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Abstract 5A

Mahara and reflection to illustrate development of graduate attributes

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Staff and students have recognized three main challenges facing students when attempting to use the University's web-based e-portfolio tool (Mahara) for critical reflection on their employability and graduate attributes. 1. Mahara views start as a blank canvas which some students find difficult; 2. Data entry in Mahara is initially private, but users subsequently need to make it increasingly more public, unlike standard social networking software; 3. Students tend only to engage with Mahara where there is a strategic advantage, e.g. credit-bearing team-work, employability development within Graduate Skills Programme, assessed reflective diaries, and for specific employment opportunities.

To help overcome these problems, twelve example Mahara views were created by a group of twelve students recruited from all four Colleges. These views will be made available to, and widely advertised to, all students across the university. Each Mahara view includes critical reflection on employability and graduate attributes. A further objective of the project is to develop learning and teaching materials that staff can access and utilise for teaching, course convening, or student support. The views will represent templates that will allow for the embedding of sustained student critical reflection on employability plans and graduate attributes.

 The presentation will demonstrate the main features and diversity of the example Mahara views generated, and discuss the lessons learned about student perspectives and awareness of graduate attributes, reflection, and online self-study. The practicalities of using the online learning and teaching resources generated by this project to embed sustainable student reflection within existing courses will also be discussed.

Outcomes
Access and use Mahara templates to promote awareness of graduate attributes in learning and teaching. Delegates will be able to embed student reflection on employability and graduate attributes.