Critical Discussions about Social Inclusion
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Welcome Message

The organising committee of the Critical Discussions about Social Inclusion forum warmly welcomes you to the University of Wollongong for this event. This forum has been organised as universities prepare to meet the requirements of the Australian Government’s (2009) *Transforming Australian Higher Education* agenda, and aims to provide researchers, practitioners and other stakeholders with an opportunity to critically reflect on the debates, stories, practices and policy surrounding the ‘new’ social inclusion agenda in higher education. In some ways, this agenda is not dissimilar to previous moves towards increased diversity and participation in the higher education sector. The current changes, however, are occurring in quite a different discursive and regulatory environment. For this reason, we would argue that the assumptions, discourses and regulations that frame these changes are worthy of close scrutiny, particularly if universities are seeking intelligent rather than expedient solutions.

The papers that you will hear and respond to today are organised around critical questions that focus on the possible effects and implications of this new participation agenda. They highlight a range of critical and contentious aspects of social inclusion and institutional strategies and responses. They inform us about how and why we ‘do’ social inclusion, and will begin conversations about how we might facilitate cross-institutional collaborations that extend these conversations and generate research and practice possibilities that continue to engage critically with the issues raised today.

This forum has been made possible with funding from the Association of Academic Language and Learning, as well as the University of Wollongong and the University of New England. It is the product of collaboration between staff from these two universities and the University of Sydney, the University of Technology, Sydney and The Australian National University.

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This Forum is sponsored by the Association for Academic Language and Learning, the University of Wollongong and the University of New England, with the assistance of The Australian National University, The University of Sydney and The University of Technology, Sydney.
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<td>8.30</td>
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| 9.00  | Welcome                        | Welcome to Country, Barbara Nicholson  
Welcome to UOW, DVC (Academic) Professor Rob Castle |  
| 9.10  | Critical perspectives: Invited speakers | *Inclusion and fairness: implications for policy and practice*  
Professor Simon Marginson, University of Melbourne  
*Developing a critical scholarship of curriculum in higher education*  
Professor Alison Lee, University of Technology, Sydney |  
| 10.40 | Morning tea                    |                                            |  
| 11.00 | Critical perspectives: Framing inclusion | *Giving voice to valuing difference*  
Fran Gaynor, Macquarie University  
*Effective university teaching and student success: Views of Australian university students from low socioeconomic status backgrounds*  
Marcia Devlin, Deakin University  
*‘Doing’ social inclusion: measuring what matters?*  
Lynne Keevers, University of Wollongong |  
| 12.30 | Lunch                          |                                            |  
| 1.20 – 2.50 | Parallel sessions | *I can do it!* Access and Equity Programs Can Increase Academic Self-Efficacy  
Chad Habel  
University of Adelaide  
*Researching outcomes of the oldest and largest enabling program in Australia*  
James Albright, et al.  
University of Newcastle  
*First-generation student engagement in the Faculty of Engineering*  
Brad Stappenbelt, et al.  
University of Wollongong  
*Walking the Talk: From Policy to Practice*  
Jeannette Stirling & Celeste Rossetto, University of Wollongong |  
| 2.30  | Lunch                          |                                            |  
| 1.20 – 2.50 | Parallel sessions | *Students Supporting Student Learning (SSSL) and Social Inclusion at VU – a perfect match*  
Gill Best & Briony Supple  
Victoria University, Melbourne  
*Planning for social inclusion and student success: a case study of a Foundation Studies program on a regional University Campus*  
Susan R. Robinson & Sandra Walsh  
University of South Australia |  
| 2.50  | Afternoon tea                  |                                            |  
| 3.10  | Roundtable                     | *Developing a social justice framework to ensure good practice in higher education*  
Karen Nelson & Tracy Creagh  
Queensland University of Technology |  
| 3.40  | Imagining research collaborations | This space has been provided for individuals and groups to propose and explore possible research collaborations. |  
| 4.10  | Where to from here?            | *(re)considering practice, productive sites of research and research directions* |  
| 4.30  | Close                          |                                            |
Invited Speakers

Professor Simon Marginson
Professor of Higher Education
Centre for the Study of Higher Education
University of Melbourne

Professor Simon Marginson is Professor of Higher Education at the Centre for the Study of Higher Education at the University of Melbourne. Marginson’s fields of expertise are higher education studies, including policy and management; international and comparative education; and global sociology. He has researched and published widely on international education and international students and was lead author of the Cambridge University Press book "International Student Security" (2010). In 2000 he was elected as Fellow of the Academy of the Social Sciences, Australia; in 2002 he became an Australian Research Council Australian Professorial Fellow; and in 2004 an Honorary Fellow of the Society for Research into Higher Education, UK. In 2008 Marginson was awarded the Woodward Medal in Humanities and Social Sciences at the University of Melbourne ‘in recognition of an exceptional contribution to knowledge’, for work on higher education and globalization. Holder of continuous ARC research funding since 1995 and the most cited academic author in the discipline of Education in Australia, he has twice won scholarly publication awards in the United States. Among his publications are three policy papers for the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development. Four of his books have been published in translation in China.

Inclusion and fairness: implications for policy and practice

Amartya Sen (2009) notes that arguments about justice fall into two main groups - those that focus primarily on 'fairness' and those that focus primarily on 'inclusion'. While these two focuses are compatible under some circumstances they have rather different implications for policy and strategy in higher education. For example a fairness focus tends to generate emphasis on the behaviour of institutions; an inclusion focus tends to foster the empowerment of those formerly excluded. The fairness focus, especially if centred on numerical measures, tends to generate symbolic (and often unachievable) politics rather than transformative change and the development a richer community. Professor Marginson will draw out the implications of an inclusion approach for not only the traditional equity constituencies - low SES students, those from remote and isolated areas, disabled and indigenous students - but also the one quarter of the student body that are international students, two thirds of whom are from non-English speaking countries in Asia. International students are never considered in equity policy discussions, but they face profound inequities that are scarcely acknowledged and addressed. Communities in tertiary education are poorer because of the exclusion of many international students.
Professor Alison Lee
Director
Centre for Research in Learning and Change (CRLC)
University of Technology, Sydney

Professor Lee is Director of the Centre for Research in Learning and Change (CRLC) at UTS. She researches and teaches in higher education with a particular focus on doctoral education. She has been coordinator of doctoral programs in Education for the past 10 years and has published widely on doctoral supervision, research writing, practice-based research and the changing nature of the doctorate. She has been awarded a national citation by the Australian Learning and Teaching Council (ALTC) in 2008 for her contribution to development of a rich learning environment for doctoral research at UTS. Her broader research expertise is in literacy, curriculum and pedagogy, particularly in post-school and higher education. She draws on poststructuralist, postmodern and feminist theorising, and critical discourse analysis. Most recently she is leading a research program investigating the changing relationship between the university and the worlds of professional practice, with a focus on health and higher education. She is a member of the Executive of the Australian Association for Research in Education, and a member of the editorial Board of Teaching in Higher Education. She is a co-editor of Literacy and Numeracy Studies: an International Journal in the Education and Training of Adults.

Developing a critical scholarship of curriculum in higher education

The widening participation agenda in higher education needs to be understood in the context of a series of intersecting dimensions of change in the tertiary sector. The ERA is pushing a renewed stratification among universities based on research performance; changing demographics of participation raise new questions of the educative responsibilities of universities; changing patterns of work are creating new demands on graduates; digital media are continuing to challenge universities’ traditional monopolies on advanced knowledge. It is particularly important at such times to build resilience in debate about the educational and cultural purposes of the university. In relation to student equity, there are major educational questions that go beyond those of access, participation and success for otherwise excluded sections of the population, or of academic standards. New questions arise, concerning changing relationships between pedagogy and culture and the sociological, political economy and policy implications of the changing scene of higher education, work, and social life. How is the university changing, who participates in debating, producing and responding to the changes? To what ends and with what effects and consequences? What kinds of futures are being imagined and enacted through the day-to-day work of teachers, students and the complex machinery of academic, administrative and technical work? In this presentation I develop an argument for a critical scholarship of curriculum in higher education to consider the relationship between equities and futures. Curriculum is defined here as a program of knowledge and learning shaped by social, historical, political, economic, technological and educational forces, contributing directly to the shaping of professional, social, economic and personal futures. Curriculum is thus inherently contested and dynamic. By means of an example taken from health professional education, I will make a case for the links among curriculum, pedagogy, technology and literacy in relation to a broader curriculum politics.
Critical perspectives: Framing inclusion

Giving voice to valuing difference

Fran Gaynor
Macquarie University

Is it enough to identify social inclusion on the agenda of policy? When we create pathway to academic success to what extent is there real engagement with the increasing diversity arising from the new student profile? In developing students' knowledge and skill, in extending their repertoire of academic literacy practices, in fostering their capacity to enter the discourse of their discipline, are we in effect requiring students to not only conform to institutional values but also adopt an institutional voice? By fostering an authentic voice we can begin the process of adapting to the greater diversity and explicitly acknowledge and value difference and enabling an individual's capacity. Social inclusion involves capacity building to enable individuals to participate as a student, as worker, paid or volunteer, as an engaged member of society and to have a voice in matters that affect them. University's policy and principles for social inclusion recognize the need to support students and target areas of potential discrimination and inequity, they also emphasis the enculturation of these target populations. At an institutional level aims are inclusive but strategies are based on remediation and addressing deficits. To build capacity differences can be viewed both as a challenges and an opportunity rather than as threats to the status quo. The measurement of social inclusion focuses on institutional goals such as student retention and success rates. While 'diversity' is named and celebrated as an achievement it is really only at the surface level if the outcomes measured are so limited.

Critical Questions

If social inclusion is genuine then what process should be implemented to value difference and enable students to give voice to their experience of higher education?

What type of achievements can be measured beyond academic success?
Effective university teaching and student success: Views of Australian university students from low socioeconomic status backgrounds

Marcia Devlin
Deakin University

As the Australian higher education population further diversifies as a result of federal government policy changes, the collective understanding and practice of effective university teaching in the Australian context will need to evolve to incorporate such shifts. The Australian Government’s response to the 2008 Bradley review of higher education has set clear targets for increased university participation of people from low socio-economic status (LSES) backgrounds. While their performance is comparable to students from higher SES backgrounds, many LSES students face particular challenges in undertaking university study. Using a ‘success-focused’ (Devlin, 2009) methodological approach, this research documents the factors that a sample of 53 later-year, LSES students at one Australian university report have assisted them to manage and overcome the challenges of remaining at, progressing through and succeeding in their studies. The interview questions invited responses about what aspects of teaching and/or which teachers had assisted students to learn and succeed while they were engaged in university studies. Thematic analyses of the data identified the most helpful factors as including teacher availability to help, their enthusiasm and dedication; and their effective communication with students particularly but not exclusively around assessment requirements.

Critical Questions

Do students from low socioeconomic status backgrounds have ‘special needs’ in learning and teaching at university?

Are there more appropriate and useful ways to position these students and the ways in which universities work to ensure their success?
‘Doing’ social inclusion: measuring what matters?

Lynne Keevers
University of Wollongong

The Australian Government’s approach to social inclusion in higher education focuses attention on indicators of ‘statistical’ inclusion. Most of the available measures of social inclusion/exclusion have an individualistic focus and tend to characterise social exclusion as a ‘state’ in which people are assumed to be ‘excluded’ from access to higher education. In the current policy configurations, social inclusion is seen to be achieved once students have entered Universities in the targeted statistical proportions. Such a perspective focuses attention on the point of entry but backgrounds how the relational experience of under-represented groups in learning environments impacts their retention and success in higher education. Such a narrow, ‘statistical equality’ view does not adequately engage with social inclusion as dynamic, relational, ongoing practices. The ‘how’, the doing, the practising of social inclusion is thereby, relatively overlooked.

In this paper I argue that only by emphasising and focusing attention on the role of relational features will the concept of social inclusion/exclusion contribute to effective ways of addressing exclusion and inequity I present an expanded, practice-based conception of social inclusion as situated, practical, partial, ongoing processes, made and remade in relations with one another rather than as theoretical and end-state oriented. The ‘doing’ of social inclusion is conceived as a dynamic complex of practices of respect and recognition, redistribution, representation and belonging.

I contend that in the current policy environment, key indicators of inclusion such as a sense of belonging, a sense of control over one’s life and a sense of hope for the future remain outside calculation (of what counts). If what matters is to count studies of social inclusion need to incorporate the intertwined cultural and social and political dimensions rather than focusing attention only on the economic dimensions.

**Critical Questions**

Does the government’s current approach to social inclusion in higher education measure what matters?

What alternative conceptions of social inclusion may contribute to effectively finding ways to deal with exclusion, inequity and injustice in higher education?
“I can do it!” Access and Equity Programs Can Increase Academic Self-Efficacy

Chad Habel
The University of Adelaide

This paper presents research undertaken at an Australian university with strong tradition of delivering access and equity in the form of a Foundation Course. The Course was in the midst of a curriculum review of the first topic, and the review adopted Biggs’ model of constructive alignment. However, the research sought to explore more concretely the oft-quoted “increase in confidence” that occurs for “non-traditional” students in such access and equity programs. Firstly, the research realigned its interest to one in academic self-efficacy, a more robust and measurable trait than confidence. Then a specific self-efficacy scale was developed for the context, the Foundations Academic Self-Efficacy Scale (FASES). The scale sought to measure academic self-efficacy overall, and was then broken down into five subscales reflecting specific tasks and activities. Students were given a questionnaire with a Visual Analogue Scale to measure self-efficacy before and after the topic, as well as later in the Course.

Validity and factor analysis was applied to the scales and they performed, for the most part, well. The results demonstrated that Topic 1 of the Foundation Course was associated with a statistically significant increase in academic self-efficacy for the cohort, especially in the topic’s focus areas of writing, an increase that was for the most part retained further into the Course. This gives empirical support to the anecdotal evidence that access and equity pathways can increase student’s confidence in their abilities, a factor which is strongly associated with higher performance in academic tasks.

Critical Questions

How can we measure the success of a social inclusion program given that performance is not a simple predictor of future success?

How can we empirically explore the subjective factors around motivation and confidence that we know are crucial but have trouble properly demonstrating?

How, then, should we develop practice to more explicitly build students’ capacity to succeed at university despite diverse backgrounds?
Researching outcomes of the oldest and largest enabling program in Australia

James Albright, Seamus Fagan, Stephen Webb, Belinda Munn and Anne Ross
University of Newcastle

The University of Newcastle has the oldest (1974) and largest (over 30,000 students) enabling/foundation programs in Australia teaching 20-30% of Australia’s enabling/foundation students in the last two years. While the UoN already exceeds the Bradley recommendation of 20% students from low SES backgrounds the region also has one of the highest low SES rates in NSW.

While enabling programs at the University and nationally have been studied sporadically, there is little evidence of the long-term outcomes of enabling programs. Research benefits for enabling education could include an increased focus on outcomes of higher education rather than simply input and process measures; increased accountability to stakeholders in terms of producing graduates; and the addressing of an emerging emphasis on performance based funding for higher education (Paramita & Sharma, 2008).

Our paper will report on a collaboration of education, equity and foundations researchers to facilitate such an ambitious and large-scale research programme. The paper describes the establishment of a Potential Enabling Program Participant Research (PEPPR) Register. The aim of the PEPPR Register is to set up a contact list of former enabling students who are interested in participating in research into the long-term outcomes of enabling programs. The paper will outline the ethical and administrative challenges involved in setting up the Registry as well as its value to inform teaching and learning practices and shed light on economic and social outcomes. These future findings and the methodology used to conduct analysis will be of national and international benefit.

Critical Questions

What are the long term impacts of enabling education for individuals and the broader community?
First-generation student engagement in the Faculty of Engineering

Brad Stappenbelt, Tom Goldfinch and Tim McCarthy
University of Wollongong

It is generally considered that the key factors in the successful engagement of students from low socioeconomic status (SES) backgrounds, correlating strongly with first-generation status (Grimard and Maddaus, 2004), are the extent to which they develop a sense of belonging within the university context, a sense of optimism about their studies, and a sense of control surrounding their academic progression. As Penrose (2002) stated, they need to ‘forge identities as members of the academic community’. The research conducted by O’Shea (2007) at the University of Newcastle clearly details the major obstacles facing first-generation students. These obstacles primarily concern the lack of identification with and adherence to the values and practices found at University due to the limited familial knowledge and experience available to the first-generation student. Another barrier to first-generation student success identified in the study by Longwell-Grice and Longwell-Grice (2008) is the intimidation felt by students by the idea of seeking out support and assistance from faculty. A lack of necessary support for these students results and ultimately manifests in lower retention rates. In the investigation of non-traditional students at university by Ballantyne, Madden and Todd (2009), the low socioeconomic status group reported the approachability of staff lowest. The present study examined the level of engagement of first-generation students in the faculty of engineering. The results from a statistical analysis of low SES student performance and focus group discussions are presented as is the resultant intervention model.

Critical Questions

Is there a strong need for intervention programmes for first-generation and low SES students?

What are the real issues faced by first-generation students in their transition to university study?

What are some of the essential elements required for an effective intervention programme?
Students Supporting Student Learning (SSSL) and Social Inclusion at VU – a perfect match

Gill Best and Briony Supple
Victoria University, Melbourne

As is the case with other universities in Australia, Victoria University (VU) is actively demonstrating its commitment to the social inclusion agenda. VU is situated in the city of Melbourne and surrounding western suburbs and as such has always drawn its students from a demographic which is culturally, socially and economically diverse. Initiatives and programs at VU are underpinned by a strong commitment to equity and diversity.

This paper explores theoretical frameworks which underpin the approaches used in Students Supporting Student Learning (SSSL), a term used to encompass all VU’s student peer mentoring programs. SSSL programs are informed by peer learning literature and more recently by the equity and diversity literature which form part of the 2nd author’s doctoral work. In our presentation we will share qualitative and quantitative data to demonstrate how mobilisation of students as peer mentors is a powerful learning support strategy for reaching diverse student populations and how these mentors perform the essential work of translating and interpreting the culture of the university in a language and cultural framing tailored to the situation and background of students. Our aim will also be to reflect and engage with others about how the various SSSL programs have been fundamental in directly targeting three key areas of engagement necessary for students from diverse cohorts to succeed: social engagement with staff and other students, academic engagement with the subject and its disciplinary content, and a wider institutional engagement with the systems, processes and procedures of the university at large.

Critical Questions

How can universities cater to the needs of a diverse learning cohort and actively avoid labels of deficit models?

How can students be engaged academically, socially and culturally?

How can students from diverse cohorts take ownership of their own learning?
Walking the Talk: From Policy to Practice

Jeannette Stirling and Celeste Rossetto
University of Wollongong

Our paper examines a social inclusion initiative devised and implemented across the regional campus network of the University of Wollongong, 2010-2011. In part, the Successful Transitions Project comes out of a longitudinal study (Stirling and Rossetto 2007-10) of how new students experience learning in the multimedia, multi-location environs of a regional campus network. In part, the project is also a response to the Final Report on the Review of Australian Higher Education which concludes that the wealth of a nation resides in the capacity of its people (Bradley et al. 2009, p.xvii) and directs educators to offer “More innovative, sustainable and responsive models of tertiary education provision … [and] to respond to rapidly changing local needs” (Bradley et al. 2009, p.13). A significant proportion of regional campus students are mature age; the first in their family to attempt university study; and / or from low socio-economic backgrounds. The Successful Transitions initiative was explicitly designed to facilitate their academic participation and retention in higher education study. We argue that our three-tiered program is a sustainable and innovative response to an identified gap in these students’ pathways to a successful higher educational experience because it is well-grounded in research about the specific cultures of these regional campuses and is designed to address the needs of students accessing higher education in a multimedia, multi-location teaching and learning environment.

Critical Questions

How can learning support facilitate social and intellectual development in a multimedia, multi-location learning environment?

What are the implications of providing this sort of learning support for multi-location Learning Development teams?
Planning for social inclusion and student success: a case study of a Foundation Studies program on a regional University Campus

Susan R. Robinson and Sandra Walsh
University of South Australia

It is widely agreed that providing access to education for disadvantaged groups is merely the beginning of the social inclusion agenda (Gidley et al. 2010, p.139) and more attention must be paid to issues of success and participation (Gale, Keynote Address Lismore 2009). Gidley et al securely link access, success and participation around a notion of human empowerment derived from human potential ideology. But what practical measures can be taken to realise the potential of disadvantaged individuals? This paper explores the learning experiences and potential for social inclusion of a doubly disadvantaged group: learners on a Foundation studies program at a regional campus. As well as posing the question, what does ‘success’ look like for such students?, the paper queries whether the change of perspective on teaching that Haggis (2006) proposes, creating collective teacher-student enquiry that tools students to tackle disciplinary barriers rather than removing the same, is sufficient to empower non-traditional students at this stage of their learning.

Critical Questions

How do we empower students?

How do we align our notions of 'success' with those of the students we wish to socially include?
Joining the sectors: Pathways for success

Fiona Henderson and Corinna Ridley
Victoria University

Victoria University identified a number of barriers to the uptake of Higher Education studies by all students but particularly low SES and Vocational Education students. In line with VU’s mission and goals for social inclusion, Vocational Education and Higher Education courses which could be integrated “seamlessly” to provide more supported learning pathways for students were identified. Known as “Integrated Education Programs”, these courses / programs were given institutional support. Areas of the university not accustomed to working together were now required to do so. Well developed pathways needed to address student language, literacy, numeracy and academic skills using a number of strategies as appropriate to the student cohort. Teaching and curriculum development teams formed to improve and/or build pathways within eleven courses. Each is developing its own unique model drawing upon VU’s Language Literacy and Numeracy strategy but also using the resources that often have been deemed limited to one or other sector. The collaboration required for this approach to be successful has highlighted the need for more dialogue and interaction between sectors, specialist academic support staff, curriculum innovation units and educational development units. Progress to date suggests that this intensive integrated approach may can be beneficial in improving curriculum and assessment design. Outcomes that link to retention are still to be documented.

Critical Questions

Each Australian university will be developing its own model, often based on student transition and retention data. Do we really know that students and academics share the same perceptions about student needs?

How can the intensive collaborative work (described in the Abstract) be an efficient and effective way of achieving sustained change in curriculum and assessment design, to meet the needs of non traditional students?

How do academic skills specialists differentiate themselves in this kind of approach from the expertise offered by curriculum development type units?

What other approaches to supporting pathwaying students are being implemented by other institutions?
Addressing issues of social inequity arising from the 'digital divide'

Martin Collins, Helen Pendreigh, Ingrid Wijeyewardene and Belinda Cutting
University of New England

In this paper, we describe a two dimensional analysis of the 'digital divide' based on the intersection of access to technology and digital literacy skills. Our analysis categorises learners into one for four quadrants based upon the intersection of these dimensions. This analysis leads us to consider the social responsibility of government and the educational sectors to address the social inequity created by this categorisation of the digital divide. Since the educational sector must have a policy dedicated to social inclusion, we present a pedagogical framework for a foundation/introductory level unit that teaches digital literacy skills that targets learners falling on the 'narrow' side of the digital divide. The pedagogical framework we present aims to address critical aspects of information literacy and draws on the paradigm of computer science to give a 'breadth first' approach. We describe a hierarchy of core digital literacy skills and how this hierarchy of skills relates to the more generalised domain of information literacy. We make a case that such digital literacy units should aspire to give targeted learners a sense of being a socially responsible global citizens, in addition to empowering these learners by guiding them down a path of independent and cooperative lifelong learning. The goal of such digital literacy units, then, should be to focus on higher level information literacy skills and learning philosophies rather than on core tool literacy.

Critical Questions

Can the digital divide be better understood as an impediment to student success in tertiary studies?

What kind of pedagogical framework is required to break a cycle of social inequity created by the digital divide?
Social inclusion, graduate attributes and curriculum: what’s the link?

Agnes Bosanquet, Anna Rowe and Theresa Winchester-Seeto
Learning and Teaching Centre
Macquarie University

Drawing on data from 39 Australian universities over the past five years, this paper examines questions of social inclusion in higher education through an analysis of university statements and policies on graduate attributes. This offers two perspectives: (a) the development, implementation and evaluation of social inclusion as a graduate outcome; and (b) the inclusivity of the graduate attributes themselves in relation to participation opportunities for students. Institutional statements of graduate attributes represent an aspect of the intended (or planned) curriculum, but may not reflect the enacted curriculum (graduate attributes as they are taught in the classroom) or the experienced curriculum (what the student actually encounters) (Marsh & Willis, 2007).

The relationship between social inclusion and graduate attributes has not been well studied. Within Australian graduate attribute policies and statements, social inclusion is commonly articulated in terms of respect for and appreciation of diversity, possessing a global/international perspective, commitment to equity and social justice, a sense of social responsibility, and participation in the community. These outcomes generally reflect key themes found in most definitions of social inclusion (Hayes, Gray & Edwards, 2008; Vinson, 2009). In a higher education context, social inclusion focuses on access to opportunities and the social and economic dimensions of participation. Curriculum approaches to developing graduate attributes to date – including work-integrated learning and community service – offer significant challenges for inclusive participation.

Critical Questions

How can student outcomes in graduate attributes related to social inclusion be measured?

How do graduate attributes respond to the diverse needs of students? Are universities developing graduates for a socially inclusive future?
Developing a social justice framework to ensure good practice in higher education

Karen Nelson and Tracy Creagh
Queensland University of Technology

As higher education institutions respond to government targets to widen participation, their student populations will become increasingly diverse, and the mechanisms in place to support student success and retention will be more closely scrutinised. The concept of student engagement is a key factor in student achievement and retention and Australasian institutions have a range of initiatives aimed at monitoring and intervening with students who are at risk of disengaging. Within the widening participation agenda, it is absolutely critical that these initiatives are designed to enable success for all students, particularly those for whom social and cultural disadvantage have been a barrier. Consequently, initiatives of this type must be consistent with the concept of social justice and a set of principles would provide this philosophical foundation for the sector. An Australian Learning and Teaching Council (ALTC) project\(^1\) that involves ten Australasian universities, is designing of a suite of resources which include: (1) a set of principles for good practice in MSLE, (2) a good practice guide for the design and implementation of institutional MSLE policy and practice, and (3) a collection of resources for and exemplars of good practice to be taken up by the sector. These resources will be made available to guide good practice for monitoring student learning engagement (MSLE), in ways consistent with the notions of equity and social justice. This workshop session will provide an opportunity for participants to examine a draft set of principles and to discuss their potential value for the participants’ institutional contexts.

\(^{1}\) Australian Learning and Teaching Council Competitive Grant CG10-1730 2011-2012: Good practice for safeguarding student learning engagement in higher education institutions.

Critical Questions

How do the draft social justice principles relate to the Higher Education context?

What perspectives of social justice should underpin MSLE activities?

What are the institutional implications for adopting a set of social justice principles?

Which of these principles will be of most benefit to individual institutions?
Poster

VET to Higher Education: Structured pathways – what difference does it make?

Janice Catterall and Janelle Davis
University of Western Sydney

Currently in the higher education sector, there has been increasing attention to the provision of coherent pathways between VET and university. In 2007 the University of Western Sydney (UWS) appointed a VET Relationships Manager who has overseen the development of more than 500 prescribed pathways. Despite these arrangements, not all students enter through a designated pathway relevant to their VET studies. In 2009 the University of Western Sydney received a grant from the Australian Learning and Teaching Council to investigate the transition experiences of students entering UWS on the basis of a VET qualification. The study used quantitative and qualitative methods to elicit responses from 529 students. Overall students seemed remarkably resilient despite some difficulties in transition, particularly in the short term. This poster will summarise key findings of the project and the range of strategies initiated to improve transition experience and retention. One finding in particular has warranted further investigation. Data will be presented which compares the experiences of students who enter HE through a prescribed pathway with those who commence university studies in unrelated disciplines.

Critical Questions

How important are structured pathways in supporting a positive transition and HE learning experience for VET students?

What can Universities do to improve access and learning opportunities for VET students choosing to further their studies in Higher Education?