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How to build a learning designer: Co-designing a training program for/with/as novice learning designers

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Keypath Education

The practice and profession of learning design has grown significantly in recent years. However, there remains a scarcity of formal qualifications and training specifically designed for learning designers. This paper describes a work-in-progress initiative to co-design a training program for/with/as a team of novice learning designers. The question driving our practice-led and design-based investigation is not just *what* but *how* learning designers should learn. The team conducted research into the requisite knowledge, skills, and capabilities that make a successful learning designer, including an informal learning needs analysis. Based on this research and analysis, this paper explores the question of *how* learning designers should learn by discussing four guiding theoretical principles and related design components consequently ideated by the team: learner agency; becoming professional; novice/expert mentorship; and community of practice. It then turns to the question of *what*, describing the core curriculum and program structure through which these principles will be enacted. These questions are critical to the present and future of the profession as we collectively articulate our shared practices and identity, and what it means to be a learning designer.

Keywords: Learning design; practice-led research; professional learning; situated learning.

Introduction

With the massive growth of technology-enhanced and online learning, the ongoing professionalisation of teaching and learning, and the ‘unbundling’ of traditional academic practices (Tucker & Neely, 2010; Macfarlane, 2011), the practice and profession of learning design is becoming ever more vital to teaching and learning in the contemporary university. The emergence of the learning designer role—alongside a host of other ‘third space’ professionals (Whitchurch, 2012) such as academic developers, educational technologists, and more—contributes to the ongoing professionalisation and innovation of learning and teaching in universities, as these highly skilled professionals work to support their academic colleagues by providing a range of pedagogical, technological, design, and other expertise. Learning designers are subsequently in high demand. But it has only been very recently that formal qualifications and training programs for learning designers have begun to be offered by universities and other higher education providers. There is also little accord on either what or how learning designers should learn—the requisite knowledge and skills for the role, what training should be provided and by whom, and even what (if any) formal qualifications should be required.

Intervening in these discussions, this paper describes a work-in-progress initiative to co-design an effective training program for/with/as a team of novice learning designers. The question driving our practice-led and design-based investigation is not just what but how learning designers should learn. A team of seven novice learning designers, supported by a senior colleague and mentor, undertook research into the typical knowledge, skills, and competencies required to succeed as a learning designer, and conducted an informal learning needs analysis to gauge the learning challenges and formative experiences that shape learning designers’ professional practices and identities. This paper begins by discussing the definition and historical development of learning design as a profession, then reviewing extant research into the requisite knowledge, skills, and capabilities for learning designers, as well as current research on training and development for learning designers. It outlines the initial process undertaken to co-design a training program based on this research and analysis, summarising the guiding theoretical principles and related design components consequently ideated by the team. The four guiding principles discussed include: 1) affecting learner agency, flexibility, and personalisation; 2) becoming professional through the integration of theory and practice; 3) the centrality of the novice-expert mentoring relationship; and 4) supporting legitimate peripheral participation in a community of practice. The paper then briefly describes the core curriculum and program structure developed by the team through a generative process of mapping knowledge, skills, and capabilities for learning design professionals. This includes plans for a set of 18 micro-credentials, supported by a professional portfolio, mentoring framework, and community of practice. The potential implications of this research for current and future learning design practice are also discussed.

Background

Even for those working and researching in and around the field, “defining what a learning designer does is a challenge” (Heggart & Dickson-Deane, 2022, p. 282). Learning designers “toil in the interstices between the more prominent teacher and student narratives” (Costello et al., 2022, p. 1), occupying an uncertain ‘third space’ (Whitchurch, 2012) as they work to support their academic colleagues by providing a range of pedagogical, technological, design, and other expertise—particularly in designing for technology-enhanced and online learning (Tay et al., 2022). Learning design appears both a consequence but perhaps also, in part at least, a cause of the disaggregation or ‘unbundling’ of traditional academic roles and the rise of the ‘para-academic’ (Tucker & Neely, 2010; MacFarlane, 2011) as “educational responsibilities are redistributed to staff with different kinds of expertise” (O’Connor, 2020, p. 19), including those in non-academic and professional roles. Undoubtedly accelerated by the COVID-19 pandemic and the shift to emergency remote teaching, learning design is becoming a vital profession not only in higher education, but increasingly in primary and secondary education, vocational education and training, corporate learning and development, and the charity and non-government sectors. Yet its practices, boundaries, and identity are often still unclear, and so sometimes poorly understood. There is also added complexity and ambiguity to the field as job titles and functions proliferate (Mitchell et al., 2017), indicating a profession still grappling with its own conflicting and divergent practices, boundaries, and identities (Altena et al., 2019). This tends to complicate the work of learning designers in general, including their working relationships with academics.

So, what is learning design? In its simplest terms, “[l]earning design is a practice, a process, and a profession that facilitates the systematic design and development of learning experiences” (Abblitt, 2024, n. p.). Heavily influenced by the long history of instructional (systems) design (see Reiser, 2001a, 2001b), its emergence is traced back to the late 1990s and early 2000s as a response to addressing “the central challenge of improving teaching and learning” (Dalziel et al., 2016, p. 1) in light of the advent of new and rapidly changing educational technologies and the rise of (social) constructivist theories of learning—a dual trend inspiring the reimagining of teaching as a design science (Conole, 2013; Laurillard, 2002, 2012). Like a growing array of other ‘third space’ professionals, learning designers often act as consultants, collaborating with academics and other stakeholders to support teaching and learning. In this team’s particular work context, we typically work one-on-one with individual academics, frequently engaging in a long and sometimes intense collaborative working relationship stretching over six months to develop a brand-new course—and often longer as courses are regularly updated and refreshed. Each collaborator brings their respective areas of expertise to bear on learning design decisions and the co-creation of learning experiences, including aspects such as learning outcomes and constructive alignment, assessment and feedback strategies, pedagogical models, structure and sequencing of content, teaching and learning activities, student engagement strategies, educational technologies, content development, multimedia production, and more. Critically, learning design is thus “not simply ... a technical methodology to be applied to design situations, but also ... a socially constructed practice” (Campbell et al., 2009, p. 646) that challenges learning designers to apply a wide variety of knowledge and skills while working with a diverse range of people and adapting to some hugely different educational and work contexts.

Learning design is a multidisciplinary field combining theoretical and practical elements from a range of disciplines and professions. There has been considerable research recently into the knowledge, skills, and capabilities relevant to learning design and educational technology professionals (Kang & Ritzhaupt, 2015; Klein & Kelly, 2018; Kumar & Ritzhaupt, 2017; MacCallum & Brown, 2022; MacLean & Scott, 2011; Martin & Ritzhaupt, 2020; Rieber, 2018; Ritzhaupt & Kumar, 2015; Ritzhaupt et al., 2021; Wang et al., 2021)—including specific aspects such as leadership (Ashbaugh, 2013; Ashbaugh & Piña, 2014; Chongwony et al., 2020; Gardner et al., 2018) and project management (Kline et al., 2020). There are also several professional organisations across the education and human resources sectors with published standards and competency frameworks for instructional or learning design. These include the Association for Educational Communications and Technology (AECT), the Association for Talent Development (ATD), the International Society for Technology in Education (ISTE), and the University Professional and Continuing Education Association (UPCEA). Although there is often significant variation in emphasis, and inevitably varying expectations for learning designers depending on institutional and organisational context, the requisite knowledge, skills, and capabilities identified herein broadly fall into four groups:

1. *Learning and Design*: Models and methodologies for designing learning, including educational psychology, theories of learning and motivation, constructive alignment and backwards design, assessment and evaluation, pedagogical concepts and models, and a growing range of design-focused concepts, methods, skills, and techniques such as design thinking and design facilitation.
2. *Media and Technology*: Technical skills, including working with learning management systems (LMSs) and

other educational technologies, authoring tools for content development, multimedia production, and coding and web development skills.

3. *Project Management*: Principles and practices of effective project management, including planning and scoping, budgeting, stakeholder management, and quality assurance and enhancement.
4. *Leadership and Communication*: Communication and interpersonal skills, collaboration and teamwork, organisation and time management, leadership, change management, troubleshooting and problem-solving, and training and development.

However, “the multiplicity of roles in which learning designers [are] required to demonstrate competence” (Heggart & Dickson-Deane, 2022, p. 287) means that it is not a simple or straightforward process to identify—let alone provide training and development for—the standard competencies or specific expertise habitually required of learning designers.

There has also been some useful recent research into how learning designers should learn. Stefaniak (2017) discusses the critical role of mentoring and coaching in the professional development of learning designers, particularly the importance of the novice-expert relationship. Mancilla & Frey (2020) describe the development of an apprenticeship model for learning designers, emphasising the integration of theory and practice. Lowell & Moore (2020) discuss the importance of authentic learning and real-world activities in developing knowledge, skills, and capabilities as a learning designer. MacCullum & Brown (2022) describe the development of a micro-credential for learning designers, asserting the need to broaden our perspective and extend our thinking beyond professional standards and employer requirements. Notably, Heggart & Dickson-Deane (2022) describe the design and development of perhaps the first formal qualification specifically targeting learning designers: the Graduate Certificate of Learning Design, offered by the University of Technology Sydney. In developing this program, they note the current “opportunity for learning designers and academics who deliver learning design content to define what it means to be a learning designer” (p. 281). They also note that overall “there has been little attention paid to the work done by learning designers in the field and that has led to a requisite lack of theorising about the best ways of training and developing learning designers” (p. 283). This paper makes a practice-led and design-based intervention into these discussions by illustrating the process and outcomes, to date, of a work-in-progress initiative to design a training program for novice learning designers.

Methods

The researchers set out to explore three core questions. First, what are the foundational requirements (i.e., knowledge, skills, competencies, mindsets) for effective learning design practice? Second, what are the current and best practices with respect to training and development for learning designers? Third, what might an effective training program look like for this specific cohort of novice learning designers? To explore these questions, we adopted a practice-led approach (Smith & Dean, 2009; Sullivan, 2009), while also drawing on aspects of design-based research (Barab & Squire, 2004; The Design-Based Research Collective; 2003), using our collaborative learning design practice as a framework to explore these complex and challenging issues and as a research method to generate new knowledge. With knowledge situated and embedded in practice, the design of our training program became our mode of inquiry, knowledge generated at the intersection of the designer-researchers, the design product itself, and the critical-reflective process. This research process is necessarily ongoing and iterative, with the researchers constantly reflecting on our practice—on action and in action (Schoen, 1992)—and using the findings to inform our next steps and continuing professional practice. Ethics is complex in design-based and practice-led research, particularly as the only human participants involved are the researchers themselves. Informed consent was discussed and iteratively negotiated and renegotiated as the design and research processes evolved over time.

The researchers are part of a large team of approximately 50 learning designers and related ‘third space’ professionals, working for an online program management (OPM) company partnered with over a dozen public and private universities across Australia and South-East Asia. The team comprises seven novice learning designers, working in the Associate Learning Designer (ALD) role, mentored by a senior colleague and mentor. Significant growth within the organisation necessitated we employ a lot of learning designers quickly, in a market in which candidates were already in high demand. The ALD role was created to help fill this gap while also providing a learning-focused entry-level position into the profession. Alongside meeting business needs, the role helps novices transition into the profession of learning design. ALDs come into the role with diverse educational and professional backgrounds and have varying levels of experience and expertise in the fields of learning design and educational technology. Some have prior experience in higher education, vocational education and training, or corporate learning and development. Some have transitioned from academic roles, with PhDs in a variety of disciplines. Others come from ‘third space’ roles in student admissions, academic

advising, career counselling, or student support. Some are former primary or secondary school teachers, with practical classroom experience. Most have some experience working in universities, but not all. This diversity of educational and professional backgrounds, and the consequent breadth and diversity of learning needs, make a one-size-fits-all and cohort-based approach to training and development particularly challenging. People are also frequently moving in and out of the team, often promoted into fully-fledged learning design roles, so that team members have different lengths of tenure and are at various stages in their learning and development. Our challenge is to create a comprehensive but flexible training program to meet the diverse learning needs of this and future ALD cohorts, enabling them to confidently grow as professionals and progress in the organisation but also in their newly chosen careers.

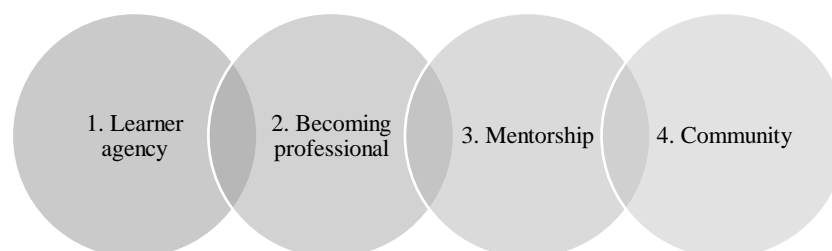
Our research comprised a co-design process, simulating our own learning design methodology employed when working with a new university partner or program. The co-design process was thus also a learning experience: throughout, we emphasised learning in the flow of work, exposing novice learning designers to the knowledge, skills, capabilities, practices, challenges, and frustrations of learning design in situ, providing a ‘sandpit’ for designerly exploration and experimentation but also the development of their own professional practices and identities. This process comprised weekly meetings and workshops over approximately six months, during which we explored key concepts, theories, models, methodologies, and skills relevant to learning design through discussions of both current and seminal research in education, technology, and design. These regular meetings were supplemented by ad hoc brainstorming and ideation sessions, as well as other independent and team-based project work, which emphasised the application of theoretical knowledge to the practice of learning design. We began by considering the various contextual factors typically influencing learning design within our specific work setting—such as academic expertise, industry expertise, employer needs, student needs, market demand, and market research looking at comparative programs. We reviewed existing programs in the market, focusing on Graduate Certificates in Learning Design, Educational Technology, and related areas. We also conducted an informal learning needs analysis to establish the major learning challenges and formative experiences that shape learning designers’ professional practices and identities. Based on the above research and analysis, we have generated two key outcomes to date:

1. First, we address the question of *how* learning designers should learn by developing a set of four guiding theoretical principles and related design elements for the program, enabling us as a group to explore the practical application of relevant theories and models from the literature, considering the integration of theory and practice.
2. Second, we address the question of *what* by mapping out a core curriculum and creating a program structure, establishing the requisite knowledge, skills, and capabilities for effective learning design practice. This includes program learning outcomes and designs for a series of 18 micro-credentials that will comprise the program.

The exploration of these foundational questions allowed us to conceptualise a training program for novice learning designers while also shaping our research as a learning experience for the team. These initial outcomes are discussed in detail below.

Discussion

How should learning designers learn? To explore this question, we investigated a range of educational research on how students learn in a variety of contexts, with a focus on pedagogical concepts, theories, and models common in higher education, adult learning, and professional learning settings—establishing what works, both for us as learners, but also for the variety of students for whom we will spend our careers designing learning. Based on this research and the learning needs analysis described above, we determined four overlapping themes and principles to guide the design and development of the program.



1. Learner agency

Learners' agency is affected in the program by attempting to situate learning within their "lifeworld" (Dall'Alba & Sandberg, 2010). This is partially achieved through pedagogical models and educational technologies that enable student-centred approaches, including elements of flexibility and personalisation. Student-centred learning is a threshold concept and key tenet for learning designers; we often think of ourselves as advocates for students, promoting a conception of learning as an active cognitive process focused on what the student does (Biggs, 1999; Shuell, 1986). Drawing on theories of andragogy and adult learning (Knowles et al., 2005), the program leverages the intrinsic motivation of adult learners, ensuring they understand the purpose and relevance of their learning—ensuring that it is contextualised and situated, not abstract and theoretical. The program provides learners with opportunities to use and share prior knowledge, skills, and experiences in their learning, integrating new knowledge and skills into their existing cognitive schema. Drawing on theories of heutagogy (Blaschke, 2012; Blaschke & Hase, 2015), the program emphasises aspects of responsibility, autonomy, self-determination, and self-regulation—these are core skills and mindsets whose cultivation is critical to learning but also to effective professional practice as a learning designer. Meta-cognitive strategies such as self-reflection and self-regulation are also critical, encouraging the recognition and development of effective learning strategies as both learners and learning designers. Focused on the development of the individual professional, engaged as an active agent directing their own learning, the self-paced and self-directed program provides a high level of flexibility and personalisation and is adaptable to different work contexts and varying levels of experience and expertise. This is realised in two ways:

1. A professional portfolio forms the centrepiece of the program, documenting learning experiences, reflections, and artifacts. Learners analyse their own learning needs, then plan and direct their learning through a cycle of goal setting, monitoring, and reflection on their learning, purpose, and impact as professionals. The portfolio encourages critical self-reflection and supports identity development in preparation for professional practice.
2. The program structure comprises a series of 18 micro-credentials. These self-paced, self-directed micro-credentials provide the personalisation and flexibility required to meet the learning needs of a highly diverse cohort. Micro-credentials are created to be accessed just-in-time and at point-of-need, when necessary, throughout the flow of work, to be as relevant and useful to that work as possible, helping to situate theory into practice. The conceptualisation and design of a new micro-credential provides a capstone project for learners concluding the program.

2. Becoming professional

One prevailing critique of existing professional development programs for learning designers is that "they are far too focused on theoretical considerations, which means that graduates are not well suited to begin work immediately as learning designers" (Heggart & Dickson-Deane, 2022, p. 285). Higher education has long been criticised for neglecting the ontological dimension of learning: "In adopting a focus on knowledge or activities that are learned, many practice approaches overlook or downplay the ontological dimension central to learning or, in other words, attention to who learners are becoming, both individually and collectively" (Dall'Alba & Sandberg, 2010, pp. 105-106). The program focuses not only on knowledge and skills but on the ontology of learning design, reshaping the learner's identity and self through exposure to and immersion in the authentic practices of the profession: "Becoming a professional ... involves transformation of the self through embodying the routines and traditions of the profession in question" (Dall'Alba, 2009, p. 37). Emphasis is placed on the essential theme of being and becoming a professional, because "[t]he central issue in learning is becoming a practitioner, not learning about practice" (Brown et al., 1998, p. 230). Theory and practice are taught and learned simultaneously (Wrenn & Wrenn, 2009), ensuring their integration and application through a guided immersion in professional practice. The program provides an authentic learning experience (Herrington & Herrington, 2006; Lowell & Moore, 2020; Rule, 2006) which stresses the inter-connectedness of learning across the education disciplines, and the congruent real-world value of academic knowledge and skills. In the course of their work, learners engage in a variety of learning design projects and take responsibility for specific tasks, including autonomous decision-making. This ensures exposure to the situatedness and multiplicity of our professional practice, treating learning design not in the abstract but as an embodied and enacted socio-material practice. The program doesn't just focus on work, but also explores the profession and the industry—where we have come from, and where we are headed in the next five, ten, or twenty years—as this is also vital to how we understand ourselves as practitioners.

3. Mentorship

Mentoring opportunities are critical for novice learning designers, allowing “less experienced individuals to gain knowledge and insight working with experienced individuals in the workplace setting” (Stefaniak, 2017, p. 27). Immersion into the profession for novice learning designers is guided by more experienced practitioners, providing visibility and access to a wide variety of expertise, knowledge, skills, capabilities, and mindsets, in the applied and situated context of our professional practice and project work. The program establishes mentor-mentee relationships and provides opportunities for novices to ‘shadow’ and ‘co-design’ alongside expert peers. The program incorporates a cognitive apprenticeship model (Collins et al., 1989; Dennen & Burner, 2007): whereas in a traditional apprenticeship model “apprentices learn their field by watching and assisting a master of a trade or practice” (Dickey, 2008, p. 507), focusing on learning the skills and knowledge necessary to perform a specific task or job, the cognitive apprenticeship model emphasises cognitive processes, such as problem-solving and decision-making, and reflection on the application of these skills. Drawing on theories of situated cognition (Brown et al., 1989; Kirshner & Whitson, 1997; Lave, 1988), knowledge is conceived as inseparable from action and practice. This allows experienced learning designers to teach “the processes that experts use to handle complex tasks”, ensuring that “conceptual and factual knowledge is exemplified and situated in the contexts of its use” (Collins et al., 1989, p. 457). The mentoring framework provides different levels of engagement—from observation to collaboration to leadership—which shape the relationship and allow the novice learning designer to adopt different roles based on their experience, expertise, and learning progress. Guided by their mentor, novice learning designers are frequently “challenged with tasks slightly more difficult than they can accomplish on their own,” working with their mentor over time to “move from a position of observation to one of active practice” (Dennen & Burner, 2007, p. 427). This immersion provides novice learning designers with exposure to the diverse contexts in which learning design takes place, encouraging the development of the complex situational and adaptive thinking skills vital to effective learning design practice.

4. Community

The social aspect is critical for learning about professional practice in any context. Collaboration and teamwork are critical skills for learning designers. For novice learning designers, receiving support and advice from peers—being able to share experiences, successes, and frustrations with each other—is truly formative. The program socialises novice learning designers to the wider practice and profession by engaging them in a community of practice through legitimate peripheral participation (Lave & Wenger, 1991; Wenger, 1998). Learners are engaged as “active participants in the practices of social communities” both within our organisation and beyond, and thus provided with opportunities to “construct... [professional] identities in relation to these communities” (Wenger, 2018, p. 210). This is crucial as “the mastery of knowledge and skills requires newcomers to move toward full participation in the sociocultural practices of a community” (Lave & Wenger, 1991, p. 29)—transitioning from novice to expert through engagement with professional communities and networks over time. In this way, learning is “not merely situated in practice” but “an integral part of generative social practice in the lived-in world” (Lave & Wenger, 1991, p. 35), such that it is genuinely transformative and “changes who we are” as professionals (Wenger, 2018, p. 211). In practice, this community comprises an inner circle of novice learning designers with a common purpose of learning to be effective, reflective practitioners, and with a variety of shared ideas and challenges related to their developing professional practices and identities. Our *domain* is learning design; our *community* comprises the social and professional interactions and relationships of our everyday work, and our *practice* comprises the knowledge, ideas, language, documents, design, tools, challenges, problems, stories, and experiences that we share. Within the organisation, we are supported by a larger team of experienced learning designers, educational technologists, web developers, project managers, and others. Beyond the organisation, we are also supported by a burgeoning professional community of learning designers—a significant focus of the program is to orient learners to these communities, looking beyond the specific ways of working with the organisation to expose them to the breadth and diversity of professional practices in the field.

5. Curriculum

How we learn is inherently tangled up with what we learn. As we explored different theories and models relevant to the how of our program, we also began mapping the knowledge, skills, and capabilities which would comprise the substantive content of the program. This involved conceptualising the ways of knowing, acting, and being (Barnett & Coate, 2004) which comprise our profession and curriculum: What are the foundational knowledge, core skills, practices, and ontologies of learning design? How do we conceptualise the relationship between these? And how do we incorporate these into a cohesive and comprehensive curriculum?

- **Knowing** relates to the epistemological dimension of our profession. What do you need to know to be a learning designer? What is the nature of knowledge in learning design?

- **Acting** relates to the practical skills constituting our profession: What do you need to be able to do to be a learning designer? What specific skills or competencies do you need? What is our practice?
- **Being** relates to the self and the ontological dimension of our profession: What are your attitudes, beliefs, values, and mindsets as a learning designer? What is your purpose? How do you relate to yourself, others, and the world?

We considered these questions through a series of brainstorming and ideation sessions. The outcomes included a knowledge map identifying four key domains—pedagogy and design, media and technology, managing people and projects, and professionalism and ethics—and a series of related topics and sub-topics relevant to our specific work context. We generated a set of nine program learning outcomes, attempting to capture both the core knowledge, skills, and capabilities required for effective practice as a learning designer, while also accurately reflecting the complexity, ambiguity, and diversity of our professional practices and identities. Upon completion of the program, learners will be able to:

1. **Knowledge & Understanding:** Synthesise and apply an integrated knowledge of pedagogy, technology, design, and consulting to implement a student-centred, evidence-based, and data-driven learning design practice.
2. **Cognitive Skills:** Apply analytical, critical, and creative thinking skills adaptively to solve problems and enhance learning in a variety of educational contexts and settings.
3. **Practice Skills (1): Learning Design:** Conceptualise, design, and create courses that meet the learning needs of diverse student cohorts.
4. **Practice Skills (2): Educational Technology:** Research, evaluate, and implement educational technologies for pedagogical benefit, while keeping up to date on current, emerging, and future technological trends and innovations.
5. **Practice skills (3): Content Development:** Create graphic, multimedia, and written content in ways that support usability, readability, and accessibility, activate learning through engagement and interactivity, and aid the retention of learned concepts.
6. **Data Literacy:** Analyse and interpret qualitative and quantitative data, including learning analytics and student feedback, to continuously improve course design and teaching delivery.
7. **Consulting Skills:** Apply communication, collaboration, and consulting skills and strategies to lead and manage diverse stakeholders throughout the learning design process.
8. **Project Management:** Manage the competing demands of learning design projects efficiently from launch to delivery, demonstrating autonomy, accountability, adaptability, resilience, and a commitment to quality and continuous improvement.
9. **Ethics & Professionalism:** Reflect critically on your own ethical professional practice, purpose, and identity as a learning designer, and plan for continuous professional learning and development.

To materialise these outcomes, the program structure itself comprises a series of 18 self-paced and self-directed micro-credentials, feeding into a portfolio and supported by mentors and a wider community of practice (Figure 1, below). Each micro-credential comprises approximately 30 hours of learning, roughly equivalent to a 4-unit graduate certificate in terms of volume of learning and aims for a similar level of complexity by AQF standards.

Portfolio: Professional Practice, Identity, and Ethics						
18 Self-Paced Micro-Credentials	Theories of Learning and Motivation	Designing for Learning	Analytics for Data-Driven Learning Design	Educational Technology, User Experience, and Accessibility	Coding and Web Development	Consulting Skills
	Educational Psychology	Assessment and Feedback	Pedagogies for Active Learning	Cognitive Load and Multimedia for Learning	Storyboarding, Instructional Writing, and Information Design	Managing People and Projects
	Inclusive Learning Environments	Effective Teaching for Online Learning	Social Learning and Student Engagement	EdTech Innovation, Trends and Futures	Quality Assurance, Enhancement, and Evaluation	Leadership, Communication, and Teamwork
Mentoring Framework / Community of Practice						

Figure 1: Program Design Elements and Micro-Credentials

With the combination of the 18 micro-credentials, portfolio, mentoring framework, and community of practice, the program provides a level of adaptability and personalisation for this diverse cohort of learners, while also providing structure and scaffolding for their learning, and a high level of support through mentorships and peer communities, all focused on immersion in practice, becoming professional, and the development of learners' own professional practice and identity. While building out a toolkit of pedagogies and technologies, and exploring their application in situ, the program scaffolds the development of the situational awareness, decision-making, and cognitive adaptivity that are critical to succeeding in the diverse educational settings and work contexts in which learning design practice takes place. To get started, each team member is taking responsibility for the design and development of one micro-credential, consulting with subject matter experts and guided by more experienced colleagues. Based on this curriculum and program structure, our next steps are to determine more specifically the topic coverage for each micro-credential, write descriptions and learning outcomes, identify threshold concepts, design aligned authentic assessment tasks and supporting activities, and curate or create the required content and resources.

Conclusion

How do you build a learning designer? What and how should learning designers learn? We are at a point in the development of our profession where these questions are becoming ever more critical—not just to meet an increasing demand for learning designers in the higher education and other sectors, but also in helping to articulate a shared practice and identity for the growing profession as its boundaries begin slowly to crystallise. Our work-in-progress design of a training program for/with/as a team of novice learning designers demonstrates that aspects such as learner agency, flexibility and personalisation, the integration of theory and practice, the ontology of becoming professional, novice-expert mentorship, and legitimate peripheral participation in a community of practice as vital to becoming and being an effective, reflective learning design practitioner, shaping our current and future practices and identities. Realising that our program is designed to meet some very specific needs in a very specific educational setting and organisational context, we hope this paper encourages and influences ongoing discussions about what and how learning designers should learn—and ultimately what it means to be a learning designer.

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