**PgCert Academic Practice in Art, Design and Communication**

**Action Research Project Ethical Enquiry Form**

**Participant name:** Kim Noce

**Cohort:** 3

**Tutor name** Liz Bunting / Rachel Marsden

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| 1. **What is your research question?**   How does student self-assessment impact critical thinking, anxiety, and compassion among students and staff in a Higher Education teaching and learning environment? |
| 1. **Who will be providing you with information to help you answer your question, and how will you approach and/or select them?**  * Students at UAL * Staff at UAL * Students at another institution (please specify institution): MUIC - Mahidol university Thailand * Staff at another institution (please specify institution): MUIC - Mahidol university Thailand   **How will you approach and/or select from each category?**  For past experiences, data will be gathered exclusively from MUIC, courtesy of Dr. Dynaya Bhutipunthu's contributions. For the current year, participation will be offered to students in the 2023/24 MA Animation program at UAL on an optional basis. Since random sampling won't be feasible under these circumstances, the data will include whoever opts in from these specific groups. |
| 1. **What will you be asking participants to do?**  **Activities Participants Will Engage In:** Participants will be asked to engage in several activities aimed at gathering qualitative and quantitative data:   * **Consent to Observation:** Participants will be asked to give informed consent for their involvement in peer-assessment and self-assessment activities within the course to be observed and documented for the purpose of the research study. * **Complete Questionnaires**: After certain educational milestones, such as completion of a peer-assessment task, participants will be requested to fill out a structured questionnaire. This will address their experiences, attitudes, and perceptions concerning the self-assessment process, peer-assessment, and collaborative learning activities. The questionnaire will be designed to measure changes in critical thinking, compassion, and anxiety levels. * **Participate in Focus Groups:** Towards the end of the study, participants will be invited to join a focus group discussion aimed at delving deeper into the qualitative aspects of their experiences. Questions will explore how they felt the peer-assessment and self-assessment impacted their critical thinking skills, level of anxiety, and feelings of compassion.   By engaging in these activities, participants will provide multi-dimensional insights into the effects of self-assessment on critical thinking, anxiety, and compassion, thereby enriching the quality and scope of the research. **Details on Activities Participants Will Engage In:** **1. Consent to Observation**   * Participants will be informed that the research team would like to observe and document their participation in peer-assessment activities within the course. They will sign a consent form to agree.  **2. Questionnaire Completion**  After key educational events such as peer assessments, participants will fill out a questionnaire to gauge their experience.   * **Draft Questions:**    + On a scale of 1-5, how would you rate your comfort level in peer-assessment activities?   + Have you noticed a change in your ability to critically assess your own and others' work? (Yes/No)   + On a scale of 1-5, how anxious do you feel during peer-assessment?   + Can you share an example where peer-assessment encouraged or discouraged compassion within the team?  **3. Participation in Focus Groups**  Towards the end of the term, participants will be invited to a focus group to discuss their experiences in depth.   * **Focus Group Structure:**    + **Introduction (5 minutes):** Brief overview of the purpose of the focus group.   + **Part 1 (15 minutes):** Discussion on self-assessment's impact on critical thinking.      - Sample Question: "Can you share a specific example where self-assessment helped or hindered your critical thinking?"   + **Part 2 (15 minutes):** Discussion on the emotional impact of peer and self-assessment.      - Sample Question: "Did you experience any moments of high anxiety or increased compassion due to peer-assessment?"   + **Part 3 (10 minutes):** Gathering suggestions for improvement.     - Sample Question: "What modifications could be made to the peer-assessment process to reduce anxiety?"   + **Conclusion (5 minutes):** Summary and thank you note.  **4. E-mail Follow-up**  **After the focus** group, participants will receive an e-mail asking them to reflect on the overall research experience.   * **E-mail Questions:**   + Do you feel your skills in critical thinking have changed during this study? If yes, how?   + How comfortable did you feel throughout the research process?   + Would you recommend any changes to future iterations of this research?   By following this structured approach, the research aims to gather in-depth data on how self-assessment impacts critical thinking, anxiety, and compassion in higher education.  In addition to the traditional focus group structure, alternative methods such as using Mentimeter for real-time polling and the option for online participation will be implemented. These alternatives aim to minimize the stress of speaking in public and allow participants more time to reflect before sharing their thoughts. This ensures that the research is inclusive and accommodates individuals who may need different modes of engagement. |
| 1. **How will you get informed consent from these participants?**   Informed consent will be obtained through a presentation of the project and a detailed but accessible consent form that outlines the purpose of the research, the methods used, and how data will be stored and used. This form will be distributed digitally to all potential participants.   When the research involves questionnaires, then a checkbox at the beginning of the questionnaire will serve as a means to obtain informed consent, along with a link to more detailed supporting information about the study.  To ensure ethical transparency, participants will be made aware that they have the right to withdraw their consent at any point during the study without any repercussions. The consent form will specify that withdrawal from the study will not affect their grades, professional standing, or participation in normal academic activities.  To maintain anonymity, participants will be assigned code numbers, and any videos or images will either not show faces or will have faces blurred if consent for identifiable imagery is not given. Participants will have the option of anonymous participation, in which case no identifying data will be recorded.  The use of a consent form is chosen to minimize influence on the research outcomes, as it allows for a standardized, unobtrusive way to inform participants about the study. However, verbal consent will also be considered in special cases, especially if the form might inhibit genuine responses or if it appears to be influencing the outcomes unduly.  **Draft of Consent Form:**    **Participant Consent Form for Action Research Project**  **Project Title:** "How does student self-assessment impact critical thinking, anxiety, and compassion among students and staff in a Higher Education teaching and learning environment?"  **Researcher: Kim Noce**  **Purpose of the Research:**  This research aims to explore the impacts of self-assessment on critical thinking, anxiety, and compassion among students and staff in higher education.  **What Will You Be Asked to Do**:  You may be asked to participate in peer-assessment activities, complete a questionnaire, and possibly take part in a focus group. Participation is completely voluntary.  **Data Storage:**  Your data will be stored securely and will only be accessible by the research team. Anonymity will be maintained by assigning code numbers to participants.  **Quoting and Referencing Preferences**  **This section helps us understand how you would like to be referenced if your contributions are directly quoted or discussed in the research findings.**  Please indicate your preference:   * I prefer to remain anonymous in any publication or presentation resulting from this study. * I would like to be attributed by my role (e.g., student, staff). * I consent to being attributed by name in any publication or presentation resulting from this study. * Other, please specify: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_   By providing your preference, you help us respect your wishes in how your contributions are represented in this research. Your choice here will not affect your participation in the study.  **Optional: Special Needs or Disabilities**  This section is entirely optional. Your participation in this study will not be affected if you choose not to answer this part.  We aim to make this study as accessible as possible for all participants. If you have a disability or any special needs that we should be aware of in order to accommodate you during this study, please indicate below:   * I prefer not to say. * I have a mobility impairment and may require an accessible location for in-person activities. * I have a hearing impairment and may require captioning or sign language interpretation. * I have a visual impairment and may require materials in alternative formats (e.g., large print, Braille, audio).   + Other, please specify: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_   By providing this information, you help us make the necessary arrangements to accommodate all participants in the study. Your information will be kept strictly confidential.  **Consent:**  I have read and understood the purpose and nature of this study and I agree to participate. Tick all that apply.   * I consent to participate in this study * I consent to my image or voice being recorded * I wish to participate anonymously   **Right to Withdraw:**  You have the right to withdraw from this study at any point without any repercussions.  Signature:  Participant's Name (or code for anonymity)  Date  By signing this form, you agree to the terms stated above. You may withdraw your consent at any time by contacting [Your Contact Information].  Thank you for your participation.  This form aims to provide a comprehensive understanding of what the study entails so that participants can make an informed decision on their involvement. |
| 1. **What potential risks to the interests of participants do you foresee and what steps will you take to minimise those risks?** A participant’s interests include their physical and psychological wellbeing; their commercial interests; and their rights of privacy and reputation.  Potential risks include psychological stress due to self-assessment and peer-assessment. To mitigate these risks, I will ensure a supportive and confidential environment, allowing participants to opt-out at any time.  **Risks for Students:**   * **Psychological Stress**: Students may find self-assessment and peer-assessment stressful, especially if they fear negative judgment from peers or lower grades.    + **Mitigation**: I will make it clear that participation is voluntary and won't affect their course grades. Additionally, I'll facilitate a positive environment to encourage constructive feedback during peer-assessment sessions. * **Time Commitment**: Filling out questionnaires and participating in focus groups takes time out of their academic schedules.    + **Mitigation**: I will try to schedule these sessions at times that are convenient for students, possibly providing incentives like extra opportunities or snacks during focus group discussions. I will also check if I can sue part of the budget to pay them for their time. * **Anxiety or Emotional Strain**: The topic might bring up personal insecurities or strong emotions.    + **Mitigation**: A qualified Mental Aid First Aider will be on standby during focus group discussions to offer immediate emotional support. (I am also planning to qualify as Mental Aid First Aider and I have booked two sessions on ESS) * **Barriers to Participation**: Some students might have disabilities that make it difficult to participate in traditional ways.    + **Mitigation**: I will ensure that all venues are ADA-compliant and that online options are available for those who prefer them.  **Risks for Staff:**   * **Reputational Concerns**: Faculty may be concerned that negative outcomes from the research could reflect poorly on their teaching methods.    + **Mitigation**: The anonymity of all participants will be ensured, and data will be presented in aggregated forms to prevent identification of individual staff members. * **Time Commitment**: Staff members have busy schedules and may see this as an additional burden.    + **Mitigation**: Staff focus groups or interviews will be scheduled at times that are convenient for them, and I'll aim for sessions to be concise yet informative. * **Emotional Strain**: Staff might feel uncomfortable discussing potential shortcomings in educational strategies.    + **Mitigation**: Emphasize the constructive aim of the research, providing a neutral third-party facilitator for the discussions to ensure that they remain non-judgmental and constructive. * **Skepticism About Research Utility**: Staff might be skeptical about the impact of the research on actual educational practices.    + **Mitigation**: Share the broader goals of the research and how it could lead to actionable insights for improving teaching and learning.  **Additional Risk for Both Students and Staff:**   * **Risk of Being Misquoted**: There's a possibility that participants' views or statements could be misquoted, which may lead to misunderstandings or misinterpretations.    + **Mitigation**: To mitigate this, all focus group discussions and interviews will be recorded with the explicit consent of participants. Transcriptions will be made available to participants for review and approval before any data is analyzed or published. This allows for any inaccuracies to be corrected and ensures that the participants' views are accurately represented.   By adding this step, I not only safeguard the integrity of the data but also build trust with your participants.  **Health and Safety:**  For both staff and students, all physical meetings will adhere to institutional and local health and safety guidelines.  By considering these potential risks and mitigations, the aim is to create a research environment that is as comfortable, inclusive, and low-risk as possible for all participants. |
| 1. **What potential risks to yourself as the practitioner do you foresee and what steps will you take to minimise those risks?**   Potential risks to me include emotional toll and burnout. I will ensure a balanced workload and seek supervisory and peer support throughout the project**.**  **Potential Risks to Practitioner:**   1. **Emotional Toll**: The focus on critical thinking, anxiety, and compassion may bring up sensitive issues that could take an emotional toll.     * **Mitigation**: I will schedule regular debriefing sessions with my supervisor and peers for emotional and academic support. I will also consider utilizing mental health resources such as counseling services and Student Service. 2. **Burnout**: The complex nature of the project and the emotional investment could lead to burnout.     * **Mitigation**: A well-structured research timeline will be in place to manage workload. Time for rest and other activities will also be scheduled. 3. **Misinterpretation of Data**: The sensitive nature of the subject matter could pose a risk if the data is misinterpreted.     * **Mitigation**: I will triangulate data from multiple sources and seek feedback from peers and supervisors to minimize this risk. 4. **Personal Safety During Interviews**: Conducting one-on-one interviews could pose a safety risk.     * **Mitigation**: All individual interviews will be conducted in open, public spaces or through virtual meetings to ensure personal safety. 5. **Data Security**: As the researcher, I am responsible for securing sensitive data, and any breaches could pose a professional risk.     * **Mitigation**: All data will be stored on secure servers with restricted access. Regular backups will be performed and encrypted. 6. **Ethical Concerns**: Working with sensitive topics could open up ethical dilemmas that might not be immediately apparent.    * **Mitigation**: Continuous ethical review processes will be in place, and any emerging ethical issues will be discussed with supervisors.   By proactively identifying these risks and putting mitigation strategies in place, I aim to conduct the research in a manner that is emotionally and ethically responsible for both the participants and myself. |
| 1. **Does your project involve children or vulnerable adults e.g. a person with a learning disability?**   Delete as appropriate: Maybe  **Extra Measures for Safeguarding Vulnerable Participants:**   1. **Informed Consent**: The consent form will include a section for participants to optionally disclose any disabilities or special needs they may have, which will help tailor the study to accommodate them. 2. **Accessibility**: All materials related to the project, including surveys and informed consent forms, will be designed to be accessible, following ADA (Americans with Disabilities Act) and similar guidelines. This means offering materials in multiple formats, such as visual, auditory, and tactile, as needed. 3. **Safe Environment**: Special attention will be given to creating a safe environment for all participants, including those with disabilities. This may involve selecting venues that are wheelchair accessible for in-person activities or using online platforms that are known to be accessible. 4. **Tailored Activities**: Wherever possible, research activities will be tailored to the individual needs of participants, particularly those with disclosed or suspected disabilities. This may involve additional time for completion or providing specialized support. 5. **Assistive Technologies**: For focus group discussions and other interactive activities, assistive technologies like real-time captioning and sign language interpreters will be made available upon request. 6. **Additional Support**: Stduent service and Carys Kennedy will provide expertise in tailoring the research methods and data collection activities to meet the needs of students with disabilities. In the context of the project, these insights could lead to modifying focus group methodologies or survey questions to better serve this demographic. 7. **Confidentiality**: Extra care will be taken to ensure that any sensitive information is kept confidential, and that disclosing a disability for the purpose of the study will not lead to any form of stigmatization or discrimination. 8. **Opt-Out**: As with all participants, those with disabilities will have the clear option to opt-out of any activities that they find uncomfortable, with no penalty.   By implementing these measures, I aim to create an inclusive research environment that accommodates all participants, irrespective of their abilities or disabilities. |
| 1. **How will you store the information you gather from participants?**   All gathered information will be stored electronically in encrypted files on a secure server with restricted access to ensure maximum security. Personal identifiers such as names and student numbers will be coded and stored separately from the data sets to preserve anonymity. These identifiers will be replaced with pseudonyms in the main data sets.  **Details on Storage and Anonymity:**   * Personal identifiers will be separated and stored in a different encrypted file, which will be doubly password-protected. Only the primary researcher will have access to this file. * A key that matches the pseudonyms with the actual identifiers will be stored in a separate, secure location and will be destroyed after the completion of the study.   **Retention and Purpose:**   * Data sets containing anonymized responses will be retained for a period of five years, in line with standard academic research practices. This is to facilitate potential follow-up studies or academic inquiries. * These retained data sets will be stored in encrypted form on a secure, password-protected server.   **Data Disposal:**   * Any data sets that are not essential for the purpose of the study or future academic inquiries will be permanently deleted after the completion of the research. * To ensure confidential disposal, all deleted files will be irreversibly wiped using secure data removal tools.   By employing these methods, I aim to maximize the confidentiality and security of participant data, while also ensuring that the data is stored and disposed of in an ethical manner. |
| **I confirm my responsibility to deliver the project in accordance with the Code of Practice on Research Ethics of the University of the Arts London (the University). In signing this form I am also confirming that:**   1. **The form is accurate to the best of my knowledge and belief.** 2. **I understand and accept that the ethical propriety of this project may be monitored by the relevant College Research body and/or the University’s Research Ethics Sub-Committee.** |
| Signed: ­­­Kim Noce Date: 30 September 2023 |
| **I support this project and have** **reviewed it with the participant:**  Signed: ­­­\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ |