

TRANSFORMING DISCIPLINES: EMERGENT LEARNING AND THRESHOLD CONCEPTS (ELTC)



EXPRESSIONS OF INTEREST ARE NOW OPEN!

This boutique conference will showcase current Threshold Concept research in tertiary education and its implications for successful teaching and learning. You are cordially invited to join us in our exploration of how this approach can transform teaching and students' emergent learning across disciplines.

The University of Waikato, New Zealand will host the conference on 18 and 19 November, 2013. If you would like to explore any particular area within the field of Threshold Concept Theory and emergent learning, please email us directly and let us know about your interest so that we can plan an exciting, dynamic and fruitful programme for all participants.

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Threshold concepts defined

Threshold concepts are a relatively new idea in higher education. They are used to link academic thinking, learning and teaching practice in a discipline.

A threshold concept is distinguished from what might be termed a 'key' or 'core' concept, as it is more than just a building block towards understanding within a discipline. Meyer and Land (2003) identify five characteristics of 'threshold concepts'.

First, they should be transformative, in that once understood, a threshold concept changes the way in which the student views the discipline. Second, they should be irreversible - given their transformative potential, a threshold concept is also likely to be difficult to unlearn. Third, a threshold concept is integrative - in understanding the concept, the learner will be exposed to the previously hidden interrelatedness of different aspects of the discipline. Fourth, a threshold concept is bounded, that is, it helps to define the boundaries of a subject area. If a threshold concept is relinquished, thinking begins to move outside or beyond the scope of the subject itself. Finally, it is potentially 'troublesome knowledge' because it may be counter-intuitive so, in grasping a threshold concept the learner may move from understanding in a 'commonsense' way to an understanding that goes against and beyond previous knowledge.

Reference

Meyer, J. H. F., & Land, R. (2003). Threshold concepts and troublesome knowledge 1 – Linkages to ways of thinking and practising. In C. Rust (Ed.), *Improving student learning – Theory and practice ten years on* (pp. 412-424). Oxford, England: Oxford Centre for Staff and Learning Development (OCSLD).



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