

interior design programs at QUT

a higher educational response to interior design professional development

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Introduction

This submission describes the process and outcome of revising existing tertiary interior design programs to address social, educational and professional demands. It is argued that the outcomes form a strong substantive and procedural base for the development of interior design in the new millenium.

Rationale for restructuring

The change to the course in terms of 4x12 credit points per semester was undertaken to conform to Faculty and University initiatives aimed at standardising course structure. This change was considered by the interior design staff in conjunction with a process that was and remains a continuing aspect of curriculum development in the section. Rather than combining and integrating existing units, for a period of approximately 12 months, we explored together and with relevant groups various issues from fundamental social, educational, discipline-specific and professional perspectives. The result is a more cohesive, professionally relevant and theoretically sound curriculum; a curriculum that facilitates articulation and student mobility in relation to other courses and the practice of interior design.

The provision of a three-year undergraduate degree combined with a one-year, full-time or two-year, part-time Graduate Diploma satisfies the International Fed-



eration of Interior Designers/Architects minimum requirement for professional interior design education while at the same time allowing students to supplement their studies with work experience. There is strong evidence to suggest that professionals are demanding shorter tertiary programs in addition to a greater number of short courses that meet specific demands of practice. The 'applications' units in the undergraduate course have the potential to be developed as continuing education programs for interior designers and other people involved in the built environment. The Graduate Diploma program is flexible to the point of explicitly recognising the specific demands and constraints of individual students/ practitioners. Its availability as a separate higher studies program is also attractive to professionals from related design disciplines.

The process of restructuring was guided by an integrative, strategic

framework for curriculum development that explicitly recognises the various internal and external forces associated with society, higher education and interior design both in discipline and professional terms. The implementation of the process incorporates continuing evaluation as determined by action research methodology.

Definition of interior design guiding content development

Interior design is a profession that is concerned with the design and production of safe, functional, aesthetically pleasing and contextually sensitive interior environments. While an interior environment can be any space that has a feeling of enclosure, most interior design work is domestic (houses, townhouses, units), commercial (offices, shops, restaurants), industrial or specialised (resorts, hospitals, educational institutions). Some interior designers also undertake projects concerning the conservation of historic interiors, furniture design, exhibition design, set design, vehicular design and the design of virtual realities for computer-aided interaction.

As well as technical knowledge, interior designers call on theoretical knowledge of how people interact with their environments physiologically, psychologically, socially and ecologically. Designers' decisions on planning, servicing, fittings, furnishing and finishing are informed by this knowledge. In everyday practice, interior designers are responsible for developing briefs, concepts and design proposals; documenting design proposals for approval, tendering and construction; supervising construction; administering contracts; and carrying out post-occupancy evaluations.

Educational philosophy

Because professional practice is both complex and ever-changing, our courses strive to balance the broad cultural aspects of education and the specialised demands of interior design practice. This reflects QUT's aim to produce graduates who possess knowledge, professional competence, a sense of community, and a capacity to continue their professional development throughout their lives'. The learning environment at QUT acknowledges student diversity and fosters collaboration, critical thinking and a spirit of enquiry. Teaching is seen as an active engagement with students and with their various backgrounds, talents and aspirations; what is taught is linked to the different ways of learning.



Anna Nelson, 'Clothes Shelter'

Undergraduate Course

Bachelor of Built Environment (Interior Design)(BN31)

Duration: Three years full-time.

This course provides a broad disciplinary base from which the students can develop personal and professional competence. Aspects of interior design are covered in the subject areas of design and research, human sciences and cultural context, physical sciences and technology, electives and specific application units that incorporate studies of light and colour, materials and furniture. Rather than standing alone, the various subject areas are integrated in specific design projects that reflect the holistic nature of designing.

Postgraduate Course

Graduate Diploma in Interior Design (AR62)

Duration: One year full-time or two years part-time.

This course emphasises critical thought and theoretical and empirical research.

It will consolidate the students' knowledge and skills in office practice and project management while they pursue design and research projects of personal, professional and social benefit. The students' individual requirements are met through flexible learning arrangements.

Research Programs

For interior design programs, research is defined as the systematic, rigorous and ethical exploration of some aspect of person-environment interaction that the students have an interest in, that will advance their conceptual and professional competence, and that contributes to interior design's body of knowledge. Research skills are considered integral to innovative and socially significant design. As well as enhancing the students' content knowledge, they will also learn how to conduct research relevant to their topic, how to collect data, how to analyse data, and how to interpret and report the findings. At QUT, interior design staff members have specific experience and expertise in:

- design theory and process
- interior design practice
- brief development
- lighting
- furniture
- colour
- aesthetics
- designing for special use, for example, aged care, dementia, crisis accommodation
- environmental psychology
- socio-cultural aspects of design
- post-occupancy evaluation
- qualitative research methodology and methods
- design education
- curriculum design and development.

Master of Applied Science by Research and Thesis (BN71)

Doctor of Philosophy (IF49)

Queensland University of Technology Interior Design Academic Staff:

Jill Franz—Associate Professor in Interior Design and Course Coordinator (Interior Design)

Dianne Smith—Assistant Course Coordinator and lecturer

Kristine Jerome—Associate Lecturer

Michael Molloy—Lecturer

Peter Hedley—Senior Lecturer