

ArT4 Final Semester Evaluation report for Spring 2013 by Ann Morrison

1. A general description of the semester.

The exhibition and project for ArT4 Spring 2013 was themed with the title "Spaces of the Imagination" and each project group was required to focus on audio interactive element(s), the experience for the audience and the specificity of an outdoor urban site. We had the semester focus on audio with a 2 ECTS course as the primary pivotal point, with site and space addressed through an energising Construction of Architectural Interaction Spaces and a pragmatic Digital Representation course. For module 14, Morten Søndergaard proposed a significant and meaningful plan for the international study trip and our students benefited hugely by being part of so many events, especially at the Biennale. They also benefited by addressing a similar-enough theme in their own project work. Allowing a 2 ECTS for Audio Design proved worthwhile with a steeper but richer learning curve. Many of the students expressed firstly their initial difficulties with addressing a non-visual element to such a degree for their major projects. 2 groups then discarded the visual from their installations completely, which was an entirely novel approach for them. The groups later reported that they appreciated and understood the need for the audio focus in such depth and that their ensuing and future work would benefit greatly. They also appreciated this tangible focus for their project, it helped them to consolidate their ideas more easily and they were consistently working on their projects directly in classes such as Audio Design, AAM (Interaction Design), Construction of Architectural Interaction Spaces and a Digital Representation.

2. What should the future coordinator and planning team be aware of?

Feedback from students found this to be the most coherent semester so far, so this should not be 'broken' in future instances of the semester. The theme for the projects, the international study trip and the courses were deliberately aligned. Each module and course lecturer was made aware of the focus in where possible face to face discussions or via email or Skype and agreed to address this specifically in their courses. All local Aalborg teaching staff had face-to-face discussions, earlier submission of their modules and courses, with feedback and this assisted in this process. They were also enthusiastic to support both the theme and the Audio focus. Allowing our teaching staff to be proactive and to follow their own interests is useful for them and for the students as they pass on their passion and their diligence. The timing of exhibition, going to Biennale and then finishing the reports was made more difficult by a later deadline for the international study trip, but most embraced having time out from report writing, being inspired and coming afresh to finishing off their reports. As always, timing of exhibitions, travel, reports and exams can be problematic. Study groups for students who have trouble with the more theoretical or technical subjects could be set up at semester commencement with a call to the students to lead such groups (in much the same way as we ask them to lead the exhibition planning groups).

3. What should the lecturers be aware of?

Standard delivery rules apply to lectures and lecturers as well (as we require from the students when they present). Focused slides that break up information into legible chunks, and take the students step by step through the processes are needed. Too much text on slides does not work. Some students have more difficulty with theory, others have more difficulty with more technical courses like programming etc. Study groups where those students who have a natural aptitude and can learn by teaching to those who are not so adept should be encouraged in

classes where it is obvious that some students, who despite attending and wanting to do well, are falling behind. This should be something lecturers are aware of and discussion with semester coordinator would assist this so groups and support are set up from the beginning.

4. What must the department and service personnel be aware of?

Sometimes students need to be able to have a place they call home and be able to have a relaxed time, grow strong as a larger team, become each others peer support etc. While we understand there are health and safety regulations, we need to be aware that if we stop all social activity in the ArT precinct the impact is that students don't form bonds, don't go through the ArT program feeling part of a larger whole and don't form a network to support them once out of ArT. These are important considerations.

Some of our students have a sense of isolation and not being important or part of the larger university life. We need to encourage activities that ensure they join in with other parts of the university.

The rooms in Student Hus need more power points to support the usual computing activity we require of our students. This needs to be addressed for the next semester.

5. What should the Study Board act upon?

Some students are there for the financial support not to learn anything and they tell the other student groups when they go into them of this fact, so the expectations are kept low, or that student has to find another group. Our student body knows who these students are already (especially by 4th semester and especially the high achiever students). We just need to be aware that this happens, it impacts students if they are forced to be in groups with these students and that students are passing with low attendance and low output (which is not a good outcome for those students who are putting in a lot of work as well). It really does not help morale and it undermines the importance of the study and the work of the active students, if those who do not even turn up still pass.

We have some activities in place in first semester now to deal with this. I think it needs discussing further as the problem is still current in higher semesters. It is very difficult for students and teaching staff managing course, module, project and group work to deal with students who are never there.

- Sort out power supplies issue in Student Hus (have a cupboard with extra leads and power boards)
- Add study groups led by capable students to semester start up allocations
- Ensure our students are aware of larger campus activities that they can join into
- Suggestion for students to organise some kind of informal café or similar event one afternoon every month (or more movie events) at our campus. Get the student life active for them.
- Coordinators and lecturers working together to address coherence with semester theme throughout courses

It is the study board's responsibility to act upon the semester assessments and to pass on relevant information to coming semester coordinators and teachers.