The Capstone Experience: Five principles for a connected curriculum

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Curriculum Design Lab | Arts Teaching Innovation | University of Melbourne
Higher Education and the Future of Graduate Employability: A Connectedness Learning Approach

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Participating Institutions

University of South Australia
Griffith University
University of Melbourne
University of Southern Queensland
University of Canberra
Queensland University of Technology
Macquarie University

University of Wollongong
Western Sydney University
La Trobe University
University of Technology Sydney
University of the Sunshine Coast
Edith Cowan University
Starting from the premise that learning and career development happen naturally and optimally through collaboration and social relationships, this book challenges the dominant employability skills discourse by exploring **socially connected and networked perspectives** to learning and teaching in higher education.”
Introduction

The Arts Capstone Experience Project at the University of Melbourne
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<th>Pedagogical Principles</th>
<th>Faculty Strategy</th>
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<td>Authentic</td>
<td>Active learning</td>
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<td>Reflective</td>
<td>Critical thinking</td>
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<td>Celebratory</td>
<td>Student well-being</td>
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<td>Networked</td>
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"Connected capstone experiences can be the most challenging yet satisfying experiences in a degree because performance is tested not only before teaching staff and peers but also in public spheres, both familiar and newly acquired."
Curriculum Design Challenges

- Workload & budgetary implications
- Professional development
- Student experience
- Learning outcomes
- Institutional policies
- Disciplinary capabilities
In essence, *capstone experiences should be tailored, not templated.*
High engagement with capstone design and evaluation emerge from a strong awareness of professional connections.”
WIL activities have produced documented evidence of improvement in student capacities including problem solving, team work, communication, information literacy and professionalism – all skills recognised for their potential to increase graduate employability.”
The Connected Learning Approach

- Harnessing skills and knowledge
- Building life-long networks
- Making sense of context
- Creating meaningful connections
The underlying metaphor for the capstone experience is not completion but connection.”
The Design Approach

Five Principles for a Connected Curriculum
### Five Principles for a Connected Curriculum

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<td>Interaction should occur in real rather than simulated contexts and involve genuine social and professional partners.</td>
<td>Providing avenues for students to reflect on their place within and their contribution to networks. The value of a connected identity.</td>
<td>Students apply discipline knowledge in acts of <em>doing</em>, rather than isolated studious expressions of a discipline’s knowledge.</td>
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Five Principles for a Connected Curriculum

**Celebratory**

Students see their new capacities as being valued by extended, post-study networks (ie. industry, community, government partners) as well as peer and family.

**Networked**

The value of networks underpins a connected curriculum approach if we prioritise student’s ability to creatively use their disciplinary skills to contribute to responsive and authentic social and industrial partnerships.
Tactics

For a connected capstone experience
Clearly **articulate** to students how the enterprise of research and critical thinking and the building of academic networks link in practical terms with career pathways, industry expectations and professional networks;
COMMUNICATE

Talk about the desired outcomes at the very start of the unit - what are we here to achieve?
Explain the value of incorporating a public facing launch event to accompany any such outcome;
MAKE IT HAPPEN

Build production milestones into the classroom schedule that lead directly towards the final outcome both in terms of the individual student and the broader collaborative endeavour;
COLLABORATION

Consider facilitating collaboration between students from more than one discipline. The interdisciplinary benefits are amplified and the experience more realistic if collaboration involves complementary assessment and/or project provision from outside of the discipline;
MINDFULNESS

Build in opportunities for **student reflection** on their own process and its outcomes, as well as for student feedback on the unit’s pertinence to their networks.
Connected capstone experiences rely on careful, long-view curriculum design. This requires a revisiting of the intended graduate attributes and learning outcomes of capstone units with a more nuanced lens. This lens should not only emphasise an industrial perspective but also remain cognisant of the expectations of a HASS graduate as a well-rounded community engaged citizen scholar.”
Contact

Please get in touch if curriculum design and teaching transformation is your thing!

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