

Prof. Dr. Seán Golden

Director, Institute for International & Intercultural Studies

Universitat Autònoma de Barcelona (UAB)

Former Dean, Faculty of Translation & Interpreting (UAB)

Member, Governing board (UAB)

Member, Academic Affairs Committee (UAB)

Member Board of Trustees, Venice International University

External Examiner, Polytechnic University of Hong Kong

Director, Asia Programme, CIDOB Foundation of Barcelona

Adviser, Casa Asia, Barcelona

Has participated in curricular reform at the University of Connecticut (USA) in the mid 1970's and at the Tianjin University of International Studies (China) in the early 1980's, and has participated in curricular reform and the reform of university governance practices at the UAB, and on various committees of the European Union.

In general terms, and with regard to teaching and learning, I think that the “Dublin Descriptors” give us a good, broad and basic outline of how higher education should be organised. For that reason I am enclosing them as the second part of this document. In the first part I will briefly outline what I consider to be the major problem areas that need to be addressed by university reform with regard to curricular reform and development, research and governance..

1. The major problem areas that need to be addressed by university reform

A. Curricular reform and development

- Teaching vs learning: the “Bologna Process” that promotes the convergence of higher education practices in Europe in order to facilitate the free circulation of citizens within the EU stresses the difference between teaching and learning and encourages curricular reform to put the emphasis on learning.
- Interdisciplinarity: identified by European university presidents as the most difficult problem to solve in curricular reform. Multidisciplinarity is not the same as interdisciplinarity.
- Flexibility in career choices: many university selection processes require students to specialise too soon and excludes them from changing from one degree course to another.
- Generalist: the first level of studies should be generalist and broadly-based. All students should be introduced to basic elements of the social sciences and the humanities as well as mathematics, experimental sciences and technology.
- Specialist: should be based on postgraduate studies and continuing education.
- Comparativist: the use of a “Major” / “Minor” curricular organisation allows students to study more than one field. In addition, and in order to promote civic responsibility, mutual respect and mutual understanding at an international level and with regard to immigration, students should be introduced to basic aspects of various cultures.
- Life-long learning: the rapid changes in the knowledge economy and in technology require

people to recycle themselves regularly and higher education should be prepared for this requirement.

- Effort: curricular reform should include education in the need to make an effort in order to learn.
- General skills: in addition to learning the contents of specific degree courses, students need to acquire a set of basic skills applicable in all fields of study and in everyday life. Curricular reform should find the way to integrate these general skills and experiences.
 - Language skills
 - Computer/TIC literacy
 - Knowledge of and respect for diversity
 - *Stages*
 - Exchange programmes and *in situ* experience
 - Oral and written skills and communications strategies in the native language
 - Oral and written skills and communications strategies in foreign languages
 - Capacity for intercultural communication and mediation
 - Identification of problems
 - Problem-solving
 - Policy making
 - Working in groups
 - Working in interdisciplinary and intercultural groups
 - Leading groups
 - Autonomous-learning
 - Documentation
 - Identifying career options and abiding by a professional code of conduct
 - Putting knowledge into practice
 - Generating new ideas (creativity)
 - Adapting to new situations.
 - Being critical and self-critical
 - Demonstrating ethical and civic commitment

B. Research

- Basic: university reform and the promotion of a closer working relationship between higher education and civil society should not be allowed to reduce the amount of resources being dedicated to basic research in all fields of knowledge.
- Applied: universities should find productive ways of cooperating with civil society in solving social problems and improving productivity, and civil society should respond with better funding for university activities. It is easier to promote applied research than basic research and for this reason applied research should be “socialised” in order to guarantee funding for basic research.
- Ethics

C. University governance

- Equal opportunity: the democratisation of higher education requires a deep reform of selection criteria and the first level of university education. The selection and training of elites should be postponed to the postgraduate level.
- Democracy: university governance should strive to make efficiency compatible with broad-based consensus.
- Autonomy: universities should be given liberty to develop strategies without government interference.
- Accountability: periodically, universities should submit the results of their autonomous management to public auditing procedures.
- Accreditation: on the basis of their results and the outcome of audits universities should be certified as competent to carry out their activities, in a system that can be accepted and relied upon internationally.
- Benchmarking: universities should develop strategic plans based on their own capacity and through a comparative study of similar university experiences at home and abroad.
- Best practices: universities should establish broadly-based networks in order to share and compare their experiences and establish best practices.
- Diversity: not all experiences, nor all best practices are equally applicable in all places, and must be adapted to local circumstances.
- Funding: none of the foregoing problems can be solved without adequate funding. Efforts should be made to guarantee adequate funding that will respect the foregoing principles.

2. The complete set of ‘Dublin descriptors’ is set out below:

[Glossary

1. The word ‘**professional**’ is used in the descriptors in its broadest sense, relating to those attributes relevant to undertaking work or a vocation and that involves the application of some aspects of advanced learning. It is not used with regard to those specific requirements relating to regulated professions. The latter may be identified with the profile / specification.
2. The word ‘**competence**’ is used in the descriptors in its broadest sense, allowing for gradation of abilities or skills. It is not used in the narrower sense identified solely on the basis of a ‘yes/no’ assessment.
3. The word ‘**research**’ is used to cover a wide variety of activities, with the context often related to a field of study; the term is used here to represent a careful study or investigation based on a systematic understanding and critical awareness of knowledge. The word is used in an inclusive way to accommodate the range of activities that support original and innovative work in the whole range of academic, professional and technological fields, including the humanities, and traditional, performing, and other creative arts. It is not used in any limited or restricted sense, or relating solely to a traditional 'scientific method'.]

Qualifications that signify completion of the higher education short cycle (within the first cycle) are awarded to students who:

- have demonstrated knowledge and understanding in a field of study that builds upon general secondary education and is typically at a level supported by advanced textbooks;
- such knowledge provides an underpinning for a field of work or vocation, personal development, and further studies to complete the first cycle;
- can apply their knowledge and understanding in occupational contexts;
- have the ability to identify and use data to formulate responses to well-defined concrete and abstract problems;
- can communicate about their understanding, skills and activities, with peers, supervisors and clients;
- have the learning skills to undertake further studies with some autonomy.

Qualifications that signify completion of the first cycle are awarded to students who:

- have demonstrated knowledge and understanding in a field of study that builds upon their general secondary education, and is typically at a level that, whilst supported by advanced textbooks, includes some aspects that will be informed by knowledge of the forefront of their field of study;
- can apply their knowledge and understanding in a manner that indicates a professional approach to their work or vocation, and have competences typically demonstrated through devising and sustaining arguments and solving problems within their field of study;
- have the ability to gather and interpret relevant data (usually within their field of study) to inform judgements that include reflection on relevant social, scientific or ethical issues;
- can communicate information, ideas, problems and solutions to both specialist and nonspecialist audiences;
- have developed those learning skills that are necessary for them to continue to undertake further study with a high degree of autonomy.

Qualifications that signify completion of the second cycle are awarded to students who:

- have demonstrated knowledge and understanding that is founded upon and extends and/or enhances that typically associated with Bachelor's level, and that provides a basis or opportunity for originality in developing and/or applying ideas, often within a research context;
- can apply their knowledge and understanding, and problem solving abilities in new or unfamiliar environments within broader (or multidisciplinary) contexts related to their field of study;
- have the ability to integrate knowledge and handle complexity, and formulate judgements with incomplete or limited information, but that include reflecting on social and ethical responsibilities linked to the application of their knowledge and judgements;
- can communicate their conclusions, and the knowledge and rationale underpinning these, to specialist and non-specialist audiences clearly and unambiguously;
- have the learning skills to allow them to continue to study in a manner that may be largely self-directed or autonomous.

Qualifications that signify completion of the third cycle are awarded to students who:

- have demonstrated a systematic understanding of a field of study and mastery of the skills and methods of research associated with that field;
- have demonstrated the ability to conceive, design, implement and adapt a substantial process of research with scholarly integrity;
- have made a contribution through original research that extends the frontier of knowledge by developing a substantial body of work, some of which merits national or international refereed publication;
- are capable of critical analysis, evaluation and synthesis of new and complex ideas;
- can communicate with their peers, the larger scholarly community and with society in general about their areas of expertise;
- can be expected to be able to promote, within academic and professional contexts, technological, social or cultural advancement in a knowledge based society;

Differentiating between cycles

Cycle Knowledge and understanding:

1 (Bachelor)

- [Is] supported by advanced text books [with] some aspects informed by knowledge at the forefront of their field of study .

2 (Master)

- provides a basis or opportunity for originality in developing or applying ideas often in a research context .

3 (Doctorate)

- [includes] a systematic understanding of their field of study and mastery of the methods of research associated with that field.

Applying knowledge and understanding:

1 (Bachelor)

- [through] devising and sustaining arguments

2 (Master)

- [through] problem solving abilities [applied] in new or unfamiliar environments within broader (or multidisciplinary) contexts .

3 (Doctorate)

- [is demonstrated by the] ability to conceive, design, implement and adapt a substantial process of research with scholarly integrity .
- [is in the context of] a contribution that extends the frontier of knowledge by developing a substantial body of work some of which merits national or international refereed publication .

Making judgements:

1 (Bachelor)

- [involves] gathering and interpreting relevant data .

2 (Master)

- [demonstrates] the ability to integrate knowledge and handle complexity, and formulate judgements with incomplete data .

3 (Doctorate)

- [requires being] capable of critical analysis, evaluation and synthesis of new and complex ideas.

Communication

1 (Bachelor)

- [of] information, ideas, problems and solutions .

2 (Master)

- [of] their conclusions and the underpinning knowledge and rationale (restricted scope) to specialist and non-specialist audiences (monologue) .

3 (Doctorate)

- with their peers, the larger scholarly community and with society in general (dialogue) about their areas of expertise (broad scope).

Learning skills .

1 (Bachelor)

- have developed those skills needed to study further with a high level of autonomy .

2 (Master)

- study in a manner that may be largely self-directed or autonomous.

3 (Doctorate)

- expected to be able to promote, within academic and professional contexts, technological, social or cultural advancement .

Prof. Dr. Seán Golden



<http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nd/2.0/fr/deed.fr>