

The Future of Education  
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# Mandatory AI Use as a Catalyst for Reflective Practice in Graphic Design Education

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Roadmap

Three questions, six parts.

1

**The problem**  
AI in the education  
today

2

**The intervention**  
Mandatory use,  
documented

3

**What we found**  
4 themes, 3  
implications

## The problem

Two unsatisfactory responses. Both sidestep what AI literacy requires.

### **Prohibit**

Use goes underground.

Covert engagement.

### **Naturalise**

Use stays unreflexive.

Black-box engagement.

The problem

AI as object of inquiry,  
not tool of convenience.

### Gap in the literature

Musiienko  
(2026)

6.4× growth since ChatGPT. Theoretically thin.  
Graphic design at 1.9%.

Fleischmann  
(2024, 2026)

Structured curricular response – but largely  
programmatic.

### Missing

**Empirical analysis of what such intervention  
actually produces.**

**The intervention**

A personal self-promotion kit.

**Cohort**

9 students

**Duration**

13 weeks

**Site**

ESART/IPCB, Portugal · 2025/26

**Deliverables**

Printed kit + functional website

**Condition**

AI mandatory. Weekly diary obligatory.

### Why this brief?

Artefact and subject coincide.

- The kit represents the student.
- Accepting AI output means standardising one's own self-presentation.
- The threshold for acceptance rises.

**Three features that matter**

Mandatory, documented, dual-material.

**Mandatory use**

No opt-out. No covert use.

**Obligatory diary**

A metacognitive device, not a record.

**Print + digital**

Confronts AI with two material domains.

Methodology

Reflexive thematic analysis. Themes constructed, not discovered.

9/9

students consented  
(S1–S9)

31700

words of reports + diaries

6

phases (Braun &  
Clarke, 2006, 2021)

Findings

# Four themes from the corpus.

1

**Cognitive scaffold**  
not authorial agent

2

**Friction and slowing**  
not acceleration

3

**Print and digital**  
not material uniformity

4

**Authorship  
reconfigured**  
not dissolved

## Theme 1

# AI as cognitive scaffold. Not authorial agent.

Recurring student vocabulary:

- “organising the thinking”
- “structuring”
- “clarifying”
- “accelerating exploration”

*“acts as an instrument for organising thought, not for generating concepts.”*

— S8

## Theme 2

AI did not speed work up. It slowed it down.

- Versioning loops.
- Prompt reformulation.
- Repeated rejection of generated material.

*“I often spent more time on AI than producing from scratch.”*

— S4

Theme 2 – Evidence

29 versions of the website before submission.

*“small prompt changes produced significant layout shifts.”*

— S8

Theme 3

## Material domain matters.

<b>Print</b>	Scale, sequence, paper, binding. AI less effective.
<b>Digital</b>	Technical threshold lowered. AI significantly more useful.

*“in the printed portfolio AI tended towards literal interpretations.”*

— S4

Theme 4

Authorship reconfigured, not dissolved.

**Executor** — **Curator**  
**Maker** — **Editor**  
**Craftsman** — **Strategist**

*“the designer’s role will evolve from executor to curator, editor and strategist.”*

— S4

Discussion

The dominant rhetoric of AI as productivity device: AI as efficiency device, AI as threat to academic integrity, AI as inevitable opportunity (Bearman, Ryan & Ajjawi; 2023).

*We propose AI as structured reflection.*

## Implications

Three things this case suggests.

1

**Structured intervention is implementable and analysable.**

2

**Friction is a resource, when documented.**

3

**AI literacy is repositioning, not adoption or rejection.**

## Limitations · Directions

### What this study cannot do:

- Small sample (n = 9).
- Single-coder analysis.
- Partially mediated corpus.

### What comes next:

- Replication.
- Longitudinal study.
- Cross-disciplinary comparison.

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# Thank you

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