

Fellow Profile



Professor Ruth Bridgstock Griffith University

Ruth Bridgstock seeks to foster future capability in learners, educators, and educational institutions. She is interested in how educational institutions can be more responsive and more transformative in an increasingly complex and changing world.

Fellowship title: Graduate Employability 2.0: Enhancing the connectedness of learners, programs and higher education institutions

Year completed: 2018

Expertise key words: graduate employability, future of life and work, connectedness learning

What did you achieve?: This fellowship, Graduate Employability 2.0, set out to support the Australian higher education sector to foster learners' capabilities to make the most of digital and face-to-face relationships for success in life, learning and work. By embracing the centrality of social relationships to learning, collaboration and careers, the fellowship sought to take a different and complementary approach to graduate employability to the dominant 'individual skills development' approach. The fellowship established empirically the opportunity for connectedness learning in higher education—it asked which learning and teaching approaches are best suited to developing learners' social capabilities and networks, and in turn which institutional-enabling strategies are required to help universities be less siloed and isolated, and become more dynamic and connected with industry, community, alumni, learners, and educators. The fellowship also engaged with stakeholders across the higher education sector to increase adoption of connectedness learning, and provided capacity-building opportunities and resources to support this.

The fellowship has provoked change in the higher education sector. A few months after engagement, more than eight in 10 (81.5%) of participants across 34 institutions had implemented connectedness learning into their teaching practices and/or curricula. About 70% of participants surveyed wanted to adopt connectedness learning more deeply into institutional systems and curriculum. Extending beyond the funded period in 2017–2018, ten teams of educators from different Australian universities worked together to apply the connectedness learning model more deeply into their educational contexts. This phase culminated in the publication of the edited book 'Higher Education and the Future of Graduate Employability: A Connectedness Learning Approach' (Edward Elgar, 2019).

What does the sector need now?: To be more responsive and influential in a constantly changing and complex world of work and society, higher education must be more dynamically engaged and open, and less siloed and bounded.



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