

## CARRICK INSTITUTE : DISCIPLINE BASED INITIATIVES



Work Integrated Learning : A national framework for initiatives to support best practice

### Swinburne University of Technology

Ms. Nicolette Lee (pictured right)  
Faculty of Design  
Telephone: 61+ 3 9214 4382,  
[nlee@swin.edu.au](mailto:nlee@swin.edu.au)



Mark Strachan (pictured far right)  
Faculty of Design  
Telephone: 61+ 3 9214 6919,  
[mstrachan@swin.edu.au](mailto:mstrachan@swin.edu.au)



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<b>Vignette title and details</b>	Design Centre, Honours and Masters Program at the Faculty of Design
<b>Discipline</b>	Communication Design Multimedia Design Industrial Design Interior Design
<b>Employment sector</b>	Design
<b>Student numbers</b>	30-40 per semester
<b>Optional/compulsory</b>	An honours or masters stream for the Faculty of Design
<b>Credit bearing?</b>	Credit bearing as ¾ of a full time load
<b>Assessment</b>	Assessment incorporates process and outcomes, with a strong focus on peer and self assessment.
<b>Payment</b>	Design Centre students work on paid and pro bono design and consultancy projects. Payment is made to a Design Centre fund, which is used to support the resourcing of the centre. Students may also be awarded scholarships, grants and resource gifts to support their work on individual projects.
<b>Number of staff involved</b>	The Design Centre is run by a Director (Professor Roger Simpson), Discipline Managers (currently Lucy Miceli, Dylan Davis and Denis Smitka), and a projects manager. The program of study was developed by Nicolette Lee and Mark Strachan.
<b>Weblink</b>	<a href="http://www.swinburne.edu.au/design/designcentre/">http://www.swinburne.edu.au/design/designcentre/</a>
<b>Key Words</b>	Multi-discipline; design studio; projects; assessment; curriculum.

## Overview

The Design Centre is a working design studio based at the Faculty of Design, Swinburne University of Technology. The studio forms the context for Professional Practice courses for Honours and Masters students in Industrial, Communication and Multimedia Design. Designed to simulate a working design studio, undertaking commercial, pro bono and internal design projects, the Design Centre has been in operation for more than two decades. At the beginning of 2004 it was substantially restructured to meet the changing needs of students and to acknowledge contemporary working methods in design.

Feedback from the first group of students to take part in the new model of the course indicated that the most important aspects had been:

- a professional learning environment that mirrors industry
- the rich variety of real-life project experiences with difficult, 'murky' problems
- generous working attitudes in a team-based learning environment
- support for confident engagement by acknowledgement, not assessment, of mistakes
- facilitation of reflective attitudes compatible with life-long learning.

## Structure of program

The Design Centre provides students with a wide range of professional experiences mirroring industry practice that includes:

- working in teams (often multidisciplinary) on client projects, supervised by an experienced Manager
- involvement in every aspect of the design studio working environment, including proposal writing, dealing with suppliers, delivering presentations and running client meetings; and
- engagement in a wide range of projects, from identity and book design, retail interiors, design research and documentary films, to designing and prototyping new products.

In the Design Centre, design projects are the context through which students demonstrate an understanding of:

- the creative methods and refinement strategies used in design practice
- best practice client management processes, including project and time management skills, proposal writing, timelines, quoting and invoicing, protocols for meetings and presentations, and methods for describing the design process and design outcomes to clients
- internal management of a design studio, including methods for managing work flow, organisational structures, teamwork, studio forms, etc; and
- design research methods for applied practice.

## Special features

It is common practice in Design, as in many other disciplines, to teach and assess largely on the basis of outcomes. In Design, the outcome usually equates to a visual folio of completed work, sometimes accompanied by a journal of visual development. However, in the Design Centre, where clients and staff have a significant influence on the nature and number of design project outcomes, folio assessment is inappropriate. The students' ability to direct and critically reflect on experiential learning, and to demonstrate an understanding of wider practices, therefore became the primary aims of the assessment process. The assessment process was reviewed against these aims, and the resulting assessment strategy includes:

Design practice and studio practice. Design practice focuses on reflecting on process and applying learning to future planning. Studio practice focuses on the day-to-day experiences of working in a studio, including the interactions between designers and clients.

Evidence of learning can be gathered from a number of sources. These include: summaries of projects, peer and self-assessments, and reflective reports identifying learning experiences.

Formative assessment aims to provide students with an ongoing indication of progress and expectations. The course therefore employs constant reviews over the duration of the course, linked to reflective reporting, self and peer assessment. Summative assessment is based on the accumulated evidence from all formative assessments and documents.

Ongoing informal 'round' reviews of the actions of clients, managers, teams and individuals. This is possible in part because the culture of the studio is no longer centred on students as the passive assesseees, but as

part of an organic and interactive community. It is also only possible in a supportive environment that values all contributions, and identifies the many possible contributing factors to any outcome.

## Future work

A reflective cycle evaluating the assessment and teaching methods has now been established for the course, and has been in operation for a total of 15 units of study. As a result, the teaching team have been extraordinarily successful in developing new and innovative modes of facilitating learning. The learning from the Design Centre development has also provided the basis for ongoing evaluation of alignment in programs Faculty-wide. I continue to collaborate with the teaching staff of Design Centre courses in evaluating the learning environment.