

How can data work for me?

Top tips for analysing information



UQ collects large amounts of data that can be used to improve teaching and learning, research, delivery of services, and more.

This data can be used in a number of ways by staff, presented in reports, and stored in databases.

However, to utilise this valuable asset accurately and effectively, it's important to understand how to read data.

Below, find out what to remember when analysing information.

Understand what's excluded

- Data completeness is an important principle, as omissions can impact data quality.
- For example, course coordinators may be evaluating how to assist students. However, while the data includes the program of study for each student, it doesn't include whether they have an SAP (Student Access Plan). This means that course staff are unaware of circumstances that may impact study.

Understand assumptions made

- If assumptions aren't understood, they can lead to misinterpretations, which can negatively affect decisions made using the data.
- For example, you may be surveying the number of full-time, part-time, and casual staff currently employed by your department. However, this data may not account for staff currently on leave. As a result, you would need to search for further information, in order to include those who are currently on leave. By accounting for this potential assumption, a more informed decision about staffing can be made.

Understand what's included

- Data quality is also impacted by what is ***included***, as unnecessary inclusions can create (conscious or unconscious) biases, resulting in unfair judgements.
- For example, when providing information about potential PhD candidates to an assessment panel, think about what data is necessary to include. Information regarding gender, ethnicity, and disability is not required for the assessment process, and could lead to biased judgements.

For further information, contact Data Strategy & Governance

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