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# **UAL students' engagement with industry and communities of practice**

Year 3 report of a 4-year longitudinal study  
for University of the Arts London

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## Summary

This report is part of a longitudinal research project that explores the higher education experiences of undergraduate students at UAL from different ethnic backgrounds; and the interplay between these experiences and their intersected identities. The study aims to illuminate statistical patterns in students' attainment, specifically, that black and minority ethnic students are around 19% less likely than white students to gain first or upper second degrees. The premise of the research is that creative arts students' multi-faceted identities are intrinsic to their practice, and so understanding the interplay between students' identities and experience at can illuminate taken-for-granted practices that underlie unequal attainment.

The findings are based on a sample of 54 undergraduate students, drawn from 11 courses at all four UAL colleges and from the following disciplines: graphic design, fashion, fine art and text-based subjects. Four of these courses offered Diploma in Professional Studies (DPS or DiPS). The remaining courses offered either in-curriculum placements, live briefs or other projects that entailed engagement with communities of practice or industry.

Participation in the DPS is associated with smaller differentials in students' attainment. The differentials are reduced in relation to home and international students, white and black and minority ethnic students, and students from different social backgrounds. However, students from traditionally disadvantaged backgrounds are less likely to take up the DPS. In employment outcomes, inequalities persist, including in the distribution of students from different ethnicities in full-time and part-time work. However, there also seems to be greater variation within black and minority ethnic groups and these differences may be better understood in the context of the intersections of class and gender as well as ethnicity. Analysis across different cultural and creative sectors reveals that some are more open than others.

The qualitative findings are presented in the form of six narrative case studies, followed by a thematic analysis. The opportunities for students to engage with industry and communities of practice vary enormously depending on the course environments to which they are exposed. However, the students' prior advantages and disadvantages, including their understanding of the significance of different kinds of engagement with industry, familial support, and material resources, determine how much they engage and the educative value of their engagement.

Opportunities to engage with industry are controlled, to some extent, by processes of selection. In some courses, DPS participation is selective and in others open to all students. There is a mix of open and transparent communication of opportunities for internships and closed discriminatory practices where a few students are selected by a tutor for interview. The latter have demoralising and destructive consequences for individuals and for the reproduction of unfair practice in the creative and cultural industries over the longer term.

Students tend to believe that they are personally and morally responsible for their success without contextualising this belief in a knowledge about the labour market in the creative and cultural industries. Preparatory support before DPS or in-curriculum placements should include timely briefings about sector-specific contexts, discussion of rights, obligations and professional conduct. Enhancement of in-situ advice should follow the preparatory support. Expanding the collation of data on DPS to live projects and placements is needed in order to track associations with attainment. Students' feedback on the educative value of these experiences would inform future developments in policy and practice.

## Introduction

This report should be read alongside the year 1 report, *Becoming Students at UAL (2014)*, the year 2 report, *Students' practice and identity work at UAL (2015)* and *Fine Art Students at UAL (2016)*. The present report draws on interview data from years 2, 3 and 4 of the project that relate to their engagement with industry and communities of practice. This engagement is taken to comprise within curriculum and self-initiated engagement, including live projects and competitions, short-term internships or placements and longer-term internships such as those undertaken as part of a Diploma in Professional Studies (DPS).

The report begins with a quantitative overview that focuses on participation in the DPS, attainment and first destinations. After discussing the implications of the statistical patterns, particularly with respect to ethnicity and student status, qualitative findings are set out in the form of six case studies. A thematic account of the issues exemplified by the case studies also draws on the wider range of interviews with students in graphic design, fashion, fine art and text-based courses. The qualitative findings explain some of the correlations to be found in the statistics. They also point to the need for data to be collated systematically in relation to curricular internships, live projects and competitions. The report as a whole is not a comprehensive description of all provision that relates to students' engagement with industry and communities of practice. There are necessarily omissions because the starting point for the qualitative findings is the sample of 54 students and the courses they are following.

### RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY

The year 1 report sets out the research design and methodology for the project as whole in some detail. Here I provide a summary and add points that are specific to the findings of this report.

This research deploys qualitative methods of interviewing and observation to illuminate historically persistent statistical patterns of inequality in attainment. The qualitative data-set is structured around twice-yearly interviews with undergraduate students from admission, through to graduation and post-graduation destinations. These interviews are supplemented by interviews with course tutors and observation of teaching and assessment. Alongside longitudinal qualitative fieldwork, statistical analysis of the UAL population of undergraduate students over eight years is being explored in the light of emerging insights from the qualitative data. The aim is to establish a relationship between the qualitative and quantitative data sets.

The sample within this report is of 54 undergraduate students: 33 are home students, 9 EU, and 12 international. There are 27 men and 27 women. The ethnic breakdown is of 24 white students and 30 students from the following BAME backgrounds: 10 Chinese, 5 black, 4 Middle Eastern, 3 Asian, 2 of mixed origin, and 6 from other BAME backgrounds.

These students are drawn from 11 courses at all four UAL colleges and from the following disciplines: graphic design, fashion, fine art and text-based subjects. Four of these courses (in graphic design, fashion and fine art) offered DPS. The remaining courses all offered either in-curriculum placements, live briefs or other projects that entailed engagement with communities of practice or industry. Of the 54 students, 9 undertook the DPS, 16 undertook

in-curriculum placements, 26 had extra-curricular self-initiated placements during vacation and/or term-time, and 40 took part in live briefs, projects, or competitions.

It is worth re-iterating from the year 1 report the way in which students' interview data is treated. This seems especially pertinent given that the main presentation of findings is in the form of narrative case studies of students' experiences. There is no assumption in this research that the researcher has direct access to the experiences of research participants:

When talking about their lives, people lie sometimes, forget a lot, exaggerate, become confused, and get things wrong. Yet, they are revealing truths. These truths don't reveal the past "as it actually was" aspiring to a standard of objectivity. They give us instead the truths of our experiences...neither open to proof nor self-evident. We come to understand then only through interpretation, paying careful attention to the contexts that shape their creation and to the world views that inform them. (The Personal Narratives Group 1989: 261)

The case studies, therefore, are interpretive accounts of what the researcher has understood from the students' interviews, and from her limited familiarity with the course environments within which students are operating. The students were sent their case studies to obtain their consent to their use, to ensure the researcher's interpretation did not conflict with their own understandings of their experiences, and to ensure that identifying details were removed or changed. In these ways, the narrative case studies are co-constructed by the researcher and participating students. They undergo a further process of co-construction in the contexts within which they are discussed among lecturers, academic advisers, careers advisers and others who support learning. In each discussion the narratives are read through the lenses of the discussants own experiences and interpreted in the context of the particular conversations that subsequently take place (usually) in the students' physical absence.

#### ANALYTIC CONCEPTS

The central organising concept that is used in analysing the findings is that of identity. Rather than conceiving of it as an essential personal set of qualities or characteristics, identity is defined in this project as socially and historically constructed in an inter-play between what students bring and the environments within which they operate. In Hall's terms, the subject is both 'hailed' and invests in a position through 'articulation' (Hall 1997: 6). Furthermore, within this project identity is analysed in relation to a particular domain of social life: becoming and being an art and design student at UAL, though student's pasts and futures are implicated in their present experiences. Again, drawing on Hall, 'because identities are constructed within, not outside, discourse, we need to understand them as produced in specific historical and institutional sites...' (Hall 1997: 4). In this report, the construction of students' identities can be traced in their experiences of placements and live projects, in the struggles to gain access to practitioner worlds beyond the University setting as well as in their nascent experiences of those worlds, often on the margins. Hall's conceptualisation is consistent with Taylor and Littleton's observation in their study of early-career art and design practitioners, that:

A creative identity is not a simple self-categorisation and nor is it adopted 'once and for all'. Rather there is always an incomplete project of identification as a constrained and negotiated ongoing process involving conflicts and dilemmas around the multiple sites and meanings in play.' (Taylor and Littleton, 2013: 158)

'Possible selves are representations of the self in the future, including those that are ideal and hoped for as well as those that one does not wish for' (Stevenson and Clegg 2011:3). Drawing

on the North American literature in this area Stevenson and Clegg see the possible self as linking self-concept and motivation, having both cognitive and affective dimensions. Possible selves can be affirmed or threatened by those around us and family contexts have been shown to be significant for their development. In their own empirical study, Stevenson and Clegg find that possible selves are 'deeply infused by class and gender and the cultural capital students were able to draw on, as well as by how their activities were institutionally valued and discursively framed within the employability agenda'(2011:7). The analysis that follows uses the concept of the possible self to illuminate the significance of students' explicit aspirations about their futures, the steps they felt able to take to bring these to fruition and the resources at their disposal from within the University and their familial and social milieu.

The students' talk about their possible selves moves from preliminary thinking about life after graduation towards less tentative plans in the course of year 3 (and 4 for those completing over 4 years). In the year 2 report we found that students varied along a number of dimensions: the degree of certainty they expressed about their aspirations, the extent to which they had taken practical steps toward their ultimate goals (if these were defined), the extent to which their options were limited or expanded by material resources at their disposal, familial support, course context and their beliefs about how their future self may come about. In the present year 3 report, these themes are developed more fully by focusing specifically on the impacts of the students' engagement with industry.

## Findings: Statistical overview

Whilst no monitoring data are collected on participation in live projects, competitions and short-term internships, we do have several years' data in relation to students' participation in the Diploma in Professional Studies (DPS)<sup>1</sup>. The data were aggregated over three years (2013/14, 2014/15 and 2015/16) in order to increase the validity of the analysis of minority groups whose numbers are too small in a single year. Two main questions were explored:

1. On the UAL courses where DPS is an option, what is the participation rate of different groups of students?
2. What difference, if any, does participation in DPS make to students' attainment?

### WHO PARTICIPATES?

Over the three years, a total of 2264 students graduated from courses where DPS is on offer. The number of students who took up the DPS is 814 (36%). It is important to note that this total is unevenly distributed across the University and courses vary greatly in the ways in which they situate the DPS within their courses. Participation varies across colleges, both in scale and the terms on which admission is attained. For example, in the Fashion programme at CSM, all but a handful of students take it up and there is no upper limit on the number of students who can undertake it. At LCC students undergo a programme of familiarisation in their year 2 (optional and additional to their normal timetable) and, if they wish, apply for a limited number of places to undertake the DPS in year 3. Whilst there are plans to expand the number of places at LCC, participation is limited to 43 students in 2016/17. At LCF rates of participation vary from course to course and DPS is offered within 2 Masters level courses in addition to 9 undergraduate courses. There are plans for expansion at LCF as well.

The subject areas within which DPS is offered include text-based courses, fashion, graphic design and illustration, fine art, and management and science. The distribution of the students who have undertaken DPS in the last 3 years is across three Colleges: 409 students at CSM, 290 at LCF and 115 at LCC.

Across the University, the profile of students who take up the DPS varies. The largest difference is between international and home students: 30.5% of international students, 35.4% of EU students and 39.6% of home students take up the DPS. More white students (40.1%) than black and minority ethnic students (36.5%) take up the DPS. (A more detailed breakdown by ethnicity is shown in Table 3.) More women (36.8%) than men (33.7%) take it up. There is a small difference between those from higher (41.5%) and lower (39%) socio-economic groups who take up the DPS of 2.5%.

### WHAT DIFFERENCE DOES DOING THE DPS MAKE TO ATTAINMENT?

This question is explored by comparing the attainment of students who took up the DPS with the attainment of those who did not take it up on those courses where the DPS is a possibility. Two general patterns are worth noting. First, students who undertake the DPS are more likely to attain a first class or upper-second degree: this is the case for all groups. Second, the gaps between different student groups seem to narrow when those groups have undertaken the DPS: traditionally disadvantaged groups tend to increase attainment more than advantaged

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<sup>1</sup> The data on DPS have been compiled by Chris Lloyd, UCPU.



students. The tables below give some detail on these patterns. All figures relate to students who graduated from courses that offered DPS between 2012/13 and 2015/16.

*Table 1: DPS and Student status*

	<b>1<sup>st</sup> or 2.1 with DPS</b>		<b>1<sup>st</sup> or 2.1 without DPS</b>	
UK - Home	387	81.5%	463	64.3%
EU	98	87.5%	135	66.2%
International	165	72.7%	214	41%

The most striking difference in this table is that between international students who undertake the DPS and those who do not – 31.7%. This is all the more significant given the relatively low take up of DPS among international students mentioned above. The gap between EU and International students is reduced by 10% for those taking DPS.

*Table 2: DPS and Ethnicity (home students only)*

	<b>1<sup>st</sup> or 2.1 with DPS</b>		<b>1<sup>st</sup> or 2.1 without DPS</b>	
BAME	81	71%	98	49.5%
white	302	85%	364	69.9%

This table shows that the ‘attainment gap’ between the two ethnic groupings without DPS mirrors that in the University at large at just under 20%. The gap narrows to 14% for those who undertake the DPS. BAME students’ attainment improves by nearly 21% whereas for white students it improves by just over 15%.

When we look in more detail at the different ethnic groups within the BAME category, the numbers are small and therefore it is less valid to claim that they are indicative of a general pattern. Nevertheless, they raise questions that may be pursued as data from future years become available for DPS and for DPS-like provision.

*Table 3: DPS and minority ethnic groups sub-divided*

	<b>In DPS courses</b>	<b>Did DPS</b>		<b>1<sup>st</sup> or 2.1 with DPS</b>		<b>1<sup>st</sup> or 2.1 without DPS</b>	
Asian – Bangladeshi & Pakistani	24	5	20.8%	4	80%	6	31.6%
Asian - Indian	32	16	50.0%	11	68.8%	11	68.8%
Chinese	33	14	42.4%	12	85.7%	5	35.7%
black	68	26	38.2%	16	61.5%	19	45.2%
mixed	101	38	37.6%	26	68.4%	39	61.9%
other	54	15	27.8%	12	80.0%	18	46.2%
white	878	357	40.7%	302	85%	364	69.9%
unknown	9	4		4		4	

First, it is interesting to note that the take-up of DPS has a much wider range than the figures for all BAME groups would suggest. Chinese and Indian students in particular exceed average take-up and this pattern, if found to be more generally true, correlates with later graduate employment outcomes.

Table 4: DPS and Socio-economic status (home students only)

	1 <sup>st</sup> or 2.1 with DPS		1 <sup>st</sup> or 2.1 without DPS	
Higher SES	218	83.2%	257	69.5%
Lower SES	81	76.4%	94	56.6%

This table shows, in keeping with the general pattern, that undertaking the DPS narrows a gap in attainment between social groupings. It is also notable that the attainment of students from lower socio-economic groups improves by 20% when undertaking the DPS whereas for those from higher socio-economic groups it improves by around 14%.

#### IMPLICATIONS OF THE STATISTICAL PATTERNS

The statistics show that there is a correlation between undertaking a DPS and higher levels of attainment. However, it is not possible to conclude from these statistics whether there is a causal link, and if so the direction of causality. In other words, there are several hypotheses:

1. Undertaking the DPS augments students' preparation for final major projects and other final year work such that they attain better results than their non-DPS counterparts
2. Students who are already high-achieving tend to opt for DPS, and go on to do well in their final year.
3. Those who undertake the DPS are a year older, more mature, and are therefore better placed to do well in their final year.

The first possibility suggests that there are particular capabilities and aspects of practitioner-identity that the DPS provides which translate into a higher quality of work in the final year. The second possibility suggests that those capabilities are already possessed by those students who undertake the DPS. The third possibility suggests that DPS acts as a period of non-specific personal development which nonetheless results in a higher quality of work from those students who undertake it. We explore these possibilities in the qualitative findings and return explicitly to them in the conclusion.

It is important to bear in mind that the foregoing statistical analysis relates only to those students who undertook DPS, or undertook courses where DPS was offered. It does not address other kinds of DPS-like experiences with industry which include in-curricular placements sustained for up to three months, self-initiated internships which students undertake in vacations or on a part-time basis during term-time. Neither does it address in-curriculum and extra-curricular live projects and competitions.

It is possible to speculate, albeit tentatively, that engagements with industry that fall short of DPS might be correlated, at least partially, with the patterns of attainment that have been identified. The analysis of DPS therefore provides a starting point for exploring the interplay between students' attainment and engagement with industry in all its forms.

It is worth also considering the patterns identified with respect to DPS alongside the analysis from the Destinations of Leavers from HE (DLHE) survey<sup>2</sup>. Some 8% more white students (50%) are in full-time work than are black and minority ethnic students (42%). Black and Minority ethnic students are more likely to be in part-time work (29%) as compared to 21% of their white counterparts. White students are more likely to be working free-lance on a self-employed basis (26% as compared to 16%). Black and minority ethnic students are more likely to be in an internship than their white counterparts (12% as compared to 5%).

Graduate level roles appear to be evenly distributed among white and black and minority ethnic students (58.4% as compared to 57% respectively). However, this should be viewed alongside the differences mentioned above with respect to part-time and full-time work. There are wider differences in graduate level roles among students from higher and lower socio-economic groups (61.3% and 50.4% respectively), male and female students (56.7% and 70.8%), and home and non-UK graduates (71.6% and 58%).

UK home students are more likely to be in full time full-time employment than non-UK undergraduates (48% as compared to 38%); and more likely to be in part-time work (23% as compared to 17%). Non-UK undergraduates are more likely to be in full-time study (23% as compared to 13%).

In terms of how work is obtained, white students are more likely to have gained work through networks, including family and friends (23% compared to 18%). Non-UK undergraduates are also more likely than home students to have used networks including family and friends (30% as compared to 22%).

Turning from these institution-specific figures that put all BAME groups together, it is worth remembering that in an analysis of the 2006/07 cohort of English HE, HEFCE's research pointed to some stark differences between these groups as they enter employment. Whereas, all BAME groups seemed to attain less well than white students, after graduation Chinese and Indian students in particular are more likely than white students to gain graduate-level employment. Black students and other Asian students, however, were shown to have consistently lower outcomes. The table below summarises the HEFCE findings:

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<sup>2</sup> UAL UCPU (2016) UAL Destinations of 2014/15 Graduates

Table 5: 2006/07 cohort who achieved each outcome, by ethnicity<sup>3</sup>.

	White	Black	Chinese	Indian	Other Asian	Other / unknown
Starting cohort	181,510	8,465	2,410	10,325	10,835	12,215
<b>Degree-qualified</b>	<b>83.1%</b>	<b>73.8%</b>	<b>87.2%</b>	<b>84.1%</b>	<b>77.7%</b>	<b>78.4%</b>
<b>First or upper second</b>	<b>56.1%</b>	<b>31.3%</b>	<b>50.7%</b>	<b>45.8%</b>	<b>35.9%</b>	<b>49.2%</b>
<b>Degree &amp; employed or studying</b>	<b>72.8%</b>	<b>60.5%</b>	<b>68.6%</b>	<b>70.3%</b>	<b>62.3%</b>	<b>65.7%</b>
<b>Degree &amp; graduate job or study</b>	<b>48.4%</b>	<b>37.7%</b>	<b>53.2%</b>	<b>51.1%</b>	<b>42.6%</b>	<b>46.2%</b>

In addition to differentiating between the diversity of groups in the category 'BAME', it is useful to consider the variations within different sectors in the creative and cultural industries. The most recent and comprehensive analysis of the Labour Force Survey (O'Brien et al, 2016: 122) points to significant variations by sector. For example, 'the IT sector has a higher percentage of BAME employees than the general population, while every other creative occupation is more white than the UK as a whole.' They go on to provide a detailed analysis of employment and pay by gender and social class, concluding that inequalities in the creative and cultural labour force 'are of an inter-sectional nature' beginning with educational inequalities and 'compounded by the uneven geography of access to creative work' (2016: 127).

To summarise, the statistics presented at the start of this section indicate that participation in the DPS is associated with smaller differentials in students' attainment. The differentials are reduced in relation to home and international students, white and black and minority ethnic students, and students from different social backgrounds. However, students from traditionally disadvantaged backgrounds are less likely to take up the DPS. When we move into looking at differentials in employment outcomes, inequalities persist, including in the distribution of students from different ethnicities in full-time and part-time work. However, there also seems to be greater variation within black and minority ethnic groups and these differences may be better understood in the context of the intersections of class and gender as well as ethnicity. Analysis by O'Brien et al across different cultural and creative sectors reveals that some are more open than others.

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<sup>3</sup> HEFCE 2013/15: 19

## Findings: Qualitative analysis

The findings are presented first as a series of six narrative case studies. They are written to foreground students' engagement with industry but with enough background and contextual information to bring out its significance for each individual. There follows a thematic analysis that explores the assumptions, practices and possible causal relationships that the case studies exemplify. The thematic analysis widens the discussion to include the experiences of students who are not represented in the selection of case studies.

The case studies are chosen to represent different modes of engagement with industry and communities of practice. They include one student who undertook a DPS (Hannah), three who undertook within-curriculum placements (Tamsin, Nathan and Stella), and two who arranged their own internships or took part in extra-curricular projects and competitions (Yuya and Peter). At present, the case studies include students from graphic design, fashion and text-based courses. A fine art case study will be added at a future date when the students from the project sample have all graduated. Nevertheless, many of the issues raised in the current version of the report apply to all four disciplines.

Students' anonymity is regarded as paramount and so where identification is deemed possible, incidental details have been altered.

In the light of the statistical analysis in the preceding section and drawing on the analytic concepts summarised in the Methodology, the following questions may be fruitfully explored in discussions of the following case studies:

1. How does this student articulate her or his identity as a practitioner?
2. Who affirms this identity, and in what contexts?
3. To what resources is this student exposed in her or his course that enable him or her to imagine and plan for a future possible self?
4. What resources does this student draw upon – within and outside the course – to imagine and plan for a future possible self?

This is not intended to be a comprehensive list of possible questions to consider, but a starting point for building an understanding of the causal mechanisms that underlie differences in students' attainment. These causal mechanisms are explored in a more general and holistic way in the preceding project reports. Here we consider the same questions within the limited sphere of students' engagement with industry and communities of practice.

## Case study narratives

TAMSIN: BA FASHION DESIGN

Female, home, white middle-class student

Tamsin's parents had both gone to art college but it was mostly teachers who helped her apply to UAL. She did much of her own research – looking at the final year shows of the colleges she was considering (she thought it professional, technically accomplished and experimental), and reading about the course content. She managed to get a room in Halls and straight away got on very well with her housemates and found a group of people to join at Freshers' events.

She was apprehensive about the workload but only insofar as she was not sure how it would fit alongside her intention to gain an internship as soon as possible. She even got talking to someone on the train coming down to London who may have been able to put her in touch with a contact to help with that. That contact did not come to anything but she managed to gain several highly stimulating industry experiences throughout the year: she was one of three students chosen by her tutor for one internship; she collaborated with a flatmate from another discipline within fashion which resulted in her designs being published by a fashion magazine; her designs were sold at London department stores; and she immersed herself in a 5-week internship over Easter during which she expanded her technical skills in several areas.

Throughout her time at UAL, Tamsin was immersed in her practice: experimenting with texture and print and building on her industry experience. She came across as determined and single-minded, working '24/7' to realise her ambitions. She was surprised at how much materials cost but fortunately was able to ask her parents to help, and other relatives helped with a budget for her final collection. This finance was an important source of support because her level of commitment to the work was such that she did not feel she could fit in a paying job.

Financial help from family enabled Tamsin to take up an internship in New York which paid only for daily expenses. Towards the end of her course, she was contacted by a high-end designer that she had previously interned for and offered a two-week paid internship in Paris. She took this up with a view to exploring the possibility of working in Paris in the longer term. As well as further enhancing her technical competence and involving her in design and making processes, these later internships helped Tamsin to think through what she wanted in a career in fashion: a job that offered the prospect of progression or in a company that was small enough to enable her to have a breadth of experience and especially involvement in design.

Internship experiences were not all positive: there were instances where her work was credited to others or she was blamed for mistakes that were the responsibility of permanent employees. Tamsin said these experiences made her 'a horrible person' by which she meant that she had to develop 'a thick skin', and adopt the demeanour of someone who didn't care. She felt confident of obtaining a job but was not necessarily looking forward to doing it.

By the time Tamsin left UAL she had done five internships and determined that she would now only take on paid work. Within six months, with a first class degree, she obtained an open-ended contract as assistant designer for a new company. She felt that it was the quality of her portfolio, which she had worked very hard to develop with the support of college tutors, and her experience of working for high-end brands, that secured her first job. Her plan now is to grow with the company and gain expertise that will enable her to work for herself one day.

NATHAN: BA FASHION DESIGN

Male, home, black working-class student

A feeling of not yet finding his strengths and interests pervaded Nathan's experience of sixth form. While working in clothing retail for a year, where the working conditions were not motivating, he found himself looking at the clothes and visualising that he could design and make better ones. He enrolled to do a BTEC in Fashion and Clothing at a college in the North East of England. There he met a tutor who became a huge inspiration and had himself studied at a UAL college. Nathan gained a distinction and eventually a place at UAL.

Nathan felt the course would help him to become 'the person I want to be.' No-one in his family was familiar with art and design and he was the first to enter higher education. Throughout his time at UAL he was hampered by the distance he was traveling from his shared house into London (a journey of an hour and 10 minutes) and by recurring financial problems, including the cost of materials. In addition, he had been diagnosed with dyslexia and dyspraxia. He found it hard to manage his time but had every intention of 'cracking on'. He was also conscious of standing out, 'of not looking or sounding like anyone else on the course'.

As the year progressed he became increasingly interested in creating his own fabrics and in textile manipulation. He therefore often experimented with fabrics and was buying them on a scale that might have been perceived as disproportionate to the time he had to complete. This was expensive but he was reluctant to limit his creativity because of financial constraints. Asking his Mum for financial help was stressful because it caused arguments and she was rarely able to help. Starting a job in the spring term where he worked 20 hours a week meant that Nathan had less time and energy for college work. The job was a necessity to pay rent but it meant that in that term he managed to do very little college work. A lot of catching up had to be done the following term which he managed to do with the support of his tutors.

After year 1 he planned to improve his portfolio to define himself as a designer and prepare for year 2 internships, whilst also doing paid work. Nathan was offered a paid internship but did not get back to his contact and subsequently felt embarrassed to follow up with this contact for any future work. Nathan seemed often to downplay his achievements.

During year 2 he took up two placements with small designers, both were unpaid except for some daily expenses. Both placements were at newly established designers and Nathan was able to draw comparisons between their different approaches to starting new businesses. At one placement he was introduced to new techniques and craft skills and later in the year he returned to help with the team's preparation for London Fashion Week. The second placement was cut short because Nathan's house was burgled and he needed time to sort out the problems that followed. He did not want to intern over the Summer or in the following year as money problems were very much a worry and paid work was needed for rent.

Towards the end of his final year, Nathan had to leave his rented room after missing rent payments. Some friends took him in and he went on to complete his final major project. After graduating with a 2.2 Nathan applied for a variety of jobs and was eventually offered a one-year internship with a sportswear designer. The experience transformed his ambitions and he is now keen to develop this specialisation. However, the company did not have a vacancy for him at the end of the year and he is currently applying for his next job.

HANNAH: BA FASHION DESIGN

Female, EU, Asian, middle-class student

Hannah came to a UAL FAD course after having done some short courses at a UAL college. She lived in halls and had felt she got a very good grounding in fashion design which served her well as she started the BA Fashion. Neither of her parents – both of Algerian origin having migrated to France – had been to art schools but her mother was a keen dress-maker and both parents were supportive of their daughter's choice to study fashion at UAL.

During her first year Hannah had a huge respect for her tutors whose feedback she sought and very much took on board. While she preferred making projects to more conceptual assignments, she gained confidence in her work and always sought to understand the rationale behind particular ways of teaching. In year 2 she became unhappy as she found herself working very hard but receiving very little recognition. Favouritism seemed to be the order of the day with her main tutor and she became a little dejected at the lack of care from tutors and what she saw as an absence of structure in, for example, the way crits were organised. She felt that the tutor failed to engender the constructive atmosphere among students that had been so prevalent during her foundation and first years. What she also observed during year 2 was that certain internships were offered only to certain students and that particular students that the tutor thought suitable were invited for interviews with companies that came to the college. She managed to gain an internship on her own initiative by approaching a guest tutor whom she felt she had a good rapport with. This was unpaid and she took it up in the course of year 2.

In year 3 she undertook the DPS and her first internship was gained through a rare opportunity for any student to be interviewed by a designer that specialised in accessories. This internship lasted 8 months and was paid. Hannah was especially grateful for all the college support in organising the paperwork that seemed to be necessary. She did not expect or receive any support that went beyond help with the paperwork. By the end of the period, she felt that she had honed some technical skills but not gained a great deal that would feed into her own practice or thinking about future employment.

In her final year, Hannah had high hopes of a new course tutor who would re-introduce a sense of structure and fairness. She was excited and looking forward to producing her final collection. She continued a part-time job which helped to fund the cost of materials. At the same time, she applied for scholarships and bursaries to help pay for all she needed. She was disappointed not to get any of these but did manage to secure some sponsorship for the shoes she used. Added to this, she saw numerous examples of interviews being arranged for other students. Some students, she observed had several opportunities whilst the majority had none. She felt the unfairness keenly. At the conclusion of her time at UAL, she had a conversation with a tutor about her future career in which she was advised that she would probably have to spend many years working in a department store before gaining a job in fashion. She was also aware that other students – particularly British students – had had very different conversations in which tutors had expressed their optimism that they would find jobs in the industry. Hannah left with an upper-second degree but she did not feel that she had reached her full potential. She felt that she had been set back and undermined by tutors' feedback on her work and in particular had been neglected in support for her dissertation. She gave specific examples of instances where her progress had been impeded rather than pushed to its fullest possibilities.



YUYA: BA GRAPHIC DESIGN

Male, home, Asian, middle-class student

Arriving in the UK at 15, Yuya went to a London school. Despite a violent and bullying environment there, he achieved good GCSE grades and went on to a calmer sixth form college where he chose Art and Photography and Design Technology A-levels. Yuya did not have support or advice from family but had friends doing FAD courses. After doing some short courses at UAL and then FAD, he chose to stay on to the BA.

He approached the course with an open mind. Reflecting on the initial projects, he resolved to impose his own structure when briefs seemed open and unstructured. Among Yuya's year 1 work was a graphic outcome which took the essence of an aspect of Japanese culture and sought to 'normalise it' by which he meant that it retained a core cultural value without necessarily making use of stereotypical references associated with it. He was excited by the work but frustrated by a mismatch between the work he put in and grades in the C range.

He was enthusiastic about the DPS and attended the preparatory sessions. Whilst nervous about the competitive application process, he assumed he would gain a place. On discovering that he was not selected, he felt 'terrible, absolutely demoralised'. Told his portfolio was 'not good enough', he found the feedback harsh. The tutor thought one of his projects 'badly resolved' and that no-one would give him work on the basis of it. He concluded that all the work of the last two years was 'worthless'. This was a shock for Yuya because in the previous week a portfolio review with another tutor gave him to understand that it was all fine.

Yuya's confidence was severely undermined. One tutor promised to put him in touch with a contact who might have an internship for him on the basis of an additional piece of work. Yuya duly sent the tutor the piece of work that he was asked for and then never heard back. The broken promise compounded his sense of demoralisation. He felt that the tutor's opinion represented not just the assessments of an individual but of powerful people in industry. His disappointment and pessimism about the future were palpable. He felt he was 'just not ready' to go into the final year. Over the next few months he made use of counselling and was prescribed anti-depressant medication.

Through a family connection he was able to gain some work experience in Hong Kong and this proved a turning point. Time away gave him the opportunity to reflect and recover and he was also able to develop his technical skills. He also spent some time researching and collecting resources in preparation for his final year's work on the BA. On returning to year 3, Yuya was nervous but also determined. He observed the 'DPS returnees' and felt somewhat cut-off. He talked to only a couple of peers who came up with him from year 2 and perceived an individualistic culture as dominant in the course. Other friends were doing the DPS.

He worked hard during year 3 and took on board some difficult initial feedback on his dissertation: managing to improve it by three grades to a B. He was aiming for a first class degree. Working steadily, despite suffering from performance anxiety, by the end of the year he had participated in a competition brief as part of his assessed work and he graduated with an upper-second class degree. Furthermore, socially he felt more integrated in the course and volunteered to help with the degree show. Since graduation he has taken on a mixture of free-lance work but feels uncertain about applying for full-time employment, and wonders whether the experience of DPS rejection feeds a fear of being rejected again.

PETER: BA GRAPHIC DESIGN

Male, home, Asian working class student

Peter had always wanted to pursue a creative career but also had academic strengths and felt a social pressure to go for an 'academic subject'. He studied architecture but within a few months he decided that this was not the right subject and withdrew, taking a job at his former sixth form college as an art technician. There he had good support for preparing a portfolio for a FAD and went on to gain a place within UAL to study Graphic Design.

Though his parents live in the South-East Peter decided to move into halls of residence. He had saved some funds from his 18-month stint as an art technician and was also continuing to work around 10 hours per week tutoring piano. He enjoyed the work and was able to schedule lessons around his college timetable. From the start he was thinking flexibly about both the amount of paid work he could fit in and where in the week it was feasible to do it. At the beginning of the year he was somewhat apprehensive about the challenge of juggling tuition and college work. Furthermore he was perceptively reflective about his own habits of work: a tendency to procrastinate; and to change his mind about work directions.

By the end of year 1 Peter was immersed in his practice and in the course. He found a medium and a set of design approaches that he was honing in work that he was doing on his own and in collaboration with others. He was excited to have found ways of combining his interests in different fields of study which gave him both an area of specialisation and opened up new possibilities: he experimented persistently and made good use of the technician's support.

He gained much from a group collaboration which he attributed to 'serendipity' but he had also cultivated an openness to other people's ideas whilst retaining a critical stance. He could recall learning to do this 'by having it done to me' and realising that 'you've just got to say it...if something is not working' but 'not in a stubborn way'. Otherwise being 'too nice' resulted in a 'mishmash of ideas' that compromised the quality of the work. Peter used feedback from friends, family, and anyone that he could try out his ideas on. During part of the Summer, he joined a book-making project in Italy and developed contacts to which he later returned.

In year 2 Peter threw himself into several live projects – some initiated by the course and at least one that he found online and collaborated with a friend to enter. He made the final 20 entrants for one of the competitions but it was not so much the result as the sheer pleasure of thinking through a design and bringing it to fruition that motivated him. He enjoyed the intellectual thinking behind his work as well as making the work itself.

Throughout his time at UAL, Peter successfully juggled paid work with his design practice but this was by no means easy for him – he often wondered how much better work he could be doing if he had more time rather than having to earn money to live. After graduating, with a first class degree, he moved back home and took up an unpaid internship. This led to a contact that resulted in some paid part-time free-lance work for a large company. Negotiating an appropriate rate of pay was tricky: he reflected that he had asked for too little as a day-rate and then negotiated a small increase a few months later. Peter prefers to limit his paid free-lance work to two days per week so that he can pursue personal projects that he finds more creative and meaningful – in both artistic and social ways. He collaborates with fellow former students and is very much in a contemplative frame of mind, questioning the purpose of what he does and searching for ways to make a contribution to society through his practice.

STELLA: BA TEXT-BASED COURSE

Female, home, black, working class student

Stella was first in her family to go to university, and some family members would have preferred her to train in law or medicine but she had confidence – and the support of her mother – in going against those expectations. Her own fashion blog was running more than a year before she started at UAL and she saw herself as a writer already. Her blog had around 1000 hits per month and Stella had a realistic sense of its significance, noting that 5000 hits were needed for a press pass to London Fashion Week, for example.

From the start, she was keen to do an internship though she was anxious about fitting it alongside her university work and a long-standing job tutoring school children. Her first days at UAL were somewhat overwhelming with so much new information and instructions about the University's requirements to absorb. By the end of year 1 she had a paid internship during London Fashion Week, an opportunity gained through a family friend. Another development for Stella was that she discovered that she had dyslexia. This was difficult to come to terms with but she took it on board and made use of the additional support that became available.

Throughout year 1 Stella talked about her struggle to understand 'what is expected of us'. At the same time, she juggled a demanding family life with paid work and university work, as well as occasional blog posts. University demands seemed opaque, and there were inconsistencies that were exacerbated by changes in course staffing. Stella continued working with two part-time jobs – one in retail for 4 hours per week and the other occasional PR work which could be a further 10 hours per week. By the start of year 2, Stella was working 24 hours per week in two retail jobs. Her plan was to save so that she did not have to work in her final year and could concentrate on her university work. This regime took its toll on her physically and emotionally and resulted in poorer attendance of university lectures and seminars.

During her year 2, Stella organised her in-curriculum internship with an agency to broaden her understanding of possible professional roles. She succeeded in obtaining an internship in New York and having saved up money during the previous months, was able to finance the trip. This achievement was marred by some family members refusing to believe that she had gained this money lawfully, and, needless to say, this was upsetting. Helped by having a distant relative in New York whose house she could stay in, her time there was fruitful in that she learnt a lot from the work itself. She also endured harsh and excluding behaviour from fellow interns. This did not deter her from forming a strong ambition to go back to New York after graduation.

In her final year, Stella stayed true to her plan to refrain from doing any paid work. This paid off in that she was able to give both her dissertation and final major project her full attention. Her ideas were clear in her own mind and she responded carefully to tutors' feedback. She was disheartened to hear one tutor express doubt that she would get a first and, after one particularly difficult presentation session, concluded that the tutors simply 'didn't take me seriously'. Nevertheless she pressed on with her final major project work, obtaining a crucial interview through persistent informal networking when her initial efforts were unsuccessful. She graduated with an upper-second class degree and applied for numerous jobs. After many interviews she went back to interning and working in retail, while saving up to start her own business. By the Spring following graduation, however, through a chance contact, she obtained a year-long graduate trainee-ship with a high-end fashion house. She continued for a few months to do other work at the week-ends to save money for her own business.

## Discussion

What follows is a thematic discussion of the issues raised in the case study narratives with reference to the wider sample of students that took part in the research.

### WHAT IS ENGAGEMENT WITH INDUSTRY AND COMMUNITIES OF PRACTICE?

The most sustained engagement with industry that students undertake is participation in the Diploma in Professional Studies (DPS) during year 3. This is offered in some of the courses sampled in this project: Graphic Design at LCC, Fashion at CSM and Fine Art at CSM. Those remaining in the sample offer some form of in-curriculum engagement: Fashion Design courses at LCF offer in-curriculum placements. Many courses, including those that offer DPS, offer in-curriculum and extra-curricular live projects, curations and competitions. Extra-curricular opportunities also include residencies and residential courses, projects and workshops that students can apply to join (some with partial funding). The opportunities to engage with industry and communities of practice therefore vary enormously for students depending on the course environments to which they are exposed.

Students' capacities to make use of the opportunities within their purview also vary: for example, Peter and Tamsin whilst not on courses that offer DPS, could be said to have gained DPS-like experience. This is because they engaged in extra-curricular projects and internships in a volume and in a depth that was easily equivalent to, and possibly surpassed, that of some students who undertook DPS. Conversely, some students such as Hannah and Nathan, whilst benefitting from DPS and in-curriculum placements respectively, did so to a narrow degree for various reasons, many beyond their control. Their choices of placements were circumscribed by the networks available to them, the quality of advice to which they had access, and, in the case of Nathan, by ongoing financial problems.

Engagement, therefore, is very much an inter-play between what a course offers and how far a student is able to make use of what is offered. This is not to set up a dichotomy between 'opportunities on offer' and students' (un)willingness to take them up: the very capacity of students to take up opportunities is itself influenced by the course environment. The example of Yuya's rejected application and Hannah's experiences of low expectations (communicated through the favouritism of others) demonstrate this point. The course environment is different – at a micro-level – for each student.

Engagement in DPS and in DPS-like activity was noticeably less among international students than among home students and this pattern is consistent with the statistics on the take-up of DPS. The interview sample is not large enough to determine a full range of causes for this or the weighting that might be given to some of the causes. Nevertheless, it is worth exploring what can be gleaned with a view to further inquiry. Constraining factors for international students included visa restrictions, and unclear advice from tutors about visa restrictions. For example, one student believed that if he took up a placement and deferred his course for a year, that his visa would be automatically cancelled. He was not aware, for example, that he could apply to transfer to a course with a DPS placement year and for a new visa, albeit from his home country. The choice before him, as he understood it, was to complete his course and give up a much-sought-after placement or to risk not being able to stay in the UK at all.

For some students, the opportunities on offer were not seen as relevant to future employment plans. For example, some mature students, both home and international, felt that they already had sufficient experience in a workplace and that the DPS was often conceived with younger and less experienced students in mind. Some international students, who were also mature students, wanted to finish their courses as soon as possible, feeling that a DPS year was a delay they could not afford – financially and also in terms of time ‘lost’ that could be spent in more permanent employment or setting up a business.

#### DEGREES OF CERTAINTY

It is worth recalling from the year 1 findings that some students, even at that early stage, already thought of themselves as predominantly practitioners rather than students. This would seem to be a distinctive characteristic of art and design students who very often have been drawing, designing, sewing and making from an early age. We saw in year 1, how often this early identification as practitioner was associated with students having family members and/or friends who were themselves working in the creative arts. In practice, this readiness to see oneself as a practitioner creates multiple, apparently incidental opportunities and contacts. For example, Tamsin uses a chance meeting on the train to London from her hometown to create a contact that could have resulted in an internship. Her desire for an internship preceded her arrival at UAL. In contrast, Nathan sees the course as the means through which he might become a fashion designer. More typically, this kind of certainty grows in students as they progress. Experiences of industry and practice outside the curriculum – even if unhappy – usually increase their sense of certainty.

Most students assumed – in different degrees of explicitness - that on graduating they would work within the industry or practice for which they had trained. However, from year 2, 5 students (3 from graphic design courses, 1 in fashion, 1 in fine art) expressed certainty that they would not become designers or artists in their fields. These students were exceptional in expressing this kind of certainty. They tended not to be open with their lecturers about their ambitions in the belief that their work might be taken less seriously if they were. Those on courses that offered DPS chose not to undertake it because they felt that professional experience was conceived as taking place within a specialist industry or practice. There was some evidence of students seeing the DPS as a chance to explore creative practice in a context that was not obviously related to their discipline. So for example, a graphic designer might intern for a fashion designer or event organiser. However, there was little evidence of students seeing the DPS as a potential opportunity to explore practice in entirely other contexts such as education or health, for example. Most students had a degree of certainty during year 2 that they would, or at least profoundly wished, to become artists, designers or communicators. This was particularly the case within fashion.

#### DETERMINANTS OF STUDENTS’ ENGAGEMENT

Students such as Peter and Stella see engagement within their respective practice communities as important and they prioritise it but their capacity to do so is circumscribed by their need to earn money. Their challenge is to meet the requirements of at least three different contexts: university attendance and assignments; experience of creative practices through extra-curricular work; and their paid jobs. For Stella, a complex and expectation-laden family life was an additional dimension. Yuya, Nathan, and to some extent Hannah are also facing this challenge but their capacity to meet it is impaired by different kinds of crises of

confidence. Their beliefs about what they may aspire to are hampered by what they see around them and the judgements that they understand others, in positions of power, to have made of their work. So Hannah is discouraged by the favouritism shown to other students that she sees as undeserved, Yuya is crushed by the harsh comments on his portfolio, and Nathan is beset by a paucity of resources to support his work and morale.

There was a widespread belief that success would be dependent upon and determined by the students' own individual hard work. Where instances of favouritism were recounted, those favoured assumed that their own efforts, the quality of their work, and their presence ('I'm always there') explained why they had been chosen for particular opportunities, as evidenced in Tamsin's account. The flip-side of this belief, held by Yuya, is that although he works hard, the quality of his work was 'not good enough' and was therefore failed.

Students tended to believe that the quality of their work and their capacities as individuals would determine their success after graduation. Many felt themselves to be morally responsible for fulfilling their ambitions: after all there was an investment – in terms of money and time – to be justified. This need to justify the investment was heightened for students whose parents had been unconvinced or ambivalent about their children's choice of subject.

This belief in their individual responsibility and accountability was rarely contextualised with any knowledge about the labour market in the creative and cultural industries or the creative economy. Students did not know how many graduates there were in their discipline, and how many opportunities for recent graduates were on offer. Consequently, prolonged periods of searching and applying for jobs can be especially demoralising as each failure or near-success is taken as a personal judgement. Several students in the sample have spent more than a year interning and failing to gain sustained employment, whilst working at a range of unrelated jobs to earn enough for living costs. One student felt he had to take a few months break from constant applications because the toll on his health and well-being was too great.

There are disparities among students in their capacities to interpret and negotiate the job market. It is evident from the DLHE findings that many students use their networks of family and friends to gain a foothold in a first job. The range of mechanisms for this to take place varies enormously: Nathan was emboldened to apply for a paid internship because he had a friend who already worked for the company he applied to but the process was an open recruitment. Peter, on the other hand, was recommended by a peer who knew the quality of his work. Stella and Tamsin obtained their first positions without direct support from family or friends but indirectly their families helped by making it possible for them to gain the industry experience that made them so appointable. Some students were aware of a need to extend their network of contacts but struggled to find a foot-hold. One Asian home student with no contacts through family or friends talked about feeling that he was 'constantly treading in shallow waters,' never meeting the individuals with sufficient power to facilitate his advancement.

Students had very little awareness of the composition of the labour market in terms of gender, ethnicity and social class. A few mentioned informal conversations with tutors about equality and discrimination but there was no evidence of a serious treatment of the subject – whether formal or informal within their courses. Two female students brought up the subject of gender equality within graphic design in the context of formal discussions with tutors and both were met with humour that seemed to belittle the subject and the students' interest in it.

Among some students there was a fear of 'getting stuck' in an agency, of coming to rely on a regular salary and not being able to take a risk to set up their own businesses, to take advantage of unexpected chance opportunities to collaborate with others, or to learn through being with other artists and designers. Ethics often played an important part in this kind of thinking – the fear was not purely to do with being free to follow one's inclinations. Peter, for example, had within his reach a full-time position with a large company but limited his work for this company to two days per week so that he could pursue more socially responsible, and for him, artistically meaningful work with others, for which he was not necessarily remunerated.

#### TUTORS' MEDIATING ROLES AND INSTITUTIONAL SUPPORT

There are mechanisms – formal and informal – within courses and colleges that result in some students gaining internships and participation in competitions and life projects. Sometimes these mechanisms are open and transparent: information is given to all students and all may contact a company, be interviewed or take part in another selection process. It is also sometimes the case that information – say about an internship – is given to only those students that a tutor believes 'are right' for a company or who 'would fit'. Tamsin was chosen for her first internship – one of three students. Many, many students in the sample of 53, such as Hannah, recounted instances where they observed other students being afforded repeated opportunities for placement interviews. There were students who slipped in and out of favour (with dramatic impact on their morale) and others who were consistently favoured or deprived of favour. The insidious ways in which favouritism impedes students' development and their capacity to fulfil their potential can be seen in the case studies of Hannah and Yuya. The role of favouritism in reproducing the social inequalities that abound in the creative and cultural industries as well as in attainment is obvious (though individual examples of favoured working class or black and minority ethnic students will always be presented as though they are not the exceptions that prove the rule).

Beyond help in obtaining internships or information about competitions, the role of tutors in supporting students' interaction in a work-place or with a sponsor, seems limited. For example, one student who won a graphic design competition reported feeling exploited in that the company running the competition required her to adapt her design to an extent that seemed to her to be out-of-all-proportion to the small reward on offer. 'Winning' for this student was 'a poisoned chalice' but she also felt that it was up to her to deal with the situation because there was no tutor involvement at that stage.

An earlier report (Sabri 2012) on students' engagement in industry projects found that tutors' mediating role in live projects is crucial to realising their pedagogic value. For example, students who did not win competitions did not necessarily 'learn' from the experience and it is the role of the tutor to deconstruct the client's response and encourage a critical response:

...the less mystique that surrounds the client's judgement the more students will be in a position to adopt a critical and informed stance in relation to the non-selection of their own work. The alternative for students is to conflate the rejection of the piece of work with a symbolic rejection of their personal style as designers. In some projects tutors often mediate client responses and proactively help students whose work is not selected to reflect critically on the experience... (Sabri 2012: 4)

When students gained internships or participated in live projects, they frequently reported that they felt exploited. Tamsin was typical in reporting that her work was credited to others, and that she was blamed for errors that were the responsibility of permanent employees. She and many others also reported being shouted at and feeling that working long hours was a taken-for-granted expectation. Indeed the absence of the latter was taken to be a novelty. Stella seems to have been victimised by fellow interns and Nathan has constantly talked about feeling out of place in both university and internship contexts, as a black man.

There was a dearth of support for students at two levels. First, there seems to be no provision to discuss with students in advance of taking up internships and live projects such issues as workplace politics, the possibilities of exploitation and relevant employment law. Whilst the students anticipated some of the problems they came up against – they expected exploitative practices – they had no strategies for dealing with them and no awareness of their rights. Second, students did not feel they could go to speak to anyone when problems arose. College support for internships appeared to focus on health and safety and ‘bureaucratic’ requirements rather than on the social and psychological dimensions of being in a work-place.

Many students undertook free-lance work during their undergraduate years or after graduating. In both instances, they frequently found it difficult to gauge what they should charge. As Peter’s account suggests, there is also much confusion about how to negotiate a fee on a free-lance basis. Within this sample, some graduates were continuing to work for ‘expenses only’ on the basis that they found it worthwhile work that would add to their portfolio, while in other instances they were struggling to estimate what to charge for a commissioned piece of work or project, or how much to quote as a daily rate. None of the students believed they had ever received guidance about payment conventions in their respective industry or practice.



## Conclusion and recommendations

To conclude, we return to the three hypotheses about the nature of the interplay between engagement with industry (as exemplified in DPS) and attainment. The hypotheses were:

1. Undertaking the DPS augments students' preparation for final major projects and other final year work such that they attain better results than their non-DPS counterparts
2. Students who are already high-achieving tend to opt for DPS, and go on to do well in their final year.
3. Those who undertake the DPS are a year older, more mature, and are therefore better placed to do well in their final year.

Undertaking the DPS tends to entail a sustained engagement with industry and communities of practice, but not always. On the one hand, Tamsin and Peter demonstrate that it is possible to undertake activities that are at least equivalent to DPS (in terms of time and depth of engagement). The benefits to both students spanned technical skills development and a growth in their knowledge of their respective professions. On the other hand, Hannah's case demonstrates that DPS was of marginal benefit and it was her drive and resilience in the face of unpromising circumstances that led to her attainment of an upper second-class degree. Though one cannot help but wonder whether a more stimulating and challenging placement would have enabled her to attain a First. The wider range of students within the sample in this research indicates that DPS years do offer a catalyst for development that provides a bedrock for a higher quality of work and a wider perspective in the final year. However, there are DPS students such as Hannah who do well in spite of their experience. It may also be the case that Hannah benefited from being a year older, and was better placed to marshal her efforts in the final year. From the sample, it is not possible to quantify which type of causal link is more often in play, but the most productive one for attainment is obviously the first. The following recommendations are aimed at optimising the possibilities for it.

### INSTITUTIONAL ENGAGEMENT

#### *Monitoring and feedback*

1. It has long been acknowledged (Allen et al 2010) that the systematic and regular analysis of monitoring and feedback data in relation to placements in cultural and creative sectors is a crucial first step in ensuring equality.
2. Data analysis on the last three years of DPS participation and its association with attainment outcomes has been included in this report. The number of courses that offer DPS is expanding at LCF and LCC. It is recommended that this form of analysis continues on an annual basis to follow the development of the pattern that has been observed thus far (a positive correlation with attainment and a narrowing effect on inequality) as the number of students taking DPS expands.
3. The data analysis pertaining to DPS and attainment suggests that obtaining similar data in relation to other kinds of engagement with industry and communities of practice would be desirable. Data are already gathered, often at course level, on live projects and placements. A first step to establishing the feasibility of collating this

information for the purposes of monitoring across UAL is to conduct a mapping exercise that sets out what information is already collected and in what forms.

4. An overview of which courses offer DPS, in-curriculum placements, in-curriculum live projects and other in-curriculum engagements with communities of practice is needed. This overview should include information about the proportion of students on each course who participate, how their access is facilitated and what feedback mechanisms are in place. The students' demographic characteristics should be monitored.
5. The mapping exercise should have consultative purpose in order to establish how the information to be collated can be used productively at course/programme level and at college and UAL levels.
6. Students' feedback specifically on placements and live projects is not yet systematically collected. A questionnaire was developed for use by tutors on live projects (Sabri 2012) which was later piloted by Careers and Employability. This may be a starting point for considering how best to develop this area of practice. Feedback should focus not on students' 'satisfaction' but rather on the educative value of these experiences and other questions that would inform policy and practice in relation to industry partners and the organisation of this aspect of curricula.

#### STRATEGIC PLANNING AND DEVELOPMENT

7. It is difficult to distinguish guiding principles in the availability and take-up of DPS at a course level. It is offered in a small minority of courses across a broad range of subjects in three colleges. It may be that there are sound reasons for the current pattern. The above-mentioned mapping exercise may usefully provide an overview of the circumstances that tend to lead to the option of a DPS within each college. A strategic UAL approach may then build on what is learned.
8. There are also differences in students' access to DPS: it can be available to all on a course or be selective. It is difficult to justify selectivity given the impact of participation on attainment and the relatively low level of resource required. It is recommended that where DPS is available, the processes for gaining access should be consistent across UAL.
9. Tutors are often in receipt of requests to recommend students for internships. Consideration should be given to a range of fair strategies for dealing with such requests, depending on the scale and nature of the opportunity on offer. Guidance in this area should be informed by the University's obligations under the Equality Act 2010 and communicated to all programme teams and others who support students' placements.

#### STAFF ENGAGEMENT

10. There is already a prevalent narrative about the higher quality of work that final year students produce when they have participated in DPS. Tutors and others who advise students whether to take up placements, live projects and DPS should be aware also of

the demonstrable association between participation in DPS and attainment. The statistical analysis adds the observation that DPS participation is associated with a reduction in the gap in attainment: BAME students, international students, and students from lower socio-economic groups gain more than white, home students and higher socio-economic groups. We have yet to see if similar patterns emerge with respect to DPS-like activity.

11. Favouritism has been observed throughout this longitudinal study by both those students who have been its beneficiaries as well as those who have observed it and suffered the consequences. Experiences of favouritism are also reported regularly in NSS comments. Within this report the examples reported have potentially momentous consequences for students' futures: they pertain to access to networks, contacts and interviews for paid and unpaid internships. These practices seem to be a common occurrence to the extent that some students take them for granted. However, there is no justification for them on the part of tutors. In many cases favouritism may constitute unlawful discrimination.
12. There is a need to ensure a minimum level of support for students at the pre-emptive stage in their engagement with industry. This research did not investigate the range of support that is currently on offer but it is evident that support has been increased recently particularly at LCF. Across the sample of students in this research there was profound gratitude for support on health and safety and other aspects of the organisation of placements. There did not seem to be support that related to conduct within working relationships, rights and obligations, negotiating skills or any other aspect of professional conduct.
13. In addition to matters of workplace conduct, students should be made aware of the nature of the labour market they are entering, including its internal structures, representation of different ethnicities, socio-economic groups and gender. Average levels of pay for new entrants and inequality of pay should also be part of timely briefings. Such information should help to empower students and promote social responsibility. See Carrotworkers Collective, *Surviving internships: A counter-guide to free labour in the Arts*  
[https://carrotworkers.files.wordpress.com/2009/03/cw\\_web.pdf](https://carrotworkers.files.wordpress.com/2009/03/cw_web.pdf)
14. Students on placements/internships need support as and when problems arise, for example, in day-to-day working relationships. A named adviser with whom they can talk through emerging problems may be able to prevent problems from developing, and increase the potential for students to learn from their experiences. Such advisers should also be able to identify with the students when situations have become untenable, for example where victimisation or harassment is taking place that need to be brought to the attention of the industry partner at a senior level.

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