

Record of Observation or Review of Teaching Practice

Session/artefact to be observed/reviewed: Photographic Fictions BAP1 – Group Tutorial.

Size of student group: 13 (7 attendees)

Observer: Rachel Louise Brown

Observee: Max Ferguson

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?

This is the third week of the unit, we are working towards a final photobook. The class will be looking at expanded photography books, and helping students develop their ideas towards their own production of a final books.

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

I have been working with this specific tutorial group for three weeks, but I have taught this year group extensively and am one of the two main senior lecturers for BA Photography Year 1.

What are the intended or expected learning outcomes?

- Experiment with various techniques, materials, and formats in the production of your work (Process)
- Use appropriate photography and design skills to structure, edit, and produce a publication, that clearly communicates your ideas and intentions (Realisation, Communication)

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

There are no expected outputs as this is a practical research session and the tutorial will be lead in part by the students' requirements and interests during the classes. Potential outputs could be unbound book structures; concertina books; posters; exhibitions in an envelope.

Are there potential difficulties or specific areas of concern?

Students have different abilities with collaboration with engagement. These are first year BA students so care and conversation are key to engage introverted students and those with less developed language skills.

How will students be informed of the observation/review?

They have been informed in the class prior to the observed session.

What would you particularly like feedback on?

General teaching practice. Engagement, group activities.

How will feedback be exchanged?

Written and verbal.

Part Two

Observer to note down observations, suggestions and questions:

Thank you for letting me observe your session Max. I came away with so many wonderful ideas, inspired by your teaching and observed some refreshing methods implemented within the context of your session. I could have easily stayed for the duration. I've made notes below and researched into the style of teaching I observed and have given some references you may find useful below, also a few questions you may wish to respond to. This has been a useful learning task for me, thank you!

The room was warm due to sunny conditions and the tower block radiators being on. You quickly sourced two fans to make sure the environment was suitable for teaching in. The class began at 2.15pm which enabled students to miss the lift rush and arrive unstressed. Was this start time communicated with the students? I'm keen to implement something like this but if I say 2.15, they'll come at 2.30. You played music to create an engaging, meditative atmosphere. Does this happen in each session? I wondered whether - with the fans + music + listening to you - it may be a bit of sensory overload, particularly for neurodiverse students – but on the flip side, I wondered whether it may help, and what you have observed in relation to this?

Creating an engaging learning space, that is comfortable and psychologically soothing, different to how a traditional classroom performs, is a really interesting device to aid learning. I am really interested in this with the sessions I deliver and wondered whether we are lifting from our professional careers as photo directors, in that we know the importance of psychology on a shoot – which is often aided by music and a comfortable atmosphere. Would love to know your thoughts on this.

You may be interested in **Sarah Rose Cavanagh – *The Spark of Learning: Energizing the College Classroom with the Science of Emotion* (2016)**. She explores how emotion and stress reduction play a crucial role in learning.

You welcomed each student to the session on an individual level (Cavanagh also discusses the importance of knowing each student's name in fostering a warm social climate). It's clear that the students feel comfortable in your presence and engage in open discussion while respecting your knowledge.

You explained which students weren't attending the session and that it's nice as we get more time with you all today. You also mentioned the three who didn't attend last week... "it's great to see what you are thinking this week – were you at fashion week, darkroom?" gently querying their absence in a positive way, while also ensuring their absence was felt.

Re-explained the context of the session – to think about creating a book in a simple way. Showed examples including previous LCC students – GREAT ! and related it to what one of the student's in the room is thinking, and that it may appeal to them. Showing knowledge of a student's practice, makes them feel known.

Gives them great idea to create images in the darkroom and using an album format which already exists as a way of reinforcing concepts to do with family. Also gives them an achievable idea in terms of cost. Taking them to a printer after to see their facilities, including a punch way to bind prints together. You consistently reinforce affordability and ways of making that do not break the bank – social justice. Ensuring that students learn to think outside of the box while creating within their means.

You showed real book examples using OBJECT BASED LEARNING!

Simple options, through to the more complex, including Daniel Alexander's publication – again linked to the Photo Department, which increases their trust and inspiration within our department.

You broke down the complexity of the concertina format, showing the simplicity / achievability of it. "Something can feel complex and important but is simple. Reason that is important is that if you are making an edition it needs to be repeatable and easy".

Final example is a book that comes apart into posters – again you talk about the cheap and easy way of creating it, including the elastic band. You are demystifying the process consistently.

You then challenge the students to consider this format...

Max - "How do you feel about that as a creator? You've organised it with your thoughts but then the audience is able to change it"

Student 1 – "That's really exciting, photographer's don't often feel this way"

Student 2 – "I like the idea but it scares me, I don't like the idea of it being ordered by me and then changed by another"

An interesting debate opens up. You encouraged this space to open and for the conversation to flow... you then bring a quieter student into the mix, and asks him to show

his work in progress. He explains it comfortably, despite perhaps being quieter during the earlier moments of the session.

You are always aware of what each student is doing in the space and when to interject with a suggestion. I wonder how well this structure works when there are more students? 7 feels quite special. It loses the impact when we have to manage many students more in this type of teaching environment and there's less ability to be as engaged.

They ask questions about what they can do. 'Could it be a hard back book'. You suggest attending book binding inductions and if it's not possible, there's also possibility to learn online. Talks about which parts of the process is difficult. Grain direction.

Explains grain direction and importance in relation to the book making process.

Going to make a quick book. Gives them all a piece of paper.

Simple explanation. Always levelling up relationship with students – no hierarchy in the room – but the knowledge of Max and trust of the students is apparent.

Using string instead of elastic band. 2 times length of book + a little bit.

Reiterating the simplicity to break down what could feel like a complex process.

Recommendations – Mixam. Very cheap print on demand process. You are constantly levelling up

'we are all artists aren't we'

Shared a profit model, giving 1st year students a clear possibility of how to have a financially viable career. "Obviously in first year but it's never too early to start thinking about these. You are all amazing".

Thinking about making structures that are easy and cheap. Avoid plastic – explain why –You are integrating UALs climate policy into teaching.

You split the group into two, and ask them to think about the projects they are working on, and how these could become a book for your submission. Space for a brainstorm. I wondered whether mixing the friendship groups up may have encouraged more integration?

What types of books exist already? Exercise book. Showed your example and explained the possibilities of making it work.

Print finishing, Chelsea as an option too.

Reiterating what had been spoken about. Fantastic knowledge of student's previous work – 'You made a tape previously... you have already made a structure so are able to think outside of the box'. Bring this into this unit.

Anything that can be recycled is really nice – again reinforcing sustainable thinking in line with UALs climate policy.

Lots of questions and discussion. Informal chat. You give them a starting point, so they don't feel lost.

'Most important critics in the room are you guys'

Encouraging sketchbook, sticking new things in.

Object based learning – a quieter member of the group has a projector on a camera with a found archive. Encourages them to show how it works. The group are excited.

A student returns with a roll of developed film and some images aren't there. Max offers advice and sympathy, allowing them to re-enter the space despite having missed the briefing.

Encourage blue sky thinking.

Asks Chinese students to switch to English, in a careful, diplomatic manner. By acknowledging language ability a confidence in self is then displayed.

Goosebumps example / interaction suggestion / gamification. Bringing experience of playing a game into the experience of a book.

Students have also brought examples too and are excited about the session.

'What's your project, what's your book'.

Great to hear such creative thinking from 1st year students.

How are we getting on?

Sits with the students – a great levelling tool!

Questioning what the surface is an interesting route too. Encouraging experimentation, thoughts about holograms.

Willing to deconstruct the format of a traditional book? Explains realities of printing + size, considering scale, shape.

Gives all student's attention and encouragement. The groups have been formed by friendships, perhaps mix them up?

Can I hire you?

Final thoughts... I felt you created an empathic radical creative session. This was teaching within the system, while recognising how to go against it and to make it work for you – particularly with the reinforcement of the students thinking creatively while working in an inexpensive way and avoiding plastics. You demystified the process of book making, while also ensuring that they think responsibly about what they create. Your style was empathetic, dialogic and dismantled the hierarchy of student / teacher, while also maintaining your place of knowledge and knowing (both the industry that you are teaching and the students you are working with). While thinking about these things it's been recommended to look further into Bell Hooks – Teaching to Transgress: Education as a Practice of Freedom (1994) in which she advocated for an engaged pedagogy that make students feel seen, heard and valued as well as discussing how race, gender and power structures affect the student experience in the classroom. She also wrote a follow up book Teaching Community: A Pedagogy of Hope (2003) in which she expands on the earlier book. It's described as a great read for educators looking to bring social justice and emotional intelligence into their teaching. Something you do in bucketloads!

Part Three

Observee to reflect on the observer's comments and describe how they will act on the feedback exchanged:

Thank you Rachel for taking the time to so thoughtfully reflect on the session you observed. It's such a privilege to have this kind of in-depth reflection on my teaching practice. Love bell hooks always, and that's such a good person to think more about in these pedagogies of care as well. I've not read the Sarah Rose Cavanagh essay but that's on the list too now.

The question about music being overbearing for some students is interesting and not something I've considered enough. I've always considered music as a good way to engage students and build a community within a room – often giving them control of the playlist – but I've not thought about the overbearing effect it could have this is something to consider in the future.
