

DESIGN
ACTION
PROGRAM

2017

The Design Action Program integrates external design activity within the Industrial Design coursework by offering two flexible types of design activity – internship and practicum work experience.

Design activity undertaken in the program can occur flexibly, allowing students and recent graduates the opportunity to work with a range of host organisations in business, educational, community and government settings, on real world issues with outcomes that matter.

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About

The Design Action Program facilitates opportunities for RMIT Industrial Design students and recent graduates to work together with host organisations for mutual benefit. It integrates practicum work experience into our Bachelor of Design degree program, and fosters internship opportunities for graduates. Our classes and design-studio projects have been doing this for over 60 years.

RMIT Industrial Design students are creative participants in a world where new technologies, global connectedness and the challenges of sustainability are changing social concerns and altering consumer behaviours and business markets. In recognition of this, design activity undertaken in the Design Action Program can occur flexibly, allowing for the opportunity to work with a range of host organisations in business, educational, community and government settings, on real world issues with outcomes that matter.

Students gain access to RMIT's international network of industry partners, research and educational organisations, and our extensive network of alumni. Host organisations gain access to design students and recent graduates who have diverse capabilities across advanced manufacturing, social innovation and business know-how. Today's students are able to creatively cross boundaries to develop products and services that help businesses and communities to prosper. The broad skill-base and cultural expertise of our students are valuable resources that can be utilized to meet the challenge of fulfilling product and service needs in changing local and world markets.

The Program convenes a bi-annual forum for host organisations, individual design-practitioners, and students to share how they have benefited from working together and to explore new design project ideas and innovative ways of working. This forum offers an ideal opportunity for younger participants to establish professional networks.

For Students
& Graduates

For Host
Organisations

DESIGN ACTION PROGRAM

Submit an online Expression of Interest form to find a host or project.

Submit an online Expression of Interest form to find a student / graduate student or project.

Begin with a suitable project opportunity

Become familiar with the Design Action Program resources online and attend a Program briefing session.

Consider government support funds that may be available.

Negotiate the design activity to be undertaken

Student / graduate and host organisation discuss working together, with help from the DAP Coordinator.

Get approval from the DAP Coordinator

Student / graduate submits DAP Proposal form for approval by DAP Coordinator.

Sign a formal agreement

Student / graduate and host organisation sign the approved Proposal form.

Prepare by re-reading the online Work Ready material.

Induct the student / graduate into your workplace.

Prepare for the project to start

Share your expectations of the project.

If any workplace safety or other issues arise, raise them early.

Provide regular feedback to the student / graduate on how they are performing their work. Encourage them to offer feedback to you.

Conduct regular progress meetings

Discuss how theory and practice come together in the workplace.

Start planning to undertake a higher level of professional experience through a work experience or internship.

Consider developing ways to integrate designers on internship, or practicum work experience into your organisational plan, or discuss developing a funded collaborative-research project with the DAP Coordinator.

Bring the project to a close

Hold a final debriefing. Provide feedback to each other and to the DAP Coordinator.

Share the experience

Share your experience in a DAP case-study. Join in the bi-annual DAP forum to learn about other host organisations and students.

Design activities facilitated by the program

We offer two types of design activity that can be undertaken flexibly, in Australia or internationally: internship and practicum work experience.

Options	Eligibility	Coursework	Course Credits	Hours	Work Agreement
Internship	Recent graduates	N/A	N/A	Flexible	Paid
Practicum Work Experience	Semester 3-4-5-6-7-8 students	"Enrolment in 'Design Practicum' course (Elective course for 2013)"	12	70-80	Voluntary

INTERNSHIP

For recent graduates of RMIT Industrial Design who are transitioning into professional careers, to undertake design-led projects with an organisation:

- up to 12 weeks full or part-time for a recent graduate to work as part of a project team managed by a host organisation, with payment made by the host organisation to the graduate.
- work on an internship project may start at anytime during the year, making it responsive to the host organisation's project timeline, and giving the host an the opportunity to trial the employability of graduates.
- RMIT staff may play a consulting or team role to foster innovation in designing products, services and systems
- multidisciplinary collaborations are encouraged – such as where the graduate designer collaborates with industry specialists, stakeholder groups, RMIT staff or other graduates
- the graduate designer is paid according to a negotiated agreement. Internship is arranged by application to the Program Coordinator

PRACTICUM WORK EXPERIENCE

For students in semesters 3-4-5-6-7-8 of their Design degree course, to experience design-related work with an organisation:

- credited as part of the Bachelor degree by enrolling in the Design Practicum course
- 12 credit points with a required 70-80 hours contact time in work experience.
- work is undertaken on a voluntary (unpaid) basis
- approved Design Action Program work experience must be completed before the end of the semester in which the student is enrolled in the Design Practicum course

A Flexible Approach

The Design Action Program encourages students to engage in a broad range of design activities, and to undertake such activity with a broad range of host organisations in business, educational, community and government settings.

We recognise that for such working relationships to be viable, flexibility may be required of both parties. Flexibility in the timing of the design activity, or in the mode by which design activity is undertaken, will allow the Program to meet a host organisation's commercial needs, and students to meet their academic and external work commitments. Host organisations may host more than one student at a time, or engage students over a number of years, as necessitated by the needs of the design activity.

The Design Action Program also encourages and supports our students and recent graduates to gain experience with overseas hosts. The chosen design activity could be undertaken by being situated overseas, or using collaborative online tools. For students this means you may be course-credited even though the activity you undertake proceeds:

- on shore in Australia, or overseas
- individually, or facilitated via a group
- utilising face-to-face collaboration, or online, or both

“Flexibility in the timing of the design activity, or in the mode by which design activity is undertaken, will allow the Program to meet a host organisation's commercial needs, and students to meet their academic and external work commitments”.

For Students & Recent Graduates

The Design Action Program is integral to the learning experience of Industrial Design students and recent graduates. You will get the chance to spend valuable time with experienced designers, allowing you to develop your design know-how, as well as with business and community people who utilise design, allowing you to test your skills in real-world situations. The Program encourages you to gain design experience offshore. Collaborative technologies and media will be actively used to support international project development.

Our staff know the design ecosphere, and actively collaborate with the best names in business and research, who are engaged with meeting the contemporary challenges of this fast paced world. These organisations need the enthusiasm, the tech skills, the design thinking and the cultural understanding of people and markets that you acquire as students of design.

However, your expectations may be different to those of the host for whom you will be working, and thus it is important that the expectations of all parties to any design activity are communicated clearly at the commencement of the activity. Your RMIT Design Action Program Coordinator and other staff will mentor you through this process.

What are the benefits?

There are many benefits to participation in the Design Action Program – it depends upon what you want to achieve, and the personal, academic and design skills you already bring:

- you will bring back firsthand design experience.
- you will gain a deeper understanding of a preferred area of design activity and a demonstration of its practical relevance, which will provide an added dimension to your course work and projects, particularly your final project.
- it offers you the chance to apply and develop your design-thinking skills or technical skills within the workplace.

- it develops workplace skills such as project management, team working, negotiation with and management of clients, and provides a real-world window into how decisions are made. You will develop your core skills by collaborating with diverse teams of people.
- it develops your personal skills. Learn from the experience of different business and social cultures, and from your host-mentor: How does design activity really happen? How can I navigate politics in the workplace?
- It gives you the chance to try out your chosen career and potentially creates or widens your career options.
- It creates or develops networks and contacts for your future.

What kind of design activity may be undertaken?

RMIT design students have worked on a diverse range of projects with well-known Australian and international organisations as well as small community organisations and entrepreneurs. They have undertaken design activity with:

- multinational businesses, including General Motors Holden, Ford and Deloitte
- local design consultancies, including Charlwood Design, Catalyst Design and Invetech
- international designers, including Marcel Wanders of Droog Design in the Netherlands and renowned Melbourne lighting designer Marc Pascal
- small design and manufacture companies, including Knog urban cycling products and Rakumba Lighting
- social innovation and sustainability-motivated groups, including The Australian Centre For Social Innovation (TACSI), Urban Commons, and the consultancy EcoInnovators
- community organisations, including Ceres Community Environment Park, Abbotsford Convent, and Carlton Housing Estate Residents Services (CHERS)
- social enterprises, including the Social Studio
- cultural organisations, including Melbourne Museum and local government
- international NGOs, including the International Network for Bamboo and Rattan (INBAR)
- research groups, including Victorian Eco Innovation Laboratory (VEIL) at the University of Melbourne

“... we share some past stories and journeys to inspire you with the value of the experience and the learning and insights it offers”.

How do you go about it?

Step 1: Find a suitable design opportunity or host organisation

Start at least three months before you wish to commence the design activity, and be proactive. Find an opportunity through RMIT Careers, through company, community, or government websites, or through design or social networks.

Register your interest in finding an organisation by completing an online Expression of Interest form (see RESOURCES), and share the Design Action Program information with organisations you are interested in working with.

The DAP Coordinator will hold briefing sessions about the Program each semester, so make sure you attend. Alert the Coordinator to your specific interests. They will be active in the design ecosphere and wider community and may spot an opportunity for you, or will match your interests and capabilities with opportunities already registered with RMIT.

For some project opportunities, expect to make a formal application and for the host organisation to interview you. Explore the online Work Ready Program material that RMIT provides for students (see RESOURCES). Be prepared with a cover letter (or email), an up-to-date CV, and a portfolio. An URL link to a digital portfolio will give organisations easy access to your work.

“... this is the ideal opportunity to share your expectations of what you would like to gain from your internship, or practicum work experience, and where you want to be at the end of it”.

Step 2: Complete the DAP Proposal form and get approval from the Coordinator

If you have succeeded in finding a design activity you want to undertake, then complete a Proposal form (see RESOURCES). Before you can formally accept an opportunity, the project needs to be approved by the DAP Coordinator. This is especially important for practicum work experience, as course learning goals need to be met and a supervisor and/or mentor appointed in your host organisation, for them to be accredited as coursework. The Coordinator will help to negotiate the scope and timing of the project work with your prospective host. Good communication with the Coordinator on your progress will sort out any issues early.

Should the Coordinator approach you with a potential project or opportunity, they will have already gained a good understanding of the skill needs and scope before you are approached. Formal approval for the design activity should be straightforward.

Step 3: Formalise the arrangement by signing an agreement with your host

There are separate standard agreements (and schedules) for paid and unpaid design activity (see RESOURCES); or, if your host organisation runs an ongoing program of design activities, they may have their own agreement for you to sign.

Any agreement will cover such practical matters as insurance, intellectual property and confidentiality, and professional ethics and workplace rights. The time to discuss and clarify mutual expectations with your host is prior to signing an agreement.

Become familiar with your rights in relation to intellectual property – this is important knowledge for every designer – and get your Coordinator to review any agreement before you sign it. Each party to the agreement (the participating host, RMIT Industrial Design, and yourself) should retain a signed copy.

Step 4: Prepare for your project to start

Revisit the online Work Ready Program material (see RESOURCES).

Your host will induct you into their workplace. How formal or structured this is will sometimes depend on the size of the organisation. You will be briefed about the organisation, its history, structure, culture and values. Practical work matters will be explained, including your host's expectations in relation to start and finish times, dress code, professional conduct and confidentiality, what the work will involve, and who you will be working with.

This is the ideal opportunity to share your expectations of what you would like to gain from your internship, or practicum work experience, and where you want to be at the end of it.

Step 5: Plan for regular progress meetings with your host and the DAP Coordinator

Regular meetings allow opportunities to discuss how theory and practice come together in the workplace, and what you are learning.

Meetings with your host offer the chance to learn more about how successful organisations are run, and how they go about their planning and the winning of new business. Expect constructive feedback on how you have performed in the workplace, and if any workplace safety or other issues arise, raise them early.

The DAP Coordinator may be involved at least once in meetings between student and host, and will also meet with the student separately

“...expect constructive feedback on how you have performed in the workplace, and if any workplace safety or other issues arise, raise them early.”

Step 6: Bring the project to a close

Expect to have a final debrief with your host to sum up what you have learnt and to get an evaluation of your work. Exit meetings are part of normal practice for organisations that have good personnel practices and strong people values.

The host organisation will provide feedback to your Coordinator about you, and you will be expected to provide feedback to your Coordinator on your experience at your host organisation. Share your observations and ideas in a positive way – this may be your future employer.

Step 7: Share your experience

When the project is completed, take the opportunity to build on your experience by participating in the bi-annual Design Action Program forum.

Share your experience by writing up your story for future Program materials, or start a blog and build your professional profile online. But remember that you will need your host's permission to include their logos or designs on your website (see PRACTICAL MATTERS).

For Host Organisations

What is the Design Action Program about?

The Design Action Program integrates external design activity within the Industrial Design coursework by offering two flexible types of design activity – internship and practicum work experience.

RMIT Industrial Design staff recognizes that great relationships with committed host-partners are crucial to deepening our students' learning and experience. We have more than 60 years of experience in listening to and working with successful organisations. We know that engendering creative design-thinking, business know-how, and the right technical capability in our young designers is essential for the sustained growth of organisations grappling with complex new-world dynamics.

The Design Action Program has the flexibility needed so that talented young designers and design students can meet your real business, research, and manufacturing needs, and potentially, short-term skill needs. Consider developing ways to integrate designers on internship or on practicum work experience into your organisational plan, or discuss developing a funded collaborative-research project with the DAP Coordinator.

For experienced design-practitioners, the program offers the chance to mentor new talent, which can be mutually satisfying for both the practitioner and the student.

“...it creates tangible design outcomes including new intellectual property and injects new knowledge and fresh ideas that we can use.”

INTERNSHIP

- conduct design-led research, or product and service development with a recent graduate designer
- the DAP Coordinator and staff will match your project's particular complexities to our recent graduates for a mutually beneficial collaboration
- where needed our staff will coordinate with other RMIT schools and disciplines to provide a team of interns to deliver the required capability mix
- an internship project may start at any time during the year, and will require a financial contribution to the design graduate
- The DAP Coordinator will work with host organisations on client-led industry projects that require design capabilities and have Government funding options available. Projects under 12 weeks in length may be eligible (see the Innovation and Technology Voucher Programs, under RESOURCES)

"... You can read about recent experiences in CASE STUDIES".

PRACTICUM WORK EXPERIENCE

- host 2nd, 3rd and 4th year design students who have a good design foundation and are enthusiastic about gaining real design-related work experience of 70-80 hours, for their professional development
- host organisations who wish to offer an opportunity can advertise through RMIT Careers, or register it with the DAP Coordinator, who will match it to an appropriate student (see How do you initiate?)
- if you have already been approached by a student, the DAP Coordinator will advise you how to proceed

Results

What can host organisations gain from this experience?

A snapshot of what our host partners say:

- creates tangible design outcomes including new intellectual property and injects new knowledge and fresh ideas that we can use
- enhances our profile as a forward-thinking member of the design and business community
- addresses our research and development issues in a way which develops our reputation and sharpens our competitive edge
- meets our short-term design or technical skill needs in an affordable way.
- our staff get updated technical skills as part of the skill exchange
- we get the opportunity to work with and mentor new talent, to see who is a good fit with our organisational culture and values
- helps our staff develop skills in mentoring and fostering career aspirations and professional development

How do you become a Host?

Step 1: Find a student or graduate to suit your project

If you have a possible project opportunity, contact the DAP Coordinator to discuss what you are offering, and complete an online Expression of Interest form to be listed in the DAP database.

Depending upon your needs, the Coordinator will suggest an approach to finding a suitable student or recent graduate. For example, you can advertise the project opportunity through RMIT Careers, an online job listing allowing for easy electronic distribution.

Step 2: Negotiate the design activity with the DAP Coordinator

It is particularly important to determine whether the opportunity you offer is best suited to a graduate internship or a student practicum work experience.

A practicum work experience offered to current students needs to include design-based activities in order to be accredited. If offering such activities, your preparation will need to include planning that course learning-goals can be met.

Step 3: Formalise the arrangement by signing an agreement with the student

RMIT provides standard agreements (and schedules) for paid and unpaid design activity (see RESOURCES).

The agreements cover such practical matters as insurance, intellectual property and confidentiality, and professional ethics and workplace rights. The formal signing may also provide an opportunity to discuss and clarify mutual expectations. Each party to the agreement (the student, RMIT Industrial Design, and yourself) should retain a signed copy.

What makes for a quality host?

Step 1: Induct the student or graduate into your workplace

Brief the student about the organisation, its history, structure, culture and values. Explain your expectations in relation to start and finish times, dress code, professional conduct and confidentiality, and what the work will involve.

Step 2: Allow for regular progress meetings

Meeting with the student provides opportunities to discuss how theory and practice come together in your workplace; and also to share constructive feedback on how the student has performed their work. Encouraging the student to offer feedback is an opportunity to receive fresh ideas and observations that may be of use in the workplace.

For some Design Action projects, the Coordinator may be involved at least once in scheduled meetings between host and student.

Step 3: Hold a final debriefing

This is to sum up what has been learned and to provide an evaluation of the student's work.

Step 4: Share your experience

Take the opportunity to share your experience as a host with your colleagues, RMIT Alumni, business networks, and the design community.

Place a brief account on your website, or allow RMIT to share your insights on the RMIT website.

Participate in the Design Action Program bi-annual forum to share the experience with students and other hosts.

“Take the opportunity to share your experience as a host with your colleagues, RMIT Alumni, business networks, and the design community”.

Practical Matters

The following provides some essential information on practical matters entailed by undertaking design activity within the Design Action Program. Clarity about such matters helps to ensure that activity undertaken with a host organisation fosters a productive and equitable exchange between host and student, for mutual benefit.

This section is addressed primarily to students, as the newcomers to the design world, but can serve as a reminder to hosts of important issues.

Insurance (WorkSafe, Public Liability and Professional Indemnity)

- Students who are employed by a host organisation and paid a salary are covered by their employer's workers compensation policy, public liability and professional indemnity.
- If the student is not being paid, then as higher education students our Industrial Design students are covered by RMIT's student accident insurance, public liability and professional indemnity insurance. Certificates of Currency for these policies can be provided (printed or emailed) to organisations requiring proof of coverage.
- Recent graduates – who are no longer higher education students – will need to be covered [for workers compensation] by the host organisation responsible for their project. Current policies for public liability and professional indemnity will need to be confirmed with RMIT when an agreement is signed with the host organisation.

For detailed information including insurance on travel to and from authorised placements, either in Australia or offshore, see RESOURCES.

“... Students may be in a position of wishing to use a registered design owned by their host organisation, for example, in coursework or for an online presence. Before this occurs, students need to understand that a host organisation retains exclusive rights to the use of the host's designs and to authorise use by others.”

Intellectual Property and Confidentiality

Knowledge of intellectual property (IP) rights is important for every designer. Students should familiarise themselves with RMIT's Intellectual Property Policy and the Australian design industry's approach to IP (see RESOURCES).

Undertaking design activity in a host organisation presents a few common scenarios in relation to intellectual property, including:

- obtaining permission for use of a host organisation's IP
- making sure not to disclose confidential IP information to others
- ensuring credit for any contribution to a host organisation's IP-in-development

USING A HOST ORGANISATION'S IP IN YOUR OWN WORK

Students may be in a position of wishing to use a registered design owned by their host organisation, for example, in coursework or for an online presence. Before this occurs, students need to understand that a host organisation retains exclusive rights to the use of the host's designs and to authorise use by others.

If you were employed by an organisation (e.g. as part of a paid internship), then you will have been subject to the conditions of employment as per any other employee. Whether you were employed by the organisation or not, you should obtain from them clear, written, approval – in advance – to use any registered design for your own academic or portfolio purposes.

NON-DISCLOSURE OF YOUR HOST ORGANISATION'S IP-IN-DEVELOPMENT

A host organisation may seek (at some later time) to register a design developed while the student was at the organisation. While the student may not have been working directly on the design, they may have had access to it. If the student later made the design public – for example by presenting it to other students in a course report, or placing it on a website – then this would prevent the host organisation from registering the design, as a design can only be registered if it is new, original and hasn't been disclosed.

Host organisations are usually well aware of such risks and should have a confidentiality agreement for the student to sign, which makes clear the restrictions and obligations entailed by his or her time at the organisation. RMIT also has its own set of confidentiality deeds and agreements that may be used to address such issues before they arise.

If you have not been presented with a confidentiality agreement at the start of your Design Action project, make sure you ask about your host organisation's expectations in relation to confidentiality. If at some later time you wish to make use of your host organisation's designs, you should obtain written permission from the host organisation before you do so.

ENSURING CREDIT FOR STUDENT CONTRIBUTIONS TO IP-IN-DEVELOPMENT

What are a student's rights in relation to the registering of a design to which they have materially contributed during their time at a host organisation? It is important for students to know that, as the designer, they own the design, but how things will proceed depends upon whether the host organisation or the student themselves wishes to register the design (at some later time).

If the host organisation seeks to register the design, they will need an agreement with the student for use of the design. If the student was in employment with the organisation, he/she will already be governed by the conditions of that employment, including use of intellectual property. If the student was not in employment, then he/she may be asked to sign a contract that addresses this issue specifically.

If the student wishes to register the IP themselves, then they must prohibit the host organisation from disclosing the design in the interim – as stated above, a design can only be registered if it is new, original and hasn't previously been disclosed. It would thus be in the student's interest to reach an agreement with the host organisation on future use of a design as soon as possible after the design is created.

For relevant links on the RMIT website, see RESOURCES.

Professional Ethics and Workplace Rights

A successful Design Action Program project requires mutual awareness by students and hosts of professional ethics and workplace rights.

Host organisations need to:

- ensure that they respect the workplace rights of students and graduates
- be aware of professional or ethically risky situations in which students could be placed
- have a code of practice in place and induct students appropriately
- model best practice in professional ethics
- be aware of the steps to taken if a problematic event occurs

Students and graduates need to:

- be aware of your Australian workplace rights and protections, your host's protocols and the requirements of professional behaviour
- act professionally and ethically at all times. This will be covered as part of your Work Ready preparation
- be able to handle situations where your practices may be questioned
- be aware of the steps to take if a problematic event occurs, such as raising it with your work supervisor or DAP Coordinator
- if you have an accident then this need to be reported to your supervisor and RMIT as soon as practicable
- be aware that health and safety obligations vary from country to country and for overseas placements the requirements of the country where you will be working should be discussed with your DAP Coordinator and with your host organisation

Resources Online

www.dap.rmit.edu.au

For Students and Recent Graduates

[Proposal form](#)

[RMIT Careers Toolkit](#)

[Project Evaluation form](#)

For Host Organisations

[Expression of Interest form](#)

[Project Evaluation form](#)

Agreements

[Practical Placement Agreement - Higher Education \(unpaid\) & Schedule. \(Updated Nov 2012\)](#)

Intellectual property

[Department of Business and Innovation publications for the industry](#)

[Make your mark \(A guide to Intellectual Property for Australia's Industrial Designers\)](#)

[Protect your creative \(A guide to Intellectual Property for Australia's Graphic Designers\)](#)

[RMIT Intellectual property in design](#)

Copyright

[Work Integrated Learning: Copyright](#)

[Australian workplace rights](#)

[for RMIT information and key government websites](#)

[Fair Work Ombudsman recommendations](#)

