

# **Grand Designs – An Innovative House of Learning Still Requires a Simple Foundation**

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There are a myriad of innovative options available to educators wishing to improve course design, learning outcomes, and student perception of education. Whilst innovations such as online content delivery, social media communication, and the use of portable computing equipment can be significant components of improved learning environments, their value is inconsequential without a course design founded on the most basic components of the teaching-learning nexus; specifically the course content and its relevance, the assessment (including type, scheduling, and relationship to content), the knowledge base and the passion underpinning the delivery, and the relationship formed between teacher and student. This project subsequently details design changes (some innovative, some quite simple) incorporated into a tertiary-level course titled, Information Systems for Service Industries, 1220HSL (a compulsory first-year course undertaken by all students completing Bachelor of Business degrees majoring in Tourism, Hotel, or Sport Management at Griffith University) over six continuous semesters (2010 to 2013) and relates each change to significant, lasting, and positive affects on learning outcomes and student perception of the education process. Changes included: 1. Implementation of knowledgeable, enthusiastic teaching. 2. Overhaul of course content and assessment. 3. Extensive application of the communication capabilities associated with Griffith University's online student portal, 'Learning@Griffith'. 4. Launch and integration of an exemplar website, [www.1220hsl.com](http://www.1220hsl.com) and associated social media (1220HSL Facebook and 1220HSL Twitter pages). 5. Roll out of interactive i-Pad-based lectures. 6. Integration of a weekly TED video (accessed online) as further 'reading' and the integration of a more interactive, discussion-based lecture approach. Each change produced increasingly positive learning outcomes and the course now consistently obtains a student-based Rating Interpretation Benchmark (RIB) of 'High' for all official Student Evaluation of Course (SEC) questions. Although the more innovative changes have garnered most of the attention from the local teaching and student community, the primary reason behind the course's success is that each successive change has been implemented upon a progressively stronger course foundation, with the most basic components of the teaching-learning nexus acting as indispensable footholds of the overall design.