

ALTC LSES Environmental Scan

1. Institution

University of Tasmania

2. Contact Person (and contact details)

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3. Name of Program/Initiative

First year Theory units, School of Visual and Performing Arts (FFA192 Theory Basics and FFA193 Theory Techniques)

3.1 URL: n/a

3.2 Start Date/Duration: Commenced 2010, ongoing. Confirmed for 2013.

4. Brief outline of program

In first semester (FFA192 Theory Basics), students are introduced to an overview of prominent themes in cultural and art theory while simultaneously being supported through a high level of scaffolding around assessment tasks. Students attend workshops tied to assessment tasks, on topics including reflective practice, understanding essay questions, research skills and academic writing. In second semester (FFA192), students take an inquiry-based learning approach to three topics, which allows them to engage in more detail with the content and to follow their own interests.

5. Purpose/Aims

The purpose of this program is to support students through their transition into university study in the creative arts, and to lay the foundations for their success as students and practitioners. Content has been designed to engage students by connecting with their existing knowledge and experience (e.g. early topics in semester one are 'the everyday' and 'regionalism') and directly connecting theory and practice through guest lectures by creative practitioners, field trips, and drawing on concurrent community events such as the Junction Arts Festival. Scaffolded assessment tasks are aimed at modelling task management processes for students, reducing stress at critical moments in the transition to university but also laying the foundation for good learning practices in later years of study. Assessment tasks aim to introduce students to the process of being able to critically reflect upon and situate their own creative work. By drawing on professional staff for the delivery of skills workshops, students become familiar with the staff and services available at the UTAS Newnham campus, which are often underutilised by visual and performing arts students who study at the Inveresk satellite campus.

6. Breadth of program

Students in these units are primarily from the Bachelor of Contemporary Arts, where students major in Visual Arts, Theatre and/or Theory. However, students from other courses can take Theory units as electives.

The units are only offered on the Inveresk campus, Launceston.

7. Category (please select all that apply and provide explanation where necessary)

Category	Y?	Explanation
Policy		
Curriculum	Y	uses core units as a vehicle
Program		
Other (please specify)		

8. Resources (optional – we are trying to determine what sort of resourcing is necessary to make the initiative work)

While there is no additional or specific budget for this initiative, it does rely on input from professional staff in the UTAS Library and Student Learning Support areas.

These units are also supported by Peer Assisted Study Sessions (PASS) organised by the UTAS Student Centre.

9. Outcomes

9.1 Uptake:

All students enrolled in the Bachelor of Contemporary Arts are required to complete the first year Theory units, and so uptake is mainly dependent on enrolment in the degree as a whole. However, students from other courses can enrol in these units as electives. This year, 44 students are enrolled in FFA192.

9.2 Evaluation(s) conducted to date - Informal or formal) – and details of findings:

Formal Student Evaluation of Learning and Teaching surveys were held in semesters one and two, 2011, and will be repeated this year. Informal discussions with students happened through the semesters. Student feedback indicated that the workshops increased students' feeling of preparedness, that content designed to connect with existing knowledge and experience was valued, and that 'real work' connections increased perceptions of relevance of theory studies.

9.3 Evidence of success:

Difficult to quantify, however student feedback and student success in assessment tasks seems to reflect a positive impact from the ongoing development and implementation of this program.

9.4 Evaluation(s) planned (and dates for this/these):

Evaluation through Student Evaluation of Learning and Teaching surveys will continue every semester in 2012 and 2013. FFA192 is currently being used as material for the unit coordinator's assessment in ELT501 Foundations of University Teaching and Learning.

9.5 Major challenges:

One challenge of the program has been working with an interdisciplinary cohort (visual and performing arts), and therefore attempting to create discussions that are interdisciplinary while also recognising the specificity of discipline-based practices. Another challenge has been to pace the units in a way that maximises opportunities for connection with work carried out in studio classes without creating overload for students. The diversity of students' backgrounds, interests and preparedness for tertiary study is a challenge, but has also been the starting point in developing this program.

9.6 Other (Please specify):

10. Publications/Reports (including links to those publically available)

None available