



# The qualities of a University of South Australia graduate

## Information for External Members of University Committees

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### Introduction

The following information has been provided to assist external members of University committees in tasks of:

- advising about University courses and their extended outcomes, and
- reviewing Divisions and Units of the University in their effectiveness in facilitating the achievement of the qualities of a University of South Australia graduate.

### The qualities of a University of South Australia graduate

In May 1996 Academic Board approved a paper that outlined seven generic graduate qualities which would be developed by all graduate and postgraduate courses of the University of South Australia. In considering such graduate qualities it was acknowledged that students, academics and their peers, and professional bodies and associations – our educational stakeholders – would be involved in deciding upon interpretations of these generic qualities so that they would become a vibrant part of the academic life of a discipline or interdisciplinary area. Such generic qualities would also assist the community in general – another of our stakeholders – to understand the benefits of a university experience.

The University believes that this set of qualities in our graduates distinguishes them from the graduates of other universities. These qualities are consistent with those sought by employers and professional bodies.

The stated qualities define desirable outcomes of the university experience and provide a succinct statement to the community at large of what the University wishes to achieve in its graduates and hence to contribute to local, state, national and international communities.

The University Council subsequently approved documentation which declares that a graduate of the University of South Australia –

- *operates effectively with and upon a body of knowledge of sufficient depth to begin professional practice*
- *is prepared for life-long learning in pursuit of personal development and excellence in professional practice*
- *is an effective problem solver, capable of applying logical, critical, and creative thinking to a range of problems*
- *can work both autonomously and collaboratively as a professional*
- *is committed to ethical action and social responsibility as a professional and citizen*
- *communicates effectively in professional practice and as a member of the community*
- *demonstrates international perspectives as a professional and as a citizen.*

It is these qualities that explicate the ways in which graduates of the University become educated professionals, effective researchers, experts in applying knowledge, and contribute to serving the many community contexts in which they may operate.

## **Achieving graduate qualities through University of South Australia courses**

The University has provided a number of supplementary statements or 'indicators' which give further meaning to the statement of each particular quality. These are aimed at assisting with the interpretation and application of generic qualities to particular areas. The examples of indicators of the achievement of a particular quality given on the next page aim to assist you to gain an understanding of the possible scope of a graduate quality.

University of South Australia courses are now required to state the ways in which they aim to develop graduate qualities. Each subject provides an indicative point weighting to the particular mix of graduate qualities it is developing.

This weighting gives an indication of the amount of student time commitment to developing the graduate quality and consequently to the weighting of assessment to gauge the achievement of that quality.

Each *subject* may address a different mix of graduate qualities and all graduate qualities need not necessarily be addressed in each *subject*. However, the cumulative effect of a course grouping of subjects should trace the course's commitment to developing the full range of graduate qualities.

## **Graduate qualities and course advice**

The University believes that this approach to tracing the impact of the development of graduate qualities through the contributions of various subjects will assist you in providing advice about:

- appropriate profiles of development of graduate qualities for year levels of courses
- the balance of efforts directed towards achieving the desired mix of qualities in graduates
- appropriate experiences and assessment arrangements which facilitate and value the development of particular graduate qualities
- the effects of combinations of subjects on the achievement of graduate qualities.

By shaping its courses in this way, the University provides a better explanation to external professional groups of the purposes of its courses and the desired type of graduate. This in turn enables external professional groups to provide advice about the particular profiles of graduate qualities that they believe are appropriate in their professions.

The University has prepared a *Guide to writing course and subject documents* which addresses details of course and subject design and appropriate teaching, learning, and assessment.

## **Involving students in their development of graduate qualities**

Through the design of its courses, teaching and learning activities, and assessment the University has provided opportunities for students to develop the qualities of a University of South Australia graduate. A set of materials about what each graduate quality means for students in the context of a course of study has also been developed and these have been trialed in selected areas of the Division of Business and Enterprise. The University is currently working with other Australian Technology Network universities in developing approaches that will involve students in reflecting upon their stage of development of each quality in the context of their studies. This will assist them to maximise future opportunities to practise and develop particular skills related to the graduate qualities.

As graduate qualities can help establish a bridge between study and employment, the University is currently investigating the role of these qualities in career placement and employment opportunities.

<b>Graduate quality A graduate of the University of South Australia...</b>	<b>Indicators of achievement of the quality</b>
<i>operates effectively with and upon a body of knowledge of sufficient depth to begin professional practice.</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▫ demonstrate an understanding in broad outline of a whole discipline or professional area (concepts, theories, proponents) including a knowledge of the boundaries</li> <li>▫ apply knowledge (demonstrate application of theory to practice in real situations, appreciate limitations of theory, use materials, devices, safety codes and practices, specific equipment and techniques appropriately)</li> <li>▫ identify the methodological and substantive limitations of the field and apply the discipline or professional area's mode of inquiry</li> <li>▫ recognise the social and historical context of knowledge</li> <li>▫ demonstrate appropriate understanding of current research areas in the discipline or professional area</li> </ul>
<i>is prepared for life-long learning in pursuit of personal development and excellence in their professional practice</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▫ locate, evaluate, manage, and use information in a range of contexts – ie be information literate</li> <li>▫ understand the limitations of, and have the capacity to evaluate, their current knowledge</li> <li>▫ understand and accept personal weaknesses, strengths, and preferred learning styles, have knowledge of a range of learning strategies, and take responsibility for their learning and development</li> <li>▫ maintain a positive concept of self as capable and autonomous</li> <li>▫ sustain intellectual interest and critical thinking as a mature professional</li> </ul>
<i>is an effective problem solvers capable of applying logical, critical, and creative thinking to a range of problems</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▫ gather, evaluate and deploy relevant information to assist problem solving – ie analysis and synthesis</li> <li>▫ define researchable questions in the discipline or professional area</li> <li>▫ apply strategies to conceptualise problems and formulate a range of solutions</li> </ul>
<i>is able to work both autonomously and collaboratively as a professional</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▫ work in a self directed way</li> <li>▫ use logical and rational argument to persuade others, to negotiate with others</li> <li>▫ work collaboratively with different groups, identify the needs of others and build positive relationships</li> <li>▫ work in a team (cooperate with all team members, share ideas, forgo personal recognition, negotiate solutions when opinions differ, resolve conflict, recognise strengths of other team members, share responsibility, convey a shared vision for the team, display a commitment to make the team function effectively)</li> </ul>
<i>is committed to ethical action and social responsibility as a professional and citizen</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▫ demonstrate a commitment to personal ethical actions within professional contexts</li> <li>▫ define social aspects of a particular technology (political, economic, legislative, sociological, environmental etc)</li> <li>▫ appreciate the impact of social change, the political decision-making process and economic imperatives of business and industry</li> <li>▫ recognise social justice issues relevant to the discipline and professional area</li> <li>▫ appreciate the importance of sustainable development</li> <li>▫ demonstrate responsibility to the community – be aware of safety, efficiency, innovation, cost-effectiveness</li> </ul>
<i>is able to communicate effectively in professional practice and as a member of the community</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▫ demonstrate oral, written, mathematical, and visual literacies as appropriate to the discipline or professional area</li> <li>▫ display sensitivity to their audience in organising and presenting ideas</li> <li>▫ communicate appropriately with professional colleagues and the public</li> </ul>
<i>demonstrates international perspectives as a professional and citizen</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▫ display an ability to think globally and consider issues from a variety of perspectives</li> <li>▫ demonstrate an awareness of their own culture and its perspectives and other cultures and their perspectives</li> <li>▫ appreciate the relation between their field of study locally and professional traditions elsewhere</li> <li>▫ recognise intercultural issues relevant to their professional practice</li> <li>▫ appreciate the importance of multicultural diversity to professional practice and citizenship</li> <li>▫ appreciate the complex and interacting factors that contribute to notions of culture and cultural relationships</li> <li>▫ value diversity of language and culture</li> <li>▫ appreciate and demonstrate the capacity to apply international standards and practices within the discipline or professional area</li> <li>▫ demonstrate awareness of the implications of local decisions and actions for international communities and of international decisions and actions for local communities</li> </ul>