

*La valutazione professionale del docente per la qualità del sistema  
universitario*

# Assessing the quality of university teaching

Dr Frank Su

Liverpool Hope University, UK

 @DrFengSu



LIVERPOOL  
HOPE  
UNIVERSITY

Est. 1844



# The notion of 'quality'

- High quality university teaching is central to the higher education sector worldwide.
- The quality of research rather than teaching has been the predominant focus of university quality assurance activities and ranking metrics.
- Different stakeholders of higher education hold different views on what quality in education means to them.

Quality can be viewed as exception, as perfection, as fitness for purpose, as value for money and as transformative.

Determining criteria for assessing quality in higher education requires an understanding of different conceptions of quality that inform the preferences of stakeholders.

Harvey and Green (1993)

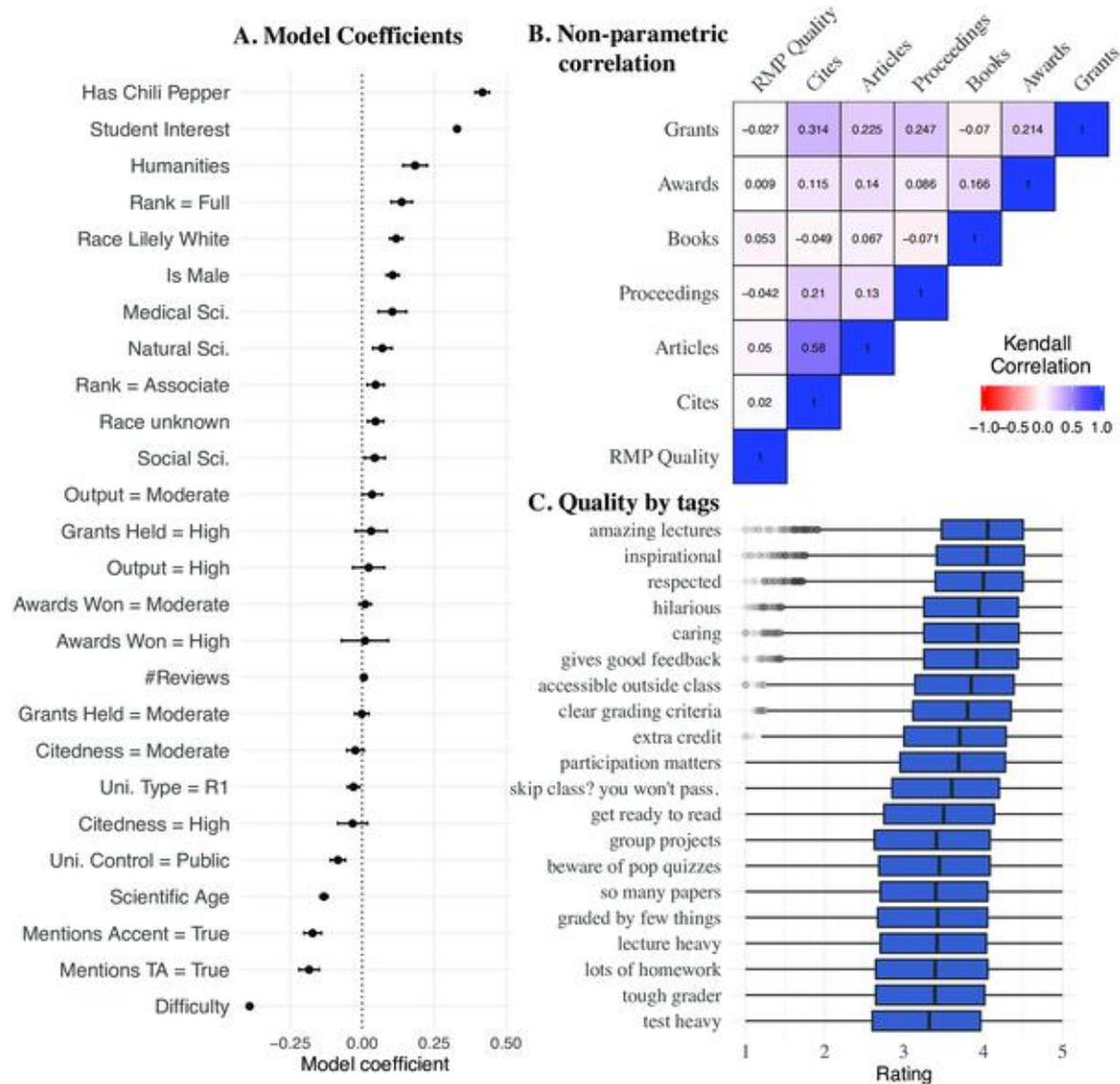
# Assessing the teaching quality

- At international level, there are university rankings for teaching, e.g. 'Europe Teaching Rankings' by THE World University Rankings.
- At national level, many countries have developed policy frameworks to measure teaching quality, e.g. The Teaching Excellence and Student Outcomes Framework (TEF) in England.
- At institutional level, student course evaluation, peer review of teaching, self-assessment and educational portfolios are often used in assessing the quality of university teaching.

**Table 2.** Summary of opportunities and challenges relating to identified quality evaluation and enhancement methods of teaching.

Method	Opportunities	Challenges
<i>Student evaluation survey</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Scalability</li><li>• Replicability</li><li>• Quantitative outcome</li><li>• Low-cost</li><li>• Can contribute as part of a wider quality approach</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Variability in reliability and validity in some instruments</li><li>• Subjective and subject to influence based on individual student and educator characteristics and student performance beyond teaching quality issues.</li></ul>
<i>Self-assessment</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Scalability</li><li>• Replicability</li><li>• Low-cost</li><li>• Promotes reflective practice</li><li>• Useful as precursor to formative peer review</li><li>• Can contribute as part of a wider quality approach</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Lacks external perspective to identify novel issues or opportunities</li><li>• Optimal approach integrates self-reflection with peer discussion and feedback at some stage</li></ul>
<i>Peer-review</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Promotes collegiality</li><li>• Promotes discussion and feedback around teaching and learning</li><li>• Can support both reviewer and reviewee in enhancing teaching quality</li><li>• Can contribute as part of a wider quality approach</li><li>• Has potential to be most effective when both formative and summative peer review processes are provided within an institution</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Resource intensive – requirements relating to time and cost of staffing</li><li>• Requires ‘expert’ reviewers</li><li>• Lacks anonymity</li><li>• Scalability requires considerable sustained resources</li><li>• Lack of research on role of peer review in online contexts</li><li>• Acceptability may be varied, depending on whether the peer-review is formative or summative</li></ul>
<i>Teaching portfolio</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Potential to document a comprehensive account of a full range of teaching activities and evidence of impact</li><li>• Supports continuous development of teaching quality</li><li>• Long-term record of teaching development</li><li>• Potential to provide a nuanced account of teaching quality relative to the educator and/or context</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Resource intensive – requirements relating to time and cost of staffing for developing and assessing portfolios</li><li>• Requires ‘expert’ reviewers to assess</li><li>• Lacks anonymity</li><li>• Scalability requires considerable ongoing resources</li></ul>

Fig 1. Individual, classroom, university, and research characteristics associated with overall teaching quality



Murray D, Boothby C, Zhao H, Minik V, Bérubé N, et al. (2020) Exploring the personal and professional factors associated with student evaluations of tenure-track faculty. *PLOS ONE* 15(6): e0233515. <https://doi.org/10.1371/journal.pone.0233515>

# Developing teaching quality

- It requires us to clarify what we mean by teaching quality at a subject / programme level;
- It requires us to reflect on what it means to be an academic in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century;
- It requires commitment and investment in teaching development;
- It requires the recognition and reward of excellent teaching;
- It requires academic leadership.

# Anatomy of 21<sup>st</sup> Century Educators



Scholar

An awareness & appreciation of effective, research-based, discipline-appropriate pedagogical approaches.



Technologist

Fluency using learning technology in educationally effective ways.



Curator

A producer & consumer of appropriate educational resources through sharing & development.



Teacher for Learning



An understanding of how students learn & how to design effective learning activities & experiences.

Collaborator



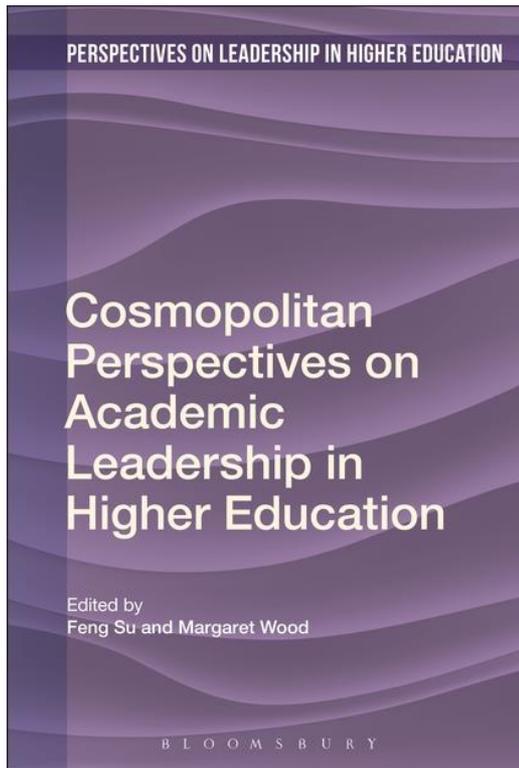
Sharing & enhancing one's own educational approaches through collaborations within, across & between disciplines.

Experimenter

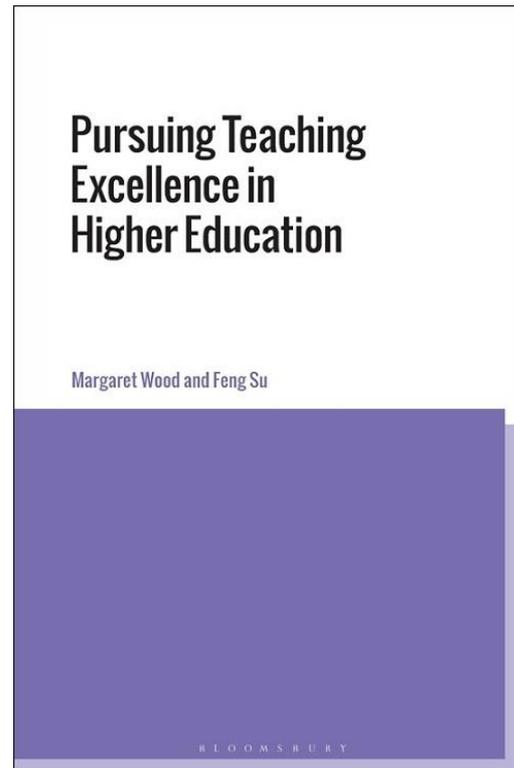


An openness to try, reflect & learn from new approaches, pedagogy & technologies to support student learning.





Su, F. and Wood, M. (eds.)  
(2017) *Cosmopolitan Perspectives on Academic Leadership in Higher Education*. London and New York: Bloomsbury.



Wood, M. and Su, F. (forthcoming 2021) *Pursuing Teaching Excellence in Higher Education: Towards an inclusive perspective*. London and New York: Bloomsbury.