The idea of the graduate attribute

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What are graduate attributes

An aspirational list of knowledge, skills and values that an institution puts forward as a statement of intent so that:

... all graduates, at the end of their studies, irrespective of background, interests, and degree taken, will possess and be able to live out in the wider world these knowledge, skills and values through their work, and also through their lives.
Graduate attribute terminology

Academic excellence          Research and enquiry
Engage critically with knowledge          Scholarship
Skilled and ethical researcher

Dominant knowledge categories

Knowledgable across disciplines
Graduate attribute terminology

Critical, analytical & creative thinker
Accomplished communicator
Active (global) citizen
Attuned to cultural diversity
Culturally agile
Ethical leadership
Well rounded, reflective, self aware

Intellectual autonomy
Flexible team worker
Inclusiveness
Integrity
Independent learner
In Melbourne, graduate attributes are …

… more than simply an aspirational vision of what the University hopes students might become.

They can be used practically to guide the planning and development of teaching, knowledge transfer and research to ensure the University’s students acquire the experience, skills and knowledge necessary for graduates in today’s complex global environment.
The strength of the Melbourne approach

• Its grounding within the graduate’s own discipline that requires them to “expand ... analytical and cognitive skills”, and to develop “skills for different types of employment”.

• The focus on both culture and community, and their necessary interconnection.

• An explicit identification of global issues which require them to be “advocates for improving the sustainability of the environment”, and to have “a broad global understanding, with a high regard for human rights, equity and ethics”
9 principles guiding teaching and learning

1. An atmosphere of intellectual excitement
2. An intensive research and knowledge transfer culture permeating all teaching and learning activities
3. A vibrant and embracing social context
4. An international and culturally diverse learning environment
5. Explicit concern and support for individual development
6. Clear academic expectations and standards
7. Learning cycles of experimentation, feedback and assessment
8. Premium quality learning spaces, resources and technologies
9. An adaptive curriculum
Active global citizens should ...

• accept social and civic responsibilities

• be advocates for improving the sustainability of the environment

• have a broad global understanding, with a high regard for human rights, equity and ethics
UBC attributes

The graduate …

• demonstrates holistic systems thinking
• demonstrates sustainability knowledge
• is aware of and integrates across intellectual constructs
• acts to create positive change
UBC’s rationale

Educational institutions have a responsibility to equip their students with the competencies and capacities that enable them to effectively contribute to the co-creation of a sustainable future.

Universities, in particular, must strive to educate and graduate students who are prepared to tackle the challenges and tough trades off facing our global society today.

We need graduates who are motivated by a personal value system that inspires just and mindful action and who can actively participate as innovate members of the workforce and contribute to the emerging green economy.
Two curriculum questions

To what extent do university curricula have to be reformed before broadly-based graduate attributes can be adopted?

Or will graduate attributes need to be taken seriously before curricula can be reformed effectively?

Are graduate attributes a good way of gaining university-wide acceptance of curriculum reform?

If so, how might the HEA support a sector-wide exploration of graduate attributes?
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