

# Insight Out Learning: QAA Case Study

Embed the Creative Business Models within the Art and Design Curriculum

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| <b>Institution(s):</b>             | <b>The Glasgow School of Art</b><br>Gray's School of Art, The Robert Gordon University  |
| <b>Discipline (if applicable):</b> | <b>Art and Design</b>   |
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## Abstract

Insight Out is a joint initiative between NESTA (the National Endowment for Science Technology and the Arts), the Lighthouse (Scotland's Centre for Design, Architecture and the City) and the Glasgow School of Art. It is designed specifically to help Glasgow-based creative graduates develop new businesses. The Insight Out approach explores and develops business strategies sympathetic to the mindset of the designer.

The Insight Out project was designed to have two main benefits. Firstly, it was designed to give graduates the opportunity to develop a bespoke creative business initiative, and secondly to give the Glasgow School of Art an exciting opportunity to examine and capture the learning gained from this initiative and embed it within the undergraduate curriculum. This latter aspect of the programme, using learning to inform the undergraduate curriculum, is called Insight Out Learning and was funded by the Scottish Institute for Enterprise.

Insight Out Learning is a collaborative project between The Glasgow School of Art and Gray's School of Art. This collaboration sought to combine the curriculum development experience of Libby Curtis from Gray's School of Art and the strong design and enterprise practices, facilities and research available at the Glasgow School of Art.

### Insight Out Learning

#### The Glasgow School of Art

167 Renfrew St.

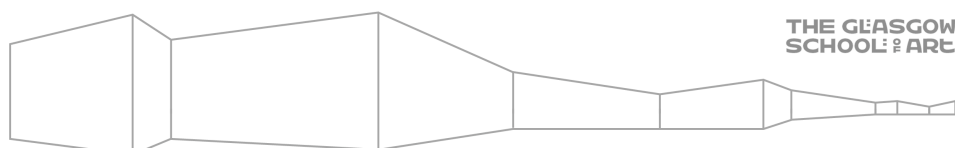
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### In what context does this initiative/project/practice take place?

Nine recent Glasgow School of Art graduates were selected to take part in Insight Out from eleven completed applications received. They participated in an intensive four-day learning academy called Insight Out Uptime, delivered at the Lighthouse (4th –9th November 2004) and facilitated by Joanna Woodford (consultant for NESTA) and Piers Roberts from Designersblock. Designersblock is a Design and Events consultancy that has developed seminars and workshops aimed at supporting design businesses, especially using models of best practice. This was followed by a four week 'virtual incubator' programme which provided coaching from accountants, lawyers, business advisors and manufacturers and concluded with the graduates presenting the business plans they had developed over this period to a panel of potential investors, including NESTA. Those deemed to be viable plans received some modest investment from the programme and were guided to other investment sources.

The Insight Out Uptime sessions above were a central aspect to the whole programme, providing an opportunity for the development team for Insight Out Learning to capture the most beneficial and relevant learning gained by the participating graduates.

Information from the two initiatives above (Insight Out Uptime and the 'virtual incubator' programme) was then used in the Insight Out Learning project to develop innovative enterprise materials which could be embedded within the curriculum for undergraduates and these were piloted in two departments at the Glasgow School of Art in the 2004/2005 Session.

### What was the rationale for introducing this initiative/project/practice?

The rationale behind the use of the business materials is to encourage the undergraduate to reflect on, and assess, their planning strategies and development needs for the future.

### How does it work in practice?

The Insight Out Learning pilots took place in two departments - Product Design Engineering and Textile Design. The pilot materials used with undergraduates are outlined below. They were selected from the most relevant models gleaned from the graduates' experience on the Insight Out Uptime programme.

### The models selected and implemented were:

- **Motives Values Model:** A tool to help students understand personal motives in everyday life, work, creative pursuits, social activities etc.
- **Future History:** A model for visualising the next 5 years and planning the steps to achieve specific goals.
- **RISKIT:** A business model, which looks at the relationships between idea, production and delivery.
- **Business Blueprinting:** A model that can help identify all the operational elements of a business.
- **Reflection:** A questionnaire, discussions and a reflective diary exercise.

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These sessions were delivered in a facilitated group environment where discussion by participants was encouraged. The sessions mainly focussed on flip chart work, which was supported by handouts. A PowerPoint presentation was developed to highlight the models and the facilitator was encouraged to expand and embellish the models by using their own experience of enterprise and industry knowledge. These sessions were delivered in half-day slots, although this was very much dependant on the undergraduates' engagement with the material and how the material was embedded into the pilot departments curriculum.

Creating professional enterprise materials, which can be embedded into the curriculum, presented some challenges. The materials had to be usable, relevant, flexible and easily translated across art and design disciplines. There was also a worry that the materials could exclude undergraduates who had no interest in starting a business by being too prescriptive and irrelevant to that cohort.

These challenges have been addressed by creating small group sessions that encourage strong group debate. The Insight Out Learning development team recognise that the sessions need to be facilitated by experienced academic staff who can demonstrate and enhance the models with experiences drawn from graduate and personal experiences.

The evaluations suggested that the students engaged with the materials more fully when they were able to relate their content/application to another's business experience. To help with this, the Insight Out Learning team also developed graduate entrepreneurial case studies and captured these in written examples and video testimony. These case studies enable the models to be put in context of 'live' creative businesses.

The initial evaluation from the students who participated in the pilots has been encouraging. Some responses are highlighted below.

**'The sessions were good at increasing my knowledge of the business.'**

**'Working out a RISKIT model concentrating on one person made it seem like a real situation, easier to get your head around and the input of different opinions was really useful because no two people think exactly the same, meaning you heard and discussed things you wouldn't maybe have considered yourself.'**

**'I felt that I gained a lot out of listening to other peoples goals and their individual ways of reaching them.'**

**'Other peoples opinions and aspirations can make you think more about your own.'**

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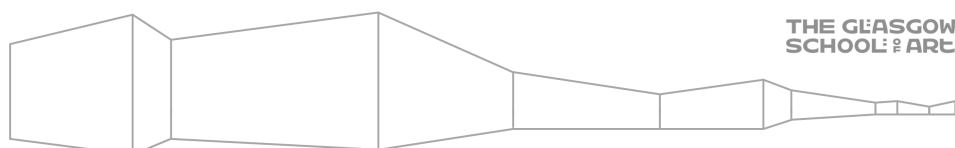
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The material has been useful in developing undergraduate understanding of business. Students have acknowledged the need to look more deeply at issues that affect the success of business ideas, for example, understanding personal motives within a working context; knowing where the business is going; applying the right production and distribution methodology and clearly identifying and structuring the operational side of any business. Insight Out Learning addresses all such critical issues and stresses the need to deal with such topics before the writing of business plans.

### **How has this initiative/project/practice helped to progress the employability agenda forward in your institution?**

The project has obvious links with the employability agenda as well as developing some of the key processes of Personal Development Planning. For example, the Values and Motives model, where the student explores his/her personal motives and values and the reflective diary/ log could be directly embedded into the personal progress file of an undergraduate. The Future History model supports the undergraduate in visualising their business/career/life plan five to ten years in the future. This activity not only challenges the undergraduate in terms of their personal plans but also requires the undergraduate to map and record all the development activity which will be required to achieve their career aim. This model develops undergraduates' self-awareness and ownership of their future.

The future of the project is to create a web-based academic teaching resource, which will feature the piloted models, and further resources, such as entrepreneurial case studies. The website will be launched for use by the Scottish sector later in the year, therefore progressing the agenda at Glasgow Schools of Art and hopefully elsewhere. The website will be an innovative and flexible site and will include video case studies and audio 'talk through' of the models which can be downloaded and used by academic staff.

### **What suggestions would you give to others hoping to introduce a similar initiative / project / practice in their own institution?**

It is important when piloting enterprise materials that academic staff members delivering the material have a good insight into developing business enterprise and industry issues. It was also helpful that the facilitators were able embellish the models with relevant examples from the experience of previous graduates and their business practices. This often allowed the models to become 'live' and achievable within the undergraduates own design practice and experience.

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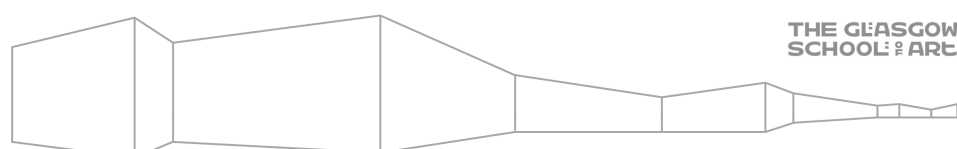
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When developing the sessions it is also helpful to pay particular attention to the current work that the undergraduates are developing and use this work as a vehicle to embed the models. A good example of this was to use the Business Blueprinting model as a tool to develop professional practice for the annual Degree Show exhibition. This was a win-win situation, as the undergraduates were exploring and using the model for a relevant and real situation which they will experience.

### Key features/strengths of this case study

- Use of graduate experience and issues to inform undergraduate curricula.
- Partnership between graduates, businesses and enterprise organisations to pool resources and develop new initiatives.
- Focus on the concerns of the specific student group and therefore ensuring a targeted and relevant response.

### Ideas for adaptation / Why not consider:

- Exploring potential partnerships with businesses and enterprise organisations e.g. the Scottish Institute for Enterprise or Scottish Enterprise in your area?
- Contacting your Higher Education Academy Subject Centre to see if they have any teaching materials on enterprise and entrepreneurship in your discipline?
- Piloting some enterprise materials in your course?

### Links

**Designersblock** - [www.designersblock.org.uk/](http://www.designersblock.org.uk/)

**Enhancement Themes** - [www.enhancementthemes.ac.uk/](http://www.enhancementthemes.ac.uk/)

**The Lighthouse** - [www.thelighthouse.co.uk/](http://www.thelighthouse.co.uk/)

**NESTA - National Endowment for Science Technology and the Arts** - [www.nesta.org.uk/](http://www.nesta.org.uk/)

**Scottish Institute for Enterprise** - [www.sie.ac.uk/](http://www.sie.ac.uk/)

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