

Trinity College Foundation Studies:

A study of pedagogy, practice and student experiences.

Dr. Ian TEO

Dr. Jennifer MITCHELL



TRINITY COLLEGE
THE UNIVERSITY OF MELBOURNE



**BUILDING
A STRONG
FOUNDATION**

International education in Australia

- **1950 to early 1970s: 'Aid' Model**

- Colombo Plan: Agreement between foreign ministers of the Commonwealth to bring political stability, economic prosperity and raise living standards to the Asia-Pacific region.
 - Partially achieved through enabling higher education enrolments to students from Asia.

- **Early 1970s to 1980s: Establishment of 'Trade' model**

- Abolition of overseas students' tuition fees opened HE opportunities during the early 1970s.
- Jackson Report (1984) emphasized removing federally funded places and exporting HE.
- By late 1980s, diminished public funding for international students.
- Concurrently, universities were under greater competition pressures to market themselves and finance their business model.

International education in Australia

- **1990s to the present**
 - Established 'trade' model of HE.
 - Many AusAID scholarships phased out and dwarfed in comparison to the number of privately funded international students.
 - Australia: Major provider of HE to students in the Asia-Pacific region.
 - 1986-1996: No more than 50,000 enrolments annually (Norton and Cherastidtham, 2014).
 - 2015: 272,095 (AEI, 2015).
 - \$19b-\$21b to economy and funding to universities (Dept. Ed. and Train., 2016, Marginson, 2006; 2007).

Australian Foundation Studies Programs

- Emerged from shifting political and economic discourses during 1970s-1980s.
- Intent:
 - Minimal interruption to students' HE aspirations.
 - Nexus between past schooling/education and entry into Australian HE sector.
 - Prepare and support students academically, BUT ALSO MORE BROADLY ACROSS social, pastoral, and cultural dimensions.
 - The latter three being the emphasis in this presentation
- Regulated by ESOS, NSFP, and the National Code.
- Global market value of \$825m (USD) (StudyPortals and Cambridge English, 2015).

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- Preparation for entry into The University of Melbourne and other Australian universities.
- **Range of courses**
 - Main programs (10 mths): February and August
 - Fast Track programs (8 mths): July and October
 - Accelerated and Extended programs (5-20 wks): Feeder courses for the Main programs depending their needs and timings.

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Curriculum

(2 Core + 3 Electives)

CORE

- English
 - Literature
 - Drama
 - English for Academic Purposes
- History of Ideas

ELECTIVES

- Accounting
- Biology
- Chemistry
- Economics
- Environment and Development
- Mathematics 1 and 2
- Media and Communications
- Music
- Physics
- Psychology

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Core Subjects

- **Broadly** develop academic and non-academic skill sets in preparation for HE.
 - **Educational aims across Core subjects:**
 - Public speaking.
 - Work in groups.
 - Develop arguments and creativity.
 - Be constructive, critical and analytical.
- Confidence and ability to achieve success in HE.
- Whole being preparation

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Core Subject Goals

LITERATURE

- Improve English and academic skills.
- Read, discuss and write about literary texts.
- Develop language skills necessary English-speaking environments

DRAMA

- Foster creativity and imagination.
- Develop self-confidence.
- Encourage initiative, responsibility and leadership.
- Ability to participate in dramatic performances

ENGLISH FOR ACADEMIC PURPOSES

- Interpret academic texts; synthesize information from readings; recognize different views/bias
- Express ideas; formulate opinions; presentation skills; paraphrasing; academic conventions; participate in discussions.

HISTORY OF IDEAS

- Read and discuss important philosophers/scientists/religious/political writers, and formulate their own responses.
- Focused on western history and ideas that affect countries like Australia.
- Academic oral and written skills; Research skills; Critical and Analytical skills.

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Purpose: To exemplify the broad focus TCFS has for preparing international students for university by:

- Outline a unique pedagogical approach taken within Literature.
- Highlight how Drama classes might facilitate the development of social skills necessary for living and studying in Australia.

LITERATURE – Creative Media Project

- ▶ 10 % of total grade for Literature (70% of English)
- ▶ Group project 8 -10 weeks, teams of four or five students, three groups per tutorial
- ▶ Involves scripting, filming, editing and creating a soundtrack for a movie trailer of one of the studied texts
- ▶ Presented with a reflective group explication.

What are we developing?

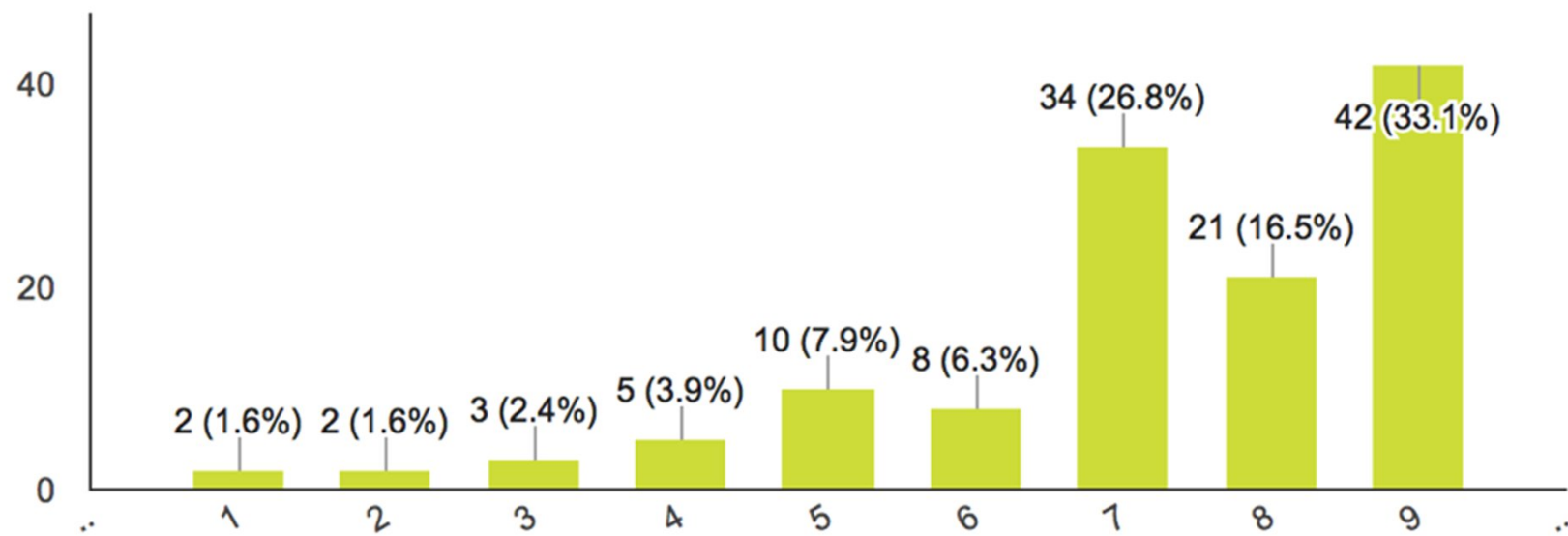
- ▶ Students' skills in applying their understanding of literary communication techniques
- ▶ To apply their analytical skills in communicating a visual representation of the studied text
- ▶ To enable students weaker in writing skills to demonstrate their learning in a an alternative, and creative way

What we evaluated – how well the project helped students to

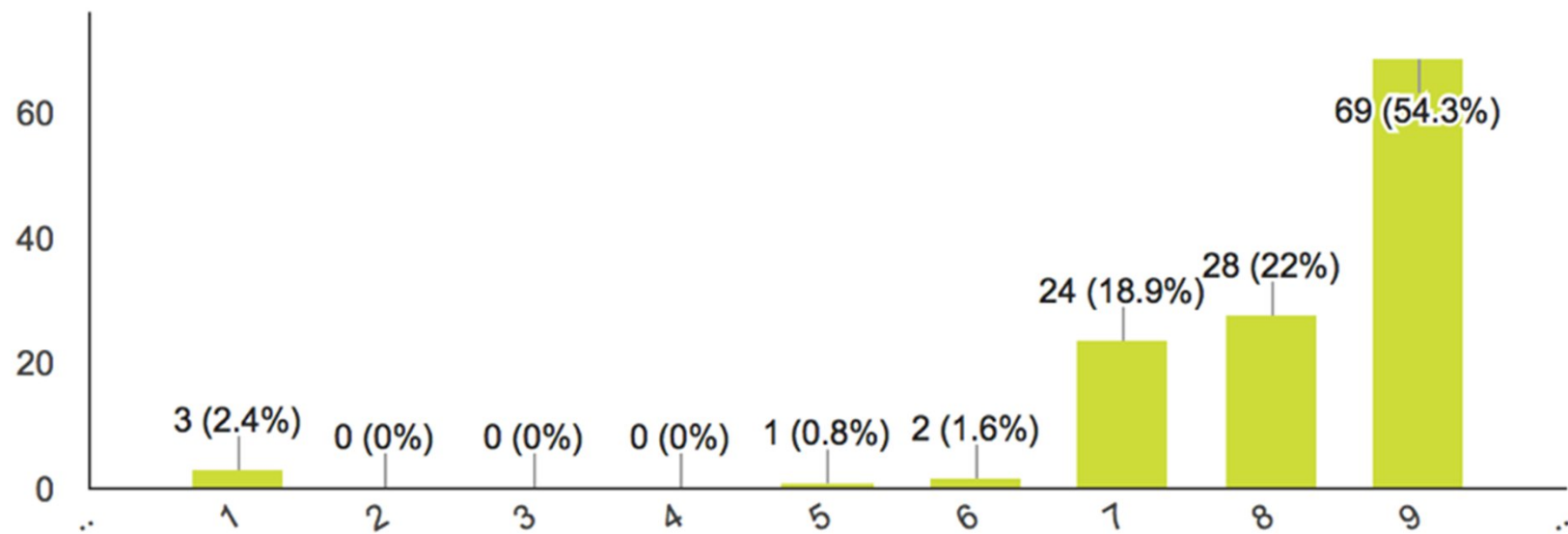
- ▶ Understand the text better
- ▶ Prepare for the essay
- ▶ understand the gothic genre
- ▶ Work well in a group
- ▶ Manage time and multitask
- ▶ Do close analysis of texts
- ▶ Find supporting evidence



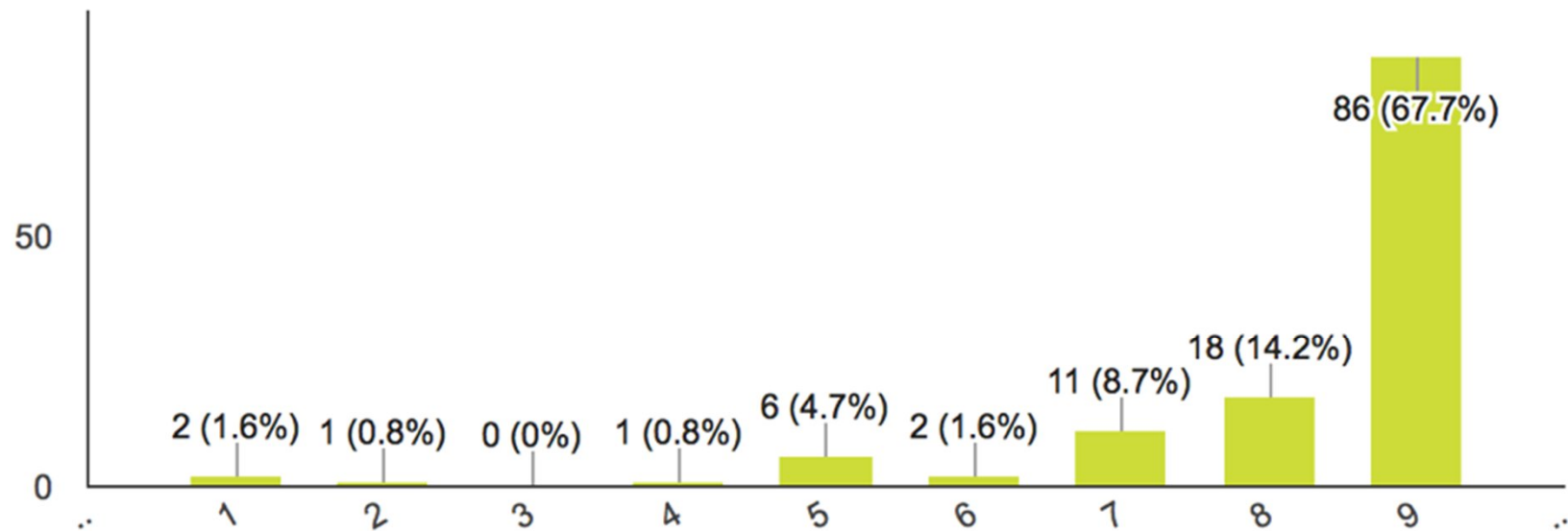
This project helped me prepare for the Gothic essay. (127 responses)



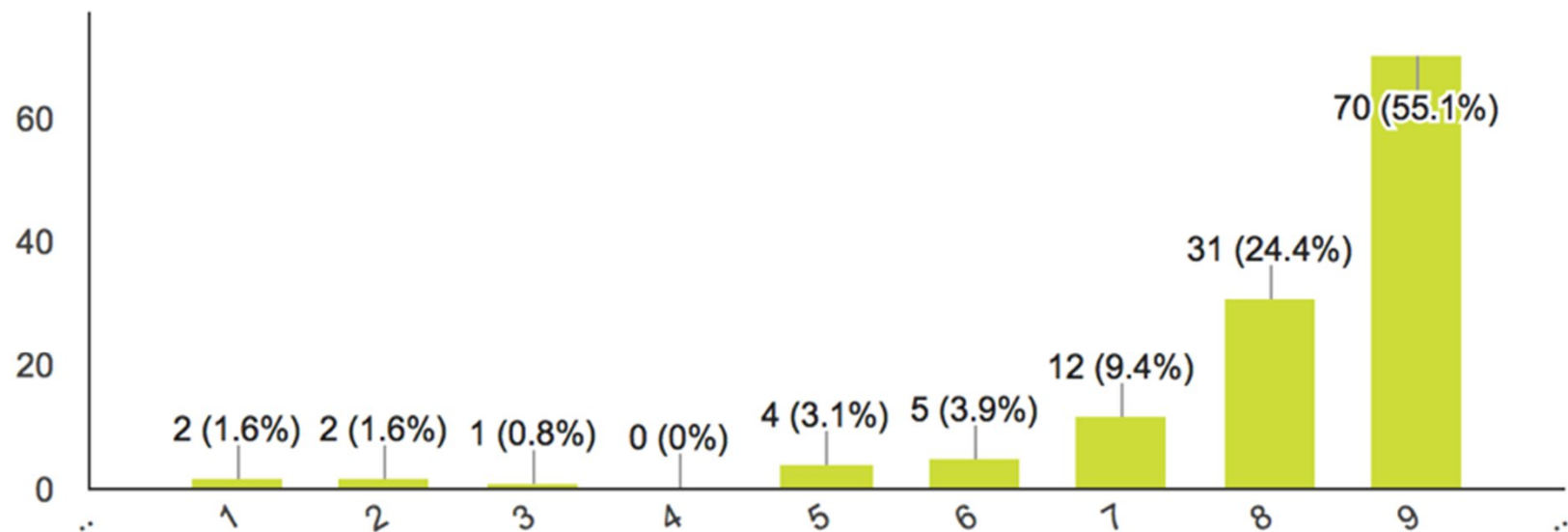
This project helped me understand the text better. (127 responses)



This project taught me how to work well in a group. (127 responses)



This project taught me how to manage my time and multitask. (127 responses)



DRAMA

- **Curriculum**

- Develop sense of the physical 'self' through mime and movement.
- Understand dramatic elements such as space, time and tension.
- Exploring, developing and understanding text within dramatic contexts within individual or group contexts.
- Improvisation, characterisation, role-play, monologue and dialogue.
- Theatrical storytelling – Literal and abstract that culminate in group performances.
- Voice projection and articulation.

- **Assessments**

- Mime exam (hurdle)
- Monologue – 10%
- Group project (minor) – 10%
- Major group Drama (major) – 10%

Surveys - DRAMA

- Assess relevance of this broad preparatory approach.
- Students were surveyed at Entry and Exit on a range of issues.
- QUESTION: Please indicate whether you expect that the following will play an important role in preparing you for ACADEMIC success at university.

Subject specific goal	Impt at Entry	Impt at Exit	Sig	Not at all important	1
Creativity and Imagination	4.2	4.16	0.362	Not important	2
Self-confidence	4.58	4.48	0.016	Neither/Nor	3
Initiative and Leadership	4.42	4.33	0.087	Important	4
Dramatic Performances	3.94	3.89	0.478	Extremely important	5

DRAMA

- (Generally) Consistent perceptions from Entry to Exit.
- Perception that these goals were important.
- Acknowledgement from students that a broad approach towards HE preparation is perceived to be important.
- But how relevant are Drama classes once students are at university?

DRAMA - Interviews

- Open-ended interviews with 23 ex-FSP students from mainland China.
 - South, South-East, and North-East regions.
 - Arts, Commerce and Science.
 - Asked to describe/characterise their Chinese, FS Program, and HE studies.
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- **How would you characterise your FS program education?**
 - **How did Drama classes prepare you for university?**

DRAMA - Interviews

How would you characterise your FS program education?

- Open-ended question.
- 9/23 students (about a third) reflected positively on this core subject.
- For example:
 - Make you confident (Student 7)
 - Active and engaging (Student 8)
 - Solidify friendship and create positive interactions (Students 10 and 16)
 - Makes students brave, especially Chinese students because they must speak and discuss in class (Student 22)
 - Fun and relaxing (Students 9 and 15)
 - Different compared to to a Chinese education (Student 17)

DRAMA - Interviews

How did Drama classes prepare you for university?

- 13/23 students (slightly more than half) felt that this subject had prepared them for HE; remaining 10 addressed this subject indifferently or not at all.
- Many focused on English language skills and interpersonal communication.
- Emphasis on transferable skill sets.
- For example:
 - Verbal communication
 - Pronunciation skills
 - Overcome shyness in social contexts
 - Group work
 - Public speaking

DRAMA



- Students' perceptions of subject goals (Survey)
 - Valued for their contributions to academic success
 - Creativity and Imagination --- **Yes**
 - Self-confidence --- **Yes**
 - Initiative and Leadership --- **Yes**
 - Dramatic performances --- **Somewhat**
- Students' reflections of their Drama classes (Interviews)
 - The value of participating in Drama classes was in its potential to prepare students for social interactions at university.

DRAMA and the SOCIAL DIMENSION



Lessons to be learnt:

1. Some value in using non-traditional approaches (like Drama classes) when preparing international students more broadly for higher education.
2. Importance of the social dimension in higher education preparation.
3. More can be done to prepare international students for their interpersonal relationships at university.
 - ▶ Approx. 50% of students responded indifferently or not at all to their Drama classes.

Conclusions...

- Preparing international students for success at university requires a broad (academic and 'non-academic') focus.
- This might involve experimenting with different pedagogical approaches such as rich media projects, when attempting to engage these students with Literature.
- Or, introducing a non-traditional course (Drama) into the core curriculum to help facilitate the development of language, interpersonal, and soft skill sets