

CHASS NEWS

Council for the Humanities, Arts and Social Sciences

31 May 2010

The challenge of academic standards

The intense debate and media coverage of a national curriculum for Australian schools has until recently overshadowed the project to devise and implement academic standards for university degrees. However the standards project, managed by the Australian Learning and Teaching Council (ALTC) is a major development for academic disciplines, Australian students and educators.

The ALTC has been allocated \$2.5 million for the first round of standards development with a view to ensuring a transparent process with realistic outcomes. The aim is to have standards which build confidence between education, professions and industry, and allow international comparison and links. There is also an important goal in ensuring the threshold learning outcomes allow universities to develop their own courses and research - retaining their autonomy.

In the humanities and social sciences scholars are tackling the issues of describing and defining "threshold learning outcomes" in geography and history. The ALTC's Discipline Scholar Professor Iain Hay says "These standards will describe what gives a discipline its coherence and identity, and define the skills, knowledge and other attributes that can be expected of a graduate in that discipline".

In the creative arts, the ALTC Discipline Scholar, Professor Jonathon Holmes says the exercise in developing the learning and teaching outcomes will give greater clarity to the role of practice led research and training within universities. He has been working with a reference group of leaders from the major schools and individual art forms to focus on the broad discipline of the creative and performing arts at the bachelor degree level.

The Australian Government has made clear it is committed to the active involvement of the academic community in developing the learning and teaching standards, with the ALTC taking on the task of supporting Discipline Scholars in an initial round of work, to demonstrate capacity to manage these standards.

In the longer term the standards will be taken up by a new Australian authority, which will have oversight of tertiary education, the Tertiary Education Quality and Standards Authority (TEQSA).

Both Hay and Holmes are seeking active involvement from academics in the humanities, arts and social sciences. The Council's web site has two information updates they have prepared so you can track progress, and compare the different approaches to developing standards.

- [Jonathan Holmes](#) - Learning and Teaching Academic Standards Project [LTAS]
- [Iain Hay](#) - Australian Learning and Teaching Academic Standards in Arts, Social Sciences and Humanities

In other news, congratulations to the Council of Australian Museum Directors (CAMD) and Museums Australia (MA) - both members of the Council. They have received a go-ahead for contract negotiations for the creation of the Museum Sector 'Cultural and Historical Collections Metadata Exchange'. This project will see CAMD and MA working closely together with research partners to develop tools and storage for the uploading of data from collections, for use by researchers.

The aim of the project is to increase academic access to museum collections, as well as to inspire fruitful research collaborations in the future. The Australian National Data Service (ANDS) agrees that the project is an excellent vehicle for enabling greater sharing of Museums' collections information.

Helen O'Neil

Executive Director

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The 2010 Budget and HASS

The Council's [analysis of the 2010 Federal Budget](#)

National Curriculum Workshop

The Australian Curriculum and Assessment Authority (ACARA) sought feedback on the draft of its initial advice paper for the creative arts curriculum, at a seminar which included Council member groups involved in the

National Advocates for Arts Education. Council member groups also contributed to a similar seminar for curriculum writers in Geography, while other members of the Council are responding to current ACARA consultations on Senior English, History and Mathematics. Dr Mary Mooney of the University of Western Sydney's School of Education represented the Council at the Creative Arts forum and prepared an [overview of the curriculum and discussion](#).

Cultural Research Workshop

Wednesday 20 July 2010 - CHASS and the Australia Council for the Arts will host a workshop for cultural researchers in Sydney bringing together researchers working on projects in partnership with the Australia Council, plus other leading researchers looking at experience of art performance and exhibition.

Research workforce strategy continues

CHASS Vice President Professor Sue Willis participated in a Department of Innovation, Industry, Science and Research roundtable, discussing [new human resources strategies](#) for researchers.

Australian Music Futures

The Council's Executive Director was invited to a Music Council of Australia focus group discussion about classical music in Australia. As part of its [Australian Musical Futures project](#), the Music Council is holding a national Classical Summit on 12 July 2010 at the Sydney Conservatorium of Music.

HASS at a glance

Productivity Commission studies education and training workforce

The Productivity Commission will undertake a [study of the education and training workforce](#). The initial focus of the study will be on vocational education, with a report on this sector to be submitted to the Australian government in April 2011.

Building water sensitive cities: From socio-technical path-dependency to adaptive governance

Monash University, School of Geography and Environment Science, Associate Professor Rebekah Brown, researches [urban water governance](#) and recently delivered a lecture on building water sensitive cities, for the Australian Academy of Science. Her research in an emerging trans-disciplinary field has led to new understandings of socio-technical transition management processes in cities.

Crowdsourcing and design - can we afford not to be involved?

[Crowdsourcing](#) makes use of collective intelligence and provides feedback and support for products, services and experiences, by going out to the crowd and asking them to contribute. For designers, crowdsourcing is becoming a big issue and many platforms are now being developed or relaunched.

How can design help communities deal with crime?

Crime affects everyone. Its guises are many, varied and changing; its costs far-reaching - socially, economically and environmentally. The Design Research Institute at RMIT University (DRI) is seeking contributions to the

[2010 Design Challenge: Crime](#). The Design Challenge seeks to respond to an urgent and topical issue, through the generation of trans-disciplinary design proposals.

2010 Australasian Student Design Awards (ASDA) - DIA Design Gallery inaugural exhibition

The Design Institute of Australia recently opened its new Design Gallery at 175 Collins Place, Melbourne. The inaugural exhibition "[Tomorrow's Design Today](#)" features the work of finalists and category winners from the recently completed 2010 Australasian Student Design Awards.

New paper on ageing population - Beyond life expectancy

The Academy of Social Sciences in Australia has released Professor Diane Gibson's paper "[Beyond life expectancy](#)" which challenges accepted views about the impact of the ageing of the population.

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