**Case Study 1: Use evidence-informed approaches to know and respond to your students’ diverse needs.**

**Contextual Background**

As part of my role as a Photography Specialist Technician I teach colour darkroom inductions to students studying within 6 courses both undergraduate and postgraduate level, this is designed as a scaffolded workshop, where they need B&W darkroom experience and to have shot their own colour negatives. The challenge is around inconsistency, students often come to this workshop unprepared, having not been back in the B&W darkroom since their induction, and they often don’t have their own negatives.

**Evaluation**

In this term I have taught around 10 colour darkroom inductions, they are whole day workshops and are designed to build upon students’ knowledge and skills of the B&W darkroom, where they use their own negatives to print colour contact sheets and prints. I have seen a drastic difference in how students navigate this workshop depending on their preparation, and how the workshop is embedded generally within their term and overall academic delivery. These are often factors I can’t control. They were all ran as course-aligned and mostly ‘sign-up’ so designed with an idea to prioritise access to those students that needed it the most.

**Moving Forward**

Two preparatory aspects massively improve students’ engagement and output throughout this workshop; if students had recently attended our B&W darkroom workshop or used it regularly and if they brought their own colour negatives (as requested before workshop). This ensures their recall is much stronger and their learning foundations are solid, there is also a stark contrast found in the interest of the students who print using their own negatives vs those who print borrowing someone else’s. We must be flexible to allow for students to attend the workshop so bringing your own negatives is an ask **not** a requirement, but I think, moving forward, we could massively improve their output by working with academic staff to attach a prior shooting challenge so that all students have colour negatives to print. As technicians ‘the role demands a complexity of thinking and facilitating a huge range of students’ enquiries, using my expertise and knowledge, applied to a wide variety of different student approaches and individual ways of learning.’[[1]](#endnote-1) We are not only are teaching often in very practical terms, but we have to allow for the fact that some students will pick things up quicker than others, these workshops are time-sensitive and designed top-heavy, so the first half is very informative, step by step instructions and practical demonstrations, leading to an supported independent solo working afternoon, which ideally allows for students who feel confident to move quickly through, and those who need more guidance to have 1:1 tech supervision throughout. This, of course, is harder to juggle if most students need more guidance and particularly if they are working without their own negatives. The real magic of the colour darkroom is seeing your photographs come to life, and if you don’t know the images you are printing, then the sole purpose of the exercise is lost. I think if we were to do a study of those who return to the darkroom after an induction, you would see a far higher percentage return rate of those who had their own negatives in the first place.

**References**

1. Sams, C (2016) p.65 Spark: UAL Creative Teaching and Learning Journal / Vol 1 / Issue 2 (2016) How do art and design technicians conceive of their role in higher education? [↑](#endnote-ref-1)