



STUDENTS AS
CO-CREATORS

A Curriculum Design Collaboration

Online Studio 20/21

REPORT

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Aim:

Design tutors are already finding ways to carry on with the teaching of design skills through online tutorials in response to the pandemic. However, the other, softer qualities of studio teaching still need to be considered. These include: peer learning, studio ethos, collaboration, support, peer feedback, and companionship. Most of the studio qualities we are looking to develop online are only partly structured by the studio tutors. The success of a studio is very dependent on the students engaging with it and one another. We need to create a structure/space/platform within which all students feel empowered, able to engage and learn proactively. The design of this new space needs to include students to have a viable chance of success. It needs to feel like a natural environment for them, but also respond to their needs and resources.

Project Work:

The project was set in 3 stages.

1. Meeting with all participants to discuss our experiences on an online studio in 19/20 during Lockdown. We began by outlining the qualities of the onsite studio. How could they have been even better? How could this be reproduced online? What has worked in Lockdown and why? What was missing and/or frustrating?

This allowed us to create a list of the main concerns for us to address for online teaching:

- a. Motivation. Seeing the work of others to gauge own work. Need for regular deadlines. Accountability as it is easy to ignore computer and therefore course from home.
- b. Technical issues occurring during live sessions making learning and communication inconsistent and difficult.
- c. Lack of resources. Everything from computer, broadband, software, space, home environment.
- d. Communication from tutors. Times, platforms, access etc. needs to be clear and planned ahead as much as possible to ensure everyone is in the right place and can find information easily.
- e. Peer to peer learning. Seeing work. Giving/getting feedback. Share skills. Discussing briefs and confirming information.

20 platforms/apps were identified for further research.

(see Stage 1 Notes in the appendix)

2. Independent Research. Each student was given 8 platforms to sign up to, research and work with. All students had a set form to complete on their allocated apps. This was a mixture of open text answers and grading to allow for both comparative and discursive discussion of the 20 apps (see Sample App Reports in the appendix)
3. Meetings were then held with and without staff to discuss the apps and see how they could be selected and gathered together in suites to cover our 5 key concerns and improve the student experience of the Online Studio. Through 3 steps the Apps were discussed and compared. Duplicates were removed until a final suggestion of 3 Apps were selected as creating the optimum suite to cover our needs for an online studio.

The final choice of apps was:

- Slack
- Infolio
- Miro

(see Collaboration Boards in the appendix)

Conclusion and Application:

The opportunities created during this project were three-fold. Firstly, it created time to get useful and comprehensive feedback from students on their experience and ambitions for an online studio. It was vital to have time away from teaching with students to discuss their experience and ambitions for online teaching. Secondly we were able to research and test a larger number of apps together, sharing teacher and student experience of both. This allowed us to test possible solutions with students ahead of semester 1 in 20/21 when we expected to be carrying out blended learning. The project itself was run testing out multiple apps for collaboration, discussion, meetings and organisation. This enabled us to test and find problems ahead of the start of teaching in September 2020. Thirdly the outcome of the project was a selection of apps for us to look at using in the future. We were able to start using MIRO throughout the course and it has been a huge success. Some staff and students have found benefits to sharing/tutoring/collaborating on work on this platform, which go beyond the “real” onsite studio.

This project has been the cradle for much reflection and testing ahead of the huge undertaking we have all had to take on with pivoting to online/blended learning this year. There have been valuable practice and skills built-up this year and we are now looking to the future and considering what we shall like to keep in the future.