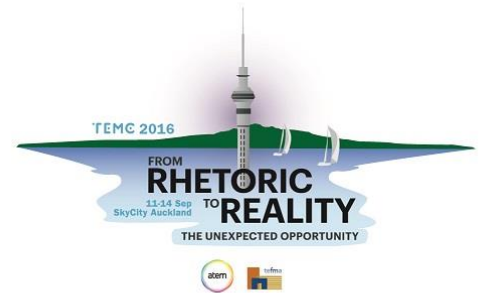**Concurrent Session C**
Monday 12 September 2016
1:30pm – 2:20pm

Session 2
Curriculum Mapping: A Tool to Support Strategic and Cultural Change in Higher Education
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> *Sharon has worked at Western Sydney University for over 20 years after commencing at Western Sydney University in 1994. Sharon has held many positions within the university. Sharon is the Course Quality Project Officer for the Pro Vice Chancellor Education (Transformations). Sharon project manages the Curriculum Mapping Tool related initiatives, enhancement and pedagogy and frameworks around curriculum.*

This paper reports on the implementation and ongoing evolution of the Western Sydney University Curriculum Mapping Tool and its proven capacity to support strategic and cultural change across the university. Development of the tool commenced in 2013 responding to changes in the higher education policy and regulatory landscape (TEQSA; AQF; HE Standards Panel) which placed increased emphasis on quality assurance and accountability, including requiring institutions to evidence graduate outcomes and standards and the means by which they are achieved and assured. The Higher Education Standards Panel then Draft Standards for Course Design and Learning Outcomes (March 2013) clearly reinforced recognised pedagogical best practice in articulating the need for alignment and integration of course and unit learning outcomes and assessment across the curriculum. Whilst reinforcing the need for mastery of disciplinary and/or interdisciplinary knowledge and skills çharacterising the field of study' – the traditional focus of academics; importantly the standards also reinforced the importance of generic skills and attributes required by graduates, including communication and employment related skills.

Providing a tool which would assist academics in taking these two objectives from rhetoric to reality was the initial aim in development of the curriculum mapping tool by enabling the production of visual and summary data which could: (1) demonstrate the alignment of course and unit learning outcomes and assessment across and within segments of a course to assist in the scaffolding of student learning; and (2) explicitly integrate the embedding of generic skills and higher order attributes articulated through the university's graduate attributes. From the beginning the tool also enabled the mapping of Professional Standards (i.e. the requirements of Professional Accreditation bodies) across the curriculum to facilitate the development of documentation required for professional accreditation.

Ensuring the alignment and scaffolding of student learning is hampered within higher education by the modularisation of courses, where units are often planned and taught in relative isolation (Higher Education Academy, 2012), hence assisting teaching teams to be able to visualise and conceptualise the curriculum was essential to achieving this outcome. Whilst it is clear that so-called "generic" skills and abilities cannot be learned or developed outside of a disciplinary context it is less clear that academics accept responsibility for intentional teaching of such skills and their explicit embedding within curriculum is often overlooked. It was therefore recognised that each of these elements would necessitate cultural change, which use of the tool helps to support.

Use of the tool, which was originally voluntary, has been widespread across the university, and recently mandated within the draft Western Sydney University Learning & Teaching Plan. Its

widespread use to date is indication of its utility, and has resulted in positive anecdotal feedback from internal end users, including academics and teaching development staff, as well as a range of external accreditation bodies. Ongoing evolution of the tool has resulted in the following enhancements in response to user requests and feedback, as well as identified strategic imperatives:

1. A focus on mapping student assessment load and distribution across units enabling a whole-of-course perspective on student embedded workload which was identified as a strategic imperative arising from student feedback and subsequent audit of institutional first year assessment practices (Gill, 2015);

2. Whilst a number of strategic initiatives were incorporated initially, including embedding of academic literacies and work integrated learning, others have been added upon request providing the capacity to readily measure and track performance, a necessity for strategic change to be realised;

3. The mapping of elements and the need to ensure the validity of outputs, resulted in the need for greater clarity in terminology and their common understanding across the university, a further positive outcome

4. Key to the success of the tool has been the adherence to the following principles. That the tool:

5. should be user friendly and as intuitive to use as feasibly possible – given that many academics would be intermittent users, this was deemed to be essential to its success;

6. would be responsive to the needs of its end users, resulting in the user generated enhancements described above.