

Starting From Scratch.

How can we align creative and technical workshops for students from multiple disciplines?

Context

The School of Art and Design at Nottingham Trent University offer optional modules to students in level 5 (2nd year) of their chosen course. Students choose from a range of modules that they find interesting and could align to their future practice although outside of their core subject. The optional module is in it's second academic year, thus this research is ongoing.

Example Module

- Motion Graphics

Applicable Courses

- Animation
- Graphic Design
- Fashion Marketing & Branding
- Illustration
- Design for Film and Television

Methods

Introduce students to the subject through relatable industry examples that touch on each of the applicable course disciplines.

Ascertain the level of experience of technical software associated with motion graphics to gain an understanding of the current level of knowledge.

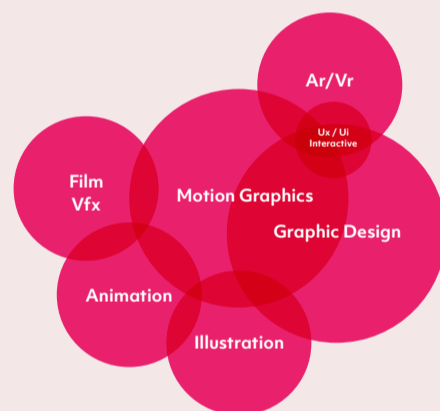
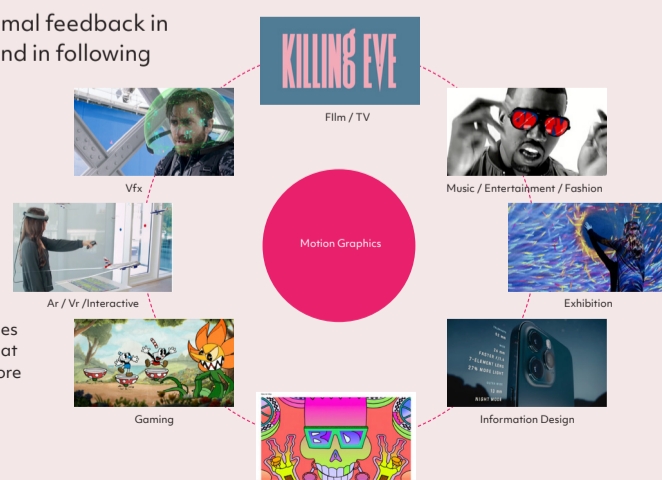
Start from scratch but offer more advanced techniques on an individual basis. Tailor learning needs and styles.

Divide cohort into mixed tutor groups so that knowledge can be shared across disciplines.

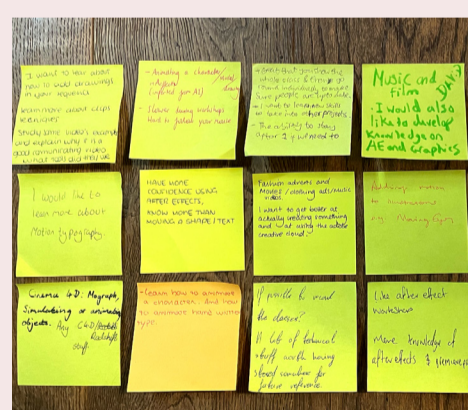
Set a project brief that is open so that students can explore their own interests (subject specialism) within the framework of the motion graphics module.

Conduct anonymous informal feedback in session. Reflect and respond in following teaching sessions.

(fig 3) A variety of industry examples suggesting career opportunities that touch upon some of the students core course disciplines.



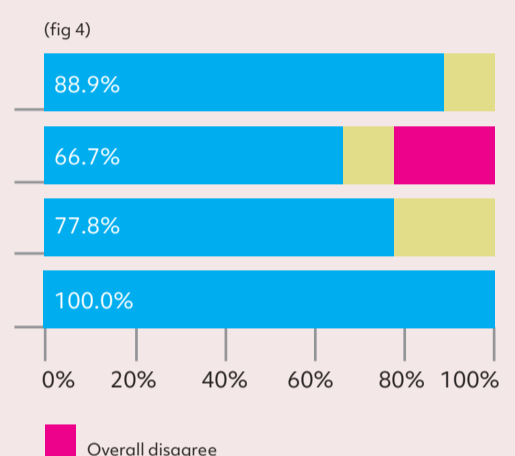
(fig 1) Interconnection of diciplines and areas of teaching



(fig 2) Student feedback

NTU MySay Data

- I understand the learning outcomes of the module
- I understand how this module links in with the rest of my course
- I find the module intellectually stimulating
- Overall, I am satisfied with the teaching quality on this module



Conclusion

Initial statistics along with informal verbal feedback suggests that students have enjoyed the combination of technical workshops, 'learning by doing' (Dewey, 1983) scaffolded with didactic structured lectures that demonstrate relevant commercial examples of Motion Graphics (fig 3).

The use of simple Post-it note (fig 2) feedback exercise proved inciteful. This mild form of action research; a term coined by the psychologist Kurt Lewin, is a way of generating knowledge about a social system whilst at the same time, attempting to change or influence it (Authur *et al.* 2012). I believe that giving students a sense of agency to impact on the content of the session and the teaching patterns of their lecturer (even within sessions) can be beneficial. This is not to suggest that lecturers stray from the intended learning outcomes, radically changing learning modules on a whim, more reflect and learn through the lens of the 'Students' Eyes' (Brookfield, 2017). Further alignment between the students discipline and intention of the module could then be discussed openly in tutorial sessions.

From a qualitative research perspective I believe a greater sense of community could be created by increasing group learning activities. At times communication between students during tutorials felt awkward. This is something which I'm already investigating by increased the number of group tutorials and learning activities. In time I hope that this will foster stronger relationships between students from different course disciplines.

Learning outcomes have been highlighted during each session to help improve the understanding of the subject. Although this can pose a risk of becoming overly prescriptive (Ashwin *et al.* 2015), the main project brief (to promote an event) allows enough opportunities for student to explore either within the boundaries of their core subject or an area that they feel passionately about. Thus, students tailor their creative response under the structure of the module learning outcomes. Perhaps this accounts for the positive engagement statistics (fig 4) from the MySay report. However, further statistics and data need to be collated from future module iterations to gain a more holistic appraisal since student engagement in the MySay report can fluctuate.

References

Arthur, J. Waring, M. Coe, R. Hedges, L.V. (2012) Research Methods & Methodologies in Education, Sage.
 Ashwin, P *et al.* (2015) Reflective Teaching in Higher Education, Bloomsbury.
 Brookfield, S. (2017) Becoming a Critically Reflective Teacher, John Wiley & Sons, Incorporated.
 Dewey, J. (1983) John Dewey the Middle Works, 1899-1924, Southern Illinois University Pr
 Keeley, T. Kelley, D. (2014) Creative Confidence Unleashing The Creative Potential Within Us All, William Collins.
Images (fig 3)
 Killing Eve titles: Design and art direction: Matt Willey. Motion graphics: Pablo Delcan <https://mattwilley.co.uk/>
 Kanye West: "Good Life" Directed by Jonas & François with animation by So-Me.
 TeamLab 2019, Interactive Digital Installation, Endless, Sound: Hideaki Takahashi
 Apple: This is iPhone 12 Pro: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=P91bKe-J-mc>
 Nike: Air Max. <https://www.nike.com/gb/air-max>
 Cuphead: <https://cupheadgame.com/>
 Framestore: BA Interactive <https://www.framestore.com/?language=en>
 Territory Studio: Spiderman Far From Home <https://territorystudio.com/>