

# Reality Transfer

Authentic workspace simulation of web design industry into teaching and learning environment:

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# Introduction

*Reality Transfer* is a proposed teaching experiment that closely applies a simulated Graphic design industry scenario to the teaching environment. The aim of this simulation is to identify the widened gap between vocational based tertiary education and industry entry requirements.

As a vocational educator, we are always faced with a challenge on how do we transfer industry-based skills to teaching environment.

This has never been an easy task as there are many limitations and differences between an actual working environment and a teaching environment.

# Research Questions

- + What can we do to better prepare our graduate students before hitting the market?
- + What does industry want from an Industry Training Provider?
- + What do students want from an Industry Training Provider?

# Theoretical Backing

*“The identified shift towards using authentic assessment tasks across the tertiary sectors can be seen as part of the growing emphasis on ‘assessment for learning’, and an “innovation to promote student learning in higher education” (Kvale, 2007, p. 57).”*

***Jane Stewart***

# Aim

This research aims to identify the missing links between industry needs, student expectations and teaching practice.

We will also attempt to answer the questions outlined previously.

# Methodology

This research follows four distinct phases:

- + Identifying the strengths and weaknesses of our graduates
- + Gathering information
- + Review findings and results
- + Reflecting and making changes to teaching strategies

# Identifying the strengths and weaknesses of our graduates

These are our initial thoughts about our student strengths and weaknesses

# What are our student strengths?

- + Good basic technical skills
- + ability to work in a self directed manner
- + Knowing when to listen and follow instruction while needed
- + Good understanding on design process that closely aligned with industry standards



# What are our student weaknesses?

- + Lacking in communication skills
- + Lacking in basic English written and verbal skills
- + Lacking interpersonal skills.
  - eg. How to deal with your colleagues?
  - How to talk to your boss?
  - How to raise opinions politely?
  - How to show appreciation? etc.

# Gathering Information

Industry placement

Interviewing industry

Internship

# Industry placement and interviews

Based on Mark Liu's investigation during his job placement, combined with Simon Nicholls previous job placement experience. We generated basic answers for the following question:

**What does industry really want from an design graduate students?**

# Internship

In mid-2010 one of the students who completed both Internet Design and Advanced Internet Design was invited to have an internship with the Auckland based web agency - Frontend Design.

**What does industry really think about our students?**

# Review findings and results

What does industry expect from a design graduate?

- + Good attitude
- + Good interpersonal and communication skills
- + Team Player
- + Good listener
- + Creative thinker
- + Knowledge of design process and history

# What does industry expect from a design graduate?

Good attitude

Students need to be humble and willing to learn, and not arrogant.

They also indicate they would like to hire students who willing to go the extra mile to get a job done.

# What does industry expect from a design graduate?

Good Interpersonal and communication skills

Students need to know how to express their opinion in an appropriate manner

They are required to learn to build and maintain a good working relationship inside and outside company

They need to have good verbal and written skills (specifically spelling and grammar skills).

# What does industry expect from a design graduate?

## Team Player

A good personality that can gel with the team so that they can integrate into a team environment swiftly.



Review findings and results

# What does industry expect from a design graduate?

Good listener

Need to be able to follow and interpret instructions accurately

# What does industry expect from a design graduate?

Creative thinker

Students need to be able to be creative and not just a follower

Student need to know how to express their alternative ideas and creativity in a professional and polite manner.

# What does industry expect from a design graduate?

Knowledge of design process and design history

Student will be ideally has a good understand on real world design process

They need to learn to appreciate current industry design practice and learn how to integrate themselves into a working environment.

They should be equipped with a good knowledge of design terminology in order for them to communicate better inside and outside their company.

# Industry Feedback

Industry feedback on 2010 student internship

## **Attitude**

The students attitude is not up to the expectation of the employer.

The feedback was that the student was not grateful enough to show any appreciation to Frontend after the completion of the internship.

On the other hand after a discussion with the student, it was discovered that they were grateful but didn't know how to express the appreciation toward the employer. i.e. they lacked interpersonal skills.

## **Technical skill**

student had the right skillset, and is capable technically

# Reflecting and making changes to teaching strategies

Updated Internet Design course material

Student feedback on updated Internet Design course material

Roleplay 1.0 and feedback

Roleplay 2.0 and feedback

Reflecting and making changes to teaching strategies

# Updated course material

We applied this data and information into our lectures, tutorials and class exercises.

We created new assignments that fit the researched information.

After students completed their assignments in Internet Design, we collected feedback and made necessary changes - such as fine tuning our teaching methods and tutorials in order to produce students who are more capable in design, and had improved technical and presentation skills.

Reflecting and making changes to teaching strategies

# Knowledge Progression

Marking Rubric / Timetable

## BMADM210.1002 – Internet Design Marking rubric for assignments

Grade	Marks	Descriptors / Guides
A++	90-100	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Individual has exceed the requirements on the brief with more than 100% extra materials or efforts.</li><li>Individual demonstrate excellent understanding of the chosen medium.</li><li>Individual displays a positive value and attitude in all class activities.</li><li>Individual displays leadership, taking initiative to assist fellow students in class.</li></ul>
A+	85-89	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Individual has exceed the requirements with more than 100% extra materials or efforts.</li><li>Individual demonstrates extensive understanding of the chosen medium.</li><li>Individual displays a positive value and attitude in most of the class activities.</li></ul>
A	80-84	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Individual has exceed the requirements with 100% extra materials or efforts.</li><li>Individual demonstrates good understanding of the chosen medium.</li><li>Individual displays a positive value and attitude in some of the class activities.</li></ul>
A-	75-79	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Individual has exceed the requirements with 75% extra materials or efforts.</li><li>Individual demonstrates good understanding of the chosen medium.</li><li>Individual shows a good amount of participation in class activities</li></ul>
B+	70-74	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Individual has exceed the requirements with 60% extra materials or efforts.</li><li>Individual demonstrates a fair understanding of the chosen medium.</li><li>Individual shows a fair amount of participation in class activities</li></ul>
B	65-69	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Individual has exceed the requirements with 45% extra materials or efforts.</li><li>Individual demonstrates a basic understanding of the chosen medium.</li><li>Individual shows a small amount of participation in class activities</li></ul>

60-64	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Individual has exceed the requirements with 30% extra materials or efforts.</li><li>Individual demonstrates a basic understanding of the chosen medium.</li><li>Individual shows a minimum amount of participation in class activities</li></ul>
55-59	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Individual has exceed the requirements with 15% extra materials or efforts.</li><li>Individual demonstrates a poor understanding on the chosen medium.</li></ul>
50-54	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Individual has achieved all the basic requirements on the brief.</li></ul>
45-49	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Individual has achieved 80% of the basic requirements on the brief.</li><li>Resubmission will be required in order to pass the task.</li></ul>
40-44	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Individual has achieved 60% of the basic requirements on the brief.</li></ul>
35-39	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Individual has achieved 40% of the basic requirements on the brief.</li></ul>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Individual will fail if achieved less than 39% of the basic requirements on the brief.</li><li>Did not complete any of the requirements.</li></ul>

## 1002 – Internet Design Timetable semester two 2010

Task Focus	Task Due Date
Introduction	
Found and history of internet	
Introduction to HTML	
Introduction to HTML tutorial	
Introduction to CSS (Cascading Style Sheet)	
Introduction to CSS tutorial	
<b>Task – Finish Tutorial</b>	
and discuss about website structure	
Key issues on HTML & CSS tutorials	Finish Tutorial – HTML & CSS
Image module tutorial	
Research for Assignment 1	
<b>Task – Research for Ass. 01</b>	
on site-map and wireframing	
Website Anatomy tutorial	
<b>Task – Finish Wireframe</b>	Finish base research for ASS 01
<b>Task – No class</b>	
SS – Class and ID selector	
Website Anatomy rebuild tutorial	
Critique on Wireframing	
<b>Finish Design Mock-up</b>	Finish Set-map and wireframing for ASS 01
Critique on Mock-up	
<b>Start constructing HTML and</b>	Finish Mock-up for ASS 01
of uploading and publishing	
<b>Task Due</b>	
uploading and publishing	Assignment 01 due



Reflecting and making changes to teaching strategies

# Knowledge Progression

Original Tutorial





# Student Feedback

## Feedback on updated Internet Design course material

“He could go over some of the tutorials a bit slower. I understand that all the students are at different levels, but there is a decent amount that feel like that they are left behind.”

“Need to try a couple of teaching methods as not everyone learns the same way.”

“Explain what went wrong as clearly as possible.”

“Not give only tutorials. I as well as many of the class don't understand them.”

# Making changes

## Using the student feedback

We recognised these problems and made changes to the teaching methods.

We included more material that catered for different learning styles e.g. before tutorial exercises, a demonstration of the skill being learned was shown through projector.

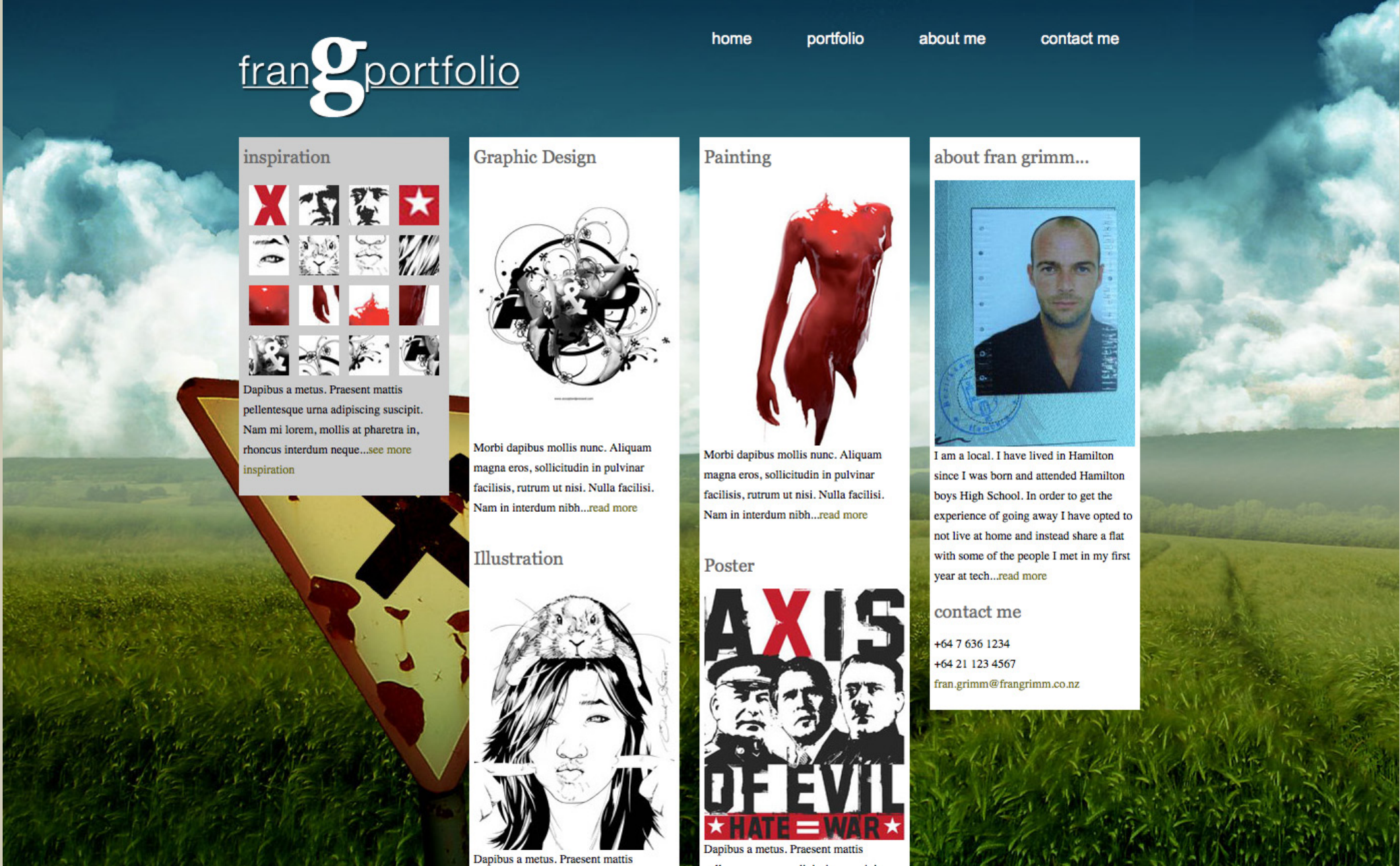
Then the following week, a question and answer session was conducted to gain feedback on any problems that the students might have encountered in completing the exercise.

Many more examples from current industry practice to illustrate the skills the students were learning through the tutorials.

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# Knowledge Progression

Updated Tutorial





# Roleplay 1.0

In 2010, Mark Liu introduced a roleplay element to the first assignment of Advanced Internet Design.

The students were formed into small groups and started their own fictional design studios.

Mark played both the Client and the Art Director/ Tutor roles during the roleplay assignment. There were very loose instructions on how to construct the groups and the students had to translate the assignment timeline into a project management plan.

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# Roleplay 1.0

## Assignment Example

The screenshot shows the homepage of the Organical website. At the top left is the Organical logo. To its right is the tagline "Your natural source of energy". Below the logo is a navigation menu with links for HOME, WHO WE ARE, WHAT WE DO, WHY WE DO IT, WHERE WE ARE, MEDIA RELEASE, and NEWS. The main content area features four water bottles in different colors (green, pink, blue, orange) with labels for "Organical. bananarama", "Organical. sugar candy", "Organical. water blaster", and "Organical. mango tangoo". To the right of the bottles is a "welcome" section with a paragraph about the company's mission and a "read more" link. Below this is a green starburst graphic that says "Sign up now! for a free full pack of water..." with a "read more" link. The footer contains three sections: "News" with a short article snippet and a "Read more" link; "Media Release" with two small images and "Enlarge" links; and "Follow Us" with social media icons for Facebook, Twitter, and YouTube, and a "Contact us" link.

**Organical**®

“Your natural source of energy”

[HOME](#) [WHO WE ARE](#) [WHAT WE DO](#) [WHY WE DO IT](#) [WHERE WE ARE](#) [MEDIA RELEASE](#) [NEWS](#)

### welcome

Organical is a enthusiastic group of people, working together to create a difference - to the New Zealand, to the planet and to the health of its people.

We're people who are driven by a desire to create wonderful things! And we love to enjoy our work as much as our play...

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for a free full pack  
of water...  
[read more](#)

#### News

Last month we added two Limited Edition flavours to our organic soft drink range. You guys love them so much we might have to make them part of our permanent family of drinks! ...

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# Student Feedback

## Feedback on Roleplay 1.0

“Encourages us to look further in to the field of web design than what is taught in class”

“Very informative about this field. Helpful with problems.”

“Brings his valuable experience of the industry to Wintec.”

“Prepares us well for what it will be like when we are creating websites for actual clients e.g. Roleplay”

# Further improvement

## Using student feedback on Roleplay 1.0

After the completion of this project, the feedback was positive from students but Mark identified areas for further improvement:

The roles of the individual group members needed to be clearer.

A third party would be better for the role of the client.

# Roleplay 2.0

This year, the Advanced Internet module conducted the same assignment with the refinements.

The students assigned roles to Team Leader, Designer, and Coder etc. Based on where the strengths in the group lay.

Simon Nicholls played the client (and had a plan of how to simulate the client role), and Mark Liu was the Art Director/ tutor.

The students were required to follow industry standard methods of communication and client/project/group management alongside the technical and design skills required to design and build a website for a fictional company.



# Roleplay 2.0

The new objectives of this assignment are to learn the needed communication skills and interpersonal skills, such as: arranging meeting with clients, negotiating and preparing quotation for client, project and time management for client, negotiating contract and proper email communication and following up skill.

We expected that students can learn these skills through the process of collaboration with colleagues (fellow students) and the process of meeting and dealing with clients (tutor).

We also expected that this exercise will improve their project and time management skill.

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# Roleplay 2.0

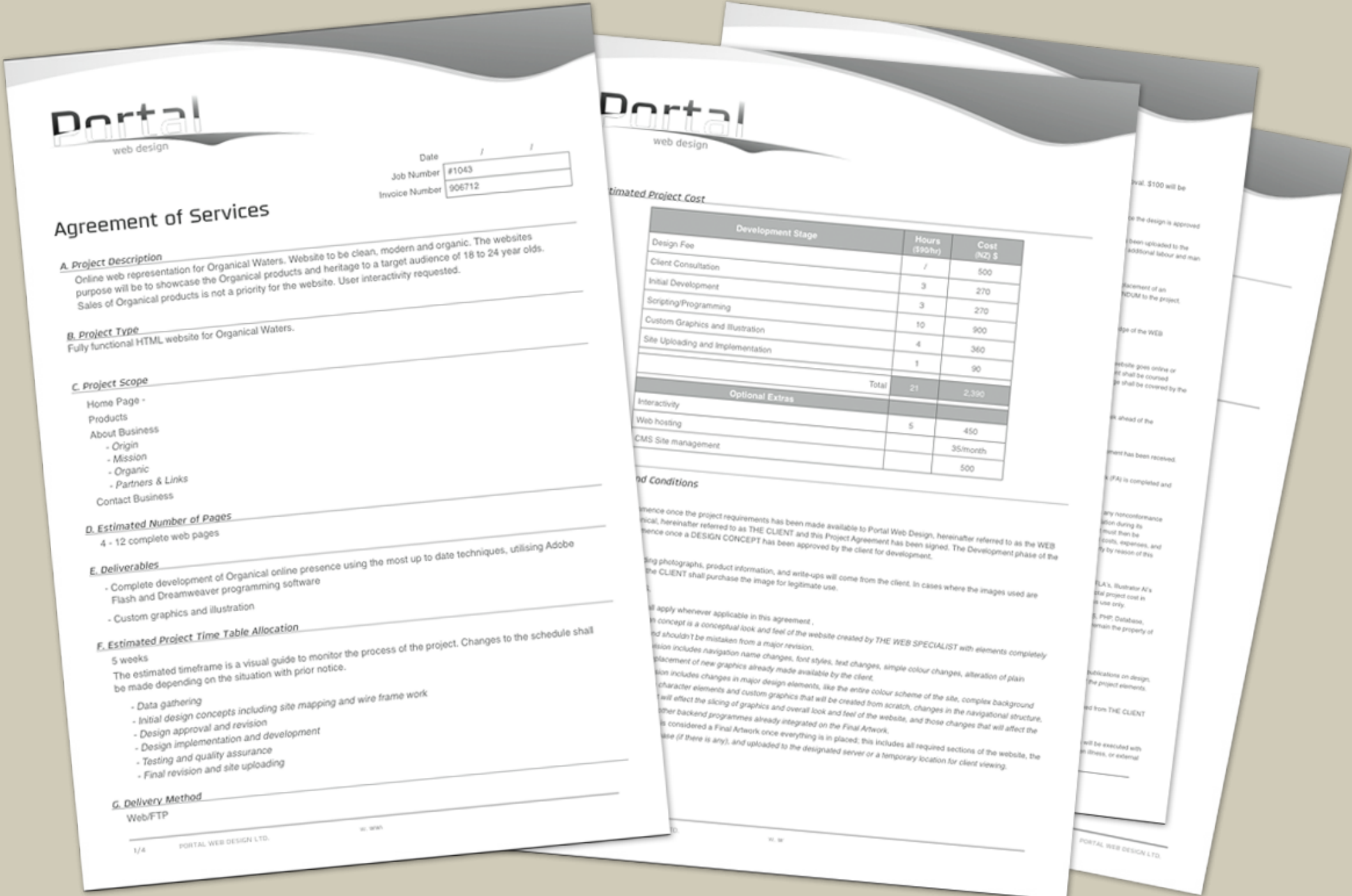
Assignment Example



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# Roleplay 2.0

## Contract / Quotation



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# Roleplay 2.0

## Email communication

Hi Elliot,

Thanks for the email, I look forward to meeting with you to discuss the website and my requirements.

At this stage I have gaps in my schedule between 11 and 12 on Friday this week and Tuesday next week.

Let me know what suits you,

Regards,  
Simon Nicholls

On 23/02/11 10:05 AM, "Elliot Norton" <[elliott.norton@hotmail.com](mailto:elliott.norton@hotmail.com)> wrote:

Hi Simon,

Elliot Norton here from TEAM-A Design LTD. We are looking forward to working with you on this new web project. I was wondering if we could meet together sometime soon to discuss your ideas and website needs.

It will also be a good opportunity for you to meet Nina our Graphic Designer and Keryn our Web Developer.

Are you free sometime on Monday (AM or PM) or Thursday afternoon?

I look forward to hearing from you soon.

Kind regards,  
Elliot Norton

Project Manager  
**TEAM-A Design LTD**  
021 0257 8565  
07 848 1371

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# Student Feedback

## Feedback on Roleplay 2.0

The students felt that this was a good assignment.

They really enjoy the realistic collaborative environment and opportunity in dealing with client. Students reflect that dealing with clients were one of their weakest link, as a result they are glad that they having this project to learn and improve.

# Student Feedback

## Feedback on Roleplay 2.0

Secondly, they had never really worked under “agency” conditions where each of them would be assigned with a particular role.

As a result, this project provide them opportunity to collaborate with their fellow classmate (workmate) – learn to share idea, learn to work together, and learn to compromise when needed.

Students strongly believed that they have become better designers and collaborators through the process of this project.



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# Industry Feedback

Industry feedback on student who participate in Roleplay 2.0

## **Communication**

Overall was good, however should realise that the company was a potential employer and the student needs to be careful with what they say at all times. i.e. Student needs to be positive about the domain the company belong to.

## **Technical skill**

Student had a good graphic design skill base but was not as good with web design skills

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# Industry Feedback

Industry feedback on student who participated in Roleplay 2.0

## **Interpersonal skills**

Positive attitude, was able to integrate into the team swiftly

## **Industrious**

Took direction and worked hard.

## **Passion**

Was enthusiastic about design in general but felt that the web was restrictive



# Conclusion

This research has provided us with insightful information on entry requirements for the web and graphic design industry, and what they expect from our graduate students.

Furthermore, the finding has served as a positive confirmation for what we are doing and what we believe in as ITP educators, which is authentic assessment that simulates realistic working scenarios that will assist in shaping a stronger design graduate.

Thus, we believe that what we have been experimenting with for the last two years was successful and we recommend that this teaching strategy could be applied into similar educational contexts.

There should be continuous improvement based on the changes and feedback from industry.

# Further Research

What limitations are there in the ability to deliver industry focussed training?

## **Proper technology**

Sometimes we don't have the ability to replicate industry workflows due to lack of current computer software and hardware.

Maybe after further research we will discover that this is not as big a problem as we think it is.

It is possibly a perception that students and educators have that the latest technology must be used to deliver industry standard training.

# Further Research

What limitations are there in the ability to deliver industry focussed training?

## **Simulation of Industry Environment**

Inability to simulate completely a tough/competitive environment - there is a disconnect between the need to nurture the students and the need to replicate critical work environment.

What is the right balance between simulating a work environment accurately and providing a safe and caring learning environment.

# Further Research

What limitations are there in the ability to deliver industry focussed training?

## **Real World Design**

In industry an individual seldom carries out work.

However in education there is the need to assess each individual's work.

What is the balance between training a hero / auteur or a collaborator?