

# Advertising Agency at the University of Gloucestershire

## The Situation

This video case study is part of a three year consortium project that is looking at Group Work Assessment in Media Production. Six higher education institutions have been involved in recording their method of assessing student groups involved in different areas of media production.

**Student (a):** So we began to think along the lines of like phrases that are associated with first and things like that, then we came up with 'dry as a bone', '...flip flop' and 'dry as the bottom of a budgie's cage', which are all common phrases and here we thought about having a tongue, so for example it would be a tongue pierced with a bone, suggesting dry as a bone.

[Music sting]

**Chris (student):** The module is Advertising Agency and we're given a brief, which we will tackle from a creative viewpoint and then follow it right through in terms of photography and then finally visualising it on the Apple Macs and then presenting a final advert.

**Andy Tibbs:** The nature of Advertising Agency as a module is to create an environment as closely as possible to a creative advertising agency environment in order to encourage the students to actually put themselves in the position of an advertising creative team, which requires working as groups and really our requirement in terms of actually organising those groups would be to try and get some sort of skill sharing. We had students who were advertising specialists, we had students who were graphic design specialists and we had some photography specialists. Now the success of Advertising Agency as a module depends on skill sharing. By the latter part of level two it's fair to say that some advertising students have formed closely linked creative teams and are reluctant to actually part with that, but at the same time to actually expand those teams of two into a team of three by using the Apple Mac skills that a level 2 Graphic Design student has developed, will actually provide a far more rounded creative and design solution as the module demands.

**Frank Holmes:** If we do have a problem with some students who are less able to mix and obviously get into the groups, we would actively look at providing them with a place within a group, and we usually probably have two or three students who are a little bit on the shy side, so we can introduce them to groups so that they work with different people with different skills.

**Asha (student):** When you go to the advertising agency you will be in a team, and so we have to get used to it really.

**Becky (student):** Well we know each other and we're quite good friends, but we've never actually worked together before, 'cause I've only worked with one girl call called Emma and I just fancied a change just because you obviously work differently with different people and obviously we've had other ideas and that kind of thing and we've worked quite well together.

**Andy Tibbs:** Team work can be quite difficult for students. By level 2 it begins to become a little bit easier and my pre-requisite in marking a group, my ultimate objective is always to give the group the same mark. However, there are problems, students will be students, they fall out, they don't gel together, often a team of three will find that perhaps they feel they're carrying a passenger, and I make it quite clear, not necessarily on a group basis, but on a team by team or even on a personal basis throughout, that I'm on the lookout for teams that are carrying passengers, and if any team does feel that it has a problem, discuss it with me, either as a group or independently, so that we can resolve the problem, so we can ensure that the team is pulling in the same direction and that ultimately in the example of the team of three, each of them has had an equal contribution, each of them has contributed thirty odd per cent to the final volume of work that's been produced.

**John (student):** In advertising, obviously you work in pairs and you obviously get hired in pairs almost, as a copywriter and art director and Kate and I have been working together as a team for, well all of this year and a bit of last year, so every brief we do in advertising is always done in pairs, it's never a single project, a solo project. Other forms of the degree, you know like essays and things like that obviously you mark on your own, but Kate and I work together so whatever mark we get we know it's a group mark and it would be hard for us to like segregate who did what and what happened there, because you know, even though I may do stuff on the computer, Katie, you know, doing other things, and Katie's like, will come up with ideas and if I wasn't there then you know Katie comes up with ideas and if Katie wasn't there I wouldn't come up with all the ideas so it's really fair that we're done in our group mark. That's personally speaking. It represents both of us and that's absolutely fine because we wouldn't have been so good without the other person.

**Andy Tibbs:** The module is marked in a way on two levels. In the first instance the module is marked obviously on the basis of course work, it's marked over a period of six weeks and it's marked on attendance, it's marked on enthusiasm, it's marked on how people have actually discussed their ideas and how they've developed their ideas from day one and it's marked on the layout pads that have been developed along the way, ideas that have been generated and pushed to one side, ideas that haven't worked, ideas... in fact so many students actually worked on all four briefs at the outset and developed stronger ideas and once ideas formed a pattern and developed more strongly half way or so through the module, they actually then began to focus on one brief and looked at how they could deliver that and the second phase of the marking would be the final presentation where there was teams of third year students available and two lecturers present and a mark was given and formed on the day, and based on the marks of the group as a whole, effectively the pitch was awarded, a student was, in hypothetical terms, given the job.

[Applause]

**Sarah (student):** I think it'd be good if... I do think group work is important but it would be good at the end of it maybe people did have their individual sort of inclusion, like writing just a bit of essay afterwards explaining their point of view, so that came across if they felt that they were being unfairly judged.

**Andy Tibbs:** The students are well aware from day one that the ultimate, the final marking process is based on what they've actually achieved over the six week life of the module, not wholly on what they've achieved on a final presentation day, although presentation at level two is important, being able to communicate ideas and being able to look and sound professional is vitally important. They are well aware that the work that they produced over six weeks, the work that they've discarded and the work that hasn't featured in that final presentation is probably more important than the work they actually deliver on the day of the presentation.

**Frank Holmes:** I think my perspective as subject leader is somewhat different from Andy's, who actually runs the module. My role is to come in at the end, you know, to review the presentations and what I'm actually getting is the product and I haven't actually been there throughout the five or six weeks that Andy has, so I mean Andy's role is very much to oversee the process and he would be able to be obviously much better informed on how the group of students have worked over the five, six weeks, whereas I'm coming in at the end seeing a presentation, which could go right or it could go wrong, so I'm going to obviously be conferring with Andy quite closely on the way the presentation goes at the end, and it would be totally unfair I think to base an assessment totally on a product, a presentation that you see at the end. The materials from the presentation are handed in at the end of the module and is again a very valuable way of assessing exactly the way that students have performed within the module. You would normally expect to find a good range of research and development work.

**Andy Tibbs:** Peer assessment has a strong role to play in any advertising based module, it does try to recreate a sense of what happens in the industry when people stand up to present work and compete against each other for new business. It's fair to say however that peer assessment doesn't necessarily provide the final marking solution. Peer assessment is made on a day of a presentation, which means that it doesn't necessarily show the development during the life of the module, during the six weeks' work that's gone into the delivery of that brief, it doesn't show all the stages and it doesn't mark development work, it doesn't mark ideas that have been discarded and it doesn't mark student struggles along the way.

**Student:** Apple C.

**Student:** But we still like the way that Apple made something better, something simple made better...

**Frank Holmes:** The peer assessment forms that students get are very effective we think and students like them. They like the way the form actually sets out specific criteria and it says it in I think fairly friendly way. The three key areas are presentation, concept and strategy and design and art direction.

**Andy Tibbs:** Having third year students contributing to the peer assessment process at presentations is extremely beneficial. The students that are presenting get some very constructive, very objective comments and can actually see a level to aspire to. What level three students will take from the experience is the ability to see exactly how far they've come. They have the benefit of work experience, they've had benefit of putting their knowledge into practice on far more frequent occasions, and it's very important for them to identify that and also they find it very easy to identify what's missing with some of the second year presentations and it encapsulates for them exactly what they're doing now that makes the advertising process so successful for them.

On the whole students respond very well to the notion that marking will be as a group. That's the way they expect it to be and that ultimately is their objective too, that's the way they want it to be. Unfortunately we do have problems. We did have a team of two throughout the first run of the module who effectively fell apart. One guy suffered very badly from a girl who was not attending the module accordingly and both of them went their separate ways and both of them actually submitted individual work at the end of the module, one of which was considered to be a fairly poor failure and the other guy passed, but passed probably averagely and it's fair to say did suffer from the fact that his team fell apart half way through the module and therefore he was forced to work on his own; by then it was too late to move into another team to pick up another group and make a significant contribution.

**Frank Holmes:** I think what we're looking for within the module to provide fair assessment for all the individuals, not just the kind of team assessment, but for individuals and the sort of work that they put in, we're looking for the photographer to produce, you know, great photographs, we're not necessarily thinking they're going to produce great concepts because they're not trained to do that, but they can take part in the process of developing concepts, but at the end of the day we're going to be assessing the photography part of it as a distinct part. We're going to be looking at the graphic design part, that will be the responsibility of the graphic designer, so it isn't as if we don't... we provide one mark for the team and that's it, we actually look at you know, do all the... although one mark does go for the Advertising Agency, we're obviously going to take into account the participation of individual group members and have they actually played their part? Normally they have but we... and again, this is part of the evaluation that we collect at the end of the module, where students may be saying we thought it was a great module, we liked working with other people, but actually we got a photographer who did nothing, so we're able to detect from both the student evaluation sheets and also to be honest, the presentation that we see at the end and the work that's handed in at the end, exactly... you know, this is a team thing but we're able to account exactly for the marks that are given to individuals as well.

[Music sting]

[End of programme]