Swansea College of Art
Founded 1853

Prifysgol Cymru
Y Drindod Dewi Sant
University of Wales
Trinity Saint David

BA (Hons) Illustration

MAJOR PROJECT

Contacting External Clients

As part of your major project you are required to demonstrate externality. For the external liaison element of the module, you have to negotiate an assignment or project with, for example, a commercial organisation, such as a design group, publisher (book, magazine, greeting cards), product design/manufacturer (gift/toys/homeware), advertising agency, illustration agency, game studio, gallery, film/animation studio, or a community group, hospital, charity or similar institution.

Guidelines:

(ALSO: See sample letters and emails provided)

1. Select the right organisations in respect of your working practice/style and direction of your major project. Research is extremely important – look at the kind of work these companies produce, in terms of product and style. Make sure your work is suitable.

2. Potential clients are best approached initially by letter or email. However emails can be overlooked.

3. Establish the name of the person you wish to contact (this may be the Art Director, Studio Manager, Editor etc.), either from a written source, looking at the company website or by asking the organisation directly (sometimes just phoning and asking the receptionist/secretary will provide you with this information). A letter that begins 'Dear Sir/Madame' or 'To Whom it May Concern' demonstrates a lack of research and care and will be quickly disregarded. Addressing a specific person will immediately increase your chances of success.

4. Avoid vague requests for experience. You should outline exactly what you want and the limits of what is expected from the client and their level of commitment. You are contacting busy professionals and should acknowledge this in your writing, assuring the client that you will not demand too much time/involvement, as it is extremely likely that the organisation receives many requests.

5. Consider exactly what you are looking for from your external client:

- Do you want a work experience placement or internship?
- Do you want to find live, external work – a brief/commission?
- Do you want professional feedback on your own authored work?

6. Keep all your communication with clients concise and friendly! Your spelling and grammar should be impeccable. A letter/email riddled with lower case 'i's or text-speak will be thrown away in an instant.

7. Target a number of organisations to increase your chance of success, as you may have no response to many of your emails/letters.

8. Your choice of paper, the typeface you use and the layout of your letter and letterhead (if you have one) should reflect your creative persona and professionalism. It could be a good idea to create a letterhead to attract attention and further enhance your chance of success – demonstrate your creativity.

9. A well-structured letter should include the following (also see example letter/email):

- Introduce yourself – final year BA (Hons) Illustration student at Swansea College of Art.
- Keep your writing short and friendly. It should be polite, focused and succinct.
- Try not to exceed one side of an A4 sheet.
- State your interest in the organisation in relation to your work. This is where research is import and you can demonstrate your knowledge of the company and the kind of work carried out.
- A clear proposal/request – an outline of what you are hoping for. For example, you may wish to produce a series of illustrations for magazine articles and you are writing to request valuable industry feedback from an Art Director or Art Editor at a magazine.
- Explain your plan clearly, for example, that you have found the magazine articles and you intend to explore them conceptually before creating final visuals and then going on to produce finished illustrations. Again, here you could give assurance that the feedback (via email) would need only be at 3 crucial points – early ideas, finished visuals and final artwork. As an addition, you should suggest that if there were any current opportunities, either paid or for experience, you would be more than happy to undertake them. You could also attach a few examples of your work.
- Thank them for their time and say you look forward to hearing from them.
- It is strongly advised that you have your letter/email proof read by a reliable family member or friend.

10. Keep a record and copies of all correspondence.