

Student Transitions

Learning and Teaching Enhancement Project Report, June, 2015

Project Title: Designing 'Live' – A series of one-day design Charettes bringing together HWU students of different disciplines and stages

School & department: Energy, Geoscience, Infrastructure and Society

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2	<i>Key words:</i> collaboration; design charette; engagement; outreach; student transitions; transitions from college to university; transitions from university to industry
3	<i>The problem being addressed, with background and context:</i> This project seeks to ease Student Transitions, in particular at two stages: • From College to University. Particularly relevant for Interior Design and Textiles students who articulate from HND courses direct into the third year of a BA(Hons) Degree. In Interior Design this was a total of 10 students from Edinburgh College and WCS in 2014 and we seek to increase that number in 2015. At SoTD, it will be 10 students in Weave next session, followed by a further 10 year on year after that and a further 5 in Print and 5 in Fashion, starting next session – all from Glasgow Clyde. • From University to Employment, through increasing interdisciplinary knowledge, client interaction, confidence, and through showcasing student work to local employers. EGIS Learning and Teaching Strategies are concerned with optimising opportunities for cross-disciplinary and industry-related work during the courses, feeding into the key Graduate Attributes of a Heriot-Watt student. This proposal supports and develops that, building on existing initiatives, for example "Teambuild". EGIS is also trying to maximise communications and opportunities between HWU schools, which again is supported by this proposal, working with SoTD and also between disciplines within EGIS. We propose to hold a series of stand-alone one-day design events, located outside of the university campus and engaging with industry. The events will emphasise different skillsets that assist at the above transitional stages; suggested themes are Concept Development (x2); Live Build; Client Presentation. These directly address known weaknesses in articulating college students and reinforce confidence in graduating students. The themes have been developed from conversation with teaching staff and external examiner feedback. The requirement to work as cross-disciplinary teams at different stages also reinforces confidence,

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	communication and collaboration skills, presentation abilities: all essential qualities for graduating HWU students and in line with university-wide Graduate Attributes. Finally the events also act as showcases for Heriot-Watt University in terms of outreach (when working with community) and industry engagement (invited professionals to evening gallery events). These experiences are key to Student Transition into the workplace, but also act as a promotional tool for the university in the community.
4	Project overview & aims: The project founded “Designing Live”, an ongoing pedagogic vehicle for collaborative design events. So far, we have staged a series of one-day design ‘Charette’ events during Semester 2 of the 2014-15 academic year. These follow a simple pattern: The events are free to sign up for, catered and managed by HWU staff; participating students are divided into mixed groups on arrival; the main activity is an intensive day of active teamwork all on one site, finishing with a celebration in the evening alongside invited guests. AIMS 1. To introduce articulating students from partner FE institutions to their Heriot-Watt student peers prior to articulation, smoothing the transition from FE to HE. 2. To improve students’ skills in team working and interdisciplinary working, preparing them for graduation and the world of work. 3. To build students’ skills in conceptual/practical projects 4. To improve student confidence in presenting projects and to raise their profile in local industry, again smoothing transition at graduation 5. To strengthen existing pedagogic links between Heriot-Watt and partner FE institutions 6. To engage local communities and industry and press with Heriot-Watt OBJECTIVES 1. To stage either “conceptual design” charettes or practical “live project” charettes with circa 30 students (drawn from SoTD, EGIS, and FE colleges) at each event. [The themes were identified having discussed FE/HE transition students’ ‘weaknesses’ with colleagues teaching at Heriot-Watt.] 2. To increase Heriot-Watt visibility in the local community, achieving outreach and some local press coverage 3. To increase Heriot-Watt links with local design, textiles and built environment industries, inviting and engaging visitors at the evening events. 4. To feedback these innovative teaching practices into school L&T committees and disseminate experience and lessons learned into broader Heriot-Watt pedagogy.

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5 **Activities and details of project steps taken to achieve aims:**

To date, two stand-alone one-day events have been completed. A further 4-day 'live build' event is planned for 13-18th June 2015.

(These are perhaps best understood by the project videos here [\[Event no.1: HOME\]](#) and here [\[Event no.2 MAKE AN ENTRANCE\]](#). They are also documented in detail on [the project tumblr blog here](#) and with a [series of record photographs here.](#))

After a series of publicity emails and flyers were sent out to HE and FE contacts, and promoted to students, the events received notes of interest from 27 individual students. 13 of these were from Heriot-Watt University, and the remainder from 'feeder' colleges (Edinburgh College, West College Scotland, Fife College). Signups were also received from Napier College and ECA. 80% of the students were from an interior design background, 20% textiles-based.

The first event, "Designing Live: Home" was attended by 18 students, 50% of whom were current Heriot-Watt students. The challenge was to design, in teams, a student bedroom for a character invented by the team in the morning intro session by playing a game of 'consequences'. The evening 'industry event' was promoted via email and twitter, achieving great social media traction on the day, when photographs of the event 'tweeted' were picked up by major local media sources such as Creative Edinburgh. Representatives from 8 local industry employers attended the evening event, speaking directly with the students and 'judging' their work for a small prize.

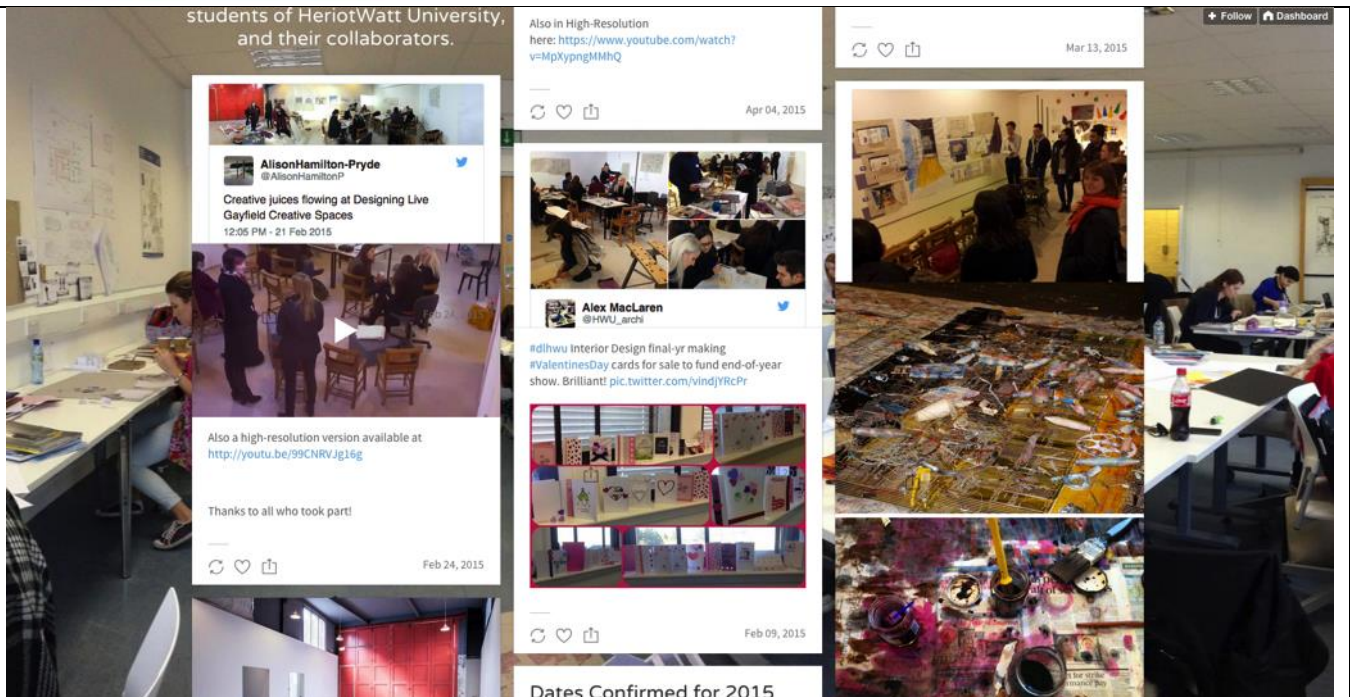
(The brief for the first session was also used with a group of 12 students from CoGC and WCS who attended Heriot-Watt University campuses for a combined visit and interview day, 20th March 2015)

The second "Designing Live: Make an Entrance" was attended by 12 students, of whom just over half had also attended the first event. The balance was again skewed towards Interior Design, only 3 students (25%) from a Textiles background. This event used a real brief and real client: proposals for the entrances to the EGIS school at Heriot-Watt, judged in the evening session by Lou Dean, social space group Leader.

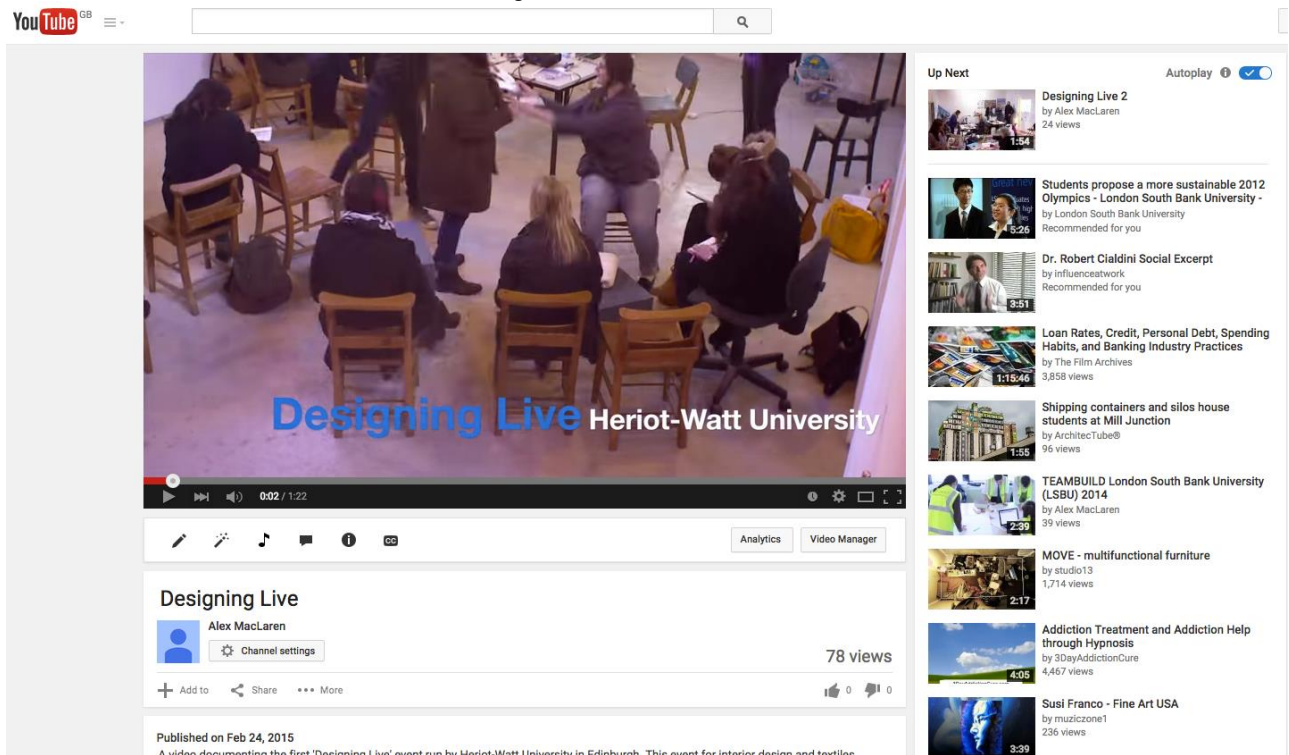
The above sessions have dealt with key themes identified by staff as transition challenges for students: Conceptual Design (event 1) and Client-Focussed Design (event 2), but also generally, improving skills in collaboration; presentation; improving confidence; allowing students and staff to meet and engage with local industry employers.

The aim for the final sessions, to be conducted jointly with Baltic Street Adventure Playground through in Glasgow, is to improve students' confidence and skills in making real change at a larger scale. The events will deliver improvements to play equipment, changing facilities and garden areas of a childrens' play park in Dalmarnock, Glasgow.

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above: screenshot from the DLHWU Tumblr blog



above: YouTube video

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6	Key points including challenges your team may have encountered: Key challenges and learning points: • Attracting busy students to an ex-curricular ungraded event over a weekend was extremely difficult. The Saturday events clashed with many students' paid jobs, but the wish to engage across so many institutions meant that a weekday was impossible. Many attending students actually arranged time off work in order to participate. <i>We are currently testing the feasibility of running an event outside of semester time with the planned 13-18th June dates: current signups (14) indicate a similar level of success to earlier events)</i> • Authoring and facilitating pedagogic content to allow 'teams' of students to very quickly form, engage and produce against a brief. The very condensed 8-hour working days are a great learning vehicle, but facilitating students to begin communication and all engage with a brief as quickly as possible, is key. The game of 'consequences' used in the first event was particularly successful at forming teams, requiring each member to contribute directly to the brief in a fun, blameless forum, and therefore assuring individual engagement and shared laughter within the first half-hour! • Student feedback indicated that most participants had got involved after direct encouragement from tutors. Staff are already overworked in most institutions, and succeeding in getting 'buy-in' from staff members at different schools and colleges will remain a challenge: especially with some expected turnover of staff next academic year. • Framing the activity as students being on 'teams' and competing for a small 'prize', was effective and instrumental in encouraging and enabling quick bonding and collaboration. The sense of belonging and shared aims, plus shared ownership of a result, was a really effective incentive. • There was a huge value in recording and broadcasting the events, using free social media platforms (YouTube, Twitter, Tumblr) and in-house media (Heriot-Watt News, EGIS public screens). This gave participating students a greater sense of value on what they had done, and allowed them to link their own social media, online CVs and job applications to the 'main' page. Several graduating students, now applying for jobs, have made much of their participation in the events in their submissions and applications.
7	Describe specific project outputs so far: Key Benefits: • 4 of the students who took part from colleges have since applied and been interviewed for direct entry to Heriot-Watt courses. Three of these have now accepted places direct into third year. • Students have included the events in their CVs when contacting industry, linking to the online content. So far the YouTube videos have clocked up 77 views. • Staff have improved contacts with college tutors and course leaders at feeder colleges, and also at peer courses at Edinburgh Napier and ECA (we made a decision to open the events up to ECA/Napier students one week prior to the events, when the level of signups was below our capacity). The events were very well-received by college tutors, who also attended parts of both events, strengthening social bonds between our courses. These staff have given us great feedback and will promote similar events next year. • The events are extremely active and photogenic, providing both schools, and Heriot-Watt university as a whole, with eye-catching content with which to attract students and employers in future. • Student feedback from the first two events indicates that identifying dates much earlier and

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	motivating college staff to actively promote and recruit volunteers will be valuable in motivating and facilitating students to attend the events. Feedback also suggested that ALL students, regardless of college or university stage, were highly motivated by the presence of industry members at the end of the day: recruiting these attendees is key to the perceived value of the events, and will remain a challenge. • A reflection: The most expensive part of the provision was the venue hire. Whilst this central Edinburgh venue increased visibility and arguably had a huge effect on the number and likelihood of industry visitors, it is this cost in particular that makes the events relatively expensive to run as a continuing concern. (Current 'cost' of these events works out at approx £60/head for participating students using numbers to date) Peer review suggested that these events might be sponsored by Industry partners in future, and this will be investigated by staff in the next year. The Interior Design course at Heriot-Watt is in its infancy, and this presents a challenge when seeking long-term sponsorship; however the current graduating cohort have demonstrated a high quality and varied output, and we hope the careful recording and promotion of these Designing Live events, and their now extant platforms in social media, will provide valuable assets in seeking industry partnerships in future.
8	Please describe how your project has contributed to the to the Heriot-Watt University strategy and priorities for Enhancement: 1. Shorter time to completion for Post-graduate Research students (PGR) 2. Improved retention and progression of undergraduate students: The project worked only with Undergraduate Students, and so did not seek to affect point 1/. Against point 2/, it is not possible to pronounce definite impact at this early stage, however: • Feedback and demonstrable action evidence that participating students placed value in these events (eg inclusion in CVs, views of the blog and YouTube videos.) • Three of the participating college students have since applied for and accepted direct-entry places to Heriot-Watt University courses starting in 2015 • Connections, (social and formal) between HWU staff and feeder college staff have been established and developed by some shared experiences and evidence of shared values • Setting up and publicising the events has increased the profile of the course within the university and outwith the university in industry: which again increases value for the student and eases transition to industry. • Students participating in the events and reflecting on their performance have noted improved confidence, and ability to work under pressure in teams. • Students and staff wish to continue these events, or similar activities, in the new year Some examples of students feedback: (hosted via SurveyMonkey) 100% of survey respondents agreed with the statement 'I enjoyed myself today'. [What did you enjoy most?] "How we were encouraged to design the space the way we wanted using a model, sketches, materials etc and also the positive vibe from lecturers and students that study at HW" (Fife College student)

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"Taking charge, and leading the team and try to sell my self to the industry professionals" (HWU student)

"Bringing the work together on the wall and adding different elements and ideas with my group."

"Meeting new people and design something together"

[How could we make it easier for you to attend the event?]

(most popular multiple-choice answer: **33% said 'get tutors from each university/college more involved'**.)

"If there were formal credits given for attending these events, then other students may be more likely to attend rather than staying away because it may cut into their time spent on coursework."

"...mainly to make myself less guilty of putting aside school project for a day."

9 **Describe how you are sharing good practice within Heriot-Watt and beyond (e.g. plans for papers, attendance at conferences):**

The project is already disseminated via platforms as explained above: ([YouTube](#), [Twitter](#), [Tumblr](#)) and in-house media ([Heriot-Watt News](#), EGIS public screens).

The project is feeding into a Seminar to be held at Heriot-Watt in August, led by this project lead, and resulting in a paper to be delivered at the iBEE conference in September (Innovation in Built Environment Education, Bath, UK: paper accepted 2 June 2015)

HERIOT WATT UNIVERSITY

a seminar: INTERDISCIPLINARY COLLABORATIVE LEARNING

Friday 7th August 2015
Heriot-Watt University Edinburgh
10.30am (reg 10.00) - 5pm

An open seminar seeking contributors and attendees from HEI Built Environment Schools across the UK.

Delegates are invited to join a group of fellow Higher Education Professionals in discussing best practice, sharing case studies, and developing the benefits of experience. The Seminar seeks to document and share existing achievements and barriers to collaborative interdisciplinary teaching.

The results of the seminar will be collated and shared with all participants and at the iBEE conference at the University of Bath in September 2015.

HERIOT WATT UNIVERSITY

a seminar: INTERDISCIPLINARY COLLABORATIVE LEARNING

Seminar dates, times and location:
Heriot-Watt University Campus, WA 3.11
William Arrol Building, Edinburgh, EH14 4AS

Friday 7th August, Start 10am for 10.30am, Close 5pm
Places are FREE and include lunch and refreshments.

If visitors wish to extend their stay in Edinburgh, the organisers are keen to arrange additional activities on Thursday relating to current collaborative activities at the university, and will suggest a venue for shared dining on Friday evening. Note it is also the Fringe Festival, so plenty of reasons to stay the weekend- though accommodation in the city centre may be scarce.

Please register your interest by emailing:
Alex MacLaren
Assistant Professor in Architectural Design
email: Alex.MacLaren@hw.ac.uk
follow: @HWU_archi

HERIOT WATT UNIVERSITY

ROYAL ACADEMY OF ENGINEERING
Centre of Excellence in Sustainable Building Design

iBEE 2015
Innovation in Built Environment Education

CHOBÉ

above: flyer for August Seminar: DL work will be presented for discussion

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10	Next steps: As above, the project has a further 4-day session still to run, 13-17th June, with Baltic Street Adventure play, a 'Live-Build' project with a real client. This project will demonstrate real impact on local children and communities, again add t participants' CVs, and reinforce student confidence. The Designing Live work will be presented at a Seminar and Conference as above, in August/September 2015 The teaching team at Heriot-Watt wish to continue this initiative next year. We will seek industry partners to achieve funding, working on the basis of the body of material we now have to publicise, promote and demonstrate the value of the events.
11	Additional information: Collection of links in main body of report above: Project Blog http://dlhwu.tumblr.com/ (NB click menu for individual event photographic record pages) Video of Event 1 https://m.youtube.com/watch?v=99CNRVJg16g Video of Event 2 https://m.youtube.com/watch?v=MpXypngMMhQ And a Heriot-Watt news piece here: http://www.hw.ac.uk/news/student/egis-makes-an-entrance.htm Staff members on twitter: https://twitter.com/HWU_archi (Alex) and https://twitter.com/AlisonHamiltonP (Alison)