



# MAS 202

## Screenwriting: An Introduction

MQC3 Day 2014

*Dept of Media, Music & Cultural Studies*

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#### **Disclaimer**

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## General Information

Unit convenor and teaching staff Lecturer Dr Greg Levine <a href="mailto:greg.levine@mqc.edu.au">greg.levine@mqc.edu.au</a>
Credit points 3
Prerequisites 12cp
Corequisites
Co-badged status
Unit description This unit introduces students to writing for screen media; from film and television to portable devices. It explores techniques for developing ideas and writing scripts for fiction, non-fiction, animation and hybrid forms. This unit combines creative writing projects with critical analysis. It is relevant to those interested in screen media, writing and creative process.

## Important Academic Dates

Information about important academic dates including deadlines for withdrawing from units are available at <https://www.mq.edu.au/study/calendar-of-dates>

## Learning Outcomes

On successful completion of this unit, you will be able to:

- Understand a range of screenwriting approaches and methodologies
- Generate story ideas and material suited to screen media
- Draw upon a record of independent research for a creative project
- Evaluate screenwriting and creative work in progress
- Demonstrate the ability to reflect in action
- Contribute to collaborative discussions

## Assessment Tasks

Name	Weighting	Due
<u>Script Field-Notes</u>	25%	Week 5
<u>Storyboard OR Treatment</u>	25%	Week 8
<u>First Draft Script for Screen</u>	40%	Week 12
<u>Participation</u>	10%	ongoing

### Script Field-Notes

Due: **Week 5**

Weighting: **25%**

This task involves leaving your computer behind and taking a field trip. The aim is to observe/record details from the world. This material will feed into the short screenplay you will be working on this semester.

A. Write a one-paragraph synopsis of your script idea. Your script idea should be for a movie suitable for broadcast via the web, mobile devices or screening. It should be able to be shot in Australia.

B. Assemble Field-Notes for your script idea.

Your Field-notes should address the following:

1. **Character.** Record a brief interview with a person who has some similarities with your script's central character. What did you learn that was surprising about this person? What were your observations of the subject's dress, body language and speech rhythms? How could you draw on this in developing your central character?
2. **Place.** Visit a place that could function as a key location in your script. Take some photographs. Observe the time of day. Note the light, colours, forms, location sounds. Consider how you might use these observations in your script.
3. **Key Imagery.** Assemble 8 key images (photographs, magazine images, postcards, found pictures, frames from other movies etc.) that could inspire scenes, imagery or dramatic action.
4. **Key text.** A quote that is relevant to your idea. (Please provide details of the writer and where it was published.)

Assemble your notes into a document/folder for assessment.

Prepare a 5 minute version to present to your tutorial group. Your tutor will allocate you a time to

present.

On successful completion you will be able to:

- Generate story ideas and material suited to screen media
- Draw upon a record of independent research for a creative project
- Evaluate screenwriting and creative work in progress

## Storyboard OR Treatment

Due: **Week 8**

Weighting: **25%**

You should prepare the storyboard or treatment using Celtx or Microsoft Word.

Storyboard Parameters:

A storyboard should present a short sequence featuring the visual images, sound effects and voiceover or screen text from your 7-10 minute film project.

1. The sequence can use text on screen, voiceover, music and sound. But not dialogue.
2. You must include a minimum of 10 sequential shots. Use more if necessary.
3. The storyboard should be prepared as using Celtx software but please submit a printed hard copy.
4. The storyboard should be accompanied by a 2 paragraph outline of your 7-10 minute script idea.

Treatment Parameters

A treatment is a chronological (in screen time) unfolding of the story, generally without dialogue, paying particular regard to style, dynamics, mood, genre, colour, character, sound and action. *It is what is happening on the screen in words.*

If preparing a treatment only, the submitted treatment should include:

1. 5-20 line biographies of the central characters
2. 3-5 page complete draft story treatment
3. Detailed scene breakdowns of the first five scenes of the short film.

On successful completion you will be able to:

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- Generate story ideas and material suited to screen media

- Draw upon a record of independent research for a creative project
- Evaluate screenwriting and creative work in progress
- Demonstrate the ability to reflect in action

## First Draft Script for Screen

Due: **Week 12**

Weighting: **40%**

Write a First Draft screenplay of 7-10 minutes (roughly 7-10 pages).

You should aim to draw on the research you have undertaken - and the feedback you have received - throughout the semester.

### Script Parameters

1. Use dialogue sparingly.
2. Please refer to the Australian film industry's standard drama format for guidance.

Alternative presentations such as photo/text collage, complete animation storyboard, graphic novel style, or transmedia, game or multi-platform format scripts – are encouraged. Please discuss this option with your tutor or the lecturer well in advance of the due date.

Please note that information on formatting is available in the course reader and at the unit's iLearn page. It will be discussed in tutorials ahead of the assignment.

On successful completion you will be able to:

- Understand a range of screenwriting approaches and methodologies
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- Evaluate screenwriting and creative work in progress
- Demonstrate the ability to reflect in action

## Participation

Due: **ongoing**

Weighting: **10%**

Students are required to attend and actively participate in all tutorials. Participation is more than attendance. It requires being punctual and prepared. Tutorials will be devoted to exercises aimed at generating ideas and stories and discussion of creative work-in-progress.

On successful completion you will be able to:

- Understand a range of screenwriting approaches and methodologies

- Generate story ideas and material suited to screen media
- Draw upon a record of independent research for a creative project
- Evaluate screenwriting and creative work in progress
- Demonstrate the ability to reflect in action
- Contribute to collaborative discussions

## Delivery and Resources

### Unit Requirements and Expectations

Students attend a one-hour lecture weekly. Students attend and participate in a two-hour weekly tutorial workshop from Week 2. Students are expected to read and view materials posted by the Lecturer at the iLearn page for this course. To pass this course, students are expected to attend lectures, participate in tutorial exercises and discussion, submit all assignments and receive a Pass grade overall.

Without adequate documentation (eg. doctor's certificate), missing more than three tutorials will adversely affect your participation grade.

There is no examination for this unit.

### E Readings

MAS 202 e-readings for this course will be available on the ilearn site prior to the weeks teaching. Additional hard copy recommended and required readings will be placed on 7 day loan in Reserve. The e readings contain information necessary to completing assignments for this course. Additional readings will be distributed in tutorials throughout the semester.

**Required Readings:** (posted on ilearn)

Speigel Ed, *Innocence of the eye: a film makers Guide* 2003 p 114-125

Dancyer, Ken, *Global scriptwriting* 2001 p 3-13.

Wells Paul, 2007. Initial Ideas and starting points, in *Scriptwriting Basics*, Animatn Lausanne: Ava pp 40-57.

Jonathon Dawson, *Screenwriting: A manual* p 184-189

Wim Wenders. "A sense of Place" (2006)

Inga Karetnova, "The Beginning of Screenwriting" in *How Scripts are Made* 1990, p 1-5

Henrik Galeen, *Nosferatu* Script extract: [www.geocities.com/emruf1/nosferatur.html](http://www.geocities.com/emruf1/nosferatur.html)

Chris Marker- script for *La Jetee* [www.godamongdirectors.com/scripts/lajetee.shtml](http://www.godamongdirectors.com/scripts/lajetee.shtml)

M Ali Issari and Doris A Paul, *What is Cinema Verite?* Scarecrow Spress, 1979.

Arndt Michael (2003) *Little Miss Sunshine* (excerpt) pp1-5

Schrader Paul, (1990) [1976] *Taxi Driver* (excerpt) London: Faber and Faber pp 1-10

Brackett, C and Wilder, B, (1999) [1949] *Sunset Boulevard*, (excerpt), Berkely, Uni of California

Press, pp 5-24.

Syd Field: *What is a Screenplay?* Dell Publishing, NY 1976 pp

Linda Seger. *Making a Good Script Great*, Dodd, Mead and Co, N.Y 1987 pp

Elliot Grove "Screen Writing in Raindance Writers Lab: write and sell the hot screenplay" p 63-75

Eileen Elsey and Andrew Kelly, *A guide to short film-making in the digital age*. 2002.

Cate Shortland Script for "*Flowergirl*"

and "*Wilfred*" and

Elliot, A, "*Harvie Krumpet*", in Emma Crimmings and Rhys Graham Ed. "*Short site: Recent Australian Short film*" 2004.

Faithful D and Hannant B, *Adaptations, a guide to adapting literature to film*, Currency 2007.

Millard K, "Everything Old is New Again", *AWG Storyline* Issue 14, Autumn 2006.

Marjane Satrapi. *Persepolis*, Johnathon Cape, London, 2006

Schlink Bernard, *The Reader*, Pheonix, London, 2008. pp 76-79

Hare, David, *The Reader*. The Weinstein Company,

Birmingham, John, *New players enter the art world*, Sydney Morning Herald April 2010.

Laybourne, Kit, *The Animation Book*, Three Rivers Press 1998.

Patmore, Chris, *The Complete Animation Course*, Thames and Hudson, London, 2003

Duncan S. 2008. *Genre Screenwriting* Continuum: New York, London.

Mernit, B, *Writing The Romantic Comedy*, Harper Resource 2000.

Haddrick, Greg. Top Shelf 1. *Reading and Writing the Best in Aust TV Drama*, ,Currency/AFTRS 2001.

AFTRS: Standard script layouts

Australian Film Commission "Suggested Script Layout"

### **Recommended/ Suggested readings (Publications) :**

Aronsen, L. 2010. *The 21st-Century Screenplay*, Allen and Unwin: Sydney

Dancyer, K. 2001 *Global scriptwriting*

Dancyer, K. 2006. *Alternative Scriptwriting*

Duncan S. 2008. *Genre Screenwriting* Continuum: New York, London.

Field, S. 1994. *Screenplay: The Foundations of Screenwriting*. Dell Publishing: NY

Faithful D and Hannant B, *Adaptations, a guide to adapting literature to film*, Currency 2007.

Laybourne, Kit, *The Animation Book*, Three Rivers Press 1998.

Patmore, Chris, *The Complete Animation Course*, Thames and Hudson, London, 2003

McKee, Robert. 1998. *Story: Substance, Structure, Style and the Principles of Screenwriting*. Methuen: London.

### **Technologies/resources required.**

The students will be required to use their own computers for development of treatments, storyboards and scripts. Students are recommended to become familiar with Celtx (free script software) Twine (interactive writing software). They may also use Microsoft Word or Final Draft (professional script writing software) for scriptwriting process. The 'Field notes' assesment will require a written or recorded interview as well as some visual design with students own software.

## **Unit Schedule**

### **Week 1: Introduction to MAS 202. Starting the creative process.**

**Required Readings:** Speigel Ed, *Innocence of the eye: a film makers Guide* 2003 p 114-125

Dancyer, Ken, *Global scriptwriting* 2001 p 3-13.

Wells Paul, 2007. Initial Ideas and starting points, in *Scriptwriting Basics*, Animatn Lausanne: Ava pp 40-57.

Jonathon Dawson, *Screenwriting: A manual* p 184-189

### **Week 2: Developing your ideas from Place:Wim Wenders and Ivan Sen**

**Screening:** *Wings of Desire, Paris Texas, Mystery Road.*

**Reading:** Wim Wenders. "A sense of Place" (2006)

**Workshop Skills:** Journey exercise

### **Week 3: The Cinematic Image: German Expressionist Cinema, French and Italian New Wave.**

**Screening:** *Battleship Potempkin and Nosferatu, La Jetee and La Dolce Vita.*

**Workshop skills:** descriptive writing (the snapshot exercise)

**Required and recommended readings:** Inga Karetnova, "The Beginning of Screenwriting" in *How Scripts are Made* 1990, p 1-5

Henrik Galeen, *Nosferatu* Script extract: [www.geocities.com/emruf1/nosferatur.html](http://www.geocities.com/emruf1/nosferatur.html)

Chris Marker- script for *La Jetee* [www.godamongdirectors.com/scripts/lajetee.shtml](http://www.godamongdirectors.com/scripts/lajetee.shtml)



M Ali Issari and Doris A Paul, *What is Cinema Verite?* Scarecrow Spress, 1979.

#### **Week 4: Classical Hollywood story structure.**

**Screening:** *Little Miss Sunshine*, *Sunset Boulevard*, *Taxi Driver*,

**Readings:** Arndt Michael (2003) *Little Miss Sunshine* (excerpt) pp1-5

Schrader Paul, (1990) [1976] *Taxi Driver* (excerpt) London: Faber and Faber pp 1-10

Brackett, C and Wilder, B, (1999) [1949] *Sunset Boulevard*, (excerpt), Berkely, Uni of California Press, pp 5-24.

Syd Field: *What is a Screenplay?* Dell Publishing, NY 1976

Linda Seger. *Making a Good Script Great*, Dodd, Mead and Co, N.Y 1987

Elliot Grove "Screen Writing in Raindance Writers Lab: write and sell the hot screenplay" p 63-75

Workshop: storybeats

#### **Week 5: Shorts under the microscope** (guest lecture: Alex M)

**Readings:** Eileen Elsey and Andrew Kelly, *A guide to short film-making in the digital age*. 2002.

Cate Shortland Script for "*Flowergirl*"

and "*Wilfred*" and

Elliot, A, "*Harvie Krumpet*", in Emma Crimmings and Rhys Graham Ed. "*Short site: Recent Australian Short film*" 2004.

**Screenings:** TBA

**Workshop skills:** Story from Poem.

**Week 6: Adaptations. Narratives and Graphic Novels:** Bernard Schlink Novel to David Hare Script. *Watchmen* comics to screen.

**Screenings:** *The Reader*, *Persepolis*, *Watchmen*.

**Readings:** Faithful D and Hannant B, *Adaptations, a guide to adapting literature to film*, Currency 2007.

Millard K, "Everything Old is New Again", *AWG Storyline* Issue 14, Autumn 2006.

Marjane Satrapi. *Persepolis*, Johnathon Cape, London, 2006

Schlink Bernard, *The Reader*, Pheonix, London, 2008.

Hare, David, *The Reader*. The Weinstein Company,

**Week 7 and 8: Games and Portable devices. Animation, Transmedia and Multi-platform storytelling**

**Screenings:** Multiplatform productions TBA.

**Readings:** Birmingham, John, *New players enter the art world*, Sydney Morning Herald April 2010.

Laybourne, Kit, *The Animation Book*, Three Rivers Press 1998.

Patmore, Chris, *The Complete Animation Course*, Thames and Hudson, London, 2003

**Workshop:** writing with TWINE software.

**Week 9: Working With Genre 1: Thriller and Horror.**

**Screening:** *Michael Clayton, 28 Days Later.*

**Readings:** Duncan S. 2008. *Genre Screenwriting Continuum*: New York, London.

**Week 10: Working with Genre 2: Comedy and Rom Com**

**Readings:** Mernit, B, *Writing The Romantic Comedy*, Harper Resource 2000.

recommended: The Comic Writers Toolbox

**Screening:** *Notting Hill.*

**Workshop:** Seven Plot Points for Rom Com

**Week 11: Writing for TV (Adult and Kids)** Guest Lecture Andy Muir.

**Readings:** Haddrick, Greg. Top Shelf 1. *Reading and Writing the Best in Aust TV Drama*, Currency/AFTRS 2001.

**Week 12: Where to from here? Industry questions and Formats and Formatting.**

**Readings:** AFTRS: Standard script layouts

Australian Film Commission "Suggested Script Layout"

Laybourne, Kit, *The Animation Book*, Three Rivers Press 1998.

Patmore, Chris, *The Complete Animation Course*, Thames and Hudson, London, 2003

**Week 13: Individual script consultation** replaces lecture and tutorials this week

Recommended Texts throughout the course include:

Aronsen, L. 2010. *The 21st-Century Screenplay*, Allen and Unwin: Sydney

Aronsen L. 2000. *Scriptwriting Updated*, Allen and Unwin: AFTRS.

Duncan S. 2008. *Genre Screenwriting Continuum*: New York, London. The Comic Writers Toolbox

Laybourne, Kit, *The Animation Book*, Three Rivers Press 1998.

Patmore, Chris, *The Complete Animation Course*, Thames and Hudson, London, 2003

Mernit, B, *Writing The Romantic Comedy*, Harper Resource 2000.

Eileen Elsey and Andrew Kelly, *A guide to short film-making in the digital age*. 2002.

Syd Field: *What is a Screenplay?* Dell Publishing, NY 1976

Linda Seger. *Making a Good Script Great*, Dodd, Mead and Co, N.Y 1987

McKee, Robert. 1998. *Story: Substance, Structure, Style and the Principles of Screenwriting*. Methuen: London.

## Policies and Procedures

Macquarie University policies and procedures are accessible from [Policy Central](#). Students should be aware of the following policies in particular with regard to Learning and Teaching:

Academic Honesty Policy [http://mq.edu.au/policy/docs/academic\\_honesty/policy.html](http://mq.edu.au/policy/docs/academic_honesty/policy.html)

Assessment Policy <http://mq.edu.au/policy/docs/assessment/policy.html>

Grading Policy <http://mq.edu.au/policy/docs/grading/policy.html>

Grade Appeal Policy <http://mq.edu.au/policy/docs/gradeappeal/policy.html>

Grievance Management Policy [http://mq.edu.au/policy/docs/grievance\\_management/policy.html](http://mq.edu.au/policy/docs/grievance_management/policy.html)

Disruption to Studies Policy [http://www.mq.edu.au/policy/docs/disruption\\_studies/policy.html](http://www.mq.edu.au/policy/docs/disruption_studies/policy.html) *The Disruption to Studies Policy is effective from March 3 2014 and replaces the Special Consideration Policy.*

In addition, a number of other policies can be found in the [Learning and Teaching Category](#) of Policy Central.

## Student Code of Conduct

Macquarie University students have a responsibility to be familiar with the Student Code of Conduct: [https://students.mq.edu.au/support/student\\_conduct/](https://students.mq.edu.au/support/student_conduct/)

## Student Support

Macquarie University provides a range of support services for students. For details, visit <http://students.mq.edu.au/support/>

### Learning Skills

Learning Skills ([mq.edu.au/learningskills](http://mq.edu.au/learningskills)) provides academic writing resources and study strategies to improve your marks and take control of your study.

- [Workshops](#)
- [StudyWise](#)
- [Academic Integrity Module for Students](#)
- [Ask a Learning Adviser](#)

## Student Services and Support

Students with a disability are encouraged to contact the [Disability Service](#) who can provide appropriate help with any issues that arise during their studies.

## Student Enquiries

For all student enquiries, visit Student Connect at [ask.mq.edu.au](http://ask.mq.edu.au)

## IT Help

For help with University computer systems and technology, visit <http://informatics.mq.edu.au/help/>.

When using the University's IT, you must adhere to the [Acceptable Use Policy](#). The policy applies to all who connect to the MQ network including students.

## Graduate Capabilities

### Capable of Professional and Personal Judgement and Initiative

We want our graduates to have emotional intelligence and sound interpersonal skills and to demonstrate discernment and common sense in their professional and personal judgement. They will exercise initiative as needed. They will be capable of risk assessment, and be able to handle ambiguity and complexity, enabling them to be adaptable in diverse and changing environments.

This graduate capability is supported by:

### Learning outcomes

- Understand a range of screenwriting approaches and methodologies
- Generate story ideas and material suited to screen media
- Draw upon a record of independent research for a creative project

- Evaluate screenwriting and creative work in progress
- Demonstrate the ability to reflect in action
- Contribute to collaborative discussions

## **Assessment tasks**

- Script Field-Notes
- Storyboard OR Treatment
- First Draft Script for Screen
- Participation

## **Commitment to Continuous Learning**

Our graduates will have enquiring minds and a literate curiosity which will lead them to pursue knowledge for its own sake. They will continue to pursue learning in their careers and as they participate in the world. They will be capable of reflecting on their experiences and relationships with others and the environment, learning from them, and growing - personally, professionally and socially.

This graduate capability is supported by:

## **Learning outcomes**

- Understand a range of screenwriting approaches and methodologies
- Generate story ideas and material suited to screen media
- Draw upon a record of independent research for a creative project

## **Assessment tasks**

- Script Field-Notes
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- Participation

## **Discipline Specific Knowledge and Skills**

Our graduates will take with them the intellectual development, depth and breadth of knowledge, scholarly understanding, and specific subject content in their chosen fields to make them competent and confident in their subject or profession. They will be able to demonstrate, where relevant, professional technical competence and meet professional standards. They will be able to articulate the structure of knowledge of their discipline, be able to adapt discipline-specific knowledge to novel situations, and be able to contribute from their discipline to inter-disciplinary solutions to problems.

This graduate capability is supported by:

## Learning outcomes

- Understand a range of screenwriting approaches and methodologies
- Generate story ideas and material suited to screen media
- Draw upon a record of independent research for a creative project
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## Assessment tasks

- Script Field-Notes
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## Critical, Analytical and Integrative Thinking

We want our graduates to be capable of reasoning, questioning and analysing, and to integrate and synthesise learning and knowledge from a range of sources and environments; to be able to critique constraints, assumptions and limitations; to be able to think independently and systemically in relation to scholarly activity, in the workplace, and in the world. We want them to have a level of scientific and information technology literacy.

This graduate capability is supported by:

## Learning outcomes

- Understand a range of screenwriting approaches and methodologies
- Generate story ideas and material suited to screen media
- Draw upon a record of independent research for a creative project
- Evaluate screenwriting and creative work in progress
- Demonstrate the ability to reflect in action
- Contribute to collaborative discussions

## Assessment tasks

- Script Field-Notes
- Storyboard OR Treatment
- First Draft Script for Screen
- Participation

## Problem Solving and Research Capability

Our graduates should be capable of researching; of analysing, and interpreting and assessing data and information in various forms; of drawing connections across fields of knowledge; and

they should be able to relate their knowledge to complex situations at work or in the world, in order to diagnose and solve problems. We want them to have the confidence to take the initiative in doing so, within an awareness of their own limitations.

This graduate capability is supported by:

## **Learning outcomes**

- Understand a range of screenwriting approaches and methodologies
- Generate story ideas and material suited to screen media
- Draw upon a record of independent research for a creative project
- Demonstrate the ability to reflect in action

## **Assessment tasks**

- Script Field-Notes
- Storyboard OR Treatment
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- Participation

## **Creative and Innovative**

Our graduates will also be capable of creative thinking and of creating knowledge. They will be imaginative and open to experience and capable of innovation at work and in the community. We want them to be engaged in applying their critical, creative thinking.

This graduate capability is supported by:

## **Learning outcomes**

- Understand a range of screenwriting approaches and methodologies
- Generate story ideas and material suited to screen media
- Draw upon a record of independent research for a creative project
- Evaluate screenwriting and creative work in progress
- Demonstrate the ability to reflect in action
- Contribute to collaborative discussions

## **Assessment tasks**

- Script Field-Notes
- Storyboard OR Treatment
- First Draft Script for Screen
- Participation

## **Effective Communication**

We want to develop in our students the ability to communicate and convey their views in forms

effective with different audiences. We want our graduates to take with them the capability to read, listen, question, gather and evaluate information resources in a variety of formats, assess, write clearly, speak effectively, and to use visual communication and communication technologies as appropriate.

This graduate capability is supported by:

## **Learning outcomes**

- Understand a range of screenwriting approaches and methodologies
- Generate story ideas and material suited to screen media
- Evaluate screenwriting and creative work in progress
- Demonstrate the ability to reflect in action
- Contribute to collaborative discussions

## **Assessment tasks**

- Script Field-Notes
- Storyboard OR Treatment
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- Participation

## **Engaged and Ethical Local and Global citizens**

As local citizens our graduates will be aware of indigenous perspectives and of the nation's historical context. They will be engaged with the challenges of contemporary society and with knowledge and ideas. We want our graduates to have respect for diversity, to be open-minded, sensitive to others and inclusive, and to be open to other cultures and perspectives: they should have a level of cultural literacy. Our graduates should be aware of disadvantage and social justice, and be willing to participate to help create a wiser and better society.

This graduate capability is supported by:

## **Assessment tasks**

- Script Field-Notes
- Storyboard OR Treatment
- First Draft Script for Screen
- Participation

## **Socially and Environmentally Active and Responsible**

We want our graduates to be aware of and have respect for self and others; to be able to work with others as a leader and a team player; to have a sense of connectedness with others and country; and to have a sense of mutual obligation. Our graduates should be informed and active participants in moving society towards sustainability.

This graduate capability is supported by:



## Assessment task

- Participation