

No labs, can't learn

“The university loan system is a real test of patience”

Before you make a final choice of where to study, take a look at the technology facilities available for you to use. It might make life a whole lot easier.

It is only after beginning study that students realise just how crucial this can be in satisfactorily pursuing a degree.

Many degrees rely on technology to facilitate learning. For instance, a degree in media and communications requires facilities such as editing suites,

audio and visual equipment, and production labs.

According to the Australian Standard Classification of Education communication and media studies degrees need to develop skills in collecting and analysing facts about events and individuals. They also need to develop practical skills such as, editing and adding sound tracks, directing and coordinating film, and writing skills.

While students expect the best possible facilities, it is surprising to see what is actually readily available on

campus. After all, what use is there of having access to the finest quality cameras if you are only allowed to hire it for 24 hours?

La Trobe's facilities for media and communications students focus on production, with facilities including 15 single chip fully equipped camera kits, 12 3-chip HD camera kits, fully equipped editing suites and a media and communications Studio.

On the other end of the spectrum, Melbourne's media and communications unit does not provide students



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with any production facilities. Instead they concentrate on more traditional forms of media, such as journalism and conventional writing. The only technological requirement for media students at Melbourne is to maintain a blog or wiki and explore the virtual world through the application, Second Life. Computer labs and software are readily available for students on campus.

RMIT provides 24-hour access to its postgraduate students, and hire periods are negotiable. Undergraduates, however, have 14-hour access to specialised media computer labs and digital video production and post production facilities. Hire periods may vary depending on assessment criterion.

Swinburne offers media and communications students cameras, digital recorders, tripods and head

phones, but similarly to RMIT, they have restrictions on hire.

So how do these facilities shape a student's experience in undergoing a Media and Communications course?

Acting coordinator for Masters of Creative Media at RMIT, Tony Paice, says: "Although the best available facilities should be provided by the universities, it is not a necessity for the successful completion of the course.

Good ideas and execution, even on lower grade equipment, is possible".

Program director of Journalism and Media at RMIT, Leo Berkeley, agrees that you don't need the best facilities to learn effectively.

"Developing your creative and critical ideas about your field is far more important. You need to know what is possible with the tools at your disposal but there is a lot more to becoming a successful media maker than operating equipment".

Berkeley says 24-hour access to facilities encourages unhealthy professional practices. Limiting accessibility of such facilities for students assists them to achieve a work ethic. Berkeley suggests similar to industry deadlines, restricted access for media and communication students encourages diligence, time management and velocity.

But what do Media and Communications students think?

La Trobe media studies student Janan Gokoglu says the university loan system is a real test of patience.

"I had to make a booking three weeks prior to the date I needed the camera kit. They really need to filter through their booking requests, granting hire in priority order".

By Baria Bol and Mem Bakar