

Becoming critical and analytical: Learning in a postgraduate Accounting course

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With global imperatives for higher education graduates to be well prepared for the changing demands of the workplace, there are pressures on higher education programs to equip students with more than disciplinary knowledge. Graduates require a range of highly developed critical analytical skills in order to manage the complexity and flexibility needed in the workplace and become lifelong learners. While skills in critical analytical thinking are included in graduate outcomes and expected of graduates, questions of how best to integrate them into learning, teaching and assessment remain an issue. This study focuses on a final year course in a postgraduate Commerce degree which aimed to engage students in debate and discussion on a range of issues of importance to the accounting profession in Australia. Reflection and discussion activities were emphasised as the course moved from a lecture/tutorial mode to an active learning mode. In this paper the course lecturer and an academic learning specialist reflect on their collaboration. Teaching materials, class observations and student reactions to learning in the course, obtained through a short evaluation survey provided data for the study. The responses were analysed in the light of theories which focus on critical thinking (Barnett, 2004) and student agency (Archer, 2007; 2010) in the context of higher education. The importance of making more explicit what it means to be a critical analytical thinker and providing guided practice and feedback are presented as ways to equip students for the uncertainties of professional life.

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