Temperature testing leading to ongoing curriculum evolution in Creative Arts modules

Dr Barbara Brownie

Jayne Smith

University of Hertfordshire

The problem

- NSS questions are asked too late for action.
- Results help future students, not current students.
- If addressed earlier, improvements could be made during module, particularly for Qs like:
  - My course has provided me with opportunities to explore ideas or concepts in depth
  - The criteria used in marking have been clear in advance
  - The IT resources and facilities provided have supported my learning well
- And of course:

  - I have had the right opportunities to provide feedback on my course

So…

- Student feedback needs to be gathered mid-module, so that staff can take action.

But…

- Student questionnaire fatigue! (Students "can't stand doing questionnaires")
- Questionnaires gather feedback, but are not in themselves valuable learning activities. Valuable teaching time feels wasted.

Changes needed

- Temperature Testing must take place earlier in modules

- Activities must not be questionnaires. Can they be active, and encourage learning, while simultaneously yielding data?

Context

- Post-1991 UK university
- Many students from FE
- Creative Arts programmes
- Many students do not know what MFQ/NSS feedback means, who it is for, etc.
- Students need to feel more empowered; to have their say in improvements to the course.

Our students are…

- Creative

- Visual communicators

- Sociable

- How can we exploit these characteristics in an activity that yields student feedback?

Our aims…

- Give students opportunities to inform changes in their programme: empowerment.
    - if those changes are not possible, to understand why (transparency).
- Give students the feeling that they are being listened to: staff/student partnership.
- Improve students' understanding of their own programme, and why it is the way it is (e.g. why certain content needs to be included)
- Improve understanding of availability of other student services.
- Improving students' understanding of what they need to do in order to maximize their own opportunities for learning.
- Improve students understanding of the characteristics and expectations of learning at HE level.
- Revision – remind them of what they have learnt, and what they already know.
- Give students time for reflection on the themes that will later arise in the NSS, so that they can give more considered responses.

And…

- For staff to gain feedback through an activity that makes students feel they are gaining directly from than activity (e.g. applying skills, learning), not just providing data.

Fashion Programme

Brought students together from all levels in a workshop to actively discuss and contribute to key topics and issues

- designed to encourage cross level communication and to give students an opportunity to make an active contribution to learning and teaching on the Fashion Programme

Topics covered

- **Module Information**
- **Assessment & Feedback** (NSS questions 8-11)
- **Modes of Learning** (NSS Qs 5-7)
- **Research and Exploration**
- **StudyNet (VLE)**
- **Module Feedback Questionnaire (MFQ)**
- **Organisation and Management** (NSS Qs 15-17)
- **Resources & Technical Support** (NSS Qs 18-20)
- **Collaborative Learning**
- **Programme of learning**

Each topic was discussed by 2 prearranged student groups

Information given to the groups:

This session is designed to encourage cross level communication and to give you an opportunity to make an important active contribution to learning and teaching on the Fashion Programme. Learning should not be a passive experience, but a collaborative partnership between tutors and students. Over the next two hours, you will be in a cross level team taking part in an exercise from a list of 10 short topics.

You will discuss your topic with your group for 30 minutes making notes as you go on the material provided. When you have finished your task, you will join up with the other group *also* working on your topic. You will spend a further 15 minutes to draw up a conclusion from both groups and prepare a short presentation. You will need to allocate a team leader and designated spokesperson who will present your outcome between 4pm and 5pm a five minutes

Topic 1 Module Information

- You are provided with information for each module you study on. The type of information provided includes the Definitive Module Document (DMD), Module Guide(s), Schedule(s) of Study and Teaching Resources. Briefs are under the heading Assignments.

- **Task, consider and feedback in your group**

In your group, please discuss this information and think about what it's for, where to find it, how you use it and how often you use it during a module. Which items are you most likely to refer to and why?

Module Information

Module Information

- Easy Access
  ↳ Found on Studynet

- SoS
  ↳ Clear info on dates
  ↳ Clear aims and outcomes } Useful
  ↳ Info about resources.
  * Should be sent out earlier. Unexpected expenses
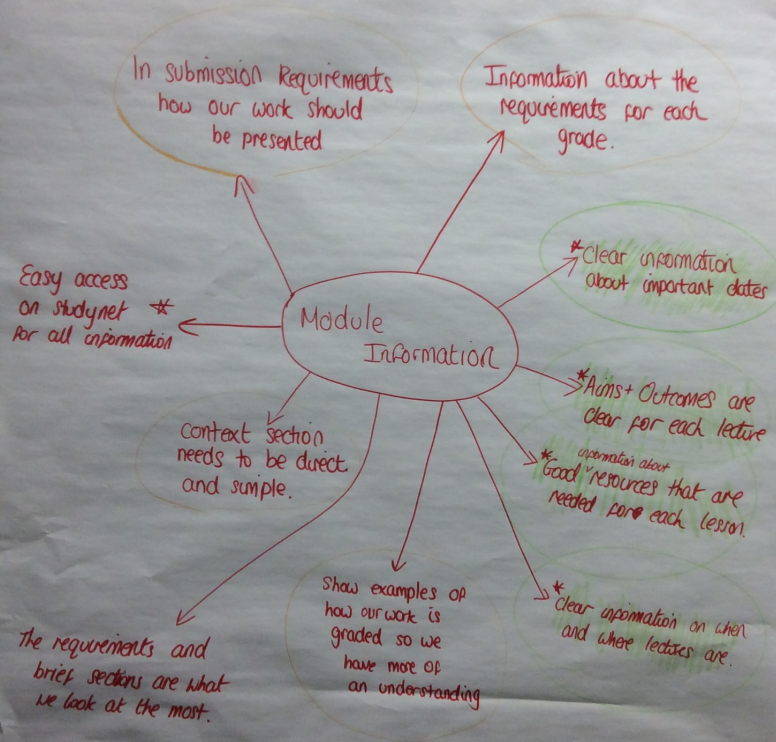
- Examples of grading will be useful

- Brief
  ↳ Too technical - Simplify & more directional.

- DMD & Module Guide - Useful to have

  * More examples of previous work or a clearer direction

In submission Requirements how our work should be presented

Information about the requirements for each grade.

Easy access on studynet for all information *

Module Information

* Clear information about important dates

Context section needs to be direct and simple.

* Aims + Outcomes are clear for each lecture

* Information about Good resources that are needed for each lesson.

Show examples of how our work is graded so we have more of an understanding

* clear information on when and where lectures are.

The requirements and brief sections are what we look at the most.

Topic 2 Assessment and Feedback

- Assessment and feedback are an important part of teaching and learning process. Your task is to consider processes that are currently used across the Fashion programme.

- **Task, consider and feedback in your group;**

You are being asked to discuss the various forms of assessment and feedback we use on the Fashion course and consider which type you find most useful:

1) To help you understand how your work is progressing.
2) To help you move forward with your work.

To help with your discussion, here are is a list of activities that staff consider to be assessment and feedback.

Group tutorial
Individual tutorial
Conversation within a workshop or class
Formal hand in and
Written feedback

Assessment and Feedback

Left panel

♀ ASSESEMENT & FEEDBACK. ♂

* ~~FORMATIVE GRADES~~
* FORMATIVE ASSESEMENTS
* 1 ON 1
* GROUP TUTORIALS
* FORMATIVE GRADES

| FORMATIVE |

- MORE FOCUS ON INDIVIDUALS
- CHANCE TO SHOW WHERE YOU'RE AT
- INDIVIDUAL IDEAS / ADVICE
- NEXT STEP

PRO'S

| GROUP TUTORIALS |

- PEER'S FEEDBACK
- LEARNING FROM ONE ANOTHER
- HELPS TO SHOW WHERE YOU ARE
- IMPORTANT TO SEE OTHERS WORK - COMPARISON
- BETTER ORGANISATION

PRO'S

Right panel

Assesment & Feedback

Good Points : - Likes group formatives.

- To help us progress and improve our work.
- Makes us rethink our ideas.
- Gives room for improvement within our work.
- Improves time management & organisation.
- Provides a different outlook & second opinion.
- Feedback helps us decide if our ideas are realistic & on track. Can it be achieved?
- Helps keep focus on thing that need doing. —
- Negative feedback can push a student to work on that particular thing.

Could Improve :

- Virbal feedback & meeting after submunision for a better insight on what could be improved next time
- Few more formatives ~~free~~ tutorials (face to face)
- Group formatives to be in smaller groups.
- Weekly formatives? (5mins face to face)
- Formative sheets could be ~~ep~~ explained a bit better.

Topic 5 StudyNet (VLE)

StudyNet is the University intranet that is used to support your learning and overall experience as a student at UH. The University uses StudyNet as its main portal to communicate module information, course information, services that are available to you, job opportunities etc. Other Universities use similar virtual learning environments such as 'blackboard'.

- **Task, consider and feedback in your group;**

Discuss amongst your group your experiences in virtual learning environments, StudyNet and any others with which you are familiar. You may wish to consider how you use it, how often and if it offers you what you think you need/would like.

StudyNet (VLE)

StudyNet

LIKES

- EASY TO NAVIGATE
- Convenient Online library
- Easy access to briefs + schedule of work
- Resourceful for information about different offices (i.e. opening times)
- Find out about events at the uni rather than just your course.
- Student Services (accommodation)
- Opportunities promoted
- Email

DISLIKES

- Inconvenient layout
- Too much information (messy)
- Off Putting to read.
-

Things that Should Change

- Categorisation (instead of bulk info)
- Option to message students (forum) about work/ networking.
- Individual profiles - Showcase work /portfolio

BA Photography

- Brainstorming about the programme and its value

- Mapping activities

- All levels (4, 5, 6)

Group brainstorming…

What is the teaching like on my course?

Somewhat Memorable.

Learning new Stuff.

This year is more engaging!

More guests talks. ☺

Prefer workshops + Participation rather than lectures.

Equipment tutorials on find I need more it.

This=5 ik (min)

SHOULD BE MORE BREAKS. FRESH AIR IS GOOD! (CHAIRS ARE A PAIN!)

Want more 1-1 tutorials.

Group tutorials less often and tailored more to practice.

Student find it hard finding stuff...

Some teaching methods are better than others.

What Academic support is there?

- Lectures (via Emails)
  - Support from lectures online
- Student Support (Student Union)
- Group Work
- Graduate Oppurtunities
- Other students supporting each other
- Writing Support (Vicky Whittall)
- 1-2-1 support from lecturers
- Careers + Enterprise
- Study Net offers → Lecture notes uploaded online
- Creative Arts Tool kit
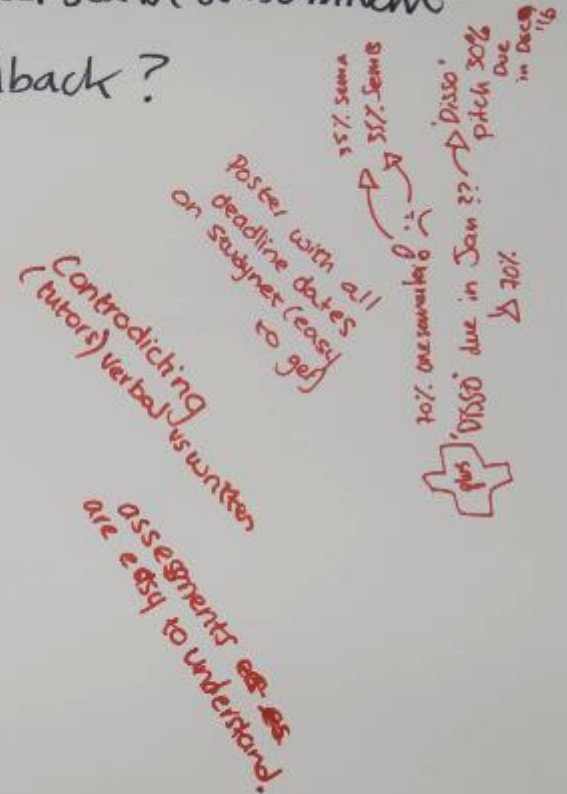- Online Resources (LRC)
- Group Feedback (Tutorials)

Group brainstorming…

SNAP, CRACKLE AND POP INTO OUR BREAKFAST CLUB!

The Photography Breakfast Club was started in 2014 as a space in which students and staff could meet to discuss any aspects of the Programme they chose, whether a part of the official curriculum or not. This year the Club will meet as usual on Wednesdays from 9-10am in the Café Gallery. The Club provides a friendly context in which students can discuss any aspects of the course they wish, talking directly to staff outside the teaching context. Staff are able to listen to any concerns or suggestions students have, as well as using the meetings to pass on information about how the Programme works. The aim is to provide a framework of collaboration and trust through which everyone can gain.

Rebecca Thomas: r.thomas@herts.ac.uk

School of
Creative Arts

Mapping activities

- BA (Hons) Photography
- All levels together
- Asked students to map curriculum (reflecting upon its design)
- Students identified positives and negatives
- Follow-up session in which staff told students about proposed changes, informed by students' maps.

Curriculum mapping activities

Curriculum mapping activities

- Gauging how students see their programme, what they see that the programme offers, and the shape of it.

Curriculum mapping activities

Encourage students to think about:

- What they gain from the course (NSS Qs 5-7)
- The range of support on offer (Qs 12-14)
- Relationships between modules (Qs 15-17)
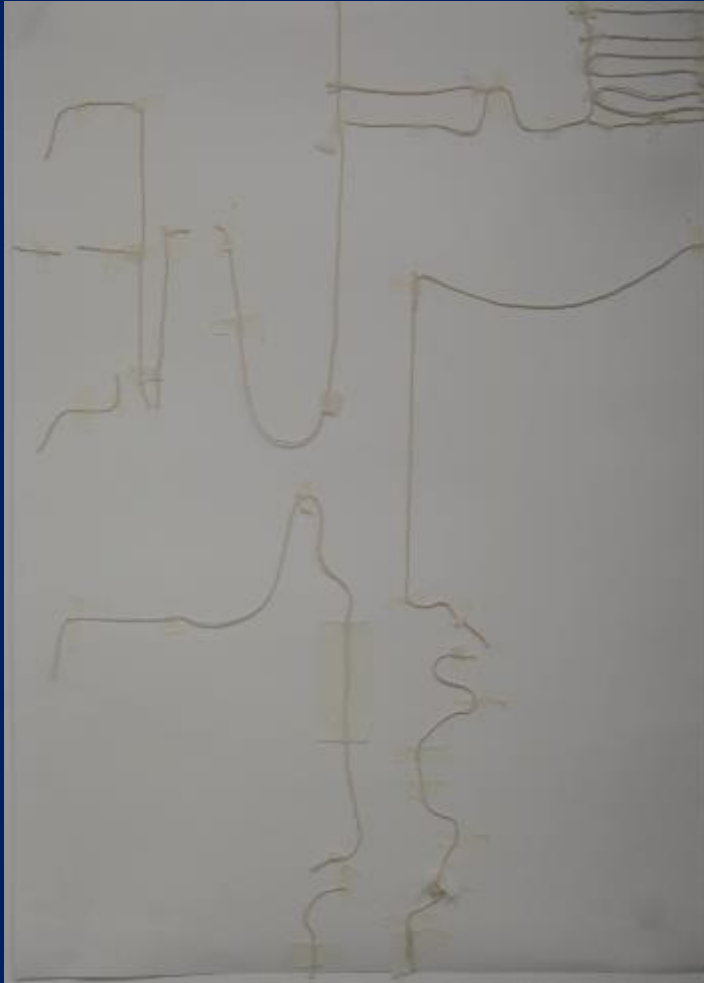- The overall value of their course.

Curriculum mapping activities

Give students opportunities to…

- Discuss structure and content of course with staff and other students (at different levels)
- Suggest improvements
- Reflect on learning (revision)
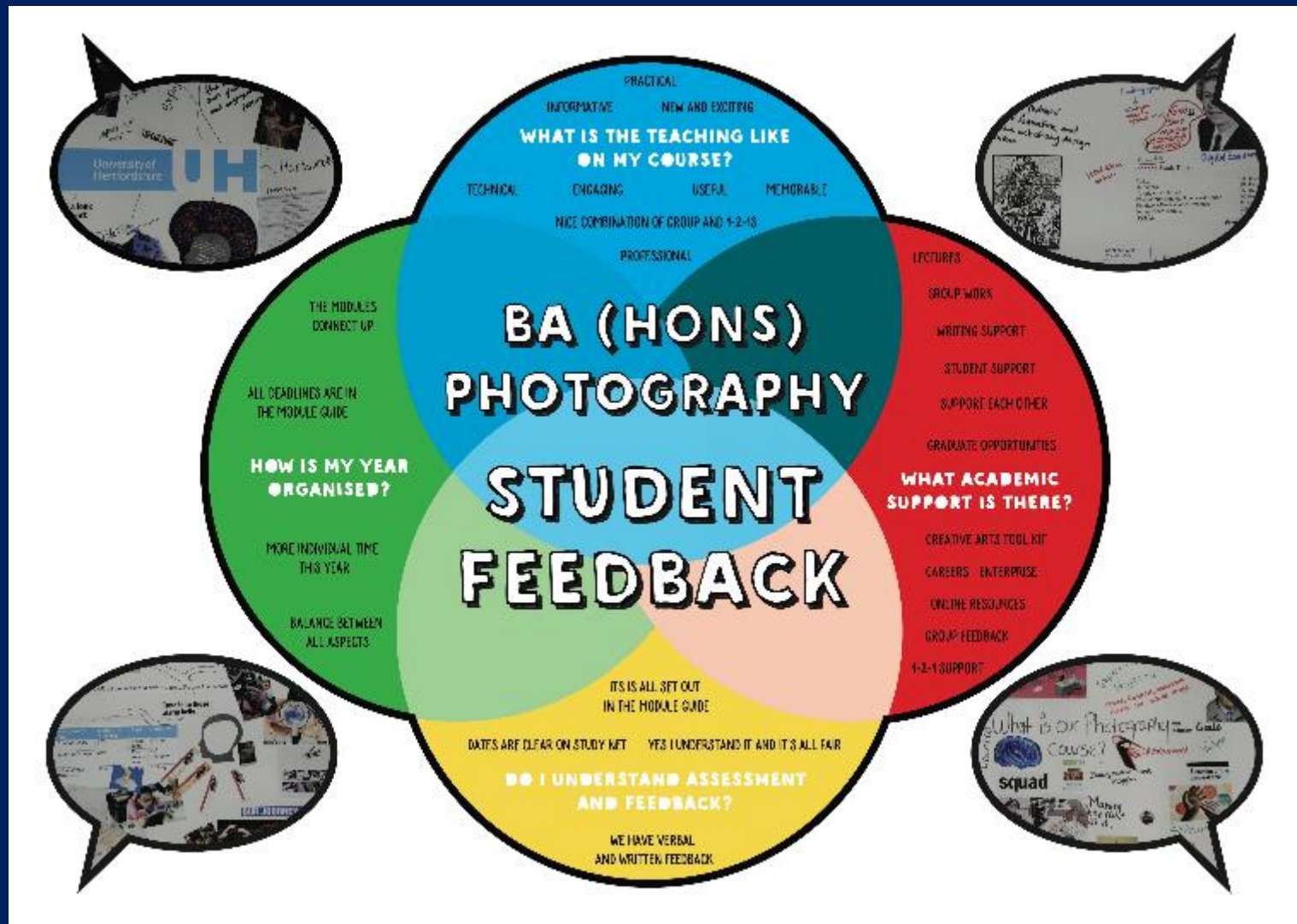- See connections between learning at the 3 levels of study.

Building mapping activity

Give students opportunities to…

- Become aware of the many facilities in the building (e.g. machinery, studio space)
- Learn how they take advantage of those facilities to get value for money
- (NSS Questions 18-20)

Results presented to students…

Benefits

- This activity led to students understanding the effort and resources that we invest into the course (their mapping included references to everything that was available to them, in terms of learning opportunities, resources, etc.).
- Students understand why their course is arranged as it is.
- Students become reflexive learners.
- They now see the value for money in their programme and in UH as a whole.

Benefits

- There is time to implement improvements <u>before NSS</u>.

- Students learn <u>other skills </u>during these activities (visual communication, poster-making, etc.).

Guidelines

- Provide clear and explicit explanation of how the activity will inform the development of the course

- Staff must record and act upon results in a visible way. Provide feedback from staff later, explaining how those changes have been implemented.

- Must have direct learning benefit, not just data collection. Should incorporate some kind of learning activity or creative activity, not just questions.

- Integrated into course at every level, so students get accustomed to the process, and it feels like an integrated part of HE learning, not a form of data collection that sits outside of their learning.

- Should be mappable onto NSS questions.

Further suggestions…

- Think about the experience inside and outside of the curriculum
  - Enable students to unpack the learning that takes place on the course, and…
  - Help them to identify available services and opportunities outside the course, and how they are valuable.