



NW Network Group
Universities of Central Lancashire, Chester, Manchester, Manchester Metropolitan
and Cumbria Institute of the Arts,

**Case Studies in support of the Support for New Academic Staff (SNAS) Strand
3 project**

Linking Disciplinary Research to Teaching

Interviewee

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Interviewer

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Introduction

DB-S is new to full time teaching this year. His main role is to lead the newly validated BA(Hons) Photography which has its first cohort of students this year.

Describes three aspects to his research:

- PhD – history/critical theory derived from his MA dissertation that develops and extends his interest in critical writing about photography especially a **re-contextualisation of contemporary photographic practice** and its **relationship to abstract painting**.
- Personal practice explores the nature of photography and how it works – as a kind of **reflexive photographic practice** that questions the making and consumption (through the act of looking) of the photographic image. PhD research provides a naturally evolving theoretical framework for practice.
- Collaborative project(s) including work with a writer taking a dialogic form based on a narrative that references forensic photography and an exhibition planned with JR for later this year.

Considers that his career and his identity as an artist has been driven by research and defined by/through practice. Believes that there should be a **natural connection between research into the subject and the teaching of the subject** especially the **need to challenge and question definitions and attitudes to practice**.

He is becoming increasingly interested in collaboration within research as a means of supporting and expanding research processes. Considers research and teaching will benefit from this collaborative approach and considers **teaching as a process of student empowerment** through collaboration.

There is no timetabled research day. PhD fees are paid but not expenses. He attempts to schedule any formal (PhD) research meetings around his teaching. He is involved with Centre for Practice-Based Research and participates in seminars as a way of sharing research issues with practitioners from art, design and performing arts. He recognises the value and availability of peer support for the development of his research but finds it difficult to secure research funding locally for his projects.

Considers the institution to see itself as a teaching institution but recognises that staff are encouraged to remain research active as something that is driven by the demands of the RAE.

Photography is promoted as an arts practice through teaching with an emphasis on an analytical, reflective practitioner model. **Photography is taught as a critical practice** not a skills/technology based practice. Associated written and verbal reflective processes are also encouraged as part of the formation of a critical photographic practice – how to read the image. The curriculum in photography is essentially 50% theory and 50% practice. But in certain modules especially Combined Studies electives a stronger emphasis on technical skills is provided.

Acknowledges the problematics of encouraging the application of theory-based strategies derived from fundamental theoretical positions. Uses Level One to introduce and establish an appreciation of basic concepts and approaches. Encourages a consistent use of group seminars to promote **the development of a critical discourse** exploiting the potential offered through the range of subject areas

in Combined Studies. This critical discourse promotes the development of a capability to defend personal positions and opinions about photography.

This was exemplified by reference to:

Perspectives on Photography

Level One module

This module focuses on the capacity to read the photographic image through an understanding of the construction of narratives both in and outside the frame of the image.

Students produce a body of work with coherent thematic connections that has been investigated visually and theoretically. They are also required to produce a contextualising statement derived from their journal commentary.

A theory-practice model of photography – photography as a critical practice, drives course development.

Research is promoted as something integral to teaching.

He is currently working on his PhD on a part time basis. The essays he has produced through his doctoral research have been published in journals positioning them in the public domain.

Summary of Key Issues

- **a re-contextualisation of contemporary photographic practice and its relationship to abstract painting.**
- **reflexive photographic practice**
- **a natural connection between research into the subject and the teaching of the subject especially the need to challenge and question definitions and attitudes to practice**
- **teaching as a process of student empowerment through collaboration**
- **photography is taught as a critical practice**
- **development of a critical discourse**
- **research is promoted as something integral to teaching.**