

What do graduates of Australian Environment and Sustainability higher education qualifications need to know and be able to do?

In this presentation I will share our collective experiences and outcomes from developing student learning standards for Environment and Sustainability in a collaborative way.



About Bonnie McBain:

‘What inspires me professionally and personally is the search for solutions to persistent environmental problems. Given the increasing complexity of environmental issues, I focus my research, teaching and professional practice on approaches which address this complexity directly’.

Bonnie has a multidisciplinary environmental background (Ecological Footprints, climate change, surface water quality, catchment management, sustainable forest management, air quality, groundwater and fisheries management) but is particularly interested in transdisciplinarity (work that goes beyond traditional disciplinary boundaries). Part of this work investigates the critical need for transformation towards sustainability and the role environmental education must play.

Project Team

Liam Phelan & Bonnie McBain, University of Newcastle
Val Brown, Australian National University
Paul Brown, University of NSW
Richard Horsefield, Macquarie University
Ros Taplin, University of NSW
Iain Hay, Flinders University
Daniella Tilbury, University of Gloucestershire

In Australia, policy to support quality outcomes in student learning from higher education institutions sees disciplinary communities collaboratively developing student learning standards which provide reference points informing curriculum design. These ensure that critical student learning occurs upon graduation from higher education institutions. These standards have recently been developed for the field of Environment and Sustainability.

In the development of the standards for the field of Environment and Sustainability we asked ‘What is the critical learning university graduates need once they graduate with Environment and Sustainability qualifications from higher education institutions in Australia and why?’ The national and international literature does not identify any consensus on the above research question and indeed identifies a wide range of different approaches, opinions and findings.

We explored and resolved this research questions using a collaborative approach informed by a wide network of national and international stakeholders (academic, industry, student, indigenous and community) over 2014. This approach was chosen because the outcomes needed to reflect a shared consensus to ensure ownership and buy-in for implementation.