

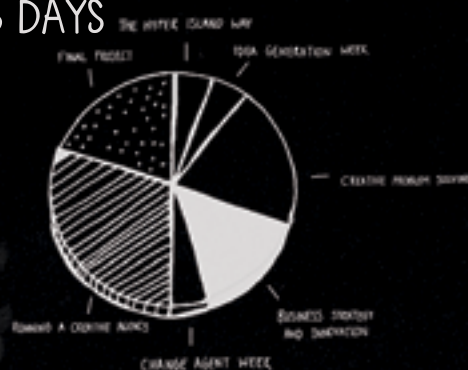
HYPER ISLAND UK



31 INSPIRATIONAL
THINKERS



108 DAYS



2,940
CUPS OF
TEA & COFFEE

GLOBAL CLIENTS



THE
BEST BITS



A FEW TOO MANY
ALL NIGHTERS

WE CREATED 2 CREATIVE AGENCIES
IN A GOOD WAY Vs PUBLIC
HOUSE

47 PRESENTATIONS



23 ADVENTURES
AROUND THE WORLD

About Nesta

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HYPER ISLAND UK

HYPER ISLAND UK PILOT EVALUATION REPORT

CONTENTS

INTRODUCTION	4
EXECUTIVE SUMMARY	5
CONTEXT	8
OVERVIEW ON HYPER ISLAND, ITS APPROACH AND HOW IT IS ACCREDITED	11
HYPER ISLAND PEDAGOGY	14
THE HYPER ISLAND PROGRAMME	15
CO-DESIGN OF THE PROGRAMME AND ENGAGEMENT OF INDUSTRY	16
SKILLS AND KNOWLEDGE DEVELOPED BY STUDENTS THROUGH THE PROGRAMME	22
THE STUDENT JOURNEY AND PERSPECTIVE	28
WHAT WE HAVE LEARNT ABOUT THE IMPACT OF HYPER ISLAND ON STUDENTS' LEARNING AND DEVELOPMENT	39
THE CHALLENGES AND OPPORTUNITIES AROUND PARTNERSHIPS BETWEEN INDUSTRY AND EDUCATION	40
WHAT COURSE PROVIDERS COULD LEARN FROM THE APPROACH TAKEN BY HYPER ISLAND	45
CONCLUSIONS	52
CASE STUDIES	54
APPENDICES:	59
APPENDIX ONE: METHODOLOGY	59
APPENDIX TWO: STUDENTS' PERCEPTIONS ON THE USEFULNESS OF DIFFERENT FORMS OF EDUCATION	60
APPENDIX THREE: STUDENTS' PERCEPTIONS OF THEIR SKILLS	61
APPENDIX FOUR: SURVEY INSTRUMENTS	62
APPENDIX FIVE: ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS	70
ENDNOTES	71

INTRODUCTION

The creative industries are forecast to be one of the fastest-growing parts of the UK's economy in the coming years and the digital and interactive media industry will be a significant contributor to that growth. However, many digital agencies have vacancies which they are struggling to fill and nearly a third of employers in the sector report a skills gap in their current workforce.¹

Hyper Island is an educational model developed in Sweden which aims to meet the growing needs of the interactive media industry by providing students with the skills, capabilities, personal attributes and professional networks to gain employment in the sector. It is co-designed with industry partners and regularly reviewed with them to ensure that it is relevant and up to date with the opportunities which new technologies afford.

Nesta and a number of industry partners funded Hyper Island to set up in the UK because they wanted to understand if specialist, relatively short-term training might offer a successful educational model for young people wanting to join the interactive media industry.

Twenty-three students took part in the UK pilot of Hyper Island which ran in Manchester between May 2011 and January 2012. The pilot programme consisted of a 19-week study period, referred to as Studio Time, followed by a 12-16 week internship. It was accredited by Teesside University.

The Hyper Island model incorporates a distinctive pedagogy fusing experiential, vocational and interdisciplinary learning with students working in teams on briefs set by industry. Hyper Island's trained facilitators work closely with industry partners to design and deliver the programme which aims to enable students to develop the skills, capabilities, personal attributes and professional networks that can help them move into employment in the interactive media industry. Students develop skills such as leadership, effective communication, the ability to manage group dynamics and how to be both team-leaders and team-players. Although the programme does not directly teach technical skills, students are expected to develop these through self-directed learning and peer-learning.

This report was commissioned by Nesta to understand the specific features of the Hyper Island approach and whether these provide improved employment opportunities for its students. It has followed the journey of 16 of the students (aged 18-24) from the UK through the programme. They were interviewed just before they started at Hyper Island about their expectations, career ambitions and perceived skills needs. They were then interviewed at the end of Studio Time, at the end of their internships and then again six months after having completed their internship to understand their progress into employment. Interviews were also conducted with industry partners, Hyper Island facilitators and the assessor for Teesside University. The research methodology is outlined in more detail in an appendix to this report. We also hope that this evaluation will provide useful insights for any organisations wanting to develop strong industry-led educational courses.

Jon Kingsbury

Director

Creative Economy Programmes

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This evaluation sought to identify:

- The impact of the Hyper Island pilot programme on participating students particularly in relation to their skills development, personal development and career progression;
- The specific features of the programme which helped deliver this impact;
- How and why industry was involved in the programme;
- What other education providers could learn from the approach adopted by Hyper Island.

The impact of the Hyper Island programme

The Hyper Island programme was found to:

- **Develop the employability of its students.** This manifested itself in a number of ways: the students' feeling of preparedness for working in the interactive media industry; their motivation to continue to learn and develop after the programme had ended; their skills development and understanding of the sector; and their progress into work with two-thirds of the students either being in paid employment or having set up their own ventures in the industry six months after the programme ended. All of the 16 students apart from one passed the course and of these, by six months after the programme:

Seven had secured paid full-time employment in the industry;

Two were doing paid internships in the industry;

Three had set up their own ventures in the sector and were planning on working in this way for the foreseeable future;

Three were doing ad-hoc freelance work whilst they searched for permanent work in the industry.
 - **Provide a broad range of skills relevant for working in the interactive media sector.** These skills included: creative thinking and the resilience and resourcefulness to navigate ideas to fruition as well as the capacity to communicate them convincingly to others; collaboration skills including an appreciation of how to be effective both as a team-leader and a team-player and the self-awareness that this requires; and adaptability to respond to changes which technologies can bring about. Alongside these wider (soft) skills, students also developed skills in project management, research and forming insights, commercial understanding and a greater awareness of business strategy. The most versatile skill developed, and what was perceived by many students as the most valuable one, was the competency to be adept at learning new things as and when required.
 - **Challenge students' perceptions of their existing skills.** In a number of instances the programme made students reappraise their ability in some skills and also encouraged them to experiment with adopting roles outside of their core specialism, thereby enabling them to learn new things often in areas which they previously considered they were not capable of.
-

- **Build the students' confidence and self-esteem.** Increased confidence was the most frequently-cited benefit of the programme by students. This confidence was developed through: a learning culture where failure was often seen as a positive learning experience; the experience of working on real briefs for well-known brands and receiving feedback from industry professionals; and knowledge, insights and familiarity with some of the working practices, processes and terminology used within agencies.
- **Improve the career aspirations of students.** In some cases the programme clarified or increased the students' career ambitions; in others it has made them more realistic about the timescales within which they can achieve some of these. Before embarking on Hyper Island most of the students were quite vague about their career goals and the sort of agencies they would like to work in or posts they would like to have. The programme enabled students to appreciate the range of career opportunities in the sector and encouraged them to be more ambitious.

How this impact was achieved

There was not one single aspect that delivered these impacts but they were the result of the interplay of a whole range of features which included:

- Having a partnership approach with industry with it actively involved both in designing and delivering the scheme. Students felt that the deep engagement of industry motivated them and provided a sense of realism that was often missing from their university courses;
- Including internships as an integral part of the programme which enabled the students to appreciate the commercial realities of how an agency operates;
- Enabling students to identify their own gaps in knowledge and their development needs and helping them to develop action plans to address these as well as encouraging them to take on roles in projects outside of their core specialism;
- Giving students a sense of ownership over the programme with the opportunity to input into its design and provide suggestions for speakers;
- Instilling a culture where failure was largely viewed as a positive learning experience;
- Avoiding a modular approach to learning with instead students acquiring skills and knowledge through a series of project briefs set by industry;
- Providing the students with the skills for collaborative and interdisciplinary working and giving them the opportunity to practise these in teams;
- Ensuring the programme is expertly facilitated with the right blend of challenge and support.

This evaluation considers the Hyper Island pilot to be successful in preparing its students for working in the interactive media industry, particularly in terms of developing a broad range of skills which accord with those that the industry identify as being crucial.

The intensive and immersive way of learning on Hyper Island is unlikely to be suitable for all students but it offers a very strong route into industry for those students with a good degree of motivation and openness to new forms of learning.

Given the intensity of the programme, its small scale (there were 23 students in total in the pilot programme), and its level of industry engagement, universities and other higher education institutions are likely to find it a difficult model to replicate. Hyper Island also has the advantage of a brand renowned in the industry which has been built up over a number of years. However, there are aspects of Hyper Island's vocational approach and how it partnered with industry which universities and others could adapt. This is covered later on in depth in this report.

Evolution of Hyper Island and implications for short-term, vocational training

Since the initial first-year programme, the Hyper Island UK programme has evolved into a Masters (MA) course but Hyper Island has not changed its learning methodology or had to significantly alter its content to become an MA. This evolution allows Hyper Island to be more financially sustainable as well as giving students a higher level qualification. However, students will require a degree with a 2.1 or equivalent to be eligible to apply. This evolution gets to the heart of the Nesta's initial interest in Hyper Island's teaching programme – is it a finishing school for the most able people, or might it be scaled up to reach large numbers of people, with its teaching practices incorporated into university degree courses or perhaps providing a viable alternative to them?

Most of the sponsored students involved in this pilot indicated that without sponsorship, they would have undertaken the Hyper Island programme only if they could access a loan for the full course fee. This highlights a dilemma for training providers that want to offer short-term vocational courses – many young people are unlikely to adopt them without being able to secure loan finance to pay the fees. Extending the provision of state-funded loans to non-degree courses is controversial, but it may be an alternative way of offering industry-led training to a wider group of people who are currently put off long-term degree courses.

A definition of interactive media

Interactive media, often referred to as digital media, covers a range of specialist companies and jobs including the design and development of websites and web applications, online content, offline multimedia experiences, mobile applications and content, and interactive television. It is a very fluid sector with many overlaps with, and blurred distinctions between, other sectors and as convergence gathers pace such differences are likely to become even less defined. As Creative Skillset, the UK industry body for the creative industries notes: *“Interactive media is becoming not so much a sector as a discipline as its use is increasingly becoming part of everyday activity across all sectors of industry in general.”*²

CONTEXT

An emergent industry in an ailing economy

At the time of writing, the British economy remains in recession and the deterioration in the mood of the global financial system suggests that a more prosperous period of stable growth and high employment is still a distant prospect for the country. Marry this with the unabated economic expansion of many developing countries and the ceaseless movement of their industries up the production value chain,³ and it becomes clear that policymakers and business leaders in the UK will have to think hard about which sectors the UK should focus on to drive national competitiveness going forward.

One such industry is likely to be that of the digital and interactive media sector. According to PwC, digital innovation is set to increase the value of the UK's media industry by an average of close to 4 per cent a year over the next four years.⁴ Internet advertising, for instance, is predicted to grow by 11 per cent between now and 2015, the only double-digit growth rate expected in the UK market over that period. Overall, around 34,500 people already work directly in the interactive media sector,⁵ while nearly a million more work in creating digital content in some form or another.⁶

Driven in part by technological innovations, the proliferation of hardware such as tablets and smartphones, and the increasing sophistication of advertising and social media marketing,⁷ the rapid rise in demand for more digital content will, in turn, lead to greater calls for more and better quality employees in this industry. This includes website designers, mobile and web app developers, online content creators, managers of offline multimedia experiences and designers of interactive television applications.⁸ According to a survey undertaken by Creative Skillset, such is the demand for high-calibre staff that approximately one-fifth of employers in this sector now have vacancies they are seeking to fill.⁹

A workforce up to the job?

While vacancies are widely greeted as a sign of an emergent and booming industry, if they exist too long, they are instead indicative of an unskilled workforce unable to meet the demands of the available roles. This may be true of the digital and interactive media industry. The same Creative Skillset survey found that of those employers who did have vacancies, over half reported that these were proving hard to fill (10 per cent higher than the average for the creative sector as a whole).¹⁰ Although the creative industries have been described as 'graduate rich', with no shortage of workers tussling to enter the sector, there is concern that a notable proportion of these lack the necessary skills and knowledge to operate effectively in the available roles.¹¹ Indeed, research indicates that nearly a third of interactive media employers report a skills gap within their current workforce.¹² Gaps relate particularly to sales and marketing, leadership and management, multi-skilling and the use of software packages.

Problems relating to skills shortages are not unique to the interactive media industry or the wider creative sector. Across the whole economy, businesses of all shapes and sizes are reporting difficulties with the quality of both current staff and the pool of prospective employees available to them. Two-thirds of CEOs interviewed by PwC believe they are likely to face a limited supply of candidates with the necessary skills for their vacancies.¹³ The CBI's most recent Education and Skills Survey shows that one of the greatest concerns for businesses is the dearth of employability skills in the wider workforce.¹⁴

According to their findings, over half of employers are not satisfied with school leavers' self-management skills (such as managing time effectively and taking responsibility) and a third are not satisfied with their personal attitude towards work and their desire to learn and develop. Similar numbers lament the poor numeracy and literacy levels of current and prospective employees.

Such skills shortages are having a detrimental impact on the economy as a whole, on businesses and on employees. The latest report from the World Economic Foundation identifies training and skills development as one of the 12 fundamental pillars contributing towards a country's competitiveness, without which an economy is unlikely to keep up with those of others in a hyper-competitive, globalised world.¹⁵ At the firm level, a major survey of businesses undertaken by UKCES shows that where skills gaps exist in the workforce, this can lead to a greater workload being created for existing staff, a drop in morale and retention rates, an increase in operating costs and a reduction in innovation.¹⁶ For individual workers, not having the necessary capabilities to meet the challenges of work can severely hamper their chances of securing and maintaining staid employment and a decent wage.

This is especially true of young people who are just leaving school or college or who have recently graduated from university. Lacking experience or the necessary skills and knowledge at their disposal, many are finding it difficult to get their foot on the employment ladder. The latest figures from the ONS show that there are now a million young people not in employment, education or training (NEET) and the numbers of 16–24 year olds out of work is more than two and a half times that of the population as a whole.¹⁷

Reappraising education for a new world of work

Against this pressing backdrop, it is critical to explore the reasons why young people lack the key skills needed for work. One major factor that arises time and again in research studies and anecdotal evidence is that of insufficient and poor quality work experience. According to surveying undertaken by UKCES, the most common reason why employers thought young people were ill-prepared for work was because they appeared not to have adequate working-world experience or maturity.¹⁸ Indeed, 56 per cent of the businesses interviewed by the CBI as part of their Education and Skills Survey said they were not satisfied with the work experience of college and school leavers.¹⁹ Young people, too, cited this is a major challenge in acquiring paid work. In one survey undertaken by the Young Foundation, a third of young people reported that a lack of work experience was a key barrier to finding employment.²⁰

Work experience is deemed by many to be important because it provides young people with the critical capabilities they need to succeed in their working lives. A report by Demos, *Access all Areas*, suggests that work experience can build the 'soft skills' and 'character capabilities', including self-direction, empathy and social skills, that employers increasingly prize above technical skills, which can be more easily developed at work.²¹ The report highlights a previous analysis of the 1970 British Cohort Study, which revealed that people who had undertaken work experience in the form of an apprenticeship at age 16 were more skilled, confident and happy than their counterparts who did not.²²

Internships can also help give prospective employees 'the edge that employers demand'.²³ Furthermore, as pointed out by the Chartered Institute of Personnel and Development, internships can be vital for boosting employability and further developing soft skills like teamwork and communication.²⁴ In some instances securing an internship can significantly increase an individual's chances of employment.²⁵

The concern, however, is that the current education system is ill-prepared to deliver opportunities for real-life learning. Only very recently, the director-general of the CBI

criticised GCSEs for producing ‘a proscribed form of learning which seems to be teaching for the test’ and creating young people who are not the ‘rounded’ individuals that businesses are in desperate need of.²⁶ Another Demos study argues that few schools provide sufficient opportunities for children to engage in practical learning and that when they do it is usually only through short-term work experience programmes which are low-quality, menial and often boil down to a ‘tick-box’ exercise.²⁷ This same sentiment is born out in young people’s own experiences. In one survey, only half of young people interviewed felt their education had prepared them for work.²⁸

A shallow set of opportunities for real-world working is a significant problem for prospective employees of the digital and interactive media industry in particular, both in terms of attaining softer ‘employability’ skills as well as harder ‘technical’ knowledge.

Marry this with the prohibitive costs of entering into higher education²⁹ and the emergence of a new generation of young people eager to earn money straight out of school, and many now see rapid courses coupled with paid practical internship placements as a necessary feature of a new learning landscape for young digital and interactive media enthusiasts. The remainder of this report will outline how the Hyper Island model has started to apply this type approach to learning, before going on to consider its effectiveness and what other course providers could learn from the model.

OVERVIEW ON HYPER ISLAND, ITS APPROACH AND HOW IT IS ACCREDITED

The Hyper Island programme includes a 19-week study period, referred to as Studio Time, followed by a 12-16 week internship. Studio Time took place in the basement of a converted warehouse in Manchester which had the look and feel akin to an interactive media agency and the space was organised to facilitate group working.

The fee for taking part in the programme for students resident in the UK was £2,000 which was a rate subsidised by Nesta and other partners. Students on the next UK Hyper Island programme, which has now become an MA, will be charged £8,500 with two bursary places funded by industry.

The programme starts with a two-week induction to give students tools and techniques for working together and generating creative ideas. The students then progress through the rest of the programme working on projects in teams with a brief set by industry. Each of these projects has a facilitator from industry who supports the groups and provides input and challenge to their ideas as they progress.

The internship which follows is a critical part of the Hyper Island programme. It provides the students with the opportunity to develop some of their hard skills, to understand how to apply some of the insights and knowledge they gained in Hyper Island Studio Time in a real working environment and to appreciate the commercial realities of how an agency operates.

Pedagogic approach

Hyper Island's pedagogic approach encompasses two parts: what students learn and how they learn. The programme aims to place equal emphasis on both the content and the process, though from observation it could be argued that there tends to be more weight given to the process.

The content covers theories, information and best practice relating to relevant topics and disciplines about the interactive media industry. These include leadership, project management, conflict resolution, team work, communication, budgeting, presentation techniques and resource allocation. The content is focussed on developing wider skills, capabilities and attributes in the students as well as an awareness of how to apply them.

The process is strongly rooted in experiential, vocational and interdisciplinary learning and involves students working in different teams through four consecutive projects. These projects are designed to enable students to connect the knowledge they gain, the skills they develop and the insights they uncover with the confidence and understanding to be able to apply them appropriately to problems and briefs posed by industry. Each project has a broad theme such as creative problem solving, strategic innovation and running a creative business but draws on a wide range of issues and culminates in a pitch to industry. This project work is interspersed with talks, workshops and discussions involving industry professionals.

Extensive engagement of industry in both the process and content of the programme is a critical part of the Hyper Island pedagogy and has informed the entire programme and is a distinctive element of its approach. Some of the content and approach has also been influenced by a blend of principles and practices from different management programmes.

For example, in its recruitment process Hyper Island employs some methods proven to be successful in the Swedish military.

The skills and attributes students develop through the programme are identified to enable them to become what Hyper Island refers to as a 'T-shaped' person – someone who is a specialist but who also has a broad understanding of different aspects of the interactive media industry and who has skills and competencies additional to those required for their specialism. It is something that has particular resonance with the industry partners involved in the pilot:

We very much recruit on the core competency – the backbone of that T which is whatever area they are focussing on. We do want them to be awesome in one particular area because they will be joining within that role but then, on top of that, we look for, we measure them – and this is for our recruitment process – on their ability to be a great team member and their wider understanding of some of the other roles they are likely to be working alongside. We are really looking for that capability for collaboration and the sort of empathy they might have with others they might work alongside.

Industry partner

The programme is regularly reviewed with industry to ensure it is meeting their needs and reflects the demands of a fast-moving sector where new technologies can arrive and make old tools and approaches obsolete. Hyper Island is very keen to prepare students for being ahead of the trend, and to be confident adopters of new technologies and programmes.

The programme and the students benefit from the Hyper Island brand which has become renowned in the interactive media industry. Hyper Island has the advantage of also offering a range of leadership and professional development courses that have been popular with industry players across the globe and consequently over the years it has built up a strong, global alumni network, which is one of the ways it can develop and maintain healthy links with industry and mobilise industry professionals to help design its curriculum.

The learning experience is intensive and immersive and at times can be quite challenging for the students but it is deliberately so, enabling them to learn through failure and not only to acquire skills but to appreciate their application as well.

This video created and produced by students on the Manchester Hyper Island pilot provides an overview on the programme.

<http://vimeo.com/24615313>

Accreditation

The Hyper Island programme was accredited by the School of Arts and Media at Teesside University. Students who completed the programme received a Certificate in Higher Education Interactive Media Design and Management which is worth 180 credits (a full degree is worth 360 credits). As well as getting some recognition for their studies, it enabled students on the programme to benefit from some of the services offered by the university.

Hyper Island did not need to alter any of their programme or pedagogy to have the accreditation but there seems to be a number of factors which facilitated this:

- Hyper Island had the benefit of working with Teesside on one of their courses for industry professionals and so the university had prior knowledge about and confidence in the way that Hyper Island delivers its learning. In this respect, trust between the two partners had already been fostered;
-

- Hyper Island and Teesside worked together early on to work out how best the students' learning and development could be assessed within the framework of the existing programme;
- The programme was presented to the university for approval in a way that could be understood and appreciated by academics.

The School of Arts and Media at Teesside University works quite extensively with industry on some of its own courses and so could appreciate the opportunities and challenges that industry partnerships can provide and had flexibility when it came to considering how best to assess students' learning on a programme with an emphasis on vocational and experiential learning.

The Hyper Island UK programme has now become an MA and so students will require a degree with 2.1 or equivalent to be eligible to apply. Several students on the pilot programme had not undertaken degrees but engaged well with the programme and benefited from its 'hands on' approach to learning.

As part of this research the students on the UK pilot were asked whether the programme having a Masters accreditation would have made it more attractive and whilst the majority felt it would, there were strong feelings that this should not compromise its distinct pedagogical approach.

Overleaf the pedagogy employed by Hyper Island is summarised as well as the overall programme.

HYPER ISLAND PEDAGOGY

	Vocational learning	Experiential learning	Interdisciplinary and collaborative learning
What this involves	<p>Everything students learn about and do at Hyper Island prepares them for working successfully in a ‘real’ professional environment. As much as possible, Hyper Island aims to simulate a work environment rather than an academic one. The programme aims to be facilitated rather than taught with industry professionals setting briefs for students, supporting them to respond to them and then evaluating the results. Students then move on to work on an internship in an agency for at least 12 weeks.</p>	<p>A major element of the Hyper Island pedagogy is learning through doing. As part of their project work, students work in teams on tasks with minimal instruction on how best to undertake these but generally through experimentation and a process of trial and error, they come to appreciate the best approach.</p>	<p>Most of the working takes place in teams. Hyper Island recruits students to these teams thinking about the balance of characters and temperaments, as one might in a professional environment.</p> <p>Students are expected both during the study period and in their internship to apply their skills and knowledge across disciplinary boundaries and to take on roles that may be outside their specialisation and where they may feel less comfortable. This enables them to have experience of working in and managing multifunctional teams and an appreciation of the different roles in an agency.</p>
How this is developed	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Industry is integral to the design and delivery of the programme;• There are no assignments, homework or other outputs often associated with educational study;• The physical space aims to replicate the look and feel of an agency rather than an academic environment;• Internships are sourced and secured by the students and are an integral aspect of the programme providing an opportunity to practise the skills acquired and developed.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• A culture is instilled where failure is seen as an integral part of learning;• Students are given the tools of feedback and reflection in order to assess and review how they have approached tasks objectively and offer guidance for growth to their peers;• Students create and follow individual action plans which they review during the programme to determine gaps in knowledge and areas for development. Each project is presented as an opportunity to work on skills and competencies students have identified for development.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Students are encouraged to assume different roles when working on projects to appreciate the demands and responsibilities of other agency positions;• Grades are not given on as they are considered to inhibit collaborative working;• Students are given tools to understand group dynamics and they develop self-awareness through feedback from other team members.

THE HYPER ISLAND PROGRAMME

Student selection and programme development		Studio Time (Weeks 1-19) Based in the Hyper Island studio in Manchester							Internship (Weeks 20-35) Based in an interactive media agency	Studio Time (Week 36) Based in the Hyper Island studio in London
Curriculum days	Student assessment day	Hyper Island Way week	Creative week	Project one	Project two	Organisational development	Project three	Project four	Internship	Student reflections on their internship
Representatives of the interactive media industry input ideas and areas of possible curriculum content for the forthcoming programme based on their current and anticipated skills needs.	Prospective students are interviewed and assessed on their suitability for the programme and get a practical feel for the Hyper Island way of learning by taking part in some group activities.	Students are introduced to the programme and learn and practise skills around team-working and collaboration. These include working with reflection and giving and receiving feedback.	Students learn skills around idea generation and idea selection. They then work in teams to apply these to a short brief.	Students work in teams on their first project to develop creative ideas to an industry brief.	Students work in teams on briefs which have a focus on strategic innovation. This could, for example, be developing new innovations in book publishing or mobile communications.	Students learn about the structure and working of an agency as preparation for their next project.	Students gain an understanding of work flows, production processes and the different roles in an agency by being split into two agencies vying against each other to win a piece of work from a client.	Students work on a specific learning and development need which they have identified. This may be done individually or in a small team. They present their research and findings to the group.	The internship is an opportunity for students to get experience and it enables the students to develop some of their hard skills, to understand how to apply some of the insights and knowledge they gained in Studio Time in a real agency and to appreciate the commercial realities of the workplace.	Students give a short presentation on their internship and what they learnt from it as well as their reflections on their host agency.
Two days	One day	One week	One week	Four weeks	Three weeks	One week	Five and a half weeks	Three weeks	12 - 16 weeks	Three days

CO-DESIGN OF THE PROGRAMME AND ENGAGEMENT OF INDUSTRY

One of the most distinguishing features of Hyper Island is its very deep engagement with industry which enables the programme to be relevant, fresh and in tune with the current dynamics of a fast-changing sector. All the industry partners were paid.

The UK pilot was fortunate to have a wide range of industry partners including Google, McCann Eriksson, Channel 4, MTV, Saatchi & Saatchi, TBWA, Sony Games, Unilever, BBH as well as smaller agencies such as Love, Profero, Poke, Brass and Code Computerlove. Employers who participated in the pilot covered a diversity of roles including company founders, managing directors, creative directors, HR directors and education leads.

The industry was involved in the pilot by:

- Helping to co-design the curriculum;
- Assisting in the selection of students for the programme;
- Providing briefs and designing projects for student teams to work on and giving them feedback on their pitches;
- Facilitating some of the learning sessions;
- Delivering workshops;
- Giving talks and hosting visits;
- Coaching the students;
- Providing internships;
- Evaluating the programme.

The overriding motivation for getting involved in the Hyper Island pilot was that the pedagogy and curriculum would provide students with the skills and competences which the industry requires:

I think a lot of what they teach the students is really the way that we run our agency. It is all about collaboration. It is not just about the skills – you can always train for those. It is more about attitude and I feel that they get that.

I liked the model. I think it is very simple but very clever.

There is nothing else in the education spectrum that is doing what Hyper Island is doing.

Other reasons industry representatives got engaged in Hyper Island were:

- Being involved in a teaching/learning methodology which equips students with the skills the interactive media industry requires and the opportunity to input into this;
 - The reputation of Hyper Island and that of its students;
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- The chance to network with other industry partners;
- The opportunity to develop the talent needed in the future;
- The enjoyment gained from working with emerging new creative talent.

Curriculum co-design

Each year members of the interactive media industry have the opportunity to input ideas and areas of possible content for forthcoming Hyper Island courses so that the programmes they offer students are current and are providing the right blend of skills, competencies and knowledge which the industry needs.

For the UK pilot, representatives from the interactive media industry were consulted through two separate curriculum development days which took place a couple of months before the programme began. Individuals who attended these were from quite different parts of the industry – both small agencies and corporate – and they encompassed a diversity of roles including creative leads, designers and individuals with technical roles.

Each curriculum day was framed around what skills and knowledge the partners felt an ideal new entrant to their business needed. They suggested, for example, that there needed to be content around understanding the user experience and being able to have empathy with the client. The industry partners were then given the scope to design projects which could be given to students which would provide some of these skills and areas of knowledge. As part of the day, the participants also gave feedback on a general curriculum outline including aspects that they felt were missing. Following the curriculum days, Hyper Island staff used the insights to develop the curriculum in more detail.

The curriculum co-design and having a deep engagement with industry was something that the industry partners felt higher education institutions should be emulating:

I feel that universities are lagging behind with the way that they teach their curriculums in relation to what industry and clients want now. I think there is a real disconnect. I think they are still teaching the stuff that they taught 15 years ago.

It (higher education) needs to build stronger ties with industry. There is no correlation in my industry between them understanding what our needs are and the actual realities of what we need.

Industry involvement

In addition to the curriculum days, the planning of each project was done in collaboration with the facilitator from industry who would be delivering the project and this planning was done fairly close to its start so that any new or emerging needs of the students and industry partners could be incorporated into it. These industry facilitators were paid by Hyper Island for their work.

During the programme itself industry partners gave talks and ran discussions to provide the students with insights into how their agencies are organised and to challenge some of their preconceptions about the industry. Often industry representatives got involved in more than one way.

Students felt that the deep engagement of industry motivated them and provided a sense of realism that was often missing in their university courses:

I think it is so important to function like a business where you have people coming in to do certain projects and working in industry – not just people coming in once in a while but being surrounded by people who work in the industry. When I was in university, we didn't really get that. Every time you got set a project, it wasn't that realistic and you didn't really believe it. Here you are actually presenting to people in the industry so you are in a mindset about how this would work in a real world. Normal courses I have experienced have always been one way – telling you information but that doesn't really help anyone because information gets dated so quickly. Whereas this is more interactive and we get information that we want to learn which we have to go and find ourselves. It is like a conversation rather than like a one way monologue.

Hyper Island student

The third main project which the students undertook was focussed on running a creative business and illustrates the extent of industry involvement in the programme. Students form teams and set up and run their own creative enterprise. The HR manager of the agency Profero came and explained the different roles in her agency, how the company is structured and how workflows are organised. The students then formed two teams to run their own agencies and had to decide on their leadership and management structure and then compete to win business. Some of the pitches were organised by Hyper Island but the students were encouraged to pitch for new business themselves. The students were also taken to visit several agencies in London to see how a range of agencies were managed. The culmination of the project involved the two groups pitching their ideas to and getting feedback from the European Creative Director of Coca-Cola who flew in from Milan to hear the students' ideas.

A few of the students were critical of some of the feedback given by the industry partners as occasionally it was not specific enough. In this respect, it may have been valuable to give the industry partners guidance about how to give feedback so that as well as getting encouragement, the students could appreciate how they needed to improve and what they needed to do to develop their ideas further.

Skills requirements of new entrants

According to a survey by Creative Skillset, a fifth (21 per cent) of interactive media employers have current vacancies, and of these employers 56 per cent report having hard-to-fill vacancies and hence skills shortages. Three in ten (28 per cent) of the interactive media employers surveyed by Creative Skillset report a skills gap within their current workforce. They also have a number of skills that they find difficult to obtain in applicants direct from education. The broad skills sets most commonly cited as being deficient are sales and marketing (28 per cent), leadership and management (26 per cent), skills in using sector specific software packages (20 per cent) and multi-skilling (20 per cent).³⁰

The Hyper Island industry partners generally felt that there was a dearth of appropriate talent and, in some cases, this was a significant inhibitor to the growth of their enterprises:

I think talent finding and development is the single biggest restrainer for us as a business.

We struggle to find people who have the skills that reflect the modern world where we take on many communication messages in print, in digital and broadcast media so people who can work across all those media is where we struggle to find people.

They identified a broad set of skills and competencies required from entrants so that their agencies functioned effectively and met their clients' demands. Most mentioned the importance of employees being able to collaborate effectively as this was seen as fundamental to how interactive agencies are now producing work.

We very rarely work with individuals, it is all about working as part of the team and that is what we really look for. Sometimes you can get someone who on paper has all the skills but they turn up here, put their headphones on and stare at their computer screen all day. They might be hot at their job but they are not really adding culturally to the value of the business.

Although industry partners recognised creativity as being valuable, they were keen to stress that what was crucial was the capacity to apply this creativity consistently through the entire process and not just at the idea generation stage.

At the same time, agencies are looking for workers to be able to appreciate the requirements which may lie behind a brief and to have the confidence to challenge briefs when appropriate. In creative ideas being put forward, they want to see that these have been informed by insights into consumer behaviour and that they utilise effectively all the possibilities that technology can provide.

Agencies were keen for employees to be able to work across technologies and platforms and who had the capacity to appreciate how all devices play a role in how brands can talk to their consumers with a consistent voice.

The table below summaries these wider skills which the industry partners involved in Hyper Island identified as being crucial for new entrants and against these it can be seen how the pilot aimed to imbue these aptitudes in its programme.

Vocational learning	How Hyper Island aimed to develop this
The ability to collaborate and work effectively with other agency team members to get work produced.	Students worked throughout Hyper Island in teams of different variations and were given a number of tools to understand group dynamics.
<p>Communication skills. Implicit in the capacity to work successfully with other team members is the ability to communicate with them. Communication skills are also required to present concepts and ideas both within the agency and to clients.</p> <p>An understanding of and empathy with other positions in an agency and an appreciation of both workflows and how work is produced.</p>	<p>Students learnt and practised presenting ideas to industry partners in response to agency briefs. These presentations were initially rehearsed internally to Hyper Island staff and students then went to clients' offices to pitch, thereby experiencing as closely as possible how an agency is likely to operate.</p> <p>Students were given tools for effective communication and the chance to practise these in simulations.</p> <p>There is a week in Hyper Island focussed on understanding agencies which includes visits to and talks from agencies. Students also research agencies for their internships and undertake work as part of their internships which gives them insights into workflows. The students share what they learn about the structure and dynamic of the agencies where they did their internships with each other through blog postings and a formal presentation.</p>

Adaptability and flexibility. The capacity to thrive in an environment where technology is constantly changing and altering consumer behaviour.	Students are equipped with the capacity to be able to learn new skills quickly and to understand their application. Each student has a plan which outlines areas of potential development.
Creative thinking. Not just the origination of ideas but the aptitude to really understand a brief and, when necessary, to challenge it. In addition to have the capacity to come up with ideas which have been informed by an understanding of user experience and the appropriate application of technology.	As well as learning and practising ideation and other creative techniques, students get the opportunity to apply these skills throughout the programme. On the second main project, there is a particular focus on strategic innovation.
Commercial awareness. An appreciation of limitations as a result of client demands, resources and budgets as well as broader business understanding.	Students are given budgets as part of some of their project briefs which they are responsible for. Commercial awareness was also developed in the internships.
Understanding of technology. Insights into potential future technological developments and the likely impact of these on consumer behaviours.	Students undertook a project in teams to review different forms of media such as publishing and mobile communication and to examine how these might develop in the future and what this would mean for how people might interact with and use the technologies.

In terms of roles, the project manager role was the post that was frequently cited by Hyper Island industry partners as being hard to fill and one that was becoming increasingly important.

Work experience

Work experience in new entrants was generally valued by the Hyper Island partners, though for some of the larger agencies it was not so essential:

We would always develop people within their role. If we were taking a junior creative, we would have already looked at their work and we know that they are capable of coming up with ideas and they just need a lot of coaching and mentoring and working with more senior members of the team to bring them along. You wouldn't expect them to come in and hit the ground running.

But unsurprisingly smaller agencies require a higher level of skills in recruits and expected them to have some experience:

It (work experience) is absolutely essential. We wouldn't consider anyone without it. If someone has left uni or an educational institution and during that period they haven't bothered to go out and get some work experience I wouldn't even talk to them. It would demonstrate to me a complete lack of motivation and they were not going to have a clue what it is like when they came here.

We don't tend to have graduate programmes or different expectations of graduates so the graduates have to get up to speed really quickly.....If you look at the rate of speed at which they work at university versus the speed at which things go in industry – it literally goes five or ten times the speed. Never mind the quality levels or detail levels that people take them to.

Some agencies were keen to stress that though work experience was valuable particularly in terms of the understanding it can give about how agencies operate, individuals should come to an agency with a very open mind and be prepared to accept new ways of working:

You need bucket loads of an open mind. Therefore people who have done very vocational type studies or have had too much to do with other ad agencies – if they've spent time in a lot of them they are already a bit too structured, they already have a little bit too much expectation of the right process or procedure by which they get to certain things. Really all of that stuff is far less important than someone who is readily inquisitive and able to approach every new thought, every new challenge with a complete blank canvas.

On Hyper Island, students gain work experience through working on briefs set by industry as well as through an internship in an agency for a minimum of 12 weeks which they are responsible for sourcing and organising. This is explored further in the chapter about the students' journey through the programme on page 28.

SKILLS AND KNOWLEDGE DEVELOPED BY STUDENTS THROUGH THE PROGRAMME

Hyper Island's approach to skills and knowledge development

Although students at Hyper Island develop some technical skills for interactive media, the programme focuses primarily on the development of wider (soft) skills and a set of competencies that employers say are often lacking in new entrants to the industry. These include creative thinking and problem solving, successful communication, the qualities to be effective both as a team leader and a team player, as well as particular aptitudes such as adaptability and flexibility.

In its skills development, Hyper Island places a great deal of emphasis on enabling the students to adopt the right mode of thinking for a given situation. For example, it equips the students with some tools and techniques to generate creative solutions to challenges but it also places considerable emphasis on enabling them to be able to think about problems differently.

One of the things that industry feels is attractive about the students is that they may not know how to solve the problem but they have the attitude and behaviour of a problem solver.

Hyper Island facilitator

The programme also stresses the value of the competency to understand how to learn new things – learning how to learn – and for many students this provided them with their most versatile skill.

We were taught how to learn which is probably the greatest skill you can learn.

Hyper Island Student

Having a culture where failure was encouraged and seen as a positive learning experience was critical to developing students' capacity to learn how to learn.

It is really important for us to convey the concept of fail faster because that is the way forward to learn to learn. To get through lots of concrete experiences and then process and reflect on them and generalise and think 'what can I do instead the next time?' 'What alternative behaviours and attitudes can I apply to strengthen myself to have other mental models or other things that I do?'

Hyper Island facilitator

In this respect, Hyper Island sees knowledge as a process rather than a product. It believes students need to have the competency to get knowledge as and when they need it and then to be able to understand how to apply it. This is essential for working in the fast-changing interactive media sector where the capacity to be able to appreciate new and emerging technologies and their application is critical.

If I were to focus just on knowledge as a product, I am afraid it would be out of date really soon because this sector is moving so fast. If I were to make sure that they know HTML 5 suddenly it is not that anymore, it is something else. If I were to put our effort into knowledge as a product, we wouldn't support them to learn how to learn.

Hyper Island facilitator

Students develop these competencies by working in teams on briefs posed by industry with only occasional intervention by facilitators. Such a way of working is seen by Hyper Island as both a realistic and effective way of developing the initiative and resourcefulness which employees in the interactive media sector need.

Research backs up the efficacy of this approach. For example, a recent study by UKCES indicates that competencies for “career adaptability” – where individuals are conscious of their own learning and are able to take active steps to regularly re-skill and adapt to different occupations – are nurtured more readily, not through formal qualifications but through actual experiences of work and through interacting with others in new and unfamiliar environments.³¹

Many of the wider skills inculcated in the students were developed in tandem. For example, Hyper Island believes that in order to collaborate effectively with other people, an individual needs a high degree of self-awareness and these two skills are therefore inextricably linked:

Technology brings complexity and to navigate the complexity you need different perspectives to think innovatively and creatively about things and that requires a huge degree of collaboration and, in order to collaborate, you need to be able to understand how groups work together and people act. In order to be able, as an employee, to work in that kind of collaborative environment, you need to be rather self-aware and to have developed as a person.

Hyper Island facilitator

Students on the pilot were also encouraged when doing projects in teams to adopt less familiar roles so they could appreciate what these entailed and thereby build a broad understanding of the contribution made by different posts. This was an aspect of the programme that industry partners felt was very worthwhile.

Existing skills

The majority of students embarking on the pilot identified business and commercial skills alongside being able to use specific programming packages and software packages as areas they needed to develop. They also rated their knowledge of and connections with industry professionals and understanding of the industry’s production processes as being quite low which is perhaps surprising given that most (9 out of 16) had undertaken an internship in the past. Project management was the skill that most students felt needed development (cited by 14 out of 16 students). It was also something which a number of the Hyper Island industry partners identified as being difficult to find employees skilled in.

It is important to acknowledge that the students went into Hyper Island with existing skills and understanding which would be beneficial to them for working in the interactive media sector. Thirteen out of the 16 students tracked for this research had undergraduate degrees, and nine had done an internship or had done some form of work experience. In a survey carried out by students prior to attending Hyper Island, 15 rated themselves as good or very good at problem solving and creative thinking and a similar number at being good or very good at learning new skills.

However, a number of students went into Hyper Island rating themselves as being very good or good at some skills and during the programme realised this was not the case. In this respect Hyper Island successfully challenged students’ perceptions of their own skills without damaging their confidence and it also enabled them to experiment with learning skills in areas they were less familiar with and discovering capabilities they did not realise they had:

I didn't think I would be a planner or a person like that and I realised that I actually am really organised. I went into Hyper Island thinking I was really creative as well but I don't think I am as much.

Presentations. I thought I was alright but that was something that I learnt that I am quite natural at now. I wouldn't have thought that before. I thought 'yer I can do it', but I wouldn't have thought I could do it so well or I would be as happy to do it as I am. That was a nice surprise.

I learnt that I wasn't as good at pitching and presentation as I thought I was.

Skills developed through Studio Time

When interviewed, students felt they had developed a range of wider soft and hard skills during Studio Time. These included:

- Increased confidence and self-belief;
- Greater self-awareness;
- Improved team-working, collaboration skills and a better understanding of the dynamics of a group;
- An enhanced capacity to reflect on experiences objectively and to learn from these;
- Project management skills;
- Being able to research and develop insights;
- Pitching and presentation skills;
- A better understanding of business strategy.

The development of confidence and self-belief was the most frequently-cited benefit of Hyper island Studio Time by students.

Now I feel quite confident in where my strengths are. I think that is really quite important for this kind of industry where you have got to be quite confident with your ideas because someone will be willing to shoot them down or, if they are really good, they are going to be so new that people find them too different. You need a lot of self-esteem and that is something they definitely taught me.

The most difficult thing was probably getting over my fears. Everyone has a lot of stuff going on and that stops them and restricts them.....it took me quite a while in the Hyper Island experience to learn that I am not the only person feeling this - everyone doubts themselves but I was doubting myself so much that I am actually stopping myself. That took me quite a while to get over.

This confidence was underpinned by a combination of skills and insights developed through the programme but it was also inculcated as a result of:

- Increased self-awareness particularly from feedback from other students and from facilitators;
 - The level of responsibility given to students in a working environment where it was possible to fail and to learn from this;
-

- The experience gained from working with well-known brands and agencies and receiving valuable feedback from them;
- A knowledge and understanding of the industry gained through talks from professionals, visits to agencies, workshops and students' own research.

From observation, the students improved their presentation skills both in terms of their confidence in delivery and technique. However, what was more marked was the level of insight that they brought into their pitches and the strength of the ideas that underpinned them. Throughout the programme the students exhibited a high level of creative thinking – something they rated themselves on highly before embarking on the programme so it is difficult to make a judgement as to how much this increased through the programme – but what was evident was the way in which they were able to apply this creativity appropriately to the briefs and with a greater appreciation of commercial contexts.

Through the programme, students benefited from gaining insights and understanding into the industry's production processes but a few wanted to learn more production skills in Studio Time and to gain some more experience around this.

The students had specific learning objectives in mind when embarking on Hyper Island and seemed in most cases to have achieved these. Below are some examples:

Student skill or development objective for Hyper Island	Extent to which the student felt it has been achieved
<i>To learn more about how to motivate people, and the management side of things, and working with groups and organising large events.</i>	<i>Very much so. Not so much organising large events, we didn't really set up any events. But, yes, everything else.</i>
<i>I want to develop my communication skills with other people. I think this is important, especially when dealing with clients. And my design skills, I want to improve on my ideas, the initial design stage when you're developing ideas for projects.</i>	<i>I've got the tools, now it's just a case of using them.</i>
<i>At the moment, the advertising course is based on your work but then there's the whole aspect of you having to sell your work and to deal with people in your agency and clients, which isn't brought across. The main aspect I'm looking forward to is the people and personal skills and trying to sell your work as well as having a good idea. It's about trying to put your idea across in a good way.</i>	<i>Definitely..... it really ticked the boxes, I thought it's really helped me with pitching and that whole process and building up a story of the pitch.</i>

Skills and knowledge developed through the internship

The skills which the students felt they particularly developed in the internship tended to be harder skills such as web design, research, writing and presentations. Some of these were self-taught and so the Hyper Island principle of enabling students to understand how to learn a new skill is likely to have been valuable for this. Those students who did not develop any technical skills in the internship tended to be seeking roles where technical competence is less critical such as project manager or strategy positions.

The internship enabled the students to increase their knowledge of the industry's production processes, understand workflows and, at the same time, appreciate some of the commercial imperatives which underpin producing creative work such as time and budget constraints.

In the internship students also honed and utilised the wider skills that they gained through Studio Time but the development of these was, in most cases, less marked than in Studio Time in part because their workplaces were less conducive to collaborative working. Students continued to make use of the techniques of feedback and reflection but primarily on an individual basis. The wider skills the students developed were also likely to have been key contributing factors to the confidence and maturity that they demonstrated in their workplaces through, for example, fostering relationships with staff members who work in other departments, taking the initiative to ask for work when they didn't have much on and being critical of the quality of their own work and taking steps to improve this.

Through the internship the students became more aware of the need for rigour in work and close attention to detail. It is something which industry is also keen to see developed in new entrants:

This generation we are dealing with now were either taught or got the expectation or maybe just grew up with different sensibilities – that they don't have to sweat the small stuff. Rigour is not high on the agenda for any of them. I believe they think they can get by with their wits and their ambition and their creativity.....The real, real stars are the ones that are able to apply their brains and their creativity to any given avenue but actually still have the mental rigour to be able to follow it through.

Industry partner

Quite a number of students did not feel that during the internships that their skills were as fully utilised by their host agencies as they could be and that they did not always provide the levels of learning and development they expected. In part, this seems due to students leaving Hyper Island with high aspirations (perhaps in a few cases unrealistic ones) and, in addition, having been used to working in a highly collaborative environment some were then disappointed to find that such practices were not always emulated to the same degree in the agencies they went into. However, it does raise the potential for more effective brokerage given the resource constraints of many of the agencies so that both students and agencies get the most out of the experience.

Students' reflection of their skills six months after the completion of the internship

The students were asked to rate themselves on a range of skills before they started on Hyper Island and then again six months after they completed their internships. The skills where the students perceived they had improved included:

- Working effectively with others in a team (ten felt they were very good at this compared to three before the programme);
-

- Leading a team and managing others ;
- Networking skills;
- Use of specific programming packages and software packages;
- Project management skills.

Though they perceived that their project management had improved, it was still an area where quite a number of students (eight) felt that it could be further developed.

The skills which the students felt they had improved the most were:

- Pitching and presentation skills;
- Business and commercial skills (11 students felt they were good or very good in these compared to five before the programme);
- Understanding the digital media industry's production processes (with all the students surveyed saying they felt they had a good or very good understanding compared to less than half saying this at the start);
- Knowledge of the digital media sector and understanding potential career opportunities in it;
- Knowledge of and connections with industry professionals.

A full list of these skills is included as an appendix to this report.

THE STUDENT JOURNEY AND PERSPECTIVE

The Hyper Island student

The average age of the 16 students tracked for this research was 23 at the time of them entering the programme. Thirteen out of the 16 in the cohort had a degree and most came on the course having recently completed their studies. Quite a number were critical of their university courses feeling that they did not prepare them adequately to enter the digital media industry or utilise the right teaching/learning methodology to imbue the skills and competencies they needed for careers in the sector. One of the students left her university course as she was dissatisfied with its content and the two other students who did not go on to do a university degree made a conscious decision not to pursue this believing that work experience would provide them with a better chance of employment.



"...I missed university and did that on purpose. I know a few people who have been to university to do graphic degrees and have come out and are in a similar position to the one I was in when I left college. You come out and you still have to get the experience. I think I did 11 months at two different agencies and both people at each agency told me that they look for experience and don't bother so much about degrees. They swayed me."

Before starting on Hyper Island, the students were asked to rate their perceived usefulness of different forms of education and learning (see appendix) including secondary school, university, self-directed learning and learning from or with their peers. The majority of the students enjoyed and seem to benefit most from forms of practical and experiential learning such as work experience and learning from peers and so were highly suited to the Hyper Island learning methodology.

Recruitment and motivation for taking part

Most students found out about the Hyper Island Manchester pilot either by word of mouth or through the Hyper Island website and half had heard of Hyper Island before. Communication of the opportunity to apply to the programme could have been improved with more proactive outreach to colleges and the start date of the programme in May was also not good for many students who were still at college, albeit close to finishing their courses. However, communication of the programme's approach and methodology was effective with those students who had heard about the scheme understanding (and indeed attracted by) both what it entailed and how it would be delivered.

The students were interviewed before starting on Hyper Island about their motivations for applying to take part. The four reasons most frequently mentioned were:

1. Improved chances of getting a (better) job in the industry;
 2. The learning methodology;
 3. The reputation of Hyper Island and the contacts in industry it can facilitate;
 4. The opportunity to work with students who share the same passion.
-

Students embarked on the Hyper Island programme primarily to acquire the aptitudes, experience and contacts that will enable them to get a job, preferably a good job, in the digital media industry. Most were also attracted by the combination of Hyper Island's extensive links with industry, the internship and the skills and insights likely to be gained from working on briefs set by industry. They believed that it would improve their employment prospects enabling them to secure either a good internship or a job in the industry:

Hopefully it will make employment a lot easier and hopefully it will give me a better pick of where I want to go rather than just applying for jobs I'm not necessarily excited about or want to be a part of.

The networking is going to be a big part of this programme – being able to get a few more connections to companies and to people who are able to help me further along the line and again vice-versa. That is what I am looking for at the moment. If there is one thing that I have found out after leaving college, it is the fact that it is not always the case of what you are able to do, it is a lot about who you know and people knowing what you are capable of doing.

Students believed the Hyper Island pedagogy was in tune with how they like to learn and also with the needs of industry. They were attracted to a programme where learning was facilitated rather than taught and where individuals had to take a considerable degree of responsibility for their own learning and development:

The method of learning at Hyper Island is so different and for me that is more in line with the way that I work and my mind works.

I have found an institution that thinks the same way as I do.

I've been at uni for three years but I don't feel I am clued up about what is going on in the industry. The industry is completely changing.

I know it is going to be different because there are not going to be any textbooks or homework or teachers and they are not going to tell you what to do. It is going to be very much up to yourself but you are in the best environment to do it and you are getting set briefs. Hopefully it will be like a job – I am expecting it to be like a job only more stressful.

Its relative newness, fast-changing nature and creative aspect were all attractions of the digital media industry and students felt excited to be part of what they perceived to be a dynamic sector that will be integral to how people communicate in the future.

Selection of students

Application to the Hyper Island programme was through a CV and submission of some examples of a student's creative work. Students were then invited to an assessment day during which they got a taste of the Hyper Island way of learning by undertaking a task in a group and then reflecting individually and with their peers on how they carried it out. There was also a brief which required creative problem solving which was undertaken individually and a short interview with a panel made up of Hyper Island staff and some industry partners.

Students were assessed for the programme as much for their potential as their current capabilities. The assessment process also had to take into account the constitution of the entire cohort for the programme and whether it would provide diversity in terms of age,

experience and skills. This diversity is important as the students in Hyper Island are reliant on their peers for some of their learning. Those assessing and selecting the students were a mixture of professionals from industry, Hyper Island staff and a representative of Teesside University.

There are five broad areas which students are assessed on for the programme and these cover:

- **Extroversion.** The extent to which a person likes to be with others and to do things together with them;
- **Emotional stress tolerance.** The extent to which a person is able to tolerate stress and take risks;
- **Conscientiousness.** How good someone is at planning, organising and working towards their goals;
- **Agreeableness.** The positive attitude that a person has to others;
- **Openness.** The extent to which someone embraces change.

After they completed the programme, the students were asked what quality they felt was most critical for a prospective student at Hyper Island to have and the most frequently-cited was openness, particularly being open to new ways of learning. Alongside this, they often cited the need for passion about the industry and an ethos of hard work.

Open-mindedness. The people here are open to themselves, open to others, open to new things; that's what makes it. If you came in here, stuck in your ways and not open to change, it would be tough on you and tough on others.....Everybody here has that curious nature and a bit of a belief that you can change the world.

Assessment of students

Assessment of the students through the programme was undertaken by Hyper Island facilitators and the core staff team. Formal assessment took place by a representative from Teesside University through an interview with the students towards the end of the programme and by observations of their final project presentations (focussed on specific learning objectives and development needs which the students identified) as well as their presentations outlining what they learnt on their internships. There are no grades on Hyper Island – students either pass or fail. Hyper Island believes that the pursuit of individual grades can be an inhibitor to collaborative/team-working. The students also felt the absence of grades facilitated the positive way they worked together:

You feel that you are less trying to tick boxes. The fact that there are no grades as such, I think that does make a big difference.

Saying you are not going to fail, that affects quite a bit because when I was at uni I was always scared about what grade I would get and I didn't relax because of that.

Although the assessment seems to have been fairly integrated into the programme, a couple of students felt that it could be embedded more deeply so that it was almost a seamless aspect:

The final project felt odd. I remember feeling that I had to do this – ticking the box – and I remember feeling that and I thought, hold on, this is like university but this is Hyper Island.

Out of the 16 students tracked for this evaluation, 15 passed. One student did not complete the full course but may do so at a later date. The students received a Certificate in Interactive Media but the accreditation did not seem to have much currency with them even those who did not have any higher education qualifications. This is not to say that it held no value but just that the students' perceived key benefit of the programme was that they would gain the skills, contacts and insights that are likely to help them secure a job in the interactive media sector and this was their main motivation for taking part.

Studio Time

The first week of the programme, Hyper Island Way Week, provides the students with valuable tools that they can use when they work closely together on industry briefs in teams. These include how to give feedback to each other and also how to receive it. During the week, the students took part in simulated challenges to appreciate the different dynamics of team-working and then used these to reflect on their own performance and that of their group.

Hyper Island believes that through such reflection and feedback students build up self-awareness and an understanding of how behaviour can impact positively and negatively on group dynamics. For many of the students, feedback and reflection were a challenging yet very powerful aspect of the programme making them think in new and deeper ways about themselves:

I found the group dynamics with feedback and group reflection really challenging. I have never opened up to anyone, not even my family. Opening up to 20 students I have never met, that is just really hard and really beneficial as well.

The feedback and reflection having to do that, I found it really hard. It is really powerful.

Students progressed through the rest of the programme working on projects in teams with a brief set by industry. The projects varied in length from a few days to a few weeks and culminated in a pitch to industry. Each project had a broad theme such as creative problem solving, strategic innovation and running a creative business but drew on a wide range of issues.

The size and constituents of the teams would change from one project to another. On one, for example, the students worked in relatively small teams of four or five members; on another, they were split into two groups and these operated as two distinct creative agencies competing against each other to win work from a client.

Here two students on the Manchester Hyper Island pilot describe working on a brief:

<http://vimeo.com/29262876>

As part of their project work, students collaborate on tasks with little instruction on how best to undertake these but then through a process of trial and error they come to appreciate the best approach. Initially, it can be quite a frustrating process though the students recognise that it provides them with the valuable competency of learning by doing.

The way they do it, you get frustrated with them because you are near the end of a project and they pop up with this lecture that gives you the tools and methods and that would have been useful two weeks ago but that is the whole point of it. I think by doing things that way it means a lot more to you.

They let you experiment and then they reveal the theory or process behind it. You make these mistakes which I imagine are very predictable to them especially after they have done the course ten times or whatever, but to us it is still like uncharted waters.

An integral aspect of this experiential learning was learning through failure and this, together with the absence of any grades for work, enabled some students to take more risks in their work and adopt a different attitude towards failure. In comparison, the students felt that other courses where there were grades inhibited collaborative working and meant that they were focussed on achieving a grade rather than necessarily on learning and development. Learning through failure was also an aspect of the Hyper Island methodology which was particularly attractive to some of the students.

Time-scales

Although there is no homework in Studio Time, that is not to say that students do not carry out work and do research outside of the programme's core hours (09.30 – 18.00) in order to meet a particular industry brief and indeed it was not uncommon for some of the students to be working into the small hours:

The other day I stayed here till five in the morning – it is not something we do regularly but if it needs to be done, you do it because you genuinely want to do great. You could leave at nine, you could leave at eight and it would still be good. But you don't want it to be good, you want it to be amazing and everyone here genuinely wants that.

At the start of the programme students developed individual action plans which were shared with the Hyper Island team and used to address gaps in their knowledge and understanding which they identified. However, the fact that Hyper Island was so intensive meant that students did not always get adequate opportunity to assume roles less familiar to them and to learn some of the things that would be new but possibly useful to them:

I am not saying this is Hyper Island's fault, it is probably our fault that we didn't time it best but I felt that the production side was always rushed it....but I always found that when we were running out of time, the people that had the design skills, they would do it instead of the people who didn't have the design skills and they could have had the chance to learn.

There is so much pressure on getting it to pitch and having that amazing pitch that you kind of go 'you can do the design' because we have run out of time.

On the final project, the students had the opportunity to work individually or in loose teams and to focus on specific learning needs that they themselves identified. Interestingly, the students by this stage were so used to team working that some were quite disappointed to be working more individually.

On all the other projects, there was a feeling of being part of a team and coming through it.

Students found Studio Time to be an intensive and productive learning experience which meant that they went into their internships with confidence, valuable experience and useful skills. There is no single factor which could be attributed to providing this but rather a combination of:

- The opportunity to work on real briefs for well-known agencies;
 - The learning methodology which accorded with their own learning styles;
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- The ability to work intensively with like-minded individuals equally passionate about the interactive media industry;
- The chance to assume different roles in teams and to work collaboratively;
- The sustained interaction with industry throughout the programme including visits, talks, briefs and informal events.

The internships

Students were responsible for organising their own internships. Nine were outside of the UK and of the seven internships that took place in the UK, three were in the North West and four were in London. Some had more difficulty than others in securing internships but these tended to be the sorts of challenges that any student will face in getting one: companies slow in responding to requests, contacts in agencies being busy and difficult to pin down etc. A couple of students were given introductions to agencies by Hyper Island facilitators and these proved to be valuable leads.

There is no doubt that the Hyper Island brand was influential in enabling some of the students to gain their internships. Several of the agencies indicated that they had chosen the students as they were keen to introduce some of the Hyper Island ways of working into their companies; others were curious about the programme and what it offered. Expectations of Hyper Island students tended to be a bit higher:

They said we had high expectations of you and you really did show that there was worth in a Hyper Island student. People have high expectations of you and sometimes it is scary as you have to make sure you show that.

Hyper Island student aspirations for the internship also tended to be considerably higher with most hoping for levels of responsibility and work that would not usually be given to interns. In many respects the students were keen not to be seen as interns. A number of students did not feel that their host agency was utilising the broad range of skills that they could provide and in several instances the amount of learning which the students felt they gained from the internship was more limited than they would have liked.

I suppose more than anything, it was getting my opinions heard. It was shaking that internship title and actually convincing (people) that you have things that might be worth thinking about; you do have ideas worth thinking about and you do have questions that might challenge the bigger picture. I think, more than anything, it was getting that point across and to be respected in that way.

It is frustrating being an intern because you are going back a step – people think that you have had no experience at all because you come from school but I feel like saying ‘well actually I haven’t been to a normal school. It is as if I have had a year’s work experience’.

Most students were surprised at the different working culture of their agency which in many cases they compared less favourably to the highly collaborative approach of Hyper Island. Facing the reality of how things are organised in some agencies and realising that outside of Hyper Island things may not be so collaborative is certainly not a bad thing, but it does raise the question as to whether Hyper Island Studio Time could have prepared students better for this. It is something that students debated amongst themselves:

There is a bit of consensus amongst a lot of the students that Hyper Island is so optimistic that it is almost misleading in a way. You really do think you can go into the world and change it and do incredible things. The level of optimism and ambition which we fostered in that basement was quite incredible really and then you go into the real world and your bubble has been burst. A few people have said that it is annoying, it shouldn't be like that because you are actually surprised in a negative way when you go into the real world. But I disagree that is a bad thing.....I think it is the agencies that need to change, it's not us.

One thing that they don't teach you and you have to figure out yourself is how to put Hyper Island into the real world. Hyper Island is this amazing bubble where everyone knows how this process works and you don't have any of the constraints of client and budget.

Hyper Island includes a short aspect in their programme of students learning how to be a change agent and how they might imbue some of the Hyper Island ways of working into an agency where the culture might be more traditional. Some of the students felt uncomfortable with the notion of trying to do this. Where students introduced specific Hyper Island tools and techniques into their workplaces, the results were more positive:

I implemented Hyper Island group methods into our group and it seemed to work really well. At the end of it they were 'as much as we laughed at you, it really showed that it worked' – which was really nice.

I have tried to do a lot of the ideation stuff – that is good and I managed to do it with a big group of people but everything that came out was crazy. The creative directors were a bit dismissive of it but all the account people and strategists loved it.

Some of the challenges the students experienced during the internship were ones that were largely outside of the control of Hyper Island such as language barriers, accommodation difficulties, cultural differences and working in an unfamiliar environment.

Out of the 16 students, nine had done an internship prior to Hyper Island or had some form of previous work experience. However, the students felt more prepared and self-assured as a result of Hyper Island in comparison to when they went into their previous internships:

When I graduated from uni, I was a little bit intimidated by going into the workforce or going into creative working lifeThe last agency I worked at they had to train me whereas I could hit the ground running with Hyper.

In the other internships I have had I never felt this – comfortable in my own ability.

What helped the students to have this self-assurance seemed to be a combination of:

- Experience of working on real project briefs with large well-known brands and getting feedback from them;
 - The third Hyper Island project where students were divided into two agencies competing against each other for a piece of work which provided students with a simulated work environment;
 - Increased knowledge of how agencies work through talks from industry professionals and visits to agencies;
 - Awareness of some of the terminology used within the industry which otherwise could act as a barrier;
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- Awareness of the different roles in an agency though some of the students on Hyper Island would have liked the time to experience some of these roles themselves when working on briefs so that they could become more familiar with what they entailed;
- Practical skills such as how to write effective letters and how to develop consumer insights and these were gained from workshops on Hyper Island;
- Researching agencies beforehand to get familiar with how they operate, though for many students the time available to do this was limited.

Students were asked to set objectives for their internships and generally achieved around two-thirds of these. In a lot of cases they had not given adequate thought to these beforehand particularly in terms of how realistic they might be to achieve within 12 weeks.

Student career aspirations

Before embarking on Hyper Island most of the students were quite vague about their career goals and the sort of agencies they would like to work in or posts they would like to have. The Hyper Island programme enabled students to appreciate the range of career opportunities available in the interactive media industry and also gave them the confidence to increase their career aspirations. The following are typical of the sort of responses students gave when asked about their career ambitions before they embarked on Hyper Island and then afterwards.

Before Hyper Island	After Hyper Island
<i>Definitely a career of some sorts with a digital media company. In a way that is helping you to think differently. Organising projects. Sorry if it is quite general.</i>	<i>I am still not entirely sure where I am heading, still got lots of questions to ask myself but the scale of the ambition, it is unbelievable how much that has changed.</i>
<i>I'm not sure what I am going to end up doing but I am sure it is going to involve digital media of some sort.</i>	<i>I've learnt a lot about myself just knowing what my strengths are, what my weaknesses are and understanding what I need to work on and an understanding of what I should be doing. I wouldn't say I was narrow-minded in terms of what I was going to do but I probably was more than I realised.</i>
<i>I want to find out where I fit in. I don't feel I know what is the right position for my skills. Agencies are changing.</i>	<i>I have seen how different agencies and organisations work differently which empowers me to make better, more informed choices where I go next and what I do next.</i>

All the students wish to remain working in the interactive media sector in some way. However, four who originally thought they would work in advertising now have different ambitions.

Student satisfaction

Overall, students felt they benefited from the programme and its content and approach to learning accorded with their expectations.

Sixty-five per cent of the students definitely agreed and 35 per cent mostly agreed with the statement: "Overall, I am satisfied with the quality of the Hyper Island course." This compared a lot more favourably with satisfaction scores for the university/college courses which they had done before this (only 23 per cent definitely agreed and 8 per cent mostly agreed with the statement). Students felt that Hyper Island was more intensive, personal and relevant and also accorded with how they wanted to learn.

With uni, I feel that I have been learning something that has been written in a book ten years ago. In the past three years of being at uni, everything has changed but they haven't seemed to grasp that.

Probably in the three years I was there, I could have learnt what I did in one year.

There were a lot of barriers in classrooms and stuff and that was frustrating. There were times when you wanted to say things in a group and you felt that you couldn't always speak your mind. Towards the end of time, I set up a group on Facebook and I got the class talking that way and it seemed to come together a bit more and we started sharing more ideas and this was towards the end. It must have been the context that we were studying in. It was meant to be this space where we would all work and collaborate but it never seemed to work like that. Everyone seemed to keep their ideas to themselves. It might not have been intentional – sometimes people are afraid to speak their mind, I don't know. It was the teacher doing all the talking.

Students were asked if they would be prepared to pay £7,000 for the Hyper Island course and although the majority of students said yes, it would be dependent on them raising a loan or being able to access funds to do this. Interestingly, most of the students would not have paid the fee initially and only now having experienced the course do they recognise its value for money. This response from a student was typical:

On hindsight, having done it, definitely 100 per cent (pay the full £7,000 fee), but I don't know whether I would have from when I joined. But I definitely think it is value for money.

This raises a number of issues: one is that although the Hyper Island brand is well-known within industry it is not so renowned with students in the UK (half the students had no prior knowledge of Hyper Island before they found out about the scholarship places on the programme). The second is that students perceive that the financial burden on them from university fees is already high and consequently they felt they would have been very cautious incurring additional costs on top of this unless they had assurance of a programme's quality and potential to facilitate employment in the industry. The third is that not being able to access a student loan would be a major inhibitor for many students to participate.

As with any pilot, there were areas students identified that could be improved. The one with the most consensus was around the length of the course with students feeling they needed more time to assimilate what they were learning and to be able to reflect on their development. The amount of interdisciplinary working on the Hyper Island pilot was also occasionally affected by the programme's tight timescales with student teams often having to get the most adept individuals to complete design work because deadlines were fast approaching rather than considering the development needs of the students in the group.

Students' progression

The students were interviewed six months after the completion of their internships in order to understand their progress into the world of work. Fifteen out of the 16 students took part in the interviews and out of these:

- Seven had secured paid full-time employment in the industry;
- Two were doing paid internships in the industry;
- Three had set up their own ventures in the sector and were planning on working in this way for the foreseeable future;
- Three were doing ad-hoc freelance work whilst they searched for permanent work in the industry.

The average salary of those in full-time work was £24,510 and their positions included front end developer, art director, designer and junior planner. Out of the seven students in full-time employment three were very satisfied and two satisfied in their work, though it should be acknowledged that many had only been in post for a few months, or even less, when interviewed. Those students less satisfied in their role were particularly keen to have greater levels of responsibility. Five of the students in full-time jobs secured these with the same agencies in which they did their internships, demonstrating the value of internships as a stepping stone into employment. Four of the students were working/doing internships abroad. Although the programme took place in Manchester, only one student was working in the North West.

The students were asked to reflect on some of the differences they perceived between working on briefs in Hyper Island and in agencies. The most frequently-cited one was the length of time which students had to work on projects with there being more time at Hyper Island. Similar to the students' reflections on their internships, many also felt that the working environment in their agencies was less collaborative compared to Hyper Island.

The biggest difference is definitely time. At Hyper, I feel we had more time to work on projects, and especially more time to think about them. I miss that time as I think it's great for creativity, but I know it's not always realistic to have that much time in a business.

The students who have set up their own enterprises have done so with other Hyper Island students thereby demonstrating the bond that has developed between them during the programme. A number of other students have also indicated a longer-term ambition to set up their own ventures. However, it was a very entrepreneurial cohort from the onset: when interviewed before they started the programme, nine students expressed (unprompted) a desire in the longer-term future to establish their own agency or go freelance. One student who is now working on a venture with someone else from Hyper Island felt that the programme could have considered the potential for students to try and work on internships together with the advantage that they could offer agencies complementary skills.

All the students wish to work in the interactive media sector for the foreseeable future but several of the students who originally indicated a keenness to focus on the advertising part of the industry no longer wish to do so.

The students were asked to reflect on Hyper Island and how they felt that the programme had benefited them. Specific skills that were mentioned include ones around leadership, creative problem solving, networking, communicating ideas, team-working and

collaboration. Most reiterated the confidence that it had given them as well as the insights into the industry and how it operates.

I can reflect now on my naiveté and lack of knowledge of the digital industries before I started the course. I am a million times more clued-up now than I was before, due to the course. I feel like the course was a 'talent manager' as it made me realise how many great skills I have but didn't focus on before. I thought I was good at designing, but didn't really consider how good I was at presenting, strategy, amongst many other things. I got great confidence out of Hyper Island that has given me an attitude of no fear and that anything is possible. I really believe that and would not be where I am now and as happy as I am without the course.

It has had a huge impact on my self-esteem. It has made me think that whereas in the past I thought I was a bit of a dreamer – I had all these ideas that I would not necessarily achieve – now I think I'm capable of achieving them.

The students were asked six months on from their internships what skills they now felt they were deficient in or needed to develop more. There was a range of skills put forward pertinent to the particular work which the students were now doing and these included greater understanding of finances, improved project management and more technical skills but the most consistent view was that what was now required was more and deeper experience, continued development of the skills already acquired and that this was going to take time.

Just knowing my craft more.

I'd love to be a bit quicker and a bit faster in coming up with really good quality ideas. I think that's just something that comes over time. It is a natural thing as well, I think some people have it and some people don't but I do feel like I can push towards it more.

The students' self-awareness developed considerably through the programme with them becoming more objective and balanced about their own capabilities and where they needed to improve. Most believed that they would need to acquire additional skills whilst at the same time continuing to develop existing ones in order to function effectively in the fast-changing interactive media sector.

WHAT WE HAVE LEARNT ABOUT THE IMPACT OF HYPER ISLAND ON STUDENTS’ LEARNING AND DEVELOPMENT

Impact	Key contributing factors	Evidence for this impact
Hyper Island builds confidence in its students both in terms of their own abilities and also how prepared they feel they are to work in the interactive media industry.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• The vocational aspect of the Hyper Island programme and specifically the opportunity to work on briefs set and evaluated by industry, particularly those from large well-known brands.• The learning culture in which failure was viewed as a positive learning experience and where there was the chance to try things out and experiment.• The programme design enabled students to become familiar with some of the language, processes and workflows employed in the interactive media industry as well as to understand the different roles in an agency. This was developed through Hyper Island Studio Time (which included visits to and talks by agencies) and reinforced in the internships.	<p>Students own assertions when reflecting on the main skills and aptitudes they have gained from the programme.</p> <p>Fourteen students out of 16 said they felt much better prepared for working in the interactive media industry after Studio Time than before (the remaining students said they felt slightly better prepared).</p> <p>Observation of the development of the students by Hyper Island facilitators and project leaders and by the researcher – an increase in confidence in many of the students was very evident.</p>
Hyper Island develops the employability of its students so that they have some of the skills, aptitudes, insights and experience valued by employers in the interactive media sector.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• The students learnt through a curriculum co-designed with industry partners so that it meets the sectors needs. The content of the curriculum is regularly reviewed to ensure that it is reflecting current requirements.• The students worked on real briefs during the programme set by industry partners and got their feedback from them enabling the students to appreciate the quality of work industry requires.• The internship undertaken by the students provided students with experience and insights as well as the opportunity to apply some of the skills and knowledge they gained through the programme in a workplace.• Hyper Island facilitated students to appreciate the different roles in the interactive media industry and their requirements. It also broke down some preconceptions of the industry. This was particularly achieved through interdisciplinary working and assuming different agency roles in projects.	<p>Reflections of industry partners involved in Hyper Island who have worked with former Hyper Island students.</p> <p>Reflections of the students themselves who felt they had gained skills, insights and knowledge valuable for working in industry.</p> <p>The students’ progression into employment. Six months after the end of the programme seven students were working full-time in the sector, three had set up their own ventures, two were doing paid internships and three were doing ad-hoc freelance work whilst looking for full-time positions in the industry.</p>
Hyper Island develops wider skills in its students particularly collaboration and team-working, the competencies of being an effective leader, the aptitude of creative thinking and the capacity for self-teaching.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Through Studio Time, students were given tools and techniques to collaborate effectively and this included how to give feedback and also how to receive it. They were then given the chance to refine and practise this skill in a working environment which is highly collaborative.• The absence of grades on the programme – Hyper Island believes the pursuit of grades can inhibit collaboration.• Students learnt ideation techniques and how to apply these to briefs during a creative week in Hyper Island Studio Time.• Students developed a range of wider (soft) skills by project working and assuming different roles in teams.	<p>The students’ own reflections on the skills they have acquired and developed through the programme. For example, before going into the programme only three students felt they were very good at working effectively with others in team; at the end of the programme ten felt they were very good at this.</p> <p>The reflections of industry partners who have had Hyper Island students as interns or as employees/contractors in their agency and what they perceive these students bring to their workplaces.</p>
Hyper Island develops skills in students of project management, pitching and presentation, and how to develop insights through research.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• The project-based learning involved the students working on industry briefs and this required research, forming insights and pitching ideas.• For some students, the internships also provided them with the opportunity to undertake research and participate in pitches for work.	<p>Observation by the researcher of the students’ pitches and presentations at the start of the programme and then at the end of each of the four main projects during Studio Time.</p> <p>Students’ reflections of their skills developments at the end of Hyper Island Studio Time. For example, project management skills were identified by 14 out of 16 students as an area for development and many felt this had improved though in a number of cases it still needed to be developed.</p>
Hyper Island occasionally challenges students’ perceptions of their existing skills and encourages them to acquire new ones.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Feedback students received from their peers, industry partners and Hyper Island facilitators built self-awareness in students.• The students developed individual learning plans both to identify and address gaps in their knowledge and skills.• Students were equipped through the programme with the capabilities, motivation and confidence to teach themselves new skills.	<p>Contrasting the reflections of students of their competence before the start of the programme, at the end of Hyper Island Studio Time and at the end of their internships – in many cases there was quite a marked difference.</p>
The Hyper Island programme impacts on the career aspirations of students. In some cases it has clarified or increased the students’ career ambitions; in others it has made them more realistic about the timescales within which they can achieve their ambitions.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• The interaction with industry throughout the programme enabled students to appreciate more of the opportunities which the industry affords.• The students’ own research about the interactive media industry which was encouraged through the programme.• The internships for some of the students clarified what type of agency and what type of role they would/would not like.	<p>Contrasting the career aspirations of students at the start of the programme, at the end of Studio Time and at the end of their internships.</p> <p>Before they started on Hyper Island half of the students felt that their knowledge of the industry and the potential career opportunities within it could be better developed; after the programme all students felt they had a good or very good understanding of this.</p>

THE CHALLENGES AND OPPORTUNITIES AROUND PARTNERSHIPS BETWEEN INDUSTRY AND EDUCATION

Hyper Island is one model of engaging with industry to provide a learning programme which equips students with some of the skills and competencies needed to work in the sector. Within higher education there are other approaches including:

- Bespoke degree programmes or modules designed by businesses in order to prepare students for their positions. One example of this is a three-year BSc course funded by Morrisons, where students spend half their time working and half studying, and a GlaxoSmithKline-sponsored module on the University of Nottingham's chemistry degrees;³²
- Degree programmes and courses designed in partnership with local businesses in order to fit their skill needs. Many of these become 'industry-accredited', for instance the CISCO accredited courses at the University of Sunderland's School of Computing and Technology;
- Foundation courses, placements, internships and sandwich degrees, where students spend a portion of their university time working directly with a company.

Some universities have also sought to create initiatives to encompass different aspects of university-business relationships. For example, Liverpool John Moores University's 'World of Work' programme is integrated in every degree course.³³ This gives students opportunities to undertake placements and visits to companies, and offers academic modules that have been created with the input of employers. Others such as the University of Manchester pay close attention to supporting their students upon graduation. Their careers service created the Manchester Graduate Internship Programme (MGIP) to help the university's graduates secure employment for between 4 and 12 months in graduate level positions.

It also should be acknowledged that higher education's engagement of industry in course design and delivery is not a new phenomenon.

If you talk to most academics in the art and design field about Hyper Island and show them (the model), they say "that's what we used to do in the 70s and 80s. That's what we used to do." I was talking to a man the other week who was a food scientist and he was interested in this as a model and he said, "that's how I used to work with my post-graduate students. Unilever used to come in, they'd set the projects and it was all in small teams." A lot of that has always been there and I think Hyper Island have rediscovered it.

University course co-ordinator

Benefits

Business-university collaboration provides benefits for both businesses and higher education institutions:

For businesses:

- Having a say in the content of university courses means that students are taught the skills most relevant to their current and future needs.³⁴
- Where industry creates and sponsors bespoke courses, this helps them to identify talented young people early on, develop a secure talent supply chain and reduce long-term employee turnover by nurturing loyalty among new graduates who have been with the company from their late teenage years.³⁵ This can lead to substantial savings in recruitment costs.³⁶
- An evaluation of a government graduate internship initiative indicated some promising findings. The companies interviewed thought the students brought new energy and fresh insights to their work, and they exceeded their expectations.³⁷

For students:

- The work experience involved with sandwich programmes, placements and internships help students get a taste of employment and can ease their journey towards the world of work. As well as improving their employment prospects, it is also argued that these work experience initiatives improve academic performance.³⁸
- Findings from a CBI/UUK survey suggest that students who experience such initiatives find them useful.³⁹ Ninety-five per cent of students say they find internships/placements useful; 84 per cent say they find one-year sandwich courses useful; and 91 per cent say they find skills development embedded in university courses useful.
- Students from industry-accredited courses are close to three times as likely to secure employment within the digital and creative industries within six months of graduating than are their counterparts who have not enrolled on these courses.⁴⁰
- Students who have completed sandwich placements have, six months after graduating, an average salary which is 8 per cent higher than those who didn't.⁴¹ They are also more likely to enter employment six months after their graduation.⁴²
- Internships have proven to be effective at boosting students' employability. Of the graduate vacancies with leading employers in 2012, it is estimated that 36 per cent will have been taken by people who already worked for the organisation in their studies.⁴³
- Stronger links between universities and businesses arguably help to open up higher education to those from less affluent backgrounds.⁴⁴ Bespoke courses created and sponsored by employers often pay for a portion, if not all, of a student's studies. Likewise, industry-accredited courses or those that entail an element of work experience attract poorer students who sense that these will significantly boost their chances of gaining employment at the end of their studies.

There can also occasionally be benefits for the wider economy of such business-university relationships. For example, the University of Abertay, Dundee, is credited with boosting the games and interactive media industry in the Scottish city⁴⁵ where partnerships between the university and the industry are estimated to have helped create 3,800 jobs and £40 million

in annual sales. Similarly, the success of the digital media industry in Brighton is thought to have been a result of the efforts taken by the university to align its courses with the needs of local businesses.⁴⁶ The number of digital media companies in Brighton is now thought to number more than 800.

Challenges

Challenges for these partnerships for businesses, universities and students include cultural, practical and resource ones.

For businesses:

- SMEs may face considerable barriers to engaging with universities, including having a lack of know-how or resources.⁴⁷ Likewise, universities may find it difficult to work with SMEs because of their 'volume and variety'.⁴⁸ This can be a particular problem for the interactive media sector and the wider creative industry since SMEs make up a large proportion of their businesses.
- Many businesses, particularly those in the rapidly evolving creative industries, are uncertain about their longer-term skill needs. This can make it challenging for them to work alongside universities in designing or creating new curricula.⁴⁹

It can be a bit tricky because it is supposed to be designed by industry and be industry-led but when industry is putting demands to you that you know, based on your experience, aren't really the answer, are you going to try and be clever and think you know better?..... So, they were saying, 'we want people to know Flash' and you then look at the course and think this is going to be a three-year programme and there is nothing that we can plan for now that is going to be true in three years. So we have to look at other ways. So we can start playing around with Flash but what we focus on is a rich media experience rather than a tool.

University course co-ordinator and Hyper Island facilitator

- Employers can find the time involved in setting up projects and overseeing students and the effort required to form and maintain relationships with sometimes numerous higher education institutions a significant barrier.⁵⁰

There are also specific challenges for the interactive media industry in engaging with education. One is the difficulty of being able to predict and articulate the future needs of the sector when change is so rapid. For example, one agency founder interviewed for this research noted that he had introduced two completely new positions in his company in the last year, ones that he did not anticipate making, but he found he needed them in response to how the industry is developing.

The sector is characterised by small, entrepreneurial agencies which, though they may have a keenness to support education to help foster the talent they require, have limited time and resource to do this. Increasing requests from both education institutions and students will add further challenge.

For universities:

- In terms of industry-accredited degrees, prescriptive requirements can often constrain the freedom of academics to design innovative courses.⁵¹ In 2008, the University and Colleges Union criticised government proposals to expand the number of employer-led courses, saying that: *“The creeping marketisation of higher education seems only concerned with a bottom line and treating students as commodities. Identikit institutions in all our towns and cities churning out graduates in a couple of years is not what the country needs to protect its proud position as world leader in teaching excellence and innovative research.”*⁵²
- The process of validating changes to courses within higher education institutions can take time and means that it is difficult for them to respond quickly to changes sought by industry.

Universities are getting better in terms of validation but traditionally when I started it was a year-long process to validate something. So, if you wanted to make a change to the course plan that was more than 25 per cent, it took a year to rewrite it, have it validated by an external validation board and all that. So, it was a very slow process. Universities are getting better with that so some can revalidate something in two or three months. Still, even over six months things can happen in the world around you that makes something you planned towards the end, like the last couple of weeks of your teaching makes it slightly irrelevant. So, if you plan that too specifically in the official documentation then you are stuck. I tried to see how fuzzy I could be in my module guides/module descriptors to allow for that flexibility.

University course co-ordinator

- Some universities do not have the resources or the time to manage these relationships. For instance, while some higher education institutions have a clearly identifiable person or team that manages their partnership with businesses, many are unable to provide this executive reference point. This can make it difficult for the two parties to spark and sustain their relationships and contributes to the perception of universities as ‘unresponsive’.⁵³ It can also lead to confusion internally.⁵⁴
- Barriers for universities also include those of culture. Trying to encourage staff and academics to collaborate more with employers involves a major shift in mind-set, something which many are either unwilling or unable to experience.⁵⁵
- There are structural challenges for higher education institutions such as being able to allocate the space in the timetable to enable students to work more intensively on industry-based projects and having cohort sizes conducive to collaborative working.

With larger cohorts with your centrally timetabled systems, having a whole day with the students where they are together as a team in a Hyper Island type environment is very, very hard to replicate now in a mass HE system. Some universities do it, some universities are still retaining creative programmes where there is only maybe 30 students on the programme; others, generally most, will have about double that so that becomes a challenge in those kind of environments.

University course co-ordinator

For students

There are also challenges for students. These include being able to source and secure internships when the demand for these is increasing. There are also challenges around being able to navigate through the myriad of available courses to find the ones that may offer effective industry engagement. The researcher reviewed a range of interactive media courses on the UCAS website and generally found the descriptions of the courses quite poor with most universities talking about what students will study on the course but few on how the course will be delivered.

One of the other issues behind this, from a student's perspective, is a student trying to pick a course like this has no way of making a comparison and testing the claims..... How does a learner choose a course? How do they assess, from knowledge they are working with, if this really is an industry-facing course where they are going to have a high degree of engagement with industry. It's a difficult one for them to know because all university courses will tell you that they are industry-focussed because that is part of the discourse now selling higher education.

University course co-ordinator

WHAT COURSE PROVIDERS COULD LEARN FROM THE APPROACH TAKEN BY HYPER ISLAND

There is a lot of innovative and pioneering work taking place in higher education to equip students with the skills and competencies for the interactive media sector. These are some reflections on lessons learnt from Hyper Island's approach which may be useful for other course providers.

The main lessons learnt are to:

- Create an environment conducive to interdisciplinary and collaborative learning;
- Give students a sense of ownership of the programme;
- Set the culture and ethos of the programme early on;
- Enable students to identify their own gaps in knowledge and development needs;
- Give students the tools for collaborative and interdisciplinary lifelong learning;
- Have a partnership approach with industry;
- Provide an intensive experience but leave space for students to reflect on their learning;
- Provide internships as these can enable students to face commercial realities

Create an environment conducive to interdisciplinary and collaborative learning

One of the most intangible, yet perhaps essential, components of the Hyper Island methodology is the learning environment and culture that helps students reach their potential, work effectively on project briefs together, trust each other and grow with and through the programme.

What Hyper Island does is that it creates the right environment for the students to learn. It teaches them how to learn from the experiences that they are going through but then it brings industry into that environment, into an environment that it can control and an environment that gives the students the right level of support but an environment that is absolutely from day one dedicated and focussed on being part of the industry that they are going to be joining. I think that is where they get it really right.

Industry partner

This culture seems to be developed in part by:

- Making the students aware beforehand, particularly at the induction day, about the style of learning at Hyper Island so that they assess if it fits in with their own learning style;
 - Equipping the students with crucial skills to work effectively together such as the skills of group facilitation, giving and receiving feedback, resolving conflicts, and working in teams;
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- Building up the students' competencies in group-work by giving them smaller tasks at the start of the programme before they go on to work on major projects;
- Giving the students a significant amount of responsibility both for their own learning and that of the group;
- Encouraging a culture where failure was largely viewed as a positive learning experience and not providing grades which can inhibit collaboration;
- Avoiding a modular approach to learning and instead facilitating the students to make links between what they learn across subject boundaries;
- As much as possible enabling students to experience things rather than to be told things;
- Encouraging students to consider what might be gaps in their knowledge or areas for development and working with their peers to address these;
- Having some major brands amongst the industry partners involved in the programme as these can act as a significant motivation for the students.

Although some of this may sound as if it means simply handing over to the students and stepping back, it requires considerable preparation and co-ordination by the course provider. As a Hyper Island student put it:

The group dynamics – that is mostly what Hyper Island is. Working with groups, working with change, working with conflict and you have an open space and you are learning what you want to learn and developing what you want to develop. Education needs to understand that you can do that in a structured and supportive way. It might sound like chaos but Hyper Island is in fact very structured.

Hyper Island student

On the part of the education institution this involves working out the level of support and intervention given to the students on each project – on Hyper Island this generally decreased as the programme progressed which enabled the students to take more ownership of their learning and to focus on the project before them. It also means that the course is essentially facilitated rather than taught.

The tension should be between the members in the team and the goal of the task rather than the tension being between the members of the team and us. We slowly back off so that the tension is towards the task and the goal. The thing that drives the students forward is the motivation towards the task and if we wouldn't back off, the tension would be between us and them instead of the challenge.

Hyper Island facilitator

Careful consideration also has to be given to the constitution of the groups working on briefs. In Hyper Island this was done to provide a mix of personality types, skills and aptitudes and to enable those students who had specific learning objectives to be with students from whom they might develop these.

There are a few things to acknowledge here. One is that the Hyper Island group with 23 students was relatively small (though on Hyper Island programmes in Sweden the groups can be considerably larger) and no doubt this facilitated collaboration and the bond that developed amongst the students. Another point is that this was a highly-motivated group from the onset whereas some course providers might need to work hard to build this enthusiasm.

Twenty people who all want to be there and who have the same passion. That's the biggest reason why I love Hyper Island because of the students there. There wasn't a slacker, there wasn't someone who didn't want to be there.

Hyper Island student

It is also important to bear in mind that students can get frustrated with some of the ways of working but this frustration is an inevitable by-product of the learning methodology.

Give the students a sense of ownership over the programme

Giving students a sense of ownership of the programme enables them to take more responsibility for their own learning and development. On Hyper Island this was facilitated by enabling the students to input into the programme by, for example, being able to put forward possible speakers and to identify training opportunities. There was also a forum made up of student representatives who met with Hyper Island staff to discuss ideas for improving the organisation of the programme or aspects of the physical space.

Set the culture and ethos of the programme early on

From the experience of Hyper Island, it seems that introducing students to the intended way of working early on in the programme helps instil the right culture. Hyper Island gave students a reasonable flavour of the programme in the induction day and then the first week of the programme, Hyper Island Way, enabled the students to be more open with each other and bond quickly as a group.

This was done through:

- Group dynamic activities so the students could appreciate how they work in a group and to break down barriers between them;
- Coaching on how to give feedback and how to receive it;
- Negotiation of ground rules for how the group will work together during the programme and providing skills on how to resolve problems;
- The chance to experience the skill of reflection, individually and in groups, to appreciate how to make objective judgements about experiences.

For many of the students the first two weeks were both the most challenging and most profound aspects of the programme as they learnt about themselves and how they behaved with other people and had to open up to other students about their insecurities.

The first couple of weeks really differentiate it from my university. It is the fact that you are looking at yourself and you get that chance to analyse yourself. I think without those two weeks it would be a completely different process.

Hyper Island Student

In this respect, it is crucial that these aspects are expertly facilitated as they can be quite demanding emotionally.

These methods and models are like dynamite and you need to handle them in a constructive way or it could go so wrong if you are not professional enough as a facilitator.

Hyper Island facilitator

Initially some of the students were keen to move straight into working on industry briefs but without this grounding they would be lacking the skills, self and group-awareness and ground rules crucial for effective team-working later on.

Enable students to identify their own gaps in knowledge and their development needs

The students on Hyper Island largely determined themselves where there were gaps in their knowledge and how to fill them and this was done through individual action plans which they reviewed throughout the programme. Each project that they undertook would result in skills, knowledge and experiences as well as realisation of gaps in their knowledge and competence which they should focus on in the next project thereby generating in them a sense of responsibility for their own educational development. They primarily relied on their peers to provide them with support in areas they felt they needed development and this meant that students took a lot of responsibility both for their own learning and that of the group. For example, the students would often reprimand other students who came late or who missed a session. The researcher also witnessed the students after just the first week of the programme taking the initiative to organise a group reflection, without any prompting from the Hyper Island team, to review how they had gone about organising an event the day before.

It makes you want to work and learn and do well because people around you rely on you and you are relying on them. You don't feel like an individual, you feel like you are growing with people. Everything else I have done it is you – it is you who sits the exam, it is you who does the work, prints it and hands it in. In this it's like shared and you have to rely on others and with that reliance everyone learns from each other. That is the situation you are in.

Hyper Island Student

Give students the tools for collaborative and interdisciplinary lifelong learning

During Hyper Island Studio Time, students were given a range of tools and techniques which would help them work together, resolve conflicts, originate ideas and present their concepts. Sometimes this involved employing external trainers who coached the students on specific techniques such as those around idea generation and idea selection and then gave them tasks to practise these.

Amongst the most utilised tools were those of reflection and feedback: students being able to reflect in a supportive environment on their experiences and offer their peers guidance on how things might be done differently. After undertaking tasks or following the pitching of proposals in response to an industry brief, students would go through this process of reflection and feedback initially individually and then with the team they worked with.

Some of the students felt there was scope on Hyper Island to have some refresher sessions to remind them about some of the techniques taught earlier in the course as the intensity of the programme meant that they could easily forget these.

Have a partnership approach with industry

Hyper Island enjoys an ongoing relationship with a broad range of interactive media agencies. This seems to be effective as:

- Industry is engaged as a partner with the potential to be involved in different aspects of the programme – from helping to choose the students for the programme to delivering briefs;
- Hyper Island is proactive in seeking the involvement of industry in helping refresh its curriculum and content in response to new and emerging industry needs and it has the flexibility to take on board new ideas and approaches;
- Its curriculum and culture accords with the wider skills industry requires from new entrants – industry feels comfortable that it is delivering students equipped with the skills and competencies they need.

One reason for industry partners' ongoing involvement in Hyper Island was its partnership approach. Companies and agencies they engaged with were not just there to give a talk or listen to some pitches and then go but there was instead the opportunity for them to have a sustained relationship with the organisation.

There needs to be an acknowledgement that it is a partnership....We are a business at the end of the day and we are going to work with people that are going to meet us half way. I don't think education gets that.

Industry partner

Hyper Island obviously has an advantage in that it has extensive links with industry and also offers training direct to agencies and, as such, can provide additional value to partners such as insights, experience and other industry contacts but there may be other ways that education providers can deliver value. For example, one agency interviewed for this research suggested that there is a largely untapped opportunity for students to do some research as part of their higher education course that could be co-commissioned with industry.

There are some practical considerations which a course provider would need to consider when trying to engage industry:

- To plan in advance and when a date, time, project etc., has been agreed to stick with these (one industry partner mentioned its frustrations that a course provider kept changing plans) but, at the same time, to have some flexibility to be able to accommodate last-minute changes by the industry partner;
 - When consulting with industry around course content and approach to be open to radical ideas and to follow-up on outcomes so partners are kept informed about how their ideas have been used and developed;
 - To enable industry partners to meet with the students informally following their involvement. This is obviously subject to the partner's time and willingness but helps cement their relationship in the programme;
 - To provide opportunities, if at all possible, for industry representatives to meet each other – this was seen as a benefit of the days which Hyper Island held to inform the content of its curriculum.
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There may be scope to experiment with other ways of engaging industry partners who are likely to be time-poor. For example, one industry partner who was setting a brief for the students at Hyper Island was not able to come up to Manchester from London as planned and instead set the brief to the students and reviewed their pitches by video conference over Skype. It worked quite well and was an efficient use of his time.

The students on Hyper Island appreciated feedback from industry partners that was constructive and gave clear areas for improvement which they could then take to the next project. In this respect, representatives from industry may benefit from being coached on how to give feedback to students:

The students seem to respond better to feedback that was quite blunt and harsh. We had one person from a company and his feedback was always super-positive and gushing and I did hear the students criticising that a bit.

Hyper Island facilitator

Provide an intensive experience but leave space for students to reflect on their learning

The Hyper Island programme was intensive and the students benefited from this but they felt that they needed some time between projects to reflect on their learning, to assimilate some of their insights and to repurpose some of the outputs from project work for their portfolios. It should also be considered that the Hyper Island group of students were on the whole highly motivated and had a strong work ethic before they came on Hyper Island and so, on the whole, they enjoyed the immersive nature of the programme – other students may find it more challenging.

I think a little time away from Studio Time would improve it – just having time to clear your head between projects and to be able to think about what you have learnt. As soon as you move onto the next thing, you obviously give that priority and it is easy to forget stuff. Just giving things time to sink in would be quite useful.

Hyper Island student

The first two weeks of Hyper Island were particularly intensive and introduced the students to a range of skills valuable for the rest of the programme. The students felt that there was scope later in the course to revisit some of these again so that they had the chance to explore them more deeply.

Internships give a valuable opportunity for students to face commercial realities

The internship was a valuable part of the programme and provided an opportunity for the students to consolidate what they learnt in Studio Time and apply it in a commercial context, to identify additional gaps in their knowledge and appreciate how agencies responded to briefs and organised workflows.

There are a number of factors which seem to create a good internship.

For the students these include:

- Having adequate time to organise and prepare for the internship;
 - Being prepared for the internship by researching the company thoroughly beforehand;
 - Being clear about their learning objectives and development goals for the internship and negotiating these with the agency beforehand;
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- Having the confidence to be proactive in asking to get involved in some of the aspects of the agency's work and requesting work when they don't have any;
- Being prepared for some of the cultural differences and ways of working beforehand and coming into the agency with an open mind and a willingness to explore other ways of working.

For the hosting agencies these include:

- Being clear about their objectives for the internship and negotiating these with the intern beforehand and taking time to explain the working practices of the agency;
- Nominating a mentor or single point of contact for the student and this individual having the time to provide support and guidance on the student's development;
- Being prepared for the intern and taking steps to make the intern feel an integral part of the team;
- Holding regular review meetings between the intern and the agency to discuss progress, get feedback and raise any concerns;
- Giving the intern constructive feedback on his/her work to help their development.

Students from Hyper Island have the advantage that they have a brand widely recognised within the industry. However, it still took them time to secure and organise an internship. The time and timing of the search for internships are important issues for anyone including an internship as part of a learning programme as students need first to have been exposed to a range of agencies and organisations and positions before being in a position to determine the most suitable place for their internship.

Some students were critical of Hyper Island over the lack of support they felt whilst undertaking their internship and this would be also something important to consider in the design of any internship programme. This support may only need to be encouraging emails or monthly Skype calls to check on how people are doing and it could also be provided by enabling the students to support each other as some of the difficulties they may experience such as acclimatising both to a different working environment and a different way of working is something which they might empathise with each other on.

CONCLUSIONS

The confluence of increased tuition fees with students likely to be even more discerning about the courses they choose, a third of interactive media employers reporting a skills gap in their existing workforce, and young people needing to demonstrate work experience to escape adding to the statistics of rising youth unemployment means that the Hyper Island model has particular current pertinence.

Employers from the interactive media sector interviewed for this evaluation are calling for a wider set of skills in new entrants and this is reiterated in other research studies. Alongside the skills required for a specific role, they are looking for broad competencies which enable individuals to function effectively in the workplace and take advantage of the opportunities that emerging technologies afford. These include the capacity to collaborate with others, the resourcefulness and initiative to be able to steer ideas to reality, the ability to communicate convincingly both to colleagues and clients, and perceptibility about future developments in technology and how they might impact on consumer behaviours.

This evaluation has shown that the Hyper Island pilot was effective in inculcating these wider skills in its students and that the development of this skillset was inextricably linked to the development of the right mindset. The programme was expertly designed and facilitated so that students had the right blend of challenge and support and were encouraged to take increasing ownership of their learning and development. There was not one main aspect that gave the Hyper Island pilot its efficacy but rather it was the interplay of a whole host of features – from the absence of grades (the pursuit of which can often impede collaborative working) to having a culture conducive to interdisciplinary working.

As well as providing students with valuable skills, Hyper Island also gave them increased confidence and many considered that this was the biggest benefit of the programme. This confidence manifested itself in a number of ways: the students' feeling of preparedness for working in the interactive media; their motivation to continue to learn and develop often in areas outside their core speciality; and, in a number of cases, greater and more defined career aspirations.

Hyper Island is an educational model which seems to particularly work for students who have an affinity with more practical and hands-on approaches and who are likely to enjoy working in an intensive and immersive learning environment. As many of the Hyper Island students in this study identified, it also requires an open mind and a willingness to engage with less familiar forms of learning. Although it was not tested extensively in the pilot, Hyper Island has the capacity to provide an alternative route into industry for students who may not be attracted to university but are highly motivated.

How accessible initiatives such as Hyper Island are to students is dependent on them being able to access appropriate funding such as student loans, but also the support needed to navigate an increasing number of courses in interactive media so that they can determine the ones best suited to their needs and learning styles. It is telling that most of the students involved in this pilot indicated that only having undertaken the Hyper Island pilot would they have paid the full course fee assuming they could access a loan to do this. This highlights a dilemma for training providers that want to offer short-term courses – young people from diverse backgrounds are unlikely to adopt them without being able to secure loan finance to pay the fees. Extending the provision of state-funded loans to non-degree courses is controversial, but it may be an alternative way of offering industry-led training to a wide group of people who are put off long-term degree courses.

Given the intensity of the programme, its small scale (there were 23 students in total in the pilot), and its level of industry engagement, universities and other higher education institutions are likely to find it a difficult model to replicate. Hyper Island also has the advantage of a brand renowned in the industry which has been built up over a number of years.

However, there are messages from this study for these institutions from both students and industry. The overriding one is that there needs to be greater engagement of industry in creative courses to ensure that their curriculum and pedagogy has relevance and is delivering the skills and aptitudes in entrants that the sector needs. A CBI and UUK survey⁵⁶ suggests that more than a quarter of students want to see employability integrated within their degree course. Hyper Island has shown that to do this effectively means engaging industry at a curriculum design stage and having the flexibility to refresh the curriculum in response to changing needs. Although there are challenges in partnering with industry, existing good practice within higher education shows it is feasible for a university department to do this though it does require a willingness to overcome barriers – both practical and cultural – to make it happen.

What is also very evident from this study is that with the rapid and ever-increasing rate of turnover of new digital technologies, those delivering courses in this sector need to give at least equal consideration to how students learn as to what they learn. Yet when the descriptions of undergraduate interactive media courses were reviewed, most seemed to focus on the latter. One CBI report notes that the content of university courses simply cannot keep up with new innovations, meaning that the knowledge that university students have worked hard to accrue over the course of their studies may already be redundant upon graduation.⁵⁷ With this in mind, Hyper Island's emphasis on facilitating students to become adept at learning new things and imbuing in them some of the characteristics crucial for this, such as flexibility and adaptability, is an effective approach.

Whilst Hyper Island is focussed on the interactive/digital sector, its vocational approach seems very suitable to other creative disciplines and could help address the lack of skills, knowledge and general employability from university graduates in some of these other industries. The Livingstone–Hope review noted that 58 per cent of digital and creative industry employers find it difficult to recruit certain positions straight from education⁵⁸ and interviews with industry representatives for this study supports this. Over recent years a few education programmes have emerged in other sectors which, like Hyper Island, are intensive and designed and delivered with industry. For example, the School of Communication Arts 2.0 (<http://schoolcommunicationarts.com/>) is a one-year programme for students who are seeking to work in the advertising industry where teams work on live briefs set by different agencies. There is the potential for others.

The interactive media sector is set to continue to develop and be a key driver of the UK's economic growth but this will be dependent on it having a pipeline of talent with the right skills and aptitudes that the sector needs. Hyper Island offers an effective model for how to develop this but there is scope for others and, in particular, for higher education courses to experiment and innovate in their course delivery and find ways of fostering deeper and lasting partnerships with the industry.

CASE STUDIES

HYPER ISLAND STUDENTS

Sarah Buggle
George King

INDUSTRY PARTNERS

Matt Powell
Tony Foggett

HYPER ISLAND STUDENT: SARAH BUGGLE

Sarah Buggle had her final hand-in for her degree in Graphic Design (specialising in advertising) at Central St Martins on a Friday and started Hyper Island the following Monday. She was attracted to the programme by its learning methodology which she was introduced to on the selection day: *"I was really interested in the learning theory behind it. It just seemed very different."*

Sarah found the Hyper Island pedagogy challenging but useful: *"I am always the person to look for an answer"* reflects Sarah, *"From the beginning to have that flat refusal to tell you their opinion on what you are doing was completely different and really, really good because that was something as a person I needed to focus on".*

Sarah did not have that much prior knowledge about interactive media before she came on the programme and found it provided a good overview: *"I would say I have developed my digital skills. I didn't know anything really before and I now know a lot of the languages and I know what things do and if I had a certain job to do, I would know the beginnings of how to approach it. I coded my own website so that is a big jump, knowing HTML and knowing the programmes to set up and connect it with the server."*

The two other skills Sarah feels she has developed have been project management and presentation skills: *"I think I have learnt a lot about doing stories, a narrative and the importance of it to make something interesting. The actual physical presenting – it is that nerves thing but I think I have come on so far. Before I couldn't consider speaking without notes.....I've learnt about the planning and getting people and resources in certain places. Sticking to that plan and when you are in the frantic time when you have gone off plan to have to replan – that takes a lot of strength and effort to focus on. I've learnt a lot about it."*

Sarah believes that the interdisciplinary approach which is a core approach of Hyper Island has enabled her to get a broad understanding of the different roles in agencies: *"I have knowledge, to a certain extent, of how it all works. Who owns what agencies and the pressures at the very top and the different roles. I had no idea about the different roles and how they interact with each other and how that effects the work and also having an empathy for those roles and knowing other people's passions. I feel a lot better about how I could slot into a company."*

The area where she feels the programme could be improved is the feedback given by the industry partners and Hyper Island facilitators: *"It is rarely you hear something that is even slightly negative and I wasn't used to that at all. I was used to a really harsh criticism of your work. But then when I did get good feedback, it meant the world. But when across the board everyone gets good feedback and you look at some work and don't agree. Every time I had a presentation, I wouldn't have that happy feeling that everyone seemed to be having. I couldn't fully trust the feedback. I think that is the only aspect that is not like the real world. I understand the whole encouragement thing, I just wanted that hit of reality at times."*

Securing an internship wasn't easy but she found a different approach paid dividends: *"I found it so difficult. You research the company, you do everything your side and you write and find the one person you think will answer your emails and you just don't get replies. It is so disheartening then you see everyone around you getting replies and it is like 'what have I done wrong?' It is really good because you get other people to read your emails and they say 'yes, that's fine' I think I found the best thing was phoning people up. I hate phoning people up – hardly anyone does it and if you know the right person, I got two internships sorted in a day, by phoning people."*

Sarah did her internship at the agency Crispin Porter + Bogusky in Gothenburg. She had previously seen their work and was keen to work for an organisation that was quite established. Sarah then went on to work for the advertising agency KesselsKramer in Hoxton, London. However, Sarah's interests have since moved on from advertising: *"I'm not really prepared to communicate things I don't believe in. I feel much better about trying to make some sort of project that could help people. I think that's the way I want to go."* Sarah is now looking at how she might get involved in the start-up/entrepreneurial community in London.

She feels that most students could benefit from Hyper Island but that they need passion and to be open-minded: *"I think they need to be passionate about what they do. They have to be open-minded, be open to new ways of thinking and new ideas."* Without this open-mindedness, Sarah feels that students will miss out on what for her was the most powerful aspect of the programme: *"The biggest learning was about myself. All the other education systems avoid you as a person."*

HYPER ISLAND STUDENT: GEORGE KING

At 19 George King was one of the youngest students on Hyper Island. After completing his A-levels at Hollycross College in Merseyside he chose not to go to university but instead opted to get work experience in some digital agencies: *"I missed university and did that on purpose. I know a few people who have been to university to do graphic degrees and have come out and are in a similar position to the one I was in when I left college. You come out and you still have to get the experience. I think I did 11 months at two different agencies and both people at each agency told me that they value experience and don't bother so much about degrees."*

George found out about the Hyper Island programme whilst doing his internships and felt that going on the Hyper Island programme was 'a no-brainer'.

George feels he has particularly developed presentation skills through the programme: *"I would definitely say my presentation skills are better. I feel more confident presenting and that has been a real plus for me because I really want to present ideas well."* In addition, he believes there have been significant developments in his project management and design skills. Hyper Island also introduced him to research methods: *"I understand the importance of research and picking out insights is very important. I didn't know how to get an insight but now I feel like I do."*

An understanding of business strategy has been one of the significant pieces of knowledge he feels he has gained: *"I learnt a lot about business in general really. That was a vast field but I felt that I entered it and started exploring it. Business strategy is something I had never done before and it is something that I found really interesting. I always thought business was the boring thing but it is really not."*

The area where George didn't feel he learnt that much was in coding: *"The opportunity didn't really come up to do it and I also don't have any interest in it at all."*

It wasn't something that I really wanted to do. I probably should have done it at Hyper Island but I didn't."

George was not alone in finding that the fourth and final project on Hyper Island – which had less of an emphasis on group collaboration – was not as dynamic as previous ones: *"The last project was definitely the worst project. We had the climax in project three, and then it sort of fell out. You had two weeks and you had to come up with your own brief. Two weeks isn't a long time and I was doing it by myself as well and we also had internships to think about and no one really got in the zone for it. On all the other projects, there was a feeling of being part of a team and coming through it."*

George believes that there is no set person for Hyper Island: *"As long as you're open-minded, you are outgoing and you are willing to experience new things, be fully committed and passionate about what you are doing".* He also feels that being a team-player is important: *"No one has been selfish with their time. Everyone has been working crazy hours. I did three all-nighters on Hyper Island. On one of them I had to draw a big Coke bottle and it had to have all the idea planned through it. I spent half a day before, pencilling it out – a five metre long presentation! The night before the presentation, I took it round to Mitch's house. Mitch (another Hyper Island student) stayed up with me all night doing that. Everyone was like that."*

When asked before he started on Hyper Island what he would be like to be doing in the long-term future, George expressed an interest in starting up an agency: *"One day, hopefully start up an agency. That is the dream. If that doesn't happen, then go through the stages of being a creative director, and through different agencies and hopefully end up in New York one day."*

George went on to complete a six-month internship in New York at First Born which he secured through a contact he knew there. He is now back in the UK and has teamed up with another Hyper Island student and together they are planning on launching their own business focussed on recruitment: *"I want to feel there is an opportunity to really make something awesome and be really successful and I just feel that when you're working for someone else, there's a cap on that which you can't really go past. I want to be excited every day."*

INDUSTRY PARTNER: MATT POWELL, CREATIVE DIRECTOR OF 20:20 OUTLINES THE QUALITIES HE FEELS ARE NEEDED FOR WORKING IN INTERACTIVE MEDIA

Matt Powell is creative director at 2020 (<http://weare2020.com>). Before this he was creative director at Profero for seven years during which time he managed a number of Hyper Island interns. He inputted into the design of the curriculum for the UK pilot for Hyper Island.

Matt first came aware of Hyper Island when he was asked to do a presentation to graduates on how to produce an outstanding portfolio. He decided to look at some examples before the talk to help him get a sense of the quality that was around: *"I went through a whole heap of online portfolios, spoke to recruiters and went back through portfolio shows – things like that. I found as many as I could and selected what I thought were the best. As I looked down the list I realised that almost every one of my favourites was from a Hyper Island student. I thought immediately that there was something really interesting going on here."*

Matt's personal motivation for getting involved with Hyper Island has been the enjoyment of working with emerging talent: *"It is very rewarding to see people develop."* He also feels that industry has a responsibility to nurture the talent it requires: *"As an employer, it is obviously in our interests to try and ensure that there is a good talent pool out there"* he says.

In terms of qualities that Matt looks for in potential employees, he cites the ability to collaborate as being as important as creativity. He also feels that adaptability is key: *"I like people to be very agile in their thinking. Creativity is essential but it's the people who cope with change that do really well. If you don't, you can end up clinging on to an idea in its original form with grim determination. The social media landscape changes on a weekly basis, clients change their mind for the most unexpected business reasons – there are any number of things outside your control influencing the outcome. Flexibility, adaptability and lateral thinking skills are hugely important qualities these days."*

Matt also sees the ability to see things from the perspective of the end user as being a crucial attribute: *"I always think you should be ready to explain three things when presenting creative work. First, the idea in one line. Second, why your audience will find it interesting, and thirdly how it works. That middle one is critical. Ask yourself bluntly 'Will they really interact with this, and why? Is it grounded in an insight?' Too much work conveys a message, but is either not needed or not wanted by the end user. It's a cliché, but you have to put yourself in their shoes."*

Another attribute Matt values in employees is the ability to predict future trends and innovations though he concedes that this is a difficult requirement: *"It really is hard to keep up with all of the emerging technology being talked about. But if you want to stand out, the answer isn't to spend your life curating and sharing other people's work – because you'll always be one step behind them. It's much more effective to just keep asking yourself where we'll be six months from now. The people that do this consistently naturally seem one step ahead, and it's a lot of fun too."*

One area that Matt feels could be better developed in some entrants is an awareness of the different roles in agencies: *"Within modern agencies, there is a strong relationship between the creative process and the delivery process. Just look at responsive web design as an example – the process you adopt will absolutely affect the outcome. What that boils down to is the creative person having an appreciation of a project manager's job and vice versa. This idea from Hyper Island to rotate people through disciplines is remarkable, it really does make people more compatible and communicative from day one. Aside from encouraging great portfolio's, this is something that Hyper Island does very, very well."*

INDUSTRY PARTNER: TONY FOGGETT, CEO OF CODE COMPUTERLOVE REFLECTS ON ENGAGING WITH EDUCATION

Tony Foggett is the founder and CEO of Code Computerlove (www.codecomputerlove.com) which he describes as a full-service digital marketing agency. The agency employs 60 permanent staff and also has around 20 freelancers working for it.

Tony attended the Hyper Island Accidental Leaders course which gave him first-hand experience of the organisation and its methodologies and since then he has used Hyper Island to do training for his staff team and to help him implement some of

the cultural and organisational changes he has sought for his company. Tony helped select the students for the UK pilot and also set them a brief to work on.

His motivation to support Hyper Island is primarily to foster talent for the North West which could ultimately benefit his agency: *"I was really keen to get the thing off the ground and make it work and for it to be in Manchester. It was a bit of a no-brainer for me to involved because if it works up here it will have a significant effect on talent development in this city which we will benefit from."*

He is also hopeful that Hyper Island might have an impact on how universities deliver their interactive media and digital courses: *"I find when I work with the universities that they are too removed from industry", he reflects. "Most of the time, it is not necessarily industry-driven – there are some industry briefs. It is almost as if at the end of two or three years then the students will start to look at industry and go and understand what they need to do and usually there is a gap between the understanding and capability the student has as he leaves and where industry needs it. It particularly comes across in an SME-type scenario where the SME needs students to start working, start producing straight away. They can't really spend the time training them when they arrive. They need them to be performing from day one."*

Tony finds that Hyper Island pedagogy accords with the skills and attributes he seeks in individuals to his agency: *"What Hyper Island does is that it creates the right environment for the students to learn. It teaches them how to learn from the experiences that they are going through but then it brings industry into that environment, into an environment that it can control and an environment that gives the students the right level of support but an environment that is absolutely from day one dedicated and focussed on being part of the industry that they are going to be joining. I think that is where they get it really right. The other big area is that the skills that they do teach them in that environment about team dynamics and the different tools that they need to make sure that they continue adapting and continue learning throughout their life – those are exactly the things I am looking for in people."*

The advantage Tony perceives Hyper Island has in comparison to higher education course providers is that its size means it has the flexibility to respond swiftly to industry needs: *"Universities are just such massive ships to turn around and our industry is going at such a pace – never mind that I might change the course content, new courses need to be popped up."*

Tony believes that industry could improve the way it works with education so that it is more co-ordinated but he believes that the relationship needs to be at a more strategic level: *"We don't work together as an industry to actually make the universities better, all our relationship is via small-scale intervention at tutor level. It is all about relationships really. The only reason we are working with the universities is because we are hoping to get some talent out of the back of it. The problem is when you are working at that tutor level, no big changes happen to university."*

APPENDIX ONE: METHODOLOGY

This evaluation was commissioned by Nesta, the UK's foundation for innovation, which has supported the UK pilot for Hyper Island. The purpose of the evaluation was to:

- Understand the impact of the programme on students, particularly in relation to their skills development and progression into employment;
- Appreciate what specific features of the Hyper Island approach contribute towards this impact;
- Get insights into how industry is involved in the programme and what value this adds;
- Consider what other course providers could learn from the Hyper Island model.

A total of 23 students participated in the UK pilot of Hyper Island and this evaluation has followed the journey of 16 of these who are from the UK and were aged 18–24 when they applied to take part in the programme. Individual interviews were conducted with these students just before they took part, at the end of Hyper Island Studio Time (the part of the programme which was 'taught'), and at the end of their internships. The students were also interviewed six months after having completed their internships in order to understand their progression into employment. A total of 63 student interviews were conducted.

Alongside the student cohort, interviews were also undertaken with some of the facilitators and organisers from Hyper Island, those responsible for the design of its curriculum, and the evaluator from Teesside University. Nine industry representatives were also interviewed who were involved in Hyper Island in some way such as helping determine its curriculum or hosting an intern.

Desk research was conducted to review some of the studies and reports around the employability of graduates in the UK and particularly those from the interactive media sector as well as to understand the skills needs of employers in the sector.

APPENDIX TWO: STUDENTS' PERCEPTIONS ON THE USEFULNESS OF DIFFERENT FORMS OF EDUCATION

	Very useful	Somewhat useful	Not particularly useful	Not useful at all
Secondary school	1	9	3	3
University* (if applicable)	2	9	3	1
College (if applicable)	2	3	0	1
Work experience (if applicable)	9	1	1	0
Self-directed learning	8	8	0	0
Learning from or with your peers**	12	3	0	0

*One student undertook a degree course for a year at one university and then transferred to another university dissatisfied with the course. She rated one of the university courses to be very useful and one to be not useful at all.

**One student did not feel she had done enough of this to comment.

APPENDIX THREE: STUDENTS' PERCEPTIONS OF THEIR SKILLS

Skill	Percentage of students ranking their competency in this skill as good or very good before Hyper Island	Percentage of students ranking their competency in this skill as good or very good after Hyper Island
Problem solving and creative thinking	93%	93%
Ability to learn new skills	93%	93%
Working effectively with others in a team	81%	93%
Managing your own learning and development	75%	74%
Design skills	68%	66%
Technical skills	56%	60%
Pitching and presentation skills	56%	93%
Networking skills and the confidence to present yourself to others	56%	74%
Leading and managing others	50%	66%
Knowledge of the digital media sector and understanding potential career opportunities in it	44%	100%
Knowledge of and connections with industry professionals	38%	100%
Business and commercial skills	31%	74%
Understanding the digital media industry's production processes	31%	80%
Use of specific programming packages and software packages	12%	46%
Project management skills	12%	46%

APPENDIX FOUR: SURVEY INSTRUMENTS

SURVEY INSTRUMENT 1: QUESTIONS FOR STUDENTS JUST BEFORE THEY PARTICIPATED IN HYPER ISLAND

Interest in the Hyper Island opportunity

1. How did you find out about the Manchester Hyper Island programme? Probe: Did you have any prior knowledge of Hyper Island?
2. What attracted you to the programme and what prompted you to apply?
3. What do you hope to get out of the programme? What particular skills and capabilities do you hope to develop? What opportunities do you hope to open up for yourself?
4. What would you be doing if you had not been selected to the programme?
5. Why do you want to be working in the digital media/interactive media industry?

Previous work, educational and other experience

6. What were you doing immediately prior to applying to Hyper Island?

Unemployed	Work experience	Course/study	Short-term work	Freelance work	Internship
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7. What is your highest education qualification?

GCSE	
A-level	
Apprenticeship/vocational qualification	
Further Education qualification	
University (undergraduate degree)	
University (postgraduate degree)	

8. What A-levels did you study at school or college? (If vocational qualification instead, then ask about this.)
9. What was your degree in and where did you study it? Probe reasons for disengaging from a course, if applicable.
10. Have you undertaken work experience in the interactive media/digital media industry? How many weeks did this last?
11. Have you undertaken any other activities that you think have helped you to develop skills and capabilities that ready you for work in the digital media sector?

Evaluating your skills and capabilities

12. At this point in time, how would you rate yourself in terms of the following:

	Very good	Good	Could be better developed	Not developed	Don't know
Technical skills (such as mathematics, physics and programming)					
Design skills (such as graphic design, design and construction)					
Use of specific programming languages and software packages					
Problem solving and creative thinking					
Pitching and presentation skills					
Ability to learn new skills					
Managing your own learning and development					
Working effectively with others in a team					
Leading a team and managing others					
Project management skills					
Business and commercial skills					
Knowledge of the digital media sector and understanding potential career opportunities in it					
Understanding the industry's production processes					
Networking skills and the confidence to present yourself to potential colleagues and employers					
Knowledge of and connections with industry professionals					

13. Through this next set of questions, I would like to understand more about how you have so far developed knowledge, skills and capabilities to prepare you for a career in the digital media industry.

Thinking about the set of skills and capabilities we have just discussed, how useful have different kinds of formal and non-formal educational experiences been to your development? Please rate the usefulness of the following:

	Very useful	Some-what useful	Not particu-larly useful	Not useful at all	Please give details outlining how this was useful or not useful
School					
University					
Other formal education or training (please specify)					
Work experience (if applicable)					
Self-directed learning					
Learning from or with your peers					

Future ambitions

14. What would you like to be doing six months after you have completed the Hyper Island programme?
15. Do you have a particular part of the industry you would most like to work in? A particular type or organisation? A particular role?
16. Do you have any idea about what you would like to be doing in the longer-term future?

Immediate reflections

17. You have now had some direct experience of the Hyper Island approach.
- What do you expect might be different or unique about learning the Hyper Island way (compared to school/university you have undertaken)?
 - What do you think you'll find particularly challenging?
 - What are you most looking forward to?

Additional questions

18. How old are you?
19. Where do you live (region and country)?

SURVEY INSTRUMENT 2: QUESTIONS FOR STUDENTS AT THE END OF STUDIO TIME

Design of the programme and how you learn on it

1. How would you describe the Hyper Island approach to learning?
2. What do you feel is particularly distinctive about how you learn on Hyper Island compared to other education programmes you have been on?
3. What new things have you learned or learned how to do during Hyper Island Studio Time?
4. What have been the most powerful aspects of the Hyper Island learning experience so far?
5. What have you found most challenging?
6. Has anything disappointed you?
7. How could the design and running of Studio Time be improved?

Developing your skills and capabilities

I sent you through a table which showed how you rated yourself on a range of skills before you started Hyper Island. Thinking about those skills and how you rated yourself on them before you started the programme....

8. Which of these skills do you think you have particularly developed or improved through Hyper Island studio time? Probe: what elements of the programme do you think have been particularly valuable in building these skills?
9. Which, if any, of these skills do you think you have not developed or improved that much? Probe: what would the programme have needed to include to support the development of these skills?
10. Are there any skills that you originally rated yourself on that now you feel you are perhaps not as good as you thought you were or better than you originally thought? What elements of the programme have challenged these perceptions of your skills?
11. Thinking specifically about some of the technical skills you might need to work in the digital media industry, have you developed any of these through Hyper Island studio time? Probe: if yes which ones and how was this done? If no – do you feel you have fairly good technical skills before you started on the programme?

Your preparedness to work and internships

12. How well do you think Hyper Island Studio Time has prepared you to work successfully in the digital media industry?
 - I feel much better prepared than I did before Studio Time
 - I feel slightly better prepared
 - I feel no different to before Studio Time
 - I feel less well prepared (probe why – could be because of a deeper understanding of what to expect).

13. What kind of advantage – if any – do you think this experience has given you over others who have not been through Hyper Island?
14. Have you secured an internship yet? (If not, reassure the student and ask what kind of company they would ideally like to have an internship in and why). What company is it in? What made you choose that company?
15. Was this your first choice? How difficult was it to secure the internship?
16. What do you hope to get out of the internship? What particular skills and capabilities do you hope to develop?
17. How are Hyper Island supporting you and supporting you to learn through the internship?

How to position Hyper Island in the landscape of education

18. What capabilities and skills do you think students need to possess before they begin Studio Time at Hyper Island? For example, is a certain level of technical skill important?
19. What would an ideal Hyper Island student look like? What kind of students would not thrive in a Hyper Island learning environment?
20. Many of the students in this cohort had previously undertaken degrees – do you think that degree-level study is a prerequisite to this course, or could you pursue Hyper Island as an alternative to an undergraduate degree?
21. What – if anything – do you think higher education courses in digital media could learn from the way Hyper Island supports students to learn?

Finally

22. Is there anything else that you would like to mention or reflect on from your experiences on Hyper Island to date which we haven't discussed?

SURVEY INSTRUMENT 3: STUDENT INTERVIEW AT END OF INTERNSHIP

General questions about the internship

1. You were doing your internship in xxx agency in xxx country, is that right? Did you have a particular role/area of responsibility in the company?
2. What have you enjoyed about the internship?
3. What have you found particularly challenging?
4. What are the differences between how you work on projects and briefs in xxx agency and how you worked on them in Hyper Island?
5. Are there any other things that you have found to be different in an actual agency to how you expected them to be?
6. Was the internship paid? If I can ask, how much were you paid?

Skills and capabilities developed through the internship

7. What new things do you feel you have learnt or learnt how to do through the internship?
8. What skills do you feel you have particularly developed through the internship and how have you developed them?
9. Probe: any others (ask about technical skills)?
10. In your interview before your internship you mentioned that you would like to develop xxx and xxx skills and learn about xxxx through your internship. Do you feel you have developed and learnt these things?

If yes – what has the internship provided so that you could learn these?

If no – why do you feel that you haven't? What would the internship needed to have done to incorporate this learning?
11. Has your internship made you realise that you have been lacking any particular skills? Which ones?

Preparedness for the internship

12. What aspects of the Hyper Island programme do you feel have been particularly useful for working in an agency?
13. How (if at all) do you feel you could have been better prepared for the internship and working in a real agency through Hyper Island Studio Time?
14. How (if at all) could the organisation of the internship be improved?

Future career ambitions

15. What are your plans for the next six months?
16. Have your future career ambitions either for the short or long term changed since you started on Hyper Island? Why?

Prompt: in the interview before you started Hyper Island, you mentioned you would like to work as a xxx in xxx kind of organisation and in the long term to work as xxxxx.

Finally

17. From your experience of the internship, what do you feel are the particular challenges of working in the interactive media sector?
18. Is there anything else that you would like to mention or reflect on from your experiences of your internship or related to Hyper Island which we haven't discussed?

SURVEY INSTRUMENT 4: SURVEY OF STUDENTS SIX MONTHS AFTER THE END OF THE PROGRAMME

Employment outcomes

1. When we last spoke you were doing an internship with xx agency/working at xxxx. What are you up to at the moment? Where are you working?
2. How big is the agency – roughly how many people work there?
3. And what is your position there?
4. When did you start working there? (Probe: what the student was doing before this if there is a significant gap between the internship and the job starting.)
5. Is it an employed position or an internship?
If employed, is it a permanent post/temporary (how long for)/contract (how long for)?
If internship, how long is it for and is it paid?
If not in employment/internship, find out what the student has been doing in the intervening time and his/her intentions. Probe any barriers the student has experienced in finding work.
6. How did you get the job/internship? (i.e. was it an advertised post, word of mouth, result of internship, recommendation etc.).
7. How difficult did you find it to get the post/internship?

Very difficult	Difficult	Not that difficult	Easy	Very easy
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8. What do you think helped you to get the post/internship?
Anything else?
9. (For students in employment) Can I ask what your current annual salary is before tax? *Rest assured, I will not be revealing any individual salaries but I might, for example, work out the average student salary from the Hyper Island team.*

Job satisfaction

10. What are you enjoying about your current post?
11. What (if anything) are you finding challenging?
12. How satisfied are you in this post? Would you say I am:

Very satisfied	Satisfied	Neither satisfied nor dissatisfied	Dissatisfied	Very dissatisfied
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Explore reasons for this.

13. What (if any) differences have you noticed about working on briefs in Hyper Island and in xxx agency?
14. Do you feel there is anything Hyper Island could have done to help prepare you better for this or for working in the agency?

Reflections on Hyper Island

15. Thinking about the Hyper Island programme overall, to the statement: Overall, I am satisfied with the quality of the course. How would you respond:

Definitely agree	Mostly agree	Neither agree nor disagree	Mostly disagree	Definitely disagree
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16. Thinking about the university/college course you did before Hyper Island, again to the statement: Overall, I am satisfied with the quality of the course. How would you respond:

Definitely agree	Mostly agree	Neither agree nor disagree	Mostly disagree	Definitely disagree
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Explore the reason for the responses.

Skills development

17. What skills do you feel you have particularly developed through the Hyper Island programme? What parts of the programme do you feel contributed towards their development?
18. Before you started on Hyper Island, you mentioned that you would like to develop the following skills and capabilities through the programme
To what extent do you feel you have developed these? (Probe: how were they developed in the programme or why do you feel they were not developed through the programme.)
19. Also before starting on Hyper Island, you mentioned that you felt the following skills could be better developed or were not developed at all.....Do you feel you have developed any of these through Hyper Island? Which ones? (Probe: what aspects of the programme do you feel contributed to their development?)
20. Now you are working (trying to find work) in the interactive media industry, what skills do you feel you are currently deficient in or need to improve more on?
21. Is it your intention, for the foreseeable future, to remain working in this sector?

Finally

22. Is there anything else that you would like to mention or reflect on from your experiences on Hyper Island or your current work which we haven't discussed?

APPENDIX FIVE: ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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