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**Abstract**

The ways in which the value-added benefits of higher education are conceptualised and measured have come under increased scrutiny as universities become more accountable to their funding bodies in a difficult economic climate. Existing approaches for understanding quality learning often rely on measuring the subjective student experience or on instruments that have questionable reliability and validity. In order to overcome these issues, the gap between rigour and relevance in higher educational research must be addressed. It is therefore suggested that the learning sciences play a greater role in understanding quality learning in universities. By directly examining the assumptions underpinning the conceptions of quality learning through an expansion of the evidence base available, more valid and reliable methods can be developed. These methods will then allow more sophisticated indicators for assessing what students gain from their time in higher education. (HRK / Abstract übernommen)