

Stewardship: a way of analysing, integrating and providing intention to the curriculum of the Australian PhD

1. Introduction

In Briefing Paper 1 *Teacher-development strategies and PhD programs* prepared for the project team by Keith Trigwell, three approaches to teaching development in the PhD were identified from an exploration of the scholarly literature: coursework, through practice, and informal learning, and examples of each approach were described. Common across these approaches is the tendency to see teaching development as an add-on to the PhD, especially the research project. In other words, there is no discernable (or intentional) relation between the teaching development efforts undertaken by students and the assessment and/or outcome of the PhD. The paper's conclusion flagged the notion of a 'doctoral curriculum' as a response to the problem of teaching development becoming more integrated.

In this second Briefing Paper for the project team, the goal is to flesh out an idea that can be used to diagnose and reframe a curriculum for doctoral education – and that idea is stewardship – borrowed from the work of Golde & Walker (2006). We put the term stewardship to work in three ways. The first is as a heuristic device that enables us to ask critical questions about the current purpose and shape of doctoral education in Australia. The second is to test whether stewardship offers a compelling way of conceptualising students' learning experiences into a coherent and integrated curriculum. And third, we flag how stewardship offers intentionality to the design challenges of doctoral education, in ways that are currently absent from curriculum conversations about the multiplicity of purposes which plague the contemporary Australian PhD.

In this Paper, we draw on the existing research literature to describe some of the concern with bringing 'curriculum' more explicitly into the doctoral education landscape. Second, we make a case for the notion of stewardship and outline its three dimensions drawing on the pioneering work of Golde & Walker (2006), and in doing so, point to examples from their Carnegie Foundation initiative. Third, we describe how stewardship has the potential to offer a more intentional and integrated view of learning in the PhD that allows for a diversity of outcomes. In essence, stewardship enables a set of new framing questions:

- What happens if we take seriously a complex notion of 'curriculum' into the learning contexts of the Australian PhD?
- What happens when we see the curriculum of the PhD as comprising (at least) four learning spaces: the research project/thesis, supervision, the intellectual climate

(departmental context), and generic courses and skills workshops? How might the design of the PhD include learning in, and between, these four spaces?

- What happens when those four (traditionally research conceived) learning spaces are re-imagined to include a focus on teaching development?
- What happens to the PhD if we see 'teaching development' more broadly - to be about the learning of others in a range contexts?
- What happens when we conceive the curriculum of the PhD to be about developing stewards (rather than researchers, primarily) of the discipline, no matter the PhD graduates' employment destination?

By taking the two notions of curriculum and stewardship seriously, the project offers an insight into how these five overlapping questions can take the Australian PhD beyond the impoverished discourses of research training that currently dominate the policy landscape, to one that returns us to the fundamental question of doctoral *education*.

2. A doctoral curriculum?

Beginning with the premise that a new national conversation about the Australian PhD is sorely needed – one that attends to the needs of a range of stakeholders: the academy, industry and the community – arguments have long been made that the entire learning experience requires a much more designed approach (Cumming, 2010). Fuelled by the fact that changes to the knowledge production scene outside the academy are putting pressures on the PhD to feed into economic agendas for the nation, Gilbert (2004:300) provides a helpful landscape summary for those arguments:

- consumers and end-users wanting research to address the problems and practices of everyday life (relevant, applicable and focused on improvement);
- multi-disciplinarity has become the research logic for innovation and discovery;
- the boundaries of knowledge implied within academic and institutional structures of universities no longer represents the sophistication in conceptions of knowledge;
- knowledge production, innovation and circulation is proceeding apace in spaces outside the university;
- the academic role and profession is no longer just teaching and research. Not only have these activities become unbundled, new opportunities for academics have emerged in the areas of entrepreneurship, community engagement, intellectual and advocacy work (raising questions about future doctoral employment destinations and outcomes);
- the forms of the doctorate have diversified; in some areas coursework is an expectation, while in others, it has become formalised through the structure of the professional doctorate;
- competing research paradigms and methodologies have created tensions in a range of fields; and
- concern about the outcomes of doctoral education have focused attention on the development of generic capabilities and transferable skills.

Although there have been many reports and reviews signalling the need for an overhaul of the PhD (ACOLA, 2016), Australian universities have not yet responded in any radical way that has challenged the centrality of the production of a written thesis. They have however, added to the diversity of doctoral program types, and they have bolted-on additional expectations around the research project itself designed to appeal to a range of agendas, for example, those related to industry collaboration, commercialisation, ethics and integrity training. Rather than intentionally re-designing the doctoral learning experience itself by taking advantage of the learning spaces students encounter, the responses from universities themselves signal wariness in tinkering too much with the PhD-as-thesis model.

Writing in an Australian context in 2002, McWilliam and Singh speculated that one of the reasons why 'curriculum' has seemed such an ill-fit for doctoral education is that in taught coursework contexts "curriculum's imperative is to contain knowledge" ... while the "imperative of research is to discover new knowledge" (p.3) – that is, one specifies what is to be learned, while the other is engaged in the act of creating it. Their argument in the main is that changes to the nature of knowledge production in and outside of universities is bringing curriculum into the conversation in ways that are designed to satisfy demands for increased order, accountability, and quantification - a form of surveillance imposed by external bodies. In other words, the move toward curriculum in doctoral education and research training derives in part from a logic that resources are being wasted.

Writing elsewhere, Grant (2011:254) adds her take:

... the curriculum of doctoral education can be described as a blend of knowledge skills and dispositions that are typically learned through a relatively intense = face to face pedagogical engagement between a novice and mature scholar/researcher (or two), sometimes supplemented by a research comprising 'colleagues' with different levels of experience. If a student is lucky, there will be other doctoral students nearby to talk to, maybe form writing/and/or reading with; their department might provide seminars or journal clubs or even writing retreats. The student may learn as much from through participation in a wider network of national and international scholars in her/his research area accessed via conference attendances, online discussion lists, reviewing work, and/or supervisor introductions.

And there are other efforts too that resuscitate 'curriculum' as a possible solution to the ills that plague doctoral education. In a panel conversation with a well-known group of doctoral education researchers (Hopwood, Dahlgren, Boud, Lee and Kiley) held at the 2010 Quality in Postgraduate Research (QPR) conference on this very topic (Hopwood et al, 2010), curriculum for Hopwood can be read as "the whole pedagogical environment, the collection of things and practices that shape students' learning" (p.85). For Kiley, curriculum involves all the following components: candidates, supervision, environment, examination, outcomes and outputs, as well as a commitment to transparency and clear expectations. Lee takes her cues about curriculum from educational theorising arguing that three considerations need attention: philosophy and purpose; learning outcomes (knowledge, skills, capabilities, values

and attitudes), and the activities of learning, teaching and assessment. She further adds that the crisis discourse which accompanies policy interventions in doctoral education tends to focus on one of these three elements in isolation from the other (producing particular sorts of distortions and effects), and that there is a need to see research activity and spaces as more consciously pedagogical. Curriculum, it seems, appears to inhabit an ambivalent presence in the doctoral education scene.

3. Why stewardship for doctoral education?

Australia's recent review of research training (ACOLA, 2016) was framed in large part around a pressing concern that Australia's HDR programs lacked a strong and coherent effort on strengthening industry-research collaboration (taken to include the broad spectrum of organizations: business, government, not-for-profit and community sectors). The review is jam-packed with practices and suggestions that tie HDR programs more closely to industry so that graduates have the best chance to develop industry-ready skills leading to employment and a measurable return to the public investment. Three innovative suggestions include industry placements, industry defined research problems, and the involvement of industry supervision in overseeing projects. While the review does flag the radical potential of these learning experiences for Australian HDR students, perhaps unsurprisingly, these suggestions in the main, do not contain a robust educational narrative, and there is no mention of the word 'curriculum' as a mechanism capable of providing structure to students' learning experiences. In addition, the review offers no vision of the PhD beyond training and in doing so, largely ignores a long tradition of critical scholarship about doctoral education.

In linking our project to the concept of stewardship outlined by Golde & Walker (2006), we use it not only to re-think teaching development within the PhD, we also put it to work to ask questions of the shape and purpose of the PhD itself - as a curriculum designed to develop stewards of the discipline. For Golde (2006), the goal is clear:

[a] PhD holder should be capable of *generating* new knowledge and defending knowledge claims against challenges and criticism, *conserving* the most important ideas and findings that are a legacy of past and current work, and *transforming* knowledge that has been generated and conserved by explaining and connecting it to ideas from other fields. All of this implies the ability to teach well to a variety of audiences, including those outside formal classrooms (p.10).

While these three facets of stewardship preserve disciplinary learning at the heart of the PhD, it is evident that the education of Golde's (2006) 'steward' promises a set of doctoral learning experiences that shift in intention, structure, pedagogy, education, and moral outcome. We take these dimensions as mirroring the complexity of curriculum. Yet, the goal is not simply to protect the discipline or maintain the status quo; the mission is to take forward the discipline in thoughtful and considered ways that include the desire for challenge and change.

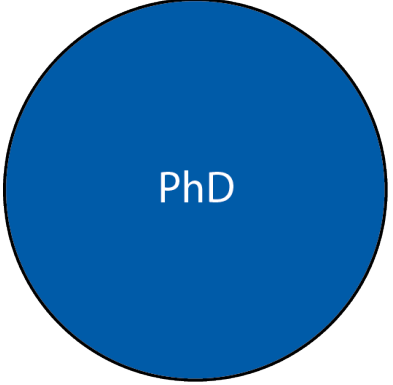
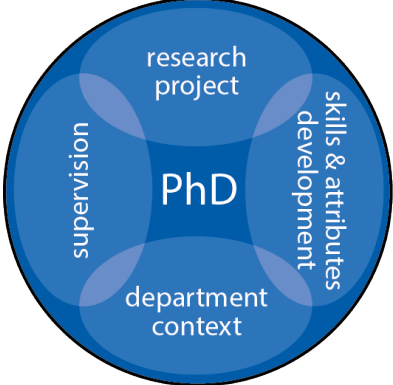
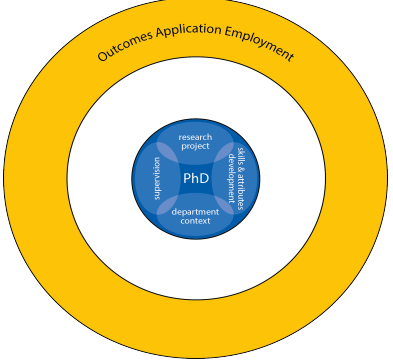
A steward thinks about how to preserve the heart and essence of the field. But there are also important forward-looking meanings, as stewardship does not imply stasis. A steward is a caretaker who trains a critical eye toward the future. A steward must be willing to take risks and move the discipline forward (Golde, 2006:13).

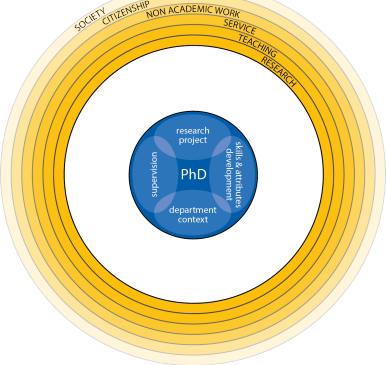
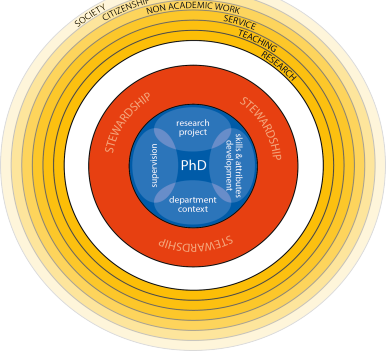
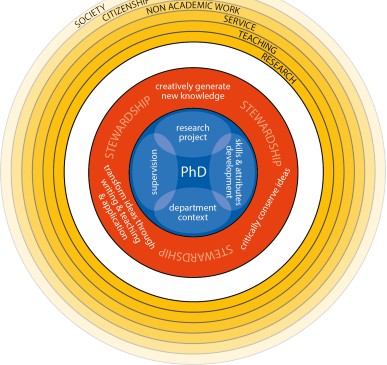
In their landmark publication *Envisioning the future of doctoral education*, Golde & Walker (2006) invited established US scholars across several fields to address the following question: “If you could start de novo, what would the best way to structure the doctorate look like?” In Science, Elkana argues that more emphasis should be placed on PhD students “understanding and cherishing the contradictions in Science” (p. 67) – and indeed – that they should be expected to encounter different paradigms for knowledge and knowing. Bass argues that a steward of Mathematics cares for both the discipline and its *professional applications*. That is – a steward attends to the diversity of work environments that involve engaging an array of audiences/publics, with maths. In the humanities, Graff offers a number of proposals for change in the English PhD that better orients its graduates toward stewardship: foregrounding the discipline as a contested space to be explored in introductory coursework, requiring students to undertake teaching development, making it attractive for disciplinary academic experts to teach in typical first year undergraduate writing courses, better connecting undergraduate and postgraduate curricula, and helping students prepare for employment outside the academy. Indeed, Golde & Walker’s (2006) publication is full with scholars imagining how stewardship can be incorporated as a central principle for the renewal of doctoral education. Indeed the focus for them is not just on acts of generation and conservation; it is also about translating the discipline to audiences beyond the academy, and entertaining the possibility that those audiences (perhaps like undergraduate students) offer new and exciting ways of pushing the discipline forward, that is, into a new cycle of generation.

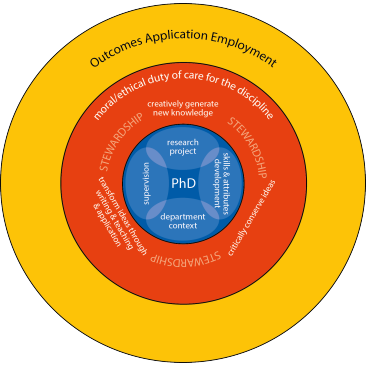
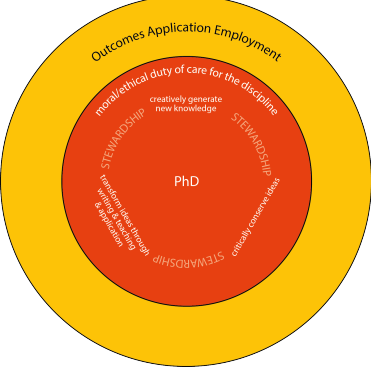
In the next section of this Briefing Paper, we outline how stewardship is put to work as part of the project.

4. Putting stewardship to work in the project

We are working with the idea of stewardship in three ways: first, as an analytical device to ask questions about the purpose and shape of the existing doctoral curriculum; second, we see stewardship as offering the possibility of a coherent narrative which can be used to identify and integrate curriculum contexts; and third, stewardship can also be considered as a mechanism that drives (or provides intentionality) to the multiplicity of purposes that currently bedevil discussions of the purpose of the contemporary PhD. Below, we describe these three uses in further detail.

	<p>In most Australian PhD programs, apart from the supervisor, a set of institutional milestones, the conduct of research, and the production of a thesis to be assessed for contribution to knowledge, it is unclear what the student will encounter as part of their learning. The focus is squarely on research/new knowledge production even though a good deal of the curriculum is likely to be concealed from the student. While many universities now have a suite of generic qualities that PhD students are expected to demonstrate on graduation (through the thesis or in addition to it), it is not clear how the learning experiences in the PhD develop those qualities. Consistent with the view that the PhD is about the production of new knowledge, the thesis continues as the main form of assessment - despite the precarious nature of future academic work. The focus on stewardship (generation, conservation and transformation) invites us to interrogate the existing (and default) research intention of the PhD and how those intentions translate into learning experiences).</p>
	<p>In the project, we argue that there may be at least four authentic learning spaces that can be conceived as doctoral curricula in the broadest sense: the research project/thesis, supervision, intellectual department climate, and generic skills/attributes development courses. While these are traditionally spaces in the PhD for research and researcher development, our attention to stewardship (translation) invites us to think about how other aspects of academic work (in particular, teaching and teaching development) can be integrated in these same spaces for PhD students. BP1 reminded us that most teaching development during the PhD happens in a bolt-on way, typically unaffected by the learning that takes place as part of the research project. In articulating these four learning spaces as providing the locations for thinking about the PhD curriculum, our focus is also on how those learning spaces can be utilized to advance a doctoral education for stewardship (generation, conservation and transformation).</p>
	<p>Given what is known about lack of employment opportunities in the academy for PhD graduates, pressure has been mounting for some time to re-engineer the PhD in ways that better connect it with a range of employment outcomes. This raises questions about what a PhD is for and how it can be redesigned with multiple destinations in mind: the academy (research, teaching and service), and non-academic work (industry, government, community). While employability is undoubtedly a main driver for diversifying the experiences in the PhD, the more liberal tradition of a PhD education also remains firmly in view (critical thinking, social responsibility and citizenship).</p>

	<p>The project's focus on stewardship (generation, conservation, and transformation) provides the basis for asking two questions: (i) what does it mean to act as a disciplinary steward no matter the employment destination; (ii) how does the employment destination add a level of complexity to what a disciplinary steward is, does, and stands up for, in that context? It may also be the case that the connection between teaching/teaching development and the PhD is broadened out. Under stewardship, teaching and teaching development are reframed and contextualized by the context of employment destination. While the academy might take 'teaching' to mean the learning of undergraduate students, each employment destination is likely to have a different audience eager to learn about the PhD graduate's work or their research expertise.</p>
	<p>In Golde & Walker's (2006) work, stewardship encompasses a set of roles and skills, as well as a set of principles. The former ensures competence and the latter provides the moral compass. The three facets of stewardship - generation, conservation, and transformation - are introduced into the doctorate to provide an intentionality to the learning experiences (including the four learning spaces) which comprise the curriculum, and its offers a narrative designed to integrate the multiple purposes to which doctoral education is now subject.</p>
	<p>Creatively generate new knowledge: students should understand that the PhD signifies that the recipient is able to ask interesting and important questions, formulate appropriate strategies for investigating these questions, conduct investigations with a high degree of competence, analyze and evaluate the results of the investigations, and communicate the results to others to advance the field.</p> <p>Conservation implies that students understand the history and fundamental ideas of the discipline but also recognizes that disciplinary stewards are aware of the shoulders on which they stand and must judge which ideas are worth keeping and which have outlived their usefulness, examining how their disciplines fit into the larger intellectual landscape.</p> <p>Transformation speaks of the importance of representing and communicating ideas effectively, and encompasses teaching in the broadest sense of the word. It is also attentive to the range of audiences and publics that engage with the discipline and their potential to ask questions that edge the discipline into new arenas. It also suggests that stewards must understand other disciplines, the differences between disciplinary views of the world, and how to appreciate and communicate across traditional boundaries.</p>

	<p>In taking on the label of a disciplinary steward, a PhD student recognizes and takes responsibility for moral and ethical care of the discipline. On this view, a PhD student understands their responsibility to engage in problem solving and/or greater understanding. Self-identifying as a steward implies adopting a sense of purpose that is larger than oneself.</p> <p>In this project, we see these three facets of stewardship - including moral and ethical care for the discipline as the tie between them - and as operating across both academic and non-academic settings. Stewardship provides an overarching intention to the design of doctoral education.</p>
	<p>Finally, an education for stewardship is taken to be the primary narrative of the PhD. While the four contexts are likely to remain as learning spaces in which activity takes place, they are no longer assumed to be the only spaces capable of developing stewards of, and for, the discipline. Further, the outcome or destination of the PhD is no longer solely focused on the academy but expands to include the multiplicity of destinations. Assumed in this model, is that students will be much more active in shaping the nature of their candidature, identifying and engaging with opportunities that develop them as scholars and stewards of their discipline.</p>

5. Next stages of the project

Returning to teaching development: beyond bolt-on to integration

In order to move on from the bolt-on approaches that have dominated teaching development practices in the PhD so far (conclusion of Briefing Paper 1), a key element of the project is about reimagining how teaching development can happen differently in the current Australian PhD. In doing so, we ask two questions. First, how can existing research and researcher development practices in the four learning spaces below be described, expanded, or contribute to, teaching development? And second, how can the four learning spaces below generate new opportunities for progressing ways of thinking and practising as a teacher?

1. The research project
2. Supervision (individual, panel, group supervision)
3. Intellectual climate (department context)
4. Courses/workshops designed to develop generic research skills

The empirical component of the project invites PhD students, early career academics, and key institutional players involved in teaching development programs for PhD students to describe how these spaces carry developmental conversations and practices related to teaching. These participants are also prompted to imagine how these spaces might be re-imagined to carry

conversations about teaching development (if it is not currently the case). They are further prompted to consider how stewardship can be used to interrogate the existing PhD's focus on research, and what a PhD designed for stewardship might look like.

Prepared by Tai Peseta for the project team: Simon Barrie, Keith Trigwell, Tai Peseta, Peter McCallum, Jeanette Fyffe, Joe Graffam, Alistair Kwan & Lee Partridge.

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