REALISING GRADUATE ATTRIBUTES THROUGH PEER SUPPORT GROUPS

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**GRADUATE ATTRIBUTES - PEER SUPPORT GROUPS**

**GRADUATE ATTRIBUTES**

- **Non-generic**
  (Jones, 2013)

- **Debatable outcomes**
  (Barrie, 2012, Manathunga et.al., 2007)

- **Top-down approach**

**PSGs**

- Small group that meets to discuss research projects without their supervisors
  (Fisher, 2006)

- “desired partner-like relationship” in a peer group that includes supervisee(s) and supervisor(s)
  (Stracke, 2010, p. 2)
GENESIS AND ACTIVITIES

New Zealand
Australia
Malaysia

Research
Research process
Career
Practical matters
Social activities
The study

**Exploratory opinion survey**

To find out how past and current PSG members reflected on their peer learning experiences in relation to the development of graduate attributes.

*Written responses to select 5 attributes*
## Students’ Top 5 Graduate Attributes at Otago, UC and UPM

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Attribute</th>
<th>Otago</th>
<th>UC</th>
<th>UPM</th>
<th>all unis</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>communication</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>creativity</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>critical thinking, problem solving, inquiry, innovation</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>cultural understanding</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ethical and professional practice</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>information literacy and management skills</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>knowledge</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>leadership skill</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>lifelong learning</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>research and organization</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>self-motivation</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>teamwork</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Members valued oral presentation opportunities

- Performance feedback: improvement and alternative options
- Team bonds: negotiation and diplomacy
- Development of higher learning abilities: reasoning, reflection, critical thinking, justifying choices

[GA: organization and leadership in communication]
Challenged perceptions and critical scrutiny
Provided justifications for choices

“participants will be forced to provide justifications … inspire new ideas”

Reasoned argument within an experiential social dimension.

[GA: well-informed decision (NZ), critical reflection (Aust) justify decisions innovatively (Msia)]
SELF-MOTIVATION

- maintain momentum
- keep track of progress by showing interest
  “it was inspiring to see the progress of other members”
- shared struggles
- work independently

[GA: Motivated capacity for self-directed learning]
RESEARCH ORGANIZATION AND TEAMWORK

• Unaware of the extent of organizational skills
  “I believe all of us in the peer group started our work messier than expected”
• sharing of best practices of research skills
• crucial organization skills

[GA : Develop advanced strategies to lead the planning, management and implementation of a project]
DISCUSSION

Knowledge is contestable
Push to be an independent researcher
In line with real life demands/attributes

[To ensure graduates start their careers with expertise that will allow them to advance effectively]
Formal and informal interactions are crucial to foster the attributes.

Positive partner-like relationship

PSG brought out the ‘human-ness’

Get to know us outside the formal supervision spectra.
TAKE HOME MESSAGE (STRACKE & KUMAR, 2014)

PhD develops content specific knowledge

Graduate attributes have to be acquired beyond actual research context.

PSGs provide complementary learner centered opportunity
REFERENCES


• Stracke, E. & Kumar, V. (2014): Realising graduate attributes in the research degree: the role of peer support groups. Teaching in Higher Education, DOI: 10.1080/13562517.2014.901955
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