Thank you for agreeing to participate in the study. And thank you for signing the participant consent form and completing your demographical information. This interview will be recorded and then transcribed, your identity will be anonymized in the transcription of this interview, as well as any other information that may identify any other person or institution. Your camera is switched off, perfect. And you may at any point withdraw from the study. The study will end in 30 minutes.

Okay.

Okay, just to start, do you use blended learning when you teach?

Yes, I do. There are online classes and face to face classes.

Okay, so that's actually my second question. How would you define blended learning? So would you only define it as online and face to face?

No, it's a mix of the mediums. So in one week, you see the students both online and you both see them in person. So it's a mix of both.

Okay, now, if you think of a typical online class that you would have, tell me me three things that you would do in a typical online class?

Um, okay, let me first start by saying that I am a digital design lecturer. And therefore, creativity is a very important medium in teaching and executing our craft in my class. So often what I do is, and this does not necessarily have anything to do with the content itself, but I do find that it has, it contributes to a positive outcome in my online classes. So before my classes start, I switch on the whiteboard feature in our online learning platform. And I give the students free rein to draw and play and do whatever they want. And during those doodles, or that time to doodle, we often have very constructive conversations around things that relate to the content that we don't necessarily realise relates to the content. So it's always a very nice segue for me from play to learning. So it's like a nice introduction in that sense. Another thing that I've done that was very successful was I incorporated a game into my presentation on my slides that I would present during this online class. So I would have a slide that introduces the game. So I don't know if you're familiar with the Pixar movie Up. There is a little character that is a wilderness explorer that gets badges if you complete certain tasks. So, in my presentation, I say that Russell has lost some of his badges in my presentation, an he’s trying to get his PowerPoint presentation badge. And it's my students job to help find the badges. So whenever they see one hidden in the images they either have to type badge in the chat, or they have to say it over the voice activation system, and then the one that I recognised first gets a point, and the one with the most points at the end of the presentation then wins. The students are incredibly competitive. So it's always very successful. And it makes them pay much more attention to my slides, because they actually have to search for these badges. I often did this when I had to teach them about gamification, applying game based principles to design. So again, it was a learning tool, I guess unconsciously in that sense. The third and final thing that I would say I like to do in my online classes, specifically, this question and answer or the poll feature that we have, just to make sure that they understood the basic principles that were discussed during that session. And it also helps me prepare better for the next one, based on the answers that I received in that poll.

Okay, if you were to think of a typical face to face campus class, any three techniques, like you just mentioned, but that you do face to face.

Okay, again, my classes always start off sort of on the same foot in a not on purpose kind of way. So I always facilitated discussion with them. I'd ask them how they're doing in the other classes, what are they doing in the other classes, maybe show me something so I can get a better direction of where they they're heading. Because my module is, the core modules are, all the other modules come together in my module, so I need a good sense of what they're doing everywhere else to facilitate the learning happening in my module. So I always start off with a discussion like that. Then, what's interesting for my face to face classes is I don't like having presentations for my face to face classes, I try to model them around this YouTube series is called the Hollywood Roundtable, where everyone sits around the table, and they just have a discussion around a certain topic, or whatever. So I tried to make it feel like that. It's very casual. It's very informal. And it's just like, I'll maybe show them an example of something and ask them what they see or analyse or question. And then that leads into the discussion of what we're supposed to learn that day. So yeah, and then also, my classes are four and a half hours long, very, very long. So there's quite a bit of time for practical work to be done in class where I like to sit with each of them, and then sort of discuss what they're doing. So very much personal attention to each and every student, and to sort of, say mould and nurture the niche that they want to go in. Because digital design is very multifaceted. You can go in many different directions. And I want to make sure that they are correctly facilitated to go in the direction that they want to go. And so I spend that time doing that with them.

Well, okay, we're going to go back to the online classes. So please correct me if I'm wrong, but I'm going to tell you what I've heard from you. So you use the whiteboard function, initially to draw and play, doodle, this sometimes results in some sort of constructive discussion. Then you have, then you have a game that you incorporate into your slides - they have to find badges and the student with the most wins. Then lastly, you like to use Q and A's or polls and you use this at the end of your sessions, so that you can see if they understood the content and also to give you guidance for your next class.

That's correct.

Okay. We're going to go into each of these now separately. So when you use your whiteboard, why would you use that? What is, what do you want to get out of it?

I want the students to relax first of all, because most often than not in my personal time with them, I do hear that they are very stressed and overloaded. So I want to give them a chance to be creative without any restrictions, because all our briefs come with restrictions, certain scenarios and things. When I basically open the whiteboard, and I tell them draw whatever you want to draw, or play or whatever you want to play or whatever. So it's unrestricted design, to just not think and just draw, because oftentimes, we forget to do that. And we forget that we get into this for the fun of it. So I kind of want to get to that point using the whiteboard, specifically. And when they relax, they start talking and thinking more about what we're actually doing. Which helps me facilitate a more constructive conversation towards learning. Just asking them leading questions where they just go yes or no, this way I get more insightful conversations.

So it's almost a soft introduction into the formal class?

Yes. Yes.

Very interesting. Um, okay. Do you find that students use this whiteboard? Draw for fun?

Yes, they do. I actually save all our whiteboard drawings. Before I started my class, I have about 30, or 36, saved somewhere. Yeah, sometimes it gets a little crazy, because they literally have creative freedom. And it's very full and things are over each other and all of that, but no, I save all of them. And I actually show it to them again, in our very last session together, sort of, like the kind of look back at the semester. So yeah, it's a very sort of a tradition in our class. So yeah.

Okay, then, let's talk about this game. So you've [unclear] a game, but it almost feels like you are gamifying your slides?

Yes.

So now, no one else has spoken about gamification within the teaching sphere, and you actually seem to be the first person who is actually doing this. Can you explain to me what is gamification?

Gamification, at its core, is applying game principles or mechanisms to things that wouldn't necessarily have these principles or mechanisms, like a presentation or a slide. You wouldn't expect to see a leaderboard, four point system, or things like that inside of a presentation. So yeah, at its core, that is what gamification is.

I'm going to explain to you what I understood with your game. So you use a slideshow as the basis. So in that sense, you're giving theory to the students. But but the students need to find these badges. And then if they are the first person to unmute themselves, or to write in the chat box that they see a badge, they get a point.

Yes, that's correct.

Do they see the points?

Not during the presentation, at the end, there is a slide to say that the game has now ended before I present them with an activity to do. And on that slide that says the game has ended, there's an empty leaderboard for me to fill in using the Blackboard tools. So at the end, we fill in the leaderboard.

So during your session, do you have a piece of paper that you just write down who got the badge?

Yeah, I have a notepad next to my laptop, and then I'd write down names and numbers and things.

Why do you use gamification?

Um, well, I know my students are very into games. First of all, it came out of our discussions in class. So I knew that it was a point of interest for them. I was coming to a point in the semester where I was finding that students are no longer excited by the idea of online learning, it was getting boring. They'd log in, and then they'd leave. So it seems like they're attending but they're not really attending. So I needed a way to get them to actually sit and listen and look at the slides to take in that information. And then the idea of gamifying my slides came about, tried it for one session. I think it was week six or five of semester two last year when we were online. And it was only supposed to be a one off thing. But then the students loved it so much. They asked for more. So it became an every session kind of thing after that. So yeah.

So what happens to the person who wins?

Well, at first, I wasn't entirely sure it was just bragging rights, but then it became such a big thing. That at the end of the semester, I told them that the overall winner over the whole semester will get a personal design from me. So I designed something for them with a sticker format. So it was a sticker that they could put on their laptop and the hashtag 2020 or 2021 would be included in the sticker. So it's kind of like this thing.

Very cool. Okay, then you said that you use Q and A's or polls, so that you can see if students understand the content or to, to prepare yourself for the next session. Explain to me this q and a, what is it? How do you do it?

Um, it depends on the nature of the information that we were learning during that session. So sometimes it will just be - do you like it? keep with a gamification theme, do you like the gamification elements applied to designs and then build on it, just so I can get an idea of if they liked it or not? Or it could be something else like when we looked at this case study. Did you recognise x y and z? So more of like an open analysing question, to see what they saw in that scenario, or if it was a new concept that I introduced that they entirely never worked with? Before, I would ask them a question, what is your understanding of this, and this and this, so I can see what gaps there are that I could fill in the next session. So it entirely depends on the content that we covered in that particular session.

How the students answer you?

Okay, so you know, Blackboard has the poll feature at the bottom for the yes or no questions and multiple choice. And then, for the other questions, where I need more of an answer, I would make a slide that has a question in it, and then they have the option of either writing on top of the slide, or they can write in the chat to me, or they can speak over their microphone, telling me the answer. So I asked them to do kind of a raise hand thing. So I know who's typing or whatever, or I can point someone out, and then from there, they can give me an answer in that sense. I do often, I mean, I'm sure you found this, there are two or three students that would always answer a question, and the rest would stay quiet. So I do sometimes let these answers count marks and say that, you have to give me an answer for a mark, or I can evaluate you. And that sort of, I mean, it's a bit of a forcing of participating, but sometimes they just need that sort of extra motivation to participate in that sense.

So you just mentioned that you sometimes use the raise hand function. Tell me about this function. What is it?

On the online learning system, there's a button that the students can press that allows them to, I guess, metaphorically raise their hand. So on my side, I get a notification, saying that, for totally anonymous reasons, Sam has raised his hand, and then I can go, okay, Sam, what's your question whenever I'm ready, because it often happens in the middle of my sentences. So then I can just finish my sentence or finish my explanation. And then I can attentively listen to what Sam wants to say and answer directly. So that is the raise hand function.

So the raise hand is used to indicate to you that someone in the class has something they want to say, but by raising their hand, they give you the opportunity to first finish your train of thought.

Yes, that's correct. Perfect.

Okay, then, um, face to face classes. So you mentioned a few things. So I'm going to first quickly run through them again, like I did with online, and correct me if I'm wrong. So, first, you said that you start your classes with a discussion that is very, almost informal, you ask them about the other classes, because your module is a core module, so you need to know what they are learning in order to incorporate that into your class. Then you said that you don't like using presentations, slideshows, PowerPoints, in a face to face class..?

Yes.

Then, these days there's something called this YouTube round table that you use, which is a casual or informal way of the students discussing things. And then you said, because your classes are so long, you have a lot of time for practical classes. [Interruption deleted]. And then you said with practical, what happens in the practical classes is you go sit with every student as an individual, because you would like to mould and nurture them into their specific niche.

Yes.

Okay, going back to discussion. The very first thing, what is a discussion?

So that informal discussion literally starts with hi guys, how are you? Just asking how they're doing. And then I will sometimes directly ask what projects do you have to hand in this week? To figure out if they have maybe other modules that have projects due that week? And then I'd ask, okay, what are you doing for that project? Things like that, just sort of finding out what's happening in other modules and getting a chance for them to really sort of, I want to say, give feedback as to what's happening in the other areas as well. I find it really insightful, I get a lot of tips and like bits from that. And then, yeah, so that typically takes, I would say, five to 10 minutes, because it also happens that students come a little bit late at times. So it gives me a chance to let everyone just sort of come in one by one as well. But that again, just makes them sort of, I guess, relax and reflect before we start jumping into the actual content that we need to discuss.

So would you also say that you use these initial discussions for you to gather data of your own?

Oh, definitely. It's very interesting to see how the content that is prescribed from my module weekly slot in with the content that is prescribed for other modules weekly. So I can bring in points or things that they learned from today to sort of give a solid foundation or substantiate the content that I'm supposed to present to them. And maybe they see the bigger picture in that sense, instead of just focusing on the core module that we're doing now. But then they can see how everything fits together in this particular thing.

So it sounds to me like your face to face discussion is a verbal communication process?

Very much very, very much. So yes.

What is a discussion in an online setting?

Um, online teachings are very sort of dependent on when they are scheduled. I sometimes have like, with a, one year the online session was the very first session of a week, but with the other year, the online session was the very last session of the week. And of course, then you approach them very differently. So with the one that meets at the beginning of the week, these discussions start with recapping what we did last week, just to put them in that mindset, again, of where we're going this week, and then also introducing them to new content in that session. Whereas if the class that is the last session of the week, it's sort of just wrapping up what we discussed that week, because because I'm doing these sort of informal discussions in class, it does have the opportunity to go off on a tangent. So sometimes we sort of steer away from what we're supposed to discuss before we come back to that. And I just wanted to make sure when that wrap up session that the students actually got and took in what we were supposed to discuss that week. So, I use that last orientation, then as a wrap up, and sort of building the foundation to move forward in the next week.

Interesting, um, from what I've heard of your discussion, it seems like in your online space, you use a lot of different tools that form part of the discussion. So for instance, you would speak verbally or students can unmute themselves, there's a chat function, an a whiteboard doodle. Is there any other thing that you would say forms part of an online discussion?

I'm, not as often as the other things. I would sometimes use audio cues with the students as well. So I would maybe play a theme song for, I don't know, just a jingle or something to teach them of subliminal brand awareness campaigns; how we remember audio cues as well, especially when we start talking about very specific terminology, when we discuss things like micro interactions, how certain sounds can indicate certain things to us. So then

We would maybe have a quiz and I would just play them different audios and ask them what that reminds them of, or how that makes them feel positive sounds, negative sounds, warning sounds, completion sounds, whatever the case may be progression sounds, what does that remind you of? How can you use this in a system that you design and things like that. So I try to, I try to utilise the media's that I have available to me in creative ways. Yeah, so it really depends on the nature of the content that we are covering, sometimes is literally impossible to incorporate anything into the content, but then you try. So you'll either find a meme, or a picture or a video or something that you display to the students. And then we discuss that afterwards, or whatever. But yeah, that is my approach to these online session. Just to use all the media that I have available to get them interested and to keep them interested. So you'll see that I mentioned the ones that I use most often. So yeah.

Do you sometimes use the audio cues in your face to face classes?

I do sometimes, yes. I'm very, very candid with my students. I've, I feel like that opens them up to be more honest with me. And to feel like they can approach me in any situation regarding to our learning. So I would sometimes have a lot of fun with them in that sense. So when a student might ask a question, that is very insightful, I might have an audio cue, or when they say to me that they will start to work on a project tomorrow, I might play a little snippet from JoJo song, it's a little too late or something like that to keep it fun, you know? Yeah, I do use audio cues in my classes as well, I guess and add to the fun elements. Yes. And that add to the fun elements that we have a very good laugh afterwards.

So. Okay, explain to me this YouTube round table. What is it? Why do you use it?

Okay, so it's actually the Hollywood round table, it's a series you can find on YouTube. So what happens is, every year before the Oscars, or the Golden Globes happen, there is a journalist who sits down with all of the nominees for Best Lead Actress in a Drama or Best Actor in a Drama. So they all sit around the table. And then they have very insightful and serious discussions about their roles in the movies that have been nominated. And how do they approach it and whatever, and it's very candid and informal. And you get an opportunity to see these actors in a whole entire different light, which is always so exciting to me. I always value the information that comes out of those discussions. So I try to emulate that in my classes. So I would literally sit on a chair in the middle of my students, and we just have a discussion, I'd ask them if they've seen a certain video or certain design, or ad, and ask them what they see or ask them, have they seen this? Or have they looked at this? Or have they considered this or, you know, sort of open ended questions to get them to really think because I need to foster critical thinking in my classes, that is what my classes are for. And the only way to do that is to get them thinking. So creating an informal but safe space for them to discuss this is critical to my success in my classes. So that is what, how we sort of get the inspiration for that.

So this is not a physical round table that you're using?

I mean, in a YouTube series it is but in my classes, I don't have a roundtable, I just sort of emulate the idea of that, because most of my classes do happen in labs because they are practical. So it's possible to get sort of that, like round situation regarding that. I would sometimes sit on a chair, sometimes I just stand casually leaning against the wall to talk to them, but I make it feel very informal. So they feel that they have the opportunity to engage.

Okay, sorry about the technical questions. Do they talk to you in this situation? Or do they talk to one another?

It's both ways. I could just pose a question and then one would say something and the other one would respond. And then I just sort of let the discussion take place among the students.

Or they would ask me questions directly. If they're unsure of something or it doesn't matter. Whichever naturally occurs. It can go either direction.

And they don't physically sit in a circle..?

Not literally, but they do kind of sit for some reason that I'm yet to explain on the edges of the floorspace. So it is sort of an open shape, if that makes sense. So yeah, it does allow them to see everyone else and to engage with everyone else.

Okay, good. Then the last one, you talked about the practical sessions that you have where you sit with an individual. And you said that you did this because you want to mould and nurture the individual niches.

Yes.

So explain to me how this would happen in a typical class, how would, how would you progress into going to sit next to each student?

Okay, so, um, at first I’d ask if anyone needs specific attention. And then if anyone indicates to me that they have to consult with me, I’d go to them first and assist them. But other than that, I just walk around, and then I might see something interesting that a student is working on, and then I sit next to them. And I asked them, what is the thought process behind this? Or what do they want to achieve with this, or something like that. And then sort of again, it seems like discussion is my my sort of thing, have a discussion around that as well. Because what you have to understand about digital designers, we cover web development, video editing, 3d modelling, sound engineering, social media marketing, it's a very wide degree. And I have students entering, one going to 3d modelling and one going into social media marketing, and that is entirely opposite on the spectrum. So our projects are set up in a way that they can choose how they want to execute the deliverables. So it might be, you have to design or redesign Discovery's vitality app or something like that. And then a 3d modeller decides to create a character and an environment. And then in this character in this environment, emulate your fitness points, or your points that you get. So they literally build a house in the 3d modelling software. And then I have another one that does social media marketing. And then we gamify and host whole social media experience around this vitality app. So it's completely different areas that I have to help facilitate, get back to the core of the module. So that takes a lot of discussion, a lot of research, intense thinking and getting to a point that actually works. So that personal time that I have with them is actually my most valuable teaching tool. Because I get to see how they think, or how they approach a project. And I get you really, I want to say herd them in the right direction, like just knock them in the right place the whole entire time.

Okay, I have asked all of my questions. Is there anything that I didn't ask that you thought I would ask?

I think that was very insightful and very on-point. So yes, I'm happy.