MM38

Monash University
Art and Social Change

Originality, Interaction, Participation, Professionalism, Resolved, Reflective Practice

Students	Expertise / ID cohort
Learning Outcomes	Disciplinary focus / ID skills
Pedagogy	Task aims / Task process

Individual work
- Prep Research
- Project Work
- Presentation
- Peer Review
- Self Reflection

Group work
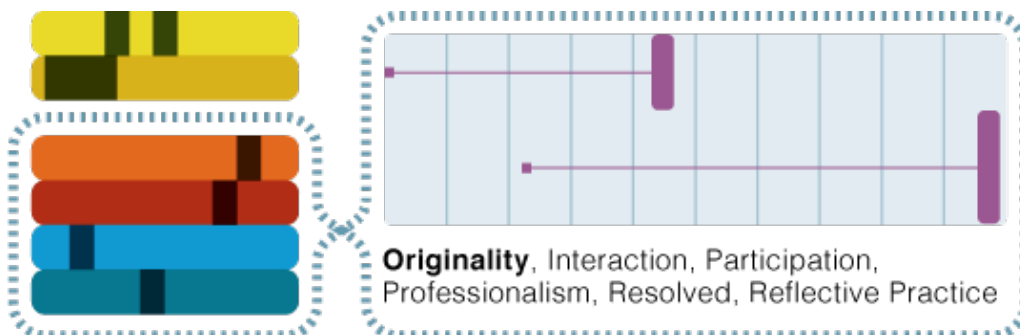
SUMMARY FOR BENCHMARKING

How well is interdisciplinary learning supported by the assessment design?

This example was developed as an OLT-funded Seed Project that investigated a model for 'collaborative event-based assessment' in interdisciplinary learning and teaching. The Final Report of the project is attached to this MM summary. The Multiple Measures project has responded directly to a recommendation emerging from the Seed Project for the investigation and benchmarking of ID assessment practices. The teaching approach in this example included a student-led symposium as a key assessment task, offering an opportunity for students to work collaboratively to engage productively and creatively with the focus and the content of the study.

How well does the assessment design fit the ID cohort?

Does it fit the level of *student expertise*?

This 2nd and 3rd year study critically explores the role of the artist, and the relationships of art, life and activism. The approach of the unit, within an art theory delivery, is framed around a set of writing and research skills familiar to many students in the early years of tertiary study. This example investigated an innovative form of assessment, challenging these expectations.

Does it respond to the *range and style of cohort learning expectations*?

The student cohort is split between art and design disciplines or double degrees involving these disciplines, with around 50% of the cohort from the humanities. The delivery of unit content included lectures and tutorials is familiar to most students. The inclusion of a collaborative and creative student-led symposium as an assessment task was unfamiliar. This challenged all students in the translation of materials into an engaging format. Students worked in interdisciplinary groups for the key element of assessment, highlighted here.

How well does the assessment design align to intended ID learning outcomes?

Do the *tasks and criteria* sufficiently support development of students' *disciplinary practices*?

The development of individual students' skills was implied by the framing of the unit as an individual undertaking. The majority of the assessment tasks were undertaken independently. The marking of the collaborative student-led symposium was also individual, although this was influenced by the timeframe for the adjustment of unit outcomes, a concern raised by a number of interviewees for this project. The delivery of group projects within the symposium was supported by a reflective report, developed and assessed individually.

Do the *tasks and criteria* sufficiently support development of students' *interdisciplinary skills*?

The student-led symposium task, while only making up a portion of the overall assessment, was the focus of the Seed project. This approach allowed students to develop a range of responses, working collaboratively to integrate a diversity of perspectives and approaches. This was seen as a particular opportunity for the interdisciplinary cohort, and is explored in more detail in the attached report. Students were encouraged to

respond to the provocation provided by staff using a variety of techniques, simultaneously providing each group with the challenge of developing a cohesive presentation.

Do the student / staff roles influencing *project direction / aims* support the ID learning outcomes?

The provocation for the symposium, "the blurred line between art and activism" drew on Malcolm Miles' essay 'Aesthetics in a Time of Emergency' (2009) as set out in the attached report. This theme offered students a broad remit, and also opened a range of formats for response. The format was facilitated by staff, and invited student contributions included zines, exhibitions, written work, short films, oral presentations. Each student group was encouraged to invite a guest speaker to the symposium, a task that was ultimately taken on by staff. As such, the framing of the challenge is by staff, but developed as an open-ended theme to be translated by students as part of their interpretation and engagement.

Do the student / staff roles influencing *project process / development* support ID learning outcomes?

Students were able to take on the theme of the symposium in a variety of ways, and were encouraged to engage creatively through multiple modes. The challenge of managing the large cohort of students ultimately meant that some of the delivery and development of this element of the project fell to staff, as administrative challenges won out over exploratory opportunities for these year levels.

UNIT/SUBJECT/COURSE OUTLINE + OUTCOMES

This 2nd and 3rd year unit looks at key moments in history in which art and artists have actively strived to generate social change. With a particular focus on the late 20th and 21st centuries, Art and Social Change critically explores the dynamic sites in which art, life and activism intersect. Diverse contexts and artistic practices will be examined. Topics include the use of art in political propaganda, culture jamming, identity politics, indigenous art and politics, the environment, art and the impact of global terrorism, and critiques of the art world itself. These thematic weekly study topics will be complimented by discussions of theory from key writers and theorists in the field.

Learning Outcomes:

- Have developed an appreciation for the diverse ways in which artists have intervened in the social world since the modern period.
- Approach art history with an appreciation for the social and political forces that inform art practice.
- Be able to analyse activist art critically in a manner that reveals the strengths and weaknesses of different artistic approaches.
- Be familiar with the key political philosophies that have informed the production and reception of politically motivated art.
- Be able to express verbally and in writing critical points of connection between art and social change.
- Understand the links between practice, theory and spectatorship in activist art.

UNIT/SUBJECT/COURSE ACTIVITIES & ASSESSMENT TASKS

Assignment 1,500 words (40%)

Research Essay 2,500 words (60%)

ASSESSMENT CRITERIA / MARKING

Students were assessed on the following aspects of the assessment task:

- The process involved in developing the symposium: Interaction (disciplinary, interdisciplinary, industry, cross-cultural), participation, engagement, hard skills (project management, use of information and communication technology), soft skills (decision-making, critical thinking/analysis, etc.) and professional practice (timely submission of supporting documentation during the process).

- The final product / the symposium: Content knowledge, concept resolution, formal presentation, organisational skills, soft skills (decision-making, critical thinking/analysis, etc.) and intangible/intuitive judgment.

- Student development, growth and enhancement (the human, emotional aspects of learning): Evaluation involving self-awareness, self-management, engagement, learning approach/skill, hard skills, soft skills (decision-making, critical thinking/analysis, etc.), reflective practice and intangible/intuitive judgement.

Rethinking assessment to enhance interdisciplinary collaborative learning in the creative arts and humanities

Final Report 2013

Monash University

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MONASH University
Art Design & Architecture

Acknowledgements

List of acronyms used

ID   Interdisciplinary or interdisciplinarity

LINK   Learning in Networks of Knowledge (LINK) fellowship program for the OLT

MADA   Faculty of Art Design and Architecture, Monash University

OLT   Australian Government Office for Learning and Teaching

STEM   Science, technology, engineering and mathematics

TD   Transdisciplinary or transdisciplinarity

Executive summary

This seed project tested and evaluated a model for a collaborative event-based assessment practice in an interdisciplinary (ID) teaching environment in the creative arts and humanities. It provided a crucial foundation for further study on interdisciplinary event-based assessment practices, in a manner that directly addresses the OLT program priority of assessment and student learning.

The interdisciplinary assessment practices tested and evaluated in this project responded directly to the call for practical models of assessment for and as learning (Birenbaum *et al* 2006). These practices centred on a student-led symposium, which was based in the interdisciplinary second and third year elective unit Art and Social Change offered by Faculty of Art Design and Architecture, Monash University (MADA). The symposium model responded to a series of challenges associated with teaching in an interdisciplinary arts environment by enabling students to apply their knowledge and communicate their learning in their choice of written or visual language, engage actively in the learning process, take responsibility for their learning, and advance beyond the specified learning outcomes.

Initial results of this seed project indicate that the students are overwhelmingly positive about their experience. Drawing on student surveys and assessment outcomes, the findings suggest that collaborative learning skills, coupled with social software tools and associated modes of communication, foster innovative, quality interdisciplinary work, and present an adaptable assessment framework for broader application in higher education settings in a full scale project.

From the results of this seed project, we recommend that:

- Innovative undergraduate ID programs should include challenging methods of assessment that embrace the ID character of knowledge and facilitate the production and transmission of new knowledge.

- Collaborative, self-directed learning assessment tasks be adopted, where feasible, as a valuable method for improving students' engagement and facilitating deep learning.

- Further research be pursued to investigate and benchmark ID assessment practices employed within the broader higher education sector both in a national and international context.

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Chapter 1

Background

Interdisciplinarity

In recent years, there has been an increased interest in ID higher education (Newell 2010, Chettiparamb 2007, Klein 2000, 2002, Davies & Devlin 2010, Parker 2010, Mcmurtry 2011, Mulder 2012). ID marks a shift away from a focus on discrete disciplines of knowledge with their own theories, language and problems, and towards an interest in the productive relationships between disciplines. Unlike transdisciplinarity, which blurs the boundaries of disciplines to develop a new kind of language, interdisciplinarity builds relationships between the existing traditions, forms, vocabularies and epistemologies of each discipline.

As universities offer units to ever broader cohorts of students studying a range of degrees, there has developed a need to formulate new assessment practices that reflect the diversity of those cohorts and maximise their potential for interdisciplinary collaborative learning. The dynamic nature of interdisciplinary course content and the complex process of contemporary mediation reinforce this need for new assessment methods, such as those tested in this twelve-month seed project.

The art school environment

The art school is the ideal environment in which to test new interdisciplinary assessment practices. "It is a place that provides the opportunity to take risks, where it is possible to do research, to build up a network, to interact with other institutions, not only of the art world" (Vecchiarelli & Vettese 2011, p.52). Art is also a potent medium that brings together diverse issues and disciplines from literature, philosophy and poetry to politics, science and environmental studies.

The unit selected to test these assessment practices, Art and Social Change, is characterised by ID. This unit was designed for students who are interested in critically examining the links between art and our political and social worlds.

A total of 88 students enrolled in Art and Social Change in 2012. This cohort included students studying a range of humanities and creative arts disciplines as part of Bachelor of Arts (and combined degrees including Arts and Visual Arts, Arts and Law, Arts and Education, Arts and Business), Bachelor of Fine Arts and Bachelor of Visual Arts (painting, sculpture, photomedia, glass), Bachelor of Journalism, Bachelor of Design and Bachelor of Multimedia and Digital Arts (see figure 1 below).

The interdisciplinary character of the unit content and cohort was complimented by the unique culture of its home faculty, MADA, which is the only faculty in Australia that brings together fine arts, industrial design, communications design and architecture in an exciting collaborative environment.
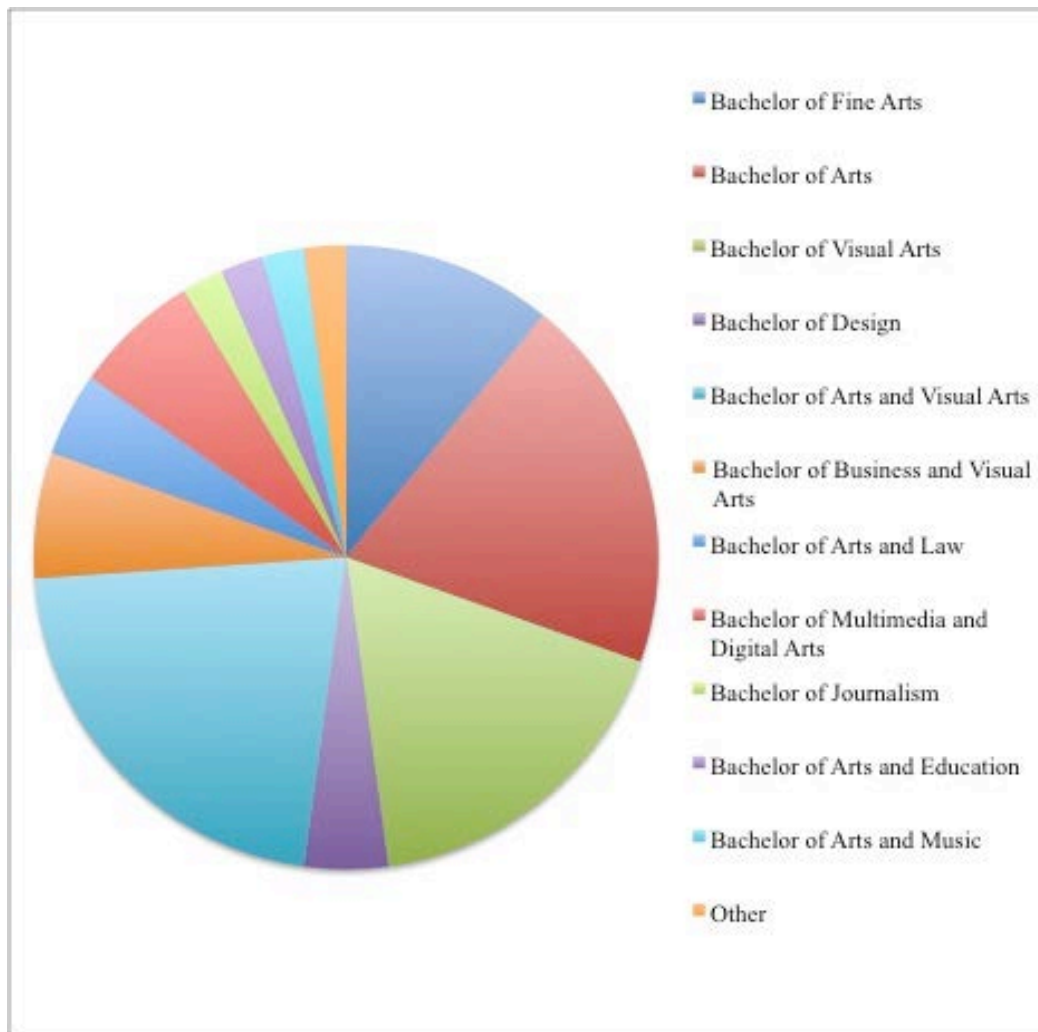
Figure 1. The Art and Social Change student cohort by degree, 2012

This seed project sought to address a key problem in tertiary education. Art theory classes are compulsory for all creative arts students, and are taken by humanities and double degree students as electives. However, assessment tends to revolve around essay writing, which places creative arts students at an unfair disadvantage to their humanities peers, and closes all students off to the many creative learning opportunities to be found in interdisciplinary classes. Problematically, essays can be inaccurate indicators of creative arts students' learning as they are trained to communicate their ideas in visual rather than written form. When students who excel in their studio assessment receive lower grades in their theory assessment, it has an impact upon their ability to progress through their course, win scholarships and prizes, and undertake postgraduate studies.

The ID collaborative assessment practices tested in this project aimed to address this problem by enabling students to use a flexible combination of visual and written skills to communicate their learning in a collaborative interdisciplinary project. These event based assessment practices sat alongside rather than replaced conventional essay writing tasks. This pilot study thereby provided a valuable opportunity to test models for creating what Kemmis & Smith (2008: 4) call "a special kind of action", where the interests of the university to produce successful graduates, the teacher to assess student work according to clear criteria and standards, and the student to be stimulated intellectually and prepared for life beyond the university cohere.

The pedagogical turn in contemporary art

The project was also inspired by recent developments in the creative arts. Curators, artists and educators, O'Neill and Wilson (2010), discuss the "educational turn" in contemporary art and the increasing presence of the pedagogical in art exhibitions (Holert 2010). Curators and artists frequently use educational methods, programs, models, terms, methods and procedures to explain the critical framework behind contemporary art exhibitions. "A critical mass of artists have galvanised the interrogative possibilities of working between art and school" (Kennedy 2011), and in doing so have formed a mode of production that embraces pedagogical models and forms.

Assessment and Learning

The assessment practices built around the student-led symposium draw on the openness that characterises art to encourage interdisciplinary teamwork, thinking and learning (Buckley & Conomos 2009, p.169). Assessment is essential to learning, teaching and intellectual development. It is not merely an extension of the teaching program or a tool for assessing whether learning outcomes have been fulfilled; it aids and facilitates the action of learning.

Studies in curriculum development for studio classes reinforce the need to build more open-ended models for teaching and learning. In the *Curriculum Development and Studio Teaching, Volume One: STP Final Report* (a project previously funded by the OLT), respondents to the Survey of Academics expressed the need to "encourage advanced outcomes that are open-ended and speculative ... [and] allow space for unpredictability", emphasising that academics "have to take risks, to innovate, to design fresh and challenging programs, to question our mode of operation and the way we teach" (Zehner *et al* 2009, p.ix). This project builds on this study by developing a practical model for promoting such open-ended and speculative outcomes. A key goal was to develop and test a model of assessment that measured students' learning in response to the unit's formal objectives, allowed students to capitalise on their strengths and make the most of the collaborative interdisciplinary learning context.

Scope and limitations

It is important to underscore the significant differences between a seed project and a full OLT Innovation and Development project. As a seed project, this twelve-month study tested its assessment practices with one student cohort, during one semester in one institution. The ultimate goal of this seed project was to determine whether a full research project involving multiple institutions and teaching and learning environments would be beneficial and feasible. Consequently, it would be inappropriate to suggest that the findings presented in this report are definitive or fully resolved. Rather, they represent the first stage in an ongoing study.

Although the results presented here are very promising, further study is required to test and evaluate how the models developed in this project are amenable to implementation in other ID environments in other institutions. This additional research will investigate and benchmark interdisciplinary assessment practices employed within the broader higher education sector both in national and international contexts.

Chapter 2

Project Outcomes and Impacts

The assessment task

Complimenting the Art and Social Change curriculum and the disciplines to which it contributes, this project addressed the need for specifically "mediated" forms of assessment, in which productive tensions are exploited and the transfers between different fields of enquiry are addressed (Draxler 2010). An event based assessment practice was selected for its potential to foster critical thinking, collaborative skills and life-long learning. The symposium topic, selected by the teaching staff, was very important in facilitating the interdisciplinary aspect of the assessment task. The topic had to be broad enough to enable the students to approach their project from a variety of different angles. In this case, the topic chosen was: "the blurred line between art and activism" - the focus of Malcolm Miles' essay 'Aesthetics in a Time of Emergency' (2009). It encouraged students to establish conceptual and practical connections between an array of practices, and develop an appreciation for the diverse ways that artists have intervened in the social world, as outlined in the unit's formal learning objectives.

This process of learning is informed by Kemmis and Smith's findings on *'praxis'* in education. They define *praxis* as: "a particular kind of action … what people do when they take into account all the circumstances and exigencies that confront them at a particular moment and then, taking the broadest view they can of what it is *best* to do, they *act*" (2008, p.4). Over the semester, students developed the symposium in interdisciplinary teams of five to six and in close consultation with the teachers. Each team included a different combination of Fine Arts and Humanities students studying diverse majors. As well as being organisers, students acted as presenters at the event to which they were invited to contribute artworks, films, written submissions or oral presentations developed as team projects in response to the symposium topic. Teams were provided with a list of possibilities for their project (eg a zine, virtual exhibition or short film), but were encouraged to develop their own ideas in consultation with their teacher to accommodate their diverse interests, skills and academic backgrounds. In order to allow students to focus on the tasks relevant to the unit's learning objectives and streamline the organisation process, teachers assisted with the management of administrative tasks associated with the symposium such as marketing, room bookings and catering.

The overall approach builds on existing research into the value of collaboration and active student engagement. Collaborative learning has received strong support as a means of promoting student learning, critical thinking and communication skills (Lo 2010, p.241). One of the primary aims of collaboration is a "coming together" and a capacity to meld different kinds of subjective knowledge. Also important is the opportunities that it affords for dissonance and the involvement of different perspectives and methodologies (Diamond 2009, p.155).

In this project, these important processes were prompted by both group and individual assessment practices in which students were made responsible for directing their own activities, the activities of the group and for the knowledge objects they developed (Muukkonen 2010). The project's assessment practices were underpinned by a "dialogic" exchange in which the teacher and students work as partners. This model therefore also addressed "the potential hierarchical nature of the students to critique" (Gillick 2009) that pervades teaching in the creative arts.

The team recognised that assessment practices do not function independently: "They need to be supported by a range of development opportunities to foster the shifts in thinking and

practice on the part of teaching staff and students that they imply" (Boud 2010, p.1). As a result, we sought to build relationships between the students and the broader professional community. After selecting their topic, each student team was given the opportunity to invite one postgraduate student, artist, theorist, writer or curator from outside the university to be a guest speaker at the symposium. In an attempt to save time and streamline the process, teachers provided students with a pro forma letter of invitation and a list of potential speakers drawn from colleagues outside the university who had already been advised of the project and were willing to participate without charge. We had hoped that this would allow students to forge connections with a community of scholars, professionals and cultural workers beyond the university in preparation for their entry into the workforce. However, it soon became apparent that the student groups felt overwhelmed by this expectation. As a result, the teaching staff took on the task of organising guest speakers for the day.

On the day of the student-led symposium each group was allocated ten to fifteen minutes to present the outcomes of their group project in an oral and visual presentation. In addition to the documentation relating to their group presentation (their film, zine, etc), each student was required to submit a written and / or visual journal revealing how their contribution to this group project was informed by critical thinking, research and analysis, and a peer and self review. As well as promoting the self-reflection and analysis noted in the unit's learning objectives, the inclusion of the journal was intended to ensure that individual contributions were taken into consideration in assessment, as well as the final outcome. Two weeks after the symposium, students were required to submit a 1000 word written report that critically analysed one or more of the key issues raised during the symposium.

Table 1 below outlines the way in which the students were assessed and the percentage allocated to each element of the assessment task.

Task	Percentage
Individual contribution to the group project presented at the symposium	30%
Depth and quality of the group project presented at the symposium	30%
Depth and quality of reflective report	40%

Table 1: Percentage allocation for each element of the ID collaborative assessment task

This assignment constituted 55% of the students' overall result for the unit.

The rubrics used in the assessment process were designed to maximise alignment between the unit objectives and assessment task, reflect the official marking scale of Monash University, clearly establish the different aspects of the students' performances to be assessed, and define how standards are measured in each category with specific language.

Students were assessed on the following aspects of the assessment task:

- The process involved in developing the symposium: Interaction (disciplinary, interdisciplinary, industry, cross-cultural), participation, engagement, hard skills (project management, use of information and communication technology), soft skills (decision-making, critical thinking/analysis, etc) and professional practice (timely submission of supporting documentation during the process).

- The final product / the symposium: Content knowledge, concept resolution, formal presentation, organisational skills, soft skills (decision-making, critical thinking/analysis, etc) and intangible/intuitive judgment.

- Student development, growth and enhancement (the human, emotional aspects of learning): Evaluation involving self-awareness, self-management, engagement, learning approach/skill, hard skills, soft skills (decision-making, critical thinking/analysis, etc), reflective practice and intangible/intuitive judgement.

Learning Processes	Academic and Professional Skills/Competencies	Learning Outcomes
Interdisciplinary, self-directed, collaborative, social, and participatory processes and experiences (facilitated by the use of social software)	• Self-direction • Problem solving • Conflict resolution • Project/team management (including time management) • Individual and group critical reasoning and analysis skills • Creativity • Communication (public speaking and inter-personal) skills	• Improved level of engagement with the selected topic • Improved level of confidence and great opportunity to engage with the construction and organisation of knowledge • Deeper understanding of the processes of knowledge construction • Stronger connection to community and industry • "Meta" coordination of perspectives • Clarity of purpose • Evidence of reflexive self-critique • Builds on two or more disciplinary foundations

Table 2: An Interdisciplinary Collaborative Assessment Learning Model

Dialogue, experience, individual and group critical analysis and synthesis are central to this event-based assessment practice, marking the differences between "rote learning and active learning" (Lattuca *et al*, p.41). Students were required to develop insights and ways of thinking informed by disciplines including art history, political studies, women's studies, environmental studies and philosophy, and integrate those modes of thinking and bodies of knowledge creatively and effectively (see Boix Mansilla *et al* 2007, p.215).

Student engagement through teamwork

The symposium itself was an exciting, energetic all-day event involving fifteen groups allocated into four theme based sessions addressing: 1) Identity Politics; 2) Colonisation, Environmental Art and the Critique of Capitalism; 3) Memory Trauma and Loss; and 4) Institutional Critique. Three sessions began with a guest artist speaker. Those artists Jasmine Targett, Ash Keating and Spiros Panigirakis discussed their activist practice, and students participated in a lively discussion with the speakers. The speakers were also invited to watch some of the student presentations and offer their own feedback in order to open up a two-way discussion on the symposium themes.

The students presented a rich array of group projects using a wide variety of media, including a zine featuring essays and original artwork that critiqued contemporary representations of femininity, a short film examining an individual artist's body of work, a blog offering a critical commentary on Indigenous art and activism, an interactive PDF addressing identity politics in post-apartheid South Africa, an online platform designed to promote discussion and dialogue on the role of art in responding to loss and trauma, and a proposal for a new kind of participatory art space that engaged both students and the local community. A sense of enthusiasm characterised the day, as the students presented their work with pride and took an interest in the work of their peers.

By fostering the students' active engagement in the learning process and encouraging them to take responsibility for their own learning, we created a positive impact on their learning experiences and attitudes (see also Lo 2010, p.239). A central, organising premise of this assessment task was linking theoretical knowledge to practical application through the use of small collaborative groups in which students are responsible for deciding their topic and the ways in which the response was presented. As Cockrell explains in her review of collaborative groups in problem-based learning environments: "[A]cquiring new knowledge and restructuring existing knowledge emerge as individuals with differing viewpoints, experiences, and levels of knowledge about a particular topic engage in testing, reconciling, and ultimately forging a new, shared understanding of that topic through interaction with one another" (2000 p.348).

Students were surveyed at the beginning and end of semester to gain their response to the symposium and the extent to which it fulfilled their expectations for learning. Participation in the surveys was optional: forty-five students completed the first survey, and fifty-one students completed the second survey. Despite the students' initial prejudices against undertaking group work (only 30% of students in the first survey agreed with the statement "I enjoy group work"), the majority of students (76.5%) noted that they enjoyed working in groups in preparation for the student-led symposium. Moreover, 78.4% of students agreed or strongly agreed that the symposium helped improve their collaborative skills.

This qualitative data was confirmed by many of the comments in students' journals and reports:
- "[R]ight from the beginning we allocated specific … responsibilities. This sort of delegation I believe was the main reason for our success. We always knew what our job was, and what everyone was doing. A real team effort."

- "I never thought working with a group could work out so well. We all put in equal time and effort and we allocated tasks to each other that fit our strengths."

- "This was the first group assignment in my Visual Culture major and it has been a really interesting project. If this task was given to me individually I definitely wouldn't have been as engaged as I have been."

- "This group was the most efficient and fair group project I have ever been a part of."

As well as working in their own groups, students gained immense satisfaction from viewing each other's work on the day of the symposium:
- "I think some of the ways the other groups presented were really fantastic."

- "I would like to begin by saying that the range and volume of material presented during the symposium was fantastic and I was amazed at the diversity and quality of what each group produced."

Viewing the work of their peers also provided important opportunities for self-reflection and analysis.

The relevance of this type of complex, collaborative, self-directed assessment task to students' professional training enables students to be more familiar with and prepared for the professional world beyond the university. As one student commented: "I really enjoyed looking at this area of study and I think to be in the industry you also need to understand it and critique it, something that as an artist it is vital to do so."

There is no doubt that students felt challenged by this assessment task, with an overwhelming 90% of students either agreeing or strongly agreeing with the statement "The student led symposium gave me the opportunity to challenge myself and work in a way that I would not normally work".

Skills development

The assessment task was designed to allow students to develop core competencies that McLoughlin and Lee (2011, p.44) note are particularly useful in today's knowledge economy including "self-direction, problem solving, critical inquiry, creativity, teamwork, and communication skills". Throughout the project, teaching staff observed that students identified greater awareness of their self-directed learning and critical reasoning and analysis skills.

These conclusions are supported by the data contained in table 2 below. The students' reports gave them the opportunity to demonstrate their reflexivity skills in relation to the purpose of their work, the means by which the goals were reached and the limitations of their work (Boix Mansilla *et al* 2007, p.228). Moreover, It is evident from the students' work that this form of *praxis* (Kemmis & Smith 2008) enabled creative thinking and critical consciousness.

Skills Development (%) (number of responses: 51)	Strongly agree	Agree	Don't know	Disagree	Strongly disagree
The student-led symposium gave me the opportunity to capitalise on my academic skills	8	46	28	16	2
The student-led symposium allowed me to try something different in my assessment task and 'think outside the box'	24	58	12	6	0
The student-led symposium helped me to improve my skills in working in groups (communication skills, team management, project management, conflict resolution)	29.4	49	3.9	15.7	2
The student-led symposium helped improve my oral communication skills (public speaking and inter-personal skills)	5.9	41.2	21.6	27.5	3.9
The student-led symposium bridged the gap between art theory and arts practice	15.7	49	21.6	9.8	3.9
The student-led symposium helped to build my confidence and knowledge of how to develop an interdisciplinary collaborative event.	13.7	58.8	21.6	3.9	2

Table 3: Skills Development

When asked whether the student-led symposium allowed students to "try something different" and "think outside the box" an overwhelming 82% of students either agreed or strongly agreed (see Table 2 above). One student said "The art and social change symposium brought up many new ideas in terms of how one can think about the role of art in the social and political sphere." And another student stated: "Some of the projects elaborated on art practices and issues we had covered during the unit but others introduced new aspects or even their own approaches for the project ...". Many of the students' projects had a "synthetic quality" as students employed "integrative devices – that is, epistemic frames" that enabled them to demonstrate an understanding of two or more disciplines (Boix Mansilla *et al* 2007, p.226).

For ID learning students need to develop insights and modes of thinking that are informed by a variety of disciplines but also integrate these forms of knowledge effectively. One successful example of this was a group that presented a brochure and manifesto for a new

art space located in the outer suburbs. Their brochure and resource folder demonstrated a depth of research, thought and analysis about the issues facing an individual or group wishing to establish an alternative, community focussed art space within the broader 'institution of art'. The group successfully integrated knowledge relating to the art institution, community, economics and politics to create an inspired outcome. A member of this group went on to provide a detailed critique of the idealistic nature of the project relevant to certain institutional critique theorists mentioned by one of the guest speakers, upholding disciplinary standards that are essential to interdisciplinary work.

The role of social software

There is a strong trend in higher education towards the individual empowerment of students through the utilisation of social software tools, which allow efficient collaboration and interaction through networked communication (McLoughlin & Lee 2011). Social software can be broadly characterised as software that supports group interaction. It provides the potential to create shared "learning-though-doing" environments that are available anywhere, anytime, and on demand (Dede 1996). Elliot (2008) recommends the use of social software as a way for students to present their work and modernise assessment.

For the student-led symposium, social software tools (Facebook, Googledocs and blogs) made it possible for students to engage with and create an assessment outcome with a new level of openness, flexibility, and customisation. One group used Facebook to discuss issues and manage action points enabling these students to always keep up-to-date with other group members' activities and seek advice and feedback in real time. A group member commented "It's also been a good forum to get or give a helping hand when needed… I feel like we've all been available to each other the entire time and I've felt that all of us have been participatory." These comments confirm Elliott's findings that the use of social software is a good fit for students as they already use these technologies in their daily lives, diminishing the "chasm between education and 'real life'" (2008, p.7). Other factors supporting the use of social software in assessment tasks include the fact that they are inherently collaborative, inexpensive and easy to use and maintain.

Blogs, in particular, are dynamic in terms of their elements, structure and size and can be adjusted and amended depending on students' needs, preferences and abilities. Three out of the fifteen student groups chose to present their work in the form of a blog. One student commented: "I enjoyed commenting on fellow group members' blog posts as this allowed for more interaction as a group and a deeper conceptual understanding of our wider topic." Whilst another student stated: "I personally ensured that my input into the blog posts was consistent and remained original and interesting, and I have learnt much more about working as a group and environmental art than I ever could have imagined at the beginning of this course." Another group used the Googledocs tool to facilitate real-time collaborative writing. This tool encouraged the group to engage in informal conversation, dialogue, collaborative content generation, and the sharing of information, supplying the students with access to a wide raft of ideas and representations of knowledge relating to their topic on the subject of memory and loss in Latin America.

Feedback

Teacher feedback was a particularly important element for this type of student-led, ID collaborative assessment task. Throughout the semester, teaching staff provided informal feedback in the form of questions, suggestions, and requests for clarification, providing important cues to stimulate thinking and guide students when they digressed from the assessment requirements and revealing rather than representing knowledge. Feedback that stimulated inquiry and guided knowledge integration enabled students to journey into

deeper realms of meaning, thereby facilitating a deeper understanding of the ID context. Students gained formal feedback in the form of their assessment rubric and comments upon completion of keys stages of their projects.

Chapter 3

Dissemination

A program of dissemination was devised to encourage active engagement with the project's findings and to promote further study on collaborative event-based interdisciplinary assessment practices in creative arts and humanities courses across the country.

The findings have been analysed critically in a detailed peer-reviewed journal article. As that article is currently under review, the journal cannot be named here. However, a link will be provided through the OLT website when the publication is confirmed. Findings will also be presented to the tertiary education sector via national conference presentations in 2013 and 2014, including the annual Art Association of Australia and New Zealand annual conference, 'Inter-discipline', in December 2013. The special panel titled 'Assessing Integrative Learning in Creative Interdisciplinary Teaching Environments' will be hosted by the project team.

In the next phase of the project, the project team will run a series of workshops that will actively engage tertiary teachers in developing student-led event-based assessment practices around their own teaching and learning environments and objectives. Two workshops have already been held at Monash, and other universities and TAFE colleges will be given the opportunity to hold workshops at their home campus.

As this seed project will be developed further with partner institutions in the future, it will pose an exciting opportunity to open a new and ongoing dialogue between students and society, fostering a deeper relationship between the students and the community, both locally and globally.

Chapter 4

Linkages

Project team and international networks

The project leader, Dr Melissa Miles, and the project manager, Sarah Rainbird, met regularly for planning and monitoring. In the early stages of the project they also sought input from Arne de Boever, director of the Master's Program in Aesthetics and Politics at the California Institute of the Arts and expert on the philosophy of aesthetic education, in particular, the works of Jacques Ranciere and Bernard Steigler. As part of his role in directing and teaching the Program in Aesthetics and Politics, De Boever considers many of the issues the subject of this research project and was eager to contribute his ideas. He has written extensively on art and education, most recently has published 'Scenes of Aesthetic Education: Rancière, Oedipus, and Notre Musique' in *The Journal of Aesthetic Education* (2012) looking at ideas relating to the shift from representation to presentation in the teaching of art theory and practice.

Dr Michael Corris, Professor and Chair, Division of Art, Meadows School of the Arts also provided ideas and input on the teaching practices he employs in the undergraduate course critical issues in contemporary art, namely, his "annotations" project. This project requires students to write a brief commentary on the reading for each week and circulate this commentary to the class. Other classmates then respond to their comments and suggest further related readings. The results of this collaborative, transparent learning process were published at the conclusion of his course.

Corris's annotations program, together with de Boever's writings on the importance of understanding what we are seeing in an artwork rather than what the artist is trying to tell us, were integral in informing the design of our assessment task.

We hope to develop these and other international collaborations further in the next phase of the project when we endeavour to answer some of the questions this research has raised on the subject of assessment in an ID context.

Linkages with other OLT funded projects

Research into the implications of ID on assessment in tertiary education has received relatively little attention as a specific area of research in OLT funded projects to date. However, the broader subject of ID has arisen in undergraduate teaching and learning and postgraduate research and supervision projects from time to time.

For example, in the OLT funded project *Teaching Sociology in Australia* 2009, Marshall et al noted that their interviewees see ID an opportunity for sociology. One of their interviewees stated that "if sociologists would be open to letting go of the canon and opening up to ID in a way that they haven't done as far as I think we could … that's where the exciting opportunities lie." (p.39). One of the key recommendations from Teaching Sociology in Australia is to "link with interdisciplinary allies" (pp.42-43). The findings of our research on interdisciplinary assessment provide a possible avenue for maximising the opportunities for interdisciplinary teaching and research methods in the discipline of sociology.

Another project that examined the concept of ID and TD was Cynthia Mitchell's *Zen and the Art of Transdisciplinary Postgraduate Studies* (2009). While this project focused on trans-disciplinarity, meaning a collapsing of academic borders and the emerging of a new discipline (Davies and Devlin 2010), and involved the review of postgraduate research courses, many synergies can be established. For example, the following quality criteria developed by

Mitchell to evaluate and assess postgraduate outcomes informed the assessment criteria used for the student-led symposium (p.6):

- critically aware, coherent argument;
- critical, pluralistic engagement with appropriate literature and other artefacts;
- evidence of critical reflection/reflexivity on own work;
- alignment between epistemology, theory, methodology, claims and enquiry space;
- mastery of the process and/or outcomes; and
- effective communication for diverse audiences.

Mitchell (2009) acknowledges that students today are being asked to engage in issues that involve the coming together of multiple disciplines and that this poses challenges to the way content is taught and learning is assessed in higher education. Although our research focused on undergraduate studies rather than postgraduate research, we hope that researchers in the area of postgraduate ID studies will find our larger review of ID assessment valuable.

The *IS-IT learning? Online interdisciplinary scenario-inquiry tasks for active learning in large, first year STEM courses* project also had an influence on our seed project. Although this research focused on the design and implementation of ID scenario inquiry tasks in large interdisciplinary science, technology, engineering and mathematics (STEM) units, many of the pedagogical principles outlined in their research were useful. For example, the researchers submitted that collaborative learning and active learning strategies can bring students together to create learning communities by enhancing engagement and allow students to develop a shared understanding of concepts. In addition, the following five guiding principles outlined in the *IS-IT learning? Final Report* were critical to the success of the collaborative learning environment: positive interdependence; individual accountability; social skills; group processing; and, communication (2011, p.7).

Other OLT project that are related to and informed the project include:

- *Demonstrating Distributed Leadership Through Cross-Disciplinary Peer Networks: Responding to Climate Change Complexity* (Davison et al 2011) where the project team developed collaborative teaching approaches to the goal of promoting interdisciplinary student learning about climate change. This was a valuable project in light of the high charged nature of the public debate on this issue. The researchers found that this interdisciplinary learning demands innovative approaches that emphasise problem-based pedagogy and links between teaching and research.

- The findings of the *Learning in Networks of Knowledge (LINK)* (Allen 2011) fellowship program for the OLT and *Rethinking assessment in the participatory digital world – Assessment 2.0* (Crisp 2011) were integral in informing our analysis of the student project that employed Web 2.0 technologies in the development and presentation of their work.

- Finally, David Boud's *Assessment 2020: seven propositions for assessment reform in higher education* (2010) provided the broad framework for the development of the design of the assessment task.

These earlier efforts have transformed scholarship about ID collaborative learning into concrete strategies, methods and practices for raising the quality of teaching and learning within Australian higher education institutions. They have created change in the way in which we define the attributes graduates need today. Indeed, there are a number of OLT projects addressing the development of ID curricula currently underway. We would like to capitalise on the knowledge gained by undertaking this seed project by establishing further connections and collaborations with these researchers to find common areas of concern and develop solid principles to guide ID collaborative assessment in an ID context.

Chapter 5

Evaluation

Evaluation of quantitative and qualitative data

The effectiveness of the student-led symposium as an ID collaborative assessment task was assessed through a mix of theoretical analysis and qualitative and quantitative research. Data was collected both via an analysis of the students' work and online surveys using SurveyMonkey at the commencement of the course and after the student-led symposium.

Given the nature of the research questions, surveys proved to be effective instruments for collecting attitude data. In this study, student perception is used as an indirect measure of student engagement, a method that is commonly used in higher education research (Kuh 2003; Seymour et al 2000). The surveys provided data on the extent to which the students' learning expectations were met with respect to the course content, professional skills and the assessment practices, and the extent to which the student experience was enhanced. Teacher observations were also important in evaluating student engagement and learning.

This seed project represents phase 1 of this larger project, which will create strategic change in the higher education sector to the benefit of all stakeholders by: benchmarking the use of collaborative student-led event based assessment practices in the humanities and creative arts, and refining a series of adaptable event based assessment models for use in various disciplines, class sizes and teaching and learning environments in tertiary institutions nationally.

Formative evaluation

Effective formative evaluation is central to this project. Students were given formative feedback throughout the semester as they prepared their project. This was given in spoken and written form. Much like the project leaders, the students set a series of milestones and were evaluated at these stages. The project team have also adopted a formative evaluation process in assessing the success of the project at various stages. We have met regularly and assessed our achievements against our goals, and shared advice as to how to advance our project.

Summative evaluation

Following the conclusion of the student-led symposium on 19 October 2012, students were asked to critically evaluate its effectiveness in developing skills and deep learning in a survey. The survey results clearly demonstrate the assessment task promoted an interdisciplinary outlook and increased understanding, knowledge and collaborative skills essential in the production of quality ID work. Furthermore, the students provided valuable feedback that is being used to adjust the parameters of assessment task for future students of Art and Social Change and for those at other institutions, which will be involved in the next phase of the project.

External evaluation

As this research project is a seed project, a formal independent evaluation was not required.

Chapter 6

Opportunities and Conclusion

Positive student comments, and an analysis of results of the surveys indicate that the student-led symposium is an exciting and innovative assessment method that enables ID conversations and facilitates high quality ID learning. The innovative and critical potential of this assessment technique lie in its capacity to generate "personally situated knowledge and new ways of modelling and externalising such knowledge, interdisciplinary and diverse and emergent approaches" (Barrett & Bolt 2007, p.2).

A key advantage of this project is its adaptability to diverse educational contexts, ensuring that it can be useful to the multitude of institutions within the tertiary education sector that offer studies in the humanities and / or creative arts. Our assessment technique also recognises and caters for the diversity of students entering higher education. Our findings illustrate how ID analysis and integration can be successfully incorporated into a curriculum via assessment to equip students with the skills required for working life, such as collaborative communication skills. These processes and skills in turn result in higher quality learning outcomes and greater student engagement.

The OLT seed project provided a useful research opportunity in which to test and evaluate the collaborative student-led event. Importantly, the funding afforded time for the project team to carefully prepare, evaluate, analyse and report on the assessment practices more comprehensively than would be possible as part of the normal practice of quality teaching and assessment. However, to enhance and improve the effectiveness of this type of assessment model, further research is required to investigate the breadth and depth of ID assessment techniques across a broader cross section of disciplines in national and international contexts. If this type of approach to assessment is to be applied successfully in the future it will be important to provide the necessary resources, both material and intellectual, to develop and test an adaptable best practice model that can subsequently be applied without the need for ongoing funding.

This next phase of the project will build upon the findings of the seed project and other OLT funded projects on assessment practices. Via the collection of data in and across a range of national courses and institutions engaged in ID assessment practices, we will develop a detailed set of benchmark statements that will provide reference points for best practice and suggest ways of improving and maximising the potential of ID assessment practices. This project will also develop a structure for describing different levels of achievement in these quality indicators. Together, the benchmark statements and guidelines will provide a systematic way of self-evaluating, learning from others, and improving the work of teaching staff (Epper 1999, p 24).

At the time of writing, we are actively pursuing these opportunities.

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