Graduates for a changing world

http://www.itl.usyd.edu.au/GraduateAttributes/

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Celebrating Excellence at the University of Canberra

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A changing world

• The world our graduates need to thrive in is one that is characterised by change and uncertainty

• Knowledge?
• Skills?
• An attitude to Being?
What qualities should graduates of your degree possess?

• Maybe not what they should know,

• maybe not even the skills they need to apply what they know,

• but maybe how they might go about applying what they should know.
How have universities sought to articulate such purposes?

• **Graduate Attributes:** These are the qualities skills and understandings that a university community agrees its students should develop during their time with the institution and consequently shape the contribution they are able to make to their profession and society….They are qualities that also prepare graduates as agents of social good in an unknown future.

  (Bowden et al 2000)
Statements of generic graduate attributes

• Have the potential to articulate newer forms of knowledge espoused by the academic community

• However, rarely gone beyond a limited articulation of knowledge and skills

• What impact have such ideas had on the sorts of educational experiences our students engage in?
Curricula outcomes

• The rhetoric of policy has not necessarily been matched by the sorts of experiences universities offer to students nor the outcomes their graduates evince.
Why haven’t university communities engaged in an effective way in creating learning experiences for students that achieve these sorts of outcomes?

- [Graduate attributes initiatives in the UK] have had little impact so far in part because of teachers' scepticism of the message, the messenger and its vocabulary and in part because the skills demanded lack clarity, consistency and a recognisable theoretical base. Any attempt to acquire enhanced understandings of practice through which to inform staff and course development initiatives requires conceptualisation and development of models of generic skills.  
  (Bennet et al 1999, p 90)
What do academics mean by ‘generic attributes’

• A hierarchy of four increasingly complex understandings of the nature of graduate attributes as outcomes

• Related to these understandings of outcomes were six different understandings of the process of teaching and learning such attributes.

• Certain outcomes were associated with certain processes (Barrie 2004).
Conceptions of Graduate Attributes

• Academics understand generic attributes as:
  - Precursor Attributes
  - Complementary Attributes
  - Translating Attributes
  - Enabling Attributes
A hierarchy of complementary approaches

• A hierarchical model with **Enabling** strategies subsuming and being supported by **Translating** strategies, which in turn are supported by **Complementary** and **Precursory** strategies.
Revised Policy

• The revised policy identifies three overarching (Mode 3, Enabling Conception) attributes:

• **Scholarship:** An attitude or stance towards knowledge

• **Global Citizenship:** An attitude or stance towards the world

• **Lifelong Learning:** An attitude or stance towards themselves
**Scholarship:** An attitude or stance towards knowledge

- Graduates of the University will have a scholarly attitude to knowledge and understanding. As Scholars, the University’s graduates will be leaders in the production of new knowledge and understanding through inquiry, critique and synthesis. They will be able to apply their knowledge to solve consequential problems and communicate their knowledge confidently and effectively.
Global Citizenship: An attitude or stance towards the world

• Graduates of the University will be Global Citizens, who will aspire to contribute to society in a full and meaningful way through their roles as members of local, national and global communities.
Lifelong Learning: An attitude or stance towards themselves

- Graduates of the University will be Lifelong Learners committed to and capable of continuous learning and reflection for the purpose of furthering their understanding of the world and their place in it.
Each of these three overarching attributes can be understood as a combination of five overlapping clusters of (mode 3 & 2) skills and abilities

1 Research and Inquiry
2 Information Literacy
3 Personal and Intellectual Autonomy
4 Ethical, Social and Professional Understanding
5 Communication
A different way of conceptualising the same attributes
Research and Inquiry: Graduates of the University will be able to create new knowledge & understanding through the process of research & inquiry

• be able to identify, define and analyse problems and identify or create processes to solve them
• be able to exercise critical judgement and critical thinking in creating new understanding
• be creative and imaginative thinkers
• have an informed respect for the principles, methods, standards, values and boundaries of their discipline and the capacity to question these
• be able to critically evaluate existing understandings and recognise the limitations of their own knowledge
Research and Inquiry at the Conservatorium of Music:

• be able to identify, define and analyse problems in written work, composition, teaching and performance and identify or create processes to solve them
• be able to exercise critical judgement and critical thinking in creating new understandings in relation to music analysis, music composition, music education, music history, music technology, and music performance
• be creative, imaginative and independent thinkers in their musical endeavours
• have an informed respect for the principles, standards, values and boundaries of current music knowledge, pedagogy and performance practice.
• be able to question critically and to evaluate current music knowledge and compositional, pedagogical and performance practices, acknowledging global and historical diversity and recognising the limitations of their own knowledge
Recap

• Changing context for our graduates to live in
• ‘Generic attributes’ try to articulate outcomes but don’t match these needs - besides had little impact so far!
• Started from what academics understand by generic attributes as conceptual basis for policy
• Acknowledge mode 3 outcomes from a university education while articulating mode 2 outcomes and recognising the role of mode 1 knowledge
• Contribution of the different types of initiatives already in place can be recognised - an organising principle
• This has implications for curriculum and teaching
Challenges for Teaching and Curricula

• Teaching can't be all about facts
• Not about somebody else teaching skills
• Not about additional content
• Integrated within discipline learning
• Learning the subject in a different way
• But even active learning in applied contexts is only part of the answer
Through their studies students need to develop a habit of mind that is about living with multiple solutions and multiple perspectives - about living with uncertainty……..how do you teach that?

How will you teach for uncertainty?
Learning experiences that foster these attributes

• Active learning
• Inquiry learning
• Peer assisted learning
• Student-centred teaching
• Authentic learning
• Collaborative learning
• Learning communities
Challenges?

• Building a learning community is hard
• Discipline teachers foregrounded
• Change to learning outcomes & assessment
• Coordination across subjects
• Coordination across university (foundation)
• Student focused to achieve engagement
• Focus on broader university experience
A curriculum revolution?

• The endeavour by universities to foster the development of generic capabilities in their students constitutes ..... a significant challenge to conventional teaching and learning arrangements. (Bowden et al 2000 p 10)

• Challenge’…..a revolution more likely!

• But revolutions can start with a single individual.....