

Developing the Ability to Communicate

What are graduate attributes?

Graduate attributes are the characteristics, qualities, skills and capabilities that we seek to develop in our students by the time they graduate. These attributes give ECU graduates a competitive advantage in the workplace and are desired 'Employability' skills. ECU's graduate attributes are developed within the context of units in a course.

ECU's Graduate Attributes:

ECU graduates will be valued for their	Exemplified by
Ability to communicate	clarity of written and spoken expression, including in public fora, and through appropriate use of technology .
Ability to work in teams	collaborating and contributing effectively in diverse settings
Critical appraisal skills	planning, organising, problem solving and decision making
Ability to generate ideas	having the courage and confidence to be creative and innovative
Cross-cultural and international outlook	engaging productively and harmoniously with diverse cultures

What does it mean to be an effective communicator?

ECU expects each of its students to leave their course a competent and engaging communicator. Each student should graduate confident in their public speaking ability, with a sophisticated grasp of both written and verbal expression. As an effective communicator, the graduate will be able to identify their intended audience, and communicate complex information to that audience in a clear, precise manner, using the appropriate technology. ECU graduates should also be excellent listeners, able to interpret information quickly and accurately.

How do I develop this attribute in my students?

The ability to communicate needs to be explicitly taught, practiced and assessed in units in every course. Below are some ways to develop your students' ability to communicate:

- Develop students' presentation skills by setting assignments that require them to present information as a member of their intended industry
- Show students how to write a report for their particular discipline
- Show students how to operate the relevant programs, media and other technology they will be required to use in their discipline (for example: Microsoft Office Programs, recording technology)
- Ask students to write in various genres such as a formal report, essay, business proposal or structured argument

- Use external partners as assessors
- Encourage debates and discussions that ask students to present structured and counter arguments under pressure
- Teach students how to conduct research and conduct media interviews
- Teach students how to facilitate group discussions effectively

When developing this attribute, it is important to make sure you provide clear rubrics for assessing communication tasks, so that students know what is expected (for example, give marks for structure, content, presentation style, clarity of purpose and audience, and clarity of argument).

Where can I learn more about ECU Graduate Attributes?

If you'd like to learn more about including ECU's graduate attributes in your teaching, or any of the points outlined in this fact sheet, you can:

- Look out for Professional Development opportunities (all teaching staff are introduced to the Graduate Attributes in PDC 111)
- Read the examples included in the CLD Curriculum 2012 example booklet
- Contact the Centre for Learning and Development for advice.

Recommended reading:

[Centre for Learning and Development Publications:](#)

- ECU Curriculum Framework – Examples for Teachers
- Course Coordinator Handbook - An Introduction to Course Coordination

Hargie, O. (2006). *The Handbook of Communication Skills*. London: Routledge.

Harper, S. R., & Quaye, S. J. (Eds.). (2009). *Student engagement in higher education: Theoretical perspectives and practical approaches for diverse populations*. New York: Routledge.

University of Pittsburgh Katz Business School. Cited in <http://www.mindtools.com/CommSkill/CommunicationIntro.htm>. Accessed on 03/08/2011.