Chapter XXIII

Developing Graduate Qualities

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ABSTRACT

For some time, universities have endeavored to address the shortfall in skill requirements that have been identified by prospective employers of graduates. The University of South Australia (UniSA) numbers itself among these universities and has identified a number of “graduate qualities” that are required to be developed within the curriculum. This chapter explores a case-study and role-play approach to embedding graduate qualities in an undergraduate business course that is delivered to a diverse student body studying either internally or externally, in Australia or in Hong Kong. It highlights a range of issues for successful implementation and assessment of these qualities.

INTRODUCTION

The development of graduate qualities is aimed at facilitating the transition from university to graduate employment. DETYA (2000) examined employer satisfaction with graduate skills and concluded that deficiencies perceived by graduates and employers are
in the areas of creativity and flair, oral business communications and problem solving, interpersonal skills, and understanding of business practice. Steven and Fallows (1998) explored “[t]he strategic decision to embed employability skills into each level of the undergraduate curriculum …” to ensure that “… every student is fully equipped, at graduation, with the skills necessary for the very important transition into the world of employment.” UniSA has adopted the approach to embed the graduate qualities into its courses rather than teach them separately.

After consultation with business, UniSA (2000a) identified that a graduate:

1. Operates effectively with and upon a body of knowledge of sufficient depth to begin professional practice
2. Is prepared for lifelong learning in pursuit of personal development and excellence in professional practice
3. Is an effective problem solver, capable of applying logical, critical, and creative thinking to a range of problems
4. Can work autonomously and collaboratively as a professional
5. Is committed to ethical action and social responsibility as a professional and citizen
6. Communicates effectively in professional practice and as a member of the community
7. Demonstrates international perspectives as a professional and as a citizen

UniSA (2000b) requires that all programs within the university should be structured to include a plan for the development of Graduate Qualities (GQs) throughout the duration of the program.

Taylor (1997) stated that “assessment has become a potent tool in dictating institutional and professional goals” and that universities are “being assessed and publicly compared on the basis of student results, and professions being required to introduce specific learning outcomes.” UniSA (2000b) views assessment as “the key to the development of Graduate Qualities” and requires academic staff to match appropriate assessment methods to the graduate qualities.

This chapter explores a case-study and role-play approach to embedding the graduate qualities in an undergraduate business course (Data Management for Administrators) and the methods identified for successful assessment of these qualities. During the course design, careful consideration was given to how the assessment related to the development of graduate qualities.

### DESIGN OF THE COURSE

The course (subject), Data Management for Administrators (DMA), was designed and introduced in 1999 in response to feedback from past and present students, local businesses,

#### Table 1. Allocation of course units across graduate qualities

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Graduate Quality</th>
<th>1 Body of Knowledge</th>
<th>2 Lifelong Learning</th>
<th>3 Effective Problem Solving</th>
<th>4 Work Autonomously and Collaboratively</th>
<th>5 Ethical Action and Social Responsibility</th>
<th>6 Communicates Effectively</th>
<th>7 International Perspectives</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Unit weighting</td>
<td>1.2</td>
<td>0.5</td>
<td>1.0</td>
<td>0.5</td>
<td>0.2</td>
<td>1.0</td>
<td>0.1</td>
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