Curriculum Design for Assuring Learning in Business Education
Graduate attributes are an orienting statement of education outcomes used to inform curriculum design and the provision of learning experiences at a university (Barrie, Hughes & Smith, 2009).

While all Australian universities make such claims in policy and curriculum documentation, the effective integration of these into programs and therefore virtual or physical classroom has been somewhat intangible (Taylor et al., 2009), resulting in students not fully engaging with the expectations of degree programs.
What are the main challenges?

- Teaching GA
- Assessing GA
- Providing GA Feedback
What academics say . . .

- “But I am not an English teacher . . .”

- The ALTC funded *B Factor* Project (2009) found that academic staff beliefs about graduate attributes and their low levels of confidence and willingness to teach and assess them must be acknowledged if universities are to progress in ensuring that graduates are equipped for the world of work.

How can we embed skills into our teaching?

- Social responsibility/ethical awareness/sustainability
- Critical thinking
- Communication
- Personal responsibility
- Teamwork/Collaboration
Social Responsibility / ethical awareness / sustainability
Task

- Write an LO for ethical awareness

- 1. Employ socially responsible judgement when critically analysing real world situations
**Task**

- Employ socially responsible judgement when critically analysing real world situations
- Think of an example from your discipline that brings out this social responsibility
Task

1. Employ socially responsible judgement when critically analysing real world situations

Think of an example from your discipline that brings out this social responsibility

Decide how you would assess students social responsibility using that example
What have we achieved?

- A worked example of how to implement these ideas for ethical awareness

- A demonstration of how GA skills can be developed in a context – critical thinking.
English Language Proficiency

“... ELP is the ability of students to use the English language to make and communicate meaning appropriately in spoken & written contexts while completing HE studies & after they graduate. ... [This] distinguishes ELP from the narrow focus of language as a formal system concerned only with correct use of grammar and sentence structure.”
As the reading and writing practices that students need to learn are specific to their discipline, these discipline-specific literacies are most effectively learned in conjunction with course content. In fact, the task of learning course content can be restated as becoming literate in the different and specific ways of particular fields of knowledge. In an integrated approach, the literacy demands of the discipline become an explicit part of the subjects that students study.

So,

- the goal of academic language integration is to make the learning of academic & professional language conventions & practices explicit to all students within their discipline to enable them to be successful in their academic studies and beyond.” (Barthel, 2005)
**Academic language integration (ALI)**

ALI is **systemic** when it is:
- formally integrated in all course structures

ALI is **sustainable** when it is:
- ‘owned’ by faculties, responsible for policy/curriculum development;
- shifted from remedial/add–on to developmental/integrated strategies;
- integrated throughout degree: from foundation to work–ready;
- supported by on–going curriculum, PD & collaborative teaching.
Reliance on long and relatively infrequent writing assignments provides students with little opportunity to practice and develop their writing ability.

The use of a variety of short writing tasks in learning can provide a bridge between the learner’s exposure to new knowledge and ideas, and their formulation within a discipline’s conventional written genres.

Ideally a task should prompt students to produce a small amount of writing from a large amount of thinking.
How would you do this?
Principles for these short writing tasks include:

- Writing tasks kept short to give students rigour and focus, avoid too great a marking burden and make feedback possible;
- Periodic short writing tasks enable lecturers and tutors to monitor students’ progress and make adjustments to what and how they teach; this allows instructors to monitor students who may need assistance who would be directed to the supporting workshops;
Principles for these short writing tasks include:

• In–class writing tasks supplement oral discussion, requiring every student to engage with ideas or changing the dynamic of a flagging discussion;
• Short writing tasks contribute to a process–oriented approach in which students take responsibility for their learning and learn to share and collaborate in their work;

Using short tasks is not to say that students should never write at length; just that length is not a necessary or sufficient indicator of quality or level.
Examples short writing tasks:

- reading a text for argument and writing a brief paragraph summarising this
- applying a concept to an actual situation
- interpreting a set of data for a purpose
- comparing different writing styles (e.g. business report and academic paper) on the same subject or looking at formal vs. informal types of writing on same topic
Examples short writing tasks:

- writing for different audiences (e.g. a conference abstract and a press release for the same topic) or looking at the difference between the same information presented formally or informally
- developing "think–pair–share" (Lyman 1981) concepts – by posing conceptual questions, students write a written response, share their answers with a partner, have a follow up discussion/ feedback to the larger group.
- In tutorials/workshops/seminars, students are asked to write down 2 questions about the lecture/reading on post–it notes. They put them on the board and group them in various ways. Questions are then allocated to other students who have to write an answer (possibly in pairs);
Examples short writing tasks:

• Ask students to make a progressive series of summaries: 200 words, 100 words, 50 words, a sentence, a phrase.
• Put students together to produce a new (perhaps shorter) version of a summary, using each person’s first attempt.
• Ask students to summarise the same piece for a couple of different audiences/purposes: for example, a younger sibling, a peer asking for ideas.
• Ask students to write two summaries – one for someone who broadly supports the views expressed and one for someone who is seeking to argue against them. How can the ‘neutral’ language of summary be made to indicate a position?
• Get students to produce a ‘negative summary’ by asking them to take a thick marker pen to a text and delete everything that is unnecessary.
• Get students to do the above on (a copy of) their own essay/report. Then ask them to produce an abstract for the essay/report.
• Get students to peer review each other short written exercises (providing them with guide lines for providing feedback to each other).
• Give students a short article and ask them to expand it (by adding in further evidence/examples or by developing the explanation/argument).
Providing students with opportunities for feedback to develop their oral skills is vital. These can be as simple as:

- explaining a concept to another student,
- summarising material,
- formulating questions to more involved tasks.

In order to develop oral communication skills in students a variety of exercises should be used in conjunction with subject material.
Elevator pitch
Communication Skills – Oral Examples

• Show a short discipline based talk to students, asking them to recognise good and poor qualities of the presentation and summarise the talk to each other demonstrating the good presentation qualities.

• Introduce a topic to the class and ask them to identify the structure used in the lecture, ask the student to research a topic and show how they would structure a presentation on this topic. This can be completed as a PowerPoint exercise with students outlining a presentation and gaining either tutor or peer feedback.

• Practice asking and answering questions in small groups to consolidate sections of the topic area.

• Ask groups of 4–6 students to each read a different paper/report before the class and then require each student a short time to present the paper to the rest of their group.
Communication Skills – Oral Examples

• At the end of a lecture/ or beginning of the next lecture get students to present their key learning from the session to each other.
• Other ideas include: giving the class a hypothetical question for them to discuss/brainstorm solutions to. • provide conflicting or biased evidence which students must critically assess, evaluate and discuss their findings.
• Ask students to present key findings of an issue/article back to their class. • Introduce students to practice delivering 'the types of spoken communication that professionals in the field' regularly use.
• Mix groups and nationalities in communication tasks within the class, so that students get a chance to learn from, network and communicate with a range of individuals/people from different backgrounds & cultures.
Communication Skills – Reading

Students at university face many challenges associated with reading for their courses. The amounts required, academic genre, unfamiliar vocabulary all associated with academic texts can provide many challenges for your students. Encouraging and developing their engagement with academic texts will help to build their skills and proficiency in this area.
Communication Skills – Reading Examples

• Students read a text then make their own comprehension questions relating to it, and then ask these to a partner or small group.
• provide 'guided questions' for the student to answer (perhaps written in the margins if space allows, or separately on the board) for the student to answer – this helps to develop meaningful reading techniques and 'engagement' with the text.
• Ask students to read a short paragraph or short page of text, ask them to summarise the key ideas, or perhaps paraphrase the key ideas/concepts or theories being presented.
• Ask students to present 3 key notions or ideas from a text you have provided for them to read, they present these back to their groups.
Communication Skills – Reading Examples

• Ask students to provide a brief written 'outline' which summarises or 'bullet points' the key ideas/concepts from a reading text you have provided them with.
• Create a written 'cloze' exercise from a reading text which ties into the subject content – this can help students to summarise and check their understanding of individual content.
• Posting separate texts/readings upon the walls of your classroom (if space/room allows) – (perhaps the articles build upon one another or explore different ideas on a subject) can allow your students to skim/scan texts so as to critically engage and reflect upon them or discover the parallel concepts within them.
Assessing Language Skills
What are the problems with assessing EL?

How do you overcome these issues?
Using Groupwork in your Teaching
Groupwork –
http://creative.canberra.edu.au/groupwork/Intro/Frameset.html

- Why do we do it?

- How do we do it?

- What problems are there with it?
James, McInnis and Devlin (2002) indicate three good reasons for conducting and assessing group work:

- **Peer learning** can improve the overall quality of student learning
- Group work can help develop specific *generic skills* sought by employers
- Group work may **reduce the workload** involved in assessing, grading and providing feedback to students
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Why?

- Students working in a group have the opportunity to see how other students approach and solve a problem – they learn that there can be more than one ‘correct’ way to approach a problem and have the opportunity to develop ways of evaluating competing solutions. Assessment of group tasks has the potential to benefit students and staff, but only if it is carefully planned. (Isaacs, 2001).
Models

- Form– Storm – Norm – Perform
- GISA (R)
- Negotiation
Learning Model – Kolb 1992

PLAN

IMPROVE  DO  REVIEW

RE-DO

PLAN
Problem Based Learning (PBL)

- **P**roblem – pose a problem
- **I**nformation/ **I**deas – establish what is already known
- **R**esearch – get information to solve problem
- **S**olution – come to the best solution possible
How?

- How to do group work
  - Creating Groups
  - Managing Groups
  - Assessing Groups

- How to develop group work skills
  - Roles
  - Communication
  - Reviewing
  - Negotiating
  - Action Planning
Managing Groups

- Tendency of particular students to dominate the group and manipulate tasks to their own advantage (Kennedy, 2006)
- Occasionally groups were not able to reach a consensus and a staff member was called in to break a stalemate in the mark negotiations (Raban & Litchfield, 2007)
- Non–performers were exposed early through the formative assessment of their peers, and they had two options, either to improve or to accept lower summative marks. (Raban & Litchfield, 2007)
Assessing Groups

- Same mark for all?
- Weighting mechanisms
- Group project with individual commentary?
- Process v product
- Peer assessment (SPARK)
- Self-assessment (SPARK)
Assessing Groups

- James, McInnis and Devlin (2002) present a range of options:
  - The group submits one product and all group members receive the same mark from the lecturer/tutor, regardless of individual contribution
  - Individual submissions are marked individually. The group members each then receive an average of these marks
  - Each student completes an allocated task that contributes to the final group product and gets the marks for that task
  - Each students writes and submits an individual report based on the group’s work on the task/project
  - Exam questions specifically target the group projects and can only be answered by students who have been involved in the project
  - The group mark is awarded to each member with a mechanism for adjusting for individual contributions
Top Tips

- **Groupwork**
  - Make rationale of groupwork explicit – Do not assume familiarity with the format/process
  - Openly discuss potential issues/ ask all students for flexibility
  - Give all students achievable tasks/roles
  - Allow different types of participation
  - Give adequate time to formulate response/report
  - Cultivate a respectful and encouraging atmosphere
To summarise ...
Teaching – Design

- Start at the end to identify the desired outcomes in a clear, authentic and contextual way
- Whole of program design to facilitate progression of GAs;
- Establishing a common understanding of GAs between staff and students
Teaching – Facilitation

- Allow practice (formative/with reflection)
- Provide a risk free environment (low weighting)
- Make GAs explicit, linking to industry, assessments, outcomes, professional body requirements
- Emphasise the value of GAs to students making the connection to practice
Assessing

- Clear articulation of criteria/standard/weightings in order to foster a shared understanding
- Design should start with the desired outcomes
- Design should draw on tasks that provide authentic evidence of these outcomes
- Need to build in a reflective process to generate information about how the task worked to generate evidence of learning
- Assessment should be embedded in the content of the units
- Should reflect a whole of program view, including scaffolding of tasks.
Modelling Graduate Attributes & Providing Exemplars

- To engage students in a socially constructive manner modelling and exemplars can be used.
- These can be achieved in a number of ways:
  - requiring teachers to model the attributes at the standard expected at graduation in their teaching methods;
  - inviting guests into the learning situations to demonstrate how graduate attributes are performed in professional/industry settings;
  - encouraging work integrated learning and field trips so that students can experience the graduate attribute standards in the workplace;
  - providing examples of work that exhibit the standard expected on completion.
Feedback

- Incorporating peer judgement
- The purpose of the feedback should be clear
- Focus on feeding forward incorporating scaffolding principles
- Feedback should explicitly related to GAs
- There should be a focus on closing the gap between student and marker’s perceptions of the work
- Incorporate both positive and negative
- Promote staff learning from providing the feedback
- Aim for value added feedback.
Providing Relevant Feedforward & Feedback

- In order for feedback to be the most feedback there are certain criteria that should be adhered to:
  - it should be timely, intimate, empowering,
  - it should open doors for further learning, and manageable (Race, 1999).
- Also explicitly relate to the graduate attributes that are being developed.
- Assignments should link to each other so feedback can be used in the students’ next piece of work (Brown, Gibbs & Glover, 2003) – feedforward.
- Sadler (1983) for feedback to benefit learning it must allow the student to: know what good performance is (goals/criteria), know how their current performance relates to good performance, know how to act to close the gap.