

GOOD PRACTICE GUIDE: THRESHOLD LEARNING OUTCOMES FOR AGRICULTURE

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Background

The Good Practice Guide: Threshold Learning Outcomes for Agriculture (the Good Practice Guide) builds on the national Learning and Teaching Academic Standards Statement for Agriculture (AgLTAS), which was developed through an extensive consultation process among academics, students and industry personnel across Australia.

The AgLTAS facilitates the implementation of academic standards by the agriculture discipline community and informs curriculum design. It describes the nature and extent of agriculture and provides five key Threshold Learning Outcomes (TLOs) that describe what a pass-level graduate will know, understand and be able to do upon graduation from a bachelor-level degree in agriculture or a related discipline. The TLOs are: Understanding agriculture; Knowledge of agriculture; Inquiry and problem-solving; Communication; and Personal and professional responsibility (Botwright Acuña et al. 2014).

Aims

Having set the learning outcomes for agriculture, the next step was to demonstrate that students achieve the TLOs through assessment. The Good Practice Guide provides academics with strategies for teaching and case studies of aligned assessment for each TLO.

The Good Practice Guide is intended for use by academics who teach into undergraduate degrees (or related areas), including but not limited to: agribusiness, animal science, agricultural economics, horticulture, agriculture and agricultural science, viticulture and oenology, agricultural business management, agrifood systems and wine science.

Methodology

The authors of each chapter have modelled components of the Good Practice Guide on those used for each of the individual Good Practice Guides for Science and Law. However, all TLOs were combined into a single 143 pp guide as an acknowledgement of how the TLOs are often addressed in an integrated way.

Each TLO chapter contains the following:

1. a literature review related to the interpretation of the TLO hyperlinked with case studies of assessment practice
2. an annotated list of resources that may be useful in teaching specifically addressing that TLO
3. a summary of the key issues, outcomes synthesised from the literature review and future opportunities identified
4. case studies of assessment practice aligned to the TLO.

References are collated at the end of the Good Practice Guide. An electronic copy of the Guide is available at www.agltas.edu.au

Conclusions

A key distinguishing feature of agriculture is its multidisciplinary nature and the contribution of disciplines other than science, such as economics and the social sciences. The integration of these disciplines in the context of agriculture is important for student achievement of the TLOs.

Two common themes appear throughout the Good Practice Guide: 1) the interdisciplinary nature of agriculture; and; 2) the emphasis on transferable and applied skills that will allow graduates to contribute to the successful practice of agriculture in a wide range of roles. The authors have also provided discussion to guide the interpretation of each overarching TLO.

References

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