

THE
BELONGING
PROJECT



Report 2013

Phase 3: Focus on the
Interdisciplinary Experience

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Project Team

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Why Belonging Matters

The need to belong is not only important for the long-term success of vulnerable students; it is a fundamental human motivation (Baumeister and Leary, 1995). Belonging has clear implications for the social experience of students and plays a critical role in academic outcomes. As Walton, Cohen, Cwir and Spencer (2011, p. 529) argue, a sense of belonging or social connectedness enhances students' motivation to achieve.

Our research into the first year experience indicates that the transition to university can be fraught. This is especially true for the more diverse cohorts that have resulted from The Bradley Review targets. For these students, “the culture of the institution is foreign and at times alienating and uninviting” (Krause et al, 2005, p. 9). Students from LSES or non-traditional educational pathways may “have less confidence in the personal and career relevance of higher education” and may experience isolation or conflict in assimilating to the cultures of universities. (James et al., 2008, p. 3). A sense of belonging can be vital in ensuring they persist and succeed at university (James, 2001).

Small-scale initiatives that support peer-to-peer relations and encourage positive interactions between staff and students engender a sense of social belonging. When integrated with curricular and co-curricular endeavours they can form the basis for disciplinary belonging (identity) and work to build the competencies and confidence of participants.

The Belonging Project has continued to argue for the importance of establishing a sense of belonging beyond a student's first year. We argue that a student's interdisciplinary and intercultural opportunities and interests need to be supported throughout the whole student lifecycle and extended within their social, academic and career environments.

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Abbreviations and Key Terms Nomenclature

Abbreviations

AQF – Australian Qualifications Framework

ESL – English as a Second Language

FYE – First Year Experience

HEPPP – Higher Education Participation Partnerships

Program L&T – Learning and teaching

LSES – Low Socioeconomic Status

MC2015 – School of Media and Communication’s curriculum renewal plan
SISI – Student Informal Spaces Initiative

SLC – Study and Learning Centre

SSCCs – Student-Staff Consultative Committees

Key terms

Co-creation: Recognises that students actively co-create their university experience and should be genuinely engaged in processes and decisions that involve them, by providing feedback, and, where appropriate, creative input in the change processes.

First year student: A student who is yet to complete 96 credit points of study (equivalent to one full-time year) in their current program at RMIT University.

Transition pedagogy: A holistic approach to the FYE developed primarily in the work of Sally Kift’s Australian Learning and Teaching Council Fellowship, involving the integration of curriculum principles (Transition, Diversity, Design, Engagement, Assessment, and Evaluation & Monitoring) and strategies to engage and support students, as well as to foster a sense of belonging and develop sustainable academic-professional partnerships. Importantly, a transition pedagogy requires a whole of institution approach and the “seamless involvement” of academic and professional staff. (See Kift, Nelson and Clarke, 2010).

At RMIT there are a number of terms that are institution-specific and as such, do not have the same meanings to external audiences. The following table sets out these differences to avoid confusion when reading this document:

Elsewhere	RMIT Term
Subject	Course
Course	Program
Faculty	College

The Belonging Project: Introduction



About the Project

The Belonging Project is a four-year project to design and pilot an improved student experience in the School of Media and Communication.

The Belonging Project has been working since 2011 within an undergraduate Higher Education context to:

1. Develop strategies to support the participation and integration of students from diverse backgrounds, circumstances and cultures, including in particular students those from low Socio Economic Status (SES) backgrounds
2. Enhance student satisfaction and retention rates
3. Help develop and make known a distinctive RMIT student experience

Scope

The Belonging Project has a broad definition of student experience including personal, social and academic experiences. The student experience is considered in relation to not only the program and the University but also to the global employability environment.

The Belonging Project is simultaneously:

1. A co-created, networked, action-based academic research project
2. A longitudinal ethnographic study using qualitative research techniques supplemented by quantitative data
3. A change and advocacy initiative seeking to understand, re-design and modify processes, services and behaviours within the University in order to improve the student experience

The Belonging Project involves around 3000 undergraduate students and 200 staff. It impacts one of RMIT University's largest Schools of approximately 6500 VE, undergraduate and postgraduate students.



The Belonging Project Model

The Belonging Project is structured around the Belonging Narrative Model of student engagement. This model proposes a three-tier student experience, beginning with a strong grounding in a diverse disciplinary cohort (Tier One), broadening out to encompass the interdisciplinary community of the school (Tier Two), and grounded in a sense of belonging to a profession as an employable and ethical global citizen (Tier Three).

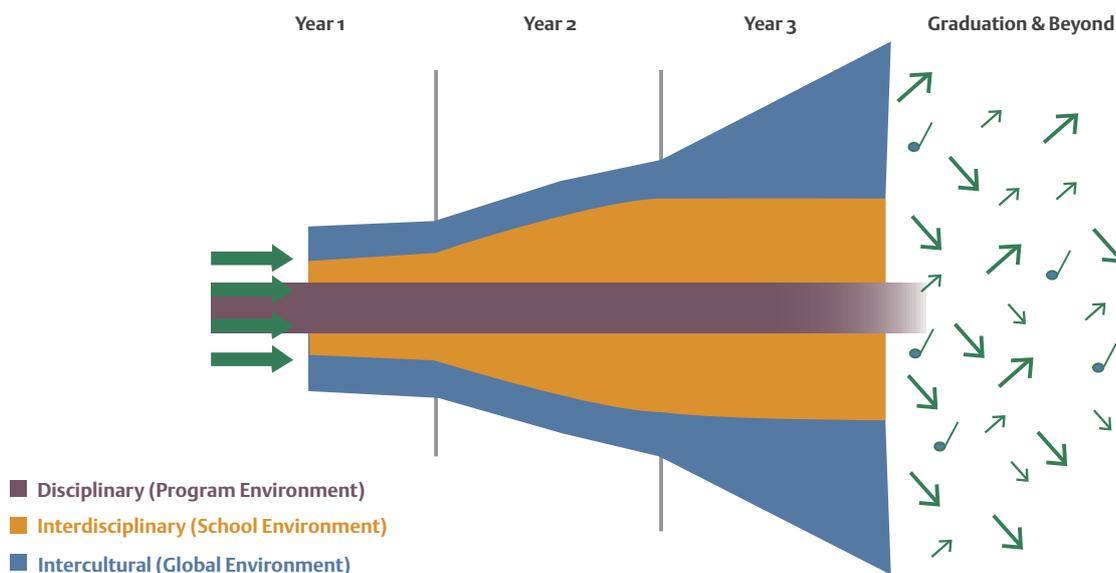


Diagram 1: The Belonging Project Narrative Model of Student Engagement.

Overview of Project Phases

Phases One and Two: Planting the Seeds (2011) and Focus on the First Year Experience (2012)

The first two phases of the Belonging Project, Planting the Seeds (2011) and Focus on the First Year Experience (2012), focused on students' experience in their disciplinary environment.

A comprehensive report on each of these phases can be found on the RMIT Belonging Website at: rmit.edu.au/about/our-education/academic-schools/media-and-communication/research/projects/the-belonging-project

Phase Three: Focus on the Interdisciplinary Experience (2013)

In this report detailing Phase Three Focus on the Interdisciplinary Experience (2013) we discuss the rationale for interdisciplinary learning within the broader context, how we have mapped and modelled interdisciplinary practice within the School of Media and Communication and propose a range of strategies and recommendations for embedding interdisciplinarity within student lifecycles.

Phase Four: Global at Home: At Home in the Global (2014)

In 2014, the The Belonging Project will work on Phase Four: Global at Home: At Home in the Global. This phase will build on the initiatives, transitions, and competencies

researched and promoted in previous phases of the project. It will seek to develop an integrated model for targeted interventions in curriculum design and pedagogy that can: (a) recognise and celebrate our 'already global' student and staff cohorts; (b) scaffold the further development of global literacies throughout the experience of an RMIT program; and (c) provide peak 'global' experiences based from the student's home campus as an alternative or adjunct to overseas exchange and study tours options.

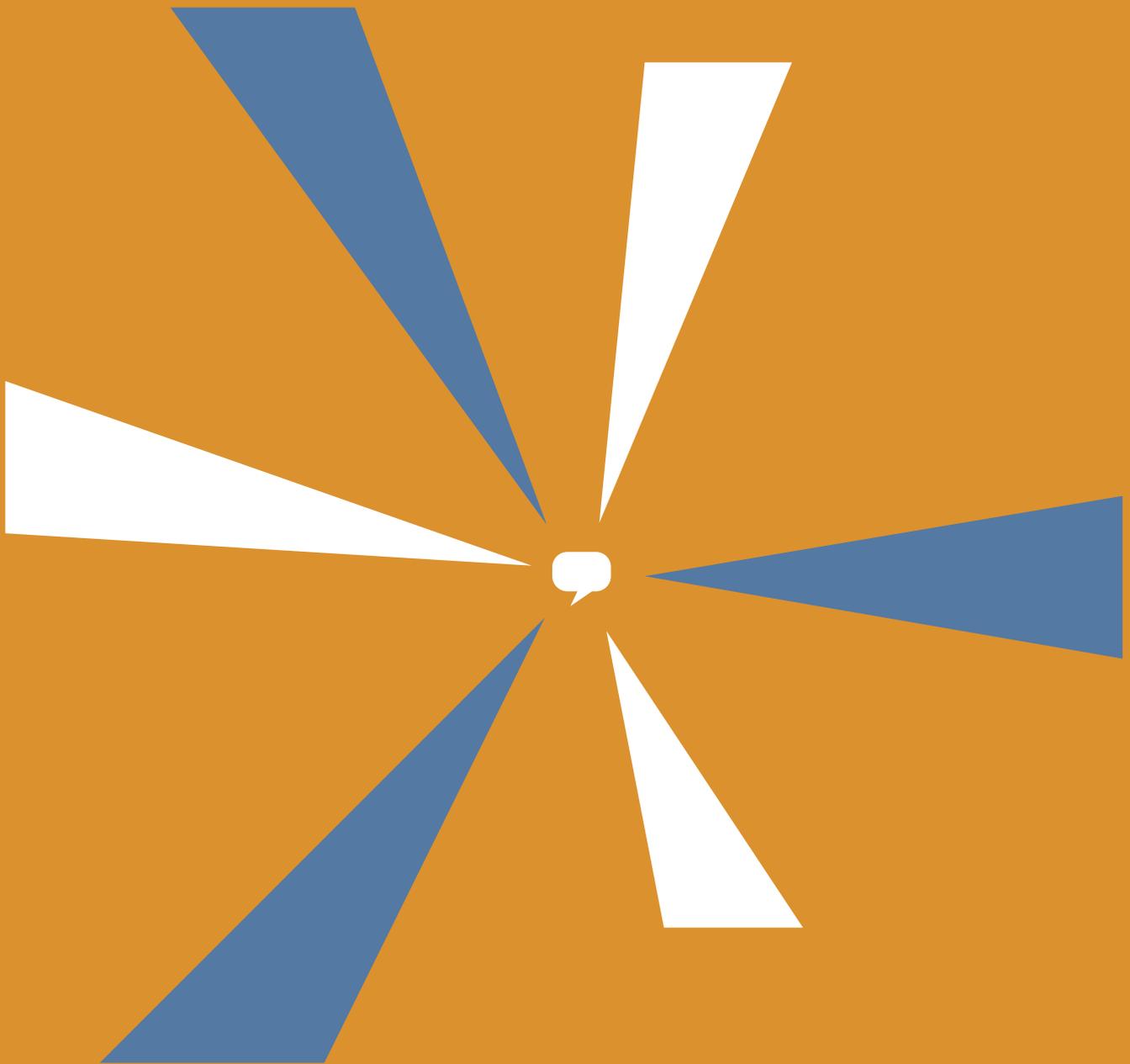
The project will build upon the established best practice of the global/internationalised curriculum to produce a framework, test initiatives, and develop a series of resources for staff delivering courses in the creative disciplines. The interventions are designed to help students to develop the intercultural skills, knowledge and awareness through a series of phased experiences situated 'At Home' in local contexts.

This phase of the project will be divided into three stages, each of which reflects a key point of emphasis:

1. Recognising and celebrating the 'already global' cohort ('feeling global');
2. Scaffolding the further development of global literacies ('doing global'); and
3. Mapping and developing alternative peak 'global' experiences ('being global').



2013 Tier Two: Focus on the Interdisciplinary Experience



2013 Tier Two: Focus on the Interdisciplinary Experience

In 2013 as part of Tier Two: Focus on the Interdisciplinary Experience The Belonging Project has:

1.	Researched and developed a working definition of interdisciplinary activity that is appropriate to the specific context and practices of the School of Media and Communication and its current disciplinary and interdisciplinary practices.
2.	Investigated and explored the range of opportunities currently available in the School in order to develop a typology of interdisciplinary literacies that can be mobilised in strategic discussions around L&T and in the development of new program and course models for 'MC2015'.
3.	Mapped a range of relevant existing case studies to inform the renewal process as well as in broader L&T debates within the School, across the University, and the wider tertiary education sector.
4.	Researched, captured, and disseminated recommendations to capitalize upon existing informal interdisciplinary activities. Fostered new opportunities that bridge the formal and informal curricula to build employability capacities in discipline-relevant ways.

In 2013 we also continued to evaluate and adapt the five Focus on the First Year Experience pilot initiatives and to advocate for the recommendations presented in our 2012 report.

One of our aims had been to develop a resource pack including an interdisciplinary artefact, case studies, assessment templates, and course design resources. During the course of our initial research into the third tier of The Belonging Project Model, Focus on the Global Experience, we identified overlap between resources for the interdisciplinary and global tiers. For this reason we have decided to create a single resource pack to be released in 2015.

Why Focus on the Interdisciplinary Experience?

The adaptive and ever changing nature of the creative industries requires flexible graduates who can work across a range business of contexts (Wright, Davis, and Bucolo, 2013; McHanon, 2012; Creigh-Tyte and Thomas, 2001).

Interdisciplinary learning and teaching approaches are increasingly recognized as effective strategies for generating the skills that students need to address these complex work environments and real world problems (Woods, 2007).

Extending work on transition and disciplinary identity carried out in 2012, The Belonging Project argues for embedding a range of interdisciplinary experiences within the student lifecycle. Interdisciplinarity is a means of increasing students' 'social and cultural capital' and supporting professional development and employability objectives.

For these reasons, in the third phase of its research, Focus on the Interdisciplinary Experience, The Belonging Project examines existing interdisciplinary practice within the School of Media and Communication and proposes strategies and recommendations for embedding interdisciplinarity within student lifecycles.

Our research finds that interdisciplinary learning is vital for students to:

Develop the complex skills required for changing professional contexts by providing students the opportunity to expand upon core disciplinary competencies and develop the higher-level communication, problem-solving project, and group work skills that are required in their future professional 'real world' settings.

Develop connections and belonging to broader groups. Interdisciplinary learning is essential to the welfare and sense of identity and belonging of students as members of a school environment, university culture, and of a professional community.

Develop engaged global citizenship. This works towards broader societal goals, to become actively engaged, empathetic global citizens (Nikolic and Gledic, 2013; Green, 2012).

Enhance personal perceptions of self. As identified by RMIT students in our focus groups, interdisciplinary studies are important in social development and wellbeing as a means of broadening horizons and facilitating critical reflection, self-reflection, self-esteem, and perceptions of empowerment.

Focus on the Interdisciplinary Experience: Recommendations from 2013

In 2013 as part of Tier Two: Focus on the Interdisciplinary Experience The Belonging Project recommends:	
1.	Create a database or platform for skills / interest exchange between staff members: Interdisciplinary learning and teaching requires meaningful interactions between staff. As such staff have recommended the development of a platform for informal and formal connections and collaborations.
2.	Investigate the feasibility of developing a School flagship interdisciplinary course or studio: As we move into deployment of MC2015 many staff have indicated interest in a School based flagship course open to all students. This course will be focused on meaningful interdisciplinary engagement and encourage structured and scaffolded industry collaboration.
3.	Test interdisciplinary frameworks / rubrics from the forthcoming resource kit over several courses within a program
4.	Investigate opportunities for the student skills exchange: The students have continuously indicated throughout the project that they require help identifying and contacting like-minded collaborators from other programs. They have also expressed a strong desire for informal interdisciplinary experiences e.g. TED talk style student presentations in the Atelier Space. Another suggestion was the development of a platform similar to the one proposed for staff in order to develop and interact on projects.

A Note About Interdisciplinarity

It is important to note that interdisciplinary academic work is one point on a spectrum of intellectual and practical student experiences. The existing literature identifies no fewer than six approaches, each with its own objectives, methodologies, and pedagogy. Those explored by The Belonging Project include: disciplinary, multidisciplinary, cross-disciplinary, participatory, interdisciplinary, and trans-disciplinary approaches. While distinctions between these approaches are pedagogically important, here we use the terms “interdisciplinary” and “interdisciplinarity” broadly to refer to the spectrum.



Diagram: Over 900 students participated directly in our initiatives in 2013. We conducted focus groups and individual and group interviews with approximately 40 staff and nearly 50 students.

Broader Context for the Interdisciplinary Experience Relevant to a School

The Creative Industries Context

The creative industries are facing two trends with wide-ranging implications for creative disciplines students in tertiary education:

1. The large studio model is no longer the primary business model for industry practice.
2. The tertiary sector is producing more graduates in specific disciplines than individual creative industries can support (Wright, Davis, and Bucolo, 2013).

These developments require innovative approaches from the tertiary sector in order to meet the needs of an evolving industry climate and employability expectations of students.

Creative industries are increasingly reverting to a small fluid start-up model in which companies are run with minimal staff. For this reason, while specialist skills remain critically important to employability, “there is a need for multi-skilled employers and employees due to the ‘micro’ nature of business” (McHanon, 2012, p. 7). These developments highlight the emerging role of interdisciplinary practice and learning as a quasi-generic skill. Employers are increasingly seeking individuals with flexible, innovative and entrepreneurial qualities.

Moreover, as Ward (2004) argues, individuals in the creative industries must not only develop myriad technical competencies, but also must possess the “emotional competencies” to navigate complex real world collaborative experiences. These emotional capacities can be fostered through engagement with “communities of practice” that extend beyond disciplinary boundaries. Communities of practice introduce the practical and interpersonal challenges and opportunities of real world collaborations.

These collaborative communities of practice can generate multi-skilled practitioners and new interdisciplinary knowledge. When embedded with the curriculum, they may also improve the tertiary sector’s effectiveness in communicating the realities of employment success to students. Students engaged in interdisciplinary communities of practice are more likely to understand that “more than ‘seeking employment’ in one specific discipline [... they] can cross disciplines and boundaries” (Wright, Davis, and Bucolo, 2013).

RMIT and the Changing University Sector

Australian higher education institutions have been attracting more diverse cohorts following developments in the local sector. In 2008, the Bradley Review sought to address the changing global economic environment, specifically an increasingly knowledge-based economy, by prioritizing access to education arrangements (Bradley et

al. 2008, p. 88). The government has adopted strategies to ensure a greater number of Australians become university educated. These included national targets of 20% of higher education enrolments at undergraduate level from LSES backgrounds by 2020 (Ibid, p. xiv). As a means of facilitating target attainment, in 2012 the then federal government removed existing caps on the number of federally funded places.

The School of Media and Communication Context

As a result of these broader developments, the School of Media and Communication is participating in program reconfiguration and renewal. This is reflected in the School’s curriculum renewal plan, *MC2015*, and influences strategic planning and policy documents such as the School of Media and Communication, *L&T Strategy 2013*. These policies have wide-ranging implications for the students and staff. Importantly, they have created a specific mandate “to foster the development of graduates as critical and creative thinkers, multi-skilled and collaborative practitioners, and responsible leaders with a global perspective” (Peterson & Hansen, 2012).

The School’s Workplan clearly implies a role for interdisciplinary learning in its imperative to educate “multi-skilled and collaborative practitioners”. There are opportunities within *MC2015* to create sustainable spaces for these experiences. This may include adopting structured recommendations for interdisciplinary classroom practice within discrete programs and/or seizing upon the proposed studio model to create specifically interdisciplinary space across curricula.

While they present important opportunities, *MC2015* and associated strategic initiatives also make it necessary to pause to assess what interdisciplinarity means in our School context. The academic literature establishes importance of interdisciplinary experiences for employability, the development of higher-level communication skills, innovation, and the refinement of generic and discipline-based skills.

Creative disciplines such as those in our School face special challenges in designing interdisciplinary curriculum. First and foremost, professional programs within the School are not tightly bound by disciplinary convention. In addition, existing interdisciplinary opportunities within the School have tended to be industry-driven rather than built out of the particular pedagogical needs of the School. Both of these issues contribute to the potential for less than fully effective experiences of interdisciplinary learning.

Unless constructed to draw attention to both disciplinary convention and the transcendence of disciplinary

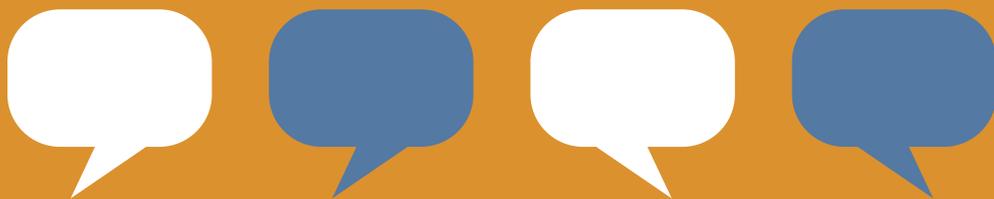
boundaries, interdisciplinary opportunities may give students an experience of collaborative project work, but leave them without the ability to effectively communicate the unique skills generated from such experiences.

Despite the challenges of interdisciplinary curriculum design, the demands of the contemporary job market make it clear that there is a place for this type of learning within the school, and indeed the University. Of 465 respondents to 2013 School Student Experience Survey (HE), 58% felt they did not have enough contact with students in other programs. This corresponds to existing data from students interviewed by the Belonging Project in 2011, 2012, and 2013. In our research, students reported desire for increased formal opportunities for interdisciplinary collaboration and structural support in the form of informal spaces, timetabling, and events for informal collaborations.

It is with our Belonging Project Narrative Model and these contexts in mind that we have approached our work on the interdisciplinary experience. In our research, we have endeavoured to highlight the role of interdisciplinarity as a transition experience that expands disciplinary knowledge and extends students' belonging beyond their immediate cohort. In doing so, we have worked to investigate, document, disseminate, and refine existing practice within the School.



Approach, Methods and Process



Approach, Methods and Process

Approach

The Belonging Project team has articulated a three-pronged research philosophy that reflects our belief that the project should encourage processes that are ‘connected to the grassroots’, inclusive and iterative. In line with this, we have explicitly refrained from proposing a prescriptive model of the interdisciplinary experience. Instead, we have facilitated the involvement of key University stakeholders – students, academic staff, and professional staff – in the process of investigation and co-creation of resources.

We acknowledge that universities are spaces where value is co-created by consumers within complex frameworks of actors and resources (Karpen, Hall, Katsoulidis, and Cam, 2011). We position students not as passive consumers but rather as co-creators of their university experience. We recognise the importance of engaging students in change and believe that this empowers them as co-creators.

Grassroots	Grassroots, because for long-term success, initiatives must be driven from the ground-up.
Inclusive	Inclusive of staff, academic and professional, and of students: each is central to the development, implementation and sustainability of the project.
Iterative	Iterative, integrating cycles of reflection and evaluation into every stage of the research, as guided by an action research methodology.

Methodology and Methods

As with previous tiers of The Belonging Project, we drew on narrative methodology (see e.g. Abma, 2000; Bruner, 1990; Gola, 2009) and action research (see e.g. Kemmis, 2007; Greenwood, Whyte, Harkavy, 1993) to capture and share knowledge. These approaches are the foundation of The Belonging Narrative Model. They have allowed us to work as collaborators with stakeholders. This emphasis on co-creation is central to our approach to change within the School.

While action research and narrative methodology guided the overall design of this tier of The Belonging Project, in our daily practice, the team used a range of allied qualitative methods to engage stakeholders. In the initial stages of the tier in late 2012, we conducted a literature review to situate the School of Media and Communication context within a broader framework of interdisciplinary learning. We then utilized workshops, focus groups, and interviews to capture staff experiences and perceptions of interdisciplinarity and map these against our literature review. In 2013, we refined our models of interdisciplinary

practice before engaging in a second round of interviews, workshops, focus groups with staff and students.

Process

In 2013 The Belonging Project began to research and develop a series of resources for Phase Three: Focus on the Interdisciplinary Experience. We examined the existing literature on interdisciplinary learning; mapped existing practice with the School of Media and Communication; and worked with staff and students to develop models of interdisciplinary learning and teaching that are appropriate to our School context. We took into consideration student desires, the rapidly changing industry and tertiary sectors, and the challenges facing staff who may already be suffering from change fatigue.

In 2013 we also continued to evaluate and adapt the five Focus on the First Year Experience pilot initiatives (see 2012 Belonging Project Report) and to advocate for the recommendations relating to these initiatives.

In contrast to Tier One: Focus on the First Year Experience, which was largely pilot-driven, The Belonging Project’s Focus on the Interdisciplinary Experience has focused primarily on mapping and modelling of interdisciplinary practice within the School and developing resources to support interdisciplinarity. We have employed a feedback loop to investigate, document, and disseminate models of interdisciplinary practice within the School:

1. *Developing a Model of Interdisciplinary Practice* (October 2012)
2. *Staff Engagement: Testing Assumptions / Mapping Practices* (November 2012- February 2013)
3. *Refining a Model of Interdisciplinary Practice* (early 2013)
4. *Student Engagement: Focus Groups and Data Analysis* (September-November 2013)
5. *Professional Staff Engagement: Testing the Model* (September-October 2013)
6. *Academic Staff Engagement: Re-testing the Model* (November 2013)
7. *Case Studies: Mapping Practice* (November 2013-February 2014)
8. *Development and Dissemination of Resources* (November 2013-present)

Focus on the Interdisciplinary Experience: Detail & Analysis



Stage One: Developing a Model of Interdisciplinary Practice

In the initial stages of The Belonging Project's transition from Tier One: Focus on the First Year Experience to Tier Two: Focus on the Interdisciplinary Experience (ICP), the team conducted a literature review in order to discover how other institutions have approached interdisciplinary curriculum design and the potential challenges likely to arise in our context. This literature also served as the basis for a summary report disseminated within the School, *Thinking About Interdisciplinarity* (Morieson, 2012). This report was intended to facilitate a meaningful conversation about perceptions and practices of interdisciplinarity.

Defining interdisciplinary practice

The report began by noting that a discussion of interdisciplinarity must necessarily begin with a clear understanding of disciplinary structures (Krishnan, 2009). It then used Cronin's (2008, p. 4) typology to define and situate interdisciplinarity within a spectrum of collaborative practices including: multidisciplinary, interdisciplinary, transdisciplinary, and integrative approaches. Using a range of written and visually representative examples, The Belonging Project team attempted to highlight the ways in which these approaches might be pedagogically and experientially distinct.

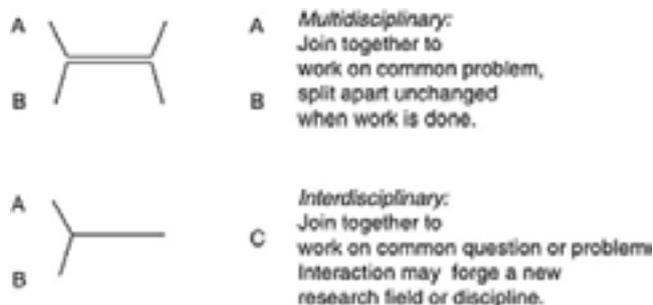


Figure: An example of the ways in which collaborative practices may be distinguished (US National Academy of Sciences, 2004, p. 29)

Making the case for interdisciplinarity

The summary report then set out to “make the case” for interdisciplinary teaching and learning. The team argued that while disciplinary identification and specialization is on the increase (Becher and Trowler, p. 14) interdisciplinary learning and teaching “counters narrow specialization and fragmented curricula [and] can be a unifying and integrating force” (Grossman, Wineburg and Scott, 2000, p. 2).

Moreover, as Grossman, Wineburg and Scott (2000, p. 2) note, “the world does not come neatly packaged in bundles.” In encouraging students to engage with complex issues that challenge the boundaries of their disciplinary skill sets, interdisciplinary practice reflects real world problems and their solutions. For this reason in the summary report, The Belonging Project team argued in

line with Messer (2012) that rather than detracting from the forms of expertise generated in disciplinary practice-led models, interdisciplinary learning can foreground process and methods. This can lead to richer disciplinary knowledge, creative innovation and improved employment outcomes.

Problems with interdisciplinarity from the literature

The summary report was careful to note that interdisciplinarity is not without its challenges. In this initial stage of research and dissemination, The Belonging Project team focused on three categories of obstacles: those focused on definition, structure, and perception.

1. Definition

Staff (and/or students) may struggle to understand precisely what interdisciplinary learning entails. This may result in ineffective communication of learning objectives or pedagogical slippages between forms of collaboration (e.g. multidisciplinary learning and interdisciplinary learning).

A separate but related issue may arise when students do not have a clear enough idea of disciplinaryity, let alone *inter*-disciplinary. With careful scaffolding interdisciplinary collaboration may be introduced into the curriculum. That said, students struggling to understand the methods and conceptual frameworks of their own discipline, may not have a clear enough understanding of the boundaries and expectations of their discipline to effectively participate in interdisciplinary learning.

2. Structure

For staff planning or supporting interdisciplinary curriculum development, interdisciplinary teaching and learning may pose practical challenges. In its initial stages, interdisciplinary curriculum development may be more time-intensive than its disciplinary counterpart. It takes time to do it properly – and teachers are time-poor.

Throughout the curriculum development and delivery period, interdisciplinarity can be a conflict-ridden process. Staff must work to balance disciplinary needs, individual egos, and student anxieties with the collaborative process. Interdisciplinary curriculum design may require effective communication and explicit confrontation of problems as they arise.

3. Perception

One of the most considerable challenges to interdisciplinary learning and teaching is the scepticism it may engender. Disciplinary allegiances and structures run deep. Individual staff members or students may resist interdisciplinary research or



collaboration for fear that it will somehow diminish or encroach upon their disciplinary work.

Others may believe that there is not enough evidence to support a role for interdisciplinarity in a formal curriculum already under pressure to deliver an increasing level of specialist skills within the three-year undergraduate life. Even those who see a space for interdisciplinary learning and teaching in the curriculum, may perceive it as just ‘the next big thing’.

Practical strategies / examples of best practice

For those interested in developing interdisciplinary opportunities, but unclear about where to start, The Belonging Project’s summary report offers a number of practical strategies from the literature. Golding (2009) outlines basic techniques that are recommended for interdisciplinary teaching:

1. Choose a team of expert academic teachers and interdisciplinarians,
2. Coordinate perspectives and approaches,
3. Ensure tutors and tutorials are of the highest standard,
4. Coordinate administrative details,
5. Address and manage expectations,
6. Plan the subject in explicit detail.

With careful planning, interdisciplinarity can be introduced to the student experience in a range of ways from simple activities in the classroom to radical reconceptualization of the student timetable and mode of learning. Examples that are relevant to the School include:

- **Interdisciplinary courses** – purposefully bringing together students from two or more different disciplines to work on shared problems/projects for the duration of a semester.
- **Interdisciplinary class projects** – bringing together students from a range of different programs and disciplinary backgrounds to work in a group on a common problem for an assessment task.
- **Interdisciplinary capstone collaboration** – coordinating or providing opportunities for collaboration on a more substantial assessment task or capstone project.
- **Opportunities for student-led collaboration** – providing a time and space for students from a range of disciplines to meet and develop productive collaborative relationships, e.g. speed dating, networking nights.
- **Informal skills workshops** – these are intentionally designed to be broad, to cut across disciplines and cohorts, and allow students to embed new or traditionally “outside of the discipline” skills within disciplinary practice.

Stage Two: Staff Engagement / Testing the Model

In November 2012, The Belonging Project team invited members of staff to a workshop to explore questions raised in the summary report and assess a path forward. Twenty academic and professional staff members representing thirteen distinct program or professional areas in the VE, Undergraduate, and Postgraduate sectors attended the workshop. The Belonging Project Research Officer facilitated a critically reflective discussion of key questions related to the program needs:

Key questions asked of staff

1. What does interdisciplinarity mean for your course/program/discipline?
2. What challenges does interdisciplinarity present? What opportunities?
3. In what guises is it already present (in your course/program/discipline)?
4. If it isn't present, how could you envisage incorporating it?
5. Or, if it is present, how could current efforts be extended?
6. What form of support could we offer you to – guidance, training, assistance making links, or financial – to initiate, improve or extend an interdisciplinary experience for your students?

Individual program/area staff member responses were recorded in order to map and thematically analyse the specificity of the School context in greater detail.

What our staff identified as concerns

1. Definitional issues: What do these mean to school staff

- “Interdisciplinary” was seen as a relative term that was often used imprecisely.
- Because the School is already very “multidisciplinary”, there was some confusion about the value added by interdisciplinary offerings.
- There was a general lack of clarity over where existing opportunities fell on the multi/inter/trans spectrum.
- The set-up of interdisciplinary activities is important and needs to be well-briefed at an early stage so students can get used to the idea and understand the objectives of interdisciplinary learning.
- There was a query over whether there was a spectrum of interdisciplinarity that could be embedded within programs.
- Some staff members posited whether collaborative is a more appropriate term than “interdisciplinary”.

2. Structure: considerations and barriers

- Staff highlighted the need for careful thought and planning the timing of interdisciplinary activities within the curriculum. They expressed a wariness of retrofitting the curriculum.
- Course structures differ between programs. Interdisciplinarity might require different assessment tasks for students from each program.
- Some staff members pondered whether there might be a need to structure interdisciplinary experiences so as to make sure to bring the experience “back to safe disciplinary space”.
- Creative programs – for example the Animation program – don't want to be involved in collaboration in a way that sets them up as ‘service disciplines’ or the ‘pack horses’ for other people's ideas.

3. School Perceptions

- Some programs in the School are part of fields that are still trying to establish themselves as disciplines and establish their own theoretical boundaries. These fields were concerned that interdisciplinary collaboration might be a barrier to disciplinary legitimacy.
- There was apprehension that good will and communication would not be sufficient to ensure an effective collaboration.
- There was also concern that even in small multidisciplinary groups with the potential for self-nominated interdisciplinary projects students would simply ‘stick together’.

In response to the concerns and suggestions raised in the first staff workshop, The Belonging Project team engaged in further research to refine our interdisciplinary artefact in preparation for further dialogue with staff and students. In addition, in early 2013 we facilitated “interdisciplinary speed-dating” events to support collaboration and dialogue within and across the School.

Stage Three: Refining a Model of Interdisciplinary Practice in a School

In 2013, in light of our analysis of the narrative data from the November 2012 staff workshop, The Belonging Project team worked on a new “interdisciplinary artefact” to define and represent the range of experiences that occur within the School of Media and Communication. In mid-2013, The Belonging Project produced a brief that further defined the categories of interdisciplinary learning represented in the School and situated these within a broader scholarly context. A summary of the categories outlined in the 2013 brief is:

What we think it looks like in our School

1. **Disciplinary**, bounded fields defined by their specific frames of reference, traditional objects of study, theoretical canons, technologies, and methodologies (Cronin, 2008: 3).
2. **Multidisciplinary**, “experts” from each area communicate and work alongside those from other areas, but they work within their disciplinary area (see e.g. Rutherford, 2005).
3. **Cross-disciplinary**, brings together discrete disciplines for the purpose of addressing an issue or area of mutual interest each discipline attempts to frame the common issue within the language and discourses of the other (Hulme and Toye, 2006; Grigg, 1999).

4. **Participatory**, expands on the types and sources of expertise drawn upon by extending its circle of engagement outside of the academic arena to industry partners, but does not seek to create new knowledge (Weaver and Cousins, 2007). (See page 25).
5. **Interdisciplinary**, requires not only disciplinary knowledge, but also the development of cultural competencies that facilitate the creation of new knowledge, theory, and concepts that extend and transform disciplinary boundaries (Wood, 2007).
6. **Transdisciplinary**, draws on both academic and non-academic expertise by involving stakeholders in disciplines and industry to create new ways of framing knowledge, innovative practices, and the novel theories and discourses (OECD, 1998).

In addition to defining types of practice, the 2013 brief included an easily digestible framework that outlined strengths and challenges of each respective category and simple strategies for maximizing the effectiveness of each approach (See Appendix 3).

Like the 2012 summary report, this was disseminated to staff within the School of Media and Communication. Staff members were invited to comment on the brief and offer suggestions for its revision. Perhaps in part due to change fatigue around MC2015 and the SLC restructure, circulation of the document yielded a very low response rate.



Stage Four: Student Engagement via Focus Groups and Data Analysis

While The Belonging Project team worked to gain traction for interdisciplinary experiences with the School of Media and Communication staff, we also began to document student perceptions of interdisciplinarity in the School. In the first instance, we approached students enrolled in the School's Interdisciplinary Communication Project (ICP) course offering. Students were invited to one-hour long focus groups.

Though the initial response rate for the focus groups exceeded 40% of the enrolment, a significantly lower number of students actually participated in the focus groups. When asked why they had not attended the focus groups in which they enrolled, students, like staff, reported a degree of change and survey fatigue. This is consistent with the experiences of staff conducting research on other projects. It represents a genuine challenge for co-creation processes.

Student perceptions: what our students said

The students who participated in the ICP focus groups, and later in discussions while being interviewed during the End of Year Festival of Events, were able to articulate their perceptions of interdisciplinary opportunities in the School. Students within the School of Media and Communication identified the value of these opportunities to the Belonging team. From their perspective, the coming together of individuals of different backgrounds, different disciplines, and different perspectives results in a creative environment in which “the ideas are going to be more comprehensive”. Such environments may also be “more honest” in that individual and disciplinary limitations and strengths may become more apparent to students and allow for greater self-reflection.

As a third year Professional Communication student highlighted with respect to interdisciplinary learning in the classroom setting:

“Sometimes it will create debate but often it will create strength, and stronger ideas and outcomes because you have different people leading into it. I think that collaboration is key.”

To students these experiences reflect “how real life works” as well as how “people work with different people in jobs and in industry” and “even just in general life”.

The benefits of interdisciplinary approaches identified by students in the School correspond to those identified in extensive research conducted elsewhere. For instance, in his survey of program directors in the United States, William Newell (1990: 70) found that students who participated in interdisciplinary courses and programs, showed:

1. More sensitivity to ethical issues
2. Ability to synthesise or integrate information
3. Enlarged perspectives and greater awareness of communal issues
4. More creative, original, and unconventional thinking
5. More humility and listening skills
6. Greater sensitivity to bias

These skills and characteristics may enhance and improve the student's experience within the cohort, within the classroom, and as a member of diverse global community. The benefits are not limited to the interdisciplinary experience but feedback to the disciplinary core and extend beyond the University to graduates' professional lives.



Stage Five: Academic Support Staff Engagement / Testing the Model

In addition to approaching students, The Belonging Project team invited Library Liaisons, Study and Learning Centre (SLC) Advisors, and College Senior Advisor Learning & Teaching (SALT) representatives to strategize an approach to interdisciplinary experiences within the School. Six representatives of these areas joined The Belonging Project team for a workshop. We presented our evolving model of interdisciplinary practice and existing data to the participants.

Impact of Australian Qualifications Framework needs verses student experience

Workshop participants initially expressed concerns over the place of interdisciplinary experience vis a vis generic skills given the Australian Qualifications Framework's increasing focus on literacy and numeracy. However, they expressed

their understanding that an evolving tertiary sector climate suggested an increasing need for universities to engage with broad interdisciplinary approaches in order to remain competitive.

This workshop yielded specific suggestions for further development of Tier Two: Focus on the Interdisciplinary Experience, that have since been incorporated into The Belonging Project's approach to interdisciplinarity. These suggestions included a request to explore "non-traditional" opportunities for interdisciplinary engagement with the informal curriculum. For example, it was that library training sessions might be used by clusters as spaces for interdisciplinary opportunities. In addition, it was recommended that a further exploration of the distinctions between group work and project work might help approaches to the interdisciplinary practice.

Stage Six: Academic Staff Engagement / Re-testing the Model

The second academic staff workshop was held in November 2013. It was attended by thirteen staff representing ten programs in VE, UG, PG. Eight staff members who had attended the November 2012 workshop were present.

The half-day workshop was split into two sections. In the first half, The Belonging Project team reported back on our revised model of interdisciplinary practice, data collected about existing interdisciplinary collaborations within the School, and student and professional staff perceptions and recommendations. In the second half of the workshop, staff members were invited to critique The Belonging Project's revised model and to offer critical reflections on their program's engagement with, and plans for, interdisciplinary learning under the *MC2015* curriculum redevelopment. They were also asked to propose resources that could be developed to facilitate their engagement with interdisciplinarity.

Working in groups of three or four, staff members first assessed the revised artefact. Almost universally, staff present rejected the inclusion of the "participatory" category. It was argued that virtually all courses, and certainly all programs within the School, are to some extent "participatory" as they strongly embed industry partners and perceptions within their design. The other categories in the artefact were seen as valuable and more clearly differentiated.

In reflecting on the place of each approach with the student lifecycle, staff questioned whether interdisciplinarity was a universally achievable opportunity within the limitations of the three-year undergraduate

lifecycle. Instead, some staff members present argued that interdisciplinary learning might more comfortably fit within the Honours framework and that transdisciplinary engagement was more likely to occur with higher-level postgraduate offerings. Other staff members, however, expressed concerns over unnecessarily limiting undergraduate experiences. Two members of staff in particular were adamant that advanced undergraduate students should have the opportunity to "opt in" to truly interdisciplinary opportunities.

What our staff needs to support interdisciplinary experiences

In terms of resources for the facilitation of interdisciplinary experiences, staff made two primary requests:

1. Resources for the facilitation of staff 'interdisciplinary match-making'
2. Case studies or vignettes that captured the experiences of those already engaged in interdisciplinary teaching and learning

These recommendations reflected a belief that interdisciplinarity required a focus on staff perceptions rather than on student skills or engagement. As one staff member noted, "Students are only here for three years, the longevity of these opportunities requires a focus on staff culture".

Stage Seven: Mapping Practice Case Studies

Seizing on the recommendation for case studies raised in the November 2013 academic staff workshop, The Belonging Project team investigated options for capturing in richer detail the experiences of those engaged in interdisciplinary teaching. We explored the possibility of developing a form for self-documentation that could be shared via an existing weblink (e.g. The Belonging Project website). Given our previous experiences with “survey fatigue” and the time sensitive nature of curriculum re-development in light of MC2015, we decided against this approach.

We also mooted the possibility of collecting and sharing individual course vignettes. However, early indications from staff present at the workshop indicated an unease with revealing “warts and all” experiences, if such experiences could be readily identified. “Rose-tinted” case studies would have been of questionable value to a staff cohort interested in real world experiences of interdisciplinary practice. Ultimately, we decided to interview key interdisciplinary champions about their experiences and compile these into a single “uber case study”. It was believed that this could capture the lived experience of interdisciplinarity without revealing the identities of the participants.

Interdisciplinary champions’ knowledge in the School

We approached staff members in seven programs and conducted in-depth interviews with staff from five programs. The programs were drawn from VE, Undergraduate, and Postgraduate. Four of the programs ran project focused, industry driven courses as their “interdisciplinary opportunities”. The same questions were asked of all staff members interviewed (see Appendix 2). The data has been compiled and subsequently mapped against student interview data from The Belonging Project’s student focus groups in 2011, 2012, and 2013.

The interview questions centred on three stages of curriculum development and delivery that were roughly divided into:

1. Development (Before)
2. Delivery (During)
3. Evaluation (After)

These categories structure the “uber case study” that will be disseminated as part of The Belonging Project’s package of interdisciplinary resources.

Themes identified by staff

The key themes that emerged from analysis of the case study interviews are outlined below:

1. Curriculum Design

- While literature emphasizes the role of team teaching and dynamics therein, only one of the case study courses involved team teaching
- Most opportunities are driven by industry / outside partners
- Staff often serve “as brokers to industry”
- In part because of the needs of outside partners, most opportunities had very short development periods
- Time intensive nature due to short time lines

2. Curriculum Delivery

- Assessment was often reflective and/or role defined
- Most experiences involved students from VE, UG, and PG and included students from outside of the School (and outside of creative disciplines)
- Need for “extra” resources primarily in the form of equipment and specialist workshops
- First year students were often successful participants

3. Curriculum Evaluation

- Most projects were “passion projects” but were generally as rewarding for staff as for students
- Very few opportunities are regularly repeated in the same format or with the same structure
- While students were given opportunities to reflect during course, there was little capturing of reflection or follow up

4. Requests

- Need for increased funding to support special needs of interdisciplinary subjects
- Request for greater flexibility for short design periods or recognition of informal opportunities

Stage Eight: Dissemination of Resources

The Belonging Project team has disseminated aspects of our research on Tier Two: Focus on the Interdisciplinary Experience as part of an ongoing process of co-creation. The summary report and brief were circulated to staff in the School of Media and Communication. Likewise, insights from our focus groups, interviews, and workshops have been fed back to relevant stakeholders through workshops and forums.

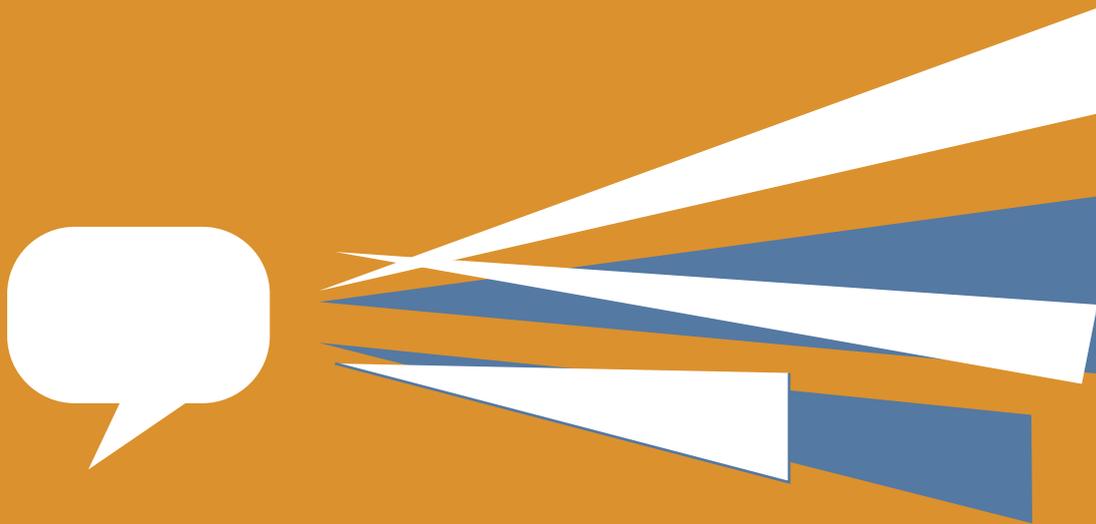
Resources for staff

One of our specific aims for this tier was to develop a resource pack including an interdisciplinary artefact, case studies, assessment templates, and course design resources.

During the course of our initial research into the third tier of The Belonging Project Narrative Model, Focus on the Global Experience, we identified an overlap between resources for the interdisciplinary and global tiers. For this reason, rather than disseminating multiple resource packs that might give the impression of self-contained tiers, operating independently of one another, we have decided to create a range of resources across the three tiers of the project.



**Tier One in 2013:
Development and
Evaluation of the
*Focus on the First Year
Experience* Initiatives
in 2013**



Tier One in 2013: Development and Evaluation of the Focus on the First Year Experience Initiatives in 2013

In 2013 we continued to evaluate and adapt the five *Focus on the First Year Experience* pilot initiatives and to advocate for the recommendations presented in our 2012 report.

These five key pilot initiatives centred around key areas of social and academic transition in the student life cycle including initial entry, semester transitions, and end of year transitions:

1. Coordinated Orientation Week Activities
2. Cohort Day Out
3. Student Informal Spaces
4. Academic Transition Initiatives
5. End of Year Festival of Events and Exhibition

Outlined below is the development and evaluation that occurred in 2013 that relates to each of these initiatives. For detailed information and background on the initiatives please refer to the 2012 report.

Initiative 1: Coordinated Orientation Week Activities

Program Orientation

Program Orientation continues to be a critically important aspect of the social and academic experience of first year students. In 2013, we noted that all undergraduate programs once again offered a Program Orientation. This allowed students within a single cohort the opportunity to receive standardized information about the program structure, expectations, and internal policies. It was an important social experience allowing students to begin the process of mingling with and connecting to classmates in a setting outside of the classroom. *Data from the Student Experience Survey indicates that 91.45% of those who attended a Program Orientation found the orientation to be useful.*

However, as with the first iteration, problems with consistency of Program Orientation planning, format, and content persist. Because information is rarely shared across programs, there is little consistency in the experience of Program Orientation within the School.

While we are not recommending that a rigid “one size fits all” structure be imposed upon each program, increased dialogue and knowledge sharing may be needed to ensure that the pedagogical objectives of Program Orientations are achieved for students within all programs. Moreover, increasing openness between Programs might ease some pressures of Program Orientation planning and assist the development of shared Program Orientation resources.

The Orientation Passport was discontinued in 2013 as data from the first iteration demonstrated low levels of engagement and interest in this initiative.

School Welcome

In 2013, over 700 students attended the School Welcome. This represents a *one hundred per cent increase from 2012*. This marks the School Welcome as a unique opportunity to introduce students to the narrative of belonging within the larger community of the School of Media and Communication.

In an attempt to capitalize on the enthusiasm expressed by the 2012 cohort and to increase the effectiveness and reach of the School Welcome, The Belonging Project team worked with staff in the School to implement a series of changes.

New developments

In 2013, the venue for the School was changed to Storey Hall in an attempt to highlight the “heart” of the City campus and to make it easier for students to participate in the full range of orientation activities.

In this iteration, we also attempted to address the concerns of focus group participants from previous years who suggested areas for improvement in the implementation of the initiative. For example, in previous years School Welcome speakers were, if generally inviting and enthusiastic, not always able to deliver clear and targeted messages that shaped a holistic narrative of the School. In response to this, *we encouraged a more consistent and thorough briefing of speakers*, who are mostly second and third year undergraduates. Importantly, the School Welcome also provides an informal opportunity for the School community to reflect on the School’s shared core values.

The speakers:

- Introduced the identity of the school through their energy and
- Effective communication skills
- Grounded Students within the School and broadening their horizons
- Engaged, entertained, and contextualized their own student experiences
- Increased awareness of academic and co-curricular services/opportunities
- Communicated key messages of engagement, networking, collaboration, community, and commitment

Improvements for 2014

Overall, the School Welcome was well received, however, it was not without challenges. There are further changes needed to improve the consistency and cohesion of the initiative:

- Student speakers need better briefs in order to ensure that the key messages of the event are clear and easily understood
- The School Welcome should be linked better to Big O Day and other orientation activities within the University in order to give students a sense of belonging to a larger institutional community
- Staff and organizers should ensure that the messages relating to new students are consistent with the pedagogical transitions needed to establish interdisciplinary collaborations and global aspirations and do not undermine these through overemphasis of competitiveness between programs

Mid-Year Welcome

For Semester 2 entrants the School Welcome may be the singular opportunity students have for an informal but structured introduction to the School of Media and Communication. While all programs now run Program Orientations for Semester 1 students, this is not yet the norm for mid-year entrants.

These students face not only the usual transition challenges, but also the added pressure of integrating into established cohorts, without the benefit of the kinds of coordinated orientation events that were designed to ease the social and academic transitions of first year students. For this reason, The Belonging Project team has worked to ensure the availability of a Mid-Year School Welcome.

New Developments

In 2013, we played a central part in the organization of the event. We also sent an evaluator to the event who made observations and conducted informal interviews with participants. The Belonging Project's role in administering

the Mid-Year Welcome has given our team insight into both the considerable challenges to the welcome event and its enduring importance.

Of 311 commencing students (81 UG, 169 PG, 61 VE) in the School of Media and Communication's mid-year intake, 18 students attended the Mid-Year Welcome. Of these, the overwhelming majority of attendees were commencing postgraduate students. The majority of attendees indicated that the timetabling of the Mid-Year Welcome was critical to their decision to attend; this emphasizes that while many students are open to attending such orientation events, the timing of the events must be practical and convenient.

The greatest success of the Mid-Year Welcome was to provide an opportunity for networking among student cohorts and between students and academic transition services. In 2013, the host venue was changed to a venue which facilitated more informal interactions. During the informal discussions that followed the more formal academic services presentation, many students resolved housing issues, found legal advice, wellbeing support and exchanged industry information. Students who attended reported that the event was valuable to both their academic and social transitions.

Improvements for 2014

The single most significant challenge to the Mid-Year Welcome is to encourage attendance. This issue requires both practical and strategic innovation in order to increase the reach of the welcome event in future years. From a practical perspective, given the complexities of timetabling during the relevant period in the academic calendar, it may be necessary to offer alternative iterations in order to connect with a larger number of students. Alternatively, the Mid-Year Welcome may need to be connected at the program level to a social event to encourage attendance and facilitate further social integration of mid-year entrants. For future iterations, organizers will need to carefully examine the timetable and the strategic objectives of the event in order to find a time that maximizes both its reach and benefits.

In addition, we need to work with program staff to ensure the Mid-Year Welcome is embedded at a program level and that students are encouraged to attend within their programs. Embedding the event, however, may require a shift in staff culture. Currently few programs are actively promoting the event and staff attendance at the event was extremely low, especially when compared to the School Welcome in Semester 1. Other than presenters, only two staff members attended the event in 2013.

Initiative 2: Cohort Day Out

Analysis of case studies from 2012 suggested the Cohort Day Out pilot was very well-received and had a significant impact on building a sense of belonging and confidence within the relevant cohorts. Staff reported that the Cohort Day Out was successful in building core competencies and in contributing to a sense of disciplinary identity. Students found the initiative to be beneficial in supporting the ongoing transition they faced. The pilot had the added benefit of being low cost and relatively easy to organize (for further discussion see, Report 2012: Phase Two: Focus on the First Year Experience and our 2014 article 'Belonging in the first year: a creative discipline cohort case study' in the International Journal of First Year Education, (Araújo et al, 2014).

Both of the original participating programs, Creative Writing and Photography, organized a second iteration of the Cohort Day Out initiative in 2013. The Belonging Project monitored and evaluated this using a range of methods including interviews and student feedback to assess the ongoing impact of the initiative.

New Developments

Case study 1: Creative Writing

In 2013, the Cohort Day Out activity in the Creative Writing program returned to Queen Victoria Market following a similar format to the 2012 iteration. Despite the fact that the non-required excursion was held on a public holiday, the Cohort Day Out experienced an increase in participation rates: 75% of eligible students participated as opposed to 70% in the first year of the initiative. Staff and students attributed this to two factors:

1. The success of the 2012 initiative had created general enthusiasm for a fun, off-campus experience.
2. The inclusion of a small monetary incentive reportedly made students "feel valued by the University".

Indeed, students from Creative Writing reported that Cohort Day Out experience had facilitated connections with other members of the cohort and allowed individuals the opportunity to develop both confidence and a sense of academic skills literacy in an organic way. In the words of the course coordinator, "This [approach] enabled a mingling of students from different backgrounds and subgroups to get to know one another and share their experience of the city".

Case study 2: Photography

In 2013 first year students in the Photography program were also once again given the opportunity to attend an informal, co-curricular Cohort Day Out at Hanging Rock. Like Creative Writing, Photography has seen an increase in the attendance rate at its Cohort Day Out, with virtually all first year students now participating.

The Cohort Day Out experience was promoted to first year students:

1. At the Program Orientation, via a program promotional video, and by the program
2. On a Facebook page during the first two weeks of the semester

In week three the students took a day trip to Hanging Rock with other members of the cohort. Photography's approach was heavily focused on social transitions and pastoral connections. In the words of the Cohort Day Out coordinator the experience is "an opportunity to bond and get comfortable with one another".

In line with its emphasis on cohort building, a unique aspect of the Photography Cohort Day Out was that it also served as an opportunity to establish inter-generational cohort links. While the event was designed for first year students, twelve pre-selected second years attended as peer-to-peer mentors. Each mentor was assigned approximately five first year students from a range of local, interstate, and international backgrounds. These mentoring groups were then maintained and fostered beyond the excursion through regular cohort barbecues and informal social gatherings. This program-based facilitation of peer-to-peer connection is one of the most notable strengths of the program's approach to the Cohort Day Out and transition.

Another important highlight of the Photography program's approach to Cohort Day Out is that the program has been successful in embedding the initiative in its annual operating budget:

"Having that understanding of belonging and The Belonging Project within the School of Media and Communication means that when I put in a generated budget line saying I want so much in the budget for belonging projects, [the administration] understands. I think it's important because sure we can cut back on so many things, but I don't see [initiatives aimed at increasing student belonging] as a luxury. I see it as a necessity for the program and I think it's important that these kind activities are recognized... We should make sure that these things are maintained."

In the view of the Coordinator, Cohort Day Out and similar informal transition activities were essential initiatives that enabled students "to feel that they belonged to a program".

What is needed to make the Cohort Day Out work

Budget and Time

While the inclusion of Belonging initiatives within the program budget ensures that support is available for a sustained approach to transition within the budget year, time constraints and staffing remain formidable obstacles to the long-term sustainability of the initiative.

Program Structure to support sustainability

As with Creative Writing, the Photography Cohort Day Out is largely dependent on a single staff member and is therefore vulnerable. In order for this initiative to achieve long-term sustainability it is necessary for it to become embedded within the program structure rather than being the project of any one individual.

Scaffolded Pedagogy

From a pedagogical perspective, the Cohort Day Out built upon academic skills embedded in the formal curriculum the first weeks of the first year. It drew on these and expanded them beyond the formal curriculum through a fun, city-based activity that introduced collaboration. The Cohort Day Out was, in this way, part of ongoing, iterative process of embedding student belonging. Its greatest strength is the way in which it accommodates the multiple transitions – social, cultural, academic – and variations in individual experiences and needs by extending the focus on transition beyond Orientation Week.

Conclusions and Challenges

The second iteration of the Cohort Day Out was even more successful than the first in achieving these objectives.

What changed:

- Groups were assigned with sensitivity to timetabling so as to ensure that collaborations begun during the Cohort Day Out could contribute to in-class activity.
- Minor changes to the format, particularly in the way that groups were assigned allowed the Cohort Day Out activity to be more closely tied to academic/classroom transitions.

The challenges of coordinating a successful Cohort Day Out are not insignificant, however. While the initiative is effective in part because it is low-cost and relatively easy to design, the implementation and sustainability of the initiative face some obstacles. In the case of Creative Writing, securing funding for the initiative of approximately \$200 per annum remains a challenge. Despite the success of the pilot and consistently positive feedback from students, the program has yet to embed the Cohort Day Out within its already tight budget. For this reason, funding is dependent on late appeals to School administrators.

In addition, there is a genuine burden of coordination in a climate in which staffing is limited and staff workloads are high. The Cohort Day Out has rested almost entirely on the passion and dedication of one or two staff members. Staff fatigue is also a growing concern and may challenge the long-term sustainability of this initiative.



Initiative 3: Student Informal Spaces

Since its refurbishment by The Belonging Project and Property Services in 2012, the Student Atelier Space has become a “cultural hub” of the School. The refurbishment was carried out in response to student focus groups in which students identified a desire for a more inviting informal space over which they could feel a sense of ownership. Students have reported that “the transformation was amazing” and that the space “filled a gap” in the public spaces of the University. It has become an important space for collaboration and has been used by students and for cohort activities throughout the year including private study, group work, socialising, preparing meals and student-led exhibitions and industry events.

In student interviews conducted between September and December 2013, students reported routinely using the space for group work and informal meetings and collaborations. It was seen to be important in that:

- This culture of collaboration and interaction was central to student perceptions of the space.
- Programs increasingly utilized the space in a semi-formal capacity. For example, in 2013 it was used for a Student Mobility Competition, the Global Exchange forum, and Communication Design’s end of year exhibition.

Echoing the sentiment of others, one student noted that, “the Level 2 area is great because people all collaborate in the same spot”. Yet the student noted that still more can be done to maximize the impact of the space, “Maybe more could be done where more student events are run sometimes in Level 2”.



Suggestions included Student “TED” style talks to facilitate knowledge-transfer between student cohorts, project initiatives, student-led skills workshops, and informal gatherings.

In our 2013 evaluation of the Student Informal Spaces Initiative connections between interdisciplinary learning and informal spaces also became evident. For some the space was a space to develop an appreciation of the work of students in other degree programs:

“The Atelier space is definitely somewhere where you come in contact with people doing the other degrees and you might share a bit of work with them just to get a different perspective or you might get to know them as mates or somewhere you just overhear things of what people are saying and you go “Oh that’s interesting”. It’s always a bit fascinating to see other people working through their own projects. You’re like “They know how to do that,” so that’s fun.”

For other students the space has become an important space for co-curricular collaboration and testing ground for interdisciplinary connections. It is a space in which students approach others to “get a different perspective,” workshop problems, and seek support in developing new skills.

During the course of 2013, The Belonging Project further collaborated with Property Services to respond to Atelier data from 2012 and to improve the space. Property Services was able to gather funds for a second phase refurbishment of the space. This work was carried out after the conclusion of Semester 2 and included the addition of secure lockers, additional seating, and tables to the space. The impact this refurbishment will be monitored in 2014.



Initiative 4: Academic Transition Initiatives

The Belonging Project's research in 2011 and 2012 indicated that the academic transition to university was as challenging as the social transition for many students. With this in mind, the Belonging Project team worked with the University's Study and Learning Centre (SLC), the Coordinator of the Peer Assisted Study Sessions (PASS) program, our School Library Liaison Officers, and our School ESL tutors to develop an Academic Transition Initiative. This initiative was designed to encourage students and staff to engage the range of University services.

New Developments in 2013

In 2013, The Belonging Project continued to collaborate with various transition and academic services and consult where appropriate. The majority of these collaborations centred on interdisciplinary learning and teaching and are discussed earlier in this report.

Our continued research in first year academic transitions indicates that many of the obstacles to the initiative first identified in 2012 persist. Though not unique to Library Services, this is exemplified in feedback from the Library Liaisons. During the course of Semester 1, 2013, the Belonging Project followed up with Library Liaisons about their experience of connecting to students during the critical first weeks of semester. Library staff reported having volunteered to attend Program Orientation sessions, but noted that many School programs were not receptive, and viewed Library Services as auxiliary rather than as essential program information.

Though most programs did, in fact, organize Library sessions for first year students, these sessions were not always well integrated into curriculum.

Library staff noted that while some programs give briefs that allow integration of Library sessions with curriculum, most offered little information beyond "make sure it isn't too long". This speaks to a broader issue about academic staff's perception and knowledge of academic support services. One librarian summed up the knowledge gaps:

"Many academics are not aware that they might not have an updated knowledge of the library. Some might feel there is no time and possibly no great need for them to get updates on the library."

Ultimately these cultural and knowledge divides do a disservice to all parties— academic staff, professional staff, and students — as they prevent the most effective use of academic transition services.

New Initiative: Student Selection Data Pilot

In 2013, The Belonging Project proposed a new academic transition initiative to be trialled in 2014: the "Student Selection Data Pilot". The initial proposal *Know Your Students First: Unlocking the Potential of Diverse Commencing Student*

Cohorts Using Existing Systems and Data (Lukas et al, 2013) was a position paper submitted to the First Year Experience and Transition Project Steering Committee.

The Belonging Project argued that in order to develop welcoming face-to-face transition interactions, first year staff (both academic and professional) must know specific information about their commencing student cohorts *before* teaching commences.

The proposed pilot project involved scoping the efficacy of data mining undergraduate student selection and admissions information from the point of offer. The pilot would test the effectiveness of this data mining process and resulting analysis in facilitating flexible planning of iterative student transition and FY curricular activities within Schools prior to the start of teaching. The Belonging Project argued that when communicated well and in a timely manner this information could assist FY staff in achieving generational and lasting change in the FYE at RMIT.

The Data Working Party endorsed the position paper in September 2013 and the proposed pilot has been incorporated into The Belonging Project's 2014 initiatives.



Initiative 5: End of Year Festival of Events and Exhibitions

End of year academic activities (EOYF) are seen as key academic and social transition points in the student lifecycle. Whereas in 2012 work on the EOYF consisted primarily of building relationships between internal institutional stakeholders, in 2013 we worked to document evolving practices and student perceptions. In order to do so, a Belonging Project staff member attended events organized by Communication Design, Photography, and Games and Animation and Media as a critical observer. Students, staff members, and community members in attendance were interviewed informally and formally as part of a documentation process. In addition, The Belonging Project produced a video of the existing events.

Interviews conducted with students in 2013 indicated that students see the EOYF activities primarily as an exciting social and academic celebration of their achievements. That said, many also expressed a belief that the EOYF was a valuable opportunity for interdisciplinary exchange and cross-disciplinary inspiration. One third year student suggested that commencing undergraduates should attend as many of the events as possible:

“I highly suggest going around to every single one you can because they’re free and they’re great to go to, to get inspiration.”

For students with a clear sense of their own disciplinary skills set, the EOYF is an opportunity to draw inspiration from other disciplines, laying the groundwork for interdisciplinary collaborations:

“It has been valuable because a lot of the game based things are based on photography as well, so it’s good to see the photography work and then translate that to games and vice versa.”

Event participants also expressed a view that the EOYF had potential for generating industry connections for exhibiting students, while transmitting knowledge to emerging practitioners:

“[It is a] day that you are working towards and something to polish your work up for and show to [younger peers] and hopefully break into the industry. It makes your work a bit more valuable as well.”

In this way The Belonging Project’s 2013 qualitative research confirms our 2012 findings about the potential of the EOYF as an important transition for participants and an opportunity for intergenerational cohort knowledge transfer.

In spite of the overwhelming enthusiasm for the EOYF activities, the EOYF initiative has not met its full potential. While students who were involved in organising the events acknowledge that they were important leadership opportunities, student co-creation opportunities were largely confined to the immediate days before the exhibition. Students report a need for better coordination and advertising of events.

The development of the EOYF as an exercise for employability is also area for improvement. Very few students who were interviewed (with Games and Animation and Photography students being notable exceptions) recognized EOYF as an important experience for establishing industry connections. Moreover, the Higher Education sector programs and portfolios / viewbooks are not capturing and marketing student skills to external stakeholders as effectively as equivalent VE events. Events are well attended by students and staff, but underrepresented by industry. A critical issue for future enquiry will be to determine ways to attract and foster industry involvement and participation in these events.

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Appendices



Appendix 1

Summary of Activities by Month in 2013

Month	Activity
January	
February	Orientation Briefings for staff and senior students (School of Media & Communication). Interdisciplinary Staff Workshop 'Creating Lively Informal Student Spaces: Lessons from The Belonging Project'. Invited presentation to Property Services Group staff Inaugural School of Media and Communication Learning and Teaching Forum
March	Conducted School Welcome Session (Story Hall). Commenced evaluations of Orientation initiatives. School Cohort Day Out initiatives.
April	
May	
June	Invited presentation to the First Year Experience and Transition Project Reference Group
July	Mid-Year Student Welcome Global Exchange Forum FYHE Conference
August	Publication in International Journal of First Year Education Development of Interdisciplinary Artefact
September	Interdisciplinary Experience focus group with academic support staff ICP student interviews Position paper, Know Your Students First: Unlocking the Potential of Diverse Commencing Student Cohorts Using Existing Systems and Data, endorsed by First Year Experience and Transition Project Steering Committee
October	ICP student interviews Cohort Day Out interviews
November	Teaching Award ceremony Interdisciplinary Tier Staff Workshop LTIF awarded EOYF video and interviews Collaboration with iBelong Presentation to Marketing Circulation of interdisciplinary artefact to staff in School of Media and Communication
December	Case Study Interviews Belonging Project Reference Group SISI Stage 2 refurbishment
Regular Activities	
Monthly	Student Cohort Experience Reference Group Meetings School of Media & Communication L&T Committee University Equity & Diversity Committee.
Weekly	Belonging Project Team Meetings
Ad Hoc	Regular planning meetings with key School staff and Student Services

Appendix 2

Interdisciplinary Case Study Interview Questions

Before (Development & Drivers)	
1.	Where did the idea for the course come from?
2.	How was the course developed from the initial idea to deliverable content?
3.	How was the design process structured? a. How long did the process take? b. How was the labor divided?
4.	What were the drivers for this experience? (e.g. pedagogy, WIL)
5.	Who were the drivers? (e.g. Industry partners?)
6.	Who were the participants in the planning stage?
7.	What were the aims of the design process?
8.	What pedagogical or practical frameworks were in place in the design?
9.	Did you have or use any particular resources? In planning? For the students? a. What were the positive aspects of this resource engagement? b. What were the negative aspects of this resource engagement?
10.	What were the time allocations for the relevant lecturers/tutors? a. Were these sufficient? b. Were these indicative of real time commitment?
11.	Did you receive additional support to run the course? a. What kind of support? b. From whom?
During (Delivery)	
1.	Who ran the course? If the course was team taught, how was the teaching and administration divided?
2.	How was the course structured? a. What was the overall structure? b. What was the week to week design? c. How were classes run within a given session?
3.	Approximately how many students participated? a. How were the students recruited? b. What was the disciplinary and/or sector breakdown?
4.	What were your assessment tasks? What were the percentage of final marks were allocated for each task? a. How did this align with graduate attributes?
5.	What was your process of expectation setting? a. Were expectations revisited throughout the course? b. How did expectations change?
6.	What were the student outputs? Were any outputs non-assessed?
7.	What did you have to change the course or content design during the course? If so, why and how?
8.	Were you or the students able to engage in structured reflection during the course? If so, what observations were made?

After (Evaluation, Reflection, Reiteration)

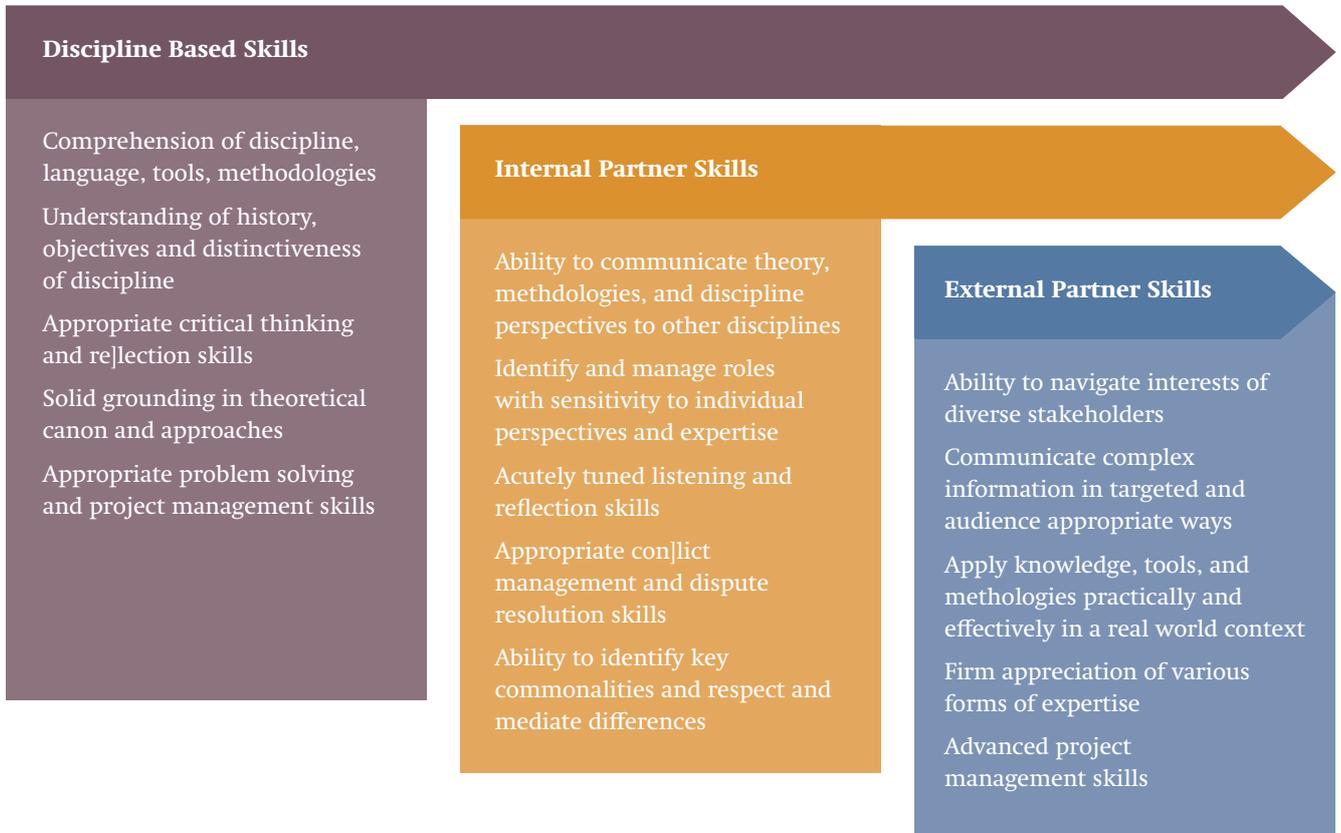
1.	What were your evaluation frameworks? Why were these chosen?
2.	How did you measure success/failure?
3.	What, if any, opportunities did the students have to evaluate beyond CES?
4.	Did this course scaffold to other professional or academic opportunities?
5.	Was the course run again? IF so, what changes were made in the second or subsequent iterations?
6.	What do you need or want in order to better run this course?
7.	What advice would you give to colleagues interested in designing similar opportunities?

Appendix 3

Approaches and Strategies Charts for Interdisciplinary Learning and Teaching before final ratification by school staff (see page 25)

Objectives, Skills and Methods for Interdisciplinary Learning and Teaching						
	Disciplinary	Multidisciplinary	Crossdisciplinary	Participatory	Interdisciplinary	Transdisciplinary
Teaching Objectives	Impart an understanding of discipline boundaries, methodologies, and theory	Increase breadth of methods through dialogue Maintain core disciplinary identities while encouraging collaboration	Create dialogue and identify commonalities in areas of research so as to address a common problem or address an issue of mutual interest	Bring together academic (student) and non-academic (industry) participants to solve a given problem	Synthesis of knowledge resulting in changed understandings Solve problems or address discrete issues that are beyond the scope of disciplinary boundaries	Bring together academic and non-academic participants to create new knowledge or theory Transcend discipline boundaries Overcome knowledge gaps
Skills	Use discipline tools Identify appropriate objects of study Frame questions according to discipline conventions	Focus on co-existence and cooperation Demonstrate ability to broaden approaches and methods Communicate disciplinary knowledge clearly for others	Facilitate genuine communication that fosters mutual understanding Identify and engage areas of overlap	Problem-solving Targeted and informed exchange of knowledge and expertise	Seek coherence Integrate myriad perspectives and approaches Create a holistic understanding Engage in responsive and adaptive communication	Advance collaboration between diverse stakeholders Understand complex issues and problems
Methods	Intensive and sustained immersion within core area	Bring together two or more disciplines for discrete tasks Juxtapose perspectives Focus on common research task/question Work is done independently	Focus on common ground between disciplines Focus on problem solving and knowledge transfe	Experience based learning Focus on problem solving rather than knowledge creation	Create new knowledge through integration of theory Integrative approach to common problem	Focus on "real world" problems Create new bases of knowledge and engage innovative methodologies
Strengths	Clear core concepts Training in specific methodologies Exposure to and experience with disciplinary tools Bounded approaches	Collaboration Exposure to new perspectives Exposure to and experience with other tools Ability to address more complex problems	Deeper collaboration between disciplines Translation of specialist knowledge for broader audiences Ability to address more complex problems	Collaboration and knowledge transfer between diverse actors Exposure to industry Focus on real world issues	Fosters critical disciplinary awareness High levels knowledge of multiple methodologies and practices Facilitates openness and advanced communication skills	Ability to make unique contributions to common good Meaningful industry-academic collaboration Encourages sustained dialogue and lasting transformations Integrative
Challenges	Disciplinary ethnocentrism Complex problems can be difficult to approach from single disciplinary perspective "real world" emphasis on multiple skill sets	Limited exchange of skills or knowledge Possibility of "language barriers" Temptation to privilege one discipline over the other	Challenges of translation Time-intensive Need for acute understanding of other disciplines' language, tools, and perspectives may limit uses in classroom settings	Challenges of managing academic and non-academic expectations Possibility of "language barriers" Practical challenges of bringing together participants	Best structured through team teaching Time and resource intensive Open to challenges of disciplinary ethnocentrism Sensitive to group conflict	Difficult in achieving consensus Privileging academic knowledge or industry or vice versa Time, resource, and knowledge requirements may be problematic in a classroom context

Understanding Disciplinary Internal and External Partner Skills in the Interdisciplinary Context



The Belonging Project Resources and Outputs

This list reflects resources and outputs until December 2013. An up-to-date listing of outputs and links to resources including final reports and video evaluations can be found at: rmit.edu.au/about/our-education/academic-schools/media-and-communication/research/projects/the-belonging-project/



Dissemination Framework

Our project follows the dissemination framework set out by the Office of Learning and Teaching (OLT), formerly known as the Australian Learning and Teaching Council (ALTC). We have grown our *information provision dissemination*, while privileging engaged dissemination - an “engaged-focused approach to dissemination, involving consultation, collaboration and support for ongoing dissemination both during the project and after the project is complete.” (ALTC, 2008).

Scholarly Outcomes

Grants

Clarke, B., Wilson, R., Carlin, D., Lukas, K., & Morieson L. (2013). *The Belonging Project. Phase 3: Focus on the Interdisciplinary Experience*. Supported by the Academic Portfolio through the Higher Education Participation and Partnerships Program, RMIT University (\$160,000).

Clarke, B., Wilson, R., Carlin, D., Lukas, K., & Morieson, L., (2012). *The Belonging Project. Phase 2: Focus on the First Year Experience*. Supported by the Academic Portfolio through the Higher Education Participation and Partnerships Program, RMIT University (\$166,000).

Carlin, D., Clarke, B., & Wilson, R. (2011). *The Belonging Project. Phase 1: Planting the Seeds*. Supported by the Academic Portfolio through the Higher Education Participation and Partnerships Program, RMIT University (\$104,236).

Peer reviewed journal articles

Morieson, L., Carlin, D., Clarke, B., Lukas, K., & Wilson, R. (2013). ‘Belonging in Education: Lessons from the Belonging Project’. *International Journal of First Year in Higher Education*, 4(2). Retrieved from <https://fyhejournal.com/article/view/173>

Conference papers – refereed

Morieson, L., Carlin, D., Clarke, B., Lukas, K., Wilson, R., (2013, July 7- 10). *Belonging in Education: Lessons from the Belonging Project. Proceedings of the 16th International First Year in Higher Education Conference*, Wellington, New Zealand. Retrieved from http://fyhe.com.au/past_papers/paper_s13/fyhe13_proceedings.pdf

Conference, symposium and workshop papers – unrefereed

Carlin, D., Clarke, B., Wilson, R., Araújo, N., & Lukas, K. (2013, Dec 4). *The Belonging Project*. Poster presented at OLT National Senior Teaching Fellowship Symposium, Monash University, Melbourne.

Araújo, N., Clarke, B., Lukas, K., & Wilson, R. (2013, Nov 21). *Approaches to Interdisciplinary Learning and Teaching*. Presentation at The Interdisciplinary Student Experience Workshop, School of Media and Communication, RMIT University, Melbourne.

Morieson, L., Carlin, D., Clarke, B., Lukas, K., & Wilson, R. (2012, Nov 20). *Thinking About Interdisciplinarity*. Presentation of position paper and workshop to School of Media and Communication staff, RMIT University, Melbourne.

Carlin, D., Clarke, B., & Wilson, R. (2012, May 7-9). *Case Study: The Belonging Project*. Invited paper presented at 2nd Annual Satisfaction in Higher Education Conference, Sydney.

Morieson, L., Lukas, K., Carlin, D., Clarke, B., & Wilson R. (2011, Nov). *But what do our students (really) want?* Presentation of paper to all staff about student focus group findings and project update, School of Media and Communication, RMIT University, Melbourne.

Conferences and workshops convened

The Belonging Project. (2013, Nov 21). The Interdisciplinary Student Experience. Workshop with School of Media and Communication, RMIT University, Melbourne.

The Belonging Project. (2013 Feb 5). Inaugural School of Media and Communication Learning and Teaching Forum. School of Media and Communication, RMIT University, Melbourne.

Clarke, B., Wilson, R., Moeller, R., & Lukas, K. (2012, Feb). Ice Breakers and Transition Teasers for the First Year Experience. School of Media and Communication, RMIT University, Melbourne.

The Belonging Project. (2012, Nov 20). Thinking About Interdisciplinarity. Workshop with School of Media and Communication, RMIT University, Melbourne.

Carlin, D., Clarke, B., Wilson, R., Lukas, K., & Morieson, L. (2011, Aug). Project Launch and Staff Workshop. Program Directors’ Retreat, School of Media and Communication, RMIT University, Kalorama.

Panels, workshops and presentations

The Belonging Project. (2013, Mar). *Interdisciplinary Speed Dating*. Presentation at Inaugural School of Media and Communication Learning and Teaching Forum, RMIT University, Melbourne.

The Belonging Project. (2012, Dec). *The Belonging Project: 2012 Update*. Presentation on key first year initiatives and findings at RMIT School of Media and Communication All School Meeting, RMIT University, Melbourne.

The Belonging Project. (2012, Oct). *Let's Talk About First Year: Lessons from The Belonging Project*. Presentation at *Teachers @ Work* Staff Development Seminar Series, School of Media and Communication, RMIT University, Melbourne.

The Belonging Project. (2012, Aug). *The Student Cohort Experience Project*. Invited co-presented panel discussion at RMIT Learning and Teaching Expo, RMIT University, Melbourne.

The Belonging Project. (2012, Aug). *The Belonging Project: An Overview*. Presentation to staff in the College of Design and Social Context, RMIT University, Melbourne.

The Belonging Project. (2011). *The Belonging Project*. Presentation at RMIT University Business Plan Student Cohort Experience Forum, RMIT University, Melbourne.

The Belonging Project. (2011, Nov). *But what do our students (really) want?* Presentation at whole-of-School meeting, School of Media and Communication, RMIT University, Melbourne.

Strategic Outcomes

Citations

National Significance

Devlin, M., Kift, S., Nelson, K., Smith, L., & McKay, J. (2012). *Effective Teaching and Support of Students from Low Socio Economic Status Backgrounds: Final Report*, Office of Learning and Teaching.

Internal Significance

Nomikoudis, M., & Bolt, S. (2012). *Pilot Projects to Define the Student Cohort Experience: 2012 Final Report*.

Peterson, F., & Hansen, S. (2012). *Media and Communication 2015: Program Suite and Delivery for the future*. (p. 3).

RMIT University School of Media and Communication. (2013, Mar). *Learning and Teaching Strategy 2013-2015*. (p. 3, 4, 8, 9).

RMIT University College of Design and Social Context. (2012). *Program Annual Review (PAR) Report*.

RMIT University School of Media and Communication. (2013). *Strategic Priorities and Profile 2013: Response to University Strategic Plan*. (p.3).

Invited consultations and contributions to committees, working parties and external projects

National Significance

Devlin, M., Kift, S., Nelson, K., Smith, L., McKay, J. (2012). *Effective Teaching and Support of Students from Low Socio Economic Status Backgrounds: Final Report*, Office of Learning and Teaching. Acknowledged as contributors to the project's final report and staff resources in relation to design and content (Clarke, B. & Wilson, R.).

Internal Significance – University Level

Student Services, I Belong Project. (2012 – ongoing). Project advisors and key School liaisons. Responsible for recruitment, design and implementation of discipline-specific workshops for visiting disadvantaged secondary school students.

First Year Experience and Transition Project. (2013-ongoing). Invited to participate in the project's Reference Group, Systems Working Group and Transition Principles Working Group.

Inclusive Teaching Practices Project. (2012-ongoing). Advisors to project team and key School liaisons.

Equity and Diversity Committee. (2011-ongoing). Invited participatory membership (Clarke).

Education Abroad Student Mobility Photographic Competition. (2012- ongoing). Advisors to event organisers and key School liaisons.

Property Services, Informal Student Spaces Redevelopment Project. (2012-ongoing). Advisors to project team and key School liaisons.

Office of the DVC (Academic), Student Cohort Experience Project Reference Group. (2011–2012). Invited participatory members.

Student Services, Student to Student Video Competition. (2013). Advisors to competition organisers and key School liaisons.

Internal Significance – College Level

College of Design and Social Context, Retention and Attrition Project. (2012-ongoing). *Invited contributors* (Clarke and Lukas).

College of Design and Social Context, Selection Review Project. (2012-ongoing). *Invited contributors* (Clarke, Wilson and Lukas).

College of Science, Engineering and Health, First Year Experience Community of Practice Group. (2012-ongoing). *Invited participants*.

Internal Significance – School Level

School of Media and Communication, Learning and Teaching Committee. (2011-ongoing). *Invited participatory membership*.

School of Media and Communication, MC2015 Review Project. (2011- ongoing).

Advisors as participatory members of the steering committee and key School liaisons to program teams.

School of Media and Communication, Learning and Teaching Investment Fund Round. (2014).

Advise School staff as participatory members of the School's LTIF Community of Practice Group and advise staff in other schools on request.

School of Media and Communication, *Transition and Orientation Coordination Team Proposal (2012 Oct)*. Submitted and endorsed by the School Executive and Learning and Teaching Committees. (Lukas, K., Clarke, B., Wilson, R., Carlin, D., & Morieson L.)

Key internal presentations

(2013 Nov). *The Belonging Project: Overview of FYE Initiatives & Findings*. Invited presentation to First Year Experience and Transition Project Reference Group, RMIT University, Melbourne.

(2013 Jun). *The Belonging Project: Overview of FYE Initiatives & Findings*. First Year Experience and Transition Project Reference Group, RMIT University, Melbourne.

(2013, Feb). *Creating Lively Informal Student Spaces: Lessons from The Belonging Project*. Invited presentation to Property Services Group staff, RMIT University, Melbourne.

(2012, Aug). *The Belonging Project: An Overview*. Presentation to the College of Science, Engineering and Health, First Year Experience Community of Practice Group, RMIT University, Melbourne.

(2012, Jul). *The Belonging Project: Project Overview and Key Student Focus Group Findings*. Invited presentation at the RMIT University Communications and Marketing Forum, RMIT University, Melbourne.

(2012, May) *Project Update*. Presentation at the RMIT School of Media and Communication Program Directors' Retreat, Kalorama.

Reports and Position Papers

Reports

Wilson, R., Clarke, B., Carlin, D., Araújo, N., Lukas, K., & Shand, L. 2013 Report: Focus on the Interdisciplinary Experience

Clarke, B., Wilson, R., Carlin, D., Morieson, L., & Lukas, K. 2012 Report: Focus on the First Year Experience

Carlin, D., Clarke, B., Wilson, R., Lukas, K., & Morieson, L. 2011 Report: Planting the Seeds

Position Papers

Araújo, N., Clarke, B., Lukas, K., & Wilson, R. (2013, Nov 21). *Approaches to Interdisciplinary Learning and Teaching*. Presentation at The Interdisciplinary Student Experience Workshop, School of Media and Communication, RMIT University, Melbourne.

Lukas, K., Clarke, B., Wilson, R., & Araújo N. (2013, Sep). *Know Your Students First: Unlocking the Potential of Diverse Commencing Student Cohorts Using Existing Systems and Data*. Position paper submitted and endorsed by the First Year Experience and Transition Reference Group, RMIT University, Melbourne.

Morieson, L., Carlin, D., Clarke, B., Wilson R., & Lukas K., (2012), *Thinking About Interdisciplinarity*. Position paper circulated to academic staff within the School of Media and Communication, RMIT University, Melbourne.

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