

Nurturing Reflective Practitioners

Cath Davies

Academic Lead: Student Experience CSAD

Transitions into Constellation (Contextual Studies) at level 4

- Transition into visual literacy and critical thinking
- Transition into writing about visual culture (not just making)
- Transition into writing about and critically analysing own studio practice
- Transition into writing reflectively on own learning journey (pdp)

Challenges encountered at level 4

- Hostility to essay writing and reading and other 'school-like' approaches
- Constellation's 'building blocks': developing level 6 dissertation academic skills including structure, coherent argument with textual evidence and theoretical underpinning
- The antithesis of the organic creative process that is 'unstructured', from within, instinctive

Developing confidence with the structuring of ideas through textual analysis

- Sketch book, handwritten note-taking, replicating studio-based approaches
- Group activities that nurture the difference between description and analysis (denotation and connotation) to develop critical literacy
- Theoretical underpinning to support and develop analysis and overall argument



Developmental potential of structure and sequence : enabling not quelling creativity and learning

“automaticity...one can employ skills or call upon ideas without conscious effort...allows students to attend to aesthetic matters because matters of technical control have been mastered...without sequence, ideas and skills are less likely to become more complex and sophisticated” *(Eisner, 1989: 23)*

“the key factor is regular and systematic exposure to reflective and analytical activities designed to develop critical literacy”

(Buchanan, 2000: 38)

Cath's columns

Three columns – landscape – sketch books

- 1) **description (denotation)** of each component of the image
- 2) **Analysis (connotation)** of each component of the image
Cultural meanings/associations/symbolism
- 3) **Theoretical perspectives** to support your analysis

Cath's columns: from essay writing to learning journals (pdp)

[critical studies' role within Art and Design] “students will become more positively encouraged to express ideas and insights gained in reflection upon their own practical work and that of others...reciprocal effect of their critical perceptions” (*Thistlewood, 1989: ix*)

Constellation Learning Journals encapsulate this ‘reciprocal effect’

- a) Reflect on the connections between modules and how ideas are being informed in the development of their practical work *What am I learning and applying?*
- b) Reflect on the learning process *How am I learning?*

Critical analysis of own creativity and learning process

- Columns template to deconstruct connotative meanings (materials, forms, representation debates, narratives and ideologies) in own practice with theoretical underpinning
- Columns template to reflect on learning development, challenges and action planning
 - **formative feedback activity** (*describe feedback comments/strategies to work on to improve/where am I now? Action planning*)
 - **transition into level 5 from level 4, level 6 challenges from level 5**

Cath's columns and our own reflective practices: the need for structure to visualise and comprehend learning development

- HEA applications that require the articulation of often 'instinctive' teaching practices and methodologies (not to mention theoretical underpinning)
- APR's : the amended form that foregrounds a reflective narrative
- Performance reviews and the difficulties of writing about ourselves and our existing and aspirational transitions

HEA applications and writing about teaching

- Describe the teaching activity/approach what I do
- Analysis of how and why I do it like that. What has changed over time and why? How is this approach encouraging learning?
- Wider context informing my methods (pedagogical theory, prof docs, strategy docs etc)

APR narratives/performance reviews/mentoring

- Describe activity/event
- Analysis of what worked and what didn't (and possible reasons).
What strategies could be put in place to develop/improve this?
- Where am I now? What's changed since last time? More confidence emerging? What challenges remain for me? Action plan to overcome these?

“a reflective teacher is valued as a resourceful individual rather than as someone who functions routinely in a predetermined role...the reflective practitioner is better equipped to respond to change ...a capacity for understanding situations holistically, for looking at them from a variety of perspectives

...analytical skills are the tools of interpretation and a means of making connections, evaluative skills are necessary in order to make judgements based on evidence and with its implications for the future in mind” (*Prentice, 2000: 12*)