



## Editorial

Welcome to Volume 9 of the *Journal of Teaching and Learning for Graduate Employability*.

The results of the 2017 Employer Satisfaction Survey (ESS), which reported the views of over 4,000 employers about the attributes of recent graduates from Australian higher education institutions, indicate that overall 84 per cent of these employers were satisfied with the graduates who worked for them. Furthermore 93 per cent of supervisors reported that the qualification prepared the graduate 'very well' or 'well' for their current employment. This suggests a good correlation between the skills and knowledge acquired by higher education graduates during their studies and the requirements of their jobs after graduation.

Interestingly, in the same report, 25 per cent of the graduates indicated that they thought their degree was less important to their employment than their supervisors did. But herein lies the issue: we must remember that Degree A does not necessarily lead to Career A. A university course – particularly at undergraduate level – is often a grounding in a discipline which, most importantly, enables students to think, learn and communicate in more sophisticated ways. In many universities, about half the commencing cohort enter less vocationally defined degree courses. Regardless, many change direction during their undergraduate degrees, as they find the right 'next step' for them.

Reports like these sometimes lead us to the perception that the value of such a degree experience is lower. Indeed, sometimes in the mainstream media, we hear about 'useless degrees'. Education is a good thing, no degree is useless in itself, but we can see why some think this way if they are under the impression that a degree is a first step on a clearly defined career pathway. There are boundless reports reminding us that the world of work is changing rapidly, and so educational pathways into finding meaningful work are also likely to be changing.

Nevertheless, this is a reminder that there is still work to be done in making more explicit to students where these graduate skills and competencies are incorporated into courses, units, teaching and learning experiences and assessment tasks – and the various ways in which they might assemble the evidence to future employers in various fields as to how they might flourish in a particular area of work.

The first two papers in this volume tap into related themes. The first reports a study at Leeds Metropolitan University in the UK which investigated student perceptions of their skill development. Authors of the report 'Enhancing student awareness of employability skills through the use of progress files', Dawn Leggott and Jane Stapleford, found that fewer than half the students believed that they had developed the skills of 'organisation and planning', 'critical thinking and analysis', 'self-confidence', 'decision-making' and 'problem-solving' by the final year of their degree. However, after one year of work experience, most of the graduates realised, in hindsight, that they had indeed developed these skills upon graduation and that they had been able to transfer them from the university to work context. Given the competitive nature of the job market it is important for graduates to not only recognise their employability skills, but also to understand where they have been embedded and developed throughout their studies so that they can evidence them in demonstrating employability.

The second paper in this volume shares the results of a study which examined perceptions of eportfolios, their uses, the skills required to implement them, and confirms their importance as

a tool for student reflection on their employability. Portfolios have long been used as a repository for evidence of skills and competencies and increasingly eportfolios are emerging as a strategy for collating artefacts including demonstrations, resources, and documenting learning and assessment. As eportfolios are flexible and enable students to collect evidence of learning, reflect on it and make connections between the various components of their studies, they are an ideal vehicle for graduates to demonstrate their employability.

On behalf of the Editorial Committee and Deputy Editor Dr Beatrice Tucker I commend this volume to you and invite you to engage with the forthcoming papers throughout the year as we seek to promote scholarly communication and debate, and scholarship in learning and teaching for graduate employability.

Alfred Deakin Professor Beverley Oliver, Editor