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Citation for final published version:

Rintoul, J and James, David 2017. 'That tricky subject': the integration of contextual studies in pre-degree art and design education. *International Journal of Art and Design Education* 36 (2) , pp. 215-225. 10.1111/jade.12077

Publishers page: <http://dx.doi.org/10.1111/jade.12077>

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‘That Tricky Subject’: The Integration of Contextual Studies in pre-degree art and Design Education

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Submitted to iJADE in September 2014.

Introduction

In the UK there are around 400 courses providing a foundation stage in art and design, and some 165 of these are BTEC¹ Extended Diplomas in Art and Design (hereafter ‘EDAD’), which until September 2010 were known as the National Diploma in Art and Design. In these courses, students complete studio-based and practical elements as well as a curriculum unit that is based on art and design theories, histories and other forms of contextualisation. The EDAD is a two-year level 3 qualification pursued by students that have completed compulsory schooling. It comprises 18 curriculum units, of which five must always be present in any student’s programme (normally termed ‘compulsory units’). One of these (Unit 5) is entitled Contextual Influences in Art and Design, which we refer to here as *Contextual Studies* (CS).

Many students completing an EDAD will go on to study art and design at degree level, though it is not the only route to a degree. In contrast to the ‘A level’ and Foundation Diploma route EDAD represents a shorter, more vocationally focused route to university level study. Figure 1 illustrates the main routes in British art education, highlighting the position of the EDAD.

(Figure 1 here)

Figure 1. Main routes in UK post-compulsory Art and Design Education

At present the recommended entry requirement for the EDAD is four GCSE passes at A*-C, while the A level route requires five A*-C passes. Despite the parity in level and UCASⁱⁱ points, there is disparity in the academic backgrounds of students on these two courses and in their relative status. While a proportion of EDAD students have achieved more than 5 A*-C GCSE grades, there are others who only meet the minimum entry requirements. Consequently, the student body on EDAD programmes encompasses a wide range of abilities: some may have found very difficult the form of ‘academic’ and written subjects that are awarded status in compulsory schooling, whilst others have excelled in these subjects.

Staff and students sometimes refer to CS as the ‘theory’ part of the Art and Design course. Other terms in circulation include Critical Studies, History of Art, Research, and Visual Culture. Whilst there are important differences between them, these terms do allude to a common curricular ‘space’ which has long had a problematic position within or alongside the practice-based elements of art and design courses. The Coldstream Reports in the 1960s recommended that ‘the history of art should be studied and should be examined for the diploma...About 15 per cent of the total course should be devoted to the history of art and complementary studies’ (HMSO: 1960: 8). More recently, one observer noted ‘On the issue of what critical and historical studies should be, opinions remain divided’ (Carrol, 2002: 61). It is striking that CS is both a core and mandatory component across Art and Design courses at

compulsory, further, and higher education levels, yet differs greatly from institution to institution and from course to course in its name, identity and practice.

Despite its volume and its social and economic significance, Further Education provision has in the past been relatively under-researched in the UK (Hughes, Taylor & Tight, 1996; James & Biesta, 2007). This is especially so in the field of art and design education, where there is an established literature at primary and secondary level (e.g. Hickman, 2005; Addison et al, 2010; Herne, Cox and Watts, 2009), and an increasing body of pedagogical work on art education in HE. For example, Goldsmiths (University of London) hosts the Writing Pad network (<http://writing-pad.org>) following a project which ran from 2002 to 2006 (<http://www.writing-pad.ac.uk>), and in 2003 art staff at Lancaster University initiated the on-going Visual Intelligences Research Project (<http://www.visualintelligences.com>). The position and practice of the writing and ‘theory’ that is associated with Critical and Contextual Studies is a particular concern in HE. However, FE level education is increasingly a platform for preparing students for HE study, and there is a strong case for trying to understand how these issues ‘play out’ at this more formative stage.

The focus of this paper is on the integration of CS, and there is encouragement from Edexcelⁱⁱⁱ, the examining body, to achieve such integration. Prior to 2008, the Edexcel website made available a separate CS (Unit 5) scheme of work sample, signaling that CS is a discrete curriculum entity. In contrast, from September 2010, this was replaced by a series of sample project briefs that position Unit 5 within projects that address practical units, appearing to mark a shift to an integrated curriculum design, delivery and assessment. Correspondence with the examining body also indicated

such a shift. In an email exchange with a representative of Edexcel, it was stated that the students should be encouraged to write and analyse but that the ‘formal academic essay’ should be avoided (email response from the Edexcel ‘Ask the Expert’ service, 29/01/10). This strongly suggests that ideally CS should be positioned within and integrated with art practice, rather than located and delivered as a separate subject. The main purpose of the rest of this paper is to look closely at some examples of practice to weigh up the significance and implications of this shift.

The research process

The research underpinning this paper was a mixed-method study combining a questionnaire survey with five in-depth qualitative case-studies. The questionnaire was sent to 180 institutions in the UK delivering the EDAD, and 60 were completed and returned (a response rate of 33 per cent). This allowed a broad mapping of the field and an indication of the different ways in which a CS component was perceived. It also provided a secure basis on which to choose the five cases, enabling the detailed exploration of research questions about conceptions and experiences around the relationship between the practice-focused and theoretical/contextual elements in art education. The qualitative work included observation, interviews with students and staff, and the production of visual representations by students. Here, we have space to focus on just two of the cases, chosen because they illustrate two contrasting models in the organization and ‘delivery’ of CS. For a broader discussion across all five cases in the study, and for detail on the problem of integrating ‘theory’ and ‘practice’, see (reference/removed/for/anonymous/review).

The questionnaire asked respondents to identify the proportion of timetabled hours dedicated to Unit 5 within their programme, if any, and how this was structured in terms of curriculum design, content and delivery (such as at what point CS is taught in the course and who delivers it). At first glance, responses suggested a straightforward distinction, in that 25 per cent (15/60) showed CS being ‘integrated into practical lessons’, whilst around 53 per cent (32/60) indicated that it was ‘taught separately from practical lessons’. However, other parts of the questionnaire returns also suggested the multifaceted nature of perceptions and practices of integration and the complexity of the topic. For example, within the 32 cases of CS being ‘taught separately’, there were 19 instances of the CS staff making explicit contributions to other practice-oriented parts of the course, or of Unit 5 being assessed in other parts of the course. This left only 13 courses where CS appeared to be conceived and organized as a discrete entity.

The two cases discussed here are given the pseudonyms ‘Wrickford’ and ‘Penton’ and have been chosen because they illustrate some of the main dimensions or continua on which the conception and practice of CS appears to sit, and are therefore useful ‘extreme cases’ (Flyvbjerg, 2006). Fieldwork at each site began with an observation of a studio session and a CS lesson or, where there was no distinct CS lesson, an observation of a studio session in which students were working towards Unit 5 criteria. Observations were followed by interviews: these began with the course manager. A second round of interviews took place with the CS tutor(s). At Wrickford, there was one CS tutor to be interviewed, whilst at Penton there was a co-ordinator and other staff contributing to the CS provision.

In the final fieldwork stage, groups of six to seven students were interviewed. These were lively and informative occasions. Sometimes prompt questions generated group discussion, whilst at other times direct questions were asked and each student made a response. Two strategies were employed to minimize the possibility that individual views might be silenced by a 'group think' (Cohen et al, 2007; see also Arksey and Knight, 1999; Hayes, 2000). Firstly, periodic checks of agreement across the group were made (Laws, 2003). Secondly, there was a visual task for students in which they individually produced drawn representations of the course. Each student was asked to explain what they had drawn and why, affording an opportunity to present a more personal view on the course using a mode of expression that will have appeared to most as familiar, and even comfortable. This part of the fieldwork therefore provided opportunities to learn about both individual and collective aspects of the learning culture.

Wrickford College

Wrickford is a general Further Education college in a city in the South West of England, attracting predominantly local students. The college is divided into departments, each on a separate floor of the building, one of which is Art and Design. As well as the EDAD, Wrickford offers First Diploma, National Award, and National Certificate programmes. The college had recently introduced a Foundation Degree in art and design: prior to this, the EDAD had been the highest level qualification at this institution. Wrickford also offers Extended Diplomas (ED) in: 3D Design; Fashion and Clothing; Graphic Design; and Photography. A generic CS provision is delivered across each of these subject-specific courses.

At the time of gathering the data, there were two EDAD groups containing a total of 55 students, most of whom were expected to progress to either Higher Education or to employment as had happened with previous groups.

The organisation of CS

CS is termed both 'Art History' and 'Contextual Studies' by staff at Wrickford, and 'Art History' by students. It occupies two of the students' 15 hours of contact time per week during the first year (the remaining 13 hours are studio-based). It is designed, delivered and assessed by an art historian. Lessons present a history of art movements through the twentieth century. For example, a CS lesson was observed on Dada and Surrealism, in which a slide presentation covered a range of themes, visual material and artists associated with these movements. For the assessment of CS, students are required to write an essay and to give a presentation, both linked to the content of the lecture programme. CS is thus discrete in terms of staffing, location, assessment and identity.

However, this is not to suggest that CS at Wrickford is confined to the lecture theatre, and elements occur informally in the studio, to help students to focus in their practical project work: 'We don't have a structured specific (CS) task for them to do (in the studio); it's not related to an assessment. CS exists there to point them in the direction of doing some work, but it's not tied into the specs (course specifications)' (Course manager). There is the expectation that this kind of studio-based CS occurs consistently throughout the course: 'I think the best tutors engage the students in

discussing these things anyway, in looking at work, just opening up discussion generally on aesthetics and the purpose of design' (Course manager).

Staff perceptions

The course manager describes the discrete CS structure as a means to achieve standardization and rigour across all ED courses in formal and generic 'organised sessions'. Having a distinct CS tutor allows other staff to be relieved of what the course manager described as 'that tricky subject'. When asked what would happen to CS if there was no allocated specialist CS tutor to deliver across all programmes, his response was:

It depends on what staff you've got available. Some people just wouldn't (deliver anything). They'd probably try but they'd make an awful job of it because their knowledge isn't there. Some others might be stressed because of having to do the reading... and keep up with it (Course Manager).

The studio staff perceive there to be a body of CS knowledge that is important to impart, and this sets it apart from studio practice; while CS is seen as imperative within the course, studio staff also assume that it is difficult to teach. There is sometimes a 'dispositional' element to this view, evident in the course manager's own experience of the subject:

I didn't learn any art history while I was a student; it wasn't until I started teaching, at 25...since then it has been one of the most valuable things I've ever done. I say that to the students. Most people, you ask them later in life what has been the most important thing that has supported their own work and

their own idea about their knowledge and their skills and being an artist of a creative person, and they'll say what they've learnt about the historical and contextual aspect of it. It's very, very important to your identity and feeds back into everything you do (Course manager).

As Goodson (1995) demonstrates, not only is a subject's status determined by knowledge hierarchies and organisational structures of its historical development, but also by the dispositions of staff members who are responsible for the subject and how they view and manage their roles and positions. Staff dispositions are fundamental to the learning culture (James and Biesta, 2007; Hodkinson et al, 2007) and at Wrickford this is apparent in the separate conception of the studio and of CS. This implies that there are two distinct elements available for connection and integration, namely studio practice and lecture-theatre based CS.

Student perceptions

At Wrickford, students continually referred to their studio practice as 'work'. CS is seen as a distinct element in the course, as secondary to, sometimes superfluous to, studio practice: 'It's on its own. I see it as a separate lesson, as if it is a completely different thing to what we do (in the studio)' (First year student). Students also describe CS in the lecture theatre as 'neat', and refer to the studio as 'messy', marking studio practice and CS in the lecture theatre apart in terms of form and setting. In terms of content, CS in the lecture theatre is described as '...like background to what you're doing now; the reasons behind it, the people who have done it before, the people who are good at it' (First year student).

The structured, contained and controlled content, delivery and assessment of CS at Wrickford left little room for ambiguity that, according to students, was in abundance in the studio time:

When they (the CS tutor) asked us to do something they gave us a piece of paper which explained exactly what we had to do and I would refer back to that and so I could know what I'm doing. But (in the studio) because it's art it's so wide and you can do whatever you want, so it's like "what do I have to do? I don't have a clue!". Art history is a lot easier (than studio practice), they (CS tutors) are a lot more clear (Second year student).

In the second year of the EDAD at Wrickford there is no discrete CS provision; Unit 5 is completed in the first year. In response to being asked whether studio tutors talk about other artists or about art history in the second year, there is a shared view amongst the students that although second-year tutors do include a form of CS this is limited, narrow or uninteresting. The following was a typical view within the group: 'They (the studio staff) just go through a slide show and go "this is...Francis Bacon...then they turn around and go "is it? Wait..."' (Second year student). Students at Wrickford suggest that these second-year studio slideshows provide exposure to imagery without critical engagement. The studio staff are not described as having the same status in CS delivery as the specialist CS tutor, and they are perceived as being less knowledgeable.

Wrickford: Natural integration?

Arrangements at Wrickford generate and maintain a learning culture in which art and design practice is separate from, though connected to, art history. Both the CS tutor and the CS content are clearly distinct from the identity, language and approach of studio staff and studio practice. The strong classification and framing (Bernstein, 1971) of the CS in the lecture theatre renders this part of the course coherent and authoritative. Studio practice at Wrickford demonstrates weaker classification and framing, forming a less directed, more exploratory and openly developmental (and, consequently for some students at this level, more ‘confusing’) part of the course.

Furthermore, when the CS in the lecture theatre style of teaching is taken into the studio and is ‘integrated’ there, facilitated by studio staff, students perceive it as being of questionable quality and see it as lacking the pedagogic authority (Bourdieu and Passeron, 1994) of the lecture theatre. Thus, the arrangements at Wrickford appear to create the conditions for integration to occur, as it were, ‘naturally’, student by student, but also give rise to examples of unsuccessful ‘deliberate’ integration.

Penton College

Penton is a specialist art and design college in the South of England that attracts students from both within and beyond the local area. At the time of gathering the data, 54 students were enrolled in the first year of the course, split into two groups of 27. More than half of the previous year group, which was of a similar size, progressed to Higher Education courses (both within the institution and beyond), and the remainder went into employment or their destination route was unknown.

Penton offers further and higher level courses in the form of BTEC First Diploma, BTEC National Award, BTEC National Certificate, Foundation with AS Critical Studies, Foundation Degrees in Animation, Film, Photography, Graphic Design, Illustration, Fashion, Applied Arts, Fine Art, Design for games, and Spatial Design. All foundation degrees have a BA (Hons) top-up award. As well as the EDAD, Penton College offers an ED in 3D Design, Graphic Design, Interactive Media, Photography, and Fashion and Textiles.

The organisation of CS

CS is termed 'concepts' by staff, but the students do not use a specific term to identify this part of the course. There is no distinct CS tutor within the course at Penton. The EDAD is staffed by three tutors, including the course manager; all three teach across the entire range of Units (including elements of CS) with the shared aim of creating an integrated course. However, this arrangement is unique in the college: On all other FE and HE courses at Penton, CS is managed and delivered by a central cross-college CS team, making the EDAD an exception in its local context.

CS is thus spread across the two year course and is based in one open studio space. In the first year, students work on projects where they address Unit 5 criteria as part of studio practice, for example through research on specific artists or exploring particular theories such as colour theory in direct relation to a practical process or outcome. In the second year, in contrast, the students have some formal CS teaching in the form of studio-based seminars with a slide show, covering either a movement or a ten-year period that the students then independently research in more detail.

Assessed outcomes for CS are in the form of a CS ‘box’ containing small tasks in a portfolio collection made by each individual student.

Staff perceptions

Staff describe the course as offering an integrated provision, and see this as an important feature of art and design. At the same time, amongst members of the cross-college CS team there is a strong and shared feeling that the integrated form of CS that is practiced within the EDAD had resulted in a ‘loss (of) identity’ (cross-college CS team member) for CS. This is more than a difference of opinion, such that the interests of each staff group overlap with their advocacy of a specific model. Whilst the cross-college CS team supports discrete CS provision, the EDAD team supports an integrated CS provision. Each staff group perceives its control and approach to CS to be under threat within the college. The ED team fears that the cross-college CS team, which is part of middle management, has the power to disrupt the integrated CS that the ED team has established. Meanwhile, members of the cross-college CS team feel vulnerable after a recent redefinition of their work by senior management as ‘servicing’ (along the same lines as provision that helps students with key skills or study skills). This is felt as a denial of serious disciplinary identity. As one of the group put it:

(senior management) don’t really have an understanding that contextual, historical and critical studies is a discipline which is essential and central to all the things they (art and design students) do in order to enhance what they do
(Cross-college CS team member).

In contrast, the EDAD staff at Penton expressed the view that without their integrated model, a hierarchical curriculum design would be imposed, where certain areas of the course dominate: 'I get a feeling that 'history and contextual' is seen as having a higher status (within the college), as if it's detached and not integrated' (Tutor on EDAD team). The relative status of one course against another and conceptions of subject hierarchy have been shown to be a fundamental and abiding aspect of the culture in general (mixed) FE colleges (James and Biesta, 2007). Here, it appears as a feature of a more specialised art and design institution. ED staff consciously and deliberately act to maintain control of CS. They view discrete, academic CS, in accordance with Bernstein's (1971) collection code, as a threat to the identity and status of art and design as a vocational, practical subject field. The EDAD is to be protected or defended from an 'academic' subject positioned further up the subject hierarchy (see for example Goodson, 1998). The course manager continues to stress the embedded position of CS:

They're (course staff) all practical *and* History and Contextual...all of us can deliver History and Contextual *and* Creative, and it's mixed in with all of the units anyway. We don't deliver a creative unit without History and Contextual, and we don't deliver History and Contextual without any creative input (Course Manager).

Student perceptions

At Penton there appeared to be a major shift in student perceptions of CS between the first and the second year. First year students suggested, in the group interviews, that they did not feel that they had ownership of their learning experience; they felt

restricted in their practice and appeared confused about the course structure. Within this, 'CS' is an unidentifiable element. The integrated approach at Penton serves to conceal the subject matter of CS to the point that it is lost and dissolved within the curriculum. As one student put it: 'I'd like to know what it (CS) is, separate to my art work; as it is now, everything is getting mixed up. They're like "that is a part of History and Contextual"' and we're like "well, you didn't tell us"' (First year student).

When asked whether CS impacts upon their own practice, a first year student responded: 'Not really because everything has been done'. The question was interpreted not in terms of the student being inspired by the history and theory of art in their own practice, but in terms of the history and theory of art failing to provide anything new (particularly in terms of technique) that can be applied in practice. Despite staff efforts to encourage the integration of CS and to embed theory within the course, first year students found it impossible to articulate any clear notion of CS or 'theory', and appeared unaware of how this might interact with their own developing practice.

Interviews with second year students, however, demonstrated a clearer identity for CS, as suggested in the following conversation about the student drawing exercise:

Interviewer: You are all putting historical and contextual into a prominent position in your drawings;

Student 1: Yeh it's because I can find out about artists.

Student 2: It's inspiration

Interviewer: Do you think you'd have drawn historical and contextual in a similar way a year ago?

- Student 2: No!! (Laughs)
- Student 1: No way
- Interviewer: So what has changed?
- Student 1: My opinion of art
- Student 2: We've just kind of matured really.
- Student 3: We're more grown up
- Student 1: I used to think that what I do is right and that no-one else matters, but now I look at other people's work and I think 'wow that is so cool' and I add to my own'.
- Student 4: I think history and contextual can play quite a big part because sometimes you need to look at artists, to see what style you are going for. You get a better idea of the area (of art and design) you are looking at, what it's about...it helps you understand it better. It gives you a lot of ideas for your work that you can come back to later.

The shift in views on CS from first year to second year at Penton is a shift from confusion over how to make sense of CS within the course, to an understanding of its importance and position. But it is also a shift from an integrated CS to a discrete CS, where the arrangements in the first year were partly based on the tutors' assumptions that students would find a discrete delivery and written element too difficult:

They're meant to (take written notes for CS), we're trying to get them into the habit...but it's a bit of a, it's a bit official for them...A lot of students (on the old discrete CS programme)...felt it was 'too big' and they just couldn't catch up with it, you know, it just got too scary for them (Course Manager).

Penton: Designed Integration?

At Penton, EDAD staff and cross-college CS staff each perceive themselves to be best equipped to deliver CS provision on the EDAD. Inter-team politics are a major force in shaping the learning culture, contributing to EDAD staff keeping hold of control of CS. EDAD staff see this way of working as one that supports and nurtures the students, though it is equally plausible to describe it as a controlling idea of nurturance (Ecclestone and Hayes, 2008). In the second year at Penton, increased student autonomy, some discrete CS provision, and a less prescribed model of integration appears to afford students the opportunity to develop a closer engagement with their own practice and with the course in general.

Concepts and practices of integration

On the surface, the relatively tightly framed CS curriculum at Wrickford appears to support a particular pedagogy, or a model of teaching and learning that many have criticised on the grounds that it promotes passivity amongst learners and pays inadequate attention to constructivist concepts or the general tenets of student-centred learning. Ramsden calls this model ‘teaching as telling or transmission’ and contrasts it with both ‘teaching as organizing student activity’ and ‘teaching as making learning possible’, arguing that these three ‘theories’ are in a progressive, hierarchical arrangement (Ramsden, 2003); Heron points to an ‘initiation model’ that defines academic staff as transmitters of bodies of knowledge, arguing that ‘(a)n educational process that is so determined cannot have as its outcome a person who is truly self-

determining' (Heron, 1989: 80). By contrast, but also superficially, Penton's approach might be taken to indicate a highly student-centred approach, with the student's exploration, discovery and development given pride of place in projects that incorporate the elements of CS that they need.

However, on closer examination, these appearances are deceptive. The structured CS provision at Wrickford is not accompanied by a prescription on how knowledge and understanding of CS is to be incorporated into individual studio practice, and it can be argued that this lack of prescription is itself productive, giving students a repertoire of resources on which they might draw as they mature in their development. At Penton, whilst the curriculum appears sufficiently loosely organized to allow freedom of exploration by students, the way in which the integration of CS is conceived, and the activities designed to ensure it, are in fact highly prescriptive and controlled. The two cases seem to differ not only in how CS and its integration are conceived, but in how much prescription is deemed appropriate for a particular group of students.

Ironically, the more 'progressive' of the two examples tries to 'leave less to chance' but in doing so, removes some of the means by which students can engage in their own sense-making. There are strong overlaps here with debates about 'learning outcomes' and whether they have negative consequences (see James, 2005; Hussey & Smith, 2002, 2003).

As we have seen, the attempt to 'engineer' integration in the first year at Penton has unintended consequences. The students describe feeling confused and at times disengaged from the course and from their own practice, whereby aspects of the course are 'lost'. By contrast, at Wrickford (and also to some extent in the second

year at Penton) a different, more authentic form of integration seems evident.

Wrickford staff see integration as important, but not as something over which they have a great deal of control: this is in keeping with their shared dispositional identity as artist-practitioners-who-teach (rather than as 'art educators'). Instead of attempting to ensure that some form of integration happens via the structures of the curriculum, integration is expected to become a feature of student engagement. This is achieved by providing discrete curriculum elements that offer students building-blocks and the conditions for making their own meaningful connections. It could be argued that these arrangements provide a form of art practice/CS integration which has a close affinity with the process of art and design production itself, in that is not necessarily linear and pre-determined, but rather one that values 'not knowing' and a process of development, and which often values this as much as the production of the 'final outcome'. Furthermore, it could be that in order for a student artist to develop as a self-determined artist, they require some autonomy in integrating and experiencing CS, and that the absence of this is likely to hinder a process of developing independent and informed 'art thought' (MacLeod and Holdridge, 2005).

Whilst it is difficult to weigh up whether students are better equipped by one or the other of these courses, it is interesting to compare them in terms of progression and opportunities for progression. At Penton the majority of ED students progress to study on Foundation Degrees or BA(Hons) degree courses, predominantly within the institution itself. In contrast, whilst less than half of the student body at Wrickford progressed to Higher Education, they did so at a range of institutions, and preparation for this was a major consideration. Although this cannot be taken as evidence that one site is better than the other, it does suggest a relationship between (on the one hand)

the nature of teaching, learning and assessment and (on the other hand) the position and needs of the institution. It may also suggest that curricular and pedagogic practices at Wrickford are informed by a more outward-looking orientation.

Conclusion: Achieving integrated CS

There is a common view amongst EDAD staff in the wider study, from which the two cases in this article are drawn, that the planned integration of CS increases the accessibility of some important knowledge and understanding for students. At the same time, CS remains a ‘tricky subject’, presenting staff and students with a series of difficulties in regard to management, assessment and relationship it might have to the more practical elements of the EDAD. Across the institutions, ‘separate’ CS lessons are still prevalent, and the essay format is widely used in the assessment of CS; this can be perceived – as it is at Wrickford - as useful in preparing students for Higher Education, and useful in that it ensures that CS is clearly identified and manageable. Yet as we saw earlier, there is strong encouragement to do more to ‘integrate’ CS by making it part of each practical project, and to avoid the ‘CS essay’. Whilst this encouragement may be motivated by good intentions (and perhaps even by certain theoretical views of learning and teaching), our analysis suggests that it runs the risk of promoting the avoidance or delay of the more exciting and productive integrative moments that we would argue are characteristic of the most worthwhile art and design education. In the light of this, course teams might find it useful to reflect on the model of integration implied by their current practices, and what the implications of retaining or changing aspects of it might be. On balance, the study reported here suggests that positioning CS as embedded yet distinct can provide students with the

tools and elements to independently develop a critical, informed and independent practice.

ⁱ A BTEC (Business and Technology Education Council) is an Edexcel ‘learning brand’. For thirteen years before being owned by Edexcel in 1996, BTEC was an organisation that accredited vocational qualifications.

ⁱⁱ UCAS is the Universities and Colleges Admissions Service in the UK, for students applying to university and post-16 education. Its ‘points’ system is a scoring tariff system, which allocates points to qualifications for application to higher education.

ⁱⁱⁱ Edexcel is one of the leading examining and awarding bodies in the UK, of which there are six (AQA, City and Guilds, LCCI, OCR, Cambridge Assessment and Edexcel). Fully owned by Pearson since 2005, Edexcel was formed in 1996 through a merging of the Business and Technology Education Council (BTEC) and the University of London Examination and Assessment Council (ULEAC). Prior to 1996, BTEC was the leading provider of vocational qualifications, and ULEAC was one of the major exam boards for GCSE and A Levels qualifications. Edexcel qualifications can be taken in schools, colleges, universities or work places.

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