



Distinguishing the final undergraduate year: Ideas and possibilities

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THE UNIVERSITY OF
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Questions to consider

Consider:

- **What are the *key learning outcomes* for final year students?**
- **How can *curriculum* be designed to achieve this?**
- **How might these *outcomes* be assessed?**

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MUCC Report, 2006, p. 27 - Graduate Attributes refers to students who

Attain:

A set of flexible and transferable skills for different types of employment

Are able to

be well informed citizens able to contribute to their communities wherever they choose to live and work

And

initiate and implement constructive change in their communities, including professions and workplaces

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Capstones – *distinguishing the final year,*

May be identified as

The culmination of experience in the third year of a new generation undergraduate degree.

They are understood as offering

both disciplinary and cohort coherence and a bridge between undergraduates experience and what lies beyond (MUCC Report, 2006, p. 7

What lies beyond might include:

- ***Graduate Education (professional or research)***
- ***Employment***
- ***A combination of both***

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Capstone experiences are varied:

- **Baker (2007)**

A capstone course should be one in which students and faculty, as co-investigators of knowledge, could engage in critical theoretical professional debates and dialogue

- **Shoaf (2000)**

Emphasises capstone courses as providing authentic experiences, collaboration and integration of knowledge across the curriculum.

- **Levine (in Gardner, 1991)**

Capstone experiences mark the final year as a transition or conclusion – *integration, breadth, application and transition.*

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A range of experiences that *may include:*

- **Project based learning**
- **Case study analysis**
- **Work placements**
- **Major research endeavours**
- **Internships**
- **Simulations**
- **Volunteer work**

The selection is linked to the desired learning outcome

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Knowledge Transfer – *distinguishing the final year*

Developing intellectual capital ‘through a two way mutually beneficial interaction between the university and non-academic sectors’ (MUCC 2007, p.8)

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Research – *distinguishing the final year*

In a research-led universities there is an expectation that ‘each student will have a research experience of some kind’ (Refining Our Strategy, May 2009, p. 32)

...all, or at least a large proportion of our undergraduate students have the opportunity to undertake a significant research project? (Refining Our Strategy, May 2009, p.32)

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Nothing all that new for some.... But for others it is a new way of conceptualising a final year (special) subject or experience.

**My own experience of thinking differently–
Management Accounting Systems**

- **Learning Outcomes** (critical thinking, communication, logical reasoning)
- **Curricula** (less is more, constructive alignment)
- **Assessment** (authentic, student engagement, feed forward, industry-based)

Embedding: Research, Knowledge Transfer, Graduate Attributes

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Look to (and sharing) the experiences of others in our own University. From this Provost Summit

- **Developing capstone experiences** – FEC and Faculty of Science
- **Knowledge transfer** – Melbourne School of Engineering and The Faculty of the VCA and Music
- **Research experiences** – Arts and Engineering

Look to the literature and the experiences of others within and outside of the University of Melbourne

Developing Capstone Experiences (Holdsworth, Watty and Davies, 2009, CSHE)

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Planning

- **The challenging conversations**
- **'Mapping' learning outcomes**
- **Scaffolding our students' learning**
- **The cart before the horse**

Possibilities

- **A willingness to think a little differently**
- **The opportunity (and confidence) to try something different**
- **The resources to make it happen**

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