Challenging boundaries – linking research education to industry and academic innovation

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Research education in the last decade has been marked by an increasing commitment to the place of generic capabilities in its offerings. Higher education policy continues to fuel this commitment, reflecting developments in the national economic area including the emerging skills shortage and the consequent urgent need for workplace-ready research graduates who can readily apply their knowledge and who have the breadth of skills to lead innovation.

The Australian Technology Network's online Learning Employment Aptitudes Program (LEAP) initiated in 1999 has been a trailblazer in the area. It provides an exemplar of a resource attuned to demands from universities, government and industry, as evidenced in DEST support for its analysis and enhancement and a 2007 Carrick Institute award for Postgraduate Education.

The collective efforts of the five ATN Deans of Graduate Studies have led to the expansion of the original ATN LEAP to take in a range of research education resources available to universities in Australia and globally through the e-Grad School [http://www.egradschool.edu.au/]. These are built around the continuing commitment to the development of research students' generic capabilities and future employability.

2007 saw the introduction of the e-Grad School's first award course, the Graduate Certificate in Research Commercialisation; students from 12 Australian universities have enrolled in the course, with 30 graduating already. The full current range of e-Grad School resources comes online in 2008 with others to be added in future, further linking research education and industry and academic innovation.