Learning and Teaching Investment Fund 2010: Final Project Report

Title: “Critical thinking, reflection and assessment of personal creative practice – e-portfolios and on-line learning tools”

Strategic objective: Student engagement

Project Team members: Claire Beale, Associate Lecturer, BA Textile Design, School of Fashion and Textiles
Annalea Beattie, Learning Skills Advisor, Study and Learning Centre, Student Services
Meaghan Botterill, Senior Coordinator, Educational Technologies Integration, Educational Technology Advancement Group (EDTAG)
Kylie Budge, Senior Advisor Learning and Teaching, College of Design and Social Context
Jody Fenn, Senior Coordinator, Production & Graphic Design, Educational Technology Advancement Group (EDTAG)
Students of the BP121 BA Textile Design program

School/Service Units/College/Portfolio:
School of Fashion and Textiles, Study and Learning Centre, Educational Technology Advancement Group, Learning and Teaching, College of Design and Social Context

Report Author: Claire Beale
Report finalised: 2011
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Executive summary

Critical thinking, reflection and assessment of personal creative practice – e-portfolios and on-line learning tools focused on the need for textile designers to develop a philosophical approach to their professional practice, and be able to communicate this to others. Many textile design students however, rely on visual forms of expression, having difficulty in aligning the academic imperative for critical thinking and engagement with their assumptions about the ‘real world’ of design practice.

The challenge was to develop the necessary skills that students need to be able to professionally expound on their practice in order to attain recognition and experience, as well as capitalise on opportunities. Within the BP 121 BA Textile Design second and third year program, we developed a specific series of on-line and analog curriculum materials focused on developing reflective writing, analysis and creativity for Textile Design practice. This included incorporating the use of e-learning tools, including:

- Reflective blog entries, discussion boards and other activity
- Pebble Pad e-portfolio platform
- Media Annotation Tool (MAT)

The use of these tools / activities provided students with opportunities to develop an understanding of the forms of writing for professional practice, and allowed for a scaffolding effect in which the learning was acquired in a cumulative manner. Given the self-reflective and highly personal nature of this form of writing and creative practice, it was important to provide a supportive, flexible and instructive series of materials that allowed the student to develop drafts, refine and polish, and finally complete at least one professional piece of writing for public dissemination.

The project was strategically aligned with the attributes, goals and values espoused in the university’s Strategic Plan, namely:

- Creative
- Committed to Making a Difference
  And
- Connected

Further, the project focused on student engagement, aligned with the following Graduate Attributes:

- Work ready
- Active& lifelong learners
- Innovative
- Global in outlook and competence

This LTIF project was also engaged with current undertakings in the areas of Learning and Teaching (DSC and DVC), and strategic initiative projects including REAP (e-portfolios, MAT).
List of outcomes

Key Project outcomes:

- The creation of a specific series of on-line and analog curriculum materials focused on developing reflective writing, analysis and creativity for Textile Design practice.
- Implementation of the Pebble Pad e-portfolio platform in the BP121 program, specifically the use of blogs and webfolios to evidence, develop and communicate creative practice, and demonstrate key graduate attributes as they apply to the Textile Design discipline.
- Ongoing development of Blackboard on-line learning curriculum activities and content for BP121 courses.
- Development of the MAT tool to develop creative writing, analysis and communication skills (planned implementation in 2011).

Key Project impacts:

- Engagement with online learning tools as part of a whole of curriculum approach, directly relevant to the professional practices within the discipline specific context. Students were able to engage with the process and see it as a meaningful activity linked to their professional development.
- Transition from teacher to learner-directed focus, through creative, imaginative and inventive solutions to curriculum development and achievement.
- Increased student engagement and confidence with reflective and creative writing processes, via the use of blogs and webfolios.
- Continued improvement in CES results and student feedback.
- Successful implementation of the project has encouraged ongoing collaboration between teams within RMIT, via an effective use of existent and emerging resources, in an innovative way. That is, the integration of a range of on-line learning resources into a coherent curriculum package.
List of the acronyms used in the report and their meanings

ALTC – Australian Learning and Teaching Council
CATD – Computer Aided Textile Design
CES – Course Evaluation Survey
DSC – College of Design and Social Context
EDTAG – Educational Technology Advancement Group
GTS – Good Teaching Score
LTIF – Learning and Teaching Investment Fund
L&T – Learning and Teaching
MAT – Media Annotation Tool
OSI – Overall Satisfaction Index
Ppd – Pebble Pad e-portfolio tool
REAP – RMIT E-learning Advancement Program
RMIT – Royal Melbourne University of Technology
SLC – Study and Learning Centre
SME – Small Manufacturing Enterprise
TD – Textile Design
TA&C – Textile Arts and Culture
TB&C – Textile Business and Careers
TS – Textile Studio
“Critical thinking, reflection and assessment of personal creative practice – e-portfolios and on-line learning tools”

**Project Description and Rationale:**

Textile designers are expected to develop a philosophical approach to their professional practice, and be able to communicate this to others. However, most textile design students struggle with verbal or written methods of communication, preferring visual forms of expression. They have difficulty in aligning the academic imperative for critical thinking and engagement with their assumptions about the ‘real world’ of design practice.

The challenge was to develop the necessary skills that students need to be able to professionally expound on their practice in order to attain recognition and experience, as well as capitalise on opportunities.

Within the BP 121 BA Textile Design second and third year program, we developed within the curriculum a series of activities incorporating the use of e-learning tools, including:

- Reflective blog entries, discussion boards and other activity
- Pebble Pad e-portfolio platform
- Media Annotation Tool (MAT)

The use of these tools / activities provided students with opportunities to develop an understanding of the forms of writing for professional practice, and allowed for a scaffolding effect in which the learning was acquired in a cumulative manner.

Given the somewhat independent, self-reflective and highly personal nature of this form of writing and creative practice, it was important to provide a supportive, flexible and instructive series of materials that allowed the student to develop drafts, refine and polish, and finally complete at least one professional piece of writing for public dissemination.

**Project Aims:**

The project focused on student engagement, aligned with the following graduate attributes:

- Work ready – through the acquisition and use of appropriate technology, embracing innovative problem solving and self management skills
- Active& lifelong learners – through taking personal responsibility, initiative and motivation for learning, application of critical reflection and analysis skills, and the creative application of knowledge and skills in meaningful and transformative ways.
- Innovative – through the open and flexible approach to developing discipline specific skills, and the investigation of creative thinking processes. Instigating an ongoing discourse around the challenges associated with effective design communication (including non-verbal / visual communication) in a medium that allows for the creation of visual and textual content
- Global in outlook and competence- through mobility and transferable skills as they apply to a graduate’s developing professional practice. Mobility and on-line communication skills are interconnected – graduates require a certain level of IT literacy in order to operate effectively

The nature of enhancing student engagement through active learning also incorporated the principles of the RMIT E-learning Advancement Program (REAP).

Specifically:

- Encouraging and extending student’s use of on-line environments, utilising the ‘safe’ environment of the RMIT space – this also leads into assessment considerations as well as equity and access issues
- Utilising a 24/7 “always available” forum to encourage prolific and stimulating exchange of ideas – “taking the classroom beyond the 4 walls”
- Encouraging students to practice reflective writing / journaling behaviour, supported by a series of guiding questions, prompts and themes, provided both in class and on-line.
Objectives:

To enable students within the TD program to develop a personal folio of creative work, as well as self-manage their academic performance, across their entire program of study. Adopting a learner centred approach, where students are able to engage with the process and see it as a meaningful activity linked to their professional development.

A key challenge for TD graduates is to develop and demonstrate the skills necessary to communicate effectively with other design practitioners, curators, funding bodies and awards panels. In short, students need to be able to professionally expound on their practice in order to attain recognition and experience, as well as to capitalise on further opportunities.

In order to ensure deeper learning outcomes for students, connections and reconnections between theory, ideas, experience and practice were interlinked / entwined throughout the entire course curriculum. The successful scaffolding of these meant that there were spaces created for unexpected changes in direction, new insights and innovations as students became better able to direct their own learning. The focus became less about content, and more about the process – the main objective being the fostering of metacognitive learning, which is critical to developing self-directed learners.

University / sector importance:

The project contributes to a growing body of work evidencing key attributes, goals and values espoused in the university’s Red Paper (Red Paper on RMIT’s Strategic Plan 2011 - 2015: Where Bold Hopes Can Be Realised) on the Strategic Plan (RMIT Strategic Plan 2015 Transforming the Future).

Key areas in which this project contributes include:

**Creative**

By seeking creative, imaginative and inventive solutions to curriculum development and achievement.

**Committed to Making a Difference**

By being directly relevant to the learning needs and developmental stages of the students, and also to the professional practices within the discipline specific context. Students were able to engage with the process and see it as a meaningful activity linked to their professional development.

**Connected**

Successful implementation of the project has created scope to extend beyond the BP121 program to serve as a model for other related discipline areas, and encourage ongoing collaboration between teams within RMIT. The project demonstrates an effective use of resources due to being completely ‘in-house’, utilising already existent RMIT resources, in an innovative way. That is, the integration of a range of on-line learning resources into a coherent curriculum package.
Project Outcomes and Impacts

Project outcomes –
Given the nature of the project focused on a whole of curriculum approach to enabling the development of key skills and attributes, as well as engaging in innovative ways with on-line learning technologies and platforms, the outcomes of this project were achieved in two key areas. Whilst a series of physical / digital artefacts were created, there were also less obvious, but perhaps more important, attitudinal shifts made within the student’s experience of the curriculum towards self-directed learning.

Key outcomes of the project included:
- The creation of a specific series of on-line and analog curriculum materials focused on developing reflective writing, analysis and creativity for Textile Design practice
- Ongoing development of Blackboard on-line learning activities and content in BP121 courses
- Implementation of the Pebble Pad e-portfolio platform in the BP121 program, specifically the use of blogs and webfolios to evidence, develop and communicate creative practice, and demonstrate key graduate attributes as they apply to the Textile Design discipline
- The ongoing development of the MAT tool to develop creative writing, analysis and communication skills (planned implementation in 2011)

Physical outcomes included:
Student Project & curriculum outcomes –
- Graduate show portfolios / artist statements / press releases & media coverage,
- Fair@square December 2010 presentation of the Conversations project (artist statements and student work),
- Apophenia exhibition project and outcomes, catalogue (printed and online versions)
- Generation of student blogs, folios and online materials
- Posters and banners for the School of Fashion and Textiles Graduate Exhibition, held at Moonee Valley Racecourse in November 2010

Professional presentation materials –
- ‘Using e-portfolios to enhance the student experience’, presentation as part of RMIT’s Learning and Teaching Expo Vision 2020: Challenging Changes, 2 September, and also to the Brunswick Learning and Teaching committee 20 October 2010
- ‘Global / Local- design for collaboration’, guest lecture presentation to students of the Graduate Certificate Tertiary Learning and Teaching, TCHE 2051 Internationalising the Curriculum course in early 2010.
- ‘Conversations’ i-movie for the Fair@Square fairtrade and ethical festival, held in December 2010 at Federation Square, Melbourne.

Learning and Teaching Artefacts –
- PebblePad exemplars - e-portfolios (individual student blogs, webfolios and collective project materials)
- Pdf presentations
- Course materials – learning activities, assessment rubrics and other tools

Impacts -
- Student engagement with online tools increased significantly
- Transition from teacher to learner-directed focus, as seen in the increase in student-led initiatives to communicate and promote creative outcomes and events
- Increased student engagement with reflective and creative writing processes, via the use of blogs and webfolios
Continued improvement in CES results, and student feedback to course lecturer.

**Approach and methodology**

A key focus from my own observations of the overall student experience in the creative disciplines, is the need to provide students with a sense of continuous / ongoing conversations beyond the conventional 3-hour class / lecture format. This generation of students are used to constant communication, instantaneous feedback and negotiation of deadlines, outcomes and the like. This is a far more fluid form of interaction than ‘traditional’ teaching models, and requires an innovative, inclusive and multi-faceted approach in order to engage and inspire the cohort of students.

These observations were supported by feedback from the student cohort, which identified the need to ensure multiple levels of engagement and discussion – alongside the ‘theory’ or lecture-based content, they wanted time to discuss and explore ideas and experience. Not only in the classroom environment, but also in a sophisticated, interactive on-line supported space. This recognition of the need for students to have multiple spaces and opportunities to devise, explore and direct their own learning, led to the structure of a flexible, responsive and creative curriculum.

In the case of the project, this requires the ability for students not only to engage with concepts and ideas within the ‘traditional’ classroom environment, but also ‘outside’ via independent, self-directed learning activities. Therefore, there is a need to incorporate within the learning and teaching plan an independent (on-line) space for students to explore and construct their own meaning based on their reflection and experimentation.

[See Appendix i: Student Blog entries, selected excerpts from 2010, Appendix ii: Student Blog entries responding to specific questions – feedback selected excerpts from 2010]:

Having knowledge of what matters to students based on their feedback, the team considered how to approach the facilitation of the learning experience. Exploring and developing the initial plan of approach included consideration of Barnett and Coates’ model (Barnett R. and Coate K, 2005) – Being Knowing Acting – as a touchstone for design of the curriculum. Reflections upon the various aspects of the model, and asking of the following questions informed the design:

- Am I allowing space for the learning (Knowing), modelling (Acting) and self-realisation / understanding (Being)?
- How will I structure the assessment for these activities to reflect the above three elements?
- Will I explicitly or implicitly expound on my intentions for the activity with my student group – to what extent?

The obvious answer was to create multiple opportunities / spaces for students to develop their understanding of the concepts and ideas in a cumulative manner.

The added challenge is to not only engage students with the critical design discourse, but to enable them to develop the habits of self-directed learners, in order to ensure they have the necessary professional skills required of design graduates and lifelong learners. The LTIF project incorporates a range of learning activities and resources, both online and ‘analogue’ (face to face) designed to maximize student’s opportunities to develop their learning in a cumulative or ‘holistic’ manner.

The design of the course curriculum, therefore, has to include additional / supplementary materials or interactive content, namely, discussion boards, collaborative Web folios and personal blogs. In addition to providing the students with another space in which to explore their own learning at their own pace, the content created in the online environment not only forms a key area of the assessment, but also provide ‘hard evidence’ of the student’s engagement and development.

[Appendix iii : Blogs and on-line discussions – selected guiding questions and lecturer content 2010, iv: GRAP2308, GRAP2349/50 Screen grabs – Web folios and collective projects in Pebble pad]
As listed in the Project Outcomes area of this report, a broad range of physical outcomes were created during the development and execution of the project. E-portfolio outcomes included collective and individual webfolios, blogs and other assets, of which selected exemplars have been collated into a presentation Webfolio located on the PebblePad Gateway. [Appendix v: Exemplars portfolio, Pebble Pad – selected screen grabs 2010].

Other artefacts arising from both the curriculum and independent, student-directed activities included media releases, posters, marketing information and presentations, many of which were widely disseminated throughout the RMIT community and the broader public. In TB&C in particular, the ‘analog’ and ‘digital’ curriculum project activities culminated in the production of materials for the final year degree show, including individual artist statements, banners and catalogue [Appendix vi: Apophenia RMIT BA Textile Design opening invitation, Media Release and coverage, other marketing outcomes]

Given that several key aims of the project were those of collaboration, inclusion and innovation, namely, to provide opportunities for students to develop their own creative outcomes, it is not surprising that some elements of the planned curriculum were amended and adjusted throughout the duration. This flexibility within the curriculum allowed for more timely responses to students’ learning needs and stages, and also for managing unforeseen delays in implementation and delivery of some of the project resources. In particular, delays to the implementation of the Media Annotation Tool (MAT) meant that this aspect of the project was postponed. Whilst students were not introduced to this particular tool in 2010, ongoing development of the resource is continuing with the intent to trial and implement within the curriculum in 2011. The Media Annotation Tool currently under development also has the potential to interact with both Blackboard and Pebble Pad, allowing students to develop a series of artefacts to support their e-portfolio content and learning activities

Similarly, the original project proposal allowed for an administration role to support the project leader. When it was recognised early in the project that such a role was not required, the opportunity arose to fund the involvement of a Learning Skills Advisor, Annalea Beattie, to co-develop and facilitate targeted workshops and on-line learning activities that ultimately contributed another level of sophistication and integration to the project.

How the project uses and advances existing knowledge with reference to strategic priorities, previous LTIF (or other) projects and literature

As discussed earlier, the project was strategically aligned with the attributes, goals and values espoused in the university’s Strategic Plan (RMIT Strategic Plan 2015 Transforming the Future), namely: Creative, Committed to Making a Difference, and Connected. Also, the project engaged with current projects in the areas of Learning and Teaching (DSC and DVC), and strategic initiative projects including REAP (e-portfolios, MAT).

Pedagogically the project was positioned on constructivist approaches to learning and teaching, with a key belief in the need to scaffold activities and opportunities that encourage students to transition from the ‘supported silo’ of the university environment into the ‘real world’ with habits of self-directed, lifelong learning. Adopting Kolb’s Experiential Learning Cycle as an initial model (Kolb 1984), the curriculum was designed to incorporate a range of activities in which students were engaged a continuous cycle of experience, reflection, conceptualization / theorization and experimentation in order to develop a deeper understanding of the material. In this case, the ability to not only engage with concepts and ideas within the ‘analog’ classroom environment, but also ‘outside’ as an independent learning experience, via use of the online tools. This approach is further supported by statements in the literature discussing the student’s experience of the curriculum as difficult to “…disentangle in a neat fashion…” (Barnett and Coate 2005 p. 54), such
complexity suggests that the curriculum itself needs to be “…dynamic and in flux…encouraging the formation of human wherewithal that is adequate to an age of fluidity…” (Barnett and Coate p. 51). Weimer (2002) discusses the focus of academia on students to take responsibility for their own learning, to develop the habits of self-direction and lifelong engagement, however emphasises that this must be taught, not assumed to be knowledge acquired via osmosis (pp15-19). Hence, student’s experience of the curriculum and content was that in which, regardless of ‘where’ (e.g. online or in-class), they had active engagement in shaping the ‘what’ and ‘why’ in order to better understand how they learned. A measure of the project’s success was its flexibility to allow students to transform the use of the tools to better serve their own learning needs and agendas.

**Amenable implementation of outcomes in a variety of programs and contexts within the university and/or beyond.**

As outlined in the Project Description and Objectives, there is potential to apply both the approach and outcomes to other creative discipline areas, within the university and perhaps beyond. Given that the activities and outcomes developed within this project are focused on integrating critical thinking, reflection and assessment of personal creative practice, it is possible that some areas within the creative arts and design disciplines may find this model easiest to adopt. Developing a student centred, flexible curriculum model, integrating a range of tools and learning activities that are in themselves able to be adapted to suit individual needs as well as incorporating discipline specific requirements, is an approach that is not limited to one area.

E-portfolios and other online resources enable students to develop an ongoing body of evidence substantiating their learning, professional skills and capabilities, and also the more broader graduate attributes espoused by the institution. More importantly, the interactive capabilities inherent within the PebblePad format ensures that this folio of ‘artefacts’ is not merely a ‘digital repository’, but rather, an evolving, personalised resource. However, the use of e-portfolios and online resources needs to be ‘embedded within, not bolted on’, to ensure it is a meaningful experience for students, and activities and content must be of relevance to the discipline area. As has been emphasised in this report, the focus should be on a whole of curriculum strategy, rather than that of a ‘quick fix widget’.
Dissemination Strategies and Outputs

Dissemination of the projects' progress and outcomes began in 2010, with involvement in various presentations, seminars and expos at RMIT. Beginning with a presentation at the Learning and Teaching Expo Vision 2020: Challenging Changes RMIT University 2 September 2010, entitled ‘Using e-portfolios to enhance the student experience’, not only the work in progress but also the insights gained have been shared with my peers in the academy. It is proposed that some of the final outcomes of this project be submitted for inclusion in the 2011 Learning and Teaching Expo, to showcase the potential for creative disciplines to engage with e-portfolios within the curriculum.

Artefacts generated by both the project team and students have also been presented to the broader public, including digital presentations of creative works and writing at a series of events towards the end of 2010. One such example of this was the creation of a short i-movie for the Fair@Square fairtrade and ethical festival, held in December 2010 at Federation Square, Melbourne. Entitled ‘Conversations’, the i-movie documented a collaborative industry project with Fairtrade and Moral Fairground, creating digitally printed conversational prints that engaged with the multidimensional aspects of sustainability, showing development of artwork and ideas and translation into digitally printed fashion fabrics. Key text, imagery and artwork generated by students, was translated into the i-Movie format for presentation on the main screen and stage, accompanied by the fabrics. Students were also interviewed on stage by blogger Lady Melbourne, allowing for a strong combination of the digital and physical aspects of public presentation. [Appendix vii: Conversations project outcomes]

Other public presentations of artefacts generated by the project also included exhibitions of graduate work, such as the School of Fashion and Textiles Graduate Exhibition, held at Moonee Valley Racecourse in November 2010, and Apophenia, an independent exhibition by the graduates of the BA Textile Design program at Forty-five Downstairs, Flinders Lane Melbourne in December 2010. [Appendix vi: Apophenia RMIT BA Textile Design opening invitation, Media Release and coverage, other marketing]

For both exhibitions, students utilised the creative writing developed throughout the project to present an artist statement accompanying their individual works. For the Moonee Valley event, these statements were incorporated into a marketing banner for each student, containing digital images of their work, the statement and also business cards and contact details. These banners were designed according to a template devised by the students themselves, which had been discussed, developed and trialled in a collaborative Webfolio in PebblePad.

The final exhibition, Apophenia, was a key focus of activities for the year, with students utilising the online environment to coordinate and manage the development of a complete media package. Beginning with a collaborative Webfolio in PebblePad, students worked individually and in teams to generate media release statements, key imagery, catalogue and invitations, artist statements and administration tasks. Working in this format ensured that all stages of the project were documented and represented in a dynamic and creative manner. Not only was this useful for learning and teaching purposes, but it also allowed for the final promotional materials and media to be easily distributed to relevant outlets. Students were able to access, update and document these interactions within a secure environment.

Alongside the expected media such as presentation pdfs and other downloadable materials, the printed catalogue package (and invitation) was the key physical outcome for students.

It is also anticipated that future dissemination of this project’s outcomes will be achieved via a link on the RMIT Textile Design homepage including key imagery, a copy of the executive summary or version appropriate for program marketing purposes, project leader’s contact details, and finally a link to RMIT Learning and Teaching / LTIF website.
Given the rich resource created by the project, there is the intention to develop a paper for contribution to a suitable academic journal article, to be submitted in 2011.

**Linkages**

As discussed in the Dissemination Strategies and Outputs area of this report, many linkages were established during the course of the project’s design and implementation. Key connections with the Educational Technology Advancement Group (EDTAG) enabled the use of existing and development of new online tools such as MAT and PebblePad to support the project’s aims. Participation in the university’s e-Portfolio Project Review Reference Group throughout 2010, and evaluation seminar in November 2010, was a direct result of the project leader’s engagement with this unit.

Ongoing ties with the Learning and Teaching Unit (at both College and University level) were further developed, with support from key individuals at various stages throughout the project. This involvement led to presentations of the curriculum project and tools as part of the Learning and Teaching Expo Vision 2020: Challenging Changes in September 2010, to the Brunswick campus Learning and Teaching Committee in October 2010, and also to students of the Graduate Certificate Tertiary Learning and Teaching, TCHE 2051 Internationalising the Curriculum course in early 2010.

Elements of the LTIF project activities were also linked to an ongoing DSC project; *Using peer learning and assessment tools to make learning and assessing the creative process more explicit for Art and Design students*. The project coordinated by DSC Senior Advisors, Learning and Teaching, Kylie Budge and Angela Clarke, involved the project leader, Claire Beale, BA Textile Design Lecturer Emma Lynas, and School of Art Senior Lecturers Dr Robin Kingston and Dominic Redfern.
Evaluation of project outcomes

Formative evaluation processes for used for measuring project outcomes included the following:

- Course Evaluation Survey (CES) results for 2009 – 2010, both raw data and student feedback / comments

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<th>Semester 2 2009</th>
<th>Semester 1 2010</th>
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*NB Team Teaching both years, course co-ordination role 2010 only

From the raw data it is obvious that in most cases the change in methodology and approach resulted in increased student satisfaction outcomes from 2009 (prior to the implementation of the project) and 2010. Additionally, from Semester 1 – 2 in complementary courses (GRAP2349 & 2350), both GTS and OSI scores improved. Given that the introduction of new online tools such as the PebblePad platform may involve an element of risk (particularly for first time users), the improved results suggests that if done correctly, i.e. in a supported, scaffolded manner, such risk may be managed. In student’s written feedback, there is a noticeable attitudinal shift between first and second semesters – some students found the transition from teacher to learner directed focus difficult, and were not able to see the relevance of the on-line activities (i.e. blogs). In the second semester, some of these same students were enthused and inspired, commenting on how they felt prepared to promote themselves and their work to a wider audience via the process of blogging and developing their creative writing skills.

What is also gratifying is that although PebblePad was not explicitly used in the Textile Studio course, many students used the blog to reflect on their overall learning experiences and project outcomes. [Appendix i: Student Blog entries, selected excerpts from 2010]

- Guiding questions linked to student blog entries seeking feedback on L&T activities, project design and execution [Appendix ii: Student Blog entries responding to specific questions – feedback from selected blog excerpts 2010]

Key outcomes from the blogging experience included increased engagement with reflective and creative writing processes, increased confidence and capability in communicating ideas and concepts, and a deeper level of awareness of personal learning styles. Many students reported a growing sense of empowerment and achievement as they progressed through the project.

- MAT tool development and progress. As noted in the Project Outcomes and Impacts, Methodology section of this report, delays to the roll out of the MAT tool (due to some technical / development issues) meant that this element of the project was not implemented within the curriculum in 2010. However, early stage experimentation and development of the tool by the project team has been undertaken, with the intention to trial with the student cohort in 2011. [Appendix x: MAT tool development examples]
References


Green W, Hammer S, and Starr C, 'Facing up to the challenge: why is it so hard to develop graduate attributes?' in Higher Education and Research Development, 28 pp. 17-29


RMIT University (2010), RMIT Strategic Plan 2015 Transforming the Future, retrieved February 8 2011 from http://www.rmit.edu.au/browse;ID=5ryaybz9c0qe


Weimer, M (2002), Learner-centred teaching. Five Key changes to Practice, Jossey-Bass: San Francisco
Appendix

Appendix i: Student Blog entries, selected excerpts from 2010:

"...So, hurrah, it seems that I've finally stumbled on the white rabbit hole that is the world of Pebble Pad bloggage. I've convinced myself that I'm going to fall in love with it, and I suspect I will - I'm such a sucker for any kind of reflective journal work and literary procrastination that it might just become one of the most addictively dangerous habits arounds..."

"...I've been talking about this blog idea with the man. Gawd, what's wrong with me - I just don't want to do it unless I have a really strong purpose. A website would be really beneficial, or even a folio as a blogspot but a regular spill the beans blog...? I know Beci Orpin says it's one of her key tools of promotion but but but BUT...ooooh, we'll see..."

"...While I don't think I used the blog to its full potential this semester, the practice has actually reiterated its relevance. I have started many diaries in my life with enthusiasm that slowly disappeared. But with a blog, I have realized, is really about defining yourself. The ability to add images and realistically move from topic to topic is quite amazing. While you have a theme there are no real rules as such. The process almost chips away those “identity” insecurities, you have a tangible “thing” that is essentially...you. The fact that you can then share that with others is quite amazing..."

"...I did utilize the guided question, which helped me to create the entries. I have to admit that my maintenance was quite sporadic...tending to be rough dot points that were then expanded on. However, as mentioned, the penny has dropped, I can see how a blog, with a personalized format can be a really creative practice. I think it would be quite painstaking to get cracking but, if I could establish a consistent practice, very rewarding..."

"...Finally, for Business and Careers, I'd like to look at this subject as the place where I can reflect and build upon everything else that is going on in (and out) of the classroom and look at it as a means of really building myself up to make that transition from student to future professional. It's really easy to get swept up in particular projects that we're given at any time and I think that this Business and Careers subject will really help in terms of looking at the bigger picture and allowing for everything to be seen in context. I'm excited to WRITE! I've always enjoyed writing but there's never been a huge emphasis on it in this course..."

"...The blog is a really good way of reflecting on what you actually think about everything that we are doing and also looking into the future at what we hope to achieve...Through the blogs it has helped me to recognize more about my personal style and look to ways that I can improve on areas that I'm not so confident. By committing thoughts to text it really makes you think and reflect on what all we are learning is about..."

"...Focusing on this blog now, I guess the main theme running throughout all of the blog entries I have written so far is to do with where I find inspiration, what inspires me as a textile designer and what I plan to do in the future. The world of textiles really excites me. I really enjoyed answering the first question 'What inspires me as a Textile Designer?'. I found this question really made me think about my life as an individual and the experiences I have had so far, both good and bad. This question made me think about why I am doing what I am doing today, living in Melbourne and studying Textile Design at RMIT. I guess overall, this blog had made me think about life, the work I am currently working and has made me realise that everything in life is linked. Nothing is separate..."
Critical thinking, reflection and assessment of personal creative practice – e-portfolios and on-line learning tools

In order to facilitate the implementation of this approach to self-directed learning, a series of guiding questions were developed and posted on the course Blackboard, and also in the exemplar Blog on the PebblePad Gateway. Based on the reflective reporting process of previous years, and building on the weekly class discussion / activities undertaken, the prompts allowed students to respond in a focused manner to their experiences, and reflect upon their own development throughout the course. As each semester progressed, less specific guiding content is posted, with the expectation that the students would direct their own reflective writing activity.

Appendix ii : Student Blog entries responding to specific questions – feedback from selected blog excerpts 2010

- Do you think the class activities are assisting your group in develop the project? How and why / why not?

  “…This was a useful exercise, it took us away from our safe do-whatever-you-like uni world and gave us a bit of a kick from reality. Yes we are finishing soon, and where can we go next? Well one thing which was constantly reinforced was blogging. The technological world of today cannot get enough of it, and it has become really important for getting your work out there….”

  “…I think the work we do at uni is pretty good training for the workplace, well at least for ***. I know I didn’t really get to do all things I really wanted, but I did feel quite competent in doing everything they asked me and had they have asked me to do something I felt confident that I would have an idea on how to at least start it…The main difference I suppose is what we talked about in class, which was about not having to do as much back up work or research. But obviously these things are learning tools, and once you’re in the industry you still go through the process but its much quicker and there is less work because you don’t have to prove your process to anybody…”

- Was the blog helpful in developing your own creative writing - e.g did you use some of your blog entries to create your artist statement?

  “…Hmmm, good question… I don’t remember consciously using any of the information written in the blog for the artist’s statement but there’s a good chance some of the same territory was covered as far as general writing goes, I think it has been useful to have a continuous outlet for unleashing all those notions an ideas that often need to be put into words before you can make full sense of them…I don’t know how other people go about it but when I write these blogs it’s pretty much a direct stream of conscious thought being tapped directly onto a keyboard. All rabbity-rabble-blabbety-blah. For the artist’s statement I found it was the opposite, a calculated, gruelling back and forth back and forth mission, trying to find just the right words without coming across like a twit… actually maybe there is a bit of creativity required for that…”

  “…Learning about free writing has helped make writing more enjoyable as well as made it a bit easier. It’s funny because some of the methods Annalea has taught us are similar to methods I learnt in drawing that completely changed the way I draw. I learnt to edit later in drawing but never thought to apply it to other areas of creativity. I’ve also found that even though you learn better ways to do things, it’s easy to go back to your old habits and sometimes you need to be reminded that there’s a better way. When I do apply what I’ve learnt writing becomes so much easier and I don’t sit there staring at the same sentence for ages….”

- Were your weekly entries developed from your own ideas, or did you work to the guiding questions?

  “…As we can see from the fact that I don’t even bother deleting the questions, I bounce straight
off these bad boys. I did actually take a more independent approach for the handful of entries that went into the ‘juicys’ blog because I was trying to treat that as more of a personal project than a uni project but even then I didn’t stray far from what was going on at school. Maybe when I make the transition from blogging as an assessable requirement to blogging for gigs it will take on a completely new form….

• How often did you maintain your blog - was this easy or difficult? Did you enjoy the process?

“…Erm. Pretty much it would get to a point every few weeks where I’d go “eff, I’m meant to be keeping a blog”, and that’s when I’d drop a bulky load of brain vomit onto a word doc. It’s not too difficult, and yes, I actually do quite enjoy it. I must say though, while I’m here, I think that one of the most curious things about being told to write a blog is that you are given completely free reign to have an indulgent one-sided conversation, that somebody is forced to sort of ‘witness’ without being able to interrupt. It’s quite a funny thing to have this space to be able to talk talk talk, without anybody else introducing new topics to bounce off…”

• What worked best for you - uploading images / sketches and documents, or writing around 300 words a week? Were your entries a mix, or did you prefer one format to communicate your ideas?

“…My entries are bland as they come. I get onto blackboard, I open the blog page, I copy and paste the latest question into a word document, then I go through the questions one by one and tyyyyyype, then I go into pebble pad and do the ol’ copy pastey. I can’t really see the point in uploading sketches etc. here because there’s so much of that going on every other aspect of assessment. For the more personal blog I definitely found it helpful to provide visual aids, picture tells a thousand words etc. but that’s because I was honing in on specific things, as opposed to simply venting. Hmm. It’s just occurred to me that this probably means I’m not doing a very good job of this blog thing, it never even occurred to me to ‘communicate ideas’ here, I just wanted to bitch about stuff…”

• Did you need regular feedback to help maintain your momentum? Do you think you would benefit from having a ‘buddy’ from within your peer group to work with in blogging, or do you think you'd prefer the 'private space'? How might this affect your writing?

“…I haven’t really craved any feedback for this... If there was to be a situation where I buddied up with another student, then it would be a compleeetely different blog. I’d actually try to offer up interesting things to share and would probably work to a more inspired theme as opposed to just writing about the blog, which is pretty much all I do in these blogs, blog about the fact that I’m blogging, see, I’m doing it right now. Blog, blog, blog…”

• Would you continue keeping a reflective journal or blog after you graduate? How may it be useful to you in your creative practice?

“…I was about to start saying (in the previous answer) that I quite like the idea of a collaborative creative blog, but would want to be involved in it as part of a ‘life’ project, not something wherein I reflect about my progress at school. No doubt multiple heads are often better than one. I suppose it comes down to what sort of blog it was as well, if it was the kind of thing where you shared the interesting bits of secondary information that you stumble across from day to day then certainly the more the merrier in terms of content. On the other hand, if it was more a tool for self-promotion it might be worth going it alone… It seems that these days it’s pretty much a given that if you create things, you blog about them, so depending on how I go as a designer/illustrator/ maker/ whatever after graduation, I’m sure it will be an invaluable way of putting myself out there and promoting my work…”
Critical thinking, reflection and assessment of personal creative practice – e-portfolios and on-line learning tools

- Promoting the Individual: Week 1 & 2 Guiding Questions - Reflect back on the exercise completed in first semester:

  “…Is it cheating if I do a cheeky little ‘copy/pastey’ job on the first section of this blog entry? I’ve just had a quick gander over my first blog entry from semester 1. It’s quite curious reading over something that was written and forgotten about so many months ago, I almost felt as though I was reading an interview with a stranger…”

Appendix iii : Blogs and on-line discussions – selected guiding questions and lecturer content 2010

Blog entry (Pebble pad + Blackboard Blogs area) 05 March 2010 - Friday's Blog
Working out the ways in which we talk about our work.....Part 1 - getting the brain limbered up
This morning we had a conversation Monday's 'Day of Chaos', and Thursday's Colour Palette workshop.
Having thought about your response to the two different activities, use your blog to reflect on the following questions:
* How do you get inspired?
* How do you work?
* What are you passionate about?
Make a list of words that are important to you as a designer or that may describe your work. These may form the start of a design and critique vocabulary that is personal to you.

Blog entry (Pebble pad + Blackboard Blogs area) 12 March 2010 - Review of today’s’ field trip - NGV international
This week, we are thinking about the connections between our emerging practice and the exhibitions experience.

Which exhibition did you think was most useful to you as a textile designer, and why?
What particular work, concept or idea appealed most to you? Why?
Explore the reasons why this resonated with you - was it a textile artefact, a specific detail, or more broadly, an idea, theme or concept?
When describing your response to the work, think about the language you are using - is it about an emotional connection, or is it an appreciation of the technique and materials themselves? Perhaps it’s a mix of both?

How / will this relate to the work you are currently undertaking in Studio or Design?

Blog entry (Pebble pad + Blackboard Blogs area) 22 March 2010 - Week 3 - Developing a discourse - Guiding Questions
This week we began developing a series of questions / thoughts around the purpose of exhibition visits and critiques.
In 2 groups, we brainstormed the following two questions:
1. What is the purpose for the visit / critique?
2. How does it related to Me and My Practice?
What is your view of these questions? Will they help you in focusing on the two different activities?
Remember we began to draw up a table for each are - one for the visit, the other for the critique.
Try creating your own and filling it in for yourself.

In the lecture, you were also introduced to some new terms. As discussed, how you understand and interpret these will influence how you use them in your analytical discussions. Try writing your own definition of each of the following (this may require some research):
- Ornamental
- Originality
- Chiaroscuro
- Cultural experience
- Paradigm
- Iconic / Iconography
- Artisan / Craft
- Context
- Aesthetics
Gaining a handle on the meaning of these terms will assist you in framing your style of Critique & engage with the ongoing Dialogue / Discourse

**Blog entry (Pebble pad + Blackboard Blogs area) 30 April 2010: Week 8 - What have you been doing?**

For the two entries covering Weeks 7 & 8, it’s time to have a little fun and look about ourselves.

* What are you reading? Watching? Doing?

Reflect on those activities you have been doing ‘for fun’ or out of interest - are they intrinsic to your developing sense of practice?

E.g. are the everyday things we engage in fundamental to our work, ideas, and inspiration as a designer?

**Blog entry (Pebble pad + Blackboard Blogs area) 29 July 2010 - I Blog therefore I am?**

Reflect back on the exercise completed in first semester:

Find 10 words to describe yourself using the following questions, reflect, discuss and write about them with a handy flatmate / long suffering family member:


For the upcoming workshop with Annalea Beattie, you are to prepare the following:

* Select all the work from the past year that you feel best demonstrates your individual style. Do you have a particular area of interest that is evident in your work - for example, are you into conceptual ideas or product outcomes?

* Make a list of 10 words that are important to you as a designer, describe you and / or your work. Once you have the key words, concepts or themes that really resonate, you can begin to draft your philosophy statement. Be clear on what your aesthetic, ethos and interests are - these will all inform your ‘Personal Take’.

This week’s blog should also include a review of your progress so far and planning for your activities across the remainder of the year (remember, it’s about you taking charge of your own learning):

* Are there any gaps that haven’t been covered yet? * What are you going to do to ensure you gain this knowledge or develop the particular skill set required? * In what timeframe? How are you going to measure your success?

**Notes from the brief:**

Within the blog, you should develop a ‘job seeking strategy’ or ‘learning plan’ outlining your intended career path and plan for securing a role in the Textile Industry after graduation. Resources such as contact lists, company information and other materials, as well as a timeline for activity should be included – this plan may begin from the first week of the project. Consider the initial discussions in class regarding setting your goals and planning for future learning and development.
Critical thinking, reflection and assessment of personal creative practice – e-portfolios and on-line learning tools

[Appendix iv: GRAP2308, GRAP2349/50 Screen grabs – Web folios and collective projects in Pebble pad]

(Image: Student timeline activity – generating a timeline and presenting the concept in a creative manner stage 3 Final outcome - 28.5.10)

(Image: Student work – ‘Collective Resource’ Webfolio (shared / collaborative) created in Pebble pad e-portfolio platform - 28.5.10)
“Critical thinking, reflection and assessment of personal creative practice – e-portfolios and on-line learning tools”

(Image: Student work – Detail from ‘WIL Webfolio’ created in Pebble pad e-portfolio platform-11.6.10)

(Image: Student work – Detail from ‘Collective Identity’ Webfolio (shared / collaborative) created in Pebble pad e-portfolio platform)
Critical thinking, reflection and assessment of personal creative practice – e-portfolios and on-line learning tools

[Appendix v: Exemplars portfolio, Pebble Pad – selected screen grabs 2010]

(Image: Exemplars webfolio – introductory notes to the on-line resource created in Pebble pad e-portfolio platform)

(Image: Exemplars webfolio – lecturer templates resource created in Pebble pad e-portfolio platform)
"Critical thinking, reflection and assessment of personal creative practice – e-portfolios and on-line learning tools"

Claire Beale 22/06/11 24

(Image: Exemplars webfolio – Lecturer blog resource created in Pebble pad e-portfolio platform)

15 October 2010

Winding up the projects - Collective Identity & Promoting the Individual

Congratulations, you are now in the final stages of the year! It’s time to wrap up all your loose ends, making sure that you have completed the blogs component of each project. Weekly guiding questions have been focused towards either Collective Identity or Promoting the Individual - this is how you will be assessed for content in your blog, e.g. I will be looking for specific entries related to the group project to form the 10%. These are specified in blockward under the ‘blog’ section.

Your final project - Promoting the Individual - asked you to respond to weekly guiding questions, and also to consider either establishing a blog in the ‘real world and’ or blogpost or wordpress, or creating a ‘draft’ version in Pebble Pad. This may consist of a couple of entries within the blog that you ‘blog’ as those to be put into a public space, or you may create a whole new blog and link it.

Looking back on your experiences across the semester, consider the following questions:

* Was the blog helpful in developing your own creative writing - e.g did you use some of your blog entries to create your artist statement?
* Were your weekly entries developed from your own ideas, or did you work to the guiding questions?
* How often did you maintain your blog - was this easy or difficult? Did you enjoy the process?
* What worked best for you - upposting images / sketches and documents, or writing around 300 words a week? Were your entries a mix, or did you prefer one format to communicate your ideas?
* Did you need regular feedback to help publish your work? Do you think you would benefit from having a ‘public’ form within your peer group to work with in blogging, or do you think you’d prefer the private space? How might this affect your writing?
* Would you continue keeping a reflective journal or blog after you graduate? How may it be useful to you in your creative practice?

(Image: Exemplars Webfolio – student collective projects examples resource created in Pebble pad e-portfolio platform)
“Critical thinking, reflection and assessment of personal creative practice – e-portfolios and on-line learning tools”

(Image: Exemplars webfolio – L&T assets exemplars (.mpeg / iMovie clips) part of the Pebble pad e-portfolio platform)

(Image: Exemplars webfolio – Presentation tools created as part of the Pebble pad e-portfolio platform)
Apophenia

Apophenia invites you to enter a new environment where the language of textiles is interwoven through a series of creative explorations. Said to be a symptom of creativity and madness, Apophenia is the spontaneous perception of pattern.

This exhibition is a multi-disciplinary exploration of a textile based story. Challenging the definitions
of conventional fabric and investigating the crossover between a textile world that embraces other art and design forms. Intimate assemblages and larger collaborative pieces highlight the strength and artisan skills of those involved. These emerging artists from RMIT BA Textile Design utilise traditional techniques such as knit, weave and print showcased alongside illustration, digital media, and other constructed methods.

Make the journey down the stairs and enter a world where the white space is transformed. Lend your hand to an evolving illustration, which will grow across the gallery walls throughout the week.

Venue- forty five downstairs, 45 Flinders Lane, Melbourne
When- Tuesday 30th November to Saturday 4th December
Hours- 11am to 5pm Tuesday to Friday, Saturday 12pm to 4pm

www.fortyfivedownstairs.com

Invite text edit: (for limited space, if not all the above text will fit)

Apophenia invites you to enter a new environment where the language of textiles is interwoven through a series of creative and multi-disciplinary explorations. Said to be a symptom of creativity and madness, Apophenia is the spontaneous perception of pattern. Emerging artists from RMIT BA Textile Design employ traditional techniques such as knit, weave and print showcased alongside illustration, digital media, and other constructed methods. Challenging the definitions of conventional fabric and investigating the crossover between a textile world that embraces other art and design forms. Intimate assemblages and larger collaborative pieces highlight the strength and artisan skills of those involved.

(Text: Apophenia press release)

(Image: Apophenia promotional i-movie – showcasing student folios)
“Critical thinking, reflection and assessment of personal creative practice –
e-portfolios and on-line learning tools”

Casting off the predictable

APOPHENIA is the discovery of patterns or meaning in random or unrelated data. Taking on that idea in their final exhibition of the year, RMIT textile students – with work ranging from knitting to digital media – have investigated the link between textiles and art. Visitors to the Apo-
phenia exhibition can add their own artistic skills to the existing illustration on the gallery’s walls. 
11am-5pm, fortyfive downstairs, 45 Rinders Lane, city, free, 9622 5966.
fortyfive downstairs.com

(Image: The Age, 30/11/10 as provided by DSC marketing)

RMIT 2010 Textile Design exhibition catalogue

Creativity and madness, Apophenia is the spontaneous perception of pattern.
The exploration of a textile based story, challenging the definitions of conventional fabric. Artists
explore traditional techniques, knit, weave, print are showcased alongside illustration, digital
media, and other constructed methods.
Opening night video

(Image: RMIT Textile Design website http://www.rmit.edu.au/browse;ID=l62jr6v1k60pyz)
“Critical thinking, reflection and assessment of personal creative practice – e-portfolios and on-line learning tools”

(Image: Jessica Njoo, webmovie of Apophenia opening night http://vimeo.com/17512512)

[Appendix vii: Conversations project outcomes]

(Image: Conversations i-movie presented at Fair@Square fairtrade and ethical festival, December 2010)
'Critical thinking, reflection and assessment of personal creative practice – e-portfolios and on-line learning tools'

[Appendix x: MAT tool development examples]

(Image: Mat tool development – annotation of short i-movie & image files)
“Critical thinking, reflection and assessment of personal creative practice – e-portfolios and on-line learning tools”