

BSC CREATIVE TECHNOLOGIES

COURSE STRUCTURE AND GENERAL INFORMATION

Visualising course information to enhance understanding during pre-entry.

30 YEAR 1 PLACES
W900 UCAS COURSE CODE
260 UCAS POINTS

ENTRY

Introduction

As part of the SRS What Works? programme Creative Technologies (CT) identified potential issues with course identity and clarity of information available to applicants during the pre-entry process. In response, CT staff looked at infographics, visual design principles, technology and interactivity to redesign course content and information with the aim of engaging students more, helping them decide if CT is the right course for them, enhance clarity of information and course identity and make information more accessible on multiple platforms.

Infographics are visual representations of large amounts of data designed to present information quickly and clearly. They are easily shared via social media and are viewable on a range of devices. The infographic can help to centralise all course content for both online / offline usage. It helps to bring clarity to complex information. The infographic presents more information in a smaller space and facilitates layered information for applicants who wish to know more.

Students who choose to study on the correct course generally tend to feel a greater sense of belonging to both their course and university. The What Works? Project (2012) has shown the importance of effective pre-entry interventions because as noted in the report students can have insufficient information to inform pre-entry decisions impacting on students' university experience. Project 7 of What Works? reported that many students reported feeling only partially or not at all prepared, and this contributed to negative feelings relating to their study life.

50 APPLE MACS
49 WINDOWS PC
2 DESIGN STUDIOS
2 STUDENT SPACES
1 COMPOSITING STUDIO
2 MUSIC STUDIOS
2 3D PRINTING

FACILITIES

1 SEMESTER
Issues in Contemporary Culture (CRE101) 20 CREDITS
Digital Audio Production (CRE104) 10 CREDITS
Design Thinking (CRE103) 10 CREDITS
Creative Coding I (CRE115) 20 CREDITS
Module options: All compulsory

YEAR ONE

2 SEMESTER
Visual Storytelling (CRE105) 20 CREDITS
Interface Technologies & Applications (CRE113) 20 CREDITS
Introduction to 3D Design (DES124) 20 CREDITS
Creative Coding II (CRE116) 20 CREDITS
Module options: Select 3/4

Objectives

- To develop an interactive infographic that visualises course information in an engaging way that enhances understanding and clarity of the course during pre-entry.
- To help students decide if CT is the right course for them, and make course identity more clear.
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- To develop an online interactive infographic which can be viewed on multiple devices i.e. desktop, tablet, smartphone.

1 SEMESTER
Form, Perception & Cognition (CRE317) 20 CREDITS
Module options: Select 3/5

YEAR TWO

1 SEMESTER
Interactive Systems I (CRE305) 20 CREDITS
Sound Eng. & Studio Techniques (CRE303) 20 CREDITS
3D Object Design (DES307) 20 CREDITS
Web Design (CRE319) 20 CREDITS

2 SEMESTER
Interactive Systems II (CRE318) 20 CREDITS
Electroacoustic Composition & Sound Design (MUS302) 20 CREDITS
3D Object Simulation (DES312) 20 CREDITS
Mobile Development (CRE320) 20 CREDITS
Module options: Select 3/6

Methodology

Staff and students worked as partners to gather specific needs and requirements of applicants during the pre-entry process. This informed the development of a course specific project brief.

An initial student led half day focus group took place designed to gather and analyse the range of existing literature available to students in pre-entry. This included Ulster University websites, printed materials, presentations and existing graphics, as well as discussing experiences and information at open days and staff talks. Issues identified included 'not enough detail on modules or course structure'. It was felt that staff talks and open days gave a good 'flavour' of what the course entailed but lacked granular detail. It was also considered due to the nature of the CT course, more information on facilities would be beneficial.

An existing static graphic detailing the course structure was also reviewed. The primary issue with this graphic was poor display on smaller screens such as smart phone and tablets. It was primarily designed for display on desktops only. Students suggested a responsive approach would facilitate better accessibility across multiple platforms. It was felt the information graphic didn't convey the 'multidisciplinarity' of the CT course either. This is particularly important given the range of backgrounds from which students traditionally apply to the course.

The result of this focus group was a clearly defined project design brief. As part of the second phase two BDes Design students collaborated to design and implement advanced prototypes of the course infographic, specifically responding to the design brief. This included exploring typography, layout, colour, responsive web design, web technologies, infographics, testing on multiple devices and interactivity. The students also explored the possibilities and limitations of creating a modular generic template design which could be suitable for all courses.

Aesthetic Practices (CRE301) 20 CREDITS
The Moving Image (DES322) 20 CREDITS

Results

The resulting infographics were used by staff during pre-entry talks and school visits to students considering applying for university study. Feedback was gathered from 67 respondents.

72% of students agreed or strongly agreed they found the infographic more engaging than traditional sources of information ie prospectus, university websites, brochures. General comments from open questions were positive with students agreeing the infographic 'looked modern and new', and was 'simple and easy to read information'.

61% agreed / strongly agreed the infographic helped them decide if this course was right for them or not. On further examination students agreed the infographic could contain more information such as 'show more student work examples' and 'show students at work in class'.

73% felt the infographic helped make the course identity more clear. Open question responses supported the inclusion of detailed module information and the use of icons and visual imagery, reducing the 'overwhelming amount of text' normally presented.

60 CREDITS
Industrial Placement Diploma of Professional Practice (25-48 weeks) (DES309)
120 CREDITS
Arts Abroad Diploma of International Academic Study (Full Academic Year) (DES313)
Module options: Optional

YEAR THREE

1 SEMESTER
Creative Business (CRE513) 20 CREDITS
Sound Theory (CRE504) 20 CREDITS
Innovation: 3D Design (DES514) 20 CREDITS
Advanced Web Development (CRE512) 20 CREDITS

YEAR FOUR

2 SEMESTER
Interactive Systems III (CRE502) 20 CREDITS
Music & Moving Image (MUS506) 20 CREDITS
Digital Compositing (CRE514) 20 CREDITS
Innovation: Animation / Moving Image (DES515) 20 CREDITS
Module options: Select 2/4

Conclusion

Students appreciate and benefit from courses sharing information in 'contemporary' ways using modern styles that are compatible with new technology. Students have clearly stated that how information is presented has a significant impact on how they engage with it. It is important that courses empathise with students' situations during pre-entry and to consider how and when they might choose to access course information, in what context (online / offline), through which medium and which information they use to inform their choices. If students are more engaged with this information, it is more likely they will understand what the course offers and if it's right for them.

References

McCandless, David (2012). Information is Beautiful. London: Harper Collins.

Moggridge, Bill (2006). Designing Interactions. London: MIT Press.

Inanc, B., Dur, U. (2014). Data Visualization and Infographics In Visual Communication Design Education at The Age of Information. Arts and humanities. 3 (5), p39-50.

Borkin, M.A., Vo, A.A., Bylinskii, Z., Isola, P., Sunkavalli, S., Oliva, A. & Pfister, H. (2013). What Makes a Visualization Memorable? IEEE Transactions on Visualization and Computer Graphics, Proceedings of InfoVis 2013.