### Project title

**Expanding the delivery of Associate Degrees in Design – IO#360173**

### Project description

A feasibility study to scope the industry support, potential student uptake, internal pathways & vocational outcomes of a new, possibly generic, Associate Degree in Design.

### Project leader

**Chair, Steering Committee**

Hendrikus Berkers, Head of School, Design (TAFE)

Christine Robertson

### Team members

**Steering Committee members**

Marilyn Capper (Project Manager)

David Trembath (Curriculum Consultant)

Lisa Thompson-Gordon, Philip Craig, Victoria Versteeg, Michael Goss, Robert Black, Julian Pratt, David McElgunn, Peter Smith, Michele Azzopardi, Rachel Roberts

### Funds approved

$53,112

### Funds acquitted (attach financial statement)

$50,870

Please see attached SAP report

### Introduction

The project analysed the potential for expanding School of Design TAFE Associate Degree offerings – currently there is one Associate Degree in Furniture Design. The project undertook local stakeholder research along with an analysis of local and international trends and assessed the potential for student demand and uptake of a generic Associate Degree in Design, in the climate of Skills Reform and contestability and competitiveness.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Detailed project description and outline of what was done</th>
<th>Please see attached Report for detail of project methodology</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>The project undertook:</td>
<td>The project recommends the development of new vocational graduate qualifications in Temporary Spatial Design (Event &amp; Exhibition) and Interior Design, rather than an Associate Degree qualification. Such program developments could involve potential industry partnerships and would address key objectives by:</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Interviews with relevant Heads of School to identify potential academic offerings and internal support for the concept</td>
<td>• Aligning Design disciplines to evolving industry need, i.e. enhanced vocational/employment opportunities</td>
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<td>• Interviews with key persons at Design Institute of Australia to identify vocational shortfalls</td>
<td>• Developing linkages between VET &amp; H.Ed for ongoing collaborative research into new markets, pathways and dual sector qualifications</td>
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<td>• Interviews with key industry personnel</td>
<td>• Introducing innovative and leading programs in Temporary Spatial Design with international appeal and potential to reach multiple industry sectors</td>
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<td>• Meetings with key School of Architecture &amp; Design personnel</td>
<td>• Offering improved opportunity for Work Integrated Learning experiences in program design</td>
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<td>• Mapping of local and international design programs</td>
<td>• Offering nested programs with potential for commercial delivery across multiple industry sectors as short courses and industry-based training</td>
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<td>• Mapping of design occupations in demand for immigration</td>
<td>• Building strong external industry networks in the creative industries</td>
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<td>• Mapping of courses in existing RMIT design programs</td>
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<td>• Review of current industry research and position papers</td>
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<td>• Review and investigation of (private RTO) Pivot Point proposals</td>
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<td>• Meetings with School of Architecture &amp; Design Program Directors</td>
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<td>The School has discussed project outcomes by way of School Executive and Discipline Cluster meetings, especially in regard to the consideration of vocational graduate qualifications in Temporary Spatial Design (Event &amp; Exhibition) and Interior Design, in the context of scoping potential industry-responsive programs and markets. Future agenda items are planned for relevant PAC meetings.</td>
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<td>The Head of School will disseminate outcomes at DSC Executive. There is also scope for ongoing dual-sector investigation with the School of Architecture &amp; Design into the development of vocational graduate qualifications and other program initiatives and consequent pathways for Visual Merchandising graduates.</td>
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<td>Additionally a de-brief forum is planned with Pivot-Point – a project partner and RTO hair academy – to assess the potential for any jointly developed WIL/vocational graduate programs in the area of event design.</td>
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Summary of the project, outcomes, impacts and dissemination

The project sought to interrogate the concept of a generic Associate Degree qualification in the Design discipline area. This was proposed as a possible joint sector offering that might align with the RMIT Associate Degree strategy and provide vocational outcomes for para-professional Design practitioners. Changes in the nature of inter-disciplinary practice, rapid technological developments, a tightening funding environment, and an emphasis on sustainability in design education all informed the study. The project also undertook to investigate the viability of a potential industry partnership for such a learning program. Research included the following:

- Interviews with relevant Heads of School to identify potential academic offerings and internal support for the concept
- Interviews with key persons at Design Institute of Australia to identify vocational shortfalls
- Interviews with key industry personnel
- Meetings with key School of Architecture & Design personnel
- Mapping of local and international design programs
- Mapping of design occupations in demand for immigration
- Mapping of courses in existing RMIT design programs
- Review of current industry research and position papers
- Review and investigation of potential industry partner proposals

At mid-project stage, the research identified three possible program options:

- Associate Degree in Sustainable Design
- Associate Degree in Interior Design
- Vocational Graduate Diploma in Event and Exhibition Design

After further investigation, the project found:

- It was difficult to establish viable vocational outcomes for such qualifications
- The qualifications did not enjoy high visibility or status with end-users (employers) or potential clients
- There were significant strengths to the development of joint sector qualifications with decided advantages in improving delivery but these strengths were not unique to Associate Degrees
- There were significant impediments to the creation of pathways to cognate degree programs with serious concerns about their negative impact on the degrees, potential confusion over the University’s offerings and doubts about standards
- There were viable alternatives to Associate Degrees which enjoyed greater popularity with industry clients and end-users
- The funding context for Associate Degrees had radically changed during the project time frame with negative impacts upon the university’s profile and strategic planning.
Final recommendations are as follows:

- Consideration be given to the development of vocational graduate qualifications in the discipline of interior design
- Consideration be given to the development of vocational graduate qualifications in the discipline of event and exhibition design
- Industry engagement be re-examined in regard to new program development and potential partnerships, especially in the context of the Skills and Innovation Reform, contestability and competitiveness
- Consideration be given to the ongoing investment in dual sector collaborative research to support development of complex, industry-responsive scoping of new program initiatives & viable markets, i.e. a needs-driven investigation to develop new programs.

Notably, the project highlighted an opportunity for program development in the discipline area of event and exhibition design, particularly in the evolving arena of ‘temporary design’. The School of Design TAFE is currently assessing how a more detailed development brief and process might be constructed in alignment with the School’s strategic priority for an articulation pathway for Visual Merchandising programs. The ‘temporary design’ discourse offers exciting potential for industry engagement with both the commercial and cultural sectors through event, exhibition, theatre, film, art installation and festival contexts - and an opportunity for the School to benchmark innovative, vocationally-oriented content and modes of delivery through project-based, work-integrated learning.