

Capstones across disciplines:

Synthesising theory, practice and policy to provide practical tools for
curriculum design

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The Fellowship

- Capstones are powerful, engaging and diverse
- Disciplines, program learning outcomes, benchmarking, employability
- Capstones implemented across the tertiary sector

- Synthesis of prior work
- What is a capstone?
- What is it for?
- How are we doing it?
- How well are we prepared for it?

- Survey, interviews, case studies
- Practical tools
- Dissemination
- Support
- Recommendations

The collage features several key documents and webpages:

- 50 Years of Excellence at Victoria University:** A document discussing curriculum renewal and capstone experiences.
- Business Capstones:** A webpage highlighting various business capstone projects and their benefits.
- Curriculum Renewal in Legal Education:** A document detailing curriculum renewal efforts and the role of capstones.
- Learning and Teaching Standards Project:** A webpage providing information on learning and teaching standards.
- The TILE Approach:** A webpage titled 'Enhancing student engagement across higher education' that describes the TILE (Teaching, Learning, and Engagement) approach.

What is a capstone?

*An opportunity for final year students to both look back on their undergraduate study in an effort **to make sense** of what they have accomplished, and **to look forward** to a professional existence where they can **build on** that foundation. It is during the capstone experience that students **complete the transition** from their primarily student identity to embrace their beginning **professional identity**.*

(McNamara et al, 2012 p.2)

- Culminating, integrative
- Build on knowledge and skills
- Consolidate graduate attributes
- Prepare for a professional future

Capstones are being increasingly used as a device to put whole of program learning together to assess whether graduates are work ready in their chosen disciplines.

(Lee in Krause et al, 2013, p.74)

What are we doing?

Interim survey analysis (April 2014):

- Many work-integrated (~48%)
- 'Very important' – personal and professional attributes and capabilities (~80%)
 - Personal responsibility, self-management, communication, teamwork

And yet: van Acker et al (2013 p.15-16) found that more than half of business capstones emphasised the 'backward looking function' of capstones. They argued that this was due to a focus 'on integrating students' previously learned knowledge and skills'.

- Some of our participants said that they:
 - Use the capstone to fill gaps in the course
 - Often have to revisit content from earlier in the course
- Question 1: Are capstones an important part of the employability jigsaw?
- Question 2: What is happening here? Are these appropriate contextual responses?