



Historical Thinking in Higher Education

An ALTC Discipline-Based Initiative

Final Report

June 2009

Marnie Hughes-Warrington, Jill Roe, Adele Nye, Matthew Bailey, Mark Peel, Penny Russell, Amanda Laugeson, Desley Deacon, Paul Kiem and Faith Trent



Support for this project has been provided by the Australian Learning and Teaching Council, an initiative of the Australian Government Department of Education, Employment and Workplace Relations. The views expressed in this report do not necessarily reflect the views of the Australian Learning and Teaching Council Ltd.

This work is published under the terms of the Creative Commons Attribution-Noncommercial-Sharealike 2.5 Australia Licence. Under this Licence you are free to copy, distribute, display and perform the work and to make derivative works.

Attribution: You must attribute the work to the original authors and include the following statement: Support for the original work was provided by the Australian Learning and Teaching Council Ltd, an initiative of the Australian Government Department of Education, Employment and Workplace Relations.

Noncommercial: You may not use this work for commercial purposes.

Share Alike. If you alter, transform or build on this work, you may distribute the resulting work only under a licence identical to this one.

For any reuse or distribution, you must make clear to others the licence terms of this work.

Any of these conditions can be waived if you get permission from the copyright holder.

To view of copy of this licence, visit <http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/2.5/au/> or send a letter to Creative Commons, 543 Howard Street, 5th Floor, San Francisco, California, 94105, USA

Requests and inquiries concerning these rights should be addressed to the Australian Learning and Teaching Council, PO Box 2375, Strawberry NSW 2012 or through the website: <http://www.altc.edu.au>

June 2009

Historical Thinking in Higher Education Project

Project Directors and Contact Details

Associate Professor Marnie Hughes-Warrington
Department of Modern History, Politics and International Relations
Macquarie University
Sydney NSW 2109
mhughesw@humn.mq.edu.au

Emeritus Professor Jillian Roe
Department of Modern History, Politics and International Relations
Macquarie University
Sydney NSW 2109
jillian.roe@humn.mq.edu.au

Project Team

Dr Adele Nye, Project Officer, Macquarie University
Mr Matthew Bailey, Research Assistant, Macquarie University
Professor Mark Peel, Monash University
Associate Professor Penny Russell, University of Sydney
Dr Amanda Laugeson, Flinders University

Project Steering Committee

Professor Faith Trent, Deans of Arts, Social Sciences and Humanities
Professor Desley Deacon, the Australian National University and the Australian
Historical Association
Mr Paul Kiem, History Teachers' Association of Australia

Participating Universities

Flinders University
La Trobe University
Macquarie University
Monash University
The Australian National University
The University of Melbourne
The University of New England
The University of New South Wales
The University of Sydney
The University of Tasmania
The University of Western Australia

Contents

List of Tables and Figures	5
Acronyms and Abbreviations	6
Executive Summary	7
Recommendations	8
Background and Significance	9
Aims of the Initiative	13
Approach and Methodologies	14
Reporting Against the Aims of the Initiative.....	17
National and International Dissemination Strategies.....	20
Comparative Summary Analysis of Student and Staff Responses and Recommendations	23
Advances on Existing Knowledge and Future Directions.....	38
References	39
Appendix 1: Approved Information, Consent Forms and Questionnaire	41

List of Tables and Figures

Summary Report Comparing the Initiative Aims with the Outcomes Achieved	19
Planned Outputs for the Initiative	22
Percentage of students by institution who characterised historical thinking as a relationship between the past and the present	27
Percentage of students by institution who characterised historical thinking as a kind of methodology	27
Percentage of students by institution who characterised historical thinking as an activity involving the handling of evidence	28
Student Rankings of Activities as Helping to Develop Historical Thinking by Institution	29
Student Rankings of Activities as Helping to Develop Historical Thinking by Stage of Study and Status as HSC Extension History Graduate	30

Acronyms and Abbreviations

AHA	The Australian Historical Association
ALTC	Australian Learning and Teaching Council
AQF	Australian Qualifications Framework
CEQ	Course Experience Questionnaire
CHATA	Concepts of History and Teaching Approaches
DASSH	Deans of Arts, Social Sciences and Humanities
Go8	Group of Eight Universities
HSC	Higher School Certificate
HTAA	The History Teachers' Association of Australia
HTANSW	History Teachers' Association of New South Wales
Ind.	Non-aligned Universities
IRUA	Innovative Research Universities Australia

Executive Summary

Much research has been undertaken on the development of historical thinking in early childhood, primary and secondary education. This research has provided history teachers with the evidence needed to design, evaluate and modify programs, activities and assessment tasks. This initiative built upon that research and curriculum reviews undertaken by the Australian Historical Association (AHA) between 1998 and 2007, providing the first tertiary-level study of staff and student perceptions of the nature, development and purposes of historical thinking.¹ It did so in order to identify the convergences and divergences in view that might provide obstacles to, or opportunities for, sector-wide projects in curriculum and assessment-task design and the articulation of standards of achievement. In 2008–9, 1445 first and third year undergraduate students and 50 academic staff in 11 Australian universities in five states and one territory completed questionnaires and interviews focused on historical thinking. Analysis of the data revealed a surprisingly consistent pattern of responses among students and staff and highlighted multiple opportunities for sector-wide development.

Many of the students who commence tertiary historical studies are graduates of secondary programs in which assessment standards and grade descriptors or achievement bands are published. These standards and descriptors outline both the information and skills that students are expected to demonstrate. Despite this background, few tertiary students explain historical thinking in terms of skills and abilities. Rather, historical thinking is characterised almost exclusively as a general form of connection between the past and present, and as an imperative to avoid the mistakes of the past. Further, students most often associated historical thinking with reading books and journal articles, or handling ‘secondary materials’. On these points, the contrast with staff views was marked. Academic historians stressed over and over again the rigorous application of research skills and abilities to interpret, question and analyse ‘primary’ evidence, and the importance of responding to feedback from others.

Student views also diverged from those of the wider public when it came to assessing the importance of visual and new media in the development and expression of historical thinking. For them, reading and discussing ideas rather than watching or browsing were considered to be important. If the differences between staff and student and staff and wider public views were surprising, then the lack of significant difference in the views of first and third year students was

¹ ‘The State of History in the 1990s,’ *AHA Bulletin*, June 1998, no. 86, pp. 3–9; ‘The State of History—From 1998 to 2000,’ unpublished report, 2000, Jill Roe and Robyn Arrowsmith, ‘Report on Trends from AHA “State of History” Survey, 2000–2002,’ unpublished report to Heads of History Conference, 2002; Carly Millar and Mark Peel, ‘Canons Old and New?: The Undergraduate History Curriculum in 2004,’ *History Australia*, 2004, vol. 2(1), 14–1–14–13; Carly Millar and Mark Peel, ‘Honours and Postgraduate Coursework Programs 2005–6,’ online at http://www.theaha.org.au/2006_AHA_Final_Report.doc and Paul Bourke (ed.), *AVCC Report of the Academic Standards Panel, (History) 1991*.

even more so. While few historians would assess first and third year work in the same ways, those differences are not reflected in the ways that students think about their discipline.

The differences in perception identified as a part of this initiative provide an excellent basis for the collaborative design, testing and appraisal of programs, assessment tasks and standards of achievement. Importantly, they highlight the opportunity for historians to historicise 'exit only' statements of graduate capabilities or outcomes by showing how student abilities develop over time and reflect discipline-specific or even institution-specific imperatives. In turn, historians might have a role to play in encouraging staff in at least cognate disciplines to historicise statements about standards and benchmarks.

Recommendations

Recommendation 1: The Development of Historical Thinking and Assessment Standards

That universities offering history programs collaborate with the Australian Historical Association and the History Teachers' Association to articulate assessment standards that reflect discipline priorities and developmental differences between introductory and upper level students.

Recommendation 2: Working with Primary Materials

That those responsible for history programs provide opportunities for—or at least make more explicit to students opportunities for—the identification, handling and critical analysis of primary evidence.

Recommendation 3: Disseminating Innovations in the Discipline-Based Development of Academic Literacy

That universities offering history programs collaborate with the Australian Historical Association and the History Teachers' Association to provide a repository of good examples of learning activities and assessment tasks that foster the development of academic literacy in ways that reflect the priorities of the profession.

Recommendation 4: Working with Visual and New Media

That universities offering history programs collaborate with the Australian Historical Association and the History Teachers' Association to develop a repository of good examples of learning and activities and assessment tasks that entail the critical handling of primary and secondary visual and new media materials.

Recommendation 5: Disseminating Coursework Experiences

That academic staff take opportunities to make more explicit to their students and peers how their experiences as coursework students contributed to their development as historians.

Recommendation 6: Disseminating Innovations in Assessment

That universities offering history programs collaborate with the Australian Historical Association and the History Teachers' Association to develop a repository of good examples of assessment tasks that align with stated assessment standards.

Background and Significance

Background

Research on historical thinking has focused almost exclusively on the understandings of history that students bring to and develop in early childhood, primary and secondary school classrooms. For Wineburg, for example, historical thinking is best understood as a movement away from everyday unreflective views of the past towards understandings built upon the investigation of primary sources embedded in their context.² Seixas, on the other hand, argues that historical thinking means being able to determine historical significance, engage with and critique evidence, understand change over time, acknowledge that history encompasses decline as much as progress, empathise with the past and its inhabitants and embrace complex notions of causation.³

Research into historical thinking is often directed at the description of developmental frameworks or typologies. In 1980, a British report into student understandings of evidence and historical practice, for instance, identified four levels of understanding. At the first level, students could not distinguish between sources and knowledge. At the second they could, but had trouble assessing the significance of sources. At the third level, students could critique and rationally assess sources, making a clear differentiation between evidence and information. Level four saw historical context and sophistication added to the analysis. Through the four stages, historical knowledge moved from being seen as given to discovered, from being worked out, to a reconstruction of past events.⁴

One of the widely used concepts in the literature on historical thinking is historical empathy. It was adopted by the Schools History Project in England during the 1980s, and incorporated into the United States' National Standards in the 1990s. It became widely used as a way of describing the attempt by historians to understand the perspectives of historical actors. Historical empathy is not a sympathetic portrayal of the past; it is the act of embedding historical actors in their context.⁵ Beginning with personal accounts, empathy can encourage student engagement with broader social and political themes.⁶ The challenge for

² Wineburg, S., *Historical Thinking and Other Unnatural Acts: Charting the Future of Teaching the Past* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 2001).

³ A. von Heyking, 'Historical thinking in the elementary years: A review of current research', *Canadian Social Studies, Special Issue: Social Studies Research and Teaching in Elementary Schools*, 2004, vol. 39(1), online at: http://www.quasar.ualberta.ca/css/Css_39_1/ARheyking_historical_thinking_current_research.html.

⁴ D. Shemilt, 'Adolescent ideas about evidence and methodology in history', in C. Portal (ed.), *The History Curriculum for Teachers* (London; New York: Falmer Press, 1987), pp. 42-59.

⁵ P. Lee, & R. Ashby, 'Empathy, perspective taking, and rational understanding', in Ozro Luke Davis et al. (eds.), *Historical Empathy and Perspective Taking in the Social Studies* (Lanham: Rowman & Littlefield, 2001), pp. 21-4.

⁶ J. Kohlmeier, 'The power of a woman's story: A three-step approach to historical significance in high school world history', *International Journal of Social Education*, 2007 vol. 20(1), p. 73.

educators is to encourage such engagement whilst avoiding ahistoricism: keeping the past accessible whilst reaffirming its alienation from the present. A late-1990s survey of European fifteen-year-olds found them unable to accept pre-modern morality without judgement.⁷ They looked at the past through the lens of their own time. Historical empathy requires an awareness of one's own historical cultural context and an ability to look beyond it. Developing historical empathy requires historical method, contextual knowledge, the analysis of sources and the critique of prior interpretations.⁸ Empathy is one of the skills of historical thinking, but it is dependent upon other skills.

Research indicates that the interpretation of primary evidence—textual or material traces from a period under investigation—is fundamental to the development of historical thinking. Foster suggests that students relying on textbooks are more likely to reach 'shallow and ill-informed conclusions' than those 'presented with multiple forms of evidence'.⁹ Initially, students may need assistance differentiating between primary evidence and secondary sources. The first must be offered for interpretation, the second for critique,¹⁰ because students treating evidence as information have no way of reconciling contradictory sources. Interpreting primary sources requires them to actively engage in the processes by which history is constructed.¹¹ Burenheide argues that even as this develops higher order thinking skills as historical facts are also more likely to be internalised.¹² His position draws on research suggesting that people learn better when they seek out answers rather than receive information.¹³

Engagement with primary sources is also a key feature of Wineburg's argument in *Historical Thinking and Other Unnatural Acts*. Wineburg's work has attracted the attention of professional historical groups such as the American Historical Association and the Organization of American Historians, which adopted the concept of historical thinking and assisted in its dissemination amongst schoolteachers through conferences and the publication of lesson plans incorporating historiographical skills.¹⁴ Wineburg has also provided examples of

⁷ D. Lowenthal, 'Dilemmas and delights of learning history', in *Knowing, Teaching, and Learning History: History: National and International Perspectives* (New York: New York University Press, 2000), pp. 67, 74

⁸ B. VanSledright, 'From empathetic regard to self-understanding: Im/Positionality, empathy, and historical contextualisation', in *Historical Empathy and Perspective Taking in the Social Studies* Lanham: Rowman & Littlefield, 2001), pp. 64-5.

⁹ S.J. Foster, 'Historical empathy in theory and practice: Some final thoughts', in *Historical Empathy and Perspective Taking in the Social Studies*, (Lanham: Rowman & Littlefield, 2001), p. 173.

¹⁰ D. Shemilt, 'Adolescent ideas about evidence and methodology in history', p. 60.

¹¹ Lee and Ashby, 'Progression in historical understanding among students ages 7–14', p. 210.

¹² Burenheide, B., 'I can do this: Revelations on teaching with historical thinking', *The History Teacher*, 2007, vol. 41(1), p. 56.

¹³ Levstik and Barton, *Doing History*, pp. 18-19.

¹⁴ C. Frederick Risinger, 'Teaching historical analysis and thinking using the Internet (Surfing the Net)', *Social Education*, 2008, vol. 72(1), pp. 31–33.

learning activities that develop historical thinking via his website, www.historicalthinkingmatters.org.¹⁵ Wineburg's site provides both the primary sources and the scaffolding, or intellectual infrastructure, to support students in the analysis and interpretation of evidence.¹⁶ This is a necessary accompaniment because students often do not have the time, resources or expertise required to contextualise and interpret sources on their own.¹⁷ Students require chronological outlines—'intellectual map[s] of the past'—in order to place periods within the broader history, and more specific contextual information about these various periods in order to locate and understand events and individuals.¹⁸ From there, they can begin to connect the links between events to gain a fuller grasp of why things occurred as they did.

Since the 1990s, cognitive research has stressed that learning, in any field, consists of the reorganisation of prior knowledge in order to encompass and integrate new material. This in turn has encouraged research on the preconceptions students bring to the classroom.¹⁹ It is clear that students cannot avoid picking up understandings and interpretations of the past from the world around them, and that these need to be accounted for in teaching practices and philosophies.²⁰

The Concepts of History and Teaching Approaches (CHATA) research, for instance, suggested that students employed 'a set of "default" assumptions' to make sense of a past that did 'not always conform to their expectations.' This could lead to negative judgements of past actors and institutions. Reason, without historical thinking, suggested to students that improvements in technology indicated a defective past and that the expansion of information was reflected in greater knowledge in our time than theirs. The purpose of history was thus to arrive at today.

Such preconceptions abound because students encounter history everywhere: through personal and shared memory, via families and community networks, through the media as both news and entertainment, and from politicians of all political persuasions.²¹ All of these sources make competing truth claims²² and

¹⁵ Martin et al., *Historicalthinkingmatters.org*, pp. 140-144.

¹⁶ Martin et al., *Historicalthinkingmatters.org*, pp. 140-144.

¹⁷ Levstik and Barton, *Doing History*, p. 21.

¹⁸ D. Shemilt, D., 'The caliph's coin: The currency of narrative frameworks in history teaching', in *Knowing, Teaching, and Learning History: National and International Perspectives* (New York: New York University Press, 2000), pp. 85-6.

¹⁹ A. von Heyking, 'Historical thinking in the elementary years'.

²⁰ P. Lee & D. Shemilt, 'A scaffold not a cage: progression and progression models in history', *Teaching History*, 2003, no. 113, pp. 13–29. p. 15; and Levstik and Barton, *Doing History*, p. 17.

²¹ P. Seixas, 'Schweigen! die Kinder!, or Does Postmodern History Have a Place in the Schools?', in *Knowing, Teaching, and Learning History: National and International Perspectives* (New York: New York University Press, 2000), pp. 31, 33.

²² P. Lee, "Walking backwards into tomorrow: Historical consciousness and understanding history", Annual Meeting of American Educational Research Association, New Orleans,

they construct history as fixed, uncomplicated and within reach.²³ This is Wineburg's 'everyday' uncritical history: the easy way to see the past that passes over the complexities of interpretation and context.²⁴ Bridging this divide between everyday understandings of the past and the discipline of history is the great challenge of teaching students to think historically.

Seixas argues that whilst these broader cultural influences see students arrive at school with a variety of historical preconceptions, the classroom remains the most powerful of all the competing influences in the development of historical understanding. And whilst prior learning can act as a barrier to new learning if concepts or information conflict, he argues that teaching the discipline of history can help students make sense of the multiplicity of historical interpretations they encounter on a daily basis.²⁵ Encouraging students' own interpretation of sources and helping them to recognise that there is no final resting place for any historical enquiry embeds them in the practice of history and opens the door to the path of lifelong learning.

Significance

Research into historical thinking offers great insights into the ways that primary and secondary students approach history, and how their understanding may develop over time. It also indicates that students across a range of age groups are capable of, and benefit from, developing historical thinking. To date, however, this research has not considered the understandings of history that students bring to and develop in university programs. This is a significant oversight, for we are currently unable to speak with any certainty about the gap between student activities and the practices of professional historians. Knowing more about the ways in which students' understandings develop is important because it will allow for the more effective design, delivery and evaluation of learning activities and assessment tasks designed to foster the transition to research programs. Further, it will better allow the profession to explain the benefits of an historical education to employers and those involved with syllabus design at all levels.

Current reviews of higher education and the Australian Qualifications Framework (AQF)²⁶ and the parallel development of a national curriculum in which history

2002, online at: <http://www.cshc.ubc.ca/viewabstract.php?id=93>. p. 8; and Levstik and Barton *Doing History*, p. 31.

²³ Lee and Shemilt, 'A scaffold not a cage', pp. 14-15; and Lowenthal, *Dilemmas and Delights*, pp. 63-65.

²⁴ S. Wineburg, 'Unnatural and essential: the nature of historical thinking', *Teaching History*, no. 129, pp. 6-11. pp. 6-7.

²⁵ Seixas, 'Schweigen! die Kinder!', pp. 25-33.

²⁶ DEEWR, *Review of Australian Higher Education: Final Report*, December 2008, online at: <http://www.deewr.gov.au/HigherEducation/Review/Pages/ReviewofAustralianHigherEducationReport.aspx>; DEEWR, *Transforming Australia's Higher Education System*, June 2009, online at: <http://www.deewr.gov.au/HigherEducation/Pages/TransformingAustraliasHESystem.aspx>; AQF Council, *Strengthening the AQF: A Proposal*, May 2009, online at: <http://www.aqf.edu.au/aboutaqf.htm>

will feature as a core subject provide a context in which the exploration of staff and student views of the nature and development of historical thinking at tertiary level is timely. Mapping student perceptions, for instance, allows history teachers to make some assessment of the role of varying state syllabuses in shaping student views. This is of particular interest to teachers of the Higher School Certificate (HSC) History Extension syllabus in New South Wales, which is currently proposed for national rollout. It allows them to assess whether there are any qualities that distinguish the extension graduate from those who have not taken the course.

For academics, it provides the evidence necessary to stimulate the collaborative description of outcomes and standards that are considered professionally appropriate. Knowing what students think about the discipline allows academics to identify obstacles to and opportunities for the development of key disciplinary skills. Further, it offers professional historians with the opportunity to 'historicise' or to stress the dynamic development of skills within and across degree cycles. In such a way, historians will be better able to engage with, refine and question generic end of degree cycle outcomes or 'capabilities', and to explain their priorities to groups both inside and outside of universities. Finally, scoping staff views allows for reflection on the experiences that encourage individuals to become professional historians and academics. As the academic workforce ages, and the recruitment and retention of younger staff threaten to become increasingly difficult, knowing some of the reasons why staff pursue historical studies will provide a firmer foundation for professional discussions on workforce planning.

Aims of the Initiative

The chief aim of the 'Historical Thinking in Higher Education' initiative was to scope staff and student perceptions of the nature, development and social purposes of historical thinking. More specifically, it sought to map:

- Variations and similarities in understandings by professional historians of the value of historical thinking and the educational means by which it may be best realised;
- How student perceptions of the nature, value and development of historical thinking compare with those of staff; and
- Perceived challenges and opportunities for the development of historical thinking in higher education.

This information was sought in order to:

- Identify and promote student-centred practices in curriculum design and delivery and assessment that are thought to best foster the development of historical thinking
- Identify and promote a corpus of history graduate capabilities that may be used to deliver social and economic benefits to the wider community
- Encourage sector-wide initiatives to embrace opportunities for the development of historical thinking or challenges to the same; and
- Inform and extend discussions on national standards for history education at secondary and tertiary level both in Australia and internationally by drawing capabilities into discussions currently dominated by curriculum- and citizenship-focused contributions.

These aims were identified after consultation with the steering committee and the executive of the AHA, and approved by the ALTC in December 2007.

Approach and Methodologies

The initiative was a collaborative one and was located within the qualitative framework of a participatory action model where academic staff participated both as subjects and as researchers.²⁷

In order to meet the aims of the initiative, a five step approach was proposed, starting with the collection of print and digital materials, moving on to the mapping of staff and student perceptions and then the proposal of capabilities statements and a digital repository of recommended practice. A research assistant was employed to locate items for the literature review, and a project officer was appointed to conduct interviews, administer the questionnaire and perform a preliminary analysis of the results. The project officer was appointed after a process of open, competitive selection.

Step One: Collation and Analysis of Print and Digital Information, Literature Review and Ethical Clearance

Using Australian Historical Association Curriculum Review reports and information presented on the internet about history programs at universities around Australia, a summary of published views on the nature, development and value of historical thinking in higher education in Australia was produced and disseminated to the Project Team and Steering Committee.²⁸ This summary was used to refine the items proposed in the questionnaire, to target invitations for universities to participate in steps two and three, and to triangulate information discerned in those steps. More universities offered to participate in the initiative than could be accommodated within the time and financial constraints of the initiative. A literature review was undertaken simultaneously in order to identify opportunities to extend existing insights.

The project was presented to the Macquarie University Ethics Review Committee (Human Research) in July 2008 and received ratification in August 2008 (ref. HE25JUL2008-RO5980). The approved questions and consent forms are included in appendix one of this report.

Step Two: Mapping Perceptions of Historical Thinking Among Academic Staff

In step two semi-structured interviews were undertaken with fifty academic staff members from eleven universities, following these prompts:

1. What is your educational and professional background?
2. What is historical thinking?
3. What are the skills that you regard as important to the development of students' historical consciousness?
4. What assessment strategies do you find most useful?

²⁷ S. Kemmis and R. McTaggart, 'Participatory Action Research', in *Handbook of Qualitative Research* ed. N.K. Denzin and Y.S. Lincoln (Thousand Oaks CA: Sage, 2000).

²⁸ A. Nye, 'Learning Outcomes in History: An Analysis of Online Statements from History Departments in Australian Universities', unpublished paper prepared for the 'Historical Thinking in Higher Education' Project Team and Steering Committee, August 2008 (22pp.).

5. What are the social benefits of historical thinking?
6. Who are the theorists or philosophers (disciplinary or interdisciplinary) who have most influenced your teaching and research?

The sample was selected to reflect a range of career stages, seniority, research and teaching specialisations, institutional affiliations and gender. The interviews were deliberately conducted in a fluid and reflexive manner. As a national scoping project, the group attempted to avoid a pre-conceived view of academics' opinions or practice. The fundamental aim of the interviews was to map what academics thought about the nature and purpose of historical thinking, thus allowing comparison with student views collected in step three. Additionally, staff were encouraged to identify examples of learning activities and assessment tasks that they connected with the development of historical thinking, and to identify the people and activities that played a key role in the development of their own skills. Interviewees were identified only by the affiliation of their university (eg Group of Eight, IRUA, or independent). The interviews were captured digitally and transcribed, and preliminary analysis was undertaken using a thematic approach. The analysis was facilitated by the use of NVivo. Issues of reliability and validity were minimised through the employment of one person to conduct the interviews and conduct the preliminary analysis. Responses were also checked against interviews with overlapping variables (eg institutional affiliation) and against published information.

Step Three: Mapping Perceptions of Historical Thinking Among Tertiary Students

In step three, 1445 first- and third-year undergraduate students in forty history classes across twelve universities completed a short questionnaire about historical thinking (appendix one). The questionnaire was administered on paper in order to secure a large sample of valid responses. Classes were identified on the basis of online information discerned in step one, and the timing of the visits was tailored to suit differing academic calendars.

There were three aspects of the data collected that reflected a possibly skewed result. First, despite clear instructions on how to rank the activities, a surprising number of students chose to assign their own value system to the ratings, selecting numbers 1, 2 and 3 and applying them multiple times. Secondly, another group chose to use ticks rather than numbers. All of these were not taken into account in the final analysis. Third, the students were given the choice as to how many boxes they numbered. The boxes left unmarked were regarded as 'blanks' in the analysis process. As an absence or a 'non-choice' they do provide another form of data; where an activity has not been deemed significant enough to earn a rating. The regularity with which this occurred was unexpected. 64.7% of the questionnaires included a valid response to question two. Preliminary analysis was undertaken using a thematic approach, and the analysis was facilitated by the use of Excel and NVivo.

Step Four: Comparative Analysis

In step four, a second level of analysis was conducted in line with Glaser and Strauss' idea of grounded theory: that is, there was a process of open coding based on the data and a second stage of interpretative coding which entailed the consolidation and reduction of categories.²⁹ Using this approach, it was possible to address two of the key aims of the initiative, namely, the

- Identification of variations and similarities in understandings of historical thinking among staff and students across universities; and
- Identification of common opportunities and challenges for the development of historical thinking.

Step Five: Identification of Capabilities and Examples of Best Practice and Dissemination of Results

Originally, the project team planned to use the data from the previous steps to draft a statement of graduate capabilities focused on historical thinking. The project plan was modified, however, when both the interim (443 students, 17 staff) and final samples highlighted the need for the collaborative development of a developmental sequence of assessment standards. That need is identified in more depth in the comparative analysis of results that follows. Step five also saw the collection of information on academics' innovations in assessment activities and their advice on the ways in which historical thinking could be best developed.

²⁹

S. R. Jones, V. Torres and J. Arminio, *Negotiating the Complexities of Qualitative Research in Higher Education* (New York: Routledge, 2006), p. 42.

Reporting Against the Aims of the Initiative

The following table summarises the outcomes of the project in relation to the set aims and methods:

Table 1: Summary Report Comparing the Initiative Aims with the Outcomes Achieved

Primary Aim: To scope staff and student perceptions of the nature, development and social purposes of historical thinking.			
Subsidiary Aims	Actions Undertaken	Achieved	Evidence of Achievement
To map variations and similarities in understandings by professional historians of the value of historical thinking and the educational means by which it may be best realised;	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Summary analysis of online statements made by history programs about the nature and function of historical thinking 2. 50 interviews with academic historians using ethics approved questions 3. Primary thematic analysis of transcribed interviews 4. Identification of assessment activities and learning activities recommended by staff as developing historical thinking 	Yes	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Unpublished paper: A. Nye, 'Learning Outcomes in History: An Analysis of Online Statements from History Departments in Australian Universities' distributed to Project Team, August 2008 2. Interview transcriptions: Interviews and transcriptions stored in line with protocols determined by the Macquarie University Ethics Committee 3. Journal Paper: 'Historians' Perceptions on the Nature, Development and Roles of Historical Thinking in Higher Education', to be submitted to <i>International Journal of Qualitative Research</i> and a summary article to <i>Teaching History</i> 4. Journal Paper: 'Assessment Strategies and Learning Activities for the Development of Historical Thinking', to be submitted to <i>Assessment in Higher Education</i> and a summary article to <i>Teaching History</i>

<p>To map how student perceptions of the nature, value and development of historical thinking compare with those of staff</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. 1445 questionnaires completed by first- and third- year undergraduates 2. Primary quantitative and thematic qualitative analysis of questionnaire responses 3. Secondary comparative analysis of student and staff responses 	<p>Yes</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Completed questionnaires: stored in line with protocols determined by the Macquarie University Ethics Committee 2. Journal Papers: 'Connecting the Past with the Present: Students' Perceptions of the Nature of Historical Thinking', to be submitted to <i>British Journal of Educational Studies</i>; and 'The Social Benefits of Historical Thinking: Knowledge, Contemporary Life and Social Justice', to be submitted to <i>Studies in Higher Education</i> and a summary article to <i>Teaching History</i> 3. Journal Paper: 'Historical Thinking in Higher Education: Staff and Student Perceptions of the Nature of Historical Thinking', in press with <i>History Australia</i> and summary article to be submitted to <i>Teaching History</i>
<p>To identify perceived challenges and opportunities for the development of historical thinking in higher education</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Identification of key divergences in staff and student views and opportunities for development and formulation of recommendations 2. Communication of recommendations to ALTC, to participating institutions, the AHA, HTAA and international stakeholders 3. Development of collaborative project proposals designed to address the recommendations 	<p>Yes to item 1, items 2 and 3 in progress</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Recommendations in <i>Historical Thinking in Higher Education: Final Report</i> 2. Acknowledgement of Receipt and Response by ALTC: communication between the Project Team and ALTC to be retained 3. Applications for Follow up funding to address recommendations: EOI lodged in ALTC Priority Scheme and Full proposal to be submitted in round 1, 2010 to develop assessment standards, subsequent project proposals to be developed

The impact of the project and its value to the discipline will be judged in three key ways. First, the project team will monitor citations of the publications produced to track local and international discussion and adoption. Second, the final report will be circulated to members of the AHA and HTAA at their annual conferences, and participants asked to indicate whether they will share the findings presented and participate in activities that will help to address the recommendations. Third, the number of successful collaborative applications for funding to address the initiative recommendations will be tracked and reported to the AHA over a five-year period.

National and International Dissemination Strategies

Five means have been identified to disseminate the findings of the initiative on a national and international level: conference presentations, talks and verbal reports, print media reports, refereed and non-refereed journal articles, the presentation of this report online and the distribution of print and electronic versions of this report to key groups and participating institutions.

Conference Presentations, Talks and Verbal reports

During the period June 2008–July 2009, the following verbal reports and presentations were given, with attendance estimates indicated in brackets:

- Two reports to the Executive of the Australian Historical Association at its annual conferences in Melbourne and the Sunshine Coast, July 2008 and July 2009 (30);
- Macquarie HTA NSW History in the National Curriculum Forum ‘Historical Thinking: What does the Research Say?’, Sydney, September 2008 (110)
- Macquarie HTA NSW Annual Conference: ‘What Activities do Students Connect with Historical Thinking?’, Sydney, December 2009 (140)
- Student responses to item two of the questionnaire featured in: Universities Australia Conference, ‘University Teaching: the Real Benefits’, Canberra, March 2009 (100); ANU Festival of Teaching, ‘Teaching as Inspiring Change’ Canberra, June 2009 (70)
- Conference Presentation HTA NSW State Conference ‘Learning from our Mistakes?: Student Perceptions of Historical Thinking’, Sydney, May 2009 (110)
- Keynote (Hughes-Warrington) and Conference Presentation (Nye) at the Annual Conference of the Australian Historical Association, Sunshine Coast, July 2009

Student responses to item two will also be mentioned in talks given at James Cook University (Townsville and Cairns, 10 and 13 July 2009), Deakin University (28 July 2009), Swinburne University (29 July) and in the leadership program of the LH Martin Institute, University of Melbourne (16–20 November).

Print Media Reports

One print media report has appeared to date:

- J. Gilling, ‘Uncomfortable Truths about Today’s History Students’, *Campus Review*, 5 June 2009, vol. 19(11), p. 15.

Refereed and Non-Refereed Journal Articles

Twelve articles are planned outputs for this initiative, as detailed in Table 2. The journals were selected to ensure effective dissemination to national and international audiences. The Project Leaders also adopted a strategy of ‘poly publishing’, ensuring that results were circulated to journals targeting both tertiary and secondary teachers.

Table 2: Planned Outputs for the Initiative (*= refereed journal)

Authors	Title	Journal	Drafted	Submitted
M. Bailey and M. Hughes-Warrington	'Research Review: Historical Thinking'	<i>Herd*</i>	Yes	March 2009
M. Bailey and M. Hughes-Warrington	'A Literature Review of Historical Thinking'	<i>Teaching History</i>	Yes	In press, August 2009
A. Nye, Marnie Hughes Warrington, J. Roe, M. Peel, P. Russell, D. Deacon, A. Laugesen, P. Kiem	'Historical Thinking in Higher Education: Staff and Student Perceptions of the Nature of Historical Thinking'	<i>History Australia*</i>	Yes	In press, December 2009
A. Nye, Marnie Hughes Warrington, J. Roe, M. Peel, P. Russell, D. Deacon, A. Laugesen, P. Kiem	'Tertiary Staff and Student Perceptions of the Nature of Historical Thinking'	<i>Teaching History</i>	Yes	July 2009
A. Nye, Marnie Hughes Warrington, J. Roe, M. Peel, P. Russell, D. Deacon, A. Laugesen, P. Kiem	'Historians' Perceptions of the Nature, Development and Roles of Historical Thinking in Higher Education'	<i>International Journal of Qualitative Research*</i>	Yes	September 2009
A. Nye, Marnie Hughes Warrington, J. Roe, M. Peel, P. Russell, D. Deacon, A. Laugesen, P. Kiem	'What Do Historians Say about Historical Thinking?'	<i>Teaching History</i>	End September 2009	October 2009
A. Nye, Marnie Hughes Warrington, J. Roe, M. Peel, P. Russell, D. Deacon, A.	'Assessment Strategies and Learning Activities for the Development of Historical	<i>History Australia*</i>	October 2009	December 2009

Laugesen, P. Kiem	Thinking'			
A. Nye, Marnie Hughes Warrington, J. Roe, M. Peel, P. Russell, D. Deacon, A. Laugesen, P. Kiem	'Assessment Activities for the Development of Historical Thinking'	<i>Teaching History</i>	December 2009	January 2010
A. Nye, Marnie Hughes Warrington, J. Roe, M. Peel, P. Russell, D. Deacon, A. Laugesen, P. Kiem	'Connecting the Past with the Present: Students' Perceptions of the Nature of Historical Thinking'	<i>British Journal of Educational Studies*</i>	February 2010	April 2010
A. Nye, Marnie Hughes Warrington, J. Roe, M. Peel, P. Russell, D. Deacon, A. Laugesen, P. Kiem	'Students' Perceptions of the Nature of Historical Thinking'	<i>Teaching History</i>	August 2009	September 2009
A. Nye, Marnie Hughes Warrington, J. Roe, M. Peel, P. Russell, D. Deacon, A. Laugesen, P. Kiem	'The Social Benefits of Historical Thinking: Knowledge, Contemporary Life and Social Justice'	<i>Studies in Higher Education*</i>	Yes	August 2009
A. Nye, Marnie Hughes Warrington, J. Roe, M. Peel, P. Russell, D. Deacon, A. Laugesen, P. Kiem	'What are the Benefits of Thinking Historically?'	<i>Teaching History</i>	October 2009	December 2009

Presentation of this Report

This report will be disseminated to members of the AHA, HTAA and DASSH for comment at the same time that it is submitted to the ALTC. Once approved,

- Permission will be sought from the AHA and the HTAA to make this report available via their websites;
- Electronic copies will be sent to all participating institutions and to the heads of all history programs in Australia;
- Electronic copies will be sent to the Historical Association (UK), the Tuning Structures Working Group for History, the American Historical Association (Teaching Division), the Canadian Historical Association, The Indian Council of Historical Research, The International Society for History Didactics, the European Association of History Educators and the National Curriculum Board.
- Given recommendation three, electronic copies will be sent to the Centre for Media History (Macquarie), the Centre for Broadcasting History Research (Bournemouth), the Center for History and New Media (George Mason), the Centre for the History of the Media (University College Dublin), Center for Media, Culture and History (New York University) and the Centre for Media History (University of Wales Aberystwyth).
- Electronic Copies will also be sent to select individuals who have undertaken significant research on historical thinking: Peter Seixas (University of British Columbia), Samuel Wineburg (Stanford), Peter Lee (University of London) and Robert Bain (Michigan University).

Comparative Summary Analysis of Student and Staff Responses and Recommendations

This section summarises the comparative analyses that have or will be explained in more detail in refereed and non-refereed journal papers. The three key points of comparison—focused on the nature, development and purpose of historical thinking—arose from the questions given to students and staff. Finally, a brief account is offered of the innovations and influences cited by historians as helping with the development of historical thinking. Woven in are the key recommendations of this initiative.

What is Historical Thinking?

The academics interviewed shared the view that historical thinking was about contextualisation, understanding change, empathy and developing skills in scholarship. These views were drawn from both their own experience as students and as teachers. Four examples highlight these dimensions:

Historical thinking is contextualisation and a preoccupation with change. (Go8)

Understanding change. Understanding the nature of time and how change occurs. (Go8)

It relates to everything. My feeling is that as historians, we study everything. We might concentrate on particular aspects but really we are interested in everything to do with being human, at any time and at any place. (Ind.)

So the answer to what is historical thinking depends on what questions we want ask, how those questions are formed, and then seek to analyse and explore those questions with prevailing evidence, whatever that might be from the historical period, and how that sets into prevailing scholarship. (Ind.)

The most popular responses from students, by contrast, highlighted the general relationship between the past and the present. They also talked in very general terms about historical thinking as a kind of methodology or methodological process. Specific skills and abilities featured very little in their descriptions, suggesting that they view historical thinking more as an outcome or relationship of times rather than a process or research or the application of skills.

Table 3: Percentage of students by institution who characterised historical thinking as a relationship between the past and the present

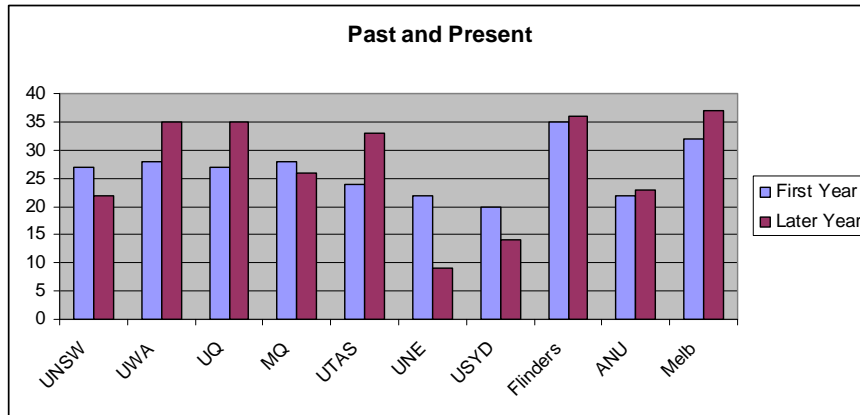
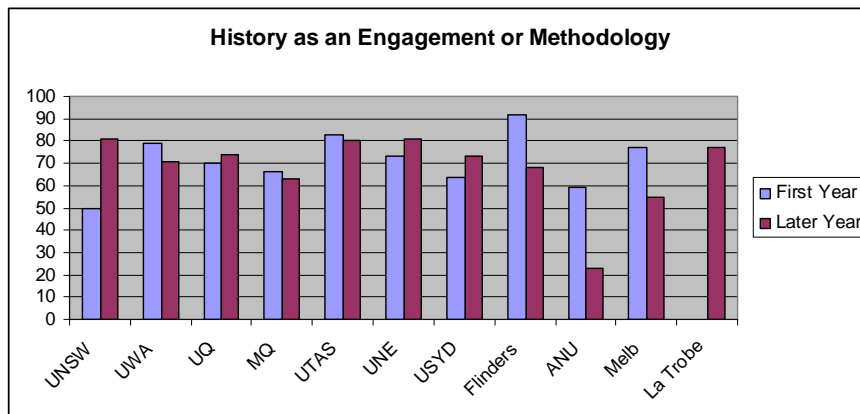
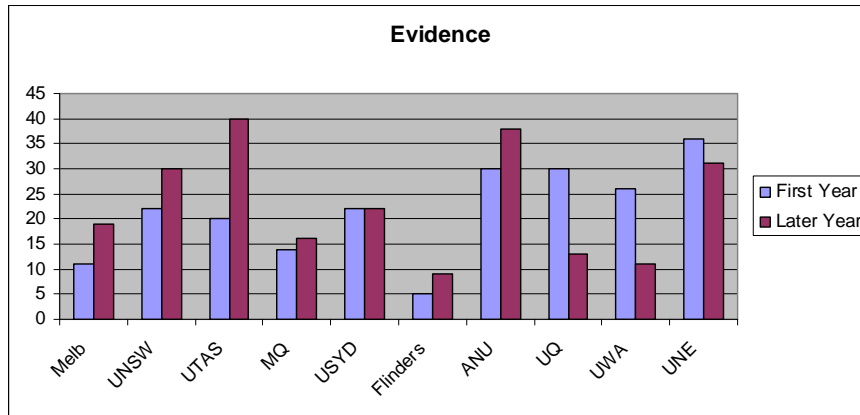


Table 4: Percentage of students by institution who characterised historical thinking as a kind of methodology



Where there was more divergence in student views—divergence both in terms of institution and stage of study—was on the role of evidence and debate. Upper level students were more likely to mention the treatment of evidence in their account of historical thinking and to acknowledge historical debates and the complex nature of historical interpretation, but their responses were not markedly consistent.

Table 5: Percentage of students by institution who characterised historical thinking as an activity involving the handling of evidence



These findings, in conjunction with others detailed below, highlight the need for more explicit discussion of the skills that historians employ, and for historians to reflect upon the ways in which historical thinking develops at tertiary level.

Recommendation 1: The Development of Historical Thinking and Assessment Standards

That universities offering history programs collaborate with the Australian Historical Association and the History Teachers' Association to articulate assessment standards that reflect discipline priorities and developmental differences between introductory and upper level students.

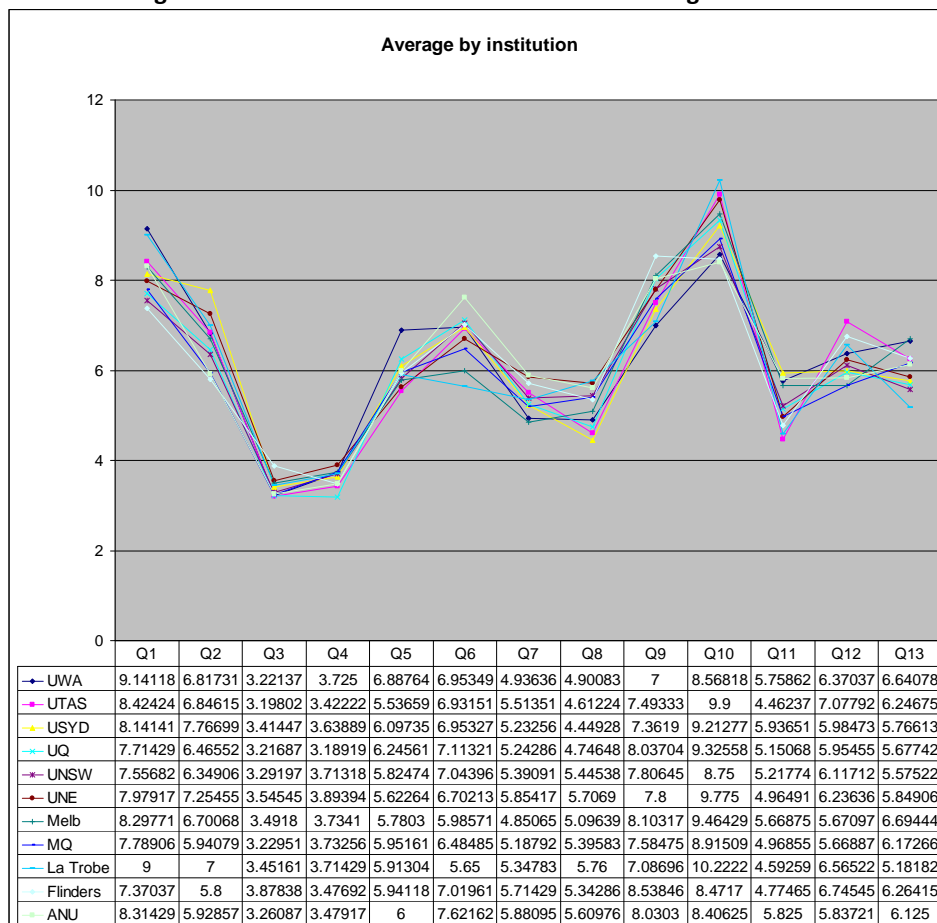
What Activities Help Develop Historical Thinking?

Students and staff were asked to rank a list of activities in terms of their contribution to the development of historical thinking. The items presented were:

1. Working Online (using the internet or email).
2. Watching and discussing film and television.
3. Reading books and journal articles.
4. Engaging in discussion with academic staff in the classroom.
5. Informal discussions with academic staff outside of the classroom.
6. Engaging in discussion with fellow students outside of the classroom.
7. Engaging in discussion with fellow students in the classroom.
8. Working on an essay or assignment.
9. Receiving feedback on assignments.
10. Making a classroom or online presentation.
11. Attending a lecture.
12. Having conversations with others who have very different opinions or values.
13. Archival work, handling material evidence or engagement in field work

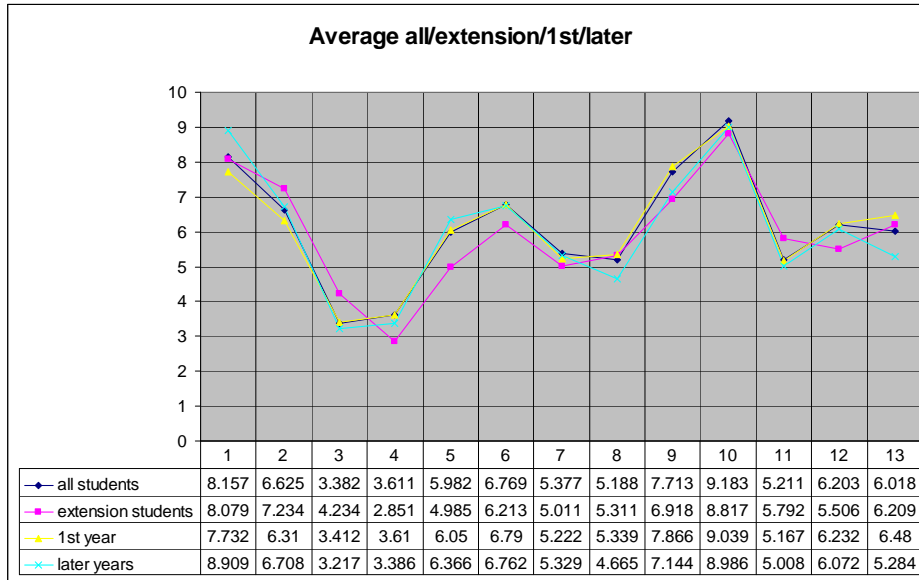
Student responses were remarkably consistent, showing few differences on an institutional or national level or by stage of study.

Table 6: Student Rankings of Activities as Helping to Develop Historical Thinking by Institution. 1 signifies the most useful and 13 the lowest ranking.



Graduates of HSC History Extension showed a slightly higher preference for discussion with staff and other students, and for conversing with others with very different opinions or values. This suggests that students who complete the course—which focuses heavily on historiographical debates—are able to apply their skills in formal and informal conversations. This finding is worthy of further exploration, as it needs to be asked whether the result reflects the impact of the syllabus or the nature of the cohort that opts to take it. If the former, Extension History might have a role to play in fostering intercultural engagement and understanding.

Table 7: Student Rankings of Activities as Helping to Develop Historical Thinking by Stage of Study and Status as HSC Extension History Graduate. 1 signifies the most useful and 13 the lowest ranking.



The consistency of student views by institution and stage was unexpected by the project team. Also unanticipated were the points on which student and staff opinions diverged.

The value of secondary sources, for example, proved to be a matter of dispute. Students tended to associate them firmly with historical thinking, while academics sought to promote primary sources first and to offer secondary sources as an accompaniment, as these examples attest:

In first year we focus very much on primary source analysis and contextualising that and charting notions of change and continuity and trying to open up what we mean by history and what constitutes a historical subject and we also begin, we don't do a lot of it but we begin to analyse secondary sources so we begin to introduce them, though not to the extent that I would like, but we begin to introduce them to historiography. (Ind.)

[W]hat we tend to do I first year is give them rich primary source materials and train them to read them without a text book. (IRUA)

Both groups were firmly anchored in these assertions. The data showed 63% of all valid student responses ranked this option in their top three, and it was the ranking that evoked the most agreement among all students. By contrast 42% of students ranked option 13; *Archival work, material evidence and field work* in the bottom three and this was generally given a mid-range ranking by students, usually cited as the 5th or 6th most useful activity. Given that students had the

option to rank as many, or as few, activities as they chose, it is notable that 81.5% of students gave *books and journals* a valid ranking while *archival work* was only ranked by 63.3% of participating students.

In light of the emphasis placed on primary evidence by historians, student privileging of secondary sources over primary sources must be of concern. Whether it is the case that students are not given the opportunities to handle primary evidence needed, or they are simply not made explicitly aware of the status of the materials they handle, a response by the profession is needed. At minimum, staff are to be encouraged to talk about the ways in which they think about the relationship between primary and secondary materials with their students, as they did with the Project Team, as these two examples attest:

Literally thinking in a historical context, so generic thinking skills, in terms of critical thinking and problem solving and skills, but specifically transporting those into a historical context in terms of the dialectic relationship between secondary and primary sources. (Ind.)

[E]ssential to historical thinking is the ability to read through material coming from the past not for what it ostensibly says but for the understandings that lie behind it. And they [the students] have to learn to read secondary sources very critically. (Go8)

Recommendation 2: Working with Primary Materials

That those responsible for history programs provide opportunities for—or at least make more explicit to students opportunities for—the identification, handling and critical analysis of primary evidence.

There were also clear differences of opinion on the value of assessment tasks and feedback for the development of historical thinking. Students drew few connections between completing assessment tasks and receiving feedback on them and historical thinking (options 8, 9, and 10). Essays received mid-range rankings while feedback was rated poorly. For academics on the other hand, assessment and feedback form an important part of the development of students as historians, as many commented:

We actually talk about what we have written and we share our drafts, we tend to give feedback which is summative of it where as the real feedback they need is formative. (Ind.)

Leading up to an essay, doing a synopsis, what they are doing first of all and having a look at those, they were not assessed but you have to put one in sort of thing, to see where they are going and to meet with them, it is very time consuming with big classes. (Go8)

The other thing that I am really probably a bit school marm-ish about is their writing. I give them a lecture on writing history and talk about different ways of researching, mind mapping and constructing a phrase,

what is a sentence. Unfortunately they need to know that. How do you use an apostrophe? Two thirds of them have no idea. (IRUA)

I certainly, and I know the head of the department does, talk [to the students] about why we are studying history, what scholarship is, the fact that this is a particular type of writing, it is not journalism, it is not fiction, it is a particular kind of writing. And that is what you are being taught, that is the scholarship you are engaging, and you are part of the debate.(Ind.)

Learning to write well requires careful attention to the mechanics of language, but also a nuanced understanding of concepts and how analysis can be used to advance an historical argument. Academic staff consistently expressed concern that students were poorly prepared to write, or did not show the will to learn to write well, as one explains:

We are entering an age where people are increasingly functionally illiterate. You can tell they are not reading enough and they are not writing enough. So we are intellectual crisis in western society and frankly I don't think that is going to change.(Go8)

Staff saw themselves as having to compensate for gaps in secondary education, and some were even resentful that students arrived at university so poorly prepared. These comments are of concern, suggesting the need for more collaborative work between historians and secondary syllabus designers, and for historians to work with those responsible for academic literacy programs at tertiary level to design, implement and test activities that foster the development of skills in an a manner thought appropriate to the discipline.

Recommendation 3: Disseminating Innovations in the Discipline-Based Development of Academic Literacy

That universities offering history programs collaborate with the Australian Historical Association and the History Teachers' Association to provide a repository of good examples of learning activities and assessment tasks that foster the development of academic literacy in ways that reflect the priorities of the profession.

Few students connected historical thinking with giving a presentation: only 49.6% giving them a valid ranking. Academic opinion was also divided. The traditional format for presentations is for one or two students to present their interpretation of a particular problem to the group. Today they can include online presentations or recorded talks (eg using Wimba Voice). They become problematic and impractical when teaching groups are large, or the staff and students are unclear about their value in developing skills. Approaches to presentation varied markedly as a consequence:

I don't get them to do tut[orial] papers, mainly because I think they just kill every conversation.(Go8)

There are no marks, given for it at all but I think it is a good skill for them to learn. You can see how terrified they are of doing it but nobody ever says anything bad about their presentations. (Ind.)

They essentially take over a tute, in a very hands on kind of way, and out of that comes an experience of working with other people getting interesting and different approaches and different roles that they can play with in a project (Go8)

I'd have an anchor person lead a group for ten minutes and at the end of the ten minutes they all move on to the next group. So there is a rotation. The participants actually gives feedback as where they have come to with the previous anchor person moves on with where they think the discussion should be going. (IRUA)

Given that the verbal presentation of research findings is a staple of conferences, and that employers are interested in verbal, online and print communication skills of graduates, there is a need to discuss how verbal and online presentation skills can be accommodated in any standards developed, and for there to be more sharing of good ideas on how non-written forms of communication are best assessed.

Finally, very few students made any connection between visual and new media and historical thinking. Indeed new media received the lowest rating of all of the options given. Staff responses were more mixed, with some reporting that students were reluctant to engage with Web2.0 technologies, and others identifying the positive impact of those technologies on students' experiences of learning activities and assessment, as these two examples show:

We stay constantly in touch especially with externals in particular. The internals rarely use it all. You have to twist their arm to get them to go on it at all. I am actually putting some of their material up on a fortnightly basis, so they have to visit the site. And that was deliberately done so they have to visit the site. (Ind.)

I got frustrated with people not doing the readings and introduced a weekly online quiz which is multiple choice and very quick, which they have to done every week before the main lecture of the week. That examines them on that week and the lecture before to keep them awake so but it is multiple choice so they always have a chance of one in five. But strangely they have been taking it incredibly seriously, more than they probably should and they are getting, many of them got into a competition to never have anything wrong. So I think that worked fairly well. (Go8)

These findings raise two key issues. First, even if students rated those items out of a desire to tell the project team what they thought we wanted to hear, this result is of concern because as US and Australian studies have shown, visual media

provide the primary means by which the wider community engage with history.³⁰ Second, it is also apparent that staff would benefit from better support in their endeavours in using visual and new media in learning activities and assessment.

Recommendation 4: Working with Visual and New Media

That universities offering history programs collaborate with the Australian Historical Association and the History Teachers' Association to develop a repository of good examples of learning and activities and assessment tasks that entail the critical handling of primary and secondary visual and new media materials.

What are the social purposes of historical thinking?

For students and staff alike, historical thinking has the potential to transform the present, particularly by alerting people to cultural differences and by helping them to avoid past mistakes. Indeed few of the students surveyed failed to mention the connection between studying history and avoiding past mistakes. Climate change and the economic downturn were cited as cases where the insight of historians might provide to be socially beneficially, as were instances of social injustice, as these two students explain:

The benefits include understanding the past and therefore understanding the people better, realising injustices and working to prevent them, as well as a greater understanding of the world and the different cultures.

Encouraging a sense of social responsibility. Educating the public about their past. Give us a greater understanding to improve the present.

Lecturers agreed, emphasising the power of historical insight for fostering tolerance:

It is important because it helps people understand things like change, I would hope it makes people more tolerant, more understanding of other people, and it gives them a sense of who they are. It equips people to go on learning throughout life.(Ind)

History teaches you tolerance. You should be tolerant and understanding. If you are not getting that out of history then probably your better off studying something else.(Ind)

³⁰ R. Rosenzweig and D. Thelen, *The Presence of the Past: Popular Uses of History in American Life* (Columbia: Columbia University Press, 1998); and P. Hamilton, and P. Ashton, 'At Home with the Past: Initial Findings from the Survey', *Australian Cultural History*, 2003, no. 23, pp. 5–30.

They also made it clear that historical thinking provides a means for navigating change—past or present—and that being open to change equips you to think about the future in terms of possibilities and agency:

I think they are immeasurable. The main issue is social benefits are to remind us continually that there is an immense range of ways in which the world the world can operate and we in our present time only operate only on a very narrow range especially in Australia but the future is not going to be like that. Whatever we know about the future, we know, that it won't be the present and unless we understand the immense range of possibilities we haven't a hope of actually coping with the future in any kind of constructive way.

all of us need to understand change in order to cope with a world that is organized around rapid change. I think there are skills you develop to analyse the forces that shape individual and collective fates. Not just to understand the past but to understand what is helping to shape the future.

Responses to this question provided the greatest degree of convergence in staff and student views across the initiative. Therein lies an opportunity for students and staff to explore how their efforts can help to shape the present and future. As a staff member noted, however, 'It is a question I should ask myself more often.'

How does Historical Thinking Develop?

This was a question put to staff rather than to students, and it elicited a range of responses. For some historians, historical thinking is achieved through a kind of epiphany, or as one wryly observed 'a historiographical stroke'. Such a moment might arrive in a lecture, or when, as one put it 'they hold an ancient artifact in their hand'. Others described the process as an accumulation of moments that unseat a student and shift them into new ways of thinking about the world. And still others cited the necessity of staff-student and student-student engagements. Regardless, all respondents emphasised that people become historians when they cross a rigour threshold. The wider public may share an interest in the past, but unless they are prepared to investigate it with care and nuance, they are not thinking as historians.

When it came to describing their own development as historians, many staff cited the influential role of their postgraduate research supervisors. Far fewer staff mentioned people who taught them as undergraduates, or as part of coursework programs, but when cited, they were also noted to be significant. It is hardly surprising that the one to one experience of supervision—the most recent experience staff have as students in all but a tiny number of cases—should be noted as significant, and sharing such experiences might help to encourage students to engage in research themselves. But the apprenticeship model can seem a strange one to an undergraduate student who has experienced only large classes, and who is curious to know the steps he or she needs to take to study

history at higher levels. On the other side, staff who draw upon their experiences as research students to make sense of or to structure their coursework teaching activities might feel ill prepared or reluctant to engage with classes, particularly if they are large (eg 30 or more students). It is clearly worth exploring whether the more explicit discussion of positive coursework experiences has an impact on student enrolment patterns, or on staff retention and even promotion.

Recommendation 5: Disseminating Coursework Experiences

That academic staff take opportunities to make more explicit to their students and peers how their experiences as coursework students contributed to their development as historians.

What Assessment Tasks Foster the Development of Historical Thinking?

Essays are a staple of history programs around Australia, but many of the staff interviewed emphasised their ongoing interest in designing, trialling and evaluating other forms of task. Information gleaned from program websites backed this up: staff appear to engage with varying forms of assessment in a dynamic manner. Here are just four examples:

- In addition to the usual documentary exercise one lecturer has been asking students to undertake a *'forgery exercise'*. In this exercise, students create primary documents which are then mixed with genuine primary documents. Students then work in groups to identify the forgeries;
- Four universities reported engaging in the *'mini supervision'* of undergraduate students. This entails asking students to create a plan or draft of an essay or research project and bring it to the lecturer for a one-to-one discussion;
- *Reflection or reaction journals* are increasingly being used by teachers in history. The students are encouraged to avoid offering a description what they have seen or read. Rather they are required to incorporate the personal into their historical practice. The lecturers employing these strategies have incorporated diverse forms of evidence including static images, film, and material evidence alongside traditional textual material; and
- Small group work in tutorials is commonplace in universities. Such an approach is generally adopted to manage large student numbers. One lecturer described a more unusual system of four rotating groups and four *'anchor people'* within a tutorial. For ten minutes an anchor person leads the discussion, when they move to the next group they will be provided with an update of what had been said. They will then pick up from that point in the narrative and expand or develop it.

These examples—just some of many—would provide a rich support and resource for those new to teaching, as well as to those seeking to tailor tasks to particular cohorts or to better align assessment with learning outcomes.

Recommendation 6: Disseminating Innovations in Assessment

That universities offering history programs collaborate with the Australian Historical Association and the History Teachers' Association to develop a repository of good examples of assessment tasks that align with stated assessment standards.

Advances on Existing Knowledge and Future Directions

as a child, he was very happily spirited and inimical to rest; but at the age of seven, he fell off a ladder to the floor, where he remained a good five hours motionless and unconscious.... The surgeon, finding the skull broken and thinking ahead to the long period of recovery, made the following prediction: either he would die, or he would survive insane. Neither of these predictions turned out right, thank God; but having recovered from his misfortune, he grew up henceforth a melancholic and irritable nature, as it must be with profound men of genius, who because of their genius are brilliant in their perceptions, and because of their depth take no delight in witticisms or falsehood.³¹

Few historians boast a developmental narrative as dramatic as that of Giambattista Vico. There might be moments for them that, in retrospect, seem to stand as thresholds of realisation. In general, however, historians hold that that path to historical thinking requires the rigorous application and refinement of skills and conceptual understandings over time.

This initiative sought to explore how historians and their students understand historical thinking, and in particular, its nature, development and social benefits. It did so in order to provide historians with the kinds of evidence that primary and secondary school teachers have long been able to turn to in the development, testing and refinement of curricula, learning activities and assessment tasks.

The results highlighted some major disjunctions of view, particularly concerning the activities that facilitate the development of historical thinking. Historians prize the handling of primary evidence and see the provision of feedback as a key means for stimulating changes in thought. Students, by contrast, looked to secondary sources and discussions with staff and other students as key activities in their own development. More surprising, though, was the level of student agreement—regardless of institution or stage of program—in ranking particular activities. Few historians would agree that introductory and upper level students perform to the same standards, yet there was little discernable difference in the way that they thought about some of the key features of their discipline. Additionally, their rankings revealed a valuation of written texts above verbal contributions and visual and new media. Historical research today involves the nuanced handling of non-textual as well as textual sources, and visual and new media operate as key vehicles for historical engagement in society.

³¹ G. Vico *The New Science of Giambattista Vico*, trans. M. H. Fisch and T. G. Bergin, 1744 edn (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, revised edition, 1984), p. 1.

It is apparent that there are multiple opportunities for collaborative projects, ranging from the need to articulate the kinds of skills that might be expected of students up to and including graduation, to the sharing of innovations in the handling of different forms of evidence, assessment tasks and the development of historical literacy. But there is also a clear need for historians to share their insights with students as well as with one another, in fact to historicise their own journeys as well as those of their students. Exit only 'graduate capabilities' and recollections about supervision do not do justice to the dynamic ways in which historical thinking takes shape over time. Arguably, the development of historical thinking—like all forms of thought—is an open-ended process. That being the case, historians have the opportunity to play a leadership role in encouraging academics in other disciplines to historicise the standards that they seek to articulate for undergraduate and postgraduate (first and second cycle) degrees. The reward for doing so might be the recognition that in managing change, we are better able to see the future as made up of possibilities, possibilities that we as agents have a role in determining. It seems therefore, that the benefits of historical thinking stretch beyond the history classroom and take in the wider tertiary curriculum.

References

- Anon, 'The State of History in the 1990s,' *AHA Bulletin*, 86, June 1998, pp. 3–9
- Anon, 'The State of History—From 1998 to 2000,' unpublished report, 2000
- Bourke, P. (ed.), *AVCC Report of the Academic Standards Panel, (History)* 1991.
- Burenheide, B., 'I can do this: Revelations on teaching with historical thinking', *The History Teacher*, 2007, vol. 41(1), 2007, pp. 55–61.
- Foster, S. J., 'Historical empathy in theory and practice: Some final thoughts', in *Historical Empathy and Perspective Taking in the Social Studies*, (Lanham: Rowman & Littlefield, 2001), p. 173.
- Hamilton, P., and Ashton, P., 'At Home with the Past: Initial Findings from the Survey', *Australian Cultural History*, 2003, no. 23, pp. 5–30.
- Jones, S. R., Torres, V., and Arminio, J., *Negotiating the Complexities of Qualitative Research in Higher Education* (New York: Routledge, 2006).
- Kemmis, S., and McTaggart, R., 'Participatory Action Research', in *Handbook of Qualitative Research* ed. N.K. Denzin and Y.S. Lincoln (Thousand Oaks CA: Sage, 2000).
- Kohlmeier, J., 'The power of a woman's story: A three-step approach to historical significance in high school world history', *International Journal of Social Education*, 2005, vol. 20(1), pp. 64–80.
- Lee, P., 'Walking backwards into tomorrow: Historical consciousness and understanding history', Annual Meeting of American Educational Research Association, New Orleans, 2002, online at: <http://www.cshc.ubc.ca/viewabstract.php?id=93>.
- Lee, P., & Ashby, R., 'Empathy, perspective taking, and rational understanding', in Ozro Luke Davis et al. (eds.), *Historical Empathy and Perspective Taking in the Social Studies* (Lanham: Rowman & Littlefield, 2001), pp. 21-4.
- Lee, P., & Ashby, R., 'Progression in historical understanding among students ages 7–14', in Peter N. Stearns et al. (eds.), *Knowing, Teaching, and Learning History: National and International Perspectives* (New York: New York University Press, 2000), pp. 210-15.
- Lee, P., & Shemilt, D., 'A scaffold not a cage: progression and progression models in history', *Teaching History*, 2003, no. 113, pp. 13–29.
- Levstik, L. S., & Barton, K. C., *Doing History: Investigating With Children in Elementary and Middle School* (Mahway, New Jersey: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates, 2005).
- Lowenthal, D., 'Dilemmas and delights of learning history', in *Knowing, Teaching, and Learning History: National and International Perspectives* (New York: New York University Press, 2000), pp. 67–74.
- Martin, D. & Wineburg, S., et al., 'Historicalthinkingmatters.org: using the web to teach historical thinking', *Social Education*, 2008 vol.,72(3), pp. 140-144.
- Millar, C., and Peel, M., 'Canons Old and New?: The Undergraduate History Curriculum in 2004,' *History Australia*, 2(1), December 2004, 14-1–14-13
- Millar, C., and Peel, M., 'Honours and Postgraduate Coursework Programs 2005–6', online at http://www.theaha.org.au/2006_AHA_Final_Report.doc
- Nye, A., 'Learning Outcomes in History: An Analysis of Online Statements from History Departments in Australian Universities', unpublished paper prepared for the 'Historical Thinking in Higher Education' Project Team and Steering Committee, August 2008.

- Risinger, C. F., 'Teaching historical analysis and thinking using the Internet (Surfing the Net)', *Social Education*, 2008, vol. 72(1), pp. 31–33.
- Roe, J., and Arrowsmith, R., 'Report on Trends from AHA "State of History" Survey, 2000–2002,' unpublished report to Heads of History Conference, 2002
- Rosenzweig, R., and Thelen, D., *The Presence of the Past: Popular Uses of History in American Life* (Columbia: Columbia University Press, 1998).
- Seixas, P., 'Schweigen! die Kinder!, or Does Postmodern History Have a Place in the Schools?', in *Knowing, Teaching, and Learning History: National and International Perspectives* (New York: New York University Press, 2000), pp. 19–37.
- Shemilt, D., 'Adolescent ideas about evidence and methodology in history', in C. Portal (ed.), *The History Curriculum for Teachers* (London; New York: Falmer Press, 1987), pp. 42-59.
- Shemilt, D., 'The caliph's coin: The currency of narrative frameworks in history teaching', in *Knowing, Teaching, and Learning History: National and International Perspectives* (New York: New York University Press, 2000), pp. 83–101.
- Van Hover, S., & Hicks, D., et al, 'Beginning Teachers Thinking Historically? Negotiating the Context of Virginia's High-Stakes Tests', *International Journal of Social Education*, 2007, vol. 22(1), p. 85–114.
- VanSledright, B., 'From empathetic regard to self-understanding: Im/Positionality, empathy, and historical contextualisation', in *Historical Empathy and Perspective Taking in the Social Studies* (Lanham: Rowman & Littlefield, 2001), pp. 51–68.
- VanSledright, B., *In Search of America's Past: Learning to Read History in Elementary School* (New York: Teachers College Press, 2002).
- Vico, G., *The New Science of Giambattista Vico*, trans. M. H. Fisch and T. G. Bergin, 1744 edn (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, revised edition, 1984).
- Von Heyking, A., 'Historical thinking in the elementary years: A review of current research', *Canadian Social Studies, Special Issue: Social Studies Research and Teaching in Elementary Schools*, 2004, vol. 39(1), online at: http://www.quasar.ualberta.ca/css/Css_39_1/ARheyking_historical_thinking_current_research.html.
- Wineburg, S., 'Unnatural and essential: the nature of historical thinking', *Teaching History*, no. 129, pp. 6-11.
- Wineburg, S., *Historical Thinking and Other Unnatural Acts: Charting the Future of Teaching the Past* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 2001).

Appendix 1: Approved Information, Consent Forms and Questionnaire

HISTORICAL THINKING IN HIGHER EDUCATION

Information for Staff

You are invited to participate in a study of Historical thinking in higher education. The purpose of the study is designed to map perceptions of historical thinking among staff and students in Higher Education providers.

The study is being conducted by Dr Adele Nye, School of Modern History, Macquarie University, as part of an Australian Learning and Teaching Council Discipline-Based Initiative Project. The project is steered by a consultative committee with representatives from Macquarie University, The University of Sydney, Monash University, Flinders University, The Australian Historical Association, The History Teachers' Association of Australia and the Deans of Arts, Social Science and Humanities. They will oversee the implementation of the study and communication of results

If you decide to participate, you will be asked to participate in an (approximately) one hour taped interview and allow access to first and third year classes .where students will be asked to complete a five minutes to complete a one page survey. Interviews and questionnaires will be largely undertaken between August and December 2008.

Any information or personal details gathered in the course of the study are confidential. No individual will be identified in any publication of the results. Dr Adele Nye, A/Professor Marnie Hughes-Warrington and Emeritus Professor Jill Roe are the only people who will see the raw data for the project.

If you decide to participate, you are free to withdraw from further participation in the research at any time without having to give a reason and without consequence. Transcripts will be available to participants on request.

If you are interested in the progress and findings of this research, reports will be presented at the Australian Historical Association (AHA) and the Australian Society for Classical Studies conferences.

Contact Details

A/Professor Marnie Hughes-Warrington (Director)

Phone: (02) 98508806

Email: mhughesw@humn.mq.edu.au

Emeritus Professor Jill Roe (Director)

Phone: (02) 9850 8866

Email: jillian.roe@humn.mq.edu.au

Dr Adele Nye

(Researcher))

Phone: (02) 985088834 (phone messages can be left)

Email: adele.nye@humn.mq.edu.au

HISTORICAL THINKING IN HIGHER EDUCATION

Information for Students

You are invited to participate in a study of historical thinking in higher education. The purpose of the study is designed to map perceptions of historical thinking among staff and students in Higher Education providers.

The study is being conducted by Dr Adele Nye, School of Modern History, Macquarie University, as part of an Australian Learning and Teaching Council Discipline-Based Initiative Project. The project is steered by a consultative committee with representatives from Macquarie University, The University of Sydney, Monash University, Flinders University, The Australian Historical Association, The History Teachers' Association of Australia and the Deans of Arts, Social Science and Humanities. They will oversee the implementation of the study and communication of results

If you decide to participate, you will be asked to take five minutes to complete a one page survey.

Any information or personal details gathered in the course of the study are confidential. No individual will be identified in any publication of the results. Dr Adele Nye, A/Professor Marnie Hughes-Warrington and Emeritus Professor Jill Roe are the only people who will see the raw data for the project.

If you decide to participate, you are free to withdraw from further participation in the research at any time without having to give a reason and without consequence.

If you are interested in the progress and findings of this research, reports will be presented at the Australian Historical Association (AHA) and the Australian Society for Classical Studies conferences.

Contact Details

A/Professor Marnie Hughes-Warrington (Director)

Phone: (02) 98508806

Email: mhughesw@humn.mq.edu.au

Emeritus Professor Jill Roe (Director)

Phone: :(02) 9850 8866

Email: jillian.roe@humn.mq.edu.au

Dr Adele Nye

(Researcher)

Phone: (02) 985088834 (phone messages can be left)

Email: adele.nye@humn.mq.edu.au

Consent Form

I, _____ have read and understand the information above and any questions I have asked have been answered to my satisfaction. I agree to participate in this research, knowing that I can withdraw from further participation in the research at any time without consequence. I have been given a copy of this form to keep.

Participant's Name: _____ (block letters)

Participant's Signature: _____ Date:

Investigator's Name: _____ (block letters)

Investigator's Signature: _____ Date:

The ethical aspects of this study have been approved by the Macquarie University Ethics Review Committee (Human Research). If you have any complaints or reservations about any ethical aspect of your participation in this research, you may contact the Ethics Review Committee through its Secretary

Telephone 9850 7854;

Email ethics@mq.edu.au).

Any complaint you make will be treated in confidence and investigated, and you will be informed of the outcome.

(INVESTIGATOR'S COPY)

Consent Form

I, _____ have read and understand the information above and any questions I have asked have been answered to my satisfaction. I agree to participate in this research, knowing that I can withdraw from further participation in the research at any time without consequence. I have been given a copy of this form to keep.

Participant's Name: _____ (block letters)

Participant's Signature: _____ Date:

Investigator's Name: _____ (block letters)

Investigator's Signature: _____ Date:

The ethical aspects of this study have been approved by the Macquarie University Ethics Review Committee (Human Research). If you have any complaints or reservations about any ethical aspect of your participation in this research, you may contact the Ethics Review Committee through its Secretary

Telephone 9850 7854;

Email ethics@mq.edu.au).

Any complaint you make will be treated in confidence and investigated, and you will be informed of the outcome.

(PARTICIPANT'S COPY)

