



**The University as intermediary for the creative economy:
pedagogues, policymakers, and creative workers in the
curriculum.**

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Abstract:	This article examines the nature and role of courses designed to train creative workers, policy-makers, and related actors, in the skills necessary for cultural management, enterprise or intermediation and their relationship in apprehending the sector. The article takes a case study approach, engaging with university policy, student research, reflections from graduates and staff who have participated in a suite of integrated MA awards at a UK University. We find the programme created environments in which practitioners and intermediaries were positioned in reflexive relation to their experiences and roles. We outline the insights and understandings that have emerged as students explored their own orbits in relation to both critical and instrumental research on the cultural sector, and in relation to perceptions of the transformations in sector and how it is conceived. The case study sets out an agenda for exploring the relationship of research, pedagogy and practice after the creative industries.

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5 **The University as intermediary for the creative economy: pedagogues,**
6 **policymakers, and creative workers in the curriculum**
7

8 **Dave Harte**
9 **Paul Long**
10 **Annette Naudin**
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14 **Abstract**

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16 This article examines the nature and role of courses designed to train creative
17 workers, policy-makers, and related actors, in the skills necessary for cultural
18 management, enterprise or intermediation and their relationship in apprehending the
19 sector. The article takes a case study approach, engaging with university policy,
20 student research, reflections from graduates and staff who have participated in a
21 suite of integrated MA awards at a UK University. We find that the programme
22 created environments in which practitioners and intermediaries were positioned in
23 reflexive relation to their experiences and roles. We outline the insights and
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26 perceptions of the transformations in sector and how it is conceived. The case study
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40 **Key Words**

41 Creative Industries; Cultural Intermediaries; Cultural Economy; Third stream;
42 Knowledge Transfer
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47 **Introduction**

48 What is the relationship between the policy and realities of the creative industries
49 and the ideas and practices that academics produce as researchers and
50 pedagogues? This research is an attempt to contribute answers to this question by
51 addressing what Comunian & Ooi (2016) recognise as a gap in existing literature.
52 That is: “the need to recognise and better understand how HE impacts and
53 contributes to changes in the creative economy and cultural policy” (2016: 60). In this
54 paper we draw connections between the work of universities in their role as
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3 intermediaries in policy-making with the creative and cultural economy, and the
4 impact – on ourselves, on the university, and on students – of a set of Master’s level
5 teaching programmes in which we have been involved as originators and tutors. We
6 set out the development and implementation of these courses in the context of the
7 maturing role of ‘new’ universities in policy-making and as vehicles for knowledge
8 exchange with local businesses; and contemporary debates about the value of
9 creative and media education.
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17 The empirical basis of our investigation is organised largely through the reflective
18 accounts by students participating in three postgraduate awards launched in 2009 as
19 part of the Birmingham School of Media in: Creative Industries and Cultural Policy,
20 Media and Creative Enterprise and Social Media. These were established to recruit
21 from, amongst others, those within the creative economy seeking to develop skills of
22 research, communication and reflexivity about their practice. Alongside insights from
23 students and graduates, we also draw on our own experiences as pedagogues,
24 researchers, knowledge transfer agents and project managers. We are taking this
25 moment to assess the understanding we gained about the nature of creative work
26 and the value we created for the creative economy, and for the university, through
27 our own actions in these varied roles. In so doing, we thus offer our own narrative of
28 transformation as a perspective on the position of tutor and students in the field of
29 creative industries provision amidst prodigious growth in UK HE and its
30 contemporary marketisation.
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43 We begin by situating our research within critical debates about the impact on higher
44 education of neoliberal economics, the development of curricula for the study of the
45 creative and cultural industries (CCI), and the role of cultural intermediaries.
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50 **Pedagogical practice in the neoliberal university**

51 In his exploration of the relationships between higher education institutions (HEIs)
52 and community, Paul Chatterton (2000) historicises the development of localised
53 universities, arguing that the nurturing of high culture by traditional universities is
54 being eroded by three key trends:
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58 the decline of a locally based elite able to uphold the boundaries of high
59 culture; a more varied consumer demand which is linked mainly to the
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3 increase in education attainment; and the rise of a broader base of
4 institutional support and management structures for cultural activities
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6 (Chatterton, 2000: 168)
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10 As a consequence, universities are “reasserting their distinctiveness as place-based
11 institutions” (Chatterton, 2000: 169) by making an impact locally, contributing to the
12 creative economy and investing in a greater range of activities for students and local
13 citizens. This is particularly the case for former polytechnics – post-1992 universities
14 – such as Birmingham City University, our own institution, which aims to be a
15 university “for Birmingham” (Birmingham City University, no date: 8). According to
16 Chatterton this has come about through a “number of push and pull factors” (2000:
17 167): push factors include funding streams for regional development and pull factors
18 are described as a shift from traditional hierarchies. Universities are asserting a level
19 of distinctiveness not solely defined by their economic contribution but also by the
20 cultural role they play in shaping local cultural institutions, producers, practitioners
21 and audiences. This creates opportunities for popular culture and a deeper
22 relationship between local communities and the university (Chatterton, 2000). For
23 the university, this might include undertaking activities such as sponsoring local
24 cultural awards, focusing internal research funding on creative economy
25 collaborations, working jointly on local cultural strategies, hosting public talks on
26 culture, providing public space for arts exhibitions – activities that Birmingham City
27 University has undertaken in one form or another to help it become, in a former Vice-
28 Chancellor’s words, a university “without walls, having close interaction with
29 business and industry” (Allan in Morgan, 2014).
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46 Yet as Gilmore and Comunian (2016) point out, the cultural and economic value in
47 these relationships is difficult to measure and define. They involve a range of
48 engagements and co-produced activities developed through collaborations and
49 interactions which are not always systematic or transparent. As they argue,
50 measurement is complicated by the bespoke ways in which HEIs increasingly locate
51 their activities in their locality: “The dynamics of these different dimensions of HEI-
52 creative economy relations are highly embedded in networks of interaction and
53 exchange which are often place-specific” (Gilmore and Comunian, 2016: 2). A
54 particular concern for Gilmore and Comunian is the prodigious ways in which HEIs
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3 have established a formal, structured relationship with the creative economy,
4 engaging 'Beyond the Creative Campus' (Comunian and Gilmore, 2015) in
5 collaborations and in training creative graduates for work in the cultural and creative
6 industries. As Oakley (2013) observes, a relationship which began informally has
7 evolved into a "more directed and more calculating" (2013: 26) arrangement between
8 the sector and HEIs. Parallels have been drawn between the shift to funding HEIs
9 through tuition fees, something approaching an open competitive market, and a
10 creative economy discourse which first emerged in New Labour's cultural
11 policies. As Ashton and Noonan (2013) discuss, this points towards the importation
12 of a neoliberal model in both HEIs and the creative economy, prompting scholars to
13 interrogate the purpose of a creative education (and education *per se*) and of
14 universities conceived in terms of their direct service to the economy.
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26 For instance, regular deployment of the description of students as 'industry ready'
27 across the sector signals how HEIs have turned to meet the skills need of business.
28 In the introduction to curriculum of a focus on professionalism and employability,
29 there is a perceived threat to experimentation and critical thinking (Collini, 2012).
30 Furthermore, the growth in HEI courses servicing, or aligned with, the creative sector
31 (Guile, 2010) has a direct role in its economic conditions. Although little reflection is
32 given to this or the wider role of HE institutions as active players the creative
33 economy, the curriculum in subjects like sociology recognises, documents and
34 critiques these challenges, while practice-based courses address the challenges of
35 success and survival through group work, attempting to develop an environment
36 which prepares students for work in a sector often characterised by its individuating
37 tendencies (McGuigan, 2010).
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48 **Learning to labour in the creative and cultural economy**

49 In preparing students for work in the cultural sector, there is tension between an
50 oversupply of creative arts graduates (Bridgstock and Cunningham, 2014) and the
51 development of employability skills for a career in the sector. For graduates, this
52 results in a difficult transition from their education to a work context which is
53 characterised by a portfolio style career and non-permanent employment situation –
54 i.e. precariousness (Hesmondhalgh and Baker, 2011; McRobbie, 2002). Likewise,
55 analyses of cultural work point to inequalities of representation within the cultural
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3 workforce in terms of gender, ethnicity and class (Gill, 2014; Oakley and O'Brien,
4 2015). In recognising this tension, Matthews (2011) uses the idea of 'translation'
5 rather than 'transition' to articulate the particular challenges for creative graduates, in
6 the context of a sector in which careers are unstable and a challenge is presented
7 for the curriculum in addressing the realities of this situation.
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13 While the aim of preparing students for future work invites a distanced dismissal from
14 many academics, there is more at stake here than a principled resistance to the
15 encroachment of neo-liberalism. For those at work in the post '92 sector, students
16 are still often the first in their families to go to university (Yorke, 2017) and manifest
17 the kind of demographic diversity absent in the elite group of Oxford, Cambridge and
18 the Russell Group of institutions (Sherriff, 2016). Indeed, Birmingham City
19 University's black and ethnic minority student population is over twice that of the
20 sector as a whole (Birmingham City University, 2015). Since the establishment of full
21 fees in 2012/13 there is increasing pressure on such students to consider the
22 purpose of their education in pragmatic terms with media commentators often
23 making distinctions between "top subjects such as medicine, maths and the
24 sciences" and those being offered by "low-performing universities" (Yorke, 2017).
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36 This might be considered as a 'return on investment' in relation to a neo-liberal
37 market or a more transparent exposé of the cultural capital traditionally accrued via a
38 university education and which bestows forms of distinction. So, while pedagogues
39 like the present authors are invested in supporting student ambitions they are also
40 eager to develop the critique of the creative sector and indeed a wider world in which
41 advantage is gained as a result of family, class and related networks (O'Brien et al.,
42 2016). For Naudin (2013), it is through reflective practice that students begin to
43 develop such a critique and begin to question the challenges of cultural work,
44 specifically in terms of the demands of freelancing and micro-entrepreneurship and
45 the landscape in which these are enacted. Daniel Ashton (2013) sees much value in
46 the role of the teacher-practitioner of the kind teaching across post '92 Universities,
47 who can engage students through a first-hand knowledge and experiences with
48 industry. Instead of focusing on a simple transfer of knowledge from experienced
49 practitioner to student, Ashton finds that by engaging with students, there is a
50 possibility for teacher-practitioners to reflect on and examine their own creative
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3 practices and normalisation of working conditions through critical conversations
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5 (2013).
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9 However, this isn't unproblematic and a key issue for Ashton (2013) is the
10 relationship of practitioner-academics with the industry in terms of status, regard and
11 expertise. While practitioners are positive about the sharing of expertise with
12 students, their contribution is sometimes framed in terms of negative claims "around
13 teaching in HE as a diminished form of professional capacity" (2013: 177). Ashton
14 suggests this as an instance of how in HE practice based teachers are viewed as
15 lesser type of creative being, as "either enthusiastic amateurs or failed professionals"
16 (2013: 178). Such positions highlight how power relations between tutors and
17 postgraduate students who themselves are drawn from the creative and cultural
18 industries may be different to those in other stages of HE.
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27 **Cultural Intermediaries**

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29 According to Smith Maguire and Matthews (2014) the literature on cultural
30 intermediaries falls into two categories. Drawing on Bourdieu's work, cultural
31 intermediaries are understood as tastemakers, drawing on their cultural, social and
32 symbolic capital to engage in the promotion of certain kinds of cultural goods, often
33 associated with the middle classes (Smith Maguire and Matthews, 2014). A different
34 interpretation of cultural intermediaries focuses on their role as gatekeepers to
35 markets, mediating between culture and economic contexts. Beyond these positions
36 there is also a sense that the term 'cultural intermediary' encompasses all cultural
37 and creative industries work. Context acts as a framework to interrogate the cultural
38 intermediaries' ability to act authoritatively, as a professional expert but also in
39 response to a social environment (Smith Maguire and Matthews, 2014). This is
40 significant for this study, as part of the context for cultural production and meaning is
41 formed in an educational setting in which the intermediary must deal with the
42 contradiction of being both professional and student; confident in their expert role
43 and able to interrogate their practice. Notions of expertise and legitimacy challenge
44 those postgraduate students recruited from the cultural sector, whose hard-earned
45 professional authority has to be renegotiated through a critical engagement with
46 scholarly debates and pedagogical principles.
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3 The University itself also operates as a cultural intermediary, a place and group of
4 people with cultural, social and symbolic capital which enables the institution and
5 academic staff to act as tastemakers (Smith Maguire and Matthews, 2014). As
6 Durrer and O'Brien note, the intermediation process is similar to that of a 'cultural
7 translator' (2014), a space for reviewing and interpreting. Here, the university as
8 cultural intermediary is understood as an influential player but working in
9 collaboration with industry and funders as described by Comunian and Gilmore
10 (2015):
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17 The growing role played by creative human capital and shared third spaces
18 corresponds to the emergence of bilateral and more organic models of
19 engagement, where new knowledge can be co-created and developed across
20 and beyond academic' (Comunian and Gilmore, 2015: 11)
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26 On considering the relationship of industry and HE it is possible to describe
27 universities as de facto policy bodies, particularly in terms of their relationship with
28 the cultural and creative sector. While they might respond to government and
29 industry requirements – notably in terms of the employability agenda – HE
30 recruitment strategies, curricula and pedagogy are not wholly and instrumentally
31 aligned. In fact, the very existence and durability of arts and humanities courses may
32 express a particular commitment to culture *per se*. After all, it is a curious
33 characteristic of the expansion of government attention to the value of creative
34 sector that this has not been balanced by any investment in the worth of an
35 education in either making or understanding culture. In 2015, the Warwick
36 Commission report on the Future of Cultural Value identified that "there has been [in
37 England] a significant decline in the number of state schools offering arts subjects
38 taught by specialist teachers" (Neelands et al., 2015: 47). The authors expressed
39 concern about the wider impacts on cultural engagement of "the narrowing of cultural
40 education in schools" (2015: 34). In 2014, Nicky Morgan, the then education minister
41 warned young people that studying arts subjects at school could "hold them back for
42 the rest of their lives" (Hutchison, 2014).
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56 **Reflecting on teaching and learning**

57 In the following sections we draw on a range of source material that allows us
58 insights into the reflections of creative economy workers and intermediaries, and into
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3 how the courses they took were developed and operationalised. These sources draw
4 on the discursive frames and structures of the everyday life of academic work that
5 market and validate particular subjects and pedagogical approaches, manifesting
6 creative industries as a subject and reality for staff and students alike and impelling
7 all to produce accounts of these experiences. In our examination we aimed to
8 identify the ‘interpretative repertoires’ that were being drawn upon; how language is:
9 “put together, constructed, for purposes and to achieve particular consequences”
10 (Wetherell and Potter, 1988: 171). The repertoires limit the possible ways that the
11 speaker can talk about a subject but allow for variance: “repertoires can be seen as
12 the building blocks speakers use for constructing versions of actions, cognitive
13 processes and other phenomena” (1988: 172). We thus look back at university
14 documentation for MA Awards to reflect on the context and case we made for their
15 approval and our articulation of the value the awards would have to the creative
16 economy. While such documentation offers a record of its instrumental function in
17 pitching for course approval (in terms of market, recruitment, quality) it is also a
18 means of understanding a particular moment in time where course design and
19 rhetoric can be read for its response to particular demands across HE policies but
20 also for its expression of abiding objectives of pedagogues and researchers.
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36 The key primary source for this paper however comes in the form of graduate
37 insights into their learning objectives and experiences. Many postgraduate students
38 were established in their field as cultural professionals and postgraduate study was
39 an opportunity for them to review their practice, reflect on their career and the field in
40 which they work. Given their substantial professional experience and expertise, it is
41 possible to describe some of our students as cultural intermediaries embedded in
42 both the cultural sector and in the university. Their accounts were garnered via
43 Personal Development Planning (PDP) assignments written at the end of their
44 course as part of the assessment cycle. PDP was seen as a tool to support
45 employability and its value was promoted by the Higher Education Academy (HEA)
46 and within the University. It is defined as “a structured and supported process
47 undertaken by an individual to reflect upon their own learning, performance and/or
48 achievement and to plan for their personal, educational and career development”
49 (Ward and Watts, 2009: 4). The HEA emphasised the reflexive benefits of the PDP
50 approach, underpinned as it was by sociological “theories of reflexive identity
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3 formation” (2009: 9). For the courses under discussion here, PDP was embedded
4 within the curriculum, with most assignments required to have accompanying written
5 reflections. By taking an integrated approach we were ensuring “reflective
6 approaches underpin the delivery of the curriculum” (Atlay, 2007: 20):
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11 Our aim is to relate PDP explicitly to the philosophy shared across awards to
12 develop ‘reflexive creative workers’. Through clearly articulated activities, we
13 encourage each student to take ownership of their learning experience and
14 sense of personal progress. (BCU programme specifications 2009)
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20 The reflective writing we draw upon for this research accompanied final projects and
21 dissertations. These accounts are the most developed in terms of the effectiveness
22 at reflecting on the whole experience of their time on the course. Methodologically
23 we anonymise their authors but they are available publicly as appendices to this
24 work in University repositories and where shared online by students themselves.
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30 These accounts are situated within a broader set of graduate insights into their own
31 career progression, gathered via contributions (in 2017/18) to a dedicated Facebook
32 group aimed at School alumni. Over a thousand alumni joined the group and over a
33 hundred posted details of their career progression, successful or otherwise. The
34 contributions from postgraduates to this group were few in number but rich in detail
35 of professional continuation or transformation. They add further ‘texture’ to the
36 context and claims of this work and act as records of the development of the
37 “individualisation of creative labour” (McGuigan, 2010: 324) establishing itself in this
38 sector at that time.
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48 **Class report**

49 In proceeding it is worth saying something about the character of the courses in
50 focus here in distinction from those with a more obvious ‘fit’ to fields of production
51 (the School of Media also ran postgraduate courses in Freelance Photography,
52 International Radio Production, Online Journalism and similar areas with a strong
53 production focus). Alongside degree courses that had rebranded in the wake of
54 DCMS boosterism and cheerleading, not to mention the wider circulation of ideas of
55 creative class and city, MA Creative Industries and Cultural Policy (led by author
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3 Long) was a relatively late entrant into this field. However, like the other courses in
4 focus here and noted earlier, its recruitment benefitted from departmental
5 engagement with ongoing research and knowledge exchange projects. These
6 included the INTERREG-funded Creative Metropoles and Cross Innovation (see
7 Long and Harding, 2015), 'Digital Central' (focused on supporting regional creative
8 companies and managed by author Harte, 2009: 109), and the 'Women in Media
9 Enterprise' project run by author Naudin (profiled in Aston et al., 2007: 128). More
10 interestingly, MA Social Media and MA Creative Enterprise were taught in a period of
11 research development resulting in publications by the course leaders which evince
12 the particular take on the subject field (see Naudin, 2013). These awards interacted
13 with each other in shared modules and teaching cultures: creative industries
14 students studied social media cultures, particularly in light of the take-up of platforms
15 and visibility of workers, policy makers and intermediaries in the context of a
16 developing digital field. Enterprise students studied policy while social media
17 students explored the meaning, nature and potential of enterprise. As Naudin has
18 noted, at the time there was limited developed exploration of the concept, especially
19 by creative industries scholars (Naudin, 2013). MA Social Media had the distinction
20 of drawing unwanted attention from the journalist and commentator Milo
21 Yiannopoulos (2012) who expressed surprise that such courses should even exist in
22 higher education.

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39 To some extent the development of the courses can be seen as reaction to debates
40 about value of media education (Thornham and O'Sullivan, 2004; Elliot, 2000; Bell,
41 2004). The courses set out to "explore the field" (Macdonald, 2008: 141) rather than
42 be simply about topping-up skills or pure research. While we cite above more recent
43 attacks on the value of an 'arts' education more widely, the ongoing debate about the
44 value of media education had been part of political discourse for some time. Sue
45 Thornham and Tim O'Sullivan (2004) react to the ways in which "media coverage
46 has tended to denigrate, question and contest" (2004: 717) the legitimacy of media
47 studies as a subject of study. In seeking a way through the polarised nature of the
48 debate about the value of the field, they describe a media employability project in
49 which the School of Media at Birmingham City University was a partner. The project,
50 they argue, was transformational for such institutional participants. Thornham and
51 O'Sullivan make the case that the project supported those involved in re-shaping the
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3 curriculum in the light of the way assumptions about the perceived narrowness of
4 graduate employability skills had been contested within the field:
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8 the most important changes have therefore been the involvement of staff in
9 teaching and curriculum development across the boundary lines of 'theory'
10 and 'practice', and the building into the curriculum, at each stage of the
11 degree, of opportunities for [...] student self-reflection (Thornham and
12 O'Sullivan, 2004: 733).
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18 The course team developing the new MA programmes, which included this paper's
19 authors, were thus aware of the value of creating what the School's publicity called
20 "thinking media workers", within the context of courses with "critical disposition"
21 (Elliot, 2000: 18). In part, we were responding to Thornham and O'Sullivan's (2004)
22 call for media studies curriculum designers to offer more reflective spaces for
23 students, as well as both Bell's (2004) and Macdonald's (2008) calls to not be drawn
24 in by external attempts to design curriculum purely around industry's needs:
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32 The programmes were all designed to develop reflexive professionals in the
33 media, creative and cultural industries, who can operate at the forefront of the
34 academic discipline and of professional practice. The content and approach of
35 the curriculum would have a strong emphasis on enterprise skills,
36 engagement with new communication technologies, and promoting
37 innovation. (BCU senate approval report 2009).
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44 Courses had relatively small numbers (an average of about ten per course in most
45 years), albeit were global in reach – with recruits from the EU, Far East and Africa
46 alongside home students. The background and ambitions of students were diverse:
47 from those in the publicly-funded cultural sector (policy makers, arts company
48 workers), freelance creatives and those in SMEs (journalists, publishers etc);
49 alongside those in non-creative sectors seeking to develop their postgraduate
50 qualifications or more instrumentally, understand the possibilities of social media in
51 their own workplace. The approval documentation noted the likelihood of recruits
52 already being in work: "we expect many of the students to already be in employment,
53 it is not necessary to justify mass employment opportunities" (BCU senate approval
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3 report 2009). It also saw the potential for sustainability lying in what it saw as an
4 inevitable expansion in the regional creative economy: “as the economy returns to
5 growth, and Birmingham develops its cultural sector, we expect to be well placed to
6 respond to growth in demand for postgraduate awards in these media sectors” (BCU
7 senate approval report 2009).
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13 Interactions in and out of class between students across the three courses evinced
14 some of the tensions apparent in the literature concerning the field – between culture
15 for its own sake and as object of the new economic potential. Alongside these three
16 courses, students from the creative sector across the school and Faculty provided
17 interesting subjects for research and comparison, as did some of the practice-
18 oriented staff. Pedagogies supported highly visible and engaged activities such as
19 participation with local creatives through networking events. These included a
20 regular ‘social media cafe’ attended by creatives and cultural intermediaries within
21 Birmingham and structured internships which took individuals to roles in the cultural
22 office of the city council or allowed them to explore and assess other positions in the
23 organisations for which they worked. In this milieu, students (and staff) negotiated
24 ways of speaking to varied audiences in making use of the kinds of research
25 developed in support of the creative sector and that which sought to interrogate its
26 claims and conditions. For many amongst the student body then, this was a context
27 in which they found themselves reflecting on both the nature of their own
28 professional identities and experience as well as the purposefulness and utility of the
29 mode of postgraduate student to which they had enlisted.
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44 **Purposeful professionalisation**

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46 In this section we draw on the PDP student accounts to demonstrate that whilst the
47 awards had value in themselves to the students, they also reveal the tensions felt by
48 the students between the knowledge gained and its use. Study at Masters level is
49 increasingly articulated as an option available to all on completion of their
50 undergraduate degree, thanks in part to available loans, aggressive marketing
51 across HE, in tandem with a fear that with so many equipped with a BA, individuals
52 need a further aspect of distinction to mark them out in the field. However, the
53 majority of students recruited to the courses discussed here have spent some time
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3 out of education and so the turn to study has been a considerable challenge and
4 commitment in spite of their professional status. As Sarah reflects:

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8 I have been planning my masters for a long time, since the last time I was
9 unemployed which would be 5 years [...] I have taken on the largest sum of
10 debt (excluding government student loans) I have yet encountered to take my
11 MA which was a daunting moment. I was also very worried about being around
12 people a great deal younger than myself and of course worried about the
13 content and my ability to complete the course.
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20 Recruitment for the courses came both through expected marketing methods
21 operated by the university but also via communications through the academics' own
22 professional networks, built up via work in the creative sector on knowledge
23 exchange projects. The subsequent mix of recruits (recent graduates from first
24 degrees, creative workers, cultural intermediaries) may have shared a central
25 motivation for career progression, yet this rarely emerges as a theme in their
26 accounts. What was apparent from some professionals taking the course was that
27 they inhabited the kind of working patterns noted in the research on creative labour
28 of self-exploitation, constant networking and rather extreme working patterns, as in
29 this example from a professional journalist and ghost-writer, John. He identified
30 issues with time management as a part-time learner based over 50 miles away from
31 campus. As he writes:
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43 My work follows no pattern: I am just as likely to be driving to Cornwall for an
44 overnight trip on a Saturday afternoon, where I'll fly around the coast with an
45 air-sea rescue team, as I am to be in the office at 7.30am each morning. I'm
46 as likely to be flying to Madagascar, Prague or the Galapagos as I am to be
47 interviewing the manager of a theatre in Shropshire. It is a curious way to
48 make a living, but that is what I do.
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54 Some approached postgraduate study with the aim of professional and intellectual
55 development and reflected on absences in their own repertoires in spite of the kind
56 of considerable accomplishment in the CCI sector as expressed by the journalist. In
57 this next case, Ann, a policy maker working for the Arts Council (who is also a
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3 practising artist with several decades of experience) reveals a particular route of
4 gaining reputation through experience:
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8 On the surface I'm a consummate professional respected in my field of artistic
9 practice, working for the national development agency for the arts. However I
10 have always felt a bit like a three-legged table in this public sector
11 environment, as I have no academic grounding to the work, which involves
12 creating and delivering a range of cultural policies.
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19 This meant a not uncommon encounter with skills requirements slightly different from
20 those developed even in the policy sector. While this student “had used experience
21 in the sector and corporate processes to develop policy documents, reports for
22 council and cultural strategies” (Ann), a challenge was anticipated in her return to
23 education as “I hadn't formally written an essay for 20 years.”
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29 Another student who worked with the nascent cultural policy sector in a Middle
30 Eastern country, Tasmin reflected on her encounter with academic approaches as
31 distinct from her perception of the everyday “practical aspect” of work, “more of what
32 is going on the ground”. As she reflects: “I struggled a lot in the beginning to create
33 the link and to tackle both aspects; I was not able to link the theoretical aspects to
34 what is going on.” She revealed a not uncommon habit of those nurtured in a goal-
35 oriented sector of KPIs and milestone delivery: “because I was approaching the
36 academic literature only to prove my point or to reflect reality”. Joseph notes similar
37 challenges: “it has been an interesting struggle to get myself into the habit of
38 reading, analysing texts and writing”. In this example, there was a very specific
39 agenda emerging from reflection on this individual's career.
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49 My aim was – and remains – to reflect on my professional practice in the
50 academic arena. I wanted to intellectualise the process, to make better sense
51 of why the work took the form that it did, to understand the reasons for its
52 development.
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Transformations

What did these individuals do to engage with the curriculum and the value of the university as intermediary? As suggested, while students were not inclined to express an instrumental approach to study in which they anticipated an award as a step towards advancement, they approached their studies with a calculation about what it could offer for their reputational credentials, integrity and authority. Simon is a lecturer in a new university in which he draws upon his continued involvement in the creative industries in managing bands and record labels. While convinced of a need to expand his learning (and recognising perhaps how PhDs are increasingly a bottom line for status and advancement in the sector) his MA was a step on his route “to establish a credible reputation as an academic”. His approach involved pushing his knowledge, recognising that teaching what he knew as a creative worker was “a safe option and it had been the only subject I had engaged seriously over the last decade.” As noted already, many students made a distinction between the literacies of their professional lives – whether reading and making policy or the writing practices of the journalist. For many, their professional world of task-oriented activity and their perception of deadline delivery was perceived as quite distinct from the exploratory nature of research-based learning. In short, there was no rote or generic template to follow. For journalist Dave, a 3,000-word feature and a similar sized assignment are radically different things. In many ways, the imaginative space of the latter, writing on the motivations of a journalist or TV producer for instance, presented what was felt to be a more genuinely creative opportunity than the activities expected of the same as *creative* workers. Likewise, the task of deconstructing cultural policy when viewed as a set of discursive tropes is rather different than writing it from *within* the normative assurance of those same tropes.

What we notice in these accounts are narratives of transformations as a result of engagement with academic literature, research questions about the normative aspects of creative fields and the learning experience. In these narratives, students reflected repeatedly on two related themes: i) tensions between the agenda of social scientists in researching and theorising the creative industries, and their own sense of empirical reality and practical experience; ii) the discovery of their experiences and ‘themselves’ as particular figures in the research literature: as members of the creative class, precariat or as emotional worker. A signal example comes from

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3 Michael, who had a fulsome career in South America as a media producer. He was
4 surprised to recognise his career framed in policy and research terms in lectures and
5 in reading: “After I obtained my bachelor’s degree in industrial design, I proceeded to
6 work in a variety of creative areas. At the time I was not aware of such thing as
7 creative industries, and it never occurred to me of my position as a creative
8 labourer.” In another example, Damian, a former TV producer and now policy maker,
9 delivers research drawing deep on his connections, capturing authentic voices and
10 experiences in which the challenge has been to gain distance from the normative
11 nature of assumptions and perspectives. He explains of this critical distance how: “It
12 radically changed my thinking about the subject of cultural policy, providing valuable
13 insights into the theories and ideas”.

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15 Particular takes on the provocations of research and of ethical considerations
16 regarding being reflexive about one’s practice and experience highlight challenges
17 encountered by students. For instance, freelance journalist John found a productive
18 thread in the concept of emotional labour and the work of Arlie Hochschild.
19 Specifically, the concept resonated with the day-to-day work of soliciting responses
20 from the public – sometimes as victims or witnesses to crime. In such cases
21 journalists balance and use their own empathetic responses in pursuit of stories and
22 the interests of the newspaper or broadcaster. Likewise, the same concept informed
23 reflections on his work as a professional ghost writer of celebrity autobiographies in
24 which his role might involve ventriloquizing a woman’s voice or that of a person of
25 colour.

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27 Such learning and reflections were not, by any means, viewed as a remove from the
28 practical demands of the work conducted by students in their professional lives and
29 the realities of the sector. For instance, Felicity, having recently stepped down from a
30 role in a major art gallery was governed by a compromise agreement with the
31 institution to ensure that she did not bring it into disrepute. Her research concerned
32 the struggles of the gallery and wider sector in her home town to deal with austerity
33 measures. While such instances were not practical contributions to addressing very
34 real disputes and problems, the chance to work with peers and tutors in reflecting on
35 their significance produced meaningful research that had potential to speak more
36 widely to the sector.

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5 Here we have the arts council policy-maker articulates a critical sense at odds with
6 an instrumental idea of education. As she says: 'a more questioning and
7 investigative outlook':
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11 We live in a time of evidence based public services, evaluating and analysing
12 academic texts has definitely improved critical thinking, public speaking and a
13 methodical approach to looking at cultural policy issues. It has also created a
14 more questioning and investigative outlook on the relationship between the
15 arts and philosophy in culture (Ann).
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22 She says that studying academic texts, and studying with international students
23 "opened out my perspective and I gained a new invigorating depth of knowledge."
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27 Finally, the research course work of the former TV producer Damian highlights the
28 particular value of entering into a dialogue with the creative sector about the nature
29 of research but also about the qualities and objectives of CCI education. One
30 substantive piece from him set out to explore the question: "what does it take to
31 survive and be happy as a film and TV producer?" It looks at the background of
32 being a creative worker, the challenges of running a creative business and how to
33 balance risks and choices to achieve a successful career. Ultimately he finds himself
34 in a position as student reflecting on the challenges presented by media education in
35 which it appears that: "university media courses are adding to the undermining of
36 production costs in the marketplace." Assertions of this condition and investigations
37 of its meaning and implications resulted in a thoughtful engagement with some of the
38 debates that shaped the very nature of the course he was on (as outlined by
39 ourselves above).
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50 51 **Conclusions**

52 Use of PDP reports is a valuable reference point for assessing the impact of study,
53 geared as the method is for reflection on origins, current experience and the
54 application of learning. As a pedagogic tool, they allow students the space to
55 consider alternative futures whilst wrestling with the contradictions of the
56 'interpretative repertoire' of the creative economy discourse. In some of his blog
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3 posts (produced as course work reflections), Social Media student Chris expressed
4 awareness of the contradictions around his enthusiasm for supporting the arts as a
5 fundraiser: “Is it right that arts organisations need to crowdfund to replace funding
6 that in previous years would have been provided by the state? By raising funds
7 through philanthropy are we just buying into a form of neo-liberalism conveniently
8 imported from the US?” With his experience in arts management, his articulation of
9 the opportunities of crowd-funding draw, arguably, on the neo-liberal agenda he
10 critiques: “It (crowdfunding) asks difficult questions of both the board and executive,
11 and exposes those who are prepared to go the extra mile as well as those who are
12 not. In this way, it can genuinely act as a catalyst for renewal and growth.” Sean
13 expresses something of the aspiration towards a career in the creative industries
14 built on a cultural service and a sense that enterprise is not a simple synonym for a
15 neoliberal approach. Here, he cites a range of academic references to underline his
16 reflexivity on this matter:
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29 I am one among those youngsters who look to innovation for development
30 (Wong, 2014) plying across multiple disciplines to offer creative solutions to
31 real-world social issues. (Goulden, 2015). I am a social entrepreneur who
32 thinks laterally to offer creative solutions by reacting to prompts, inspiration
33 and diagnoses in society (Murray, et al., 2010). Coming from a small
34 Northeastern state in India where insurgency has crippled the state
35 government and economy, I find increasing relevance and purpose in my
36 work as a social entrepreneur who makes ‘the market an exciting place for
37 fighting social battles in ever more innovative and effective ways’ (Yunus,
38 2006: 44).
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48 In this paper we have presented these reflexive accounts in the context of curriculum
49 developed in a UK university in the mid-2000s. The timing is important, representing
50 as it does a moment when the drive towards engagement with business and
51 community was maturing through established ‘third stream’ funding routes. Setting
52 up these MA awards coincided with the growth and maturing of the CCIs, their
53 continued importance as a growing and resilient part of ‘UK PLC’, and the availability
54 of European funding and knowledge transfer projects. Also at a mature stage was
55 the institutional engagement with creative industries policy-making and the
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3 institution's developing role as an intermediary between academic expertise, industry
4 and policy. Whilst such developments were common to many UK regional
5 universities, the importance of this case study is in the way that educators working
6 across research, teaching and knowledge transfer, drew on critical thinking about the
7 nature of the creative industries to rethink pedagogy to produce more reflective
8 students. Such re-thinking was also a reaction to wider debates about the value of
9 media studies and the need for an approach that foregrounded reflexivity as a
10 developmental device for students.
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19 In their analysis of Bourdieu's fixed notion of the intermediary, Smith Maguire and
20 Matthews discuss the "range of strategies by which cultural intermediaries delimit
21 and defend their occupational position against the ongoing emergence of new taste
22 makers" (2014: 23). In this context, one can speculate that professional cultural
23 workers undertaking a Masters are involved in consolidating their position and sense
24 of identity as expert. By developing a relationship with a university, its staff and
25 research projects, they are confirming their social standing and re-confirming a
26 position of authority, even as new players, tastes and policies are prioritised. This
27 suggests an instrumental approach, a strategy for mitigating against the risks
28 associated with cultural work. However, in re-valuing the cultural intermediary, Perry
29 et al (2015) note that by exploring the everyday working practices of cultural
30 intermediaries, it is possible to identify a wide range of moral and social motivations
31 amongst them. The commercially orientated cultural intermediary, perceived as part
32 of the neoliberal project, is replaced by an individual embedded in his/her
33 community, performing diverse roles and sensitive to local context. In the context of
34 this paper, the professional cultural worker / intermediary engaging in postgraduate
35 education might be perceived as competitive and seeking to stay ahead of the game
36 by gaining new insights and a qualification as proof of their value. Taking on board
37 Perry et al's (2015) emphasis on the embedded position of cultural intermediaries
38 suggest that a more complex set of motivations and relationships are being
39 negotiated, including competing strategies of self-interest and cultural commitment.
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56 Our findings suggest that doing a Master's level course creates a space for students
57 of various guises to be reflexive about their practice. To a degree there is some
58 instrumentalism on their part in the sense that they wish to develop within their work
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3 as professionals but this is not necessarily or simply expressed in terms of career
4 progression. Rather, it is about gaining a qualification for those who so far have
5 secured work through their experience. Students begin to balance the role of
6 cheerleader for the sector alongside thinking critically about it and the realities that
7 they have encountered or made. They begin to see themselves as researching the
8 subject and becoming the subject of research. However, questions about who could
9 or could not take part in this level of education, due to barriers of funding or time or
10 other issues, remain; as do questions about the longer-term trajectory of course
11 participants. Has engaging with critiques of the sector resulted in shifting ambitions?
12 As Felicity writes in her summative report: “Now I have to think about what to do
13 next”. Her personal experience of the cultural sector under austerity and her
14 research into general conditions of precarity resulted in a longing for stability: “so not
15 a job in the creative industries necessarily.”
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27 For ourselves, our original motivation may have been to benefit from funding and to
28 ‘transfer’ knowledge, but the outcome has been a two-way process. By attracting
29 cultural intermediaries, we have become better informed scholars and researchers.
30 Our assumptions have been challenged. We have been able to develop projects in
31 which we act as critical friend rather than critical theorists to workers who come from
32 and come back to HE. As we have outlined in this paper, critical theorists are
33 concerned about the notion of the neoliberal university, instrumental courses and the
34 overt focus on employability, but in reflecting on the impact and outcomes of the MA
35 courses, we find ourselves contributing to current debates in CCI practice during a
36 time of austerity for the sector and re-thinking our contribution as scholars and as a
37 university. Our own more recent research and knowledge exchange work has
38 attempted to “break down barriers to access for segments of the community which
39 are left outside of the campus” (Comunian and Gilmore, 2015: 25) which comes
40 directly from the contextualisation of our work “in relation to issues of power, value
41 (of creative education) and the broader societal objectives of universities” (Comunian
42 and Gilmore, 2015: 24). The challenge for the CCI curriculum designer is in finding
43 balance between the role they are required to play as critical thinkers and as
44 enabling pedagogues in the neoliberal university. This paper has articulated how we
45 have found that our sense of social responsibility as scholars has been developed
46 through our interactions with cultural intermediary students and thus into research
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3 projects and questions, supporting our own development as well as that of the
4 students.
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