



# After Standards: Engaging and embedding history standards using international best practice to inform curriculum renewal

Final Report 2013

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## List of acronyms used

ACPHA	Australian Council of Professional Historians Associations
AHA	Australian Historical Association
AHELO	Assessment of Higher Education Learning Outcomes
AQF	Australian Qualifications Framework
ALTC	Australian Learning and Teaching Council Ltd
ALTC-LTAS	Australian Learning and Teaching Council-Learning and Teaching Academic Standards
CLA	Collegiate Learning Assessment
DASSH	Australasian Council of Deans of Arts, Social Sciences and Humanities
FoS	Field of Study
GAs	Graduate Attributes
Go8	Group of Eight
HESP	Higher Education Standards Panel
HTAA	History Teachers' Association of Australia
ISSOTL	International Society for the Scholarship of Teaching & Learning
LOs	Learning Outcomes
LTAS	Learning and Teaching Academic Standards
OLT	Australian Government Office for Learning and Teaching
PhD	Doctor of Philosophy
QAA	Quality Assurance Agency
QVS	Quality Verification Scheme
SOTL	Scholarship of Teaching and Learning
TEQSA	Tertiary Education Quality and Standards Agency
TLOs	Threshold Learning Outcomes
UNE	University of New England
UNSW	The University of New South Wales
UQ	The University of Queensland

# Glossary

Course – An individual unit or subject of study within a major

Learning Outcomes – the institutionally agreed minima for students completing a course, major or program. Also known at major or program level as Graduate Attributes or Graduate Capabilities.

National Rubric – A guide listing specific criteria for evaluating student outputs against the Threshold Learning Outcomes produced by the Office for Learning and Teaching After Standards Project for the Australian Historical Association

Program – The degree in which a major sits

Reflective work – Student Output(s) that articulate self-conscious consideration of an individual's personal experience as a learner

Student Output – Work produced by students for assessment as a routine part of a course or courses within their major

Threshold Learning Outcomes – The nationally agreed minima for an area of study as produced by the Office for Learning and Teaching After Standards Project for the Australian Historical Association

## Executive summary

The After Standards Project was an attempt by a disciplinary community unfamiliar with national standards/compliance regimes to respond to the significant changes in the Australian Higher Education Sector. It sought to achieve this through the utilisation of the nationally endorsed Threshold Learning Outcomes for History that formed part of the Australian Learning and Teaching Council Learning and Teaching Academic Standards Project. The project engaged the whole discipline community, the discipline's peak body (the Australian Historical Association) and related organisations. As well as its scholarly and community engagement outputs, the central goal was the development of a national accreditation model for the consideration of the discipline community and the peak body. The project was able to achieve but not without substantial reconsideration and reconfiguration of what a discipline-based compliance framework might look like.

The most important lessons learned from the project were as follows:

- Discipline communities with little or no experience in national standards frameworks are capable of designing and implementing discipline-led audit and compliance processes.
- A “soft touch” approach to standards compliance is not possible and moves to any form of compliance must necessitate fundamental redevelopment of curriculum rather than warranting existing majors or programs.
- Interrogating existing standards from the perspective of compliance can necessitate modification of the standards themselves.
- Engagement with a discipline's peak body can dramatically increase a teaching and learning project's ability to influence the discipline
- Despite the commonalities of a discipline community, structural institutional variations produce difficulties when considering national approaches to teaching and learning.
- Teaching and Learning projects benefit most when they have in-built iterative processes that ensure frequent and vigorous critiques of progressive outcomes by the discipline community. This form of engagement helps to produce robust outcomes and help to ensure widespread ownership.

The project was somewhat frustrated by the delayed establishment of the Tertiary Education Quality and Standards Agency and the lack of concrete developments in the national standards framework. This said, the project has enjoyed significant success and has produced a set of Recommendations, and Outcomes and Deliverables as detailed below.



# Recommendations

## To the higher education sector:

1. Disciplines need to have control over the content and input into the processes by which teaching and learning standards are developed and measured.
2. In a standards compliance environment, disciplines need to be active stakeholders in the accreditation process.
3. An effective standards process is reliant on a stable and certain policy and regulatory environment.
4. Disciplines should embed standards throughout their curriculum as they cannot easily be retrofitted into existing courses/units.
5. Disciplines should engage in a discussion regarding the failure to fail and grade inflation.

## To the discipline community:

6. The emergence of a standards-based environment in the Australian higher education sector will require the discipline in each institution to engage in substantial curriculum renewal/design including a comprehensive implementation of the TLOs at each stage of a major. This activity must be collegially driven but will challenge many who continue to see teaching as an autonomous activity.
7. Regardless of the eventual regulatory framework, the discipline community should develop its own nationally endorsed Quality Assurance and Quality Improvement process (QA/QI) and that a standards-based approach is the most effective and transparent mechanism for achieving same.
8. The Australian Historical Association (AHA, as the peak body for academic historians, is the most appropriate body to monitor and endorse standards compliance.
9. The history discipline needs to build upon the community of practice established by this project in order to engage with a standards environment and share best practice in teaching and learning.
10. The AHA needs to continue to build capacity if the discipline is to meet all the recommendations of the project.
11. The AHA needs to continue its commitment to teaching and learning by hosting and supporting discussion of teaching and learning at the AHA annual conference and other forums.
12. The AHA journal *History Australia* should provide regular opportunities for the discussion of teaching and learning.
13. The discipline should engage in the discussion of the standards assessment process/accreditation outlined in this document.

## To the Office for Learning and Teaching:

14. Engaging all institutions who are stakeholders in a discipline area can maximise participation and uptake.
15. Engaging peak bodies is advantageous when attempting to influence an entire discipline community.

16. Face-to-face workshops with representatives from all stakeholder institutions provide the best means of developing a community of practice across a discipline. This maximises engagement of participants, the progress made towards project goals and the dissemination of outcomes. Further, workshops provide important, and sometimes serendipitous, opportunities for the initiation of bilateral and multi-lateral activities. Synchronous or asynchronous electronic communication, despite its apparent cost-saving benefit, is not an effective substitute.
17. OLT projects should have inbuilt, iterative processes that engage the discipline thereby ensuring frequent and vigorous critiques that build community ownership and quality outcomes.
18. Disseminating through discipline-focussed forums and publications can have significant dissemination advantages over SOTL forums and publications alone.
19. Internationalising a project increase its credibility and pedagogical power.

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# Chapter One: Background

The After Standards Project was a whole-of-disciplinary approach aimed at engaging and embedding History standards using international best practice. The central ambition of the project was to build a “community of practice” (Wenger, 2007) through which historians in Australia could – systematically, universally, collegially, reflectively, and effectively – respond to standards implementation and the resulting opportunities for curriculum renewal.

In response to the Bradley’s Review of Australian Higher Education in 2008 (Bradley *et al*, 2008), the now defunct Australian Learning and Teaching Council (ALTC) worked with various disciplines to create Threshold Learning Outcomes (TLOs) that could function as ‘standards’ for Teaching and Learning in Australian universities (ALTC, 2010). It was envisaged that this work by the ALTC would inform sector-wide discussion on national standards within the context of the creation of the Tertiary Education Quality and Standards Agency (TEQSA). This work was informed by international developments such as the British Quality Assurance Agency Honours Benchmark Statements (2004) and the European Association for Quality Assurance in Higher Education, Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in the European Higher Education Area (2005).

History was chosen as a model discipline for the Humanities and Social Sciences in the original Australian Learning and Teaching Council-Learning and Teaching Academic Standards (ALTC-LTAS) project. After widespread consultation, the following TLOs for Australian Qualifications Framework (AQF) Level 7 (Bachelors) History programs in Australian universities were developed and endorsed by the peak body, the Australian Historical Association (AHA), in December 2010 (subsequently modified December 2011) – see Figure 1.

## Figure 1: Threshold Learning Outcomes for History

### Threshold Learning Outcomes for History

Upon completion of a bachelor degree with a major in History, graduates will be able to:

#### Knowledge

1. Demonstrate an understanding of at least one period or culture of the past.
2. Demonstrate an understanding of a variety of conceptual approaches to interpreting the past.
3. Show how History and historians shape the present and the future.

#### Research

4. Identify and interpret a wide variety of secondary and primary materials.
5. Examine historical issues by undertaking research according to the methodological and ethical conventions of the discipline.

#### Analysis

6. Analyse historical evidence, scholarship and changing representations of the past.

#### Communication

7. Construct an evidence-based argument or narrative in audio, digital, oral, visual or written form.

#### Reflection

8. Identify and reflect critically on the knowledge and skills developed in their study of History.

These TLOs may be achieved through a combination of individual and collaborative work.

Developments in this space were complicated in early 2011 with the abolition of the ALTC in the aftermath of the 2011 Queensland floods and the delay in the enactment and establishment of TEQSA which left the ALTC-LTAS project, its consequences and future in question. It was also the case that prominent commentators, such as interim TEQSA Commissioner Denise Bradley, questioned the rigour and validity of a discipline-based approach to national standards (Lane 2011a, Lane 2011b). A discussion paper by the interim TEQSA (2011) entitled 'Developing a Framework for Teaching and Learning Standards in Australian Higher Education and the Role of TEQSA' provided little clarity but raised concerns about the level of engagement with discipline communities in any alternative process.

With the establishment of TEQSA in January 2012, the future for standards-based national TLOs remained unclear, notwithstanding the continuing work of a number of discipline-based groups in this space. Despite the sector acceptance of the notion of TLOs, the term 'Threshold' held different connotations in the LTAS project in comparison to TEQSA's legislation. Here 'Teaching and Learning Standards' are considered 'Non-Threshold' and therefore not an area of direct responsibility for the newly-formed Higher Education Standards Panel (HESP) led by Emeritus Professor Alan Robson. So-called 'communiqués' from the HESP in August (HESP, 2012a) and September 2012 (HESP, 2012b) have acknowledged germane issues but unfortunately failed to provide much greater clarity on Teaching and Learning Standards and the role of disciplines.



# Chapter Two: Aims and Methodology

## Aims

This project was designed in late 2010 to respond to a very particular challenge. In any quality framework measuring learning outcomes, it should be the responsibility of the discipline to implement and embed the collectively agreed standards across the Australian university sector. To achieve this, discipline communities need to be in a position to work with regulators to ensure any proposed monitoring and compliance of standards is sensitive to the community's cultural and structural peculiarities. Building within the discipline a sustainable "community of practice" (Wenger, 2007) network that is capable of facilitating and leading the dissemination, interpretation, and implementation of national standards should therefore be a key goal.

The history discipline in Australia found itself in an exciting position at the end of 2010 when as a result of the Australian Learning and Teaching Council-Learning and Teaching Academic Standards (ALTC-LTAS) project, and after a year of discipline consultation, an agreed set of Threshold Learning Outcomes (TLOs) for Australian Qualifications Framework (AQF) Level 7 were finalised and endorsed by the peak body, the Australian Historical Association (AHA).

What the History discipline in Australia lacked, however, was any experience or processes for engaging with the TLOs and an emerging national standards framework. The goal of the After Standards project, therefore, was to facilitate the discipline community's consideration of these issues and the building of capacity through a community-of-practice approach that shared and developed the discipline's corporate understanding of Quality Assurance and Quality Improvement.

The aims of the project, drafted in 2010, were six:

- To model, demonstrate, evaluate and disseminate how a discipline with no background experience in professional accreditation or national standards can engage successfully with TLO implementation and compliance requirements as part of the new Tertiary Education Quality and Standards Agency (TEQSA) national standards framework. Despite the uncertain environment since 2010, this goal has remained an important one. The conversation about how to implement and evaluate TLOs across a wide variety of disciplines in Australia has prompted important and creative conversations about diversity, about assessment and about the suitability of the TLOs themselves
- To build, with the assistance of the Project's institutional partners, a sustainable community of practice around Teaching and Learning that can both implement and monitor change and, where necessary, assume or support an advocacy role for the discipline within the Higher Education sector and with Government
- To model, demonstrate, evaluate and disseminate how TLOs and their national implementation can be used as a means of driving curriculum renewal and the adoption of best practice in Teaching and Learning across a discipline
- To model, demonstrate, evaluate and disseminate how Australian engagement with national standards can benefit from the experience and expertise gained from the implementation of standards overseas
- To model, demonstrate, evaluate and disseminate how the resulting international

connections can build collaborations for Teaching and Learning research that will enhance Australian scholarship and practice

- Continue the Standards process for the Discipline of History by finalising standards beyond the Bachelor/AQF 7 level.

## Methodology

The Project, like the ALTC-LTAS project, sought to pursue an “engaged-focused” approach involving “consultation, collaboration, and support for ongoing dissemination” to build capacity (ALTC, 2008). Alongside these broad brushstrokes, the Project design appropriated the conclusion of McKenzie *et al* that dissemination worked best when the innovation, or change, was associated with its “use or impact” (McKenzie *et al*, 2005: xi).

The challenge for the Project’s design was to then consider the implications of these ideas within a disciplinary context. The best means of disseminating new knowledge and promoting knowledge utilisation is to construct a methodology that complements the epistemology of its target audience (Research Utilization Support and Help, 2001). Disciplines and their institutions have particular ways of doing things (Corbett *et al*, 1984; Deal, 1984; Fullan, 1985; Healey, 2000; & Healey and Jenkins, 2003). The discipline of History has been to the fore in recent years asserting the breadth and depth of its “signature pedagogy” (Calder, 2006, 2007 & Booth, 2009).

Key to the disciplinary practice of History is discussion, debate, and argument over ideas and approaches. Further, History teachers have been slow to embrace innovation in their teaching (Calder *et al*, 2000; Lueddeke, 2003) and prefer to follow “haphazardly shared folk wisdom ... forming notions about teaching in isolation, and ... often totally ignorant of the pedagogical discoveries of colleagues teaching in the next classroom” (Pace, 2004; see also Booth, 2004). The project was approached with this signature pedagogy in mind to try to ensure that individual academics at the local level felt comfortable participating in the community of practice and as a result achieved a sense of “ownership” which is essential for the effective implementation of any initiative (Coburn, 2003: 8).

While seeking to gain ‘buy-in’ by individual academics and institutions at the local level, the project maintained an overarching national vision. It secured the in-principle support of every History program in the country. The goal was not to mobilise every historian, rather, we sought to build capacity through the employment of a community-of-practice approach through the engagement of interested colleagues to participate in a national workshop program. Studies of distributed leadership in academic environments have shown that potential leaders in any process should be self-nominated rather than delegated (Lefoe *et al*, 2008: 2-4).

Each of the nation’s 31 History programs was invited to send two members of staff to contribute to the project as delegates. The national workshop process provided delegates with the information and scaffolding required to ensure they could become effective “change agents/leaders” who could provide direction and exercise influence amongst their colleagues and across the discipline (Chesterton *et al*, 2008: iv-v). The community of practice approach also modelled the collaborative and teamwork approach to change management that will be essential within their own local contexts (Okubo and Zitt, 2004; Peterson, 2001: 69; Shaw, 2006: 442, 452; Stead and Harrington, 2000: 97). Such an approach was designed to ensure

that the TLOs and the broader standards agenda would be implemented with more “depth,” “sustainability,” and “spread” (Coburn, 2003: 8).

Despite its scale and purpose, this “whole-of-discipline” engagement remained a bottom-up approach. Driving change through a cohesive community of practice avoids the top-down, “add-on” approach to curriculum change that typically proves unsustainable because of the lack of ownership felt by practitioners and the absence of critical reflection on the process itself (Curro and McTaggart, 2003). This was particularly important when, despite the wide discipline community consultation to create the TLOs and lack of institutional intrusion in this process, some historians still viewed the overarching standards framework as externally driven from outside both their institution and discipline.

The integration of international academics as partners in this process was a key part of the project’s methodology, because it provided expertise and perspectives unavailable within the History discipline in Australia relating to both the international experience of standards implementation and new initiatives in Teaching and Learning. To this end the project secured the support of a number of leading practitioners in the Scholarship of Teaching and Learning (SOTL) in History.

The project also benefited from engagement with current OLT projects, most notably the ‘Assessing and Assuring Graduate Learning Outcomes: Principles and Practices within and across Disciplines’ project. The two projects progressively shared experiences and outcomes.

This methodology was implemented in the following ways:

- The key method in the creation of a community of practice centred on the evaluation and implementation of the TLOs, bringing historians together to workshop the challenges of ensuring good learning outcomes for students.
- The method was to combine information dissemination with active community engagement in sharing best practice teaching methods, in debating how the discipline might shape public policy, in workshopping not only viable ways to reform curriculum, but the TLOs themselves.
- The gathering of data about the practice of history teaching in Australia, in order to map the task before History majors seek to engage with the TLOs.
- Nominees from programs around the country provided the project team with data about their curricula. The project officers used the data to:
  - map learning outcomes for particular courses and majors against the TLOs in order to expose gaps in the basic curriculum design
  - map assessments against both learning outcomes and the TLOs in order to consider what outputs might inform a compliance/audit approach
  - gain an appreciation of the diversity and continuities of History majors across the Australian Higher Education sector.
- The project established a relationship with the Australian Historical Association (AHA), as the discipline community’s peak body, and the most obvious national organisation to lead and/or organise the discipline’s response/engagement with a national standards framework.
- The project modelled, workshopped, tested and evaluated a system for auditing the TLOs against individual program outcomes with the aspirational aim of the AHA designing and

implementing a program accreditation system for the discipline.

- Finally, the project sought to ensure that its work and findings was widely disseminated through the discipline community and beyond.

## National and International Dissemination Strategies

The After Standards Project employed a three-pronged dissemination strategy aimed at reaching the resulting community of practice, the broad disciplinary community, and the higher education sector in general, particularly those disciplines without previous exposure to standards environments and the resulting audit/compliance processes. A number of dissemination strategies were embedded within the project, such as the organisation of National Workshops, individual and collective institutional briefings and consultations, the establishment and maintenance of a website, reports and plenary sessions at discipline and SOTL-based national and international conferences, and scholarly research outputs.

## Presentation of this Report

This report will be disseminated to members of the AHA and Australasian Council of Deans of Arts, Social Sciences and Humanities (DASSH) for comment at the same time that it is submitted to the OLT. Once approved, the report will be made available in the following ways:

- Through the AHA <<http://www.theaha.org.au/index.html>> and After Standards websites <<http://afterstandards.omeka.net/>>
- The report will be sent to TEQSA for comment.
- The report will be sent to the reference group and international experts engaged with the project, including Professor Alan Booth (University of Nottingham), Professor Lendol Calder (Augustana College), Assistant Professor Keith Erikson (University of Texas at El Paso), Professor Paul Hyland (Bath Spa University), Associate Professor Mills Kelly (George Mason University), Emeritus Professor David Pace (Indiana University Bloomington), Associate Professor Sarah Richardson (University of Warwick), and Emeritus Professor Geoff Timmins (University of Central Lancashire) for comment
- The report will be sent to the Leadership Core of the American Historical Association 'Tuning the History Discipline in the United States' project, including Professor Anne Hyde (Colorado College, Chair), Professor Patricia Limerick (University of Colorado Boulder), Associate Professor John Bezis-Selfa (Wheaton College), Professor Elizabeth Lehfeldt (Cleveland State University), Professor Gregory Nobles (Georgia Institute of Technology), Professor Kevin Reilly (Raritan Valley Community College) and Professor Stefan Tanaka (University of California San Diego) for comment.
- The report will be sent to major international quality assurance projects for comment, including the European Tuning Process, the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development's Assessment of Higher Education Learning Outcomes (AHELO) project, the Collegiate Learning Assessment (CLA) project in the United States, the Quality Assurance Agency (QAA) in the United Kingdom, and the Australian Group of Eight's (Go8) Quality Verification Scheme (QVS).

## Chapter Three: History Curriculum Stocktake – Institutional Contexts and Opportunities

In addition to its central aims, the After Standards Project took the opportunity to complete a stocktake of the characteristics of tertiary History majors in Australia. As Southwell *et al* (2005) have suggested, such stocktakes are important foundational work for capacity building. The primary mechanism for this stocktake was a questionnaire sent to all participating institutions (see Appendix A).

The questionnaire required institutions to provide information about:

- staffing levels
- progression
- volume of learning requirements
- the development and dissemination of Learning Outcomes (LOs)
- the existence and nature of Gateway and Capstone courses
- review procedures
- the definition and mapping of Graduate Attributes (GAs) against LOs
- characteristics of Honours and pre-Honours programs
- postgraduate offerings, and
- feedback provided to the Australian Learning and Teaching Council-Learning and Teaching Academic Standards (ALTC-LTAS) project.

The questionnaire also asked institutions to provide a qualitative response to the issue of the impact of the new regulatory environment built around national standards on the teaching of History. They were asked to rank the importance of the individual Threshold Learning Outcomes (TLOs) for History and suggest any additional TLOs. The questionnaire was sent to institutions in the form of a PDF formatted as an interactive resource, and attracted responses from 21 institutions.<sup>1</sup>

In November 2012 the participating institutions were sent a second survey as a way to gauge changes in individual institutions since the original survey and as a means of measuring the After Standard's project's impact. Most likely due to the time of the year these responses had not been returned in numbers sufficient to make meaning of the data and therefore sit outside this report. The data will be used future reporting to the AHA.

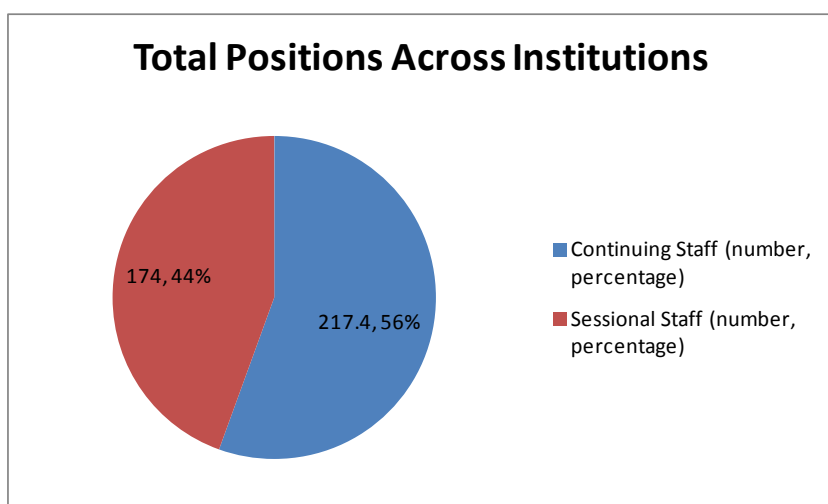
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<sup>1</sup> Australian Catholic University, Australian Defence Force Academy, Australian National University, Avondale College of Higher Education, Central Queensland University, Edith Cowan University, Griffith University, La Trobe University, Macquarie University, Monash University, Murdoch University, Southern Cross University, University of Adelaide, University of Melbourne, University of Newcastle, University of New England, University of New South Wales, University of Queensland, University of Southern Queensland, University of Sydney, University of Western Sydney,

## Staffing

Institutions were asked about the number of full-time and sessional staff that they employ to service their History major (see Appendix A). From the data received (see Figure 2), it was found that the institutions surveyed had a total of 391 History positions filled, with 217 continuing positions (56 per cent) and 174 sessional positions (44 per cent).

Figure 2: Total Positions Across Institutions



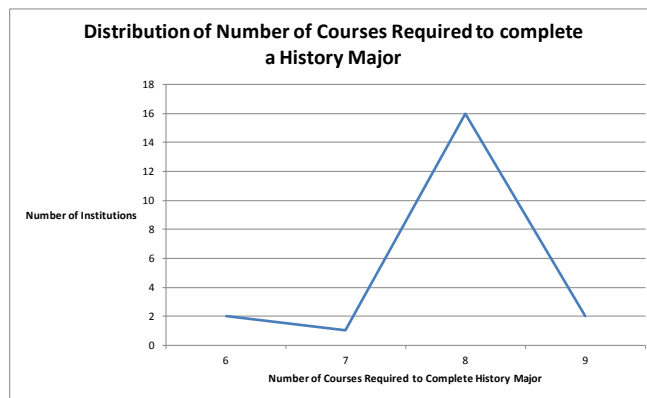
Two institutions had 100 per cent of their complement of staff in continuing positions, while the highest percentage of sessional positions within a particular institution was 75 per cent. The average split between continuing and sessional was 61 per cent continuing and 39 per cent sessional.

## Structure of the History major

History in Australian universities usually exists in a major stream. In most cases, the home of this stream is the Bachelor of Arts, though the major can often service other programs (e.g. Bachelor of International Studies). It should be noted that there is one institution that offers a dedicated History program (the Bachelor of Historical Inquiry and Practice at the University of New England (UNE)).

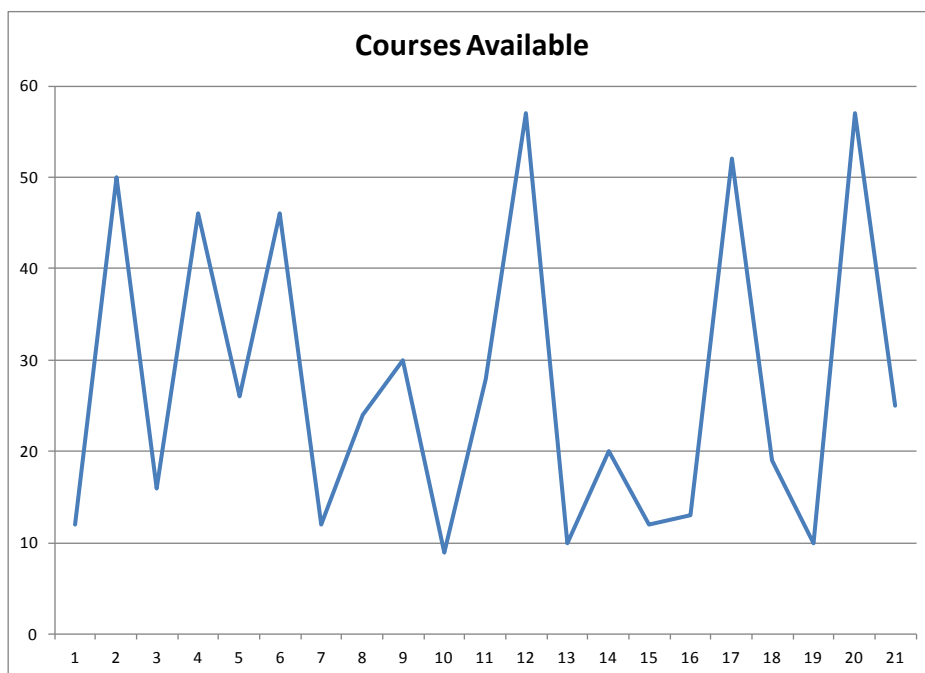
As Figure 3 demonstrates, the number of courses that make up each History major differs across the Australian sector.

Figure 3: Distribution of Number of Courses Required to complete a History Major



Institutions differed significantly on the number of courses available within the major (Figure 4). Notwithstanding sabbaticals and other reasons why a course might not be able to be offered in each year, the total number of available courses was as follows.

Figure 4: Courses Available



Ten institutions, or 48 per cent, reported that they introduced first year students to the study of history at the tertiary level through a Gateway course. Seven institutions (33 per cent) reported that their program utilised a Capstone course that offered a student the opportunity to demonstrate the achievement of institutional and disciplinary goals for learning.

Some institutions require completion of a certain number of courses at each level of study. For example, one institution requires students to complete two courses at first year, three courses at second year and four courses at third year. Another institution requires students to complete one course at first year, three courses at upper level and the remaining four courses from any level in the program.

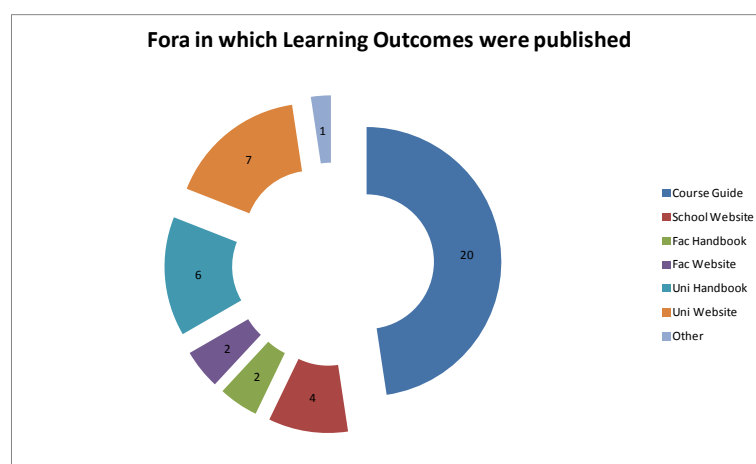
## Progression

Institutions were asked to provide details about how students progressed through the undergraduate History major in their faculty. Of the 21 institutions that responded, all had some form of progression built into their programs. All institutions had progression from first year, but only nine (43 per cent) had progression from second year to third year. Further, nine institutions (43 per cent) reported progression from third to fourth year (i.e. Pre-Honours courses).

## Learning Outcomes

Learning Outcomes (LOs) were aligned to History courses at all 21 institutions that completed the survey, although one institution reported that only some of the constituent courses in their major had explicit LOs. As per Figure 5, all but one institution reported that these LOs were made available to students through the course guide (95 per cent), four institutions (19 per cent) reported that these LOs were published on the school website, two institutions reported that these LOs were included in the Faculty Handbook, and two institutions reported that these LOs were published on the Faculty Website. The University Handbook (6 institutions, or 29 per cent) and the University Website (7 institutions, 33 per cent) were other fora used to provide students with details about LOs. One institution indicated that another, unspecified forum was also used for this purpose.

Figure 5: Fora in which Learning Outcomes were published



## Graduate Attributes: Definition and mapping

All institutions reported that their major operated within a program where Graduate Attributes (GAs) were defined at some level. Many majors operated in an environment where GAs operated at various levels (at the institutional, program and/or major level). The degree of curriculum mapping between the major and these GAs varied widely.

Eighteen majors (86 per cent) reported that their university held institution-wide GAs. Of these institutions, thirteen (72 per cent) reported that they had mapped institution-wide GAs to course LOs in their major. Eight institutions (38 per cent) reported that they had defined GAs at the faculty level. Of these, four (50 per cent) had these GAs mapped against course LOs. Nine (43 per cent) institutions defined GAs at the major level. Of these, three institutions (33 per



cent) had mapped these GAs against course LOs. Five institutions (24 per cent) reported that they had not mapped their LOs against GAs as defined at any level. Figure 6 gives a graphic representation of levels at which GAs have been defined, while Figure 7 shows the levels at which GAs had been mapped against LOs.

Figure 6: Level at which Graduate Attributes Have Been Defined

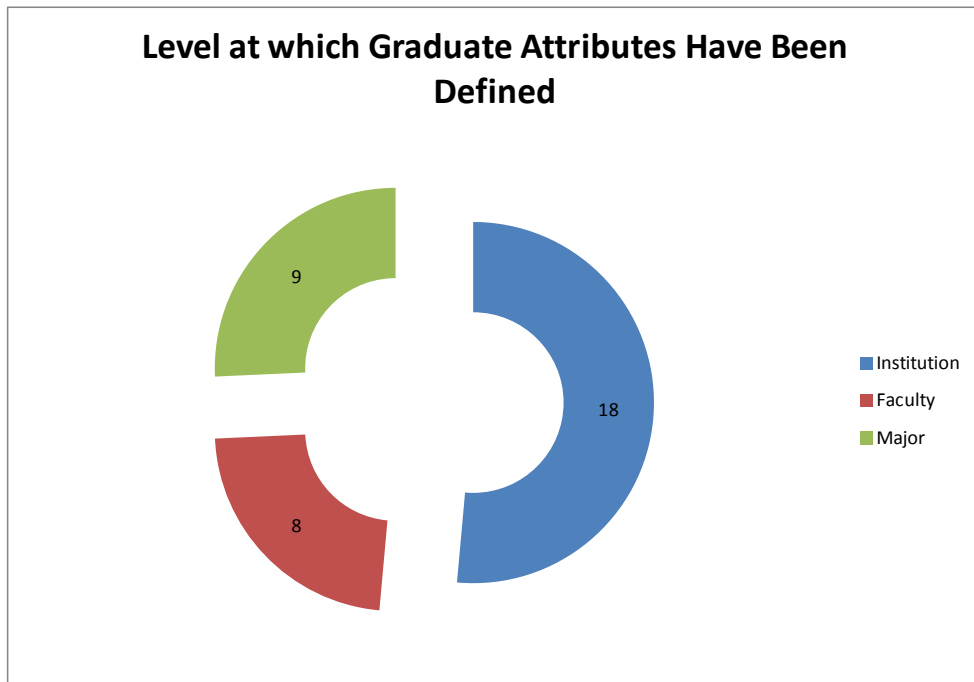
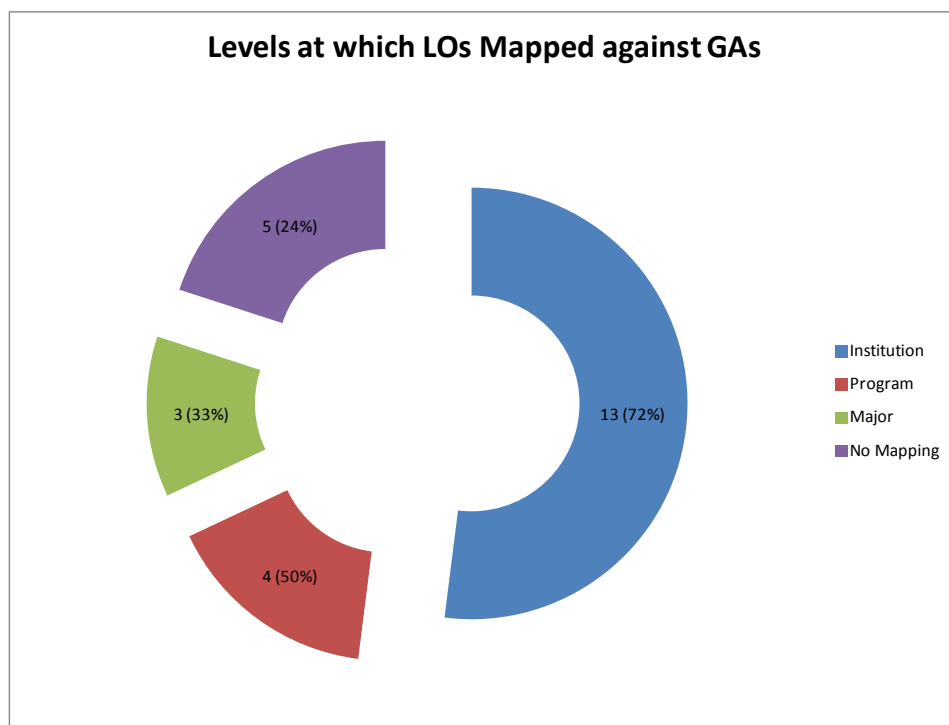


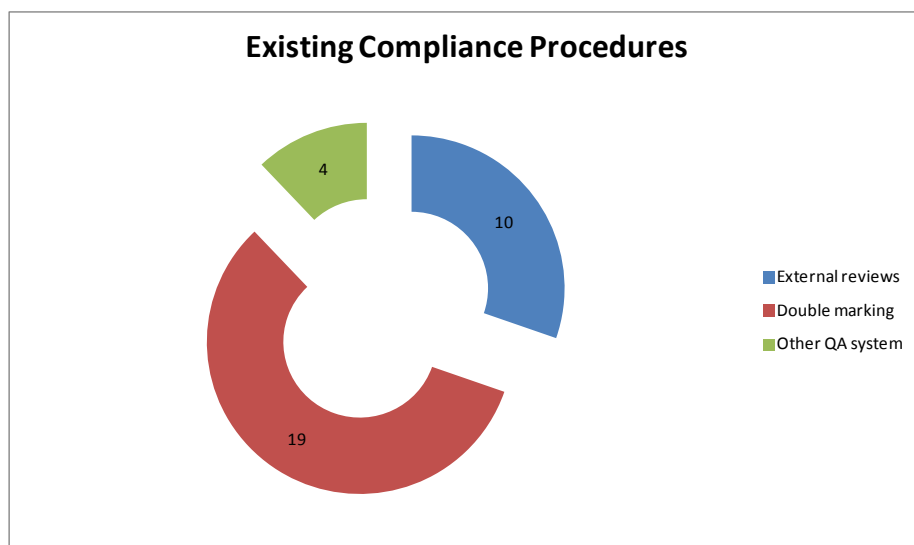
Figure 7: Levels at which LOs Mapped against GAs



## Compliance

Institutions were also requested to provide any details about the Quality Assurance environment in which their major operated. As shown in Figure 8, 10 institutions (48 per cent) reported that they employed an external review procedure. Nineteen institutions (90 per cent) employed a double marking system at some level of their program. No institutions reported that they utilised an electronic portfolio system to capture student work either at course or program level. Four institutions (19 per cent) reported that they employed some other Quality Assurance system.

Figure 8: Existing Compliance Procedures



## Honours and Pre-Honours

All but one of the 21 institutions that completed the survey (ninety-five per cent) reported that they taught to honours level (AQF Level 8). Most institutions reported that equal weighting was given to coursework and thesis components of the honours program, but some institutions provided more weighting to the thesis component. Overall, the average distribution was 49 per cent coursework and 51 per cent thesis. The average thesis word-length range reported was 15,000 to 16,500 words with the minimum requirement being 12,000 and the maximum requirement of 20,000. Four institutions (19 per cent) also reported that they offered at least one pre-Honours course.

## Postgraduate Offerings

All institutions that completed the survey reported that they offered some kind of postgraduate program (see Figure 9). Twenty institutions (95 per cent) reported that they offered a Doctor of Philosophy (PhD), and seventeen of these institutions (81 per cent) also offered a Masters by Research program. Ten institutions (48 per cent) offered a Masters by Coursework program in History, and the same number offered a Graduate Diploma in History. Eight institutions offered other postgraduate programs, including Masters of Letters, Masters of Philosophy, Graduate Certificates, and a Post-graduate diploma that was equivalent to honours.



# Chapter Four: National Workshop 1 (Sydney)

## Introduction

Between 27 and 29 April 2011, the After Standards Project hosted a National Workshop at the University of New South Wales. This was the first national meeting in Australia where historians from across the higher education sector gathered together for the specific purpose of discussing issues pertaining to Teaching and Learning.

## Goals and Participants

The workshop had four principal goals:

- To inform participants about, and prepare them for, the introduction of national standards
- To provide an opportunity for participants to reflect upon and share information about their teaching practices and experiences
- To showcase international best practice through the participation of international delegates
- To establish a discipline Community of Practice around Teaching and Learning

Sixty-one delegates attended the workshop, including representatives from 25 of the 31 Australian tertiary institutions with a History major, the Australian Historical Association (AHA), and the History Teachers' Association of Australia (HTAA).

The Workshop benefited from the presence of eight international leaders in History Scholarship of Teaching Learning (SOTL):

- Professor Alan Booth (University of Nottingham, Vice-President History SOTL and National Teaching Fellow)
- Professor Lendol Calder (Augustana College)
- Professor Keith Erikson (University of Texas, El Paso)
- Professor Paul Hyland (University of Bath-Spa and National Teaching Fellow)
- Professor T. Mills Kelly (George Mason University)
- Professor David Pace (University of Indiana and President, History SOTL)
- Associate Professor Sarah Richardson, (University of Warwick and Director of the UKHEA History Subject Centre)
- Professor Geoff Timmins (University of Central Lancashire and National Teaching Fellow)

On the assumption that a national standards framework would be imposed in the near future, the principal objective of the workshop was to enable Australian historians to understand the standards debate, in its international as well as national context. The workshop provided an opportunity for historians to think through the challenges of operating within such a framework – including the institutional context of standards implementation, the process of incorporating progression into History curricula, and gathering data to demonstrate student

learning outcomes. The uncertainties of the standards environment and the institutional interface of standards with government, university infrastructures, and schools were examined in a series of four workshops and two plenary meetings. The visitors from the United Kingdom brought firsthand accounts of how a discipline-led compliance approach can operate. As well as noting how external compliance regimes can bolster disciplinary interests within institutional contexts, the UK experts emphasised that Australian historians should coordinate a national approach to the standards process as a means of ensuring the discipline's requirements were recognised. The speakers endorsed the project's belief that this could be best achieved through a single peak body such as the AHA.

The second objective of the Workshop was to provide participants with opportunities to reflect on the relationships between tertiary standards, their own teaching practices, and History's growing body of scholarship on Teaching and Learning matters.

The third objective was to showcase international best practice through the participation of international delegates. In addition to facilitating workshops introducing best practice teaching methods, our international delegates presented innovative work being undertaken in the SOTL field and invited the delegates to join them in collaboration. Delegates were thus given an opportunity (free from their administrative and research commitments) to engage with cutting edge SOTL in the History discipline.

The fourth objective was to establish a discipline Community of Practice around Teaching and Learning. This was achieved through the workshops themselves, the opportunities for face-to-face dialogue, and the formation of three working parties to sustain the Community of Practice.

## Workshop Program

Plenary and parallel sessions of the Workshop addressed a range of issues:

- "History's Standards and the Landscape" (Sean Brawley)
- "Implementing and Best Practices" (Jennifer Clark)
- "Introducing Omeka" (Mills Kelly and Shawn Ross)
- "International Round Table on Standards" (Alan Booth, Paul Hyland, Lendol Calder, Mills Kelly, Sarah Richardson, and Geoff Timmins)
- "An Australian History Curriculum and History Standards: Rhetoric and Reality" (Paul Kiem, President, HTAA)
- "The Texas Experience" (Keith Erekson)
- "Measuring Compliance" (Sarah Richardson and Sean Brawley)
- "Content and Skills: Getting the Balance Right" (Alan Booth, Lendol Calder, and Chris Dixon)
- "Progression" (Geoff Timmins and Shawn Ross)
- "Assessment" (Paul Hyland and Sean Brawley)
- "Faculty/Discipline Interface" (Paul Hyland, Mills Kelly, and Jennifer Clark)
- "Assessing Learning" (David Pace, Lisa Ford, and Chris Dixon)

- “Problems of Innovation/Problems of Implementation”
- “Owning Standards: Formulating History’s Approach”

Besides confirming that History programs around the country share many core strategies in their approaches to Teaching and Learning, the workshop revealed that many programs were already closely involved in curriculum improvement. In contradiction of the stereotype that historians teaching in Australian universities have been reluctant to adopt new teaching modes or approaches, the workshop revealed that historians have been receptive to new ideas and technologies. Indeed, History programs at Australian universities currently deploy many innovative teaching strategies that can be disseminated through the process of data sharing, which in turn can underpin a discipline-driven standards implementation process. The workshop provided an opportunity to share such developments.

A major challenge to emerge during the workshop was the difficulty of managing the introduction of a standards system that would be applicable across the range of universities offering a History major. Larger History sections/groupings are able to offer a broader range of courses, and are better-placed to offer clearly-articulated progressions from first-year through to capstone courses. At the other end of the spectrum, some History Majors are serviced by a handful of staff – in one case, by just one full-time academic.

The workshop led to the establishment of three working parties. The first (chaired by Chris Dixon) designed Threshold Learning Outcomes (TLOs) for AQF Levels 8 and 9. After a period of community consultation (based on an approach used the Australian Learning and Teaching Council-Learning and Teaching Academic Standards (ALTC-LTAS) project), the Level 8 standards were submitted to the AHA and were endorsed in December 2011. The Level 9 TLOs have been released for discussion by the discipline community.

The second working party (chaired by Jennifer Clark) explored ways in which the discipline community might develop its own audit/compliance processes and produced a position paper for presentation to the peak body on accreditation. The third working party emerged from the floor of the workshop and was chaired by Stephen Wheatcroft (University of Melbourne). This group gathered data highlighting the deleterious consequences for History programs of Field of Study (FoS) coding and cluster funding if the funding was applied to the classroom. As became clear, those coding and funding processes have contributed significantly to the under-resourcing of History (as well as a number of other Humanities) teaching programs, across the sector.

## Evaluation Summary

Participants were asked to evaluate each of the Workshop's plenary and parallel sessions. The Workshop secured very positive feedback (Table 4.1).

Table 1: Evaluation: Workshop 1 Feedback

Evaluation	Number	Percentage
Very useful	32	89
Somewhat useful	4	11
Not useful	0	0
Total	36	100

The overall qualitative feedback collected following the workshop supports this overwhelmingly positive result, although some divergent opinion was expressed:

- *Particularly useful to talk to colleagues from across Australian institutions about these common issues. Fab international guests with great attitudes. Great management, Sean.*
- *I have to admit I was sceptical about how useful or productive this conf was going to be, but I was totally wrong - it was extremely productive and exciting - the beginning of what is hopefully a much longer and more involved conversation*
- *I really appreciate the well prepared and on-task presenters. Truly inspiring to spend time with colleagues talking about teaching. I also appreciated the generally optimistic view that participants took - much more productive than gloom and doom and blaming govt.*
- *I think this was a useful meeting and good to meet so many colleagues in the context of teaching and learning - which we do spend most of our time on, despite our love of and dedication to research. I do think that the workshop sessions could have been more interactive - i.e. general discussions among the whole group. The presenters could have distilled the essence of their presentations more efficiently to allow more discussion of the ideas they were offering in the varied contexts from which participants came.*
- *This was an extremely useful conference. It provided a rare opportunity to combine discussions of our 'big picture' issues that affect our profession with detailed issues of teaching standards and innovation. It was also extremely valuable to meet and discuss these issues with colleagues from the vast majority of Australian universities.*
- *As is inevitable, the workshop was uneven. It would have helped to have the standards in front of us - but the lack of involvement of many in developing these standards made them a problematic focus. The opportunity to talk about T&L with such a diverse group was excellent but I would have liked more systematic info on what everyone does in their teaching.*

Further, personal feedback was provided to the project team. For example:

- *I did not know what to expect but it's easy to say the conference exceeded all expectations. Thank you for taking such good care of us ... I hope people will let you know what the conference meant to them. It's an incredible effort you put out and, apart from standards (who knows where that is going) there seemed to be a lot of learning going on. And the new friendships and connections are invaluable.*

Additional feedback can be found at: <[afterstandards.omeka.net/items/show/30](http://afterstandards.omeka.net/items/show/30)>

## Concluding Summary

The National Workshop achieved a number of goals:

- It provided an invaluable opportunity to inform Australian historians about the national standards system, despite the continuing uncertainties regarding the introduction of a system of national standards. Following the lead of our British colleagues, there was consensus that the discipline community should participate actively in the standards process
- It provided an opportunity for Australian historians to learn more about international best practice in Teaching and Learning from international leaders in the field
- It was successful in establishing a community of practice
- It established three working parties that continued the work of the community of practice

The delegates who attended the first national workshop returned to their institutions more deeply engaged with ideas about Teaching and Learning. This led to a number of institutional and cross-institutional projects. The national workshop thus served an invaluable function in facilitating dialogue around the teaching of History. As one participant remarked in their evaluation, the workshop provided

- *... the first opportunity [in a fifteen-year career] to discuss in a formal setting such an essential element of my own working life. It should become a more frequent occurrence, for both ourselves and for the benefit of the students we teach.*

Moreover, the workshop has ensured that when a system of national standards is eventually adopted, the discipline community is better informed and better prepared than was previously the case.



## Chapter Five: Capacity Building within AHA and Wider Discipline

Capacity building is crucial to a discipline community negotiating its way through a standards environment (O'Day, Goertz and Floden, 1995). Beyerlein has conceptualised capacity building as shared approaches that improve Teaching and Learning by a variety of means including “professional development, coaching, professional learning communities, in-service, professional organization conference and peer support groups” (2005: 18). Southwell *et al* (2005) have taken the notion further and are insistent that capacity building was “more than training programmes” and requires “needs analysis and audits of capacity and potential”. Consequently, it “requires the design of strategic interventions that employ and challenge the enhancement of strengths, exploit opportunities, confront constraints and supplement gaps and limitations”.

It has been suggested by Saroyan and Frenay that disciplines can be something of a block on capacity building in Teaching and Learning (Saroyan and Frenay, 2010: 168). If discipline communities are to build capacity, they need to acknowledge the discipline’s “signature pedagogy” (Shulman, 2005) and develop approaches that reflect disciplinary ways of knowing and performing.

Capacity building empowers teachers to become reflective learners in their own right and share their newly gained insights with colleagues at the local or national level. The After Standards project saw its Community of Practice approach as not only an opportunity to share practice but as a capacity building opportunity for a discipline that had no previous engagement with standards and compliance mechanisms and an uneven engagement with the Scholarship of Teaching and Learning (SOTL). A central dimension of the National Workshop approach was to build capacity amongst the delegates by providing a range of briefing opportunities that introduced them to both the emerging standards environment and SOTL from both national and international perspectives. Further, it sought to provide delegates with the means by which they could make meaning of the supplied information/data in their own institution and lead debate within their major.

The feedback from the first two national workshops would suggest delegates did leave these learning opportunities with a sense that they had been empowered to share their new understandings and build capacity with colleagues. Evaluation commentary included:

### 2011 Evaluations:

- *This has certainly provided me with great ideas about ways to better teach our students and closely consider their learning.*
- *It was great to gather together and discuss these vital matters. I gained a whole lot of knowledge from macro to micro: from policy to the classroom.*
- *Much fascinating and stimulating material. The sessions were excellent and all presenters were engaging. I have gained many new ideas that I will try and implement in my teaching. It was also great to have the opportunity to hear what many other historians were/are doing/thinking and working on.*

- *[T]here was a diversity of topics and approaches, with many of the issues raised holding a great deal of resonance for me. I feel inspired to take these ideas back to my own teaching and my discipline and to follow up on the opportunities for collaboration.*
- *Thank you for organising this event, which was the first opportunity I've had, in a 15-year academic career, to discuss in a formal setting such an essential element of my own working life. It should become a more frequent occurrence, for both ourselves and for the benefit of the students we teach.*
- *We'll feed back to our history dept; a) on the standards issue; b) lots of great teaching and learning hints. And both will help us individually (in our teaching) and collectively (in continuing to develop our curriculum). Thanks.*
- *I have to admit I was sceptical about how useful or productive this conf was going to be, but I was totally wrong - it was extremely productive and exciting - the beginning of what is hopefully a much longer and more involved conversation.*

## 2012 (Adelaide) Evaluations:

- *As with the first workshop, the opportunity to share and discuss teaching is invaluable & far too infrequent - It should be ongoing.*
- *[T]hanks again for a great couple of days - it's been an energising & fascinating event & I've enjoyed it very much. Can we make it an annual event?*
- *Energising + we're bringing home much that will help our School to rethink its curriculum*
- *A great way to get up to speed on current ideas & issues in History teaching. The work you have done places the discipline in a very good position when the call for standards comes.*
- *Another fantastic workshop with plenty to take back and think about and apply to our units and the major.*
- *Please keep meeting & keep the work going. Standards & QA work will have to be done, & History is in a strong position thanks to you!*

## Impediments to capacity building

In any discipline community include there are a range of issues that must be considered to ensure effective capacity building. These include:

- Issues of ownership
- Issues of sustainability
- Institutional/discipline community tensions
- Workload constraints
- Continuity

The work of the After Standards project has highlighted all of these impediment issues. With regard to the issue of ownership the evidence would suggest that the After Standards project has given the discipline community a sense of “ownership” and empowered a shared response to the emerging standards environment.

Stamps (1998) argues that the growth and development associated with a learning community reflects an ecological metaphor where the system is self-regulating and self-sustaining. Sustainability is a major issue for the History discipline. History majors in all Australian universities no longer sit within their own administrative units but are grouped within larger multi-disciplinary units. This delivers a major structural impediment to sustainability. In most cases no longer their own cost centre, history majors find it difficult to secure discretionary funds to sustain Teaching and Learning. With regard to the second workshop the project was confronted with a number of institutions who were unprepared to financially support a second delegate to the workshop.

An obvious challenge to sustainability has been the continuing lack of clarity from government, the Tertiary Education Quality and Standards Agency (TEQSA) and the Higher Education Standards Panel on what the new standards environment would look like and how it would engage with learning and teaching standards. The project was able to use the impending standards environment to drive engagement but the continued lack of clarity has seen some individuals reallocate their time and resources to more pressing priorities.

From its very beginning the project identified engagement with the national peak body as one way of attempting to build sustainability. The Australian Historical Association (AHA) is the only disciplinary community body that could possibly sustain work in this area once the After Standards project had been completed. In this area there have been some most positive signs, including:

- The AHA's general support of the project
- The AHA's creation of a position on the National Executive with responsibility for Teaching and Learning
- Teaching and Learning a regular item on the AHA Executive agenda
- The AHA's financial support of the second national workshop and its support of a Teaching and Learning plenary and stream at its 2012 annual conference
- The AHA's support of a national accreditation trial and its agreement that if such a policy choice was required by the discipline community it was best placed to deliver the system

The tensions between the discipline community and institutional cultures and environments have been a continuing source of discussion throughout the project. The consequences for capacity building are not clear, though the process around the accreditation process did show that local institutional structures/cultures could impede that institution's engagement and therefore capacity for further work in the area.

A major difficulty for the delegates engaged in the After Standards project is that their involvement is above and beyond their teaching and research workloads. This has meant that many colleagues who have engaged with the workshops have participated in the work of the project above and beyond their existing commitments and with little or no recognition. While individual participants have found this involvement beneficial to their local discipline community and their own professional development, the fact that this type of engagement sits above and beyond current workloads leaves it susceptible to neglect as other institutional priorities/responsibilities take precedence.

Continuity has also been identified as a potential barrier to capacity building. A project of this nature does find it difficult to deal with issue that within an institution would often be labeled succession planning. One way the project has sought to secure a degree of continuity is through its association with the AHA. The distributed leadership model which has shaped the work of the project team and the approach to the community of practice might provide resilience with regard to issues around continuity.

Reinforcing a trend developed by the ALTC Historical Thinking Project, the After Standards Project has further influenced the discipline community in seeing the advantages of a united approach to project development in Teaching and Learning. The community, for example, supported an Office for Learning and Teaching (OLT) grant application addressing Australian Qualifications Framework (AQF) Level 8 led by Monash University which was unfortunately unsuccessful. Another grant application by two delegates to the National Workshops (Jim Trotter and Michael Sturma, Murdoch University) was successful in 2012. The Third National Workshop also offered its support to Associate Professor Adrian Jones (La Trobe University) and his nomination for a 2013 Senior National Teaching Fellowship.

Beyond the discipline of History, the After Standards project had an influence on the successful ALTC grant application ('Renewing first year curricula for social sciences and humanities in the context of discipline threshold standards') led by Associate Professor Theda Thomas of Australian Catholic University with partners at the University of New England, the University of Western Sydney, the University of Tasmania, the University of Southern Queensland, Charles Sturt University and La Trobe University.

In conclusion it does appear that the After Standards project has enjoyed some success in building capacity in the discipline community. The 2012 AHA annual conference provides a snapshot which supports this conclusion. The conference had four sessions devoted to Teaching and Learning (including a plenary involving three international guests of the project and two panels on "Teaching Australians at War" and "How best to Teach Australian History") involving 18 academics. This is a significant uptake when it is recalled that, as well as a briefing session by the After Standards project, at the Launceston meeting in 2011 there were only two Teaching and Learning related papers delivered by two historians.

# Chapter Six: The Accreditation Trial

## Introduction

In order to operate within a standards environment, it is crucial to prove that those standards are being met. The After Standards project team recognised that the History discipline needed to find a way to record, model and demonstrate the ability of our programs to deliver the TLOs in order to meet any future standards audit. To meet this objective the project team constructed and trialled a mechanism to demonstrate that students graduating with a major in History had met the discipline-derived Threshold Learning Outcomes (TLOs). The Australian Historical Association (AHA), best placed to act as the discipline's peak body, could then use a tool based on the mechanism to manage an accreditation process. History programs around the country could use accreditation, or proof of having met standards, to respond to an external audit and to promote their programs to students. In this way the History discipline could drive and monitor its own quality assurance and improvement processes.

The trial of the mechanism, operated on the following principles. Any process for proving compliance with the TLOs ought to be:

- discipline driven
- locally owned
- led by the peak discipline body, the AHA
- based on 'expert review' by academic staff of routine student work
- undertaken with a 'light touch', that is, it should not be onerous for the participating institutions, the students involved, and the assessors
- focusing on Pass students only, because the TLOs are minimum standards for all graduates
- both Quality Assurance and Quality Improvement driven.

The trial operated with a two-phase process:

- Compliance phase
- Audit phase

## Trial Method

### The Compliance Phase: Matching and affirming TLOs to Learning Outcomes and Student Outputs

The trial covered History majors in the Bachelor of Arts programs at the University of New South Wales (UNSW), the University of New England (UNE) and the University of Queensland (UQ). Each participating university had previously submitted to the project team a list of all units/courses that sat in their History majors. Subsequently, the After Standards project team mapped their individually-derived learning outcomes in each unit/course against the national TLOs. For example, one unit/course listed “a broad overview of environmental history themes” as one of its learning outcomes. This outcome was mapped against TLO 2 “Demonstrate an understanding of a variety of conceptual approaches to interpreting the past”. The matches were colour coded according to whether TLOs were well (green) matched, partially (orange) matched or did not (red) match (Appendix C). A second mapping exercise saw the TLOs and unit/course Learning Outcomes aligned with specific student outputs (assessment). The final spread sheet containing the unit/course name, the learning outcomes for that unit/course, and the suggested learning outcome and assessment matching with the TLOs was sent to each participating university for the discipline members to check and to comment upon the efficacy of the match. An example of how that was interpreted by one participating university appears below. The stars indicate the number of course learning outcomes that correspond to TLOs, i.e. the first course listed [HIST111] had one learning outcome that aligned with TLO 1, and two that aligned with TLO 6 (see Figure 11 below).

Figure 11: An institutional response to the mapping process

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
HIST111	*		*	*		**	**	
HIST150	*			*	*	**	*	
HIST151	*		*	**	*	**		
HIST165	**			*		*	**	*
HINQ100		***			**	**	*	*
HINQ101		**			**	**	*	*
HINQ200		**	*		**	**	*	*
HINQ201		**	*		**	**	*	*
HINQ300	not assessed							
HIST305	**	*		*	*	*	**	
HIST307	*		*	*		**	**	
HIST308	**			*		*	***	
HIST318	**			*	*	*	*	
HIST324	**	***			*	**	**	
HIST328	**			*	*	*	**	
HIST329	**	**		*		*	*	
HIST330		**		**		****		
HIST331	**		*	*		*		
HIST332		***		**	*	****	*	
HIST333		****		*	*	**		
HIST335	*	*			*	*	*	
HIST337		**			*	**	*	*
HIST338	*			**		*		*
HIST339	*	***		*		*		
HIST342	**	**						
HIST343	**	*	*					
HIST348	**	*	*	*		*	**	
HIST351	**			*	*		*	
HIST354	**	**				**		
HIST357	*	**		*			***	
HIST361	*	*		**		*		

If the participating institution was satisfied that the information supplied was accurate, the audit phase could then be activated. This design feature reflected the underlying assumption that it was for institutions to decide themselves whether they were ready to undergo a compliance audit.

### Audit Phase: Choosing and submitting assignments

The After Standards team randomly selected three TLOs to assess during this exercise. For each participating university, units/courses were chosen which had learning outcomes that aligned with these TLOs. If offered, a single capstone course was preferred, although this type of course was not offered at one institution, and one institution designated three separate courses as capstones. Each university was then asked to submit the five lowest passing student outputs in those units/courses that aligned to these learning outcomes. TLOs are meant to be achieved by all graduating students in a History major, not only high achievers. It was important to assess the lowest passing students for that reason. The assignments were neither identified by student name or university affiliation.

The After Standards team members then blind-marked the student outputs against the designated TLO to assess whether it had been met. For example, if a student output was being judged on how well it met TLO 1, then that was the only TLO considered by the marker.

The assignments were marked on a sliding scale of 0 to 3 according to how well the TLO was met with a score of 3 indicating high achievement and 0 indicating that the TLO was not attained at all. It was determined that a cumulative score of 10 (across the five assessments reviewed against a given TLO) would be required for a university to meet that TLO, and that a university would have to achieve that score across all three selected TLOs for successful accreditation. The sliding scale was adapted from the VALUE Rubric of the Association of American Colleges and Universities. An example of how the sliding scale was referenced for TLO 3 appears below at Figure 12.

Figure 12: The Sliding Scale matrix for TLO 3

Institution ..... Task Example ...../5

**Threshold Learning Outcome 3**

**Show how history and historians shape the present and the future.**

Circle one for each aspect

**Understanding**

Shows a critical understanding of the impact of historical events and processes on current and future situations.	3
Shows understanding of the impact of historical events and processes on current and future situations.	2
Shows a limited understanding of the impact of historical events and processes on current and future situations.	1
Shows little or no understanding of the current and future relevance of historical events and processes.	0

**Awareness**

Shows awareness of the nature of this impact and how historians have shaped it.	3
Shows limited awareness of the nature of this impact and/or how historians have shaped it.	2
Limited demonstration of this impact or how historians have shaped it.	1
<b>No demonstration of this impact or how historians have shaped it.</b>	0

**Score /6 = /3 (whole number only)**

**Comments**

**Scoring the assignments**

Once all of the assignments were marked a de-identified results table showing the scores by institution, course, TLO, examiner, and student output was developed (see Table 6.1). One set of student outputs was not received from institution 1, so there was no score registered for TLO 5. Out of a possible score of 15 only one set of student outputs achieved a score of 10. Two other sets scored a nine, with the scores from the remaining five sets rather lower. Even though assignments were marked against a sliding scale only one student output scored the highest mark of three. 27 out of 40 (68 per cent) outputs did not attain minimum expected proficiency for their designated TLO and scored between zero and one.



Table 2: Stage 2 TLO Evaluation Trial

Stage 2 TLO Accreditation Trial										
Institution	Course	TLO	Tasks received	Examiner	Marks out of 3					Total out of 15
					Output 1	Output 2	Output 3	Output 4	Output 5	
1	S	3	Yes	A	1	1	1	1	0	4
	T	6	Yes	B	1	1	0	1	1	4
	U	5	No	C	-	-	-	-	-	-
2	V	8	Yes	D	0	1	0	0	1	2
	X	4	Yes	C	0.5	1	1	1	1	4
	Y	2	Yes	E	1	1	2	2	3	9
3	Z	1	Yes	F	2	2	2	2	2	10
	Z	3	Yes	A	2	2	2	2	1	9
	Z	7	Yes	E	1	1	1	1	2	6
<b>AVERAGE</b>										<b>6.1</b>

Using this system of a light touch test of three TLOs that were matched against currently published learning outcomes no university in the trial actually passed. We could not demonstrate that any of the students we assessed had in fact met the TLO standards at all.

### Discussion of the trial process

The trial operated on the principle that it was important to audit with a light touch, that is, the mechanism was designed to operate with minimum disruption to current practice and test a minimum number of TLOs. It was realised that a light touch was not practical nor did it prove that the standards were met. There were problems both with the trial process and with the standards themselves.

Problems with the trial process were as follows:

- A test of three TLOs at any given time for each university could not prove that all TLOs were met, as a standards environment requires that all students graduating with a History major meets all of the standards. An audit needs to assess all of the TLOs at one time. Judging from the poor performance of each assignment marked against one TLO, the likelihood of each assignment (or, in fact, any combination of the assignments submitted) proving to be compliant against all TLOs was very low indeed.
- There were many difficulties in determining the assignment/TLO alignment. Although we as teaching staff believe that we teach the TLOs as they were developed (and the TLOs did receive broad support from the History profession in an exhaustive consultation process) in reality, current learning outcomes did not in fact represent the TLOs closely enough to be audited against them. If the TLOs were not taken into account by staff when preparing the task or by students when doing the output, then understandably it was difficult to prove that the standards had in fact been met.
- Measuring each assessment on a sliding scale was inappropriate. The purpose of meeting standards is not to judge how well students met them, rather it is to judge that they are either met or not met. A binary scale should be used to measure compliance.
- Some assessments that were submitted because their learning outcomes appeared to match the standards in actual fact did not align with the standards. It was impossible to judge an assessment task against the standards if the task itself was not set to test the standards and the students, perhaps more importantly, were not aware that they had to meet those standards.
- The TLOs are intended to test graduating standards, but History majors do not necessarily have

structured progression (see Chapter Three). For example, one institution participating in the trial did not have distinct 300 level units/courses. There was therefore no guarantee that the student output being assessed was in fact the work of a graduating student.

- One institution had not kept any copies of student work for one of the courses/units selected for the trial.
- One institution had a capstone course but it was not designed to serve the purpose of teaching to and assessment of the TLOs as graduating standards.

Problems with the standards themselves were as follows:

- The TLOs were designed in a vacuum and were not clearly related to current practice.
- The TLOs were too structurally complex. Some of the TLOs are compound standards that cover more than one specific feature of History learning. An approach to reviewing such compound standards needs developing. Auditing compliance with any given TLO could require utilising an aggregate of those component standards or separate judgements about each component standard.
- Some TLOs were too “soft-edged” or vague. It was difficult to decide exactly how they should be represented through student output. The TLOs were not referenced in conjunction with unambiguous descriptor statements of what constituted meeting the standard or alternatively what constituted not meeting the standard.
- There was no equity across the TLOs. Some were easier to meet than others. TLO 1 was the easiest, as it only required evidence that a student could demonstrate an understanding of one period or culture of the past. Unless every university History program was audited against all TLOs, inequalities would be likely to arise, as some institutions would be judged against ‘easy’ TLOs while others would have to meet ‘hard’ ones.
- ‘Failure to fail’ was a serious problem at the universities involved in the trial. Reviewers reported reading work riddled with gross historical errors and other major problems. A meaningful accreditation scheme based on lowest pass scores will place considerable pressure on universities to regulate the quality of pass work.

## Recommendations from the Trial Process

It was very clear that proof of compliance with standards was impossible unless assessments were constructed in order to test the standards explicitly. For an audit process to be effective learning outcomes and assessment must be designed with the standards in mind. The standards cannot be effectively retro-fitted onto existing programs operating with their own individually designed learning outcomes. It was impossible to prove compliance with the standards using current practice. In the case of the trial, all three universities failed to prove that their students met the TLOs.

- Recommendation 1. Assessment tasks must directly and explicitly address the TLOs. An effective approach would be to ensure all graduating students complete a capstone unit/course, compile a portfolio or complete some other suitable exercise that is constructed to test the TLOs.

The TLOs proved difficult to interpret accurately and consistently. Descriptors of each TLO were needed to explain what meeting the standard would look like in practice, and conversely, what

not meeting the standard would look like.

- Recommendation 2. The standards should be accompanied by clear descriptors that help to unpack the standards to ensure consistency in the way they are understood.

Any auditing process must operate with a standards rubric that is given to students and used by staff within their History major. For an example of how a rubric might be constructed, see Figure 13 below.

- Recommendation 3. All students must be aware of the standards and how they will be assessed and audited. All staff must be aware of the standards and construct their courses using a standards rubric. All staff should teach to the standards.

Course programs will need to be comprehensively reorganised to take into account standards-based teaching from the first year. The trial audit has shown that retro-fitting current practices with the standards package will not be sufficient. It is unfair and unrealistic to expect student work to demonstrate students' ability to meet the standards if those standards have not been taught and developed across the students' entire academic careers.

- Recommendation 4: All History majors will need to undergo major revision in the light of the standards environment to ensure that students in their final year are able to meet the standards in an audit.

The trial raised the question of whether the discipline of History was passing students who should have failed, due to considerable pressure placed on staff to pass students. The standards environment will force historians to reconsider how student work is marked, and to be much more careful in marking against pre-determined and clearly transparent criteria.

- Recommendation 5. The standards process will force the discipline of History to look at what constitutes a passing grade.

## Conclusion

Although the trial did not produce a clearly usable accreditation tool, it did raise a whole raft of issues that needed to be addressed if such a tool and process was eventually to be developed and implemented. The History discipline in Australia needs to think much more deeply about what sort of student output could demonstrate meeting the TLOs and how to embed the TLOs much better into teaching practice.

## Postscript to The Accreditation Trial: The National Rubric

The accreditation trial did not immediately produce a useful evaluation tool nor a manageable accreditation process but it did bring to the foreground a range of problems that needed to be addressed if such a tool was to be employed in the future. The After Standards team invited a group of historians from across the country to a workshop in Darwin (Third National Workshop) to consider what we had learned from the failure of the trial and how to employ the experiences of the trial in a future accreditation model.

It soon became clear that the main problems with proving compliance that the trial had identified were related to the way the TLOs aligned with current pedagogical practice. Neither the learning outcomes nor the assessment tasks were aligned closely enough to the TLOs for

the purposes of compliance assessment. In order to accredit a program by proving that students meet the TLOs, it would be necessary for:

- teaching staff to familiarise themselves with the TLOs and to arrange their teaching so that the TLOs were taught incrementally from the first year;
- students to be made aware of the TLOs and how they would be taught and assessed throughout their program of study; and
- assessment tasks to be closely mapped against the TLOs.

The third workshop participants agreed that a National Rubric linked to explanatory descriptors that outlining the TLOs would help interpretation and guide teachers, students and ultimately assessors. That rubric could then be used to inform curriculum planning, act as a marking rubric for assessment tasks and be used as a guide for students so they knew what they would learn and whether they had in fact attained those TLOs at the end of their major.

The benefits of using a rubric are clear. Students could be taught with the rubric in mind. The students themselves would see what they had to achieve to pass the designated assessment task and an accreditation process using assessors to independently check the lowest passes in the course/unit would also use the rubric. Teaching, assessment and accreditation processes would be aligned with the TLOs.

At the completion of a major TLOs are either 'met' or 'not yet met', therefore the rubric should only have explanations for what constituted attainment or lack of attainment. The credit, distinction and high distinction levels could be developed by individual History disciplines according to their own chosen criteria.

It became very clear in our deliberations that each institution had its own context that needed to be taken into account. Some programs, for example, were keen to develop a capstone course/unit but others believed that would be very difficult to achieve. It would not be practicable to dictate how students should attain the TLOs or by what assessments they should be assessed. The institution of a standards-based environment in History could be achieved in the easiest and least burdensome way by using a rubric rather than introducing standardised testing, by stipulating what sort of assessment task should be employed or how their major should operate. That level of standardisation could ensure that the discipline of History had in place a mechanism and process whereby it would be easy to demonstrate that History graduates had met the TLOs.

It was concluded that the National Rubric should be made available to all historians via the AHA website. It would then be used to assist the discipline to demonstrate that students had attained the TLOs. The rubric would be designed to give maximum assistance to historians to demonstrate not only that their students had met the TLOs and demonstrate higher levels of achievement.

Figure 13: The National Rubric – Concise version

(For expanded and marking versions see Appendix C.)

No.	Threshold Learning Outcome	Does not yet meet TLO	Meets TLO
1	<b>Demonstrate an understanding of at least one period or culture of the past.</b>	Contains significant factual errors.	Demonstrates a factually accurate understanding of a period or culture of the past.
		Does not demonstrate an understanding of the period or society under examination.	
2	<b>Demonstrate an understanding of a variety of conceptual approaches to interpreting the past</b>	Lacks recognition of conceptual approaches historians use to interpret the past.	Demonstrates understanding of a variety of conceptual approaches historians use to interpret the past.
		Significantly misunderstands conceptual approaches historians use to interpret the past.	
		Misapplies conceptual approaches historians use to interpret the past.	Correctly applies selected conceptual approaches historians use to interpret the past.
3	<b>Show how History and historians shape their contemporary world.</b>	Does not explicate the role of the historian and historical debate in shaping their contemporary use(s) of the past.	Recognises the influence of historians and historical debate on present or past understandings of political, cultural, social or economic issues.
		Fails to recognize that 'History' is more than the past itself.	Assesses or interprets the impact the past has on concurrent or subsequent developments, up to and including the present.
		Fails to assess the impact of the past on subsequent periods of history.	
4	<b>Identify and interpret a wide variety of secondary and primary materials.</b>	Does not make appropriate use of primary and secondary sources.	Uses a range of secondary and primary sources.
		Does not scrutinize the historical integrity/bias of the source(s) under investigation.	Demonstrates understanding of meaning and recognition of biases in the secondary and primary sources used.
		Does not demonstrate competency in the basic skills of data retrieval, organisation and analysis.	Displays a range of basic skills in data retrieval, organisation and analysis to satisfy this TLO, including the ability to use a range of electronic and/or manual research tools.

Continued next page.

No.	Threshold Learning Outcome	Does not yet meet TLO	Meets TLO
5	Examine historical issues by undertaking research according to the methodological and ethical conventions of the discipline.	Plagiarised.	Employ research techniques responsibly. These include, but are not limited to, collection and analysis of archival, textual, oral and material sources.
5	Examine historical issues by undertaking research according to the methodological and ethical conventions of the discipline.	Plagiarised.	Employ research techniques responsibly. These include, but are not limited to, collection and analysis of archival, textual, oral and material sources.
		Misrepresents evidence.	
		Falsifies evidence.	
		Does not reference sources in accordance with disciplinary conventions.	
		Does not employ accepted research approaches and techniques.	
6	Analyse historical evidence, scholarship and changing representations of the past.	Does not include analysis linking evidence to argument or narrative.	Analyses evidence (relevant information drawn from primary or secondary sources) in support of an argument or narrative. 'Analysis' involves explicitly linking evidence to a specific argument or narrative.
		Ignores or misrepresents scholarly arguments or historical approaches.	Demonstrates an understanding that historical approaches have changed over time, and that these changes characterise and are embodied in 'Scholarship' (academic outputs, broadly defined).
		Fails to recognise how historical approaches have changed over time.	
7	Construct an evidence-based argument or narrative in audio, digital, oral, visual or written form.	Argument or narrative does not display a proficient level of English communication.	Displays a proficient level of English communication.
		Argument or narrative has major inconsistencies or contradictions.	Contains an argument or narrative that follows scholarly conventions.
		Evidence is not relevant to the argument or narrative.	
		Argument or narrative misuses historical terminology.	
8	Identify, and reflect critically on the knowledge and skills developed in their study of History.	Does not articulate a graduate's personal, vocational or intellectual development (lacks self-awareness of the student's own growth over the course of an academic career).	Demonstrates reflective practice (articulates key elements of the student's learning trajectory, including matters of personal, vocational or intellectual development).
		Reflects only on historical events in general instead of demonstrating reflective practice.	

### Notes

(1) To meet a TLO, ALL subsections must be satisfied (no "does not meet" boxes checked; all "meets" boxes checked). Failure in a subsection equates to failure of the TLO.

(2) To pass accreditation, ALL TLOs must be met.

# Chapter Seven: National Workshop 2 (Adelaide)

## Introduction

Between 8 and 9 July 2012, the After Standards Project organised a workshop in Adelaide preceding the Annual Meeting of the Australian Historical Association (AHA). This workshop built upon and continued activities that commenced at the first workshop held in April 2011 at the University of New South Wales.

## Goals and Participants

The overarching aim of the workshop was to continue the activities initiated at the first workshop in 2011, including the following specific goals:

- To update participants about the national standards environment and the After Standards project, including a presentation of the results of the accreditation trial
- To provide an opportunity for participants to reflect upon and share information about their teaching practices and experiences
- To showcase international best practice through the participation of international delegates
- To further develop a discipline Community of Practice around Teaching and Learning

Fifty delegates attended the workshop, including representatives from 22 of the 31 Australian tertiary institutions with a History major, the AHA, the History Teachers' Association of Australia (HTAA) and the Australian Council of Professional Historians Associations (ACPHA). This workshop extended the audience of the First National Workshops, with many institutions sending different delegates. Some institutions, such as the University of Western Sydney, made a conscious policy decision to send new delegates. Changes in nominated delegates also occurred because the Second National Workshop coincided with the AHA Annual Meeting; in some cases institutions sent delegates who were attending the meetings to present papers or for other reasons. Delegate changes, whether intentional or not, offered an opportunity to extend the community of practice, build additional capacity, and engage more broadly with the discipline.

The workshop benefited from the presence of three international leaders in History Scholarship of Teaching and Learning (SOTL):

- Professor Alan Booth (University of Nottingham, Vice-President History SOTL and National Teaching Fellow)
- Professor Lendol Calder (Augustana College)
- Associate Professor Leah Shopkow (Indiana University)

The principal objective of the workshop involved updating Australian historians on the Australian standards environment, its international context, and the activities of the After Standards Project since the first workshop at UNSW in April, 2011. To accomplish this goal, a sector and international briefing was provided, followed by institutional reports from six

Australian universities, focusing on steps taken at these institutions to prepare for a national standards regime. A centrepiece of the workshop was a report on the After Standards accreditation trial, presenting the results of assessing attainment of selected TLOs based on student work from the University of New South Wales (UNSW), the University of New England (UNE) and the University of Queensland (UQ). Since this trial revealed serious problems with the proposed accreditation process, new approaches were suggested, including an exploration of Capstone courses as an alternative location for standards compliance evaluation (including major-wide implications of a capstone, as revealed by the international SOTL literature), and a portfolio approach. The workshop provided an opportunity for historians to continue discussions about the challenges of standards implementation, in light of clear evidence that standards would in many cases not be met simply by evaluating existing student work, but would require more thoroughgoing renewal of history curricula. The uncertainties in the standards environment and questions about regulatory implementation, were summarised and emerged as a major concern of participants. Despite these uncertainties, overseas participants continued to encourage the discipline community to develop a coordinated response to a national standards environment.

The second objective of the Workshop was to provide participants with opportunities to reflect on the relationships between tertiary standards, their own teaching practices, and the growing body of SOTL knowledge related to History. Institutional reports revealed how the initiation of this discussion at the first workshop had affected teaching at selected Australian universities. A session on Capstones spurred discussion of cumulative, end-of-program experiences, while a new OLT project proposal focusing on History Honours – spawned by the first workshop – was presented to the discipline community for feedback and endorsement.

The third objective was to again showcase international best practice through the participation of international delegates. Sessions included a critique of history ‘rituals that impede student learning, the findings of the UK-based ‘History Passion Project’, and new approaches to introductory history courses. Delegates were thus given another opportunity (free from their administrative and research commitments) to engage with cutting edge SOTL in the History discipline. These presentations about international best practices were particularly valuable considering the project’s finding that meaningful standards must be integrated into all phases of a curriculum if they are to be met by outgoing students.

The fourth objective related to the opportunity the workshop provided to continue the nurturing of the Community of Practice around Teaching and Learning that had been initiated at the first workshop. This outcome was achieved through the workshop itself, particularly the opportunities for sustained face-to-face dialogue.



## Workshop Program

- “Sector and International Developments Briefing” (Sean Brawley, University of New South Wales)
- Institutional Reports: Macquarie University, University of Newcastle, University of Sydney, University of New England (UNE), Australian National University, University of Western Sydney
- Workshop 1: “Starting at the End: Disrupting the Rituals of the History Classroom” (Leah Shopkow, Indiana University)
- Workshop 2: “Honours” (Julie Kalman, Monash University)
- Workshop 3: “AHA Accreditation Trial” (Jennifer Clark, UNE)
- Workshop 4: “Talking about Teaching: Lessons from Being a History Teacher in Higher Education” (Alan and Jeanne Booth, University of Nottingham)
- Workshop 5: “Capstones” (Lisa Ford and Stuart Upton, UNSW)
- Workshop 6: “The End of the History Survey Course” (Lendol Calder, Augustana College)

## Evaluation Summary

Participants were asked to evaluate each of the Workshop’s plenary and parallel sessions. The overall workshop evaluation received very positive feedback as shown in the table below.

Table 3: Evaluation: Workshop 2 Feedback

Evaluation	Number	Percentage
Very useful	15	94
Somewhat useful	1	6
Not useful	0	0
Total	16	100

Additional evaluation results and summaries can be found at:  
<[afterstandards.omeka.net/items/show/29](http://afterstandards.omeka.net/items/show/29)>.

Qualitative feedback about individual presentations was overwhelmingly positive, reflecting an appreciation of the opportunity to discuss Teaching and Learning issues relevant to concerns at attendees’ home institutions:

- [Trial Accreditation workshop] *Appreciated the 'view from the ground' and experience. The ensuing debate was very helpful in teasing out space for development in our own institution.*
- [Capstone workshop] *ACPHA is interested in the idea of capstone courses because they offer the opportunity to prepare graduating students for work in the public/freelance history world. Although there are always going to be logistical problems, please don't write off the idea of work placement/experience. Thanks!*
- [Capstone workshop] *Helpful in laying out potential + problems of 'capstone' unit/courses. Group discussion - much appreciated.*
- [Capstone workshop] *As we are in the midst of this process at my university this was a timely discussion & opportunity for greater reflection.*

Overall qualitative feedback focused on the quality and friendliness of the workshop, expressing a desire for more frequent opportunities for pedagogical discussion:

- *Thanks again for a great couple of days – it's been an energising & fascinating event & I've enjoyed it very much. Can we make it an annual event?*
- *A lot of great ideas, good exchanges, lots of really fruitful discussions. I think the future is unclear, but this is an essential conversation that needs to continue.*
- *Excellent workshop. Made real progress with all the agendas set for discussion. Benchmarking as always exciting. Please keep meeting & keep the work going. Standards & QA work will have to be done, & History is in a strong position thanks to you!*
- *A great way to get up to speed on current ideas & issues in History teaching. The work you have done places the discipline in a very good position when the call for standards comes. Also one of the most friendly conferences I have ever attended.*
- *As with the first workshop, the opportunity to share and discuss teaching is invaluable & far too infrequent - It should be ongoing.*
- *A worthwhile exercise which I would recommend for all teaching academics in history. A really well organised conference with some well chosen speakers + a good collegial ambiance.*

One delegate on two separate occasions expressed concern that the project may be too prescriptive or may incorrectly assume that a consensus has been reached:

- *[Trial Accreditation workshop] I can't express strongly enough how this process needs to be extensively discussed further before taking a proposal to the AHA for the method of accreditation. Much too precipitous to do so now - not only is the Discipline not ready to concur on an approach, but the industry has not yet agreed or been informed on how auditing will be conducted. I'd encourage the AHA to take a role in auditing, but encourage much greater planning and conference about that. After Standards workshop 3???*
- *[Capstone workshop] I have residual concern at the conclusion of a range of these workshops that there is an assumption that consensus has been reached. I think the opposite is true: please don't assume that everyone will adopt a capstone, or that everyone will adopt the same type. Further conversation is necessary if there is an intent to proscribe this approach in auditing. But it's another reminder that there is too much prescription coming from NSW on other programs.*

While far from a majority viewpoint of delegates, such concerns struck a cautionary chord for the project and helped inform the subsequent planning for the Third National Workshop which provided further and sustained opportunities to test a variety of approaches.

## Concluding Summary

The After Standards Second National Workshop achieved its goals, including:

- It brought participants up to date about the After Standards Project and the national standards environment.
- It presented the results of the accreditation trial, offering an opportunity for comment, and presented a capstone-based assessment package as part of a potential accreditation alternative.
- It provided a rare and – judging from participant feedback – very welcome opportunity to discuss Teaching and Learning in a professional and scholarly yet collegial environment.
- It provided an opportunity for Australian historians to learn more about international best practice in Teaching and Learning from leaders in the field, especially international perspectives on pedagogical issues relevant to a standards environment
- It was successful in strengthening the community of practice established at the First National Workshop

The delegates who attended the workshop returned to their institutions better informed and much more deeply engaged with the emerging standards environment and its pedagogical implications. Delegate feedback indicates that, whether or not national standards are eventually implemented, the opportunity to discuss Teaching and Learning was rare and welcome – and relevant to developments at their own institutions.

Finally, this workshop has offered delegates the opportunity to critique proposals developed by the After Standards Project. This feedback, along with that from the other project workshops, has not only improved the quality of After Standards Project proposals and recommendations, but also increases the likelihood of institutional buy-in and ownership of any system of compliance with national standards that may be adopted in the future.

# Chapter Eight: Accreditation Drafting Workshop: The Third National Workshop, Darwin, 14-15 November 2012

## Introduction

At the conclusion of the second workshop in Adelaide it became clear that a number of options had emerged around the best way for individual institutions to demonstrate that their students had attained National Standards. Each option presented the discipline with both opportunities and difficulties. No one model suited every institution largely because of institutional constraints/culture and program diversity. The accreditation trial raised a number of issues that needed to be addressed in terms of practical ways forward and much debate had arisen over the comparative values of portfolios of student work versus capstone units as the best way of demonstrating student attainment. In order to formulate a recommendation to the Australian Historical Association (AHA) about how to proceed, more work was needed to tease out the relative merits of different ways of assessing student work and applying the Threshold Learning Outcomes (TLOs). Further, a new accreditation model taking into consideration the results of the trial needed to be finalised.

It was decided to establish a small discipline think tank to drill more deeply into these issues. The workshop was held in Darwin – the Northern Territory being the only state/territory not having been visited by the project – to provide an opportunity to brief local historians on the project and the broader sector context.

## Goals and participants

The final workshop had three main goals:

- To create a small think tank drawn from members of the discipline who had attended the previous workshops to spend concentrated time on approaches to standards compliance
- To produce by the end of the workshop position papers on the viability of various compliance approaches (options being standardised testing, e-portfolios and a capstone project with a reflective component) that could inform the finalisation of a preferred model of recommendation to the peak body.
- To commence work on the preferred model and its related processes in a document for submission to the peak body.

Along with the project team, those in attendance were:

- Dr Alexander Cook, Australian National University
- Associate Professor Deborah Gare, University of Notre Dame Australia
- Associate Professor Eleanor Hancock, University of New South Wales Canberra
- Associate Professor Adrian Jones, La Trobe University
- Dr Robert Mason, University of Southern Queensland
- Associate Professor Stephen Mullins, University of Central Queensland
- Professor Sarah Paddle, Deakin University
- Dr Leigh Straw, Edith Cowan University

This well-balanced group represented a range of constituencies within the discipline community.

## Workshop Program

Wednesday 14 November

Discussions amongst the think-tank as members arrived in Darwin.

Thursday 15 November

9.00-10.00 Welcome, sector briefing, overview outcomes

10.00-11.00 Group projects (1): Brainstorming-Advantages for learner and Discipline, Issues for Institution/Faculty/School

11.30-12.30 Group Projects (2): Literature Review

13.30-1400 Group Progress report

14.00-16.00 Group project (3) Concept Formulation

16.00-18.30 Sector briefing (Charles Darwin University)

Friday 16 November

9.00-11.00 Groups – Report Drafting

11.30-12.30 Groups – Report Drafting

14.00-15.30 Group Presentations

15.30-16.00 Wrap up

Saturday 17 November

9:00-16:00 Project team meeting

Sunday 18 November

8:00-12:30 Project team meeting

The workshop began with a further update on the national standards framework space, most notably including the recent pronouncements of the Higher Education Standards Panel (HESP) (HESP 2012a, HESP 2012b).

Participants at the workshop then divided into three working parties tasked to put together a proposal to submit to the AHA focusing on one of the three possible forms of compliance assessment. Each group worked off a template to standardise the responses (Appendix D). The first working party led by Jennifer Clark examined the feasibility of introducing standardised testing. The second working party led by Shawn Ross examined the role of the portfolio as a mechanism for students to present evidence that they had met the TLOs. The third working party led by Chris Dixon examined the capstone course/unit in the same light.

Each group discussed the issues related to the topic informed by their reading of relevant literature and made a case for or against their nominated option. Each group reported findings to the whole meeting followed by whole group discussion.

This work then informed the further project team discussion on a viable compliance model for the peak body. This new proposed accreditation model for the AHA is held in Appendix F.

## Summary

- The think tank explored three ways to produce outcomes that allowed students to demonstrate their capacity to meet all eight TLOs. These were standardised testing, portfolio construction and capstone research projects which included a reflective component.
- Each of the three options presented potential challenges in their implementation to History majors across diverse institutions operating within a range of constraints.
- The working party looking at standardised testing explored four types of standardised testing processes and determined that standardised testing of students' capacity to meet the TLOs through the use of a standardised marking rubric was the favoured option. The rubric would cover what constituted meeting the TLOs and what did not. Academic teaching staff would need to use the rubric to guide their curriculum development and help them to construct institutionally suitable final year assessments. The rubric would be given to students at the commencement of their studies so they knew what skills and knowledge they would need to acquire and demonstrate in order to graduate from the History major. Use of a marking rubric allowed a standardised assessment process to be used in conjunction with either a portfolio or a capstone research project or an alternative assessment approach. Standardised marking could achieve the benefits of standardised testing while still allowing for institutional diversity.
- The working party looking at the Capstone Project with Reflective Component identified a number of advantages to this option, but also a number of impediments to its implementation across the sector – particularly with regard to the diversity of institutional characteristics. Advantages were identified as:
  - The development of reflective learners and practitioners through independent research, skills that can be transferred to further study
  - Staff may be provided with a discipline-based response to the new regulatory context and, in some cases, assistance in defending the position of History within multi- or trans-disciplinary programs
  - The discipline community may be provided with a means of demonstrating comparability across the sector
  - If an institution applied a capstone across all of its majors, it would be provided with administrative consistencyDisadvantages were identified as:
  - A compulsory capstone course is a high-risk exercise for students – failure can have catastrophic consequences
  - The institution of a compulsory capstone for the history major independently of other disciplines may result in students being discouraged from enrolling in history
  - A compulsory capstone may be intensive to teach, particularly for smaller institutions
- The working party looking at the E-Portfolio option detailed a number of approaches that could be adopted and provided an extensive list of advantages and disadvantages for this model (see Appendix E 'Capstones', 4 and 5).

## Chapter Nine: Lessons Learned

Over the two years of its operation, the After Standards Project learned a number of lessons that are applicable to the discipline of history and many other areas of study within the Higher Education Sector. These lessons are as follows:

- Interrogating standards from the perspective of compliance necessitated modification of the standards themselves. The Australian Historical Association as peak body has already approved one revision and is currently considering a second as a direct consequence of this issue.
- Despite the commonalities of a discipline community, structural institutional variations produced difficulties when considering standardised approaches
- The accreditation trial revealed what appears a systemic issue around the reluctance to fail student work which also might be strongly suggestive of endemic grade inflation
- Projects of this kind can facilitate across a discipline community meaningful exchanges of ideas and practices relating to Teaching and Learning
- Projects of this kind can particularly assist colleagues who are isolated in smaller/regional institutions by involving them in wider practice and creating the potential for developing meaningful linkages in Teaching and Learning – for example shared practice, opportunities for students through cross-institutional study and the development of joint projects
- Face-to-face gatherings are the most meaningful and productive way of developing and sustaining a community of practice within a discipline
- Attempting to stimulate change in a discipline community is most effective when the project extends to the entire community rather than relying on a ‘change agent/champion’ model of a few institutions/individuals. Such an approach allows more engagement and ownership across the discipline
- This project’s findings transcend the discipline of history and are especially germane to other discipline communities with no previous experience of an accreditation/compliance environment
- The history discipline has been at the forefront of this debate in the broad Arts, Social Sciences and Humanities. This leadership has afforded the discipline certain opportunities; notably to shape a discourse around standards that is more closely aligned with the discipline’s signature pedagogy. However, such leadership brings perceived risks at an institutional level that the discipline may suffer from the vagaries of the student marketplace if other disciplines do not also adopt such a similarly rigorous approach
- Despite widespread engagement with the project and its goals, scepticism remains within the community towards a standards environment that transcends institutional processes and contexts
- As measured on a range of metrics, there is enthusiasm within the discipline about Teaching and Learning, however, individual colleagues under the burden of unrealistic workloads find it difficult to find the time to engage with the Scholarship of Teaching and Learning (SOTL) literature and plan/execute innovation in their own teaching. In some institutions, traditional tensions between the demands of teaching and research remain
- Individuals within disciplinary Communities of Practice can develop their own independent directions that empower members and deal with issues unique to their institutional context

- The engagement with a discipline peak body (in this case the AHA) has dramatically increased the project's ability to influence the discipline
- The project had been keen to understand developments at the secondary level, notably around the National Curriculum and so had invited the president of the History Teachers' Association of Australia (HTAA) to address the first workshop. The project's exposure through the AHA executive where other non-university stake-holders hold membership, however, revealed a need from not only the HTAA, but the Australian Council of Professional Historians Associations (ACPHA) to be more closely engaged with our efforts. The various state professional historians associations accredit individual historians, rather than programs so their input was deemed important. Both these organisations are now briefed on the project through the AHA Executive and two delegates from the national executives of both organisations attended the second national workshop.
- The compliance feasibility trial threw up a number of issues, some very alarming. The project team was compelled to stop and pause and remind itself that that is what the nature of a feasibility trial is all about. An initial air of despondency from the trial was transformed when it was realised how much we had learned and how it could shape the next step. While it will be for the discipline community and the AHA executive to judge, the project team feel that the final recommended approach has much merit
- The project found a limited range of possible approaches to demonstrating standards-compliance: major-wide portfolios, standardised-testing or research projects with a reflective component. Due to significant institutional structural differences and a lack of previous experience with external accreditation, the project concluded that in the first instance an accreditation model should be built around an approach that delivers the greatest flexibility and ease of application. The project concluded that this could be achieved by using a standardised national marking rubric applied to a sufficiently comprehensive body of student work such as a portfolio or a research project that includes a reflective component
- The SOTL literature suggests, and our examinations prove, that summative, end-of-program experiences (such as capstones or portfolios) are unlikely to be effective if they are merely added on to a major that has not been aligned to the TLOs. Indeed, the process of developing an end-of-program experience is likely to reveal existing weaknesses in a major
- Students must be made aware of the TLOs on entry to the major and TLOs must be comprehensively integrated throughout the major. Not all students will be able to produce a body of work that successfully demonstrates competence in all the TLOs if they are only introduced to the TLOs at the end of their major
- Teaching and Learning projects benefit most when they have in-built iterative processes that ensure frequent and vigorous critiques of progressive outcomes by the discipline community. This form of engagement helps to produce robust outcomes and help to ensure widespread ownership.

The After Standards Project has been a transformative experience for the discipline of History in Australia. The Project Team remains firmly of the belief that the good work attained can be sustained through the support of the peak body and the commitment of individual historians to the community of practice.



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Note: Surnames in **BOLD** are members/partners of the project.

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# Appendix A: Participant Questionnaire



15 February 2011

## After Standards - Benchmarking and Mapping Exercise

To provide *After Standards* with needed information and prepare you and your colleagues for the project, we have created this questionnaire. It will form the basis of a data repository that will assist you in the months ahead, serving both as a diagnostic tool for assessing your own institution and also as a quick and ready comparison with other institutions.

To get the most value from the April symposium, we require an understanding of the landscape in which your major is situated. We need you to fill out the attached forms, which gather and transmit data that will be used during the symposium to help you build a diagnostic curriculum mapping tool for history at your institution.

The data we require needs to be harvested from *all* of your course/subject guides *by 01 April 2011*. We appreciate this will take time, but this information is essential to the task of assessing the discipline as we prepare for - and try to influence - the compliance requirements of a national standards environment. You do not need to manipulate the raw data in any way; if all your course/subject guide materials exist electronically (published online in program handbook, for example), this task could be completed fairly easily by an administrative member of your department/school.

At most institutions today in Australia, history no longer exists in its own administrative unit (if it ever did in some places). When we use the term "department", therefore, it can refer to either an administrative unit dedicated to the teaching of history (e.g., a School of History), or to the collective of historians who teach together in a larger multi-disciplinary department or school. For the purpose of this exercise, "program" can also be read as "degree" or sometimes "course" (e.g., the Bachelor of Arts). Finally, "Course", indicates the subject, unit or paper in which a student is taught (e.g., HIST0001: Introduction to Australian History).

Thank you for your time and effort; we look forward to seeing you all in April.

Sean Brawley, UNSW  
Jennifer Clark, UNE  
Chris Dixon, UQ  
Lisa Ford, UNSW  
Shawn Ross, UNSW



1. Your institution

2. Your faculty:

3. In what school or department does History reside?

4. What is your typical full-time staff complement?

5. In a typical year, how many sessional staff do you employ?

6. Do you have progression from 1st to 2nd to 3rd to 4th level courses (e.g., 100-, 200-, 300- and 400-numbered courses) in your undergraduate program (check all that apply)?

1st to 2nd     1st to 2nd/3rd     2nd to 3rd     2nd to 3rd/4th     3rd to 4th     None

7. If your institution does have progression, clarify your answer to Question 6 as necessary (e.g., details about nature of progression between levels, exceptions, etc.).

8. How many courses must a student complete at each level to meet the requirements of the major?

Level 1 / 100 / 1000	<input style="width: 50px; height: 20px; border: 1px solid red;" type="text"/>	Level 2 / 200 / 2000	<input style="width: 50px; height: 20px; border: 1px solid red;" type="text"/>
Level 3 / 300 / 3000	<input style="width: 50px; height: 20px; border: 1px solid red;" type="text"/>	Level 4 / 400 / 4000	<input style="width: 50px; height: 20px; border: 1px solid red;" type="text"/>

9. How many Units of Credit (UoC) or Credit Points is a typical course worth?

10. How many subjects / courses and UoC are required to complete a major in History?

Courses       UoC

11. How many courses do you have available for students enrolled in your major?

12. How many of the constituent courses in your major have explicit Learning Outcomes?

 All     Some     None

13. Where are course Learning Outcomes made available to students (check all that apply)?

- Course Guide       School Website       Faculty Handbook  
 Other Faculty Website       University Handbook       Other University Website  
 Other      Specify

14. Does your major utilise a "Gateway" course - a required first-year course that introduces students to fundamental skills, abilities and knowledge - as an entry point?  Yes  No

15. If you answered "yes" to Question 14, please provide the following information about your Gateway course(s):

Gateway Title

Gateway Description

Gateway course options, alternatives, or other details

16. Does your major utilise a "Capstone" course - a required course in the final year of study that reflects upon earlier coursework, offering students an opportunity to demonstrate that they have achieved institutional and disciplinary goals for learning?  Yes  No

17. If you answered "Yes" to Question 16, please provide the following information about your Capstone course(s).

Capstone Title

Capstone Description

Capstone course options, alternatives, or other details

18. Does your major utilise an electronic portfolio system at either the course level (i.e., students produce multiple portfolios for different courses) and / or program level (i.e., a single portfolio for the entire major)?

Course level  Program level

19. If your major utilises an electronic portfolio system, please provide the following information:

ePortfolio software in use

ePortfolio information (contents or other details)



20. Does your major utilise any other system or approach to ensure that graduates have attained the Graduate Attributes or other expectations you have set for them?

Yes  No

21. If you answered "yes" to Question 20, please describe the system or approach in use:

22. Do you have external reviews of student performance?

Yes  No

23. If you answered yes to Question 22, please describe when external review is used and how it works:

24. At what administrative level(s) have you defined Graduate Attributes (check all that apply)?

GAs at the *insitutional* level.  GAs at the *Faculty* level.  GAs *specific to the History major*

GAs at level not listed above

Specify:

25. Do you teach to Honours level?

Yes  No

26. If you do teach an Honours year, what is the breakdown in percentage terms between coursework and thesis? How long is the thesis?

Coursework percentage  Thesis percentage  Thesis length (words)

27. Do you have a pre-Honours course?

Yes  No

28. If you answered yes to Question 27, please provide the following information about your pre-Honours course(s).

Pre-Honours Title

Pre-Honours Description

Further Information (options, alternatives, etc)

29. Do you offer postgraduate programs of study in History?

Yes  No



30. If you answered "yes" to Question 29, please indicate which postgraduate programs you offer (check all that apply):

Graduate Diploma     Coursework MA     Research MA     PhD

Other

Specify:

31. Do you double mark in any courses or programs?

Yes     No

32. If you answered "yes" to Question 31, under what circumstances do you double mark?

33. Do you use external reviewers in any courses or programs?

Yes     No

34. If you answered "yes" to Question 33, please explain the circumstances under which you use external reviewers:

35. Have you mapped the Learning Outcomes for each course against Graduate Attributes, and if so at what levels (check all that apply)?

- Yes, course Learning Outcomes mapped against institutional Graduate Attributes.
- Yes, course Learning Outcomes mapped against program Graduate Attributes.
- Yes, course Learning Outcomes mapped against discipline or major Graduate Attributes.
- No, Learning Outcomes have not been mapped against Graduate Attributes at any level.

36. Did your School / Discipline provide feedback to the ALTC National Standards project for History?

Yes     No

37. If you answered "yes" to Question 36, how would you characterise that feedback?

38. What do you see as the major issues facing the teaching of history at your institution as we move into a new regulatory environment built around national standards?

39. Below you will find a list of the eight "Threshold Learning Outcomes" (standards) that have been endorsed for History. Please rank these in importance from the perspective of your School / Discipline.

Rank	<u>Threshold Learning Outcome</u>
<input type="checkbox"/>	Demonstrate an understanding of at least one period or culture of the past.
<input type="checkbox"/>	Demonstrate an understanding of a variety of conceptual approaches to interpreting the past.
<input type="checkbox"/>	Show how History and historians shape the present and future.
<input type="checkbox"/>	Identify and interpret a wide variety of secondary and primary materials.
<input type="checkbox"/>	Examine historical issues by undertaking research according to the methodological and ethical conventions of the discipline.
<input type="checkbox"/>	Analyse historical evidence, scholarship and changing representations of the past.
<input type="checkbox"/>	Construct an evidence-based argument or narrative in audio, digital, oral, visual or written form.
<input type="checkbox"/>	Identify, and reflect critically on, the knowledge and skills developed in their study of History.

40. Proposals for "Threshold Learning Outcomes" allow institutions to add two additional Outcomes of their own. What two additional outcomes, if any, would your School / Discipline add?

Additional TLO 1	
Additional TLO 2	

39. Please list the programs in which a major or course of study in History is available at your institution.

<u>Program or course of study</u>	
<input type="button" value="Add"/>	<input type="button" value="Del"/>

40. Please list all Graduate Attributes, indicating the level at which each GA resides.

		<u>Level</u>	<u>Graduate Attribute</u>
<input type="button" value="Add"/>	Institution Program Major		
<input type="button" value="Del"/>			

When you have completed this form, press the button below to submit your results. No further changes will be possible.

To save a form in progress for further editing, simply press "save" in Adobe Acrobat or Adobe Reader.

Please save a copy of this form for your records.

Submit Form via Email

## Appendix B: Answers to the Question: What do you see as the major issues facing the teaching of history at your institution as we move into a new regulatory environment built around national standards?

Answers to the Question: What do you see as the major issues facing the teaching of history at your institution as we move into a new regulatory environment built around national standards?

Institution	Issues raised
1	Our small size will make it necessary for us to continue to benchmark against other higher education institutions and to network within the discipline.
2	1. That the Standards do not function to curb innovations in assessment, teaching and learning. 2. That the standards are only ever conceived as minimal. 3. That the standards are not determined by DEEWR or some other agency of state, but rather that they emerge in cross-institutional dialogues conducted (most likely) under the auspices of the AHA.
3	It is uncertain at this stage what will be the outcomes from this new environment.
4	The major issues that we face are financial difficulties and the consequent problems of loss of staff, but this is a separate issue to the new regulatory environment.
5	Cost pressures forcing "rationalization" of course offerings, and pressure on how intensively students are assessed. Mounting workload pressures resulting from funding cuts. Increasing managerial interference and encroachment on disciplinary and staff autonomy. Increasing emphasis on box-ticking against quantitative performance indicators which bear only a tenuous relationship to what happens in actual courses.
6	At present we are focused on establishing capstone units. We are also moving toward creating greater structure in the major and in honours.
7	We only have 12 units, 5 of those are drawn from other disciplines and Schools which may not share the same Learning Outcomes. We do not offer the range of specialist units available elsewhere due to number of students. Most of the students doing History are also enrolled in Education, with its own Standards (as prescribed by NSWIT). The administrative load for reporting and monitoring standards will rest with the one continuing staff member teaching into the program.
8	Meeting national standards while maintaining reasonable workloads for both staff and students
9	An artificial restriction on the number of units (courses) which can be offered as a result of inflexible rules governing the structure of the BA
10	After a number of years with a small number of historians on staff, we have recently been joined by several new colleagues. We are therefore now able to review our teaching areas. The review of history teaching standards has come at a good time for us to look at best practice in the area.
11	The main issue for our staff will be dissatisfaction that a further layer of bureaucracy/compliance procedures is/are being imposed on them, adding to workload etc. Our School is already recognised for its excellence in teaching and student retention etc., and a number of staff have won faculty and university teaching awards. They take teaching very seriously and tend to resent being micro-managed when they have already proved proficiency and commitment to teaching and learning. Also, the Faculty revised its program structure and program requirements a few years ago, requiring students to take more 'upper level' (i.e. 2nd and 3rd year) subjects dispensing with progression (i.e. the difference between 2nd and 3rd year courses). Our School vigorously opposed these changes, but now they have been made, the framework has been set.
12	The major challenge will be to balance the need to ensure rigorous quality control while maintaining the opportunity for innovation and the benefits of diversity in pedagogy. We also need to find ways to ensure rigorous quality control while minimizing the bureaucratic workload that can accompany such processes.
13	Ensuring quality of content and learning outcomes, with student engagement. Balancing the budget (and workload) with the ability to offer discipline specific capstone courses - a particular problem in regional universities, where numbers are lower and History courses are embedded in multiple majors and programs.

14	National standards are likely to require close mapping of achievement of TLOs, which in turn will probably require us to move towards a clearer progression from level 2 to level 3. Given relatively small numbers of students this will pose difficulties for the range of courses we can offer. At present 2/3 level courses are interchangeable and we offer them in alternate years to maximise variety across the 4 semesters of 2nd and 3rd year. This will become more difficult if we need a clear differentiation of 2 and 3 level courses. Otherwise, the new environment offers definite opportunities to strengthen the program and improve <u>institutional perceptions of its value and coherence</u> .
15	We have no concerns with regard to the new regulatory environment. Indeed we welcome it. We have other 'major issues' to worry about!
16	1. The need to develop basic writing and research skills in first-year students, so that students take longer to develop higher-level historical skills. 2. Students' increasing and often unreflective reliance on poor-quality information from the internet, rather than entering into the scholarship on a topic.
17	The demands of service teaching and increased student loads as a result; casualisation; ERA impacts on the way research agendas are framed and funded; reduction of teaching relief in ARC applications; increasing administrative demands and roles; institutional bias towards 'work ready' courses and programs; increasing <u>divides between those who mainly teach' and those who mainly 'research'</u> .
18	- Staff resistance to changing teaching practice - Ensuring standards are implemented at unit/subject level in meaningful (rather than peripheral) ways - Adjustment of disciplinary conventions to changing student body (as uni ugrads increase in number).
19	Inadequate staffing, inadequate time and resources to deal with administrative needs.
20	Sufficient funding to enable scholars to maintain a productive research life, as well as teach with passion and care. Respect for individual differences among teachers who employ different pedagogical method.
21	1) That the regulatory environment doesn't create unnecessary work. 2) That the national standards are not excessively deterministic about teaching history.

# Appendix C: Example of Mapping Undertaken by After Standards Project Team

## Institution 1 Level 300 Courses

Course	LO No	Suggested relevant TLO	Learning Outcome	Related assessments	Assessments - not explicitly related
A		1. Demonstrate an understanding of a variety of conceptual approaches to interpreting the past.	A broad overview of environmental history themes		Research Essay
		2. Demonstrate an understanding of a variety of conceptual approaches to interpreting the past. 6. Analyse historical evidence, scholarship and changing representations of the past.	Knowledge of the debates in over [sic] historical interpretation, particularly in relationship to two topics studied in depth		Seminar Paper Seminar Oral presentation
		3.4. Identify and interpret a wide variety of secondary and primary materials 5. Examine historical issues by undertaking research according to the methodological and ethical conventions of the discipline 6. Analyse historical evidence, scholarship and changing representations of the past.	Research skills; knowledge of and experience in using key sources, including internet sources, and displaying competence in being able to discriminate among interpretations using evidence		Seminar Participation
B	G1	7. Construct an evidence based argument or narrative in audio, digital, oral, visual or written form.	achieve a higher level of critical thinking and clear expression		
	G2	4. Identify and interpret a wide variety of secondary and primary materials 6. Analyse historical evidence, scholarship and changing representations of the past.	demonstrate enhanced abilities to assess and manage information		
	G3	7. Construct an evidence based argument or narrative in audio, digital, oral, visual or written form.	attain a higher level of communication in written form		
	G4	8. Identify and reflect on the knowledge and skills developed in their study of history	comprehend the transportability of their generic and discipline specific skills into career opportunities		
	H1	3. Show how history and historians shape the present and the future	understand the social role, impact and responsibilities of historians		
	H2	6. Analyse historical evidence, scholarship and changing representations of the past.	understand the role of evidence in historical debate		
	H3	6. Analyse historical evidence, scholarship and changing representations of the past.	understand evaluation of historical interpretation		
	H4	6. Analyse historical evidence, scholarship and changing representations of the past.	understand the concept of historiography and how it informs historical narrative and debate		
	H5	4. Identify and Interpret a wide variety of secondary and primary materials 6. Analyse historical evidence, scholarship and changing representations of the past.	understand that the past can be examined through written and visual documents, architecture, film, museum exhibitions and memory		
	A1		This assignment allows students the opportunity to apply the results of learning from assigned readings and their discussion in seminars to a form of public history of their choice.		Short assignment: History in the "Outside World"
	A2	7. Construct an evidence based argument or narrative in audio, digital, oral, visual or written form.	This assignment allows students the opportunity to apply the results of learning from assigned readings and their discussion in seminars to a school of history or event in world history, and to develop skills in oral communication and communication by poster or power point.		Major Project: Written and Oral components, Poster or Power Point presentation
	A3	2. Demonstrate an understanding of a variety of conceptual approaches to interpreting the past. 7. Construct an evidence based argument or narrative in audio, digital, oral, visual or written form.	Individual participation in discussion reinforces understanding of key concepts and issues, and gives practice in articulating complex ideas and debating.		Class participation in seminar discussions



## Appendix D: Template for Working Party Report

Option [Capstone with Reflective Component/Standardised Testing/E-Portfolio]

1. Review team members
2. Summary of approach
3. Document if and where this approach is used in other disciplines
4. What are the advantages of this approach? (include engagement with the scholarly literature, and advantages for learner, staff, institution, disciplinary community)
5. What are the disadvantages of this approach? (include engagement with the scholarly literature, advantages for learner, staff, institution, disciplinary community)
6. Can this approach work at AQF Level 8 and AQF Level 9?
7. How does the approach deal with the failure to fail?
8. What are the requirements on academic staff and departments to prepare and deliver the required materials/reporting for evaluation?
9. What is the nature and content of feedback provided to institutions?
10. What are the resource requirements (time, labour and dollars) on the AHA to administer this process?
11. How could the review process be subject to Quality Assurance
12. Timeframe and process for operationalisation
13. Does this process lend itself to metrics comparison?
14. Can this process form a basis for international comparison?

# Appendix E: Report of the Working Parties (Third National Workshop)

This section holds the reports completed at the Third National Workshop.

## Capstone with Reflective Component

### 1) Team Members

Chris Dixon, Sarah Paddle, Alexander Cook, and Robert Mason

### 2) Summary of approach:

Capstone courses have various potential functions: they provide opportunities for students to showcase the skills of knowledge acquired over the course of a major; they give students a chance of applying those skills to independent research projects or other creative expressions of history; and they can serve as a vehicle for building a sense of community amongst final-year students. In addition, they can provide a means by which students can demonstrate they have achieved the appropriate Threshold Learning Outcomes (TLOs). The implementation of capstones would necessitate some balancing between these objectives.

Capstone courses promise many advantages as a means of assessing Level 7 TLOs. As Jones, et al, have noted in a recent article in the *Journal of American History*, “The capstone course, designed to bring together all aspects of the undergraduate educational experience and allow students to put into practice the skills and knowledge they have acquired, is becoming a standard feature of academic departments across U.S. colleges and universities” (2012: 1095).<sup>2</sup>

### 3) Use of capstones in other contexts:

“This facet of the undergraduate curriculum,” Jones, et al, have argued, “goes by several names: capstone, senior experience, senior seminar, colloquium, or independent thesis. Though the terms differ, as do the specifics of the courses, a culminating research-focused course has become a core component of the history major. To be sure, undergraduate research papers and honors theses have long been a part of history curricula. Yet implementation of a required ‘capstone experience’ for all majors has gathered momentum recently in history departments and in many other disciplines as well” (2012: 1095).

Distinct Capstone courses, taught at the exit point of a History major, to the entire graduating cohort, offer a number of potential advantages for students, institutions, and the disciplinary community. Capstone courses are already utilised in a number of disciplines, and have been adopted by some History programs internationally. In 2011, Liz van Acker and Janis Bailey noted that just 2.7% of “later year students in Australasia had a ‘capstone experience’ compared to 36.8%” of their counterparts in the United States (van Acker and Bailey, 2011).

Although Capstones are relatively common in a number of degree programs, it should be noted that Capstones used by professional programs bear little resemblance to those in humanities disciplines: students enrolling in professional programs usually enter their program as part of a much more coherent “community,” and their programs are typically much more structured than they are for students in the arts, or even social sciences.

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<sup>2</sup> Note that their sample group of 30 was unrepresentative of the wider US higher-education system.

Those disciplinary differences underpin a number of potential disadvantages arising from the use of capstones as a means of assessing TLOs, and reflect fundamental questions concerning the purpose and format of History capstone courses. Using capstones as a means of demonstrating the achievement of TLOs is fraught with challenges of implementation and resourcing. These challenges are logistical as well as pedagogic, and reflect the range of possible objectives of capstones. Is it feasible to apply capstones to all History programs across the country? Are we conceiving capstones as a means of helping to make our students 'work ready'? Or are we preparing students to move onto Honours or Postgraduate studies? To what extent can both objectives be met in a single capstone?

While endorsing the general merit of capstones, for both students and the discipline, it should be recognised that the possibility of using capstone courses as a universal solution to the problem of quality assurance in History may be limited by the range of institutional ecosystems and policies across Australia. While seeking to realise the TLOs, individual programs may need to adapt their 'capstone experiences' to reflect local practices and realities.

#### 4) Advantages:

For learners:

- Provide an opportunity to reflect on what it means to be a historian;
- Have the capacity to empower students to reflect on their discipline;
- Provides a scaffolded experience of independent research;
- Can encourage a sense of community;
- Can help students think about their capabilities, and what they have learned;
- Provide an opportunity to showcase their acquired skills and knowledge ;
- Can be a bridge to honours and/or postgraduate programs;

For staff:

- Provide a discipline-based response to the new regulatory context;
- In some institutions, might assist in defending staff levels and the position of the History discipline within multi- or trans-disciplinary programs;
- Might better prepare students for Honours or postgraduate studies;
- Might offer an economical means of proving that students are meeting the relevant Threshold Learning Outcomes.

For the discipline community:

- Provide a means of demonstrating comparability across the sector;

For the institution:

- If applied across all majors have the advantage of administrative consistency.

## 5) Disadvantages:

For learners:

- Might be a high-risk exercise: what happens if they fail?
- There are also questions of transition: As Jones, et al, note, “If students are not prepared for the transition in identity from student to historian demanded by the capstone course, they will find the prospect overwhelming and lack the motivation necessary to complete a successful research project” (2012: 1109).

For staff:

- If History capstones are introduced independently of other disciplines, they might discourage students from enrolling in History.
- Possibly intensive to teach;
- As Jones, et al, have noted, “teaching the capstone course to students unprepared for the research and writing requirements will be frustrating for faculty as well” (2012: 1109);
- Imposing a capstone on existing programs can be problematic. Jones, et al, have recognised that a “gratifying outcome for both students and teachers cannot be achieved if the capstone course is merely plunked atop an otherwise unchanged content-laden curriculum” (2012: 1110). Shapiro (2003) has emphasised the importance of “holistic curriculum development” that builds “skills cumulatively from first-year induction to the final-year capstone process”;

For the discipline community:

- Resourcing implications if the capstone needs to be taught every semester;
- There has been a common assumption that a History Capstone should involve an extended research project entailing primary source research. Logistical questions aside, does that type of primary research exercise contradict the idea of ‘synthesis’, which has been identified as one of the objectives of capstones (Holdsworth, Watty and Davies, 2009, p. 2)?

For the institution:

- Resourcing implications if the capstone needs to be taught every semester;
- May delay graduations and entail additional staff time;

## 6) Applicability to Levels 8 and 9?

There is potential to apply a capstone model to Level 8. Indeed, the two major components of Honors degrees – a theory and method/historiography course, and a research thesis – would be constituent elements in most Level 7 capstone courses.

At Level 9, the picture is more murky, partly because only a handful of students enrol in History postgraduate coursework programs, and partly because there is – at present – little consistency within postgraduate coursework programs in the humanities.

## 7) How does the capstone model deal with the “failure to fail.”?

This is potentially problematic. Requiring students to pass a capstone prior to graduation presumably means the capstone will need to be offered every semester. This problem could be obviated if ‘capstone’ is interpreted to mean a(ny) course taken during the latter stages of a program.

An alternate ‘capstone’ model:

Remembering that an underlying objective is to provide a mechanism for demonstrating that students have attained Level 7 TLOs, it is reasonable to ask whether the Capstone experience be captured in distinct third-year courses?

- What would those courses look like – and what would they seek to achieve? (Is it possible to consider all third-year courses as somehow capturing the ‘capstone’ experience?)
- At what point in their program should students be allowed to enrol in these courses?

## 8) Reporting requirements:

Students’ work will need to be retained for external evaluation.

## 9) Nature and content of feedback provided to institutions?

External assessors will judge whether the work has demonstrated the TLOs.

## 10) Resource implications for the AHA?

Any accreditation system would require government support. In practice, evaluating capstones is probably less onerous for the AHA than some of the alternative models.

## 11) Could the process be subject to Quality Assurance?

Yes.

## 12) Timeframe for implementation:

Implementation would need to be done in consultation with individual history programs. We anticipate it would take at least five years to implement a coherent, discipline-wide program of capstone courses.

## 13) Does this process lend itself to metrics comparison?

No. Because one size will not fit all, such comparisons will be unhelpful.

## 14) Can this process form a basis for international comparison?

Yes

## Standardised Testing

### 1) Team Members

Jennifer Clark, Leigh Straw, Adrian Jones

### 2) Summary of Approach

Internationally, there are two major standardised testing models, the Collegiate Learning Assessment (CLA) test used in the United States and the Assessment of Higher Education Learning Outcomes (AHELO) test developed in the OECD countries (Benjamin, 2008; Coates and Richardson, 2012). These tests measure, in a systematic and comparative way, a student's capacity for critical thinking, problem-solving, analytical reasoning and written communication. If standardised testing is about measuring the value added by a university education then it must include both a first year input measure and a third year output measure. If not, then standardised testing can be an output measure only.

Our working party suggests there are four options that represent varying degrees of standardised testing that could be considered in the Australian higher education environment. They will produce different data sets for different purposes:

*Option 1.* Standardised testing along the lines of the CLA and the AHELO (Benchmarked performance indicators with marketing potential nationally and internationally)

*Option 2.* Student self-reported skill development assessment set into the Course Experience Questionnaire (CEQ) (Students need to be able to articulate what they have learned eg: oral presentation and writing skills, critical thinking skills, and programs need to know how students have responded to what they have learned.) (Douglass *et al*, 2012).

*Option 3.* TLO standardised marking rubric for a capstone assessment task with centralised reporting of results (Frames a truly disciplinary community consistent with diverse approaches and content but still demonstrating compliance with the national standards. There is a basis there for a national disciplinary conversation about professional education.)

*Option 4.* AHA developed test for administering within the institution in the first and third years for diagnostic purposes and reporting to TEQSA but with no centralised reporting of results.

### 3) Document if and where this approach is used in other disciplines

Standardised tests are regularly used for students who have completed training and want to enter professional practice, for example, in accountancy and medicine.

4) What are the advantages of this approach? (include engagement with the scholarly literature, and advantages for the learner, staff, institution, disciplinary community).

Advantages of standardised testing include:

- convenient national and potentially international benchmarking (Coates and Richardson, 2012);
- encourages the development of an effective cross-institutional discipline community (Coates and Richardson, 2012);
- promotes competition to obtain a market edge and improve student outputs;

- providing evidence to increase institutional reputation;
- provides a level of professional credibility for graduating students;
- introduces an element of accountability in programs which may not normally subject themselves to any external scrutiny (Douglass *et al*, 2012, p. 318; Malandra, 2008, p. 63);
- developing a 'robust quality culture' (Coates and Richardson, 2012, p. 55);
- the promotion of transparency (Coates and Richardson, 2012, p. 56); and
- evidence-based institutional reform (Coates and Richardson, 2012, p. 57).

Advantages of the following variations of standardised testing in the Australian context include:

*Option 1.*

- This is the most complete and comprehensive form of standardised testing and provides opportunities for international benchmarking.

*Option 2.*

- The way a student feels about their education is emphasised. They are able to tell a story of their ongoing development of skill sets;
- Students chart their emergence as professionals and measure their professional confidence;
- This is subjective data not covered by the CLA or AHELO processes;
- Could also be used for reporting to TEQSA; and
- Permits the tracking of self-authorship.

*Option 3.* This option comes from the results of the accreditation audit trial undertaken by the After Standards Project. It became clear that if auditing student outcomes was done properly then all students and staff would need to know the marking rubrics against which they would be tested;

A standardised marking rubric would still allow institutions to have a diversity of assessments while still teaching to the standards. Students would be tested against the same standards but would have the opportunity to engage in individualised assessment tasks;

- opportunity to create a data base at the AHA that would allow for national benchmarking;
- lighter touch standardised testing; and
- minimal cost and administrative burden.
- provides data for quality assurance;
- provides objective data for quality improvement;
- well aligned with the current discipline-approved TLOs; and
- staff are given a resource they can use.

*Option 4.*

- Purpose built to show the existing capabilities of the students so that programs can be better tailored to meet their actual needs. The test would also show what value the programs have added; and
- top and tail provides a useful data set.

5) What are the disadvantages of this approach? (include engagement with the scholarly literature, advantages for learner, staff, institution, disciplinary community)

Disadvantages of standardised testing include:

- potential for fudging results by selecting students to sit the test;
- huge cost of development and administration of CLA and AHELO type tests;
- would need a committee to develop the test bank which would be time consuming and costly;
- the tests would need to be reviewed and revised and redeveloped every year creating ongoing costs;
- student resentment at generic skills testing because it would reflect the style of tests done in high school;
- staff resentment because the testing may reduce opportunities for innovation and diversity in teaching styles and content;
- curriculum narrowing to pursue good results in the standardised tests (Banta, 2007);
- there is no advantage in pursuing institutional comparisons because students are different and join programs for different reasons and institutions offer different experiences (Banta, 2007);
- there is unresolved public debate about the value of standardised tests in general; and
- in order to decrease costs in administration and marking there will be a tendency to emphasise multiple choice questions which may not be well suited to testing higher order skills connected with History.

Disadvantages of the following variations of standardised testing in the Australian context include:

*Option 1.*

- This is the most complete and comprehensive form of standardised testing and is consequently costly and time consuming to develop and administer.

*Option 2.*

- This option comes with all of the problems of subjective self-reporting including bias, inaccuracy, optimism, self-promotion, unrealistic expectations etc
- how much value is there in self-reporting perception? This data is not objective; and



- it is hard to undertake national and international benchmarking because different universities have different cohorts who come in at different levels.

*Option 3.*

- Any standardised marking process for testing would require much stronger engagement with TLOs by all staff. This would require an education program; and
- This would require a web presence for the rubric and the TLOs with explanatory information which has to be built and develop.

*Option 4.*

- requires considerable work by the AHA to develop their own test for their own purposes;
- could be time consuming and costly to the AHA;
- no opportunities for international benchmarking;
- no centralised function used for internal purposes; and
- students enter and leave programs at different times so it is difficult to track students across first to third year.

## 6) Can this approach work at AQF level 8 and AQF level 9?

Level 8 and 9 is the serious beginning of one's research apprenticeship and that is very much individualised. The idea of standardised testing better suits the undergraduate level 7.

## 7) How does the approach deal with the failure to fail?

*Option 1.* There is no impact on the students but the program would need reassessment and review.

*Option 2.* There is no impact on the student because of the results they report but there is information here for course improvement processes.

*Option 3.* If the student fails they would have to do the assessment again but the elements that contributed to their failure are transparent. There may be less chance of failure because the criteria for assessment is clear from the beginning of the exercise. Both staff and students are aware of how the assessment will be judged. Once alignment of the curriculum occurs then students know what to expect from their assessment tasks (Coates and Richardson, 2012, p. 61).

*Option 4.* No impact on the student. The program could be reassessed and revised as a result of the tests' outcomes but without any centralised reporting there is no imperative to do even that.

## 8) What are the requirements on academic staff and departments to prepare and deliver the required materials/reporting for evaluation?

*Option 1.* This would be delivered online to all students from a centralised body. This would be a highly automated process. There are high costs involved in developing the tests but low costs

in marking and collating the data.

*Option 2.* This would be delivered online to all students from a centralised body.

*Option 3.* This requires staff to engage with the marking rubric by teaching to the rubric and using the rubric when marking. Students will have to be given copies of the rubric and have the implications explained to them. Staff would be responsible for sending a spreadsheet with the data to the centralised repository. This process would not require the collection, collation and submission of any student work. Only the results would be tabulated and submitted.

*Option 4.* This would require staff to administer the test in a way appropriate for their institution. Because it tests both first and third year students, there would be considerable workload to manage the data.

## 9) What is the nature and content of feedback provided to institutions?

*Option 1.* Institutions would receive raw scores and breakdown scores across capabilities.

*Option 2.* Institutions would receive a qualitative summary capturing student responses.

*Option 3.* Institutions would receive raw scores and a breakdown aligned to each TLO.

*Option 4.* The institution would be responsible for organising their own feedback and determining with whom they share the data.

## 10) What are the resource requirements (time, labour and dollars) on the AHA to administer this process?

*Option 1.* Very costly to develop but resource free for staff to administer.

*Option 2.* Costly to develop and costly to report back because of its qualitative nature.

*Option 3.* Not costly to develop or administer because it will be built into each institution's marking scheme. This could make marking more efficient and effective thereby saving time in the long run.

*Option 4.* Costly to develop and depending on how each institution wants to use the material costs may vary but costs will be borne by the institution.

## 11) How could the review process be subject to Quality Assurance?

Standardised testing will:

- provide comparable data as a basis for review and revision;
- provide evidence to any external interested party about the quality of programs; and
- require input from external providers to help develop the tests.

## 12) Timeframe and process for operationalisation.

*Option 1.* This process requires the longest timeframe for development and administration of the tests. The process could take up to 12 months and would include development, assessor reports and regular updates and revision. The test can be administered at any time online so there is no pressure to collect or collate work at a given time.

*Option 2.* A small group could develop the questionnaire which could be used in subsequent years and so reduce revision costs. The assessment can be administered at any time online so there is no pressure to collect or collate work at a given time.

*Option 3.* The rubric should be easily available, so staff could be referring to it at any time in the program. Students should have access to the rubric when they begin their final capstone unit or when they begin their folio collection process. The submission of final data would fit the marking schedule of the institution. This form of standardised testing does not require time to collect or assess work by an external authority.

*Option 4.* This process would take some time to develop and constantly update and renew. There would be a lead time for development but because there is no centralised function the time for administering the test and collating the data would be at the discretion of the institution.

13) Does this process lend itself to metrics comparison?

Yes it does. Standardised testing is metrics driven.

14) Can this process form a basis for international comparison?

*Option 1.* YES

*Option 2.* NO

*Option 3.* NO

*Option 4.* NO

## Portfolios

### 1) Review team members

- Dr Shawn Ross, School of Humanities, UNSW, Sydney
- Associate Professor Eleanor Hancock, School of Humanities and Social Sciences, UNSW Canberra (ADFA)
- Associate Professor Deborah Gare, School of Arts and Sciences, University of Notre Dame Australia, Fremantle
- Associate Professor Steve Mullins, School of Education and Arts, Central Queensland University, Rockhampton

### 2) Summary of approach

- Accreditation by portfolio typically involves the collection of a body of work from every student that, taken together, demonstrates attainment of all history Threshold Learning Outcomes (TLOs). Student work constituting the portfolio should be 'authentic', i.e., produced as part of their regular coursework, preferably with real stakes for the student, i.e., for a mark - although some included work might be purely formative in nature and not marked (cf. 'The VALUE Project Overview', 2009: 4; 6). Students should be introduced to the nature and purpose of the portfolio from the beginning of their academic career (e.g., in a major gateway course), with regular reference to the portfolio thereafter (O'Sullivan, et al., 2012: 385). Although the institution would need to provide the technical means of producing a (digital) portfolio, the student would be primarily responsible for populating it (Rhodes, 2008: 65; O'Sullivan *et al.*, 2012: 381; 385; Hallam and Harper, 2008). Many portfolios also include a reflective element, where students review their work and discuss its strengths and weaknesses, reviewing their progress in the process (see, for example, O'Sullivan *et al.*, 2012: 385; Rowley and Dunbar-Hall, 2009). A course late in a student's career (e.g., a capstone), could serve as a forum for finalising the portfolio (and, optionally, the accompanying reflective exercise). Once they have been prepared by students, institutions would submit portfolios from the five lowest pass students (by WAM/GPA). These portfolios would be reviewed by a panel of experts (teaching academics) to assess whether the major is producing graduates who meet the TLOs (cf. 'The VALUE Project Overview', 2009: 4). Rubrics are helpful to ensure consistent review of portfolios ('The VALUE Project Overview', 2009: 5-6; Maki, 2009: 15-17), while a calibration exercise for reviewers can improve consistency even further (O'Sullivan *et al.*, 2012: 385-386; 388). Several variations of this basic format are possible (as follows).
- The portfolio could be cumulative across the entire major, or for only a certain number of years / levels (e.g., second and third year only). 'Portfolio by capstone', where students prepare their portfolios and any associated reflective exercises constitutes another option.
- The portfolio could be student selected or could be automatically populated based on rubric marking outcomes (when an instructor indicates in a rubric that a piece of assessment meets one or more TLOs, that piece of assessment could automatically go into an e-portfolio).
- Reviewers need some guidance as to how each assessment meets certain TLOs, and how the entire portfolio meets all eight TLOs. Such guidance could come from the students through reflective essays or commentaries, or it could be an automatically generated report based on marking rubrics.
- The sample of portfolios for review could be based on the lowest WAMs in the major, or on the portfolio itself as marked in a special unit/course (e.g., a capstone).

### 3) Document if and where this approach is used in other disciplines

- Portfolios are in use around the world to the extent that national and international communities of practice are emerging, although the landscape in Australia is somewhat fractured (Hallam and Harper, 2008; Hallam *et al.*, 2008: esp. Chapter 4). Overseas, Clark and Eynon (2009: 18-20) argue that the benefits of portfolios have led “literally hundreds of U.S. colleges to adopt [electronic]-portfolios” leading to an “e-portfolio movement”.
- Portfolios are extensively used in Australia across a range of disciplines (Hallam and Harper, 2008; cf. Hallam *et al.*, 2008). Some of the disciplines/fields that use portfolios most include:
  - Teacher Education
  - Fine Arts and Design
  - Technology
  - Engineering
  - Psychology
- Two specific examples of e-portfolios deployed to foster and assess cumulative student learning include:
  - Medicine at UNSW has developed a summative portfolio of student work accompanied by a reflective essay that was used as a barrier to advancement through the medical degree. Much of this portfolio was automated through a very sophisticated management system, and the program deployed a comprehensive template for the portfolio. Nevertheless, students were given primary responsibility for its contents (O’Sullivan *et al.*, 2012).
  - The Sydney Conservatorium of Music has adopted an e-portfolio system (including multimedia components like recordings of performances and reflective exercises) to ensure that students have met current accreditation standards for teaching music in NSW secondary schools (Rowley and Dunbar-Hall, 2009).
- Portfolios are extensively used in US colleges and universities, to the extent that one can speak of an “e-portfolio movement” (Clark and Eynon, 2009: 18-20); nationwide expectations for such portfolios can be captured and summarised in ‘meta-rubrics’ that may then be used to compare student learning outcomes across institutions (see publications related to the VALUE project, including Rhodes, 2009 and various contributions to Peer Review 11.1, 2009).

### 4) What are the advantages of this approach? (include engagement with the scholarly literature, and advantages for learner, staff, institution, disciplinary community)

- Advantages as a learning experience are well documented and include:
  - Portfolios can do more than measure attainment, they can drive student learning (O’Sullivan *et al.*, 2012: 380).
  - Embody a “student-centred active learning” approach – students produce, select, and reflect upon their own work (Clark and Eynon, 2009: 18; Rhodes, 2008: 64-65).
  - Portfolios that contain cumulative reflective exercises develop metacognition – students think about their “progress in learning”; when students “monitor their own understanding”, it enhances achievement and cultivates independent learning (Miller and Morgaine, 2009: 8; cf. Clark and Eynon, 2009: 18; O’Sullivan *et al.*, 2012: 380).
  - Helps “build learners’ personal and academic identities” (Miller and Morgaine, 2009: 8).
  - Helps “facilitate the integration of learning as students connect learning across courses and time” (Miller and Morgaine, 2009: 8).
  - Develops self-assessment abilities (Miller and Morgaine, 2009: 8)

- Encourages students to develop their own “academic pathways as they come to understand what they know and...what they still need to learn” (Miller and Morgaine, 2009: 9)
- Digital portfolios where students select and generate the content “[speak] the language of today’s student body...who came of age using social networking sites” (Clark and Eynon, 2009: 18)
- Portfolios promote a wide range of “generic skills” that will benefit them in life beyond the university (Rhodes, 2008: 65)
- Gives scope for reflective exercise (e.g., TLOs three and eight).
- Shows students the big picture – how classes add up, what they have learned, how they have learned it
- Advantages as a review exercise
  - Portfolios are a known way to provide evidence for student development and to demonstrate competencies (Rowley and Dunbar-Hall, 2009: 899; O’Sullivan *et al.*, 2012: 380).
  - Can demonstrate all areas of competency (O’Sullivan *et al.*, 2012: 380).
  - Uses ‘authentic’ student work from their courses (cf. ‘The VALUE Project Overview’, 2009: 4; 6; Rhodes, 2008: 60).
  - Tends to be less ‘high stakes’ than single assessment like test or a research essay + reflective work. Students or institutions can assemble a portfolio showcasing students’ best work (also a possible disadvantage; see below).
  - Collects evidence for a wide range of student learning that can be missed through other approaches, in so doing it accommodates a wide range of student learning styles (cf. ‘The VALUE Project Overview’, 2009: 6-7; Maki 2009, 14-15).
  - Potential for more flexibility for programs – the content of the portfolio can vary
  - Promotes alignment between assessments, course goals, graduate attributes, and TLOs (cf. O’Sullivan *et al.*, 2012: 380-381).
  - Can be used to facilitate transition from education to career (Clark and Eynon, 2009: 19)

5) What are the disadvantages of this approach? (include engagement with the scholarly literature, advantages for learner, staff, institution, disciplinary community)

- Portfolios must be properly designed and structured to meet the needs of an assessment/accreditation regime (O’Sullivan *et al.*, 2012: 380); insufficient planning, not informed by pedagogical literature, can undermine implementation of a portfolio. For example, portfolios require:
  - Clear objectives and requirements
  - A format and management system that can be managed by students
  - Student choice in the evidence they provide
  - Mentoring or academic advisement
  - Student reflective exercises covering their learning journey
- Portfolios also present a number of known challenges that must be recognised and overcome (O’Sullivan *et al.*, 2012: 380-381), including:
  - Reviewing portfolios can be very time consuming
  - Portfolios may not “reflect the true attitudes, reasoning and knowledge of students” (381)
  - Student acceptance or buy-in. Will students seek other majors that don’t have it? Will they consider other possible ways of meeting standards less onerous and flee to other disciplines?
  - Student reliability. Together with the above, will students conscientiously maintain a portfolio over a three year career?
- Considering the above points, for a university to seek accreditation through a portfolio requires *at least* one of the following options to be implemented:

- Students maintain their own portfolio. There is an issue of students failing to retain work or otherwise make fatal errors, perhaps despite otherwise acceptable performance in the major.
- The university implements an automatic harvesting system. This would necessitate a significant technological investment be made.
- A staff member – advisor, course convenor, program convenor – be made responsible for ensuring that student assessments have been collected. This would involve significant staff costs.
- Probable need for advisement / mentoring to ensure that all TLOs are met
- Institutions have to determine the best place to implement a portfolio, and devote the necessary planning and resources to implement it:
  - In a dedicated unit of study?
  - Across all units?
  - Through program rules?
- Advantage of pulling together learning experiences – but does that work better across a degree or program, rather than restricted to a major? Are the pedagogical advantages diluted restricted only to a major? Some positives may be lost because the portfolio is limited to history coursework assessments, rather than more holistic review of intellectual development (e.g., the VALUE project emphasises generic skills acquired across an entire career of study, cf. Rhodes, 2008: 64-65).
- Technical and administrative questions that need to be answered
  - How do we get students to buy in enough so that they take the effort required to ensure that their portfolio progresses appropriately?
  - How do we ensure that the students collect what they need? All work from all history courses will probably have to be captured, even if students later chose what work to ultimately submit as part of the portfolio.
  - How much and what data collected?
  - What period of timeframe does the portfolio cover – full career? final year?
  - How is it made it available/secured?
  - How long stored?
  - Is the portfolio portable? If so how? How do we accommodate transfers, late declarations of major, etc.?

#### 6) Can this approach work at AQF Level 8 and AQF Level 9?

- Yes, portfolios widely applicable as a summative assessment qualifying a student for advancement (and allowing external review of student performance). See, for example O'Sullivan *et al.*, 2012).
- Perhaps it would be redundant for honours – how does a portfolio extend or enhance a thesis?
- Well suited to masters by coursework.

#### 7) How does the approach deal with the failure to fail?

- Poorly in one sense: a student's best assessments can be carefully chosen to demonstrate attainment of a TLO – students get many opportunities, and conversely could fail many assessments that reviewers never see.
- Any external review of student work may, however, help set a floor for student performance.

#### 8) What are the requirements on academic staff and departments to prepare and deliver the required materials/reporting for evaluation?

- Requirements on staff and institutions are high, unless students are given a dangerous amount of autonomy and responsibility for producing their own portfolios. See 'disadvantages' above.

### 9) What is the nature and content of feedback provided to institutions?

- Provides reviewers of a glimpse inside a major – many assessments can be reviewed for each student, revealing patterns of weakness in the major (such as lack of coordination amongst staff and across units/courses to ensure that every student attains every TLO). Potentially very powerful feedback is possible but institutions can cherry-pick every student's best work (see first point under 7).

### 10) What are the resource requirements (time, labour and dollars) on the AHA to administer this process?

- Access to reviews from institutions – most of the onus will be on institutions.
- Portfolios will require more time for review than a single output (e.g., a research essay), but they may provide guidance as noted in the fourth point under 2.

### 11) How could the review process be subject to Quality Assurance?

- Abuse is transparent – cherry-pick students' best work from across their whole career and submit that – students only have to attain each TLO in a single assessment over their whole three years – the TLOs would indeed be true minima under this approach.

### 12) What are the timeframe and processes for operationalisation?

- Implementation required across an entire major – the curriculum, including staff and unit/course coordination, must ensure that every student covers every TLO at some point or another during their career, no matter which specific classes they take.
- Probably similar to research essay + reflective task, but the investment must be made up front.
- IT system(s) must be implemented.

### 13) Does this process lend itself to metrics comparison?

- Yes, if the portfolios are evaluated against shared criteria.
- Problems might include variation in contents and circumstances of production (see the second point under 14).

### 14) Can this process form a basis for international comparison?

- To an extent. Portfolios are widely used in Australia, Europe, and North America (see Hallam and Harper, 2008 for an overview of international and Australian deployment). Portfolios are being considered as a uniform measure of achievement (cf. the VALUE project – Rhodes, 2008 and various contributions to *Peer Review* 11.1, 2009), offering a basis of comparison (see especially Rhodes, 2008: 68).
- The contents of the portfolios, however, can vary greatly, as can the manner in which they are assessed. At minimum, alignment with, e.g., the VALUE project's 'meta-rubrics' (Rhodes, 2008: 61), would be necessary for international comparison. Some standardisation of content, and perhaps circumstances of production, would also likely be necessary for international comparisons.



## Appendix F: New Accreditation Model for the AHA

### Outline for a new accreditation review process for Threshold Learning Outcomes for History AQF Level 7

#### Definitions

College of Assessors – The body of academic historians drawn from the AHA membership who are responsible for the accreditation process, including the review of student outputs against the TLOs.

Course – An individual unit or subject of study within a major.

Learning Outcomes – the institutionally agreed minima for students completing a course, major or program. Also known at major or program level as Graduate Attributes or Graduate Capabilities.

National Rubric – A guide listing specific criteria for evaluating student outputs against the Threshold Learning Outcomes produced by the Office for Learning and Teaching After Standards Project for the Australian Historical Association.

Program – The degree in which a major sits.

Reflective work – Student Output(s) that articulate self-conscious consideration of their personal experience as a learner.

Student Output – Work produced by students for assessment as a routine part of a course or courses within their major.

Threshold Learning Outcomes (TLOs) – The nationally agreed minima for an area of study as produced by the Office for Learning and Teaching After Standards Project for the Australian Historical Association (institutions may add their own custom TLOs).

## Approach to accreditation

- As the national peak body for academic historians, the Australian Historical Association (AHA) is the custodian of the accreditation scheme.
- Accreditation will be based upon the examination of student output against the nationally endorsed Threshold Learning Outcomes (TLOs).
- The scheme utilises a 'light-touch' philosophy that embraces professional autonomy and institutional diversity. It is based on the principle of expert review using student outputs generated within regular coursework.
- It is the responsibility of individual institutions to decide what student outputs are selected for examination.
- Student output may consist of work drawn from a single course, multiple courses, or the whole major. Outputs could include:
  - Advanced research project (for example an essay, a documentary film, an exhibition, etc.) plus associated reflective work.
  - A portfolio of student work drawn from a single course, multiple courses, or the whole major.
  - An examination script.
  - Another package of student work as determined by the institution that demonstrates attainment of all TLOs.
- If the student work is drawn from a single course, the course selected should be third year, preferably a Capstone offered in the final semester of the student's career.
- Each student output package will be tested against all TLOs.
- Student output will be evaluated on a binary scale ('Meets the TLO'/'Does not yet meet the TLO'), using criteria for each TLO encapsulated in a National Rubric.
- TLOs are recognised as the minimum attainment requirements for a student graduating with a History major.
- Individual institutions are encouraged to develop criteria for successful attainment of the TLOs exceeding the pass level (e.g. High Distinction/Distinction/Credit, A+/A/B+/B etc.) and deploy their extended rubric in their major.
- If an institution has designed its own TLOs over and above the national minima, they are encouraged to incorporate them into their extended rubric. These TLOs will not be judged by the national accreditation process.
- Evaluation will be double-blind, external peer reviewed with accommodation for differences in professional judgement
- This process ensures that student attainment is transparent and articulated
- This process prepares the History discipline for an emerging national standards framework
- Institutions will be able to publicise their accreditation status

## Pedagogical preparation

- Academic staff should ensure that the development and delivery of their major and constituent courses are informed by the TLOs. Academics may find it useful to incorporate the National Rubric into their own marking practices.
- It is the responsibility of individual institutions to ensure that the Learning Outcomes within the courses of their major, and the associated student outputs, map against the TLOs. A lack of alignment can make it difficult for students to meet the TLOs and jeopardise the successful accreditation of the institution.
- Institutions should provide students with the TLOs from the beginning of their major and inform students of the institution's expectations regarding the successful attainment of the TLOs and the means by which the institution will ensure their delivery.

## Administrative preparation

- All student work in the nominated output must be marked against the National Rubric.
- The accreditation process utilises the five lowest passes on the nominated student output
  - If the nominated student output consists of a single task (e.g. a research project), then 'lowest pass' refers to the mark for that task.
  - If the output is a portfolio for a course, then 'lowest pass' refers to the mark for the portfolio or, in the absence of such a mark, the mark for the course.
  - If the output consists of a portfolio drawn from multiple courses, then 'lowest pass' refers to the Weighted Average Mark (WAM), Grade Point Average (GPA), or similar, in the major.
- It is the responsibility of individual institutions to ensure that the necessary student outputs are collected, preserved, cleaned (markers' commentary removed) and anonymised, and provided to the AHA in digital form.

## Process

- The AHA accreditation system will be managed by a College of Assessors drawn from the AHA membership. Each Australian Higher Education institution with a History major can nominate up to two current AHA members to the College subject to the approval of the Chair of the College.
- The AHA will develop a secure online system for the lodging and review of student outputs.
- An institution wishing to seek accreditation will download the National Rubric available from the AHA website.
- Institutions will upload their clean, anonymous copies of the five lowest passing student outputs to this system.
- The College of Assessors will be provided with the National Rubric and student outputs stripped of their institutional identification.
- The Chair of the College will nominate three Assessors for each institutional accreditation. The Assessors will not be made known to the institution seeking accreditation.
- Assessors will use the National Rubric to determine whether each student output meets the TLOs. Assessors will conduct their reviews independently without consultation.
- Each student output will be reviewed by two Assessors in the first instance. In the event of a disagreement, the student output will be sent to the third Assessor.
- A successful review requires that two Assessors find that all five student outputs meet all eight TLOs.
- The College will generate a report for each institution stating whether the submitted student output meets all TLOs, plus details of how each Assessor reviewed each TLO.
- If the Assessors find that student outputs do not meet the TLOs, no further action is taken and no record kept. Institutions may apply for accreditation at a later time.
- If the Assessors find that student outputs do meet the TLOs, the College will make a recommendation to the AHA executive that the major be accredited.
- An institution with an accredited major will be able to display in all published material their AHA status. The AHA will supply an appropriate accreditation logo for this purpose.
- The AHA will maintain a list of accredited institutions on its website.
- Institutions must apply for re-accreditation of their major after an interval of five years.

## National Rubric – Expanded Version

No.	Threshold Learning Outcome	Does not yet meet TLO	Meets TLO	Additional guidance
1	Demonstrate an understanding of at least one period or culture of the past.	Contains significant factual errors.	Demonstrates a factually accurate understanding of a period or culture of the past.	This TLO recognises graduates' specific interests within the discipline, the organisational structure of the program within which they earn their degree, and the expertise of academic staff in that program.
		Does not demonstrate an understanding of the period or society under examination.		Periods of the past referred to in this TLO may be cross-cultural and of any temporal duration. They are understood here to be intellectual constructs given meaning or coherence through particular, unifying characteristics. Examples might include: the Bronze Age, the Age of Enlightenment, the Information Age, the Middle Ages, and World War II. Cultures of the past are understood to be chronologically and spatially bounded societies. Examples include Ancient Greece, pre-colonisation Australia, Antebellum United States and Republican China.
2	Demonstrate an understanding of a variety of conceptual approaches to interpreting the past	Lacks recognition of conceptual approaches historians use to interpret the past.	Demonstrates understanding of a variety of conceptual approaches historians use to interpret the past.	This TLO focuses on methodology and historiography. Conceptual approaches include both theory and method. Examples include methods such as biographical, ethnographical and quantitative. Theories can include gendered approaches, structuralism, post structuralism, Orientalism etc.
		Significantly misunderstands conceptual approaches historians use to interpret the past.		
		Misapplies conceptual approaches historians use to interpret the past.	Correctly applies selected conceptual approaches historians use to interpret the past.	
3	Show how History and historians shape their contemporary world.	Does not explicate the role of the historian and historical debate in shaping their contemporary use(s) of the past.	Recognises the influence of historians and historical debate on present or past understandings of political, cultural, social or economic issues.	This TLO recognises that 'History' is not just the past itself, but also an academic discipline whose purpose is to investigate, interpret and debate the past.
		Fails to recognize that 'History' is more than the past itself.	Assesses or interprets the impact the past has on concurrent or subsequent developments, up to and including the present.	
		Fails to assess the impact of the past on subsequent periods of history.		
4	Identify and interpret a wide variety of secondary and primary materials.	Does not make appropriate use of primary and secondary sources.	Uses a range of secondary and primary sources.	Materials may include, but are not limited to: secondary sources such as textbooks, monographs, scholarly articles, documentaries and statistical data; and primary sources derived from written and material artifacts and cultural productions that might include, but are not limited to, newspapers, archival documents, personal writings, oral testimony, material objects, maps, paintings, photography, film and music.
		Does not scrutinize the historical integrity/bias of the source(s) under investigation.	Demonstrates understanding of meaning and recognition of biases in the secondary and primary sources used.	
		Does not demonstrate competency in the basic skills of data retrieval, organisation and analysis.	Displays a range of basic skills in data retrieval, organisation and analysis to satisfy this TLO, including the ability to use a range of electronic and/or manual research tools.	In certain fields of historical inquiry these skills may be further enhanced to reflect information literacies related to a type or specific period of study (e.g. the use of statistical software in Economic History or the use of palaeographic techniques in Ancient History).

## Expanded Rubric (continued)

No.	Threshold Learning Outcome	Does not yet meet TLO	Meets TLO	Additional guidance
5	Examine historical issues by undertaking research according to the methodological and ethical conventions of the discipline.	Plagiarised.	Employ research techniques responsibly. These include, but are not limited to, collection and analysis of archival, textual, oral and material sources.	In the context of this TLO, "methodological and ethical conventions" refers to the prevailing standards of the discipline, institutional research ethics guidelines, and carefully considered, publicly defensible personal conduct. Examples include acknowledging sources and using information in context.
		Misrepresents evidence.		
		Falsifies evidence.		
		Does not reference sources in accordance with disciplinary conventions.		
		Does not employ accepted research approaches and techniques.		
6	Analyse historical evidence, scholarship and changing representations of the past.	Does not include analysis linking evidence to argument or narrative.	Analyses evidence (relevant information drawn from primary or secondary sources) in support of an argument or narrative. 'Analysis' involves explicitly linking evidence to a specific argument or narrative.	This TLO focuses on the skills of historical analysis and historiography.
		Ignores or misrepresents scholarly arguments or historical approaches.	Demonstrates an understanding that historical approaches have changed over time, and that these changes characterise and are embodied in 'Scholarship' (academic outputs, broadly defined).	
		Fails to recognise how historical approaches have changed over time.		
7	Construct an evidence-based argument or narrative in audio, digital, oral, visual or written form.	Argument or narrative does not display a proficient level of English communication.	Displays a proficient level of English communication.	Appropriate forms of communication include but are not limited to annotated bibliographies, blogs, documentary films, essays, media releases, posters, presentations to peers or community members, and websites.
		Argument or narrative has major inconsistencies or contradictions.	Contains an argument or narrative that follows scholarly conventions.	
		Evidence is not relevant to the argument or narrative.		
		Argument or narrative misuses historical terminology.		
8	Identify, and reflect critically on the knowledge and skills developed in their study of History.	Does not articulate a graduate's personal, vocational or intellectual development (lacks self-awareness of the student's own growth over the course of an academic career).	Demonstrates reflective practice (articulates key elements of the student's learning trajectory, including matters of personal, vocational or intellectual development).	'Critical reflection' relates to the student's personal experience as a learner rather than being a reflection on historical events in general.
		Reflects only on historical events in general instead of demonstrating reflective practice.		A major which does not provide an opportunity for student self-reflection is unlikely to produce graduates who will meet this TLO.  It will be difficult for graduates to demonstrate attainment of this TLO outside of a directed exercise such as a learning diary, a collection of minute papers, or a reflective essay.

## National Rubric – Marking Rubric

No.	Threshold Learning Outcome	Fail	Pass	Credit	Distinction	High Distinction
1	Demonstrate an understanding of at least one period or culture of the past.	Contains significant factual errors.	Demonstrates a factually accurate understanding of a period or culture of the past.			
		Does not demonstrate an understanding of the period or society under examination.				
2	Demonstrate an understanding of a variety of conceptual approaches to interpreting the past	Lacks recognition of conceptual approaches historians use to interpret the past.	Demonstrates understanding of a variety of conceptual approaches historians use to interpret the past.			
		Significantly misunderstands conceptual approaches historians use to interpret the past.				
		Misapplies conceptual approaches historians use to interpret the past.	Correctly applies selected conceptual approaches historians use to interpret the past.			
3	Show how History and historians shape their contemporary world.	Does not explicate the role of the historian and historical debate in shaping their contemporary use(s) of the past.	Recognises the influence of historians and historical debate on present or past understandings of political, cultural, social or economic issues.			
		Fails to recognize that 'History' is more than the past itself.	Assesses or interprets the impact the past has on concurrent or subsequent developments, up to and including the present.			
		Fails to assess the impact of the past on subsequent periods of history.				
4	Identify and interpret a wide variety of secondary and primary materials.	Does not make appropriate use of primary and secondary sources.	Uses a range of secondary and primary sources.			
		Does not scrutinize the historical integrity/bias of the source(s) under investigation.	Demonstrates understanding of meaning and recognition of biases in the secondary and primary sources used.			
		Does not demonstrate competency in the basic skills of data retrieval, organisation and analysis.	Displays a range of basic skills in data retrieval, organisation and analysis to satisfy this TLO, including the ability to use a range of electronic and/or manual research tools.			
5	Examine historical issues by undertaking research according to the methodological and ethical conventions of the discipline.	Plagiarised.	Employ research techniques responsibly. These include, but are not limited to, collection and analysis of archival, textual, oral and material sources.			
		Misrepresents evidence.				
		Falsifies evidence.				
		Does not reference sources in accordance with disciplinary conventions.				
6	Analyse historical evidence, scholarship and changing representations of the past.	Does not include analysis linking evidence to argument or narrative.	Analyses evidence (relevant information drawn from primary or secondary sources) in support of an argument or narrative. 'Analysis' involves explicitly linking evidence to a specific argument or narrative.			
		Ignores or misrepresents scholarly arguments or historical approaches.	Demonstrates an understanding that historical approaches have changed over time, and that these changes characterise and are embodied in 'Scholarship' (academic outputs, broadly defined).			
		Fails to recognise how historical approaches have changed over time.				
7	Construct an evidence-based argument or narrative in audio, digital, oral, visual or written form.	Argument or narrative does not display a proficient level of English communication.	Displays a proficient level of English communication.			
		Argument or narrative has major inconsistencies or contradictions.	Contains an argument or narrative that follows scholarly conventions.			
		Evidence is not relevant to the argument or narrative.				
		Argument or narrative misuses historical terminology.				
8	Identify, and reflect critically on the knowledge and skills developed in their study of History.	Does not articulate a graduate's personal, vocational or intellectual development (lacks self-awareness of the student's own growth over the course of an academic career).	Demonstrates reflective practice (articulates key elements of the student's learning trajectory, including matters of personal, vocational or intellectual development).			
		Reflects only on historical events in general instead of demonstrating reflective practice.				