

21st century curricula in research-intensive universities

University of Leeds

3rd November 2010

Paul Blackmore
King's College London

The session

- 1 Why review the curriculum?
- 2 A fairly radical example
- 3 Some key definitions and questions
- 4 The Leeds graduate?
- 5 What have some others done?
- 6 Making a change
- 7 What might Leeds do – and how?
- 8 Where is the funding to come from?
- 9 The King's-Warwick Project

Universities studied

Aberdeen

Southampton

LSE

UCL

Manchester

Queen Mary

KCL

Warwick

Cape Town

Witwatersrand

Stellenbosch

Utrecht

Maastricht

Chicago

Wisconsin

Harvard

Brown

Pennsylvania

Temple

UCLA

Melbourne

Sydney

Western Australia

Hong Kong

CUHK

HKUST

Reasons for review

- Student satisfaction
- Skills for life and employability
- Marketing

- Strategic planning
- Restructuring
- Finance

- Crisis – social upheaval / change
- Following the herd

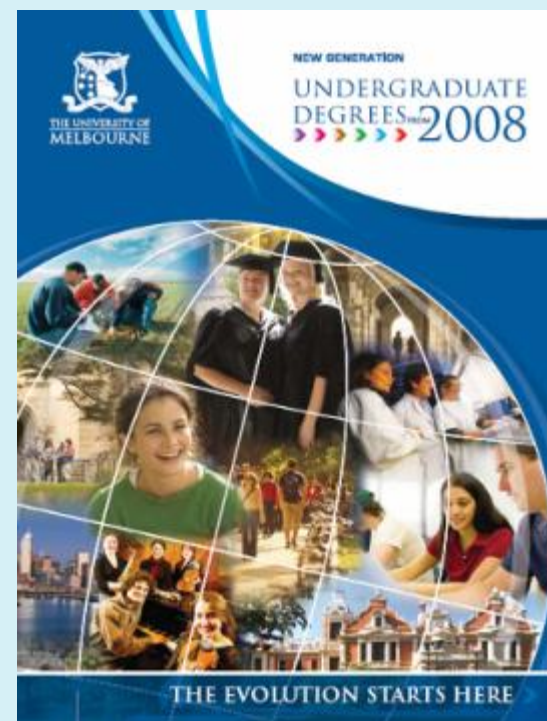


The Melbourne Model

Undergraduate degrees

From 2008, the University will offer six 'New Generation' undergraduate degrees:

- Bachelor of Arts
- Bachelor of Biomedicine
- Bachelor of Commerce
- Bachelor of Environments
- Bachelor of Music
- Bachelor of Science



Students undertaking New Generation degrees will complete at least one major sequence and take at least one-quarter of their degree from 'breadth' subjects outside their core program

University-wide Breadth Subjects

University-wide breadth subjects are multidisciplinary, often exploring the 'big issues' facing the world today and building on cross-disciplinary research

Examples include:

- Climate Change
- Australian Indigenous Studies
- Food, Water and Wine
- “Growing up in the 21st Century” – The Changing Landscape of Child and Youth Issues
- Catastrophes, Cultures and the Angry Earth
- Drugs that have Shaped Society



Some questions ...

What is a curriculum?

What is its purpose?

What is a graduate?

Is there a curriculum “core”?

What is the curriculum?

“We take the term “curriculum” to mean all of the intended learning experiences, both within and beyond formal teaching. We also acknowledge the importance of the co-curriculum—that range of experiences that students may gain through participation in, for example, voluntary and service activities”

KWP report

What is its purpose?

Cohering around:

- Subject / discipline?
- Attributes?
- Vocational proficiency?
- Professional competence?
- Personal development?



What is a graduate?

- Terminology
 - Attributes
 - Capabilities
 - Skills
 - Competenc(i)es
- How specific
- Articulated at what level
- Whether and how used

Is there a core?

- Is a core course / strand needed?
 - What would it focus on?
 - Would it operate at institutional or school / dept level?
- How much can be included in the department-based curriculum?
- How much needs to take place outside that curriculum?

Structural issues

- Relationship between UG and PG
- Is cross-institutional support or location needed for enhancing u/g study?
- Alignment of support services, including with academic decision making
- Re-shaping of teaching facilities?

Leeds?

- What should be the characteristics of a Leeds graduate / postgraduate?
- How effectively does Leeds develop these?
- What are Leeds's strengths and weaknesses in so doing?



The Difference

“The University of Aberdeen - a unique experience in learning and living for the twenty-first century.

“With a 500 year heritage behind us, we are committed to producing graduates for the 21st century. Our aim is to produce graduates who are more rounded, better informed and more intellectually flexible. Who can be critical thinkers and effective communicators. Who are more committed to personal development and better prepared to be active citizens.”



Sixth Century Courses

“Crossdisciplinary courses ... consider different approaches to knowledge and enquiry ... look at issues affecting the world in which we live today. ... develop a deeper critical understanding of your chosen area of study by setting the subject in a wider context”

- Humans and Other Animals
- The Digital Society
- Health and Wealth of Nations
- Sustainability
- Science and the Media
- Risk in Society
- The Mind Machine
- Natural World
- Oceans and Society
- Mankind in the Universe
- Fearsome Engines



Other options

Sustained Study Programmes

An area of study that is distinct from, but complementary to, core discipline.

French; German; Hispanic Studies; Gaelic Studies; Arabic; Mandarin Chinese; Business; Latin; Biblical Languages; The Classical Tradition; Fit for Life; Computing; Conservation & Environment.

Discipline Breadth Courses

A single course separate from the core discipline and possibly unrelated.

Piloting a core course

“You will learn the core elements of social scientific reasoning and how they are applied across a broad range of social sciences. Whichever course you take at the School, your studies will touch on the common themes the use of evidence, methods of enquiry and strategies for conceptualising problems. **LSE100** uses important issues and debates to explore each of these themes.”

Module 1: How should we manage climate change?

Module 2: Does culture matter?

Module 3: Why are great events so difficult to predict?



Assessment

400–500 word in-class writing assignment (x2)

1500 word essay

Group project

Examination

LSE100 certificate - Distinction, Pass or Fail

In each of 2 years:

20 twenty hours of lectures (10 x 2 hours)

10 hours of classes (10 x 1 hour).

<http://www2.lse.ac.uk/intranet/students/LSE100/Home.aspx>

University Community Service Center, Chicago



“an active culture of service and partnership at the University of Chicago”

- Volunteering
- Internships



Hong Kong

- Four-year degrees
- First year experience vital
- Liberal arts / general education curriculum
- Global perspective - focus on East-West relationships



And others ...

Macquarie: broader undergraduate education

- Science, arts, communication skills
- Projects outside the university



UWA: Future Framework

6 UG degrees: arts, commerce, design, health, science, philosophy
Professional, postgraduate education.

Utrecht: personal study programme

- Personal tutor
- Yr 1: academic world, disciplines, skills
- Courses in 2 of Sciences, Soc Sciences, Humanities
- Yr 2: major – can be interdeptal
- Yr 3: research project
- BA or BSc awarded



Change process

- Often takes five years or more
- Top down, bottom up or combination
- Focus and distributed leadership needed
- Hard to reach staff in departments
- Open process and communication
- Resource uncertainty = resistance
- Recognition and rewards matter

Leeds?

- What single change would make the biggest positive difference to the Leeds student experience?
- How would you seek to make that change?

Resources for curriculum change

Some solutions from:

- Re-balancing distribution of funding
- Portfolio review, possibly leading to collaboration
- Funding models that reveal income and costs of teaching
- Graduate teaching assistants
- Distributing resources towards year 1
- Investing in development – targeting internal funding

The King's-Warwick project

<http://kingslearning.info/kwp/>



Central issues

- What should be the characteristics of a King's / Warwick curriculum / graduate?
- What directions should we take?
- What major curriculum changes are taking place in peer institutions?

A graduate “pledge”?

All students to have opportunity to experience:

- Research-rich environment
- Interdisciplinarity
- Global connectedness
- Community engagement
- Academic literacy

Research-rich environment

From students as recipients of research
by others to students as researchers



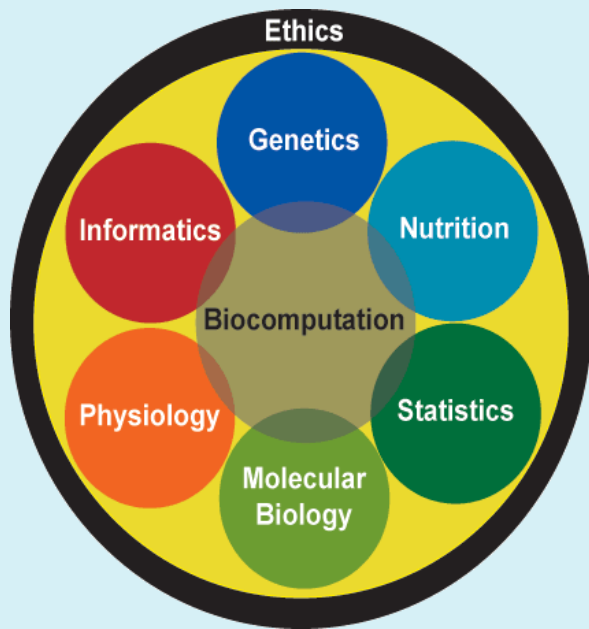
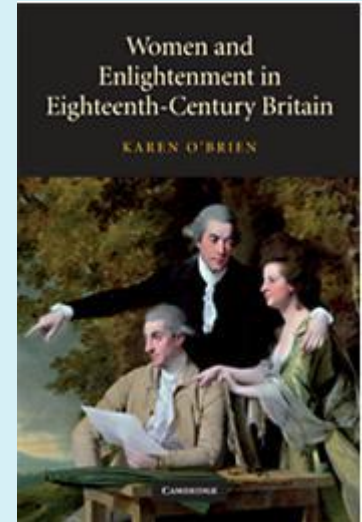
“... the research universities have often failed, and continue to fail, their undergraduate populations. Thousands of students graduate without seeing the world-famous professors or tasting genuine research”

*Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement
of Teaching, 1998*



Interdisciplinarity

“a means of solving problems and answering questions that cannot be satisfactorily addressed using single methods or approaches”



Why?
When?
How?
Where?



Global connectedness



- UK students studying abroad
- Overseas students' experience in the UK
- Students in own countries experiencing other cultures
- International aspects of curricula
- Learning foreign languages
- Awareness of own culture and its interactions



Community engagement

Mutually beneficial partnerships between HE and the community – both within and beyond formal curriculum



- Broad personal development
- Sense of social responsibility
- Making learning more meaningful
- Sense of belonging



Academic literacy

...enable students to participate fully in their disciplinary communities whilst in university (and) with the literacy practices of new contexts after graduation



- taking a critical position
- the role of assessment



Other activities

- 15 College Teaching Fund projects
- Graduate attributes and employability
- Assessment
- Employers
- Support services
- Festival of learning

Students and learning

“... ensuring that students are partners in their learning rather than recipients or customers ... in sharp contrast to a contemporary rhetoric that promotes higher education as a service or business transaction”

Student disengagement

“they just look at the grade ... they don't read my feedback”

“ ... where is the continuing conversation about a student's learning?”

Student engagement

- Volunteering and placements
- Students as researchers
- Student-led activities
- Self- and peer assessment
- Learning as a core curriculum?

KWP Curriculum

“... changes are needed if the institutions are to make full use of their strengths and provide students with more choice”

- Choice with coherence
- Academic credit and resourcing
- Presentation of opportunities

Co-curriculum

“The co-curriculum has much to offer but it is relatively diffuse at both institutions, particularly King’s.”

- Co-ordination
- Development
- Recognition of participation and possibly attainment

KWP Employability

“Increasingly, students need to be able to articulate what they have learnt over and above disciplinary study”

- Curriculum
- Co-curriculum
- Recording and recognition?

KWP Space

“... the kinds of active learning that are envisaged require significant re-shaping of teaching and learning facilities, making .. use of learning technologies, for face-to-face, virtual and independent learning.”

KWP Support services

“We must make sure we can deliver what we promise”

- More and sustained collaboration
- Support services involved in planning
- Resources to follow students
- Flexible student records

KWP Recognising teaching

“a widely shared view ... that research rather than teaching was the way to achieve promotion and that teaching and curriculum innovation had relatively low status”.

Festival of Learning



14th September 2010

Prof Paul Blackmore
King's College, London, UK
paul.blackmore@kcl.ac.uk
+44 (0)20 7848 3329