Making Arts Work

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Abstract

The Bachelor of Arts has traditionally provided a liberal education, emphasising the development of critical and other transportable skills in a range of humanities disciplines. One challenge for humanities educators in the 21st century is to find ways to bridge this tradition with the demands that graduates be prepared for the workplace. The School of Humanities at Griffith University has developed a suite of courses\(^1\) in its BA, called the Social Enterprise signature experience, which incorporates a core stream of subjects into which a work-integrated learning experience is embedded. The rationale for choosing social enterprises for work-integrated learning is the many opportunities they provide to articulate with the wide range of disciplines taught in a BA, and their capacity to resonate with the broad idealism of BA students. This paper offers an overview of the program since its inception in 2008, presents a reflection upon the theoretical and pedagogical issues involved, and examines the impact of this innovation on the students.

Re-positioning the BA as a program of choice is an issue of emerging and ongoing importance across the tertiary sector in Australia. In 2007, the Griffith BA was significantly revised as the first step in addressing recruitment and retention challenges facing the program. The revision, implemented in 2008, incorporated several new features. These included a suite of six courses (a quarter of the degree) dedicated to work-integrated learning. The decision was made during the revision process to build the program’s work-integrated learning around social enterprises. This core part of the BA is called the “Social Enterprise signature experience”. In this paper we begin by setting the context of introducing WIL into a BA and discussing the issues surrounding the implementation of the social enterprise signature experience in Griffith University’s BA. The structure of the social enterprise stream and the teaching/learning approach we have adopted in it is then explained. In the final part of the paper we turn our attention to the responses, particularly from the students who have undertaken the degree in this form.

\(^1\) At Griffith, undergraduate degrees are called programs, and individual subjects or units are called courses. There are typically 24 courses in a three-year bachelor’s degree.
Context: background of Social Enterprise in Bachelor of Arts at Griffith University from 2008

In its Academic Plan 3 (2008-2010), Griffith University outlined a policy in which all degree programs across the university were required to provide students with the opportunity to have completed a work-integrated learning (WIL) experience prior to graduation. This broad directive was based on evidence regarding the changing characteristics and motivations of students entering university in a period of mass education. For Griffith, where approximately 70% of its undergraduate intake is first-in-family at university, the evidence clearly pointed to the importance they placed on vocational outcomes when choosing their degree program. There are six aspects of work integrated learning that are usually cited as being significant: authenticity, pedagogical input, assessment, reflection, insight and administrative support (Abeysekera, I. 2006, Bates 2008; Brown 2007; Orrell, 2004, Patrick et al 2008, Smith and Simbag 2008, 2010). While the university’s policy emphasises “authenticity”, each of these aspects is essential and, in fact, inextricable from each other. The authentic experience without reflection and insight gained by the student is of no particular use, either academically or practically, so these two elements have to be in balance with each other. And the pedagogical input and assessment are not add-ons but must be integrated as providing the opportunities for the reflection and insight on the authentic experience, so there is a requirement that the pedagogical mode and assessment items need to be tailored to provoke and elicit insight and reflection.

More specific evidence regarding the BA reinforced this general perspective. Data from the national Course Experience Questionnaire (which targets graduating students from across disciplines and across universities in Australia) show that students, while enjoying Arts degrees, were not confident about career opportunities. Within Griffith University, Starting@Griffith data (which targets first year students approximately six weeks after commencement) reveal approximately 30% of commencing students are not at all clear about the purpose or direction of a Bachelor of Arts. More specifically, focus group discussions with current BA students and secondary school students and teachers on the value of the BA undertaken by Macleod et. al. in 2008-9, all indicated that the traditional value of the BA and its virtues of flexibility and transportable skills do not resonate in the
current market, even though employers value just these attributes in Arts graduates. All these data confirmed the need in BA students for some connection between their generalist studies and definite career outcomes.

Although the BA already had internships for its journalism and public relations students, there were several challenges in developing a WIL experience for the program as a whole. Firstly, the BA commencing cohort was in the region of 100 Full-Time Equivalent students (now close to 150 FTE), and while attrition rates were high (now lower), there were always going to be significant demands on finding enough placements when the students reached the third year of their degree. Secondly, it would have to do justice to the wide array of disciplines covered (ranging from history, literature and creative writing, film and communication studies, through to sociology) and the kinds of skill-sets traditionally emphasised in BA graduates: the capacity for clear and logical thought, analysis, literate and artistic expression, and sustained enquiry (Jacobs 2009, Brown 2007). Thirdly, it would have to resonate with the kinds of values BA students typically manifest, including careers that “make a difference” and “require creative solutions to problems” (Macleod, et. al. 2009). Finally, it would have to be validated in the eyes of many humanities staff who themselves entered university at a time and from families where the value of tertiary education for its own sake was something of a given, and who believed that incorporating a WIL dimension into a BA would de-value its traditional role as a carrier of humane values and intellectual enquiry. In short, the challenge was how to create an opportunity for students to bridge the horns of the dilemma, to find ways to develop the kinds of teamwork, information literacy and workplace preparation skills that are requirements of WIL (Bates 2008, Brown 2007, Orrell 2004) while at the same time achieve deep and resonant scholarly knowledge and expand their capacities to be creative and make a difference in themselves, their local communities and the world. And further, what kind of teaching approach might be taken to make this achievable.

This was the context within which the decision was made to build the BA WIL experience around social enterprise. Social enterprises can be classified in three categories: cooperatives or mutual owner organisations, subsidiaries of non-profit organisations that are created to raise funds and for-profit businesses with social benefits (Schlee, Curren and
Harich 2009:7). The terminology varies from the emphasis on philanthropy in the USA to social enterprise in the United Kingdom, social venture in Europe and community economic development in Canada (Mirabella et al 2007; Thompson and Doherty 2006). Mirabella’s review (2007) of the field of social enterprise as it is invested in university curricula reveals that in the USA there has been a substantial increase (approximately 50% from 284 to 426) in the number of universities offering programs in the non-profit and philanthropy studies sector in the period from 1996-2006. Of these, 117 offer undergraduate courses of some kind, while the remainder are providing postgraduate courses. What is germane to the Griffith case is that in the report (2007:15S) only 26 out of 105 of the graduate programs are offered in schools of arts and sciences, and usually within a school of public affairs or administration. The data collected in the report also showed that of the 189 universities in the rest of the world offering related programs, none of these is identified as being located within an Arts degree (2007:114S).

Developing a core stream in social enterprise in the BA thus faced an unusual challenge: the term itself was largely unknown in Australia although it had been gaining currency in the UK and Europe over the last decade. Only two universities offer social enterprise studies as a core part of the BA: University of East London, and Griffith University. A third (University of Northampton) is introducing the degree in 2011. In every other instance, this is an area usually taught within Business or Management Faculties, with the emphasis being laid upon corporate social responsibility or not-for-profit organisations. While there was in the USA and Europe a flourishing if relatively new discourse concerning philanthropy and not-for-profit organisations, Griffith in effect had to develop its own version that was appropriate to a generalist BA.

On the face of it, given its location in non-Arts programs elsewhere, it seems that choosing social enterprise as the signature WIL experience within a BA program is an odd choice. However, there were several reasons that lay behind the decision. Firstly, the students themselves identified that they wanted to “make a difference” in their careers; secondly, the term is one which encompasses the breadth of the Third Sector and offers opportunities for careers within a broad range of government, non-government and community organisations, as well as within the corporate sector; thirdly, this range of opportunities
allows easy articulation with the many kinds of disciplines covered in a traditional BA; fourthly, it encourages students to become “enterprising,” active in pursuing their own goals within a framework of social responsibility; and finally, the term is only now coming into currency in Australia so there were no pre-determined loaded meanings to overcome.

The social enterprise signature experience was therefore conceived, not simply as just another work experience opportunity, but as a significant component of the BA that articulated with the other disciplinary components of the degree in exploring the world we live in and what we can do to make a difference. The aim was to provide an overview of issues, theories and practical knowledge that enable students to understand the world of the 21st Century and to be equipped to participate as active citizens. More broadly, as Kelly Smith (2008:714) observes, “acquisition of entrepreneurial skills whilst at university was positively related to the intentions of the participants to become entrepreneurs in the future” and “where students do not become entrepreneurs, it is hoped that they will develop a ‘can do’ confidence, a creative questioning and a willingness to take risks” (2008:716). Peredo and McLean (2006: 61) identify a range of types of social entrepreneurs (for profit and for social outcomes, not-for-profit but for social purposes and corporate social responsibility). “Being engaged in a social enterprise is not necessarily the same as being a social entrepreneur; ... social entrepreneurship should be taken to include undertakings where social goals are added to the firm’s objectives, even where they may not rank first in the firm’s priorities and may be taken on partly for instrumental reasons” (2006:62).

In terms of practical pedagogy, this meant that attention needed to be paid to foundational ideas and the location of the stream within existing discourses and disciplines. These include social justice, human rights, ethical behaviour, understanding social policy development, cultural awareness, world community and environmental issues, and third sector studies. At a fundamental level, the curriculum had to be interdisciplinary. This sits well with Richard Turner’s argument that there is a need for the development of a recognition of what he calls an “ur-discipline” of Philanthropic Studies which incorporates a multi-disciplinary approach and embraces principles which are fundamental to “humanistic enterprise” (2007: 163-1685). In effect, the School of Humanities was attempting to generate within its own
location the conditions observed by Schlee, Curren and Harich (2009:6) that “social entrepreneurship has ‘no clear academic home in most universities’ (citing Bloom 2006:272). Social entrepreneurship programs within universities tend to be quite diverse, often involving faculty from the humanities, social and behavioural sciences, and public policy as well as business faculty”.

Structure of Social Enterprise core stream

The WIL program across Griffith University is concerned with a closer engagement of the university within the broader community through the development of Industry Partnerships. The social enterprise stream serves this purpose by engaging with organisations within the Third Sector: the not-for-profit or community organisations that serve social purposes, and while they may be partly government-funded, usually operate along business lines in order to sustain themselves and their beneficiaries. This is a large and growing component of the workforce, and while the alignment with the Third Sector admirably fits with the University’s mission statement as a social justice institution, it is also a means of entry for graduates into an expanding sector of the economy (cf Knowle 1999). In the case of the social enterprise signature experience, there is a further aim of developing graduates who are capable of becoming enterprising and adventurous, even entrepreneurial, particularly in a social context, in the sense of Smith’s observation noted above regarding the development of “a ‘can do’ confidence, a creative questioning and a willingness to take risks” (2008:716). However, it is central to the approach that the School has taken that students develop core abilities such as critical thinking as well as disciplinary knowledge in addition to preparing for the workplace.

The model adopted by the School of Humanities is that of a BA comprising a core stream of six semester length courses in social enterprise (60 credit points) out of a total of 24 courses. The social enterprise suite of courses is combined with one or more majors offered in the school. The core courses include two broad courses (Academic Writing in first year and Thinking Ethically in second year) which provide foundational skills and understandings. Two further courses (Introduction to Social Enterprise in first year and Culture, Community and Enterprise in second year) provide training in theory and application of fundamental ideas of social justice, human rights and third sector studies. Introduction to Social
Enterprise covers such diverse areas as social justice, human rights, social policy and
governmentality, careers and vocations, business and third sector organizations; Culture,
Community and Enterprise explores the theoretical analysis of both culture and community,
while also introducing students to concepts of organizational realities. In the final year, two
subjects complete the stream (Social Enterprise Placement and Social Enterprise Project).
Here students undertake a placement in the third sector and then put into action the
experience gained through that placement in the creation, management and presentation
of a showcase event. Practice opportunities are offered to develop skills for the workplace,
such as writing grant applications, submissions, ministerial briefing minutes, project outlines
and networking. The placement takes the understanding of the third sector from the
theoretical and into the realm of practicality.

Figure 1 shows the structure of the Bachelor of Arts and the positioning of the Social
Enterprise core stream courses. Students choose their majors and electives, but at least for
the first year, all students must complete the Social Enterprise courses.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Social Enterprise</th>
<th>Major</th>
<th>Electives</th>
<th>Total semester courses</th>
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<td><strong>First year</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>Semester 1</td>
<td>Academic Writing</td>
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<td>Semester 2</td>
<td>Introduction to Social Enterprise</td>
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<td>4</td>
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<td><strong>Second year</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>Semester 1</td>
<td>Thinking Ethically</td>
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<td>4</td>
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<tr>
<td>Semester 2</td>
<td>Culture, Community and Enterprise</td>
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<td><strong>Third year</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>Semester 1</td>
<td>Social Enterprise Placement</td>
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<td>Semester 2</td>
<td>Social Enterprise Project</td>
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|                  |                   |       |           | 24 (= 240 credit points) |

The task of preparation for the WIL element is managed through the whole core stream.
This preparation begins in Introduction to Social Enterprise, where the arena of the third
sector is introduced as both an area of study and a potential placement destination. The
process of preparation forms the largest part of the second year course Culture Community
and Enterprise. The third year is directly concerned with WIL (Social Enterprise Placement)
and the capstone subject (*Social Enterprise Project*), reflects on the core stream and the entire degree, enabling students to demonstrate the learning outcomes of the entire process.

The Social Enterprise signature experience is designed to create and develop within the students a deep sense of social conscience, and, hopefully a sense of capability (Nussbaum 2000). As the course material has to cover such diverse areas as social justice, human rights, social policy and governmentality, careers and vocations, business and third sector organisations, it is necessarily transdisciplinary (Brewer 1999; Hall & Weaver 2001; Dall’Alba 2009; Gunn 2003; Gaff & Wilson 1971; Petrie 1992; Silver, Howard & Clouse 1999; Woods 2007). In the context of the BA, students undertaking the WIL placement will have undertaken their major studies in one of the many disciplines offered in the program, so the placement course has to provide a means of articulating the content knowledge of their specific discipline with the broader transdisciplinary studies of the Social Enterprise core stream. One of the aims of teaching students from across this wide range of interests is to find ways in which to incorporate or at least invoke their existing interests, so appeals to these disciplines needed to be embedded in the teaching of social enterprise.

One of the key issues for the core stream is responding to the interdisciplinary context in which it sits. These courses provide several interesting aspects of the learning environment: a) the entire cohort mixes in these classes where they may not meet otherwise, leading to some sense of cohesion by third year; b) the opportunity is offered for those studying quite different disciplines to learn about other areas and to discuss the social enterprise topics from the basis of their major studies; and c) the challenge is laid down for teachers in social enterprise to be themselves interdisciplinary in their approaches.

Within the literature on interdisciplinarity (for example: Brewer 1999; Dall’Alba 2009; Gunn 2003; Gaff & Wilson 1971; Hall & Weaver 2001; Petrie 1992; Silver, Howard & Clouse 1999; Woods 2007) the emphasis seems to be that this approach is in itself an innovation, moving away from the narrow disciplinary boundaries and approaches. Dall’Alba (2009) offers a particularly useful insight when she talks about professional education as a process of becoming in which integration of knowledge and skill is embodied rather than remaining
purely intellectual. The very complexity of the practice and theory sets of knowledge which are offered by the social enterprise stream (including placement) demands a stance which recognizes that becoming professionals is the aim of the program.

In this context, there are several implicit learning outcomes (Biggs 2003) that are embedded in the social enterprise signature experience: the production of professionals with specific and demonstrated skills, the development of socially aware and active global citizens, and the foundation of an interest in lifelong learning. In practice, these aims and objectives are circumscribed by Griffith University’s policy of a “signature experience”. The policy has clear indications of specific outcomes: that disciplines and students are engaged, that a capstone course brings together the learning provided across the degree, that sufficient research is undertaken, and that the community becomes connected, particularly through the interactions offered in student placements (GU Doc: 04/0893 December 2004).

In the spirit of developing these learning outcomes, the curriculum for the stream has been framed around the use of core questions on which each course is built: Academic Writing asks “How can I best communicate?”, Introduction to Social Enterprise asks “Why should I care?” and “What could I do?”; Thinking Ethically asks “How should I act?”; Culture Community and Enterprise asks “What is community?”, and “How can I participate in communities, local and global?”. The final year courses ask “How can I be an effective professional in the community?”

It is also intended that students will have a sound foundation on which to base creative and innovative solutions and practices, often in areas in which resources may be limited. The ability to work autonomously and in collaboration is a further extension of both learning objectives and teaching activities undertaken within the courses in the core stream. However the difference is that the outcome will be seen in the workplace as well as in the classroom. The educational key here is the notion of transferable skills (Fallows and Steven 2000, & Soleau 1997) which are engaged throughout the courses via problem-based or experiential learning practices (Bowden and Marton 1998, Savin-Baden 2000, Savery and Duffy 2001).
The idea of self-directed learning is a reflection of the real world practice which graduates face. Often one of the most difficult skills to develop is that of working autonomously or determining what task or knowledge is needed at a particular time. The “engagement” identified by Ramsden (2003) as essential is the foundation of autonomous learning (cf Betts & Kercher 1999) in which students take charge of their own learning. Exploring the idea of self-directed learning with undergraduates brings forward capacities usually found in postgraduate study or in the work place. One of the great strengths of building the BA WIL around social enterprise is that within the third sector it is often the case that resources are limited, so ingenuity and self-reliance have to be necessarily enhanced.

The approach is one which favours deep over surface learning, process and transferable skills over narrow content and problem-based learning in the form of experiential class work over reiteration of texts. The form and structure of the teaching lends itself to drawing attention to concepts and practices which can be integrated at a deep level (Biggs, 1996, 2003; Fry, Ketteridge & Marshall 2003; Jackson, 1995; Ramsden 2003). While there is a need for the provision of specific materials and case studies to make the issues relevant and comprehensible, the greater demand is for the development of a critical ability and a deep appreciation of a worldview that privileges those that have none. In practice, achieving the aim of problem-based learning has been tackled through the creation of workbooks which outline class activities that hone critical abilities, team exploration and articulation.

**Student responses**

Since 2008 over 1800 students have undertaken at least the first year subjects, and 2010 has seen the first cohort to graduate, having completed the entire core stream. We are continuing to evaluate the signature experience, both through student feedback and responses from industry partners.² The University’s formal “Student Evaluation of Courses” and “Student Evaluation of Teaching” instruments have shown distinct improvements in student responses as the signature experience has been developed and refined, but this

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² Although most of our evaluations are student-based, we have also begun collecting qualitative data from industry partners. On the whole, this has been very positive, and in several cases students have been invited back to work in the enterprise after they have graduated. Faculty support has been not been formally evaluated, but the experiential evidence is that even those academics who did not welcome the creation of a compulsory stream in the BA have come to be more supportive as they have seen the results in student confidence. We are currently planning a project that will investigate graduate outcomes in terms of career destinations and the impact of social enterprise on career values.
section is based on qualitative data collected from a representative sample of Student Reflection Journals. The themes we examine here include the initial resistance, the appreciation of the real life locations, the emotional impacts of the topics, the differences between student experiences, valuing the degree and the possibilities of careers.

Student evaluation of the individual courses has been on-going since the first cohort started in 2008. One of our key concerns is monitoring the teaching/learning outcomes in order to provide an enriched learning experience, and this has meant that each year the courses have been updated with a view to improving the quality of the students’ experience. A particularly valuable source of evidence has been the Reflective Practice Journals which have been part of the *Introduction to Social Enterprise* assessment profile. While it is possible that some responses are designed to give the lecturers what they want to hear, there are distinct patterns that emerge from analysing the dozens of journals kept from the three years. A full analysis of this evidence is currently part of another project being undertaken by the authors, but a number of key points can be made here.

Firstly, resistance and ambivalence were common responses during the first weeks of study. Students unacquainted with the term ‘social enterprise’ felt sceptical about the content of the course and struggled to grasp its relevance to the BA. This was due in large part to students’ unfamiliarity with the term, but not knowing what to expect was a common source of anxiety for students, especially school-leavers, who had only a limited sense of what to expect from them at the tertiary level. However, in most cases the initial apprehension and uncertainty, and even lack of interest toward the course, expressed by the students during the first weeks, gradually began to recede, so that by week twelve, even the most reluctant students could find some value in the course. In many cases the process of reappraisal took considerably less time than the full twelve weeks to occur. By week two and three, many students reported being happily surprised by the content of the course, and expressed an eager anticipation of the next week’s topic. The level of enjoyment and engagement reported by students seems to grow in direct proportion to their level of understanding. Being able to comprehend or grasp a topic was pivotal to how responsive a student was to that particular week’s readings. ‘Relevance’ to the students’ own lives, and in particular their career aspirations, was another key aspect that led to reportedly higher levels of enjoyment.
Secondly, the ‘real life’ components of the course are highly valued by students. These range from case studies and tutorial activities that bring abstract concepts to life, readings which focus upon personal accounts, through to guest lecturers from the third sector. Hearing ‘first hand’ from those who know and who had obtained a considerable amount of experience in their field seems to hold particular sway for students, even above and beyond the authority of their regular tutor/lecturer. In the minds of the students, there is a real currency in being taught by leaders in their field because their wisdom has been derived from ‘real world’ experience. Further, the assessment profile, which includes tasks where students interact with members of the public and spend time with individuals who have experience running social enterprises, assists in breaking down the barriers between ‘university’ and the ‘real world’. The in situ learning that takes place on occasions such as this, helps reinforce students’ prior learning, adding a deeper level of awareness and comprehension to what they already understand about social enterprises and their social justice outcomes.

Thirdly, there are numerous examples throughout the reflective practice journals of students commenting upon the emotional impact that a text (lecture, reading, film, podcast) had on them. The frequency with which emotions are mentioned indicates that emotion plays a significant role in learning in this course. The predominant emotions that students report being aroused by the readings and the lectures are feelings of pity, anger, outrage, sadness and compassion. There are many cases of emotive stories or personal accounts providing a ‘hook’ or way in to a topic for students. While some students admitted to feelings of sadness and helplessness when presented with concrete examples of social injustice, the vast majority of students reported feeling more motivated to learn; to empower themselves with understanding, and to equip themselves with the skills necessary to ‘make a difference’. In this way, personal identification and emotional engagement have been precursors to intellectual engagement, and in some cases, became first steps toward taking action for positive social change.

Fourthly, the impact of the course was understandably different for each individual. Some students attained only a shallow interest in the course, remaining all the while unresponsive to the main themes. For these students, the outcomes were not as far ranging as for other, more engaged, students. A common response among the less engaged students was that they had had their eyes ‘opened’ by the course. What it was exactly that they felt more aware of, however, was often unclear. It would seem that individuals for whom a ‘career’ or ‘good job’ was the main focus of coming to university, experienced less enjoyment of the course and remained less engaged than those who had a broad interest in learning, knowing, understanding. The latter group of students registered a whole range of benefits/impacts from the course: feelings of becoming more deeply
imbedded in their society – how it works, its history its future – were especially rewarding outcomes for more eager students. Being part of a community of minds was clearly a gratifying outcome, as was cultivating a greater understanding of the interconnectedness of life on earth. For students who reported benefits such as these, the experience of the course was been rich and profound, and in some cases, life-changing. Being exposed to a range of new ideas and issues was an experience that was valued by students, providing evidence that the course was providing them with what they had come to university to acquire: learning, knowledge and wisdom. In effect, Introduction to Social Enterprise, for all its emphasis as an introductory course in a WIL stream, has been able to function as a typical ‘Arts’ course.

Indeed, a fifth outcome from the analysis of the journals has been that students feel they have a better understanding of the purpose of the BA and feel reassured by the career pathways available to them once they acquire their degree (that is, if they are intending to continue with the program). Week 3 of the entries in the reflective practice journals are revealing of the negative myths with which Australian students are loaded when they embark upon the first year of a BA. What is alarming about these entries is the evidence they provide of the almost universally low opinion students have of the program. Whether by hearsay, from parents, peers or from other sources in their community, many students embark upon the BA believing it is “the degree you get when you’re not getting a degree”. Another common misconception among students is that the BA is something that you use “to either upgrade into another course or go into teaching”. By addressing these fears early on in the course and providing students with a large amount of evidence to the contrary, *Introduction to Social Enterprise* and its clear relation to a WIL dimension in the BA has been instrumental in allowing students to make up their own minds as to the benefits (or otherwise) of undertaking the program. Indeed, the speed of the turnaround in students’ thinking once they embarked on the course was extraordinary. The career-related podcasts that students accessed in week 3 were perhaps the single most important factor in changing their minds. Through getting a sense of the diverse and challenging range of careers open to graduates of the BA, students’ respect for the program (and the individuals who complete this program) was greatly enhanced.

Finally, one of the strongest themes to emerge from the journals is the role that *Introduction to Social Enterprise* had played in helping students realise they could pursue a career at the same time as they could honour their desire to work for greater social justice. Finding a vocation that would balance their creative, intellectual and social needs with their desire to do good for the community was a crucial aspect for many students in setting a career goal. For these students, work was not just something that you do to earn your living, but an expression of who you are and how you conduct
yourself in the community. One of the comments often made was that the jobs undertaken form part of the ethical obligations of a person, and that work, ethics and a person’s identity were inextricably connected.

Of the first cohort, about 20% undertook their professional placements with a community based education provider, with the result that most have indicated an intention to undertake postgraduate qualifications in teaching. Of the balance, many of those whose placements were in organisations that reflected their majors (such as historians who were located in museums or galleries) have reported considerable satisfaction with their personal experience of the WIL process (Issaden and Portman, eds, Yearbook 2010).

These are just some of the main themes to emerge from the analysis of the first year reflection journals but they are replicated in the reflection journals attached to the third year course Social Enterprise Placement. What is clear is that, while the social enterprise stream of courses has had a limited purchase on some students in the BA – particularly those who have clear ideas about where they are going when they enter University or those who have come back to study from careers – it has had a profound and positive impact in a number of ways on the bulk of students undertaking it. A follow-up research project on the career destinations of BA graduates who undertook the social enterprise WIL signature experience compared to those who didn’t, will be able to tell us more about the wider and more long-lasting impact of the program and its perceived value to students.

Conclusion

There have been – and will continue to be – multiple levels of complexity involved in “making arts work”. One is the attempt to reconcile the traditional stance of scholarship in the humanities with the contemporary demands of preparation for the workplace. Our approach to bridge the two has been to locate social enterprise placements in such a way that students’ disciplinary studies are able to be utilised by the particular social enterprise in which they are placed, whether these studies are in history, sociology, film, journalism or the other majors offered in the School of Humanities. This expectation has largely been achieved with the help of a dedicated Placement Officer; indeed, in a number of cases, placements have been found in social enterprises for several students from different disciplinary backgrounds, and those students have combined their different knowledges and skills for the benefit of the social enterprise.
Secondly, by embedding the WIL component within a core stream, the equivalent of a major within the BA, we have aimed to position the experience of the professional placement in such a way that it becomes an authentic element of the degree. That is, the placement and project courses are to be experienced not as add-ons, but as the culminating part of an integrated series of steps from introduction through preparation to placement and post-placement reflection. Although structurally this aim is clear in the course sequence, informal student responses suggest that we need to be clearer about the “integrated” nature of the whole suite of courses. We are currently gathering data on whether our expectations have been met on this aspect of the program, and if not, what might need to be done to achieve it.

While there was some initial confusion about introducing social enterprise into the humanities – as distinct from its more usual home with business or management faculties – as the terminology has become more widespread and the program has been more accepted, the term has come to be recognised as one which enables humanities students to recognise in themselves the potential for becoming enterprising. Indeed, there have been several requests from other Australian universities for advice on how our program has worked. Our challenge now is to disseminate what has been achieved to other parts of the tertiary sector.

At another level, it has been exciting to create a problem and inquiry based learning approach which engages and involves students from diverse disciplines in becoming self-directed learners, and in doing so, creates a foundation for life-long learning. The final, and probably the most significant, level of complexity is that of meeting students’ expectations. From their own reports, the core stream has offered opportunities to be creative, to develop social skills and to expose them to ways in which they can make a difference to themselves, their communities and the wider world. In these various ways, Griffith University’s social enterprise signature experience has already “made arts work”; as the core stream is further refined in the coming years, we expect to encounter other valuable ways in which the BA will not only work better, but in which the BA will even better articulate with the world of work while retaining its significance as a generalist degree.


