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surveillance of their emotional responses is just one of a number of ways in which their performance is monitored. Rules on class attendance and “active” participation constitute a form of bodily performance that is becoming increasingly oppressive.

Like reality show contestants, students quickly learn how to play the game. Trainee teachers, nurses and architects encounter assignments that try to assess their commitment to reflection about their professional practice. These implicitly look for evidence of an emotional, personal transformation, moving from “wrong” to “right” attitudes. A trainee teacher, for example, might write about how they have shifted from didactic to “student-centred” approaches and are now emotionally committed to promoting deep rather than surface approaches to learning. In reality TV, this is called “the journey”. This then becomes what the artful, skilful or merely compliant student will write.

“Students with a genuine desire to do good are encouraged to convert even the most basic human kindness into self-promotional material for their CV”

Students with a genuine desire to do good are now encouraged to cynically convert even the most basic human kindness into self-promotional material for their CV as a badge of their “caring” and suitability for employment. As Susan Cain has argued in her book *Quiet: The Power of Introverts in a World that Can't Stop Talking* (2012), there is little place left for the modest introvert in the modern educational system. Students must big up their claims to “leadership” and “team-working” skills and their “commitments” to do good in the world. It is all rather reminiscent of the sentiments expressed by Miss World contestants canvassing for votes.

I am not denying the importance of values in university education. Values are important in making higher learning at university possible. Tolerance is needed in listening to and engaging with the ideas of others. Students must also show respect for intellectual knowledge. This is why plagiarism and inadequate referencing is rightly punished, because fundamentally it demonstrates a lack of respect for the creativity and authorship of others. However, these are functional values or necessary conditions for a genuinely “higher” education. They are quite different from prescriptions of normative value positions that students are required to espouse in an unquestioning manner.

Learning at university is becoming more about a public performance rather than a private encounter with knowledge. Students should be free to learn – and we need to allow them the space to develop their own ideas and values rather than trying to govern their souls.

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Truly ‘higher’ study demands critical thinking, not faking it

Students should not be expected to ‘perform’ their emotional commitment to trendy political orthodoxies, says Bruce Macfarlane

particular mantras, such as “reflective practice” in teacher education.

At one level, the expression of such values is a well-meaning attempt to define a common culture in an age of mass higher education. Universities also use them as part of their marketing hype. To take issue with values such as global citizenship might seem like attacking Bambi. But their aggressive promotion within the curriculum is seriously at odds with a liberal conception of a “higher” education. This needs to empower rather than restrict students in developing their own ideas, giving

them the confidence to critique sacred tropes rather than display a slavish commitment to them. Expectations that students will be active global citizens, for example, assume a singular interpretation of globalism as social justice and largely ignore the role of the free market. It is a partial and political construction.

Academics know all about the demands of performativity. They must meet a bewildering array of targets, evaluations and performance indicators connected with the measurement of teaching and research. Yet pressures on students mirror this performative culture. The

Reality television shows are a staple of modern life. Our screens are packed with images of participants apparently experiencing a series of real emotions such as excitement, fear, pain, agony or joy. Or are they? A reality TV star must master an emotional performance – convincing others that what they are seeing is “real”. Ironically, of course, making something seem real often involves skilful acting. This means that a lot of what appears to be authentic is merely a fabrication.

The need to give an emotional performance is not confined to reality TV stars. It also applies to university students, who increasingly are expected to demonstrate their emotional stance as part of learning and assessment regimes. We expect our students to show undiluted enthusiasm for global citizenship, collaborative learning, environmental sustainability and social justice among other voguish value positions.

These are the political orthodoxies of the age that have come to the fore in grandiose statements about graduate attributes or as the integrative principles of elective programmes. They have been widely adopted by universities in many parts of the world including Australasia, Hong Kong and the UK. Some disciplines also require the adoption of