

School of Education

# Updated

What can we learn from  
the rain?

School Libraries support well-being



Learning and  
alternate philosophy



# From the Executive Dean



This year has been an extraordinary and remarkable year. There have been and continue to be ongoing and significant changes and challenges to our society, including the education sector.

While these challenges have been significant, it has been through our collaboration and collegiality that public perception has realised the importance and value of education and teachers to our society.

The School of Education is committed to developing and delivering courses that ensure our graduates will inspire the next generation of young people.

Our academics undertake and publish research that will advance the pedagogy, policy and innovation in the education sector.

The latest edition of UpdatED showcases some of the School of Education's recent achievements which is a testament to the calibre of academics and students.

We look forward to continuing our collaboration with you in 2021.

I wish you a relaxing and safe summer spent with friends and loved ones.

**Professor Stephen Winn**  
Executive Dean  
School of Education  
Edith Cowan University

## Alumni Education Chapter Annual General Meeting



The ECU Alumni Education Chapter's vision is to be an ambassador in the education field, provide a voice for teaching and education and empower ECU School of Education graduates to pursue career advancement and build social and professional networks.

The Chapter held its first Annual General Meeting on Thursday, 15 October 2020 at the Mount Lawley Campus.

Mr Colin Pettit, Commissioner for Children and Young People, provided a keynote speech about the value of advancing social change and supporting the children of tomorrow through participation in the Alumni Chapter.

The new Committee for the Alumni Chapter can be found below:

**Co-Chair:** Kevin Fraser and Wendy Norris

**Deputy Chair:** Scott Sullivan

**Secretary:** Amanda Tan

**Events Officer:** Robyn Ekberg



[Join the ECU Education Alumni Chapter now](#)

# ECU celebrates 20 years of Fogarty Foundation

The School of Education recently celebrated the twentieth anniversary of the Fogarty Foundation with a reception at the Edith Spiegel tent at ECU Mount Lawley on Thursday, 5 November.

Members of the ECU executive welcomed guest of honour Annie Fogarty AM to the campus to recognise the incredible impact of the Foundation's work on the ECU teaching community.

ECU School of Education Executive Dean Professor Stephen Winn said the ongoing collaboration between the School and the Foundation underscored their mutual commitment to education advocacy.

"As organisations, we both recognise the significance of education and the lifelong impact that receiving a quality education can have," he said.

"We have had an enduring and successful partnership with the Fogarty Foundation for many years, and we hope to continue this for many more."

The ECU Fogarty Learning Centre was established in 2003 and has led to a range of research projects around the teaching and learning of literacy and numeracy, especially in schools serving lower socio-economic communities.

In 2005, the Fogarty Foundation scholarships and academic prizes were established for students undertaking specialisations in learning difficulties and special education.

Since then, 63 Fogarty Foundation Scholars have graduated from ECU, with a further eight scholars awarded scholarships in 2020.

The Fogarty Foundation was established in 2000 by Brett and Annie Fogarty with the aim of helping to build strong and prosperous communities and providing educational and leadership opportunities across Western Australia.

Earlier this year, Mrs Fogarty was recognised as 2020 West Australian of the Year for her long-term commitment to educational advocacy.

For more information about the Fogarty Foundation, [visit their website.](#)

For more information about ECU's Fogarty Foundation Scholarships, [visit the scholarships page.](#)



Pictured left to right: Caitlyn Fogarty, Professor Arshad Omari, ECU Senior Deputy Vice-Chancellor, and Annie Fogarty AM.

## School of Education Lands Top 400 Global Status as new course launches

The School of Education has been recognised globally as being among the best in its class, with a strong showing in the 2021 Times Higher Education World University Rankings.

As a young and growing university, ECU overall continues to excel internationally, maintaining its position in the top 500 in this year's rankings.

ECU is in the top 2.5% of universities in the world.

In the global rankings by subject, Education fared even better, ranking within the top 400 globally.

The strong endorsement of ECU's Education courses comes as the School launches a new course, rolling several previous offerings into a streamlined Graduate Certificate of Education (195).

The new course of four units is designed for graduates who seek to upskill in a particular specialisation, and can count towards the completion of a Master of Education degree.

The Graduate Certificate of Education can be completed in one year and has a range of specialisations available.

Scholarships are available for some specialisations, including scholarships generously provided by the Fogarty Foundation.

For more information on the Graduate Certificate of Education course, [visit the course guide.](#)

For more information on ECU's latest global rankings, [visit the ECU website.](#)

## Latest Research from the **ECU** School of Education

The following are selections from among some of the most recently-published open access journal articles by School of Education researchers.

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**A measure of classroom management: Validation of a pre-service teacher self-efficacy scale**

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**How Can School Libraries Support Student Wellbeing? Evidence and Implications for Further Research**

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**School Librarians as Literacy Educators within a Complex Role**

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**Deconstructing Health and Physical Education Teacher Education: A mapping and analysis of program structure and content in Australia**

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**Digital Storytelling as a Disciplinary Literacy Enhancement Tool for EFL Students**

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We need you!

# ECU launches study into **Pandemic** **Impact on Children's** **Wellbeing**

The School of Education is seeking schools for a new research project designed to support the health and wellbeing of children during, and after, the COVID-19 pandemic.

The MindSPAN (Mindfulness, Sleep, Physical Activity and Nutrition) Project is a new school-based initiative which aims to improve the health and wellbeing of young people.

The project will seek to strengthen resilience skills, as well as their ability to make healthy decisions regarding physical activity, nutrition and sleep.

Lead investigator Dr Joseph Scott said the project is timely and critically needed, given the detrimental impact COVID-19 has had on mental and physical health at a population level.

"Recent research indicates that since the COVID-19 pandemic, generalized anxiety and depression symptoms are now twice as prevalent among Australians," he said.

"Children are a particularly vulnerable population group, and schools, teachers and parents/caregivers need support to empower them to maintain their mental health and wellbeing during, and after this pandemic."

The MindSPAN Project will be conducted in a school-based environment, with 20 WA government primary schools sought for inclusion in the program.

Dr Scott said schools were the ideal setting for the study to take place.



"School have been recognised globally as a strategic vehicle to promote health and an important setting for the development of healthy behaviours," he said.

"This project will develop and provide free online teaching resources and activities to support schools, school leaders and teachers throughout, and beyond, the pandemic.

"This research will make an important difference to the health and wellbeing of many groups, including primary school-aged children and their families, teachers and school leaders."

### **Register your interest**

Any WA government primary school in the Perth, Peel or South West region can now register their interest to be involved in the MindSPAN Project via the **Expression of Interest link**.

For more information, please contact **Lead Investigator Dr Joseph Scott**.

# Montessori, Steiner or Reggio Emilia: which childcare philosophy is best for your family?

Up to **90% of brain development occurs in the first five years** of life. Early learning matters, and creates a solid foundation for future development.

Philosophical underpinnings in early education matter too. They influence the interactions between teachers and children, the environment design and beliefs about how children learn.

The demographic diversity of Australia means no single early learning philosophy will suit everyone. Parents can find it difficult choosing a service given the plethora on offer.

Below are three of the best known alternative educational philosophies used in early childhood education in Australia.

## Steiner (Waldorf)

Steiner education (also known as **Waldorf**) is based on Rudolf Steiner's educational philosophy. It originated in Germany in the early 20th century.

It is focused on self-directed learning, based on children's interests. Steiner education encourages self-motivated

learning that supports and encourages problem solving, critical thinking, creativity and social skills.

When learning is self-directed, children's motivation doesn't come from rewards. Instead, they are **engaged** because they find it satisfying.

A Steiner childcare centre or preschool engages children in self-directed play, and in the arts. Children draw, paint, model, tell stories and do practical things like cooking, cleaning and gardening. There would be more arts and craft in a Steiner-inspired setting than a mainstream one.

Steiner teachers role model rather than instruct and play with children, facilitating their learning.

Assessments of children's learning are generally personalised to the child and their interests, abilities, culture and strengths – rather than based on developmental checklists or standardised assessments.

Steiner learning resources are **simple and low-tech** to stimulate curiosity and creativity. A Steiner classroom may include weaving materials, crayons, puppets, natural fibres and natural timber.

Parents enrolling their child in a Steiner-inspired service can expect the centre to aim for the same teacher to educate and care for their child throughout their time there.

Genuine Steiner schools are certified and use a specific Steiner curriculum. They attract families who would like their child to develop their creativity in a predictable, routine environment with little to no technology.

Limited research has been conducted into Steiner education. What research exist mainly relates to schools rather than childcare. Some studies show **students at Steiner-inspired schools** get better academic scores (when using the same test methods) and social outcomes than students at public schools.



## The Montessori approach

**Dr Maria Montessori** was a medical doctor and psychiatrist. She opened a school for disadvantaged children in early 20th century Rome, to test her education theories. There are now Montessori schools in more than 100 countries.

Montessori's philosophy is based on her direct observations of children, and integrating their development with their learning. The focus is on play and work, as children like to model adults and be involved in real-world tasks. The philosophy sees children as capable of self-directed learning, who can independently choose resources to use in their learning.

The first learning materials a child is **likely to encounter** in the Montessori environment will be used for practical life activities. These include pouring different materials, using utensils such as scissors and tongs, cleaning, preparing snacks, laying the table and washing dishes, arranging flowers and gardening. The aim is to develop independent skills and to build their gross and fine motor control and hand-eye co-ordination.

Montessori resources are specifically designed, often sensory. They are to encourage matching, rhyming, sequencing, sandpaper letters and numbers for finger tracing, cutting, writing and drawing, sewing, weaving and woodworking.

Resources help children learn through repetition and self-correction. A child manipulating a puzzle can see their mistake if the pieces don't fit together and self-correct as they go.

Unlike the Steiner approach, children in Montessori settings are grouped according to ability, not age. **There are benefits associated with multi-age classrooms**, which support children to work at their individual pace. They provide opportunities for peer-to-peer learning and to develop a sense of community.

Many Australian early learning services are inspired by Montessori, but not all will be Montessori-registered (anyone can open a Montessori services as the name "Montessori" was never copyrighted).

In Australia, education and care services can participate in an external review by Montessori Australia against the Montessori quality standards and become **"Montessori registered"**. Parents can search the **Montessori Australia** directory to confirm if a service is Montessori-inspired, or Montessori-registered.

There is limited evaluation of the Montessori method in Australia, particularly for children aged under three. Some **research has shown** children aged 3–6 attending Montessori settings make significant gains over children attending non-Montessori settings in social and academic skills – but only if using the prescribed Montessori program without adaptations.

**A US study** found higher academic and social skills, as well as better mastery of skills and executive function in children aged 3–6 who had attended a Montessori service, in comparison to children in non-Montessori settings.

### Reggio Emilia

The Reggio Emilia approach was established in a city in Northern Italy. After the end of World War 2 and fascism, parents and educators looked for new educational experiences.

The first preschool in Reggio Emilia opened in 1963 with the collaboration of educationalist Loris Malaguzzi.

In 1991, one of the city's preschools, the Diana preschool, was named **one of the most advanced preschools in the world** by Newsweek, in recognition of the preschool's innovative teaching practices. These preschools saw the child as an active citizen and holder of rights from birth, valued for their individual identity and active participation in their learning.

In contrast to the more structured educational programs in Montessori settings, teachers in Reggio Emilia design **curricula** that follow children's interests and learning. Teachers assume different roles including researcher, role model, observer, documenter, photographer and student.

A teacher may see children are interested in nesting birds in the tree outside their classroom. The teacher may first establish what the children already know about the birds. Then the teacher may offer children the opportunity to draw the birds in the nest, create sculptures of the nest and read children books about bird species. The teacher could also photograph the children engaged in learning about the birds and do further research themselves.

The learning journey is then displayed at the centre.

Reggio Emilia schools are renowned for their aesthetics. Each resource is purposefully placed in the classroom to invite children to explore and create with it. Resources can include items such as PVC piping, boxes, fabrics, buckets, stones, blocks and clay. Classrooms are bright and open, designed to allow children to move freely between spaces.

An exact replica of Reggio Emilia can't be recreated outside the town, as each services must reflect its cultural, political and historical context. So centres refer to themselves as "Reggio-inspired". These individual differences make it difficult to evaluate.

**Authors:** Nadia Wilson-Ali and Associate Professor Marianne Knaus

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# CHILDHOOD TRAUMA: UNDERSTANDING THE IMPACTS

## A NEW ONLINE SHORT COURSE FOR EDUCATORS

Trauma-affected children can be found in any classroom and any school. In fact, one in four children experience a traumatic event before they turn three years old\*. Trauma impacts development, behaviour and learning.

This short course is an ideal introduction to childhood trauma for all educators including parents, carers and youth workers. By understanding the impact of trauma on children, you have a better chance of making a positive difference to their lives.

The course is entirely online and self-paced, taking approximately 9 hours to complete.

### MORE INFORMATION

[www.ecu.edu.au/short-courses/education/childhood-trauma](http://www.ecu.edu.au/short-courses/education/childhood-trauma)

*\*Creating Supportive Environments for Children Who have had Exposure to Traumatic Events. J Child Fam Stud 26, 2728–2741 (2017)*

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# Start with a raindrop: Climate change project a national finalist

A research project that deepens children's connection to nature and their place in the world through sensory art has been recognised in the prestigious Museum and Galleries National Awards.

*Conversations with Rain*, a joint initiative from Edith Cowan University (ECU) and the Art Gallery of Western Australia, was highly commended in the category of Interpretation, Learning and Audience Engagement.

ECU researcher Dr Jo Pollitt explained the importance of the initiative.

"Children often learn about nature through adults telling them facts about the world 'outside' through instructive weather charts," Dr Pollitt said.

"We are interested in drawing on children's personal experiences through art and imagination to enliven and deepen their connection with rain and the world.

"The project offers fresh ways to bring climate issues into curriculum through creative engagement that foregrounds children's perspectives to researching with rain.

"This is vital for future citizens to engage more deeply with climate change, and in particular, the increasingly drought affected areas of WA."

Dr Pollitt said the award gave increased visibility of the work with children in the both Art Gallery of WA (AGWA) and ECU settings as well as recognition of the work and the partnership on a national scale will make it possible to continue the research and reach a wider audience.

## Tuning into the rain

The *Conversations with Rain* workshops and creative learning resources offer opportunities for sensing, breathing, wondering and experimenting in an open-ended and imaginative way.

Young children participated in studio workshops where they responded to Ngarralja Tommy May's painting *Raining on Kurtal* as inspiration for the creation of a sensory Rain Book that became part of a wider Library of Rain including over 500 handmade books.

Children also created soundscapes of rainfall which were recorded and arranged into an audio work called *Sound of Rain* – exhibited as part of AGWA's The Botanical: Beauty and Peril.

*Conversations with Rain* helps children to tune into rain in an attentively and deeply personal way.

"The concept resonated with many children with classes using the creative resources to develop their own projects and home-schooled children taking a leadership role in testing ideas and sharing insights," Dr Pollitt said.

"This was the first time a child made work *Sound of Rain* had been exhibited alongside State Art Collection works at the Art Gallery of WA.

"In a longer-term vision, *Conversations with Rain* helps children to tune into rain in an attentively and deeply personal way. The project is now touring regionally in WA."

More information about *Conversations with Rain* can be read on the [ECU School of Education website](#).

**MAGNA**  
MUSEUMS AND GALLERIES  
NATIONAL AWARDS 2020  
**HIGHLY COMMENDED**  
INTERPRETATION, LEARNING & AUDIENCE ENGAGEMENT





# A place to get away from it all: 5 ways school libraries support student well-being



Students in Australia and around the world have experienced significant challenges this year, including the COVID-19 pandemic and natural disasters.

Globally, as many as **one in five** young people may experience mental-health problems. These can be exacerbated, or even brought on by, stressful life events including economic pressures related to the pandemic.

We know teacher librarians and school libraries play an important role in supporting **young people's reading** and broader **academic achievement**. But school libraries play a **more diverse role** in students' lives, among which is to support **their well-being**.

Here are five ways they do this.

## 1. They can be safe spaces

Creating a positive, safe and supportive **school environment** can help schools meet young people's academic, emotional and social needs.

Whether students are victims of bullying or simply feel like they don't fit in, school libraries can provide safe spaces in sometimes challenging school environments. In some schools, the **library is the only space** intentionally created as a refuge for young people.

Both the library as a whole, and spaces in it, can be adapted to be comforting sanctuaries. A quiet space with comfortable furniture can make the library a place to "**get away from it all**".

In recent times the school library has been expected to cater to a **growing array of diverse purposes** such as sports equipment storage and meeting venues, perhaps challenging its ability to be a safe space. It's important for schools to ensure, within these demands, students still have a special spot to come to for refuge.

A quiet space with comfortable furniture can make the library a place to “get away from it all”.



## 2. They provide resources for well-being

When students are experiencing health and other well-being issues, libraries can have valuable **resources to help** them understand what they are going through and where to get help. School libraries can also potentially provide valuable health resources to the **broader community**.

Teacher librarians **curate resources (and weed out irrelevant ones)** to ensure students get current, quality information. Library staff may also work with teachers and school psychologists to ensure the school community is well resourced for meeting young people’s needs.

## 3. They help build digital health-literacy skills

The **World Health Organisation** has emphasised the importance of health literacy and its potential to support better individual and community health outcomes.

Young people need these skills to prevent potentially dangerous misconceptions, such as those that have circulated during the **COVID-19 pandemic**.

In a **2017 study**, researchers worked with school librarians to improve young people’s digital health-literacy skills. The study showed young people had good digital literacy skills when it came to searching for general information. But they had poor knowledge when it came to evaluating the credibility of websites and health information.

Reading for pleasure is associated with mental well-being.

School librarians are digital literacy experts. Supporting staff and students with their information skills is part of their **job description**. School libraries can **build students’ digital and information health-literacy skills**, helping them evaluate online health information sources.

## 4. They support reading for pleasure

Reading for pleasure is associated with **mental well-being**.

School libraries facilitate reading for pleasure by providing comfortable reading spaces, as well as access to interesting texts. Visits to the library **encourage young people** to read more and positive attitudes toward reading.

Teacher librarians may also make recommendations and read books aloud, **which is relaxing** for young people.

While much is known about the **literacy benefits** of reading, keen reading in childhood is also linked to healthy choices and fewer issues with **behaviour** in the teen years. Reading for pleasure can provide a **valuable escape** from the challenges of everyday life.

However, the **crowded curriculum** can lead to reading for pleasure being undervalued in schools. Students at schools with libraries do not always have **regular access** to them, which is something schools need to ensure is provided.

## 5. They encourage healing through reading

Teacher librarians may also support students to engage with literature in healing ways. Known as bibliotherapy, which is **“healing through books”**, students can deal with issues challenging their well-being from a safe distance when they are experienced by book characters. They can also get guidance on how to cope from the experiences and perspectives of book characters.

Teacher librarians may **select specific literature** to support students encountering particular challenges. This is one of the numerous benefits of the literature expertise of teacher librarians.

School libraries and staffing are **under threat** and **undervalued**. These resources are easy to take for granted, and school libraries often **lose out** in budget cuts.

Where school libraries do not have the staff and materials they need, this can **limit their ability** to support student well-being. We need to better understand how our school libraries and staff contribute to student well-being so we can make the most of this valuable resource.

**Author: Dr Margaret Merga**

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# Early childhood students learn to use space

ECU's fourth year Early Childhood pre-service teachers recently had the opportunity to visit three school and early learning centres to explore their creative designs and innovative use of space.

Students visited Nido Early School, Bold Park Community School and Peter Moyes Anglican Community School to discover how teachers can use space creatively to develop learning and pedagogies that are play-based and authentic.

Early Childhood Studies Lecturer Ms Dimity Franks said the School of Education was grateful to the schools for opening their doors to ECU pre-service teachers, which provided invaluable advice and guidance.

"These students will be teaching their own classes within months, so providing them with practical examples of how to use materials and space in creative ways is very timely," Ms Franks said.

"This is the type of experience that cannot be taught at university."

# The Show Must Go On For ECU Drama Education

After COVID-19 shut down the performing arts industry for most of 2020, ECU's drama education students were finally able to take to the stage again in October with their musical performances.

Students performed abridged "20 Minute Musicals" over four nights to sold out audiences, with ECU Drama Lecturer Dr Christina Gray noting that both performers and audiences "had a ball".

The School also hosted a professional development opportunity for drama and dance educators, with twenty-six drama practitioners gathering at

ECU Mount Lawley on Saturday, 31 October, led by movement educator Natalie Diggins.

Attendees explored how movement theorist Rudolf Laban's Eight Basic Efforts can be used not only for the performing arts, but for classroom management and interpersonal relationships.

For more information, please contact [Christina Gray](#).



## ACHPER Conference Aiming to Build Resilient Young Australians

On 23 and 24 November, ECU was delighted to host the WA state conference of the Australian Council for Health, Physical Education and Recreation (ACHPER) at Mount Lawley Campus.

In the context of COVID-19, the conference, for which ECU is a platinum sponsor, opted for a theme of "active, strong and resilient young Australians".

ACHPER WA President and ECU lecturer Dr Joseph Scott said the conference sold out in less than two weeks, indicating the strong need for professional

learning during a pandemic-stricken year.

"This conference enhanced teacher's ability to support young people's physical and mental health through and beyond COVID-19," he said.

Keynote speakers included Mr Graeme Quelch (ACHPER WA Patron and Manager of Curriculum and Moderation at SCSA) and Associate Professor Susan Beltman (Curtin University).

For more information, visit the [ACHPER WA conference page](#).



# Music Teachers Take Their Songs On The Road

ECU's fourth year music education students have finished their year with fanfare, taking their talents on the road to play end-of-year concerts in schools to the north and south of Perth.

The student-led performances took place on Thursday, 5 November, with pre-service teachers performing to 300 students at Fremantle College and 150 students at Butler College.

ECU Music Lecturer Dr Geoffrey Lowe said the aim was to inspire the next generation of music teachers and help ECU music education students to reconnect with their love of playing music.

"There was a great reception at both schools – lots of children asked about the music education courses at ECU," Dr Lowe said.

"There were kids up and dancing and singing along – it was a great stress release following the difficulties of 2020."



# Making Space for Home Economics

Prospective students recently had the opportunity to try their hand at Home Economics skills during the ECU Open Day at the Joondalup campus on Sunday, 4 October.

The School of Education's dedicated Home Economics rooms became a Maker Space for the day, offering crochet, macrame and popping corn.

Second Year student textile work was displayed, while visitors had the chance to speak with Course Coordinator, Sandy Smith, Sessional Lecturer in Textiles, Ellen Morrow, and Laura, a fourth-year Home Economics student.

Ms Morrow said prospective students were glad to learn their job prospects would be excellent, with Home Economics teachers in short supply in Western Australia.

"They were pleased they made space in their day for Home Economics, especially as ECU is the

only university in Western Australia to offer a Bachelor of Education (Secondary), specialising in Home Economics," she said.

For more information on ECU's Home Economics specialisation, visit the course guide.



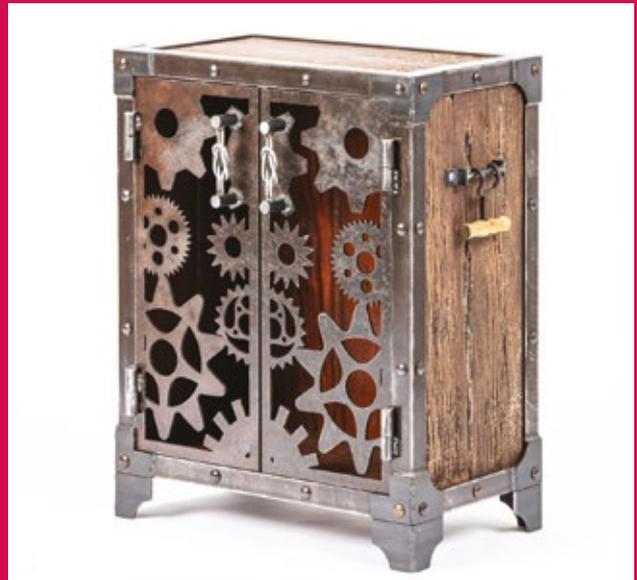
# Student

# SHOWCASE

Outstanding examples of the works completed by ECU's pre-service Design and Technology teachers.



Bee Lamp by Bailey Bartholomew



Cabinet by Hayden Greaves



River Table by Coron Longwood

Photographs by Steven Heath.

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International student enquiries

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