

# Week 3 | Designing and Presenting your Artistic Research Project

## Developing Artistic Research Methods

This week you will work on offering new insights within a broader context of research; determining, mastering, synthesising and applying a mixed research methods.

### Designing your Research

Designing your research project requires thinking carefully about the research methods you will use.

Research Methods can be drawn from a myriad of disciplinary approaches. For example:

- ... you may choose to use a disciplinary method such as auto-ethnography. This is an approach that is used in different social sciences, including social anthropology. To elect to use such a method will require that you understand the method in question since it is well established. This means reading *about* the application of the method. And, yes, that means creating a Literature/Practice Review of the method itself.

- ... you may choose to create a hybrid method. e.g. You might mix the collage techniques used by artists (e.g. we looked at the example of Paolozzi here) with the Fieldnote techniques used by anthropologists (e.g. we looked at the example of Tausig here).

... you may choose to *invent* a method. e.g. You might engage in a form of myth-science or hyperstition – that is, create a logic that you apply as consistently and rigorously as an established method such as the examples auto-ethnography, collage and fieldnotes just given.

You can choose to use more than one method of course. Normally there will be a mix of different methods used in any research project. Some things that you may not have considered to be research methods – on reflection – often turn out to be just that. A good example is drawing. Drawing is a research method just as much as, say, auto-ethnography.

Methods are processes that we might think of as being akin to tools; you need a different tool for different parts of the task. You switch your methods/tools as the project demands. The methods have to fit with what you're attempting to achieve. So, think of your research design process as being similar to attempting to cook a meal.

## ***mise en place***

You need to start with *mise-en-place*. You layout all the utensils and ingredients you will need to cook; you then prep the ingredients, then you cook them in the right order. This way you are always using the right tools as you proceed and you know (mostly) in advance when and how to switch them. Of course, as with cooking, there's always room for improvisation along the way – things will not always go according to plan. But, when most things do go according to plan, you will find that you have more energy and focus to be able to cope with things that do not.

So, as with with *mise-en-place*, deciding to use *any* method must always be a carefully considered choice selected from an already reduced menu of options.

Is *this* the right tool for *this* job? What would make it

particularly well suited to the field you are examining?

You need to justify your choice of methods before you get cooking....

## Methodology

Research Methods and Methodology are commonly confused. They are not the same thing.

A Research Methodology is a *careful critical justification* of the methods you have chosen to use. How do you critically justify your choices? Try answering these questions:

Why have you chosen the methods you have selected for your research design?

Why *these particular* methods? Define your assumptions about the project....

What other options do you have as far as methods are concerned? Why are you consciously *rejecting* those options?

Have you *invented* any elements of your methods (i.e. are you using an approach that's novel or untested)? Is this justified? If so, how will you know if it is successful or not?

Your Research Methodology is a way of 'going meta' on the methods you are going to use.

Your Research Methodology will show you the methods you are going to use will synthesise into a coherent whole through the realisation of your research project.

## On a Practice-Led Methodological Approach

## to Research Design – Dr Jake Watts

While you are considering methodology I have included an audio recording of a methods presentation I gave to PhD students in Art and Design earlier this year that I think will be of use to you. If you have studied on our Contemporary Art & Open Learning course or Themes in Contemporary Art course you may already have familiarity with some of the research practice being discussed but the talk is a discussion on how to identify and articulate practice-led research and exemplify the reflective analysis approach applied in my PhD project to demonstrate how to enact this in relation to individual work and collective practices.

Slides that accompany the talk can be accessed here as a PDF -> Jake Watts PGT Methods, I recommend looking at them while you listen along.

A couple of things worth considering:

- In the talk I refer to 'the viva' this is not terminology relevant to your current studies, instead this term can be substituted for the research project 'publication or submission'
- If you would like to explore my own PhD Thesis to see exactly how I've articulated and framed these subjects then you can find it here for download

## Implications of your research and its contribution(s) to knowledge

It's important to remember that research is something that we do *for each other* – it's not simply a personal project.

In this sense, it's important to consider what the implications of your research might be.

A good place to start is to ask yourself:

!/? *Who cares?*

Other than you, who cares about your research project? Who is it for? Why should *they* care? What are the consequences for others?

Consider, then, if it will have *particular* forms of impact. Here are few ideas:

## **Contribution to your Field:**

Artistic/Academic impact?: Will it change or impact upon academia/the artworld in any discernible way? Will it make a specific contribution to knowledge by, say, filling a gap that you have identified? How so? How will you know this?

Such forms of impact can take time to be felt and so it may be impossible to actually measure this in the time it takes to complete an MA research project (10 weeks). However, if you conduct research that includes participants, it's possible to include an element of impact assessment or measurement in your project (hence the importance of research design).

Artistic/Academic impact are, nevertheless, notoriously difficult to measure (hence the controversy over the UK's Research Excellence Framework, which attempts to do just this).

There are alternative qualitative benchmarks ('altmetrics') that might help you measure the impact of your research, or, at very least, consider how you can design research in ways that makes your project more likely to have some Artistic/Academic impact.

[See:

<https://www.altmetric.com/about-altmetrics/what-are-altmetrics/>](<https://www.youtube.com/embed/M6XawJ7-880>)

See:

<https://www.altmetric.com/about-altmetrics/what-are-altmetrics/>

## **‘Collateral’ impact (beyond your field):**

These are much harder still for a short MA sized project (30 ECTS); but – do not underestimate the potential of your project to have wider impact beyond the discipline(s) you are working with:

Social impact: Will your research change or impact upon society in any evidential way? How so? How will you know this?

Economic/value chain impact?: Will it change or impact the economy? Will it generate value in a measurable way? How so? How will you know this?

## **Access to your research:**

Your research is more likely to have impact if it is accessible. In this sense, it’s worth considering how academia is currently being transformed by open access research. Government research funders in the EU and UK are now requiring that funded research is published in an open access format. See <https://www.coalition-s.org/>

Most academic research has been guarded behind paywalls – journals that require a subscription fee paid, mainly, by academic libraries. The cost of journal subscriptions escalates annually. Open access (OA) research is generally published in ‘flipped’ journals that do not require subscriptions. The research they publish is still rigorously peer reviewed by academics, but the academics themselves aim to publish their research in ways that do not require a

paywall. This requires a different funding model:

“The costs of publication in a subscription journal are covered by subscription fees, and upon publication the articles are immediately accessible to subscribers. Articles in open access journals are broadcast to everyone. The costs are covered by an open access publication fee, paid by the author, his or her institution, or a funder.”

You can see that this still leaves academic institutions footing the bill for publishing their research. The main difference, however, is that the research findings are made open. OA is a very thorny issue research universities and is far from resolved.

While you do not have to publish your research project you can choose to do so simply by making it available online. If you do choose to do this, you will have to consider how to licence your work. This means thinking about who will use it and how.

## Knowledge Exchange

Finally, you should consider if your project proposal can include knowledge exchange with non-academic partners. Universities in Scotland are public charitable bodies; they are obligated to curate, co-create and share knowledge. To ensure that they do end, all universities in Scotland strategically engage in forms of *knowledge exchange*.

□ *A knowledge exchange is a collaborative arrangement with a non-academic organisation to co-research something that is of mutual interest/benefit.*

For you this might mean that you conduct your research in-situ, in residency or through a form of paid internship and co-design your project with the organisation that has agreed to be your partner.

## **Knowledge exchanges can be formal or informal.**

For a (meta) analysis of a knowledge exchange with the Cultural Enterprise Office (based in Glasgow, Scotland) read this: Munro, Ealasaid, 2016. Illuminating the practice of Knowledge Exchange as a 'pathway to impact' within an Arts and Humanities Research Council 'Creative Economy Knowledge Exchange' project. Geoforum, 71, pp.44–51.

## **Some Additional Resources:**

### **LinkedIn Learning | Research Design Playlist**

LinkedIn Learning | Login

Your University Login

Lotte, R, Peter, SJ, & Signe, S 2013, The Good Paper : A Handbook for Writing Papers in Higher Education, Samfundslitteratur, Frederiksberg. Available from: ProQuest Ebook Central. See Chapter 9. <https://ebookcentral.proquest.com/lib/ed/detail.action?docID=4186716>.

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## **Project management and resourcing: techniques and tools.**

*How might you become an effective project manager able to draw on and design a range of project management techniques and tools?*

A useful place to start is with the **Triple Constraint** in Project Management.

The Triple Constraint argues that there are three constraints in managing any project Time, Scope & Cost that must be balanced and kept in line with each other:



1. **Cost:** Your budgetary constraints of your project. How much money is the project going to generate if you complete deliver its promised scope, at the best possible quality, on time. If you are aiming to produce your project at little to no cost, then you may think that cost will not be a major consideration for you, but it will be a consideration – keep costs down is not simple!
2. **Scope:** The tasks required complete your project at the highest quality. What can you do with the finite amount of time and money you have available?
3. **Time:** You have 10 weeks for your project to reach completion. How much time can you afford to spend of different components of the project – considering available \$\$ and the relative importance of each component to the scope? Review the time you need carefully by breaking down the work into smaller stages (tasks); you can then determine which things are affordable and of greatest value to the overall scope.

You can, if you wish, create a different set of constraints when you are managing your Project. For example, you might find this Triple Constraint useful:

1. **Quality**
2. **Scope**
3. **Time**

Replacing cost with 'quality' could be more useful to you as a way of understanding what to prioritise when...

Use an online tool to manage your Project. Use something that is cross-platform that you can share with your Supervisor e.g.

**Miro** (Kanban tool; *Gantt charts*)

**Notion** (Kanban tool; *Gantt charts*)

**Trello** (is a Kanban – it can support *Gantt charts*)

## Research Design Tracking (Jake Watts)

Based on this week's material and concepts from Gray & Mallins (2004) Visualizing Research: A Guide to the Research Process in Art and Design, I've created a Miro Board that you can use to shape and track your research design. It is an interactive worksheet that scaffolds the course timeline onto areas of research management and phases of your studies, it does this through kanbans and tables that provide you with a checklist to work along with through Weeks 1-5 and then Weeks 5-8.

I recommend making a copy of the Miro Board and personalising to your own project.

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## Editing and Proof-reading your writing.

<https://www.ed.ac.uk/institute-academic-development/study-hub/learning-resources/editing-and-proofreading>

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