



Course Description

***Branding Design Course***



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# Branding Design Course

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## **Abstract**

Branding Design Course is a programme designed as a collaborative project for students with very little or no existing experience in what constitutes visual communication for a brand, product or service. The course came complete with learning materials, suggested schedule, tasks and example briefs. Learning materials guided students through the importance of understanding the brief, visual layout and composition, colour considerations and managing/documenting the process. Although the course had a common goal and suggested teaching methodology/time frame, multiple modes of collaboration we used and varied between institutions.

## **Course Description**

The original idea to create a branding design course originated from the need to create a visual identity for the OnCreate project. It felt appropriate to design this collaboratively in a competition. The course as such was conceived as an online-only version of a flipped classroom concept: A four weeks course with weekly learning materials in PDF-form and 3h-Workshops to work hands-on in each phase. In the two implementations of the course we experimented once with four evening workshops and once with two day-workshops, combining two units each.

The course comprised four major steps:

1. Design research and responding to a design brief
2. Moodboarding of visual identities
3. Logo design
4. Styleguide authoring

The course was mainly aimed at design-affine non-designers looking for a





quick introduction into the matter. The course provided a great environment for experimenting with different setups of synchronous and asynchronous collaboration.

## ***Collaboration Mode***

- **Parallel Assignments:** Student groups from different universities work on the same assignment.
- **Integrated Project / Virtual Team:** Students form real virtual teams, with intensive collaboration (and intensive coordination needs).
- **Synchronous Collaboration** Collaboration using live tools like chat, google docs live editing and online conferencing software.
- **Asynchronous Collaboration:** Using asynchronous communication tools like forums, shared documents, shared folders. A particular interesting form of asynchronous collaboration are Design Thinking processes where each partner builds on the existing work of the other partner.

## ***Duration, Intensity & ECTS***

As with the Collaboration Methods, the logistics of the course varied between institutions. The details of which are listed below to demonstrate that the course can be run as either an extension to an existing curriculum or as an extracurricular activity:

### **Lincoln**

As with all student participation in OnCreate courses, Branding Design 2 for Lincoln students was an extracurricular commitment. This is due to the inflexibility and inability of most British HE curriculums to support the ease of swapping credits for ECTS. This did not prevent participation however, it just meant extra incentives were required to promote and recruit to the course as an extracurricular activity (see Experience Report).

In extracurricular mode, the course ran for 4 weeks with a physical studio meeting of all Lincoln participants on Wednesday afternoons. The intensity was moderate with students working intensively during the 3 hour Wednesday studio sessions and contributing/augmenting ad hoc in between.

There were 0 ECTS awarded to Lincoln students but all who participated





were eligible to have the time spent working on this course counted towards an optional rewards scheme for volunteer work.

### **Magdeburg**

In Magdeburg, the course was taught twice over 4 weeks as a part of the module “Design Methods in Cross Media” and awarded with 1 ECTS. The students worked in teams of 3. In the first iteration of the course, the workshops combined students present in a lecture room with online students from both Magdeburg and Tampere UAS.

### **Potsdam**

In Potsdam, the course was taught once as a compact course over two weeks with two physical studio meetings on Tuesday and Thursday for three hours each week. There were 0 ECTS awarded to Potsdam students.

## **Platform**

During the different implementations of the course different combinations of platforms were tested.

### **Google Docs**

The base platform for the first iteration was google docs / google drive and an email list for communication of assignments. The sharing of assignments and results worked by and large, but there was not much asynchronous social communication in the course. It felt like a sorted collection of documents, which it essentially is, but lacked an overarching discourse about the content. This was one of the reasons why we switched to Eliademy for the second iteration.

### **Eliademy**

With 3 partner institutions working in a connected fashion on a single course, it was important to find a platform to host the course materials and provide structure to programme.

Eliademy was selected because it is free and available to all students, regardless of their institution, geographic location and status as a student. In this particular course/iteration, Eliademy additionally hosted the links to different teams work in progress (usually a Padlet). This ensured they were shared in a common location for consistency of ease of access. Al-





though this functionality could quite easily have been replicated in Google Docs, it felt more “official” to use the information sharing platform for this course.

More can be found on Eliademy as a host for online courses on the document *Learning Space Description — MOOC-Platform Centred Courses*.

### **Adobe Connect**

In order to facilitate synchronous connections, Adobe Connect (hosted by Magdeburg) was used ahead of Skype or Google Hangouts because of Connect’s ability to support many simultaneous connections and breakout rooms. perfect for peer review sessions between international groups.

### **Google Hangouts**

For the first iteration, google hangouts was the realtime conferencing platform of choice.



### **Padlet**

Collaborative practice was at the heart of this design task so shared mood boards were essential for group development and ideation. In the second implementation Padlet was selected as Eliademy did not support this feature directly.





Padlet provided accessible evidence of collaboration and public-facing view of the students ideation and development process.

### Pinterest as Moodboarding Tool

One challenge was to enable collaborative remote moodboarding. A popular approach was the collection of images and snippets on Pinterest, which on the one hand worked very smoothly, yet from an inspirational point of view was often too concrete. Students tended to look for a design to copy instead of for inspiration.



## Realtimeboard as Research Tool

Realtimeboard worked as a tool for collaborative organisation of design research. Together with Google Hangouts it worked as a tool that could be used by remote and local users concurrently and kept both groups of users together. It was interesting to watch emerge new uses of the tools while the students were working with it. One example is the idea to increase or decrease the size of the virtual post-its depending on the perceived importance of the respective remarks and facts.





## Method

### Inter-institution Critiquing

Because each institution was managing their own brief, then collaboration between student groups was not appropriate. However, in order to make the project feel connected between the different institutions, it was decided that the groups should have a live critiquing session at the end of the second week (see Curriculum below).

Because the student teams were working on different briefs, they spent half an hour prior to the live critique session familiarising themselves with each others brief in order to concentrate on pertinent details and suggest meaningful improvements.

Through the links to each team's work in progress on Eliademy, student groups took turns in a live session powered by Adobe Connect to share their screens and talk through the responses to their respective briefs. If non-verbal/audio communication was not possible then the chat feature was used - but this posed certain communication issues.

However we found students managed this difficulty in communication by using the 'whiteboard' or 'draw over' tools within Adobe Connect. They were able to highlight an area of design and then discuss the suggestions/feedback in the chat window, This kept the conversation in context and meant communication became effective.

### Used OnCreate Evaluation Methods: Course Design; Teambuilding

## Curriculum

First Implementation:

Date	Theme
11.11.2015	Publish Design Briefs & Learning Material
18.11.2015	Workshop 1&2 activities => Teambuilding & Collaborative Moodboarding
25.11.2015	Workshop 3&4 activities Quick Ideation/Logo Sketching/Feedback => scanned sketches on a pinboard => realtimeboard or padlet
3.12.2015	Feedback Session (Björn) Introduction to styleguide
9.12.2015	(final) Presentation & Feedback ongoing asynchronous feedback till mid december







Second Implementation:

Week	Theme & Activities
1	<p>Short Introduction of instructors &amp; students; Grouping; Introduction of Padlet-Sphere; Introduction of Design Challenges; Design Research Activity (in groups); Live meeting (optional)</p> <p><u>Week 1 Tasks:</u> // Enhance your research board (read workshop material on „Design Research“) // Gather open questions towards customer (if a client brief). // Start a moodboard on padlet (read workshop material on mood creation). Work together on one board. If you want you can have more than one moodboard, but then they still should be on the same padlet to avoid link clutter.</p>
2	<p>Peer-Consulting of Moodboards (and maybe first sketches): Two groups each are paired and introduce their designs mutually (if in groups). Kick off of logo design.</p> <p><u>Week 2 Tasks:</u> // Start sketching your logo ideas. For a first iteration, try each to go for 10 fundamentally different approaches. You can do these sketches quickly with pen &amp; paper. When using digital tools, try not to waste too much time per sketch. // Use the Moodboard to get inspiration of which forms, colours and fonts to use. Limit yourself to a set of about five colours per logo. // In a second iteration, check your sketches against your research, the briefing and your moodboard. // Finally, choose the 3 most promising approaches and improve them.</p> <p><u>End of Week 2:</u> Feedback session on logo design</p>
3 & 4	<p>Introduction to styleguides</p> <p><u>Final Assignment – Styleguide</u> // Choose your favourite logo and give it a last iteration. // Put your final draft onto the „Styleguide Board“ // Add a colour palette suggesting a number of primary colours, secondary colours and one or two accenture colours, that fits the Logo (usually the logo will use at least part of the colour palette) // Give short advice on how to use the logo in web, print and on dark and light backgrounds. // If your logo uses a font, add the name of the font // Suggest a font or two that go well along with the logo // Write a short explanation about the idea and construction of the logo.</p>





## ***Experience Report***

**James Field, Lecturer, Lincoln University**

This was the first iteration of the Branding Design Course I had teaching involvement and that my students contributed to. I had originally produced some of the learning material for the first iteration and my students were familiar with the concepts of the branding design process due to it forming part of their official curriculum. The reason I was keen for my students to participate with this course were twofold:

Firstly, the brief that they would be working on was an actual client brief. The brief came from the University and it was for the design a logo and visual brand for the School of Film & Media. This was perfect for the student because they know better anyone just what ‘belong’ to the school means. Secondly, this was an opportunity to work with international students. There was to no collaboration in international teams for my students, because of the limited time they could contribute. This was an extracurricular activity for them all. However, it was an opportunity for them to get their work examined and critiqued by their international peers and vice-versa.

The experience as a whole was mostly positive and my students enjoyed working in, what felt like an “international team”, even though their contact with the wider international cohort was quite minimal. This contact however, was synchronous through the use of the Adobe Connect Platform. The meeting of students “face to face” really made them appropriate the potential difficulties in communication and the barriers to productivity when technology lets us down - which in some ways is the opposite to the desired outcome. Despite the difficulties, the students found the feedback process useful and created ingenious solutions to the difficulties presented by the failures of the technology.

An extended experience report can be found here:

<http://colab.lincoln.ac.uk/branding-design-workshop-mini-series/>





### **Björn Stockleben, Magdeburg**

The brand design course represents one of our earliest efforts to create a virtual environment for transnational student collaboration. A highlight of the first implementation was the integration between local and remote students during the day workshops. Due to a larger-than-live Google Hangouts projection, the remote students were very much present in the room. They were addressable and followed the course concurrently. In combination with a large projection of a realtimeboard.com instance and a well-balanced room microphone, collaboration felt almost seamless in the research phase.

For moodboarding, things become more complicated and we decided to let the moodboarding be done in parallel both in classical, physical way and in a digital way, relying on pinterest.com. The direct comparison of the approaches showed that one advantage of classical moodboarding was the higher degree of formal freedom, paired with the constraint of limited stimulus material in form of a pile of magazines and newspapers. This approach served better the idea of inspiring designers, while on pinterest.com people often found directly what they were looking for, curbing inspiration. Classic Moodboarding can be replicated better using a visual collaboration platform with more degrees of freedoms, such as realtimeboard.

In the second iteration, we sought to increase students's awareness and attention for the course by choosing an established base platform that would be open for all participating students from all consortium members. The choice was Eliademy, for reasons depicted earlier. Also, the step-by-step process was formalized better by using pre-structured templates on padlet. This worked well and led all in all to a better structured feedback and course supervision.





## **OnCreate Update**

### **Create Design Styleguides and Templates**

co\_LAB's participation in the EU Erasmus+ Strategic Partnership project: OnCreate has started to produce output beyond the scope of the internal project framework.

One of the tasks we are contributing heavily to is: Create Design Styleguide and Templates (O1-A4). The core outcome is to have created the identity and branding of the OnCreate project ready for when we are required to output work officially.

This task was designated to run from December 2014 – February 2015 with TAMK as lead. Early on in the project, we put forward the idea that we should set this as a competition brief for students who are enrolled on creative programmes within the partner institutions. This idea was suggested due to the success and enhanced participation encountered when we ran a similar task during MC2020.

All partners involved with this task agreed that this was an excellent idea but noted concerns that the students might not have the required grounding and knowledge of the subject of branding in order to produce work of a high enough standard.

During one of our all partner online meetings, a breakaway group suggested that it would be a great idea to collaboratively produce and deliver an online programme of 4 weeks to help educate and guide the students through the process using a mixture of blended and flipped learning pedagogies.

### **The Programme**

The original intention was for 4 different institutions to work on each of the 4 workshops that represent a phase in branding research, design and development:

- Branding analysis/research
- Mood board creation
- Logos, Fonts, Images & Layouts
- Styleguide creation

Sadly it didn't quite pan out the way we would have liked, and in the end only 3 institutions contributed to this task, but what was positive about this approach, is that now, all the partner institutions have access to a





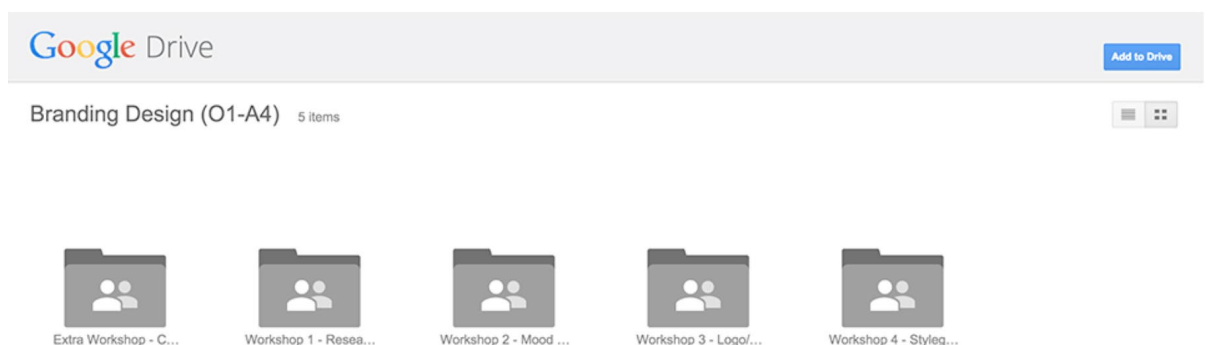
four workshop intensive programme on the subject of branding design that they are free to use and participate in whenever they like. One vital lesson learned was to ensure communication was as clear as possible as it is clearly difficult in some instances to ensure all partners are fully aware of their expected contribution and participation in a task.

### Distribution Platform

As each institution utilises a different Learning Management System (LMS) there was no possible way we could select one in particular to host the programme due to difficulties in providing appropriate levels of access.

Those institutions who participated in the IDEO HCD MOOC favoured the NovoEd platform as it provided intuitive access to workshop content and excellent integrated synchronous and asynchronous tools for collaboration. However, it is a commercial platform and, as such, we did not have the time, or inclination to explore that route. After-all, this is as much an experiment in collaboration as it is a useful programme of study.

In the end it was decided that we use the OnCreate Google Drive as a means to store and deliver the programme's contents as it is free, provides plentiful storage, natively handles a good range of files formats and allows excellent access control. Folders for each workshop were then created as repositories for related content:



We even created extra content that introduced using Google tools for synchronous collaboration.

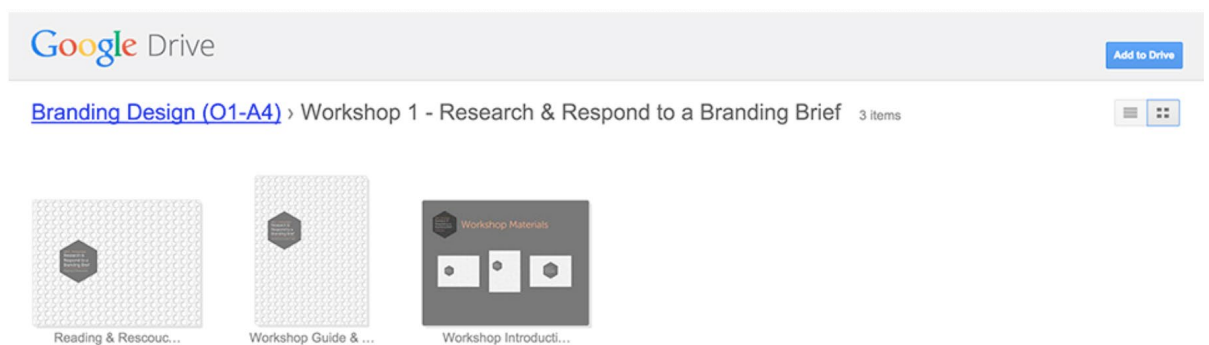




### Workshop Content

Using the HCD programme as a model, which we all agreed seem to work well, it was recommended that each workshop consist of a video introduction or screen-cast of the content, a PDF that contains in-depth content on the topic, a task that requires demonstration of knowledge and provide each participant with an opportunity to discuss their responses to the task set.

We then uploaded our content to the appropriate folder and viola! — a coherent programme about branding design, created by 3 different institutions:



Of course, the driving force behind this workshop programme is to provide students with the tools they need to enter their branding ideas for On-Create to the competition brief. This is going to be published very soon.

## Material

Links to all materials is hosted on the website.

