

**Presenting 'The Viva', A Courageous Learning Activity Supported By  
Pedagogically Sound Research**

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**Theme 5: Accountability (also refers to Theme 2 Futures and Theme 6 E -  
Futures)**

**Conceptual Paper**

(Full length 3000 words - 45 mins)

**Objectives**

- To locate and illustrate the space for 'accommodated' assessment within Art and Design pedagogy
- To promote 'real' changes to assessment practice by presenting research findings from my Teaching and Learning Fellowship at University of the Arts London
- To encourage fellow professionals to respond enthusiastically to the challenges of disability legislation by utilising the notion of 'risk' in creative art pedagogy

**Context**

In 1978, Jarvie presented the case for standards of assessment being cultural (Fraser, J 2002 p56), that 'culture shapes and constrains even perceptions of colour, shape time and space.' In 2006, Art educationalists are engaging with a culture requiring 'reasonable adjustment', inclusion and widening participation, of the 11,865 undergraduates with dyslexia, 5.59% choose Creative Arts and Design.(HESA 2004). Students choose art

and design perhaps understanding that the rational process of art and design is often akin to dyslexia in rejecting formulaic, linear thinking. Art has a reputation for delivering holistic, ethnographic and portfolio led assessment, yet remains wedded to traditional text for 20-30% of assessment in many degree programmes.

Learners within the field of Art and Design are reputedly abductive, rather than deductive or inductive, shifting paradigms as part of the art process. Fraser claims 'designers tolerate uncertainty whilst working with incomplete information' (FraserJ 2002 p52). Taking risks and using new methods are integral to the craft as the second year of student handbooks often demonstrate ;'thinking outside the box' is rewarded. Further, the rationale for the dyslexic learner choosing art, design and creative practice is underscored by the subject benchmarks for Art and Design (HEFCE 2004) being the only national benchmarks which specifically acknowledge dyslexia and the disproportionate number of students within this discipline.

Employers enthuse over oral skills and presentation (HEFCE 2005),enterprise learning outcomes praise presentation skills, 'talking up the grade' , presenting story boards or illustrative material and fostering self promotion confidence. All skills industrial panelists claim are vital to success in the creative industries. Art graduates need to 'hit the ground running and talking'.

If 'accommodated assessment ' means ensuring validity in all aspects of teaching, assessment and learning with a critic-theoretic stance that promotes equity and student empowerment (Messick, S.J. 1989 p22), then theoretically art is set to adopt 'the viva'. In spite of this, few staff supervise and still fewer students opt for substantive 'accommodations'. The text-

based dissertation remains generally viewed as the medium to deliver the learning outcomes of Art programmes, writing appearing as assessment at 20 percent or more, culminating in the dissertation. This paper advances a discourse that aims to maximise the ability of the student to engage in academic life and present evidence in different forms, specifically 'the viva'. In Implementing this change and using the dyslexic student as the model, art educationalists may also enable other learners, who may share difficulties, albeit not as pronounced, to succeed. (Berninger, V. 2003)

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### **Journals**

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