ABSTRACT

# Integrated Design Practice: A reflection on combining Animation, Visual Effects & Game Design for first year undergraduate students

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## *Abstract*

This paper reflects on the transition from the legacy Digital Design major to the Animation, Visual Effects, and Game Design (AVG) degree at Auckland University of Technology (AUT). It examines how first-year papers DESN511 and DESN512 support student engagement and pathway selection through inclusive, interdisciplinary, and culturally grounded teaching. Students explore animation, VFX, and game design through hands-on, concept-led projects that centre identity, storytelling, and experimentation. Activities such as collaborative storytelling and tactile self-portraiture foster connection and inclusion, aligning with Mātauranga Māori and the Bachelor of Design's educational philosophy. These experiences help students feel seen and supported, with reflective annotations and anecdotal feedback indicating

needs, proposing scalable strategies that balance foundational skill development with creative freedom. Animation is positioned as a shared language across disciplines, while VFX and game design offer entry points into narrative and interactive expression. By embedding writing into creative practice and fostering a culture of reflection, the AVG curriculum supports identity formation and interdisciplinary fluency, contributing to broader conversations about inclusive and future-focused design education.

## *References*

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## *Index Terms*

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