Queensland University of Technology
Brisbane Australia

This is the author's version of a work that was submitted/accepted for publication in the following source:

[Bridgstock, Ruth S. & Cunningham, Stuart D.](#)
(2016)

Creative labour and graduate outcomes : Implications for higher education and cultural policy.

International Journal of Cultural Policy, 22(1), pp. 10-26.

This file was downloaded from: <https://eprints.qut.edu.au/83086/>

© © 2015 Taylor & Francis

The Version of Record of this manuscript has been published and is available in *International Journal of Cultural Policy*, 12 November 2015, <http://www.tandfonline.com/10.1080/10286632.2015.1101086>

Notice: *Changes introduced as a result of publishing processes such as copy-editing and formatting may not be reflected in this document. For a definitive version of this work, please refer to the published source:*

<https://doi.org/10.1080/10286632.2015.1101086>

Creative labour and graduate outcomes: implications for higher education and cultural policy

Ruth Bridgstock* and Stuart Cunningham

Creative Industries Faculty, Queensland University of Technology, Brisbane, Australia

*Corresponding author: r.bridgstock@qut.edu.au

Keywords: creative industries; creative labour; graduate careers; higher education

One of the principal ways that cultural and higher education policy and practice intersect is over a shared concern with the supply of talent and its employability and career sustainability. This article considers the multidisciplinary contributions to these debates, and then engages with these debates by drawing upon research from analyses of national Census data, and via granular empirical survey research into Australian creative arts graduates' initial career trajectories. In so doing, it seeks to paint a more nuanced picture of graduate outcomes, the significance of creative skills and by extension creative education and training, and the various kinds of value that creative graduates add through their work. This evidence should assist in a closer affinity between the differing approaches to creative labour and the creative economy, and has implications for cultural and higher education policy.

One of the principal ways that cultural and higher education policy and practice intersect is over a shared concern with the supply of talent into employability and sustainable careers. It is often argued that creative arts degrees fail to deliver adequate employment prospects for students, and that creative graduates end up chronically underemployed, or finding work outside creative fields entirely. Concerns around the oversupply of creative arts graduates from education and training are accompanied by worries that once in the workforce, graduates will be unable to sustain careers in their preferred creative occupations. Then there is the creative economy policy and research literature that emphasises the growth of the creative workforce and the importance of creative work and workers to innovation and economic growth in general. In this article, we engage with these debates by drawing upon research from analyses of national Census data, and via granular empirical survey research into Australian creative arts graduates' initial career trajectories. In so doing, we aim to paint a more nuanced picture of graduate outcomes, the significance of creative skills and by extension creative education and training, and the various kinds of value that creative graduates add through their work. This evidence should assist in a closer affinity between the differing approaches to creative labour and the creative economy, and has implications for cultural and higher education policy.

The two discourses of the creative workforce

Arts and cultural policy have regularly focused on issues of education and career outcomes. There are robust debates on the contributions an arts education can make to overall education performance and viability of the consumption base for culture (Oakley, 2007). Given these contributions, the regular findings of research into career prospects of creative arts practitioners (Throsby & Zednick, 2010) demonstrate persistently sub optimal outcomes in terms of oversupply of talent and low, precarious income. These well-rehearsed aspects of cultural policy provide ongoing evidence for one of its dominant analytical frameworks: endemic market failure in markets for the arts that justify ongoing government subvention. These well known insights from cultural policy feed into contemporary debates about the vicissitudes of creative labour.

Recent developments in creative industries and creative economy theory and policy and accompanying analytical and empirical frameworks have painted a different

picture of the ‘creative workforce’. There is compelling evidence for the dynamic growth of digital content, design services and creative internet applications – well above general economy averages over a 15 year period – and for their increasing importance as enabling skills in modern economies. Creative and cultural knowledge and skills, particularly when allied with digital capability, contribute to innovation throughout the economy, reaching beyond the creative industries (Potts and Cunningham 2008, Hearn et al. 2014). Recent research reinforces ‘that the creative industries bring together a particular combination of [creative] content and ICT skills; their integrity as an emerging economic entity relies on this combination’ (Bakhshi et al. 2012, 45).

These approaches to cultural and creative activity in services-dominated economies have relevance for not only cultural policy, but also for education and research, and industry and innovation. This has been both their strength (as they track significant structural shifts in modern economies) and their weakness. In an economy like Australia’s, that derives much of its export wealth from extractive industries and agriculture, the case for government recognition and support for business development, and wider connectivity with the mainstream pillars of the economy, has sat uneasily amongst the established stakeholder interests in arts and culture, higher education curricula and research agendas in the humanities and creative arts, research and development and innovation, and industry policy.

But the findings of cultural policy and those from creative economy studies are not incommensurate. The latter confirms that traditional arts occupations are the least remunerated and the most likely to be self-employed and precarious. Further creative workforce research reported in this article will develop this closer affinity with concern central to cultural and educational policy.

Creative labour and precarity

Australia has, as elsewhere, been caught up in the tension between policies, mapping studies, and commentary relating to the economic contribution of creative work on the one hand, and a tranche of seemingly incompatible literature that points out continuing precarious working conditions and self-exploitation of creative workers on

the other. Creative careers are characterised as being precarious, in that they involve chronic unemployment and underemployment. Workers undertake 'portfolio careers' comprising piecemeal creative and non-creative jobs, and tend to undertake short-term project-based and self-employment-based work (Bridgstock 2005, Ross 2009, Throsby and Zednik 2010).

Some career development and creative economy theorists (Hall 1996, Howkins 2001) have promoted the portfolio career as 'the career configuration of the future', emphasising flexibility, autonomy, lifestyle benefits and excitement associated with entrepreneurship and varied work. A recent study (Morgan et al. 2013) suggests that among young creative workers, insecure employment conditions may be starting to be accepted and normalised to the extent that they feel that not staying in one position too long can be both liberating and adaptive. This is a pattern of internalisation of precarity that has been theorised as 'venture labour' by Gina Neff (2012, 16), "the explicit expression of entrepreneurial values by nonentrepreneurs".

It is commonly argued that creative workers bring strong intrinsic drivers to career, and tend to link personal identity with creative practice. The possibility of a lucky break leading to outstanding success can also be a significant factor in creative workers' decisions to stay in the industry despite uncertainty and adversity (Taylor and Littleton 2008). Rather than exiting the field in search of better employment prospects in other industries, they 'self-exploit', by continuing to work within the field, but for free or at reduced rates (Hesmondhalgh and Baker 2010).

However, many studies suggest that creative workers are often pushed to portfolio working (through financial necessity or industry configurations and norms) rather than pulled to it, and that their overall career prospects are highly uncertain at best. Under the portfolio career model, workers have individual responsibility for their career development, and thus assume all risk associated with economic vicissitudes, changes to supply chains and market demand, and personal adversity (Gregg 2011, Neff 2012).

Angela McRobbie (2002) suggests that the informal and social processes involved in finding or creating creative work are key barriers to breaking in to a creative career.

Because finding or creating work is often contingent on ‘who you know’ in various ways, and much is dependent on experience and the quality of previous work outputs, it can take a significant length of time to become established; some scholars have argued that these informal, networked job acquisition and creation processes can serve as a mechanism for exclusion and discrimination (Lee 2011).

Globally, both precarity and self-exploitation appear to be severe among graduates of creative degrees as they attempt to enter the creative workforce. Creative graduates struggle through an extended education to work transition period that can involve multiple entry attempts, unpaid internships, travel to follow the possibility of work, more education or / training, and reliance on non-career jobs, family, or social security for financial support (Galloway et al. 2002). Studies of graduate transitions indicate that many students also experience a significant period of personal and professional identity uncertainty as they attempt to move into the world of work (Buckham 1998, Nystrom 2009). These issues have also been documented in Australian graduate transitions to the workforce (Bridgstock, 2011), and national graduate destinations surveys consistently report that creative degrees are associated with the poorest employment outcomes (Graduate Careers Australia, 2014).

Human capital, higher education policy, and graduate employability

It is not entirely clear to what extent the creative precarity phenomenon occurs because of oversupply of entrants into an unregulated, oversaturated market where portfolio working is the norm (Banks & Hesmondhalgh, 2008; Oakley, 2013), and to what extent there is supply side failure, with graduates of creative courses not equipped with the appropriate capabilities for creative occupations, or to find / create work in creative fields. Certainly, as with the United Kingdom (e.g., *Staying Ahead*, 2008), in Australia there has been recent significant emphasis on graduate employability and human capital as a determinant of success in the innovation economy (Australian Government Department of Industry, 2014).

Australia has a long established set of priorities around increasing and diversifying higher education participation. Since 2012, Australia has had a ‘demand driven system’ of enrolments, which means that individual institutions have been allowed to determine the number of students they enroll in bachelor level courses. They receive

Government funding for the places they fill. Increasing participation targets are being achieved, with a 27% increase in enrolments between 2007 and 2011, equating to some 150,000 students (Meek, 2014). However, now some commentators are arguing for graduate oversupply, particularly in a number of the health disciplines and media fields (Stokes & Wright, 2012).

The 2014/2015 Commonwealth Budget announced significant funding reform to the higher education sector, with the overarching aim of supporting higher education to “flexibly respond to the skills needs of our students and our workforce” (Commonwealth Government of Australia, 2014), but also with the aim of further improving efficiencies in management structures and use of resources. These reforms include student fee deregulation and online publication of institutional and course performance survey results on indicators such as student satisfaction, employment outcomes, and employer satisfaction. When taken in the context of declines in graduate employment rates and salary premiums across all disciplines and historically poor creative graduate outcomes (Graduate Careers Australia, 2014), providers are under increasing and very public pressure to demonstrate the tangible ‘employment value’ of creative degrees to prospective students and other stakeholders.

While there is an Australia national curriculum in the school sector, there is no single mandated curriculum for higher education. There are also few professional accreditation requirements in the creative industries. This means that institutions are free to determine their own graduate capabilities and program learning outcomes. The Australian Qualifications Framework stipulates that Bachelors degrees in Australia will “have advanced knowledge and skills for professional or highly skilled work and/or further learning”, but do not stipulate the actual knowledge and skills required (AQFC, 2013). While threshold learning outcomes and disciplinary academic standards statements have been produced for the creative and performing arts disciplines (ALTC 2010), and are in the process of development for journalism, media and communications disciplines (JOMEC, 2015) these frameworks have been criticised for insufficiently addressing ‘21st century’ capabilities such as entrepreneurship and career self-management, lifelong learning and metacognition (Bridgstock & Carr, 2013). Many institutions do not use them.

Systematic studies of what Australian universities do teach in creative degree courses are lacking. However, there is some evidence that many tertiary programs do not fully connect with latest digital trends. Haukka (2011) reported significant disjuncture between course provision and industry requirements, and Rowley et al (2012) found that universities offering education in the digital sector only undertook curriculum reviews every five years.

Core findings of research into the Australian creative economy

Given these contexts and debates, this article outlines key empirical developments that engage with questions around the creative economy and precarious labour, creative graduate skills and experiences of the transition to work, and inform our analysis of the Australian context. It does this firstly through utilising the ARC Centre of Excellence in Creative Industries and Innovation's Creative Trident methodology to examine creative work prospects using Australian Census data. The Creative Trident methodology as applied to Census data will be used to examine claims of the contribution of creative work to economic growth, explore the growth and economic contributions of sub-groups of creative occupations and industries, and speak to precarious labour within these sub-groups. Second, this article will provide an overview of the findings of an in-depth individual questionnaire administered to graduates of creative degrees from 10 Australian universities. These findings relate to creative graduates' transitions to the world of work, their employability, the skills and capabilities they acquire through study, and the kinds of value that graduates add through work. In the light of these empirical contributions, the article then considers implications for cultural and educational policy, and educational practice.

In an important development in 2014, the Australian Bureau of Statistics published Australia's 'first experimental measures of the economic contribution of cultural and creative activity in Australia'. It found that culture is 'big business' in this country, contributing an estimated \$86 billion (6.9%) to Australia's Gross Domestic Product on a national accounts basis in 2008–09 and \$65.8 billion (5.6%) to Australia's Gross Value Added (GVA) in same year. To put this into context, this contribution was similar to the GVA contribution of Health Care and Social

Assistance. There were almost 1,000,000 people during that same year whose main employment was in a cultural or creative industry or occupation.

The research conducted on Australia's creative economy by the ARC Centre of Excellence for Creative Industries and Innovation informed the Australian Bureau of Statistics' work. It also complemented it by research on the sector's growth dynamics. High growth is found in creative services – business-to-business – at almost twice the growth of the rest of the economy. It is important to note that this growth in creative services occupations – the designers, content developers, communicators and so on – is not restricted to the creative services sector itself, populated by many small-to-medium enterprises. The level of growth in the employment of creative services occupations within other industry sectors – the embedded workforce such as designers employed by manufacturers, architects by construction firms and so on – was also above the growth rate of the general workforce.

Digital content, design and other high growth elements of the creative economy are also economically significant, not only because of the size of the sector (as now officially measured by the Australian Bureau of Statistics) but also because it is a high-growth industry, growing faster worldwide and in Australia than other economic sectors. These long-running, above-average growth trends are indicators of innovation in so far as they demonstrate new needs for creative attributes and skills as the general economy evolves. New locations of creative labour are co-evolving with new needs and opportunities across the economy. Also, the economic multipliers arising from the digital content industry are significant, being higher than those for most other categories of economic activity. While traditional productivity measures, as noted above, may be problematic for cultural and creative activity in general, the now well-documented phenomenon of high growth creative services have major implications for productivity growth in many important industries beyond the core digital content industry itself: design, digital content and technology are becoming important inputs to other industries and act as enablers, which help transform the way business is done.

It is not hard to see why there should be such relatively high growth patterns in creative services and creative service occupations embedded in other industries.

The progressive embedding of the internet and associated digital applications and services into the general economy, especially since the first correction of the dotcom boom and bust more than a decade ago, has seen rapid rises in demand for website design and online visual communication, as well as online and digital advertising, and software data basing, automation and business applications. Additionally, there are widespread converged digital technologies of reproduction and dissemination – digital cameras, digital video, digital audio creation, sharing online in social platforms – and a growing design-and-communication skill base and consciousness that supplies people, ideas and applications into the economy, and creates increasingly sophisticated demand in consumers, some of whom are co-producing and disseminating content.

Creative Graduate Career Studies in the United Kingdom and Australia

Two major recent UK studies contribute in this area. The ‘Creative Graduates, Creative Futures’ study (Ball *et al.* 2010; Pollard, 2013) was a survey-based study of 3,500 art, media, crafts and design graduates up to eight year years after course completion, in the vein of the seminal *Destinations and Reflections* study (Blackwell and Harvey 1999). The study found evidence for precarious employment, especially in the first year after graduation. It documented high levels of self-employment (45% of the participants surveyed) and portfolio working (48% had more than one job). However, it also found that 78% of the participants in the study were engaged in creative work of some sort, although creative work was defined very flexibly, including a much broader range of so-called creative occupations than generally accepted (including how creative occupations are defined in the Trident method). For instance, it included teaching in its definition of creative work, and noted that 33% of the participants had engaged in teaching work since graduation.

Comunian and colleagues (Comunian *et al.* 2010, Comunian *et al.* 2011) have explored creative graduate destinations through analysis of the UK-wide ‘Destinations of Leavers from Higher Education’ (DLHE) survey matched with student record data, collected as part of the ‘Students in Higher Education’ survey. These researchers conducted statistical analyses on surveys submitted by graduates from Advertising, Architecture, Crafts, Design, Film and Television, Fine Art, Music, Performing Arts, Technology and Writing and Publishing disciplines. Comunian and

her colleagues found a complex picture of destinations that nonetheless broadly supported the findings of Trident Mark II in Australia: that some creative graduates (particularly those from largely Creative Services-related degrees such as architecture, advertising and publishing) were much more likely to be employed full-time and with higher wages than others (particularly those from broadly Cultural Production-related degrees such as craft, and the fine and performing arts). Comunian et al (Comunian, Faggian and Jewell, in press) have also very recently used the same methodology to demonstrate that graduates of digital creative degrees also demonstrate high levels of full-time employment and receive comparatively high salaries, compared with creative arts graduates, and further, that digital graduates seem to be finding employment destinations throughout the economy.

In Australia, the authors, as part of CCI's continuing program of research complementing the Trident mapping, have conducted a series of survey-based studies of creative graduate outcomes. Bridgstock's (2011) PhD research tracked graduates of Creative Industries undergraduate degree programs for one year after course completion. While the focus of this study was to identify capability and attitudinal predictors of career success in the creative career, Bridgstock also found a significant disciplinary difference in earnings-based career success measures, with design and digital graduates earning significantly more overall and from creative work than graduates of visual and performing arts programs. However, the graduates of visual and performing arts programs maintained high ratings on subjective (self-defined) career success, reflective of Hesmondhalgh and others' (Banks and Hesmondhalgh 2009) suggestions around 'good work' and important non-economic value associated with creative work.

Cunningham and Bridgstock (2012; Bridgstock & Cunningham, 2014) conducted a single-institution study (based on alumni contacts within our own university, Queensland University of Technology) of 400 journalism, media and communications graduates going back to 10 years post-course completion. The data in that study supported Creative Trident findings that journalism, media and communications professionals are found throughout the economy. This is particularly the case for those graduates employed in Public Relations, Marketing and Communications roles (Creative Services roles), whereas early career Journalists (a

Cultural Production role) tend to be employed within the core media sectors. Overall, the graduates in this study enjoyed high levels of employment and gave positive accounts of the relevance of their courses to working life, with minimal precarious employment. In general, courses were regarded as successful in delivering the generic capabilities, skills and orientations that facilitated graduate employability, irrespective of eventual employment type.

Creative Pathways: The Australian National Graduate Tracking Study

We now report an overview of the as results of a recent national study that captured the trajectories, experiences and destinations of more than 900 Australian creative graduates up to six years post-course completion (for a full report, see Bridgstock, Bonson & Le Roux, 2014). The study involved anonymous web-based surveys of 916 graduates from undergraduate creative degrees, with conferral dates from 2007 to 2012. A total of ten Australian universities of various types, sizes and locations around Australia were involved in the study. The survey took into account of portfolio career configurations, and time needed to settle into creative careers, thus addressing some of the limitations of most standard graduate surveys, as well as top down methods. The sample includes graduates of undergraduate degrees corresponding to the ‘cultural production’ category of the CCI Trident Mark II model of creative workforce mapping – that is, music and performing arts; film, television and radio; writing, publishing and print media, and the visual arts. Graduates from degree programs that correspond with the CCI Trident Mark II category of ‘creative services’ (advertising and marketing; software development and digital content; architecture and design) were not included in the survey, thus permitting specific questions to be answered around a key group of graduates most associated with precarious labour experiences. The survey was designed to elicit detailed data on precarious employment, unemployment and portfolio working, creative value-add through creative and other work, and perceptions of the value of creative degree qualifications. The Creative Trident occupation and industry classifications were used for analysis, to allow for comparison and alignment with the Census data findings.

The Creative Pathways study found evidence of the portfolio career among creative graduates, with an average of 1.43 jobs held per graduate. While full-time

employment was the most common basis for employment (45% of graduates), one in three were self employed to some degree, and 27% holding at least one casual job.

When categorised into CCI Trident Mark I and II classifications, significant differences were found for graduate earnings, bases for employment, and self-rated employability. These differences lend further weight to the contention that the Australian creative workforce contains sub-groups that are quite different from one another in terms of employment characteristics. Graduates with creative services or embedded cultural production jobs were more likely than other graduates to hold full-time positions, and less likely to have experienced unemployment; holders of specialist cultural production jobs were most likely to be self-employed or employed on a casual basis, and were also most likely to have experienced unemployment at some stage since course completion. There was wide variation in earnings and paid hours among the graduate surveyed, but overall, creative services roles, other-than-creative roles, and embedded roles were associated with higher average paid hours worked per week and hourly earnings than cultural production and specialist roles.

There was evidence that graduates in the *Creative Pathways* study were employable, and that they believed their creative degrees had been valuable. While the graduates rated themselves as 'fairly employable' overall (4.12 on a 1-5 scale), with no difference between the various creative trident groupings, graduates who worked in creative roles were generally more satisfied with their careers, and felt that they were more successful, than those who worked in non-trident, other than-creative jobs. Those with specialist jobs rated themselves as having more career success than those with embedded jobs. It seems that while the graduates employed in embedded and creative services roles tended to earn more and be engaged in more stable employment, that many still aspired to specialist, cultural production work. In terms of the rated value of the creative degree, the mean rating given was 4.00 (SD=1.6), corresponding to 'quite valuable'. There was some variation in this by Creative Trident categories of employment: Graduates in specialist roles gave higher ratings than those in embedded roles and other-than-creative roles, but there was a much smaller difference between the ratings assigned by graduates in cultural production versus those in creative services roles.

Nearly half of the graduates surveyed for *Creative Pathways* held at least one job that fell outside the creative trident. When asked to indicate, on a 1-5 scale, to what extent they felt that they added creative value through their other than-creative work, the mean rating given was 4, corresponding to ‘a fair extent’. There was also a reasonably strong correlation between the degree of perceived creative value added through other than-creative work and self-rated employability, career success, and career satisfaction. The graduates who indicated that they added significant creative value through their other than-creative work were also likely to indicate that their creative degree studies had been valuable to their careers to date.

The main types of creative value that the graduates felt they added in their other than-creative work are presented in Figure 1 below.

<insert Figure 1 here>

Graduates were also asked to list up to three capabilities that they had acquired during their creative degrees that they used as part of their current work. They were asked this question for any work they were currently undertaking that they regarded as creative, and again for any work that they regarded as non-creative. For both creative and non-creative work, creative discipline-specific skills were most likely to be listed (see Table 3). These capabilities comprised ‘how to’ skills relating specifically to the creative disciplinary domain, such as camera techniques, visual design principles, and music composition knowledge. Communication and teamwork generic skills were the second most common group of capabilities listed, followed by discipline-specific knowledge (such as knowledge of art history, content knowledge of form and style, knowledge of music theory).

There was some divergence in capability use between the two categories of work, with discipline-specific knowledge, self, time and project management skills, and entrepreneurship/ business management more often listed for creative work than non-creative work. By comparison, graduates were more likely to use generic/transferable skills such as communication and teamwork, critical thinking,

and non-disciplinary creative skills in their non-creative work than their creative work.

<insert Table 3 about here>

These findings are congruent with previously presented studies: First, that the majority of creative work undertaken by the graduates fell into the specialist, cultural production categories, and was likely to be undertaken on a self-employment basis, and further, that graduates were more likely to think that specialist cultural production work is creative than they do other types of work. Second, this finding points to the fact that the graduates were acquiring valuable generic skills, including teamwork and generic creativity and critical thinking, that they were using in their work. Finally, an unexpected finding was that more than half of those engaged in ‘non-creative’ work were nonetheless using the creative disciplinary skills acquired during creative degrees. Some of the participants’ qualitative descriptions of their work illuminated what may be happening here. For instance, the administrative assistant who designed the company website, runs their social media marketing campaign or designed and wrote the marketing materials; the music teacher who composes pieces for their students to play in the school recital; or the retail assistant who also puts together the store displays are all reporting high levels of creative input into their jobs and corresponding use of their creative qualifications.

Trident Mark II and Creative Pathways: Conclusions about the Australian Creative Workforce

A number of important conclusions emerge from empirical work discussed here. First, the graduates in the Creative Pathways study believed that the cultural production degree courses they undertook were valuable, and that they had acquired skills they saw as relevant to their careers. It seems that ‘non-creative’, as well as creative work in which the graduates are engaged, are perceived to require a fair degree of creative disciplinary capability, and also generic capabilities developed during creative degrees, such as generic creativity, critical thinking, teamwork, and written and oral communication (see also Oakley *et al.* 2008). Further, it seems that no matter what the employment destination, graduates who perceived that they were creative value of some kind through their work reported high levels of career

satisfaction (although many graduates employed outside specialist, cultural production still aspired to this type of work, and synonymise it with success). These findings support the sense of ‘worth’ pointed to by cultural sociologists Boltanski and Thevenot (2006) and Stark (2009), and the ‘good work’ invoked as labour motivation by media theorists Hesmondalgh and Baker (2010).

Second, our graduate results support important observations from the Trident Census analyses. Embedded creative and creative services jobs are associated with a far greater degree of full-time, employee-based job holding, lower unemployment, higher earnings per hour, and a higher average number of paid hours of work per week than specialist and cultural production jobs. It does seem from the findings reported here that while the Trident facilitates much better quantification of creative employment through enumeration of both creative occupations and industries, it may still underreport creative cultural work when this work is engaged in as part of a second or third job. These second or third creative jobs are more likely than first jobs to be undertaken on a part-time or self-employment basis.

Graduates engaged in cultural production work did exhibit a tendency towards portfolio career configurations, undertaking multiple concurrent multiple cultural production jobs, or working in other than-creative or creative services roles in addition to cultural production jobs. This finding lends support to the proposition that creatives manage risk and career reward through portfolio work by combining ‘less’ and ‘more risky’ types of work; work for clients versus work for predominantly expressive purposes (B2B vs B2C); and work within and outside the creative industries (Cunningham 2014a, Goldsmith and Bridgstock in press). Our tracking study of journalism, media and communications alumni (Cunningham & Bridgstock 2012) also showed that career-span risk mitigation occurs, with movements over time into more stable employment (such as into management, administration and teaching roles) and further study, as career needs evolve across the lifespan (Watson 2008). Future longitudinal qualitative tracking research could yield insights into how the creative portfolio career unfolds over time in response to changing risk management requirements and the ongoing development of career and life identities.

Implications for Cultural Policy and Creative Education

Cultural policy in Australia has registered and sought to respond to important aspects of the challenge of creative labour and educational reform. This is best exemplified in Australia's second National Cultural Policy, *Creative Australia*, launched by the Labour Government in 2013. The responsible minister, Simon Crean, took a farsighted and holistic approach, saying what he wanted from the policy process: "“joining the dots”, bringing culture into contact with the “education revolution”, with technology and innovation, and with its role in binding the social fabric of the nation’. These parameters for a cultural policy certainly embedded the wider contributions which creative activity makes to economic modernisation, social inclusion and technological diffusion. A model policy process, conducted over almost two years, it unfortunately became one of the policy victims of a change of government which occurred only months after the launch.

Cultural policy can engage, and is engaging, with the creative economy in many ways (Throsby & Zednick, 2010). This occurs through supporting research into the diversity of creative careers (eg. Throsby & Zednik 2010; Cunningham et al 2010). The Australia Council facilitates the engagement of artists with creative economy firms and cutting-edge technologies (see, for instance, <http://www.australiacouncil.gov.au/research/arc-linkage-projects/>). It can advocate that the contemporary nature, scope and growth potential of ‘creative careers’ should be integrated into school and university curricula, and that education and curriculum to bring art, design, technology and computer science together to better prepare the creative workforce for future careers which thoroughly mix and match these disciplinary knowledges.

We have seen that the transition from education to work and career for creative graduates can be more fraught than for most, if not all, other discipline fields. As Matthews (2011) suggests, the process of moving from creative education to work is more like ‘translation’ rather than transition, with graduates needing to recontextualise and reinterpret knowledge, capabilities and practices acquired during degree courses for an extremely wide variety of employment situations, a process that often occurs alongside significant and fundamental shifts in career identity. We have

also seen how creative graduates may learn to mitigate and manage risk and precarity. But we also need to focus on how universities, through curriculum reform and rigorous, up-to-date, and research-informed information about creative careers, need to assume some degree of responsibility for the risk taken on by their creative graduates.

Both of our graduate tracking studies report that key perceived lacks in curriculum development were creative enterprise and entrepreneurship and career management capability. In the present study, 42% of graduates listed these skills as being integral to creative career success and yet inadequately emphasised in, or completely absent from, their creative degree courses. Bridgstock (2013) suggests that these gaps in curriculum may in part be due to a certain hardy Romanticism in creative arts higher education -- that creative enterprise might in some quarters be seen as tantamount to 'selling out' and lead to compromises in quality and creativity of artistic practice. She also suggests that many existing teachers of the creative arts have themselves received little or no training in creative entrepreneurship, are not particularly skilled or knowledgeable creative entrepreneurs, and may therefore not be in a position to develop or deliver courses addressing these skill sets. Further, education and training can play a role in facilitating the engagement of artists with creative economy firms and cutting-edge technologies, and advocating for education and curriculum to bring art, design, technology and computer science together to better prepare the creative workforce for future careers which thoroughly mix and match these disciplinary knowledges.

There is a certain ethics that should subtend higher education of the creative arts in the light of the realities of creative labour. It is a matter of core pedagogical ethics to refine critical stances in these disciplinary traditions to take account of vocational aspirations, workplace trends and the broader structure of the industries and markets into which students will be moving. Building into creative curricula, for example, 'left' knowledge and skills about rights at work and corporate citizenship or lack of it, and 'right' knowledge of and confidence in global 'creative class' opportunities is a self-evidently necessary balance between critique and vocational realism.

Vocationally-oriented curricula have, of course, attracted criticism for their ‘dumbing down’ and ‘loss of critical mission’ (Turner 2011). Programs should include, but move beyond, skill-based curricula to engage critically with creative workforce issues and develop higher-level management and self-management capabilities, thus helping to sustain many graduates when faced with the many challenges in building creative careers. It is important to stress that, from our experience, it is critical research into, and the embedding of awareness of, precarity that drives and justifies this necessary amalgam of critical and vocational perspectives in pedagogy and curriculum.

At QUT, we have employed a range of approaches to building such pedagogy and curricula. First, we have conducted extensive research investigating creative careers, the Trident, graduate outcomes and trajectories, and creative work throughout the economy. Over several years, we embedded findings from this research and that of others into our degree programs in several ways. We now offer a Bachelor of Entertainment Industries degree, in addition to our Bachelor Fine Arts programs, that emphasises training for creative producers, and integrates business and law curricula with creative disciplinary offerings (Collis *et al.* 2010). We also offer an interdisciplinary undergraduate creative degree, the Bachelor of Creative Industries, that allows students to combine majors and minors from many creative arts, media, and design disciplines, with a strong core curriculum around creative workforce issues that builds practical and theoretical capability progressively. The core program commences from first year with foundational career identity development and creative enterprise, then entrepreneurship, project development and financial management, and moves into a suite of work integrated learning experiences (creative projects, internships, and study tours) in the final year of study (Bridgstock and Carr 2013).

This is not to say that either HEIs or students should assume all of the responsibility for creative graduate employability. Industry must play a role as well. There is no shortage of literature that documents employer skill requirements and dissatisfactions relating to skill levels of new graduates (Graduate Careers Australia, 2013; Business Council of Australia, 2006). One obstacle that has been identified here is the assumptions and practices that employers can bring to recruitment, including wanting

entirely 'oven ready' graduates, and viewing human resourcing as short-term and transactional, rather than as an investment (Tomlinson, 2012).

Recent moves have been made in Australia to follow the UK in exploring HE/industry partnerships to enhance graduate employability, and this is likely to be a fruitful approach. However, partnerships between HE and industry can result in variable outcomes due to somewhat incompatible stakeholder aims (Tomlinson, 2012; Cranmer, 2006). It must also be remembered that however well-intentioned and well designed, curricula for employability may not necessarily equate with creative graduates' actual world of work experiences and outcomes. The vast range of career possibilities pursued by creative graduates means that it is unlikely that graduates can be prepared adequately while at university for all of the employment scenarios they will encounter, even as new graduates. Rather, the educational strategy that seems to be most efficacious in supporting creative graduate employability and career success is the development of adaptive, flexible identities while at university (Bridgstock & Hearn, 2012), as well as teaching students how to continue to reflect upon, shape, adapt and develop their identities throughout the lifespan (Lairio, Puukari, and Kouvo, 2013).

From the empirical findings described here, Australia would benefit by taking a more nuanced approach to both its educational and its cultural policy with respect to the creative workforce. This article has characterised the heterogeneity of the work roles, contributions and experiences of creative workers and graduates. While some creative roles in some industries do contribute significantly to the Australian economy, other roles tend to contribute more to social and cultural well-being. Sometimes the same people will be occupied in both types of roles, and sometimes a single role will add value in multiple ways. Precarity of employment is a reality for a sub-set of creative graduates, and yet there are also many that move into full-time employment. Higher education for the creative disciplines operates in a very wide sphere of activity.

Figure 1. Main types of creative value added by graduates in their non-creative work, % agreement, N=433

Table 1. The creative trident

	Employment in Creative Industries	Employment in other industries	Total
Employment in creative occupations	Specialist creatives	Embedded creatives	Total employment in creative occupations
Employment in other occupations	Support workers		
Total	Total employment in Creative Industries		Total creative workforce

Table 2. Creative Economy Employment Growth Rates by Trident Mark II Categories based on 2006 and 2011 Australian Census data

	Cultural Production Sectors	Creative Services Sectors	Other Sectors
Cultural Production Occupations	2.60%	3.50%	-0.80%
Creative Services Occupations	1.70%	4.80%	2.50%
Support Occupations	-0.20%	4.30%	
	Creative Economy 2.8%		
	rest of economy 2.0%		

Table 3. Capabilities acquired during the creative degree used as part of current work, by category of work

	Creative work (n=414)	Non creative work (N=297)
Creative discipline-specific skills	64.30%	53.87%
Communication and teamwork	21.52%	37.04%
Generic creativity	7.09%	22.90%
Critical thinking	12.71%	21.55%
Self, time and project management	28.36%	15.49%
Discipline specific knowledge	38.63%	14.48%
Digital skills	11.00%	8.42%
Problem solving	3.67%	6.40%
Entrepreneurship, business management	10.76%	5.72%
Job search	6.36%	5.05%
Teaching-related	8.80%	4.71%
Personal qualities	3.42%	3.37%
None	0.49%	3.03%

Note: This article reports on research supported by the Australian Research Council through Centre of Excellence SR0590002.

References

- Australian Government Department of Industry. (2014). *Australian Innovation System Report 2014*. Canberra: Australian Government Department of Industry.
- Australian Learning and Teaching Council. (2010). *Creative and Performing Arts Learning and Teaching Academic Standards Statement*. Strawberry Hills: Australian Learning and Teaching Council.
- Australian Qualifications Framework Council. (2013). *Australian Qualifications Framework*, second edition.
- Bakhshi, H., Freeman, A. & Higgs, P., 2012. *A dynamic mapping of the UK's creative industries*. London: NESTA.
- Ball, L., Pollard, E. & Stanley, N., 2010. *Creative graduates, creative futures*. London: Council for Higher Education in Art and Design.
- Banks, M. & Hesmondhalgh, D., 2009. Looking for work in creative industries policy. *International Journal of Cultural Policy*, 15 (4), 415-430.
- Blackwell, A. & Harvey, L., 1999. *Destinations and reflections: Careers of British art, craft and design graduates*. Birmingham: CRQ.
- Boltanski, L. & Thévenot, L., 2006. *On justification: Economies of worth*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press.
- Bridgstock, R., 2005. Australian artists, starving and well-nourished: What can we learn from the prototypical protean career? *Australian Journal of Career Development*, 14 (3), 40-48.
- Bridgstock, R., 2011. Skills for creative industries graduate success. *Education & Training*, Vol. 53 (1), 9-26.
- Bridgstock, R., 2013. Not a dirty word: Arts entrepreneurship and higher education. *Arts and Humanities in Higher Education*, 12 (2-3), 122-137.
- Bridgstock, R., Bonson, S., & Le Roux, N. (2014). *Creative Pathways: The Final Report of the Australian National Creative Graduate Tracking Project*. Australian Research Centre of Excellence in Creative Industries and Innovation, Brisbane.
- Bridgstock, R. & Cunningham, S., 2014. Graduate careers in journalism, media and communications within and outside the sector: Early career outcomes, trajectories and capabilities. In: Hearn, G., Bridgstock, R., Goldsmith, B. &

- Rodgers, J. eds. *Creative work beyond the creative industries: Innovation, employment and education*. London: Edward Elgar.
- Bridgstock, R. & Carr, L., 2013. Creative entrepreneurship education for graduate employability in the creative arts. In: Holmes, J. ed. *The CALTN Papers: The Refereed Proceedings of the Creative Arts Learning and Teaching Network Symposium 2013*. Hobart: Tasmanian College of the Arts, University of Tasmania and the Creative Arts Learning and Teaching Network, 8-35.
- Buckham, L., 1998. "Perhaps we're thinking there isn't a career out there for us": A study of undergraduates' attitudes to their future prospects. *British Journal of Guidance and Counselling*, 26 (3), 417-33.
- Collis, C., McKee, A. & Hamley, B., 2010. Entertainment industries at university: Designing a curriculum. *Continuum: Journal of Media & Cultural Studies*, 24 (6), 921-932.
- Comunian, R., Faggian, A. & Jewell, S., 2011. Winning and losing in the creative industries: An analysis of creative graduates' career opportunities across creative disciplines. *Cultural Trends*, 20 (3-4), 291-308.
- Comunian, R., Faggian, A. & Li, Q.C., 2010. Unrewarded careers in the creative class: The strange case of bohemian graduates. *Papers in Regional Science*, 89 (2), 389-410.
- Cunningham, S., & Higgs, P. (2010). What's your other job? A census analysis of arts employment in Australia. Melbourne: Australia Council for the Arts.
- Cunningham, S., 2014a. Creative labour and its discontents: A reappraisal. In: Hearn, G., Bridgstock, R., Goldsmith, B. & Rodgers, J. eds. *Creative work beyond the creative industries: Innovation, employment and education*. London: Edward Elgar.
- Cunningham, S., 2014b. *Hidden innovation: Policy, industry and the creative sector*. Lanham, MD: Lexington Books / Rowman & Littlefield.
- Cunningham, S. & Bridgstock, R., 2012. Say goodbye to the fries: Graduate careers in media, cultural and communication studies. *Media International Australia: Incorporating Culture and Policy*, 145, 145-160.
- Department for Culture Media and Sport, 1998. *Creative industries mapping document 1998*. London: DCMS.

- Galloway, S., Lindley, R., Davies, R. & Scheibl, F., 2002. *A balancing act: Artists' labour markets and the tax and benefit systems*. London: Arts Council of England.
- Graduate Careers Australia. (2014). GradStats: Employment and salary outcomes of recent higher education graduates. Retrieved November 10, 2014, from <http://www.graduatecareers.com.au/research/researchreports/>
- Goldsmith, B. & Bridgstock, R., in press. Embedded creative workers and creative work in education. *Journal of Education and Work*.
- Gregg, M., 2011. *Work's intimacy*. Cambridge: Polity.
- Hall, D., 1996. *The career is dead - long live the career: A relational approach to careers*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.
- Haukka, S., 2011. Education-to-work transitions of aspiring creatives. *Cultural Trends*, 20 (1), 41-64.
- Haukka, S., Hearn, G.N., Brow, J. & Cunningham, S.D., 2010. *From education to work in Australia's creative digital industries: Comparing the opinions and practices of employers and aspiring creatives*. Brisbane: ARC Centre of Excellence in Creative Industries and Innovation.
- Hearn, G., Bridgstock, R., Goldsmith, B. & Rodgers, J. eds. 2014. *Creative work beyond the creative industries: Innovation, employment and education*. London: Edward Elgar.
- Hearn, G. & Bridgstock, R.S., 2010. Education for the creative economy: Innovation, transdisciplinarity and networks. In: Peters, M. & Araya, D. eds. *Education in the creative economy*. New York: Peter Lang.
- Hesmondhalgh, D. & Baker, S., 2010. A very complicated version of freedom: Conditions and experiences of creative labour in three cultural industries. *Poetics*, 38 (1), 4-20.
- Howkins, J., 2001. *The creative economy: How people make money from ideas*. London: Penguin.
- Jackson, Denise. (2014). Factors influencing job attainment in recent Bachelor graduates: evidence from Australia. *Higher Education*, 68(1), 1-19.
- Johanson, Katya. (2008). How Australian industry policy shaped cultural policy. *International Journal of Cultural Policy*, 14(2), 139-148.
- Lash, S. & Urry, J., 1994. *Economies of signs and space*. London: Sage.

- Lee, D., 2011. Networks, cultural capital and creative labour in the British independent television industry. *Media, Culture & Society*, 33 (4), 549-565.
- Matthews, N., 2011. Transition or translation?: Thinking through media and cultural studies students' experiences after graduation. *Cultural Studies Review*, 17 (2), 28-48.
- McRobbie, A., 2002. Clubs to companies: Notes on the decline of political culture in speeded up creative worlds. *Cultural Studies*, 16 (4), 516-531.
- Meek, L. (2014). Higher Education Policy in Australia. In F. Kaiser, P. Maassen, L. Meek, F. van Vught, E. de Weert & L. Goedegebuure (Eds.), *Higher education policy: An international comparative perspective* (pp. 13-48). Oxford: Pergamon Press.
- Menger, P.M., 1999. Artistic labour markets and careers. *Annual Review of Sociology*, 25, 541-574.
- Morgan, G., Wood, J. & Nelligan, P., 2013. Beyond the vocational fragments: Creative work, precarious labour and the idea of 'flexploitation'. *The Economic and Labour Relations Review*, 24 (3), 397-415.
- Neff, G., 2012. *Venture labor: Work and the burden of risk in innovative industries*. Massachusetts: MIT Press.
- Nystrom, S., 2009. The dynamics of professional identity formation: Graduates' transitions from higher education to working life. *Vocations and Learning*, 2 (1), 1-18.
- Oakley, K. (2013). Making Workers: Higher Education and the Cultural Industries. In D. Ashton & K. Noonan (Eds.), *Cultural Work and Higher Education*. London: Palgrave Macmillan.
- Oakley, K. (2007). *Educating for the Creative Workforce: Rethinking Arts and Education*. Melbourne: ARC Centre of Excellence in Creative Industries and Innovation and Australia Council for the Arts.
- Oakley, K., Sperry, B. & Pratt, A., 2008. *The art of innovation: How fine arts graduates contribute to innovation*. London: NESTA.
- Pollard, Emma. (2013). Making your way: Empirical evidence of a survey from 3,5000 graduates. In D. Ashton & K. Noonan (Eds.), *Cultural Work and Higher Education* (pp. 45-68). London: Palgrave Macmillan.
- Potts, J. & Cunningham, S., 2008. Four models of the creative industries. *International Journal of Cultural Policy*, 14 (3), 233-247.

- Potts, J. & Shehadeh, T., 2014. Compensating differentials in creative industries and occupations: Some evidence from HILDA. *In*: Hearn, G., Bridgstock, R., Goldsmith, B. & Rodgers, J. eds. *Creative work beyond the creative industries: Innovation, employment and education*. London: Edward Elgar.
- Ross, A., 2009. *Nice work if you can get it: Life and labor in precarious times*. New York: NYU Press.
- Rowley, S. (2012). *Interactive Skills Education Scheme Education Report*. Sydney: Interactive Skills Integration Scheme, University of Technology Sydney.
- Seares, M, & Gardiner-Garden, J. (2011). Cultural policies in Australia *Australian Government, Canberra*: Australia Council for the Arts.
- Stark, D., 2009. *The sense of dissonance: Accounts of worth in economic life*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press.
- Stokes, Anthony, & Wright, Sarah. (2012). The impact of a 'demand-driven' higher education policy in Australia. *Journal of International Education Research (JIER)*, 8(4), 441-452.
- Taylor, S. & Littleton, K., 2008. Art work or money: Conflicts in the construction of a creative identity. *The Sociological Review*, 56 (2), 275-292.
- Throsby, D. & Zednik, A., 2010. *Do you really expect to get paid? An economic study of professional artists in Australia*. Melbourne: Australia Council for the Arts.
- Tomlinson, Michael. (2012). Graduate employability: a review of conceptual and empirical themes. *Higher Education Policy*, 25(4), 407-431.
- Turner, G., 2011. Surrendering the space: Convergence culture, cultural studies and the curriculum. *Cultural Studies*, 25 (4-5), 685-699.
- Watson, T.J., 2008. Managing identity: Identity work, personal predicaments and structural circumstances. *Organization*, 15 (1), 121-143.
- The Work Foundation. (2008). Staying Ahead: The Economic Performance of the UK's Creative Industries. Retrieved from http://www.theworkfoundation.com/Assets/PDFs/Creative_Industries_Foreword_one1.pdf