

# Graduate Capabilities for Undergraduate Students Policy

## Section 1 - Background and Purpose

(1) Graduate Capabilities (GCs) or attributes are interdisciplinary skills, knowledge and attitudes that equip students to live and work in a rapidly changing and complex world. They are desirable and transferable attributes sought by employers.

(2) Students will be given opportunities and feedback required to develop and demonstrate achievement of agreed standards of performance in relation to the La Trobe GCs.

(3) Integration and development of the La Trobe Graduate GCs (refer to [Schedule A](#) of this procedure) into courses requires courses to review, reconsider, and revise CILOs &/or SILOs and content to ensure provision of sufficient time, space, and support in the curriculum for students to develop and demonstrate expected levels of achievement in the La Trobe Graduate Capabilities.

### A Note on Terms

(4) Throughout this document, the terms “evaluate” and “evaluation” are used to refer to the process of determining the degree to which student work meets, fails to meet, or exceeds the standards set for Graduate Capabilities (GCs) by a given College.

(5) The term “outcome” will be used to denote the result – Standard Not Met, Standard Met, or Standard Exceeded – of a given evaluation of student work against GC standards. These terms are used to distinguish the process of determining student achievement against the Graduate Capabilities from the more familiar process of assessing student work for marks and grades.

## Section 2 - Scope

(6) Applies to:

- a. All Bachelor degree courses
- b. All Bachelor-Bachelor double degree courses
- c. All Bachelor-Master combined degree courses
- d. All campuses

## Section 3 - Policy Statement

(7) The University will define a set of La Trobe University Graduate Capabilities for each college to:

- a. Describe in appropriate discipline-specific terms;
- b. Develop agreed GC standards of student performance of these capabilities at three points in each course –

Cornerstone (first year), Mid-point, and Capstone (final year); and,

- c. At each of those three points, the standard for expected student achievement for each graduate capability will be defined at three quality levels.

(8) Development of GCs will be constructively aligned with specific course intended learning outcomes (CILOs), subject intended learning outcomes (SILOs) and relevant assessment(s).

(9) Feedback will be provided to students on their performance against the agreed GC standards for each GC. The definitions, standards and method of providing feedback will be communicated to prospective and current students, and staff teaching into the course.

(10) Student outcomes for GCs at Cornerstone will be reported at a localised (college/discipline/course) level to allow faculties to review aggregated outcome data which can be incorporated into data used for each five year Academic Course Review. Evaluation at Mid-point is optional.

(11) Student outcomes for GCs at Capstone level will be recorded and reported to the University to ensure that each course can demonstrate students are meeting quality standards. Outcomes will be reported on each student's Australian Higher Education Graduate Statement (AHEGS).

(12) In Bachelor-Masters combined degrees, the Capstone standard will apply to the final year with standards expected to be set at an appropriate Masters level standard in accordance with the Australian Qualifications Framework. Colleges may at their own discretion choose to develop GCs in Postgraduate courses within the published 'Graduate Capabilities Guidelines'.

## Section 4 - Procedure

### Governance

(13) Each college will set standards for expected student achievement of each graduate capability at three points in the course - Cornerstone, Mid-point and Capstone - which will be provided to the Education Committee for endorsement. Any amendments made to statements which have already received endorsement will be resubmitted to Education Committee for re-endorsement.

### Defining Graduate Capabilities (GCs)

(14) Each college will define, in appropriate discipline-specific terms, the La Trobe University Graduate Capabilities outlined in [Schedule A](#) of this procedure. Colleges are encouraged to develop descriptors for each GC.

(15) Integration of GCs into learning outcomes, learning activities and assessment tasks will commence in first year subjects from the year this procedure commences and progressively be extended each following year to subjects at the next level in all courses defined within the scope of the policy governing this procedure.

### Standards for Student Achievement of GCs

(16) Each college will set standards for expected student achievement of each graduate capability at three points in the course curriculum - Cornerstone, Mid-point, and Capstone.

(17) At each of those three points, the standard for expected student achievement for each graduate capability will be defined at the following three quality levels:

- a. Standard Not Met;
- b. Standard Met; and,

- c. Standard Exceeded.

(18) Consequently, each college is responsible for:

- a. Defining, describing and exemplifying the criteria its academic staff will use to determine whether student work does not meet, meets, or exceeds the expected standard for each GC at Cornerstone, Mid-point, and Capstone levels;
- b. Developing and implementing an effective, equitable, valid and reliable process for evaluating student achievement of those GCs;
- c. Ensuring that the outcomes of GC evaluation and progression towards meeting the expected standards are communicated to the individual student at each evaluation point as part of normal assessment feedback;
- d. Aggregating its own GC data at Cornerstone and, if it chooses to, at Mid-point; and,
- e. Recording and reporting Capstone achievement to the University in a timely manner.

(19) These criteria and processes will be overseen by the Education Committee.

### **Embedding GCs in Course Curricula**

(20) In line with the constructive alignment detailed in the [Undergraduate Curriculum Design Policy](#), courses covered by this policy will:

- a. Develop and communicate all Course-level Intended Learning Outcomes (CILOs) identifying CILOs which relate to GCs.
- b. Develop and communicate all GC-related Subject-level Intended Learning Outcomes (SILOs) needed to provide students with the instruction, feedback, and academic support required throughout the course to develop appropriate levels of achievement in relation to the GCs.
- c. Identify and map the points in the course curriculum – Cornerstone, Mid-point and Capstone – at which the level of each student’s achievement of the agreed college standard for each GC will be evaluated and that outcome communicated to students as part of normal feedback on assessment.
- d. Embed Cornerstone evaluation(s) in the first year of the course to determine student achievement relative to the agreed college standard for each GC at Cornerstone level and, subsequently, to provide formative feedback, further learning and development opportunities and appropriate academic support.
- e. Embed Mid-point evaluation(s) approximately halfway through the course – in terms of credit points required for the course and typically achieved by students – to determine student achievement relative to the agreed college standard for each GC at Mid-point level and, subsequently, to provide formative feedback, further learning and development opportunities and appropriate academic support.
- f. Embed Capstone evaluation(s) in the final year of the course to determine student achievement relative to the agreed college standard for each GC at Capstone level and, subsequently, to provide summative feedback to students.
- g. Colleges may at their own discretion choose to develop GCs in Postgraduate courses within the published ‘Graduate Capabilities Guidelines’.

### **Evaluating Student Achievement Against GC Standards**

(21) To promote curricular coherence and alignment, enhance learning, and minimise staff workload, when evaluating student achievement against GC standards, the following principles and process will apply wherever a subject has been identified to teach/develop, evaluate and provide feedback on the student achievement of one or more GCs:

- a. The relevant GCs will be expressed clearly through that subject’s SILOs and the evaluation of the GCs will be integrated within the normal subject assessment activities.

- b. To avoid marking the same assessment twice when the evaluation of GCs is integrated in subject assessment activities, an assessment rubric(s) or grading grid will be developed for the relevant assessment activity which includes criteria for assessing content and evaluating the standard of GC achievement.
- c. When the evaluation of GCs is integrated in subject assessment activities, each student will receive an overall grade/mark for the assessment item as well as an outcome - i.e. Standard Not Met, Standard Met, Standard Exceeded - indicating the level of student achievement for the relevant GCs.
- d. The student will be evaluated according to the GC standard set by the College owning the subject and with the relevant assessment rubric(s), with feedback being provided to the student based on the level of student achievement against that standard.
- e. Where a student attains differing levels of achievement against one or more of the component criteria comprising a GC standard, each College will determine a transparent way of providing holistic feedback in the form of a single overall outcome expressed and recorded as Standard Not Met, Standard Met, or Standard Exceeded.

## **Evaluating GCs in Multiple Subjects or Courses**

(22) Key Elements for each GC may be evaluated in different subjects whereby student work may be evaluated against college standards for that key element.

(23) Student work may be evaluated against college standards for the same GC, or key element of the same GC, at the same level in two or more different subjects (e.g., 'writing' evaluated at Cornerstone in two different subjects). In such cases, the students will receive feedback in each subject according to their level of achievement against the college standard set for each GC or GC key element.

(24) As a minimum, at the completion of the course, an overall level of achievement for Capstone for each GC will be determined based on the Major(s) in which the student is enrolled.

(25) Where a student is enrolled in a Bachelor-Bachelor double-degree course, a level of achievement for each GC will be determined for each course at the three points - Cornerstone, Mid-point and Capstone - based on the standards set by the College owning the award.

## **Recording Student Achievement Against GCs**

(26) Colleges will record outcomes within a subject that indicate the level of each student's achievement toward the standard set for a GC - i.e. Standard Not Met; Standard Met; Standard Exceeded - in a way of their choosing although the University will provide a mechanism via the LMS to facilitate the process.

## **Reporting Student Achievement Against GCs**

(27) Colleges will aggregate and report their own GC data at Cornerstone level which will be used by the Associate Pro Vice-Chancellor (Coursework ) and Heads of Schools as part of Course and Subject Review Processes.

(28) Colleges may choose whether to aggregate and report their own GC data at Mid-point level.

(29) Colleges will provide GC data and individual student outcomes in a timely manner to the University at Capstone level to facilitate a record of achievement being provided to students upon qualification for their award.

(30) Where the course is a Bachelor-Bachelor double-degree, levels of achievement at the Capstone point will be reported for each course based on the standards set by the College owning the award.

(31) Where the course is a Bachelor-Masters combined-degree, level of achievement at the Capstone point will be reported for the Masters course based on the standards set by the College owning the award.

## Graduation Requirements

(32) The integration of the description of GCs into SILOs and their subsequent development and assessment across the course will ensure that students who are eligible to graduate have successfully achieved 'standard met' for each GC.

(33) In the unlikely advent that any student does not meet the minimum expected standard for a GC at the Capstone level but successfully meets all other course requirements for graduation, the student will be allowed to graduate.

## Section 5 - Definitions

(34) For the purpose of this Policy and Procedure:

- a. Award: A degree attained at the completion of a course of study. In the case of a double Bachelor degree, a student is enrolled in one course of study leading to two awards.
- b. Capstone Subject: Any subject teaching, evaluating and providing feedback that consolidates learning from across the course, and evaluates the level of student achievement towards achieving the standard set for Capstone.
- c. Cornerstone Subject: Any subject teaching, evaluating and providing feedback specifically designed to provide commencing students with a firm grounding in the core threshold knowledge and skills required to learn successfully in more advanced subjects, and evaluates the level of student achievement towards achieving the standard set for Cornerstone.
- d. Course: A program of study leading to one or more qualifications and in which a student may study one or more Majors.
- e. Formative Assessment/Evaluation: Processes aimed at monitoring student progress against standards and providing them with feedback comparing their progress to the standards in order to help students improve their learning and achievement.
- f. Graduate Capabilities: High level learning outcomes that are described in discipline-specific terms.
- g. Graduate Capability Standard: Component criteria against which a student's achievement of a GC is evaluated.
- h. Intended Learning Outcome (ILO): Brief statements defining what students are to understand and are able to do at the end of a defined period of learning.
- i. Level: Achievement toward the standard set for a GC - i.e. Standard Not Met; Standard Met; Standard Exceeded.
- j. Mid-point subject: Any subject teaching/developing, evaluating and providing feedback on a GC of a course which evaluates the level of student achievement towards achieving the standard set for Mid-point.
- k. Point: Refers to any of three instances in time - Cornerstone, Mid-point or Capstone - where a level of achievement for a GC will be determined for a course.
- l. Subject Intended Learning Outcomes (SILOs): Brief statements defining what students are expected to demonstrate they know and can do by the end of a subject.
- m. Subject: A unit of study within a course.
- n. Subject Intended Learning Outcomes (SILOs): Brief statements defining what students are expected to demonstrate they know and can do by the end of a subject.

## Section 6 - Stakeholders

Responsibility for implementation – Course and Subject Coordinators; Associate Pro Vice-Chancellors (Coursework); Heads of School.

Responsibility for monitoring implementation and compliance – College Academic Committee; Education Committee; Coursework Committee.

## Status and Details

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|---------------------------|---|
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