

# Achieving Degree-level “Learning Outcomes” in Fine Art

perspectives and commentary

Prof. Colin Cina : 10/ 2005

## A projected outcome.....

*On completion of this presentation and follow-on discussion you may be able to:*

- feel more at ease with the incorporation of generic and specific 'learning outcomes' in your Fine Art degree course documents;
- re-address the intrinsic relationship between Fine Art practice, its histories and theory - and the student's (progress to) creative attainments in such practice(s) and skills.
- perceive how course outcomes will acknowledge the subject 'benchmark' standards to be provided nationally or internationally;
- begin to recognise how you can come to **own** a 'learning outcomes'-based teaching approach without compromising the particular traditions and identity of your academy

**Providing summary ‘Learning Outcomes’ tends to be justified in terms of a need for transparent explanation to the student (the learner) of the intended experience of the syllabus and its progress: *but ‘Learning Outcomes’ are just as relevant and valuable as a guide and resource for the teaching staff.***

**They are thus a helpful means to explain the progressive experience and levels of a course, both to the students and to their artist and/or theory teachers and to the technical instructors. Ideally, they are collectively ‘owned’ and periodically revised by the entire course teaching team.**

**We should also recognise that, once formally stated, ‘Learning Outcomes’ obtain the status of quasi-contractual *entitlements*. They must derive directly from the *aims* of the course or its units and, with the aims, also serve to determine the content and criteria of student *assessment* and *progress* review.**

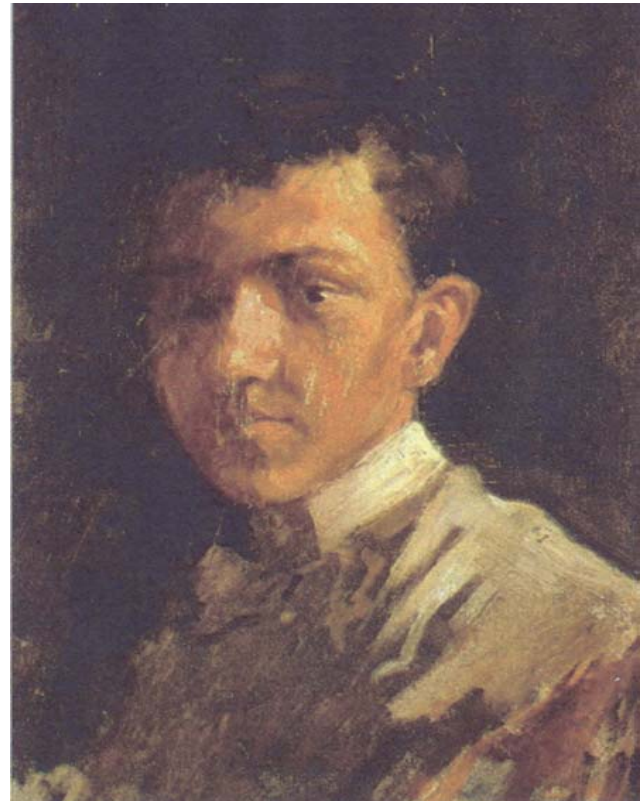
**Many UK degree courses detail learning outcomes within this kind of sequence:-**

COURSE OR UNIT TITLE  
SUMMARY INTRODUCTION AND REQUIREMENTS  
**LEARNING OUTCOMES**  
INDICATIVE CONTENT of course or unit  
EVIDENCE OF STUDY TO BE PRESENTED FOR  
ASSESSMENT  
LEARNING AND TEACHING METHODS

# FINE ART LEARNING OUTCOMES

.....not so easily a precise exercise, however

- Pablo Picasso: Self-portrait  
1896, aged 14: at the time he  
was an 'advanced student' at  
the Academy of Art, Barcelona



# Apprehensions.....

apprehension n.

1            uneasiness, dread.

2            [understanding](#).

3            arrest, capture

Does the ambition to make Europe's university-level art education 'transparent' and 'harmonious' for all of its students lead to these academic programmes becoming somewhat 'homogenised' ....I.e.; do the instruments to create *comparability* also serve to diminish 'identity'?



Is it “one way” only: or will alternative, diverse approaches also flourish?



Diversity  
Matters



## ...evidently different kinds of degree courses in Fine Art: e.g.

- ‘specialist’ Fine Art which recognises the original disciplines; i.e., painting, sculpture, printmaking, etc
- ‘specialist’ Fine Art which emphasises use of new/alternative visual media
- ‘generalist’ Fine Art
- Fine Art and Art History and Theory
- Fine Art and Critical Studies
- Fine Art and Business Studies and/or Curation
- ‘Drawing and Painting’ ...or a single honours degree in, e.g., Sculpture
- Fine Art, including Artwork Conservation
- Joint Honours in Art and Design

A Chelsea School of Art antique cast, drawing class in the early 1920s;  
.....but isn't advanced Fine Art study (these days) more often an aleatoric, self directed learning process from quite an early stage onwards?

Is it possible to be anything like as precise about the outcomes of 'studio' studies in 2005 as it was in 1925...or 1955...or 1975? Can we annually replicate levels and pace of attainment in a primarily student-centred learning environment?



Edinburgh College of Art [“ECA”] Life Drawing studio: 2004

BA Hons Degree ‘Drawing and Painting’ students



**ECA: BA Hons Drawing and Painting: session 2003/'04**







eca





*Excerpt from C Cina chapter, "TINA's Academy"  
in 'The Artist and the Academy', Southampton University Press publication: 1994*

Specialist Fine Art education which is pro-actively aware of the fluid, external conditions for art practice, has learned to operate within a responsive yet comparatively minimal organisational specification - to enable a student maximum capacity for self organised learning - given its belief that there is no longer an approved or definitive 'body of knowledge' or range of skills within which the learning trajectory can be precisely predetermined. While the teaching staff, the artist- teachers, theorists and historians may seem, for line management purposes, to be defined as a hierarchy - course leaders, principal lecturers, lecturers, visiting teachers, etc., - they function most effectively as a Matrix of facilitating, enabling, orchestrating resources to support a critique-led environment and to tangibly elucidate the plurality of art practice which, ideally, they should also represent by their own creative practice.

Within these frameworks for experience, the student will 'learn to learn' very effectively. What the bureaucratic mind might perceive to be a worriesome 'randomness' is, in fact, maximised flexibility within an organic integrated, teaching strategy.

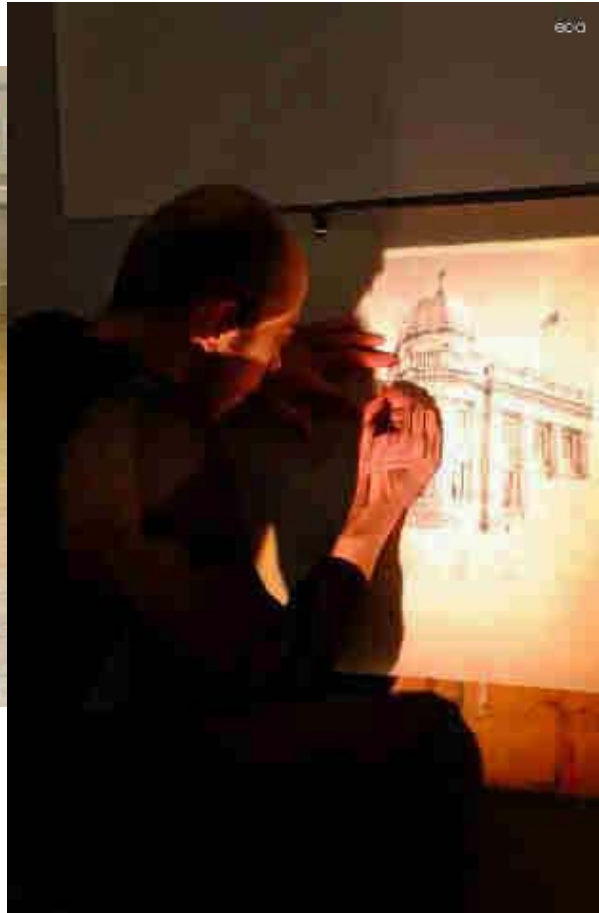


*The inherent strengths of contemporary UK (higher) art education are*

*a: availability of a broad range of resources and media to the students*

*b: the continuing respect for - and use of - the active, professional artist as teacher*

*c: an integration of practice and theory which address current art and its critiques*



## How does the UK (art and design) academic community officially define 'Art' and 'Design' ?

- "...the conception, production, promotion and dissemination of the material outcomes which constitute our visual culture.
- These encompass artefacts intended for intellectual and aesthetic contemplation to functional products, systems and services.
- The processes from conception to dissemination employ a range of predominantly visual languages to articulate concepts and ideas in two and three dimensions, while in some disciplines, the time dimension, narrative, sound and interactivity are of equal importance.
- These are combined with the exercise of creative skills, imagination, vision, and - at the highest levels of achievement - innovation."

Benedetto Croce: *Estetica*, chap. i]

*“..art is expression; and expression we may describe, for our own ends, as the putting forth of purpose, feeling, or thought into a sensuous medium, where they can be experienced again by the one who expresses himself and communicated to others.”*

This is the essence missing from the UK ‘committee’ definition. We are not just educating an emerging artist’s interpretation of ‘our visual culture’. We also nurturing and assessing the sensibility and precocity of the student artist : her or his self-expressive *desire* for art

## **The instrumental link between **Learning Outcomes** and Institutional documentation ‘requirements’ in the UK**

Source example: Norwich School of Art & Design 2004

**Fine Art : 3 years duration, Degree Course**

**Course Team’s External/internal reference points for :**

**Course Aims, Structure, Content, Assessment, Validation, Quality Assurance, etc**

national Framework for Higher Education Qualifications

national Code of Practice (Quality Monitoring and Assurance)

national ‘Benchmark’ Statement for Art & Design H. Education

**academy Mission Statement**

**academy Subject Aims and **Outcomes****

**academy Undergraduate Framework and related handbooks**

## **Examples from UK Fine Art degree courses**

**From web pages:-**

**Norwich School of Art & Design**

**London Metropolitan University**

**From internal college documents:-**

**Chelsea College of Art & Design - University of the Arts,  
London**

**Norwich School of Art & Design, UK**  
**BA HONS FINE ART**  
**Excerpt from ‘Course Aims’**

***Specifically, the course aims to:***

1. Provide students with a learning environment which supports the production of high quality independent and self-managed fine art activity;
2. Develop an understanding of concepts, discourses, methodologies and audiences in relation to contemporary fine art practice;
3. Develop an understanding of visual research, analysis and observational skills appropriate to and supporting self-motivated fine art practice;
4. Ensure students have the ability to communicate ideas and arguments through visual, written and verbal language;
5. Equip students to develop a relevant contextual framework including historical and contemporary references for their practice in a challenging environment;
6. Provide a platform from which graduates of the course can become professional and competent practitioners of fine art and related areas;
7. Provide an environment which supports and encourages high levels of problem - solving using appropriate technology and processes.

## **Norwich School of Art & Design, UK**

### **BA HONS FINE ART**

#### **Course Learning Outcomes**

##### ***(a) Subject-specific knowledge and understanding, attributes and skills:***

The course at NSAD is structured around four subject disciplines which group together the main practices associated with Fine Art : Painting, Printmaking & Photo Media, Sculpture and New Media. Whilst the four subject areas aim to develop a skills base from which students will develop a vocabulary for the expression of their creative interests, the emphasis is also on ideas and students are encouraged to relate methodology and process to content and ideas throughout.

##### ***By the end of the BA (Hons) Fine Art course, students will be able to:***

1. Negotiate and manage the interplay between studio practice and related discourses to develop individual, self-motivated paths of enquiry
2. Make inventive and informed selections and use of ideas, materials and methods in individual studio and workshop practice to articulate individual concerns
3. Demonstrate research, analytical and observational skills in order to investigate ideas through the process of studio practice
4. Demonstrate appropriate levels of visual, oral and written communication skills
5. Articulate the critical context of studio practice and be able to evaluate and respond positively to the criticism of others
6. Demonstrate an understanding of the professional skills required by fine artists to work independently
7. Demonstrate high levels of proficiency and problem-solving skills in the use of appropriate technology and processes

**Course Aims for BA Honours Fine Art (full time study; 3 years)**  
*at Chelsea College of Art and Design University of the Arts - London*

The specific aims of BA Honours Fine Art are:

- i. provide an educational experience which will equip each student with the capacity and confidence to develop and practice as professional artists;
- i. promote independent thinking and learning;
- i. establish the capacity for mature, informed, critical self-evaluation.
- i. encourage clarity and originality of visual and verbal expression, and promote independent thinking and research.
- i. develop an awareness of how the practice of the contemporary visual artist can be understood in the wider contexts of historical, critical and cultural definitions.
- i. equip students with the flexibility to respond to a diversity of employment opportunities in support of, or beyond, a commitment to Fine Art practice.



## **Chelsea : University of the Arts BA Hons Fine Art 2005 : COURSE OUTCOMES**

On completion of the course students should be able to demonstrate the ability to:

- i. make artworks which confirm possession of practical abilities, the presence of an informed critical awareness, the application of aesthetic and formal discretion, and a capability to develop innovative creative processes;
- ii. locate their work within the contexts of historical and contemporary visual art practice, and within appropriate cultural, social, and theoretical contexts;
- iii. undertake research and apply valid methods of critical analysis, enabling them to evaluate both their own work and that of others;
- iv. participate in debate and scholarship concerning the nature and production of art, questioning preconceptions and exploring alternatives;
- v. communicate effectively in visual, oral and written terms, demonstrating the possession of a range of personal skills relevant to the professional and work opportunities within Fine Art practice and its related institutions;
- vi. evidence an understanding of good studio practice, intellectual clarity, a self-disciplined approach to work, and the capacity to direct their own learning and their personal and professional development as an artist;
- vii. understand that the practical, intellectual and personal transferable skills promoted by the course can be flexibly re-applied to a wide variety of professional/career opportunities and within diverse types of employment.

The descriptions of course units or modules or projects have to conform to this approach



## TITLE: Final Project 1

### Module Aims

- enable students to develop their capabilities in the area of **independent research**
- undertake a personal investigation into a chosen aspect of Fine Art, drawing on previous experience
- develop additional skills in information gathering, organisation, time-management and communication relevant to the specific parameters of the student's programme, and its aims and anticipated outcomes
- extend creative and practical skills in the areas of making and use of relevant materials

### Learning Outcomes

*On successful completion of this module students will be able to:*

- demonstrate experience in a particular area of Fine Art and have a greater understanding of the potential value to them of working independently;
- show evidence of developed capabilities for self-managed research;
- demonstrate the ability to engage in the process of sequential development of a concept through to realisation, to a set brief, within time allocated;
- show evidence of practical, critical, analytical, creative, intellectual, methodological and communication skills necessary for future good practice in the area of professional Fine Art.

### Assessment Strategy

*The assessment criteria for this module are clearly related to the stated aims and learning outcomes with particular emphasis of the student's ability to:*

- show evidence of self initiated research resulting in a body of work which is well documented and sustained;
- demonstrate a level of technical ability;
- show evidence of originality and creative decision-making related to the project undertaken and in the context of achieving stated learning outcomes;
- make a professional presentation of all coursework required, with a clear, critical evaluation of the completed submission in respect of stated aims and learning outcomes.

**It's also necessary to ensure that there are progressive levels of 'difficulty' for the student to overcome .....**

**examples from the Chelsea Fine Art 'Practice' Units of Study: Years I II III**

### **Learning Outcomes**

*year I*

On successful completion of this unit you will be able to:

- initiate and negotiate a programme of personal studio practice;
- demonstrate a creative and exploratory approach in your chosen media;
- engage with both conceptual and formal problems;
- articulate intentions, expressive concerns and creative interests in your practice.

### **Learning Outcomes**

*year II*

On successful completion of this unit you will be able to:

- develop methods of critical analysis, argument and evaluation appropriate to your studio practice;
- evaluate the relevance of your supporting research to your studio practice;
- critically discuss and debate your work, and that of others;
- plan, take part in and discuss exhibitions.

### **Learning Outcomes**

*year III prior to Finals*

On successful completion of this unit you will be able to effectively:

- evaluate and analyse problems, conduct research, and apply methods of critical analysis;
- utilize analytical and critical thought in order to locate your own position within the context of historical and contemporary practice and specialist debate;
- present your own individual practice by relating and locating it within broader issues and aspects of contemporary practice;
- produce presentation/exhibition plans including an analysis of any technical needs.

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