



## **Evidence for Enhancement:** Improving the Student Experience

# **Tool Kit for Reflecting on Impact**

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**Representing the Creative Disciplines' Collaborative Cluster:**

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## Contents

<b>Introduction</b> .....	<b>1</b>
<b>Assumptions underpinning the tool kit's suggested activities</b> .....	<b>2</b>
<b>Why the focus on adaptive resilience?</b> .....	<b>3</b>
The debate in education.....	3
The debate in the creative economy .....	4
The debate in environmental sustainability.....	5
<b>The process</b> .....	<b>5</b>
Two levels.....	5
Three stages.....	6
<b>References</b> .....	<b>8</b>

## Introduction

The aim of the tool kit and its components is to develop programme leaders' and course leaders' understanding of the impact of learning and teaching, and enhancement of teaching. The tool kit provides a pragmatic structure from which to debate complex and contended aspects of creative arts higher education as part of annual programme enhancement. It hopes to offer materials that support creative and critical conversations regarding the nature of the disciplines and what creative arts higher education has to offer socially, culturally and economically.

To derive the most benefit from this tool kit, it is best used in conjunction with:<sup>1</sup>

- Understanding the Learning Journey in the Creative Arts
- Creative Disciplines' Learning Journey: Nine dilemmas for the skills agenda
- Creative Disciplines' Annual Programme Monitoring Briefing: Considering outcomes metrics as Part of Enhancing Programme Design and Delivery

This tool kit is thus designed to assist programme and subject leaders in rethinking their annual monitoring processes as an opportunity to reflect on the impact of what they do as creative practices educators in terms of:

- How their programmes encourage a range of skills (with skills defined here in a holistic rather than a mechanistic way), both discipline-specific and transferable to more general contexts that assist not just in careers but also living in society.
- How their programmes integrate with the cultural and creative ecology and, in so doing, are a part of that ecology and also drivers within that ecology.
- Who their students are and how their students impact in the local communities, both whilst being students and once they graduate.

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<sup>1</sup> Available at: [www.enhancementthemes.ac.uk/current-enhancement-theme/defining-and-capturing-evidence/the-creative-disciplines](http://www.enhancementthemes.ac.uk/current-enhancement-theme/defining-and-capturing-evidence/the-creative-disciplines)

## Assumptions underpinning the tool kit's suggested activities

The tool kit is underpinned by four assumptions drawn from the work of the collaborative cluster and outlined in Figure 1 below.

**Figure 1: Making key creative discipline educational assumptions explicit**

<p><b>Creative disciplinary expertise (and its requirement of adaptive resilience) is fostered through a curriculum centred around uncertainty. In this, the curriculum needs to ensure that students deliberately, accidentally and serendipitously move across the boundaries of familiarity into spaces and times of unfamiliarity.</b></p>	<p>Creative disciplines require a high degree of uncertainty in their pedagogies to foster both creativity as a disciplinary expertise and the adaptive resilience necessary to self-direct this disciplinary expertise. This means our programmes need to enact the following core conditions:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• self-authorship through encounters with uncertainty and failure</li> <li>• open ended problem-solving opportunities</li> <li>• knowledge challenges that require sophisticated criticality as well as disruptive reasoning and intellectual risk-taking</li> <li>• materials exposure to enable high levels of materials literacies (both tangible and intangible materials) and the practical wisdoms that accompany this</li> <li>• circumstances that demand adaptive resilience, particularly opportunities for horizontal and vertical forms of collaborative learning that disrupt normative disciplinary boundaries.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Creative disciplines' disciplinary expertise is professional.</b></p>	<p>The creative disciplines are also professional subjects. Thus, as well as creating new ideas, objects and forms of the social, these disciplines also have to provide opportunities for students to develop the pragmatic wisdoms that enable them to make a living, either as creatives or elsewhere in other socio-economic contexts (including, but not exclusive to, the broader economy).</p>
<p><b>Values as well as value are central to the work of the creative disciplines.</b></p>	<p>The creative disciplines embody and can newly materialise important social values, as well as having value socially, culturally, democratically and economically. This means that when reflecting on the impact of teaching and learning, there is a larger narrative to write regarding the impact of our programmes than is assumed by</p>

	the evidence of leavers' destinations and fiscal outcomes metrics.
<b>High levels of porosity between the programme and the cultural ecology are necessary to provide the conditions of creative disciplinary education.</b>	Innovation in the creative disciplines requires diverse forms of engagement with their various communities (local, regional, national, international, employment, government, funding, health and wellbeing communities) as part of the educational process. This necessitates porosity between curricular activities (in programme and alongside programme) and these communities.

## Why the focus on adaptive resilience?

### The debate in education

Increasingly, the student learner journey (particularly for domiciled Scottish students) will be underpinned with assumptions about metaskills. In the Scottish context, this is most clearly represented in the meta-skill matrix developed as Skills 4.0, which will direct educational development in secondary school, further education and apprenticeship design. In particular, these meta-skills are identified as categories of learning which map clearly onto what the creative disciplines are attempting to achieve: self-management, social intelligence, and innovation (in which sits curiosity, creativity, sense-making, critical thinking) (see Figure 2).

<b>Self management</b>	<b>Social intelligence</b>	<b>Innovation</b>
Focussing	Communicating	Curiosity
Integrity	Feeling	Creativity
Adapting	Collaborating	Sense making
Initiative	Leading	Critical thinking

**Figure 2: Skills Development Scotland: Metaskills Matrix 4.0<sup>2</sup>**

<sup>2</sup> [www.skillsdevelopmentscotland.co.uk/media/44684/skills-40\\_a-skills-model.pdf](http://www.skillsdevelopmentscotland.co.uk/media/44684/skills-40_a-skills-model.pdf)

In a broader skills context, the adaptive mindset is defined as *the* metaskill for the 21st century, with creativity being defined to include problem-solving, innovating and improvising (see Figure 3).



**Figure 3: The Characteristics of an Adaptive Mindset: Gustavo Razzetti, 4 September 2018<sup>3</sup>**

Throughout this project, the members of the collaborative cluster have recognised the importance of the resilience agenda from a general skills perspective, but also recognised that the creative disciplines have something specific to offer in terms of creative practice as expertise.

### The debate in the creative economy

As notions of the creative economy have emerged, been critiqued, then, despite critique, remained fairly persistent, attempts to identify the graduate characteristics most likely to align to the creative economy have become a topic worthy of definition. This is relevant to adaptive resilience in these distinct areas:

1 Much of the debate regarding the growth in the creativity economy is focused around a sense that creativity is becoming important and will become even more so (Campbell, 2019). Conceptualisations of the creative economy (and the creative industries within it) contain a futuristic assumption that the nature of work is changing, about to change, has changed, and that technological advances will accelerate this process. The ambiguity in what creativity means in this context inclines towards resolution by being closely aligned to the adaptive mindset outlined above (Figure 3). This tends to emphasise the conceptual nature of creativity within an economic growth agenda, rather than the professional/practice expertise nature of disciplinary creative practices which generate a range of values and

<sup>3</sup> <https://blog.liberationist.org/the-metaskills-you-need-to-thrive-in-the-21st-century-55f172f6d2f3>

value (not just economic). Thus, the creative economy becomes inseparable from a technologically fuelled knowledge economy in which information, signs, symbols, aesthetics and the immaterial are key (Campbell, 2019). Nonetheless, we would argue that to innovate requires adaptive resilience attached to an integration of both creative practice as conceptual sophistication and materials' literacies, with outcomes at a social, cultural, wellbeing, educative, innovative and economic level. One consequence of this is a learning journey which extends beyond a normative educational pattern, outwards towards materials' skills development either before or after creative practices degrees (which themselves incorporate both matter and ideas). Another consequence is the production of creative arts programmes in which the apparently immaterial, is the material of creative practice (for example, coding and computational arts).

2 Technological advances are creating more ambiguity between (what have hitherto been referred to as) craft practices and creative practices. As a result, the debate regarding crafts and the craft economy within the creative economy has been gathering pace. For creative practitioners who wish to remain economically competitively, so striking a balance between traditional disciplinary skills and predominantly digital innovation is perceivable as an aspect of adaptive resilience.

## **The debate in environmental sustainability**

In terms of the broader, socio-cultural-scientific climate regime change agenda, adaptive resilience is also seen as key to responding to the geopolitical complexities emerging from growing concern regarding environmental sustainability. Ecologists and sociologists (O'Brien et al, 2009; Latour, 2017) identify strategies for building resilience in terms of:

- learning to live with change and uncertainty
- nurturing diversity
- combining different types of knowledge for learning
- creating opportunity for self-organisation and cross-scale links.

This agenda is of as much importance to the creative disciplines as it is for other areas of higher education. The collaborative cluster would argue, nonetheless, that a comparison between what creative disciplines pedagogies seek to foster and the strategies for building resilience identified by environmentalists, are similar enough to imply that the creative disciplines can have a unique role in these debates.

## **The process**

The process suggested by this tool kit has two levels and three stages:

### **Two levels**

1 Evolving programme and course leaders' understanding and ways of articulating impact under the following headings:

- i Creativity as a form of expertise that is both situated in their discipline and adaptable/transferable as a metaskill.
- ii Community engagement through our students responding to briefs, themes, projects, forms of social activism and creating the 'social' underpinning for their creative practice
- iii How their students make an impact after graduating from a programme.

iv Considering links into a much broader cultural landscape defined by related, but independent, sectors identified in the collaborative cluster's scoping report (year 1): social wellbeing (health policies); arts, society and culture (cultural policy); innovation (analogue and digital creative economies policies); education (across the learner/learning journey policies); and economy, business and skills (economic policies/skills policies).

2 Cultivating student awareness of their own developing value as a designer/artist/creative within a much broader cultural landscape defined by related but independent sectors identified in the collaborative cluster's scoping report (year 1): social wellbeing (health policies); arts, society and culture (cultural policy); innovation (analogue and digital creative economies policies); education (across the learner/learning journey policies); and economy, business and skills (economic policies/skills policies).

It can be implemented at course within a programme or overall programme levels with an outcome feeding into the programme's annual monitoring deliberations.

### Three stages:

<b>Stage 1: Inception and initialisation</b>	1a Reflexive practice by staff 1b Reflexive practice by students
<b>Stage 2: Activity</b>	Require students to consider where and how they 'impact' and where and how their programme activities impact on them as they go through a given year.
<b>Stage 3: Reflective workshop</b>	Engage students in reflective process looking back at the 'assets' they've encountered as learning opportunities and where they have had an impact in their communities.

### Stage 1: Inception and initialisation

#### Stage 1a: Reflexive practice by staff

**Provocation:** At a coordinated programme team meeting early in the academic session, discuss and identify examples to demonstrate the following:

- Creativity is a form of disciplinary expertise that is professionally relevant as well as transferable and adaptable from the initial context in which it is developed.
- Creative programmes ensure community engagement through our students responding to briefs, themes, projects, forms of social activism and creating the 'social' underpinning for their creative practice.
- Our students make an impact after graduating from a programme in these arenas: social wellbeing, arts, society and culture, innovation (analogue and digital), education and economy, business and skills.

**Comparison:** Compare your conversations regarding the provocation statements with the evidence you have available to you regarding the impact of your students whilst they are studying on your programme and the outcomes' metrics, alumni evidence regarding their postgraduation experience.



The following structure can be used to manage the conversation:

<p><b>Key point</b></p> <p>We need to move away from descriptions and assertions about what we do and seek to do through teaching to an evidence-based response, to 'so what?' What is the reach and significance of what we do?</p>
<p><b>Discussion/links</b></p> <p>If creativity is a form of disciplinary expertise that is professionally relevant as well as transferable and adaptable from the initial context in which it is developed, what is creativity as an outcome of our programmes?</p> <p>How does this differ from 'creativity' as a metaskill as outlined in skills development contexts?</p>
<p>How do our programmes 'do' community engagement through our students responding to briefs, themes, projects, forms of social activism and creating the 'social' underpinning for their creative practice? (What role do these activities play in amplifying the porosity between creative disciplines' programmes and the cultural ecology?)</p> <p>How do students make an impact after graduating from a programme? What would our indicators of impact be?</p>
<p>What is value, and what are values, in the learning and teaching space? How can we use these to build impact statements that either mitigate or complement metrics at a subject/programme level?</p>

### Stage 1b: Reflexive practice by students

**Provocation:** During induction, discuss the following:

- Creative practice is professional practice.
- As part of this disciplinary professionalism, the design of the programme aims to support you developing in the following areas (insert programme aims or use the headlines developed by the collaborative cluster in the year 1 scoping project):
  - Prospering in uncertainty (with sub-categories relating to encouraging experimentation, citizenship, disrupting, challenging, leaving a mark to tell a story, self-fulfilment, transformation).
  - Being adaptable (viral) enough to have influence/inference in a social role and adapt their qualities across multiple sectors and registers. The ability to develop community relevance and creative excellence (attitude?) and empathy. To be questioning, bold, conscious and active agents of change.
  - Growing in critical awareness and activism.
  - Managing perseverance.
- Community engagement through responding to briefs, themes, projects, forms of social activism and creating the 'social', create opportunities to have an impact in a range of arenas, particularly: wellbeing, arts, society and culture, innovation (analogue and digital), education and economy.

**Comparison:** Compare the responses to each of these statements and identify possible connections between them.

### **Stage 2: 'Do' the project course or year (delete as appropriate)**

Once the reflective activity has been framed within the context of practice, the important thing to do is to be clear about where what the student does over the project, course, year fits within the six sectors identified so far. This again makes students aware of the broader context within which they might deliver value within the project they will be working on.

### **Stage 3: Reflective practice for students**

Facilitate a reflective workshop towards the end of the module, for example, around or as part of the final crit before assessment hand ins. Make it a group-based activity, structured using reflective activities that should:

- 1 Enable students to reflect on the value of their work within the parameters of the project, course or year that they have just about completed, and discuss what kinds of messages they are producing both directly and indirectly in their work.
- 2 Encourage students to consider the audiences that might be engaging with these messages, as well as the other communities that might be represented by those messages.
- 3 Facilitate a discussion about the values that these audiences and communities might hold dearly, and whether or not these values transcend the sector within which they have been working to one or more of the other six (exploring the porosity of sectors, breaking out of the silo).
- 4 Encourage students to consider how the methods they have employed to make their work might be utilised to engage with a different issue from a different sector.
- 5 Encourage students to reflect on what this means for their own professional development and value as a reflector, barometer, problem solver, storyteller within their community, culture and society as a whole. Really focus on what value this has and how it might be valuable across all six sectors.

## **References**

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