KIFT ALTC SENIOR FELLOWSHIP: ARTICULATING A TRANSITION PEDAGOGY

WRITING AND COMMUNICATION (BILBY) MULTIMEDIA CASE STUDY

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'Bilby' is incorporated in the subject *Writing for Professional Practice* in the Faculty of Arts and Education at Deakin University, which was developed to improve students' writing, critical analysis and communication skills as a foundations requirement for all undergraduate university students.

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1. Context

Institutional context

01. Deakin University is headquartered at Geelong, a regional city approximately 70 kilometres west of Melbourne on Port Phillip Bay. However, its largest campus (by population) is in Melbourne at Burwood. Deakin has two Geelong campuses, at the Waterfront and at Waurn Ponds, and another regional campus at Warrnambool. The university enjoys both its regional and city status, and expects program design and development to include a rural and regional aspect. It has a history of distance education which is now replaced by a strong off-campus student cohort across Australia and around the world. There are 33,000 students enrolled in four faculties: Business and Law; Science and Technology; Health, Medicine, Nursing and Behavioural Sciences; and Arts and Education.

02. Deakin's **mission** is that the university '*aims to be a catalyst for positive change for the individuals and communities it serves. This will be achieved by ensuring that Deakin's teaching and learning, its research, its partnerships and international programs and the services that support those activities are relevant, innovative and responsive. By pursuing these objectives, Deakin aspires to be recognised as Australia's most progressive university*'. The **values** espoused are: excellence, academic freedom, collegiality, continuous improvement, ethical behaviour, accountability and environmental responsibility.

03. Deakin University is ranked behind Melbourne University and Monash in Melbourne, but ahead of RMIT, La Trobe, Swinburne and Victoria universities, and in recent years has increased its first year enrolments, particularly on the Burwood (city) campus. In 2008, school-leavers made up the greatest increase.

04. In response to an external review of teaching and learning in 2007, the university established a Student Experience Committee, chaired by the Vice President. This Committee is recognition of the university's commitment to the principles of transition. It sits alongside a Teaching and Learning Committee and an Academic Programs Committee as sub-committees of Academic Board.

Program description

05. The Faculty of Arts and Education does not have a common first year program. There are three Arts Schools and one Education School which has many education degrees catering for teaching disciplines, levels of teaching and levels of student entry. The Arts Schools provide discrete degrees or majors in disciplines of history, criminology, politics, international relations, sociology, languages, public relations, journalism, creative arts, film and digital media, communication, literary studies, and professional and creative writing. A generic *Bachelor of Arts* across the arts incorporates discipline majors and electives but no common core.

06. Each degree comprises 24 subjects with majors of between eight and 12 subjects. Program rules require students to take a certain number of subjects at levels 1, 2 and 3 of the degree. Students plan their own degree based on hard copy and online program descriptions and requirements, and by consulting student support officers.

> This case study is multidisciplinary, responding to student enrolment across faculties and campuses.

Program objectives

07. Each program has an established set of objectives which are developed in the program design and development stage, and are interpreted in the learning objectives of each subject in the program or major. Because students take electives across disciplines and programs, the 'whole of program' focus is experienced more strongly in designated graduate attributes. Each program is designed to provide curriculum and pedagogy to achieve the following **graduate attributes**:

Graduate attributes

Knowledge and understanding

- Understanding of, and the ability to work with, a systematic body of knowledge, appropriate to the focus and level of the qualification based on the highest standards of scholarship and research.
- Ability to initiate and formulate viable and relevant research questions.
- Contribution to new knowledge, or an original interpretation and application of existing knowledge.
- Understanding of the social, economic and cultural impact and application of their research, and its academic relevance and value.
- Understanding of the professional, social, economic and cultural contexts of the discipline and related fields.
- Awareness of ethical issues, social responsibility and cultural diversity.
- Understanding and appreciation of international perspectives in a global environment.

Skills

- Critical analysis, problem solving, and creative thinking.
- Identifying, gathering, evaluating and using information.
- Communicating effectively and appropriately in a range of contexts.
- Developing, planning and managing independent work.
- Working effectively as part of a team.
- Effectively using information and communication technologies.
- Applying knowledge learned in the program to new situations.

This case study is multidisciplinary, responding to student enrolment across faculties and campuses.

Student cohort demographics

08. Historically, this student cohort is predominantly made up of school-leavers in the eastern suburbs of Melbourne, or in the case of the regional campuses, the local city and its environs. International students comprise 15% and are mainly from China, India, Hong Kong and Norway, although 64 nationalities are represented. Indigenous students enrol at Deakin's Koori Institute in Geelong. The Faculty accepts most of its students by meeting targets from Victorian Certificate of Education (VCE) applicants, but does have strategies in place for special entry students and those requiring creative arts specific expertise. In 2007, 551 students completed the subject *ALW117 Writing for Professional Practice*, the focus of this case study; 404 are enrolled in 2008.

Assumed knowledge, skills and abilities on entry

09. All students must have satisfactory English levels of achievement. Tertiary entrance scores (ENTER scores in Victoria) vary across disciplines, cohorts and campuses. This case study is contained in the subject *ALW117 Writing for Professional Practice*, which was developed to improve students' writing, critical analysis and communication skills as a foundations requirement for all undergraduate university students. It is a core subject in some majors and may also be taken as an elective. The content is foundational, but the pedagogy creative and vocational.

Role of the authors in the program

10. This project has two authors. **Dr Karen LeRossignol** developed the subject and the case study. She teaches in the discipline of professional writing and has

developed learning resources for students in transition, particularly international students. At the time of writing, **Professor Jennifer Radbourne** was Head of School of Communication and Creative Arts (where the subject is resourced) and Chair of the University Teaching and Learning Committee. She therefore has a leadership role and responsibility for teaching and learning in the first year program. In the latter part of 2008, Jennifer was appointed Dean of the Faculty of Arts and Education.

2. Case study application

11. The case study is a component of the subject *ALW117 Writing for Professional Practice.*

Synopsis

12. This subject enables students to strengthen their skills in writing, research and presenting. Students explore the power of language and the characteristics of effective and ineffective writing; the relationships between written and spoken language; strategies for developing arguments; and the requirements of a range of writing including reports, letters, resumes, academic essays, summaries, media releases and persuasive writing. The subject supports students in their written and oral tasks in other subject areas, as well as providing them with workplace-oriented skills that enhance their performance in professional fields. Students participate in a hypothetical scenario and are required to employ different forms of writing and oral communication to tackle issues that arise from this scenario.

Aims and objectives

13. The purpose of this subject is to:
- gain practice in writing across a wide range of styles and forms
- hone writing techniques with extensive feedback
- participate in a variety of real-life writing situations

- develop oral and written communication skills that will help you tackle other subjects in undergraduate studies.

Learning objectives

14. This subject encourages the development of a range of skills including the ability to:
- read critically and report purposefully
- assess a variety of sources — written, oral, visual, aural
- recognise differing interpretations
- synthesise and summarise arguments
- structure answers using appropriate formats
- develop written and oral material in a style appropriate to audience and purpose
- access relevant materials in varying locations including libraries, internet, community and other experts
- undertake self-directed tasks
- engage in critical discourse
- conduct oral interviews
- meet deadlines
- draft and redraft written work
- work collaboratively with a team
- use technology for range of purposes, including working with others, communicating and accessing sources of research.

15. The Bilby Case Study was developed as a multimedia resource to achieve learning objectives in persuasive writing and work related writing tasks. The case is accessed through the Deakin Studies Online (DSO) subject site. When students enter Bilby, a signpost offers optional directions to the Bilby Shire Council, Bendalong Regional Tourism, Geranini TV Productions, Bilby Historic Society, Bilby Business Association, Bilby Landcare, and the Media. A welcome sign states that Bilby is home to the TV series City Stresses Country Pleasures, has a population of 19,020, was winner of the Tidy Town contest in 1997 and 2003, and 'is the town where ALW117 persuasive writing students will stay for a few weeks, working

on their reports, letters, news stories and interview profiles'. Each of the resources on the website provides information on projects, messages from key people, and activities to solve problems faced in the real life scenarios. Students are asked to write media releases, job applications, reports, proposals and feature articles for a newspaper. Links to guidelines from writing and further content complement classroom teaching. The particular focus is student engagement and student development, motivating students to achieve learning objectives as part of their professional development towards career goals.

3. TRANSITION

16. *First year experience curriculum design principle — interpretation*

- Linking the student's previous experience into the learning experiences at the university.
- Making explicit the transition through the first year.
- Embedding the transition from university to work in teaching and learning.
- Creating an interest in lifelong learning.

17. *Implementation in subject*

- Students discover the town of Bilby at their own pace and from their own areas and levels of interest.
- Student expectations are invited at the beginning of the subject.
- Students are placed in groups — Bilby Landcare, Bilby Historical Society, Bilby Business Association. They write as communication/community officers from the point of view of that group.
- Teaching sessions are linked to both the Bilby website, which provides the background resource material, the key stakeholders and the demonstration of the issues, and to a weekly 'Breaking News' segment which can be completed as a role play.
- There are models of all writing tasks within the Bilby Shire Council website

> *The writing tasks provide a pathway through university (essays, reports) into the world of work and professional practice.*

(media releases) and the media section (news, interview profiles, letters to editor). There are additional resources linked to the Bilby Shire Council and the three levels of education in the town — primary and secondary schools and university — which include position descriptions for job vacancies, common articles on language, how to write CVs and reports. These provide context for the tasks.

- Job applications encourage career planning.
- The writing tasks provide a pathway through university (essays, reports) into the world of work and professional practice.
- Reflection on learning is developed through online group discussions on Bilby, sharing of introductions to writing tasks, and about special events to organise as members of their Bilby group.
- All four lectures on key professional writing issues are audio streamed — lectures are on Power of Language, Conciseness and Clarity, Research Methods for Writers, and Persuasive Writing Techniques. These introduce students to issues such as lecture note taking and engagement in theory with practical applications.
- Other notes on the DSO site Resources link include: grammar and punctuation notes and self-paced exercises (answers provided); exam techniques; web links (many links to environmental, history, business sites for researching); essay writing notes; report writing notes; links to sample media releases; additional readings for oral presentations; and essay research.

4. DIVERSITY

18. *First year experience curriculum design principle — interpretation*

- Acknowledging the special learning needs of regional and international students.
- Accommodating the multi-disciplinary students' cohort in one case study.

19. *Implementation in subject*

- This subject is offered to the Indigenous students at the Institute of Koori Education (very small classes via distance and intensive mode delivery), in off-campus mode for prisoners (all material in print form including website), across the Faculty of Arts and Education, and to Deakin's feeder international college MIBT in Melbourne and Jakarta.
- The special learning needs of international students are supported by the Bilby media models that are contextualised to the Australian environment. The students work in groups for peer discussion and support, although the assignments are individual.
- Pedagogy is based on diverse learning styles — each tutorial/session in the Study Guide has provision for activist/reflector/pragmatist and realist learners (Honey and Mumford Learning Styles Questionnaire details). Students are able to complete tasks with others, reflect on learning experience, follow clear guidelines and rules, and explore models/templates.
- Delivery adapts according to mix in Bilby groups and different literacies.
- Offered in both semesters and all campuses, and in off-campus mode.
- Offered in multiple disciplines, programs and faculties (Public Relations, Journalism, Media and Communication, Health, Business and Law) and addresses a logical development in writing across genres and audiences.

5. DESIGN

20. *First year experience curriculum design principle — interpretation*

- Ensuring the curriculum and pedagogy are student-centred.
- Achieving the relevance of foundation level studies in a university setting.
- Stimulating students through creative content and imaginative learning activities.
- Integrating graduate attributes in the curriculum.

21. *Implementation in subject*

- Progression from essay writing (known skill and within student comfort zone), through analysis of readings, to development of appropriate voice in persuasive writing for stipulated audience. Goes on to look closely at CV/letter of application (own voice).
- Closely aligned to students' vocational aspirations — sessions on CVs focus on letter of application, key selection criteria for specific student-selected positions.
- Independent learning, but with scaffolding of 'Breaking News' catalysts to encourage engagement.
- Co-curricular design — linked to writing for the web, use of visuals, developing analytical skills for use with student theatre, fringe performance, organising events.

6. ENGAGEMENT

22. *First year experience curriculum design principle — interpretation*

- Motivating students to engage in the curriculum.
- Fostering student/teacher interaction.
- Encouraging student collaboration and peer-to-peer activity.

23. *Implementation in subject*

- High involvement — Bilby requires students take on personas of characters in the town for letters to editor, advocate on issues, and

become part of the community groups they select.

- Pastoral care — strong links to university support services (Division of Student Life (DSL)) referral when issues encountered, such as workshopping essays, commenting on writing style, working on report format using given template.

- Social engagement — comes from the Bilby groups; gets discussions going.

- Active and collaborative learning — students discuss who will be leader, how outcomes can be achieved etc.

7. ASSESSMENT

24. *First year experience curriculum design principle — interpretation*

- Using regular formative feedback to students on their contribution and assessment items.

- Increasing the complexity of assessment items as they progress and achieve.

25. *Implementation in subject*

- Start with familiar — the essay assessment prepared in weeks 1–3, formative feedback provided at each stage during tutorials (for example, developing structured paragraphs, developing opening/ closing argument), then move to the unknown (such as the media release and report) but provide models and templates. Facilitate group discussion and the sharing of samples of work.

- Develop greater complexity in assessment through the use of templates and stipulated audiences.

- Final assessment item requires writing a media release for given event, an analysis of a media article, analysis of letter to editor. This is complex when within timelines.

- Provide explicit guidelines for criteria for assessment as follows:

Assignment 2:	Folio
The three items are based for content on the scenario of Bilby. They incorporate: • short report (approx. 500 words) • media release (approx. 250 words) • news story OR interview profile (approx. 250 words) — select from two tasks presented.	
Marking criteria	**Graduate attribute**
What the assessor will be looking for when marking this assignment	**Knowledge and understanding**
• applying different writing styles and formats to given persuasive writing tasks	• acquisition of, and ability to work with, a systematic body of knowledge, based on the highest standards of scholarship and research
• relating the persuasive writing tasks to the social, economic and cultural environment of communication media and professional writing	• understanding of the professional, social, economic and cultural contexts of the discipline area
• developing a sustained argument related to an environmental issue within the Bilby scenario	• understanding of the principles and applications of sustainable development
What the assessor will be looking for when marking this assignment	**Skills**
• developing summary and synthesis skills in identifying what materials to use for persuasive writing tasks	• identifying, gathering, retrieving and working with textual, graphic and numerical information
• developing appropriate written responses to the stipulated briefing	• communication, orally and in written form, across a range of contexts
• submitting work in appropriate format and to time	• personal organisation and management
• discussing and identifying key issues with Bilby group	• collaborative and team working

Marking criteria		Graduate attribute	
What the assessor will be looking for when marking this assignment		**Skills**	
• developing appropriate formats using internet research to identify current professional models of persuasive writing		• harnessing information and communication technology	
• developing writing tasks appropriate to audience and purpose, with clear recommendations or actions for audience to take		• critical analysis, problem solving, and creative thinking	
What the assessor will be looking for when marking this assignment		**Attitudes**	
• developing an independent attitude to compiling a range of written tasks		• commitment to independent and lifelong learning	
• applying appropriate ethical, cultural and social responsibility to development of research and writing, and to discussions with Bilby group		• awareness of ethics, social responsibility and cultural diversity	
• developing recommendations in relation to the scenario which take account of the global environment		• appreciation of international perspectives in a global environment	

8. EVALUATION AND MONITORING

26. *First year experience curriculum design principle — interpretation*

- Responding to formal and informal student feedback.
- Commitment to review and renewal to ensure student engagement.

27. *Implementation in subject*

- Class evaluations of this subject over the years have resulted in changes in readings according to feedback, and changed structure to meet current student expectations.
- SETU scores and comments have influenced the subject's development around graduate attributes and this is explained when the subject is evaluated with students at end of semester.

9. IMPLICATIONS FOR IMPLEMENTATION

28. *First year experience curriculum design principles*

- Student advice.
- Resources.
- Staffing (lecturer and sessional teachers).
- Staff development.
- Subject coordination.
- Links to other first year subjects and experiences.

29. *Implementation in subject*

- General advice on the university website recommends this subject to students.
- The learning resources are described in the subject guide as follows:

The materials for this subject include:
- This Subject Guide (available exclusively via DSO)
- The combined Study Guide/Reader Writing for Professional Practice
- Other resources available via DSO.

For off-campus students all materials, other than those appearing on the DSO site, will be mailed to you in hardcopy form. Should you NOT receive any of the above materials the Distance Education Support Service Guide should be consulted. You may wish to send an email to coursematerials@deakin.edu.au advising the University of your situation.

For on-campus students the above materials are available either online via the Deakin Studies Online (DSO) site for the subject, or in printed form from the Unitext Bookshop on your campus.

Recommended texts

General — research, essay and report writing, persuasive writing, writing job applications, grammar and editing:

Windschuttle, K., Elliott, E. 2001 *Writing, Researching, Communicating: Communication Skills for the Information Age* 3rd ed. McGraw Hill

Eunson, B. 2005 *Communicating in the 21st Century*, Wiley, Melbourne

Marson, S. 2007 *Professional Writing* 2nd ed Palgrave Macmillan, Hampshire/NY

A very useful guide to government guidelines on grammar and style is the:

• *Style Manual for Authors, Editors and Printers*, 2002, 6th ed., John Wiley and Sons, Queensland.

The texts above are available from the Deakin University library, or for purchase at the university bookshop.

You will also need a good dictionary.

• The subject is chaired by Karen Le Rossignol, one of the School's most experienced teachers. Sessional teachers attend 2 briefing meetings per semester and receive 3 bulletins per semester. The subject chair works across all campuses. All assessment is moderated.

• The subject addresses content and skills that prepares students for further study across disciplines and programs.

10. Other observations

30. This case study has been designed for delivery as a multimedia activity by the teacher with support from the university's Knowledge Media Division. It is housed on the university's online teaching server. It is critical that the university's IT infrastructure is maintained and supported for the learning platform to succeed. The technology motivates engagement in learning because this medium is flexible without constraints of time and place and topics do not have to be learned sequentially. The technology, the content, the instructions, and activities have been customised for the learners, their skills and their characteristics. Students can read or work on whichever aspect of the Bilby town they need for the task, leaving content that is unneeded for another problem or exercise. This allows the problem or task to be addressed as the users decide, empowering them to determine what is needed.

31. The interactive learning platform creates interest, and at the same time addresses the learner's emotional, situational and knowledge needs. The online communication allows for interaction between students and teacher, and among students. Maximum interactivity ensures students are motivated to search for more content to guide their learning activity.

32. Tasks must be authentic so that the case study engages students in experiential learning. This case is multimodal and multidimensional. It incorporates online and teacher directed classroom activity. And it provides virtual scenarios, independent learning and self assessment, alongside acquisition of graduate attributes and employability skills.