Record of Observation or Review of Teaching Practice

*Session/artefact to be observed/reviewed: 1 to 1 sessions with students*

*Size of student group: Variable*

*Observer: Stephen Barrett*

*Observee: James Hopkins*

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 OneObservee 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?

I run a digital fabrication space at CCW Foundation. Students are currently working on their FMP (final major project) so I will help aid the process of preparing files for digital making and digital fabrication.

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

The students are split into art, communication and design. The current group of students I have been working with since September 2023, however some I may see for the first time depending on their familiarity with the digital workshop.

What are the intended or expected learning outcomes?

To understand how digital software can be used to produce physical work, via fabrication tools like 3D printed, laser cutter, pen plotting etc.

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

It’s dependent on students’ personal projects but will be in the realm of digital file creation and fabrication. For example, helping a student prepare an Adobe Illustrator file for laser cutting.

Are there potential difficulties or specific areas of concern?

Students unfamiliarity with the workshop, maybe coming In for the first time and/or their potentially limited understanding of digital processes might need more assistance and have trouble with specific terminology.

How will students be informed of the observation/review?

Students will be notified via moodle and email.

What would you particularly like feedback on?

Clarity of discussion with students, knowledge dissemination, accessibility of space?

How will feedback be exchanged?

Verbally through Teams if not possible on the day (via tutorials) or informal chat after session has ended.

Part Two

Observer to note down observations, suggestions and questions:

Observations

I’ve written notes under your three headings…

**Accessibility of space**

James is located in a digital fabrication workshop for Foundation students at CCW. The building and in particular the workshop areas have an informal, calming warmth to them, partly through the age and style of the architecture (previously a grammar school) and also due to open doors at the workshop entrance but throughout the connecting spaces. This creates flow from one space to another and I found myself inquisitively wondering around, looking at work and chatting to technical staff who were all very welcoming and spent time talking to me about why I was there. I felt very comfortable in the space.

The spaces feel like workshops or studios, not a print / fabrication bureau, an important distinction which I feel must affect the students’ mindset and approach to technical staff, collaborating rather than considering it as a service provision.

There are no divisions between staff space and student space, no counters / office doors to wait at or negotiate and the environment was relaxed. There is an area of computers/desks/chairs which looks and felt more like a studio environment, so there seems to be a mix of production facilities and studio work happening in the same space. That combination felt important and part of the teaching/learning ethos. I’m sure this resulted in a lot of cross-pollination of ideas with students and staff seeing what is happening in various parts of the workshop.

There is clear but not official looking signage throughout the spaces, indicating where particular equipment is. There is also a huge amount of work, tests, offcuts, prints on display, creating a busy, visual and inspiring space but not too precious. Objects on display are used to visually explain print/technical processes, demonstrating what’s possible in terms of size, image reproduction, manufacturing, materials, etc. These act as teaching aids and I imagine inform and inspire new ideas in students.

**Discussions with students**

During my visit there were maybe 4-5 students in the workshops and I was told this was a pretty quiet day. James was working with two students one-to-one while I was there and was

very hands-on, involving students in the process, explaining what was happening at various stages and discussing how they might solve the technical problems the student had. James was very calm and laid-back, and conversational with the students. The students seemed to find him very approachable, and it appeared that James was working *with* each student.

James moves around the space, working with students in the computer areas and then moving to use other pieces of equipment, but each time with the student so they can see and understand what is happening. When I was there he was explaining and showing the laser cutter to a student who was making a model of a stained-glass window, they were prototyping and making iterations together.

**Knowledge dissemination**

I observed that knowledge dissemination could potentially be happening in several ways in the space, which from a pedagogical sense is quite exciting and is encouraged through how the spaces have been set up and designed: Firstly though the direct interactions James (and other technicians) has with students: conversations, explanations, discussions, problem solving, demonstrations of equipment and processes; secondly through the interactions with other staff and students, seeing what is happening in the space, what people are working on, the shared workshop environment; thirdly through the display of examples, student work, tests, materials, prototypes etc, this acts like an immersive swatch book or materials library – very inspiring and rich as an experience. Lastly the architecture of the spaces and how they have been configured, the warmth of the materials, light in the wood workshop, informative signs, open doors and fluid connected spaces, and an informality to everything that encouraged inquisitiveness, nothing was ‘out of reach’ or ‘off limits’.

Part Three

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

Thank you for the feedback Stephen, really great points and it was interesting having someone else in the space observing.

I’m glad you felt comfortable in the space and that the natural flow I feel the space provides came across. In my role I really try and push the collaborative nature of disciplines and feel this is only possible by the workshops being next to each other in which conversations and ideas can naturally occur. This flow allows students and staff alike to see what’s happening, and along with the large amount of examples we have on display, creates conversation of what’s possible with a variety of processes. With our upcoming move to Lime Grove I hope the workshops will keep this ethos as I believe it’s incredibly important!

It’s encouraging to hear that you believe that the students found me approachable and comfortable to talk to. I try to think of the students as fellow artists/practitioners which hopefully allows them to be more open about their work and creates deeper conversation. As technicians I think we’re in an interesting position, as we’re not ‘marking’ work, students often feel more comfortable explaining, experimenting and changing their ideas with us. I am glad that you recognised the multifaceted approach we employ, including direct interactions, peer learning opportunities, visual displays, and the design of the physical space itself. I believe creating an environment that fosters curiosity and accessibility to resources is essential for empowering students to explore and learn independently.