USING GRADUATE ATTRIBUTES TO DESIGN 21ST CENTURY UNIVERSITY CURRICULA

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Graduate attributes

Graduate attributes are an orientating statement of education outcomes used to inform curriculum design and engagement with teaching and learning experiences at a university (Barrie 2009).

They are descriptions of the core abilities and values a university community agrees all its graduates should develop as a result of successfully completing their university studies (adapted from Bowden et al 2000).
However....

Meaningful curriculum renewal has proved elusive and in Australia there remains a 'national gap' between the rhetoric of generic attributes and the reality of the student learning experience.
Last time I was here we discussed three reasons *Why*........

1. As outcomes they are more complex than they seem
2. Universities’ activity systems aren’t supportive
3. Learners have been left behind

This time I want to discuss...... *How we might do this differently*
1. Setting the right direction

Ensure the university community understands the complexity and makes a relevant commitment

Foundation: Generic skills – ‘off-the shelf’, non-specialised skills for university learning and work

Translation: Explicit ways of doing and thinking, using and applying discipline knowledge... they are the discipline

Enabling: Implicit dispositions attitudes & values, they grow from, but transcend the discipline
What do you want for your graduates? Write one attribute for each level

One Enabling outcome:

One Translation outcome:

One Foundation skill (input):
Why keep these levels of outcome distinct in your mind and in your policy?

1. One sort of GA is an input not an output and if we look for ‘value-add’ from university in that group, both staff and students will be disappointed.

2. Some sorts of GA can be explicitly taught and assessed at university but one type probably can’t.

3. One type of GA is different in every discipline – the others might be more generic – but that still doesn’t meant they are the same.

4. One sort you develop with stand alone skills courses taught by skills experts and there is no real change to the rest of the curriculum.
Some other reasons…..

5. One sort would be developed if all university teachers adopted ‘good teaching practices’ in their courses

6. Some types are not very appealing to some in the academic community

7. Some types are very appealing to bureaucrats and administrators – and some scare them
What commitment is required to achieve useful outcomes?

*They are not a shopping list to be ticked off and they are not somebody else’s responsibility, it is a team effort.*

**Foundation generic skills:** Ensure coverage and recognise limits

**Translation graduate attributes:** we may need to change the way we think about teaching the discipline.

**Enabling graduate attributes:** we need to find ways to better engage students in the broader integrative learning experiences of university – and we may need to provide better integrative learning experiences.
2. Moving from commitment to action

All three are required: Foundation skills, Translation attributes, Enabling Attributes.

How can we act on these commitments in relation to each type of graduate attribute.
Foundation Skills:
*Effective coverage, efficient learning recognise limits*

What do we agree all first year students need to know in order to learn effectively at university ......that they don’t get taught at school? *How might we do this?*

How can we ensure students learn this efficiently? Skills modules taught by experts, self-study modules, embedded FY assignments, work with 2# schools?

Limits? Not enough on its own – inputs to GA not outputs - connect to subsequent learning and GA development
Translation graduate attributes:

*We may need to change the way we think about teaching the discipline.*

*A lot is in place*

Move from content-based to outcomes-based curriculum

‘Discipline’ is not defined by content alone but content + (disciplinary)graduate attribute

Content in action

Professional accreditation does this
Translation graduate attributes: *teaching the discipline continued*......

Different outcomes suggest different teaching, learning & assessment processes
Active learning & active teaching
Inquiry-learning, undergraduate research, work-integrated learning, case based learning, writing intensive courses, collaborative assignments etc.
Different teaching and learning means different (aligned) assessment
Enabling graduate attributes:
Better integrative learning experiences and better student engagement

*Integrative learning* – “Fostering students' abilities to intentionally integrate learning - over time, across courses, and between academic, personal, and community life” (Huber & Hutchings)
Enabling graduate attributes: 
integrative learning continued......

**Integrative learning experiences** (adapted from Kuh)

- First-Year Seminars
- Study Groups
- Common Intellectual Experiences
- Learning Communities
- Research
- Experiencing Diversity
- Service & Community-Based Learning
- Internships
- Capstone Courses and Projects
- Discipline learning that is like this
Enabling graduate attributes: integrative learning continued......

Engaging students in integrative learning

Make time & space

Value and recognise engagement

• Encourage
• rewarding
• require
• assess
• give credit
• integrate
• participate
Enabling graduate attributes: integrative learning continued......

Assessing integrative student learning

We don’t have to assess everything
We don’t always have to be the assessors
• Portfolios
• Self assessment
• Subsequent application embedded in discipline assessment or capstone assessment
Putting it all together: Tertiary Integrated Graduate Attributes (TIGA?) curriculum
4: How do we engage the university community

Collective and collaborative task initially - not an individual one

Group is the broader university community not just the ‘GA’ converts
Collaborative group task......

How do we encourage students to work in groups?

What makes for effective student group work?

How do we manage student group work?
University staff working together (!)

- Allow sufficient time
- Coordination and leadership
- Acknowledge different roles and contributions
- Effective internal team processes
- Effective internal communication
- Accountability for outputs
- Reward for effective processes
Encouraging staff engagement

• *Lessons from students* (Encourage, rewarding, require, assess, give credit, integrate, participate)

Make time and make it manageable
Make it intellectually rewarding and fun (intrinsic)
Build on what is done and reward productive engagement (extrinsic)
Participate – lead by example
Recognise engagement – Evaluation

*Teacher measures*

Course (discipline and integrative) audits of developments, teaching and assessment activities

Mapping is of limited benefit for engagement on its own
Audit could become inquiry
What is done with the data after matters most

Evidence of effective curriculum development for GA as a KPI? (teacher measures cross tab with student outcome measures)
Recognise engagement – Evaluation

*Indirect measures of outcomes - surveys and audits*

Average # times per semester academics meet with students outside class
Frequency and quality of intellectual engagement with staff outside of class
# and % of students reporting helpful teacher feedback on GA development
# and % of students reporting participation in (integrative learning experiences)
# and % of courses emphasizing multicultural learning experiences
# and % of students involved in faculty research
# and % of degrees requiring practicum, internship, service
Frequency and quality of intellectual engagement with other students not studying your course
Self ratings on development of GA
Did the course / teaching / assessment help you develop these GA?
Employer/Graduate/Peer perception surveys
Recognise engagement – Evaluation

Direct measures of student outcomes - assessments and audits

Course (discipline and integrative capstone) assignments, exams, projects

Perhaps not standardised generic skills tests – Why not?

Un-intended (unwanted and not insignificant) consequences....
Graduate Attributes led curriculum development

1. OBE policy and curriculum design should start with the recognition that these graduate outcomes are multilayered.

2. Multilayered outcomes require a multilayered curricula. *(TIGA)*

1. The broader university community needs to choose to be meaningfully engaged.
Thank you!