

College of Arts
T&L Innovation case studies
July 2021

Lincoln School of Fine & Performing Arts

Studio culture in MA Fine Art

The MA Fine Art module 'Independent Study: Fine Art' identified the need to improve use of the studio during non-taught sessions. The programme team had begun to see a culture where (increasingly more) students only attend their formal, scheduled, taught sessions. The team wanted to improve a studio working culture, where students take advantage of the valuable resource that is the studio, outside of taught sessions and even out of hours (the studio is normally open 24hrs).

Andrew Bracey and Martin Lang were awarded a College of Arts Teaching and Learning Project fund for a project designed to address the issue. They used the fund to purchase two time-lapse cameras to make a time and motion study of studio use. Aware that the MA Fine Art students might be wary of being filmed, Bracey and lang volunteered to act as guineapigs. The two academics spent a week each working in the MA Fine Art studio, with the intention of setting an example of best practice regarding studio use. These two weeks' were later critically reviewed by the students in specially dedicated seminar sessions, where they watched the time-lapse footage. The MA Fine Art students were then recorded working in the studio in the same manner.

This project has had a huge impact on MA Fine Art pedagogy.

The first outcome of this project was a realisation of the benefits of working alongside students, in the studio. Students fed-back that they experienced a more equal relationship with staff who they were able to approach informally during each staff member's "residency". This led to bespoke demonstrations including: canvas stretching; sizing (sealing surfaces); use of specialist painting mediums; and more. Students were not only able to speak with staff about issues arising from their art practice – they also felt able to approach them about other teaching related matters: they felt that staff were more 'present' and approachable.



The second impact was that staff learnt what it is like to work as a Fine Art student at the University of Lincoln in 2021: access to facilities, technicians, storage, health and safety procedures and so on were all experienced from a student perspective.

The project was so valuable that staff decided to embed it permanently into the new MA Fine Art programme that they were re-validating at the time: this was the third area of impact. Pending revalidation, the new course will have a specialist “Studio Culture” module that will use a range of pedagogic strategies – including the atelier-style teaching described above.

This model is unusual in the United Kingdom, but it is not so uncommon in Europe. Consequently, the staff team will continue to refer to existing models to hone and fineness programme delivery in years to come. The team are considering extending the studio residency to visiting artists – potentially supporting our graduates by providing them with studio space in return for informal discussion with students and for being observed.

