



## Supporting Mentors for the 1<sup>st</sup> year Extended Curriculum Programme for Graphic Design students - 2015/2016 (Cape Peninsula University of Technology - CPUT)

|   |               | <b>SETTING</b>   |
|---|---------------|--|
|  | Institution   | <b>Cape Peninsula University of Technology, Cape Town</b>                |
|  | Faculty       | <b>Faculty of Informatics and Design</b>                                 |
|   | Department    | <b>Graphic Design</b>  |
|   | Degree        | <b>ECP Year of the Diploma in Graphic Design</b>                         |
|   | Level         | <b>6</b>   |
|   | Course/module | <b><i>Drawing</i></b>  |
| Pedagogical purpose of tutorials  |               | <b>- To provide ECP students with improved support through mentoring</b> |
| <p><b>Cheri Hugo</b></p> <p>ECP Drawing lecturer, and mentoring supervisor</p>    |               |  |

### 1. INTRODUCTION TO THE COURSE AND CASE

In this Extended Curriculum year of the Diploma in Graphic Design, 1<sup>st</sup> year students are expected to make the adjustment from high school to university, but also to be orientated to a design course and the design discipline. Extended Curriculum Programmes have been developed as a strategy to enable students, who do not meet the official institutional prerequisites, to complete their 1<sup>st</sup> year over an extended period, thereby allowing more time for this orientation to take place.

This case focuses on the process of supporting mentors of 1<sup>st</sup> year Extended Curriculum Graphic Design students during their Drawing course. The intervention aimed to support mentors while they supported mentees (students). The case focuses on the 2015 - June 2016 mentor cohorts.



A mentor guiding an ECP student by demonstrating a drawing technique

### **Student and mentor profile in 2015/2016**

All ECP students were assigned mentors

The majority of mentees were male and Black

100% were between 18-20 years

Mentors were a diverse group of 3<sup>rd</sup> year students (coloured and black), mostly male (11) all of whom had come through the ECP programme.

In 2015, 20 mentors were assigned to 35 ECP students; in 2016, 13 mentors were assigned to 35 students.

As a result of funding and training constraints, the mentor/student ratio dropped to 1: 13 in 2016, and ended in June 2016.

## **2. HOW MENTORING TUTORIALS FIT INTO THE ECP PROGRAMME**

ECP students engage in one subject, e.g. Drawing, from Monday to Friday from 09h00 till 15h30; within this week, they have four hours with a History of Design lecturer, and four hours with a Professional Practice lecturer.



Graphic design lecture within Drawing; this is followed by studio time to put this learning into practice

In addition, ECP students meet with mentors for two hours a week as and when it suits them. This is partly achieved through WhatsApp meetings for study and social purposes, but most mentorship takes place face to face during studio time, when both mentors and mentees work in the studio on their designs.

### **3. SUPPORTING THE MENTORS**

Most mentors are 3<sup>rd</sup> year level Graphic Design students who are paid for their work; they are not selected on the basis of academic performance, but through their volunteering. Mentors are required to attend a training program offered free of charge through Fundani Centre for Higher Education at the Cape Peninsula University of Technology (CPUT) prior to starting mentoring. Mentors are required to adhere to the departmental Memorandum of Understanding, which is explained through the mentor training process.

For most courses, the front-end mentor training programme is the sole training input: however for Graphic Design, support tutorials were initiated when the lecturer and Mentor Supervisor of Graphic Design realized: "... that mentors are not given any further support once they are mentoring, only before; it is not common in my department for mentors to have opportunities for such connection with supervising lecturers, so this was done as an additional support process and not official" (Cheri Hugo, 2015).

She therefore started holding weekly meetings and workshops once a term, "... to bring issues to the foreground and to offer some support to mentors while in the process of mentoring". Every Friday during lunch-break, mentors would meet with the mentor supervisor and report on their weekly activities with mentees; feedback would be provided by their peers and the mentor supervisor. They would follow up with a Google Form in which more detailed information about their weekly mentoring sessions and the results of these activities were detailed.

Once a term, the group would meet again to attend motivational talks to assist them: problems they faced during the term were *workshopped*, and ways to further assist ECP students were explored. One of the concerns that has been raised by mentors is that "*There is a lack of understanding how valuable the mentor support program is by other staff*".



A mentor meeting in progress led by the Mentor-Supervisor and a Student Affairs representative

#### **4. TEACHING METHODS USED IN MENTOR TUTORIALS**

During mentor tutorials, a number of teaching methods are used to identify problematic issues and to flag important practices for mentoring, such as role playing, group discussion and free writing exercises. In addition, social media platforms are used to support mentors between tutorials, which are restricted to members of the group.

##### **Mentors' observations about student preferences**

During these workshops, mentors have provided valuable insights into students' learning preferences.

*ECP students ...*

- *learn better with familiar ways of learning, e.g. demonstrating, story-telling.*
- *enjoy learning through demonstration.*
- *require additional support with regard to orientation to university, the design course and industry.*
- *find that a "locked in" time table makes it difficult to access the services available at university.*
- *find that the learning space affects their creativity.*

## 5. BENEFITS OF THESE TUTORIALS FOR MENTORS

At a certain point, the Mentor-Supervisor noted that mentors were becoming demotivated and distracted from their own studies. A workshop was scheduled to motivate and focus them on balancing their own work with their mentoring.



A motivational speaker, Dr Leon Klein, was called on to run a session with the mentors to help them stay focused on their own studies

The value of the mentor workshops are evident in the following comments from the Mentor Supervisor based on observations and discussions with mentors:

- *The tutorials provide insights as to what ECP students would prefer as learning activities, and how they best learn.*
- *It allows us to see what kind of support mentors require from the department staff, while in the process of mentoring.*
- *This sort of interaction is helpful so that the mentors do not become at risk themselves.*



End-of year evaluation workshop where mentors and mentees shared experiences, challenges and benefits of the programme; recommendations were made on improving the programme.

**This case was compiled by Cheri Hugo, Lecturer in ECP Drawing (part of Graphic Design), Department of Graphic Design Faculty of Informatics and Design at CPUT.**

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#### RELEVANT REFERENCES

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