DRAWN TOGETHER

These courses give students the chance to study with others from different cultures and different parts of the world. By Neena Bhandari.

Cutting-edge technologies and delivery modes are at the heart of the way art and design courses are changing and helping postgraduate students develop their careers.

The fully online master of cross-disciplinary art and design at the University of NSW’s College of Fine Arts exposes students to contemporary cross-disciplinary industry practice and gives them the chance to work with people from different cultures and creative backgrounds.

Course co-ordinator Simon McIntyre says: "This online postgraduate program allows students from all over the world to study together in an active online community. "Students communicate and share ideas in an environment where they can shape their own learning goals."

The Omnium software platform on which all the college's online courses run has been developed to promote interaction, handle visual material easily and be user-friendly. The college's online Germany-based lecturer, Andy Polaine, says: "The structure and the socialisation aspects of the course have been planned to create a space that is intuitive and challenging for students."

Polaine says boundaries between different disciplines are blurring. "With more countries moving into an environment of knowledge and creative economies, it is much less about what specific knowledge one has, but how one connects it to other areas of knowledge."

For example, the college's online print advertising for a world market course consists of several fields, such as visual communication, modern philosophy, cultural studies and global marketing.

South Korea-based course lecturer Dong Jun Kim says the course "offers an opportunity for local and international students to investigate how one's cultural uniqueness and familiarities are employed as a pivotal resource for the international promoting and advertising in the print media."

The master of animation course at the University of Technology, Sydney is the first postgraduate course of its kind, involving cross-disciplinary study of animation offered by three faculties: information technology, humanities and social sciences, and design, architecture and building.

The 18-month full-time or three-year part-time master's course comprises coursework, research and project work. Jason Benedek, production manager of the course, says, "We have recently established a new state-of-the-art optical motion capture studio. It helps capture the motion of people and objects that can be applied to animated characters for quicker and increased realism."

"This technology is used by the computer games, film, television and advertising industries, besides for sports and health research."

The course has genuine industry relevance, thanks to the involvement of an advisory board comprising business and company executives. "For example, [visual effects specialist] Animal Logic is very closely associated with the program and six students were part of the Oscar-winning Happy Feet team," Benedek says.