Contribute 2: Broadening peer learning for inclusive practice into Creative Arts Diploma and Associate Degree programs in TAFE

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Strategic objectives addressed:

- transforming the student experience by providing support for self-directed independent learning and assessment in Creative Arts
- using institutional data and student feedback to renew the curriculum on peer learning and assessment in Creative Arts
- renewing learning and teaching through professional development by involving academic staff in the design and implementation of a constructivist approach to student learning and assessment practices
- providing support for students from diverse backgrounds by including participatory strategies that support persistence, engagement and student motivation
- promoting the tertiary aspects of RMIT's educational offerings by using a formalised, structured, peer learning and assessment activity with first year students enrolled across 3 TAFE Creative Arts programs

Internal order number: 360303

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List of abbreviations

LTIF: RMIT University Learning and Teaching Investment Fund
Art: Students and/or staff enrolled or teaching in the ‘Produce Paintings’ course in the Diploma of Visual Arts program at RMIT
Fashion: Students and/or staff enrolled or teaching in the ‘Design and Development 2’ course in the Associate Degree in Fashion Design and Technology program at RMIT
Media: Students and/or staff enrolled or teaching in the ‘Writing Professionally Effective Communication’ course in the Associate Degree in Professional Writing and Editing program at RMIT
1 Executive summary

In this LTIF project, a structured peer assessment approach was trialed in Semester 2, 2012 in core first year courses in the Diploma of Visual Arts program (School of Art), the Associate Degree in Fashion Design and Technology program (School of Fashion and Textiles) and the Associate Degree in Professional Writing and Editing program (School of Media and Communication). As part of the approach, a peer assessment activity was embedded in one core studio course in each program. This provided students with the opportunity to provide feedback to their peers on a major project and to contribute a mark to their peer’s final grade. The peer feedback and assessment activity was allocated 10% of the course grade.

The peer assessment approach included an introduction to peer assessment and assessment rubrics, access to concurrent workshops and online learning and teaching support materials (from Contribute: Peer learning for inclusive practice in Art and Design 2011), the use of mobile technologies appropriate to the disciplines and a peer-learning brochure. Teachers in each program (a total of 9, 3 from each program) specifically designed a peer learning activity to extend, enhance and maximize student learning within existing course curriculum using the resources available.

The structured peer assessment approach was evaluated using a mixed methods ADRI (Approach, Deployment, Reflection and Improvement) action cycle methodology. For students, this involved peer assessment in small teams, face-to-face, using a rubric and completing a pre-post survey that explored whether the approach enhanced their overall learning experience and academic achievement. The pre student survey (N= 203, n= 73; 36% response rate) was conducted at the start of semester two 2012, after students were briefed about the peer assessment process, while post student survey (N= 203, n= 40; 19.7% response rate) was conducted after the peer feedback and assessment activities were completed at the end of semester two, 2012. For staff, it involved the integration of a formalised student-led peer feedback and assessment process (and development of an assessment rubric) where for the first time students contributed to the mark of fellow students in a key course. Staff completed a survey (N=9; n=7; 77.7%) that focused on whether they believed that the approach enhanced overall student learning, academic achievement and the future of the approach in their program.

Overall, positive results were reported. All staff and the majority (60%) of students reported that the peer assessment approach helped them to become more professional. As confidence in marking other students’ work increased, the desire for using peer assessment also increased ($\rho = .356, p = .028$). As willingness to mark other students’ work increased, the desire for using peer assessment also increased ($\rho = .411, p = .013$). As student willingness to have their work marked by other students increased, the desire for using peer assessment also increased ($\rho = .459, p = .004$). The more positively peer feedback was received, the stronger the desire students had for using peer assessment again ($\rho = .353, p = .041$). Students who referred to the assessment rubric before or during completion of their project were more likely to want to use peer assessment in the future ($\rho = .309, p = .071$). The more effectively a student’s peer assessment group worked together, the more they wanted to use peer assessment in the future ($\rho = .281, p = .088$). Most importantly, all staff reported that they were interested in continuing using peer feedback and assessment rubrics, that, in turn, we believe supports a cultural paradigm shift towards a more student-centred approach to learning and teaching.
2 Outcomes

The proposed project outcomes were as follows:

- **Outcome 1** Improved student cohort experience
- **Outcome 2** Enhanced staff knowledge in adapting curriculum for supporting and integrating a peer learning process
- **Outcome 3** Development of an integrated peer-learning model, with accompanying student self-directed online module
- **Outcome 4** Advice on appropriate mobile technologies to support an integrated peer-learning model in Creative Arts programs delivered in TAFE
- **Outcome 5** Presentations on integrated peer learning and scalability of model for adoption in other areas
- **Outcome 6** Scholarship of teaching and learning (SoTL) paper for publication that documents practice and experiences

Below is an overview of the impact of each outcome.

**Outcome 1**
Improved student cohort experience as evidenced by student feedback data

*Project Impact*

Students reported (See Appendix 1 for student data) that if a peer feedback process was carefully considered and planned and conducted in a positive and structured way, it benefited all involved.

> It's not too scary and is a part of what we need in our studies. [Student Survey 2 (SS2) comment]

> It was quite challenging to begin with but is a worthwhile opportunity. [SS2 comment]

Two thirds (65%) agreed or strongly agreed that engaging in the peer assessment process created positive conditions for learning and expanded their professional networks (62.5%). Just over half (52.5%) agreed or strongly agreed that it helped them to work better in groups and improved their experience of the course (55.0%).

> We each listened and took in each of our opinions and came to a decision together [SS2 student comment]

A large proportion of students (70%) agreed or strongly agreed that participating in peer assessment helped them appreciate how well they were getting on, understand where they were going wrong (70%) and helped them clarify what they needed to do (69.2%).

The overwhelming majority of staff (80%) strongly agreed that it improved students’ experience of the course and created positive conditions for learning (83.3%).

The majority of students in both Art (66.7%) and Media (55.6%) wanted to have the opportunity to use peer assessment in their programs in 2013.
It has been a very useful and interesting exercise. I’ve learnt a lot and would happily do it again. I think it’s particularly important in our course because we have to learn to receive feedback if we are putting ourselves out there as professional practitioners, and if we know something about how feedback should be given, we can then make an assessment of how it is provided to us, and how we might provide it to others in our field [SS2 comment]

Outcome 2
Enhanced staff knowledge of adapting curriculum for supporting and integrating a peer learning process

Project Impact
In terms of enhanced staff knowledge in adapting the curriculum to integrate peer learning, nine staff (3 from each program) were involved in embedding and/or facilitating a peer assessment activity in a core studio first year course (and guide) and developing a peer assessment rubric, in some way. The peer assessment activity focused on students assessing one another’s work in small groups, filling out an assessment rubric and providing comments (oral and/or written). Ten percent of the course grade was allocated to the peer assessment activity.

Most of the academic staff (N=9, n=7; 77.7%) who responded to the staff survey indicated a willingness to learn more about conducting peer feedback and assessment activities through re-designing their course guides and teaching and learning approaches in their Diploma or Associate Degree program contexts. Areas of most learning identified included assessment in general, the use of peer assessment specifically, the design and development of peer assessment rubrics and the selection of appropriate projects.

Rubric set very clear guidelines and students found this very useful [Teacher comment]

The students gave very positive feedback. They thought the rubric helped them analyse their peer’s work, and gave them the language to facilitate this [Teacher comment]

As a result of participating in the project, six of the seven who responded have expressed a strong interest in continuing to refine the peer feedback and assessment activities in 2013, thereby contributing to the ongoing sustainability of the approach in the schools.

Some students have expressed a desire to their teacher for peer assessment to be implemented across the whole school asking if,

…the process could be (used for every major assessment) in the course [Teacher comment]

Outcome 3
An integrated peer-learning model, with accompanying student self-directed online module

Project Impact
The integrated peer learning model developed in the previous iteration of this project, Contribute: Peer learning for inclusive practice in Art and Design 2011, was successfully adapted and
expanded in this project. Adaptations included the design, development and trialing of discipline specific rubrics for 3 programs (at Diploma and Associate Degree level) delivered in TAFE.

In addition, a suite of online support tools to help implement and support peer learning and assessment into Creative Arts teaching and learning practices, for both staff and students, was further refined and offered to staff and students. The online support tools were linked to from myRMIT studies and the link was also emailed to staff and students.

The LEAD handbook for students to develop leadership and facilitation skills for peer study groups developed in Contribute: Peer learning for inclusive practice in Art and Design was also further refined and the Peer Assessment LEAD workshop program was again offered to students. In addition, concurrent support workshops for students on peer feedback and assessment skills, including using their assessment rubric, were offered but unfortunately, due to timing, uptake was minimal, with only three students utilising this opportunity. Feedback on the peer assessment approach from these three students was extremely positive. General feedback by teachers on the use of peer assessment included:

- Involves the students in the assessment process [Teacher comment]
- Students gained an appreciation of the many aspects of their work that are taken into consideration with the marking of their work…. [Teacher comment]
- Encourages students to take a very specific interest in all aspects of the assessment process [Teacher comment]

Outcome 4

Advice on appropriate mobile technologies to support an integrated peer-learning model in Creative Arts programs delivered in TAFE.

Project Impact

In terms of the use of mobile technologies, the project revealed that a simple device (for example the iPod touch, iPad mini or a tablet) that enables connectivity to the internet is all that is required. Additionally, the stronger the alignment with existing devices, such as mobile phones, that can be used 'in the moment' in the studio context, the greater the uptake of technology. Expecting students to make a special trip to the library to connect to the web may not encourage the use of technology in a studio that is equipped with wireless internet. Many students have access to a mobile device or laptop to connect in class at RMIT (Bender, 2012). A scholarship to provide an iPod touch mobile device for students who met the low-income criteria and did not already have access to their own mobile device was implemented through Student Services. Of the 35 students who applied 14 were awarded a scholarship.

Overall, strong alignment with existing discipline practices, familiarity with online tools, a user friendly system, an appropriate workload, and teacher encouragement and support were the most important factors in enhancing technology use in the studio. Comments from students about the benefits of using the mobile technologies included being able to:

- Research while in class and [find] references. It also keeps me up to date with student emails. [S2 Student comment]
- [I] take photos of exercise that I needed to do…[S2 Student comment]
Outcome 5

*Presentations on integrated peer learning and the scalability of the model for adoption in other areas.*

**Project Impact**

A number of presentations on integrating peer learning and the model have been made or are in progress. These are detailed in section 3.2.5.

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Outcome 6

*Scholarship of teaching and learning (SoTL) paper for publication that document practice and experiences.*

**Project Impact**


Journal articles for publication in academic journals are in progress.

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3 Project outcomes and impacts

3.1 Project background and overview of peer assessment in action

The project implemented and extended multiple elements of the 2011 LTIF *Contribute: Peer learning for inclusive practice in art and design* (Contribute 1) to the tertiary university environment (specifically, Diplomas and Associate degree programs in TAFE).

The programs were:
- Diploma of Visual Art
- Associate Degree in Fashion Design and Technology
- Associate Degree in Professional Writing and Editing

The program leaders and the teaching staff in each of these three programs agreed to take part in the project (9 staff, 3 from each program). They were assisted to adapt an in-context, disciplinary model of peer assessment for all their first year students based on lessons learned in the 2011 Contribute LTIF project, including strategies that have been shown to be particularly effective in Creative Arts programs.

This process was underpinned by six key principles identified as critical to the success of peer learning approaches in the seminal work of Sampson, Boud, Cohen & Gaynor (1999), namely,

1. **Attend to the context in which the peer learning strategy is to be introduced**
2. **Focus on learning outcomes and objectives and matching these to peer learning strategies**
3. **Ensure congruence between the peer learning strategies and assessment tasks**
4. **Prepare staff and students for different learning approaches, roles and responsibilities**
5. **Introduce peer learning strategies and manage the process**
6 Create positive conditions for learning

Specifically, staff incorporated the use of a student peer assessment rubric to enhance the learning experience.

Staff were supported by the project manager to select the most appropriate course and adapt the assessment for peer assessment. This is in line with contemporary thought on enhancing academic learning and teaching practice. According to Hare (2007, p.15) innovative approaches locate support inside university disciplines “…in order to focus the collective energy and commitment of the discipline to improve the quality of learning and teaching [since] culturally, organisationally and academically, staff identify with their discipline and approach their professional life by their discipline [and] while there is evidence that a lot of teaching and learning matters are generic, there are issues that are specific to disciplines”. A study by Knight, Tait and Yorke (2006) also found that non formal learning, that is learning that is situated in disciplinary practices and local contexts “…is likely to be a more significant response than formal learning [and] that actions to enhance pedagogic practices gain force when they are subject-related.” (p.322; 336).

The project used a collaborative research model involving the teachers and students as co-researchers. It was led and managed using a model that recognised the importance of strong overall project leadership (providing strategic oversight and direction setting with clear vision and goals articulated). Program Leaders and teaching staff were central to the project implementation and success (Marshall 2008; Ramsden, Prosser, Trigwell & Martin, 2007).

In terms of methodology, the project;

- Was designed, implemented and evaluated using a mixed methods ADRI (Approach, Deployment, Reflection, and Improvement) action cycle methodology, incorporating mixed methods to evaluate its effectiveness
- Involved phases, each with their own set of activities and outcomes
- Was supported and co-ordinated by project leaders Barbara de la Harpe and Megan McPherson. The Project Manager, Rebekha Naim, was responsible for bringing people together, facilitating ongoing communication and collaboration; overseeing and developing strategic activities; ensuring milestones and the budget were met; preparing interim and final project reports; and supporting the Project Leadership Team
- Analysed data collected to identify impacts, patterns and themes in order to inform future approaches to learning and teaching within studio courses and to add to the body of knowledge on student perceptions of peer learning in Creative Arts programs

The key research questions were:

1. What are students’ expectations of peer learning and are they transformed (or not) through involvement in a peer-learning program?
2. What expectations do students have of online peer learning opportunities and how do they use online peer learning opportunities if available?
3. What are the conditions required for successful implementation of peer learning strategies from both staff and student perspectives?

The peer assessment approach in Produce Paintings, Diploma of Visual Art

The Diploma of Visual Art is a two-year TAFE program and describes itself as ‘preparing individuals who wish to pursue a career as a visual artist or in another creative field… The major emphasis of the Diploma of Visual Arts is the production of a folio of work that reflects personal creative inquiry, and the pursuit of excellence… The diploma is developed around ideas of
integrated course experiences, reflecting contemporary notions of the arts practitioner as multi-disciplined’ (RMIT University, 2012a, para. 1&2).

The formalised peer assessment approach for this program was implemented in semester 2, 2012 in a core first year studio course, ‘ Produce Paintings’, involving 76 (52 female and 24 male) students across 3 groups where peers assessed pieces in their folio of work. At the end of the semester students were allocated into groups of 4-5. Each student in the group spoke to their artwork and the group used the assessment rubric and wrote comments for each student. The marking rubric was included in the student’s course grade as 10% of their final grade. The completed peer rubric was also used as part of the assessment moderation session with assessors/teachers for each student’s folio of work.

In terms of challenges, the assessment rubric was re-developed just prior to peer assessment to align it with the competency unit and as a result students did not see the final assessment rubric until late in the semester.

The peer assessment approach in Design Development 2, Associate Degree in Fashion, Design and Technology

The Associate Degree in Fashion, Design and Technology is a new two-year program and describes itself as ‘developing creative and technical skills while working closely with the fashion industry, blending theory with practice through a series of industry-driven projects. The program was redeveloped for 2012 from the Advanced Diploma in Fashion Design and Technology to the new Associate Degree in Fashion Design and Technology’ (RMIT University, 2012b, para. 3&4).

The formalised peer assessment approach for this program was implemented in semester 2, 2012 in a core first year 12-credit point studio course, encompassing theory and practical pattern making skills across 12 weeks called ‘Design and Development 2’. It included 94 students (93 female and 1 male) across 6 tutorial groups where peers anonymously assessed each other’s cargo pants in groups of 4-5. They assessed random students from other classes unknown to them. At the end of the semester students were organised into groups of 4-5 and were given 4-5 cargo pants to assess. The groups then went over the assessment rubric in detail and circled the most appropriate level for each rubric criteria with each cargo pant. Due to time constraints they did not give feedback to these students in person but wrote detailed comments instead. They also completed a self-review a week later, which gave them an opportunity to discuss their peer feedback and assessment the following week (this was not an assessable task). The marking rubric was included in the student’s course grade as 10% of their final grade. The completed peer rubric was also used as part of the assessment moderation session with assessors/teachers for each student’s folio of work. The filled-in peer rubric was also used as part of the assessment moderation session with assessors/teachers for each student’s cargo pants.

In terms of challenges, the assessment rubric took time to develop as it was new to staff. In addition, a key staff member and project champion for the program was unwell for the majority of the semester and other staff had to replace her. Regardless, the program manager and teachers were keen to undertake the peer feedback and assessment activity to expand the new program based on student-centred learning and innovative assessment practices.

The peer assessment approach in Writing Professionally - Effective Communication, Associate Degree in Professional Writing and Editing

The Associate Degree in Professional Writing and Editing is a new two-year program and the Writing Professionally – Effective Communication course is described as introducing students ‘…to the craft of professional writing and explores ways in which [students] can shape messages for specific audiences and purposes. By studying the principles of clear writing and ‘plain English’ [students] learn to communicate effectively across written, oral and graphic forms…[Students] also explore how writing for the ear differs from the eye and how the language of persuasion differs from that of informing. The skills [students] learn in this course apply across the industry and are essential to [their] work as a writer and /or editor’ (RMIT University, 2012c).
The formalised peer assessment approach for this program was implemented in semester 2, 2012 in a core first year 12-credit point course, ‘Writing Professionally - Effective Communication’, encompassing written and spoken communication skills across 8 weeks. It included 33 students (19 female and 14 male) across two tutorial groups where peers assessed each other’s persuasive speeches in groups of 4-5, towards the end of the semester, in their tutorials. Students presented their speeches and 4-5 students were allotted 4-5 students to assess, where they specifically looked at only one or two areas of the assessment rubric. The assessment rubric was included in the student’s course grade as 10% of their final grade. The completed assessment rubric was also used as part of the assessment moderation session with assessors/teachers for each student’s persuasive speech.

In terms of challenges, due to having to do the speech in front of a live audience and with time constraints, students assessing the work looked in detail at one or two areas of the speech only, rather than the complete speech, including text and presentation. The following week, students were broken into their assessment groups and filled in a complete rubric for each student they assessed. Some students reported this was a challenge to assess over the time period and recording the presentations would have been useful.

**Student support**

Students in all three courses were briefed about the Contribute 2: Broadening peer learning for inclusive practice into Creative Arts Diploma and Associate Degree programs in TAFE project in week 2 of their course. The Project Manager met with the class groups (11 groups in total) in Contribute 2 and explained the concept of peer feedback and assessment and the peer assessment rubric. This gave students an opportunity to find out about the peer assessment approach they would be undertaking that semester before work on their assessments began. Students were given access to the Studio Study Groups website, a brochure on peer assessment, given the opportunity to become a Peer Mentor as part of the LEAD program and also had the opportunity to apply for an iPod Touch scholarship.

Students were invited to undertake the first of two, online, twenty-minute surveys to gauge their experiences and attitudes towards peer feedback and peer assessment. This data was then compared to data collected from the second volunteer student survey conducted once students had completed their course peer feedback and assessment activity.

Students were supported by the Studio Study Groups website adapted from Contribute 1. It was placed in their myRMIT studies online resources, emailed to them and detailed in a brochure (Appendix 2). Website available at [http://emedia.rmit.edu/studio-study-groups/](http://emedia.rmit.edu/studio-study-groups/)

A brochure was produced for students and handed out at the briefing session to draw students’ attention to peer feedback and assessment skills and to provide the link to the Studio Study Groups website where they could access further information. Students were given the brochure as a quick ‘hands-on’ guide to help inform them about the peer feedback and assessment process.

The LEAD program was also introduced at the student briefing. Unfortunately, no students took up the opportunity, given the timing.

Workshops were offered to students on peer feedback, assessment and using the assessment rubric in weeks seven and eight of Semester 2, 2012. Various times and dates were announced for these potential workshops, but after much effort only three students participated in one session. It was held in Building 94 with Media students in late September 2012. The session was an opportunity for students to hear about the peer feedback and assessment approach and the kind of
support they required to carry out a successful peer assessment. All three students were supportive of peer assessment but nervous about grading. Discussion in the workshop focused on how best to approach and use the assessment rubric (from an assessor and student perspective), being honest but fair in criticisms, keeping to the rubric criteria when assessing and being positive and interested in each student during the process. This was a successful session and it is disappointing that so few students took up the opportunity.

An iPod Touch scholarship was offered to students meeting the criteria for low income and need in all three programs. This opportunity was negotiated with the RMIT Student Services area to support students with a low income and with no other form of mobile technology device that could link into the University’s wireless network. Student Services conducted a scholarship survey via student email in Semester 1, 2012 and the scholarship process was conducted separately from the project. RMIT University Student Services awarded 14 iPod Touch Scholarships from 35 applications. At the time of selection, iPod Touch met criteria of cost, functionality and usability and provided audio, video and camera functions to comparable devices.

**Academic staff-support**

Academic staff were supported in various ways. A peer learning project champion was appointed in each school. They were responsible, for producing the peer assessment rubric, adapting the course guide and lead the change in assessment for their program, along with their team members. They led the project in the local context and oversaw and coordinated the workshop. In all three programs the first year courses were redesigned to embed peer-to-peer feedback and an assessment activity adapted within the context of the discipline, which accounted for 10% of the course grade.

During Semester One, staff had regular meetings with the Project Manager about the development of a peer assessment model for each program, the best suited course and assessment to peer assess, the assessment rubrics were developed and other meetings were held to support staff. Each of the discipline groups met at the program level, not as one large project group due to timetable constraints. In Semester Two, staff built on the strategies developed in Semester 1, this approach ensured that “…students and staff had time to adjust to the different learning opportunities and to their own changed roles within the process…” (Sampson, Boud, Cohen & Gaynor 1999, p.7).

In summary, the peer feedback and assessment approach designed, implemented and evaluated in this project was underpinned by six key principles identified by the seminal work of Sampson, Boud, Cohen & Gaynor (1999) as critical to the success of peer feedback and assessment approaches:

- Attend to the context in which the peer assessment strategy is to be introduced
- Focus on learning outcomes and objectives and matching these to the peer assessment strategies
- Ensure congruence between the peer assessment strategies and tasks
- Prepare staff and students for different assessment approaches, roles and responsibilities
- Introduce peer assessment strategies and manage the process
- Create positive conditions for learning and assessment.

**Project evaluation**

All students and the 9 academic staff who were involved in the courses in the three schools were invited to participate in the evaluation of the approach. Data was collected by:

- Administering 2 student online surveys, one in weeks 2-4 (pre) and one in weeks 13-16 (post)
- Adding 5 supplementary questions to the course evaluation survey (CES)
Administering an online staff survey (mid November - early December 2012)

The pre student survey (see Appendix 3) explored student perceptions about peer feedback and assessment before undertaking the Contribute 2 project. It comprised 17 questions (quantitative and qualitative) and was administered in weeks 2-4 of Semester 2. The post student survey (see Appendix 4) was administered at the end of Semester 2 and explored student experiences of the Contribute 2 peer feedback and assessment approach, including academic and social aspects. It comprised 22 questions (quantitative and qualitative) and was administered in week 13-16 of semester 2.

The pre student survey focused on:

- What their previous experience with peer feedback and assessment was and their anticipation of the experience
- Previous experience of giving and receiving feedback from peers

While the post student survey focused on:

- What the peer feedback and assessment approach involved
- Whether or not the experienced enhanced their learning
- The experience of using assessment rubrics
- The experience of giving and receiving feedback from peers
- The experience of grading peers
- Whether or not the peer feedback and assessment helped them and in what ways
- Whether or not they wanted to have peer learning and assessment activities in their courses next year
- What they used the iPods for if they received/had one
- What overall feedback they wanted to highlight about the peer assessment activities

The staff survey (See appendix 5) focused on:

- Previous experience of peer feedback and assessment
- Use of assessment rubrics
- How teachers implemented the assessment activity in their class
- Successful and unsuccessful aspects of the peer assessment activity
- Further improvements to the peer assessment process

Seventy-three students responded to the pre student survey representing a 36% response rate (N= 203; n=73). Of the 73 respondents, 31 were from Fashion, 21 were from Art and 10 were from Media (11 students did not name their school). Most respondents were female between the ages of 18 and 24 years old.

Forty-three students responded to the second online survey representing a 15% response rate (N= 203; n= 40). Of the 40 respondents, 22 were from Fashion, 6 were from Art and 9 were from Media (3 students did not name their school). All respondents to the post student survey were female. Most were aged between 18 and 24 years old. See Appendix 1 for detailed analysis by item.
3.2 Project outcomes

The project achieved all the outcomes it was designed to achieve and this section provides additional detail of the overview of project outcomes outlined in section two.

3.2.1 Outcome 1 Improved student cohort experiences (as evidenced by student feedback data)

Overall, the project gained insights into students’ expectations and perceptions of peer assessment in the Creative Arts disciplines as a student cohort and as individuals.

Students reported (See Appendix 1 for student data) that if a peer feedback process was carefully considered and planned and conducted in a positive and structured way, it benefited all involved.

“It's not too scary and is a part of what we need in our studies. [SS2 student comment]

“It was quite challenging to begin with but is a worthwhile opportunity. [SS2 student comment]

Two thirds (65%) agreed or strongly agreed that engaging in the peer assessment process created positive conditions for learning and expanded their professional networks (62.5%). Just over half (52.5%) agreed or strongly agreed that it helped them to work better in groups and improved their experience of the course (55.0%).

“We each listened and took in each of our opinions and came to a decision together [SS2 student comment]

A large proportion of students (70%) agreed or strongly agreed that participating in peer assessment helped them appreciate how well they were getting on, understand where they were going wrong (70%) and helped them clarify what they needed to do (69.2%). The overwhelming majority of staff (80%) strongly agreed that the peer assessment activity improved students’ experience of the course and created positive conditions for learning (83.3%).

“It has been a very useful and interesting exercise. I've learnt a lot and would happily do it again. I think it's particularly important in our course because we have to learn to receive feedback if we are putting ourselves out there as professional practitioners, and if we know something about how feedback should be given, we can then make an assessment of how it is provided to us, and how we might provide it to others in our field [S2 student comment]

In the post student survey, we asked about individual student learning perspectives from the peer assessment activities, just under two thirds (65%) of students agreed or strongly agreed that the peer assessment activities developed their confidence in giving feedback and sixty two percent (62.5%) of students agreed or strongly agreed that the activities had developed their ability to give constructive feedback. Over two thirds (67.5%) of students agreed or strongly agreed that the peer assessment activities motivated them to keep going and try harder. Sixty five percent (65%) agreed or strongly agreed that the peer assessment activities created positive conditions for learning.

Students also reported participating in peer assessment activity helped in more individually focused learning outcomes, such as understanding course content, intellectual skills, learning skills and subsequent projects. Just over half (57.5%) of the students agreed or strongly agreed that participating in peer assessment helped them to understand specific course content. Over half (59%) agreed or strongly agreed that the peer assessment activity helped them develop their...
intellectual skills such as problem solving skills; over half (53.8%) agreed or strongly agreed that it helped them develop learning skills such as reading and note taking and; over half (55%) of the student respondents agreed or strongly agreed that the peer assessment activity will help them with subsequent projects.

In comparing the pre and post student survey responses, the project team was presented with an interesting occurrence in the data. It seems that as student confidence in marking other students’ work increased, the desire for using peer assessment also increased ($\rho = .356$, $p = .028$). As student willingness to mark other students’ work increased, the desire for using peer assessment also increased ($\rho = .411$, $p = .013$). As student willingness to have their work marked by other students increased, the desire for using peer assessment also increased ($\rho = .459$, $p = .004$). The more positively peer feedback was received, the stronger the desire students had for using peer assessment again ($\rho = .353$, $p = .041$). Students who referred to the assessment rubric before or during completion of their project were more likely to want to use peer assessment in the future ($\rho = .370$, $p = .022$). The more students thought that the feedback from their group was useful, the more they wanted to use peer assessment in the future ($\rho = .309$, $p = .071$). The more effectively a student’s peer assessment group worked together, the more they wanted to use peer assessment in the future ($\rho = .281$, $p = .088$).

In terms of anticipation and design of the peer assessment activity, the project findings from student survey one show that students had relatively high expectations of how useful participating in peer feedback and assessment activities would be. Most of the students (80%) responded that past experiences of peer assessment were moderately positive to very positive.

You can learn new things [SS1 student comment]

I find it really helpful to get fresh and different opinions of my work... it helps me to consider things and approaches from a different angle [SS1 student comment]

Articulating why something 'works' or 'doesn't work' helps you see the strengths in your own work. Also it's good practice for real life situations where you have to phrase things in a way that is tangible. [SS1 student comment]

One of the issues highlighted in the student survey responses is the changing of the role of the student in student-centred learning, from passive receiver of knowledge to active co-creator or prod-user of knowledge (McWilliams & Haukka, 2008, p21). In response to the question we asked ‘if students would like to share any issues they had about giving peer feedback and assessing peers this semester’ (SS1, question 13), the themes students suggested were confidence issues about giving feedback, the role of student in ‘assessment in/as/with learning’ (Boud, 2010) as ‘objective’ in-practice skills and the assessment of peers as not being part of a student’s role.

I am slightly nervous because I think we are all (our class) in such different stages in our lives and in our work, I don't really understand how it (having work marked by the students) can be a clear indication of where the work is going. It is our teacher's job to objectively consider our work, where as we are not taught this. I am unsure of some of my classmates opinions and consideration I guess. Some of their opinions I value greatly, others none at all. [SS1 student comment]

Informal feedback in the form of workshopping is an extremely valuable and supportive experience for all concerned. Putting your work out there for others to critique is always a nerve wracking experience. I am not sure how qualified we as students are or should be expected to be in terms of the formal assessment process. [SS1 student comment]

In the post survey, these issues were further identified as assessment not being part of the role of a student with students stating they are not equipped to peer assess because of a lack of experience, knowledge and an assumed need for reciprocity.

Firstly, I don’t have an issue with giving feedback, it’s that it would be part of our official marks. There’s a reason I’m studying my course, it’s to learn, having not even completed my first year I’m hardly knowledgeable on different techniques and other things we were marked on. Secondly, I felt too guilty to mark my peers.
down even though I thought they didn’t meet the higher requirements for the higher level, especially when they had marked me with a high score and we are going to get our assessment sheets back. [S2 student comment]

I feel it is difficult I am not a teacher [S2 student comment]

These student attitudes to peer feedback and peer assessment are an insight into perceptions of practice-based learning in the Creative Arts where ‘technical expertise’ is not enough, practice and therefore, practice-based education, should include,

…a body of knowledge, a capacity to make judgment, a sensitivity to intuition [perception], and an awareness of the purposes of the action are all involved in some way.  
(Beckett & Hager, 2002 p12)

### 3.2.2 Outcome 2 Enhanced staff knowledge of adapting curriculum for supporting and integrating a peer learning process

Overall, based on an analysis of the staff feedback data presented below, participation in the project enhanced staff knowledge in adapting the curriculum to integrate peer feedback and assessment into their Creative Arts programs. Staff also suggested a number of aspects that they reported were most critical to the design and implementation of a successful peer assessment component of a Creative Arts course.

**Evidence from staff practice**

All of the nine staff (three in each program) who participated in the project engaged with the peer feedback and assessment approach and implemented it in some way in their program. In all three courses, assessment was amended to include a 10% weighting for the peer assessment component. This is a significant outcome as assessment is a key sticking point in curriculum change processes and how assessment for student-centred learning capacities and applications are adopted (de la Harpe, David, Dalton & Thomas, 2009). Assessment is one of the litmus tests for changing academic staff beliefs and values when designing and implementing curriculum activities (de la Harpe, Radloff, Dalton, Thomas & Lawson, 2008).

**Evidence from staff feedback data**

An online staff survey comprising 26 questions was administered to teaching staff in the project exploring the implementation of the peer learning approach in the Associate Degree of Fashion Design and Technology, Associate Degree of Professional Writing and Editing and Diploma of Visual Art. The staff survey (see Appendix 5) was administered in week 16 of semester two. Questions focused on:

- Experience, confidence and willingness to undertake peer feedback and assessment (Q1-3)
- Details of the assessment task and model (Q4-6)
- Suggested improvements (Q7)
- Assessment rubrics (Q8-14)
- Feedback on the peer assessment approach (Q15-20)
- Demographics (Q21-26)
Seven of the 9 teachers responded to the survey, representing a 77.7% response rate. Prior experience of peer assessment was measured with staff responding to ‘if they had ever used peer assessment in their teaching practice’ (Q1). Five respondents gave instances of where they had, including as feedback (2 references), in High School teaching practice (1 reference), as a part of a teacher professional development exercise (1 reference) and as a part of group work (1 reference).

Yes, as critique sessions, without a rubric. Students are often asked to critique the work of their peers in these feedback sessions. [Teacher comment]

I have used it in a minor way when I was a secondary teacher. While students in our (name withheld) course often assess each other’s work and give feedback, this was the first time they have formally given a mark to the work. [Teacher comment]

I have been involved with peer assessment at my previous school. Each staff member was reviewed by another staff member in the classroom situation. Follow up interviews then occurred to inform each staff member about any areas that were of concern and recommendations were made as to how certain elements of their teaching could be improved. Professional development in specific areas was then offered to the staff member. It was also recommended that staff observe other teaching areas than their own to assist with their delivery of lessons and structure in the classroom. Most staff reported in their evaluations that the process of peer assessment was extremely valuable. [Teacher comment]

With some assessment where a substantial part of the work is completed in groups (E.G. Project Management) I allocate 20% of the result to Peer Assessment and individual Reflection. This helps to overcome the issue of group members, who don’t do their share, getting the group mark. [Teacher comment]

Teachers suggested that the ‘successful aspects of including peer assessment’ in their courses (question 15) were realised as student engagement increased with the assessment criteria (5 references), with students working together (5 references), gains in students’ self-confidence appeared, learning and assessment skills were developed (3 references) and the alignment and comparison of teacher and student marking (2 references) was apparent.

The students actually enjoyed the process of working with their peers and listening to other students’ points of view about the work requirements. [Teacher comment]

Gives student’s analytical skills, which they can use to self-assess. [Teacher comment]

When asked ‘what do you think the ‘3 most unsuccessful aspects of including peer assessment’ (question 16), teachers responded with four references to time and logistics and two references to lack of a practice run.

Time consuming - took time out of classes over a two week period. [Teacher comment]

Logistics of organising the process. [Teacher comment]

Being the first time, there were small problems. [Teacher comment]

Students not having a practice run first. [Teacher comment]

In addition, one staff member noted no unsuccessful aspects of including peer assessment in their course;

The group that I had were generally very positive and supportive of the process. They actually commented about their enjoyment of the process and my delivery of the expectations of them for their fellow students. [Teacher comment]

When considering aspects critical to the design and implementation of peer assessment, six respondents suggested how the design and implementation of peer assessment in their course could be improved (Question 18). These included three comments about peer assessment being...
more frequently and widely used, two comments were about the need for careful development of the rubrics and implementation for peer assessment, one comment was on the need for appropriate project selection for peer assessment, one comment was about the need for the development of an overall assessment package for students to reference outside of class time, and one comment related to staff being aligned to the concept of peer assessment. One academic staff respondent considered formal feedback rather than marking to be more appropriate for their course.

Having all staff involved aligned to the concept of peer assessment. Preparation and experience of staff- having done it once, I would make adjustments to my preparation and the rubric design. [Teacher comment]

Make sure the rubric is well constructed and clearly explained and discussed with students. [Teacher comment]

All information is available to each student in a package for them to read about outside of class. The students are then more understanding of the process and less of their production work time is taken to instruct them about the process. [Teacher comment]

Students also responded in what they thought was required for successful peer learning and assessment activities to occur in their courses/program. Twenty-one students replied. Themes arose, such as the need for students to perform the activities honestly and to recognise biases, the need for explicit guidelines for peer assessment and useful comments and advice for implementing the process of peer feedback and assessment activities in their courses.

I think it’s important to be able to consult the rubric before you start your projects and also for peer assessment to be a regularly, bi-weekly thing. [S2 student comment]

Preparation (overview and specific advice about how to do it), then a reminder/refresher before the event. [S2 student comment]

Practice at progressive levels. It would have been useful to (show examples) of varying quality and assess these according to the rubric before doing so live. [S2 student comment]

I think the amount of workshopping we do in our course already means that we’re all comfortable giving and receiving feedback. Building a comfortable and open environment for the students where feedback is always passed around makes it easier to do it ‘officially’ when an opportunity like this presents itself. [S2 student comment]

Academic staff gave general feedback on the project and on peer assessment (question 19). These four responses include a range of feedback themes that encompassed process, engagement issues, being impressed by students, students being more in touch with the assessment completed by their peers than their teacher, and the relationship between professional practice in education with peer assessment and feedback;

Some of the students asked if the process could be completed for each [outcome] completed in their course. [Teacher comment]

Some students worked harder than others with more feedback while others were disinterested and bored [Teacher comment]

Despite a few hiccups initially, students really valued the experience and felt empowered. I was impressed by how earnestly and honestly they undertook the process. [Teacher comment]

I think the students were more in touch with their peer result than the result their teacher gives them. [Teacher comment]

Just to reiterate that peer assessment (without marks) is an integral part of the teaching and learning in many of our courses, given that ours is a [professional practice context]. I’m still to reconcile the awarding of marks with how feedback is
given in our industry, but I'm open to investigating this further and to having support to see how this can work in a cohesive manner. [Teacher comment]

Staff were asked how they thought they could improve the process of introducing peer assessment next time (question 7). Seven respondents suggested a number of improvements. These responses included references to more practice and preparation (4 references), more consideration of how peer assessment is introduced (2 references), and one reference suggested more thought was needed in how peer assessment fits into course.

First time is always the hardest. Give the students more preparation with class activities prior to actual assessment. [Teacher comment]

The introduction was difficult to deliver as all students were not present when the introductory information was provided. Students arrive at class at different times and this causes a problem with all students having the same information. Even when [researcher] was delivering her information to the students some students were talking and obviously did not gather all that was said at that time. An improvement is required with this aspect. [Teacher comment]

It worked well.Introduced by [researcher] with opportunities for queries. Rubric distributed and discussed in class after [researcher] left. Students thought about it and it was discussed in class the following week. Initially they were not enthusiastic but were quite positive on the day. As [discipline] students they are used to workshopping each other's work. [Teacher comment]

It would be worthwhile rethinking the whole process. It was challenging to implement this project while developing the course from scratch. It was also challenging to think about peer assessment in the context of giving marks, compared with the peer 'assessment' we normally do in workshopping, which mirrors professional practice (with no grading attached). Perhaps students could have workshop groups for the whole semester. Perhaps they could collaborate online. Students were assessing (an assessment) and it would be good if they had (more) time to (understand) the peer assessment and give (comprehensive) feedback. All needs careful thought. [Teacher comment]

The findings above suggest that the changes teachers made to their courses were mainly positive for students however also highlighted some of the challenges when implementing curriculum changes. More than half the students in both Art (66.7%) and Media (55.6%) wanted to have the opportunity to use peer assessment in their programs in 2013, however in Fashion less than half (40.9%) wanted this opportunity.

Overall, in the 3 programs, the students were split evenly about the opportunity to use peer assessment in their programs in 2013. While all staff said they would include peer assessment in their program next year, they suggested a number of design changes and improvements that they wanted to make.

These suggestions included introducing peer assessment and related concepts earlier (for those who did not do it already as part of their course), closely aligning the peer assessment to an appropriate area of the curriculum (that students are competent to assess) and giving students a better understanding of the utility of the assessment rubric. Interestingly, a number of these suggestions were discussed with teachers at the start of the year when choosing the most appropriate course to embed peer assessment into, what activity to use peer assessment with and what method would be most appropriate to the course curriculum and resources available.

At some point in the process, either at the start or end of the year, all teachers experienced some form of anxiety due to the changes brought about by using the peer assessment approach. Either staff were not comfortable with students grading each other, felt it was their role to assess and not the students or responded to the anxiety some students held about doing peer assessment (as seen in outcome 1). As happens, introducing change in two courses (which were brand new) and undertaking new teaching practices put a lot of pressure on staff and was also combined with changes to key staff members during Semester 2.
Peer assessment is inherently a student-centred activity that can be used in education to support this paradigm shift as we have discussed. However for it to be successful, teachers need to be supported in terms of professional development, time, course guide development, confidence and willingness to undertake peer feedback and assessment and all that it entails.

3.2.3 Outcome 3 An integrated peer learning model with accompanying student self-directed online module

Project Impact
The integrated peer learning model developed in the previous iteration of this project, Contribute: Peer learning for inclusive practice in Art and Design 2011, was successfully adapted and expanded in this project. Adaptations included the design, development and trialing of discipline specific rubrics for 3 programs (at Diploma and Associate Degree level) delivered in TAFE. In addition, the suite of online support tools to help implement and support peer learning and assessment into creative arts teaching and learning practices for both staff and students, was further refined and offered to staff and students in the study. The support tools were linked to myRMIT studies and the link was also emailed to staff and students.

The LEAD handbook for students to develop leadership and facilitation skills for peer study groups in Contribute: Peer learning for inclusive practice in Art and Design was further refined, and the Peer Assessment LEAD workshop program was offered to students. In addition, concurrent support workshops for students on peer feedback and assessment skills, including using their assessment rubric, were offered but unfortunately, due to timing, uptake was minimal, with only three students utilising this opportunity. The feedback about the peer assessment approach from these students was extremely positive.

Involves the students in the assessment process [Teacher comment]

Students gained an appreciation of the many aspects of their work that are taken into consideration with the marking of their work…. [Teacher comment]

Encourages students to take a very specific interest in all aspects of the assessment process [Teacher comment]

Both students and academic staff saw the need to scaffold the peer feedback and peer assessment activities. A range of improvements to this iteration of the project (2012) was suggested, including ongoing practice and further integration into course activities. Both academic staff and students suggested further development of the assessment rubrics would also improve peer feedback and peer assessment in the Creative Arts. In addition, there is current College of DSC Learning and Teaching work being undertaken in the development of assessment rubrics for Unit of Competencies.

1 The integrated peer learning model, with accompanying student, self-directed, online peer learning website was further developed (See Appendix 6, http://emedia.rmit.edu/studio-study-groups/).

2 The use of concurrent support workshops such as the Academic Study Group Facilitation Program were offered. These were developed for peer-to-peer learning support with LEAD recognition (a formalisation of student volunteering listed on testamurs). Resources for developing this program are included the appendices (See Appendix 7). Due to aspects of timing and logistics this was not enacted in this iteration of the project.
In terms of providing support to adapt the peer learning approach to include peer assessment activities, the three programs trialled a similar method. The peer assessment activity was set up as follows:

1. Peer assessment activities were held in small groups of 4-5 students
2. Groups had to peer assess 4-5 outcomes/artifacts (1 from each student in group, or randomly assigned from course) using an assessment rubric with comments/feedback
3. Assessment rubrics were completed for each student, as agreed by the group
4. Staff then assessed students’ work and incorporated the peer assessment (10%) into their overall marking. Staff also moderated their own staff mediated rubric with the peer rubric.

The peer assessment approach used by the 3 programs had various responses from the student and teacher cohorts.

Staff introduced the peer assessment rubric to students, which they developed specifically for this assessment. The project looked at the introduction and use of these rubrics. The utility of a good assessment rubric is that it explicitly states performance expectations. Therefore, to refer to a rubric in the development of students’ responses to a peer assessment adds to making the assessment criteria explicit. In response to ‘when was the final version of the rubric available’ (question 3), over half (55.6%) of Media students and just under a third (31.8%) of Fashion students were aware of the rubric’s existence before they started working on the assessment, while Art students were not introduced to their rubric until a week before conducting the peer assessments.

When asked in the post student survey (question 4) if students ‘referred to the assessment rubric before or during the completion of their project or not’, most (88.9%) Media students, half (50%) of the Art students, and less than half (40.9%) of Fashion students agreed that they had referred the rubric before or during their project. Most students (92.3%) stated that their teacher gave them instructions on how to communicate effectively in teams. Most students (89.8%) thought that their peer assessment group worked moderately to extremely effectively together (question 6), with students also adding comments about the complexity of the task, how they shared opinions about the assessment task and how they listened, took turns, agreed to come to decisions together.

Some respondents (4) also suggested that their peer assessment group work was not effective in terms of engagement of all students involved in the activity. This again highlights the importance of student perception of the peer assessment as a way to develop skills that are directly related to industry skills, and personal skills such as communication, responsibility to others and confidence in performing tasks of assessment (de la Harpe, McPherson & Mason, 2012).

In investigating the differences between courses in the implementation of the peer assessment activities and how the sessions ran, a series of chi-square tests were computed. Significant or marginally-significant differences emerged where Fashion students reported giving more detailed written feedback than students in other schools, but Fashion students also reported having less opportunity to give feedback in person ($\chi^2(2, N = 37) = 4.81, p = .090$). This was because these Fashion students did not get the opportunity to give their feedback in person due to time constraints.

To test for differences between schools in the extent to which students ‘refer[red] to the assessment rubric before or during the completion of [their] project’, a Fisher’s exact test was used. Results revealed a marginally significant difference between schools, with most (88.9%) of Media students reporting that they referred to the rubric, while only half (50.0%) of Art students and less than half (40.9%) of Fashion students reporting that they referred to the rubric before or during completion of their project, $\chi^2(N = 37) = 6.00, p = .054$). Media students were more likely to refer to the rubric before or during completion of their project than Art or Fashion students. This may be because a variety of variables including that Media students were familiar with giving peer feedback as part of their course curriculum, as stated in both student and teachers comments, and the rubric was available to them.
To test for differences between programs in the extent to which students reported receiving instructions from their teacher on how to work in teams and peer assess, two Fisher’s exact tests were used. In sum, there were no significant differences between schools in the reported incidence of receiving instructions from teachers on how to work in teams or peer assess with $\chi^2(N = 37) < 1$.

To test for differences between schools in the extent to which students reported establishing rules in their peer groups before assessing other’s work, a Fisher’s exact test was computed. Results revealed significant differences between schools, $\chi^2(N = 37) = 7.20, p = .016)$. Just over half (55.6%) of Media students reported establishing their own rules, while less than a fifth (16.7%) of Art and less than a tenth (9.1%) of Fashion students reported establishing rules. These variables may be because of prior experiences of peer feedback and possibly the age differences of the three cohorts.

There were also no significant differences between programs to do with how students captured feedback during the assessment activity, in confidence and willingness or the extent to which programs wanted to use peer assessment in 2013. It was found though, that older students tended to refer to the rubric more than younger students and established more rules before assessing their peer’s work.

In sum, wanting to do peer assessment in the future was positively correlated with most of the measures of perceived utility like helped me to develop my intellectual skills (e.g. problem solving) $p=.453, p=.004$, will help me with subsequent project(s) $p=.475, p=.017$, and created positive conditions for learning $p=.538, p<0.001$.

In response to the question (9) in the student post survey, ‘did you find it easy or challenging to use the assessment rubric’, almost two thirds of students (61.5%) suggested that they found it somewhat easy to very easy. Eleven respondents commented to this question, with ten references to it being challenging, for example;

It's sometimes difficult to distinguish between 'Excellent work' and 'Very good work', for example. The more specific criteria only made it more difficult to distinguish, so we ended up going with a more 'gut feeling' and 'could they have improved, and if so by how much?' sort of approach and awarding a mark based on that assessment. [S2 student comment]

Its hard to grade sometimes when the [outcome] has different outcomes across the rubric. [S2 student comment]

Assessing across so many domains presented a challenge - especially as we were responding to [outcome], and did not have a [outcome]. This meant we had to do our assessments quickly. When the [outcome] was really good, it was straightforward, when it didn't go quite so well it was difficult, at times, to take notes and make a judgement about where (on the rubric) a fair and accurate assessment would be. [S2 student comment]

One student also responded that;

Parts of it didn't make sense and the same requirements were needed on different levels making it hard to differentiate what level of achievement the person was at. [S2 student comment]

This pinpoints issues with how the rubrics expressed the varying levels of the assessed outcomes; the clarity of the language used in explicitly describing for example, what was ‘excellent’ work and what was ‘very good’ work and; and the difficulty for some students in making judgements. The proposition inherent in rubrics and peer assessment is that they can be used for ongoing process of development, usage, moderation and validation. Each time a rubric is used additional feedback from the peer assessors may improve clarity and the assessment process.

In terms of staff responses, almost all staff ($n=6$) stated that they had used assessment rubrics previously to the LTIF project (question 8), five staff had used peer assessment in their teaching practice (question1), six staff were moderately confident to very confident about the success of the peer feedback and assessment activity at the start of the semester (question 2).
Staff responded that they were *moderately, very and extremely willing* to use peer assessment with one staff member *not at all willing* (Q3). All staff were involved in the development of the rubrics as members of discipline teams (question 9). In the development of the discipline rubrics, four people used an example to start their rubrics, one person did self directed research and six staff members developed the rubric alongside the assessment task.

We also asked if the academic staff found the process of developing their rubrics rewarding (3 references) or arduous (1 reference) (question10). All seven teachers introduced students to peer assessment in class. Four teachers used activities to introduce the concept of peer assessment in class and two teachers repeated activities over classes (Q4). Teachers (50%) somewhat agreed and strongly agreed that students found the rubric easy to use (question 11) and over half (60%) did not think it was challenging for students to understand and use the rubrics effectively. How the students used the rubrics to write comments for their peers also varied in each class. Over half (57.1%) agreed generally that students gave written and/or face to face feedback, just over a quarter (28.6%) responded that only some students wrote comments and in one staff reference (14.3%) stated that students didn’t have the opportunity to give verbal feedback.

Teachers suggested issues and improvements in the process of introducing peer assessment to students. One staff member commented that more thought was needed in terms of how peer assessment fits into the course and two staff members commented that there were issues around how peer assessment was introduced to the students (question 7). Four teachers commented that more practice was required;

> First time is always the hardest. Give the students more preparation with class activities prior to actual assessment. [Teacher comment]

> A practice run with a simpler task and a class discussion followed as soon as possible [Teacher comment]

> I would prepare students more thoroughly, with a series of smaller progressive exercises. [Teacher comment]

Teachers also gave the project feedback from students prior to (33.3%), and after (66.6%) the peer assessment (question 14). All staff responded that students raised issues or made comments to them about the assessment rubrics and/or the peer assessment process. Teachers commented that through the peer assessment students had a better understanding about the assessment itself (2 references); students felt reassured when receiving feedback as part of the peer assessment activity (2 references); that students thought the activity was too late in the semester (2 references); a practice run was needed (1 reference); that students had difficulties in making judgements between grades (1 reference) and; extra training (outside of class time) would have been too demanding on students time (1 reference).

Most teachers (85.8%) stated that the use of assessment rubrics is an effective way to facilitate peer-assessment.

### 3.2.4 Outcome 4 Advice on appropriate mobile technologies to support an integrated peer learning model in Creative Arts programs delivered in TAFE

**Project Impact**

In terms of the use of mobile technologies, the project revealed that a simple device (for example mobile phone, an iPod touch, iPad mini or a tablet) that enables connectivity to the internet is all that is required. Additionally, the stronger the alignment with existing devices such as mobile...
phones that can be used ‘in the moment’ in studio, the greater the uptake of technology. Expecting
students to make a special trip to the library to connect to the web may not encourage the use of
technology in studio. Many students at RMIT have access to a mobile device or laptop which can
connect to the internet in class through wireless technology (Bender, 2012).

A scholarship to provide an iPod touch mobile device for students who met the low-income criteria
and did not already have access to their own mobile device was implemented through Student
Services. Of the 35 students who applied 14 were awarded a scholarship.

Overall, strong alignment with existing discipline practices, familiarity with online tools, a user
friendly system, an appropriate workload, and teacher encouragement and support were the most
important factors in enhancing technology use in the studio.

Research while in class and references. It also keeps me up to date with student
emails. [S2 Student comment]

[I] take photos of exercise that I needed to do…[S2 Student comment]

3.2.5 Outcome 5 Presentations on integrated peer learning and scalability of
model for adoption in other areas

A number of presentations on integrating peer learning and the model have been made or are in
progress.

Project Impact

04/04/2012
Design TAFE workshop (which incorporated assessment rubrics) at RMIT’s Brunswick campus for
5 teaching staff (Project Manager, Rebekha Naim)

17/07/2012
Media and Communication School held ‘Teachers at Work’ lunchtime sessions for RMIT academic
staff on teaching and learning and Project Manager, Rebekha Naim, presented on the peer
feedback and assessment approach used in ‘Contribute 2’ and the use of assessment rubrics by
students in this process, in Creative Arts courses at RMIT, which 5 people attended. (Project
Manager, Rebekha Naim)

28/11/2012
Media and Communication TAFE workshop (which incorporated online learning) at RMIT’s City
campus for approximately 60 staff (Project Manager, Rebekha Naim)

All three sessions received good feedback from teaching staff and program managers.

21/03/2012
24/05/2012
Two posts on the theteachingtomtom.wordpress.com This is a blog by the RMIT College of Design
and Social Context Learning and Teaching team and is a source of professional development
information for teaching staff.
http://theteachingtomtom.wordpress.com/2012/03/21/peer-learning-and-study-groups/
http://theteachingtomtom.wordpress.com/2012/05/24/the-missing-element-to-group-work-peer-
assessment/

06/02/2013
School of Media and Communication Learning and Teaching Forum. (Participation in a plenary
panel on studio pedagogies) (Project Co-Leader, Megan McPherson)

05/02/13
PD presentation
3.2.6 Outcome 6 A number of scholarship of learning teaching (SoTL) papers for publication that document practice and experiences


A number of academic journal publications are in development.

Key research questions addressed

1. **What are students' expectations of peer learning and are they transformed (or not) through involvement in a peer-learning program?**

Students’ prior expectations about how useful peer learning would be were higher than their ratings of how peer feedback and assessment was actually experienced.

As stated above in Outcome One, confidence in marking other student’s work increased significantly, and confidence in all of the other areas that were measured also increased, but these increases were not statistically significant. As confidence in marking other students’ work increased, the desire for using peer assessment also increased. As willingness to mark other students’ work increased, the desire for using peer assessment also increased. As student willingness to have their work marked by other students increased, the desire for using peer assessment also increased.

The more positively peer feedback was received, the stronger the desire students had for using peer assessment again. Students who referred to the assessment rubric before or during completion of their project were more likely to want to use peer assessment in the future. The more students thought that the feedback from their group was useful, the more they wanted to use peer assessment in the future. The more effectively a student’s peer assessment group worked together, the more they wanted to use peer assessment in the future. Finally, willingness to engage in each of the tasks necessary for peer feedback and assessment did not significantly change between the pre and post student surveys.

2. **What expectations do students have of online peer learning opportunities and how do they use online peer learning opportunities if available?**

The peer feedback and assessment approach in this iteration of the project used face-to-face studio-based activities, as the courses had little or no existing online learning and teaching practice. Last year in the Contribute: Peer learning for inclusive practice in Art and Design project, we found online peer learning opportunities was a difficult hurdle to overcome for both students and teachers in some discipline areas, as the lack of online peer learning opportunities demonstrates disciplinary affordances and beliefs. Developing studio pedagogies with online peer learning experiences in the creative arts disciplines is important and necessary, however for staff undertaking peer assessment activities involving peer-to-peer student grading for the first time in
their programs, to find the most appropriate peer assessment opportunities for each course was evaluated to be paramount.

3. **What are the conditions required for successful implementation of peer learning strategies from both staff and student perspectives?**

Teachers and students who undertook the peer feedback and assessment approach in 2012 for this project found the experience either positive for a range of reasons, or in a few cases, negative for a range of reasons. As the project was focused on peer assessment, there were no formal opportunities given to students to work independently in peer learning groups away from their formal learning environment during the year.

Teachers (100%) were interested in implementing the approach in 2013 by incorporating peer learning strategies and experiences during the breadth of the year. Combined with *Contribute: Peer learning for inclusive practice in Art and Design* findings, it is now clear that both a teaching and learning environment embedding peer learning and feedback in and outside of class experience and course curricula alongside peer feedback and assessment is beneficial for many students and teachers in the creative arts.

### 3.3 A brief description of any issues preventing achievement of all the outcomes stated in the application

All stated project outcomes were achieved. Significant learning has been made in this project that is being used to enhance current peer learning approaches and to inform the design and implementation of future peer learning initiatives.

### 3.4 A brief description of any disciplinary and interdisciplinary linkages that emerged as a result of the project

The LTIF project *Contribute: Peer learning for inclusive practice in Art and Design* from 2011 was extended from a peer learning approach to develop its outcomes further into peer feedback and assessment with *Contribute 2: Broadening peer learning for inclusive practice into Creative Arts Diploma and Associate Degree programs in TAFE* project in 2012.

Links were made with three Design and Social Context TAFE Schools through the implementation of the *Contribute 2: Broadening peer learning for inclusive practice into Creative Arts Diploma and Associate Degree programs in TAFE* project. The peer feedback and assessment approach was adopted and adapted successfully into 2 new Associate Degree programs; the Associate Degree in Fashion Design and Technology in the School of Fashion and Technology; and the Associate Degree in Professional Writing and Editing in the School of Media and Communication; as well as the Diploma of Visual Art in the School of Art.

The *Contribute 2: Broadening peer learning for inclusive practice into Creative Arts Diploma and Associate Degree programs in TAFE* project has developed linkages with RMIT University Student Services through the support of the iPod scholarships and with the Learning and Teaching Unit and eduTAG in the development the Studio Study Groups website.
The **Contribute 2: Broadening peer learning for inclusive practice into Creative Arts Diploma and Associate Degree programs in TAFE** project has developed international links with QArts London thought email discussions between Megan McPherson and Sarah Rowles, QArts London Director.

## 4 Dissemination strategies and outputs

An active dissemination strategy has been put into place for **Contribute 2: Broadening peer learning for inclusive practice into Creative Arts Diploma and Associate Degree programs in TAFE**. Resources and reports are available online. Theses resources are also available through the DSC College Learning and Teaching Senior Advisors. Peer reviewed articles and chapters will be lodged in the university Research Repository (within copyright restrictions).

### Outputs developed and available include:

- **A Student Peer Learning Website**. The project has developed a suite of support tools for students to implement peer learning into the studio-teaching model, [http://emedia.rmit.edu.au/studio-study-groups/](http://emedia.rmit.edu.au/studio-study-groups/)

- **A LEAD Peer Learning Handbook** for students has been developed to support student in the development of leadership and facilitation skills when working in peer learning study groups in conjunction with resources for academic staff taking on the LEAD champion roles.

### Dissemination activities include:

The **Contribute 2** peer assessment approach and assessment rubrics was presented a number RMIT Learning and Teaching workshops and forums:

- **4/4/12 PD presentation**
  Design TAFE mid-year academic staff PD workshop at RMIT’s Brunswick campus (Naim)

- **22/5/2012 International conference paper and presentation**
  ag Ideas Design for Business and Industry. (delaHarpe and McPherson)

- **17/7/12 PD presentation**
  Media and Communication School ‘Teachers at Work’ PD lunchtime session to RMIT academic staff (Naim)

- **28/11/12 PD presentation**
  Media and Communication School TAFE workshop (which incorporated online learning) at RMIT’s City campus (Naim)

- **21/03/2012 Blog post**
  [http://theteachingtomtom.wordpress.com/2012/03/21/peer-learning-and-study-groups/](http://theteachingtomtom.wordpress.com/2012/03/21/peer-learning-and-study-groups/) (Naim)

- **24/05/2012 Blog post**
  [http://theteachingtomtom.wordpress.com/2012/05/24/the-missing-element-to-group-work-peer-assessment/](http://theteachingtomtom.wordpress.com/2012/05/24/the-missing-element-to-group-work-peer-assessment/) (Naim)

- **05/02/13 PD presentation**
  **School of Media and Communication, Learning and Teaching Forum TAFE** (incorporating rubrics) (Naim)

- **06/02/2013 Forum Plenary Panel**
  **School of Media and Communication Learning and Teaching Forum plenary panel on studio pedagogies.** (McPherson)
Audit against the planned dissemination activities outlined in LTIF proposal

In the matrix planned dissemination activities showing that all were achieved.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Information provision</th>
<th>In progress</th>
<th>Achieved</th>
<th>Comments</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>LTIF presentations, including the RMIT L&amp;T Expo</td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
<td>Presentation planned for the next Expo, if appropriate</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A* rated journals and the ATN Assessment Conference</td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
<td>Planned journal submissions in the coming year</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Provision of materials on the web for adaptation across RMIT schools and more widely</td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
<td>Adaption to develop a Creative Arts Student Peer Learning website that is embeddable into Blackboard course shells as an RMIT e-media site has taken place.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In the matrix below dissemination activities showing that all were in progress and or achieved.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Engaged dissemination methods</th>
<th>In progress</th>
<th>Achieved</th>
<th>Comments</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Ongoing meetings with the leadership team and stakeholders</td>
<td></td>
<td>X</td>
<td>Regular project team meetings with school based project staff were held as required. The leadership team met monthly.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Participatory design of peer learning model with program teams and support to adapt and contextualise for different disciplines</td>
<td></td>
<td>X</td>
<td>Program teams were involved in developing, adapting and contextualising their discipline specific rubrics with participation and support of the project.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Conscious use of ADRI action cycle (Approach, Deploy, Reflect, Improve)</td>
<td></td>
<td>X</td>
<td>ADRI action cycle employed</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Engagement of students in a first semester class to enhance involvement in the project</td>
<td></td>
<td>X</td>
<td>By focusing on peer assessment, the timing of the intervention was pushed into semester 2, 2012. Briefings (11 course groups) were held on City and Brunswick and all students had peer feedback workshops either formally or informally as part of their course.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Linking with RMIT LEAD program for embedded and ongoing student recognition</td>
<td></td>
<td>X</td>
<td>Negotiations with Student Services for the RMIT LEAD Peer facilitation program were undertaken. The administration formalities for</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
the peer to peer program were developed and adapted for the 2012 iteration of the project. The student handbook was also adapted.

The development of resources for a staff professional development workshop on peer learning through the RMIT Open Program has been adapted as an online resource for a wider audience. Resources such as the final reports and the student website will be available online and through DSC L&T Senior Advisors.

5 Evaluation of project outcomes

In line with the ALTC evaluation project guidelines, the project evaluation has specifically addressed 5 important areas as follows:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Areas of evaluation</th>
<th>Project evaluation:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Proactive</td>
<td>The environment in which the project took place was thoroughly scoped. Students were administered a survey at pre and post intervals to measure prior and intervention activity experiences.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Clarify</td>
<td>The project objectives were logically connected and aligned with outcomes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Interactive</td>
<td>Data was obtained from participants to establish if the design of the project was working well or needed to be changed, at numerous points in the project. This was acted upon to modify the project approach in a collaborative and inclusive way.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Monitor</td>
<td>The project progress was monitored regularly, and issues, such as timing of activities, student and teacher concerns were responded to in a thoughtful and collaborative manner.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Impact</td>
<td>The project outcomes and deliverables were measured to ascertain if the objectives were achieved and whether any modifications are recommended for the future</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Key Evaluation Questions

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Key evaluation questions</th>
<th>Project Team</th>
<th>Lecturers</th>
<th>Students</th>
<th>Comments</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Regular</td>
<td>Professional</td>
<td>Two surveys</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In row 1: The peer to peer program were developed and adapted for the 2012 iteration of the project. The student handbook was also adapted. The development of resources for a staff professional development workshop on peer learning through the RMIT Open Program has been adapted as an online resource for a wider audience. Resources such as the final reports and the student website will be available online and through DSC L&T Senior Advisors.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Source of information</th>
<th>project meetings</th>
<th>development for teaching staff</th>
<th>were undertaken to evaluate the project activities</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### To what extent were the intended outcomes achieved?

- X
- X
- X

All the project’s intended outcomes have been successfully achieved, as detailed in project outcomes above.

### Were there any unintended outcomes?

No unintended outcomes occurred.

The constraints due to the timing of the peer assessment activities and also existing practices in the use of peer feedback informed the teaching and learning practices of developing peer feedback and peer assessment in these courses.

### What factors helped and hindered in the achievement of the outcomes?

Strong project management and collaborative partnerships supported the project in achieving successful outcomes. The review and feedback received also led to a better understanding of the contextual nature of peer feedback and peer assessment and as such will assist in the adaptation and further extension of peer learning, peer feedback and peer assessment practices to other disciplines.

### What measures have been put in place to promote sustainability of the project's focus and outcomes?

All teachers have expressed interest in continuing to use rubrics and to extend their use into other courses. Course guides and materials have been adapted to include peer learning and peer assessment activities and these will continue to be used in 2013. Project resources are accessible online and via DSC L&T Senior Advisors.
How might the project be improved?

To improve the project, the recognition of the value of peer feedback and assessment activities as a normal part of student learning at university is integral. The conceptual shift required to move from teacher-directed to student-led learning that underpins this project needs to be actively discussed and explicitly defined for both learners and teachers. This is challenging, however with more instances of peer learning, peer feedback and peer assessment; the provision of exemplars and; peer learning champions, this will eventuate.

What lessons have been learned from this project and how might these be of assistance to other institutions?

The development of peer learning processes and materials in Contribute 1 and peer feedback and peer assessment approaches in Contribute 2 have developed a strong model, resources and accompanying research. These will be continued to be disseminated via online materials, conference presentations and journal articles (in process).

6 Budget report

The amount of funds approved was $70,000 (from an original budget of ($120,931). The amount of funds acquitted was $69,917.59. The final financial statement is attached.

A single page financial statement of acquittal of funds is included with the report (Appendix 8). It includes a statement of income and expenditure against the budget categories specified in the approved project proposal.

7 Signature page
References


Ramsden, P., Prosser, M., Trigwell., K., & Martin, E. (2007). Learning and Instruction: University teachers’ experiences of academic leadership and their approaches to teaching. *Learning and Instruction*, (17)2, 140-155. Available at: http://dx.doi.org/10.1016/j.learninstruc.2007.01.00


**Appendices**

Appendix 1- Results: Contribute 2 Data and Analysis
Appendix 2- Brochure: Peer feedback and peer assessment
Appendix 3- Survey Tool: C2 Pre Student Survey
Appendix 4- Survey Tool: C2 Post Student Survey
Appendix 5- Survey Tool: C2 Staff Survey
Appendix 6- Website: Peer learning
Appendix 7- LEAD Resources: Champion Teacher Information
Appendix 8- Finance report: Contribute 2