Abstract
Universities continue to struggle to embody their purposes in the curriculum and learning experiences they offer to students. This struggle often finds a focus in calls for curricula to address employability skills and foster generic graduate attributes. These calls are not new, and nor is the struggle, however it is becoming clear that the way we have tried to address these calls has not always been as effective as we would have hoped. In part the persistent struggle reflects unresolved and often unacknowledged - tensions as to what this purpose is – for instance the familiar though inappropriate dichotomy of preparation for employment or for disciplinary thinking and knowledge creation – a curricula version of what some in Australia term the ‘culture wars’. At another level the persistent difficulties also reflect the assumptions made – by both champions and opponents of graduate attributes curriculum reform - as to how to go about achieving such outcomes for graduates. These assumptions are embodied in more than simply curriculum decisions; they find expression in all facets of the complex system that is a university, from recruitment practices to academic workload formulae and academic development strategies.

This workshop will consider how some of these issues might have contributed to what many see as the failure of universities to achieve systemic embedding of the development of graduate attributes in university learning experiences. It will do so by encouraging participants to consider the challenge from a variety of institutional perspectives – as teacher, curriculum designer, Dean/Head of school, quality assurance manager, researcher and academic developer. Using reflection, role-play and group problem solving, it will focus on identifying practical renewal strategies in relation to those graduate attributes prized by proponents of employability and ‘thinkability’ alike. The workshop draws on the findings of a current national study into the embedding of graduate attributes in Australian university curricula.