

# Thinking Hands - Putting making and materiality at the core of Design Education



A hand is not simply part of the body, but the expression and continuation of a thought which must be captured and conveyed.  
(Honore Balzac, Le Chef d'oeuvre inconnu, in Merleau-Ponty, 1964: 18)



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Lecturer at  
CCW Foundation – 3D/Spatial and Textile  
Chelsea BA Product and Furniture Design  
Camberwell MA Design Maker

### Auto Ethnography

This ARP will also be based on my reflection and experiences as a learner and Design Student across several Universities, Countries, Cultures and Design cultures/visions.

## Positionality

### Practitioner

Woman of color from mixed cultures,  
neurodiverse, non English, educated both in  
Europe and UK with a BA in Fine Arts,  
Product design and Social design  
Working as a product designer, material  
researcher and social designer.  
Previously Art technician in a London sixth  
form school.  
I have seen the cultural different between  
French, English and Dutch Design Education  
and its relationship to making, materiality  
and technical knowledge.  
Aware of difference in term of professional  
market and opportunities, expectations and  
the value of practical technical knowledge.

### Tutor

I have always seen the learning process as a  
fluid movement between the brain and the  
hands. I acknowledge the importance of  
learning key design concepts and theories but  
also to question, learn and deconstruct ideas  
and preconceptions by using hands-on  
processes and to study materials from a trial  
error approach.

Pushing the students to use the design  
studios and/or the workshops with the same  
learning value to gain knowledge, confidence  
and independence.

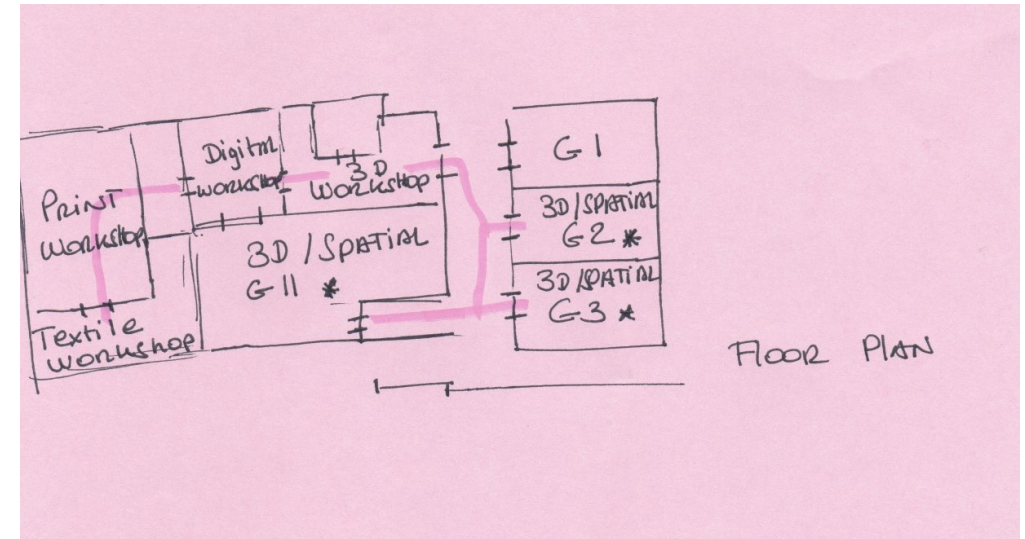
## Context

### UAL

- CCW Foundation is in the process of merging in a bigger UAL Foundation with CSM, LCF, LCC.
- In the new building, workshops will be geographically far from design studios.
- Increase of students numbers

### Nationwide

- Art and Design education national crisis
- Cost of living
- Lack of time for students to use their self directed days in workshops (many having several part time jobs)
- Lack of time for technical teaching
- Tension between Technicians/Students - Technicians/Tutors



Current CCW Foundation in Wilson Rd

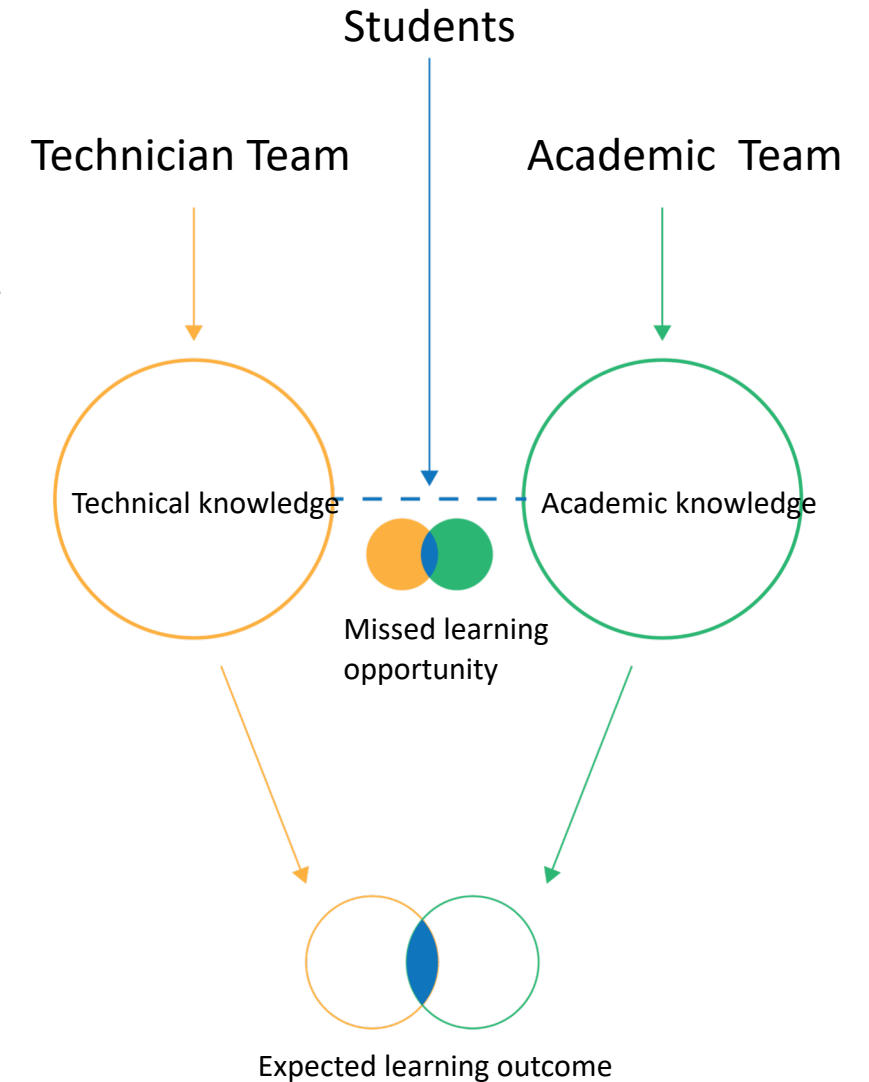
## Rationale, Problem and Questions

This ARP project is looking into the space left to **make** and **materiality** in HE and Foundation curriculum

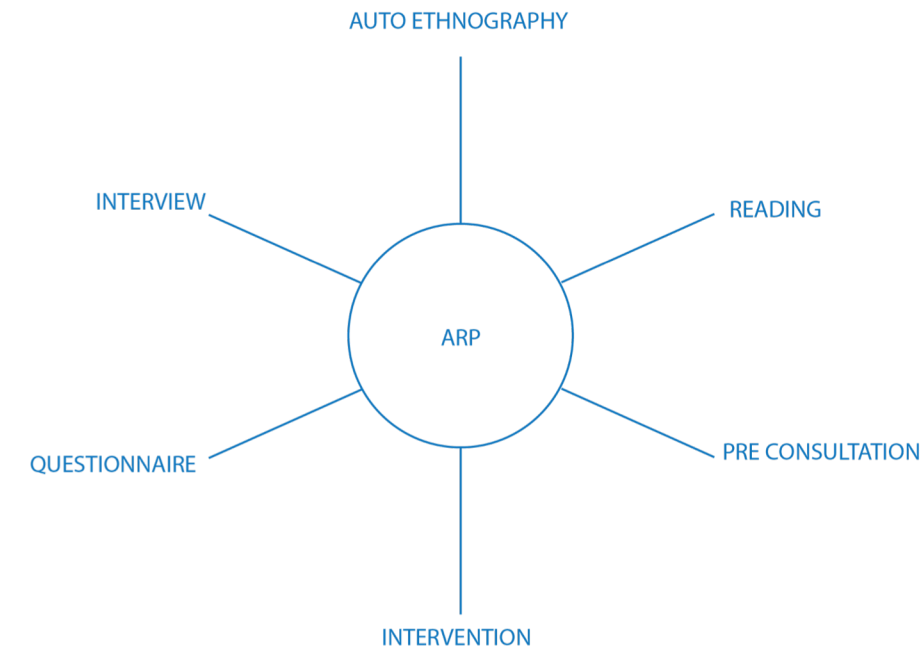
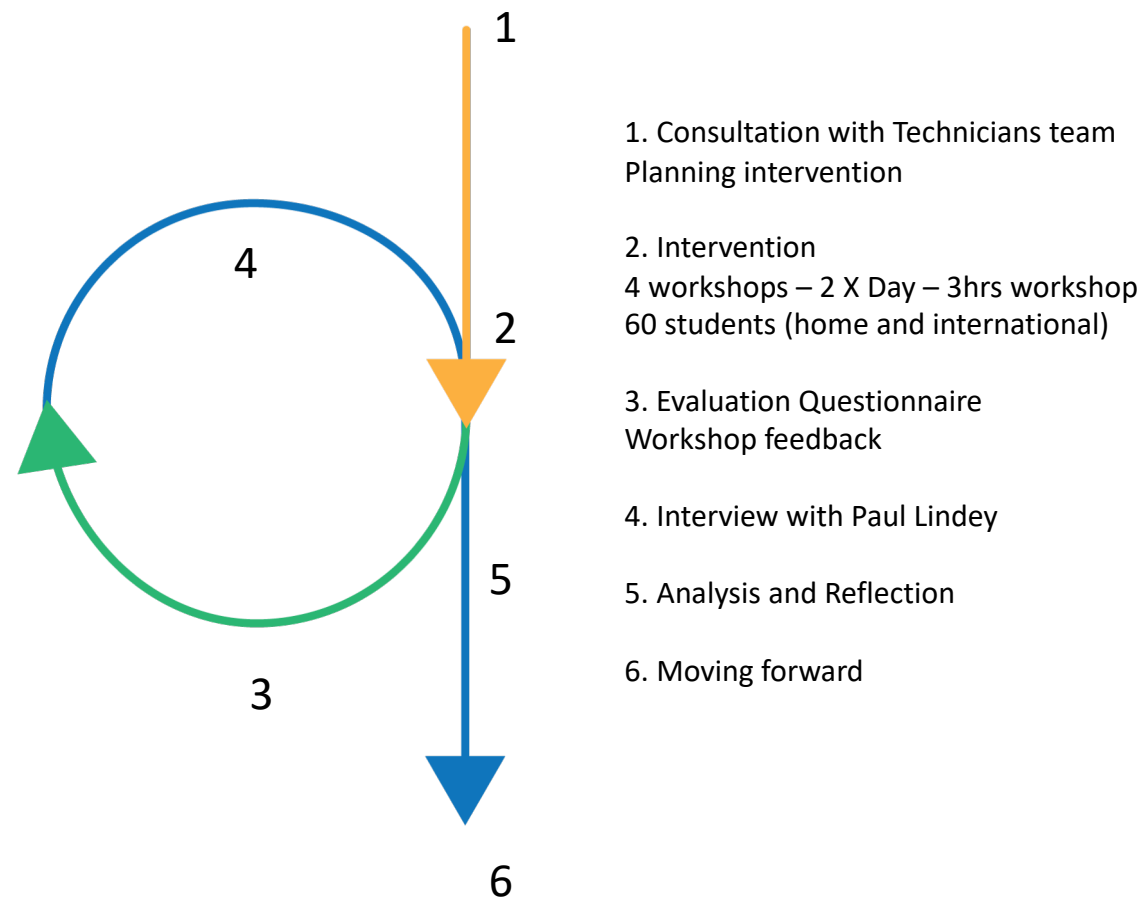
We are learning from our heads and also our hands, yet in current UK FE and HE education, hands-on learning is still associated with a soft skill, linked to the world of craft, DIY or apprenticeship career and not seen as an essential skill for future design professional practice.

It examines the relationship between a curriculum angled to “learn how to be creative” which relies heavily on idea, concept generation and CAD and less and less on investigating the world through making and materiality.

For students who grow up during the COVID pandemic and through the digitalisation of design practices, how could we encourage students to learn how to make things and think with their hands? How could it be better integrated into design education?



Research map



## Intervention

- 4 X 3 hrs workshops split between the digital workshop and G2 Design Studio
- 15 students per workshop – 60 Students total

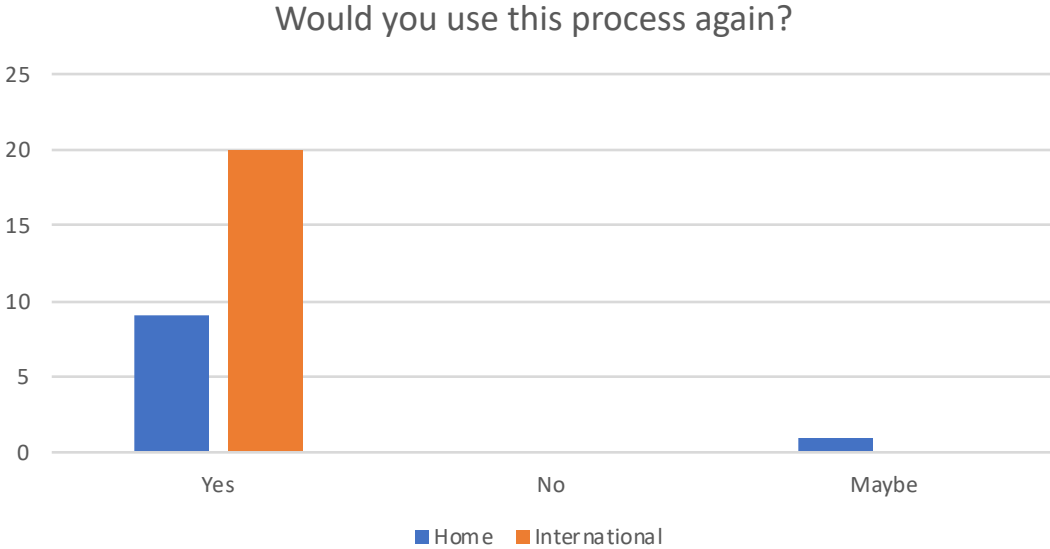
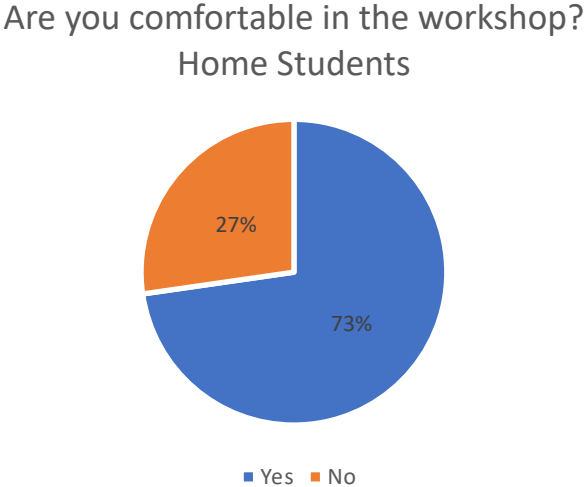
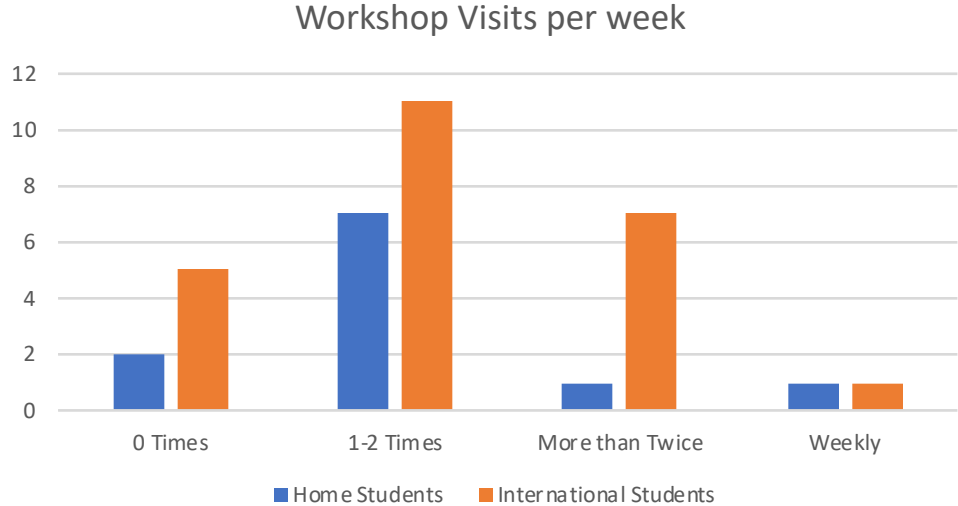
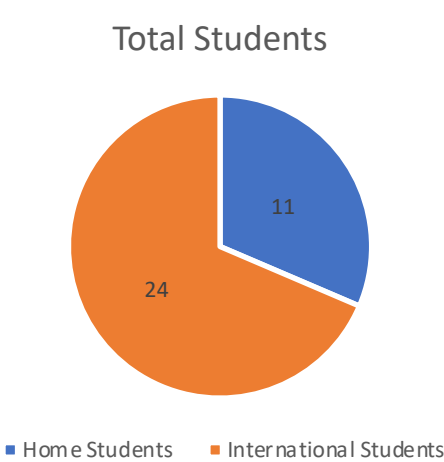
### 1st Part

- 45 mins in the Digital workshop: Presentation of the workshop structure, Technicians introduction.
- General discussion of how to book the workshop, opening hours, the tools and processes available
- Presentation of the material library available in workshops
- Discussion of the importance of experimenting and testing material and process in Design

### 2<sup>nd</sup> Part

- In G2 Design studio, 15 mins ARP presentation and its questionnaire. Discussion on their impression while constructing the sphere or the mesh cut out
- Demonstration of the papier mache process, its applications, demonstration of the Modroc and its applications
- Students use the rest of the workshop time to customize and design their sphere, experimenting with different processes
- 15mins before the end, students are proposed to fill out a paper questionnaire about the workshop







## Interview

### Paul Lindey

- Retired Head Technician at Wimbledon and Camberwell
- Studied and trained as a Sculptor at Bath University and Chelsea College

### Interview findings

- There are tensions between Academics and Technicians due to miscommunication and devaluation of technical knowledge
- Need to work more closely with Technicians, sharing briefs or asking for input for briefs
- We need to revalue Technicians who are Technical tutors as the majority have a PGCert
- Need for creating workshops between Academics and tutors during development days
- Need for a hybrid learning designated space in workshops where in situ lessons can be delivered while not interfering with the workshop space, timetable and bookings.



## ARP General Reflections and Findings

Question of Social Justice  
toward role and status of  
Technicians across UAL

Missed opportunity to  
collaborate for all staff and  
improve student's learning  
experience

Need of more material  
process libraries inside  
Design Studio and  
Workshops

Need to revalue making  
culture in Design  
Foundation curriculum and  
as part of assessment  
criteria

A hybrid space between the  
workshops and design  
studios to deliver technical  
lessons

Too limited time for  
students to access  
workshops

## What's next...

### COMMUNICATION

Invite Technicians to staff development and planning days

Send systematically project briefs to Technicians

Invite Technicians to student's tutorials relevant) to give technical expertise and to help students to plan project

Stressing the revaluation of making skills inside the Design curriculum delivery

### COLLABORATION

Organise team-building events between Academics and Technicians

Ask input from Technicians when writing briefs: recommending resources, techniques material etc...

Co lead making workshop between Academic and Technical team

### COMMITMENT

Creation of material library in Design Studios

Creation of a student led material library in Workshop to celebrate making culture

Creation of a hybrid learning/teaching space where Design lessons could be delivered in the Workshops and co led with technicians

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