

ENhance Case Study

Edinburgh Napier
UNIVERSITY

Department of
Learning & Teaching
Enhancement

Themes presented:

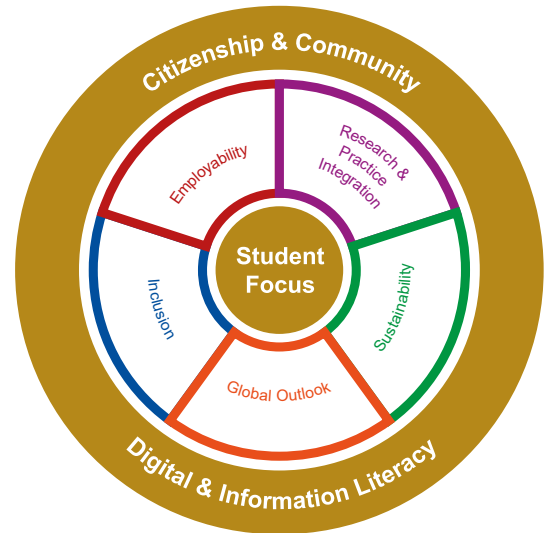
Employability; Global Outlook; Inclusion

Programme

BDes (Hons) Graphic Design

Submission made by

Peter Buwert



Case Study

The BDes(Hons) Graphic Design actively integrates a Global Outlook in a variety of ways across the programme. Graphic Design operates by manipulating visual representations of the raw materials of human cultural meanings, and so being exposed to new and different cultures is a vitally important stage in understanding how visual communication operates within and across cultures locally and globally. Therefore this is a priority area for us.

Structurally, the programme offers the option to study abroad in Trimester 2 of Year 3. We have a range of partner universities with whom we exchange students each year. In a normal year we might expect to send and receive around 6 students on international exchange with our established partners. We are currently in the process of re-evaluating our established partnerships and identifying new partnerships to increase our offering with the aim of doubling our reciprocal exchange places to 12 students each year. Class sizes are generally around 30 so our ambition is to work towards over a third of all our students participating in exchange.

However, we recognise that there are many reasons why students may not be able to participate in international exchange. To ensure that international and intercultural thinking is a core experience for all students on the programme, in 2018 we introduced a new core module to the programme: "DES09139 International & Intercultural Graphic Design". This module runs in Trimester 2 of Year 3 and is therefore taken by those students who are not studying abroad at that time. Coursework in the module is centred around live-projects working with international partners. Examples of past project include collaborating with coders in Berlin, and designing book covers for a publisher in Mozambique. For several years

students also worked with Napier's Modern Language department designing Napier's own "Worldwide Napier" magazine.

A project I want to highlight here is one which has developed through our good relationship with the Institut Français Écosse (French Institute) in Edinburgh. For several years now the students have worked with the IFE to design a poster and cover for the brochure promoting the IFE's programme of cultural events during the Fringe: "Vive le Fringe"(see for example 2019, 2021). The students respond to the IFE's design brief each year, exploring the context of the IFE's mission to represent French culture in Scotland and encourage cultural exchange. One student's design is chosen to be used for the large scale print run promoting the Vive le Fringe events, but the IFE staff have been so impressed with the student work over the past few years that they an exhibition of the posters produced by the whole class has been added as an event in the Vive le Fringe programme, installed in the foyer of the French Institute building on West Parliament Square throughout the duration of the Festival.

Beyond the module based opportunities provided by study abroad and the International & Intercultural Graphic Design module, we also try to organise an annual short (4-5 days) study trip to an international destination during reading week of Trimester 2. This is an optional extracurricular experience offered to years 2-4. Past destinations have included Barcelona, Berlin, Madrid, Lisbon, Copenhagen, Paris etc. Again, for various reasons not all students will be able to join these study trips, but they do offer a more affordable international experience for those who are not able to go on a full trimester exchange. The primary purpose of these trips is to become immersed in a new cultural context and learn about how graphic design and visual communication operate differently within this context. We arrange to visit local design studios, as well as soaking up the general and niche visual cultures of the locality through galleries etc.

A secondary purpose of these trips is that the experience of exploring a new city with classmates really helps to build community within the cohort, leading to genuinely significant gains within class dynamics upon return. The last trip was to Madrid in February 2020 (pre-lockdown) and it has been really interesting watching how the bonds developed by the then second year students who all attended that trip have helped them as a class to support each other through the subsequent two years of pandemic restrictions. There is an obvious cross reference to the Community and Citizenship theme here. These extracurricular international experiences contribute a huge amount to community. And in a more general sense, all of our pedagogical activity relating to international/intercultural contexts is deeply tied up with notions of citizenship intercultural relationships. 2021 is the first year we have not offered our students an international study trip, we have chosen instead to offer a loosely organised London study trip (some might argue that London is international), with hopes of maintaining the benefits of community building through this experience.

Regarding how these activities support the Inclusion theme, hopefully it is implicit above, but to make

this explicit: we have tried to provide a range of opportunities for all students on the course to be able to have an international experience of one kind or another at some point during the course. For example we often have student with certain health conditions or caring commitments who are not able to undertake a full trimester study abroad, but who may be able to come on a one week study trip. For those who cannot travel at all, the International and Intercultural Graphic Design module was devised to offer an in-depth engagement with international issues while studying on campus.

Digital & Information Literacy and Citizenship & Community

Discussed in the case study above.

Further Reading