

Project Brief **CTS3 Route B - Element 1**

This project brief focuses on Element 1 – Writing. It will give you structured guidance about approaching your research and presenting your final outcomes in a written format. The project brief for Element 2 is available separately via Moodle.

To develop your essay you will need to identify two key parts:

- a case study (example of art, design, architecture, culture...)
- a theoretical perspective through which to analyse it

You will also use the suggested structure to organise and communicate the findings of your research. All of these aspects are outlined in detail in this document.

From the assignment brief

You decide the content of your research project, within the context of art, design, media and culture. In consultation with your supervisor, and in dialogue with your peers, you will complete a self-initiated research project that builds on your CTS2 project proposal.

Element 1 (80% of mark)

A piece of writing of 4,000-5,000 words (excluding title page, abstract, acknowledgments, contents page, bibliography, image list and appendices). The writing can take the form of an Essay, Report, Review Article or Reflection on Practice.

Identifying a suitable topic

For this unit, you are invited to identify and research a topic of your choice. This can be any subject that relates to your emerging design practice (illustration, art, graphic design, technology, photography, etc.) or your own personal interests, culture and history.

While you had an opportunity to think about a potential topic at the end of year two, now is the time to reflect and refine your topic of choice. Find something you feel passionate about as you will spend a lot of time (14 weeks!) working on it.

If you are worried that your topic is too narrow or that you won't have enough to write about, don't be! No topic is too 'small' to explore – as you dive into your subject you will be able to identify interesting material and find ways to connect it to wider social, cultural, political, or personal perspectives.

Case Studies

Developing an in-depth, focused, well-researched project within 4000-5000 words is challenging. If your research is too broad – your final submission will not have enough depth or allow you to present a compelling argument. A broad topic demands broad research: you don't have time for such a broad approach within the scope of this essay and, even if you did, you would not be able to present it effectively within the constraints of the brief. This is why we ask you to focus your research around a case study.

What is a case study?

A detailed, close analysis of an example of art, design, visual culture, architecture or cultural, social or political events or phenomena.

For example, a case study could be the music video of the singer MIA for her song through which you can examine the representation of migrants in popular media. Another example might be the branding design for a popular skincare brand Glossier, through which to examine the commercialisation of feminist politics. Or it could be a Bollywood film through which to examine the changing nature of women's roles in contemporary Indian society.

Theoretical Perspectives and Contexts

You will need to identify a theoretical perspective to allow you to examine your case study and provide a critical argument. A theoretical perspective is a set of assumptions that inform the questions you ask about your case study and the kind of answers you might arrive at as a result. It is a lens through which you look at the case study, using to structure your inquiry, analyse your case study and present your argument. Another way to think about the theoretical perspective is as a frame, which serves to both include and exclude certain things from view. A theoretical perspective is important as it serves to organise our thoughts and makes our approach explicit to others. Your theoretical perspective will inform your thesis statement (more on this below in the structure section).

Example:

From the examples above, feminist theory may be used in the second example to analyse the Glossier case study. This lens will examine Glossier's branding within the wider feminist struggle for emancipation, equal rights and power within contemporary Western society. It may use the writing of authors such as Judith Williamson or Nancy Fraser to examine the way Glossier mobilises feminist identity politics towards consumption.

Writing structure

Please note: this guidance is mostly directed towards the essay format. While this format is applicable to all formats of CTS3 Element 1 submissions, if you are writing a review, report or reflection on practice, your structure may vary. Please discuss with your tutor.

While each approach to research and writing is different, we suggest the following structure to organise your essay and communicate your knowledge and intellectual position with clarity.

Introduction

In this section, you will briefly introduce the subject of your research, your research question, case study and theoretical perspectives.

You should also include your thesis statement in your introduction. This is a short paragraph that sets out your position in relation to your research theme. You can start the thesis statement in the following way:

“This essay argues _____”

“In this essay, I will demonstrate _____”

“This research analyses _____ to argue that _____”

You are encouraged to write your thesis statement in the first person – this is your position and your voice should be highlighted here.

Main body

Your main body should be broken down into 2-3 subsections. Add subtitles for each of these sections.

Section 1: Theoretical perspective

In this section, you will outline the theoretical lens you will be applying to your case study. You will introduce key authors and use quotations from your key sources. One or two sources are sufficient, but you need to engage with them in depth.

Section 2: Contextual background

In this section, you will provide some contextual information about your case study: What is it? When was it created? What is the wider historical, social, or political context (not all of these may be relevant to you)?

Section 3: Critical analysis of case study

This is the core section of your essay. Here you will analyse your case study through the theoretical lens you have identified: you will apply that theory to your visual or contextual analysis. We suggest you include relevant images in this section. This is where you provide evidence for your argument through critical writing

Conclusion

This section restates your argument and summarises the main points of your essay. This section should remind the reader what the key points they should take away after reading your essay are – essentially you remind them why they should ‘care’ about the topic you have written about and why it is important.

Bibliography

Here you should include all the sources you have consulted during your research as well as those cited in your essay. Please use Cite them Right online for guidance on using Harvard referencing format.