

ASSESSING CREATIVITY

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BACKGROUND

Creativity is a key element in becoming a successful filmmaker. Higher education in filmmaking therefore needs to support, build, teach, stimulate, motivate, value as well as ultimately assess and feedback on student's progress in their creative abilities. Both faculty and students can find it difficult, even frustrating, to give and understand assessment in this particular area. It can be daunting having to "judge" or mark someone's creativity. MetFilm School Berlin runs BA and MA courses in Practical Filmmaking, our cohorts come from very diverse cultural backgrounds. In most assignments the students are expected to evidence a creative approach, an original idea to produce an effective solution within given limitations.

In order to successfully work on an assignment, the expectations and criteria need to be clearly communicated both to students and markers. Just stating *creativity* as a criterion can appear to be vague and there is a danger it is interpreted or misunderstood as a matter of personal taste.

INTERVENTION

One particular assignment - a **Visual Research Presentation** - on our MA Directing course had produced very disappointing results in the past, not only in terms of achievement or grades, but also in outspoken feedback by students who found the entire assignment very confusing as well as by tutors who felt it was very difficult to give useful assignment feedback.

In order to provide the students with more clarity around the assessment, to build confidence in them and to encourage them to take creative risks, I created a rubric, outlining the different components of the assignment according to the Intended Learning Outcomes and a detailed scale of performance levels associated with each.

The list of dimensions and criteria was given to the students before they started working on their presentations, the full sheet including the different possible levels of performances was given to the marking tutors.

Visual Research Project - Assessment Sheet			
Name of Student:	Presentation Title:		
Criteria	Distinction	Merit/Pass	Fail
Introduction	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Introduction sets the audience clearly what to expect of the project Clearly states the purpose of the project Contains clear hypothesis 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Introduction to general Contains hypothesis but a little unclear 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Introduction missing or Purpose not explained Hypothesis missing Overall confusing set-up of presentation
Organisation and Structure	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Presentation is organised to create a logical argument Clear introduction through to conclusion Clear structure of points Components neatly to brief with discussion in evidence with brief 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Evidence of structure, but not always building a logical argument Structure somewhat disjointed Some components not discussed with time in evidence 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Presentation is confusingly organised, not leading from introduction to conclusion Does not correspond to brief was not discussed with time in evidence
Evidence	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Evidence of primary research including both literature and film (e.g. interviews) Evidence and reference to theories are relevant to stated hypothesis 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Good amount (3-4) of examples drawn from both film and literature, quotes and accurately described and appropriately interpreted Good referencing and evidence is relevant to hypothesis 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Little to no evidence of primary research Research not relevant to hypothesis Only 1-2 references to films or literature
Audio-visual artefact	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Audio-visual production in artefact and does not exceed the hypothesis Artistic choice can be drawn from the produced artefact, relating clearly to the hypothesis Technical level of artefact is high Length 1-3 minutes 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Length of artefact not much shorter than 3 minutes and not much longer than 3 minutes Good technical quality with some minor flaws Does test the hypothesis in artefact and leads to conclusion 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> No artefact included Artefact not designed to test the hypothesis Artefact too long (over 10 min) or too short (under 1 min) Substandard technical flaws No suitable to support hypothesis
Creativity	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Unique choice of and approach to chosen topic Experimental, imaginative use of artefact to test hypothesis Conclusion presents a new perspective Visuals and audio are used in an imaginative way to support the argument 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Clear visual concept Conclusion contains some new ideas Conclusion lacks a personal perspective 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> No visual concept No new aspects Lacking in effect Nothing really clear
Analysis	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Clearly presents the conclusions that were drawn from the project Evidence of critical evaluation of own work Reflections on personal development as director are presented 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Targeted storytelling Clear discussion and conclusion are explicitly linked to artefact, include self-reflection Analysis clearly related to hypothesis Clear reflection on personal development as director 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Analysis missing Conclusion not clearly linked to artefact Analysis not clearly related to hypothesis Conclusion not clearly linked to artefact
Presentation skills	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Evidence of good industry standard presentation skills Managing audience input Timing (30 minutes length) Overall visual presentation 		

CONCLUSION

The most surprising outcome of this intervention was the impact it had on the student's achievement. The quality of the submissions noticeably improved.

Setting out rubrics for an assignment including for a seemingly intangible dimension like creativity does not just provide useful guidance both for tutors and students. The guidelines form a safe space for students where they can confidently apply their creativity and then are able to self-evaluate and improve the effectiveness of their choices.

For a practical filmmaking course it is vital to encourage students to take creative risks in order to produce original pieces of work. This intervention seems to have supported and improved that student learning journey. It might be worth trying to adapt this approach to other assignments students and/or tutors struggle with.

LITERATURE

Runco and Jaeger's (2012) standard definition of creativity is bipartite: 'Creativity requires both originality and effectiveness. Originality is not alone sufficient for creativity. Original things must be effective to be creative.' (p. 92)

Not only in order to measure effectiveness and originality, students and marking tutors need to know the specific expectations for an assignment. Pursuant to Biggs' (1996) constructive alignment theory and Gale and Bond (2007) who depict the importance of 'specifying precisely what is to be assessed' (p.132), all criteria for an assignment, including creativity, should come with a detailed description.

Even if discussions about an assignment take place in the classroom, Stevens and Levi (2013) remark that it is too simple to assume 'students will automatically know the criteria based on what we say in class, write in the syllabus and specify in the assignment'. Students need and 'want to see the criteria before they begin the assignment' (p. 50).

Alongside the conclusion by Visser et al (2017) that 'the teacher-student relationship can also influence student efficacy, confidence and creativity', and that 'creativity thrives in an atmosphere of trust' (p.55) it seems logical to assume, that clear and detailed communication about the marking criteria will also help to build that trust. It is also likely to give students a better chance of understanding how an assignment and the subsequent feedback is supposed to enhance their learning journey.

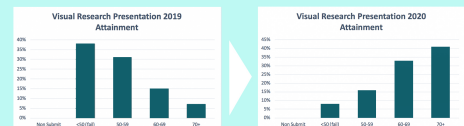
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EVALUATION

After introduction of the assessment criteria, submissions displayed an impressive level of originality and were effective in presenting the student's research into Visual Storytelling.

Where 38% of the previous year's students had failed in this assignment, this year, after being given the criteria, only 8% of students failed. The attainment graph literally had been turned on its head.



DATA

STUDENT FEEDBACK

"The criteria provided made it clear what was expected of me."
"The criteria around the Artefact was particularly helpful, as the information given in the module study guide was rather confusing."

TUTOR FEEDBACK

Both the first and second marker were in close agreement about the given marks. They felt the rubrics had been very helpful in writing timely and meaningful feedback and saved them a lot of time when it came to marking the assignments. One suggestion for improvement was to add a weighting to the criteria for better calculation of the final mark.