

**ISTITUTO MARANGONI LONDON
LEARNING AND TEACHING STRATEGY**

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1. INTRODUCTION

This Learning and Teaching Strategy (LTS) expresses the commitment of Istituto Marangoni London (IML) to enable all our graduates to reach their full employment potential within the global fashion and design industries.

At its core, the LTS aims for creative and inspiring teaching, informed by contemporary industry expertise, academic research and scholarly practice. It seeks to provide IM students with the knowledge, skills and cultural and social capital for undertaking lifelong career development, self-realisation and self-promotion in the disciplines of fashion, design (broadly understood), business and associated specialisms.

The LTS has been developed around the 'complex interaction between the planned and the serendipitous' (Webb, 1994: 43) events that occur during the learning process and strives to balance the link between the macro institutional level and the micro-level (individual student experience). To ensure its effectiveness and enthuse students with an inspiring and motivating learning experience, the LTS is the outcome of the collaborative efforts and contributions of tutors, tutor-practitioners, students and industry partners. These parties, who operate within the IM Learning and Teaching Working Group, identified and negotiated the principles around which the LTS was developed to enable the school's strategic aspirations in providing a flexible, coherent, scholarly and inclusive curriculum.

The LTS underpins all the teaching provided by IML. It is accessible to all students and staff across the School through its Virtual Learning Environment, sinapto® and is also published on the public facing websites the School uses to provide information for potential students and other interested parties.

In framing the LTS, and in subsequently reviewing, enhancing and updating it, IML pays careful attention to the advice, guidance and requirements of its own staff and relevant agencies in the jurisdictions where it operates.

2. LEARNING CONTEXT AND INSTITUTIONAL HERITAGE

In 1935, Giulio Marangoni, a Master Tailor recognised by the Italian aristocracy, founded "The Marangoni Artistic Clothing Institute in Milan ("istituto artistico dell'abbigliamento") aiming at infusing Milanese seamstresses with professional expertise based on Italian craftsmanship.

Since then, Istituto Marangoni has been producing highly qualified and innovative graduates that are ready to work with passion in the Fashion and Design industry.

Our inspiration is Italian creativity and its values, informed by our heritage. These interact with the creative stimuli that we draw from our staff and students in our Schools and Centres outside Italy, but always with the aim of conveying Italian values and aesthetics. Through project based learning, we combine ideas, skills and management in the studio, the workshop, the cutting room, the lecture space, the workplace, and the graduate show.

Learning is progressive, in that as students develop throughout their studies in their knowledge, skills, self-determination and confidence, we aim to support and guide their ambition and achievement so that they leave us as creative, autonomous, thought provoking career professionals.

Our programmes and courses blend industry practice and skills with theory and research to enhance the employability of our graduates. Our staff bring first-hand knowledge of practice, skills and theory in fashion, design,

and business to IM learning processes. They and our students are drawn from Italy and across the world, to work and learn together, in co-creative, inclusive and multicultural settings.

3. MISSION

Be an international school of fashion, design and luxury that thrives on enhancing talent through project based experiential learning.

3.1. THE LONDON SCHOOL AIMS TO:

- Nurture creative dynamism and an aesthetic understanding which generate disruptive, experimental, conceptual thinking relevant to future industry innovation and leadership
- Enact a global curriculum where student inspiration in every classroom is driven from every street and corporate boardroom of London
- Produce leaders for the luxury sector equipped with a contemporary focus on innovation, sustainability, ethical practice and technological literacy
- Ensure industry readiness of graduates where IML brand recognition as a lovetmark is continually enhanced through alumni employability and success
- Enable active, critical, self-aware innovative learning, through academics and industry leaders by facilitating open, creative and collaborative exchange between communities and stakeholders

4. VALUES

Professionalism, responsibility, innovation, co-creation, inclusivity, diversity, market readiness, feasibility, problem solving, inquiry, craftsmanship.

5. OBJECTIVES

IML sets out the following objectives:

1. To nurture teaching excellence
2. To provide a quality student learning experience
3. To maintain the currency and legitimacy of the curriculum
4. To ensure the global employability of our graduates
5. To provide an inclusive and integrated learning community

5.1. TO NURTURE TEACHING EXCELLENCE

At IML, teaching is practice- and research-based: the former is led predominantly by staff whose teaching is informed by their experience as active industry professionals and practitioners (tutor practitioners), whilst the latter is led predominantly by academics, whose teaching is informed by their commitment to research thus providing our students with the more formal, academically rigorous aspects of their learning. This teaching philosophy translates into a comprehensive preparation that integrates theory with practice in dynamic and interactive ways thus enabling our students to achieve self-realisation and autonomy at the point of graduation.

Teaching is supported and developed by IML through formative and summative feedback, training, reflection, appraisal and peer mentoring. We aim to provide a unique and individual experience to every student developing with them their own career paths, leveraging their strengths and providing a personalised development plan to

achieve career aspirations. A learning by doing approach makes room to experiment, to learn from their own mistakes and to take calculated risks within a safe learning environment.

While teaching at IML emphasises practice and is primarily project based, we encourage the adoption of innovative teaching pedagogies that promote interaction between teacher and student in order to facilitate the acquisition of learning through a dynamic and iterative relationship between theory and practice, eventually creating a culture of inspired learning. IML has been progressively shifting away from teacher centred methods to claim the centrality of the student in the learning process. In accordance to the level of studies and to enable scaffolding within the student experience, experiential learning is predominantly but not exclusively used as the official, signature teaching pedagogy (Shulman 2005). Therefore, building on the expertise in their subject areas, tutors act as facilitators of learning in an inclusive learning environment, in which students assume an active, collaborative and co-creative role. Problem solving and problem based approaches are amongst alternative teaching strategies adopted in order to locate the student at the core of a developmental learning process.

At IML we strongly advocate excellence in teaching not only by ensuring quality and currency in the curriculum and by supporting staff development and progression through tutor training, faculty forums and labs, peer observations and senior fellowships programmes. Our teaching practice is periodically scrutinised through a continuous improvement process to adapt to new circumstances and contingencies, and technologies have consistently been adopted to help teachers in their role and “adjust the power dynamics to turn power over into power with learners” (Larrivee 2000: 293), eventually enhancing the student learning experience. The use of technologies in the learning and teaching process makes the student and the tutor experience more flexible and allows students “to think more deeply and operate more consistently at the higher end of the cognitive continuum than ever in the past” (Cowan in Cowan 2006: 34). Therefore, technology such as our intranet, virtual labs, social media platforms and the school app have increasingly been adopted to ease communication and to eventually facilitate the learning experience. Recently, the education technology platform Blackboard Ultra has been adopted and fully integrated into the LTS enabling remote learning and allowing further flexibility and ease in the student experience.

5.2. TO PROVIDE A QUALITY STUDENT LEARNING EXPERIENCE

Students work with their tutors and practitioners to learn, experiment and progressively create together in teaching spaces that include the studio, the workshop, the boardroom, the lecture space, the cutting room, the workplace and the catwalk. Students acquire and practice the skills essential to fashion and product design, such as drawing, hand-drawn and computer aided design, fabrication, and finishing.

In their programmes, students learn and practice the techniques of marketing, branding, communication, project management, and integrate them with fashion, design and styling through managing individual and group projects that include elements of production, management and marketing.

Through career development learning, students come to understand how to design, shape and “produce” their own careers and employability as autonomous professionals.

At IML, we implement a highly diversified learning strategy offering a range of learning opportunities. Building on students’ prior knowledge, through in class activities and debates, we promote a student experience that enables the learning process to be active, self-reflective, collaborative and experiential/practice based.

Learning takes place in the classroom, but also through additional workshops, masterclasses, seminars, symposiums, off-site visits to exhibitions, showrooms, shows, trade fairs and museums. The assessment and events are organised to allow students to showcase their talent and creativity (e.g. graduate fashion shows). Research clusters will provide opportunities for further challenge to our students, where they might join an existing team or propose new projects or initiatives that support their interests, ambitions and future employability.

Students' active participation in the school life is encouraged and promoted: the student survey (Student Voice) and Programme Committee meetings (through student representation) at the end of each term constitutes an opportunity to feedback to the school on their experience and the highly successful Mentor/Mentee programme has demonstrated how effective peer support can be. More traditional "top-down" forms of support are also embedded in the student experience: Student Services, the coaching programme and psychological support.

As part of the student progression, we expect lessons to be engaging yet challenging thanks to effective planning. Student progress, facilitated through small class sizes, is closely monitored by means of in-class activities, formative assessment, self-assessment and one-to-one tutorials.

5.3. TO MAINTAIN THE CURRENCY AND LEGITIMACY OF THE CURRICULUM

To ensure comprehensiveness and effectiveness, the curriculum is designed holistically to include the input of staff, students and other expert external stakeholders. Specifically, to make learning meaningful and relevant, in line with Barnett et al. (2001), the curriculum is framed around the interaction of the competences of subject specialists (Knowledge), the diverse identities of our students (Self), and IML signature pedagogy, Experiential Learning (Action). This translates into a curriculum intended to elicit deep learning through the alignment of classroom activities, assessment tasks and the feedback that the students receive. The outcome of this dialogical planning is a curriculum that allows students to interrogate and further scrutinise their practice, to explore alternatives and encourage critical thinking. Crucial in achieving the above are its flexibility, inclusivity, creativity and internationalisation. At IML, internationalisation exists first and foremost in the multinational and multicultural cohort of students, which elicits a reflection on inclusivity, as well as cultural and intellectual identity. In other words, at IML the curriculum is designed not to limit knowledge acquisition through the imposition of predetermined fixed content learning paradigms, but to allow students to broaden their horizons by opening up and offering a variety of possible non-mutually exclusive paths, which among other things take into account the acquisition of skills, unplanned experiences as well as the emotional dimension. In this sense, the curriculum rather than being solely a prescriptive document becomes an instrument for a serendipitous process of knowledge acquisition. Consequently, alongside its formal and explicit manifestations, the curriculum also includes informal elements and "hidden" parts thus becoming the totality of things encompassing the overall student experience.

Periodic reviews are undertaken to ensure the curriculum is current and of value. In order to define what is good learning and teaching in terms of outcomes and achievements, IML organises learning and teaching forums to encourage all stakeholders to discuss the effectiveness of the curriculum and to identify areas of expansion, enhancement or change.

The establishment of research at IML will be central to ensuring that our curriculum responds not only to cutting edge industry practice, but also enables our students to question, challenge and lead this as they begin their careers. Research is crucial to enabling academic staff to develop in their disciplines, to contribute effectively to

the pedagogical process and to inform a dynamic and responsive curriculum. Our MA electives: Alternative Business Models, Neocraft and Hi-Technology, initially will provide a broad and flexible, interdisciplinary starting point from which research clusters will evolve organically in response to opportunities as they arise. Our research therefore, while closely related to our existing curriculum is not confined by it, enabling an agile research culture to develop and flourish that will feed back into our curriculum development.

5.4. TO ENSURE THE GLOBAL EMPLOYABILITY OF OUR GRADUATES

Employability is one of the core elements of student learning processes at IML, in line with QAA subject benchmarks and graduate outcomes. Employability formally is included in the curriculum based on job market intelligence from course design to sustainability and employability mapping in the Unit Specifications of courses. Many of IML tutors are practitioners in their respective fields and incorporate live industry projects as part of the assessments. Furthermore, formative feedback is often provided by industry specialists. Under the direct supervision of academic placement tutors and the guidance of Careers Service, students have the opportunity to undertake work placements, which allow them to put into practice the formal learning acquired in the classroom. Alternatives to work placements include internships, volunteering, career fairs and company visits. To further enhance students' awareness of the soft and hard skills the fashion industry appreciates, some assignments require students to reflect on their employability skills – for example, critical reflections/reflective journals and personal development plans. Our Careers Service conducts a range of activities to prepare and advise students for employment. Additionally, IM regularly organises industry talks and invites alumni to shed light on potential career paths students might wish to follow.

5.5. TO PROVIDE AN INCLUSIVE AND INTEGRATED LEARNING COMMUNITY

At IML, we sustain an inclusive learning community where students and staff can learn from each other. The nature of the institution in terms of its international student mix has enabled a naturally inclusive environment. As part of this commitment, we employ staff from diverse cultural backgrounds, develop the curriculum and implement an assessment strategy based on the cross-cultural nature of our student body. Exchanges occur on a daily basis in the classroom through debate and sharing. Events are organised to encourage the sharing and mixing of ideas and the spaces of the school premises, student timetables and some cross-curricular units are intended to facilitate communication between students enrolled on different programmes/years. We ensure equal opportunity through internal and external moderation systems. Special educational needs coaching is available on site all week as well as psychologists and pastoral care/student services. Our Inclusivity Advisory Group constantly reviews and proposes actions and activities at all levels to ensure an integrated learning community.

6. ASSESSMENT AND FEEDBACK

At IML, we believe that assessment is integral to the learning process and as such assessment for learning is present in and cuts across the five objectives that characterise the LTS hereby outlined: teaching, student learning experience, curriculum, employability, inclusive learning community.

Assessment is intended to enable students to further explore the ideas and concepts covered in the course and to critically and creatively bring together the knowledge acquired in different subject areas to eventually add depth and breadth to their learning experience. Therefore, the heterogeneous composition of the student body is taken into consideration when designing assessment tasks in order to bring richness to the learning dynamics of IML, an institution that thrives on the willingness to embrace intercultural perspectives that can 'stimulate new thinking,

challenge assumptions [...] into the lived-experience of our universities, and especially of the home students' (Killick 2009: 2).

In our approach to assessment and consistently with our signature pedagogy, to support students in their learning, IML favours formative over summative assessment, as the latter mainly tests the knowledge and skills that students have acquired. Hence, IML limits the number of summative assessments for students to what is required to provide robust evidence for their achievements.

IML assesses students against the learning outcomes approved for their courses and programmes. As students progress from level to level their assessments become more challenging.

Students participate in formative peer assessments to advance their aesthetic, creative and critical understanding and only after training in assessment principles. Marks from student peer assessment are generally indicative and do not contribute to progression or graduation outcomes. Instrumental in this student assessment approach is transparency in discussing the unit learning outcomes and assessment tasks marking criteria with students at the beginning of each term.

Assessment tasks are marked with appropriate feedback by staff that have been appropriately trained. IML also trains placement and internship providers who contribute to the assessment of work-based learning in assessment principles and all such assessments are subject to moderation by IML teaching staff. All assessments that contribute to progression or graduation outcomes are moderated by appropriately trained teaching staff using processes approved by IML for the purpose. When assessing group and individual projects, IML ensures that an appropriate balance is struck between marks given to specific components of the project and for the realisation of the project as a whole.

Timely feedback on formative and summative assessments is provided to enable students to learn from it when completing the next relevant assessment task. Decisions about the achievement, progression, and completion of students are fair, subject to due process, and comply with the assessment regulations.

7. DOCUMENT REVISION

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