

CENTRE FOR THE STUDY OF HIGHER EDUCATION ISSUES AND IDEAS IN HIGHER EDUCATION

Hercules at the crossroads: Excellence, prestige and esteem for universities

Peodair Leihy, CSHE, The University of Melbourne

Wednesday 10 June
12.30 - 2.00pm

Barbara Falk Room
1st Floor
CSHE
715 Swanston St
All welcome

To register please email
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Peodair Leihy is a PhD student in the Centre for the Study of Higher Education. Peodair has been educated at, and worked for, institutions of various levels of educational excellence in Australia and England.

Bill Readings called universities' bluff in his critique of the 'language of excellence' that had crept into higher education by the early 1990s (*The University in Ruins*, 1996). Readings's main complaint is that the language of excellence seems to be a wholesale adoption of corporate claptrap. This presentation will explore not so much whether this language is out of place, but whether and

how universities can be excellent. Starting with the myth of Hercules at the crossroads, where the hero chooses striving for excellence over instant luxury, we will look at what excellence meant long before the rise of the management consultant. An examination will follow of the standing of the university as a place of excellence, and of the claims and intimations that particular universities

are excellent (absolutely or relatively). The presentation will explore contemporary weavings of traditional imagery with ephemeral and often mystifying advertising in asserting prestige and inviting esteem for universities.