Abstract for the book chapter entitled *‘A Collaborative Approach to Engaging with the Future.’*

The book chapter will be published in the book *Beyond Graduate Attributes: Embedding Work Integrated Learning into Undergraduate Degrees,* edited by: Associate Professor Arianne Rourke, Associate Professor Vaughan Rees and Associate Dean Graham Forsyth.

Published by Common Ground Research Networks in 2018 in one of eight books which comprise the ‘*Transformative Pedagogy in the Visual Domain’* series.

As the influence and impact of design within contemporary society continues to evolve and develop, so too does the nature and purpose of design education and academic practice. Design is not only an industrial or production-focused occupation; rather it is becoming an epistemological practice that explores the future, generates new knowledge and formulates hypotheses for how people might live in the future.

Whether a designed product is a physical artefact, a service or an experience, knowing ‘how’ to understand what truly drives people, ‘what’ their needs are and ‘why’ remains fundamental to the role of a designer. In order to design effectively a future-focused, collaborative approach is key to revealing multiple user perspectives, and enabling the exchange and embedding of knowledge within teams to deliver credible propositions for focused innovation. The establishment and communication of such future-focused knowledge or hypothesis regarding behaviours will underpin design innovation only if it can be demonstrated to be credible and emerge from evidence gathered. The propositions created by such a future-focused, collaborative methodology must also be comprehensible and capable of being utilised by designers as they seek to make ideas about the future into tangible manifestations of innovation.

This dynamic context requires that designers can embrace a level of mobility and flexibility of approach; the awareness and ability to work with innovative techniques and methods that enable them to learn and work collaboratively across teams, disciplines and platforms becomes of vital significance within design education.

The chapter will focus on the presentation and discussion of an emerging pedagogical model for future-focused, collaborative design practice developed by the author and deployed within the Product Design final year curriculum at the Glasgow School of Art. The highly collaborative nature of the model aims to extend learning and working beyond the context of studio-based teaching to explore how different groups of learners (both academic and professional) interact, learn and collaborate with each other in order to engage with the future.

The author will discuss two examples of the model in action, in the form of two distinct collaborative projects; the first with the design division of the Japanese corporation Hitachi (2015), and the second with the Royal Bank of Scotland’s design team (2016). Both iterations of the project saw a cohort of final year Masters of European Design students joined by GSA design graduates to form a design team. The team worked alongside the company’s design team, other professional designers and researchers and a variety of civic and academic stakeholders in order to deploy, utilise and evaluate the company’s emerging design research process and its capacity to develop future-based scenarios that inform the company’s design direction and strategy.

The Masters of European Design (MEDes) pathway at the Glasgow School of Art is a programme of study that sees its students integrate into a collective of seven design schools across Europe. The educational experience spans five years during which time the students study in three schools within the network; their home institution for the first two years followed by two consecutive years of study abroad before returning to the home institution to complete their final year. As the first educational experience the students encounter upon their return for final year, the collaborative project is designed to provide the opportunity for each individual to draw upon their previous educational journeys thus far; to apply, test and refine their skills and approaches and shape their own identities as emerging designers.

The chapter brings together diverse perspectives; the author will evidence the academic value of the new pedagogical approach in achieving a depth of learning and knowledge for the student contributors based on the real insight and experience of collaborating with a live client at a professional level. Secondly, the perspective of the Industry partners will offer a critical point of view on the lessons learnt; how a commercial design team can utilise the design recommendations produced and the tangible forms of communication to inform existing projects and define new work streams; and additionally how members of the design team reflect on the experience of working collaboratively with an academic institution to inform their own developing design practice and working culture. Finally, the chapter concludes with the perspectives of the students involved to identify how they applied the learning from their own experiences within these projects to inform their transition into professional practice and shape their roles as designers.

**Kirsty Ross** is a design academic at the Glasgow School of Art. She has extensive professional design experience working within the consumer electronics, automotive and fashion industries for a decade prior to becoming a lecturer within the department of Product Design at the GSA. Her current research interests focus on collaborative design pedagogy and future-focused design practice.