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# ENHANCING CREATIVE INDUSTRIES EDUCATION: INTEGRATING INDUSTRY FEEDBACK PRACTICE IN AN UNDERGRADUATE CURRICULUM

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## Abstract

It is recognised that there is a shortage of skilled workers in Creative Industries. This is particularly prevalent in the visual effects, animation, and games industries, due to significant growth in the industry, heightened pressure to produce more content in less time, higher quality expectations relevant to technology advancements, and the emergence of novel technologies such as virtual production. Hence, the need to design and deliver Higher Education (HE) courses that meet the needs of the industry is imperative. In addition to technical and design thinking skills, pedagogical approaches in HE do not tend to focus on training students' interpersonal skills in a way that matches industry practices. The ability to organise work, develop a "critical eye" to self-evaluate, deliver and receive feedback effectively, and action adjustments based on feedback are critical skills which could be underpinned more effectively.

This paper explores the adoption of "Dailies" within a digital design undergraduate curriculum; an industry standard practice used to provide regular and formative feedback in a group setting. Specifically, the paper reflects on its integration across all stages of an undergraduate curriculum, with supporting data drawn from student mid-term and end-of-module evaluations. Findings reveal how the integration of the Dailies practice helps students better understand the strengths and weaknesses of their work through self-evaluation, obtain better outcomes, build resilience, and how to effectively engage in meaningful feedback dialogue with their peers and others. Furthermore, it highlights how such practice can positively impact student experience whilst also having the potential to narrow the skills gap between graduates and industry expectations.

Keywords: Higher Education, Creative Industries, Design Pedagogy, Feedback, Industry Practice

## 1 INTRODUCTION

The United Kingdom government's 2030 vision has laid out an ambitious plan to strengthen the Creative Industries sector by increasing its value by £50 billion and generating one million additional jobs [1]. However, the industry is already grappling with significant talent shortages, particularly in the Visual Effects (VFX), animation (2D and 3D), and gaming sectors [2]. In fact, the number of employers in 2021 who were unable to successfully fill vacant positions over the previous 12-month period doubled in comparison to 2019 [2]. As such, with the 2030 vision in mind, there is an urgent need for more concerted efforts to equip candidates with the requisite skills necessary to fulfil the current and future demands of the Creative Industries.

In addition to the shortage of talents who have an adequate level of technical know-how and design thinking in their respective sectors, research indicates that employers also demand professional competencies beyond a candidate's technical skills to ensure effective performance and contribution to their companies. A 2021 survey revealed that more than half of the employers surveyed required organisational skills (53%) and teamwork skills (50%) from graduate and junior-level candidates, as well as a notable emphasis on public speaking (35%), presentation and communication (28%), and resilience (28%) [3]. Finally, feedback in the context of Creative Industries is a very important component that candidates need to be able to navigate professionally. The body of research found that the ability to receive feedback from supervisors and clients, respond to or address the feedback adequately, and translate the feedback into design decisions, is set to be one of the key factors that contribute to the success of graduate and student internships in the Creative Industries [4]. In order to meet the needs of industry, pedagogic practice within Higher Education (HE) needs to incorporate and strengthen professional skills development in addition to technical expertise and design thinking methods[5]. One approach to achieving this is by drawing insights from industry practices and integrating them into the undergraduate curriculum, all while preserving and nurturing the academic rigour.

In this paper, we focus our attention on feedback as a central professional skill capable of concurrently fostering other essential professional competencies. By cultivating the ability to prepare content for feedback, receive and digest feedback from lecturers and peers, and respond effectively while articulating their thoughts in response to feedback, students have the potential to nurture a range of essential skills, including time management, resilience, communication, and presentation skills, just to mention a few. In order to achieve this in a way that is closest to industry practices, we introduce the concept of “Dailies”, a form of formative feedback that is used in the Creative Industries. Herein, we first introduce what Dailies are. We then present the process of integrating the concept of Dailies -as close to industry practices as possible- into a creative-industry-related undergraduate course. Finally, we reflect on the integration and implications of integrating Dailies as a pedagogical practice with HE, with supporting data drawn from student mid-term and end-of-module evaluations.

## **1.1 The “Dailies” as a Formative Industry Practice**

Formative feedback is a well-established pedagogical approach in HE; it refers to the information, comments or guidance provided to students based on their ongoing performance during their learning process. Considering that students in HE are rarely given the opportunity to revise and re-submit assignments [6], the primary aim of formative feedback is to help students identify their strengths and weaknesses and make necessary improvements while learning is still in progress [7]. Therefore, formative feedback tends to be constructive and does not hold a weight on students' marks [8]. By having no marking weight on formative feedback, students, can receive feedback instantly in a friendly manner, and focus on the quality of work rather than the mark itself [9].

Taking inspiration from industry practices, “Dailies” refer to a regular and systematic review process where professionals involved in a project gather to view the work completed up to that point [10]. Whilst Dailies as a practice is particularly common in the VFX, animation and film production sectors, it is also common in other Creative Industries such as games development. From its name, Dailies typically occur on a daily basis or at regular intervals during a project's production phase. In these sessions, team members, including directors, producers, editors, cinematographers, VFX artists, and other key stakeholders, gather to review the work that has been completed since the last session. Each team member presents the content they have been working on since the previous session. This can include raw footage, edited sequences, Computer-Generated Imagery (CGI), special effects, or any other relevant material.

As the work is screened, team members discuss what is working well, what needs improvement, and any changes or adjustments required. Such discussions are aimed to refine the creative process and ensure that everyone is aligned with the project's vision and objectives. Through Dailies, teams adopt an iterative and incremental approach to creative work, allowing for continuous improvement and refinement of the project. After each Dailies session, team members use the feedback acquired to make necessary changes. Furthermore, Dailies also serve as a problem-solving mechanism, helping to identify issues or challenges that arise during production, reducing the likelihood of major setbacks later in the project. Dailies can also influence key decisions related to the project's direction. Based on the feedback and discussions during these sessions, decisions may be made regarding scene re-shoots, VFX revisions, or other creative and technical adjustments. In conclusion, Dailies provide teams with an opportunity to objectively assess their work, receive constructive criticism, and make necessary improvements, all of which contribute to the success of the final project [11].

When thinking of Dailies as a pedagogical approach, Dailies can be thought of as a form of formative feedback where students receive feedback from their lecturers' on their ongoing creative work, with more guidance on what needs improvement, and any changes or adjustments to refine their creative process, and ultimately, produce better outcomes. Dailies could also serve as a problem-solving mechanism in the context of design pedagogy; students can seek their lecturers' guidance to solve technical or design-related issues with their work. In addition to the incorporation of formative feedback as a pedagogic approach, Dailies also integrates peer feedback as part of its mechanism. Peer-feedback is a pedagogic approach where students provide constructive input, and comments on their peers' work [12]. Similarly to the peer feedback approach within HE, through Dailies, students may actively participate in evaluating, providing feedback, and brainstorming for solutions to problems with their peers.

## 2 THE INTEGRATION OF DAILIES INTO PEDAGOGICAL PRACTICE

### 2.1 The Pedagogical Context

The undergraduate courses BSc Digital Design and BA Digital Arts are taught under the Division of Computing, Engineering, and Mathematical Sciences (CEMS) at the University of Kent, United Kingdom. Students undertaking these courses study a broad range of topics related to digital design, such as 3D production, film production, and interactive experiences design, such as gaming, Virtual Reality (VR), Mixed Realities (XR) and tangible media.

As the Dailies practice is more of an industry practice in the film, animation, and gaming industries, the academic team planned to integrate Dailies into the modules that are related to these industries. As a result, Dailies sessions were to be integrated into the following modules: Technical Rigging, Virtual Environment Design, 3D Production, and Digital Visual Effects & Post-Production. Table 1 describes the stage at which each module is taught, the mode of assessment, the number of projects students are expected to deliver, and the cohort size.

Table 1. Module and student cohort information

|                     | <i>Technical Rigging</i> | <i>Virtual Environment Design</i> | <i>3D Production</i> | <i>Digital Visual Effects &amp; Post-Production</i> |
|---------------------|--------------------------|-----------------------------------|----------------------|---|
| Undergraduate Stage | Year 1                   | Year 1                            | Year 2               | Year 3  |
| Mode of Assessment  | 100% Project-Based       | 100% Project-Based                | 100% Project-Based   | 100% Project-Based                                  |
| Number of Projects  | 2                        | 3                                 | 4                    | 2   |
| Cohort Size         | 38                       | 39                                | 24                   | 26  |

In efforts to mimic the same industrial practices within Dailies, the course's industrial panel was consulted. The industrial panel comprises a team of ~15 experts in related topics, working in top leading companies such as Meta (formerly known as Facebook)[13], Nintendo[14], Moving Picture Company (MPC)[15], and Industrial Light & Magic (ILM)[16]. During the consultation, the academic team discussed in depth how the Dailies are delivered in the industry, how the flow of a typical session goes, and what kind of preparation is done for new team members to embrace this practice.

Considering the aim of the Dailies integration is not to evaluate students' work, but rather to develop their ability to give and receive feedback, enhance their communication and time management skills, and get them used to such an industry practice, the academic team chose to make Dailies a formative component (i.e., does not hold a mark). Whilst attendance was compulsory due to University regulations for all contact hours, submitting work to be reviewed in Dailies was optional.

### 2.2 Integrating Dailies Into the Module Delivery

#### 2.2.1 Scheduling

Aiming to deliver an experience as authentic as possible, the Dailies sessions were integrated with the minimum number of changes to the process, structure, and goals as possible [17]. However, due to timetabling constraints, it was not feasible to deliver a Dailies session on a daily or even weekly basis. Instead, the Dailies sessions were predetermined and oriented around project deadlines. In that respect, the sessions were able to be effectively used and focused on the project students were working on at the time. Table 2 describes the number of Dailies sessions delivered, per module.

Table 2. Number of projects and Dailies sessions, per module

|                                      | <i>Technical Rigging</i> | <i>Virtual Environment Design</i> | <i>3D Production</i> | <i>Digital Visual Effects &amp; Post-Production</i> |
|--------------------------------------|--------------------------|-----------------------------------|----------------------|---|
| Number of Projects                   | 2                        | 3                                 | 4                    | 2   |
| Number of Dailies Sessions Delivered | 3                        | 5                                 | 6                    | 4   |

### 2.2.2 Dailies Setup

Taking into consideration that students were to encounter this pedagogical approach to feedback for the first time, there were a number of preparatory activities that took place in order to ensure constructive, effective and active participation in the Dailies sessions. In the timetabled event before the scheduled Dailies session, lecturers explained what Dailies is, what it is used for, and what are the benefits of engaging in Dailies sessions. Lecturers also elaborated on the nature of Dailies; being formative (i.e., holding no marks) and explaining what they expected from students (i.e., bringing their up-to-date work, pen and paper or a digital device to note down the feedback). This was further reiterated via email to prepare students who were not in attendance. When the scheduled Dailies session commenced, lecturers started by laying down the foundation of constructive feedback, to ensure the feedback shared among students is proactive and constructive. To further nail down the principles of constructive feedback, students practised by analysing and critiquing the work of past students' work as well as samples of professional work relevant to the nature of the module.

### 2.2.3 Delivery of Dailies

Students were informed about the dates and frequency of Dailies sessions within each module. Before every Dailies session, students submitted their assignment's up-to-date work-in-progress (e.g., screenshots, renders, screen recordings, etc.). During the Dailies sessions, students presented their work-in-progress to their lecturer as well as their peers through an informal dialogic approach. From that point, the lecturers encouraged feedback, guidance, and questions among the student and their peers, before providing their own feedback. Aiming to foster a collaborative and constructive environment, the lecturers deliberately maintained a casual atmosphere whilst retaining focus on the quality of feedback and discussions that arose at the time. Once a student has received their formative and peer feedback, asked any follow-up questions, and shared their next-steps plan, the lecturer would move to the next student. In order to ensure every student in attendance, had an opportunity to participate in the Dailies session, and avoid any bias, students' work was reviewed in the order of their attendance on the register. As well as this, students who did not have the chance to present their work in a previous Dailies session took priority. Finally, every student who had submitted work for the Dailies session was given fair consideration, irrespective of their level of extroversion during the time-limited session. Furthermore, to emphasise that the purpose of Dailies was to review *ongoing* work, all students were given an equal amount of attention regardless of how far they are with their progress without feeling pressured or disadvantaged when comparing their work to their peers. In cases where a student did not submit any work for discussion during a session, but was still in attendance, they were still given the opportunity to engage in discussion, provide feedback to their peers, and ask questions in regard to their own progress.

## 3 EVALUATION

Aiming to evaluate the integration of Dailies as a pedagogical practice, we draw on our experience to outline the benefits and drawbacks observed across the four undergraduate modules. We occasionally used quotes from the Mid-Term and End-of-Year student evaluations of those modules. These questionnaires are normally distributed for all modules as part of the university's practices. The questionnaires are anonymously filled out halfway through the term (i.e., Mid-Term module evaluation), and after the term has ended (i.e., End-of-Year module evaluation). Whilst these questionnaires do not ask specific questions about the Dailies, many students have mentioned the Dailies component in open-ended questions. In total, the responses from 50 students were collated from four modules, including 5 Mid-Term evaluations and 4 End-of-Year evaluations. We also compare these module evaluations with the year before, where the same module structure was maintained, minus the introduction of Dailies. Herein, we evaluate the practice, process and efficacy of integrating the Dailies industry practice into

design pedagogy and its implications on obtained professional skills and their relevance to the competencies required by Creative Industries.

### 3.1 Perceived Value of Dailies

When examining the integration of Dailies as a pedagogical practice, it was important to gauge how students perceived the Dailies sessions. Initially, we noted a level of scepticism and hesitation among students. However, as time progressed and students did more Dailies sessions, we noticed a gradual shift towards increased proactivity and confidence in preparing content for Dailies and participating in the discussions. When comparing student evaluations from the previous year (where Dailies were not introduced) to this year's evaluations (with Dailies), we observed a notable 16% increase in students' perception of the helpfulness of feedback on their work. Students further elaborated in their module evaluations on how valuable they deemed the Dailies sessions to be, commenting that the Dailies offer "*good opportunities for more chances for in-person feedback*" and "*the Dailies sessions were useful to get feedback from both the lecturers and other students*".

### 3.2 Acquired Professional Competencies

#### 3.2.1 Collaboration & Peer Support

Throughout the Mid-Term and End-of-Year evaluations, students consistently highlighted the positive impact of Dailies on their peer support relationships, commenting, "*we all help each other and learn off of that [Dailies] too*" and "*the Dailies sessions have also been helpful as I got feedback on my own work and also saw everyone else's [work] which helped me with mine*". By fostering a friendly and supportive environment within Dailies, students had the chance to learn from their peers and gain insights and perspectives that may not have been accessible through traditional pedagogical methods. These observations indicate that Dailies also played a role in cultivating a sense of community and camaraderie among students, further contributing to a supportive and inclusive learning environment. Such skills in offering feedback, listening to feedback, and learning from others, are cornerstone competencies required for working within Creative Industries [6].

#### 3.2.2 Critical Thinking

A key finding of the integration of the Dailies sessions was its contribution to the significant development of students' critical thinking skills and critical eye to point out "what does not look right", "why it does not look right", and "how to fix it". As students continuously assessed their own work and engaged in discussions with peers and lecturers, they learned to approach problems analytically and critically. Students have noticed they have acquired this skill by commenting, "*I've developed more of an artistic critical eye*". Furthermore, when comparing student evaluations from the previous year (where Dailies were not introduced) to this year's evaluations (with Dailies), we observed a 15% increase in students' perception of the opportunities the module offered to explore ideas or concepts in depth.

When students learned how to provide constructive feedback to peers, it enabled them to develop their own critical evaluation skills, enhancing their ability to assess and critique their own work. The importance of developing such skill from a pedagogic perspective has been recognised in the body of research; it is important that students are able to identify the strengths and weaknesses in their work [18] and evaluate how their work can be improved independently, without the resource constraints of waiting for lecturer involvement [19]. Such critical thinking skills are not only valuable for academic success but also in professional settings in general and Creative Industries in particular[20].

#### 3.2.3 Time Management

This has been a long-standing challenge within design pedagogy; due to the nature of projects that tend to be over a long period of time. In particular, previous research has indicated the need to find ways to help students break down complex tasks into smaller, more achievable steps, reducing procrastination and anxiety associated with looming deadlines [21]. In that respect, we found that having students submit their work-in-progress at predetermined times (i.e., in preparation for Dailies sessions) throughout the project timeline has improved students' time management skills. This was not only observed by lecturers, but also identified by the students themselves, commenting, "*I have been able to manage my time more efficiently*", "*Dailies are very helpful to keep us on track*", and "*having a goal set by the lecturer, while its not a hard deadline, has helped me immensely in staying on track*". In traditional academic settings, students often face the challenge of managing their time effectively, especially when dealing with longer-term assignments and projects. However, short-term goals, like those provided

through the facilitation of Dailies sessions, provided students with clear, manageable objectives that can be accomplished within a relatively brief period. In the context of employability, time management and organisational skills are crucial for employment, thus, it is important to incorporate approaches such as Dailies to increase students' capability to enter the job market [3].

### 3.2.4 Boosting Confidence & Resilience

As a lateral effect of the COVID-19 pandemic, students experience social anxiety and lack of confidence [22]. This challenge not only affects their HE experience, but also can have negative implications on their future careers, especially within the Creative Industries, which can be extremely competitive and requires graduates to be persistent, confident, and resilient [23]. When considering the integration of Dailies into pedagogical practice and its impact on students' confidence and resilience, the evaluation yielded mixed results. On one hand, we observed many students stepping out of their comfort zones, confidently presenting their work and engaging in discussions with their peers about their progress. Such newfound confidence not only benefits their academic pursuits but also prepares them for future career challenges. On the other hand, we also noted instances where some students exhibited their reluctance when it came to presenting their work-in-progress in front of their peers, commenting that *"the Dailies are stressful"*.

These findings were unexpected, particularly when considering that Dailies sessions were not subject to assessment, and participation in presenting work-in-progress content Dailies was encouraged but entirely optional. We speculate that this reluctance may stem from an unnecessary pressure to impress the lecturer or match the performance of peers who choose to showcase their work, leading to this unwanted stress. As such, there is a need to find a balance in this equation in a way that we are still able to capture the positives of Dailies integration into design pedagogy without causing unnecessary stress to students who are still unable to come out of their comfort zones.

## 3.3 Improved Final Outcomes

Although the aim of the Dailies was to focus more on the design process rather than the final outcome, the repetitive act of seeking feedback throughout the project period ultimately affected the students' end results positively. We found that the frequent Dailies sessions provided regular check-ins, which ensured that students could address their weaknesses as they progressed in the module and made necessary adjustments promptly, leading to improved outcomes [24]. In particular, the Dailies sessions gave students a learning environment to revise and refine their ongoing work through actively engaging in discussions on how their work could be better and extracting actionable practical steps that can be taken to enhance their final outcomes. Students have also noticed an improvement in their technical skills mentioning, *"I have seen notable improvements in the last few weeks"*.

## 4 CONCLUSIONS

This paper examined the integration of the industry-based feedback practice known as "Dailies". The Dailies practice has been implemented across four modules within the BSc Digital Design and BA Digital Arts courses under the Division of Computing, Engineering, and Mathematical Sciences (CEMS) at the University of Kent, United Kingdom. In this paper, we described the implementation and discussed the evaluation of this practice. Both the academic team and students have observed tangible benefits from integrating the Dailies practice into the design pedagogy. We also highlighted how the use of Dailies sessions as a form of formative and dialogic peer feedback can bridge the gap between industry needs and academia by enhancing students' professional skills. In particular, the integration of Dailies into design pedagogy can develop students' professional competencies, including their ability to assimilate and act upon feedback, critical thinking, time management, resilience, and self-confidence. Finally, we believe that the frequent repetition of Dailies sessions may help students, encouraging those who may still feel shy or unconfident to step up and share their work, and ultimately, promote a healthy collaborative and constructive work environment for students in HE.

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