

# Exploring the elusive shape of service outcomes: Reflections on evaluating learning advice services

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As part of good practice and for the purpose of continual improvement of service quality, Student Learning at Victoria University of Wellington regularly conducts service and programme evaluations. These include the end of year Student Learning Survey and bi-annual peer observations and tend to focus on student satisfaction and/or perceptions of our services and programmes. In response to the New Zealand government's call for tertiary education institutions (TEIs) to report on "the services the TEI is providing, how well it is providing them, and the effects of the services on the student community (impacts/outcomes)" (Office of the Auditor-General, 2012, p.28) we have been looking at ways in which we can carry out evaluation beyond that of student numbers and satisfaction. This is not a straightforward task. As Alach (2015, p.1) notes, the value and validity of methods and practices of performance measurement in higher education are the subject of much debate. This paper reflects on our journey to date to re-define and re-design our evaluations so they allow us to more effectively measure our service outcomes and the possible impact on students.

## References:

Alach, Z. (2015). Performance measurement and accountability in higher education: The puzzle of qualification completions. *Tertiary Education and Management*. DOI:[10.1080/13583883.2015.1122828](https://doi.org/10.1080/13583883.2015.1122828).  
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## Biographies:

Xiaodan Gao works with students at all levels. Her research interests include international education, transition for international postgraduate students and cross-cultural communication.

Kirsten Reid is a Senior Learning Advisor at Victoria University of Wellington. She works mainly with postgraduate and undergraduate international students and has a particular interest in academic writing and oral presentations. She is also interested in supporting students from refugee backgrounds.