

## HESTANDARDS - Info

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**From:** Anna Carew <>  
**Sent:** Monday, 8 April 2013 12:13 PM  
**To:** HESTANDARDS - Info  
**Cc:** Susan Jones  
**Subject:** Learning Outcomes (Coursework) submission

To the Committee

Professor Sue Jones and I have been discussing your draft Learning Outcomes (Coursework) and she suggested I convey my comments direct to you. I am a scientist working at UTAS and have expertise/standing in the areas of academic development, engineering education, and the design and evaluation of transdisciplinary research. My comments relate to section 3: Learning Outcomes.

I agree it is very important to acknowledge interdisciplinarity as an emerging priority for HE but 3a. might make just as much sense without the words 'specific disciplinary and/or interdisciplinary' because the requisite knowledge and skills are well described by the end phrases 'characterise the field of study'. I think 3b may be superfluous because generics stop being generic when they are applied within a context or discipline or field of study/practice (eg. I am not sure how/why/when a person would learn to communicate or be ethical or relate to others outside of a context). Also, the Threshold Learning Outcomes seem to have effectively encompassed/embedded generics. Perhaps the sun is setting on the idea of 'generic attributes'? Might I suggest you expand 3a to read 'knowledge, skills and attributes (or attitudes or ethics or behaviours)' and change 3c to be about the application of those knowledge, skills and attributes?

I would genuinely like to see the capacity for interdisciplinarity acknowledged as a worthy outcome from undergraduate education in Australia but, I am concerned that the document (and the wider HE debate on ID/TD etc...) is skewed on the point or substance of interdisciplinarity. Perhaps your document is not the right place for that acknowledgement?

Your draft uses the phrase 'interdisciplinary knowledge'. What is 'interdisciplinary knowledge'? Interdisciplinarity is about processes, not knowledge.

Interdisciplinarity and related approaches are about integrating disparate forms of knowledge to solve a real problem that exists in a specific context. In other words 'problem solving through the context specific negotiation of knowledge' (Wickson et al, 2006). It is highly questionable whether interdisciplinary knowledge exists as a static entity and, even if it does, I would argue that it is far more important for universities to focus our efforts on the process side of interdisciplinarity. Interdisciplinarity is not about committing knowledge to memory, it is about developing our graduates' capacity and experience in flexible, responsive, contextualised problem-solving. This form of problem-solving relies heavily on skills in collective negotiation, the integration of disciplinary knowledges, and construction of solutions which are appropriate and acceptable to the stakeholders in the problem. I am not sure how you might include this in your document as not all degrees would have the aim of developing this highly flexible, contextualised, responsive problem-solving capacity. Again, perhaps it might be better to omit reference to disciplinarity/interdisciplinarity and rely on the phrase 'characterise the field of study'.

Goodluck with your consultation process on the LOs.

Regards, Anna

Wickson, F., Carew, A.L. & Russell, A.W., 2006, 'Transdisciplinary research: characteristics, quandaries and quality', Futures, vol. 38, no. 9, pp. 1046–1059.