Record of Observation or Review of Teaching Practice

Session/artefact to be observed/reviewed: Wig-making Samples
Size of student group: up to 150 (entire course cohort)
Observer: Cora James
Observee: Kitty Eyes

Note: This record is solely for exchanging developmental feedback between colleagues. Its reflective aspect informs PgCert and Fellowship assessment, but it is not an official evaluation of teaching and is not intended for other internal or legal applications such as probation or disciplinary action.

Part One
Observee to complete in brief and send to observer prior to the observation or review:

What is the context of this session/artefact within the curriculum?

This on-going collection of wig-making samples is currently being made by myself for all three year groups on BA (Hons) Hair, Makeup and Prosthetics for Performance. These samples are not included in any workshops but are used to assist students in casual one-to-ones and supervised studio sessions when students need assistance visualizing the making process of a wig, and what kind of construction their designs necessitate. Students are introduced to wig-making and basic hairdressing from their first year and are expected to produce hair pieces for most of their physical projects throughout their course.

How long have you been working with this group and in what capacity?

I have been working as a Support Technician and now Specialist Technician for this course for nearly 4 years. The current final year students are the first group I have seen through all 3 years of the course, so I have seen them all progress through their wig-making classes and am aware of all three years' individual ability.

What are the intended or expected learning outcomes?

The samples should be able to help the students have a better understanding of specialized knowledge pertaining to wig-making and hairdressing, thus assisting them in their designs, experimentation, and realizations for each units' physical outcomes.

What are the anticipated outputs (anything students will make/do)?

The students are required to make and/or style a hair piece for every practical unit during their course.

Are there potential difficulties or specific areas of concern?

The presentation of the samples has not been finalized, leaving them in a file folder with small labels attached. Additionally, as they are very delicate, they cannot be left out in the classroom so are only accessible when I am working.

How will students be informed of the observation/review?

No students will be present at the time of the observation as the samples are not currently used for any lessons.

What would you particularly like feedback on?

I would love to know if Cora has any opinion on the presentation of the samples – as a technical member of staff in a completely different specialism I am very interested to hear about if/how Cora's team and department utilise samples and what the culture is around them. Are they only for lessons, are they kept in a specific area, are they accessible for students at any time or do they have access restrictions etc.

How will feedback be exchanged?

Cora and I will be meeting in person for our reviews, with feedback exchanged online or through email.

Part Two
Observer to note down observations, suggestions and questions:

It was a lovely and insightful peer review looking and talking through Kitty's wig samples, and she did a fantastic job in explaining them to me (I have no experience so was encountering a completely new field), and how she uses said examples in 1:1 teaching. Kitty was very informed and easy going with her knowledge, explaining clearly and concisely what each different sample was and how the 3rd year students might engage with them, from net density, sporadic and single strand techniques and different types of human hair samples. Kitty showed some her own wigs (ones she had made as a student), the first wig she had ever made which she said she used to show students how she has progressed and help them understand what is expected of them and when. She was very direct in showing the errors, explaining what went wrong and had exact examples of how her technique had got better with practice on just one sample (I particularly loved this – thought it was so clever!) I had a ton of questions, that I imagine students wouldn't have with the prior knowledge from their course, but Kitty was able to answer everything, and the samples only added to her explanation. It was interesting and it felt important to hold the samples physically so I'm glad we did the review in person. It made me think about the wider culture around hair and we had a lengthy discussion, mainly focused on the active effort her department was making to diversify their hair samples and references which was interesting.

What I absolutely loved about the peer review was how Kitty showed her mistakes physically as a key part of the learning process, it helped me reflect on my own practice, I do this verbally a lot in my sessions, I find it helps students to relate and feel comfortably in the learning environment but I don't currently use physical examples, I feel like that's something I would love to do in the future, as I feel our students who are also practitioners making physical work could really benefit from seeing the trial and error process that comes with working in the darkroom so they aren't too hard on themselves.

I feel like the only thing that the samples would really benefit from is a proper storage system for them, and maybe multiples so students can hold on to copies or they can be left out (I am aware that these would likely be misused or lost).

Part Three
Observee to reflect on the observer's comments and describe how they will act on the feedback exchanged:

I'm really glad that we had the opportunity to meet up in person as my peer review last year was online, and resulted in my opinion that I do not feel like the samples can be shown in an in-depth enough way through a laptop camera. Being able to physically hand the samples to Cora also gave the review a physicality that helped the conversation flow naturally and that enforced my confidence in the samples themselves. It was wonderful to see someone interact with them, as normally students are quite scared of them, but Cora clearly felt confident in my own confidence to hand them straight to her and she jumped right in and made sure to pick up everything I had brought. I'm glad that Cora also enjoyed the tactile aspect and understood my intention behind them – to not only show students different techniques, but to also familiarize them with touching delicate objects that you know someone has spent hours making by hand, and to show them what skill growth and progression looks like.

It has been incredibly helpful to hear from another technical member of staff that they like and agree with me showing "bad examples" and my own mistakes to students. I am the only member of my department who has specific "bad examples", so I do often question whether I should be using them or not and if they send the right message. Ultimately, I do always show them as I have yet to find another way to show students the realistic nature of learning a new skill and the learning curves that come with that. I'm thankful for Cora's feedback that she agrees that this is useful and worthwhile for students. I do think that they need to be displayed or organised in a better way as sometimes it's not clear that what I'm showing is a mistake – I think I will probably lean into my current "bad example" naming and give them their own box or labels to make it even more clear and also to reinforce the light-heartedness I have around showing them.

I agree with Cora that the biggest downside of my samples is their lack of proper storage and how that can impact their availability to students. I have thought a lot about how these samples can be displayed or more accessible and still draw blanks as I don't want to expose the samples to the realities if being damaged or lost – but maybe that is a risk that has to be taken. I have recently started to ask students themselves for ideas or how they would like to interact with the samples, and I hope that this will give me some insight or inspiration so that these samples can be as useful as possible to students.