

Closing the Gap between Higher Education and the UK Screen Art Industries:

Collaborating with BAFTA albert to create and embed the “Applied Skills for a Sustainable Media Industry” training module into existing UK Higher Education Film and TV programmes of learning.

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Area of Focus

In February 2019 The British Academy of Film and Television Arts (BAFTA) announced a new partnership between UK universities and albert, a collaboration to tackle the environmental impact of the screen industries.

The origins of the BAFTA albert Education Partnership began much earlier than 2019, as both the industry and the UK Higher Education Sector have had their own motivations and incentives to consider the environmental and sustainable impact of their sectors.

Context to Industry

It is widely acknowledged that since its inception in the late 19th Century, Screen-based media has developed into an important part of modern society and culture. During that time, it has evolved in form and application to become if not the largest, one of the largest cultural phenomena of global society, supported by the vast production and distribution infrastructure of the modern media industries.

As with any social and cultural development, the scope for academic study has grown in parallel. Initially academia tended to study the art and theories behind Screen-based media, but as technologies became more accessible and more financially viable, the academic learning opportunities have evolved, producing more technical and practical learning opportunities that now mirror the apprenticeships and training models of learning, traditionally employed by industry.

In context to the development of any industry is the impact that the industry has on maintaining the resources required to produce product. After the Global Energy Production and Transportation Sectors, The Industry Sector is widely recognised as being the largest contributing sector to global carbon emissions, through direct emissions, caused by the combustion of fuel for energy and transportation required to support the production process, with further direct emissions from production waste designated to landfill and water treatment.

Significant secondary emissions include burning fossil fuel for electricity, to power appliances used in the planning, production and distribution of product.

Considering the vast resource demands of the modern Film and TV industries the industry itself acknowledges

that Film and TV production has become largely unsustainable, requiring sustainability measures to support future generations:

A single hour of television production contributes on average 13.5 tonnes Co2e to the environment, an equivalent amount being the annual gas and electricity emissions from 3 average UK households.

Recognising this need for sustainability internationally, organisations, institutions and global communities have attempted to introduce standards to control emissions. These include the Paris Agreement at COP21 and the BS8909, that was adopted in 2012 by the British Film Institute.

The impact of these policies has provided potential for sustainability, but has also introduced significant change to traditional workflow, thus impacting the skillset and knowledge of industry practitioners', apprentices and persons wishing to enter the industries.

Within the UK Industry the BFI's adoption of the BS8909 standard was developed further through the work of the BAFTA albert consortium, “the leading think- tank on sustainability for film and television.

Working to raise the profile of sustainability in the industry and containing “14 of the UK's largest production companies and broadcasters,” albert now includes among others BBC, ITV, SKY, Channel 4, Channel 5, NBC Universal and Warner Bros. International and Netflix.

Since 2011 this consortium has increased its membership by 20% on a year-by-year basis and now includes a significant number of broadcast production employers and contributors to the UK media industry.

Context to Academia

Within academia the importance of sustainability has increased on par with Industry, over the past decade an increasing number of education institutions introduced sustainability targets, and values in parity with global awareness.

In 2012 over 300 universities from around the world made voluntary commitments through the Higher Education Sustainability Initiative (HESI) to

- Teach sustainable development across all disciplines of study,
- Encourage research and dissemination of sustainable development knowledge,
- Offer Green campuses and support local sustainability efforts, and
- Engage and share information with international networks.

Since the late 20th Century, on an organisational level within UK education and training sector it was the tertiary educators including Polytechnics and Technical Colleges of Further Education that predominantly focussed on the STEM subjects.

These institutions traditionally offered undergraduate and sub-degree courses validated by the Business & Technology Education Council (BTEC).

The BTEC provision was an ideal progression pathway for Industry and vocationally focussed individuals wishing to study in the Creative Industry sectors such as Film Production Media, Broadcast and Television.

Throughout the early 21st Century many non-traditional courses and learning opportunities emerged in these Further and Higher Education institutions, presenting a primary focus to raise employability skills and opportunities through education.

The Confetti Institute of Creative Technologies was one such institution who offered teaching learning and training within the Creative Technologies sector.

Over the past 25 Years Confetti's provision of teaching, learning and training, specifically within the Creative Sector has grown and developed.

Initially Confetti offered Higher Education provision for Creative Technology courses through a collaborative partnership with De Montfort University, and later from 2015 after the Confetti Media Group was purchased by NTU as an academic school run within Nottingham Trent University's academic portfolio of Higher Education courses.

Upon the purchase of the Confetti Media Group by NTU, new undergraduate Higher Education courses were validated, encompassing Nottingham Trent University's policy and strategic aims. This allowed the teaching teams to evaluate the needs of the students within the changing landscape of both academia and the Film and TV Production Industries, as well as the opportunities that were available to make new partnerships to provide and support that learning.

In February 2018 Confetti became one of the founding members of the new BAFTA albert Education Partnership aiming to provide "students, staff and graduates with the opportunity to learn about environmentally responsible working practices and their professional relevance, contributing to the transformation of the film and television industry".

Over the next 12 months the BAFTA albert Education Partnership collaborated to re-imagine the BAFTA albert Industry Certified Training Programme, to be more aligned with Higher Education, the needs of academia, and to support student's progression towards employment. This was done in part by mirroring the training that all major British Film and Television Production companies undergo to maintain standards of sustainability in production.

As well as the redeveloped training program, it was also proposed that students gain access to a vast array of Industry Tools, experience and opportunities, including "The albert Education Carbon Calculator" developed exclusively for the Education Partnership and being modelled by BAFTA on their own industry calculator.

Further to this there would be official recognition from albert consortium members through the albert Grad Certification that enhances employment and commissioning opportunities for students who are the next generation of Film and TV producers.

Approach

The primary aim of the collaboration between BAFTA albert and the Education partners was to help prepare the next generation of Film and TV Producers for employment by embedding the values and ideas of BAFTA albert into existing academic Screen Arts programmes.

Although on a subject level there were many similarities between Industry Training and academic assessment, barriers such as scale, finance, differing access to resources, time constraints and options to choose suppliers, were initially identified when considering the academic teaching and learning in context to industry operational processes.

Looking at assessment and certification also presented barriers, as what could be easily embedded in industry practice did not immediately nor perceptibly translate to traditional academic standards or language, especially considering the desire for institutions to embed the learning experience at differing levels of academia, delivery methodologies, cohort sizes and context of course learning objectives.

Considered Strategy

There were three main delivery strategies considered by the partnership to run the new BAFTA albert “Applied Skills for a Sustainable Media Industry” training module within Higher Education.

The first strategy was to deliver and assess the module as a stand-alone discrete training experience, side by side with existing learning programs for students wishing to engage.

- This follows the same delivery strategy that has been used to successfully in the past to deliver and assess industry software training to Higher Education students.
- The context is to deliver extra-curricular activities that would benefit the student, whilst furthering the impact of industry practice and education.
- This model of engagement has benefits that it can stand alone outside of the requirements of the academic standards and regulations, whilst allowing students the opportunity to “opt-in” to the experience.
- The information and values of the industry can be communicated, and learners gain recognition of achievement from the industry.

The second strategy was to embed the module into the existing curriculum, using appropriate learning and assessment opportunities that can be transparently mapped to the needs of the Industry Training module.

- This strategy requires the existing academic programme to have comparable learning outcomes that can be mapped across. Although once addressed these may be implemented at any academic level by interpreting the taxonomy of academic and industry outcome descriptors.
- This model of engagement has benefits that the training content can be integrated with existing content. Learners gain additional benefit without perceivably having to do anything more than what they signed up to do. Furthermore, through continual practise of the skills and practise over longer periods, learners will become more proficient and engaged with the tools and values throughout their development.
- With this model information and values of the industry can be communicated, and learners can gain recognition of achievement from the industry whilst at the same time gaining academic recognition.
- The disadvantages of this model are that elements of the industry training need to be translated to the traditional content that is taught in the subject area. Careful consideration must be taken to ensure all academic and industry outcomes are accurately translated into the teaching and learning experience.

The final delivery strategy considered was to develop a custom academic module to fit into the existing programme.

- This model of engagement has the benefit of meeting the needs of industry and potential for academic institutions, but does require significant lead time to validate and develop the academic learning outcomes into an extended programme as well as requiring further negotiation with academic boards to validate the module’s inclusion in the learning programme.

Intervention: What Was Done to Facilitate Strategy

In the case of introducing sustainability into the Film TV and VFX programmes at Confetti, a phased approach was chosen to assess the developing impact against input and outlay.

The first stage was to review the curriculum map. This was undertaken in 2015-16 when new academic programmes were designed and validated in line with the change from being collaborative partners with De Montfort University, to delivering Higher Education as part of Nottingham Trent University.

When validating the courses Industry Benchmarks were combined with University Graduate Attributes including strategic aims that encompassed sustainability.

The decision at Confetti was to initially embed the Industry Training Programme into the existing Film, Television and VFX curriculum areas from September 2019.

There will be a further review after 12 months to assess the scope of running additional standalone Screen Arts Sustainability Challenge Days. These could potentially benefit learners from the wider Creative Industries curriculum areas who might benefit the skills and understanding present in the albert Education Programme whilst not necessarily applying for albert Grad status.

Areas of Intervention: Mapping Learning Opportunity

Specific modules were selected that promoted the mapping to the Industry Training Module Outcomes:

- ◆ To have a general understanding of the science of climate change and its impacts
- ◆ To understand the environmental impacts of a production
- ◆ To be able to calculate a production's carbon footprint using the albert footprint calculator
- ◆ To be able to implement solutions to reduce the media's carbon footprint
- ◆ To understand the importance of engaging audiences, cast, crew and production suppliers

Considering all these outcomes these were mapped to a combination of two academic modules that contained specific Module Learning Outcomes the required the students to:

- ◆ Interpret British standards of sustainable practice in the production management of your own film production."
- ◆ Explain the application of technology and working practices of production crew on location as part of a film unit."
- ◆ Review British and International standards of sustainable practice within film production."

The evidence that would be produced to assess achievement of the Learning outcomes would be:

- ◆ Multi Choice Questions on climate change
Completed in Session to assess understanding of delivered content.
- ◆ Predicted and final footprint calculator
Completed as part of Pre-Production and Final Reflection
- ◆ List/essay of positive actions to reduce the production's footprint (include proof)
Completed as part of Final Reflection and referencing documents that were created and used in the production.
- ◆ Make a commitment to creating a greener industry in the future role you would like to hold within the industry
Completed as part of an initial film concept proposal, and a Final Personal Reflection of learning experiences undertaken throughout the production.

Areas of Intervention: Rationale

- By embedding the learning opportunity into a larger context of a film production, there was opportunity for the students to undertake research planning, development, execution, presentation and reflection of all elements - this process mirrors traditional industry expectations whilst meeting existing module and programme learning outcomes.
- The selection of modules and learning outcomes allow the subject to be divided into specific learning lenses for delivery and assessment.
 - ◆ These included on a primary level; problem solving, collaborative learning, research, communication of ideas, working as a team, social learning and self-reflection.
 - ◆ On a secondary level this included two of the three spheres of sustainability; Social and Economic with the third Environmental being tangentially addressed through research into required resources and practice
- By building a relationship with BAFTA albert the connection between the learning opportunity and real industry practice became more tangible. The relationship that albert training has with the UN Sustainable Development Goals also provide a foundation to introduce, and more importantly contextualise, the teaching and learning of more diverse social aims into the curriculum.
- By using the albert training as underpinning foundation, there was a necessity to acknowledge and explain the SDG's which underpin the training, thus exposing students to the other wider social economic values such as equality, community, education and health awareness. More importantly it helped the students realise that as film makers they can influence how the wider community see the subject of sustainability and social change through the stories that they tell and the product that they make.

Initial Outcomes

Prior to the final implementation in September 2019, the strategy was practiced allowing the opportunity to reflect on areas that needed development.

In 2016-17 the academic modules were attempted without any input from BAFTA albert training. Statistics showed that learners did not see the relevance of sustainability to film making and other than through research, they did not engage as fully with learning outcomes that mentioned sustainability as other elements such as Health and Safety or Economics.

In 2017-18 after delivery tutors had attended BAFTA albert training to help inform current industry practice, the structure of the BAFTA albert training was used as an underpinning foundation for the learning opportunities. This helped introduce and contextualise the environmental elements of sustainability into the curriculum and there was a marked improvement in attainment of sustainability focussed learning outcomes within the program.

In 2018 -19 sustainability was actively incorporated into all areas of the Film Production curriculum at Confetti and learners were made aware that the adoption of the BAFTA albert training was an underpinning foundation for their learning opportunities.

This has not only helped introduce and contextualise the wider elements of sustainability into the curriculum, showing a marked improvement in attainment of sustainability focussed learning outcomes within the program, but has also evidenced a significant rise in engagement with sustainability projects, not only in signposted modules, but in self-directed coursework including undergraduate dissertations and postgraduate projects

Challenges and Areas for Further Development

With the BAFTA albert education partnership only being formally announced in February 2019, to date there were no opportunity to formalise the recognition by industry of the student achievements.

As such the first formal albert Grads will be certified in 2019-20.

This will also be the case for students actively engaging with the BAFTA albert Education Partnership training program that will be embedded into the 2019-20 Film Curriculum. Future plans will be considered to engage the wider curriculum from 2020 through extracurricular standalone activities with other courses across the curriculum.

From September 2019 all students on Film, TV and VFX production courses at Confetti will have access to the albert Carbon Calculator providing a more visual industry relationship and illustrating more clearly how industry approaches the wider lenses of socio-economic change in media production.

This will help set standards that students will be able to work towards in their own learning and career development.

By continuing the relationship with BAFTA albert and embedding that relationship in the course, all learners who pass the Level 4 academic modules on Film TV and VFX production will achieve industry recognition of their achievements and learnt skills, thus allowing students to be more visible in the industry workplace, increasing the probability of employment and exposure within a very challenging and traditionally closed industry.

By embedding the training into the curriculum, the future aim is to provide more diverse instruction relating to the industry values of Social, Economic and Environmental factors.

The hope is to see more interaction from students of varying social-ethical and cultural backgrounds with the industry, at the same time seeing a further rise in average attainment relating to academic learning outcomes surrounding sustainability.

Within the student work, the aim is to see more diverse narratives in student films surrounding social, ethnic and cultural themes associated with sustainability and see a greater number of students from non-traditional media backgrounds entering and being recognised by the industry.

To continue networking and sharing learnt practices with related curricular media areas and levels, as well as investigating how core advantages and how the case can be related and communicated with other areas of Confetti, NTU and the National Higher Education sector.