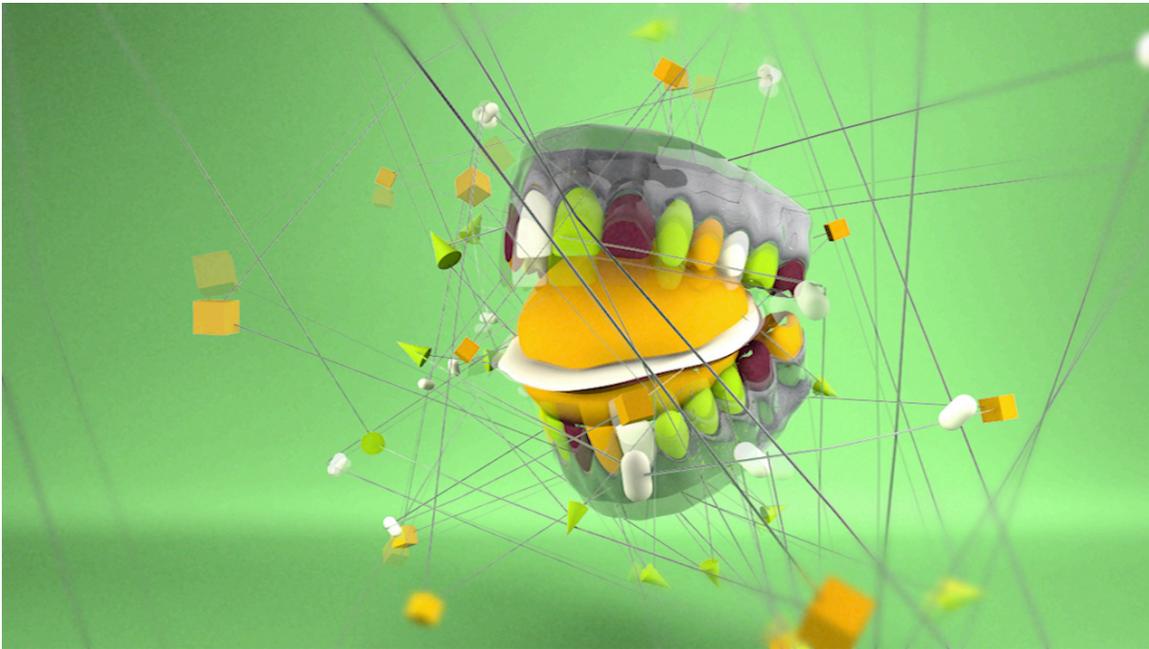


MAGI 2018

Guide to students



Dr Chris Barker, Program Manager

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WELCOME

MAGI AND YOU

Welcome to the Masters of Animation, Games and Interactive Media. Congratulations on your selection. You now belong to an alumni group going back 30 years, representing the best of Australian Animation Education.

The Masters of Animation, Games and Interactive Media is uses studio based, student centered training in the production of animation, games and interactive media. We are part research lab, part production house, and part training facility. It is outward-focused, interfacing with the real world. We welcome partnerships, internships, and integrative experiences.

THIS DOCUMENT

This document is designed to give you important information for your study, and for your wider life within RMIT. It is designed to help you orient yourself to our expectations, and to show you how things are done here.

Mostly, this document can be use to refer to when you are feeling lost, stuck, confused and need some guidance.



Harry Blight, 2017, Studio Still



Yixi Lee, 2017, Headdress,

POSTGRADUATE EDUCATION

Postgraduate education is slightly different from undergraduate education at Australian Universities. Postgraduate education expects you to be more focused, more independent, more driven, and, importantly, more innovate as a practitioner. If you have been accepted into MAGI, you will already have had an interview that has given you a sense of the course, the structure, and the expectations, but we will review that here.

FOUR PILLARS

Throughout your time at MAGI, you will be engaged in the production of 4 production objects that you will build over time which will track and represent your interaction with the course, your own work, and contribution to the field. These are:

- **Documentation** - Play/Discover Practice/Private
- **Minor Project** - Test/Iterate
- **Major Project** - Propose/Conclude
- **Exegesis** - Discuss/Contextualize Reflection/Public

In order to ensure that you will be working toward an evolution of your practice, we have tried to administer your production in a legible and accessible way.

We see your progress through the degree as cyclic, but evolutionary – using making and doing to develop professionalism, and contribute to your site, field and communities of practice.

The studio and subjects are structured using the model of Practice/Reflection to relate and integrate both the academic and the material aspects of your professional work.

Cycles of Practice and Reflection provide a way to engage with iterative “loops” of creative endeavour, directed to questions, problems, enthusiasms, or designs that you will direct. Reflection can happen inside and across all aspects of production.

In the course of your degree you will be moving through many tasks that embody different aspects of the practice research cycle (often simultaneously). Because it is quite difficult to “know and reflect” on what you are doing when you work, (and often feels ‘false’ or intrusive) we use a practice / reflection administrative model to classify the different kinds of work that you will produce. We have tried to make this concrete using 5 aspects or classifications that describe your work.

ARCHIVING YOUR WORK

Because every part of your work is valuable to you (even if you think it isn't!), we have instituted a system of categorization that will allow you to see that nothing in your work is wasted.

Archive everything. Everything is data. Website.

These classifications allow you to “collect the data objects” with which you can show a continuing engagement with the content of the program. They can be thought of as objects, aspects or fragments that inform the creation of the larger objects (MINOR, MAJOR, EXEGESIS, DOCUMENTATION) that you will be asked to complete at MAGI. These are:

ASPECT

POINTER QUESTIONS

BACKGROUND/CHARACTER

– **who is the maker?**

PLAY/DISCOVERY

– **what is there to make?**

CONTEXT/SITE/FIELD/CULTURE

– **who else is making?**

PRODUCTION/TÉCHNE

– **methods of making and knowing**

DISSEMINATION/DISOURSE

– **who should know?**

Each of these sites corresponds to activities that are common in the production and dissemination of professional work submitted for your degree. Each of these sites also corresponds to specific stations of a research cycle. Hopefully, everything you produce, from the mindless sketch to the final mark-up of your exegesis can be inserted into one of these containers.

Think of the containers as forming a template that can be used to shape, map and discuss your progress through your degree.

In order to collect this data, we will be using a variety of (primarily digital) tools. What these are will change over time, according to changes in the medium (delivery, platforms, etc.).

What won't change is the *frequency* of the collection of the data. You are asked to upload aspects of your work **every** day, without fail. This will generate a practice habit, which you can carry on into your working life. In class, we will give you time to collect, collate and submit your work. We also will be using various 'reminder' mechanisms, as well as strictly scheduled timetable, messaging, etc.

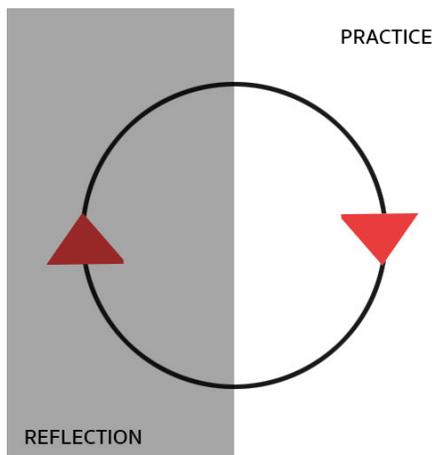
Most of this collection will be administered using the MAGI website (url). It is this work that you will bring to mentor meetings, reflect on when you are asked to participate in discussions, and use as an ongoing framing narrative that can track your progression. It is a vital part of the functioning of the studio.

REFLECTIVE PRACTICE

Wheels within wheels: The reflective cycle

Just as we carry ourselves through each day cycling through in breath and outbreath, day and night, years beginning and ending, and birth and death, we conduct ourselves professionally with ever more cycles.

In your MAGI career, you will continually be asked to work within the practice-reflection cycle. In its simplest form it is:



There are about as many examples of the reflective cycle, or the action research cycle, or the iterative cycle, etc. as there are researchers who have employed it. That's okay! Everyone has their own nostrils.

Essentially, what this represents is a method with which we can examine and evolve our practice; we interrogate our experience using these very broad, very simple categories.

This practice/reflection cycle is something that is very familiar, and something that we have all been engaged with, always. As children, the first time we attempted to "see" how we could place our blocks in the "right" spots, we were doing it. From the first time that we understood that crying and milk were related, we were doing it. In our reflections and our practice, we were *designing* - making and testing models and simulations; our hominid brain was throwing itself into the world, instinctively discovering patterns, collating and categorizing information from the senses, then cycling over these reflections, doing, evaluating, testing, with varying degrees of conscious or deliberate effort from each of us. This unending cycle is something we are born doing.

Put simply, we are reflecting *or* we are practicing. Either we are "dreaming / thinking / mulling / considering / debating / enquiring / (broadly - 'reflecting')" or we are "making / constructing / tending / removing (broadly - 'practicing')". I like to think of the situation as something like the eternal play of materials (practice) with logos (reflection).

Of course we aren't robots, and in our lives, seeing this cycle isn't so simple - nor so binary.

Sometimes when we reflect we are reflecting *using* our practice (Enactive Cognition - Valera & Thompson, Material Studies, Tools analysis) sometimes we are reflecting *about* practice (Inspiration and

Analysis, Drive, Desire, Ideology) sometimes we are reflecting *through* practice (experiments, algorithms, tools, objects of persuasion, entertainment, spectacle).

And, unfortunately, we should recognize that sometimes there is just dull reflectionpracticepracticereflectionpractice, which feels like one protracted, undifferentiated thing, where clusters of activities drift and bleed into the other, often for long periods of time.

Sharpening our engagement with reflection and practice is, in a sense, why we are here, and what the masters is for – to give a conceptual and practical scaffolding so that we can get more deeply involved in our practice, and our practice community.

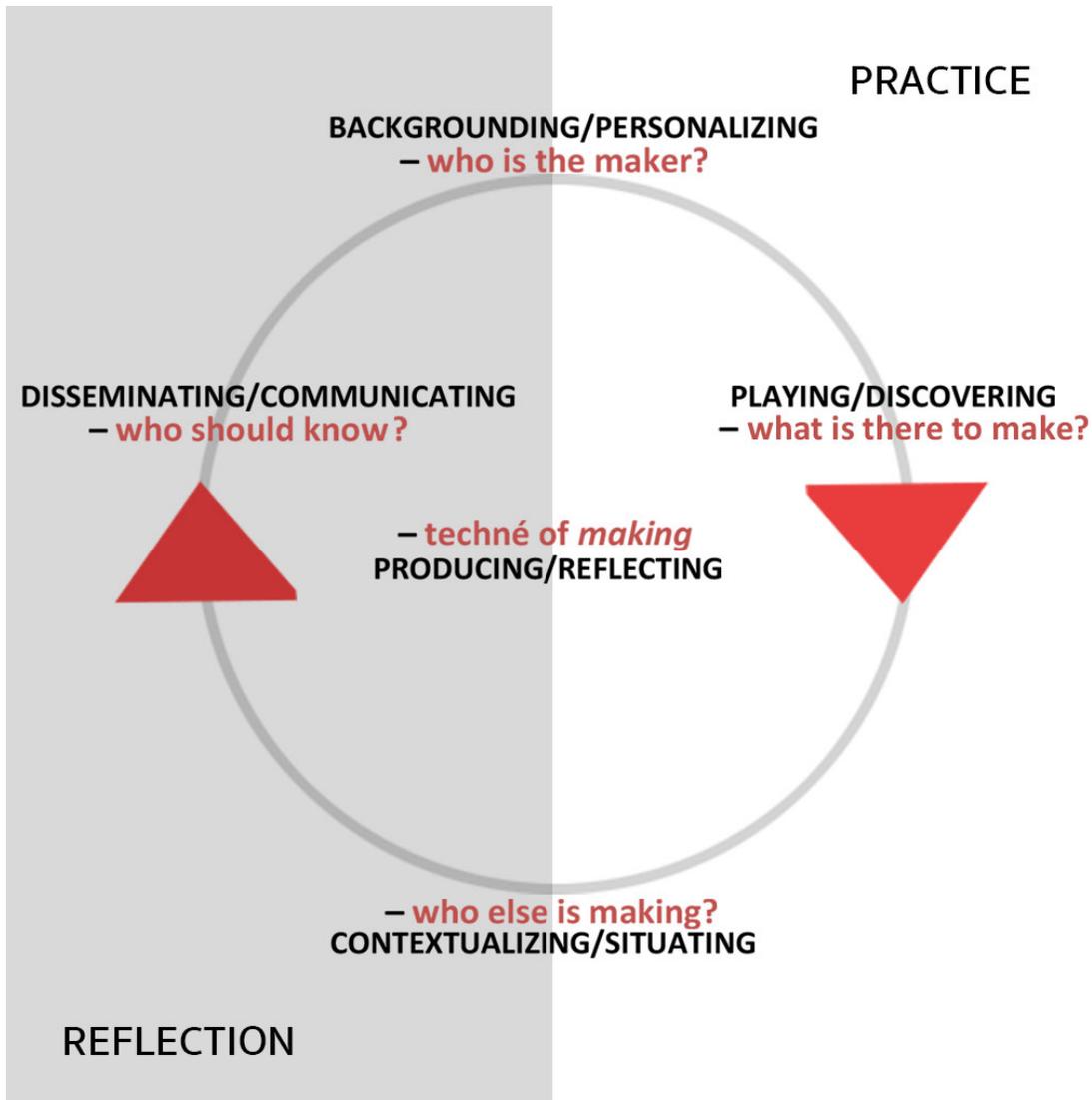
Practice / Reflection– Its Not Just About The Work!

The useful thing about the reflective cycle is that it gives us a **first instrument**, a broad tool that we can use to and enquire into and “make sense” of our experience as makers. We can use it as a tool to help sharpen and focus our work. We can use it to bring to a more intimate attention to our work, and to the work of others. If we use this cycle, it can be used as a means through which we might enter our practice more authentically.

Committing to an ongoing reflection in time creates the potential for an evolution, where the subject of that evolution is both you (as character/professional) and the world (as your work, your materials or events).

Reflective practice is used to evolve both the professional *and* the profession. If you are serious about your work, you should consider your own evolution as a practitioner as well as the evolution of the profession.

THE ARRANGEMENT OF THE CYCLE:



There are 2 elements of the cycle that sit entirely inside their own zone – *Dissemination/Communication* in Reflection and *Play/Discovery* in Practice.

Dissemination and Communication is *commonly* discursive and Play Discovery is *commonly* material. Dissemination and Communicative activities arise as *Logos (words, pictures, simulation, order)*, and Play Discovery – arises as the material (*specificities, combinations, particularities*). The opposition of these two with/in the person provide the context and energy for the cycle and evolution.

The person sits at the top of the reflective cycle because it is ultimately the person who engages with the process of practice/reflection. The person initiates reflection and practice and also *arises* in the activity of reflection and practice. In a sense the person should, in fact, sit *outside* the diagram, as they aren't introduced, but always already present, and so it is inevitable that for good or ill, they will *forever* engage with practice and reflection.

Pure reflection evokes consistent simulations of the world, and these simulations are directed toward predictions. Predictability prescribes a patterning of the world into order and structure, process and subject. The reflection step most commonly addresses human subjects, but need not, and exists as a *casting* – to “spell it out” as models, simulations, and solutions. That's why dissemination and communication exist in the reflective axis because it is through “discursive objects” that we propose, evaluate and enact new ways of doing and being

In contrast to the fixed space of reflection, the boundary less world of practice is a world where the names, labels, or uses of things have not yet been settled.

The nadir of Practice is pure play – a joyful noise - a meaningless dance of singularities– at it's most absurd – it connects donkeys and static, connects anger and coon cheese. Pure play is like a dance where everything is available beyond its name or use. Practice can be thought of as just the material that you are and the materials you arrange or move in the world. Even the materials of words, states and communities are temporarily relieved of their discursive duty in Play– The United States of Arcadia.

When practice and reflection are employed together, they temper each other and they evolve together – on beginning a new project our

playful, self-interested indulgences are seasoned overtime to value and include the perspective of others.

All of the other sites of the diagram sit on the spine, in-between practice and reflection, because they all participate in both practice and reflection.

Context, Site and Field sit on the spine as they track the current state of play in the ordering of a practice. When we examine context, there are categories of things, and there are objects arranged into existing orders. There are intentions and there are meanings. There are communities, fairs, exhibitions, groups, instances, disciplines and institutions, publishers, laws. All of these things exist in a kind of half world between their material and their reflection. They are all frozen, static, and do not endure. It is the work of a discipline, or a profession, or a practitioner to renew, revive and reinterpret the cannon continually.

Finally, techné is material under direction. Techne is action specific to an intention. It can be understood as “tool and toolmaker”, or “pattern and patternmaker” where the user of the tool and the tool itself reflect one another. Like Context, Site and Field, techne exists in a half world of material and reflection.

Like all methods, practice/reflection can be used to discover more in our work. The *repeatability* of reflection is the important aspect – is what makes practice and reflection a research method – a site to uncover *newness*.

THE CONTAINERS IN DETAIL

Background/Character – BACKGROUND

Background and Character ask, “What sort of thing is a maker?” A maker sits in an odd relation to practice and reflection because the maker *is* an object of practice and reflection even as they *initiate* practice and reflection.

Each person who comes to study at MAGI is unique. A unique person gets up out of bed and throws on their clothes and stumbles to the station in the morning. A unique person engages with the course and its content. Each one of us has a working history, with certain skill sets, and ideas for the future. This unique person sits behind all of the work presented, and it is this person who speaks to the world via the work being produced. In a lot of ways, this is your professional identity that will inflect and inform the work that you will be making. Identity and character is the hidden product of a Master’s course – you

enter the course with hopes that you become changed, and in order to do so, you must bring your whole self to your work, to put yourself “on the line”. If you have deep convictions, bring those, if you have a peerless curiosity, bring that, if you have an unresolved abiding question, bring that. Most great work emerges from the heart of someone’s life, and in order to make good use of your Masters studies, it is important to take seriously the task of becoming and being in a professional context.

You are the result of your efforts – sometimes, pure practice, sometimes, pure reflection, often - a mix of both. You bring your enquiry to the table. You anticipate growth.

Playing/Uncovering – TITLE

Play is the ground of production, and although on the one hand it might be highly inefficient, laborious, fruitless, and directionless, it is the willingness to play that secures your mastery. Play is a lot like humour, and like humour, play questions tradition, and commonly held beliefs, and any assumptions you might have. Play turns things upside down, and draws you into the tradition as not a consumer or critic but as a participant. In play, you inhabit a role (Vygotsky), you “try on hats”(DeBono), you “mess about”(Eisner), and you feel your way in the dark.

Play is in all of the tutorials you will do online, all of the tests and messing about you will do with technology, all of the extensions of yourself beyond your current skill set, and your current environment. In play, you are most likely to experience deep engagement, timelessness, flow, and in play, you are most likely to unearth or bring your key research themes to light. If you don’t have any ideas, that’s okay – play.

Play is the most immediate, fresh, unknowing, free – very corporeal, terrestrial. Everything is available, transferrable, equivalent, useful.

Context/Site/Field - CULTURE

In order to make an impact, you must first know the terrain, or the site of practice. You don't battle a master swordsman with an egg flip. In order to attain mastery, you must become deeply knowledgeable about your field of practice. You must get to know exemplary works, you must get to know histories, thresholds, divisions, open questions, current fascinations, trends, emergent themes, sites of discussion, etc. Your work is never produced in a vacuum and a lot of the time you spend in a master's course should be devoted to you examining and discussing your work in the light of the work of others. This might be through examining conferences, visiting exhibitions, lurking on forums, curating events, reviewing literature, speaking with experts, interning, critiquing, and speaking professionally. When you situate your work in the field, you become acquainted with the minuate of differences. This is not something to be taken lightly, and the majority of your work and discussion should eventually be directed toward these existing fields of practice.

Working with an awareness of context allows you to become a contributor to your field, and engages with existing discourses of value and power.

Production- METHOD RESULTS

The production arm of making has a lot in common with other, related design disciplines. In a lot of ways, the ways you go about making, and the processes and tools you use to make are "standardized". That is, there are already existent pathways that you should follow. These are often discussed as "best practice", and "industry standards". In order to be professional about your work you will need to engage with these standards, and you will need to receive advice in terms of scheduling, production technique, and methods. Be aware that for a lot of your time at Magi will be here, just doing "the grind" and the

hard yards. This doesn't mean that your researcher brain will be checked at the door – you inevitably will be engaging in constant reflection on your actions with your mentor and reflecting on your activities *as* you are making them. (Schon, Mottram).

When you apply the tools and techniques and direction of those who have come before, boredom, cynicism, resentment can seep in. Why are you using this tool, now? Why are you making this design, now? What's the point of this process? Reflection sharpens production. Practice/Reflection breeds research.

Disseminating/Discourse – DISCUSSION CONCLUSION

When you have completed a working cycle, you are asked to present your work back to the field, or your peers. This might be a major moment, like a public presentation, an end of year exhibition, or it might be a planning meeting, or a meeting with a director or mentor. Whatever the case your professional life needs to include this step, and without it, you don't really get to participate in discourses of power and influence. For some, this is the most difficult part of the whole enterprise, as it often trades on systems of value that may not accord with their own, but, as the old adage from storytelling goes "showing is better than telling", or "you got to be in it to win it!"

Finally, you offer your own voice to the profession – as the profession - it is a measure of your character whether you appear as a pebble or a mountain. In play, both are equivalent...but in dissemination, it certainly feels as if the stakes are high.

MAGI EVENTS

AND

STRUCTURES

MAGI Lectures

Each Tuesday at 12.30 there will be a lecture in room 5.3.1 that is pitched to students across the whole degree. This is a place where you can catch up on new developments in the field, listen for changes in the degree, weekly events, new internship opportunities, new grants, scholarships and travel opportunities. The lecture series is curated to give you access to interesting presenters and ideas across the range of work in Games, Animation and Interactive Media.

Hunters and Gatherers:

Each Thursday at 1pm, you are invited to take part in a shared, informal lunch and guest presentation. This lunch is part of a 30-year tradition of the studio, and your attendance and contribution forms a part of your community contribution. Attendance is highly recommended. Here you can meet, mingle, ask question of and

schmooze a decorated guest from Melbourne's Game, Animation and Interactive Media Industry.

MAGI Workshop Series:

Each Tuesday afternoon, there will be student-generated workshops presented on a different aspect of the production of Animation, Games or Interactive Media. These workshops are hands-on and intended to examine or extend a particular skill set. We welcome students to propose, and present workshops. Presenting a workshop gives you great your community of practice mark, and looks great on your CV.

Class Time:

You will be attending classes, which are available in your [timetable](#). Your classes are where you work independently or with staff, invited guests and clients. In class you will do the majority of your consulting and collaboration. Your classes are defined by your enrolment. Most of the face-to-face teaching in your classrooms begins in the morning, and you will be working independently in the afternoon.

Semester Presentations/Examination:

Each Semester, you will be given a chance to present one or more of these objects to your peers and examiners, a varying levels of completion. The presentations will be by invitation, and is a community event.

You will have 10mins in which to describe, present, contextualize and reflect on your work, and to address future directions. This is a formalized environment, and you are encouraged to attend a "presentation" workshop to understand the format, and the requirements.

End of year Show:

Every year, we intend to present a curated showcase of the work that you have presented in the course. This will usually consist of finished work, which is “ready” to go out into the world.

Students are expected to help the staff in the design, curation, organization and presentation of the show, counted toward your community mark.

Travel Opportunities:

Each year, we will attempt to provide you with the option and opportunity to travel to participate in a professional setting, or to engage with a specific practice. This might form part of your community mark, or you might be engaging with the creation of your own work.

Website: magistudio.net

MAGI has a website that we use to advertise and to archive the course. From time to time your work will be featured publicly. You will be encouraged to use and to contribute to the website throughout the course. The website is structured to help you archive your work, and will be used as a major tool in the development of your personal research repository.

Personal Journals

Each MAGI student is expected to create, maintain, track and archive their development work in the course via a digital repository, made accessible through a URL. Although we do not dictate the technology, or services you use we strongly suggest that the journal has both online and offline versions, to protect you from data loss.

Celebrations & Alumni Gatherings

Periodically, you will be invited to attend, and sometimes curate events. It is here where we celebrate one another’s work, we encounter plans and we reconnect with the community. These events

can be as big as curated, public exhibitions, or as small as reading or writing or makers groups.

We see your time at MAGI as a precious commodity. This is a rare time where you are able to throw yourselves into making something significant. We want you to be able to drive it, and all the staff are here to help you being relevant, well-practiced, and masterful.

MAGI CALENDAR

The MAGI calendar allows you to see, at a glance, what's going on when. The calendar is used to show you when events are occurring, and to help you to plan your days. There is a analogue and digital version, and we will attempt to keep it as up to date as possible. . The calendar is a rich repository of all the events in our field occurring over the next year. Items in the calendar form a key part of the way a student works in the studio, as well as providing the authentic learning environment.

EXTERNAL HELP

From time to time, you will need to liaise with the wider University to access services, to get advice, to get forms, to administer your degree. Here is a list of some of the services that you might require.

[Security Cards](#)

[IT related services](#)

[Study Spaces](#)

[AV Loans and Hire](#)

[Study Support](#)

[English Language support](#)

[Study Abroad](#)

[Global Opportunities](#)

[Work Integrated Learning](#)

[Scholarships & Funding](#)

TRAVEL AND STUDY TOURS

We value global opportunities at MAGI, and will always support your desire to go elsewhere to travel. For example, for the last few years, MAGI students have been recipients of travel grants to attend the International Games Concept challenge in Singapore (2016) Nagoya(2017) and Finland (2018). We will always try to help you attend events and opportunities overseas, in the form of yearly grant applications, and trying to access other sources of funding. On top of that, other MAGI students have been very successful in finding support from RMIT independently, seeking out other Universities, work experience and events to augment and to spice up their degree.

TIME AT MAGI

Like the rest of RMIT, MAGI officially runs on a 2 semester year model. Each Semester contains about 13 weeks worth of contact hours. However, you are also expected to contribute to community events such as industry or study tours, exhibition organization, planning and execution. Please also remember that you have 24 hour access to the studio, even in the break times, and that many Academics are present in the breaks. Please feel free to use the studio to “get ahead” on your work, to complete, design or to present new work. We would be most pleased if the 13-week structure disappeared from your mind, and you became a frequent visitor to the studio. Of course, there is also a wide variety of allied industry events that you can participate in that can all go toward your community contribution mark.