



CURRICULUM DEVELOPMENT IN STUDIO TEACHING

www.studioteaching.org

Volume Four STP Case Studies of Effective Practice

Case studies contributed by
Academics from Australian Universities
in the discipline areas of Art,
Architecture and Design

Editors

Stephanie Wilson (University of New South Wales)
Karin Watson (University of New South Wales)

OCTOBER 2009

Cover images courtesy of COFA (UNSW) and RMIT University

Support for this project has been provided by the Australian Learning and Teaching Council, an initiative of the Australian Government Department of Education, Employment and Workplace Relations. The views expressed in this report do not necessarily reflect the views of the Australian Learning and Teaching Council Ltd.

This work is published under the terms of the Creative Commons Attribution-Noncommercial-ShareAlike 2.5 Australia Licence. Under this Licence you are free to copy, distribute, display and perform the work and to make derivative works.

Attribution: You must attribute the work to the original authors and include the following statement: Support for the original work was provided by the Australian Learning and Teaching Council Ltd, an initiative of the Australian Government Department of Education, Employment and Workplace Relations.

Noncommercial: You may not use this work for commercial purposes.

Share Alike. If you alter, transform, or build on this work, you may distribute the resulting work only under a licence identical to this one. For any reuse or distribution, you must make clear to others the licence terms of this work.

Any of these conditions can be waived if you get permission from the copyright holder.

To view a copy of this licence, visit:

<http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/2.5/au/> or send a letter to Creative Commons, 543 Howard Street, 5th Floor, San Francisco, California, 94105, USA.

Requests and inquiries concerning these rights should be addressed to the Australian Learning and Teaching Council, PO Box 2375, Strawberry Hills NSW 2012 or through the website: <http://www.altc.edu.au>.

2009

ISBN: 978-0-7334-2825-8

Contents

Introduction to the case studies.....	6
Case studies.....	9
Video feedback: a practical tool for student critique and assessment <i>Fiona Fell</i>	9
Project X: The experience of student-led multidisciplinary design courses across three faculties at UNSW <i>Carol Longbottom, Graham Bell, Zora Vrcelj, Mario Attard and Richard Hough</i>	13
Engaging staff and students in an explicit and integrated approach to the development of graduate's attributes in a School of Design <i>Darrall Thompson</i>	20
Fostering an interdisciplinary learning environment through core 3rd-year courses in a revised BCA <i>Janet McDonald</i>	29
Studio 5: Seven houses on a bridge <i>Linda Marie Walker and Michael Geissler</i>	37
Capturing, analysing and critiquing the visual image using Web 2.0 in studio classes <i>Lynette Zeeng</i>	40
Core Studies in Art and Design 1A and 1B <i>Neil Haddon</i>	44
Third Year Combined Studio TheoRy (CSTR) <i>John Vella</i>	47
Greenmachines: A TSAH sculpture workshop and exhibition of sculptures for year 9 and 10 school students at the Tasmanian Museum and Art Gallery <i>John Vella</i>	52
Pilot study for integrated blended learning in a first year studio design program <i>Carol Longbottom</i>	57
The use of 3D computer gaming technology in architectural design studio teaching <i>Russell Lowe</i>	61
Fully online postgraduate art and design program <i>Simon McIntyre</i>	64

The Collabor8 Project: Cross-cultural, trans-national studios <i>Ian McArthur</i>	69
Modifying the critique for student-centred learning <i>Louise Wallis, Ian Clayton, Tim Moss and Sharon Thomas</i>	73
Spoken feedback using mobile technology <i>Mary-Jane Taylor and Coralie McCormack</i>	78
Studio conversation and formative assessment: Reflections on the first year design studio at UQ <i>Michael Dickson</i>	83
<i>Porosity Studio</i> : an interdisciplinary studio based on a critical investigation of contemporary urban space and the intersections of public and private space <i>Richard Goodwin</i>	90
Experiential learning via field trips: Art, Natural Environment and Wilderness, and Art, Natural Environment and Technology <i>Martin Walch</i>	97
Studio 4: Theatre and theatricality <i>James Curry</i>	101
Kissing frogs – again: Major subject revision project across two semesters <i>Julie Montgarrett</i>	104
Student design presentations using the ‘Pecha Kucha’ method <i>Susan Shannon</i>	111
The introduction of the Art Studio Practice course as a pre-tertiary subject in Tasmanian schools <i>Peta Collins and Jane Giblin</i>	114
Continuous City: A first year Architecture studio project <i>Ross Anderson</i>	117
The first three weeks: First years and the trilogy project <i>Gene Bawden</i>	123
The Bachelor of Digital Media: A partnership between TAFE Illawarra and the University of Wollongong <i>Brogan Brunt</i>	129
IA (Interior Architecture) and the new city <i>Lynn Churchill</i>	133
Invaresk co-location: Integrating formal and informal learning to unlock art ecologies <i>Tess Dryza, Penny Mason and Steve Watts</i>	139

Technical learning in Fine Arts – A case study <i>Nuala Gregory</i>	146
Ararat Field Studio: A Master of Architecture elective design studio undertaken in intensive fieldwork mode <i>Naomi Stead and Adam Haddow</i>	154
The museum of urban mythology <i>Tom Loveday</i>	159
The copulation of theory and practice in the creative arts <i>Sean Lowry and Jocelyn McKinnon</i>	164
Introducing the interdisciplinary: The Foundations year and the open studio <i>Daniel Mafe and Mark Webb</i>	169
Cross-sector initiative: Charles Sturt University and TAFE NSW integrated delivery of Bachelor of Arts (Fine Art) and Advanced Diploma in Fine Arts and Crafts <i>Julie Montgarrett</i>	176
Too many cooks? Co-creating and co-teaching courses in the creative media context: a career-focused approach <i>Stuart Thorp and Christiaan Willems</i>	181
Foundation knowledge? The case for an accretive studio model <i>Jillian Walliss and Joan Greig</i>	187
Objectifying the subjective: Assessment and Feedback in creative arts studio learning and teaching <i>Christiaan Willems</i>	192
Contact information.....	199
About the Studio Teaching Project team.....	200

Introduction to the case studies

The case studies presented in this volume can also be accessed individually or as a collection on the Studio Teaching Website. New contributions to this collection will arise from the Studio Teaching Forum: Enriching Creative Arts Learning (University of Tasmania, December, 2009) and will be available on the website.

Studio Teaching Case Studies

www.studioteaching.org

Throughout the Studio Teaching Project there have been a number of approaches taken to seek out and collect instances of effective practice. These include two National Studio Teaching Forums (2007, 2008), surveys of academics and Heads of School across the country, and the utilisation of formal and informal networks linked to the project team. The case studies included in the Studio Teaching Toolkit have been developed to both inform emerging studio practices and reinvigorate established studio practices.

Effective practices have been identified by high levels of student satisfaction, high industry regard for graduates of particular courses, and high levels of staff satisfaction and engagement. Descriptions of exemplary practices address teaching techniques, organisation and/or creative solutions to challenges that arise in the practice of studio teaching in the disciplines of Art, Architecture and Design. The examples of effective practice described in this volume cover a diverse range of areas such as feedback, assessment, first year learning, interdisciplinary learning and teaching, experiential learning, technology-enabled learning and teaching, industry-related projects and studio management. They provide examples of many of the various models of studio teaching described in Chapter Two of the STP Final Report (see Volume One).

A case study template was developed by the project team to guide the development and writing of the case studies. The template was designed to focus contributors' case studies on the student learning issues underpinning their approach, the specific strategies used, and to provide evidence of successful student outcomes. Equally, the design of the case studies was intended to reveal the challenges involved in implementing changes or new approaches in studio, and to allow contributors to offer advice to colleagues wishing to adopt similar teaching approaches.

Question Nine of the STP Head of School Survey (Volume Three) asked participants to outline examples of recent innovations within studio teaching in their programs. Many of the innovations outlined provided opportunities to develop case studies. As summarised earlier in this report, recent innovations

include the utilisation of contemporary technologies (for example ICT, blogs, on-line), return to past studio practices (foundation-type subjects, increased time in studio), themed studio projects and content, community/work-place projects, curriculum development/refinements, embedding of ethical and sustainability principles, interdisciplinary strategies, intensive/workshop delivery, and the introduction of research methods elements within studio subjects.

The Studio Teaching Case Studies included in this volume are those that were completed at the time that this report was written. As mentioned, this list will be significantly extended as a result of the third National Studio Teaching Forum to be held at the University of Tasmania in December 2009. Presenters will write up their presentations in the same case study format and case studies will be added to Studio Teaching Toolkit for dissemination.

The student experience

The case studies developed for the Studio Teaching Project asked contributors to provide information about student feedback on their studio. Student quotes and feedback summaries have been examined to draw out factors that lead students to describe learning experiences in studio as positive. While it is not assumed that the views of these students represent students across the sector in Art, Architecture and Design disciplines, it is interesting to see how students have responded to studios that have been identified as “good practice”. Evidence from the case studies suggests that:

1. Students appreciate opportunities to work **collaboratively** with their peers
2. **Peer review** can enhance students’ learning and confidence
3. Effective use of **online supported studios** can enhance students’ learning
4. Students respond positively to opportunities to use/develop a range of different **communication skills**
5. Students value **cross-cultural learning experiences**
6. Students respond positively to the incorporation of **new technology** to enhance design and/or studio practice
7. Students appreciate learning/teaching strategies that **acknowledge the broader context** in which they are studying
8. Students acknowledge that **interdisciplinary opportunities** challenge their perceptions and enhance their learning of the profession
9. Students respond well to **challenging, interesting and real-world** learning experiences
10. Students’ value **enthusiasm and support** from staff and a sense of a learning **community**
11. Students appreciate **clear expectations** and knowing how various course components are **relevant** to the degree/profession
12. Students value regular and constructive **formative feedback**



Volumes

This volume (Volume One) is part of a series titled: Curriculum Development in Studio Teaching. Volumes in this series include:

Volume One	STP Final Report Robert Zehner, Graham Forsyth, Elizabeth Musgrave, Douglas Neale, Barbara de la Harpe, Fiona Peterson and Noel Frankham, with Stephanie Wilson and Karin Watson
Volume Two	STP Academic Survey Report Barbara de la Harpe, Stephanie Wilson and Robert Zehner, with Fiona Peterson and Noel Frankham
Volume Three	STP Head of School Survey Report Noel Frankham, Stephanie Wilson, Graham Forsyth and Robert Zehner
Volume Four	STP Case Studies of Effective Practice Stephanie Wilson and Karin Watson (eds)

There is also an online toolkit associated with these volumes for studio teachers:
www.studioteaching.org



Executive Summary

The broad discipline areas that are the focus of the Studio Teaching Project encompass a wide range of studio settings from artists with easels and potting wheels, to architects with drawing tables and, increasingly, laptops, to graphic designers in computer laboratories. Whatever the discipline and whatever the setting, the essences of the studio are seen to include creative and reflective thinking, a focus on integrative design in the context of a project, and an opportunity to absorb the culture of one's chosen area of endeavour.

While physical studio settings do differ, they tend to be notably more resource intensive – in terms of space, staff, workshops, equipment – than many university degree programs. As funding sources have tightened across the university sector in recent years, anecdotal stories of resource pressures and cutbacks in the studio teaching area have become more and more widespread. In that context, concerns about the viability of familiar approaches to studio teaching have led naturally to questions about exactly what contributes most to successful studios; what characteristics are most important to retain? In addition, increasing Government and university expectations of accountability in terms of outcomes, teaching strategies employed, assessment criteria and the like, have also put pressure on a form of teaching which has its roots in the relatively unstructured space of the traditional studio.

Focus of the Study and Primary Data Sources

The focus of the Studio Teaching Project is the identification, description and investigation of the circumstances and characteristics of studio teaching models in the discipline areas of Art, Architecture and Design. A further aim is to uncover effective studio practice in each of these disciplines to inform curriculum development, future practice, and professional development for studio teachers, and to help shape university policy with regard to appropriate resourcing.

The views of academic staff involved in studio teaching – in the classroom and/or in program leadership roles – have fundamentally informed the Project from its inception and have provided perspectives, across a broad range of disciplines, of the challenges and opportunities they now face, and their responses to these changes. How do Australian academics describe their studio classes? What do they feel most contributes to successful, even ideal, studio classes? And what needs to be done to attain the best studio outcomes in the future?

In addition to an extensive review of literature on studio teaching, there were three main sources of primary data for the project: (i) workshops and papers associated with three National Forums on Studio Teaching (2007, 2008 and 2009), each of which attracted in excess of 80 participants; (ii) an online survey of Australian academics (2008) that included 352 respondents who reported in detail on 301 specific studio projects/classes; and (iii) a 2008-2009 survey of heads of 28 schools or departments from 19 Australian universities with Art, Architecture or Design degree programs.



The Studio Teaching Project Final Reports

The Project is presenting its findings in four interrelated volumes: Volume One provides an overview of the project's work, including its pedagogical foundations; the focus of Volume Two is an analysis of the responses to the Survey of Academics; Volume Three focuses on an analysis of the Heads of School Survey; and Volume Four is a compendium of case studies of effective studio practice, drawing to a significant extent on contributions to the three National Forums. There is also an online toolkit for studio teachers associated with these volumes at www.studioteaching.org

The Framework, Analyses, and the View Ahead

The studio, and what distinguishes studio teaching and learning

In the Art, Architecture and Design disciplines, the studio is where learning emerges through action – an investigative and creative process driven by research, exploration and experimentation, and critique and reflection. Studio teaching and learning can be distinguished by emphases on project-based work; learning through praxis; learning through workshop; and learning through first hand observation.

Following on from these distinguishing characteristics, Art, Architecture and Design studios need to be understood in four essential dimensions: a studio culture/community of people; a mode of teaching and learning; a program of projects and activities; and a physical space or constructed environment.

The factors that contribute to ideal and 'best experience' studio outcomes

Based on the Studio Teaching Project Survey of Academics, the theme that most often appeared as the leading indicator of an ideal studio or a teacher's "best experience" was the quality of the studio project. Insofar as there was a single characteristic that typified when studio experiences were likely to be successful, that characteristic was having a high quality project. There was no single definition of what goes into a "high quality project", but there were clear indications of what worked well for respondents to this survey: projects which were challenging; inspiring; multilayered; multidisciplinary; real world; interesting; and relevant.

In addition to the quality of the studio project, important factors included the quality of the teaching; a positive studio atmosphere; and reasonable class and group sizes. Other themes that occurred often enough to warrant being coded as distinctive types of mention were good staff/student interaction; access to good studio spaces (although not necessarily dedicated) and facilities; the quality of staff and of students; and links beyond the university.

The Head of School Survey led to slightly different descriptors of the most crucial qualities of successful studio teaching. In terms of 'the people factor', heads of schools/departments affirmed the importance of having a skilful academic teaching staff, excellent technical staff, and enthusiastic and motivated students. Necessary 'facilities and resources' included flexible studio spaces, appropriately equipped workshops, and industry standard ICT software and hardware. Next, and in line with



the Survey of Academics, the heads of school nominated high quality projects – challenging and inspiring, with a focus on student centred learning, and relevant to contemporary industry workplace problems.

Key indicators to assess student outcomes in studio

Analyses of the literature and of the Project’s primary data sources identified three dimensions for studio assessment, categorised as focussing on the Product (e.g., content knowledge), the Process (e.g., reflective skills and professional awareness), and People (e.g., personal development). Assessment criteria in the Art, Architecture and Design discipline areas were seen to follow different emphases: Art (Process, followed by Person, then Product), Architecture (Product, followed by Process, then People), and Design (Process, followed by Product, then People).

An elaboration of relevant criteria (“indicators”) for assessment identified a series of more detailed dimensions that could be applied to studio assessment situations, including, for example, Concept resolution, Presentation, Interdisciplinarity, Engagement, Self-awareness, and Self-management. And at the core of all these indicators, is the illusive criterion of *Magic*, that intangible/intuitive essence that is often as easy to recognise in studio, as it is difficult to describe.

Five principles for the application of these indicators are suggested: (1) The indicators are *flexible* in that every indicator does not need to be assessed every time. (2) The indicators can be used at both the individual subject and degree level as a *touchstone* to facilitate reflection on, and re-alignment of, assessment in studio. (3) The dimensions and associated indicators can be used to support *developmental* assessment as students progress through their degree program. (4) The indicators can be used at the individual subject or degree level to inform the *design* of studio assessment tasks and the development of assessment rubrics. (5) The indicators can be openly discussed with students and in this way facilitate the development of a *shared understanding* of what is being assessed and why.

Benchmarks for studio teaching

In addition to providing principles for the application of studio assessment criteria, a synthesis of findings from across the Studio Teaching Project led to a series of interdependent benchmark statements about effective practice in studio that can be used by studio teachers to reflect on their practice, and by those involved in curriculum design, development and review. Benchmarks include quality projects; quality staff; positive studio community; student engagement and commitment; high level of interaction; effective collaboration amongst students; reasonable class and group sizes; connection with industry and the profession; a variety of studio outcomes; and provision of appropriate studio spaces and facilities.

The view ahead: Challenges and Opportunities

Heads of school are unanimous in their belief that studio teaching is a key and indispensable characteristic of pedagogy in the disciplines of Art, Architecture and Design. Over three-quarters of these heads also agreed that they are now exploring alternative and more efficient ways of delivering studio teaching, and over two-thirds



agreed that some aspects of studio teaching in their institutions were currently marginally viable and/or under threat.

Standing alongside the responses about a range of pressures on heads and the programs they administer was the finding that approximately 93% of these heads also agreed that the quality of their graduates was high, a strong indication that despite (or because “necessity is the mother of invention”) they have been able to maintain high quality outcomes for students.

What was also apparent in heads’ comments about the current status of Australian Art, Architecture and Design schools, however, was the array of serious concerns related to resources (funding, teaching spaces (dedicated as well as non-dedicated), technology, quality staff, and workload-related stress, for example) and to structures in the sector (the loss of sub-disciplines, the lack of differentiation across institutions in what they offer, the demands of accreditation, for example) that call into question their ability to improve the quality of the student, and staff, experience in the future.

Perhaps more germane in the drive to attain the best studio outcomes in the years ahead, however, were observations made by several respondents in the Survey of Academics who focused their attention less on physical spaces and equipment, and more on the things which would make the studio a more vibrant and compelling experience. It is appropriate to recall here the crucial importance of good projects for highly valued studios. The adjectives linked with those studios – challenging, inspiring, multidisciplinary, relevant, and so forth – are clear pointers on the way to achieving improved studio outcomes in the future.

Those themes – including the need for more flexibility and creativity in the design of studio teaching and learning – were well expressed by two of the respondents in the Survey of Academics. Specifically, studio teaching academics:

[Need to] encourage advanced outcomes that are open-ended and speculative ... allow space for unpredictability ... rather than ticking boxes in teaching as well as the more career-driven curricula that are currently becoming fashionable.

[... and academics] have to take risks, to innovate, to design fresh and challenging programs, to question our mode of operation and the way we teach.