

# Standards-Based Assessment: What does it mean for higher education?

15 October 2015 • John Niland Scientia Building, UNSW



**UNSW**  
AUSTRALIA

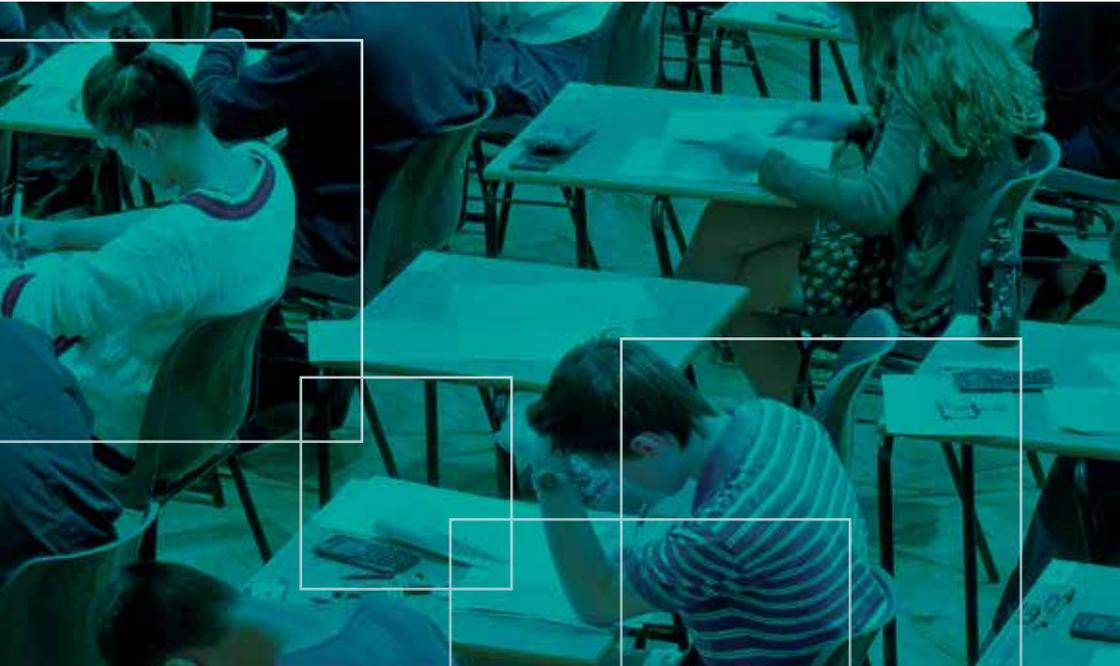
## Symposium Program 2015

Never Stand Still



## Acknowledgement of Country

We acknowledge the Bedegal people who are the traditional custodians of the land on which this symposium is being held.



# About the symposium

Today's symposium is designed to bring together the UNSW community to explore and disseminate the latest thinking and practice in standards-based assessment.

While learning outcomes and standards are increasingly applied to specific assessment tasks at the course level, the application of program-based outcomes and standards is less developed. This symposium will explore the role of learning outcomes and performance standards in supporting student learning in higher education.

Today's symposium is funded by a UNSW Strategic Educational Development Grant, provided to UNSW Medicine to promote the development of standards-based assessment.

# Program

09.15 - 09.30 **Registration**

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09.30 - 09.45 **Welcome address**

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Iain Martin, Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Academic), UNSW

09.45 - 10.45 **Keynote address**

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*'The role of performance standards in supporting student learning'*

Geoff Masters, CEO,  
Australian Council for Educational Research

10.45 - 11.15 **Morning tea**

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11.15 - 12.30 **Panel discussion**

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**Issues and challenges in standards-based assessment in higher education.**

Session will explore broad and contentious issues relating to standards-based assessment in higher education.

**Facilitator**

- Cath Ellis, UNSW Arts and Social Sciences

**Panel members**

- Geoff Masters, Australian Council for Educational Research
- Royce Sadler, School of Education, University of Queensland
- Tim Wilkinson, Medicine, Otago University
- Billy Bruffey, President, UNSW Student Representative Council

12.30 - 13.15 **Lunch**

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13.15 - 14.45

### Workshop session

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**Workshop 1: Implementing standards-based assessment in your course.**

*Facilitators: Tim Wilkinson (Otago University) and Chris Davison (UNSW Arts and Social Sciences)*

**Workshop 2: Making holistic judgements about student performance in a program: The role of portfolios.**

*Facilitators: Anthony O'Sullivan (UNSW Medicine) and Dean Utian (UNSW Built Environment)*

**Workshop 3: Enhancing student learning with clear goals and feedback linked to outcomes and standards.**

*Facilitator: Royce Sadler (University of Queensland) and Alex Steel (UNSW Law)*

14.45 - 15.00

### Afternoon tea

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15.00 - 15.55

### Workshops reports

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Facilitator: Philip Jones, Deputy Dean Education, UNSW Medicine

15.55 - 16.00

### Closing comments

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Iain Martin, Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Academic), UNSW

# About the workshops

## Workshop 1

### Implementing standards-based assessment in your course

This workshop explores ways to align various assessment methods to course learning outcomes. Participants will discuss a wide range of assessment methods that are suited to assess increasingly complex levels of knowledge, consider how to assess competency related to skills (e.g. communication skills, teamwork skills) and performance in work integrated learning. There will be opportunities to explore the role of measurement and judgement in assessing the standard of a student's performance with these methods. The role of standard-setting methods, which equate a student's performance to pre-determined standards, will be explained briefly.

*Facilitators: Tim Wilkinson (Otago University) and Chris Davison (UNSW Arts and Social Sciences)*

## Workshop 2

### Making holistic judgements about student performance in a program: The role of portfolios:

Assessments should provide clear evidence of a student's development in the capabilities expected by the program. In this workshop, you will consider how graduate learning outcomes (capabilities), attained at various stages of study, can be assessed. Portfolios will be explored as an effective means for collating evidence of graduate capability attainment that enable holistic judgements. In addition, participants will look at how combining this evidence with a student's reflection can be used to provide timely and pertinent examiner feedback, drive student learning, and gauge progress through the program and at its completion.

*Facilitators: Anthony O'Sullivan (UNSW Medicine) and Dean Utian (UNSW Built Environment)*



## Workshop 3

### Enhancing student learning with clear goals and feedback linked to outcomes and standards

For students to be able to learn properly, they need to monitor and control their own learning so they can perform well in the constituent courses of their academic programs of choice. They need to emerge as competent professionals who can demonstrate a thorough grasp of the subject matter and higher-order skills in using it. For this to be achieved, it is crucial that both students and academic teachers have a clear and deep knowledge of the desired learning outcomes and expected performance standards. In this workshop, you will look at the evidence and experience related to the espoused aim of improving student learning by implementing learning outcomes and standards. You will consider how the availability of exemplars and opportunities for peer and self-assessment can assist students to interpret and understand these expectations. Feedback should overtly relate performance to the pre-determined outcomes and standards, which should also align with areas for improvement

*Facilitators: Royce Sadler (University of Queensland) and Alex Steel (UNSW Law)*

# Keynote speaker



## **Geoff Masters**

Geoff Masters is Chief Executive Officer of the Australian Council for Educational Research (ACER).

He has a PhD in educational measurement from the University of Chicago and has published widely in the fields of educational assessment and research. He has served on a range of bodies, including terms as President of the Australian College of Educators; founding President of the Asia-Pacific Educational Research Association; member of the Business Council of Australia's Education, Skills and Innovation Taskforce; member of the Australian National Commission for UNESCO; and member of the International Baccalaureate Research Committee.

Currently he is a member of the Advisory Board for the Science of Learning Research Centre, the ABC Digital Education Advisory Group, the national Board of Life Education Australia and the Board of the Academy of Education, Arts and Sciences.



## *The role of performance standards in supporting student learning*

### **Abstract**

This presentation will introduce performance standards as indicators of learning progress. Performance standards describe what it means to become more proficient (or expert) in an area of learning – for example, what deeper understandings, a richer knowledge base and more sophisticated skills look like in practice.

Performance standards usually define a number of levels of increasing proficiency. Each level describes the kinds of knowledge, skills and understandings typical of students at that level, often accompanied by examples of performances and work illustrative of that level. As such, they make explicit what higher levels of performance and better quality work look like.

The advantages of performance standards are that they provide a frame of reference that can be used to establish where students are in their learning at particular points in time, to set realistic stretch challenges for further learning, to monitor progress over time, and to decide whether desired standards have been achieved. They provide an alternative to marks and grades which usually are difficult to interpret substantively and provide little guidance to next steps in teaching and learning.

# Panel members and facilitators



## **Billy Bruffey**

Billy Bruffey is the President of the UNSW Student Representative Council, a director of Arc @ UNSW Ltd, and the undergraduate representative on the UNSW Council. He was formerly a member of the UNSW Academic Board and has had experience in several teaching and learning committees. He is in his fourth year of a combined BA/LLB with a major in English Literature, and is on the National Executive of the National Union of Students.



## **Chris Davison**

Professor Chris Davison is Head, UNSW School of Education, President of the NSW Council of Deans of Education and Chair of the Policy and Evaluation Working Party, UNSW English language assessment project. She has worked in teacher education, including at Melbourne and La Trobe University, for over 30 years, and before that, as an ESL teacher and consultant in AMES, TAFE, secondary schools and English language centres.

Chris has published extensively on ESL development, language and content curriculum, and English language assessment. She is a series editor for Springer's new series on English language education, editor in chief of the Australian Review of Applied Linguistics, and also editor and contributor to a two volume handbook on teaching English internationally (with Jim Cummins). She has undertaken large-scale curriculum and assessment projects in Hong Kong, Singapore and in Brunei, and is currently leading the research and development of a teacher-based assessment toolkit for EAL learners in Victorian schools, funded by the Department of Education and Early Childhood (DEECD), the Catholic Education office and Independent Schools Victoria.

She received an award for Outstanding Contributions to Teacher Education from the Australian College of Educators, Sydney Region, in 2012.



### **Cath Ellis**

Associate Professor Cath Ellis is Associate Dean (Education) UNSW Arts and Social Sciences. She returned to Australia in 2014 from Huddersfield University, where she held the role of Director of Teaching and Learning in the School of Music, Humanities and Media. Prior to that, she was a Lecturer in English in the Faculty of Arts at the University of Wollongong.

Cath has been using technology to enhance student learning for nearly 20 years in distance, distributed and on-campus contexts. Her research interests are in postcolonial cultural studies, literature and theory, with a particular interest in the national storytelling of settler-invader nations. She also conducts research into Technology Enhanced Learning and Academic Integrity.

In 2003 she was awarded the Vice Chancellor's prize for Outstanding Contribution to Teaching and Learning. In 2010 she was awarded a National Teaching Fellowship by the Higher Education Academy. In 2013 she was awarded the Exceptional Contribution prize for teaching and learning in the student-nominated Thank You Awards at the University of Huddersfield.



### **Philip Jones**

Professor Philip Jones is Deputy Dean Education, UNSW Medicine, a position he has held since 2006. He graduated from Sydney University in 1976. He was awarded Fellowship as a Physician in Infectious Diseases before completing a PhD in Immunology at the John Curtin School of Medical Research at the Australian National University. In 2000, he was awarded a Master of Higher Education from UNSW. As Deputy Dean he has oversight of the Faculty's academic programs. He was involved with the development of the revised Medicine program from the inception of its planning in 1998 to its commencement in 2004. From 2004 to 2010 he was the authority for the program and chair of the Curriculum Development Committee. His interests are in assessment and he is leading a project in Medicine to develop standards-based assessment.

# Panel members and facilitators



## **Iain Martin**

Professor Iain Martin was appointed Vice-President and Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Academic) at UNSW in October 2012. His key responsibilities are to look after students from recruitment to graduation (the student experience in its broadest sense), the needs of academic staff (recruitment, staff development, promotions and learning and teaching) and international operations. He is a member of the Executive Team, and attends meetings of University Council and many of its subcommittees.

Before joining UNSW, Professor Martin was Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Strategic Engagement) at the University of Auckland. Professor Martin graduated from the University of Leeds in 1987 and following early clinical posts was appointed to the staff of the University's Department of Surgery, where he remained until moving to New Zealand in 2000. He was appointed Professor of Surgery at the University of Auckland and served in a various roles in the Faculty of Medical and Health Sciences, including Head of Surgery and Head of School, before being appointed Dean in 2005. He took up his position as DVC (Strategic Engagement) in September 2011.



## **Anthony O'Sullivan**

Professor Anthony (Tony) O'Sullivan is Program Authority for the UNSW Medicine program. His educational research interests are into the assessment of medical students, and the teaching and assessment of professionalism. He was involved in the development of UNSW Medicine's graduate capabilities and the programmatic approach to assessment. He has a particular interest in portfolio examination and how it can help students' drive their learning, gather evidence of achievement and develop reflective practice. Tony is Head of Endocrinology and Diabetes at St George Hospital and Sutherland Hospitals, Sydney.



### **Royce Sadler**

Royce Sadler is Senior Assessment Scholar in the School of Education, University of Queensland, and Professor Emeritus of Higher Education, Griffith University. His main research and publication interest since 1973 has been the assessment of student achievement. Since 2000, he has focused exclusively on assessment policy and practice in higher education, especially the role of assessment in improving learning and capability, academic achievement standards, grading and the competence of graduates.



### **Alex Steel**

Professor Alex Steel is Associate Dean (Academic), UNSW Law. He is Consultant to the Australian Law Schools Standards Committee and has written national Best Practice guides on teaching law in broader contexts and teaching statutory interpretation. He was part of a team that developed Program Learning Outcomes and curriculum mapping for UNSW Law and his legal education research has concentrated on student attitudes to, and understandings of, assessment. He is currently a member of an Office of Learning and Teaching funded project developing online teaching development for sessional staff.



### **Dean Utian**

Dean Utian provides TELT support as well as teaches as a sessional academic within the Built Environment. His approaches have been shared at UNSW Learning and Teaching Forums in the form of poster presentations, and have been recognised as for their excellence through teaching awards. Dean's expertise covers multimedia design, digital communication, and educational technology. He employs blogs in his courses and teaches digital skills valuable for portfolio creation.

# Panel members and facilitators

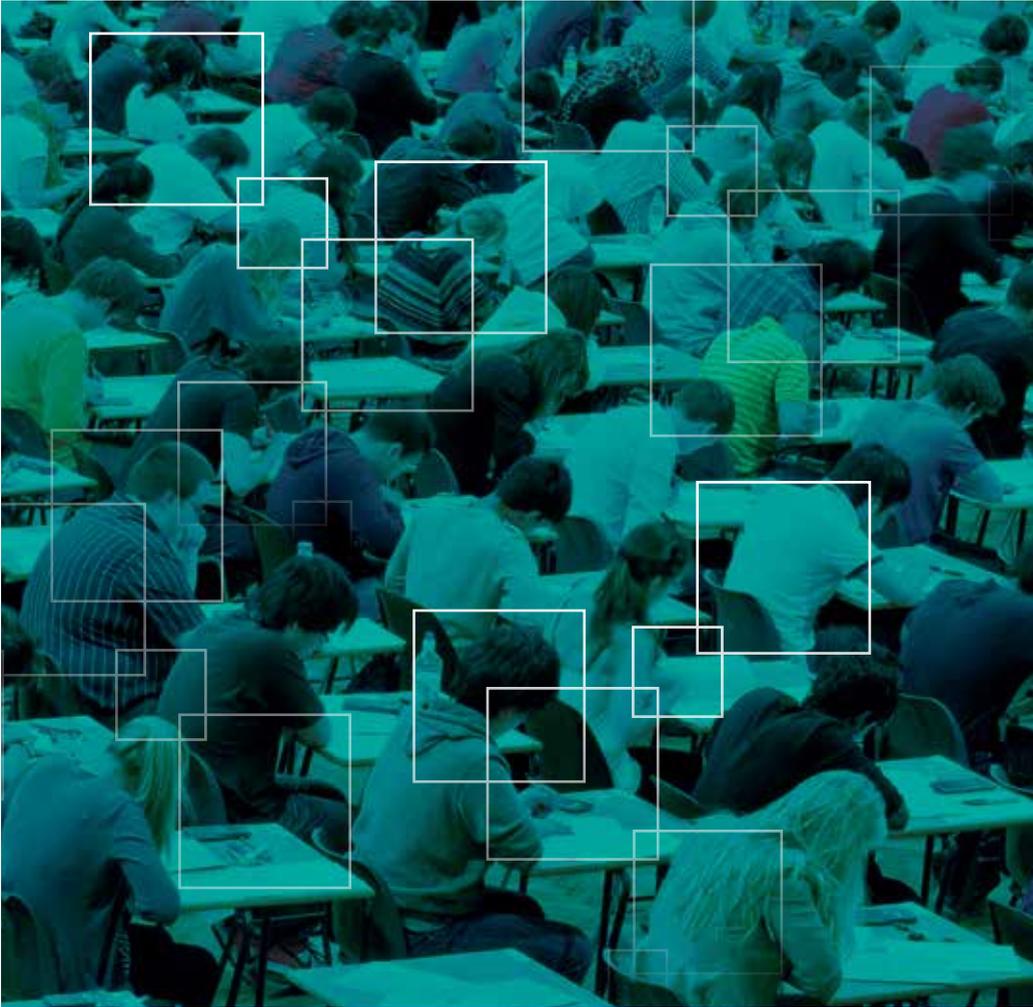


## **Tim Wilkinson**

Tim Wilkinson is Director of the Medicine programme, Professor in Medicine and Associate Dean (Medical Education) at the University of Otago, New Zealand. He completed a Master in Clinical Education in 2001, which looked at characteristics of borderline final year medical students. His PhD looked at educational impact of a change to standards based assessment in a medical course and his MD investigated programmatic assessment.

He is a past president of the Australian and New Zealand Association for Health Professional Educators. He is a deputy editor of Medical Education and section editor of BMC Medical Education. His research interests are assessment of clinical competence and performance, workplace learning, selection into medical school, and professionalism.





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