Capstones across disciplines:

Synthesising theory, practice and policy to provide practical tools for curriculum design

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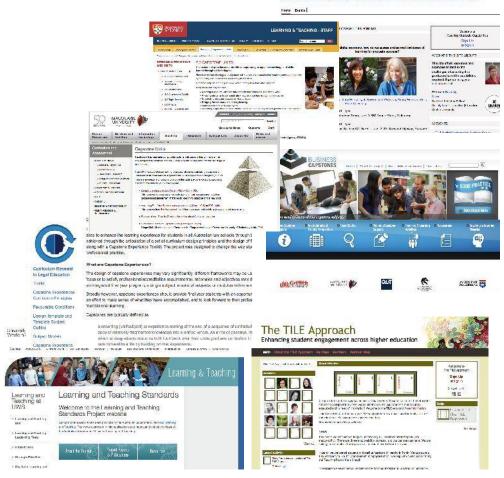






The Fellowship

- Capstones are powerful, engaging and diverse
- Disciplines, program learning outcomes, benchmarking, employability
- Capstones implemented across the tertiary sector
- Synthesis of prior work
- What is a capstone?
- What is it for?
- How are we doing it?
- How well are we prepared for it?
- Survey, interviews, case studies
- Practical tools
- Dissemination
- Support
- Recommendations



ASSURING GRADUATE CAPABILITIES

What is a capstone?

An opportunity for final year students to both look back on their undergraduate study in an effort **to make sense** of what they have accomplished, and **to look forward** to a professional existence where they can **build on** that foundation. It is during the capstone experience that students **complete the transition** from their primarily student identity to embrace their beginning **professional identity**.

(McNamara et al, 2012 p.2)

- Culminating, integrative
- Build on knowledge and skills
- Consolidate graduate attributes
- Prepare for a professional future

Capstones are being increasingly used as a device to put whole of program learning together to assess whether graduates are work ready in their chosen disciplines.

(Lee in Krause et al, 2013, p.74)

What are we doing?

Interim survey analysis (April 2014):

- Many work-integrated (~48%)
- 'Very important' personal and professional attributes and capabilities (~80%)
 - Personal responsibility, self-management, communication, teamwork

And yet: van Acker et al (2013 p.15-16) found that more than half of business capstones emphasised the 'backward looking function' of capstones. They argued that this was due to a focus 'on integrating students' previously learned knowledge and skills'.

- Some of our participants said that they:
 - Use the capstone to fill gaps in the course
 - Often have to revisit content from earlier in the course
- Question 1: Are capstones an important part of the employability jigsaw?
- Question 2: What is happening here? Are these appropriate contextual responses?

van Acker, E et al (2013). Capstone courses in undergraduate business degrees: Better course design, better learning activities, better assessment. Sydney: Office of Learning and Teaching.