Preamble

University of Ballarat Amendment (Federation University Australia) Act 2013 confers on the University the responsibility of maximising student opportunities ‘through flexible entry to programs and provision of multiple pathways to admission enabling students to perform to their potential and to achieve their personal, professional and career aspirations’ (p.3 Interim Charter).

In this context the University Council has established the following objective relating to FedUni graduates:

To have graduates with knowledge, skills and competence that enable them to stand out as critical, creative and enquiring learners who are capable, flexible and work ready, and responsible, ethical and engaged citizens.

This objective is set in the context of an extensive range of vocational education and higher education course offerings spanning certificate through to postgraduate levels delivered in University Faculties, Schools, Colleges and Centres throughout Federation University Australia. Any statement of graduate attributes therefore has to be relevant to the broad objective determined by the University Council and achievable across the diversity of courses and Schools.

Graduate Attributes Defined

The following definition conveys a generally accepted Australian understanding of graduate attributes:

"Graduate attributes are the qualities, skills and understandings a university community agrees its students should develop during their time with the institution. These attributes include, but go beyond, the disciplinary expertise or technical knowledge that has traditionally formed the core of most university courses. They are qualities that also prepare graduates as agents for social good in an unknown future." Bowden, J. et. al. (2000). 'Generic Capabilities of ATN University Graduates'.
Graduate attributes are the set of core outcomes that a tertiary education community agrees its graduates will develop during their studies.

For students, graduate attributes provide an indication of the university's and society's expectations; the development of graduate attributes should encourage and nurture a love of lifelong learning and community engagement.

For academic staff, graduate attributes provide an overarching framework for discipline knowledge and skills that may be linked to particular professional or vocational outcomes. Reference to the attributes provides a holistic way of evaluating and discussing students' work and progress, as well as providing some guidance in curriculum development.

For the university, graduate attributes provide an opportunity to reinforce and demonstrate its values and mission, and to market its distinctiveness.

In Australia, graduate attributes from part of a continuum of generic skills and knowledge development consisting of national employability skills in school and VET curriculum, graduate attributes for university undergraduate degrees, and postgraduate attributes for higher degrees by research. The importance of building graduate attributes into tertiary programs is widely endorsed both nationally and internationally. Graduate attributes must be embedded into curriculum and individuals' attainment needs to be recorded, assessed and reported.

**Development of Attributes**

While it is expected that all students of the University will be provided with opportunities to develop each of the overarching attributes, it is also acknowledged that these opportunities will vary across different course contexts. For example, opportunities in certificate courses will differ from those in diploma or degree courses and programs. Also, at any given program level, the opportunity to develop each attribute may vary; some will be more vocationally/professionally oriented than others, some will have a greater international focus, etc. It should not be expected that each attribute will be developed to the same extent in these different course contexts.

The following is an indicative list of the 'enabling' attributes which might underpin each of the overarching attributes (each should be interpreted in the context of a particular course):

Graduates who are responsible, ethical and engaged citizens will: recognise, respect and appreciate diverse social and cultural perspectives; behave ethically; make meaningful contributions to local, national and/or international communities; and accept social and civic responsibilities. Graduates who are critical, creative, and enquiring will: know how to learn; recognise opportunities for new learning; be prepared to confront new challenges; apply disciplinary knowledge to evaluate problems and develop solutions; be capable of finding and analysing information; and think creatively. Graduates who are capable, flexible, and work ready will: communicate effectively; work independently and collaboratively; have appropriate discipline knowledge; and apply knowledge and skills in a range of contexts.

Opportunities for graduates of the Federation University Australia to develop the overarching attributes are nested in the value-set of University. This enhances and strengthens the validity of the attributes.

**Authors**

Kim Dowling, Jeannie King, Guojun Lu, Jenny Mosse, Cathy Trembath, Helen Weadon, Andrew West, Linda Wight