QUESTIONNAIRE TRIAL ANALYSIS

I delivered a short lecture on soft skills before asking the students to complete the questionnaires. This approach ensured they were primed in a similar way to the intended MA cohort. There were approximately 13 students in the class, but only three responded. This low response rate was likely because the workshop and questionnaire were inserted into a class unrelated to soft skills. Consequently, the students were more focused on completing their final projects and less engaged with this activity. Additionally, around 95% of the students were from China, where soft skills such as critical thinking, creativity, initiative and leadership may not be strongly embedded in career development due to cultural particularities such as Confucianism.

Since the students involved in this trial were in the final unit of the course, I adapted the questions to suit their context while maintaining the original meaning.

A- INTRODUCTORY QUESTIONNAIRE

Objective: Gauge students' perceptions of soft skills development and whether they have actively engaged with them throughout the term.

1- Think about your studies, work and research conducted in this course:

a) What skills have you developed by studying MA Visual Effects? (trial question)
a) What skills do you expect to develop by studying MA Visual Effects? (final workshop question)

Student A:

- Technical skills with Unreal, Houdini, 3DEqualizer, and Nuke
- Soft skills in time management, collaborative skills and communication

Student B:

- Compositing and colour basic theory.

Student C:

- Time management, Problem-Solving, Team-Working

Conclusion: this question is open-end, and my expectation is whether students even mention soft skills or they are more prone to focus hard skills only. I can use the same question for the real workshop.

b) How do you think you will be evaluated in the final unit assignments? (trial)
b) How do you think you will be evaluated in the unit assignments? (final)

Student A:

- Pre-production research, in-progress management, critical thinking and final output.

Student B:

- I think one is the time management, because I decided to finish my project by myself which means I must do all things.

Student C:

- Based on UAL assessment criteria: Enquiry, Knowledge, Process and Communication.

Conclusion: One student responded by describing how their project is structured and presented. Another focused on the critical aspects of her project, while the last student referred directly to the official assessment criteria, which is the most accurate answer. This question aims to determine whether students are aware of the benchmarks expected for progression in the course. Similarly, in industry, specific criteria are used to evaluate and promote staff or freelancers. To make the question clearer and more targeted, I propose a slight revision:

Revised Question: b) How do you think your skills will influence the evaluation of your final unit assignments?

c) Which do you believe is more important for becoming a successful artist: soft or hard skills? Why? (trial and final questions are the same)

Student A:

- Both. Because every little detail matters.

Student B:

- It's hard to choose, they have different effects in work. The hard skills are important; you get the job by show it to your boss. On the other hand, when you become an employee, you need to work in a team which means you need to collaret with your colleague.

Student C:

- Both are important.

Conclusion: 2 students responded the reason why albeit only one in more depth. The third failed to explain why and this is most likely because the student failed to read "Why" at the end.

c) Which do you believe is more important for becoming a successful artist: soft or hard skills? Explain Why.

d) Are soft skills developed passively through work or through active effort? Explain. (trial and final questions are the same)

Student A:

- Through active effort. First you suffer, then you learn how to make things smooth. And you get the understanding of the importance of soft skills.

Student B:

- Passively. For example, I remember we have a collaborative project in first term, in this project we need to work together, we must develop our communication skill.

Student C:

- I think soft skills develop in both ways. For example, I can learn software when I need to (a hard skill). But soft skills can also develop through active effort like self-reflection; for example, I understood the importance of time management after I finished my personal project.

Conclusion: This question is to gather quantitative answers on active, passive or both pursuit of soft skills development. I want to analyse how students feel they are in control of their own career progress. I will keep the question as it is.

e) Have you developed any new soft skills during the course ? If yes, which ones? (trial and final questions are the same)

Student A:

- More like developing all the soft skills I have before to a higher level.

Student B:

- Of course, yes. I learned a software named Miro witch the important part of my preparation. I can put all my thinkings on it and show it to my partner.

Student C:

- In fact, in different projects, I believe I have achieved comprehensive improvement.

Conclusion: I realise this question seems to repeat the first one - What skills have you developed by studying MA Visual Effects? - so it's redundant. I will slightly change the question to:

Have you already developed any new soft skills during the first term ? If yes, which ones?

f) How could the MA Course have contributed to developing them further ? (trial)
f) How can the MA Course contribute to developing them further ? (final)

Student A:

- Better critical thinking and collaboration skills.

Student B:

- Develop my collaborate skill.

Student C:

- Because I need to use them when doing different **projects**. I need to communicate with team members and clients, **manage** time, and **plan** to make sure that I can complete my **assignments** on time.

Conclusion: my intention here is to understand how we, as tutors, can structure and deliver a course that will exercise different soft skills for student personal development. Their answers seem to meet my goal.

B- GROUP TASK

Objective: Identify which soft skills were used and which were lacking.

Now, think about all collaborative projects you participated.

a) Which soft skills do you feel you used most during the task? (same as final questionnaire)

Student A:

- Communication skill

Student B:

- Communication.

Student C:

- Problem-Solving. Feedback receptiveness.

Conclusion: Students tend to list the same common words such as communication and collaboration. When I place this questionnaire, I need to have the list of soft skills available so they give other alternatives instead of the same ones.

b) Which soft skills did you find challenging or underdeveloped? (same as final questionnaire)

Student A:

- Compromising

Student B:

- Also, the communication. I used it most but not good at do it.

Student C:

- Communication

Conclusion: Compromising is not a soft skill. Again, I need to have the list of main soft skills available for them as reference.

c) How did you handle uncertainty or unexpected issues during the task? (same as final questionnaire)

Student A:

- Keep working with resilience.

Student B:

- First thing I do was calm down, because I can't solve anything if I feel warry or nerves.

Student C:

- In most cases, I will just start to try my best to solve part of it. This method can help me to understand the difficulty of the task or the time I may need to spend on this issue.

Conclusion: good answers so I will keep this question as it is.

d) Did you notice any personal growth or change in your mindset during the collaboration? (same as final questionnaire)

Student A:

- Yes. Be a soft person while undertaking challenges with confidence and resilience.

Student B:

- Now I think things like a manager while my past just needs to focus on my individual work.

Student C:

- Yes.

e) What would you do differently in your next collaborative task? (same as final questionnaire)

Student A:

- Prepare pre-production better and communicate more.

Student B:

- Prepare a full timeline, so that my partners can understand the range and I can inquire their process before the DDL.

Student C:

- I would be more communicative.

f) Which soft skill would you like to improve, and how might you do that? (same as final questionnaire)

Student A:

- Leadership. Be confidence to provide ideas.

Student B:

- I want to improve my communication skill, maybe I can practice more presentation and talk with others more.

Student C:

- Communication. I may try to use this skill actively (Communicate more with others) in the future.

Conclusion: Again, communication is cited more often. From experience teaching these students, they indeed are very quiet so maybe they lack this soft skills…or they need a list of soft skills…

C- FINAL QUESTIONNAIRE

Objective: Assess whether students can connect soft skills development with long-term career success. This questionnaire session is implemented after the 30 min lecture/class discussion on what soft skills, including STEM, are in demand in CG/VFX Industries.

Finally, think about the industry and your career development:

a) Do you know that VFX is part of the STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering and Math field) ? (Yes / No / Other) (trial question)
a) Did you know before today that VFX is part of the STEM field? (Yes / No / Other) (final question)

Student A:

- Yes

Student B:

- No before, but I know it from this class.

Student C:

- YES

Conclusion: I wronged this question for the trialling…my mistake… at least one student understood the real meaning of the question.

b) What does VFX being part of STEM mean to you? Explain. (same as final questionnaire)

Student A:

- Being both artistic and technical.

Student B:

- I think is the technology, most of VFX depend on the computer software, but we are not engineering because the work need artis base.

Student C:

- I need to keep learning. Because the technology is keeping development nowadays.

Conclusion: their explanation is minimum. I think by now, they are tired as this trialling was applied with no activity that will be occurring during the actual workshop. To provide better clarification, I will change the question to: "What does VFX being part of STEM mean to you? How does this influence your attitude toward your career and future development?"

c) Which skills do you think the VFX industry values most? (same as final questionnaire)

Student A:

- Technical skills

Student B:

- Nuke and compositing skill.

Student C:

- Communication (teamwork, understanding the idea of clients). Technical skills (use of software). Time management.

Conclusion: the ideal response should be the Student C. The goal of this question is to check whether they can finally associate soft skills development for long term career success after this workshop. First two students still believe the hard skills are the ones valued the most, even after the lecture explaining VFX/CG Industries look for soft skills as well. The third student answered correctly. I need to change this question to: "In VFX, both technical skills and personal qualities matter. Based on your experience today, how do you see the balance between technical skills and soft skills—such as teamwork, communication, resilience, and initiative—for long-term career success?"

d) Which competitive soft skills do you possess? How can you demonstrate them? (same as final questionnaire)

Student A:

- Management skills and adaptive technical skills.

Student B:

- I always create good relationship with people around, but not enough.

Student C:

- Teamwork. Adaptability. In the job interview, I will describe how I work with others in collaborative projects. Also, I will talk about how to use new technology (Like Generative AI) to update my own workflow.

Conclusion: Only the 3rd trial student answered the second question (How can you demonstrate them?). The other 2 must already be tired for this question or maybe the question is either repetitive or complex. I wonder if the second question is too challenging at this point ? I might be causing cognitive load and fatigued about question repetition. So I will split int 2 questions:

Q1: *"Which soft skills do you feel most confident about?"*
Q2: *"How could you show these skills in a professional setting (e.g., interviews, projects)?"*

e) Which soft skills do you lack but consider important? How do you plan to improve them ? (same as final questionnaire)

Student A:

- Better Leadership. To take more responsibility and be able to organize the team with authority.

Student B:

- I must practise my presentation and communication skills. The TED videos can help me a lot.

Student C:

- Communication and Leadership. I will try to find chance to improve them in my career.

Conclusion: this is a good answer so I will keep it.