

INPUT Reflection

Introduction

This reflective report records my learning process and personal changes in this module. Using the DIEP framework (Describe / Interpret / Evaluate / Plan), I will review what I did in the six R3 tasks, what I learned, what I did not do well enough, and how I want to improve next.

D — Describe: What happened? (What did I do?)

RRR01 Conditional Design

In the Conditional Design exercises, I clearly experienced for the first time that “rules” can become part of design. I no longer need to control every detail. Instead, I need to think first: which conditions must stay stable, and which factors can be left to participants or the environment to change. After the workshop, I wrote a personal design manifesto to guide my future studies

RRR02 Affordances & Signifiers

In this task, I learned that “affordance” is not simply a function. It is the possibility of action created by both the object’s features and the user’s ability. For example, the height and stability of a chair make “sitting” feel natural. The shape and position of a door handle guide people to “hold it and pull”.

I also understood signifiers: they are perceivable cues that tell users where to act and how to act (such as icons, labels, colours, sounds, etc.), which can reduce mistakes and confusion (Interaction Design Foundation, 2016).

The clearest example for me is the “Norman Door”. When a door should be pushed, but it has a handle that looks like it should be pulled, users are misled and have to rely on “Push/Pull” signs. This made me realise that when design details do not match how the object actually works, it can directly affect users’ judgement and emotions.

RRR03 Letter to My Son

This task introduced me to speculative thinking. I read Barbara Flanagan’s letter to her future child and completed the related questions. Then I planned a letter to my own future child: I imagined I write in 2025 to a child born in 2020, and the child reads it in 2035. The focus of this task is to use imagination to support critical thinking: what changes might happen in the future? Will these changes bring opportunities or pressure?

RRR04 Prototyping

I watched three materials about prototyping and understood the process of “from idea to an experience” from three angles: Sketching, Digital prototyping, and Native prototyping. In the past, I treated prototyping as “evidence” for final presentation. But this learning made it clearer that prototyping is not only a result. It is also a tool to test assumptions, check flows, collect feedback, and iterate.

RRR05 Storytelling

I recorded my one-day experience in Bristol: the colourful city atmosphere, graffiti and fallen leaves, the smell of the market, rivers and boats, the up-and-down hills, and the shock of seeing the Clifton Suspension Bridge at the end. I used a short poem to tell this experience.

RRR06 Empathy (UX empathy)

This task made me understand more clearly that “user-centred” is not just a slogan. It is a set of work that needs real effort. How users understand, how they operate, and where they hesitate or misunderstand all need designers to imagine through empathy, and then validate through research or testing. Empathy helped me realise that I cannot use my own feelings to represent users’ feelings.

I — Interpret: What does the experience mean?

Looking back, the most important change for me is that I no longer treat “finishing a result” as the only goal of design. I now see “thinking and iteration” as part of design. Before, I often worked based on my own understanding and assumed the audience would understand. But this module made me realise that design needs to include the audience/users in the system—how they understand, behave, and give feedback decides whether the work is successful.

Conditional Design helped me understand that uncertainty is not always a bad thing. If the rules are clear and the variables are controlled well, changes can make the audience part of the work, and the result becomes more alive. The designer’s role is not only a “controller”, but also a “builder of frameworks and conditions”.

Affordance & Signifiers connected design with psychology. The “Norman Door” shows a very real issue: when the action suggested by an object conflicts with the real way to use it, users feel confused or frustrated. This also made me reflect on my habits: sometimes I add unnecessary details for “beauty” but I do not check whether they make understanding harder. Learning “affordance” made me care more about what each shape, position, and cue is communicating, and whether it matches the function.

Letter to My Son showed me another design way of thinking: using future imagination to reflect on the present. Speculative design is not simply predicting the future. It uses imagination to highlight real problems and to show possible consequences of today’s choices. This gave me inspiration to think about design and its relationship with society and the environment on a longer time scale.

Prototyping made me understand more clearly that the goal is not to finish a beautiful interface first, but to turn ideas into something testable with low cost, so people can experience it and give feedback. Prototypes are the key step to move from “I think it works” to “users tell me what doesn’t work”.

Storytelling made me realise that expressing design is also part of design. A project—from inspiration to result—is basically a story. Being able to choose key points, control rhythm, and help others quickly understand is an important skill for communicating design.

Empathy again emphasised the importance of user experience. Users’ goals, emotions, and environmental limitations influence how they understand and operate. Empathy turns “user-centred” into specific work: I need research and testing to get close to real needs, instead of using my intuition to decide for users.

E — Evaluate: How valuable was the learning experience?

Overall, this learning was valuable because it changed my habits: I started to value process, user understanding, and reflection. But I also clearly see my weaknesses and what I need to strengthen.

First, my storytelling focus was not strong enough. In my poem, I tried to record too many things, so it became close to a simple timeline and was not very memorable. For example, I mentioned “colour” but did not repeat it as a main clue. If I used “changes of colour” as the main line, the story might feel more unified and easier to remember.

Second, my empathy is still more about “understanding” than “verifying”. Empathy is not a slogan, but a method: understanding users’ goals, emotions, limits, and habits. For example, whether a user can find a button, dare to click it, or understand what will happen depends on context and experience. I realised I often use my own feelings to replace user understanding. This also appeared in my Project 4 (interaction design for non-human users). I tried to build a platform to reduce the conflict between pigeons staying in walking paths and people walking. But do pigeons really need it? Is this conflict important for them? I am not fully sure. I naturally put my own thoughts into “the user’s thoughts”. This still needs observation, interviews, and usability tests to correct. For me, it also reminds me that design is responsible: not only to look good, but to work smoothly in real use.

Third, I still have a result-oriented habit. I worry about completeness and visual effect, so I sometimes ignore the rhythm of “test first, improve later”. In other words, I know iteration is important, but in practice I am not brave enough to leave space for “unfinished” early stages. Before I start, I often think too much about what the final result should look like and what I should do. But actually, I need to accept and understand that the process is also the result.

Through these issues, I realised that design is not only making something. It is also a responsibility—understanding users carefully and using evidence to support design choices, not only aiming for visual beauty.

P — Plan: How will I apply my learning?

Based on this module, I hope to make the following improvements in the future:

1. Treat the process as part of the result.

For each project, I will plan at least two rounds: draft/low-fidelity → test/feedback → revision. Early versions do not need to be perfect, but they must be testable.

2. Explore user needs more seriously (use evidence, not intuition).

In future UX/interaction tasks, I will do at least one of these:

- 2–3 short interviews
- contextual observation
- simple usability testing (task checklist)
I will record where users pause, misunderstand, or make mistakes, and use evidence to guide improvements.

3. Pay more attention to design details, and make every design decision have a clear purpose.

I will check whether the interface clearly shows what is usable/not usable and what action is expected. I will avoid design elements that look nice but are unclear.

4. Use storytelling to explain design clearly.

When presenting work, I will focus on narrative choices: key problem, key decisions, key feedback and changes, and final insights. I will not show every detail, but only the most meaningful parts of the process.

Conclusion

This module brought three main changes to me: from result-oriented to process-oriented; from designer-centred assumptions to user understanding; and from simply completing tasks to reflection and narrative expression. In the future, my core goal is to keep creativity and clarity together, and to balance critical thinking with feasibility. I hope my work is not only visually good, but also understandable, usable, and honest in showing the design process.

Reference List

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UXtweak (2025) *Prototype Testing 101: Learn How To Test Prototypes in 5 Minutes* [YouTube video]. YouTube. Available at: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=VeRCOCrntQU>

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AI Use Statement

This assignment was written by the student. AI tools were used only for language support.

ChatGPT was used to help improve grammar, sentence clarity, and overall readability. DeepL was used to translate parts of the text from Chinese into English.

AI tools were not used to generate original content, arguments, or critical thinking.

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