First things First: Transition and Transformation of the student cohort experience, in the creative disciplines.

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School of Media and Communication/Design and Social Context College

12 February 2014

Strategic objectives addressed:

- enhancing the student cohort experience for the creative students
- implementing AQF and TEQSA requirements through the embedding of literacies, competencies, knowledge and skills to the Frameworks.

Internal order number: 360384

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1 Executive summary

This project aims to address the challenges faced by students from creative disciplines struggling to transition into their higher education programs by helping teaching staff to design curriculum that would enable students to transition and transform their learning experience. The project team has worked on developing a cohort-level outcome that enables a collaborative and cohesive teaching staff experience, where teaching staff considered the entirety of the student learning experience as opposed to disparate course-level experiences.

The project looked to address two fundamental questions facing first-year students, and teaching staff designing curriculum for students;

- what does it mean to be a life-long learner; and
- what does it mean to be a practitioner of their creative discipline.

To that end, the project team has developed a Transition and Transformation Framework. The framework has been created to enable teaching staff to design curriculum that will address those two fundamental questions. The framework guides course coordinators plan for transition, and transformation. They build student literacies, competencies, knowledge and skill by embedding suitable activities into the curriculum they are designing. Importantly, the focus is on cohort-level staff working together to create a singular transition and transformation experience for the student.

The framework is targeted at course-coordinators and other teaching staff developing a cohort-level curriculum in collaborative and cohesive curriculum development experience, where teaching staff consider the entirety of the student learning experience instead of disparate course-level experiences. This framework enables teaching staff to design curriculum that enables students to transition and transform their learning experience and as such, address the challenges faced by students from creative disciplines struggling to transition into their higher education programs. The framework will be piloted in 2014 with three programs undertaking a renewal and developing new courses as part of the School of Media and Communications MC2015 project.

2 Outcomes

University-wide outcomes

- Transition and transformation framework
  - Course life cycle - sentence explaining what this is
  - Planning - sentence explaining what this is
  - Design - sentence explaining what this is
  - Delivery - sentence explaining what this is
  - Review and evaluate - sentence explaining what this is

- Case studies of two courses in the development and use of framework
  - Semester 1 – GRAP2199 Communication Design History and Theory A
  - Semester 2 – GRAP2200 Communication Design History and Theory B

- Dissemination presentation at the School of Media and Communication’s Learning and Teaching Forum in February 2014

- Three facilitation workshops with teaching staff from programs in the School of Media and Communication
• More dissemination presentations with facilitation workshops in discussion with other schools

• A practice paper is being drafted for submission to an appropriate journal (First Year Experience)

• A journal article for submission to a peer-reviewed journal will prepared after the pilot study is complete

• Possible collaboration with another Australian university who are developing resources to address similar issues

School-specific outcomes

• The School of Media and Communication is undertaking a school-wide program renewal for delivery in 2015. As such, there will be significant course renewals as well as the need to develop content for new courses. This framework will help course coordinators and program directors in both reviewing current courses and designing new courses. The project team will run facilitated workshops for three programmes as part of their curriculum renewal. This will also serve as a pilot study and help the team to further develop the framework. The framework will be made available to other programs, and the project team will run facilitated workshop as requested.

Program-specific outcomes

• Two first-year courses were redeveloped for the Bachelor Of Design (Communication Design). These courses were designed specifically to focus on student and transformation. These courses will serve as foundation courses in the renewed program in 2015.

3 Project outcomes and impacts

3.1 Project Description and Aims
This project aims to address the challenges faced by students from creative disciplines struggling to transition into their higher education programs by helping teaching staff to design curriculum that would enable students to transition and transform their learning experience. The project team has worked on developing a cohort-level outcome that enables a collaborative and cohesive teaching staff experience, where teaching staff considered the entirety of the student learning experience as opposed to disparate course-level experiences.

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The framework was developed, and evaluated with staff teaching in the Bachelor of Design (Communication Design) and applied in two courses (Communication Design History and Theory A & B). The project addressed the problems faced by students from
creative disciplines struggling to transition into higher education – as evidenced by Belonging Project & Equal/Local (LTIF project 2012) student focus groups.

3.2 Project Background

Transition for students into higher-education has been discussed at length (Nelson, Kift, Clarke and Creagh 2008-2010 & Delvin, Kift and Nelson 2011), especially the importance of it to enhance the first-year experience and retain students within higher education.

In the creative disciplines, historically transition is viewed around the concepts of discipline specific skills focusing on bridging the gap between previous educational experience, and perceived technical and conceptual skills needed to engage with creative briefs in the higher education environment. These are privileged at the expense of academic literacies, competencies, knowledge & generic skills required to enable students to engage with what it means to be a university student.

With the Bradley Review (2010), the development of AQF framework (2011), and TESQA (2012) compliance, the creative disciplines need to ensure that they are preparing students for the whole of University experience. They need to ensure that their students are able to develop the broad and coherent literacies, competencies, knowledge and skills for professional work and/or further learning and are not at risk of attrition.

While the literature on transition (Kift 2010, Nelson; Creagh et al. 2010) provides overarching principles and resources for developing the first year experience, they do not address the particular needs of a student cohort or discipline. Commencing cohorts in creative programs often have made educational choices to avoid subjects that focus on academic literacies and competencies (such as communications and history), not realising that this limits their creative education. It often directs them away from knowledge and skills that would assist them in engaging in the broader higher education student experience.

The project address this issue of creative students not having the academic skills and competencies that effectively would allow them to become life long learners. A key insistence of the project team is that such transition issues must be embedded in the curriculum so that its value and purpose are clear to the students. Transition should be woven into the formal curriculum so as to be indiscernible from informal or hidden curriculum.

As such, after discussions with teaching staff in the Bachelor of Design (Communication Design), project team decided that the point of intervention should be at the point of when the teaching staff are designing curriculum; especially useful would be a process that allows for a cohort level engagement with teaching staff to develop a cohesive and consolidated approach to transition. Also important, was to ensure that graduates they have the broad and coherent knowledge and skills for professional work and/or further learning inline with the AQF level 7 expectations. This project provides a framework for implementing AQF and TEQSA requirements explicitly in the curriculum.

3.3 Project Design

3.3.1 Research and Development

Over the last decade higher education institutes, both within Australia and internationally, have come to recognize the importance student transition. It has become a issue of great significance as successful student transition has a positive impact on the student cohort experience, improves student retention, and enables student academic success. As such, various reviews, discussions, and reports have been engaged to develop strategies and tactics on student retention.
3.3.1.1 Transition

In Australia, student transition has been informed by the recommendations of the Bradley Review into Higher Education (Bradley, Noonan, Nugent, & Scales: 2008), and the implementation of the Australian Qualification Framework (Review 2010- ongoing) and Transforming Australia’s Higher Education System (Australian Government 2009).

The Bradley review outlined a number of recommendations to dramatically increase the percentage of the Australian population with tertiary qualifications; in particular, to increase by 20% students participation rates in higher education of students from Low Socio-economic Status (SES) by 2020. To achieve this, an additional $394 million is being spent to fund equity spaces, and research, as well as other reforms to dismantle barriers to higher education participation. These barriers include “previous educational attainment, low awareness of the long-term benefits of higher education resulting in little aspiration to participate, and the need for financial assistance, academic and personal support once enrolled.” (Transforming Australia’s Higher Education System 2009).

This project focuses on transition once the student entered the higher education institution. While the probability of completion of low SES students is generally similar to that of the general student population, the students require higher levels of academic support, and engagement. Responding to the challenge of increasing student engagement and satisfaction, various initiatives have been introduced such as the First Year in Higher Education Centre. It provides access to “research projects and deliverables, reusable resources and communities of practice all of which are focused on enhancing the experiences of students during their first year in higher education” (http://fyhe.com.au/about/). Universities also have articulated their transition principles. For example RMIT University’s ‘whole-of-institution’ approach to the ‘whole-of-student’ approach to student engagement and retention (RMIT Transition Principles (2009). These developments have helped to raise awareness for the issue of transition for student success.

While it might seem that the focus of transition is just on the student’s first year in higher education, transition is at its core about enabling a lifetime of learning. The first year of the student’s higher education experience is foundational for later year learning success as “it is within the first year curriculum that students must be inspired, supported, and realise their sense of belonging”. So transition is not only addressed in first year curriculum, but rather through the totality of students higher education experience. Transition needs to be iterative to reinforce skills and knowledge, not only between courses but also between years. Transition also needs to be cascaded so as to build on the skills and knowledge acquired by the students. As such, transition must be considered holistically - across a cohort’s experience during a course, a semester, and program. The First Year Higher Education Centre http://fyhe.com.au/ (2014) resources for academics describe the significance of the importance of Transition Pedagogy beyond the context of a students time within higher education. Further to that, programs often have entry points at each of first four semesters of its lifecycle. In that case, transition must be take into account the pathways of the articulating students to best enable student success.

The project team referenced established best practice models, and resources that inform curriculum development and design when designing its framework. The focus was at enabling a holistic student experience by considering transition within a course, across courses at a semester level (or cohort level), and ultimately, program-level.

Given the research on transition, the framework considers transition in the following terms;

- It is vital to student engagement, retention, and success
- It’s embedded in the curriculum
- Its iterative and cascading in its execution
• It’s a whole of student experience approach (not disparate courses)
• It’s about enabling life long learning and personal empowerment

3.3.1.2 Challenges faced by teaching staff
In order for Australia to remain economically competitive, the government has adopted strategies to ensure a greater number of Australians become university educated. Currently, attainment rate for bachelor degrees is approximately 32 per cent (for 25 to 34 year olds), and the desire for that to rise to 40 per cent by 2025. A key change has been to move from a capped-places model to a demand-drive one. This means that instead of rationing the number of higher education places available, the new policies focus on the demand from students and the marketplace.

Further to that, the Review of Australian Higher Education Final Report indicates the other challenges faced by teaching staff; namely, changing student demographics and characteristics, greater diversity in the student body, increase in types of learners and modes of learning, distance and online learners, and finally, full-time students straight from school studying on campus as a minority in many institutions.

This means that teaching staff are facing learning situations that have and will continue to change significantly over the coming years. As such, there needs to be a greater emphasis on transition for students, in particular, students from low SES, regional Australian, mature age, and international backgrounds.

This project is looking to address the challenges faced by teaching staff by giving them a framework to enable a collaborative and cohesive curriculum development experience, where teaching staff consider the entirety of the student learning experience as opposed to disparate course-level experiences so as to be able to embed transition into their curriculum to ensure student engagement, success, and retention.

3.3.1.3 University expectations, AQF, and RMIT Policy
The challenges faced by the teaching staff come at a time where the university is an increasingly measurement and metrics-driven environment. There has been an increase in class sizes, greater emphasis on compliance, growth in transnational education, and the such – a general intensification of teaching work. All this while the demands and accountability of research outcomes has also become more significant and metric-driven. This balance between research and teaching is another challenge that staff have to negotiate. This is particularly important as governments have adopted performance funding for research budget components for higher education (Houston, Meyer & Paewai: 2006). Teaching performance is increasingly considered and used in staff evaluation, and the Australasian Survey of Student Engagement (AUSSE) is viewed as an indicator of institutional excellence nationally and internationally.

Another measure of quality, Australian Quality Framework (AQF) has in the last decade undergone significant renewal. The AQF is the national policy for regulating qualifications that incorporates quality assurance. Further to that, the promulgation of the Tertiary Education Quality and Standards Agency Act 2011 (TEQSA Act) – a regulatory body that regulates and evaluates the quality of the Australian education sector – means that there is an increase burden on teaching staff in terms of documenting and evidencing both compliance to policy and legislation as well as the quality of teaching.

These have been reflected at RMIT in the expectations of the Academic Plan 2011-2015, reviews of various policies such as assessment, program design, equivalence and comparability, and other quality assurance measures such as the Course Management Teams and the Course Assessment Committee. Also, projects such as the Inclusive Teaching Project and the I Belong Project are further engagement government policy and legislation.
The project team understands the challenges the faced by the sector and teaching staff. It was realized very early in the project that teaching staff generally have not engaged with their program learning outcomes, the AQF specifications or the RMIT Graduate Attributes that are supposed to be achieved in their course curriculum design. Teaching staff tend to focus on the course-level learning outcomes. So, the framework is designed such that teaching staff will engage with the relevant program learning outcomes, the AQF specifications and the RMIT Graduate Attributes as well as their course learning outcomes when designing their course curriculum. The framework is designed to enable their cross referencing so as to understand their relationship. Further to that, the framework itself serves as a backbone to documenting and evidencing teaching quality as well as compliance to AQF and RMIT policies.

3.3.1.4 Transnational Education

The Equal/Local (Clarke, Sharp & Johal, 2013) highlighted the challenges facing academics in the creative disciplines in curriculum design, and the issues of the transferability when faced with transnational delivery. In particular, the challenge that faces academics in any location is to know a student cohort “as well as be able to engage in contemporary curriculum design.” (p.3).

Increasingly academics are expected to teach offshore, with very little supporting tools to improve comparability in curriculum design, and the research confirms that there is a great deal of work still needed to improve student engagement and satisfaction in offshore locations (Shah, Roth & Sid Nair, 2010). Of concern is that the quality of teaching and learning offshore is uneven, with little planning on the how to transfer content delivery to inform the formal and informal delivery offshore and that particular cohort (Dunn & Wallace, 2005).

It has been acknowledged that the academics ability to know the local context, the student profile, and develop up-to-date curriculum is a currently a significant issue in the transnational space. As such, at the core of any course or program design is curriculum planning and review (Bird et al, 2003) and collegial contact with offshore colleagues at the planning stage is recommended (Dunn & Wallace: 2005). It is important that an understanding of the curriculum beyond content, delivery, and assessment is arrived at. It is the understanding of a holistic and collaborative approach to course design that is critical to the success of long-term opportunities of innovation transnationally.

The framework has the capacity to allow for this. It has been design to accommodate multiple offerings across multiple locations, as well as the execution of the Course Management Team policy. This is as the framework is designed to ensure that the teaching team are collaborating and documenting their curriculum development so as to be able to maintaining the same quality of education. Importantly, as the research suggest should be done, the framework enables greater engagement with colleagues to design culturally responsive curriculum that is relevant to the cohort’s diversity at the time of planning prior to each semester. (While the framework has not been designed explicitly with transnational education in view, and is not being piloted in that context, the project team has significant experience in transnational education and its challenges.)

3.3.2 Building on previous projects

The project design has been informed by the following projects.

3.3.2.1 Relevant Sector Projects

The Bradley Review sought to address the changing global political and economic environment, which has seen Australia move away from its status as a center of production, to an increasingly knowledge-based economy (Bradley et al. 2008, p. 88). In order for Australia to remain economically competitive in this changing environment,
the government has adopted strategies to ensure a greater number of Australians become university educated.

The attainment of this ideal is support by the Australian Quality Framework (AQF). Which is the national policy for regulated qualifications providing the taxonomic structure to enable consistency and understanding about the differences and relationships between qualification types. This provides institutions and the academics within them with clear specification of the purpose, knowledge, skills and the application that graduates can expect to attain.

The Tertiary Education Quality and Standards Agency (TEQSA) is the independent national regulator of the higher education sector. As the regulatory body ensuring that institutions are upholding standards the need for frameworks that support delivery of quality learning and teaching while allowing academics to attain other deliverables in their workloads in research that inform there teaching to ensuring both compliance and excellence in teaching.

3.3.2.2 Equal Local:
For RMIT attaining quality and equivalence of our programs is critical given the increasing number of programs based in Melbourne that are now being delivered in Singapore, Hong Kong and Vietnam. The Equal Local: Future-proofing RMIT’s global reach by promoting equivalence in onshore and offshore learning (Clarke, Sharp & Johal, 2013). The projects Adaptable Curriculum Implementation Processes highlights the cyclical nature of curriculum design and that the First Things First framework provides the process and templates that support developing the components within the equal local process.

3.3.2.3 Belonging Project:
The Belonging Project (Carlin et al 2011-ongoing) is a four-year pilot project to investigate, design and trial an integrated program and school-based approach to enhancing the RMIT undergraduate cohort experience. This project situated within the School of Media and Communication.

The project proposes a flexible narrative model of student belonging that can be used to guide and prompt initiatives to improve student engagement throughout the undergraduate experience rather than just within the first year of a students experience within a program. The Belonging Narrative Model of student engagement proposes a three-tier student experience, in line with the three year undergraduate experience, beginning with a strong grounding in a diverse disciplinary cohort (Tier One), broadening out to encompass the interdisciplinary community of the school (Tier Two), and grounded in a sense of belonging as an ethical global citizen (Tier Three). The broad principles and strategies of The Belonging Project Narrative Model are designed to be transferable to other schools and universities. In developing our framework we have been mindful of the need for the model to be transferable across courses, programs and through future development of this framework into an online resource for wider application.

3.3.2.4 School of Media and Communication: MC2015 project.
The School of Media and Communication was created in 2009 as a result of a merge between two schools, and is the largest school within the University. Given the diversity of programs and staff into this new school as well as responding to the AQF, the school us undertaking an innovative redevelopment of its undergraduate and postgraduate programs.

Exploiting this opportunity, the school is developing new models of integrated learning within 24-credit point courses and studios. There is a challenge to ensure that course learning outcomes can be mapped and evidenced appropriately. This is critical given
the diversity across the school between Bachelors of Communication, Bachelors of Art, and Bachelors of Design. It is important to enable innovation and collaboration while ensuring quality.

It is the aim of the project is to pilot the framework across a number of programs within the school in 2014 to inform curriculum design and delivery in 2015.

### 3.4 Transition and Transformation Framework

The framework is targeted at course-coordinators and other teaching staff developing a cohort-level curriculum in collaborative and cohesive curriculum development experience, where teaching staff consider the entirety of the student learning experience instead of disparate course-level experiences. This framework enables teaching staff to design curriculum that enables students to transition and transform their learning experience and as such, address the challenges faced by students from creative disciplines struggling to transition into their higher education programs. The framework will be piloted in 2014 with three programs undertaking a renewal and developing new courses as part of the School of Media and Communications MC2015 project (details above).

The following are excerpts from the Transition and Transformation Framework (Appendix A). (A detailed explanation of the framework with the supporting case study is being prepared for publication in the near future. Please email tntframwork@rmit.edu.au if you want to arrange a facilitated workshop, or further detail on case study.)

#### 3.4.1 Overview of the Framework:

Excerpts from the Transition and Transformation Framework (Appendix A the text highlighted in blue is from the Framework publication attached. Other text is our observations)

The Transition and Transformation Framework has been designed to assist you as a course coordinator. This framework is a resource that you can use both to review current courses and to design new courses. It has been informed by, the Australian Quality Framework (AQF), other relevant policies and projects so that your curriculum is compliant with various quality assurance requirements and informed by Learning and Teaching Research.

This framework will help you to design curriculum to enable your students to transition and transform their learning experience and address the challenges faced by creative practice students that are struggling to transition into higher education. This framework considers the entirety of the student learning experience across a semester and year-level as opposed to disparate course-level experiences disconnected from each other. The framework focuses on designing cohort-level student experience in through a collaborative and cohesive teaching staff experience. You will create a transparent, holistic, and singular transition for the students.

The aim of this framework is to guide you as course coordinators in planning for transition, and transformation in your curriculum. You will build into your curriculum student literacies, competencies, knowledge and skills relevant to be a practitioner of their creative discipline, and a life-long learner. The framework will assist you to document and detail your curriculum so that you can acknowledge and account for the various quality assurance measures as you design your curriculum in an easy and clear manner.

The templates will enable you compile the course design, and delivery material, that can be used to:
First things First: Transition and Transformation of the student cohort experience, in the creative disciplines.

- create an applied discipline specific training for teaching staff on the how to consider designing course ware to the AQF level of learning outcomes relevant to the qualification.

- induct and train new teaching staff on the courseware both onshore and offshore.

- provides a documentation process to create an auditable record of designing best practice courseware compliant with AQF and RMIT policies. Ensuring staff will not have to compile additional material for these purposes.

3.4.2 Course life cycle

The course life cycle diagram is a visualization of the entirety of the cohort-level curriculum design process from a good teaching practice perspective. It accounts for a wide-range of considerations that should inform curriculum design, and provides you with a visual gauge of the time needed for each phase across the entire workflow cycle. It has intentionally been designed without particular calendar dates in recognition that you maybe be designing a course within different semester cycles and dates depending on offerings, locations and partnerships.

The life cycle is divided into four phases – Planning, Design, Delivery, and Review and Evaluation. This resource breaks down each phase, into activities for you as course coordinator and/or teaching staff to undertake. This framework is a supplement to inform your thinking and designing of course curriculum, addressing the learning objectives and graduate outcomes, as well as timely and scaffolded assessment. Each phases provides you with a checklist and various resources to support you.

**Why is this important**

The course life cycle maps the your workflow for not only the designing of the courseware, but also for engagement with other cohort-level staff, relevant policies and resources at appropriate points. Key in the framework is the capacity for reviewing with other course coordinators the cohesive student experience at cohort-level as opposed to the separate individual courses. Having the understanding of the course life cycle should allow you to manage your time, workload, and tasks more effectively. The documentation process creates an auditable record of the design coursework to meet AQF specifications for the level of the qualification and RMIT policy. This will ensure you will not have to compile any additional material for these purposes when requested.

3.4.3 Planning

The planning phase of the course life cycle has the following components and each of these components needs to be reviewed against the trigger questions where...
relevant, and responses to these collated will help to inform the subsequent staff workshop.

- **Student profile:** This is the de-identified demographic data from RMIT reporting systems and selection of the students in the relevant cohort.
- **Historical data:** If the course has run before this is the CES, SSCC, student’s narrative and staff reflection collations.
- **Learning Outcomes:** These are the Program learning outcomes each course mapped against with the relevant RMIT Graduate Attributes and AQF levels.
- **Staff workshop:** A facilitated workshop that can be run with teaching staff from the course, the semesters courses, the year level and or program.

3.4.3.1 **Student Profile**

The Program Manager will need to provide you with the de-identified demographic data and other relevant information to inform your planning. This is the responsibility of the Program Manager so as to ensure that the data is de-identified to maintain privacy for individuals, and to ensure that any trends are contextualized for you. Other considerations are the programs selection process, articulation agreements, sector changes or Program Annual Review Reporting (PAR) which are overseen by the Program Manager.

If this course has run before the historical data from the previous semester will provide you with a collated insight from the CES (Course Experience Survey) SSCC (Student Staff Consultative Committee), student narratives, staff reflections and peer partnerships. (More detail of this is provided in the Review and Evaluation section)

**What is the Student Profile data?**

Student Profile data is the collation of the various data that is available to inform you to have a better sense of ‘who your students are’ to inform the type of transition, curriculum design and as the RMIT Inclusive Teaching Resource states ‘address the needs of every learner within a ‘diversity of learners’.

Research and our case study (see below) indicates that staff tend to make significantly differing assumptions of the prior experience, knowledge, skills and motivators of the students entering their programs. These assumptions were driven by anecdotal recollections, informal staff discussions, and were not grounded in data or research.
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Why is Student Profile Data important?
To design curriculum that enables successful learning outcomes for the students, it is vital to know a student's prior learning experience, skills, and knowledge. This will allow you to further develop the students' capacity to the promised capability of the course learning outcomes. A clear understanding of the background means that you can design an experience that best engages all students.

Examples of Trigger Questions:
- What is the student profile data telling me about the diversity of the students in this course? How does it match my expectations? (For example, cultural backgrounds, gender balances, educational backgrounds, and the such)
- What kinds of meaningful social and academic transition activities can I embed into my course? (That is relevant for the student profile)
- Based on the historical data from the Review and Evaluation phase from the previous offering, what do I need to respond to? (Historical data includes CES, SSCC, Student Narratives/Peer Partnership, your own self-reflections, discussions with teaching team) what do I need to respond to this semester to build on the student's transition and transformation?
- Based on the data from the teaching staff from the cohort's previous semester, what do I need to respond to this semester to build on the student's transition and transformation?
- If this is not a first-year course, have any students just joined the program, and how will I transition these students into the course, and engage them with their peers?
- Other considerations:
  - do I need case studies or exemplars to design curriculum for a diverse cohort,
  - do I need learning and teaching strategies to better engage this cohort with the course content,
  - do I need any help in engaging appropriate with students from a diverse or unfamiliar background?
- Does the course delivery and course assessment need to consider having a broader range of opportunities, or flexibility to enable students to bring and build upon their cultural, life, and educational experiences?
- What can I take away from these trigger questions to inform the staff workshop?
3.4.3.2 Learning Outcomes

This section focuses on the relationship between the program learning outcomes, RMIT University Graduate Attributes, AQF levels of Skills, Knowledge and Application and the course learning outcomes. As a course coordinator, it will assist you positioning your course in reference to other courses and the program. It can also be a useful way to explain your course to other teaching staff at the staff workshop.

The Program Learning Outcomes are from the Program Guide, which all students have access after enrolment, these are provided by the Program Manager.

During the development of the framework, we discovered that teaching staff, tend not be aware of the process and importance of mapping courses program learning outcomes. In addition to this, these outcomes must be reviewed in reference to the Course Description and Course Learning outcomes.

Furthermore, during the project, we discovered that most teaching staff are not be aware of the relationships between the various learning outcomes and other quality assurance measures such as the AQF, especially given that program guides were only made AQF compliant in 2014. So the framework serves as a useful way to educate staff about AQF levels as well as the RMIT University Graduate Attributes.
<table>
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<th>Program Learning outcomes</th>
<th>GA#</th>
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<td>Apply broad and coherent knowledge of the role Communication Design plays in wider society</td>
<td>GA4</td>
<td>K, A1</td>
<td>GRAP-2199</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
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<td>GRAP-2200</td>
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<td>Sophisticated and nuanced skills to apply this knowledge in various Communication Design</td>
<td>GA5</td>
<td>S3, S4, A2</td>
<td>GRAP-2274</td>
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<td></td>
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<td>GRAP-2275</td>
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<td>GRAP-2278</td>
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<tr>
<td>Apply a body of theoretical and practical knowledge and specific skills in your discipline in which to base your professional practice or future study</td>
<td>GA5</td>
<td>K, S2</td>
<td>GRAP-2199</td>
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<td>GRAP-2200</td>
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<tr>
<td>Critically analyse, synthesize and reflect on your discipline in both local and international contexts</td>
<td>GA2</td>
<td>S1</td>
<td>GRAP-2199</td>
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<td>GRAP-2200</td>
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<tr>
<td>Demonstrate creativity, critical thinking and innovation when identifying and solving problems in diverse contexts within the discipline</td>
<td>GA6</td>
<td>S3, A2</td>
<td>GRAP-2274</td>
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<td>GRAP-2277</td>
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<tr>
<td>Communicate using diverse formats and strategies to audiences within and external to your discipline</td>
<td>GA1</td>
<td>S4</td>
<td>GRAP-2274</td>
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<tr>
<td>Work with others in a range of roles and contexts, demonstrating cultural, environmental and social awareness and ethical and reflective practice</td>
<td>GA1</td>
<td>A3</td>
<td>GRAP-2199</td>
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<td>GA3</td>
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<td>GRAP-2200</td>
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<td>GA4</td>
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<tr>
<td>Apply initiative and judgment in planning, problem solving and decision making in your practice or future study</td>
<td>GA5</td>
<td>A1</td>
<td>GRAP-2276</td>
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<td>GRAP-2279</td>
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<td>GRAP-2277</td>
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</table>
This is a visualization of the breakdown of the course-level outcomes engage with the program-level outcomes as well as the AQF levels through skills, knowledge and applications. It is important to note that all these things need to be considered and accounted for in reference to each other when designing curriculum. This will not only help to design appropriate curriculum, but also serve as documentation for the quality assurance requirements.

The activity sheet below is one of several examples of ways in which a course coordinator can plan their courseware in reference to all the good teaching and quality assurance requirements.
Pre-staff workshop checklist

1. Student profile
2. Learning outcomes
3. Course description
4. Inclusive teaching considerations
5. Policy awareness (internal/external)

### 3.4.3.3 Facilitated Staff Workshop

The main aim of the Facilitated Staff Workshop is to create a space for the teaching staff to work in a collaborative and cohesive manner to design curriculum that can enable students to have a transformative learning experience. In the workshop, teaching staff will focus on profile of the incoming cohort, the expected learning outcomes of each course at the end of semester, and the transition and transformation needs of each course. It is an opportunity for the teaching staff to agree on what types of transitions and transformations are needed by the cohort, in which course they

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>course outline</th>
<th>discipline / academic</th>
<th>knowledge skills application</th>
<th>learning outcome</th>
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</table>
First things First: Transition and Transformation of the student cohort experience, in the creative disciplines.

would be initiated and then reinforced, and well as to review the content covered by each course.

Below are brief excerpts from a Facilitated Staff Workshop. It was run for the Bachelor of Design (Communication Design) program staff to inform the course development of GRAP2199 Communication Design History and Theory A in Semester 1, and GRAP 2200 Communication Design History and Theory B in Semester 2. These two courses were under review to inform the development of a program renewal as part of MC2015. (A detailed explanation of the framework with the supporting case study is being prepared for publication in the near future. Please email tntframework@rmit.edu.au if you want to arrange a facilitated workshop, or further detail on case study.)

“We worked with the School’s SALT (Senior Advisor Learning and Teaching), Ruth Moeller, on the development of this workshop. This enabled us to take down observations and Ruth’s independence from the program was an enabler to robust and well-guided conversation.

The aim was to work with staff to understand what they believed the pre-RMIT student profile to be, where those student would be at the end of semester 1, and at the end of semester 2 as well as graduates of the program. This workshop raised significant points of difference in staffs beliefs and expectations. These were further unpacked over 2013 through a regular series program meetings, and discussions with industry. These focused on the changing diversity in the students coming into the program, and how that can informs opportunities within the program.”
The facilitated Program workshop.
Whole of program experience

End of 1st semester expectations.
Topics: that came up for additional discussion, investigation the staff voice to inform delivery and design from case study
Topics: that came up for additional discussion, investigation the staff voice to inform delivery and design from case study.

Following on from the Program Staff Workshop course co-ordinators need to consider having follow up workshops to map outcomes and assessments across courses. We have designed these templates to assist staff in ensuring they are able to map towards all the learning outcomes within and across courses.

Mapping Learning Outcomes

Mapping Significant events over a semesters delivery, where assessment is informed by policy and how might transition sit within these. Look at other resources on Assessment and Flexible delivery [www.rmit.edu.au/strategies flexible assessment and delivery](http://www.rmit.edu.au/strategies flexible assessment and delivery)

3.4.4 Design
It is important to note that this section is not to replace the design of each week delivery. There are many resources for weekly lesson planning and we have provided links below to some on the RMIT website. These templates are to support you in thinking across all the courses students will be engaging with in a semester and to provide clarity to inform your lesson plans.

When designing your course you will come with the outcomes from all the recommended workshops. Overtime once the documentation of your course has been developed through one or two cycles. It is envisaged that some of the workshops would just be touching base rather than the full workshops documented in the case study.

From the above material you can work through what the models within a course might look like when considering AQF, RMIT Graduate Attributes against course learning outcomes.

The aim of this project is to develop an online resource by which course co-ordinators can customised the templates to the needs of their courses. While providing a consistent framework that can be applied across courses and build understanding that is understood by other staff, and Program Managers to build best practice.

Stage 1 of Course Design the Brainstorm
First things First: Transition and Transformation of the student cohort experience, in the creative disciplines.

Overview of course and modules and building towards Semester 2 outcomes.
First things First: Transition and Transformation of the student cohort experience, in the creative disciplines.

These modules were brainstormed with teaching staff within the course against the language of the AQF of skill, knowledge and application, to see where the course aligned what was needed, and address any gaps.
Stage 2 How to consider design of modules within a course.

<table>
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<tr>
<th>MODULES</th>
<th>SEMESTER MODULE PLAN</th>
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<td>TYPE and IMAGE</td>
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LEARNING OUTCOMES:

- Power Knowledge / Literacy = vis com

THEMES:

EEK FOCUS:

- Tutorial
- Lecture
- Homework

It is important to acknowledge that this is just a guide as to ways to inform thinking. Long term it is the aim of this project is to develop a web based resource so that staff will be able to customize templates, relevant to the course, discipline and learning outcomes.

There are many ways you can as a course coordinator consider how you will scaffold the students learning to over a semester. These diagrams are to inform different ways of thinking about a course, and the modules within it. Around skills, knowledge and applications, the discipline and learning style of student co-horts.
Staff looked at different ways to look at semester modules and how they scaffold across a course to build the learning outcomes of the course.

It was valuable for staff to review visually the way a course can build the learning outcomes within modules and against learning style of students within creative programs.

Importantly this is where you as a course co-ordinator can plan with other staff how to engage with other resources informed by consideration of the design.
First things First: Transition and Transformation of the student cohort experience, in the creative disciplines.

Undertaking your course design in this way ensures you are building documentation so the course is meeting the AQF specifications, within the course and across the courses, to better transition students through an engaged experience. It creates validation across courses and with other staff to ensure a more holistic approach is communicated. It enables quality processes for training of teaching staff and ensures comparability on and offshore. Importantly it enables a sign off between course co-ordinators and program managers for quality and clarity.

From this agreement you can then work with staff on [www.rmit.edu.au/lesson planning](http://www.rmit.edu.au/lesson planning) to plan in detail each week's delivery with the staff within the course rather than across all courses. Understanding how each module works informs the transition needed into the course, into and through each module, and with the skills and knowledge the course is building.

This transition is then able to ask itself how will the student Belong within this course and at this stage of program and across the courses that make up the students semester long experience.
3.4.5 Delivery

During semester delivery as course coordinator you and your teaching team will be executing the developed plan. It is important to ensure that you building in time for your teaching team to reflect together and as individuals. The resources on the RMIT Inclusive Teaching website provide you with the how and why of this for courses www.rmit.edu.au/Practise reflectively

3.4.6 Review and Evaluate

Review and Evaluation is informed by formal and informal feedback.
It is important to schedule opportunities to come together within a timely manner ensuring that this information is captured to take forward to the next cycle within course delivery. Importantly if this can be considered by your team, in the context of ‘what if’ I was not there to tell the narrative of this course what would I need to know? In this way you ensure they capture meta level data for the next cycle. Importantly celebrate success and acknowledge areas for improvement!

Trigger questions:
1. What was effective? Name it from informal and formal sources.
2. What would you change? Why?
3. What changes have you noticed in feedback from the last time this course was delivered?
4. What key differences would you like to implement in the future?

4 Dissemination strategies and outputs
- Dissemination presentation will be held on 20 February 2014 in the School of Media and Communication. This presentation will cater to those involved in program and course renewal within the school. Also invited to this presentation are relevant people from Learning Teaching Unit, and other schools within DSC. The project team will offer to run facilitation workshops for programs and schools that are interested.
• Three programmes in the School of Media and Communication undertaking a programme renewal will be piloting the framework, and providing feedback. Over the coming months of 2014, other programs within the school as well as programs in other schools will be invited to pilot the toolkit, and provide feedback. This will allow us to further develop the toolkit based on the feedback.

• The project team will submit a practice paper to the Journal of First Year Experience.

• The project team will undertake to complete an article for publishing in a peer-reviewed journal. This will be undertaken after the pilot study has been run and feedback obtained to further develop the toolkit.

• The project team will look to collaborate with another Australian university, who have developed resources addressing similar problems as the framework. It would be an opportunity to further disseminate and develop the framework.

5 Evaluation of project outcomes

There was continuous evaluation through 2013, via staff workshops and consultations with key personnel from the library, student learning centre, and the Learning and Teaching Unit, as well as teaching staff from the Bachelor of Design (Communication Design).

Further evaluation will take place in 2014 through the piloting process and facilitated staff workshops run by the project team. The framework will be piloted with course coordinators and program directors from at three programs in the School of Media and Communication. The framework and facilitated workshops run by the project team will be made available to other programs from within the school and other schools. Ideally, the project team would like to pilot (test) the framework with other universities and will be working to achieve this.

The key focus of the piloting will be to further develop and validate the usability, the flexibility, and compliance potential of the toolkit.

5.1 Recommendations

• RMIT

  o The framework (after being modified as per feedback from pilot study) be supported by the Learning and Teaching Unit as part of their resources for teaching staff and course coordinators. This will help them to design a cohort-level student experience that focuses on developing and delivering a cohort-level outcome that enables firstly, a collaborative and cohesive teaching staff experience, where teaching staff considered the entirety of the student learning experience as opposed to disparate course-level experiences, and secondly, enable students to transition and transform their learning experience.

    ▪ Professional development and teaching resources for the framework be developed in three formats:

      • Static content – the framework itself be made available on the website with supporting documentation
      • Audio visual content – package featuring how-to videos and footage of facilitated workshops
      • Facilitated workshops – this would be especially useful for programs undergoing renewal as well as courses that are being reviewed significantly
The framework can also be used to create an applied and discipline-specific training system for teaching staff to design AQF compliant courseware. The framework’s documentation process can also create an auditable record of designing courseware compliant with AQF and RMIT policy.

The framework was designed with the Course Management Team and Course Assessment Committee policies in mind. As such, the framework lends itself for use in reference to those policies and should be considered being recommended or included in those policies implementation.

Further to that, the framework is ideal for use in the transnational context. It should be tested and validated by other RMIT University campuses, both as in terms of curriculum design and policy compliance.

In the long-run, the project team envisions a framework that encompasses the entire student life cycle (and program life cycle). The project team envisions a framework that operates from program-level, cohort-level, and course-level as well as multiple location offerings. It would cater to the needs of program directors, course coordinators, and members of a teaching team. The framework would be housed on the web and its entire documentation process online, with capacity to upload material to share. This integrated system would engender good teaching practice.

work with another Australian University to co-develop resources – address the project and how it is the same how it differs how we can build on each other. Make the point that QT project is university level
Appendix A

1. Budget Report Attached to email

2. Transition and Transformation for Course Coordinators Framework Attached to email

Bibliography:


www.rmit.edu.au/Equity & Social Inclusion Plan

RMIT (2013). Inclusive teaching: RMIT University Melbourne:  
www.rmit.edu.au/Inclusive Teaching

Melbourne: www.rmit.edu.au/staff/strategy