

Record of Observation or Review of Teaching Practice

Session/artefact to be observed/reviewed:

Size of student group:

Observer: Leila Duffy-Tetzlaff and Kwame Baah

Observee: Antonia Huber

Note: This record is solely for exchanging developmental feedback between colleagues. Its reflective aspect informs PgCert and Fellowship assessment, but it is not an official evaluation of teaching and is not intended for other internal or legal applications such as probation or disciplinary action.

Part One

Observee to complete in brief and send to observer prior to the observation or review:

What is the context of this session/artefact within the curriculum?

MA Graphic Branding and Identity course sits within the Design School at London College of Communication and has been recently reapproved and has been shortened to 12 months. The student cohort has just finished Unit 1 called 'Situating Practice'. The intro unit consisted of a series of creative briefs as well as a set of academic writing intended to critically situate themselves as designers within the world; establishing their own value system within the field of graphic branding. The students have just started Unit 2+3 called 'Professional Practice/Collaborative Unit' which entails working on a set industry brief of their choice and working collaboratively on the briefs. Alongside the create competition briefs we also ask them examine different industry practices to identify design groups or branding agencies whose ethos or practice aligns with the declared values they established in Unit 1. You will observe the second Monday workshop session in this term's unit during which we will introduce the students to different research methodologies applicable to any branding process.

How long have you been working with this group and in what capacity?

I have been teaching the student cohort as an Associate Lecturer every Monday since the beginning of term in October 2024. The Monday session is split into two parts with the first half taking place in the Lecture Theatre and the second half in the studio. During the former part we have students present their own position within an established practice or invite an established practitioner to present their commercial work, during the latter we either run hands-on workshop or offer 1-2-1 tutorials relevant to their current course work. I have done a 'Practiceshare' myself introducing the students to my work outside the university context, lead as workshop and held individual tutorials meaning all students know me well and in different capacities. The post graduate students won't necessarily have all done an undergraduate degree in the creative field (we have students with a background in law and engineers as well) which creates a nice mix.

What are the intended or expected learning outcomes?

- Identify different research methodologies, their purpose and procedures
- Examine the set industry briefs through the lens of the most relevant research methodology
- Reflect on research insights and how they could inform their creative ideation stage
- Identity different UK-based and global agencies and establish their value system and align them with their own

What are the anticipated outputs (anything students will make/do)?

- A collaborative Miro board (or simply pen and paper, still tbc) unpacking the different quantitative and qualitative research methodologies and their individual purposes and procedure.
- I am currently also thinking to turn the above into a more hands-on session
- A short crit at the end sharing their key insights

Are there potential difficulties or specific areas of concern?

- Ensuring engagement and participation as the methodologies can be quite abstract at first.
- Making the theory feel applicable to what they are working on creatively and distill a sense of fun and excitement.
- Some students will still be in the middle of choosing their industry competition brief and therefore might feel confused in general.
- Distraction through mobile phone / social media use during class.

How will students be informed of the observation/review?

I am anticipating around 40 students (out of an overall cohort of 62) to attend the in person class. I will be leading the session and I will mention your presence in the room at the start of the workshop. There will be two other tutors teaching with me on the day – Rob Mawbray, Senior Lecturer on the course and Namrata (pronounced Num-ratha), a new Associate Lecture to the course.

What would you particularly like feedback on?

- The effectiveness of unpacking complex research methodologies through a group exercise
- How general studio set-up of tutors given short prompts foster deep (or superficial) engagement with the subject matter.
- Clarity and accessibility of the resources provided.
- Whether the session sufficiently addresses the diverse needs of UAL's creative student body, and graduate cohorts.

How will feedback be exchanged?

- Make notes in the session
- Briefly talk through notes after the session
- Write up the review in your own notes,
- Set-up a meeting to talk through notes
- Send final written review after the conversation

Part Two

Observer 1 to note down observations, suggestions and questions:

Kwame Baah – Tutor

The observation took place in LCC with a very large class size, which has become a regular occurrence across UAL faculties.

I was very impressed with your breakdown of information for the students, which provided them with clarity and direction. The quote I had in mind to frame the session was "*A notion of moving self from research to objectivity*" It was very good to see you engaging with each group (by way of nested table groups) and supporting their discussions in a way that made them feel centred and considered. It is often the case that in large class sizes students can either feel invisible or become detached.

Throughout the duration you successfully paced yourself between teaching delivery and supporting group thinking with pauses that created significant impact. It was really good to see that you held the attention of the students with an occasional pause in teaching delivery. There was a good amount of technical guide in providing associated definitions as required. Also, you had very good use of multiple directional focusing in the classroom which gave meant that you were looking at what was happening across the room. It is a useful way drawing in student attention and I commend you for that.

I wondered if students are encouraged to stim or fidget to help them focus? I mention this because at times I noticed that some students were looking downwards whilst listening. Nevertheless, there was a buzz in the classroom which says that you had their attention, focus and enthusiasm.

Well done, it was a privilege to experience your teaching!

Part Two

Observer 2 to note down observations, suggestions and questions:

Leila Duffy-Tetzlaff – Peer

Observations on:

- **Ensuring engagement and participation as the methodologies can be quite abstract at first.**

Eased into the session with a well-paced presentation led by the Lecturer. Effective at breaking down the terminology of the methodologies in a clearer way, for example application of reframing language to say 'tools for revealing patterns for further research', to aid comprehension. Giving practical examples of what is meant and what the process could look like in different industry briefs, to aid the possibilities of creative thought before jumping into the ideation stage.

- **Making the theory feel applicable to what they are working on creatively and distill a sense of fun and excitement.**

By giving permission to leave the classroom, being active in the outside world, I can see can foster a sense of excitement and agency by bringing to life the dynamic parts of this line of work and the process of responding to creative and client briefs. The surrounding theory is helping to back up the process, and actions following the introduction of this stage helped to contextualise within an academic environment.

- **Some students will still be in the middle of choosing their industry competition brief and therefore might feel confused in general.**

Referring back to the previous parts of this unit, and previous units, helped to present this stage as a progression and in relation to what has been accomplished already by individuals. The grouping via the Miro board seemed to help visualise the natural or possible groups, but poses the issue if some were oversubscribed due to overloading the options if participants did not stick to a set amount of options selected. Being on your feet and in a classroom environment helped to bring people out of a stuck position, ask questions in a fluid way, and not hang onto one person in particular for enhanced support.

- **Distraction through mobile phone / social media use during class.**

Some students were late, but the flow of the class was not disrupted and extra tutors were at hand to bring them up to speed with most students seeming confident in the positionality even with the lack of introduction to the session's outline. Some students did not face the board during the presentation, which may be their own way of engaging if figurative delivery is distracting, the same students were part of a group who conversed in their own language which may deter the possibility of collaborative teamwork or community building outside of their regular peer group. If participants are prone to be distracted, that can be on the lecturer not being engaging enough, or there can be steps put in place to support the individual to digest information and confirm comprehension in the classroom, or later within the task.

Feedback on:

- **The effectiveness of unpacking complex research methodologies through a group exercise**

Bringing this task introduction and action to the classroom poses a blank slate for the creative springboard towards the possibility and implementation of collaboration. The dynamism of comradery, and energising tendencies of teamwork helps to mirror industry environments and expectations. I had concerns over homogenised groups forming or being instilled beyond adaptation to echo the industry mirroring notion. With possible justification based on a strong sense of belonging lending its positives within the shortened timeframe of the course design, putting pressure on prioritising this approach

over encouraging diverse groups to work together on a collaborative brief. Flow of the course benefits from this format for this type of task.

- **How general studio set-up of tutors given short prompts foster deep (or superficial) engagement with the subject matter.**

May need help identifying which part of the session this pertains to in order to give the feedback...

Open studio appeared to create safer team dynamics. The use of extra tutors helped to shake up the pace, and instill the notion that there are no right answers, can be multiple avenues to pursue the task, and multiple voices and influences that can steer the conversations but not confirm or deny 'right and wrong' which can go against the needs of the task.

The active questions used when approaching the tables for queries included "Which brief have you chosen?" and "What are your first steps?" which supported a more active response. The declaration of the group, and saying the intentions out loud supported the notion that this is early stages, and creative ideas are beginning to flow, and the decisions are being formed if only they continue to be externalised and shared at this stage. Plus allowing the teams to hear from each other the rest of the participants' comprehension levels of the brief and the collective, united decisions, or which ones are still to be clarified amongst themselves. The roaming tutors helped to create a sense of activity and energy, but also for the groups to not be married to one mind representing authority on the subject or how they should progress, and look to each other for the clarification after the lines of enquiry being supported and planted by the tutors.

- **Clarity and accessibility of the resources provided.**

Using Miro for selecting the groups provided a centralised and interactive place to self-organise in a visual way before the session. It is presumed that this method is agreed either unanimously or by majority before going forward as a way of supporting and coordinating the group in a way that works for them. The slides being available beforehand or on Moodle helps to solidify the learning and be an ongoing reference. The chance to ask follow up questions either as a group for the benefit of the whole class, and as individuals if it required a more private conversation, was a conducive method of meeting their engagement and confidence level and preferred learning approach. For those who were not present that day, possibilities of catching up and pursuing the brief is possible.

- **Whether the session sufficiently addresses the diverse needs of UAL's creative student body, and graduate cohorts.**

Written instructions on the screen helped to set the tone and help the stages be clearer for the participants. Encouraged to bring their interests to the work and therefore classroom and course content creates a sense of belonging and ownership. Suggesting a mixture of laptop device, plus field research and active inspiration gathering not enforced but the value of the variety stimulated. Relating the session back to the briefs and course content helped to solidify this initiation as part of the wider picture they are all working towards. Clarity was given on how less text and instead visually driven presentation of ideas is a positive in this line of work, encouraging less studious application and more evidence of agile and responsive way of working which may help break up the more intense and text-heavy parts of the course. Offered paper but not used.

Part Three

Observee to reflect on the observer's 1 (Kwame Baah's – Tutor) comments and describe how they will act on the feedback exchanged:

I am reflecting a lot on how to help students focus during class and avoid following their impulse to look down at their laptop and desktop screen instead of keeping their eyes and mind open for the lecture.

My thoughts on this are two-fold:

In the past I occasionally have jumped too soon to the conclusion that students were using their phone for leisure instead for the course work taking place. When hovering in the room to check I then sometimes found out that students were using their devices to help translate the assignment brief. By interfering with the use of technology I would hinder their engagement rather than helping it.

However when I clearly sense a high level of distraction from the course work in the room I will aim to either verbally encourage the overall student cohort to put their heads up and join in and try to change their perspective by helping them to see the time of taught lessons as an opportunity to fully focus and turning off all digital distractions like messaging or social media apps. If a distracted mood turns into a disruptive temperature, I tend to be stricter and voice a phone ban only allowing students to use their devices outside the classroom. However I am always left unsure whether an authoritarian approach is appropriate given the students' age. As an alternative method I try to walk around the room and silently I aim to ask students individually to put down their phone and try and focus on the brief.

Observee to reflect on the observer's 2 (Leila Duff-Tetzlaff – Peer) comments and describe how they will act on the feedback exchanged:

I found it really re-assuring to read that my observer Leila found the broken down and short statements about complex research methodologies helpful. Same about the accompanying visual references, me paraphrasing and contextualising the new information with learnt elements from previous units. We often assign pre-tasks and readings for our taught session, but sadly a lot of our students are time-poor and not necessarily have done it ahead of a session. This creates the need to summarise the pre-task to a certain extent in order to successfully brief a workshop which is based on the new knowledge. I am often unsure whether I strike the balance right of delivering key information and giving prompts during the rather short verbal introducing. In future I would like to incorporate clearly the readings for students to refer back to.

I really appreciated Leila's observation of how the 'open studio' approach with several tutors roaming the room creates a relaxed yet energising tone to the work environment. I also liked how my encouragement to students of being allowed to leave the classroom to work on the assignment has been positively noted. I am currently reflection of how I could distil this energy in a solely online taught MA. I found this time of working together an essential part of studying. It creates a judge-free time for exchange. However I also agree with Leila's comment that there can be a danger of instilling too much the notion that there are no right answers as it could potentially undermine the task in its entirety. In future I will try to emphasise more on that A) there is no single right approach, but a great set of equally valuable methods of achieving the same outcome and B) helping them to realise that it is about visual and verbal consistency which is the winning factor of any enquiry.

We discussed in-depth Leila's perspective on students self-assigning themselves to groups during our verbal feedback session which has been invaluable. I agree that allowing students to choose teams themselves comes with the potential danger of creating overly homogenised student groups as well as uneven subscription of groups. After the reapproval the length of this particular MA course has been shortened from 18 to 12 months which made students tend to be less risk-taking in choosing groups outside established friendship groups and cultural background. As a teaching team we oscillate between pushing them out of their comfort zones and making sure we foster a sense of belonging amongst the student cohort. For bigger 10 week-long projects we currently tend to let them self-choose their team members. However for a recent Monday workshop tasks which spanned only over two weeks we randomly assigned students to groups. The particular assignment required students to go on a trip to hotels and museums across London and record their brand experience. The feedback has been solely positive – the students used the opportunity to get to know new peers on a personal level and enthusiastically spent quality time in the hotel bar / museum's café together as well as working successfully on the task together resulting in great presentations. In future I will plead for more randomly assigned group activities with my colleagues to diversify student sub groupings further. I will also in personal conversations with students help them reflect on those new connections and encourage them to not solely default to what they know, but continue to be open for the unknown.