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# A "whole-person" education: students innovating and reflecting with the Scottish Innovative Student Awards.

MARTZOUKOU, K., MOULE, C. and BREMNER, P.

2020

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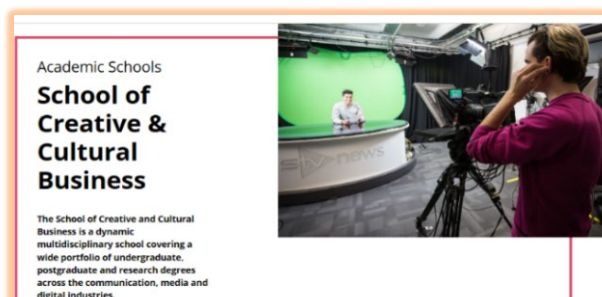
# *A 'Whole-person' Education: Students Innovating and Reflecting with the Scottish Innovative Student Awards*

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## **School of Creative & Cultural Business**



Hello, I am Dr Konstantina Martzoukou, Teaching Excellence Fellow in the [School of Creative and Cultural Business](#) (SCCB) at the Robert Gordon University (RGU). Our new RGU Teaching and Learning Framework focuses on the integration and embedding of 'whole person education' as a key educational component via 'technology enabled learning', 'collaborative practice', 'authentic learning', 'flexibility and inclusion' and 'lifelong learning' (The RGU Teaching and Learning Framework, 2020, p. 2-3). The current shift to 'whole person education' is a factor of holistic curriculums (Miller 2019) and presents a need for universities to become more skills focussed (Ostergaard and Graafland Norlund 2019).



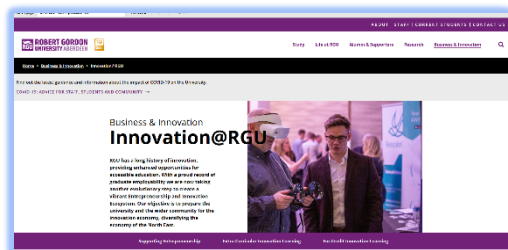
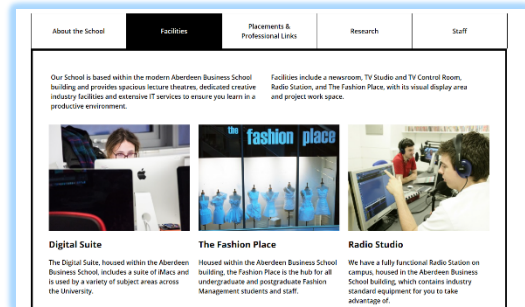
Our school offers diversified, versatile and creative learning opportunities to students via activities which are designed to foster that direction and embed innovation and reflection.

Reflection is a sense-making activity which helps students to develop a deeper understanding and a holistic picture of their learning journey, as well as plan continuing learning paths with rigor and evidence (Schon 1983). It is the road towards developing critical self-awareness and skills, crystallising professional values and forming a reflective professional identity. However, reflection and innovation go hand in hand. In the post COVID-19 world, we are called to adapt rapidly to changing environments, with innovations in education that will help to generate new and improved ideas, knowledge, approaches, methods, practices, and services. Critical reflection helps to accelerate progress towards those innovations, making us to ask the important questions of what, how, why and when and plan for the future.



One of these opportunities to reflect and innovate is the Scottish Innovative Student Awards (SISA) programme, which is well placed to extend a student’s ability to apply theory into practice and aligns with the UK Quality Assurance Agency (QAA) Enterprise and Entrepreneurship Education (2018). To compete with the workplace market in gaining employment, graduates must understand the development of their intrinsic competencies and values, as well as well as their development in expanding their awareness of external environments.

In the [School of Creative and Cultural Business](#), and more recently across RGU, the Scottish Innovative Student Awards (SISA) programme from the Scottish Institute for Enterprise, has been embedded within many of our degree programmes. Via the accreditation of modules for level one (Future Thinker), SISA allows students to progress to levels 2 (Innovation Catalyst) and 3 (Innovative Champion).



This work is led by the RGU Entrepreneurship and Innovation Group (EIG) with the support of Dr Pauline Bremner and the SISA steering group. To date 478 RGU students have attained a SISA award with 21 continuing to Level 3.

RGU was the [first university](#) to introduce the scheme in 2018 and has now become the first university in Scotland to be awarded Scottish Innovative Student Award (SISA) self-accreditation status from the Scottish Institute for Enterprise (SIE) to equip students with a forward-thinking and enterprising mindset.



The university’s [School of Creative and Cultural Business](#) was also the first school to receive SISA accreditation and, since then, RGU have gone on to provide students across a number of academic schools.

### What is the Importance of SISA to RGU students?



**Chris Moule (Head of Entrepreneurship and Innovation, Entrepreneurship and Innovation Group):** Skills are a major driving force of growth through their effect on our global, national and regional economy. They are essential for our young people to enter the labour market, access good-quality jobs or create their own and provide value to society.

Furthermore, they are crucial for everyone to utilise and keep abreast of technological advances in a rapidly changing, uncertain and inter-dependent world. Through its three levels, SISA provides a

foundation of core skills upon which our students at RGU can confidently embrace the challenges and opportunities of the 'future of work' as employees who can act as catalysts for innovation and change or as future entrepreneurs.

Now more than ever, Robert Gordon University, through our partnership with SIE SISA, aim to ensure that key innovation skills and the art of thinking innovatively and working collaboratively will ensure that our students are responsive and agile to the needs of the labour market, now and in the future.

## Who is involved in this work in the School of Creative and Cultural Business?



Hello, I'm Pauline Bremner, and I am a Lecturer in Fashion and Retail in the School of Creative and Cultural Business, Robert Gordon University (RGU). I have been leading the implementation of the Scottish Innovative Student Award SISA programme into our school and aiding in the development of the accreditation process. SISA level one is currently accredited across 15 modules in CCB and some other modules across RGU.

Many academic staff have modules accredited and they work with the SISA process and methodology to ensure students benefit. Iain Morrison and Lorraine Amies have also implemented SISA level one into Gray's PPD programme. As a university we collaborate with the Scottish Institute of Enterprise Programme Manager Ann Davidson, who has SISA responsibility via our Entrepreneurship and Innovation Group (EIG).

## What is this method about?

**Pauline:** SISA is an awards programme from the Scottish Institute for Enterprise (SIE) that develops innovation skills in students and issues certificates for each stage completed. With the changes predicted for the future of work the businesses of the future require employers to have innovation and enterprise skills such as creativity, problem solving and the ability to communicate well. Participating in SISA will enhance a student's ability to stand out in the graduate recruitment market and develop future-ready skills that will open up new career opportunities. They will learn how they can embrace the opportunities and challenges of the Fourth Industrial Revolution as innovative employees or as future entrepreneurs.

More information is available via the SISA website: <https://www.sie.ac.uk/sisa/>

## How does this method work?

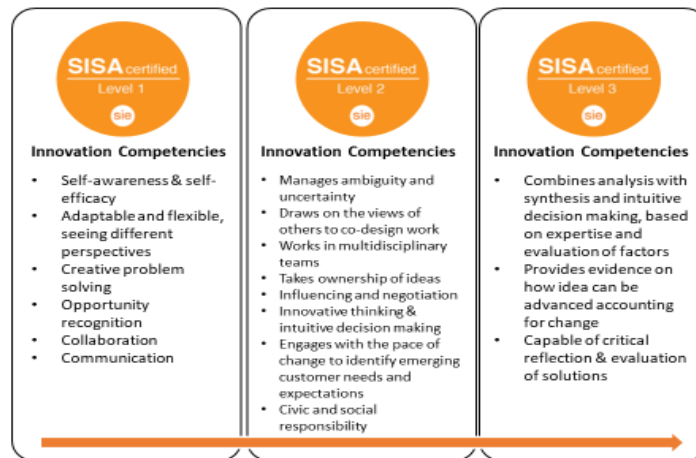
There are three SISA levels (Figure 1) which help students to develop a range of innovation competencies.

### Level 1 (Future Thinker)

It is delivered within the curriculum by SIE – or by RGU lecturers. Students can then apply online for their Level 1 certificate and demonstrate their understanding by answering the question:

***'What new thing did you learn and how does that relate to the future and to your future?'***

## What innovation competencies will you develop?



© SIE 2019

**Figure 1.** The Three SISA levels

### Level 2 (Innovation Catalyst)

Students who are successful with their reflection are invited to attend a level 2 workshop which, this academic year, has taken on the theme of the UN sustainability goals. This February saw 43 RGU students attend in Dundee and they achieved their Level 2 Innovation Catalyst. The SIE facilitated workshop students to enhance and develop their innovation competencies by working in multidisciplinary teams, with students from other Scottish universities. Working with peers from other universities clearly gives students the need to collaborate, working in tandem using innovative practices to move ideas forward.



**Figure 2.** Pictures of our students at various SISA workshops

### Level 3 (Innovation Champion)

It is achieved by students who complete an online worksheet from the SIE demonstrating their ability to apply the innovation process to their own project. In this academic session (2019-2020), 16 students have obtained this level and past work has been presented by the SIE in posters, encapsulating the Museum of the Future initiative, which has been used at the QAA's Focus on Graduate Skills workshops.

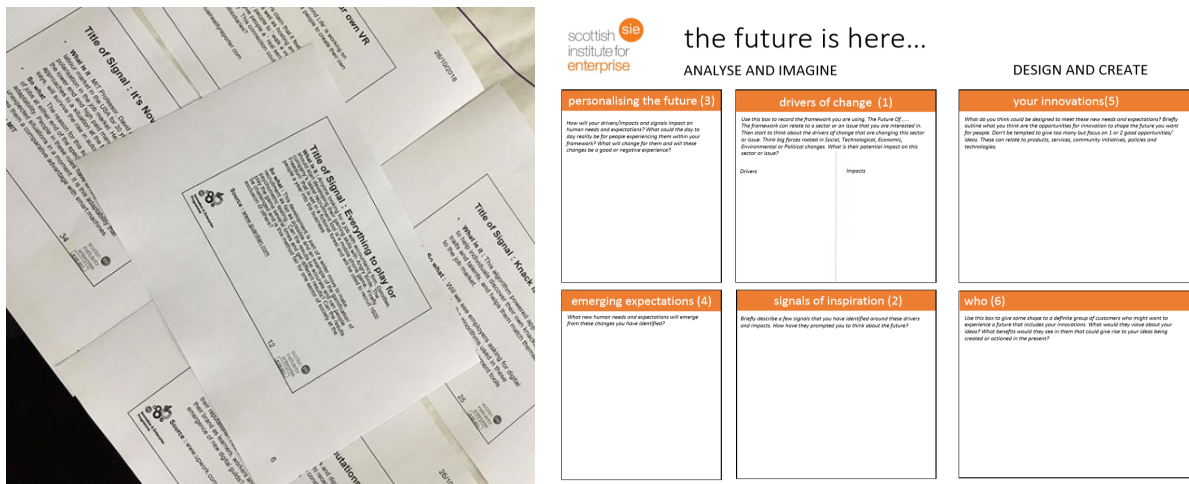


**Figure 3.** Level 3 Innovation Champion Awards

### Could we see an example?

**Pauline:** An example of level 2 and 3 materials are illustrated below. The students are given a full set of materials to work with during levels 2 and 3, where the signals relevant to the theme of the UN sustainable goals are provided for level 2 and a worksheet is provided with a guide for applying for level 3.

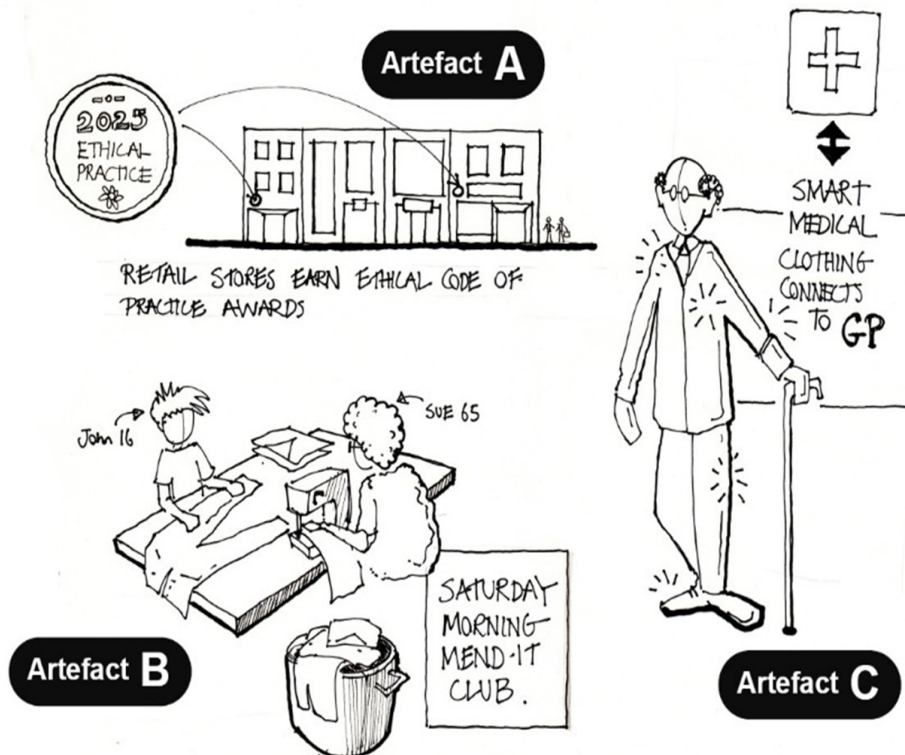
A Fashion Management student's application at Level 3 is illustrated below (Figure 4). The student has used the brief given by SIE on the 'Museum of the Future' (Figure 5) to encompass the drivers of change of the future in their discipline (Fashion) and using artefacts such as technology, ethics and social conscience, they have highlighted the need to make fashion more ethical.



**Figure 4.** Examples of Level 2 and 3 SISA materials

# The Future of Fashion

Developed in collaboration with Scottish Innovative Student Award Level 3 Innovation Champions



These artefacts are excellent examples of how the government’s agenda on product stewardship is working in practice. It is working towards ensuring through legislation and educational campaigns that everyone involved in the design, production, selling, use and disposal of a product has responsibility for minimising that product’s impact on the environment.

## Artefact A: The Ethical Code of Practice

Companies are complying with a strict ethical code of practice around their manufacturing and procurement upstream processes. There have been examples of company share prices dropping if they fail their bi-annual code compliance inspection. The initial action needed by these companies to comply with the code when it came into force incurred significant costs. However, it is now generating a return on investment for some companies as shoppers choose to shop in person or online only with companies that comply with the code, even if this means the products are more expensive.

## Artefact B: Saturday Make do and Mend Clubs

A great example of a simple idea that addresses product disposal now that people are prohibited from sending discarded clothing to landfill.

Technology by way of social media plays a part by providing the platform that brings people face to face for this meaningful and social activity, and enables them to contribute to local as well as national and global environmental management strategies. It also alerts and enables various charities to arrange for the collection of unwanted clothing after a club meeting.

## Artefact C: Smart Clothing

New technology continues to redefine the very clothes we wear. Gone are the days of single purpose clothing. Tomorrow’s garments will instead offer unparalleled functionality and as this example demonstrates will be capable of monitoring user wellbeing and broadcasting this data in real time to medical services.

© 2019 Scottish Institute for Enterprise



**Figure 5.** An example of a Fashion Management student’s level 3 application

# Welcome to SIE's Museum of the Future!

## What is it?

SIE's Museum of the Future showcases a series of artefacts of the future that captures the future forecasts of students studying at Scotland's Universities and their insights about a future they want to make happen. Representing a diverse range of disciplines and level of study, these students took part in the Scottish Innovative Student Awards (SISA) for 2018/2019 and received the top Level 3 award, Innovation Champion.

## How was the collection generated?

Each student receiving this award arrived at their future forecasts and insights by choosing a sector of society they were interested in. Their next step was to identify the big drivers or forces of change shaping this sector into something new. The students also looked at the connections between the different drivers.

They then went on to identify signals or small present-day innovations that prompted them to think about the potential impacts resulting from these drivers were they to scale up and gather momentum. Could this have the potential to disrupt the status quo in their chosen sector? To answer these questions, the students treated their signals as small building blocks of evidence of futures in the making.

## How the collection has been curated

Just as an artefact of the past can tell us how people lived, an artefact of the future can tell us how people will live in the future. By making the future tangible by creating artefacts of the future we can take steps to action it in the present.

*"No one can predict the future but you can think about it systematically and turn uncertainty into inspiration, creativity and resilience."*

*Bob Johansen, Get there Early*

**This collection of artefacts of the future takes the students' emerging insights and ideas about a possible future and, with the help of a graphic artist:**

- **Transforms** them into seemingly real objects and spaces that say **'This is how the future looks and feels'**
- **Shows** how familiar objects could evolve as a consequence of changes we can foresee today
- **Communicates** the students' findings to inspire better insights about the futures they want to make happen and **inspire and inform present day action.**

## How to engage with the collection

Use the tangible objects and spaces you see in the collection to generate your own insights around the future possibilities for the sectors represented. Does one sector's future landscape impact on another? Can you spot opportunities and risks for yourself and others? What action do you need to take in the present to turn these forecasts into a future you want to see or make happen?

*This collection is supported by:*



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**Figure 6.** SIE's brief on the 'Museum of the Future'

## What other support materials are included for the students?

**Pauline:** The SIE produce quite a range of materials for staff and students. As staff we have access to signals, previous workshop slides and information sheets. In addition, we have held an information session for staff on levels 2 and 3 and the SIE are currently engaging staff in focus groups to discuss the provision of materials going forward. Online materials are in the pipeline as support for both staff and students as an added value to



the process. Additionally, a Facebook group was developed by SIE to aid students in their level 3 application.

## How has SISA been implemented in the School of Creative and Cultural Business?

**Pauline:** Our school has many degrees and because of this many module coordinators have applied using the SIE's application process to have their module accredited for level one. Any student attending the activity or session the lecturer delivers will cover the SISA level one methodology and begin to consider how things may have to change in the future. Once they have completed this session the student follows on by completing the 100-word reflective statement. Reflection is important as this encourages the students to consider the competencies targeted in level one and how they can use them in the future. The aim is to engender an innovative mindset in the student early on in their curriculum ensuring that students consider their own entrepreneurial approaches to the external environment.

With the successful implementation in academic year 2018-2019 we have collaborated with the SIE as a university to becoming the first university to award the level one in house. A full overview of the success of SISA in our school (2018-2019) is found in this video (Figure 7).



**Figure 7.** Video on SISA outcomes (School of Creative and Cultural Business)

## How did the students find the approach?

**Pauline:** The students who complete the programme get credited for their mindset and can stand out in the crowd more than their peers. This learning and teaching development of a mindset is so in tune with whole person education and collaboration competencies needed for their future employability.

This is one of the main reasons why we have had an award ceremony at RGU's What's Next conference. This video shows the importance of skills to our employability strategic direction at RGU and the benefits of SISA to the students.



**Irina-Cristina Bogdan (Innovative Champion BA (Hons) Fashion Management):**

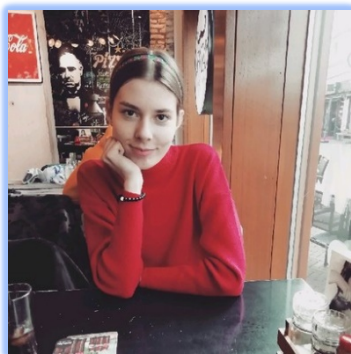


I enjoy challenges that help me progress in my career, which is why I recently entered the Scottish Innovative Student Award Programme, achieving levels 1 (Future Thinker), 2 (Innovation Catalyst), and 3 (Innovation Champion). This allowed me to work in multidisciplinary and multiculturally teams, as well as individually, coming up with ideas and developing solutions for the future.

I learned how to identify drivers of change, draw signals, think about customers' needs and expectations. I developed an innovative project that would contribute to the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals, ensuring public satisfaction, environment protection, as well as economic growth.

As the nature of work is very dynamic in the Fourth Industrial Revolution, I believe being agile, adaptable, resilient, a team player, ready to think outside the box and solving problems creatively is what could differentiate you in a competitive recruitment market. I highly recommend joining the SISA Programme because that is where you will develop these skills and many others.

**Ivana Krizova (Innovative Champion BA (Hons) Fashion Management):**



For me, SIE workshops and SISA overall were a rather rewarding experience. Not only I was dealing with tasks addressing the UN Sustainable Development Goals but I also had to consider the precarious future when creating innovation strategies that focused on the ever-changing trends in different industries. As the workshops heavily relied on teamwork, I had a chance to work together with other students from different cultural and academic backgrounds, which, I believe can help me in the future in regard to employability and enhance my CV.

**Lucia Da Vinci (Innovative Champion MSc Information and Library Studies):**



Participating in the three stages of the SISA Programme, just after my learning phase and before my future work stage, gave me the opportunity to sharpen the competencies so vital for a fulfilling career. More so, I could achieve this in co-creation with hundreds of other flexible thinkers, my future colleagues, in solving the problems we're facing in the world.

The SISA Programme helped me, almost like a magnifying glass, to focus on my sense of purpose and value-based actions that I can engage in converging my worlds of learning and work. Not only did we develop our agile and flexible minds as well as applied foresight in the ideation processes during Levels 1 and 2, but we were then given the opportunity at Level 3 to demonstrate our design thinking, civic and social responsibility competencies, and to test our preparedness to become good influencers for our teams, communities and the society surrounding us.

This was a great multi-disciplinary and multi-cultural exercise and I couldn't have asked for a better preparation for what the future holds for us!

## What were the perspectives of other staff?



**Tracy Pirie (Lecturer in Marketing in the School of Creative and Cultural Business):** I have a final year module 'CB4163 Business Creativity' which has been awarded SISA accreditation. As part of this module the students are challenged with working in cross-disciplinary/cultural teams to undertake research and develop a final pitch on a creative new business idea. Early on in the session we have worked alongside the SIE engaging the students with their signal packs. This allowed the students to work with ideas which they may otherwise not have considered in the context of their respective disciplines. This allowed them to develop a more comprehensive understanding of how changes in environment can drive innovation in their specific disciplines. An additional benefit was that some groups developed their final concept for the assessment during these sessions.

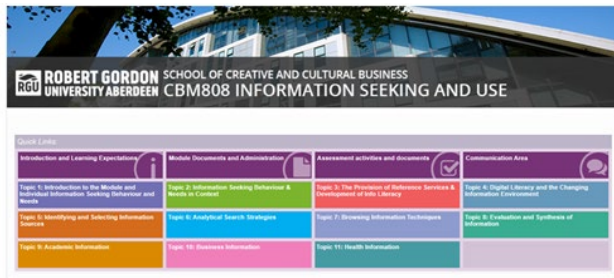
This module also has a critical reflective component where students need to consider the role of entrepreneurial personality traits and the competencies required for working effectively in a creative context to develop these ideas, with a specific focus on the impact that multi-disciplinary/cultural teams can have on this process. The materials which have been developed in this area via the SISA programme again allow the students to get a deeper appreciation of their own practice in this area. This enhances their understanding of the importance of being reflective of their own practices and abilities, with the added value of receiving external recognition for their engagement.



**Simon Farmer (Media and Online Learning Developer in the School of Creative and Cultural Business):** I used elements of the presentation (highlighted on page 6) as a visual aid to explain details of the Scottish Innovative Student Awards to a class of potential applicants. It helped me to explain the differences between levels and potential activities as well as increasing interest. I placed the presentation within the VLE afterwards so students could watch it back in more detail. The student testimonials at the end were very helpful for students and helped them to get a sense of how the SISA could increase their attractiveness to potential employers.



**Dr Konstantina Martzoukou (Teaching Excellence Fellow in the School of Creative and Cultural Business):** I have SISA accreditation for one of my modules, 'CBM808 Information Seeking and Use', which is part of the MSc Information and Library Studies. The module, aims to introduce students to the main theoretical positions and practical developments in the fields of *Information Seeking Behaviour*, *Information Literacy* and *Digital literacy*, examining current information related phenomena, such as fake news, misinformation and information eco chambers. The module has a critical reflective component where the students are asked to evaluate and reflect on what they have learned. SISA offered my students the opportunity to formalise their reflective experiences and receive external recognition for their learning. In their reflections my students focused on the information skills and new information retrieval methods they had learned, as well as the broader competencies they developed as future information professionals. The following summarises the valuable reflective outcomes of SISA as verbalised by my students who completed SISA Level 1:



“Applying for the SISA award really made me reflect on the aspects of the module that had helped me grow my knowledge base and become a more critical thinker on the ideas of information. I am happy I applied for it and had an opportunity to share my experiences on the module” (Ingrid Majoos, MSc Information and Library Studies Student).

“The module helped me become a person that reflects more on information given, but also has made me more confident in research which has helped me not only in my life but in other modules” (Sulaima Iquebal Golam, MSc Information and Library Studies Student).

“I think writing the application for the SISA was very useful in facilitating real reflection on my learning and why I was doing the course. The question ‘*What new thing did you learn and how does that relate to the future and to your future?*’ is quite a powerful one! I think because I was applying for an external award it made me really reflect on what I had learned, why I had learned it, and how my future employers, service users and myself would benefit - or even if they would benefit. All professional practice requires reflective learning, so pushing students to really think about why it matters is good. As future library and information professionals responsible for service provision, we need to understand why a particular skill or piece of knowledge matters to our future, the future of our services and service users, and the communities we will work in...What we study on the course should not be studied in abstract, it should be aligned to our goals and our vision of the future, not only for ourselves as individuals, but also for the people we will be providing services for” (Beki Smith, MSc Information and Library Studies Student).

## Has SISA been implemented in other schools in RGU?



**Iain Morrison (Lecturer at Gray’s School of Art):** At Gray’s School of Art the school has a Personal Professional Development (PPD) program that has been in place for four years which was developed in conjunction with 'Student Partners', to challenge students to consider different stages of their career path through their undergraduate and postgraduate study. As the school had a PPD program in place across all years rather than an application for SISA accreditation that relies on a single module in one semester the school was able to use PPD to successfully apply for all elements of the school to be accredited.

In the first year of taking part in SISA (2019-2020) all Stage 1 students (120) were required to submit the SISA Level 1 outcome online which was successfully completed at the end of semester 2 using their PPD training to support their response to the SISA level 1 question. Over the coming years this will then open out to our Stage 2-4 + Masters students who will then have the option to take part in supporting SIE workshops and PPD support material to allow them to engage in SISA 2 and 3.

## How did the students find the approach?

**Iain:** The PPD at Gray’s is focused on developing a greater awareness of the student’s transferable skills and reviewing the expertise employers wish to see in graduates to allow the student to prepare for their future career path. This perfectly aligns with the SISA awards programme which test their skills gained in their PPD and studio studies while

developing innovation skills through the SISA program. This also gives the students the opportunity to gain SIE certificates for each stage successfully completed.

## Are you planning any changes?

**Pauline:** Teaching and learning is always about reflection, what worked well what did not work well. The SIE have just conducted focus groups and are looking at how best to adapt and support academic staff going forward. Online materials and development of more virtual interactivity will become the next phase. It is important to give students a good balance of support considering the external challenges we all face now. The team at RGU have worked towards an in-house accreditation process for level one SISA and look forward to taking that on board in this academic year.

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