

Synthesising Graduate Qualities within the UOW LLB Curriculum

The UOW LLB program:

- Began 1990. Strong focus on practical skills - stand alone skills subjects and integration across doctrinal subjects.
- Mandatory placement component.
- In line with Australian Law Reform Commission (ALRC) 2000 Report - legal education in Australia should be "oriented around what lawyers need to do [rather than] outmoded notions of what lawyers need to know."
- Significant number of graduates do not enter traditional legal practice.
- LLB skills program reviewed 2001. Major overhaul of the LLB program 2005-2006: essential skills/values subjects concentrated in first year.
- Audit of LLB skills program in 2006-2007 confirmed importance employers place on graduate skills and also identified current problems in effectively teaching and assessing those skills in current LLB curriculum.

Development of faculty specific Graduate Qualities and a curriculum review so as to ensure assessment is aligned with outcomes reflecting those Qualities is therefore timely.

Project Description and Context:

This project focuses on translating the University of Wollongong's recently reformulated generic Graduate Qualities into specific Graduate Qualities for the Faculty of Law's LLB program and facilitating the development of curricula across the LLB program that will project these qualities and clearly identify and support the nexus between outcomes and assessment in LLB subjects.

Graduate Qualities and Assessment:

The concept of graduate qualities is not a new one. Most institutions can point to a list of generic qualities, attributes, capabilities or skills that it is expected their students will have acquired by the time they graduate which will best equip them for their working life and make them attractive to potential employers. Many institutions have now also formulated graduate qualities in relation to specific degrees or programs. This has meant a rethinking of course design from a traditional approach where content primarily determined assessment to one where objectives and graduate qualities now assume that role.



Moot Court

Whilst there may be differing levels of enthusiasm amongst academics in relation to their adoption, Graduate Qualities have an important and positive role to play in assessment, particularly in relation to the promotion of assessment that goes beyond the testing of knowledge but involves deeper learning and equips graduates with life long learning skills.

In 2007, UOW replaced its nine Graduate Attributes with 5 Graduate Qualities. Each quality has a descriptor containing a number of elements. All faculties have been assigned the task of adopting faculty graduate qualities by July 2008.

LLB Graduate Qualities and assessment:

The development of carefully considered graduate qualities to guide assessment can promote great assessment - assessment which will better inform student, teacher and future employers in relation to that student's capabilities. The positive role of Graduate Qualities in guiding and informing in relation to assessment has been recognised in relation to other LLB programs (eg QUT), in particular their role in embedding or integrating work-related skills within the curriculum.

"Graduate Qualities have an important and positive role to play in assessment, particularly in relation to the promotion of assessment that goes beyond the testing of knowledge but involves deeper learning and equips graduates with life long learning skills".



John Littrich
Lecturer
Faculty of Law
University of Wollongong

email: littrich@uow.edu.au

Progress

The UOW LLB Graduate qualities need to be adopted by July 2008. Faculty information sessions and discussion in Spring 2008 will lead to the formation of a working party to draft the Graduate Qualities. Involvement of as many faculty staff as possible in the development process will be encouraged so that the faculty takes ownership of the project and the Graduate Qualities are meaningful, useful, widely accepted and understood. It is anticipated that the second part of the project, the synthesising of the UOW Graduate Qualities within the LLB curriculum will pose the greatest challenges but meeting those challenges will provide long term benefits for the faculty and great collaborative opportunities for teaching staff.

