

Drawing together, drawing to learn

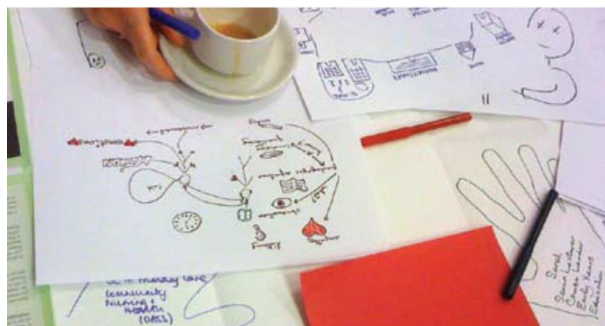


Image Source: Pauline Ridley

- On campus (but can be adapted for online Teams sessions, with students sharing their drawings on screen or uploading a photo to the chat, or to a linked Padlet board)
- Duration- each of these activities could last between 10 minutes and 30 minutes depending on the time available. It's better to limit the time spent on individual drawing to allow enough time for the follow-up reflection and discussion.
- Group work – pairs or small groups for initial activity then whole group discussion
- 1 metre + in classroom or all together seated in a circle
- Facilitation technique – Think, Pair, Share, small group work

AIM OF ACTIVITIES

- To provide opportunities for students to get to know their peers and their learning environment
- To give a sense of the variety of cultures, identities, and histories that students bring with them to the classroom.
- To facilitate a reflective discussion time to increase connection and sense of belonging.
- To introduce the potential value of visual communication and recording for their university studies

INTRODUCTION AND RATIONALE

These activities do not require artistic talent or specialist materials, but it may be helpful to have some blank paper and coloured markers available. Otherwise, students can just use their usual notebooks and pens. Since some students may be initially nervous about drawing or see it as childish, it is important to design activities that are enjoyable but also clearly relevant to your subject area. Ideally the session tutor should join in and be willing to share their own pictures.

It is worth taking a few minutes to explain the rationale for combining visual and verbal approaches to their studies, to assist memory, clarify concepts and aid revision. (See **ADDITIONAL RESOURCES** at end for links to the Drawing to Learn resources which address these issues in more detail).

We've included a variety of activities in a single resource, as you may want to use different combinations depending on the course context. Each can work well at any stage during the induction period, to help students familiarise themselves with each other, with their tutors, with the campus and with subject-specific concepts or identities linked to their programme.

Encourage students to keep or photograph the results of any in-class drawing activities, and with their permission these can also be uploaded to the course area on My Studies. These images can provide a useful reminder of the session for revision purposes, or to help the students realise how far their ideas have developed since the start of their course.

Activity 1 Who are we?

Working in pairs (ideally with partners they don't already know) the students take turns to interview each other. Each student must come up with three facts about themselves to share with their partner, who then records these in pictures/doodles.

When the pairs have finished interviewing, students share their pictures and introduce their partners to the group. As well as providing a way for the students to start to get to know each other, this activity also offers a low-key introduction to the use of sketch-noting techniques for study and revision.

Activity 2 How did we get here?

Give each student a piece of paper and ask them to draw their journey to the University. Explain that they can interpret this literally (their route from home) or metaphorically (their educational journey to this point) and in any format they choose, such as a sketch map or a comic strip.

After everyone has shared their completed drawings, first in pairs and then with the wider group, they can be used to trigger discussion around the transition to university study and common hopes and fears about embarking on a new course.

If time allows, you could follow this up by giving students an outline map of the campus to explore now or later, with a list of course-related features to look out for and mark on the map. Make sure you provide an opportunity for them to share and discuss these at a later session.

Activity 3 Who do we want to become?

A good starter activity for courses with a strong vocational element is to ask students, working in small groups, to draw a schematic figure and then draw on and around it the attributes of the 'ideal' professional (e.g. teacher, health professional, social worker) that they aspire to become. This is good for prompting discussion of their own expectations, and a chance to explore how realistic these may be.

A variation is to ask them to draw their ideal 'client' (or school student, patient etc) and then discuss the experiences and assumptions behind their drawings.

Activity 4 Where do we want to get to?

A follow-up activity is to imagine and draw their future journey towards completion of the course and beyond, charting potential obstacles and opportunities.

Activity 5 Visualising concepts

This is designed to encourage students to share assumptions and ideas about key concepts in a subject. Try to choose general terms that will have meaning without previous study in the subject and where there are no right or wrong answers. For instance, new students in an Introduction to Sociology class were asked to depict their images of 'society'. The sheer variety of representations and the subsequent discussion of people's choices and imagery was a better way to bring implicit assumptions to the surface than simply asking them for a verbal definition.

This task can then be revisited towards the end of the course to map students' developing understanding of complex structures and ideas.

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

The Drawing to Learn webpages at <https://blogs.brighton.ac.uk/visuallearning/drawing/> contain further resources on the use of drawing and other visual practices to support learning and research at university. From here, you can download subject-specific booklets with more suggestions on using:

- Observational drawing – to sharpen perception and make rapid and accurate records of key data in almost any situation.
- Conceptual drawing and diagramming – to help students to visualise ideas and processes, compare their understanding and develop critical thinking skills and to reinforce memory
- Collaborative drawing and image making activities – to develop communication skills, encourage reflection on experience, and support professional and personal development planning.

The site also contains a series of tips and suggestions from staff and students – originally published as part of the Big Draw 2019 - about different kinds of drawing, including doodles and diagrams, and other creative activities to help students study effectively and enjoyably, to explore and express their experiences and to maintain a healthy work-life balance

