

## **MA 3DCA**

### **A Guide to Learning:**

### **Learning, and how to do your best:**

Although this document is aimed at MA 3DCA, it can be applied to any student on any practical taught programme.

*(Revised 04-06-2017)*

#### **A General Guide to Learning:**

There are probably as many theories on how to teach or learn as there are tutors but here are some guidelines on how study a practical subject like animation, which needs both artistic, technical knowledge and creativity.

One of obvious places to learn is in the class room but there are other places like the rest of the world including your home, the library and other environments.

Terms of Reference:

Teacher = Tutor = Lecturer, for the sake of this guide, all have the same meaning.

Pupil = Student mean the same.

Colleague = a fellow student = a student in the same class.

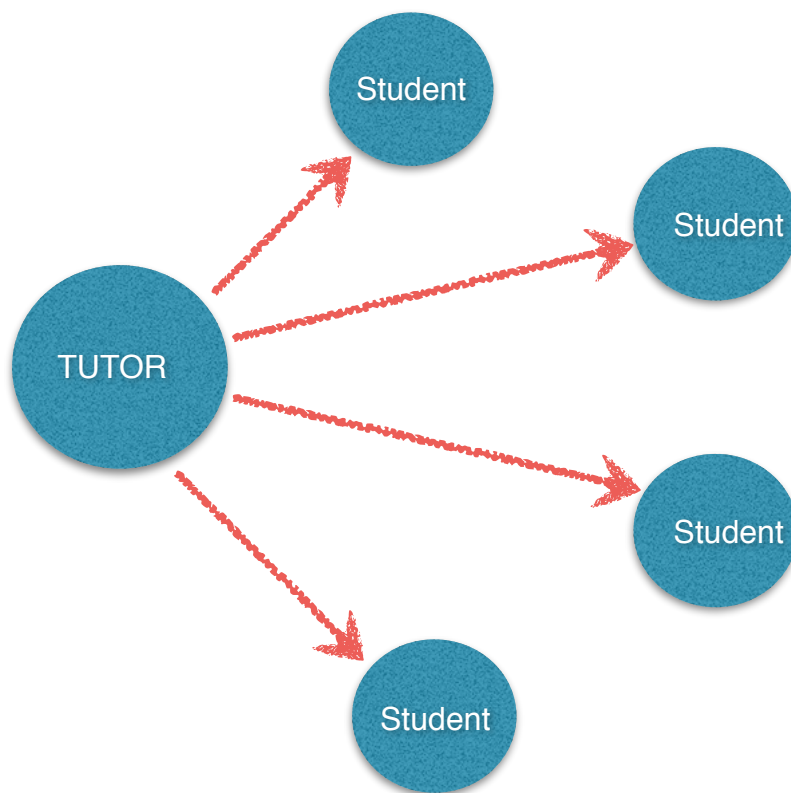
Team leader = Supervisor, the person who will set you your tasks and give you guidance.

Client = The ultimate boss and is the person who has overall control.

**The Class Room:**

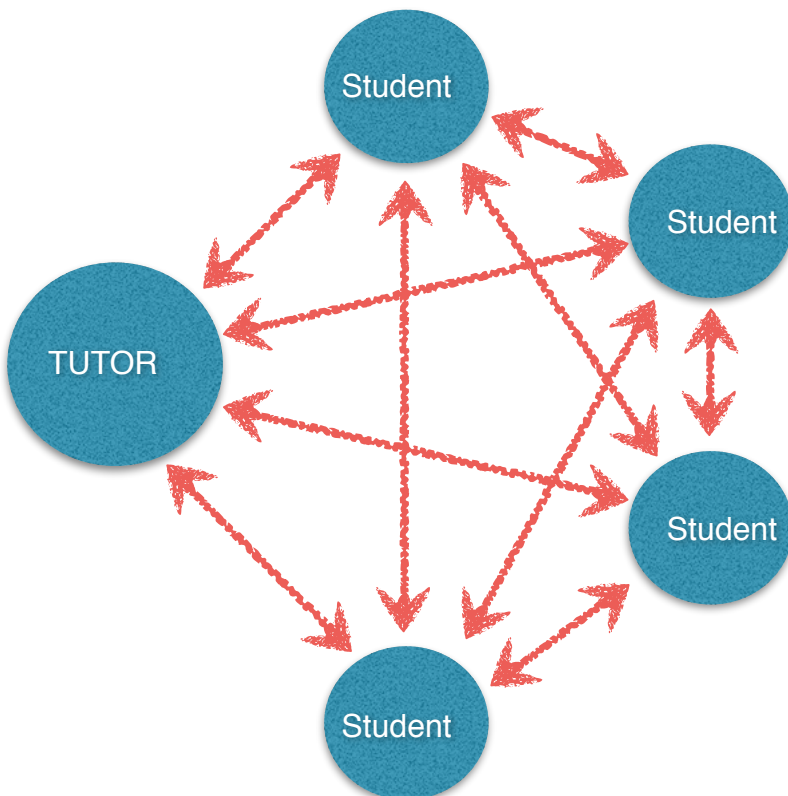
The old model is a one way flow of information between tutor and pupil re-enforced by punishment. If you didn't understand, comprehend or process the information then it was your hard luck. You would hope that the tutor was sympathetic and repeat the information if you got stuck. Luckily, I don't think they teach like this anymore in British schools.

Direction of Information:  
A traditional flow



The model we use is a little more complex with information flowing in all directions between tutor, student and between students.

Direction of Information:  
A more realistic flow



Learning itself, is complex and the delivery and comprehension of information is not always easy. There are methods that you can adopt to make learning easier but one of the most obvious ways is by making sure you communicate with your lecturers. An example might be a statement by the tutor, "Today you will learn how to animate". If you, as a pupil, don't understand this statement or a part of it, then it is a good idea to ask the lecturer, straight away, to elaborate, or to make things clearer.

This establishes the flow of information in both directions. Asking questions helps the lecturer to understand how you learn and how he/she can modify the information flow to make learning easier for you.

You could ask a colleague discretely, to help you understand and this would be perfectly valid except that it is better to share your lack of understanding with the whole class. This is because, firstly, they may be other students that also don't understand. Secondly, the lecturer may have made a mistake and used an incorrect statement or word which has confused the whole class. Thirdly, a helpful student may give you the wrong answer.

There is no shame in asking simple questions which help the clarity of information that the lecturer is giving you. In the ideal situation, learning becomes an open conversation between all participants in the classroom.

"Today you will learn how to animate" could stimulate a question from a student like, "what does *to animate* mean?" The lecturer may then elaborate and explain what it means, or he/she may ask the student what they think it means, thus stimulating deeper thought and discussion between students.

Establishing this type of open of communication is crucial but the structure of the class is also important along with additional supporting elements. The activities of most modules are planned in advanced and this information can be found on the "Moodle" university site in the "Module Guide" which is a document which outlines what you will learn and when, while you are participating in a module.

### **The Class Room:**

The time in the class room is usually broken down into around 7 parts. Not all classes are organised like this but when a module is a taught session, rather than an ongoing studio session or research activity, then a structure like the one below is usually employed.

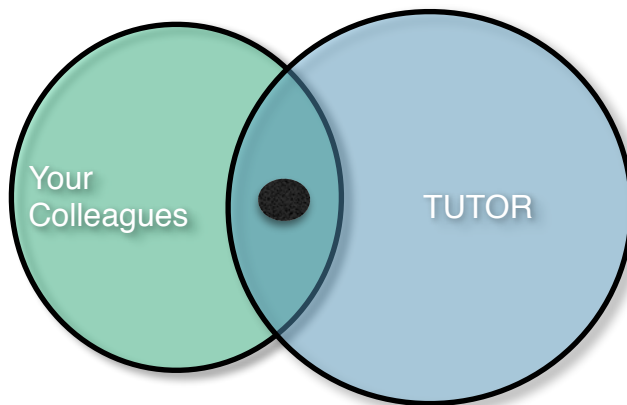
| <b>The Class Room Elements: (2 hours in total)</b>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                    |
|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <b>Introduction or Recap from the previous lesson</b> (Approx 10 minutes)<br>This is usually a discussion between tutor and students which serves as a reminder of the content from the previous lesson. Any out-of-class work done by the students can be shown to the tutor individually or shown to the whole cohort. If it is the very first lesson of the module then there is usually a discussion about the module as a whole, and what the purpose of it is.                                                                                                                                                                  |
| <b>Lesson Content</b> (Approx 20 minutes)<br>The tutor will outline the class content and what you are expected to learn in this lesson. The tutor will work through the detail, stopping to answer questions, or taking questions at the end of the talk or demonstration. Any supporting material like publications or link to web pages which can be helpful are highlighted here.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                 |
| <b>Introduction to a Work Exercise</b> (Approx 5 minutes)<br>The tutor will then outline what he expects you to do in the studio session which will be related the lesson content by setting an exercise or series of them.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                           |
| <b>Studio Work</b> (Approx 60 minutes)<br>The studio session is when you execute the exercise/s set by the tutor. In this part of the module it is usual for you to ask your tutor for individual help or guidance if you need it. Sometimes you might need to ask a fellow student for help if the tutor is busy with someone else. This is perfectly acceptable but make sure that the help you receive is the right help. This part of the class emulates that of an industrial studio where teams of artists work together in a studio environment. You can regard the tutor as your team leader/line-manager or even the client. |
| <b>Additional Demos</b> (Approx 15 minutes)<br>During the Studio Work session, it sometimes will become apparent that some parts of the lesson content will need re-enforcing or that some issues that have arisen need to be addressed. An additional demonstration by tutor usually remedies this.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                  |
| <b>Recap of the work and work to be continued until next lesson</b> (Approx 9 minutes)<br>Towards the end of the class the tutor will re-cap on what you should have learnt during the lesson and what needs to be completed before the next class.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                   |
| <b>What comes next</b> (Approx 1 minutes)<br>The tutor reminds you of what topics will be covered in the next class.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                  |
| <i>Class Room Elements by Scott Smith</i>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                             |

### **Outside the Class Room & Self study.**

As well as the class room where you learn from you tutor and your colleagues, most of your learning will studying in the studio on your own or at home. Experimenting with exercises is important. Trying to solve a problem using varied and different ways will extend your versatility. Making mistakes is a robust way of building your experience and re-enforcing your knowledge. Reading is an important element of learning too and visiting the library either physically or online. Stimulating your creative juices by going to the cinema, theatre, concert hall, art galleries, museums can all help your studies too.

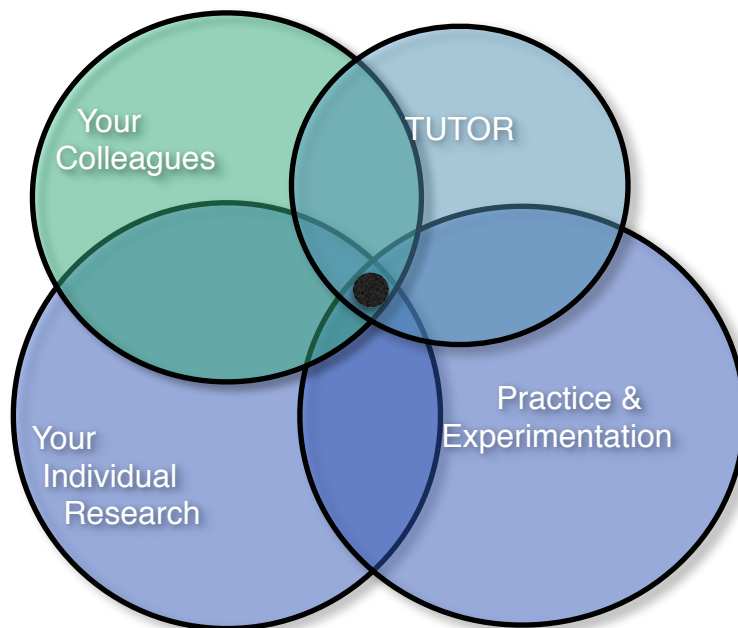
The Venn diagram below represents just two circles of influence on your learning which are simply not enough for you to develop your full potential.

Circles of Influence on Your Learning.  
A Simple Model.



This Venn diagram is much more realistic with the addition of two very important circles of influence.

Circles of Influence on Your Learning.  
A More Realistic Model.



Part of your success as a student, relies on skill and knowledge, and these are re-enforced by practice and experimentation. If a person is studying to be surgeon, do you think they would be allowed to operate on you without doing either? I suspect your answer would be no, so why should your situation be any different. Practice helps to make certain activities easier, so that you don't have to keep stopping to think how to do things. Experimentation, which costs nothing but your own time on a computer, should take a large proportion of you study, and this helps you to be more authoritative because experimentation brings first hand experience. This applies to modules which are writing based too, as well as the more practical modules.

The other part of your success is your own personal research. Don't rely just on what your tutor tells you with regard to problem solving or creative suggestions but look at how other people work. Technical problems are usually not unique so looking online is usually helpful. When you are looking for inspiration then look outside your own sphere of influence. Sometimes commercial film or animation productions can have a negative influence on your creativity whereas books, the theatre, art galleries, museums etc, bring a fresh slant on life and can stimulate ideas that you may not have thought of.