

This text will present the development of an artefact that aims to help the Masters student of the Graphic Branding and Identity course at LCC to develop equitable and meaningful touchpoints for their research projects.

As a research course, we encourage students to explore topics that challenge the role of branding in contemporary society and consider its potential to create positive change. This often results in the development of projects which are socially, culturally, politically, or environmentally focused. Every year, some students decide to focus on a topic that will help a group of people which they are not necessarily a part of. Though we encourage fieldwork, co-creation and testing, there is always a point of tension between the students' desire to do something meaningful, and their ability to create something that will be of value to the problem they have identified (Jackson, Haargaard, Williams, 2022). Having taught on the course for 3 years now, brand equity and authenticity is something that I have always tried to tie in when teaching students about brand experience. However, I feel that I have often failed to do this with much success.

Most of the students I teach are from overseas and though I am queer, as a white, middle-class woman, I am aware that a lot of the intersections of my identity give me great privilege. The systems of oppression I encourage students to dismantle are often of benefit to me (Tate, 2018). I realise that I hold a position of power by representing the dominant group within university, both because of my role, and because I belong to the majority of staff within UAL (UAL diversity and Inclusion report, 2020/21). I therefore have experienced a sense of discomfort which I have never been able to fully address when teaching about diversity to a diverse group of students. I am becoming increasingly aware that this feeling is futile and possibly even rooted in self-centred guilt (Richards, 2020). Rather than ignore the trouble, an alternative would be to stay with it (Haraway, 2016) by considering ways in which I can positively address this problem whilst still acknowledging the privilege of my positionality.

One aim for this task was to consider how I could involve the students in the discussion. Inspired by a Freirean pedagogy of forging with, not for, the students (Freire, 1972: 22), I could help to break down the hierarchical nature of the classroom and empower the voices of the students present in the room. I was scheduled to deliver a Touchpoint & Brand Experience session for the Final Major Project Unit, and as part of that, I decided to introduce an activity where the students and I could collectively develop a set of prompts to help them in the development of ethical, equitable and inclusive ideas. An essential aspect of this session was to facilitate an environment where all students felt they were 'welcome in the learning community' (NUS, 2011) by using co-creation and giving equal voices to every one present. Earlier in the term, the students had been introduced to equitable design principles and notions of positionality by Associate lecturer Cai Zhang, so these themes were not completely foreign to them. I was therefore able to build on this session and solidify their knowledge through further development and consideration of how it could be tangibly applied to their own work and process. When I was myself a student, I often used the oblique strategies cards designed by Peter Schmidt and Brian Eno to help me with creative block. I thought this could act as a playful format to use in this endeavour. I therefore set out with the intention to co-create an ethical and sustainable design deck that the students could use to refer to when developing touchpoints and brand-experience ideas for their

projects. The goal was to empower the students to reflect on their own practice and positionality as well as to celebrate the differences of thoughts and opinions within the class, a method which feminist writer Rouse Asis describes as a potential conveyor of unity and empowerment (1997). The final purpose of the cards themselves would be twofold:

- The first: to help creative block by generating random prompts to trigger experimentation.
- The second: to provide a tool for checking the social and environmental impact of ideas produced.

To guide the students, I decided to re-use the *Equity-Centered Community Design Field Guide* (Creative Reaction Lab, 2018) which my colleague Cai Zhang had already shared with them in the session mentioned earlier. The aim here was to give the students more confidence by building on existing knowledge. The cohort was split into groups and asked to read a chapter each, noting down anything they deemed of interest. I also encouraged them to brainstorm, as a group, any personal tips they had encountered throughout the year that they would want to share with the rest of the cohort. Their notes were written down on [this Miro](#), creating a live mapping of statements, questions, tips, and prompts. We then collectively went through all the prompts, combined similar ones, and created a non-exhaustive list of questions that can be used and re-used throughout the development of their brands.

Some questions remain in terms of the final form these prompts will take. The finality of a deck of cards may go against the mutable and adaptable nature of the exercise. I was drawn to the idea of a physical deck, because as a maker, I enjoy and appreciate the physicality of things, however, a digital and flexible output would have the added benefit of being more accessible. Indeed, this would allow for students to refer to the prompts without having to be physically present in the studio. It would also give them the opportunity to translate the prompts, use alt text, or make use of the resource alongside assistive software that best suits their needs (UAL Disability Service, 2019). I want to make sure that all content created ensures that students 'know they are valued as equal members of the learning community' (NUS, 2011). As a temporary solution, I created a wheel of fortune on Moodle (see appendix), but I would like to consider the design and functionality of this further. Ideally, I would like for this resource to be accessible to the students indefinitely as I do believe the prompts generated are useful even outside of an academic context. For similar reasons, I think there would be value in also sharing the outcome with people and designers who may not have access to higher education therefore broadening the reach of the output. As a platform, Moodle unfortunately doesn't allow for that. This is why I want to explore other methods of archiving this activity in a way that would make it accessible beyond the simple existence of the course.

Because of the time constraint of the session, I was not able to gather in depth feedback beyond asking the students how helpful they found the session at the end. A few voices answered positively but I realise this kind of feedback isn't always representative of how students really feel and doesn't 'naturally enable deep level of imaginative thought or complex recollection of events' (Hield, 2012). In the future I would like to plan my time better to give ample space for student feedback. I have observed that it is often the same voices that are heard in the classroom, and oral feedback risks alienating students who are less comfortable participating, whose voices might be marginalised or who struggle with the

English language. One way to mitigate this would be to allow students at the end of the session to give anonymous feedback on padlet. This is a technique used by our tutors on this PgCert and which I have personally found helpful. Anonymity gives greater freedom of expression and the written nature of it also enables the use of translation tools for students for whom English is not their first language. Considering more objective and creative ways of reviewing the session would therefore help me refine both the activity and the outcome. It did seem from the level of participation that the students were positively engaged in the activity and through tutorials I have had since, I know that some of them have already begun to use the resource. Though less formally, I was able to evaluate through these observations that there was benefit in sharing the responsibility (and power) of knowledge with the group; not dismissing or denying my role and position but allowing for a range of voices to be heard and valued (Lowe & Short, 1990: 8). I think it was empowering for the students and this is an exercise I would like to repeat in future years to give each cohort the opportunity to define and share what they see as ethical and sustainable design process.

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Link to blog:

<https://emloiseleur.myblog.arts.ac.uk/>

Appendix:

moodle.arts.ac.uk/mod/folder/view.php?id=995736

Google Translate My Drive - Google... Inbox - e.loiseleur... NTS | Don't Assume LCC PgCert

ual:moodle Dashboard My courses Help UAL Resources

Emilie's Brand Experience and Equity - Monday 26th June 2023

Dashboard / Courses / 22/23 Final Major Project: Practical and Report / Skill School / Emilie's Brand Experience and Equity - Monday 26th June 2023

Open course menu

Workshop - Prompt Miro

HAVE YOU GOT TEXT...
HAVE YOU CHECKED...
HAVE YOU TESTED YOUR...
HAVE YOU TRIED...
HAVE YOU BEEN...
HAVE YOU USED...
HAVE YOU...
HAVE YOU...
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HAVE YOU...
HAVE YOU...
HAVE YOU...

HAVE YOU CONSIDERED A POSITION OTHER THAN YOUR OWN?

WHILE I DECIDE

