Theme: Virtual Learning
Briefing

EMERGING MEDIA EXPLORATION

Theme: Virtual Learning

Briefing: Designing a virtual learning platform for the next decade

Introduction

It is an understatement to say the current pandemic has affected us all in some way. Not least in education. We've had to transform teaching materials to online systems that initially weren't fit for purpose (some would argue still not). Prior to the Covid-19 pandemic, online learning referred to synchronous learning where the teaching is not present and greater emphasis is placed on the materials rather than the delivery of 'teaching'.

This brief looks to solve this problem by re-imagining what might the future of virtual learning become in the next decade to accelerate learning, become ubiquitous and provide personalised co-created opportunities.

Problem Description

As students you've been greatly impacted with this disruption to your learning, social commitment and health and wellbeing. In some instance as teachers, we've observed this cliff edge drop in the lack of engagement, inspiration and communication. Not to mention the deserted campuses and classrooms around the world.

These are serious problems that this project seeks to address by innovating the future of learning.

Virtual doesn't necessarily mean "online". If we abstract what learning is and where it happens, you could consider the brain as a virtual space. So we shouldn't constrain out thinking to merely "online" solutions.

Equally we know that being physically present doesn't always mean the learning is better.

Therefore, we propose the following questions for consideration:

- What is virtual learning?
- Considering online as a platform. What can we learn from other online entertainment platforms? And how can these platforms be repurposed for learning?
- What subjects suit virtual learning? We know "lab" based subjects are difficult to teach online due to the lack of physical interaction such as the medical profession, chemistry, biology, phycology etc.
- How can digital assistants (twins) be used in learning platforms?
- Where does remote learning take place?
- How can virtual lectures and students be used to enhance the learning experience?

Audience

The project seeks to understand three personas of audiences who are studying an undergraduate degree.

1. Young student continuing their education, typically no dependants and
2. Mature students taking extra courses, have a family and might work alongside their studies.
3. International students not local to the area and would often consider Open University programmes.

Output

As the project involves addressing a 'wicked problem' you will need to understand the current learning landscape. You will do this by first

1. Evaluating the current virtual learning platforms – mentors will provide this background knowledge and demonstrate various platforms for you to feedback. You will also conduct your own research. The purpose of this is to gain insights into what aspects of these platforms and can inspire the prototype production.
- Production of low-fidelity/high-fidelity prototype/s of a virtual learning platform.

Production

We are looking for students with skills and interests in the following areas (but not limited to).

- User Centred Design
- Prototyping methods
- User Experience design
- Learning
- AR/VR/XR
- Gaming platforms
- Bots: Artificial Intelligence / Machine Learning
- Design fiction / Speculative design