

Course Designer:

Vision and Values



Course Vision and Values

This section of the Course Designer is intended to provide a range of methods by which course leaders and course teams can define and agree which values and beliefs most inform the course identity. It also encourages teams to define an education philosophy that can inform all aspects of course design.

Reflect on your approach, values and beliefs

We are likely to bring a particular set of values and beliefs to our teaching practices based on professional educational, or industry, experience.

Educational values may relate to the values listed in the UKPSF, for instance, or include much wider beliefs about learning.¹

Development of student attributes is increasingly promoted in UK HE.² These might also be named as graduate attributes at the end of a course of study. The Creative and Digital Attributes Frameworks provide a set of student attributes for embedding and enhancing enterprise and employability within the curriculum at UAL.³

Course typology: what type of course is this?

You could decide what type of course you have, and to which group of courses, or broadly similar 'family', your course aligns with most. Note, this may or may not mean one from the same discipline, college or even university, but one that is similar in type – e.g. similar to others that offer professional registration, is multi-disciplinary, or has a clear international focus. A review of the field of curriculum offers of this type, including other national and international examples, might inspire you in designing your own vision and values, and point to a course philosophy.

Institutional, pedagogic and identity-forming values

We advocate the inclusion of 'self' or 'being', alongside 'knowing' and 'acting' when articulating values.⁴ This adds to some traditional distinctions between knowledge and skills, or 'knowing-that and knowing-how'.⁵ The importance of student agency in university education is not new and is a key way to maintain balance in curriculum planning.⁶

The following demonstrates how a course vision can be balanced when considered in three distinct parts:

- Product: designing and planning the curriculum – e.g. Credit framework constraints, unit structures, departmental or university priorities, professional frameworks and agreed course content or resources each constrain the product aspect of what a course can offer⁷
- Process: enacting the curriculum – e.g. Teacher-student interactions, curriculum activities, careers and employability, pre-enrolment and enrolment, formative and flexible assessment points, collaboration requirements, industry engagement, and course calendars each enable processes to be incorporated into the course⁸
- Agency: space for student agency in the curriculum – e.g. student-led contributions, student well-being, student choice in assessment and co-marking, peer learning, students co-creating content, choosing texts, and co-evaluating courses each contribute to course culture⁹

How a course philosophy can be constructed

A course philosophy as a set of approaches, values and beliefs, or a single motivating belief-system, however it is expressed, enables a clear articulation of a course vision. This can then inform your choice of aims, outcomes, assessment and teaching or learning activities. It can be formed from:

- Research, data or evidence for taking a certain approach
- Examples of best practice and key resources that you and the course team would subscribe to as valuable
- The core course practices and methods, materials, techniques and tools, including digital affordances
- The variety of connections the course makes, both internally and externally
- A shared understanding of tacit and embodied knowledge



Activities

Four domains, twelve values exercise

Write three words or phrases you hold in high esteem for each of these four domains: personally, professionally, educationally, and lastly as attributes you want students to develop.

Research has shown that staff might have congruence or conflict between value structures in HE across such domains.¹⁰

Sharing personal, professional, educational and attribute values establishes clarity of communication between colleagues, and may impact on overall course values.

Personal values have been called eulogy values, describing you as a person.¹¹ Professional values may reflect your discipline or industry expertise.

Educational values may be the qualities you inspire in others or communicate verbally and non-verbally.

Lastly, student attributes describe the 'qualities, skills and understandings' that you believe will best prepare students for their professional futures.

Three-part question

Use the product, process and agency distinctions outlined overleaf to address:

What course constraints are you working with?

How can the course processes be clearly described and aligned?

In what ways could you encourage student agency in course co-design ?

Diamond 9 Exercise¹²

What matters most? Achieving consensus

This activity should involve the whole course team if possible and can be useful for reaching agreement on validation and/or reapproval priorities.

With existing courses you might ask: what most needs changing on this course? What are the course strengths we want to keep?

With new and existing courses you might ask: what are our team/course educational values? Which key student attributes does our course develop?

Activity instructions

1. First decide on which question you want to address collectively.
2. Individually note the 9 most important changes/ strengths/ values/ attributes of



Figure 1: Diamond 9

this new/renewed course (5-10 mins).

The top diamond indicates the most important, and the bottom one the least important. The second layer, the second most important and middle layer the three terms of average importance.

3. Compare your lists in pairs, threes or with the whole group and then decide on group priorities (10-15 mins).

4. Now arrange your items in any order that makes sense (rank order, clusters, connections, etc.) (10 mins).

References

Full references can be found in the Course Designer Introduction and Resources List.

- (1) Value 1 is to 'Respect individual learners and diverse learning communities,' Value 2 is to 'Promote participation in higher education and equality of opportunity for learners.' UKPSF (2011), also HEA Code of Practice (2013).
- (2) Attributes are described as qualities, skills and understandings (Bowden *et al.* (2000) in O'Neill (2015), p.42.
- (3) UAL Creative Attributes Framework Available at: <https://www.arts.ac.uk/about-ual/teaching-and-learning-exchange/careers-and-employability/creative-attributes-framework> UAL Digital Creative Attributes Framework. Available at <https://dcaf.myblhttps://dcaf.myblog.arts.ac.uk/og.arts.ac.uk/>
- (4) Barnett and Coate (2005). Also, 'course designers needed to set objectives in three domains, life skill objectives, methodological objectives and content objectives' Rowntree (1981) in Toohey (1999), p.139.
- (5) Gilbert Ryle's distinction between 'knowing-that and knowing-how' (1949) (2009). Also Toohey (1999), p.140: 'In the UK, groups like the Education for Capability movement and the Enterprise in Higher Education Initiative have [...]pushed for greater attention to process knowledge, experiential knowledge and 'know-how.'" Orr and Shreeve (2018) argue that Art and Design pedagogy has contributed just this.
- (6) Benjamin, W. (1996).
- (7) Also, see Grundy (1987) in Smith (2011) who use the terms 'product', 'process' and 'praxis'. The product model, a normative view of curriculum-as-content from a regulatory point of view is traced back to Tyler (1949) in O'Neill (2015), O'Neill's table of product and process models in the literature (p.29).

- (8) Knight (2001) 'the advantages of a process model of curriculum planning, [...] from complexity theory [are] that what matters is getting the ingredients – the process, messages and conditions – right and trusting that good outcomes will follow.' in O'Neill (2015), p.29.
- (9) These examples are drawn from O'Neill (2011), Deeley (2014), Duah and Croft (2011), Bovill *et. al* (2010), Mihans (2008) all cited in Bovill *et al* (2014).
- (10) McNay, I. (2007), pp.34-57.
- (11) Brook, D. (2015).
- (12) Diamond Ranking explained by Clark (2012) in HEA Promoting Teaching (2014)

UAL Course Designer credits

Course Designer is a set of materials produced by the Teaching, Learning and Employability Exchange to support staff in designing arts curricula in Higher Education.

It is intended to complement course validation and/or reapproval, and will be useful to course leaders and teams who want to devise or revise their courses to ensure they are coherent.

The resource consists of:

- Introduction and Resources List
- **Course Vision and Values**
- Defining Course Aims
- Crafting Learning Outcomes
- Designing Inclusive Assessment
- Course Structure

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