

07 DIEP FINAL REPORT

This R³ task is the Final Reflective Report of 1500 words (+/- 100 words).

Reading

Read and digest the DIEP Strategy document. See the attached .pdf document.

You can also get more details of DIEP from its source URL <https://learninglab.rmit.edu.au/assessments/reflective-writing/>

Task

Your task is to write a reflective report on your personal performance on the module. Add a .pdf of this report to the other six R³ tasks on your portfolio website.

The deadline for completing the report and posting it online is as shown above - Th 15/01/26 @ 16:00 - this deadline also refers to all other aspects of the portfolio.

Important: Note that you are also required to upload a .pdf version of your report to Turnitin on Blackboard - with the same deadline. You have already received instructions on how to do this from the Student Office.

Remember that this report is about your performance and personal practice and should NOT be an essay on User Experience Design or other *content* of the module.

Use the DIEP approach to reflect on how you feel you have performed over the course of the module. For example: What would you do differently next time? With more time what (if any) improvements would you make to your project(s)? Be specific about areas of your design practice you feel you need to improve going forward? What are your strengths and weaknesses? Make sure you include images and examples in the report and try to contextualise your writing by reference to some of the blog tasks, readings and viewings.

You can choose to reflect on your performance over the whole module, or you can focus down into a single project or other aspect of the work.

Use the same approach for the required reflective element of the CDU module submission.

Resources

The .pdf DIEP Strategy document.

Introduction

The series challenged me to engage with core design concepts—from conditional design and affordances to speculative design, prototyping, storytelling, and empathy—while honing critical thinking, research, and creative communication skills. This reflective report analyzes my personal performance across all six tasks, focusing on strengths, weaknesses, and actionable improvements.

Description

In the *RRR01: Conditional Design Manifesto* task. First, I revisited Project 1's collective creation process (rule-based drawing, collaborative iteration) to identify alignment with the manifesto's core tenets (e.g., "process over product," "constraints as creativity drivers"). I researched three external manifestos (*First Things First Manifestos: Social Responsibility in Graphic Design*, *Words in Freedom: A Manifesto Machine as Critical Design*, and *Bauhaus Manifesto*) to inform my personal manifesto, which prioritized dynamic processes, user-centricity, and cross-media practice.

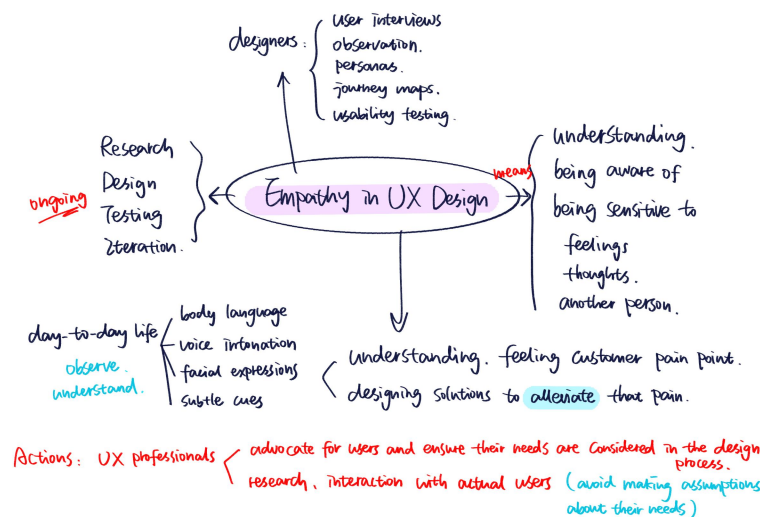
In the *RRR02: Affordance* task. I watched the three assigned videos (Vox's "Bad Doors," IxDF's "Affordance in UX Design") and read the IxDF encyclopedia entry to grasp James Gibson's original theory and Don Norman's design application. I categorized affordances by device (e.g., iPhone's haptic feedback, iPad's stylus compatibility, MacBook's precision typing) and researched Norman's revised definition of signifiers to distinguish them from affordances. I used simple diagrams to illustrate key concepts.

In the *RRR03: Letter to My Son* task. I deconstructed Flanagan's letter to map timelines (written 2000, published 2000, future setting 2020) and cross-referenced her predictions with real-world 2020 – 2026 developments (e.g., ubiquitous touchscreens as realized, "North American Republic" as unfulfilled). I structured my 2035 letter around three pillars: positive progress (clean energy, community connection), challenges (info overload, mental health), and hopes (mindful tech use), keeping it concise per the A4 limit.

In the *RRR04: Prototyping* task. I focused on process over outdated tools, extracting key workflows: low-fidelity (sketching/paper prototypes) → digital (Principle/Form) → native (code-based). I synthesized these into a framework emphasizing iterative validation. For the additional resource, I selected *Prototyping for Designers* by Kathryn McElroy (O'Reilly), as it bridges digital and physical prototyping—complementing Google's digital focus.

In the *RRR05: Storytelling* task. As a current resident of Winchester, I documented my day through taking photos and drawing sketches. I chose a mainly third-person perspective and structured this story around a chronological order: "waking up → discovering activities → going to sleep".

In the *RRR06: Empathy in UX Design* task. I split the 70-minute course into three 20-25 minute sessions to maintain focus. I used a mindmap format with a central "UX Empathy" node, branching into definition, importance, methods (user interviews, empathy maps), and actions.



Interpretation

Each task became a lens to interpret how I approach challenges, collaborate, and balance creativity with structure.

A Shift in Mindset. RRR01 (Conditional Design) was a pivotal moment for redefining my design philosophy. The manifesto's emphasis on "formations rather than forms" resonated with Project 1's collaborative drawing process, where our group's rule-based iterations (e.g., "no lifting the pen," "build on previous lines") produced unexpected, cohesive works. This task taught me that constraints—far from limiting creativity—focus attention on interaction and relationship, a lesson I applied to subsequent tasks. For example, in RRR04 (Prototyping), I prioritized rapid, low-fidelity sketches over polished digital work, recognizing that early iteration (not perfection) drives better design decisions. This shift from "creating a finished product" to "exploring a process" has since become a core part of my practice.

Research as a Creative Tool. RRR02 (Affordance) and RRR01 (Manifesto Research) highlighted how structured research fuels meaningful output. Initially, I viewed research as a "preliminary step," but these tasks showed that research itself can inspire creativity. For RRR02, reading Don Norman's *The Design of Everyday Things* helped me distinguish between affordances (possible actions) and signifiers (perceivable cues), which I applied to analyzing the MacBook's trackpad (affords precise cursor control) and its "click" sound (a signifier of action completion). For RRR01, researching *The Words in Freedom: A Manifesto Machine as Critical Design*'s focus on "to challenge and provoke" influenced my personal manifesto's bullet on "critically examining design value"—reminding me that design is not neutral. This interpretation transformed research from a "box-ticking exercise" to a creative foundation.

Empathy and Speculation: Designing for Others. RRR03 (Speculative Design) and RRR06 (Empathy) reinforced that design is inherently human-centered. Flanagan's letter taught me that speculative design is not just about predicting the future but questioning it—balancing optimism (clean energy) with critique (loss of freedom). When drafting my letter, I found myself prioritizing "what my child would need to navigate" over abstract trends, a shift that mirrored RRR06's empathy training. The LinkedIn course's focus on "empathy maps" (saying/doing/thinking/feeling) helped me avoid "designer bias" in RRR03; instead of projecting my own fears about technology, I considered what a 15-year-old in 2035 might actually experience (e.g., info overload, pressure to "perform" online). This connection showed me that empathy and speculation are two sides of

the same coin: both require stepping outside one's own perspective.

Creative Communication: Adapting to Audience and Format. RRR05 (Storytelling) challenged me to communicate experiences beyond text—a skill I had undervalued. My initial instinct was to write a journal entry, but the task's emphasis on creative formats pushed me to experiment with a photogallery. Curating photos to follow a narrative arc taught me that visual storytelling relies on pacing and emotion, not just detail. This lesson transferred to RRR06's visual notes: I used color coding (blue for key takeaways, red for actions) to ensure the mindmap was scannable, recognizing that "good communication" depends on the audience's needs (e.g., a designer reviewing notes needs clarity over verbosity).

Evaluation

Across all tasks, my ability to synthesize complex information into clear, actionable insights was a consistent strength. For example: In RRR01, I connected the Conditional Design Manifesto's "logic as a tool" to our workshop's rule-based creation, identifying how constraints eliminated "aimless freedom" and forced collaboration.

In RRR02, I categorized device affordances by "user capability + object feature" (e.g., iPhone's portability + human need for on-the-go communication) rather than listing random functions, making the analysis structured and purposeful.

Adherence to Brief and Attention to Detail. For RRR06, my visual notes adhered to the single-A4 limit and included both key takeaways and actions, avoiding the common pitfall of overloading information. This attention to detail ensured that my work was professional and aligned with assessment criteria.

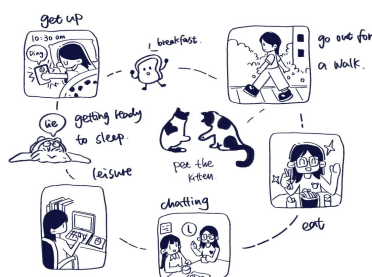
Curiosity and Research Depth

For RRR02, I supplemented the assigned videos with Don Norman's original book chapter on signifiers, adding examples like "a red 'X' button as a signifier for closing a window" to clarify the concept.

Key Weaknesses

I struggled with native prototyping and the technical constraints of software. I often spent too much time in the "Digital Prototyping" phase (Stage 2) and not enough time validating "Native" interactions (Stage 3), as suggested by the Google Entrepreneurs series. Reflecting on Barbara Flanagan's piece taught me that design is never just about the object; it's about the environmental and political context. My early work lacked this "big picture" thinking.

I tended to choose safe formats over innovative ones, limiting my growth: For RRR05, I opted for a photogallery (familiar to me) instead of experimenting with a comic strip or animated GIF, which would have challenged me to think differently about storytelling. And my final photogallery felt rushed, with minimal context for key moments.



Linking Tasks to Parallel Projects. RRR06's empathy maps could have informed CDU Project 's user-centered design, but I did not include this connection in my visual notes or portfolio.

Despite weaknesses, the R³ tasks yielded tangible improvements in my practice: I developed a personal design manifesto that now guides my MA projects. I can confidently explain and apply core concepts (affordances, empathy, conditional design) to practical tasks. I improved my research skills, learning to source and synthesize academic and industry resources efficiently. I recognized the value of iterative, low-fidelity work, which has accelerated my design process in subsequent projects.

Plan

Based on the evaluation, I have developed a structured plan to address weaknesses and build on strengths.

Improve Visual Communication Skills. Integrate visual elements into all future projects—e.g., use Figma to create simple diagrams for Projects. Make visual communication a core part of my design process, not an afterthought. For example, I will use mindmaps to brainstorm project ideas and sketchnotes to document user testing sessions.

Prioritization Framework. Use the Eisenhower Matrix to distinguish between “urgent/important” and “non-urgent/important” tasks. For R³-like tasks, I will prioritize creative iteration (important) over excessive research (often non-urgent).

Failure as Learning. I will document “failed” experiments in my portfolio to reflect on what went wrong and how to improve. This aligns with my personal manifesto's bullet on “allowing phased failures”.

Conclusion

The R³ tasks have been a transformative component of my MA Communication Design journey, revealing both my strengths as a critical, detail-oriented researcher and my weaknesses in visual communication and risk-taking. Through the DIEP framework, I have moved beyond surface-level reflection to identify actionable improvements that will shape my future practice. By prioritizing visual skill-building, time management, and creative experimentation, I aim to become a more holistic designer—one who balances research and creativity, process and product, and empathy and innovation.

The personal manifesto I drafted in RRR01 now serves as a touchstone: “Focus on dynamic processes”, “be user demand-oriented.” These principles, paired with the improvements outlined in this report, will guide me through the remainder of my MA program and beyond. Ultimately, the R³ tasks have taught me that design is not just about creating objects or experiences—it is about continuous reflection, adaptation, and growth.