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engineering disciplines should also be included here. However, for the purposes of this paper, discussion will be limited primarily to the life and natural resource sciences.

Despite an increasing emphasis on quality (and associated risk) management in both public and private sectors, as well as increasing employment opportunities in these areas, there are no common or widespread university quality systems curricula. Exceptions include externally-accredited degree programs leading to certified/licensed graduates that specifically require quality system curricula (food safety, food technology, pharmacy, medical technology, etc.) However, for the majority of technical science areas, quality systems education is commonly provided via post-graduation, non-university-based instruction in the form of short courses or on-the-job training. Given the variety of quality management system technical areas, and the frequent, often industry-, or site-specific, requirement for specialised training in each, such education is unlikely to be wholly replaced by university academic coursework. And given the largely limited real-world experience of most university science academics outside academia, such practical extra-university quality system training in critical risk areas may be warranted. However, as most quality systems managers and lead auditors recognise, knowledge of general quality management principles provides the foundation on which specific quality system and technical knowledge can be most effectively utilised. University would seem an ideal place to provide such a foundation. This paper presents the author's impressions on where quality systems education currently

sits within the current Australian university science educational environment, and presents a discussion of potential schemes to foster a broader understanding of such systems in graduates; some of whom will become future quality system managers.

QUALITY SYSTEMS EDUCATION AT UNIVERSITY

A primary function of university science education is provision of "foundation" technical and critical thinking capabilities for subsequent study employment and/or study. Considering undergraduate students undertake studies progressively-focused on their respective technical areas from the second year onward, provision of education in quality systems in general, and optimally associated with the specific technical area, at this time would appear optimal. While perhaps obvious, a basic understanding of the Australian university academic environment can provide critical context for those considering integration of quality systems education into university curricula.

PERCEPTIONS OF "QUALITY"

As many in quality management professionals recognise, the term "quality" is used what I might term "promiscuously." One such example was in transit in a SE Asian capital wherein I saw an establishment of somewhat dubious moral rectitude advertising, "Qualtee Entatanment". Several quality management system issues came to mind, including accreditation, QMP, SOPs, scope, and the technical assessors required. While those associated with quality management recognise the profligate use of a term which, to them, has a specific meaning, they also recognise the wide spectrum in what can be (and is) labelled "quality". Indeed, "quality" is often used as a synonym and brand label of "excellence". Give me \$5 and an hour in an Australian CBD and I will purchase something labelled "quality" that lacks either excellence or quality. At a higher level, anyone unfortunate enough to deal negatively with ISO9000-accredited-company outsourced customer support knows what I'm talking about. It is within this context we should first consider perceptions of quality of university students.

My experience is students perceive the term "quality" as described above; as a label or adjective/adverb rather than the end-goal of a systematic approach to assuring safety and/or consistency and/or performance. Additionally, many science students respectively associate the terms

"quality assurance"/"quality control" and "audit" with either, a) humourless, clipboard-wielding drones of severe-constitution whose objective is creation of annoying busy-work, or b) something negative associated with taxation authorities. In my experience, exceptions are often students with employment experience in supermarkets (largely food safety and stock QA) or production facilities. However, the majority of students have only a vague knowledge of quality systems in the real world, and less regarding their breadth of application, operation, scope and utility.

For those actively involved in quality systems and their management it is worthwhile to step-back and recall the cumulative amount of knowledge required to become skilled in a particular system. Students of even one quality management system are frequently faced with a daunting alphabet soup of abbreviations, acronyms, agencies, regulations and stakeholders, to say nothing of jargon and standard quality system terminology. Many find even the distinction between quality control and assurance conceptually difficult. This is not assisted by the frequent perception of quality management as on-par with accounting for excitement. Overcoming these factors is crucial to stimulating interest in quality issue and management. I suggest presentation of specific quality management system terminology is essential. However, regulatory agencies, certification authorities and associated regulations may be best presented in gradually where possible, and optimally in an applied context.

One approach I have used to stimulate interest concerns career advancement. Many life science undergraduates obtain employment as laboratory technicians or assistants directly out of university. I suggest quality assurance as a route to advancement within such laboratories and development of generic quality management skills as helpful for career progression within a variety of industries.

UNIVERSITY STUDENT DIVERSITY

Australian university students comprise two basic cohorts, undergraduates (BSc and Honours) and postgraduates (MSc and PhD). A variety of other degree options such as graduate diplomas (GradDip) exist as well. Undergraduate (BSc, typically 3 years) studies focus on development of technical and theoretical capabilities within the chosen discipline/degree. A majority of Australian university BSc graduates do not subsequently pursue science-related careers. Honours (one year) and postgraduate studies (MSc 1-2 years, PhD 3 years) focus almost exclusively on laboratory and/or literature research, and a larger proportion subsequently



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