

Resource Review

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Review:

Insight Out Learning is a free web based resource developed by Glasgow School of Art in association with Gray's School of Art at Robert Gordon University in Aberdeen, and with the financial support of the Scottish Institute for Enterprise and the National Endowment for Science, Technology and the Arts (NESTA). The resource is a tool aimed at staff of art and design undergraduate programmes, exploring business and personal development in a creative and challenging way. The programme enables students to demonstrate their understanding of the business context for their practical and creative work. The website includes guidelines for staff, an introduction to each concept, further research information and downloads which include case studies. Having asked for expert advice on the website design, I am informed that it does not meet certain industry standards; in particular from an accessibility point of view.

Although not complicated to use, it works best as a resource to download information rather than as a web tool.

The programme consists of five elements: *Motives and Values*, *Future History*, *RISKIT – Production Management*, *Business Blueprinting* and *Reflection*. *Motives and Values* explores individual characteristics and how students operate in a team. It is particularly important in terms of students developing an awareness of their strengths and weaknesses. *Future History* is key for students who often find it difficult to see beyond the end of their degree studies. This gives practical knowledge of how to set goals and plan which can be used for short term projects or long term personal aspirations. The *RISKIT* model allows students to break down the process and imagine the different stages from the initial concept to the delivery of a product. Again it demands a very practical, step by step approach which should reflect a real life scenario. *Business Blueprinting* addresses the range of activities which will make a business successful and asks the student to assess these. This is particularly important as most students' experience to date will have been focused on their creative development and design skills. The final element, *Reflection*, as it suggests is an opportunity to reflect on the learning and is critical for students to truly benefit from this programme.

The website offers a level of support for staff using the resource along with an opportunity to book a 2 day Train the Trainer course for further help and support. The guidelines section offers good support advice for delivering the programme which is broken down into; environment, reflection and material.

As a lecturer within an Art, Design & Media institution, the tool can be used in two ways: firstly, teaching staff can follow the programme as it is presented. Secondly it can be used as an inspiration, taking elements which best suit the user. As it is presented on the website, the programme does rely on staff following the programme relatively closely to gain the full benefit it offers. However, for those interested in taking elements from this and developing their own material, the case studies and research information may be of interest. Individual elements such as the Future History model can also be used to plan other projects such as degree shows, events or exhibitions. As part of any personal and professional development, the *Motives and Values* model can be utilised to allow individuals to explore their personal, social and or business values.

The approach explored in *Insight Out Learning* is highly commendable, making business and enterprise relevant to art and design students. Instead of introducing business or professional development as an add-on, this encourages a closer synergy with studio practice and learning can be embedded in studio projects. The result is an enhanced learning experience for the students who can start to understand for themselves, the relationship between their practice and the real world of business and enterprise. Using real case studies which students can easily relate to, illustrates key issues and act as a catalyst for debate.

Using the tool demands a good understanding of the programme and is best delivered by a member of staff with an understanding of creative businesses. Staff who can bring their own expertise and experience will make it easier to deliver this programme. As a tool specifically developed for teaching enterprise and business skills to Art, Design or Media students it is relatively unique. Along with other programmes developed by NESTA (*Insight Out* and *The Creative Pioneer* programme) it is inspirational and a much needed resource for Higher Education.