

# CLIPP Chronicle: Case Studies

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## A collaborative approach to program redesign

The journey of implementing an active learning framework to improve student engagement in learning in the Bachelor of Community and Human Services program (School of Arts)

By Tulsa Andrews and Kellie Macneil

### The project

In 2018, the Bachelor of Community and Human Services (BCHS) program underwent an extensive review as part of re-accreditation with the Australian Community Workers Association (ACWA), and to improve student engagement in learning. Led by Dr Tejaswini Patil and Ms Kellie Macneil, a truly contemporary approach to program design has been achieved through the combined expertise of discipline staff, industry, and the University's central learning and teaching unit, CLIPP. With the first semester of the new program recently completed, this case study reflects on the journey, shares the experience and engagement of both teachers and students, and considers what lies ahead.

### Key collaborators & contributors

#### Key Collaborators:

Dr Tejaswini Patil – Lecturer & Program Coordinator (Project lead)  
Ms Kellie Macneil – Learning Designer (CLIPP | SoA & SoE)  
Ms Michelle Hunt – Lecturer  
Ms Kimberlea Cooper – Lecturer  
Dr Clement Chihota – Lecturer  
Mr Trent Kooyman – Lecturer  
Dr Rumyana Kudeva – Lecturer  
Dr Catherine Koerner – Lecturer  
Dr Joanie Smith – Lecturer  
Professor John McDonald – Professor, Sociology

#### Key Contributors:

Dr Carolyn Johnstone – Associate Dean, Teaching Quality (SoA)  
Mr Eammon Jones – Senior Digital Designer (CLIPP)  
Ms Emma Gould – Learning Designer (CLIPP | SoA & SoE)  
Mr Heath Diwell – Learning Technology Support (CLIPP)  
Ms Tulsa Andrews – Lecturer, Learning and Teaching (CLIPP)  
A/Prof Rob Townsend – Program Coordinator, Master of Social Work (Qualifying)  
Mr Andrew McCausland - Senior Manager, Education and Early Intervention Programs (Berry Street)  
Ms Jacqui Keevins – Project Manager in Forensic Mental Health (Ballarat Community Health)  
Mr Barry Petrovski – Team Leader (Centre for Multicultural Youth)  
Ms Jo Fogarty – Team Leader Education & Early Intervention (Berry St Child and Family Services)  
Ms Angela Elson – Director (Stand Up Collaboration)  
Ms Balwinder Chohan – Team Leader (Kinship Care Berry Street)

### The process

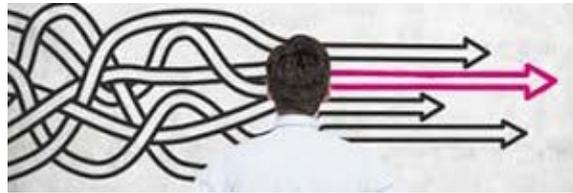
The redesign process focused on three main areas:

#### Focus Area 1: Undertake a full program review and curriculum mapping

Dr Patil worked with the teaching team to review all courses in the BCHS program. With the assistance of Ms Macneil, they benchmarked learning outcomes and content to comply with accreditation expectations. Identifying gaps, strengths, challenges and barriers, the teaching team proposed measures to modernise the program, improve compliance with the accrediting body ACWA, and better equip graduates for industry.

## Focus Area 2: Explore innovative approaches to learning and teaching

Modernising the program opened the door to contemporary approaches to learning and teaching. The decision to implement an '[active learning framework](#)', based on a [constructivist and social constructionist](#) teaching pedagogy aimed to better prepare graduates for the realities of working in the community and human services sector by making student learning more experiential and case-based. Learning activities are built around case studies, role-playing and audio-visual resources that involved practitioner interviews to allow students to engage more deeply in learning, not just at a cognitive level, but also the affective learning domain.



## Focus Area 3: Development of purpose-built, sustainable learning resources

Collaboration between program staff, CLIPP and experts from industry modelled the active learning approach to create resources for use across the program. Videos illustrate the 'unpacking' of case scenarios and highlight industry practitioners' experience within the community and human services sector through personal interviews. This format offers students access to real-life perspectives and advice on organisational approaches to issues of poverty, inequality and injustice, power imbalance, relationship building, diversity and difference, ethical considerations and political challenges.

## Impact... Teacher experience and engagement

Moving from a traditional tertiary model of lecture/tutorial to a more contemporary active learning model required a commitment from teaching staff to challenge their current thinking about learning and teaching, by focusing on:

- Overhauling the approach to delivering the online components of the program
- Adopting a '[flipped learning](#)' model to maximise more active learning in face-to-face class time
- Developing innovative active learning activities and resources for the fully online cohorts to ensure an equivalence of outcome for online and face-to-face students.

### Step 1: Professional development

A suite of webinars, face-to-face and online workshops drew on expertise from CLIPP and staff within the School of Arts to provide teaching staff with relevant professional development opportunities. Facilitated by Ms Macneil and CLIPP peers, staff explored ways to design, develop and facilitate a range of 'flipped' approaches to suit both the pedagogical needs of the program, course and individual sessions. Teaching staff engaged in workshops that expanded their capacity to develop, maintain and facilitate online learning spaces and active learning sessions. Already, staff are employing innovative teaching practices using technology to facilitate online role-playing and group work.

*"From the onset CLIPP had a clear vision and understanding of what we were trying to achieve. They provided a range of opportunities for us to consolidate skills and expand the knowledge we needed to deliver the new teaching model. This included support in understanding the pedagogical approach as well as upskilling in the technology required to deliver it. We now have a more consistent approach to learning outcomes for online and face-to-face students, and course content that is better tailored to graduate learning needs"* (Ms Michelle Hunt - Lecturer, BCHS)

### Step 2: Design and develop a program-wide Moodle template

Under the guidance of Ms Macneil, the teaching team worked together to design a Moodle course template for use across the program. The template supports staff in maximising student engagement by providing consistent presentation, access and delivery of online materials.

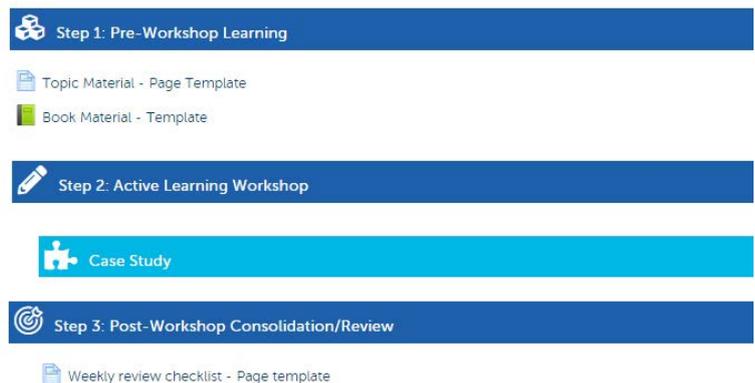


Image 1: An example of the weekly structure in the online learning space

### Step 3: Sustainable, purpose-built video vignettes



Specialised video vignettes were created to reflect contemporary case scenarios and support emerging practitioners' understanding of how to resolve issues in practice. Filmed by Mr Eammon Jones (CLIPP), each video illuminates the application of theoretical concepts in an industry setting. Through collaboration with industry practitioners to develop the scenarios and audio-visual resources, the vignettes bridge the gap between industry and higher education, ensuring the program's real-world relevance. Click on the image to watch an example video.

*"The video interviews with industry practitioners help our students to connect the abstract concepts they are learning about for the first time with their future practice in the community and human services. Students often discuss the videos and the comments made by the practitioners when they are grappling with case scenarios in class or reflecting upon their own values and world view. Rather than having a guest lecture at one campus during the semester, the industry videos enable students from all campuses and modes of learning to benefit. The short excerpts that develop throughout the semester enable students to slowly build their understanding of the real-world relevance of their studies."*  
(Ms Kimberlea Cooper - Lecturer, BCHS)

### Step 4: Ongoing staff support resources



Image 2: Image of webinar recording to support course learning design displayed on the BCHS: Staff Resource

An integral part of the project was ensuring current and future staff had ongoing access to resources to support their teaching. This includes the pedagogical underpinnings of the program design, the agreed conventions of the learning and teaching approach, and professional development offerings. To capture these resources, Dr Patil and Ms Macneil created a Mahara eportfolio. Staff can simply click on [Bachelor of Community & Human Services – Moodle Template Support](#) to access resources to support their teaching.



Image 3: Image of webinar recording to support teaching pedagogy and program design displayed on the BCHS: Staff Resource

*"As a new staff member with no previous knowledge and experience of working with Moodle, I had to quickly learn the basics of the platform so I could transfer my pedagogical understanding of the flipped learning model into my teaching spaces. I was offered tremendous support by CLIPP staff ranging from one-on-one sessions, reviews of my Moodle content, and most importantly - access to the compiled teaching resources for BCHS staff. ..[enabling my] questions about translating pedagogical concepts of active learning to be quickly answered. I have gotten so many comments from tutors and students about the easy navigation, logical and straightforward interface of my online content, which would not be possible without the direction provided in the staff resources."* (Dr Romyana Kudeva - Lecturer, BCHS)

## Impact – Student experience and engagement

Moving from a traditional tertiary model of lecture/tutorial to an innovative active learning framework has also required a shift from students about their views and expectations of learning in higher education. Whilst the new program has only been delivered for one semester, recurring themes have already emerged from informal and formal student and staff feedback.

### Theme 1: Challenging student views on approaches to learning

Many current students are familiar with the traditional lecture/tutorial format of teaching. Some students found the transition to the new format easy, while others are requiring a longer adjustment. This highlights the need to continue focusing on clear communication with students, and to scaffold learning expectations in all year levels of the program.

*"I think it is much better because the structure of the workload and program is much easier to understand and work with"*  
(Student feedback, 2019)

*"This style is dramatically challenging my time and capacity to grasp concepts prior to class activities...this framework relies upon in-class participation, of which, there is very little. I think the provision of online lectures would at least provide some bulk information that could be discussed in class"* (Student feedback, 2019)

## Theme 2: Skills for self-directed learning

Both students and teachers noted early challenges relating to motivation and understanding of the skills required for self-directed learning. Teachers identified varying levels of student engagement with preparatory work in the early weeks. However, as the semester progressed, student preparedness improved, and teachers saw increased participation in class discussions.

*One student noted in feedback to the lecturer that she... "found her voice through the group facilitation set up by the lecturer and felt more confident about her emerging professional identity as a human service practitioner"*

(Informal student feedback provided to Dr Patil, 2019).

*"Definitely need to do the readings in order to understand the discussions in class"*(Student feedback, 2019).

*"Students are coming to the workshop prepared, and there is a very high level of engagement [and] within the first five weeks, students have made great strides in understanding research design, selecting a research topic, and building their intellectual capital"* (Professor McDonald, 2019).

## The next step

To date, this bold collaborative approach to learning and teaching design has had a positive impact on both students and teachers in the Bachelor of Community and Human Services. The strength of the project lies with the cross-discipline department/industry project team 'brains trust', which has managed the transition and its inherent challenges. The next steps include:

1. Continue to upskill teaching staff on the active learning framework and refine and streamline resources and activities that best fit with the pre-, during and post-workshop stages.
2. Continue to communicate with and upskill students on the value of engaging in an active learning model and support them to maximise their learning opportunities in each stage.
3. Map the student time commitment across pre-, during and post workshop stages to ensure student workloads in each course are evenly distributed and follow the 10 hours (per week) study model of a 15-credit point course.
4. Continue to enhance and improve the online and face-to-face integration of learning materials and activities.
5. Undertake scholarly research on the impact and value of this program-wide approach to learning, and on the experience of the industry practitioners involved in resource design.
6. Undertake evaluation of students and staff experience at the end of 2019.

*The active learning framework developed by academic staff in the human services discipline in collaboration with CLIPP is innovative and cutting edge in several ways. It has a coherent teaching philosophy at a program level, it prepares graduates to be work ready by introducing them to audio-visual resources developed by practitioners working in human services sector and case scenarios developed with input from practitioners and user-friendly teaching design. Reflecting on the process of leading this change, I believe the standout feature that led to the successful implementation in 2019 was the way academic/discipline experts, industry practitioners and CLIPP collaborated to integrate various components of the curriculum design.*

*Reflecting on the future, I feel the active learning framework has the potential to increase student engagement and better prepare them for work in the human services sector. The collaborative multidisciplinary approach to develop this curriculum could become an example that could be replicated across other disciplines and/or programs in the higher education sector."*

(Dr Tejaswini Patil – Program Coordinator and Project Lead, BCHS)

## More information

If you would like more information on this project, please contact:

- Dr Tejaswini Patil – ph: +61 3 5327 6563 or email: [t.patilvishwanath@federation.edu.au](mailto:t.patilvishwanath@federation.edu.au)
- Ms Kellie Macneil – ph: +61 3 5327 6095 or email: [k.macneil@federation.edu.au](mailto:k.macneil@federation.edu.au)

If you would like to explore how a collaboration with CLIPP can enhance your project outcomes, contact your CLIPP/School Learning Designer:

- [Federation Business School](#)
- [School of Arts](#)
- [School of Education](#)
- [School of Health and Life Sciences](#)
- [School of Nursing & Healthcare Professions](#)
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