

DJCAD

Putting the person
in the business



INTRODUCTION

Jon Rogers is Senior Lecturer in Product Design in DJCAD at the University of Dundee.

PUTTING THE PERSON IN THE BUSINESS

Jon is an avid fan of the NESTA Toolkit: “I talk about it with everyone. It is a valuable business prototyping tool and a highly useable support guide for teaching students how to assess the commercial viability of their ideas.”

Putting the individual at the centre of a business opportunity is one of the unique qualities of the Toolkit, says Jon: “It is unusual in that it covers both the social and economic aspects of starting up a business, exploring what is the right business for you as a person, which is great.”

A NEW BENCHMARK

The modular structure and inspirational content combined with multiple touchpoints: reading material, case studies, and online references represent a welcome shift in learning materials. “It sets a new benchmark for how educational content and support should look... imagine a library of such toolkits for all education in Scotland!” enthuses Jon.

“The quality of the Toolkit inspires students and helps it to be taken seriously. This is important as the quality of materials we present as tutors sets a standard for the quality of work we receive,” states Jon.

DESIGN-LED ANALYSIS

It allows students to analyse their ideas in a design-led way, preparing them for business and employment, suggests Jon: “They learn to distil their ideas and present them back in a way that can be understood by employers.”

The success of recent graduate, Chris McNicholl, illustrates the point: “The Toolkit not only helped me develop and understand the skills necessary to create a business, it also helped me to think like a business person. It inspired me to take forward my eco-radio design, which is now produced and retailed by Suck UK.”

STRUCTURE SUPPORTS

CREATIVE OUTPUT

The Tutor Notes set out a framework: “that provides the right amount of structure to allow a creative output while saving the tutor time in setting up workshops,” says Jon.

It is easy to use and six tutors within the design school are currently using the Toolkit. “In the first year we ran the Toolkit within a week of it being published!” comments Jon.

ROBUST YET FLEXIBLE

Courses can be run over different durations depending on the required outcome. “It is very robust yet flexible enough to work across a number of educational platforms,” says Jon.

The six-week module is used across disciplines including product, interior design and textile design with numbers more than doubling to 34 in year two.

Final year students can take a 12-week module as an alternative to a dissertation. Jon explains: “Many students consider presenting a substantial business plan to be more akin to the skills they will use on graduating.” The extended module provides a time for reflection and critical thinking, consistent with requirements for a dissertation. “The Toolkit can be used in any context where you are planning an activity that engages with people. I’ve used it to design teaching materials and to enhance internal processes,” says Jon.

THE FUTURE

Jon is keen to see the evolution of the Toolkit: “I think there is potential to use the Toolkit across disciplines like engineering, technology or computer sciences. And also for use with communities where the objective is to improve social value and the benefits are not purely financial.”