The 'Media Production Triangle': A practical tool for supporting students learning in applied media at degree level.

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This project has explored methods of pedagogical support for learning and teaching in applied media at HE level. This has lead to the development of a practical tool for helping undergraduates in applied media and design courses to understand the balance between practical and academic skills.

Often students enter courses of this type with expectations focused on the technical expertise they hope to develop. These skills are vital in applied media and are readily identifiable by the students when reflecting on their work (as they are often the most tangible of the abilities undergraduates on this type of course believe they need). However, successful graduates, and by extension media practitioners, require a combination of less visible, yet equally important, skills to create successful media artefacts (e.g. films, TV programs, websites, photographs, audio pieces etc).

These skills are often discussed in the context of the needs of the 'audience' and the drive for innovation and creativity. Students can however find the philosophical and academic issues relating to these areas difficult to grapple with and often seek refuge in the technical prowess they show in the making of artefacts. This can lead to technically impressive work, but at the danger of it being produced in a vacuum.

To address this issue a model has been developed in which students can identify their strengths and weaknesses in media production that is both simple to use and memorable. The model also allows students to begin to understand how various professions in the media industry operate as well as develop a sense of how the tangible (technical and 'making' skills) relate to the intangible (thinking, predicting and assessing skills) required to be successful in media production.

Students are typically asked to carry out the following in small groups in a year one mandatory module (abridged):

> • *Pick THREE professional media roles from the following list:*

Film Director	*Music Producer*
Film Editor	*Lighting Director*
Camera Operator	*Floor Manager (TV)*
Sound Engineer	*Script Writer*
Graphic Designer	*Photographer*
Web designer	*Illustrator*

> • *Under each of the three job titles list the skills you think the role would demand.*

> • *Can these be put under common headings that fit all the skills the roles require?*

The following is then explained to the whole class:

> *There is a relationship between the headings below that cover virtually all media production skills:*
>
> - *Communication (how to 'reach' and connect with an audience or user)*
> - *Technical Competence (The skill of making and using)*
> - *Creativity (innovation and imagination)*
>
> *Or you can think of it visually like this:*
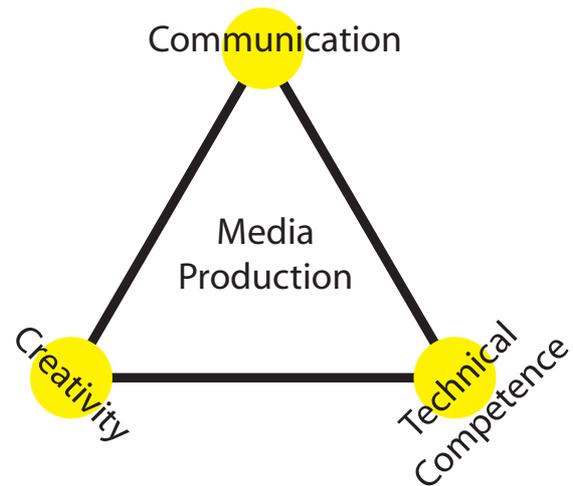
Students are then asked to put each of the three roles they have thought about somewhere within the media production triangle by marking the location with a cross. Following this they are asked to look at other's conclusions, compare and reach a consensus as a group for each role.

What is found is that there is general agreement that all professional roles reside somewhere near the centre of the triangle.

Students are then asked to place themselves where they think they currently are in the triangle. They are then asked to reflect on where they think they need to be and how they can move to this position during their studies.

This model is now also used in tutorials and research is beginning into its use during assessment.