students based on their learning needs, at faculty level, helping the department to focus on priority targets, diagnostics may help with internal review of capacity, infrastructure, implementation and support within each department to enable the faculty to review vision, mission and strategic plans.
- **Bespoke approaches:** While many HE institutions have not been using diagnostics to their full potential or suitable for their context, two initial questions for any HE schools interested in diagnostics can relate to what value their diagnostics bring to students and schools as a whole, and also how to use diagnostics more effectively by designing bespoke tests? Having multiple stakeholders within each discipline, validating the goal with these stakeholders and disciplines is essential to ensure the diagnostic aligns with each stakeholder and discipline's expectations and needs. Identifying core learning areas within the design of the diagnostics for each department is a crucial step to explore students' learning needs specific to each department and utilise resources to meet these unique learning needs. The report of the diagnostic can be used to inform future strategic plans, tailoring the diagnostics, and also evaluate the impact of the support provided.
- **Collaborations between departments:** A faculty-wide approach can provide opportunities for important goals of the collaboration, improving opportunities for students and faculty, positioning the partnership to be more sustainable in the future. Departments can choose collaborating partners based on similarities, differences and the importance of shared vision.
- **Strengthen relationships and collaboration between programme teams and centralised support departments** to embed development of academic and other skills into subject teaching, countering the deficit model that is in place in many institutions.

- **Sustainability and Governance:** This dimension deals with the question of how utilising diagnostics can move beyond individual support points and be embedded long-term on the faculty's agenda.

A key framework to consider (Governance and Sustainability Development- figure 1)

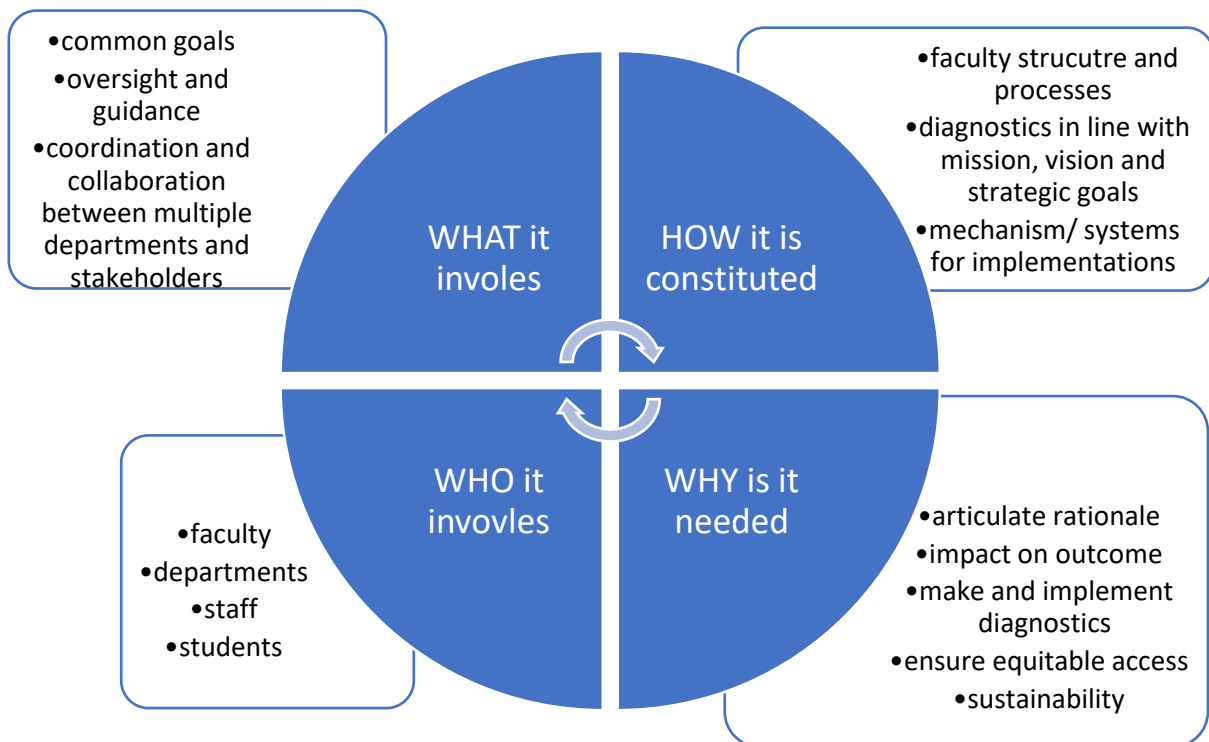


Figure 1- Governance and Sustainability Development

Governance involves the formal and informal processes and mechanisms that influence decision-making and collective action and in accordance with common goals between departments and the faculty (figure 1). With its multidisciplinary origins, a governance perspective encourages taking a step back to understand how the diagnostics are viewed before focusing on the micro-details of diagnostics. These findings raise the issue of sustainability and governance in HEIs.

Validation of the integrative system of diagnosis at faculty level involves reviewing the diagnostic reports internally within departments to suggest teaching and learning activities aiming at strengthening the identified weaknesses of students on the diagnostics. A key step in the suitability process involves integrating diagnostic results into the curriculum within each department. This has the potential to create meaningful content and concrete pedagogy following iterative cycles of planning, acting observing and reflecting (figure 2).

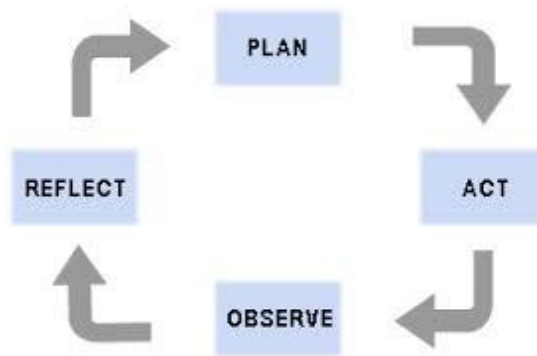


Figure 2- Plan-Act-Observe-Reflect cycle and key steps in the sustainability process

The PARC project through the implementation of diagnostic testing, and tailored study resources and support, will explore whether these can address some of the resilience and retention issues that may emerge in the 2021-22 academic year.

Questions to consider:-

- What value do diagnostics bring to the faculty/school as a whole with the blended approaches?
- How diagnostics inform/reshape faculty/schools' strategic plans and address sustainability?
- How can diagnostics facilitate faculty's mission/vision/goals in areas such as equality, diversity retention, recruitment, sustainability and employability?
- Who is best placed to deliver transition and resilience material, and how do we ensure there is adequate resource to implement this?
- What are academic staff beliefs about diagnostic assessment and effective integration of this into the classroom (academic staff perceptions about DA can have implications on each process of planning, acting, observing and reflecting)?
- What are the students' beliefs about diagnostic assessment - how it is conducted, interpreted, and used in the classroom? Can these insights help highlight the discrepancies between instructor intentions and student understandings, and provide access to how students develop self-regulated corrective skills independent of the ones offered by their instructors?
- How can departments use diagnostics data (the recommendation reports) more effectively?
- How can departments give students more control over their learning experience by utilising diagnostics?
- How can a department show tangible evidence of learning using diagnostics?

References

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- Velazquez, L.; Munguia, N.; Platt, A.; Taddei, J., 2006. Sustainable University: What can be the matter? *J. Clean.Prod.*, 14, 810–819.