Paper / Proposal Title:
RETHINKING THE CRIT;
What we have learnt from the online design review

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Abstract (300 words):
Assessment in architecture and creative arts schools has traditionally adopted a ‘one size fits all’ approach by using the ‘crit’, where students pin up their work, make a presentation and receive verbal feedback in front of peers and academic staff.

This crit method is bound to a specific time and place and has been in operation in a barely changed, largely unchallenged and somewhat notorious format for over a hundred years.

In 2020 the move online has challenged the traditional format of the crit and in particular its requirement to be connected to a specific time and place. This has led to a re-examination of how design assessment and feedback can be delivered using alternative methods.
When COVID forced university teaching online, one of the authors of this paper was leading a two year-long action research project entitled ‘Rethinking the Crit’ which piloted new methods of formative and summative student-centred assessment without a ‘crit’. The other author was leading an undergraduate architecture design studio that was testing alternative methods of critique in collaboration with the research project. We were placed in a unique position to trial and evaluate the new possibilities opened up by teaching and reviewing design projects online.

Framed within the wider research project, this paper will examine pedagogical theory underlying the traditional ‘crit’ approach, discuss recent critiques of the method and the reality of the ‘crit’ will be examined through analysis of practice. This will lead into a discussion of our experience of how online feedback has opened up new possibilities. We will seek to identify what we found of value to retain as we move slowly back into the real space of the design studio.

While our focus will be on architecture, it will be relevant to all disciplines which use project-based learning.

*https://www.teachingandlearning.ie/project/rethinking-the-crit/

Keywords: Architecture, Reviews, Critique, Assessment, Online Feedback.

• Author(s) Biography (200 words each):

Alice Clancy is an Assistant Professor at the School of Architecture, Planning & Environmental Policy at University College Dublin. She is an architect and photographer and co-ordinates and teaches in Second Year Design Studio and Lectures in photography at UCD. She has been a visiting lecturer/reviewer at QUB, SAUL, NCAD and TUD. In 2016-2018 she worked on the curatorial team of the 2018 Biennale Architettura as assistant to overall curators Yvonne Farrell & Shelley McNamara of Grafton Architects.

Patrick Flynn is the Head of Learning Development in the College of Engineering and Built Environment in TU Dublin. He is an architect and educator and teaches on the BArch and MArch programmes and holds an MA in education. He has served on the Board of Architectural Education in the RIAI. His professional experience includes working in New York and Dublin. He has chaired visiting boards to UCD, SAUL and CCAE schools of architecture on behalf of the RIAI. He is part of the consortium including UCD, SAUL and CIT which is currently engaged in a research project into feedback and assessment funded by the National Forum for the Enhancement in Teaching and Learning in Higher Education.