Graduate Attributes and Undergraduate Psychology Education
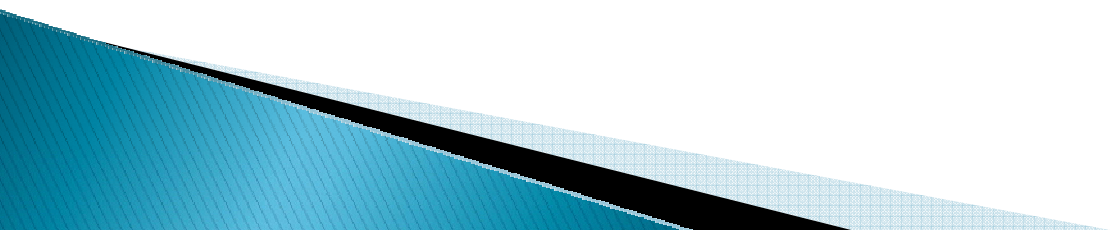
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Graduate Attributes (GAs) of the Australian Undergraduate Four-year Program

= comprehensive list of the capacities or attributes that undergraduate students of psychology can develop during their four years at university

= the knowledge, skills and values that are consistent with the science and application of psychology

Each attribute is accompanied by a list of suggested student learning outcomes (SLOs)

The SLOs provide:

➢students with focal points to demonstrate their attainment of the graduate attributes

➢academics with focal points for measuring student performance

Why do we need GAs?

Changing higher education landscape:
- Accountability to tax-payers
- other disciplines/professions
-identified need in previous scoping investigation by Lipp, Terry, Chalmers, Bath, Hannan, Martin, Farrell, Wilson, & Provost, S. C. (2007). (http://www.psy.uq.edu.au/carrick)
- making much of what we already do explicit…

But most importantly:
- if GAs are developed appropriately through *whole-program* and *aligned teaching & assessment* strategies,
this should lead to most effective student learning…
= changes in thinking, changes in behaviour

Shouldn't we as psychologists be the experts in this area?

Moreover, ALL graduates (including 3-year graduates) should be more aware of what they have gained during their education
= better ambassadors for psychology…
= better public image of psychology…

How did we go about delineating GAs?

(1) Review of some key international and national documents
  eg *APAC Standards*, ALTC/Carrick Scoping Investigation (Lipp et al.),
  APA Guidelines for the Undergraduate Psychology Major (2006), *Project EuroPsyT* (2001), the *School of Psychology UNSW Graduate Attributes* (Cranney et al., 2005)

(2) Input from stakeholders through forums, surveys, interviews

(3) Iterative development of the GAs from an initial drafting in June 2007 to its current version, with stakeholder input including July 2007 ISSoTL APEN workshop, Sept 2007 APS Forum, Jan 2008 APS PDAC meeting

GAs and SLOs:

- not intended as a set of rules or directives (except those included in APAC: * and **); rather:
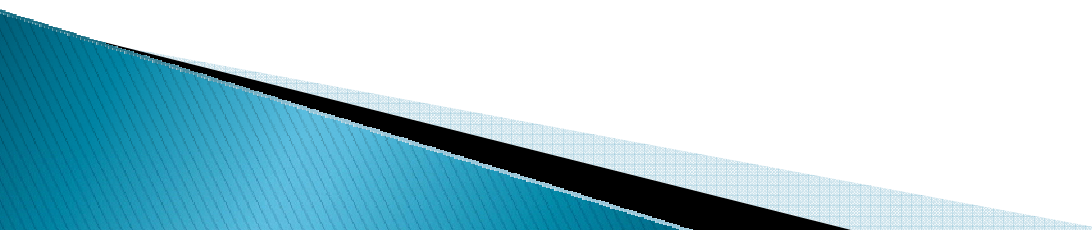
= recommendations based on research and consultation with a wide range of stakeholders

- different levels of development of GAs and SLOs would be expected across the four years of the program
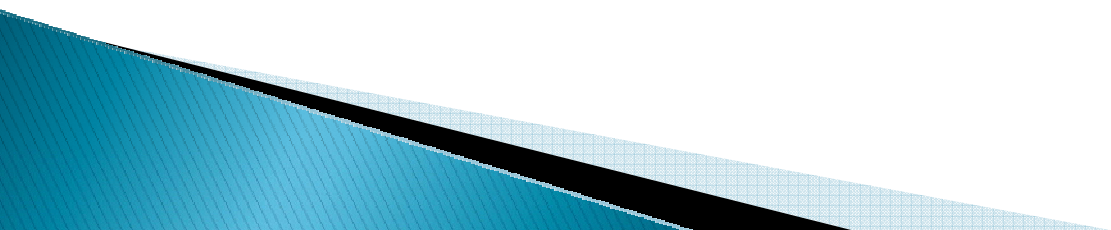
- inevitably, there is a certain amount of overlap across different GAs

-different UG programs may emphasise the development of some GAs/SLOs more than others

-University units (eg library, careers) should assist with some aspects

Graduate Attribute 1: Knowledge & Understanding of Psychology

- Demonstrate understanding of the major concepts, theoretical perspectives, empirical findings, and historical trends in the core topics of psychology as outlined by the National Accreditation Body (current the Australian Psychology Accreditation Council)
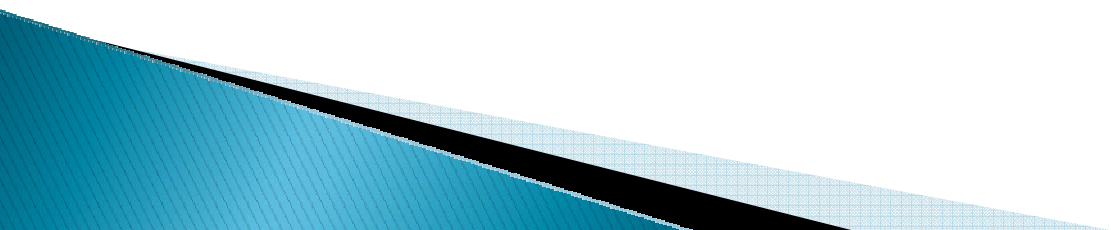
GA1: Student Learning Outcomes

- *Display basic knowledge and understanding of the following core topics: (abnormal psychology, biological bases of behaviour, cognition information processing and language, health and well-being, individual differences in capacity and behaviour, testing and assessment, personality, learning, lifespan developmental psychology, motivation and emotion, perception, social psychology, history and philosophy of psychology, intercultural diversity and indigenous psychology)
- **Demonstrate knowledge of the theoretical and empirical bases underpinning the construction, implementation, and interpretation of some of the most widely used cognitive and personality assessments
- **Demonstrate knowledge of the theoretical and empirical bases underpinning evidence-based approaches to psychological intervention
- Delineate psychology as a scientific discipline and describe its major objectives.
- Explain the major themes (e.g., interaction of genetics and environment) and perspectives (e.g., behavioural, evolutionary, sociocultural) of psychology.
- Explain psychological phenomena using the concepts, language, and major theories of the discipline.
- "Core" is used in the sense that these topics must be covered by programs, and not necessarily because they are substantive subject areas in psychology.

Graduate Attribute 2: Research methods in psychology

- Understand, apply and evaluate basic research methods in psychology, including research design, data analysis and interpretation, and the appropriate use of technologies
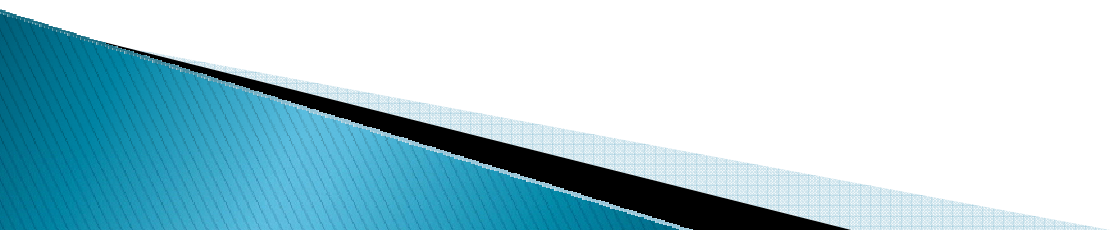
GA2: Student Learning Outcomes

- *Describe the basic characteristics of the science of psychology.
- *Describe, apply and evaluate the different research methods used by psychologists.
- *Demonstrate practical skills in laboratory-based and other psychological research.
- Describe and evaluate questionnaire and test construction, implementation and interpretation.
- Describe the key principles for designing, implementing and evaluating programs of behaviour change.
- Locate, evaluate and use information appropriately in the research process.
- Undertake statistical analysis appropriately.
- Use basic web-search, word-processing, database, email, spreadsheet, and data analysis programs.
- *Design and conduct basic studies to address psychological questions: frame research questions; undertake literature searches; critically analyse theoretical and empirical studies; formulate testable hypotheses; operationalise variables; choose an appropriate methodology; make valid and reliable measurements; analyse data and interpret results; and write research reports.

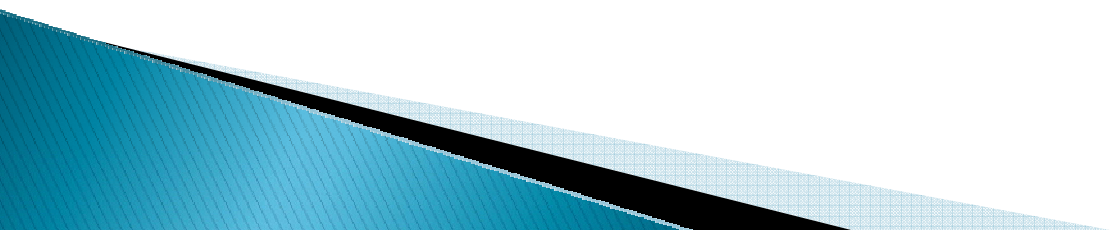# Graduate Attribute 3: Critical Thinking Skills in Psychology

- Respect and use critical and creative thinking, skeptical inquiry, and the scientific approach to solve problems related to behaviour and mental processes

GA3: Student Learning Outcomes

- *Apply knowledge of the scientific method in thinking about problems related to behaviour and mental processes.
- *Question claims that arise from myth, stereotype, pseudo-science or untested assumptions.
- Demonstrate an attitude of critical thinking that includes persistence, open-mindedness, and intellectual engagement.
- Demonstrate a capacity for higher-order analysis, including the capacity to identify recurrent patterns in human behaviour.
- Evaluate the quality of information, including differentiating empirical evidence from speculation.
- Identify and evaluate the source and context of behaviour.
- *Recognise and defend against the major fallacies of human thinking.
- Evaluate issues and behaviour using different theoretical and methodological approaches.
- Use reasoning and evidence to recognise, develop, defend, and criticise arguments and persuasive appeals.
- Demonstrate creative and pragmatic problem solving.

Graduate Attribute 4: Values in Psychology

- Value empirical evidence, tolerate ambiguity during the search for greater understanding of behaviour and knowledge structures; act ethically and professionally; understand the complexity of sociocultural and international diversity; and reflect other values that are the underpinnings of psychology as a discipline
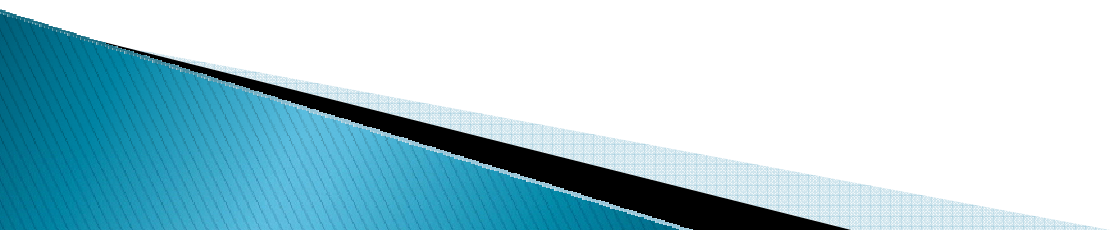
GA4: Student Learning Outcomes

- Recognise and respect social, cultural, linguistic, spiritual and gender diversity.
- **Explain how the science and practice of psychology is influenced by social, historical, professional, and cultural contexts.
- Identify and describe the sociocultural and international contexts that influence individual differences in beliefs, values, and behaviour.
- *Use information in an ethical manner (e.g., acknowledge and respect the work and intellectual property rights of others through appropriate citations in oral and written communication).
- Recognise how privilege, power, and oppression may affect prejudice, discrimination, and inequity.
- Explain how prejudicial attitudes and discriminatory behaviours might exist in oneself and in others.
- Recognise the limitations of one's psychological knowledge and skills, and value life-long learning.
- Display high standards of personal and professional integrity in relationships with others.
- Exhibit a scientific attitude in critically thinking about, and learning about, human behaviour, and in creative and pragmatic problem solving.
- *Evaluate psychologists' behaviour in psychological research and other professional contexts in relation to the Australian Psychological Society *Code of Ethics* and the complementary *Ethical Guidelines*, as well as the Australian *National Practice Standards for the Mental Health Workforce*.
- Promote evidence-based approaches to understanding and changing human behaviour.

Graduate Attribute 5: Communication Skills in Psychology

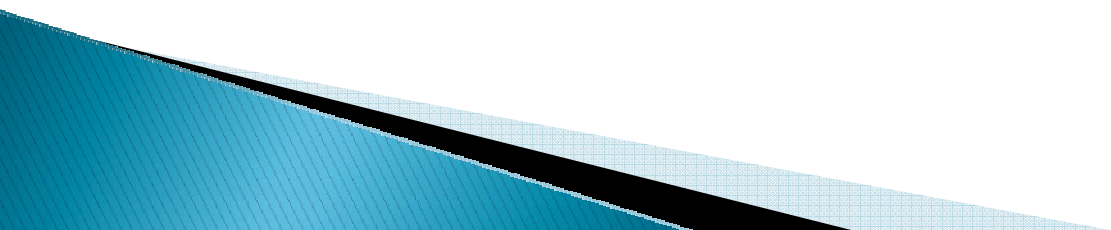▸ Communicate effectively in a variety of formats and in a variety of contexts

GA5: Student Learning Outcomes

- *Write a standard research report using American Psychological Association (APA) structure and formatting conventions.
- Write effectively in a variety of other formats (e.g., essays, research proposals, reports) and for a variety of purposes (e.g., informing, arguing).
- *Demonstrate effective oral communication skills in various formats (e.g., debate, group discussion, presentation) and for various purposes
- Demonstrate basic interviewing skills.
- Demonstrate effective interpersonal communication skills including the abilities to: listen accurately and actively; use psychological concepts and theories to understand interactions with others; identify the impact or potential impact of one's behaviour on others; provide constructive feedback to others; adopt flexible techniques to communicate sensitively and effectively with diverse ethnic and cultural partners, including in the context of team-work.
- Collaborate effectively, demonstrating an ability to: work with groups to complete projects within reasonable timeframes; manage conflicts appropriately and ethically.
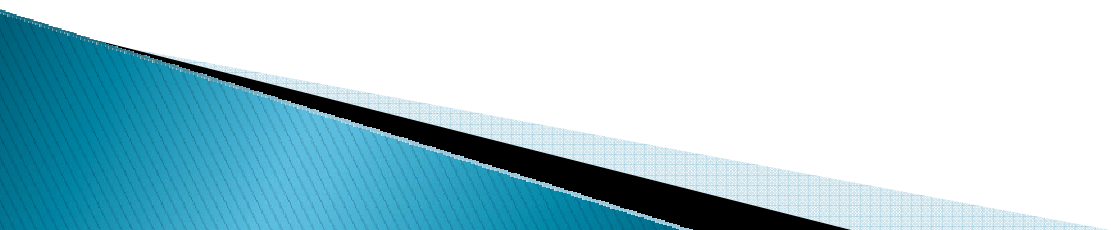
Graduate Attribute 6: Learning and the Application of Psychology

- Understand and apply psychological principles to personal, social and organisational issues

GA6: Student Learning Outcomes

- *Describe major areas of applied psychology (e.g., clinical, counselling, organisational, forensic, health).
- *Apply knowledge of legislative frameworks (including privacy, human rights).
- *Apply knowledge of consumer and carer participation in psychological care.
- *Apply knowledge of psychology, society and the workplace/influencing systems.
- Apply psychological concepts, theories, and research findings to solve problems in everyday life and in society.
- Reflect on one's experiences and learn from them in order to identify and articulate one's personal, sociocultural, and professional values; demonstrate insightful awareness of one's feelings, motives, and attitudes based on psychological principles.
- Apply psychological principles to promote personal development through self-regulation in setting and achieving career and personal goals; self-assess performance accurately; incorporate feedback for improved performance; purposefully evaluate the quality of one's thinking (metacognition).
- *Demonstrate a capacity for independent learning to sustain personal and professional development in the changing world of the science and practice of psychology.

Some Carrick/ALTC Project Outcomes

-The document "Graduate Attributes of the Australian Undergraduate Psychology Program" (http://www.psy.unsw.edu.au/profiles/jcranney.html)

- Integration of GAs and many SLOs into APAC standards (http://www.apac.psychology.org.au/Content.aspx?ID= 1083)

- Initiation of ALTC Exchange *Australian Psychology Educators Network (APEN)* site to support development of GAs

- Inclusion of the GAs in local and national surveys of students and graduates (see the ALTC Psychology Discipline Investigation Report http://www.altc.edu.au/carrick/go/home/grants/pid/343)

Future needs:

GA developmental rubric and benchmarks

Identify more resources to support GA development (ALTC exchange)

Dissemination/sharing of good practice re GA development

Assistance at the coal face…
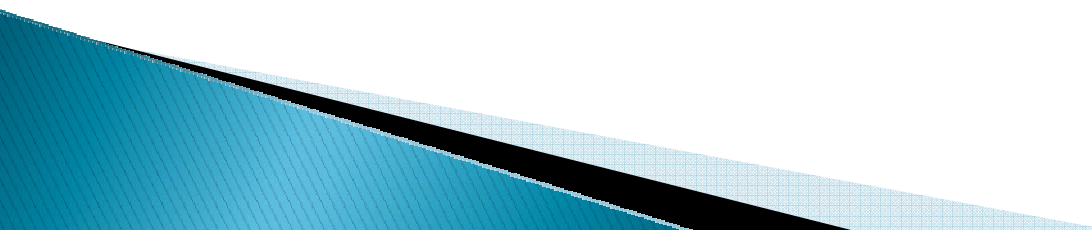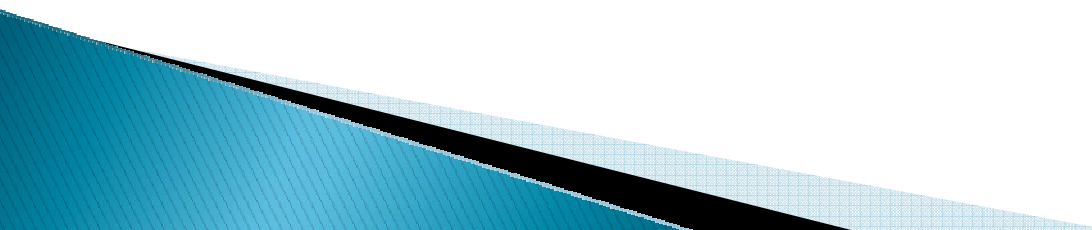
All of the above for PG capabilities…

The bigger picture?

-Attainment of graduate attributes constitutes *psychological literacy*

Quote from upcoming APA book on future of UG education

- International perspectives

- Transdisciplinary perspectives—life-long liberal learning

-Sociobiological/evolutionary perspectives

-At the very least, let's think about the kind of education our future psychologists, our future educated public, needs… "Psychology leading change"

A paradigm shift: "the psychologically literate citizen" (APA, under review)

- Further: "the globally responsive professional psychologist"

Where are we, developmentally, as a discipline and profession?

In Australia we are uniquely positioned to lead this paradigm shift
 (see Waring, 2008; ALTC Psychology Discipline Investigation Report)

We have the capacity…
    do we have the courage?

Quote from APA book (under review)…