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When do you (or your discipline group) typically use esquisse for assessment, at what level and what type of work do you assess using esquisse?

I have, for a number of years and at different institutions, been teaching first year design. As part of the students’ initiation, I will start the year with an exercise aimed to trigger experimentation and engagement, namely an esquisse. This refers to a project that is presented, discussed, executed and assessed on the first day of the semester, which, for many students, is also the first day of their architecture degree and their first day at a university. The esquisse aims to start design education as learning by doing/making from day one and thereby motivate the students and encourage readiness and resourcefulness.

The esquisse intends to begin the year, the subject and the course with a jump-start and, subsequently, bring students (and teaching staff) immediately into the content and approach of the subject. It sets out to engage the students experientially and necessitates consolidation of conceptual and practical applications, further requiring full participation and a heightened presence and level of engagement. It is intended to wake everyone up (from the summer, the break, the weekend) and to engender a dynamic and productive atmosphere in the studio.

The esquisse involves a simple exercise with a structure that includes conceptual and practical application. In 2011, for example, the students were asked to design a body shelter; they were asked to make a shelter for their body, irrespective of their position (laying down, sitting, standing, crouching). The task involved two parts: first, a 1:10 model of the body shelter made from an A4 sheet of paper; and, second, a 1:1 scale body shelter made from box cardboard. In earlier years, the exercises have been, for example, making a mask using A4 paper and string, developing a cardboard chaise longue that folds into a portfolio, and creating a paper tray that may be tested by how many cans of soft drink it can hold. In the remainder of this text, I will refer directly to the exercise put to the students in 2011, which was adapted from a discussion with the studio directors of the Macedonian pavilion, Learning Architecture, at the Venice Biennale 2010 (Bakalcev & Hadzi-Pulja 2010; Lozanovska 2010).
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As in previous years, the jolt factor in 2011 was high; though several strategies were adopted to guide the students through the project and the day (this will be further explained in Question 2). The students first worked individually (within their studio groups) on the 1:10 model made out of A4 paper before they developed the 1:1 model in pairs. Working in pairs was believed to reduce anxiety and to provide an opportunity for the new students to meet and work collaboratively with peers. Moreover, by allowing the students to work with ordinary throw-away materials, quicker and more experimental possibilities could evolve and the trauma around the idea of results was diminished.

The esquisse initiated and was integral to the structure of the design semester. There were four projects in total for the semester, including the esquisse on the first day, a portfolio at the end of semester and two major projects. With the aim of ensuring production on a weekly basis, the structure of the course comprised weekly tasks that, through reflection on the work, would enable learning and confidence. The weekly tasks were scheduled at the start of the semester and were intended to continue the pace of the esquisse.

What assessment support tools and/or enablers support the assessment, and how do these support quality assessment?

The esquisse was explained in class (lecture theatre). The class involved an introductory presentation about studio and how it operates, and a lecture about the project at hand. The brief for the project was explained in the lecture and shown in detail in a power point presentation. The objectives of the project were discussed and related to examples of previous students’ work, as well as examples in architecture. In addition, the idea of the esquisse was explained in terms of how it operates and the criteria for assessment were discussed.

The esquisse started at 2.00pm (one hour after the lecture) and was presented at 5.00pm on the same day. There were approximately 130 students in the class. The students were divided into studio groups of about 18 students who met with their design teacher at 2.00pm. The design teachers had been given the brief beforehand and the brief, as well as the schedule for the day, had been discussed in detail prior to the studio class at 2.00pm. Briefing the design teachers was important as it was a big day and the experimental and engaged nature of the esquisse needed to be complemented by a good and clear schedule and structure for the day.
Within the studio groups, the design teachers discussed the brief and further explained the project, giving an opportunity for students to ask for clarification. Students started working individually on the A4 1:10. The design teacher attended to students in the form of desk crit before summoning the students for a general discussion at the completion of this stage. The students organised themselves into pairs and started on the 1:1 model. They had been asked to come prepared with box cardboard and other tools needed for the execution of the project (communicated to them during Orientation Week).

Upon completion of the esquisse, the projects were presented for the whole class and all the design teachers. While the logistics of this were complex, a large floor space enabled the exhibition of the projects and a tour from one group to another, while the students staged their body shelters. The presentations were recorded by the design teachers, though the students were also asked to record their projects for their portfolio.

The assessment of the esquisse attained a staged nature, starting with initial assessment by the design teacher within the studio groups. This was followed by assessment of the presentation and performance where design teachers assessed another studio group's projects according to pre-set criteria. The design teachers then ranked projects and moderated the grades. Quality of assessment was achieved through discussions, the various methods (above) and crosschecking of criteria, grades and ranking. The esquisse was worth 10% of the semester grade.

What feedback do students receive?

The students received informal feedback in the process of making and developing their esquisse project during the studio group discussion and desk crit. At the end of the first part, the students were asked to exhibit their 1:10 models on the table. These were discussed before proceeding to the second part of the project. Feedback was then given to each pair of students in the development of their 1:1 models.

The structure of the presentation and performance to the whole class enabled comments by others—staff and students. A deliberate structure was put in place that required one studio group to provide the critique of another studio group. Comments by staff members related directly to the criteria for assessment, and outlined what were the achievements and shortfalls of projects. While this was not extensive for each model it produced a basis for how assessment was carried out for project-based
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More formal feedback was presented in class (lecture) the following week. Projects had been documented and were grouped in relation to what they achieved directly associated with the criteria. It was reiterated and emphasised that the combination of criteria makes for the best projects and these were shown and discussed. Further elaboration of feedback was discussed in the studio groups that following week and the students received their marks.

**How does esquisse support the students' immediate and long-term learning?**

Immediate learning is evident in the place and role of esquisse in design education. However, in order to achieve this, the brief for the esquisse is crucial. The projects that have been set for first year design have attempted to dismantle preconceptions. The intention has been partly to counter a society saturated by information by focussing on a simple, yet challenging, task. Students come into architecture and design knowing quite a lot, and perhaps also knowing some things that may not be helpful in this exercise. The students have to draw on what they know but also think, discuss, make and evaluate on the spot. The projects have intended to be simple, achievable exercises, as tasks that are too complicated are frustrating for the students. Completing the project and producing a visible outcome increases the students’ sense of their own capacity, and the esquisse is intended to engender confidence in this way.

**How does esquisse support, encourage or enable creativity?**

Supporting creativity requires students to be inspired to experiment whilst, at the same time, being disciplined and focussed on their work. The emphasis of the esquisse on time-restricted productivity introduces creativity as doing and making, as experimentation, development and realisation. The production of smaller components enables students to gain confidence. Discipline and focus on the work is encouraged, as is developing methods for work and learning to identify ways to improve work.

The esquisse forms part of a series of assessment items. Together, the different assessment items demonstrate how creativity is not a mystical experience but can be an accumulative series that develops into a larger
The human subject is not necessarily the fount of all creativity; in the piecemeal processes of making, evaluating, revising, refining and, sometimes, remaking objects, creativity comes in as though through the back door. Underlying this approach is the notion of an interactive relationship between the human subject and the objects that are produced. The human subject is not necessarily the fount of all creativity; in the piecemeal processes of making, evaluating, revising, refining and, sometimes, remaking objects, creativity comes in as though through the back door. Out of each phase, a product emerges, which in turn becomes the potential data for the next phase. In addition, this does not occur in a vacuum but is the result of design learning as a dialogue that enables interaction with other students, instructors and critics.