

# LA TROBE UNIVERSITY'S NEW DESIGN FOR LEARNING

Measuring graduate skills and capabilities



By 2013 La Trobe's Bachelor-degree graduates will be able to identify, and demonstrate to potential employers, the skills they've acquired and the level of their ability against published quality standards.

All Australian universities list graduate capabilities or attributes – essential skills every student is expected to have by the time they graduate. La Trobe University plans to be the first Australian university to formally assess these capabilities in its graduates to ensure students learn these skills and are able to demonstrate their level of accomplishment at the end of their studies.

Further, the University intends to make public the quality standards against which student performance is assessed, providing prospective employers with a clearly defined set of expected capabilities and criteria by which to measure them.

The University's ambitious Design for Learning project will see six generic graduate capabilities embedded in its undergraduate curriculum. La Trobe graduates will be able to provide evidence that clearly demonstrates their level of ability in these capabilities, and that they possess the requisite skills and knowledge specific to their areas of study. From 2013, employers will be able to assess these against established quality standards published on the University's website.

## La Trobe's Design for Learning Project

Launched in 2009, Design for Learning is a four-year project that will see every Bachelor-level course, and related student engagement and academic support service at La Trobe reviewed and redesigned.

Six graduate capabilities will be embedded in the University's undergraduate curriculum:

- Writing
- Speaking
- Inquiry/research
- Critical thinking
- Creative problem-solving
- Teamwork

These capabilities are among those most sought after by employers and are part of the Australian Government's Employability skills for the future (DEST 2002). They will be taught and assessed in addition to discipline specific skills and knowledge.

Capabilities will be clearly identified with subjects so staff and students can map courses to achieve desired learning outcomes. Students' performance will be assessed regularly against published quality standards and formal feedback will be provided at three points during the course – cornerstone (first year), midpoint, and capstone (final year).

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Design for Learning is a significant project set to improve the employability of La Trobe's graduates. Its aim is to provide all La Trobe undergraduate students the opportunities and support to achieve high standards of learning in challenging, well designed and relevant courses of study.

**In 2007, the Business Industry and Higher Education Collaboration Council reported the following:** Employability skills can be effectively assessed where the specific skill and its application is described in course materials and learning objectives, and where it is clearly located within the context of a given discipline. Good assessment practice is underpinned by curriculum and course design which makes explicit the requirements for employability skills and describes how and at what point in the course they will be addressed.

*La Trobe's undergraduate courses embody this good practice in curriculum and course design. For more information on Design for Learning please visit: [www.latrobe.edu.au/ctlc/dfli/index.html](http://www.latrobe.edu.au/ctlc/dfli/index.html)*