



Student Transitions: Example of transitions practice

Title: Singapore Summer School Overseas Immersion Programme for Communication and Interior Design Students at Glasgow School of Art (GSA) – focus here on Interior Design Students

Transition(s) the practice supports: *Discipline:* ‘Shift student thinking to show them there is value in re-appropriating, rather than destroying, old buildings. *International students/ study abroad/ induction:* inducting Singapore students into GSA culture and practices.

Abstract: The Singapore Overseas Immersion Programme is a three-week Summer School programme at the GSA for third year Interior and Communication Design students from GSA’s Singapore Campus. It takes place in June when these students are preparing to transition into the final year of their degree programme. The Summer School consists of a credit-bearing project through which students are introduced to the City, the studios and the degree show. It also consists of a number of trips and social events. The Summer School is designed to introduce students to the home institution and the city of Glasgow, and induct them into the culture of GSA and the principles underpinning its Communication and Interior design practices.

Description:

The Singapore Overseas Immersion Programme is a three-week Summer School programme at the GSA for third year Interior Design and Communication Design students from GSA’s Singapore Campus. It takes place in June when these students are preparing to transition into the final year of their degree programme. The Summer School consists of a credit-bearing project through which students are introduced to the City, the studios, and the degree show. It also consists of a number of trips and social events.

In week one of the credit-bearing project, interior design students are given a brief and taken to visit a range of interiors within the city, such as Tramway (an old industrial building re-appropriated for cultural and public use) and City Chambers (an historic building with an elaborate interior) before being asked to design an aspect of one of these buildings in the studios in weeks two and three. When based in the studio students must attend compulsory workshops but otherwise have the freedom to come and go as they please. Social events and visits led by GSA staff and student ambassadors run throughout the three weeks. Visits include: a trip to the Highlands, Edinburgh, cultural venues and places where GSA students hang out, a ceilidh, and a student and staff pecha-kucha.

Background/ Context:

Interior Design is a relatively new discipline in Singapore and there is a growing market for it. As a result the Singapore government is investing in it heavily. As part of this investment the Glasgow School of Art and its staff have been working in partnership with the Singapore Institute of Technology (SIT) and Temasek Polytechnic since 2012 to deliver two new Interior and Communication Design degree programmes.

Students in Singapore study two years at the Polytechnic and then two years at the GSA Singapore Campus, which is located alongside SIT. The teaching at the GSA campus is run by GSA and SIT staff and is modelled on the principles of how design is taught at GSA; students are also given the same briefs. The approach to learning that the students experience as they enter the GSA Singapore Campus in Year 3, is different and more self-directed than what they have been used to. The government subsidised overseas immersion programme comes at the end of this third year and is a crucial part of the student's orientation with this approach.

Aspiration/ key points/ principles:

Re-appropriation of buildings is not common in Singapore and so part of the aim of visiting buildings such as Tramway and City Chambers in week one of the Summer School is to shift the students thinking about the value of old buildings i.e. so they can see that there is value in keeping rather than destroying old buildings, and that ultimately this is something they might take with them into their future design careers in Singapore.

By working in the studios and visiting degree shows, and through the GSA staff and student ambassador led visits and activities, the students also get chance to experience some of the GSA culture and way of life and feel a resonance with their home institution so that they might become part of the community.

For many students it's also the first time they have travelled so is a growing experience. Many then continue the experience by visiting parts of Europe.

Observations/ challenges/ recommendations:

The three-week period is felt to be too short, with staff commenting that as soon as students feel comfortable and settle in it is time to go. It is thought an extra week would be good.

Staff are reflecting critically on the notion of transporting educational approaches. Is it quite a colonial approach?

It was felt that in order to get the GSA experience fully students should come at a time when all of the students are around, rather than just student ambassadors. However, due to timetabling commitments and availability of space students are only able to come once the degree show is on and after students have left.

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All examples provided will be posted to the Enhancement Themes website with the intention of including them in the National Transitions map.