The CSU Degree: Learning for Life and Work at Home and Away

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Introduction
This occasional paper has been prepared to support staff development workshops conducted by The Education For Practice Institute (EFPI) for staff working on curriculum renewal around Practice-Based Education (PBE) and Smart Learning (see below). It provides an introduction to this curriculum renewal context and identifies links with PBE. This paper identifies relationships across key components of our current curriculum renewal program as illustrated in Figure 1. The paper also discusses two complementary views of our courses:

a) seeing our CSU Degree (courses) as Learning for Life and Work at Home and Away in keeping with the CSU Strategy 2013-2015, CSU is introducing a sector-leading curriculum approach for its undergraduate and graduate entry programs that is based around a) a vision for our graduates as holistic, far-sighted people who help their communities grow and flourish and b) the pursuit of excellence and leadership in practice-based and distance education. The curriculum design of the CSU Degree is shaped by the concept and framework of Smart Learning (*).

b) recognising how our future curricula need to adopt transcending pedagogies.

EFPI is engaged in a research program exploring transcending pedagogies (i.e. pedagogies that transcend course modes, goals, cohorts, spaces and pathways) to enhance the flexibility, sustainability and accessibility of learning and enrich learning experiences and outcomes. (See Box 1.)

The CSU Degree
Consistent with the University Strategy 2013-2015, CSU is introducing a sector-leading curriculum approach for its undergraduate and graduate entry programs that is based around a) a vision for our graduates as holistic, far-sighted people who help their communities grow and flourish and b) the pursuit of excellence and leadership in practice-based and distance education. The curriculum design of the CSU Degree is shaped by the concept and framework of Smart Learning (*).

Standards
The CSU degree is designed to meet the expectations of the Australian Qualifications Framework (AQF) as well as university standards including the Professional and Practice-Based Education Standards that were developed by the Education For Practice Institute with widespread University consultation. These standards have been incorporated into a set of Graduate Learning Outcomes that underpin the CSU Degree curricula.

CSU’s Graduate Learning Outcomes (the GLOs)
The graduate learning outcomes for all CSU Degree courses are:
- Academic literacy, learning and numeracy
- Digital literacies
- Ethics
- Global citizenship
- Indigenous cultural competency
- Professional practice
- Sustainability.

CSU Graduate Attributes
The CSU Degree programs produce graduates who:
- are well educated in the knowledge, capabilities, practices, attitudes, ethics and dispositions of their discipline or profession
- are capable communicators with effective problem-solving, analytical and critical thinking skills and can work well both independently and with others
- are digitally literate citizens, able to harness technologies for professional practice and participate independently in online learning communities
- value diversity and the ‘common good’, and work constructively, respectfully and effectively with local and global communities and workplaces
- engage meaningfully with the culture, experiences, histories and contemporary issues of Indigenous Australian communities
- practice ethically and sustainably in ways that demonstrate ‘yindymarra winhanga-nha’ which is translated from the Wiradjuri language as ‘the wisdom of respectfully knowing how to live well in a world worth living in’, and
- critically appraise and continue to develop personal and professional capabilities.

Learning for life and work, at home and away is embodied in the teaching and learning philosophy of transcending pedagogies.

Pedagogy: refers to the ways educators frame and enact their teaching and curricular practices and their teaching relationships, to enrich their students’ learning experiences. Pedagogy is informed by the teachers’ interests, personal frames of reference, practice knowledge, theoretical frameworks, reflexive inquiries, and capabilities, in consideration of contextual parameters, educational theory and research. Pedagogy can encapsulate the entirety of the teaching and learning environment, how and what is taught, and how, and through which learning strategies, students learn. (3)

Pedagogies: refers to learning and teaching approaches, including modes of interpersonal engagement involved in educational programs. These pedagogies may be shared (e.g. within a discipline) or personal/personally owned (by an individual educator). (4)

Transcend: To transcend means to exceed or extend beyond known, typical or accepted limits; to experience a state above and beyond normal experience. (5)

Transcending Pedagogies incorporates ideas about:

a) transcending the expected and traditional pedagogies used in given situations; rethinking the pedagogies to adopt for different courses, pathways (e.g. undergraduate, graduate), modes of enrolment (e.g. on campus, distance education), student groups (e.g. school leavers, mature aged students). For example, we don’t need to restrict online learning to distance courses – it has much to offer all learners. We don’t need to limit students’ access to actual or simulated workplace learning just because of their mode of enrolment – instead they can participate in workplace learning in many settings – on campus, in local (home) industry locations (such as in the current full-time employment of a mature-aged distance student) and in distant (away) locations (including remote, rural, international settings) for on campus students.

b) recognising the need for transcending the limitations and potentials of particular and individual pedagogies to address the complexity of the graduate learning outcomes we are aiming to achieve – to see most learning situations as needing a blended pedagogical approach.

c) realising that pedagogies are transcend – they have potential and power and opportunities that we haven’t yet explored and multiple uses and variations that should transcend tradition and the status quo to harness the imagined and as yet unimagined potential of information and technology communication innovations, educational theory and human inventiveness.

d) realising the value and need for transcending our views of the way we think different groups of learners can, do and want to learn

e) transcending learning from the here and now of narrow curriculum targets to encompass lifelong and life wide learning

f) transcending the role of students as learners to encompass their future role as professionals - being critical self-evaluators with responsibility for ethical and reflexive behaviour and growth. Becoming a professional starts at enrolment not at graduation.
Bringing the goals together
As illustrated in Figure 2 the CSU degree draws together CSU’s vision through the University’s Plans, GLOs and Graduate Attributes with our responsibility to conduct our courses within the AQF.

Curriculum Design, Smart Learning, Smart Tools and GLOs
The GLOs provide a frame of reference for designing the structure, content, learning, teaching and assessment strategies in the CSU Degree. Figure 3 illustrates how some of these GLOs relate to all university education (bottom row) and in addition some relate to the discipline focus (e.g. arts, science degrees) (middle row) or profession focus (top row) of courses.

Smart Learning
Smart Learning is a university-wide organisational change process focused on implementing sector leading curriculum, learning and teaching. The Smart Learning Model is made up of four components and initiatives which work inter-dependently to facilitate excellent learning and teaching:
- Learning communities
- Learning and teaching
- Professional capacity
- Technology.

Smart Tools
http://www.csu.edu.au/division/deputyvc/acad/smart-learning/staff/faq#tools
The design of CSU Degrees through the Smart Learning program is facilitated by Smart Tools - a course design, delivery and analytics software system for higher education. The Smart Tools software supports comprehensive course design and delivery from mapping graduate attributes and standards through building and delivering assessment tasks and subjects all the way to the development of an accreditation submission. Smart tools can been seen as a dynamic, interactive curriculum support framework as reflected in Figure 4. The colours indicate different paths of engagement between people involved in the curriculum design, implementation and review/reporting process as well as the connections that can be made between different information sets and pathways (such as connecting GLOs and their links to course content, processes and assessment and to accreditation requirements).

Professional and Practice-Based Education
http://www.csu.edu.au/efpi/pbe-resources/glossary
PBE refers to grounding education in goals, content and strategies that direct students’ learning towards preparation for practice roles post graduation. PBE is best understood as a curriculum framework or frame of reference that can be shaped to fit the particular situation (e.g. course, discipline, profession, location, resources). Within the framework PBE is manifest in subject, stream and activity level strategies such as goal setting and teaching, learning, assessment and program coordination-evaluation activities. PBE can occur in on-campus workplace, distance, e-learning, self-directed and workplace learning components of curricula. PBE can adopt multiple approaches including problem-based learning, workplace learning, blended and flexible learning and inter-professional learning.

Learning for Life and Work
To summarise goals of the CSU Degree, these courses:
- reflect a vision for our graduates as holistic, far-sighted people who help their communities grow and flourish
- embody ‘the wisdom of respectfully knowing how to live well in a world worth living in’
- promote the development of life capabilities including global citizenship, cultural competence (including Indigenous cultural competence) and the capacity to live and work sustainably
- promote the development of literacies that enhance the graduate’s quality of life and capacity to engage in and contribute to their communities (including learning and numeracy, digital literacies, academic literacy)
- promote professional attitudes and capabilities (including ethical conduct, professionalism and readiness for professional practice).

In this way university education through the CSU Degree prepares people for life and work.
The CSU Degree in Action
Implementing the CSU Degree (see Figure 5) is about:

- enacting the CSU Strategy (and the Curriculum, Learning and Teaching Sub Plan)
- using the GLOs as a curriculum frame of reference
- using Smart Tools as curriculum framework/software (see coloured lines in Figure 3)
- helping students develop the graduate attributes
- focussing on CSU’s objective to be recognised as the national leader, and a significant international player, in practice-based and distance education

Learning at Home and Away
The CSU Degree suite of courses offers a range of options for students who can learn “at home and away”. Sometimes home is the family home in a rural or remote area and the student, often the first in family to attend university, is studying at a distance to the university using a blend of learning strategies such as online learning and social media. These students also study away from home at residential weeks on campus or in workplace learning placements. The home study base for other students is on campus attending classes with their peers, also using a blend of learning strategies ranging from face-to-face classes, online learning (in classes, libraries, student study areas) and practical classes to peer learning through social media and study groups. They travel away from home, away from campus, to attend workplace learning placements. Both of these modes of home and away enrolment are necessary, as argued by Professor Andrew Vann (Vice-Chancellor at CSU, 2014).

He poses the question: What about the future, particularly in an environment where finances are tight? In reply, he argues: Some would say, considering the distances sometimes involved, online study solutions are the answer. Indeed, some commentary has suggested that all we need are metropolitan institutions to provide education over the Internet and we could dispense with regional universities altogether. As a long-standing successful provider of distance and online education, CSU certainly believes in the opportunities they can provide.

However, they generally work much better for mature students than for school leavers. We find online education is so much more powerful when students have the option to mix their study modes, attend residential workshops and meet their lecturers or use university facilities when it suits them. And those benefits are realistic only when a physical campus is close enough to visit.

Regional campuses contribute to local economies, produce regionally relevant research, generate a skilled labour force and work with local business, government and community organisations. More important from an economic and equity standpoint is that students at universities in regional Australia are predominantly from surrounding regional areas. These students are more likely to be women, more likely to be caring for dependants, and more likely to be Indigenous. Students who complete their studies at regional universities also tend to remain there for employment or further study. And regional institutions do a great job. Students at these universities are just as engaged and satisfied with their studies as those in the cities, and they are more likely to report that their studies have prepared them for employment. They are also more likely than metropolitan students to feel that their courses incorporate employment-focused work experiences into study, and more likely to report that they have developed industry awareness and acquired job-related knowledge and skills.

Conclusion
The CSU Degree and our current curriculum renewal program offers an exciting opportunity as well as a challenge to move towards:

a) a coherent approach to CSU degrees embedded in our University Strategy
b) an ongoing program of curriculum renewal building on the large amount of work completed in recent years. [Much of this work can be accessed through Smart Tools as well as Academic Senate Minutes (e.g. GLOs)]
c) a robust curriculum management system that will progressively incorporate all CSU degrees
d) the achievement of a sector-leading approach for our undergraduate and graduate-entry degrees
e) the achievement of our goal to be recognised as a significant international player in practice-based and distance education.

References