The Assessment Arms Race & its Fallout: the Case for Slow Scholarship

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3.00pm – 4.30pm
University Hall Auditorium,
Lee Kong Chian Wing

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Synopsis
What is the impact of assessment on university teaching and learning in circumstances where all student work is graded? I examine a case from New Zealand in which such conditions contributed to the proliferation of assessment tasks that resulted in a grading arms race between academics and between subjects. The research found that spaces for achieving certain educational objectives, such as fostering self-motivated learners, were marginalized. Both students and lecturers were unsatisfied with this situation but neither group could envisage change. I propose slow scholarship should be considered to stop further escalation and reverse the arms race.

An example will be given of a curriculum based on ‘learning through research’ that radically alters students’ educational experience and how they are assessed.

About the Speaker
Tony Harland is Professor of Higher Education and heads the Higher Education Development Centre (HEDC) at the University of Otago, New Zealand. HEDC provides a service for the university based on high quality research into higher education. It teaches undergraduates, postgraduates and academic staff and focuses on support for student learning, research, teaching and service. Tony’s first subject was marine ecology and he has taught this for 30 years in four institutions. He then went on to study higher education and in 1996 joined the Higher Education Research Group at the University of Sheffield, UK. He moved to New Zealand in 2000.

Tony’s research examines the rationale for higher education and what institutions are trying to achieve for teaching, research and service. Recent projects have investigated the ways in which higher education is valued, how teaching values form an important part of a student’s education, what critical theory has to offer our thinking about university work and its relationship to society, and how students learn through doing research. Tony teaches qualitative research methods and other topics such as learning theory, leadership and peer review. He also supervises PhD students working in the fields of policy and practice in higher education. In 2013, he was awarded the Tertiary Education Research in New Zealand (TERNZ) research medal for outstanding contribution to the field. Tony is on the editorial board of several international journals.