

Mini DV tape four: Bournemouth University

Interviewer: *Introduction...*

Paul Inman: My name's Paul Inman, I'm the Subject Leader for Television at Bournemouth Media School and I oversee the undergraduate course of these students that are in the first year.

Interviewer: *Brief introduction to the unit... drama/documentary...*

Paul Inman: At Bournemouth we structured the Television Production Unit, we break it up into doing documentary in their first term and then moving on to drama in their second term and in the third term we concentrate solely on live television production delivered through a television studio.

Interviewer: *So students are broken into groups right at the beginning of the year, how are these formed?*

Paul Inman: I think the interesting thing at Bournemouth, and I suppose I'm bound to say this because I'm heavily involved in it, is that we spend a lot of time trying to work out how groups work. We've done that for many years. I think like most undergraduate courses in the UK, I mean students appear on that first day and we know a little bit about them but not much. The difference at Bournemouth is that we interview for all of our places, so we have at least met them before, and there is some attempt at trying to form groups, but right at the start it's more luck than anything else.

Interviewer: *Can you talk a little bit about the criteria for assessing groups, peer assessment criteria?*

Interviewer: *What do you think students need to be able to work effectively in groups?*

Paul Inman: I think there are a number of things that students need to be able to work effectively in a group and I think if we look at the key skills that we're looking for, for those students when they arrive for an interview to go on the course in the first place, I think those key skills we're looking for are then what we assess through criteria. We're looking for students who can communicate essentially well with other students, we're looking for students who can have something to say but know also when to shut up so they can take a leadership within a group, but they can also then take a specific task, a production skill and deliver that to somebody else's brief. Those are the main kind of key skills we're looking for.

Interviewer: And how do you convey that information, or is that information conveyed to the students? How do they know that that's what they're supposed to be... how they're supposed to act within a group?

Paul Inman: Getting students to understand what we require of them is kind of... that's the essential dilemma of assessing work in universities isn't it, I think. All you can do is try to make the process as transparent as possible and you do that by publishing assessment criteria, but I still there still needs to be some flexibility in there and I think that's what is the basis of independent learning. At the end of the day, because it's a university and not a primary school, I think it's counter productive if we're just looking for people to perform to a pro forma, we're actually looking for some initiative in there as well and I think if possible you try to incorporate that in the assessment criteria you use.

Interviewer: How do the students decide what role they're going to undertake?

Paul Inman: When it comes down to students deciding what roles they're going to take within a particular group, at one end you've got people who think that you should just tell everybody what they're going to do and at the other end you've got an open bun fight where people just jump in there and try and work out and smash in to get what they want. As with most of these things I think somewhere in the middle is probably better, so I think you're allowing people the chance to make their own decisions, but you're also, as a member of staff, providing some overview to ensure that people aren't kind of, like the quieter people are never going to get a role because they can't speak up for themselves, so you're trying to mediate that process of finding the job that they're going to do, but you've got to offer some kind of guidance and some kind of supervision of the process.

Interviewer: Why do you get students to assess each other?

Paul Inman: The notion of students assessing each other, peer assessment, is again a contentious issue really, certainly in higher education it's a contentious issue. Of course in all other works of life it's less contentious, but some of these things have come to universities later. But I think what you've got is the reason for doing peer group assessment is that I think students should have a say in the marks and the feedback that they receive. I think you've got issues around with practical media work, is that the way things have gone over the last ten years is that people like myself go out less and less

with students, so we're physically not there to witness what happens at very important parts of the process, and so it makes sense to utilise the people who are there, their peers are there, and they can offer feedback and comments and marks to each other's work and I think that's a good starting point.

Interviewer: *How does that help the student, as well as able to give marks and so on but what do students get out of that process?*

Paul Inman: What we're eventually looking for and what we're trying encourage and foster are students who are reflective and reflexive in their practice and I think the notion of peer group assessments and having to think not just about how other people are performing, but how they are performing themselves in some form of self assessment exercise, it's good, I think it's good that it gives people a sense, a self knowledge, which is what you're looking for, and it's interesting to see the people that do really well when they leave here are those people who know where they fit in a situation at a particular time and they know their own position, where they are, will change depending on the situation. It's being able to adapt to be chameleon like in the situations that you work in and you get that through being reflective and self reflexive throughout your time at university.

Interviewer: *Do you want to say something about widening participation and how that may impact on group working?*

Paul Inman: I think there's a lot of dialogue around whether the new agenda of widening participation within higher education, how that then impacts on the type of students you've got on your courses, and I know there's lots of apprehension, certainly from the people I work with, there are whole issues around are we dumbing down? I mean I don't think so, I think it's healthy to have people from all walks of life involved in your education and I'm basing that on my own experience, that in my secondary school was around people from, you know, my dad worked in a factory, but my friends' dad was a lawyer and another friend's dad was an architect and I think that mixing across the board, certainly in a class way, is a very good thing. Now whether that has an impact on group work, I mean I don't think it does to be honest, I don't think we should be getting into this thing of like giving people tags because they come from a certain place and therefore making loads of exceptions for them. They just get here in the first place, as long as they're here, that's where the work's to be done in the recruitment side of it. When you work in a group, no, you keep an eye on things but no more than you would with any other people.

Interviewer: Recruitment strategy: you could say about we interview... but talking group working as part of that interview process?

Paul Inman: At Bournemouth Media School we interview for all the places on the Television Production undergraduate course and part of that, we're looking for certain things in a recruitment kind of strand, a policy sounds too grand a word, but we have a way of doing things, we've done it for 28 years, we've changed that over the years, but what we're essentially looking... we do one to one interviews with those students. Now, I know other institutions use all kinds of ways of trying to see whether people can work in groups, I mean we don't do that, we don't play group games when they come to interview, I actually think that's counter productive and we look at ways of questioning people to get at those answers, whether you think... you can do that, without spelling it out now, it is possible to do that, recruitment processes have relied on interview technique for years and years and if you think about it, we already carry out 120, 130 interviews for the 45 places on offer, to then open that up to doing other group work assessment, I mean that's over cooking the whole thing isn't it, which I have to say is one of the things that people find worrying about the whole group process, this whole assessing group work, they think it's going to just take them so long. Well all I'm saying I suppose is that you can do things, you can do it in a way that it's not going to be massive and up your workload.

Interviewer: How is the group work then assessed? What different components make up the assessment?

Paul Inman: Group assessment on the course is done through a number of ways. What we've always held on is we do a mark for the product, there's a lot of talk about product and process obviously in media production. At Bournemouth we think the product is really important, and so there is a product. There's also a mark given through peer group assessment, where the students mark each other, that's a part of it, and then we also ask them to critically reflect on the process and product and we do that in a separate piece of assessment. So three pieces of assessment, very different pieces of assessment are used to grade students' work.

Interviewer: Is the idea that those three different pieces of assessment are assessing different parts of that individual, on the work of their... we're not doubling up... they all do...

Paul Inman: The three pieces of assessment that we use to grade students' work are looking at different aspects. There's obviously some cross over, but we're not talking about again multiplying up the amount of work, because I know it is again another live issue that people think that by peer group assessment, that's a nice thing, but the actually doing it will be a real pain because it's going to involve lots of extra work. I mean the fact is it doesn't and we probably can show that from the years that we've doing it. The fact is if anything, it's very effective.

Interviewer: To what extent are group working skills taught, or how do they learn?

Paul Inman: Students learn group working skills through a variety of methods. We utilise a seminar programme to teach that, so we do a seminar programme on group working skills, so I think there are certain kind of, the background I think you can deal with that, some of the theory you can deal with like that, but essentially a lot of the work is done learning on the job and that's how we view television production at this institution, is that you're making and making and making, reflecting, reflecting and reflecting and assessing your peers' work, so again, not over cooking the goose, but over time that sinks in and you learn a lot and you change, and you can physically see the change that happens with the students, when they arrive here in the first year and when they leave in their third year.

Interviewer: Going back to a point you made earlier about working either collaboratively or in a hierarchic industry model, which methods should the students be working in, or is it a case of...?

Paul Inman: There's a lot of dialogue around, should students work in a collaborative model, in a hierarchical model, in their production work while they're with us and I think you utilise a number of approaches again, and students, quite often our advice to them is to find the approach which matches the core skills that you've got, so it is about finding your own place and no longer really is it relevant to say well there is a hierarchical model and that is television and that's how you have to learn, because I'm afraid that just doesn't hold water does it? I mean even if you look at places like LWT's The Lab, there are a number of other television labs around the country. I mean they've been described, I've seen them described in the broadsheets as mouwest [check] in structure, which I think is certainly not hierarchical but something completely different. So we have a lot of television that's made now where the credit is given to the production team rather than to individuals in certain

jobs. I mean it's fair to say that film production is still fairly hierarchical, very hierarchical, but there are different models out there, so I think it's quite healthy. In lots of ways what we've been doing at Bournemouth, I think when we started doing it, it was out of favour. Some of the collaborative stuff we'd done was seen as not the right place to be and we shouldn't be doing it, but you know things go around don't they? If you're in a place long enough that becomes the trendy thing to do, so I think without sounding too smug, at the moment we are in the right place at the right time, but you just do a variety of methods, just see what works.

Interviewer: *How is the tutor involved during a project between the beginning and the end? Or kind of not involved? Where do they... what part they play?*

Paul Inman: We think that the place of the tutor in Television Production again has a number of roles and comes in at a number of particular obvious points I think. It's about intervention, but it's about intervention at appropriate moments and I think it's fair to say that we use the tutorial approach at the start of a project to get a project into shape and then we would do a number of kind of staged, formative assessments I suppose, work with them over time and I think they are obvious and I don't want to spell them out but at the beginning, the middle and the end are the obvious things, but we try not to look at rushes, I think watching rushes is one of my pet loves, but there is a time to look at a very early rough cut, not a late rough cut, look at an early rough cut so you can actually offer some helpful advice to the student, so gauged intervention over time.

Interviewer: *So the students have all done a peer assessment, what kind of feedback do they get? To be honest, it's like they get a mark at the end of the process, it can be...*

Paul Inman: When you're doing peer group assessments, I mean it is assessment and lots of people will try and fudge what they're doing, so I think it's important that a student to get involved in that process gets to see or is fed back the assessment from their peers. Now that's going to come in two ways; it's going to come in the way of marks, which are fine. Always had a bit of a problem with marks, all the time I've worked in higher education, I still don't really understand about marks, I try hard, and obviously I've learnt, but so marks, but also feedback, and the feedback, I think,, for the students is as important as the marks, if not more important, and I think there are improvements in the way we could do things,

I'm sure that for me they should be able to see a version of that feedback. What you're trying to move out of the process is you don't want it to become a very personal, vindictive thing, which again people worry about, that's what it's going to be like, so that can be mediated through a tutor. But they do need to see the feedback because the mark without the feedback is meaningless.

Interviewer: Now currently the peer assessment is very summative, they're having to write their own... forget about how complicated it may be to actually do it, but in theory would it be a good idea if it took a more formative approach and maybe there was a mid point say in the project process where they undertook a feedback related peer assessment exercise, so they could still benefit and learn...?

Paul Inman: One of the big issues around an assessment is about how much of it's formative, how much of it is summative. At the moment we do our peer group assessment through a summative exercise, so the student really gets the feedback and the grade at the end of the process. It is ok to argue I think that that process could come earlier or there could be another stage half way through the process maybe that was formative, and that therefore the students are learning as they go through. I think that's another one of those live issues whereas as members of staff we're not looking to over assess and therefore over over up the amount of work we're having to do, because it's a substantial amount of work. But at the same time you're wanting students to have relevant assessment at particular times, so we're in that process at the moment, thinking can we do this better and we just look at ways of doing it that can be done so everybody's happy really.

Interviewer: Do you think it's worth... cause it's what assessments are like as opposed to learning and is there a way to take those two things apart a little bit. I mean the feedback is more about learning but the mark is about the assessment.

Paul Inman: Well let's get radical then and see if we can be radical for about ten minutes before a university jumps all over you, but essentially if you took a lot of the assessment bit out of it, the marks, and talked about learning, then you're in a different ball game then. Assessment is one of those live issues in higher education where people just view it as a member of staff, the amount of work that... and they're right, it's a lot of work. But if the focus of your higher education experience for those students is about independent learning, then all the time what you're working with, students over three years of an undergraduate course, is to encourage that belief that they can have much more of a control over their own learning

experience, it's just how you manage to kind of get that through and how formal that approach has to be, and I think that's what the institutions that have been involved in the various projects that we've looked at, they're all struggling with that trying to work out what level they wish to operate it, but there's no kind of trite answers for me, I think you have to choose the route which is best for you and most importantly for me that it's right for your students.

Interviewer: How can you ensure that students who may have additional learning needs play an active role in group work? ...in a wheel chair for example, can they have elected roles, how can students perhaps help to ensure... ?

Paul Inman: The issue of students with additional learning needs comes up time and time again with this kind of, what we're talking about, peer group assessment. I think just assessment and the learning experience for students is bound to come up time and time again, and I think that there's no problem... [starts again].

There are always issues around students with additional learning needs and I think if we look at our own experience at Bournemouth that we haven't found that a problem, I think it's not a problem, we could talk about it being a challenge, but it's not a problem, it's just the fact that if you have students in a wheelchair, with hearing difficulties, sight, whatever they're down to, having a dyslexia problem, that they're just all part of the mix, the mix of the students you've got, and I think... I've witnessed, even just in my time here I've witnessed members of staff who have felt apprehensive about having a student with a particular disability for instance, in their class, and I have to say, quite often the member of staff is the person quite often with the problem about it, than the students and certainly our experience over years is that when we thought it was a problem, the students didn't make it a problem because they were much more accepting. You know, there are issues you think about, I remember a live one for us about five or six years ago was a student with a very severe disability, in a wheelchair, and lots of talk of how will this person be able to work on location, in the studio, with this, with that, he spent three years with us and he's now a video editor doing all sorts of interesting work. We did everything we could to make his time with us as good as possible, but I have to say most of his good student experience came from the people around him, he didn't hold them back, they just actually learnt quite a lot about being around people with disabilities, so at the end of the day, all things you can make good things out of what initially seem like a problem.

Interviewer: Would you say that really everyone, irrespective of who they are or where they come from and widening participation... the way to work well in a group is just to work to people's individual strengths, so you just find out what people's strengths are and work to them.

Paul Inman: Yeah, it's a case of working to each individual's strengths and sometimes what's perceived as a weakness or a flaw or a problem turns out to be something completely different and you can actually get something very, very positive out of that. I mean it sounds like I'm making a big thing about it, I'm not, I actually do believe that, that you can actually... you work with things and I think it's important that students who spend their time in university, meet, will come across, are faced with things that they wouldn't normally do. It's not our job to try and keep them all cloistered in an environment which they feel incredibly safe with, the idea is to open up challenges for them and surely that increases their over all learning.

Interviewer: We talked about assessing process and products, but can you just say, quite factually, how it's broken down in terms of 100% for the unit?

Paul Inman: We spent quite a lot of time trying to work out the percentages, and again this is when you come back to numbers isn't it really, how important the numbers are for assessment, and not to make light of that because I know students, they do think it's important to get certain numbers or grades or letters for their work. At Bournemouth we separate out these three pieces of forms of assessment, we use 50% of the mark towards the product, the assessment of the product, 35% goes towards group work assessment and then 15% is the written piece of work. Now, we took a long time to get to that point, I don't think I can now go over all that process and try to explain why that was, but that's just the way we do it, and like all processes, that is open for review and change, depending on the learning outcomes that you're looking for.

Interviewer: Peer assessment is quite a large chunk, 35%...

Paul Inman: The peer group assessment mark to some people seems large. I mean it was just uproar when we first talked about what we were going to do, but unless it's large it's pointless. It is totally meaningless when you've averaged out. I mean I enjoy mathematics, but when you sort of then put all your figures in, if it

isn't a large enough percentage, it makes no difference to the marks and so I think what you can be in the position, well we have been in the past, where all the students seem to be getting more or less the same marks because of group work, all these things, and the fact that universities quite often you find will only band their marks between 55 and 70, not using the full spread of the marks. So it is important that a high percentage, and for us that's 35%, probably for us it'll never be higher than the product mark, but I think that's again about Bournemouth and the way that we see media production, but it is a high percentage and I think that's good.

Interviewer: Degrees are obviously awarded to individuals, not to groups, can you say something about that?

Paul Inman: For us anyway, degrees are awarded to individuals and not to groups and I think if you look at the way the ark of the course goes we are looking to freeing up individuals in that more and more it's independently assessed, and as they're engaged in group work you've got to find ways of not just assessing their progress, but actually giving them feedback, so at the end of the day you've also got to find ways of separating out those individuals in the assessment process so that it's fair and work, good work, is rewarded at a number of levels, in whether it be there practical training skills they're learning, their management of groups and individuals or just the process of authoring work.

Interviewer: We need something about moderation.

Paul Inman: There's a lot of talk about the fairness in peer group assessment. Quite often when you're setting these things up you get students will question and members of staff will question you about how fair this is, how do you moderate, how can you possibly moderate assessment that a student has done about another student while you weren't there, as a member of staff you weren't even present. How do you moderate that? Well I suppose the answer is really that over time and the amount of assessing that they are doing amongst themselves, that that is the moderation, the moderation is being done by a number of students to come up with one student's grade. There are times also where you need to use staff moderation on the final grades as well, and I think that with us anyway, it's when we realise that it doesn't kind of add up, that there is some problem in terms of the way that the marks have been awarded and that's not to say we're vetting the marks, because again if a member of staff just comes in at the end and says oh that obviously can't be right we must change all that, then again you're just totally... the whole

process is pointless and meaningless, so what we look at is doing something with that moderation, usually in circumstances where there is something not quite right, very rare this happens, but we get the students in and we'll open that out to discuss amongst us a version of the truth, and that's the staff moderation, and I think that's right. There'll be times also where you may be aware of bullying, sounds like a primary school term doesn't it to me, but where it is bullying, and bullying happens throughout the television industry, where strong individuals marginalise the weaker students or the less vocal students and I think peer group assessment in that way has to be moderated by us, and I think used sensibly it's not majorly interventionist, but has a real value.

Interviewer: *A safeguard... we're at the end now really, last two questions, I want you to tell me the main strengths and the main weaknesses of how we assess group work in the first year. Where does it really work and where could it be improved?*

Paul Inman: If there is a weakness in our approach at the moment, 'cause I think these things are always kind of growing and you're building on your experiences of doing things, if there is a weakness at all it's that the feedback we given isn't sufficient enough and it may be that that needs formalising somewhat. Again it's just an issue isn't it that you... how much you have to write everything down, how much are things done verbally. I mean I think there's a case for if you're having a formative stage in your assessment that a lot of that is done in tutorial and we have records of tutorials, I think that's fine. There's part of me that wants to steer clear of having too many forms to fill in all the time, but at the same time coming up with something which again is meaningful.

Interviewer: *And the strengths? What's the biggest strength?*

Paul Inman: I suppose the biggest strength of what we do is the fact that, is that we do it, that we actually take part in peer group assessment, our students are... to be honest over 28 years they have, now it's more formalised, but we've always encouraged people to reflect on the way things are going in terms of the making of the product, but also in their group working skills and we've always offered kind of formative assessment in the form of tutorials between staff and students and students amongst themselves, formed in production groups, reflecting all the time on the way things are going. We've encouraged them to be up front when things aren't going well and not just ignore them, because in today's kind of world of work, the people that get on are the people that can negotiate well, negotiate how much they're going to be paid, but also can negotiate what

jobs they're going to do and to negotiate in groups, if you do peer group assessment I think you're doing a service to the students you've got studying with you because you're offering them a vocationally related experience which they will be able to use later when they leave you and go on to work.

Interviewer: *It's about introducing the pro forma.*

Paul Inman: We're continually obviously refining the process that we're asking students to go through in terms of peer group assessment and I think one of the keys for me anyway is that you're asking students, one is you're giving them some guidance, we're utilising a new kind of pro forma, so they know what they're looking for, so along with the seminar presentations to encourage them to know what to look for in good group working processes, we actually put all that information onto a pro forma for them, and again, it's not going too far with that, so that you're asking more or less, you know, I don't want to be doing the thing where we're doing a multiple choice tick box thing because we do actually want them to think, to reflect and then to actually verbalise their thoughts on processes, but it does help to have an over all plan to know what to look for in the first place. It also makes for us to make sense of what that feedback is, it helps us make sense of it as well as it does for those other students who are receiving the feedback from other people.

Paul Inman: I think there's some interesting things around when you're working out ways of assessing and looking at the way that students learn, I think we're now moving into a time where there's lots more been talked about whether students are happy. I mean the whole fees issues, lots of things have come into the box to be thinking about, and for me, personally, my own experience, that university is all about independent learning, so I think universities can do learning and assessment better than they have in the past. They can always be improved on but I think there's also a time where if you get too far with it, too far in delineating how the students understand how they'll be assessed, in little boxes, everything's tick boxes etcetera, I worry about that. I don't want it to go too far like that because then it is an extension of... it's kids have come out of school where they've been assessed to death, and don't know how to do any out of the box thinking, that actually they're just stuck in being able to perform to boxes and I don't think that's a good thing 'cause that's not about independent learning, so in my own little way I'll always try and fight that as much as I can.

Interviewer: *That's good.*