

## Context

**One off workshops** and short courses are a great way to equip students with the auxiliary skills needed to enhance the production of their main body of work. Students from any subject area may for example want to include a short video to add to their portfolio. Fashion students as another example suddenly have an interest in 3D printing PPE equipment. The mercurial real-time nature of creative subjects does not always allow for every permutation of skill set to be built into scheduled workshops. Although this flexibility can add dynamic elements to the student learning experience it is not without its problems in terms of delivery.

Unique lesson plans for each workshop need to be manufactured to match the level and student subject area often with limited time. The intended alignment of leaning outcomes may not be immediately obvious or meaningfully communicated. The evaluation of quality of learning is also difficult with single imprint sessions.

This research aims to enhance the impact of learning in one-off workshops by ensuring alignment to meaningful learning outcomes, implementing appropriate learning theories and creating a conducive classroom ecology. There is an emphasis on student engagement, active learning and monitoring of engagement as a means of real time evaluation of the quality of learning.

### Constructive Alignment

Constructivism is where students learn through activity while constructing meaning in context of their own experience and knowledge. This is guided by an Alignment to the intended learning outcomes. (Biggs J.B 2003)

The first and most basic consideration is we need to know who we are teaching, course, module, level, number of students among other pieces of key information. Looking at the credit level descriptors for course, module and assignment as well as assessment criteria is essential to creating balanced and aligned teaching activities.

Constructive Alignment helps to both balance the coverage of subject and keep sight of intended learning outcomes

### Taxonomy

Blooms Taxonomy of Learning. Moving from lower order thinking skills to Higher order thinking skills using a taxonomy allows the mapping of each cognitive skill to an appropriate activity. The revised 2001 version of Blooms Taxonomy has been further adapted by (Churches. A 2008) into a "Digital Taxonomy" and adjusted for creative technologies in the intervention.

Although the aim is towards higher order cognitive skills the actual order of these activities does not need to be completely ridged. You may for example put "Creating" before "Evaluation" or even re-visit an order of thinking that needs revision.

### Impact active learning and social interaction.

As students use the critical thinking needed to accomplish tasks before and after an activity their leaning is enhanced and even deepened. Social interaction is beneficial in many ways and can add dynamics to the pace of sessions as well as re-engaging a class by shifting gears from other order activities. Social interaction means talking/discussing the learning with more knowledgeable students then becoming a learning resource in themselves. (Moon, J. 2001)

### Engagement

Making sure the right tech and room resources are implemented facilitates this ecology to develop but it is student engagement that makes it work. Ways of measuring engagement may also be a way to assess an overall impression of the success of delivery. A focus on active learning and group effort tasks re-inforce engagement but needs to be driven and guided by an also active teacher. (Moon, J. 2001)

# I M P A C T

Engaging students in one-off  
creative technology workshops

## CRITICAL ALIGNMENT SOURCE INFORMATION

Credit level descriptors for student level  
Course Module Intended Learning outcomes  
Assignment Intended Learning Outcomes  
Assignment Assessment Criteria

Credit level descriptors for student level 6  
(a) A systematic understanding of key aspects of their field of study, including the acquisition of coherent and detailed knowledge, at least some of which is at, or informed by, the forefront of the field  
(b) An ability to deploy accurately established techniques of analysis and enquiry within the field of study  
(c) A conceptual understanding that enables the student to devise and sustain arguments, and/or to solve problems, using ideas and techniques, some of which are at the forefront of the field of study  
(d) A conceptual understanding that enables the student to describe and comment upon particular aspects of current research, or equivalent advanced scholarship, in the field of study  
(e) An appreciation of the uncertainty, ambiguity and limits of knowledge  
(f) An ability to manage their own learning  
(g) An ability to make use of scholarly reviews and primary sources (for example, refereed research articles and/or original materials appropriate to the field of study).

UWL Qualifications and Curriculum Framework Credit level descriptors for your student level. [https://www.uwl.ac.uk/sites/default/files/Departments/About-us/academic\\_quality\\_and\\_standards\\_handbook.pdf](https://www.uwl.ac.uk/sites/default/files/Departments/About-us/academic_quality_and_standards_handbook.pdf)

The above information will act as a start to inform the design of your sessions subject coverage, timing and nature of workshop activities. Keep this information in mind when mapping to the adapted taxonomy below

| Taxonomic Level | Taxonomic Verbs                              | Activity   |
|-----------------|--|--|
| REMEMBERING     | Identifying<br>Listing                       | introduction to session structure and subject, declaration of intended learning outcomes, probe current knowledge and experience, core knowledge, examples and demonstration |
| UNDERSTANDING   | Classifying<br>Interpreting<br>Explaining    | class investigation and discussion, student interaction, group class exercise, revision of core knowledge  |
| APPLYING        | Implementing<br>Executing<br>Operating       | group class exercise 2, practical technical skills and practice, hardware software demonstrations,   |
| ANALYSING       | Structuring<br>De-constructing<br>Organising | further digital resources, workflow discussion, idea workshoping,  |
| CREATING        | Designing<br>Planning<br>Producing           | inventing, pitching, making, exhibiting, presenting, manufactureing, editing, uploading  |
| EVALUATING      | Critiquing<br>Testing                        | peer assessment of product, screening, review, feedback, round up  |

A structurally dynamic workshop that is aligned with the students learning scheme and interests is one essential part of engaging students. When combined with a positive classroom climate and physical environment, active learning and social interaction, learning is greatly enhanced. We can also monitor engagement in real time to help evaluate the effectiveness of our constructed classroom ecology.

## CLASSROOM WALKTHROUGH EXAMPLES

|  | Physical  | Culture |
|--|---|---------|
| <b>Physical</b><br>Organised un-cluttered space<br>Easy access to move around<br>Data and Intended learning outcomes displayed clearly<br>Large central discussion table<br>A/V tech working.<br>Other required technologies | <b>Culture</b><br>Student-teacher relationships positive<br>Respect between students<br>Sharing ideas and experience<br>At ease asking questions and raising concerns<br>Student successes celebrated<br>Focus on student |         |
| Positive Body Language<br>Indicates attention to teacher and/or other students.  | Very low <input type="checkbox"/> low <input type="checkbox"/> Medium <input type="checkbox"/> High <input type="checkbox"/> Very High <input type="checkbox"/>   |         |
| Consistency of focus<br>Student attention to activity without distraction.   | Very low <input type="checkbox"/> low <input type="checkbox"/> Medium <input type="checkbox"/> High <input type="checkbox"/> Very High <input type="checkbox"/>   |         |
| Verbal Participation<br>Students ask relevant questions and express ideas freely   | Very low <input type="checkbox"/> low <input type="checkbox"/> Medium <input type="checkbox"/> High <input type="checkbox"/> Very High <input type="checkbox"/>   |         |
| Level of Confidence<br>Students initiate and complete work independatly and in groups  | Very low <input type="checkbox"/> low <input type="checkbox"/> Medium <input type="checkbox"/> High <input type="checkbox"/> Very High <input type="checkbox"/>   |         |
| Excitement and fun<br>level of enthusiasm and good humor   | Very low <input type="checkbox"/> low <input type="checkbox"/> Medium <input type="checkbox"/> High <input type="checkbox"/> Very High <input type="checkbox"/>   |         |

## Evaluation of the interventions impact

Mentor feedback was mainly excellent. I had asked the tutor to "advertise" the workshop and explain the benefits to both their course of study and their general education well in advance. Attendance was excellent although some latecomers did disrupt the session slightly at first. In future on advice from my mentor latecomers will be politely ignored and briefed at the end of the session. Although there was an initial slight nervousness in the class dynamic as we had never met before this very quickly was replaced by a very positive and engaged atmosphere. Some dry mild humor helped in this regard as well as my confidence in delivering a subject I am passionate about. Clearly stating the learning goals and activities of the session early in the workshop helped further engage and orientate the students. Preparing, testing and rehearsing the technical aspects of the delivery in advance meant that I could focus on the students and pacing, balancing the session activities.

Demonstrations were interactive and involved students guiding the direction of these as they discussed its aspects, asked and answered questions. Pitching the level of learning was made simple by aligning to the course learning outcomes. Explaining each technical aspect in simple terms first before advancing the concepts worked well although I do realise now it is easy to take things too far sometimes. Feedback from students was excellent. Measuring levels of engagement in real-time using the engagement checklists resulted in high or very high levels of engagement. Enthusiasm for the subject had an obviously inspiring effect with students requesting to have more workshops.

On a personal level, I believe these interventions have had a profound effect on the impact of my workshops. They have given me a much clearer vision of structures with which to approach delivering a deeper more aligned learning. This new vision has taken much of the stress and confusion out of my teaching practice allowing me to focus on engagement and impact.

### Conclusion

Engagement is not just an educational "buzzword" but a very real and critical aspect of how and why we learn. Using a combination of key learning theories and adapting them into tools that are relevant to your subject delivery enhance the whole experience of teaching. Students will pick up on your confidence and this helps reinforce engagement with the class and subject too. I now see engagement as central to the learning theories around it. A combination of a constructively aligned plan generated from a taxonomy of learning focused on active learning and social interactions results in high levels of engagement. Mixing up the activities with a blend of teaching techniques also reinforced engagement. Changing the dynamics and pace, not spending too much time on "remembering" further enhanced the student's attention. The practical group activities had a genuine air of fun and excitement. Critique of the session was minor (text size of data presentation, latecomers) and can be easily adjusted. The next step is to reflect on all aspects of these interventions and keep refining and developing the impact of my one-off specialist workshops moving forward.

Billingham, S. (2015) Student engagement: the what, the why and the how. [online] Available at: <https://www.eaie.org/blog/student-engagement-what-why-how.html>  
Biggs, J.B. (2003) Teaching for quality learning at university. Buckingham: Open University Press/Society for Research into Higher Education. (Second edition)  
Improving Student Support for Learning. International Centre for Leadership in Education <https://images.pcmac.org/Uploads/BradleyCounty/BradleyCounty/Divisions/PagesLevel2/Documents/sus2.pdf>  
Moon, J. (2013) Short Courses and Workshops, Improving the Impact of Learning, Teaching and Professional Development : Routledge

Churches, A. (2008) Bloom's Digital Taxonomy <https://www.montgomeryschoolsmd.org/uploadedFiles/departments/techtraining/homepage/BloomDigitalTaxonomy2001.pdf>