Understanding undergraduate attributes: The Views of Senior Leadership at one Research-Intensive University

Graduate Profile Outcomes Research Project Technical Report #3

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I.   ABSTRACT

An interview study was conducted to ascertain senior management's perceptions of and priorities for the attributes listed in the University of Auckland's Graduate Profile (GP). Eight interviews with members of the Senior Leadership Team examined their views of the GP and solicited guidance as to which attributes should be the focus of a pilot evaluation. Participants mainly saw the GP as aspirational and reported limited use. They generally viewed general intellectual skills and capacities, and personal qualities (sections 2 and 3 of the profile) as somewhat more important than specialist knowledge (section 1). However, section 1 attributes were viewed as more well developed among graduates than section 2 and 3 attributes. Attributes were believed to vary by academic programme, but there was very limited evidence regarding graduates' acquisition of most GP attributes. From participants' recommendations, three attributes were selected for a pilot evaluation. Nonetheless, it is a matter of some concern that a statement of University outcomes (GP) plays such a minor role in the thinking and practice of senior managers and leaders in the institution.

II.   BACKGROUND

There is a global interest in the quality of student experiences in higher education and a growing demand for evidence that undergraduate education provides additional value than simply a means of career education. For example, the OECD has initiated a multinational study, "Assessing Higher Education Learning Outcomes (AHELO)", with the goal of establishing what students in higher education know and can do (e.g., critical thinking, analytical reasoning, problem-solving, and written communication) upon graduation. Similarly, the Collegiate Learning Assessment (CLA) evaluates student cognitive and communicative skills and two-years of attendance at many American universities was shown to make little difference (Arum & Roksa, 2011). More locally, Spronken-Smith et al. (2012) showed that graduate attribute descriptions exist in 7 NZ universities; however, their study found little in-depth institutional engagement with the outcomes, especially around student assessment and course evaluation. Thus, there are concerns that university education is not delivering even what it expects of itself.

In 2012, the Graduate Profile Attributes project, funded by the Vice Chancellor Strategic Development Fund, began to evaluate student outcomes in light of The University of Auckland's Graduate Profile (Appendix A). The University's Graduate Profile is similar to documents at all other New Zealand universities which describe the knowledge, skills, and personal qualities students are expected to acquire by completion of the baccalaureat degree. Hence, this study was motivated by an interest in what the institution's ambitious Graduate Profile, approved by Senate more than a decade ago, meant to senior leaders.

A further motivation for this study was to provide an independent basis for selecting attributes for initial research. Hence, rather than relying on the research team's preferences, it was decided to inform the selection by the input of senior management in the university who would be expected to have valid insights into the relative priority of the attributes. Another advantage of this approach is to establish perspectives that go beyond those of the Faculty of Education to ensure the project focuses on university-wide concerns and priorities. While measures for the various attributes exist in the research literature or in commercial applications, the Project had limited resources and needed to prioritise aspects of the GP that were amenable for the project's time frame and funding limitations.

II. GRADUATE PROFILE ATTRIBUTES

The GP lists 18 multi-faceted "attributes" distributed across three domains: (Section 1) Specialist knowledge, (Section 2) General intellectual skills and capacities, and (Section 3) Personal qualities and dispositions. Section I Specialist knowledge of the GP cannot be assessed across faculties using a common instrument since the attributes are discipline specific. Furthermore, Section I attributes are assessed relatively comprehensively across the bachelor degree within programmes and faculties. The GP has 15 attributes in Sections 2 General intellectual skills and capacities and Section 3 Personal qualities of the GP. Section 2 focuses on students developing advanced critical intellectual powers such as logic, reasoning, analysis, synthesis, problem solving and so on, while Section 3 focuses on acquisition of enhanced personal attributes and dispositions favourably associated with a broader, more tolerant, engaged, and insightful perspective on humanity, organisations, values, ideas, and beliefs. The fundamental premise in formulated a Graduate Profile is that, over and above any career entry or economic benefits accruing to a person with a university degree (especially in selective professions), university education is intended to have certain impacts on an individual that could not be obtained in another way.

III. METHOD

Ethics approval was sought and obtained from the University of Auckland Human Participants Ethics Committee (#010232) to conduct one-on-one interviews with members of the University of Auckland Senior Leadership Team (SLT). The University's SLT is an advisory group to the Vice-Chancellor, normally chaired by the Vice-Chancellor and comprises the Deputy Vice-Chancellors, Pro Vice-Chancellors, Deans and Directors of the major service divisions. The SLT normally meets weekly to consider strategy, policy and current projects and issues, and act as a sounding board for the Vice-Chancellor. Invitations to participate in an interview were emailed to 16 members of SLT, including Deans from each of the 8 faculties. Deans were encouraged to nominate a Deputy, Associate, or Assistant Dean within their faculty to participate if they opted not to participate themselves. The VC excluded himself from the study on the basis that he had commissioned the research in the first place.

Of the 16 invited individuals, 8 participated (1 as a Dean's nominee). Two individuals (Dean's nominees) agreed to participate but an interview could not be scheduled. Four invited individuals declined to participate, and one did not respond to the invitations. This gave an initial response rate of 63% and an obtained rate of 50%. One individual (a Dean's nominee) participated in an interview but because this person did not hold a Deputy/Associate/Assistant Dean role, the data were excluded from analysis.

Interviews were conducted by Dr Makayla Grays at a time and location most convenient to the participant; all took place within participants' offices. Five interviews were conducted in September-October 2013. After a second round of email invitations to those who had not initially responded, three more interviews were conducted in May-June 2014. Interviews were audio recorded, with participant consent, and typically lasted about 35 minutes. During the interviews, participants were provided with a copy of the GP to refer to as needed when responding to the interview questions (listed in Appendix B).

Semi-structured interviewing took place and analysis of results was conducted thematically to aggregate points of view around the research agenda (i.e., meaning & purpose of GP, relative importance of the attributes, evidence related to the GP, and attribute prioritisation for research). Analysis was carried out by the interviewer.

IV. RESULTS

Results are organised below by themes rather than specific question, as relevant comments were sometimes made during participants' responses to another question.

It needs to be first noted that overall familiarity with the GP was minimal. Often participants either did not know about the GP prior to the interview (but had reviewed it in preparation), or they knew that such a document existed but had limited familiarity with its content. Some mentioned only becoming familiar with the GP when developing programme-specific GPs within their faculty. The general impression among participants was that the GP is not a frequently referenced document.

PURPOSE AND USE OF THE GP

Views concerning the purpose of the GP ranged from expression of hoped for outcomes (i.e., aspiration) or as a requirement that guided curriculum and teaching (i.e., expectation). An aspirational interpretation of the GP's purpose can be contrasted with an "expectation" interpretation in which the GP defines the attributes students *will* possess upon graduation (as opposed to *hoped* attributes).

Most participants identified the purpose of the GP as "aspirational" outlining the type of graduates which UoA hopes and/or aims to prepare. For example:

> [It describes] what we aspire to for our students when they leave this institution. To me, they're aspirational statements about what we're aiming for.

The following quotes reflect an expectation view:

> It's trying to give students and staff and people who are interested in our students some sense of the range of qualities the students will possess when they graduate.

> [The purpose] is really to define the fundamental body of knowledge that we require for our students and what we guarantee as a faculty that our students can do.

However, the distinction between aspirations and expectations was not always clear, as shown here:

> The main purpose of [the GP] is to set out a level of expectation and the requisite knowledge and skills that you would hope any graduate from this university would leave with.

It is apparent that among this sample of University leadership there were mixed perceptions as to the purpose of the GP, acknowledging the GP both as *hopes* and *guarantees* for graduate capabilities. Two participants elaborated on how the GP may be interpreted as outlining expected graduate outcomes, yet personally recognise its function as purely aspirational.

> [The GP] is like mission statements…people look at this with a jaded eye, and they will find some graduates who measure up marvellously and others who don't in the least, and that's just to be expected. These are aspirational things… [quoting from GP] '*The university expects its graduates to have the following attributes…*' It doesn't actually, does it? It knows some will and some won't, but it's aspirational.

> [The GP] informs the way we need to think about our teaching. It isn't so much that we can, hand on heart, say we're producing all these graduates who are doing these things. For me, it's saying, "This is what we're aspiring to produce".

Participants were asked about what role the GP plays in their work. As mentioned above, some had consulted the GP when developing programme-specific GPs. None of the participants indicated a deliberate, focused, ongoing use of the GP in their work. Some commented that their work connects to the GP simply because the attributes represent "shared values throughout universities," even though their work does not explicitly or intentionally aim to fulfil the GP. As one participant remarked about the GP's role,

> The blunt answer is, it doesn't [play a role], if you mean that we consult the Profile. But it does [play a role] as far as the ideas in the Profile are ones that we live by.

Some participants commented that the GP gives an impression that graduates will undergo a broad educational experience at university, but they questioned whether this is really the case. They noted that several of the attributes presented in sections 2 and 3 of the GP could potentially be addressed through General Education but in actuality are not, due to the brevity and structure of the University's GE programme.

> I realise the University would like students to be broad-based in some sense—not just to have a specialist knowledge but to have a general knowledge... [General education] perhaps tries to achieve that. It doesn't do it. Very few courses, and the students can still just pick the courses that somehow or other suit them and not courses that necessarily challenge them... If you want your students to be able to go out in life and be the kind of leaders you expect them to be in their specialist fields, more generally you do want a broad knowledge—of the kind that, say, American universities try to foster in their liberal arts components of degrees.

> I really think that for some of these more broadly based graduate attributes, to really achieve that in an undergraduate degree, you would need a higher component of general education—like an American four year liberal arts degree programme—where you're really expecting that your students will do some courses in dimensions that are completely outside the area of their major.

One participant discussed a need for the GP to be updated to include an internationalisation aspect.

> We have to produce citizens who are going to be able to work anywhere in the world. I think a question we've got to ask ourselves is, does our GP sufficiently prepare our students as global citizens? I'm not sure that it does. There's nothing [included] about internationalisation...New Zealand students are very mobile...many of them will work overseas for some part of their lives. They've got to be able to engage with a wide range of cultures.

Some participants remarked that the GP should be more prominent in the minds of both staff and students. One emphasised that students should be made aware of the GP and reminded of it at every possible opportunity. Another said that the GP could help to inspire and guide University staff:

> I'd like [staff] to say, 'I'm really proud to be here because this is what we're aiming to do with our students.'

One participant said that the GP was too long and wordy.

Primarily among participants holding instructional roles acknowledged that their work addresses the GP's aims to some degree, although the connection is largely incidental. A common perception among these instructors was that their work is carried out with little to no influence from the GP. Interestingly, among the eight participants there appeared to be a (perhaps weak) association between viewing the GP's content as "aspirations" or "expectations," and actually using the document. Participants who described the GP attributes as expectations for graduate capabilities spoke more about using the GP in their curriculum development

processes. It is possible that an aspirational interpretation of the GP is linked to less utilisation; however, confirming such a link would require further investigation.

IMPORTANCE OF THE ATTRIBUTES

Appendix C provides selected participant quotations, organised by each GP attribute. This section provides instead a summary of the important patterns concerning the importance of the Sections in the GP.

Most participants indicated the importance of the various GP attributes varied according to the situation students were in. Seven of the eight participants identified Section 2 and/or Section 3 as most important. Intellectual skills and personal qualities in Sections 2 and 3 were regarded as most important mainly because they were seen as transferable to a variety of contexts, and thus particularly relevant in terms of future employment and lifelong learning. Several participants remarked that the development of these attributes is what sets university graduates apart from graduates of other tertiary institutions (e.g., trade/tech schools). University graduates were believed to be more broadly educated than others who undergo specialised vocational training.

Section 2
In particular, with regard to Section 2, the "intellectual capacities" reflected in attributes 2.1, 2.2 and 2.3 were considered more important than the more "mundane" skills which followed in that section. Attributes 2.1 (i.e., capacity for critical, conceptual and reflective thinking) and 2.2 (i.e., intellectual openness and curiosity) were often seen as foundational in that other attributes relied upon and related to these.

Section 3
One participant remarked that personal qualities are also "where you really differentiate between a good graduate or a less well prepared graduate." Personal qualities were widely regarded as important, although participants acknowledged that they are also the most difficult to develop and often overlooked by programmes. As one said,

> I don't think people think that much about the personal qualities, until they come to look for a
> reference [for employment].

A few participants raised the issue of what role the University does, and should, play in furthering students' development of personal qualities listed in the GP. According to one,

> [Personal qualities] are very important, but we certainly don't teach them... It's not that we fail to
> teach them, but we shouldn't take that to be our role. They're fostered.

Overall, participants regarded personal qualities as very important attributes for graduates but acknowledged that the mechanism(s) through which these qualities are developed at University is unclear. Two suggested that instructors' modelling of these qualities is probably the most impact that the university has, or can have, in helping to impart the personal qualities.

Section 1
Not to be overlooked, specialist knowledge was considered a fundamental component of a university education. One participant who argued for Section 3 as most important on the GP did so with the following caveat:

> I think the dispositional elements probably matter most—under the understanding, of course, that
> any university worth its salt will be producing mastery of a body of knowledge and skills.

Another participant noted that while specialist knowledge is important, it is not equally important across all programmes.

> Specialist knowledge is important, but it's important for graduates if they go onto careers in which use the specialist knowledge. But many graduates don't… Capacities and skills you acquire in the training, they tend to stay with you.

Specialist knowledge may be the most emphasised component of university education, yet participants indicated that discipline-crossing general intellectual skills/capacities and personal qualities are possibly even more important for graduates. The development of Section 2 and 3 attributes was viewed as more difficult than Section 1, and it remains unclear how students ought to develop those attributes while at University.

GP EFFECTIVENESS AND EVIDENCE

There was strong consensus that attribute development varied across the University. That is, for a given attribute, graduates of some programmes may be more developed than graduates of other programmes because of the nature of the discipline being taught and learned. However, the most consistent response was that the University was doing well at Section 1 Specialist knowledge, particularly attributes 1.1 (i.e., mastery of a body of knowledge, including an understanding of broad conceptual and theoretical elements, in the major fields of study) and 1.2 (i.e., understanding and appreciation of current issues and debates in the major fields of knowledge studied). Participants also had confidence in students' information technology ability (Attribute 2.9) and noted progress in the area of intellectual/research integrity (Attribute 2.4).

Communication (Attribute 2.7) was the most often cited area of weakness—and according to one participant, oral communication in particular. Quantitative ability (Attribute 2.8) was also regarded as quite variable across the university, and more problematic in some disciplines than others. A few participants commented on how difficult it is to prioritise attributes like 2.6 (i.e., awareness of international and global dimensions of intellectual, political and economic activities, and distinctive qualities of Āotearoa/New Zealand), 2.8 (i.e., ability to undertake numerical calculations and understand quantitative information) and 3.4 (i.e., ability to lead in the community, and a willingness to engage in constructive public discourse and to accept social and civic responsibilities) which largely rely on General Education to address. According to one,

> [The university] generally does poorly on the kinds of things that in the States you call Liberal Arts. We don't require enough. [General education] is a very poor nod in the direction of that sort of thing. I know the University would like to say we try to make students broad by general education.

Participants were asked what evidence they used to base their judgement of the University's effectiveness at producing the GP attributes. In general, participants struggled to point to any solid evidence substantiating their impressions of students' attainment of the attributes. Some directly stated that the type of evidence needed to answer questions of effectiveness was lacking or absent.

> As an institution, we are not approaching it in any way that would allow us to really collect and evaluate evidence that students are achieving these attributes. // We don't look for evidence that students have actually achieved [the GP attributes].

> We're weak on that. We default to the [standards for the profession.]

Arguably, most of the assessments conducted within academic programmes focus on specialist knowledge. There is considerably less assessment of graduates' attainment of the attributes appearing in sections 2 and 3 of the Profile. Nonetheless, participants offered the following as evidence for their judgments of effectiveness:

- Assumptions about the benefit of completing a bachelor degree:

    You make that assumption—if you come in to do a degree, there's an expectation...that by the time [students] have completed their programme, they will leave with a set of knowledge and skills.

    You've got to assume that, because you've gone through a whole rigorous process of actually setting up degrees in the first place...by the time [students] have completed their programme, they should have acquired these skills in some shape or form.

- Academic programmes' learning objectives

    You would look to the learning objectives in the particular programmes and the attainment of those as a sign the [GP] had been met. That's if things are working properly.

- Employer surveys

    We're always looking for evidence from employers about the quality of our graduates.

In addition, sources of evidence included the university's international ranking, professional accreditations conducted of various programmes, and results from alumni and student satisfaction surveys. However, it was admitted that alignment of programmes and stated learning objectives did not assure students actually developed the intended attributes. Furthermore, international rankings, which was the most frequently cited evidence for effectiveness in Section 1 Specialist Knowledge are largely based on the research outputs and reputations of academic staff rather than students' learning and development. Again, having a reputable staff is no guarantee that the GP attributes are being developed. As one participant said,

> We are a research-intensive university that's serious about research-informed teaching. I think it's a pretty fair assumption that transfers into this notion of at least *communicating* a body of knowledge. I'm not so sure about *mastery* of a body of knowledge—that I'm less sure about.

While professional accreditations, employer, alumni and student surveys may yield useful information, none of these are actual measures of attribute effectiveness. Accreditations and employer feedback largely focus on products rather than the processes aimed at delivering attributes. Furthermore, such sources are unlikely to document change in students' capabilities, such that it cannot be discerned whether students already had some knowledge and skills prior to entering university or if the knowledge and skills were developed en route to graduating. Alumni and student surveys may show change over time (if administered as pre-post) but may be less valid as self-report measures. With all of these sources, the content may not be directly related to GP attributes—e.g., general student satisfaction is not a good indication of critical thinking ability, leadership, etc.

One participant commented that if the University is in fact fulfilling the GP, then evaluating the GP should be possible through a review of existing documentation.

> We ought to be able to measure [the achievement of attributes] as much as we can from existing documentation without having to go and try and create a whole lot of new things. And if our existing documentation is not lined up with [the attributes], then there's something wrong with it.

In summary, students' attainment of the GP attributes was perceived to vary by academic programme; however, there was a widespread lack of evidence to support any perceptions about attribute attainment, particularly outside the domain of specialist knowledge.

FOCUS ATTRIBUTES

At the end of the interview, participants were asked to recommend about three attributes from sections 2 and 3 of the Profile as the potential focus of an initial pilot evaluation. Most participants recommended at least 4 attributes. Table 1 shows the number of participants (out of 8) selecting each attribute as a possible focus.

Table 1. *GP Focus Attributes Recommended by Participants*

Attribute		Selected by
2.1	A capacity for critical, conceptual and reflective thinking.	6
2.2	An intellectual openness and curiosity.	
2.3	A capacity for creativity and originality.	4
2.7	An ability to access, identify, organise and communicate knowledge effectively in both written and spoken English and/or Māori.	
3.2	An ability to work independently and in collaboration with others.	
2.5	An ability to recognise when information is needed and a capacity to locate, evaluate and use this information effectively.	3
2.4	Intellectual integrity, respect for truth and for the ethics of research and scholarly activity.	2
3.1	A love and enjoyment of ideas, discovery and learning.	
3.5	Respect for the values of other individuals and groups, and an appreciation of human and cultural diversity.	
2.9	An ability to make appropriate use of advanced information and communication technologies.	1
3.3	Self-discipline and an ability to plan and achieve personal and professional goals.	
3.4	An ability to lead in the community, and a willingness to engage in constructive public discourse and to accept social and civic responsibilities.	
2.6	An awareness of international and global dimensions of intellectual, political and economic activities, and distinctive qualities of Āotearoa/New Zealand.	0
2.8	An ability to undertake numerical calculations and understand quantitative information.	
3.6	Personal and professional integrity and an awareness of the requirements of ethical behaviour.	

Attributes 2.1 and 2.2 were most frequently recommended as foci because, as noted previously, these were viewed as "foundational" in that other attributes build from and/or rely on them. Among the least frequently recommended were the liberal-arts-type attributes, which some participants had said that the University does not sufficiently attempt to address.

As described above, we wanted to select focus attributes for a pilot evaluation which
- Had been recommended by staff (i.e., were perceived as important or otherwise of interest),
- Were not known to be the focus of investigation elsewhere, and

- Could be adequately assessed within the project timeframe to establish a proof of concept.

We selected the focus attributes in late 2013 after five interviews had been completed. The following attributes were chosen for the pilot evaluation:
- 2.2, An intellectual openness and curiosity
- 3.1, A love and enjoyment of ideas, discovery and learning
- 3.5, Respect for the values of other individuals and groups, and an appreciation of human and cultural diversity

Each of these three attributes had been recommended by at least 2 of the 5 participants. We considered attributes 2.2 and 3.1 to be conceptually similar (as did some of the participants) and decided to investigate whether these attributes might be adequately assessed using a common survey. Note results for Attributes 2.2 and 3.1 have been reported in Project Report #2.

V. CONCLUSIONS AND FUTURE DIRECTIONS

It is important to keep in mind that only eight individuals from across the University participated in this study. Participants were chosen because of their leadership roles, which suggests some degree of representation for their respective organisational units; however, we recognise that many relevant perspectives from University staff could not be included here.

Results from this study indicate that the University's GP is not widely used. The GP is primarily viewed as an aspirational document, but viewing the GP in this way may detract somewhat from the need to provide evidence of what the University *is* accomplishing (as opposed to what it *aims* to accomplish). If the GP is meant to function as an overview of graduates' actual capabilities, rather than just institutional aspirations, then evidence to substantiate the GP's content is at present lacking. The University should consider how audiences ought to interpret the GP and what processes are in place or can be established to provide evidence for graduates' attainment of the GP attributes.

Another issue to consider with regard to the GP is where and how students are expected to develop the attributes during their time at university. The interviews revealed that some leaders believe that the University does not, and/or should not, attempt to develop some of the GP attributes (e.g., personal qualities). The University's General Education curriculum may not be comprehensive enough to produce sufficient development of the attributes for all students. The University should consider where and when (i.e., through which courses or experiences) students are expected to make gains on the GP attributes. A large-scale review and synthesis of academic programmes' graduate profiles could reveal where attributes are, or are not, addressed. Once it is known how students may develop the attributes, future investigations can contrast the performance of students who have participated in targeted courses/experiences to those who have not (yet) done so.

Before further investing significant resources into evaluating the current GP—now 12 years old—the University may want to consider whether any revisions are needed to the GP attributes or the document as a whole. A staff survey, focus groups and/or more interviews can provide insight into how well the current GP represents the aims of University staff in preparing graduates.

APPENDIX A
The University of Auckland Graduate Profile

The Graduate Profile is a description of the personal qualities, skills and attributes a student is expected to obtain by the end of an undergraduate degree programme at the University.

A student who has completed an undergraduate degree at The University of Auckland will have acquired an education at an advanced level, including both specialist knowledge and general intellectual and life skills that equip them for employment and citizenship and lay the foundations for a lifetime of continuous learning and personal development.

The University of Auckland expects its graduates to have the following attributes:

I Specialist knowledge

1. A mastery of a body of knowledge, including an understanding of broad conceptual and theoretical elements, in the major fields of study.
2. An understanding and appreciation of current issues and debates in the major fields of knowledge studied.
3. An understanding and appreciation of the philosophical bases, methodologies and characteristics of scholarship, research and creative work.

II General intellectual skills and capacities

1. A capacity for critical, conceptual and reflective thinking.
2. An intellectual openness and curiosity.
3. A capacity for creativity and originality.
4. Intellectual integrity, respect for truth and for the ethics of research and scholarly activity.
5. An ability to recognise when information is needed and a capacity to locate, evaluate and use this information effectively.
6. An awareness of international and global dimensions of intellectual, political and economic activities, and distinctive qualities of Āotearoa/New Zealand.
7. An ability to access, identify, organise and communicate knowledge effectively in both written and spoken English and/or Māori.
8. An ability to undertake numerical calculations and understand quantitative information.
9. An ability to make appropriate use of advanced information and communication technologies.

III Personal qualities

1. A love and enjoyment of ideas, discovery and learning.
2. An ability to work independently and in collaboration with others.
3. Self-discipline and an ability to plan and achieve personal and professional goals.
4. An ability to lead in the community, and a willingness to engage in constructive public discourse and to accept social and civic responsibilities.
5. Respect for the values of other individuals and groups, and an appreciation of human and cultural diversity.
6. Personal and professional integrity and an awareness of the requirements of ethical behaviour.

APPENDIX B
Interview questions

1) How familiar are you with the Graduate Profile (GP)?

2) If you could put the GP into your own words, how would you describe the main intent or thrust of what the document intends?

3) What evidence do you look for that students completing first degrees have met the expectations of the GP?

4) Please illustrate what role the GP plays, if any, in your office's design and evaluation of the University's bachelor degrees.

5) Which aspects of the GP are the most important? Why? What evidence would you use to establish that those expectations are met?

6) Which attributes do you think the University does a good/poor job with? How did you come to that evaluation? What evidence did you use?

7) [*Focusing on sections 2 and 3*] If you had to prioritise just 3 attributes, which would they be? Why? What evidence would you accept that students were meeting those expectations?

8) Do you have any other thoughts about the GP you'd like to share before we conclude the interview?

APPENDIX C
Selected quotes regarding GP attribute content and effectiveness

1. Specialist knowledge

Content   Whatever [skills and attributes] you want graduates to have needs to be developed on a platform of robust, timely, up-to-date, research-informed specialist knowledge.

Effectiveness   I think the University has increasingly, in the last 10-15 years, developed an international appreciation of some of the requirements in specialist knowledge... we have an enviable reputation in developing specialised knowledge.

1.1. A mastery of a body of knowledge, including an understanding of broad conceptual and theoretical elements, in the major fields of study.

Effectiveness   internationally highly ranked university with very, very good academic staff.

We are a research-intensive university that's serious about research-informed teaching. I think it's a pretty fair assumption that transfers into this notion of at least *communicating* a body of knowledge. I'm not so sure about a *mastery* of a body of knowledge. That I'm less sure about.

1.3. An understanding and appreciation of the philosophical bases, methodologies and characteristics of scholarship, research and creative work.

Content   You would like there to be more courses which are...potentially critical of the way things are done, or step back and say, the way we do things now is clearly right... There are parts of the university...which are more like training schools in existing methodologies, and there's no questioning of values. There should be more of that sort of thing.

2. General intellectual skills and capacities

Content   I think that's where a University adds a particular kind of value in the way that other educational institutions [like polytechnics or trade training schools] don't... General intellectual skills and capacities, I think, are really important, and the fact that students develop them in a research-led university environment is what is a distinguishing feature of those skills and capacities.

[General intellectual skills and capacities] are the most important... If things are working properly, one actually develops [these attributes] through the engagement with specialist knowledge, so they're not mutually exclusive.

Specialist knowledge is important, but it's important for graduates if they go onto careers which use the specialist knowledge. But many graduates don't... Capacities and skills you acquire in the training, they tend to stay with you.

Effectiveness

I think we have developed an international reputation for some of the areas that we work in.

2.1. A capacity for critical, conceptual and reflective thinking.

Content   The most important thing is that we produce graduates who are able to think. And there's a whole lot of things that flow from that—their ability to be flexible, to adapt, and to continue lifelong learning. And I think that's possibly the most important thing we can do.

2.2. An intellectual openness and curiosity.

Content   You want students to have curiosity and openness to new ideas. That's what university is really all about. Don't get used to things that people tell you, don't just take it in, but challenge what you're told.

Effectiveness

The biggest disappointment about teaching now is that, you have a bunch of students who for the most part are interested in the result. They don't have a curiosity. It's just, tell me what I have to do to get through and I'll do it. That's a function of the stress and pressure they're under, and the way they've been brought up. I don't know that [2.2 on the GP] is even

valid anymore. It's ideal, but...the system doesn't enhance that kind of approach anymore.

2.4. Intellectual integrity, respect for truth and for the ethics of research and scholarly activity.

Effectiveness   We've made a lot of developments in the last few years, with the academic integrity tutorial, so that's now become a sort of embedded part of all programmes. So I think that's a potentially strong area—at least an area we've given some systematic concentration to.

2.5. An ability to recognise when information is needed and a capacity to locate, evaluate and use this information effectively.

Content   [2.5] is actually becoming more important as time goes on. Generations ago, information was harder to locate and evaluate. Now it's really, really easy to locate the information, but there's so much of it that, more and more, it's around understanding what you know and what you don't know, how to find what you don't know, how to know when you've found it, and how to use it and evaluate it.

Effectiveness

We need the ability, more than ever, to not just find information, but to assess whether it's valuable or not. Finding information now is really easy. It's being able to understand the value of it, the context of it, how it can be applied, and where it should be distributed, which are actually much more complicated problems than just knowing where it is. Those are the things I think the university does well, but I think it also has to do well, and it needs to continue to develop those things.

probably quite well done because that's a necessity these days.

2.6. An awareness of international and global dimensions of intellectual, political and economic activities, and distinctive qualities of Āotearoa/New Zealand.

Effectiveness   Without a really robust general education component to the degree, that's hard to do.

[2.6] would vary across programmes. General education makes some attempt to generalise those sorts of attributes, but students can avoid engaging in those things if they wish.

2.7. An ability to access, identify, organise and communicate knowledge effectively in both written and spoken English and/or Māori.

Content   probably more important than it used to be.

Effectiveness   quite a lot of progress.

I think we are letting our students down, particularly the ones in the more quantitative disciplines. We're letting them off with being OK with being able to master their subject but not actually to master decent levels of communication in their subject.

I don't necessarily think the university does the Maori stuff very well...I don't think that's addressed particularly well.

2.8. An ability to undertake numerical calculations and understand quantitative information.

Content   I wish more students had that. There are some life skills that people need... // I would like there to be compulsory numeracy courses. It's a disgrace when students come out of university not knowing certain very elementary things. You might think schools teach this. Well, they do, [but] kids will have forgotten much of it.

Effectiveness   very, very uneven.

2.9. An ability to make appropriate use of advanced information and communication technologies.

Effectiveness   [2.9] is becoming more one which graduates need to be ready for. Some of the graduates I've seen coming out in the last 5 years fail to do that.

On a scale of 1 to 10, we're probably about a 5 or 6 on that.

3. Personal qualities

Content   Where you really differentiate between a good graduate or a less well prepared graduate is

in the personal qualities.

I don't think people think that much about the personal qualities, until they come to look for a reference [for employment].

[Personal qualities] are the hardest to build into a degree programme... you can only add so much value there to what people arrive with and how they are driven. I think what you best do is modelling it rather than attempting to teach it.

[Personal qualities] are very important, but we certainly don't teach them... We might model it...that's the way it's passed on... Some of the personal qualities, I think they're very important, but not especially because the university is there to teach them. It's not. // Some personal qualities you hope the students to have, but they're not taught as such, and we shouldn't think of ourselves with teaching them. I struggle slightly with the Profile because sometimes you get the impression that the university thinks that somehow or other we teach these things. Well we don't. It's not that we fail to teach them, but we shouldn't take that to be our role. They're fostered.

Effectiveness   [Personal qualities] are the harder ones.

These would be more difficult to measure, particularly in the university environment... these are the sorts of things that would be revealed in people's subsequent lives. We have been taking a more systematic approach to these.

We need to do more about looking at the well-rounded graduate leaving us with personal qualities... In a general sense, I don't think it's one of the issues we look at.

3.1. A love and enjoyment of ideas, discovery and learning.

Content   That's also covered under [2.2], so there's an overlap here.

It's very hard to know how you would build that in [a programme] except by modelling it, [making it] part of all your interaction with students.

...very difficult to impart...I think that's got to come from the students themselves. We can help them, but in the end...students themselves have to come here and be prepared to be independent learners and to be challenged. If they're not up to that challenge, they shouldn't be here. Students have to actually take responsibility for their own learning.

3.2. An ability to work independently and in collaboration with others.

Content   When you look at the workforce, that's possibly the most important attribute that you can have.

I find that a completely useless profile statement. It tells us nothing. It tells us people can work independently and in collaboration. So what?

Effectiveness

The academic grading system is contrary to getting people to work in teams, and I think that's one that needs to be investigated more thoroughly. Because we say that we do this, but I'm not sure that we're actually preparing people to work in teams, just because of the way the whole course is structured in terms of individual learning.

I think across the university that's very variably done, and I think it's a very important skill.

I suspect we do a pretty good job.

3.3. Self-discipline and an ability to plan and achieve personal and professional goals.

Effectiveness   It seems to be very common that students can't, even at very, very advanced levels in courses, get their act together to hand things in on time, and have some self-awareness around those issues.

3.4. An ability to lead in the community, and a willingness to engage in constructive public discourse and to accept social and civic responsibilities.

Content   I realise that the profile...would like students to have the ability to lead in some capacity. At that point I struggle a bit with the profile. It's not that I disagree necessarily, but it's unrealistic... It's a thing that you might like students to be like, but you know that some students who you really admire will not be like this, and that's utterly fine. // 'An ability to leade in the community' – I think it doesn't try to do this, and furthermore, it probably shouldn't... Some people of our brightest students are shy. It would be a tragedy if you were to say, well, we're not doing so well by you... It doesn't matter. They'll make their name in other ways.

That's particularly important, I think, otherwise you're just producing the same sort of product as a polytech or another sort of tertiary institution. If you're in the top, the G8 or whatever, that's where your mission lies.

Effectiveness

That's the kind of thing you can do at a four-year liberal arts college in the US, where you've got small classes and faculty that are very heavily engaged with aspects of what students do, and you've got residential education. [In] a large comprehensive university in a large multicultural city, that's really hard to do.

not always drawn out as effectively as it could be.

3.5. Respect for the values of other individuals and groups, and an appreciation of human and cultural diversity.

Content   One thing that you do teach at university is you teach students to challenge ideas. Some of these ideas involve values, so it's not part of our brief, I think, to inculcate respect for the values of everyone. There are lots of value systems that we do not respect. We might tolerate them...but I certainly would not want my students to respect some of the belief systems that are just basically flawed, for all kinds of reasons.

3.6. Personal and professional integrity and an awareness of the requirements of ethical behaviour.

Effectiveness   I think the university does not just foster this but in some sense does try to teach this, and I think that's a good development.