Graduate Attributes: Nothing to do with me!

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With acknowledgement to Dr Clair Hughes & Dr Calvin Smith of the National GAP project
• .......meaningful solutions have proved elusive and there remains a 'national gap' between the rhetoric of graduate attributes and the reality of the student learning experience.
“Nothing to do with me”

• Because of the way we, as individuals, think about Graduate Attributes.

• Because of the way the systems we work in, shape what we do.
  (See Barrie, Hughes & Smith 2008)

• The ‘individual’ and the ‘system’ are linked
A way of thinking about the institutional systems

1. Conceptualisation
2. Stakeholders
3. Implementation
4. Curriculum
5. Assessment
6. Staff Development
7. Quality Assurance
8. Student Centred

Issues paper on each of these
A way of thinking about institutional strategy
Conceptualisation

- Context or stakeholder focus

- Conceptions of learning outcomes and processes – these underpin the different beliefs and values people have about GA and explain and predict how they will approach teaching and learning of GA. They are also embodied in university policy statements.

- Limitations inherent in conceptions based on “generic” and “skills”
Stakeholders

• Multiple – with multiple agendas

• Rarely recognise the differences or way these interact

• Who is included and who is excluded
Implementation

- Many different strategies …intimately connected to resourcing decisions
- Left to individuals - or done for them or done to them
- Rarely engages the diverse members of university community
- Policy ….of outcomes….of processes …but rarely of implementation beyond simplistic ‘mapping’ input / process / output
- Institutional structures and cultures dominate and are rarely aligned – approaches are usually atomistic & simplistic – rarely ‘joined up’
- Multi level leadership, coordination & prioritisation (competing agendas)……resourcing
Curriculum

• The choice of “vehicle” can determine the destination
• Linear sequence of content blocks – add in some other ‘blocks’ (PD theme, skills courses, WIL, internships – potentially limiting)
• Change the existing learning experiences
• Broaden the range of learning experiences
• Curriculum structure & organisation limits what can be achieved
Assessment

• Assessment defines the curriculum – for all stakeholders
• The complexity of assessment is ignored in favour of tick and flick
• Explicit articulation in standards and criteria needs operationisation in lived experience and systems
• Need a whole degree approach to assessment
• Need to broaden how we assess
• Need to broaden who is engaged in assessment
Staff development

- Support and encouragement to engage in curriculum renewal & development of new learning experiences
- A different (broader) cohort with different needs to usual ADU constituency
- SD needs to address all aspects of the puzzle not just ‘tools’
- Long term undertaking - not short term fix
- QA (measures punishments rewards) vital
Quality Assurance

• How we ‘assess’ teaching / curriculum determines what we do – teachers are no different to students

• QA is often simplistic and reflects low level conceptions

• QA does not capture the multi-level effort required to foster GAs

• Does not measure all the bits of the puzzle or the integrated effect
Student Centred

• It is the students’ experience of GAs that counts – not what we do or say
• This is not prominent in institutional approaches
• This is not evident in students reports of their experiences
• Career (life) development learning life-long / life-wide learning
The people in the system: Staff and Students

• Staff

• Our ideas about GA can shape the system….but we rarely articulate them in a way that does.

• In the absence of such a conversation…..the system limits how we can act on our ideas

• What sort of vested interests are there maintaining the current system?
The people in the system: Staff and Students

- Students
- Their ideas about GA .... *what are their ideas?*
- In the absence of a conversation.....the system defines how they engage with achieving GAs
- How might we create more meaningful conversations with students?
Thank you!