

PgCert Presentation

Exploring Lighting Skin Tones

Context and Background

Research Question

How do different skin tones respond to varied lighting conditions on digital cinema cameras, and how can this knowledge be translated into more inclusive and effective cinematography teaching?

Or

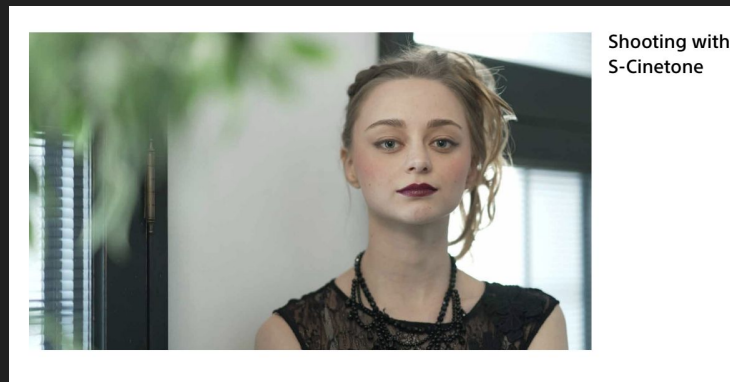
How do I improve my work? (How I like to look at it)

Link to intervention -

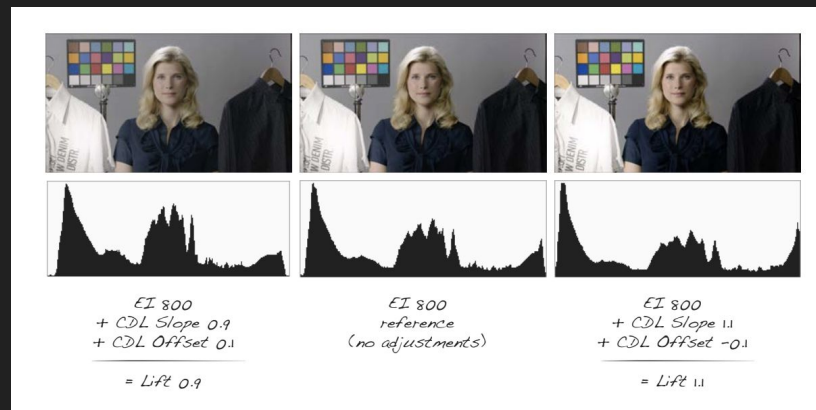
<https://mcarless.myblog.arts.ac.uk/2025/07/28/intervention-report-inclusive-practice/>

Research into topic - Camera Manufacturer white papers

- Looking into current camera manufacturers documentation on how to expose current cameras the majority of models and information was still aimed at white skin
- When I try out new cameras in the field and for work inside and out of UAL current camera exposure settings are still being set up for white skin out of the box (70% exposure value for skin tones for example)



Sony white paper



Arri white paper

Goals/Output of the project

- To expand the visual resource bank for teaching lighting people at UAL, reflecting the diversity of the student body.
- To improve students' and my own understanding of how different skin tones react in a variety of lighting conditions.
- To create teaching resources documenting varied lighting effects on diverse skin tones, supporting BA and MA cinematography courses technical delivery.
- To deliver a workshop where students test lighting techniques on diverse skin tones, building practical understanding without prescribing “correct” outcomes.
- To approach the project reflexively and ethically, acknowledging my positionality and the limits of my perspective while avoiding prescriptive judgments.

Research into topic - Lighting pedagogy

Gerrit van Honthorst, *The Procuress*, 1625 (detail).



El Greco, *An Allegory*, 1585 (detail).



Lighting teaching needs **“to ask ourselves who is learning, who is teaching, and what examples and canons are most relevant”** — which calls for teaching practices that actively foreground skin-tone diversity. **(Greenhalgh, C., 2020)**

Decolonising cinematography education:
experimenting with lighting ratios and textures for Black and Asian skin tones **(Sung, Y.-L. (2022))**

Figure 6. Film still of the clandestine cave, from *Shadow* (Source: Blu-ray distributed by Universal Pictures)

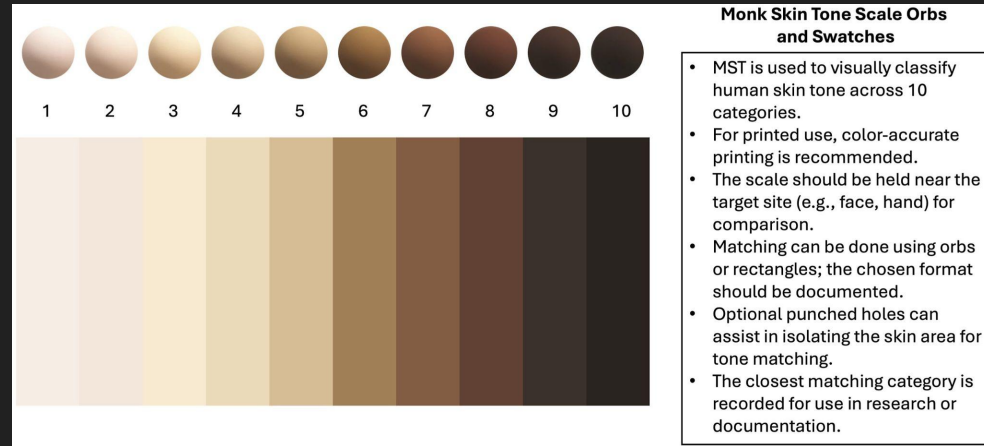


Figure 5. *The Calling of Saint Matthew*, Caravaggio (1599–1600; Source: San Luigi dei Francesi, Rome)



Research into topic - Skin tone charts/data collection

Fitzpatrick Skin Phototype Classification (FSPC)



Fitzpatrick scale critique (British Journal of Dermatology editorial)

Hamad, S.H. & Shah, M. (2021) 'The Fitzpatrick Skin Type scale is obsolete: time for a new classification', *British Journal of Dermatology*, 185(1), pp. 198–199.

(Article you quoted from:

<https://academic.oup.com/bjd/article-abstract/185/1/198/6600283>)

Monk Skin Tone Scale (MST) explanation

Monk, E., Buolamwini, J. & Gebre, T. (2023) 'The Monk Skin Tone Scale: A More Inclusive Measure for Evaluating Algorithmic Bias', *Journal of Drugs in Dermatology*, 22(8), pp. 861–864.

(General MST dermatology reference:

<https://jddonline.com/articles/dermatology/S1545961625P8618X>)

Proof of Concept shoot - Example Lighting Test

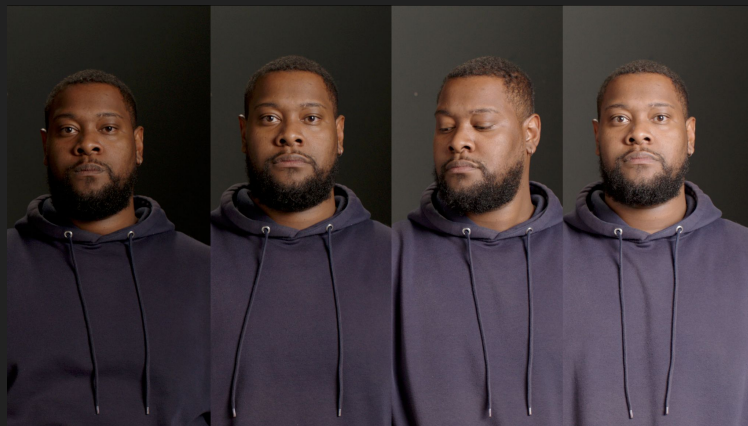
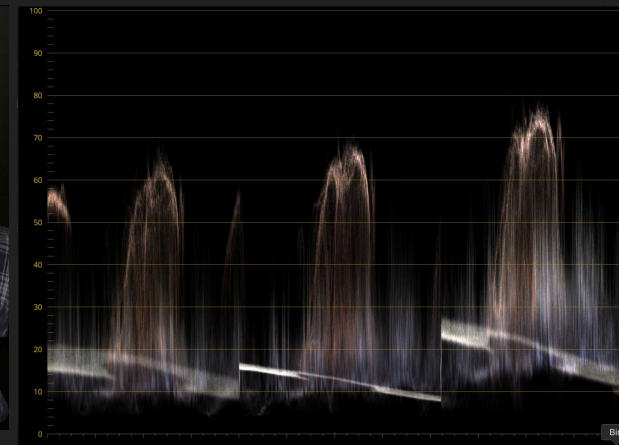




60-65%

65-70%

70 - 75%

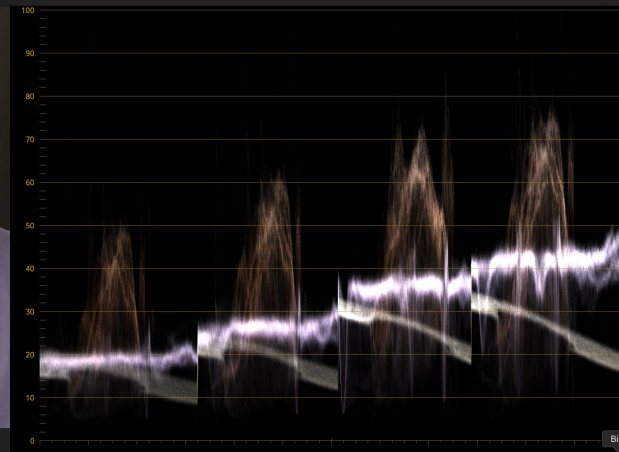


45-50%

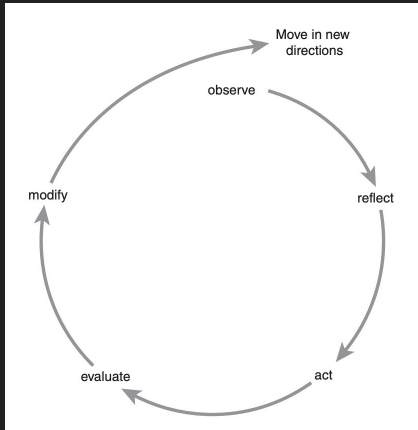
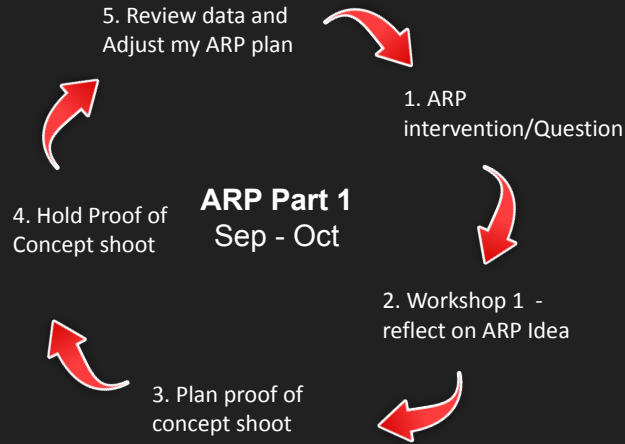
50-60%

60-70%

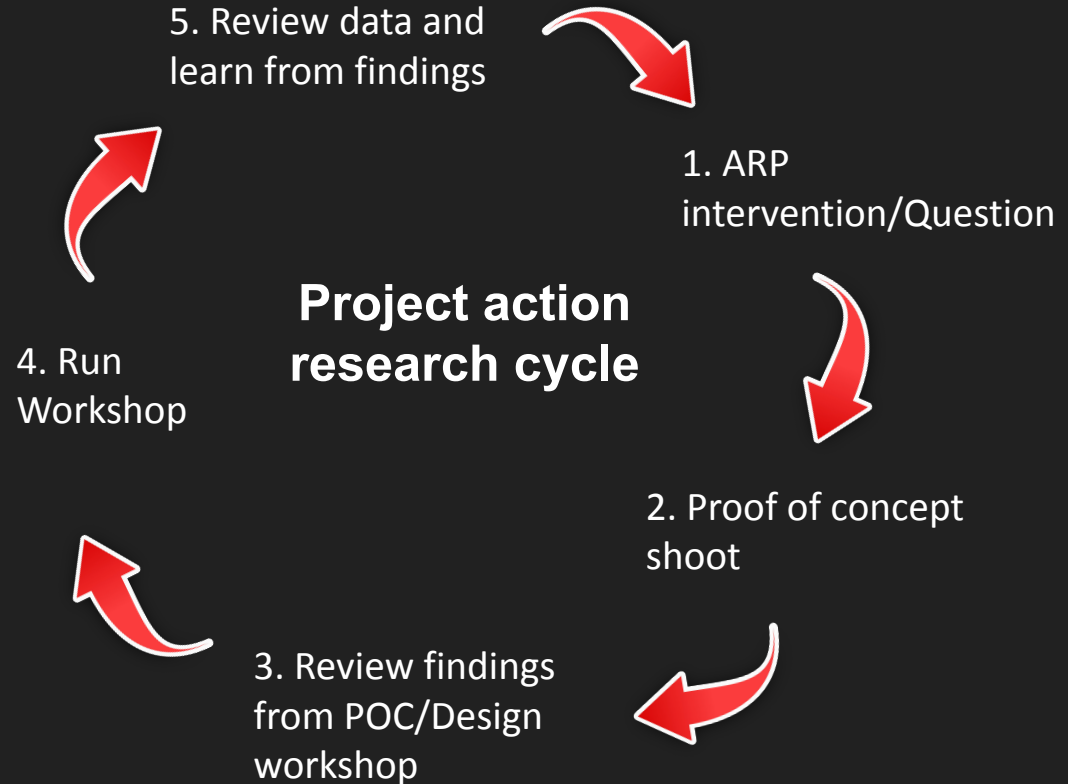
70-75%



Action Research cycles throughout project



McNiff, J. & Whitehead, J. (2011). *All You Need to Know About Action Research* (2nd ed.). SAGE Publications, London.



Research methods and data capture for the workshop

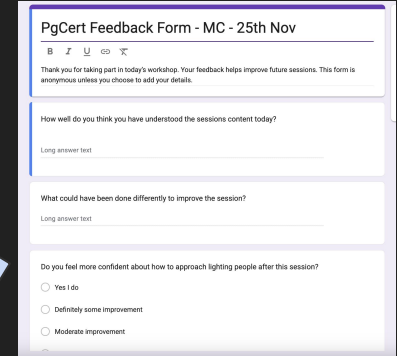


Camera Assets

Mixed methods research
(Creswell, J.W., 2014.)

My observations
from the day

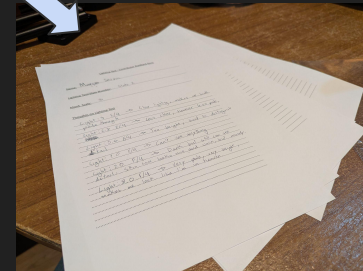
Student Feedback
forms

A screenshot of a digital feedback form titled "PgCert Feedback Form - MC - 25th Nov". The form includes a header with text formatting options (B, I, U, etc.). The main body contains several questions with text input fields: "Thank you for taking part in today's workshop. Your feedback helps improve future sessions. This form is anonymous unless you choose to add your details.", "How well do you think you have understood the sessions content today?", "What could have been done differently to improve the session?", and "Do you feel more confident about how to approach lighting people after this session?". The last question has radio button options: "Yes I do", "Definitely some improvement", and "Moderate improvement".

Written Data

Visual Data

Student reflections
during workshop



BTS Photos

Recording for review



The Workshop - Exploring Lighting Skin Tones



Link to workshop breakdown

<https://docs.google.com/document/d/1-sv1RGbPI-McLJzqwcYxi6vf0DVmz5AArxQCyMYgYpl/edit?usp=sharing>

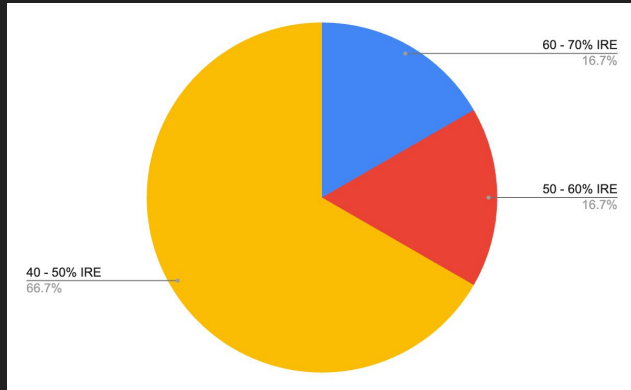


Link to Slides used in workshop

<https://docs.google.com/presentation/d/125u8qbY03M10-MVFmDUcATyPqbWNwfXP2TXB6Po2Ed0/edit?usp=sharing>

Assets and findings

- When Asked where there preferred exposure was on camera, most students thought that they looked most natural when lit 1 or 2 stops under 70% IRE.



- A range of video assets have been captured by students with a wide variety of different skin tones for future use.

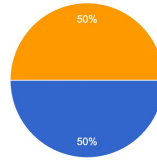


Assets and findings

- Positive workshop feedback in general from the students, they all felt like they learnt something new in the topic of lighting different shades of skin
- Adjusted workshop parameters during workshop in response to students reactions to the brief
- This shift away from my initial plan follows a more student centered approach to my delivery. Aligns with - *'Inclusive learning and teaching in higher education: a synthesis of research'* Hockings, C. (2010)

Do you feel more confident about how to approach lighting people after this session?

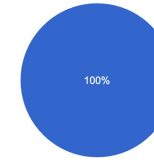
4 responses



● Yes I do
● Definitely some improvement
● Moderate improvement
● A small improvement
● Not at all

Did the workshop improve your understanding of the topic?

4 responses

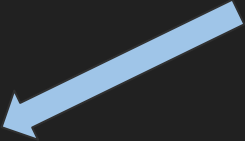


● Yes
● Somewhat
● No




Reflections and improvements

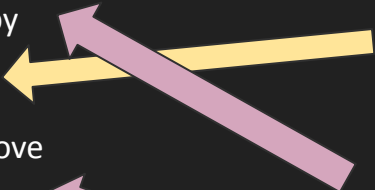
- **Improvements to questionnaires:** some of my questions should have been more targeted to specific learning outcomes
- **Clearer technical instructions:** Some minor errors in student assets caused by relaxed approach to student instruction
- **Incorporate a more structured round up/end of workshop review:** Allow the students to cement their knowledge by creating a more co-constructive space
- **Adjust exercises in response to student feedback:** Improve engagement in the task by allowing more participatory exploration within the brief



Improvement to my use of constructive alignment, which emphasises coherence between learning objectives, teaching activities, and assessment or feedback mechanisms (*Biggs & Tang, 2011*)



Seven principles of good feedback practice: facilitating self-regulation (*Nicol, D.J. and Macfarlane-Dick, D. (2006)*)



'Inclusive learning and teaching in higher education: a synthesis of research' *Hockings, C. (2010)*