

Critical Thinking and Organisation Theory: Embedding a process to encourage graduate capabilities

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Developing effective business curricula that meets the needs of the marketplace has seen a rise in the development of core competencies lists identifying appropriate skills. Many organisations and tertiary institutions have individual graduate capabilities lists including skills deemed essential for success. Skills recognised as 'critical thinking' are the most popular inclusions on core competencies and graduate capability lists. While there is literature outlining 'critical thinking' frameworks and methods of teaching it and calls for its integration into business curricula, few studies actually identify quantifiable improvements achieved in this area. This project sought to address the development of 'critical thinking' skills in a management degree program by embedding a process for critical thinking within a theory unit undertaken by students early in the program. Focus groups and a student survey were used to identify issues of both content and implementation and to develop a student perspective on their needs in thinking critically. A process utilising a framework of critical thinking was integrated through a workbook of weekly case studies for group analysis, discussions and experiential exercises. The experience included formative and summative assessment. Early results indicate a greater valuation by students of their experience in the organisation theory unit; better marks for mid semester essay assignments and higher evaluations on the university administered survey of students.

Keywords: critical thinking; organisation theory; and graduate capabilities