Learning and Teaching Investment Fund 2011

Final Project Report

Submission date: March 2012

Title of project: By Design : New curriculum for an Urban, Global and Connected Future

Strategic objective(s) addressed:

Urban / Global / Connected

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1. Executive summary

The School of Design TAFE commenced the implementation of the first phase of its strategic plan (academic) 2012 – 2015 to develop a suite of Associate Degree qualifications in design disciplines offered by the School.

The high performing design discipline areas of, Interior Decoration and Design, Visual Merchandising and Graphic Design were identified as areas well positioned for the advent of associate degree qualifications for their related professions and industries.

The strategic direction was presented and discussed with the allied and aligned industry groups and higher education colleagues within the University. The reaction and response received were both positive and supportive with feedback and contributions used to inform the development process for the new Associate Degrees being proposed and for the major change to the existing program in Design (Furniture).

The programs are being progressed for full program approval with program guides and course guides developed for each of the Associate Degrees.

2. A list of outcomes

Proposals to develop three new Associate Degree programs relating to disciplines in design were prepared, including the strategic plan and business case for each. The program proposals for the new programs were presented to, and approved by, the VCE in mid-December 2011.

New Associate Degree Programs:

AD020 Associate Degree in Interior Decoration and Design
AD021 Associate Degree in Visual Merchandising
AD022 Associate Degree in Graphic Design

At the same time a proposal for a major change to an existing Associate Degree was also prepared and submitted for approval by the VCE also approved in mid-December 2011.

AD007 Associate Degree in Design (Furniture)

Consultation with the related industries and associations in each of the discipline areas was facilitated through the Program Advisory Groups within the School. The response from the industry groups and professional associations was one of support for the new initiative. All feedback was acknowledged and considered providing a significant contribution to the design and development of the programs.
Consultation with higher education colleagues through conversations and discussions progressed the understanding of the position and nature of the new Associate Degree qualifications. In all cases the mood was one of support for the new qualifications with early conversations occurring in regard to pathways and articulation arrangements that will be negotiated or re-aligned once the programs are fully approved. A general enthusiasm was evident in relation to the prospect of potential areas of collaboration envisaged that would provide an enhanced and rich experience for both students and staff.

In developing the program proposals advice was sought from other areas within the University with experience of developing Associate Degrees. A number of sessions with personalities who had direct and recent experience were conducted and the support / advice given was valuable in regard to effectively and efficiently progressing the project. The relationships remain and we hope will prove to be collegiate into the future.

3. Project outcomes and impacts

The consultation and conversations with industry were conducted on several levels, primarily through the School Program Advisory Committees and focus groups.

The original proposal was to include the Product Design discipline within the School as an area well positioned to take advantage from the development of an Associate Degree for the area. The focus group for the area presented as quite divided as to the position of the graduates that would present from the program to the industry. Industrial design graduates emerge into the same industry sector and clarification was required as to the role the graduates from each of the programs would perform within the industry. This emerged as an area that required greater investigation and analysis and given the context of the timeline required for a program proposal it was decided to postpone the submission until a complete investigation could be carried out. The intention is to proceed with the strategy should the results of the investigation provide a clear direction.

As the project progressed through the phases of consultation with industry and higher education counterparts several key considerations evolved that moved away from the premise of first semester common course architecture across the new programs:

- The 2 year duration of the Associate Degree
- Concern from industry as to how we maintain the vocational focus and work ready graduates together with capabilities and knowledge requirements at AQF level 6 given the 2 year
duration was the same as the previous Diplomas that serviced the professions/industries.

It was acknowledged by the program developers that each program would be designed to align with and maintain relevance and integrity for both the academic and industry requirements. As the program developed the intention to have inter-connections across the program moved from the first semester to shared elective areas across the programs that would advantage the students as areas of specialisation. This aspect will be further developed as the programs are approved and implemented.

- The major change to the Associate Degree in Design (Furniture) is currently being implemented for the 2012 first year students and feedback will be sought from students and staff as to the impact of the changes.

4. Dissemination strategies and outputs

The program proposals developed were considered to be of extremely high quality and may be useful as exemplars for use by others with the university needing to go through this process.

Experiences have already begun to be shared through the RMIT Associate Degree network group and VETLink forums specifically focussing on Associate Degrees being developed within the university and by our competitors.

5. Evaluation of project outcomes

As the aim of the project was to develop proposals for a suite of Associate Degree programs the process, documentation and resultant approval for development is the primary evidence.

Success is evidenced by the four (4) program proposals being approved by VCE.

Other related and beneficial outcomes were as follows:

- Knowledge development of the nature and position of the Associate Degree qualification in the tertiary landscape.

- The evolution of a core team of people in the School with the understanding of Associate Degrees and the process required for development and approval.

- Development of existing and new relationships with both industry and professional Associations with particular focus on Associate Degrees as qualification.

- Engagement of program teams in developing an understanding of the Associate Degree qualification and the pedagogical
points of differentiation between AQF levels either side ie. Advanced Diploma and Degree.

- Potential for further collaboration opportunities with higher education counterparts is positive and has great potential.

- Potential to develop shared electives across the three (3) new Associate Degrees to facilitate the opportunity for diversity and or specialisation for the students will be pursued as the programs are further developed.

- Engagement with the wider university activity around the Associate Degree as a qualification has enriched the understanding and stimulated a rigorous discourse for the core group within the School of Design TAFE.

6. Budget report

- The amount of funds approved for the project $19,000.00
- Final amount of funds acquitted $3,435.88

A financial statement (in PDF), signed by the team leader and relevant Finance Manager of acquittal of funds must be attached to the report. It should include a statement of income and expenditure against the budget categories specified in the approved project proposal. Please consult your Finance Manager for further information.

7. Appendices

a. Financial Statement

**Submitting the Final LTIF Project Report**

- Please follow the headings listed above.
- Please save the report in Microsoft Word using the following formula: team leader's surname_College_LTIF2011_finreport.doc (e.g. brown_DSC_LTIF2011_finreport.doc).
- Please include a Table of Contents.
- Please sign the final signature page.