TEACHING & LEARNING
SPECIAL ISSUE

IT’S NOT JUST EXAMS
Practical assessments set students up for future careers

ACING THE ONLINE INTERVIEW
Making first impressions count

LIGHT FROM THE SHADOWS
How one student is working to end modern-day slavery now
What is the most extreme thing you’ve ever done?
Several years ago I went on a tour of Le Tour de France. We rode parts of the route of each stage in the morning and then returned as spectators. One of those was Mont Ventoux which was the most grueling and extreme thing I have ever done. Although it is only 21 kilometres, it involves relentless climbing with no respite such as a short piece of flat. Although the average gradient is 7.5 per cent, at times it is 11 per cent. According to my heart rate monitor, I greatly exceeded what all the equations said was my maximum heart rate. I truly thought I was about to die.

What do you say to students who ask you about the shift from semesters to balanced teaching periods?
I often ask students to consider what it is they are really paying for when they enroll in their degrees. Are they paying for the ‘performance’ of an academic to stand at the front of a large 1000 seat theatre and lecture for three hours for example, or are they paying for the achievement of learning outcomes? I think most would agree that it is achievement of learning outcomes.

Our role is to design your experiences to help you achieve your learning outcomes using the best mix of online and face-to-face activities. Some of these activities are designed for you to undertake alone, in a location of your choice, and these may include reading texts and articles, watching videos, undertaking eLearning and other online activities. Once you come on to campus, we believe that you should be engaged in experiences that are highly engaging and collaborative, helping you to make sense of what you have heard or read, thus making your investment in coming on to campus worthwhile one.

These changes have been informed by significant analysis about the future of jobs, industry requirements of graduates and student feedback.

In fact, the substantial investment we have made in our students achieving learning outcomes through learning.futures has received national and international acclaim – last year UTS received an international award from the Wharton-QS Stars awards (the ‘Oscars’ of educational awards) for the learning.futures strategy (including the design of the teaching and learning spaces) which demonstrates that we are fast becoming a world-leading university of technology.

What is the most memorable class you ever took?
In this day and age it’s hard to imagine this ever happened, but it demonstrates how much times have changed. It was a class on non-parametrics (statistics). The lecturer selected 10 female students to stand out the front and the class was then asked to rank each on beauty. He then used non-parametric methods to demonstrate how to determine an overall ranking for all 10. Times have certainly changed for the better!
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All U: articles are available to read online via newsroom.uts.edu.au
Send your story ideas, opinions and events to u@uts.edu.au

discover, engage, empower, deliver, sustain
“I was kind of scared,” admits animation student Erika Ju. “You know, it’s Central Park, everyone’s going to see it.”

Ju is one of 60 second-year animation students who created a light display for the main building at Central Park, Chippendale as part of this year’s Vivid Sydney festival.

The students, divided into groups, worked with projection design firm Ample Projects to produce a 12-minute animation titled Chronos and Kairos.

“The project was underpinned by the students researching the human relationship to time,” explains Design Lecturer Deborah Szapiro.

“Each group produced 40 seconds of animation. They also worked with the Australia Piano Quartet – UTS’s quartet-in-residence – and one of Australia’s leading young composers, Lachlan Skipworth, as part of the experience.”

“I love how from the very beginning, UTS animation, especially with projects like Vivid, puts your work out there for people to see,” enthuses Ju.

“Practical work helps us learn the most. With this project we went through the whole pipeline of production, and yeah, we go through a lot of mistakes, but you do that first-hand instead of doing case studies of other people; you come up with new mistakes, instead of just learning from theirs.”

Lecturer Mike Day, who teaches interior lighting at UTS, says working on Vivid and similar projects “gives students a bit more of a sense of empowerment”.

“You just learn so much by making and testing and doing. Now it has that additional layer of putting it out in public. You get the public feedback and you look at your own work in a very different way. And that’s what happens in real life.”

As part of Vivid, Day’s students had their work displayed at Newtown Social Club and along Dixon Street in Haymarket.

Natalie Wadick, a third-year interior and spatial design student, says there’s nothing quite like designing for a public space.

“I printed black ink onto acetate – album covers and tour posters of local artists that are actually playing at Newtown Social Club. There’s an interior window within Newtown Social Club so I taped them all up on the glass, and backed them with coloured cellophane. Then, in the daylight they sort of shimmer and at night we’ve got spotlights on them so they project a glow, an ambient light in the space.”

Day says he is often surprised by his students. “Many of the students depart from the brief, a lot, but I think they learn more by doing that. They always surprise me with a completely different take from the one I was expecting. Usually the best students surprise me by doing something really inventive.”

Szapiro agrees. “What absolutely amazes me is that they always step up to the plate. I am so proud of them and they are so proud of themselves.

“The students work incredibly hard,” Szapiro adds. “They learn a lot about the technical side of things, so if they go out and apply for an architectural projection job when they leave UTS, they’re already streets ahead of anybody else.”

Lucy Tassell
Bachelor of Communication (Journalism)
Bachelor of Arts in International Studies

Photographer: David Roche
NEW THINKING
SOLVING OLD PROBLEMS

Every year, a fresh group of aspiring engineers enters UTS’s Faculty of Engineering and Information Technology. And every year, those students undertake the Engineering and Communication subject, throwing them into a challenge that tests their perception of what it means to be an engineer.

Engineers Without Borders (EWB) is a not-for-profit organisation that works within Australia and abroad to improve access to clean water, sanitation, hygiene and energy. Each year, they combine with participating universities, like UTS, to run the EWB Challenge – a program for first-year engineering students to deliver innovative solutions to real-world problems.

“It is always based on a community where there needs to be some improvement in living standards,” explains Subject Coordinator for Engineering Communication Sally Inchbold-Busby.

“What’s important about the challenge is that the students often come to university having a stereotypical idea of what an engineer is, and that’s often technology based. This project allows students, working in groups, to think outside of technology and about the social implications of what they do,” says Inchbold-Busby.

This year, the EWB design brief focused on the community of Mayukwayukwa in Zambia. One of UTS’s stand-out projects was a centrifugal ceramic water filtration system powered by a bicycle.

Biomedical engineering student Justin Lenihan, one of the group’s team members, says, “We focused on water in the community, as the area has high levels of iron oxide and bacteria in the water which bio-accumulates over time. This design means they don’t have to treat it themselves as the water is collected through a ground bore and they just pump it.”

Fellow engineering and creative intelligence and innovation student Pratiksha Chuttar says, “Currently, Mayukwewyukwa has a basic ball pump to pump the water out; it’s a very labour-intensive operation. Nurses and staff from the medical centre should be in the medical centre, but instead they are spending so much time pumping water out for the hospitals. So we designed a bike attachment which is a lot less strenuous than a hand-powered pump.

“They’ll get a lot more water out of it, plus it incorporates a centrifuge that pushes the water through various filters, so at the end they’ll have clean, filtered water.”

Lenihan adds, “The community’s current filter takes one hour to filter three litres of water using gravity. According to my rough calculations, our design would make three litres of filtered water in just seven minutes.”

Chuttar says a key focus for the group was to create a culturally appropriate solution.

“Communities are often given solutions they don’t connect to, so it doesn’t work out. It’s important that solutions are appropriate culturally and socially, are cost-effective and can be easily implemented.”

Last year, a UTS group won the national EWB competition after pitching their sanitation solution of a waterless, double-pit toilet (Fossa Alterna) to a panel in Canberra made up of community representatives.

“Being selected by EWB as the most successful and appropriate project means that their design will hopefully be implemented in the community,” says Inchbold-Busby.

And that, agrees Chuttar, is an incredible prospect for first-year students. “It’s different than just being a regular assessment task that we’re going to get marks out of, here we actually had to use our brains to think of solutions to be applied, and it is so exciting that we could maybe make a real difference.”

Isabella Stevens
Bachelor of Communication (Journalism)
Photographer (J Lenihan): Hannah Jenkins
Sketch by: Justin Lenihan and Michael Crapis
The end of last year was the first time I met Sejoon. He came to me early in the course and told me: ‘Amanda, I’m really worried. Because I’m an international student, I feel like I lack communication skills, and during job interviews I won’t be able to answer their questions on the spot.’ Sejoon would come and meet with me weekly, for consultations, and we’d discuss the course and his career plans. It’s been an evolution, but he really has cemented his goals whilst I’ve known him.

I’ve always taken a holistic approach to teaching – going beyond the content and teaching students how they can use their business skills for more than just career progression. I want to teach them they can also help others, and contribute to the community around them. Last year, I was awarded the UTS Business School Undergraduate Prize for Excellence in Teaching in both the Autumn and Spring semesters.

The reason I started my YouTube channel and Facebook page is to generate a community that people want to come back to. It just makes sense to put up relevant and helpful content on social media because that’s where the students already are. I’ve had students get job offers by being active on that page. I’ve also had students in other countries, people I’ve never met, contact me saying, ‘Thanks for your help! Your page really explained things I just didn’t understand in my own course.’

A few years ago some students came to me and said, ‘Amanda, we have to go through this video interview thing for our graduate recruitment. Do you know anything about that?’ So I started doing some research and I found out that one of the first measures that companies are using to screen candidates are these video interviews.
I started to think, ‘This would be a great experiment and if I can make it into an assessment, then all my students will be miles ahead come recruitment time’. I’ve been teaching for over 10 years, but before that I worked in the profession, so I know that one of the most important skills, in terms of preparing our graduates for the workforce, is communication. I went to a number of professional firms and asked them, ‘What are you looking for in these video interviews?’

By consulting with UTS Careers Service as well as graduate recruitment staff at the accounting firm Grant Thornton, we were able to devise a new assessment. Using an online magazine with attached YouTube clips we laid out how to make the perfect first impression with your future employer, all from your webcam.

We want students to look at themselves, assess their own abilities and then say, ‘Here’s what I need to do to improve’. While you have to know the content, it’s those simple things, like making sure the camera is not looking up your nose, making eye contact and looking professional in your appearance and in the video’s background, that can make all the difference.

SEJOON HEO

When I first met Amanda, she had no hair. I later found out this was because she had shaved it all off to raise funds for her friend’s sick child. Soon after that, it became clear that Amanda really does care. A lot of other lecturers put a bit of distance between themselves and their students – they outline their consultation times and then leave it there. But Amanda encourages her students to meet with her and reaches out on Facebook when she doesn’t have to.

Meeting Amanda came at an interesting time in my life – I had just finished my military service in South Korea and I was searching to set up my life values. I chose to come to UTS to finish my accounting studies that I started at Sogang University in Seoul because I wanted to find out how I could contribute to society on an international scale. Seeing how Amanda contributes to the community using her skills and knowledge led me to understand that I can contribute to society with my own professionalism. So I basically came to Amanda and said, ‘This is my long term goal, these are the plans I want to achieve, now how can I get there?’.

I believe that before helping others as an adviser, I need to gain the necessary business skills, myself, in order to be in a position to help. It’s a culture that was fostered by my family in Jinju, South Korea, where we have what we call ‘table education’. Whenever we had a meal together as a family, my parents took that time to teach the children the importance of manners, values, ethics and wisdom. My father has helped others since he started his own business and has always taught me to help others since I was a child. It’s also an idea that has been inspired by the program, ‘Business As Mission’, which is a Christian initiative I’m involved in that encourages professionals to give back through their work.

Graduates in accounting are being assessed on their communication skills early in their online applications, so performing well in video interviews is essential. Employers will ask us a few accounting questions to make sure we’re prepared, but they also use a video interview to see how we communicate. The interview process you go through to get a job is pretty much the same as the assessment we do with Amanda.

After I did the assessment, I realised the importance of confidence in communication and how I lacked the ability to quickly and logically answer questions. So I practiced communicating confidently with others and tried to make a structure before answering questions, just like in the video interview assessment – giving myself time to think about how to answer.

When I had a real interview, even though I felt nervous, I could still answer unexpected questions with confidence and a logical flow. The materials and coaching Amanda gave us along the way definitely helped me get my part-time job as an accounting associate. Even today, I still use those skills preparing for our Monday morning video conferences with our Melbourne and Brisbane offices.

Aaron Taylor
Bachelor of Communication (Journalism and Social and Political Sciences)

Photographer: Ayesha Mira

Last spring, Accounting Lecturer Dr Amanda White and her student Sejoon Heo worked together on an innovative assessment aimed at helping students ace their graduate video interviews with real-life employers. White, well-known for her YouTube channel and Facebook page ‘Amanda Loves to Audit’, implemented the simulated job interview assessment for the subject Assurance Services and Audit. It’s a move that’s already paying dividends for students.
Human trafficking, forced marriage, debt bondage – these are the faces of modern-day slavery. They’re also issues being tackled by UTS’s legal research and policy centre, Anti-Slavery Australia. Final-year medical science/law student Rachael Kim-Ainsworth reveals what it’s like to work with the centre and how the experience has turned a “romantic idea of helping people” into a vocation.
Being part of Anti-Slavery Australia has, in essence, allowed me to achieve my dream of helping people. In my indecision as a high schooler I was not sure if I wanted to pursue law or science and found the opportunity, offered by UTS, to have a foot in the door of both career paths to be irresistible.

Having said that, I will never forget the moment I first told a group of people about my new internship with Anti-Slavery Australia. As soon as the words left my mouth I could see their faces scrunch a little in confusion and then incredulity.

Even more astounding than their reactions were their comments suggesting that slavery was a historical artifact – that of African-American slaves and slaves in chains. I was so shocked that I only managed to mumble something about human trafficking and debt bondage in the world today before promptly excusing myself.

Unfortunately, this wasn’t to be the only time people responded to my internship in this way. But, thankfully, I have become better at responding to disbelief and calling out ignorance when I hear it.

In Australia, those who are victims of human trafficking and slavery are often deceived with promises of a better life, of greater opportunities for work, and a more fruitful means of providing for their families.

In reality, victims may be forced to pay their traffickers tens of thousands of dollars as a debt for being brought to Australia. They are often forced to work long hours in sub-standard working conditions, with minimal rest and little or no pay.

To be honest, before I started working with Anti-Slavery Australia (a university centre that focuses on the abolition of slavery, trafficking and extreme labour exploitation based in UTS’s Faculty of Law), my own eyes weren’t fully open to the global issues of human trafficking and slavery. Despite being aware of its occurrence around the world, I was fairly ignorant of its existence in Australia. But not anymore.

Through my combined degree of medical science and law, I was offered the chance to select, as an elective, a subject called The Law of Slavery and Human Trafficking. The subject is taught by Anti-Slavery Australia Director Professor Jennifer Burn. Under Jennifer’s tutelage my understanding of the definitions, issues, and laws relating to human trafficking and slavery broadened, and a passion to somehow make a change began to brew inside me. As soon as Jennifer mentioned, in class, that there were opportunities available to undertake a practical legal training placement with Anti-Slavery Australia, I jumped at the chance. And life has not quite been the same since.

Currently, I work as an intern at Anti-Slavery Australia three days a week during regular business hours. Once I complete my 80-day placement, I plan to continue working there as a volunteer. Why? Being an intern at Anti-Slavery Australia means I have interacted with clients; conducted research into matters like forced marriage; worked on applications for citizenship and protection visas; and helped draft parliamentary submissions about Anti-Slavery Australia’s stance on the current laws of human trafficking in Australia. For a small centre with five permanent members, the amount of work done by Anti-Slavery Australia is phenomenal.

The centre stays with their clients, more or less, for life – from the time they’re first identified as a trafficked person, or a victim of slavery or slavery-like practices or forced marriage, through their relevant visa applications (such as the referred stay visa or a protection visa), their compensation claims, and whichever other matters they need assistance with.

I always had this romantic idea of helping people by developing groundbreaking medications, but I had never truly considered helping people by ensuring their rights as a human being were protected. Through Anti-Slavery Australia I have found my calling; this is the kind of legal work I hope to practice.

I will admit it hasn’t been easy to work in a centre that focuses on assisting victims of trafficking, slavery and forced marriage. There have been many moments when my heart has sunk into my stomach.

I will also admit to having gone home after a day in the office feeling upset because a former client had re-connected with Anti-Slavery Australia, seeking help to escape circumstances that continued to be unjust, unfair and heartbreaking. It can take so long for a client to achieve freedom.

But all this heartache simply fuels my desire to ensure that all people, not just our clients, are treated with respect. Respect is fundamental to ensuring dignity and rights are maintained; and it’s key to being a good citizen of the world.

I am very thankful that I have been able to be involved with Anti-Slavery Australia. My experiences have been profound, and...
Do you struggle under the pressure of written exams? Then prepare yourself for some welcome news. In every faculty at UTS, students are increasingly undertaking authentic non-traditional assessments. The idea is to set realistic assessment tasks that relate to how students will use what they have learned in their future careers. And so far, the move has been a win-win, for the students and their teachers.

Faculty of Arts and Social Sciences – Newsday

From the very first day of class, UTS journalism students are thrown out of their comfort zones and into the role of real-life journalist.

“It’s super challenging; crazy challenging,” says first-year journalism student Dylan Crismale. “But also lots of fun.”

Last teaching session, Crismale undertook the subject Stories from the Streets: Local Journalism, Social Media.

In the subject, students research, produce and edit original news stories to deadline, publishing on basic content management systems to deliver work each week. They also work in real-time, pop-up newsrooms during Newsday and live-blog news during events, like the 2016 Federal election.

“For Newsday everyone operates out of the pop-up newsroom where the tutors/editors assign stories for the day, unless you have specific locations or early events in which case they send you out to location straight away,” Crismale says.

“Newsday runs for the whole five days in one week and we all have a certain number of hours to cover each story. Everyone covers a range of stories – finance, sport, medicine et cetera.”

One of Crismale’s jobs was to cover an Independent Commission Against Corruption inquiry into an alleged fraud of funds from the Aboriginal Land Council. “We were able to take notes in the space reserved for media and were afforded the same courtesy and assistance as working journalists, so it was really eye-opening about what it’s like to be a journalist out in the field.”

And when it comes to landing a job, Crismale says that’s a real plus. “If we didn’t have the practical experiences at uni and we just did theory all the time you’d be totally lost when you got out into the field, because you’d have no idea what you were doing.

“These kinds of assignments really set you up to put things into practice.”

Dylan Crismale

UTS Newsday
Faculty of Design, Architecture and Building – Animated trailer

In the Faculty of Design, Architecture and Building’s subject VC Design Studio: Design Practice, students work on real-world design briefs and prepare for employment by developing a personal visual identity and professional portfolio.

Last teaching session, visual communication student Kathy Ngo undertook the subject and an assessment to create an animated book trailer for *The Many Selves of Katherine North* – an upcoming sci-fi novel from Bloomsbury Publications. As an added bonus for students, Bloomsbury would select two of the trailers for commercial use.

“At first, I had very little knowledge about motion graphics and I was quite frustrated,” admits Ngo. “But I set myself a goal to win the competition. I spent a huge amount of time researching and developing my techniques and design concepts. In the assessment, we had a chance to practice professionalism – how to present the design concept and design outcome to clients – and it was super helpful for me in my future career.”

And in the assessment Ngo’s work was ultimately one of the two chosen by Bloomsbury to promote the book.

“Interestingly, when I applied for internships right after finishing this assessment, the HR teams were more impressed with my animation than other works,” says Ngo. “It was a truly amazing experience. With this motion graphic, I got a chance to intern at a big company that I never even dreamed I could.”

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Faculty of Law – Mock constitutional law case

UTS law students have found their degree to be as dynamic and engaging as the legal profession itself.

In the Constitutional Law subject, students take on the roles of lawyers, arguing their clients’ cases in response to a specific set of facts. Earlier this year, the subject required students to break into groups and act as the Commonwealth Attorney-General, Attorney-Generals of New South Wales and Victoria and lawyers for two individuals and the Human Rights Commission in a mock case about a young man facing terrorism charges.

Second-year law student Ben Rice stepped up to act as the Attorney-General of Victoria. He says, “The assessment was part of an evolving scenario. Every week a different group would get up and present a part of the scenario and answer questions you would normally address in a court setting.

“I was representing the state of Victoria as an intervenor in the dispute and my part of the scenario was addressing whether Victoria had any standing to appear before the High Court in a matter that didn’t necessarily involve anyone from Victoria.”

It’s a scenario that, Rice says, closely mirrors how lawyers work in the real-world and how constitutional law can impact all other areas of Australian law – tax, family law, torts or contracts.

“Constitutional Law is a really big subject with a lot of material to be covered. This assessment definitely broke that up and forced you to engage with elements of the subject that could otherwise be quite tedious to go over in a rote-learning sort of way.

“It was really interesting to be able to test out the theoretical elements of constitutional law in a real-life scenario and to actually have the chance to get up and argue a standpoint.”
Faculty of Health – DIY art

In the Graduate Diploma of Midwifery, students are creating paintings, drawings, embroidery, board games and even cakes to show how they understand course content.

For the subject Midwifery as Primary Health Care, student Jessica Bolitho chose to create a piece of music, a process that got her thinking “more about building relationships and rapport with women and the journey we are involved in.”

As well as the academic side of the assignment (students were required to write an essay explaining their reasoning behind each creation), Bolitho enjoyed the opportunity to de-stress through the remedial side of art-making.

“Having us, as students, getting our creative juices going was such a good idea,” she says.

“Both nursing and midwifery are careers where you need really good, hands-on experience, but also to have a constant, open and non-judgmental mind.

“It definitely made me think and appreciate the fact that no one woman is the same and social determinants and vulnerability can definitely impact on the way we provide care.”

Faculty of Engineering and Information Technology – CHOICE user testing

Civil engineering student Anjali Warsapperuma has been involved in an interesting task this session in Physical Modelling for Engineering Students. The subject, which sits within the Faculty of Science, is a first-year core subject designed for and offered only to first-year engineering students in the Faculty of Engineering and Information Technology.

In this subject, students work in groups using their knowledge of physics to test and compare properties of different brands of everyday household products. These include things such as hair dryers, kettles and dishwashing liquid; all of which had previously been tested and featured in CHOICE magazine.

The assessment enables students to develop important skills in research, time management and teamwork.

Warsapperuma says, “Other, traditional, assessments involve learning concepts and undergoing assessments that directly tested our knowledge. However, the lab program allows us to apply those concepts in order to validate our results.”

We industry”. In fact, for the assessment, students were required to detail their results in the form of a consultant’s report.

Warsapperuma says, “As an engineer providing innovative solutions to a problem, it’s important to understand the correlation between physics concepts and the real world. The new physical modelling lab program encourages students to adapt theoretical concepts when reporting their findings and providing recommendations, portraying the real work of engineers.”

UTS Business School – Screencast

Over in the UTS Business School, in the Accounting for Business Decisions A subject, students are swapping seats with staff for their screencast assignment.

In this assessment, first-year students are tasked with choosing one accounting concept then creating a three-minute screencast (a digital recording of a computer screen, usually with audio narration) to teach it to other students.

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In this assessment, first-year students are tasked with choosing one accounting concept then creating a three-minute screencast (a digital recording of a computer screen, usually with audio narration) to teach it to other students.
The results were surprising, says business student Steven Luu.

“It was actually very different. No one expected an assignment like that for accounting because you’re just so used to calculations and numbers on top of numbers.

“Out of nowhere, to do a video, that’s kind of fun! At first I was sort of intimidated, because I’d never really done any video editing,” admits Luu. “But I became something of an expert in PowerPoint.”

And for Luu, the assignment offered another bonus – helping students pass a subject, which has, in the past, had a high failure rate.

“As a U:PASS leader in the subject, I was able to suggest my video to students to help them quickly recap and understand the topic that was relevant to them. It also provided the students with an idea of how to approach the assignment themselves.

“It’s a great feeling knowing that an assignment I have completed over a year ago can still be relevant and such great help to other students today!”

**Faculty of Science – Professional Practice Points**

In several of the Faculty of Science’s subjects, organisational, interpersonal and work-based skills are the key to getting good marks.

The Professional Practice Points assessment is completed weekly, in the Chemistry 1 and Chemistry 2 subjects, alongside practical in-class activities.

For this, students write reflections on their own ability to complete practical tasks, and they receive feedback from a class supervisor.

Bachelor of Science Bachelor of Business student Massimo Bedoya undertook the assessment in Chemistry 1 last year.

“At the end every prac, we had to log onto the online self-assessment tool REVIEW and fill out a few fields about our communication and conduct in the lab,” Bedoya explains.

“Theres an ascending scale from one to four. It was based on competencies – ‘not evident’, ‘developing’, ‘competent’ and ‘exemplary’ – so you had to slide an indicator along the scale to show how you think you did and leave comments about your performance in the laboratory. The teaching assistant would do the same thing and give you a score and feedback so you could see how, and in what areas, you could improve during the teaching period.”

It’s this real-time feedback that, Bedoya says, is the most beneficial part of the assessment.

“Because of the feedback, you get to see what you’re good at and what you need to work on. In an exam, you don’t get any opportunity to improve because your classes are already over:

“It’s also not as high-stress as other assessments because you complete it on a week-to-week basis, not all at once. And if you plan to work in a scientific field, and publish papers, the peer review process means you need to get used to receiving lots of feedback.”

Olivia Stanley
Bachelor of Communication (Journalism)
Lucy Tassell
Bachelor of Communication (Journalism)
Brittany Ledwell
Bachelor of Communication (Journalism)

Photographer [Super Lab]: Andrew Worssam
Photographer [D Crismale, S Luu, A Warsapperuma]: Hannah Jenkins
Photographer [J Bolitho, K Ngo]: Madeleine Clarke
Photograph [B Rice] supplied by: Ben Rice
Photograph [UTS Newsday] supplied by: Paige Zavaglia
Photographer [M Bedoya and student watching screencast]: Fiona Livy
Photographer [CHOICE user testing]: Lisa Aloisio
CREATIVE INNOVATION

BCII

a day in the life ... BCII WINTER SCHOOL

The Bachelor of Creative Intelligence and Innovation, or BCII for short, is a unique combined degree that integrates industry experiences, real-world projects and self-initiated proposals. Its aim: develop graduates capable of addressing today's wicked problems and untapped opportunities.

The first subject in BCII is the winter school subject – Problems to Possibilities, where students are exposed to over 50 different ways of being more creative and innovative. Take a look at what happened this year, on day two of the 10-day, nine-to-five, fast-tracked program.

Tuesday 5 July, 2016
'Mistake-ism' and 'Visualising Possibilities'

9am

It's a chilly July morning and 224 first-year students are filing into Building 11 for the second day of the BCII winter school. Yesterday they were introduced to the subject’s key concepts, their fellow students and their first assessment.

Today, the collaborative theatre is filled with students from 24 different degrees, opening their laptops and finishing their coffee as they prepare for the eight-hour day ahead.

When it comes to BCII, Course Director Dr Bem le Hunte says, "Every day is different. Every year and every class is different."

9:30am

The focus, today, is on visualisation and the idea that any graphic that organises meaningful information in multi-dimensional spatial form can be used as a tool for imagination and for better communicating and understanding concepts.

Students are asked to get into groups to do an activity called 'Using visual thinking to re-imagine the team of the future'. The aim is to use group work and visualisation techniques to explore a diverse set of ideas, then agree on one idea as a group which they believe will enable them to do better group work in future projects.

While some students know each other from their first semester of university, others are only just meeting. Architecture students are coming together with fashion designers; journalists meeting science students.

“I like how all the degrees can be brought together to produce one big idea,” says journalism student Chelsea Hetherington.

11am

The students break for morning tea. The posters from the morning session are laid out at the front of the room for everyone to look at and see how others represented their thoughts.

Some posters make it easy to see what a group’s thoughts were, but others are more abstract – like the poster featuring a tree with branches leading to different symbols.

Subject coordinator and Senior Lecturer in accounting Dr Paul Brown explains the focus of the day’s activities: "We want to get them into a new state of being. We can learn technique, but BCII is also about creative practice."

The posters from the morning session are laid out at the front of the room for everyone to look at and see how others represented their thoughts.
11.15am
The students regroup, this time for a session on mistake-ism. “Mistakes drive learning,” says Brown.

Three academics, each from a different faculty at UTS, speak for 10 minutes about how mistakes can be a fundamental part of any scientist’s, journalist’s or fashion designer’s path to discovery. They reveal how Post-it notes, microwaves, LSD and Watergate could not have happened if, at some point, the people responsible for them hadn’t made mistakes.

12.15pm
Back to visualisation and everyone is asked to create a causal map to represent their own creative process.

The room is buzzing as students discuss how their plans differ – some used symbols, others pictures or words. Up front, one civil engineering student found her creative process was a lot more scientific than her friend in interior design.

Third-year student Dominica Ingui says the course had changed the way she approached her core degree, public relations.

“It’s not hard to spot the BCII voices in my lectures and tutes, critically they see the world differently,” she says. “The network of genuinely cool and quirky people that I’ve met is just so special.”

1pm
At lunch, the conversations range from travel to politics to high school. Students are also discussing how they feel about the course.

“I’m starting to understand it more today,” says journalism student Mikayla Spicer. “Yesterday it was completely new, but I’m starting to get the hang of it now.”

Some are having trouble adapting to a different style of degree, but others, like journalism student Olivia Bilic, love it! “I like that they encourage you to be yourself,” she says.

“I saw on Four Corners last night that the job industry is changing a lot because of technology, and I think this degree will help with that. I’m also looking forward to meeting people from all walks of life.”

2pm
Lunch is followed by a session on mapping and visual literacy. There are at least seven lecturers in the theatre and the talking is divided between them.

The students are asked: “What is the difference between a map and a plan?”

“A plan you have to follow, a map you have more perspective,” shouts one student from the back of the theatre.

For the activity, students are given a map featuring a cluster of islands which they must use to show their journey through first semester in an exercise to encourage students to play with the use of visual metaphor and subversion.

Bilic turned her map into a map of Australia and the places she visited on a road trip. The Queensland town of Caloundra, a place where Bilic and her friend became lost, represents a point during the semester when she felt confused and overwhelmed.

On the other side of the room, engineering student Amartej Dhami split his map in two to represent the left and right side of his brain. The islands represent the dreams he is trying to get to – they are harder to reach than the places connected to the mainland.

3.15pm
Afternoon break. Coffee!

3.30pm
The last activity for the day comes as welcome relief. The aim of the task is to get students up and energised by designing an ‘algorithm’ to guide a walk.

Brown says, “This allows them to physically understand the notion of creative constraints. It also opens up students to thinking differently.”

The list can be as creative and original as the students want, but it must lead them on an adventure outside the building.

Bilic’s list reads:
• Start at Door 405
• Go to the first place you find where you can buy a cookie
• Ask the shop keeper what their favourite colour is
• Walk for two minutes
• Stop and look for something that colour
• Go to a location the colour reminds you of and sit for two minutes without looking at your phone

4.30pm
Back in the theatre, the day ends with a session about creativity, and how different fields and disciplines can converge to create brands like Apple. “It’s too easy to do the common,” says Lecturer in the School of Design Dr Gerhard Bachfischer. “One of the things you want to get used to is being uncomfortable.”

5pm
Before heading home, everyone is told to get a good night’s sleep; tomorrow is another long day with students set to use eight different practical techniques to help them think differently and to help them finalise their first (of three) assessments.

Alice Gordon
Bachelor of Communication (Journalism)
Photographer: Ayesha Mira
GAME ON!

It’s time to abandon your preconceptions, put on your game face and roll the dice.

This year, Citizenship and Communication Subject Coordinators Jenna Price and Christina Ho have turned university teaching on its head. They’ve adopted the unconventional assignment format of a board game to teach first-year students about the political landscape and what that means for citizen communicators.

“Board games force us to interact with each other; and developing the skills to make that possible is a key goal of this assessment,” says Price.

“Essays are lonely activities. Chris and I thought that the combination of the board game and the exegesis – a reflection on the theory and the game – would really help first-years engage with each other and the ideas.”

The subject explores the successes and failures of the current political landscape, asks students to dissect the social institutions that shape the world around us and reflect these ideas within their game board.

Journalism/law student Rayane Tamer explains that her game, Prime Time, comments on and criticises aspects of the journey to becoming the Prime Minister of Australia.

“At first, I thought making a board game at uni was a pretty amateur way of getting university-level concepts across. But when it came to the crux of the game construction, I think every group realised that expressing social ideologies with creativity, with accuracy, with realism was much harder than anticipated.”

Media arts and production student Sam Jones was thrilled to have his board game, Pass or Participate, facilitate his theory.

“Personally, I’m a really visual learner and it was great creating something that had a huge visual component.”

Public communication student Emilie Davila, who created the board game Progression, adds, “The assignment was beneficial to helping us cover content in a more approachable and fun way.

“Many subjects teach you the necessity of practical work and experience, yet never give you the opportunity to explore this. A board game gives a practical approach to concepts and ideas that aren’t always as easy to interpret in an essay.”

Ho says watching her students in the final classes of the semester playing each of the board games was gratifying.

“Given that each game addressed the content of the subject, the players were engaging in social and political issues and processes without even realising it. One of our first readings of the semester was about ways to ‘make democracy more fun’. We think our game assignment achieved this.”

Michelle Elias
Bachelor of Communication (Journalism)

Video stills: Sophia Mathias
‘University’ is a word that can evoke fear and excitement in many first-year students. For UTS health students, though, there’s really no need to worry, thanks to the faculty’s annual ‘nursing bootcamp’.

Unlike other bootcamps though, this one doesn’t involve camouflage, training or intense exercise. Instead, you get the chance to embark on an Amazing Race-style urban orienteering adventure, find out everything you need to know about Getting Good Grades and more.

According to nursing student Liv Edwards, “Bootcamp was a great experience and a nice way to meet people. Everyone was so warm and friendly; I just knew I was home.”

And that’s the point, explains Lecturer Lisa Townsend. “Bootcamp promotes the idea of students having a good time, getting to know each other and finding out how the expectations and opportunities at university differ from what they may have experienced before. We want them to understand the professional and academic potential in their nursing program.”

It’s also about getting students ready for the realities of working as a nurse.

“All of our students go on clinical placement, every single semester throughout their degree,” says Townsend. “And to get started on that clinical placement, they have to be prepared.

“They have to be up-to-date with all their immunisations and have had a whole lot of criminal record checks, so the earlier we can start students on that journey the easier it is for them.”

To do this, nursing bootcamp includes practical sessions about preparing for clinical placement, creating a professional identity, setting up an e-portfolio, navigating the IT systems in UTS’s computer labs and, of course, Getting Good Grades.

“That was talking about practical elements – preparing for first assignments and things we need them to know – looking at marking matrices, thinking about plagiarism issues and explaining the referencing techniques we use,” says Townsend.

Students say the unique orientation experience is a huge stress reliever.

“By telling us what to expect and what guidelines to follow, offering insight into the roles of nurses and allowing interaction with other students, it meant I was confident and ready to start my degree,” affirms first-year nursing student Heather Abrahams.

“The study tips and skills really helped me to improve my organisation and time management before I even stepped inside a classroom,” she adds.

Also a hit, are the talks where third-year students explain what kinds of things first-year students learn and the professional attributes they should start attaining now.

Edwards says, “Empathy is the number one professional attribute needed as a nurse, so you can understand the lives and situations of others and enhance the patient/nurse relationship. That’s really the basis for successful treatments.

“But you also need time management and organisation so you can keep up-to-date with treatment and patient improvement or decline. By showing us videos and giving examples of how these attributes will help us succeed, it was really clear what we need to do to be good students, good nurses, and overall better people of the world.”

Adella Beaini
Bachelor of Communication (Journalism)
Bachelor of Arts in International Studies

Rebecca Nash
Bachelor of Communication (Journalism)

Photographer: Kitty Amour
To the uninitiated, the word ‘hackathon’ may invoke images of a cybercrime spree. But for those in the know, it actually describes a marathon collaborative programming event that uses big data to solve real-world problems.

UTS has teamed up with Transport NSW to run in-class hackathons that help students learn what it really means to be a data scientist and enable Transport NSW to improve their services too.

28 August 2015: four Master of Data Science and Innovation (MDSI) students find themselves crammed around computers, balanced on small wooden tables, sifting through gigabytes of data.

The Unaccompanied Miners, as the team was then known, were on a mission: use coal survey data to develop a way to automate the detection of coal seams and reduce the delays and costs associated with using geologists.

“Our mission was part of Unearthed Sydney – a hackathon aimed at accelerating innovation in the resources sector. It was our very first hackathon, but it wasn’t our last,” says MDSI student and former Ausgrid electrical engineer Perry Stephenson.

Unbeknownst to Stephenson, Passiona Cottee, Daniel Booth and Greg Paul (just four of six members of the MDSI team), their upcoming success would change the way UTS MDSI students learn.

Today, UTS’s Connected Intelligence Centre (CIC) has established a partnership with the NSW Government to embed real-life hackathon challenges into the curriculum of three different MDSI subjects – Data Driven Decision Making, Data Visualisation and Narratives, and Project Management for Data Driven Solutions.

So how did it come about?

Hackathons, also known as ‘Data Challenges’ and ‘Dataslams’, are competitions held by organisations as a way to harness innovative ideas that use big data to help make their processes more efficient and cost-effective.

The participants are given the data and a time limit, after which they present their findings to a panel of judges who determine the viability of their solutions.

At Unearthed Sydney, the Unaccompanied Miners placed 5th out of the 20 competing teams.

“It was good because we spent two-and-a-half days just learning,” explains Stephenson. “It wasn’t just lecturers giving us materials, it was like, ‘What do I need to solve this problem? I’m going to try this, this and this. Oh, this kind of worked, let’s go forward from here’.”

Senior Lecturer at CIC and Course Director of the MDSI Dr Theresa Anderson was the driving force behind the Unaccompanied Miners’ appearance at Unearthed Sydney.
She says, although the team went into the hackathon with very little expectation or experience, they did have high levels of enthusiasm.

“They were up against really well-equipped computer science specialists from various programs,” says Anderson. “What I like to point out is that they lost out to four PhDs in machine learning. The group that won at the Unearthed challenge had been working as a team for a few years.”

Stephenson agrees. “We were expecting to be better at it. There were teams that actually produced real things at the end. We developed a really solid pitch based on the machine learning system we were trying to build, but the system itself was completely unsuccessful. So, of course we should’ve lost, but it was a fairly good effort for the first time.”

But the experience did give Anderson an idea – keep the team together; develop their partnerships and skill sets, then send them out to battle again in a new hackathon. This time for Transport NSW.

The team, now renamed Team Gosling (an homage to their first training room for the Transport NSW hackathon) were confident. Their new mission was to use advanced machine learning techniques to deliver new insights from Opal card data to determine what drives patronage on the City Rail network.

“If you want to increase patronage on the network, then look at what drives it,” explains Stephenson. “If people aren’t catching a train from the station when it’s raining, then maybe go and have a look at that station and see why. That’s a useful bit of information you can use to make business decisions in the planning sphere.”

This time, Team Gosling were awarded first place. “It was pretty good,” recalls Stephenson. “It’s a fairly lucrative sort of activity; the prize money for that hackathon was $16,000 split within the team.

“Considering we didn’t even know we were going to be doing it two months beforehand, it was a fairly good windfall.”

Following Team Gosling’s success, Anderson began working with Transport NSW to develop a way to introduce hackathons into the MDSI curriculum. Today, the three MDSI subjects that include hackathon assessments all focus on a real-life business problem identified by Transport NSW.

“The challenge from Transport NSW has moved from one subject to another during the semester,” explains Anderson.

Before one class hands the project over to the next, Transport NSW meets with the MDSI subject coordinators to make sure the business problem will be clear to the next round of students and meet that subject’s core learning objectives.

“Each round is with a different class,” adds Anderson. “But what holds it together is that in each one of those classes I know I have a core group of four students, who are full-time students, who were taking every single one of those subjects. They became the carriers of knowledge from one round to the next.”

Paul, a Team Gosling member and former electrical engineer for Schneider Electric, believes hackathons are vital for educating prospective data analysts.

In a hackathon, says Paul, “You have to make a lot of compromises to get to the end point because of time constraints. For example, you can’t do a lot of heavy processing that you’d normally like to do.

“But what it does expose you to is the way it would work in a real job. In a real job there’s less handling. It’s more like, ‘Look, we want a solution to this problem, here’s some information, go and get started.’”

For Paul, such activities develop skills you can’t obtain through ordinary assessments. “In an assessment there’s an existing end point; there is a right answer. In the real world though, there really aren’t right answers, but there are good answers. And this teaches you how to get there.

“Electric – what does the company want? What does the client want? What are they looking out for? And with better questions, you get better answers.”

Camilo Mella Zannoni
Bachelor of Arts in Communication (Journalism)
Instagram images: Theresa Anderson
Station image: Thinkstock
"I'm traveling for three months in Europe – up, down and all around!" Nick Cerone, Bachelor of Arts in Communication (Media Arts and Production) (2015)

"After completing my degree at UTS, I was recruited to work at Westpac Bank. I applied through Westpac’s graduate program which means I’m able to learn as I work without the pressure most new starters would feel. Finding out I’d been accepted into one of the ‘big four’ before I’d even finished my degree was one of my proudest moments." Jack Ross, Bachelor of Information Technology (2015)

"I started 2016 with more study – a graduate certificate at UTS that will allow me to be admitted as a solicitor. I’ve also been working part-time as a law clerk and volunteering with the national children’s and youth law centre which provides free legal advice and help to people aged under 25." Maree Selvaraj, Bachelor of Laws (2016)

"I'm about to travel overseas with a working visa to hopefully get some travel experience and knowledge before I begin a career in the industry." Monique Bills, Bachelor of Business (Tourism Management) (2016)

"I'm working in London as a digital product designer and developer for digital service design company Wilson Fletcher." Michael Parker, Bachelor of Design in Integrated Product Design (2015)

"The week after I finished my assignments, this job fell in my lap through a mutual friend, and I've been working at QMS Media as an account executive ever since." Jacqueline Ingram, Bachelor of Arts in Communication (Information and Media) (2016)

"I'm currently working at Royal North Shore public hospital in St Leonards in the respiratory special care unit, but I will be rotating to the severe burns and plastics unit this month." Grace McCarthy, Bachelor of Nursing (2016)

"I'm an Associate Risk Consultant at PwC Australia. A mathematician’s skill set doesn’t lie with the number of formulas you can memorise, but in the way you approach problems." Jasmine Tan, Bachelor of Mathematics and Finance (2014)