The pathway to PhD entry via a coursework masters

Convenor

Dr Margaret Kiley.
The Australian National University

With the substantial increase in enrolments in coursework masters and with a growing number of applicants seeking PhD entry and scholarships in Australia with qualifications other than Honours this roundtable will examine the extent to which a coursework masters that includes a research project, provides an effective, supportable entry to a research program in Australia.

Coursework masters programs generally do not purport to be preparation for entry to a research degree, in fact most coursework masters graduates continue in professional employment with no specific thought of a research degree. However, the evidence suggests that some students are using their coursework masters results as a form of PhD entry and the recent review of the Australian Qualifications Framework (AQF, 2010) positions coursework masters as level 9, the same level as a research masters. This might be for a number of reasons, for example we can surmise that students realize, as mature-age learners, that they are more interested in, or more capable of research than they thought in their undergraduate programs once having been exposed to a research project. But, we do not actually know hence, the need for this discussion arising from a recently funded ALTC grant.

The roundtable will discuss issues related to the pedagogy and curriculum issues of research projects in Australian coursework masters programs and their possible role in preparing candidates for a research degree.