

DIFFERENT APPROACHES TO POSITIONING AND MARKETING OF BACHELOR OF ARTS DEGREES.

***The Issue:** Three universities located in Brisbane, each competing for the same pool of domestic students, offer examples of significantly different approaches to the issues of defining fields of study and positioning and marketing Bachelor of Arts degrees.*

Griffith University has used “Bachelor of Arts” as a generic term for a large number of degrees offered by different faculties over three different campuses and by open learning, as well as a number of “badged” degrees in which fields are identified as discipline specific and in some cases more obviously “job” orientated: e.g. Bachelor of Arts in Applied Theatre, in Criminology and Criminal Justice, in Languages and Applied Linguistics, and in Politics, Asian Studies and International Relations. There are also separate degrees such as Bachelor of Communication, of Film and Screen Media Production, of Multimedia, of Music Studies, and of Visual Media.

Queensland University of Technology announced in April 2007 that it planned to close down its Bachelor of Arts program, which is offered principally on its satellite Carseldine campus. Languages other than English are to be transferred to the School of Business, while many other humanities-oriented fields of study may be discontinued. This was explicitly stated to be a consequence of QUT’s establishment on another campus of a successful “Creative Industries” suite of over 50 degrees backed by a strong marketing strategy emphasising vocational outcomes for graduates. QUT’s overall marketing slogan: “A University for the Real World” possibly has also helped marginalise its general humanities-focused BA degree on a less popular campus.

Creative Industries has been strongly marketed as interdisciplinary, bringing together disparate fields in practical arts and crafts:

“The Creative Industries Precinct is Australia’s first site dedicated to creative experimentation and commercial development in the creative industries. It provides a unique opportunity for designers, artists, researchers, educators and entrepreneurs to easily connect and collaborate with others to create new work, develop new ideas and grow the creative industries sector in Queensland.” (<http://www.ciprecinct.qut.com/idea/>).

It also emphasises vocational outcomes:

“The creative industries foster individual creativity, skill and talent and offer diverse and rewarding career opportunities.” (http://www.creativeindustries.qut.com/about_us/creative-industries.jsp)

The University of Queensland has not embraced either interdisciplinary approaches or proliferated degrees. It has a very large Bachelor of Arts program offered principally at its home campus (and, from 2006 and in a few fields only, another campus). Apart from a very small Bachelor of Music degree, the UQ BA is the only undergraduate degree offered by the UQ Faculty of Arts, and allows study in some 50 different disciplines, almost none of which are multi- or inter-disciplinary. Students are expected to mix and match fields of study themselves, rather than have this built into individual units or study sequences. While it is true that a separate Faculty of Social and Behavioural Sciences has established a number of

“professional” degrees in Communication, Journalism, Psychological Science, and Social Science, of these only the Psychology degree has been successful in attracting large enrolments. The UQ BA remains the university’s largest degree with over 4000 enrolments.

UQ’s response to the problem of linking humanities education to student demands for vocational outcomes has been to establish generous cross-crediting arrangements for dual-degree programs. So the BA/B Education degree only takes 4 years, the BA/B Business 4.25 years, and the BA/Bachelor of Laws 5.75 years – in all cases approximately two years shorter than the two degrees taken separately. This has proved very successful with over 2000 students and a much higher tertiary entrance cut-off and median scores than the BA simple.