ITL Research Roundtables 2015

Reframing the PhD for Australia’s future universities

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This research arose from an often-voiced concern about how well the PhD is preparing graduates for the demands of contemporary work and society, and related to that, questions about the scope of universities’ current ‘doctoral curriculum’ strategies to effectively deliver on those demands. The project focuses on the role of the PhD in preparing the future academic workforce, especially in relation to higher education teaching. While it pays particular attention to the preparation of doctoral students for careers in academia, it does so in a way that will also better prepare them for careers in industry and elsewhere. The project adopts a conceptual methodology and seeks to engage academic communities in shaping a different way of thinking about the research 'heart' of the PhD, borrowing from, and extending, the Carnegie Foundation's idea of 'stewardship'. In addition to its conceptual contributions it will deliver practical strategies and resources that re-frame and integrate (i) the PhD research project, (ii) its supervision, (iii) the disciplinary community the PhD occurs in, and (iv) universities' doctoral research skills and teaching development strategies, to better prepare graduates for employment in both academia and industry. This seminar will introduce some of the background thinking to the project and in particular it will explore the idea of stewardship in relation to a reframing of academic practice.