



ruskinmill

re-imagining potential



Student blowing glass, Glasshouse College

Ruskin Mill Trust Practitioner's Guide

How to Apply the Method of
Practical Skills Therapeutic Education

Developed by Aonghus Gordon and colleagues
for staff contributing to the student journey

2013- 2014 Edition



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Inspiration



Freeman College Student (Graduated 2007)

"As I began to polish my spoon, my picture of myself began to be reflected. It looked weird as it distorted my reflection. Sometimes I looked better than I thought, I felt, and sometimes I looked disturbed. My dislike for myself was tested because the spoon was beautiful."



John Ruskin (1819-1846)

"The highest reward for a person's toil is not what they get for it, but what they become by it."



William Morris (1834 -1896)

"A man at work, making something which he feels will exist because he is working at it and wills it, is exercising the energies of his mind and soul as well as of his body. Memory and imagination help him as he works."



Rudolf Steiner (1861-1925)

"Only that for our consciousness, light is thought, imagination; while the darkness is, in us, will, which becomes at length goodness, becomes love."

From "Truth Wrought Words"

Dear Reader,

Welcome to the Practitioner's Guide.

I would like to thank countless colleagues and students who, over the many years have contributed to the development of Ruskin Mill Trust. It has grown from one student, whose life changed as a result of working with practical skills through a contemporary apprenticeship model of learning. During the biography of the Trust, the creativity and empathy from countless staff toward student development has enabled the Trust to grow. Through recognition from agencies and parents, locally, nationally and internationally, the work of the Trust is greatly valued. However the journey that the Trust now faces is to embed understanding and consciousness of the 'why?' of what we do and how we do it.

I am eternally grateful for the collaboration of Charlotte von Bülow over the last two years in undertaking our Masters in Education at Rudolf Steiner University College. Our joint thesis, "Re-Imagining Potential: the Development and Validation of Practical Skills Therapeutic Education" is the foundation for this guide. I am equally grateful for the tireless work that Charlotte undertook in re-working the thesis to form *The Practitioner's Guide*. I am also grateful for the contributions of many staff in contributing and reviewing this document.

This guide has been developed for the benefit of people working within Ruskin Mill Trust and who directly or indirectly serve and contribute to the Student Journey – that is, all of us who work or volunteer for Ruskin Mill Trust.

The intention with this guide is to offer a resource and a 'companion' for staff in the practical application of the method of Practical Skills Therapeutic Education, as developed by the author of this guide and colleagues over the last 28 years.

In the process of developing the guide, I have consulted extensively with senior practitioners, leaders and managers, subject experts, support staff, students and colleagues from other organisations. I would like to thank all those who have taken a role in the development of this guide.

I am aware that Practical Skills Therapeutic Education is multi-layered and that there may be as many ways of applying the method as there are practitioners of it. The guide is therefore a means by which you as practitioner can find your own approach to Practical Skills Therapeutic Education. It is however, the hallmark of Ruskin Mill Trust itself and it is what makes our method unique within the sector of care and specialist education. Practical Skills Therapeutic Education is likely to be the reason why you came to work here in the first place and, as a result, it is the responsibility of practitioners and managers to be able to articulate the *why* the *how* and the

what of this method. It is the means by which we may get a reputation for our distinctive approach both nationally and internationally.

As with every method, Practical Skills Therapeutic Education has a set of ‘givens’ – or coordinates, if you like – that can help you orientate when you study and research the method or when you plan, deliver and assess the curriculum or guide the students on their journey.

This guide will set out the fundamental principles of Practical Skills Therapeutic Education and their applications. It will describe the continuum of the Seven Fields of Practice and address the means by which you can work with the student Star Outcomes Assessment, the Assessment and Recording Framework (ARF) and the Integrated Learning for Living and Work curriculum units (hereafter referred to for brevity as *Integrated Learning Curriculum* or ILLW). The aim has been to present the content in such a way that both newcomers to Ruskin Mill Trust and senior practitioners can gain something from this guide.

Our aim is to review this guide every year and update it as we learn more about Practical Skills Therapeutic Education.

As with any publication issued to staff, I invite you to provide feedback and comments to help us develop this resource. I am looking forward to a major new section that we can develop next year which should anchor the Practical Skills Therapeutic Education Curriculum to the increasing body of knowledge of human neurology. We shall also be including major contributions from staff who are currently undertaking the MSc in Practical Skills Therapeutic Education and whose research will increasingly inform and re-invigorate the practice within the Trust and inform the Practitioner’s Guide.

I hope you will enjoy this first edition of the Ruskin Mill Trust Practitioner’s Guide.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Aonghus Gordon', written in a cursive style.

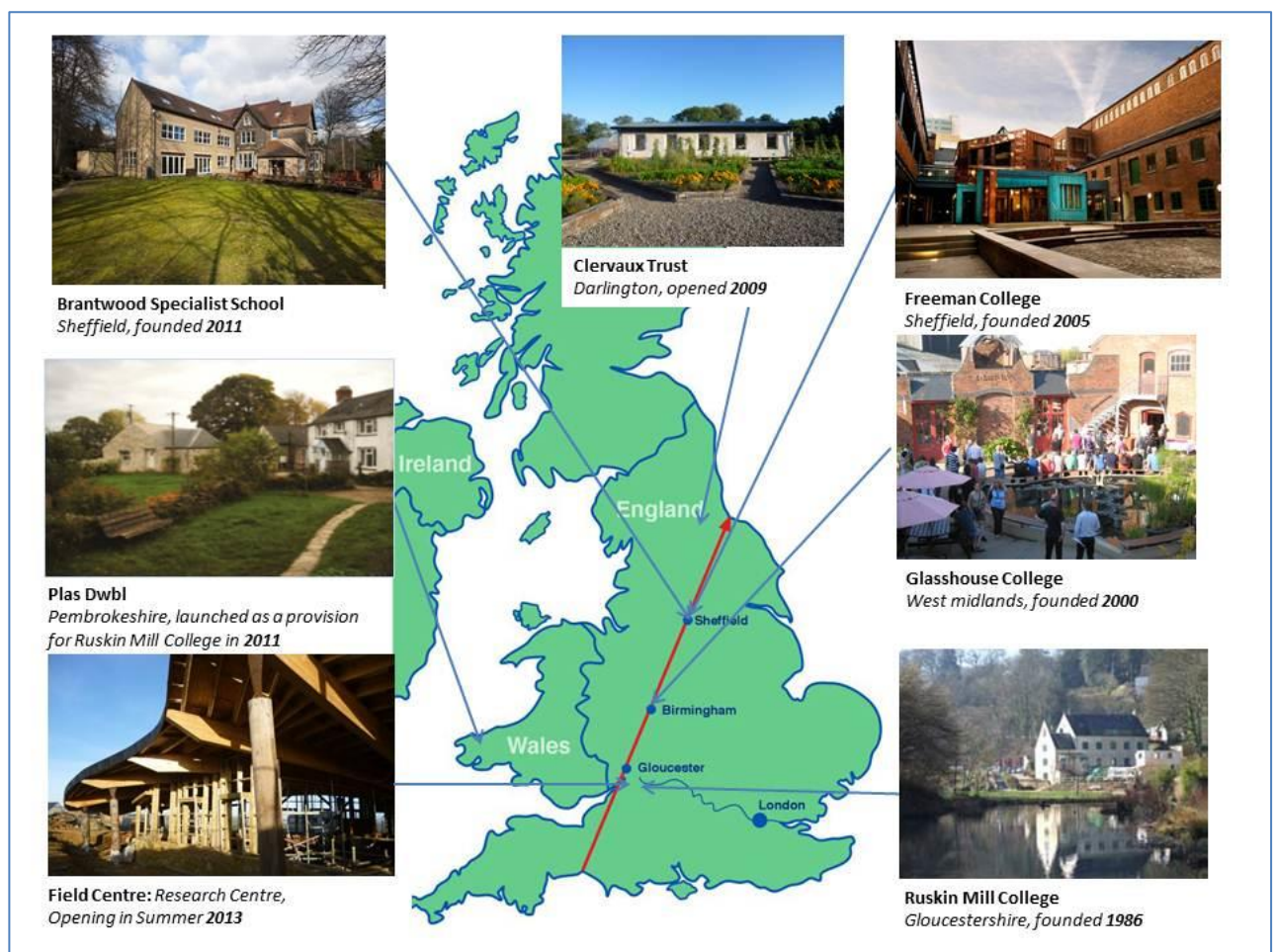
Aonghus Gordon

Founder and Executive Chair of the Trustees

Charitable Objectives of Ruskin Mill Trust

The charitable objectives of the Trust as approved by the Charity Commission in 1994, read as follows:

- 1) To advance the education of young people with learning difficulties and/or behavioral problems or special educational needs through training in the areas of arts, crafts, agriculture and environmental sciences, with particular reference being given to the indications and insights of Rudolf Steiner in these areas.
- 2) To promote research into the practice and development in these areas of education provided and that all research findings will be widely disseminated.
- 3) The promotion of Rudolf Steiner educational establishments.



Ruskin Mill Trust sites

How to use the Practitioner's Guide

This guide will provide you with the principles and applications of Ruskin Mill Trust as an introduction to Practical Skills Therapeutic Education. You may wish to choose different sections and references as appropriate for your own journey. The Practitioners Guide is on the mandatory reading list for all Hiram ERD programmes and it is highly recommended that you familiarise yourself with it.

References and Accompanying Literature

Throughout the guide, you will find references to literature listed in the bibliography (page 92). These references serve to underpin the method, enhance your understanding and to point to places where you can find out more about a particular subject matter or principle.

The bibliography is divided into sections relating to the different principles and practices of Practical Skills Therapeutic Education described in the Guide. You may find it useful to refer to the literature listed there and you are encouraged to ask your line manager or the Hiram Education and Research Team if you need assistance in finding books and other learning resources.

You are also encouraged to cross-reference your learning and work to the Ruskin Mill Trust Strategic Plan which is available from the Ruskin Mill Trust website www.rmt.org

Another essential resource that may enhance your understanding of the lineage and roots of the method is the Ruskin Mill Trust publication 'Recovering Gifts', which is available from the Hiram Education and Research Team

Orientation Points

The guide is divided into the following key sections:

A. The Historical Context of Practical Skills Therapeutic Education

The story of how Practical Skills Therapeutic Education became a method for educating people with learning difficulties and disabilities

B. The principles of WHY, HOW and WHAT of Practical Skills Therapeutic Education

The description of why we do what we do, how we do it and what it encompasses

- a. WHY: The Development of Self-generated Conscious Action
- b. HOW: Contemporary Apprenticeship Learning
- c. WHAT: The Integration of Seven Fields of Practice

C. The Seven Fields of Practice

The description of the different practices used throughout the student journey and how they are interlinked

- a. Genius Loci
- b. Practical Skills
- c. Biodynamic Ecology
- d. Therapeutic Education
- e. Holistic Support and Care
- f. Holistic Medicine
- g. Transformative Leadership and Management

D. Star Outcomes Assessment Framework

Information about the Star Outcomes Assessment process and how it links to the Assessment and Recording Framework and the curriculum units

E. The Student Curriculum – Integrated Learning for Living and Work

Information about the development and validation of the Integrated Learning Curriculum for students, how to deliver and assess this using the Integration Living for Learning Units and in particular the Delivery Guidance

F. The Assessment and Recording Framework (ARF)

A guide on how to operate with the ARF

G. Films, links and other resources

H. *Introduction to the films, links and other resources available for your further development and research*

The Historical Context of the Practical Skills Therapeutic Education Method

As we are setting the scene for the Practitioner's Guide, what follows is an account of the historical context of the development of Practical Skills Therapeutic Education as a method; it is the story of the building of a new culture of inquiry rooted in practice, social entrepreneurship and innovation.

Here, in the words of Aonghus Gordon, is the story of Practical Skills Therapeutic Education.

Building a method

The Horsley Valley is one of the five tributary valleys and rivers that orientate and flow toward Stroud in Gloucestershire. Starting high up on the dip slope behind the Cotswold Escarpment, The Horsley Brook flows from the southwest to the northeast. The river, having been once fed substantially at the end of the ice age with considerable melt-water, cut through the Jurassic limestone like butter to the Lias Clay below, forming a distinctive 'V' shaped valley.

The valley is criss-crossed from west to east with ancient roads and tracks that brought migratory settlers into the heartland of England, having moored on the River Severn. These tracks avoided, wherever possible, the soft valley clay. The early settlers were not warlike; they were agrarian farmers and craftsmen living in communities. One of their deities was Cuda, a mother goddess associated with the Cotswold Hills and its rivers and springs. Geography and geology preordained human settlements with its economic activity and spiritual aspirations. A medieval priory managed part of what is now the southern-most area of the Ruskin Mill College estate. However, the northern section of the estate has a more diverse history having come under the influence of the mercantile economy of the Stroud Valleys – a history full of entrepreneurship and non-conformity.

The current Horsley Valley was shaped and reengineered hydraulically around 1800 by the Huguenots, leaving three distinctive mills in the valley. Both Ruskin and Horsley Mill were built as part of the British wool industry making cloth for both the British and Napoleon's armies.

Later, Horsley Mill housed an industrial fish farm, fed by the natural springs emerging from the valley's slopes and what was to become Ruskin Mill housed the manufacture of toxic aniline ink. However, by the end of the Second World War, Hartbury Mill had been demolished and although both Ruskin and Horsley Mill were still being used for commercial activity, both had fallen into a state of chronic disrepair.

For a detailed study of the history of the Horsley Valley, please see *Three Smaller Mills: A study of the mills in the Upper Horsley Valley* by Ian Mackintosh.

The development of the valley under Ruskin Mill Trust

The development of the valley under the management of Ruskin Mill Trust was initiated in the north and moved down the valley to the south during the first 10 years. In 1967, what is now Ruskin Mill was bought from Horsley Mill Fish Farm by Robin Gordon. He had a vision of cultural entrepreneurship. In 1983 a foundation stone mosaic was cast at Ruskin Mill as an orientation of the emergent spiritual and practical vision of the Trust. The vision was inspired by Rudolf Steiner's Cosmology which could be described as an 'integration of Universe, Earth and People'. The foundation stone mosaic depicted the seven life processes and the twelve senses of the human being, integrated into the geometry of the zodiac. The mosaic – the Zodiac Floor – was created by volunteers and unemployed youth from Stroud along with pupils attending the Rudolf Steiner Specialist School, Cotswold Chine.



The Zodiac Floor at Ruskin Mill (1983)

The Zodiac Floor has been a compass of orientation and innovation for the Trust's vision for three decades. During the last three years the Zodiac Floor has inspired the building of a new research centre, the Field Centre, dedicated to the delivery and research of the method and practice of Ruskin Mill Trust with a special emphasis on research into consciousness, human developmental ideas and underpinned by biodynamic agriculture.

The Mill was soon to be renamed the Ruskin Mill Arts and Crafts Centre in dedication to the life and work of John Ruskin. It was in a constant process of renovation and innovation, allowing workshops for master craftsmen and a café to flourish, becoming a centre for cultural development, design and craft workshops, training and study. In 1994, Ruskin Mill Trust bought Horsley Mill and the Fish Farm. Gables Farm, the most southerly point of the College estate was bought in 1996 and reconnected the site with the purchase of Brightside Farm in 2000. Ruskin Mill Arts and Crafts Centre and Horsley Mill, housing Ruskin Mill College, have now been entirely restored and form a deeply restorative experience for students and the many visitors who walk

through the valley that has been re-imagined and shaped through the alchemy of student biographies and the historical context of the place.



Ruskin Mill 1983



Ruskin Mill 2000

The emergence of a method

The Ruskin Mill Arts and Crafts Centre set up the 'Living Earth Training Course', located in Ruskin Mill itself. As the craft workshops and the land developed, a group of young students from local provisions for people with special needs began to take interest. The young students had reached the end of their schooling and wished for a transition into further education. This enabled the students to enter into the workshops of professional crafts people along with art, drama, meteorology, numeracy and literacy delivered as an integrated experience. The students required a completely new way of learning: neither the formal Rudolf Steiner Waldorf curriculum nor the mainstream curriculum were able to meet their needs. Here lay a unique opportunity to re-think learning from the inside-out and create an emergent paradigm.

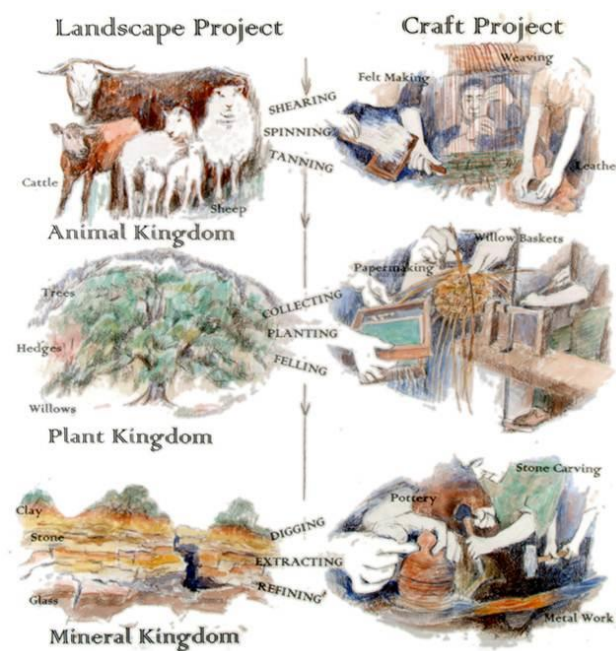
It became clear that a particular methodology of integration would be needed to meet these young students on their developmental journey. The staff and the community of the Ruskin Mill initiative were encouraged to look for inspiration in Goethe's work. Workshops were put in place and held by people with expertise in the practice of what is called Goethean Science (Seamon & Zajonc, 1998), - Dr. Jochen Boehemühl and Dr. Margaret Colquhoun in particular, along with on-

going research groups and workshops with Dr. Rupert Sheldrake. These workshops were held as public events in conjunction with the Nailsworth Spring Festival.

The reconsolidation of the Horsley Valley created a new integrated vision for the students' development, becoming a *laboratory* for the observation of practical, social and cognitive development.

A new curriculum

Over the years, a new student curriculum emerged. The student's biographies often mirrored processes in nature. The element of time, seasonality, growth and shedding were indirect educational elements on the student journey. A craft and land curriculum emerged, connecting with biodynamic practices and keeping an educational focus. Staff members were drawn both locally and internationally into the venture. The locality provided the materials for the curriculum, which was to become known as 'Descent into Matter'. This curriculum embodied a Rudolf Steiner perspective of *coming into the body*, incorporating Rudolf Steiner's idea of the



"Descent into Matter"

phasic developmental understanding (Steiner, 1947). Critical choices of crafts were experienced to meet developmental needs in the context of tutors' guidance, farms, woods, gardens, fish farms, coppicing, charcoal, willow beds, clay and stone. The ultimate objective was to 'grow' young people within the context of growing the landscape; this may be described as a 'double cultivation'.

A transformative process arose between season, student and economy. The biodynamic methods supported this integration. One of the most tangible and

primary productions was the growing of food. The food chain generated the concept, "*from seed to table*".

The growing of food contributed to the students' capacity to develop wellbeing. It was a springboard out into the community towards employment and service.

The early days of the curriculum had an air of exploration and care-free motivation. Taking inspiration from Steiner's work on human development, the curriculum could provide a

framework for the student to re-live certain lost phases. If a student felt themselves to be in a 'hunter gatherer' identity, a wood was bought in order to facilitate a clearing to make a fire and a woodland management process was devised to help understand the process of time. What was done to serve one student would later serve the requirements of many. Students learned to accommodate the unexpected. Tutors designed and offered experiences and challenges in doses calibrated to the individual student's capacity to start their journey into self-management. This process supported the development of acceptance and the will to transform through the challenges of kinaesthetic resistance. Practitioners, materials and nature became the educators.

The new integrated learning culture in the Horsley Valley was delivered through an apprenticeship-learning model. This model was inspired by the Arts and Crafts Movement and delivered by crafts people. Through engagement with student biographies and developmental challenges, the tutors engaged in the curriculum were called upon to take a therapeutic approach. What emerged was a collegueship of Practical Skills Therapeutic Educators.

Staff grew, as did students, whose destinies were entwined through role modelling and a love for creative, practical, purposeful work.

Carers came from far and wide, often working alongside the students during the day to build communication between day and residential support. The Ruskin Mill shop became a hub for communication and dialogue, and the morning and evening drop-off. Cultural events organised for the students in the Ruskin Mill Gallery and their work was further celebrated by using what they had made to adorn their bedrooms and homes.

It is important to mention the Ruskin Mill Trust history of art trips. Students worked at weekends or in the holidays to contribute to the cost of going abroad to see great, significant works of art and architecture. The history of art trips were, in a sense like a facilitated *rite of passage*, which were taking place at the end of the 2nd year. The students, having embarked on a journey into the valley, were also encouraged to expand their cultural awareness and sense for



aesthetic. History of art trips took the students to Turkey, Sinai, Crete, Venice and Florence. In Turkey, the Mayor of Selcuk invited students with their tutors and mentors to perform *A Winter's Tale* in the Amphitheatre of Ephesus to an audience for 2500 – 3000 school children.

In the Sinai Desert, students walked or rode on camels. Money was gifted to restore wells and ancient gardens to create a series of renovated

oases for Bedouin children and students. Walking through the desert became a metaphor for the transition process. It was an aid to understand how life's path is full of disappointments and highlights, often only around the corner. The walking became a lens for life. In Crete, the myth of Theseus and the Minotaur inspired cooperation and collaboration. Greek and Roman culture offered a journey in which the development of consciousness could give deeper understanding to our western cultural history. Built on the ingenuity of water, reclamation, craftsmanship and the guilds, the Byzantine culture in Venice gave way to the held human values of the Renaissance. Students appreciated and brought back a profound appreciation of the power of painting, sculpture and architecture.

Students returned, transported through entirely new visual, emotional and cognitive stimulation. Their sensory organisation had been put to work, often under profound and life-changing intensity. The history or art trips can be described as a contemporary form of 'catharsis', laying the foundation for the development of personal autonomy.

The Living Earth Training Course received government approval from Ofsted, whose first inspection in 1992 awarded a Grade 2; 1 being 'outstanding' and 3 'satisfactory'. The activities in Ruskin Mill inspired community participation along with student referrals from education authorities from across the south of England. Extending the provision from one year to three years was called for and endorsed not only by parents but also by the education authorities. The Living Earth Training Course had landed as a tangible educational provision.

Vision, Method and Purpose

This Guide will be focusing primarily on the method of Practical Skills Therapeutic Education and how it is applied in Ruskin Mill Trust. It is worth contextualising the method within the vision and the purpose of Ruskin Mill Trust by providing you with a brief overview.

As we develop the vision, method and purpose of the organisation, our terminology changes. In order to make it clear what we do for students, parents, funders, regulatory bodies and colleagues internally and externally to Ruskin Mill Trust, it is important that as far as possible, we find a common language. Below is an introduction to what we have found to be among the most effective ways of communicating our organisational intention to others. This needs to be seen to complement and enhance what is stated in the Ruskin Mill Trust Strategic Plan.

The Vision of “Re-imagining Potential”

This strapline for Ruskin Mill Trust is a statement that encourages us to consider the latent potential of each person – students and staff – who come to learn, work and grow within the organisation.

The intention of Ruskin Mill Trust is to work with students to rekindle hope and a motivation to contribute positively to the world out of personal initiative.

The word ‘re-imagine’ encourages us to work creatively with individuals who have had to embrace a compromised existence due to a physical, emotional or developmental challenge or perhaps have not received the care and attention they required. It points to a process of recalibrating each other and ourselves through focused work on our senses and our attitude to life. When we talk of ‘imagination’ it means that we may develop the inner ability to work creatively with the future through the development of an *inner life* that can complement the development of *the outer life*.

The work with students and staff in Ruskin Mill Trust focuses on the immense potential of each individual and we strive to foster in each other the confidence and ability to stand independently in the world, feeling safe and strong.

The Practical Skills Therapeutic Education method has this as its aim. The conditions for growth can be created in many ways and the student journey takes each person on an individual path, designed to facilitate the growth of that person. The development of practical skills in a therapeutic environment creates a foundation for such growth and offers a safe framework for developing independence and strength. *Re-imagining Potential* therefore captures the vision of Ruskin Mill Trust.

The Method of Practical Skills Therapeutic Education

The theory and practical application of Practical Skills Therapeutic Education forms the main content of this guide and is explored in depth below.

The Ruskin Mill Trust method has had different names over the years, starting with the Living Earth Training Course in the eighties and nineties, developing into the Practical Therapeutic Education Skills (PTES) in 2005 and, for a brief period during 2008-2009, Apprenticeship-in-Service.

Equally, the curriculum informed by this method and provided by Ruskin Mill Trust to the students has been known as Descent into Matter and until recently, the Ruskin Mill Orientation Course.

In line with the developments in the education sector and the accreditation and validation of Ruskin Mill Trust's method, both the student and staff education offer is now known and certified as 'Practical Skills Therapeutic Education'.

Since 2009, Ruskin Mill Trust has focused on articulating, developing and validating the method of Practical Skills Therapeutic Education for the benefit primarily of the students engaged in the educational activities and the staff that provide them.

The process has yielded the development and accreditation of the Integrated Foundation Learning curriculum for students. From September 2012 the Practical Skills Therapeutic Education that informed student curriculum is certified as 'Integrated Learning for Living and Work'. As described, this term will cover all activities that the student journey entails, the bespoke units developed by Ruskin Mill Trust practitioners, including the completion of BTECs or other awards granted by Edexcel, National Open College Network (et al).

Staff education in the method focuses on building the capacity to facilitate the student journey, deliver the student curriculum and to lead and manage the organisation according to its vision and values. This has been developed into a series of validated programmes that are delivered to staff: Introduction to Ruskin Mill Trust, Practical Skills Therapeutic Education Foundation Certificate, Holistic Support and Care, and Transformative Leadership and Management. Two new offers are being developed for new Ruskin Mill Trust learners:

1. A specialist pathway particularly aimed at Tutors and Student Journey Managers. This pathway will focus on how to deliver and assess the Integrated Learning for Living and Work (ILLW) for students.
2. An intensive induction in Practical Skills Therapeutic Education for Senior Managers and Leaders in Ruskin Mill Trust. This would complement the offer of Transformative

Leadership and Management and help senior staff embed the method of Practical Skills Therapeutic Education.

Other useful guidance about the student curriculum and the application of Practical Skills Therapeutic Education can be found in this Guide and the Practical Skills Therapeutic Education Certificate units

An Masters programme has been designed to support the further research and development of the method and to offer the tools for its practical application to the general public, with particular emphasis on professionals in the fields of care, education, agriculture, leadership and management, and social entrepreneurship. Further information can be found on the following websites:

Ruskin Mill Trust: <http://rmt.org/msc-pste/>

A set of quality standards are being developed for centres, organisations and initiatives wishing to use the method of Practical Skills Therapeutic Education. Standards of Proficiency for Practical Skills Therapeutic Education Practitioners are also being developed and we share an early draft in Appendix 3 on page 88.

The Dialogic Action Research method and its application is described in Appendix 4 on page **Error! Bookmark not defined..**

The Purpose of the Student Curriculum – Integrated Learning for Living and Work

Twenty-eight years of practical application of Practical Skills Therapeutic Education have shown that the method is highly enhancing and developmental for any person; but particularly potent is its use within the field of special needs education for young people.

Students attending Ruskin Mill Trust Colleges are enrolled into *the Integrated Learning Curriculum*. This has been designed to meet practical, therapeutic and educational requirements and encompasses five areas of guided, recorded and assessed activities:

1. Student assessment (Star Outcomes Assessment) and recording of 'distance travelled' (Assessment and Recording Framework – ARF)
2. Edexcel Assured *customised* units and qualifications, based on the Practical Skills Therapeutic Education method (Integrated Learning for Living and Work - ILLW units and qualifications)
3. Functional Skills and accredited BTEC and NOCN qualifications (Foundation Learning and My City Learning Suites)

4. Living skills activities (assessed and un-assessed)
5. Additional unlisted (unaccredited) activities and projects

When students leave Ruskin Mill Trust, they will receive a portfolio and certificate for having completed the Integrated Learning Curriculum, followed by Awards and Certificates of the collective achievement. This may include BTECs or NOCNs, in-house project based information and a record of distance travelled in other areas of development.

The student's college experience is carefully guided and is referred to as *the student journey*. The intention of the student journey through Ruskin Mill Trust is to enable progression and integration into society. The aim is to expand the student's possibilities and capacities to contribute positively to their environment.

The practical skills context calls upon the development of creativity, team working, problem solving and communication – among other essential qualities. Practical Skills Therapeutic Education informs the design of an individualised curriculum, which offers students the possibility to develop confidence and a sense of purpose. This process is facilitated through the practical and therapeutic activities offered and culminates with the student's own experience of having developed skill, gratitude and a sense of service.

During their time within Ruskin Mill Trust, students commonly develop from a stage where they are just able to produce something for their own use to a stage where they have the ability to produce an item in order to give it away. For some, the journey takes them so far that they are able to create something that can be sold to a third party.

This trajectory is a highly therapeutic path, particularly for those individuals who have never *received* or had their most basic needs met in their early years.

In this manner, the Practical Skills Therapeutic Education method aims to enhance progression and to foster a sense of purpose, wellbeing and fulfilment.

Ruskin Mill Trust Terminology

In line with our Strategic Plan, we may articulate to students, parents, funders, agents, regulatory bodies and colleagues that –

- Our Vision is captured in the strapline *Re-imagining Potential*. This aspirational statement pertains to our attitude towards the people who come towards Ruskin Mill Trust for education and development. It addresses our values through recognising the embedded potential that each person, student and staff, carries and which we aim to nurture, enhance and develop in the context of consciously engaging *Universe, Earth and People*.
- Our Method is called *Practical Skills Therapeutic Education*. It is a method that provides a safe environment for people to learn, grow and develop. The method is built on three main principles that address the why, how and what of the offer to students. 1) Why we educate using the Practical Skills Therapeutic Education method: for the development of self-generated conscious action; 2) how we deliver the curriculum: through Contemporary Apprenticeship Learning and what we deliver: an integration of seven fields of practice that form a continuum of Practical Skills Therapeutic Education.
- Our Purpose is the provision of the *Integrated Learning Curriculum for students*. The activities offered as part of the curriculum fosters the ability to engage creatively with positive challenges, meet the world with confidence, to develop personal initiative and the capacity to act responsibly. It is a curriculum that includes the development of basic skills as well as the possibility to become competent in different specialist areas. It prepares students for life beyond Ruskin Mill Trust.

This guide will go into the detail of all of these statements so that practitioners may feel confident and familiar with the vision, method and purpose as described here.

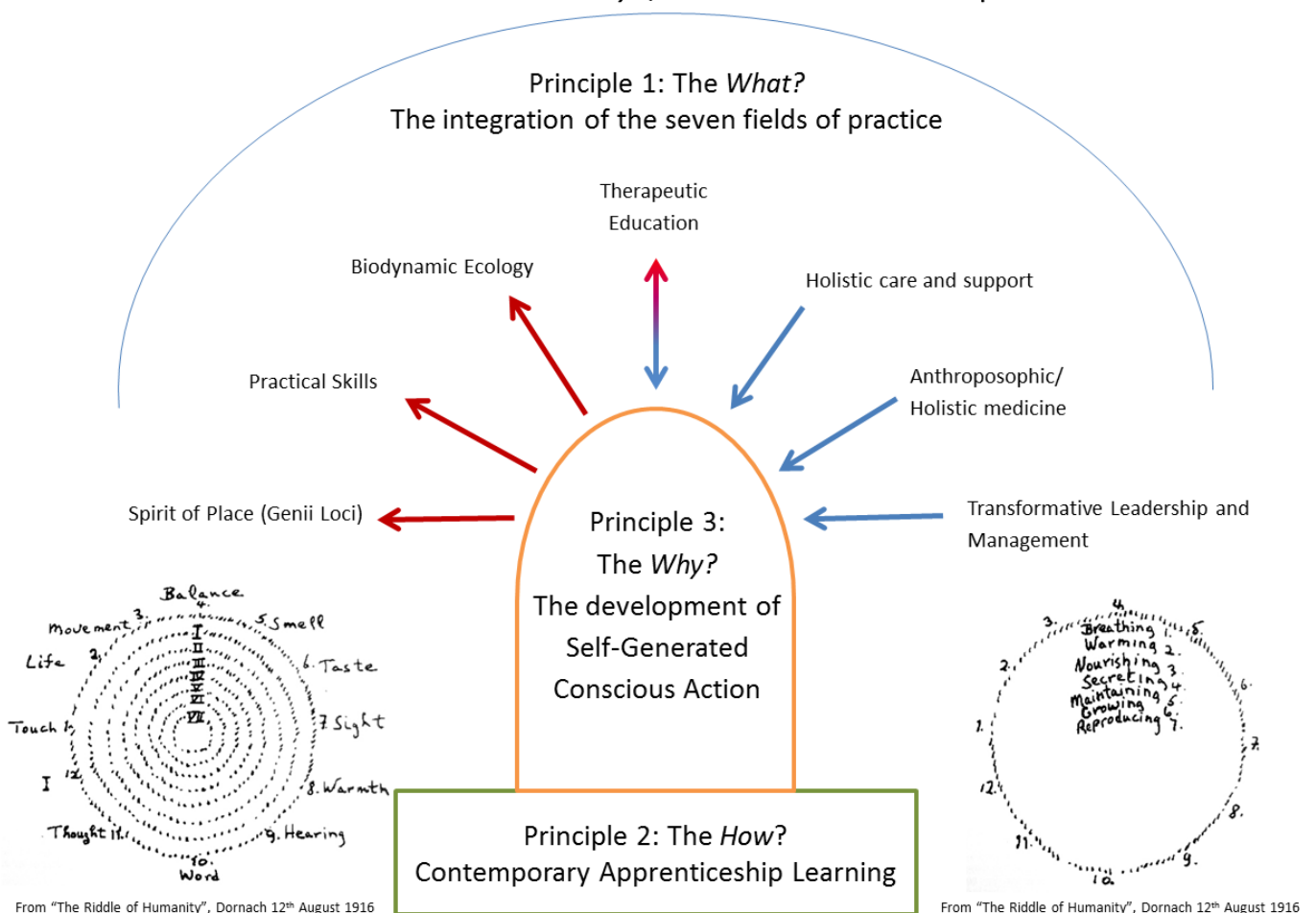
The Principles of WHY, HOW and WHAT of Practical Skills Therapeutic Education

There are three fundamental principles that inform the method of Practical Skills Therapeutic Education. The principles are based on the essential questions: *why* is Practical Skills Therapeutic Education an appropriate educational method? *How* should Practical Skills Therapeutic Education be delivered to students? And *what* does Practical Skills Therapeutic Education consist of?

The three principles of Practical Skills Therapeutic Education are:

1. **WHY:** The development of self-generated conscious action
2. **HOW:** Applied Contemporary Apprenticeship Learning
3. **WHAT:** The integration of seven fields of practice

The *What?* the *How?* and the *Why?*, in Practical Skills Therapeutic Education



Principle 1: The development of self-generated conscious action

The term 'self-generated conscious action' has been developed to explain the ability to generate personal initiative out of the motivation to contribute positively to the world.

When students arrive in Ruskin Mill Trust we often experience that they are unable to take action, to take initiative and to take charge of their own lives. It is unsurprising that students may feel and behave in this way if we consider the different biographies and paths that have brought them to us. You may experience that a student does not know what he or she wants or needs. You may observe that there is an unconscious drive to behave in ways that are inappropriate or damaging to themselves and their environment.

As practitioners, our main aim is therefore to assist and support students to connect or reconnect with who they really are and to find ways in which we can find and enhance the potential that they all have. The activities offered in the curriculum are designed to transform what may be unconscious, inappropriate or damaging behaviour and to offer positive alternatives.

Handling *tools* safely and appropriately in the workshop and the meeting with the resistance of transforming physical material may help the student to find appropriate ways of behaving and relating. The practical skills activities bring out a sense of achievement and the feeling that what has been created has use and makes sense.

It is well known that *finding meaning in life* is one of the key contributing factors for wellbeing. When we feel useless, we may become depressed and unable to function. For a vulnerable person or a person diagnosed with learning difficulties and disabilities, common ways of finding meaning in life may be compromised. This may be because physical, emotional or cognitive abilities are impaired or delayed. It may also be due to the fact that their basic needs have not been met or because certain crucial developmental steps were disrupted by trauma. It is therefore important that the activities that are timetabled into the student journey are meaningful and achievable so that the student may look back on their accumulated successes.



A student at Plas Dwbl caring for chickens

Conditions for the Development of Autonomy and a Sense of Service

The development of self-generated conscious action is supported by the conscious facilitation of certain conditions:

- **Emotional and Cognitive ‘Resistance’** (inner conditions): This can be created in the meeting with tutors and peers and through following instruction. Within the workshop, the student may be asked to imagine what an item may look like before they create it and this enhances the development of imagination and foresight. The positive challenge of collaborating with others in practical, social and cognitive contexts creates good conditions for the development of self-generated conscious action.
- **Aesthetics and Place** (outer conditions): All the sites in Ruskin Mill Trust have been regenerated to stand as an example of *re-imagining potential*. The regenerated buildings and sites stand as role models for the process we offer to students. We build functional and beautiful spaces to host the learning and development process of students. The interrelationship between landscape and people and the meeting with local geology, flora, fauna and community contributes to the development of self-generated conscious action.
- **Conscious Role Modelling**: The condition of conscious role modelling is the most difficult one to create in that it relies entirely on the approach of the practitioner. In the student’s relationships with tutors, guides or peers, the learning focuses on becoming

conscious of oneself and considering one's actions. For the student to observe a tutor or peer applying themselves to a craft activity for example, and paying attention, remaining awake and responding appropriately to a challenge, may well be the most developmental experience they can have. Some students have never had conscious role models and the appropriate handling of the most basic principles may be the most beneficial for the student. Role modelling is a key condition for the development of self-generated conscious action.

The development of self-generated conscious action within Practical Skills Therapeutic Education relies on creating a context within which these conditions are created.

Developing Will in Thinking



A student weaving at Ruskin Mill College

One of the sources of inspiration that Aonghus Gordon found when developing Practical Skills Therapeutic Education was Rudolf Steiner. Steiner (Steiner, 1999) talked about the capacity to apply *will in thinking*. The way this idea has been developed in Practical Skills Therapeutic Education is through the engagement with *will power* in the art, craft and land activities. In order to produce a useful item, the student has to apply a high level of will power to maintain the momentum and complete the task.

In the beginning, this will power may be supported to a high degree by the practitioner, but at a certain point the student may find that they can *self-motivate*. At this point, the will power has started to enter into the *thinking*. At this stage, the reason for completing a task is no longer just because the student is told to do so but because the student understands the reason *why* he or she should complete the task. It may be the beginning of forming a wish to succeed – and this wish is anchored in a *sense of self*.

For the student, self-generated conscious action may just be the recognition of *making a difference*. It is the personal journey of the student from external validation – reflecting on external achievement or indeed failure – to internal validation: a sense of self and the experience of making an impact on the world out of *who they are* and of what they are capable.

Practitioners on Self-Generated Conscious Action

Here is what practitioners in Ruskin Mill Trust said about Self-Generated Conscious Action:

“...seeing the students out on the farm and coming into contact with something that perhaps they’ve never experienced before, but also something that is totally honest. The goats are as honest as can be, and the students will come against this. The honesty of the weather, difficulty of the conditions sometimes; this can enhance and build the student’s ability to stay within that and do it anyway, to carry on. It’s another opportunity to push themselves beyond what they think their capabilities are and push themselves further than they thought they could.”

“We talk to the students about TRUST – they grow to understand that we are not there to make them fall but to help them achieve and once that trust has been established between the students and the tutor then resistance to learn decreases and they start to talk about what they want and how they would like to do something knowing that we have the knowledge to help them do that. Sometimes this pushes us as tutors – and we have to do our research to make it happen. We also see at this time the student start to take on a self confidence that allows them, without worrying or thinking, to be able to demonstrate to someone else what they have learnt.”

“I invited a student who used to kick my buckets of settling pulp to make a bucket of pulp himself – three students worked together to make their own bucket of pulp and then he could respect what it was for, by doing it himself.”

Concluding Question and Answer

Why do we apply Practical Skills Therapeutic Education to the curriculum for students?

We do this to create the best possible conditions for the development of responsible, autonomous people. The intention is that we can identify, develop and enhance the potential in each person and facilitate his or her development of self-generated conscious action. The ultimate goal is to enable the students for transition into society and contribute positively to it in ways that make them feel fulfilled.

Principle 2: Applied Contemporary Apprenticeship Learning

The apprenticeship model is perhaps the most ancient of all educational models. We know it from parenting where the child imitates the adult from the earliest stages. The traditional apprenticeships are essentially based on the same principle of imitation and it has been applied over centuries, particularly in the crafts and vocational fields.

It is interesting to note how the education sector is now promoting the apprenticeship model again and building styles of training opportunities for professionals at a range of educational levels.

Apprenticeship Communities of Practice

In the last two decades where this model of learning has been developed, we have made observations about the traditional apprenticeship model as it has been performed for centuries and concluded that the curriculum requires a contemporary model which implies:

- 1) mutual and ongoing learning and research processes that involve all active participants – tutors, guides (Masters) and young learners (Apprentices) and
- 2) the potential to educate towards *mastery of complexity*.

Starting with the first point: When we talk of a ‘Contemporary Apprenticeship Learning’ model, it is because Ruskin Mill Trust has developed a different kind of ‘offer’ that complements Practical Skills Therapeutic Education.

The contemporary apprenticeship model is based on the idea that there is a reciprocal relationship of learning between tutor and student in the workshop. The reciprocity has to do with mutual development:



Student and tutor at Plas Dwbl

Tutors become learners in the process and are expected to reflect on their own practice and their cognitive, emotional and physical development.

Students become tutors in the process and – as part of their physical, emotional and cognitive development – they come to realise that they themselves are role models to others.

This conscious, reciprocal ‘field’ of learning is created through the guidance of the tutor.

The method of Practical Skills Therapeutic Education

requires crafts people to be educators and educators to be crafts people. Along with high levels of regulation, this is partly the reason why Ruskin Mill Trust takes staff training very seriously and offers a range of pathways to people working within the organisation.

The Contemporary Apprenticeship Learning model depends on self-reflective practice for both tutors and students. Ruskin Mill Trust promotes the idea of creating *communities of practice* and another inspiration behind this model can be found in the literature of Jean Lave and Etienne Wenger, who say:

“Because the place of knowledge is within a community of practice, questions of learning must be addressed within the developmental cycles of that community, [...] ” (Lave & Wenger, 1991, p. 100)

To develop such communities of practice, Ruskin Mill Trust has introduced reflective practice into both the staff and student programmes. Learning outcomes in the units we both deliver as tutors and undertake as staff learners address this need to start with looking at oneself and build *one's* own capacity through knowing more about *who we are*.

If we look again at the WHY of Practical Skills Therapeutic Education, we can observe that the development of *self-generated conscious action* takes its starting point in self- knowledge.

Mastering Complexity through the engagement of Hand, Head and Heart.

Looking at the second point: the other key aspect of Contemporary Apprenticeship Learning is to understand how to ‘master complexity’. What does that mean?

It seems that there is the need to work consciously with at least three levels of complexity.

Firstly, the apprenticeship will often start with the student having to overcome all sorts of fears and assumptions about themselves and their abilities. Often a student’s inner voice may tell them that they are no good, that they cannot do what is expected of them and consequently, there is a sense of resistance to engaging with the activities they are invited to do.

This inner resistance may have been determined by past experiences, or perhaps he or she was told from an early age that they were no good because of a disability or other diagnosis. As practitioners we may then wish to start the process of *making* or *engaging* with the activity to foster an interest. The process can in this way begin through imitation. The first level of complexity can be expressed as *overcoming oneself* and *allowing oneself* to become interested in something new – something that lies beyond the habitual. An answer to mastering this first level of complexity is to engage the **hand** and to **develop self-control and physical skill**.

When the student has gone beyond that stage and has accepted engagement with the activity, the second layer of complexity relates to the meeting with physical resistance. This is experienced through the realisation that craftwork (or other curriculum activity) is difficult and that it requires control and skill. This is worked with through small steps of achievement and allowing oneself to fail. The practitioner is responsible for making *failure* part of the *success* by acknowledging with the student the learning and insight that follows. This process requires self-reflective practice and can be used in the assessment process as a positive learning experience. An answer to mastering this level of complexity is to engage the **head** and enhance the ability to **consider the process**.

The third stage of complexity arises when the student has to learn to follow instruction and work alongside peers who are also learning. This level has to do with the development of emotional capacity and it relies on the conscious guidance and role modeling of the practitioner. Being able to interact successfully with other people is the doorway to being able to contribute positively to society. It is also the main means by which a student can integrate successfully into a community, work or a learning environment. It is the hardest and most complex capacity to develop and it is something we usually have to work with for the rest of our lives. An answer to mastering this level of complexity is to engage the **heart** and enhance the ability to **respond, rather than react to the context**.

Practitioners on Contemporary Apprenticeship Learning

Here is what practitioners in Ruskin Mill Trust said about Contemporary Apprenticeship Learning in Practical Skills Therapeutic Education:

“I was very lucky to have been an indentured apprentice from 18 -22 years old. I was told - "Watch and learn. Try it and Learn. Show others how to do it and learn. And then Take what you have learnt and use it wisely" – At each stage I was given small tasks to complete. So I follow the same basic principles with our students - Show them – Assess what they have understood through questions. Let them have a go – Assess how they did it / How much help they required, etc. Then I let them show someone else and let others ask the questions ‘why’ and ‘how’. And then they make something special and we ask - How do they feel now? – How far do they feel they have come? Would they do anything differently? Of course how much of this we can do depends on the overall level of the student.”

Practitioners on Contemporary Apprenticeship Learning (continued)

“Some students might be in that ego-forming period but their emotional intelligence has fallen behind so they need a different approach. The ego should be present or on its way, so one has to take this into account. I think it’s very important that if you have someone who becomes an apprentice at 14 you would treat them very differently to someone of 21.”

“I feel that in the tutor/ student relationship there is an element of transference that happens in a subtle way. They will pick up on things that we may not necessarily know we are putting out there but will be harbouring in ourselves, so it’s vital as practitioners for us to do our own internal work so that as we are delivering on our teaching we are reflecting on our practice and transforming ourselves, not just the students – it’s a symbiotic relationship. I’ve come across many difficulties and resistance within my teaching environment and it’s vital to be able to reflect on it and transform it.”

Concluding Question and Answer

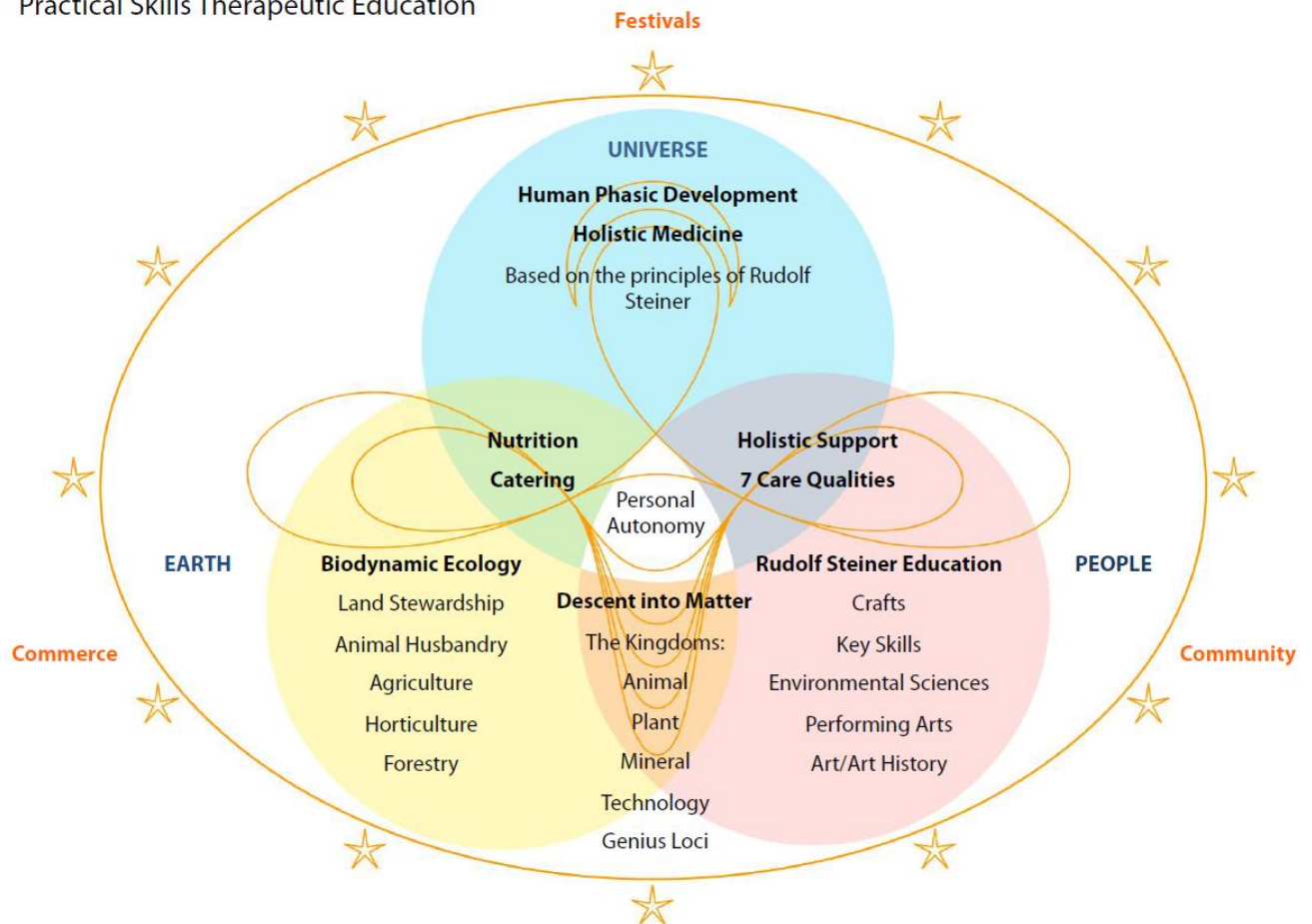
How do we provide Practical Skills Therapeutic Education in the curriculum for students?

We do this through Contemporary Apprenticeship Learning in order to consciously develop the student’s physical, emotional and cognitive abilities through the engagement of ‘hand’, ‘head’ and ‘heart’. The intention is to create communities or practice where tutor and student engage in a mutual learning process through conscious guidance and role modelling. The ultimate goal is to enable the students for transition into society and contribute positively to it in ways that make them feel fulfilled.

Principle 3: The integration of seven fields of practice

As you can see from the 'Practical Skills Therapeutic Education' diagram below, there are seven main fields of practice that are placed within the structure of the student journey. There is an unbroken line running through and around the fields, connecting them into a whole.

Practical Skills Therapeutic Education



This integration of the different fields within the student journey represents what we have chosen to call a *continuum*. The definition of 'continuum' in this context is *a sustained unbroken whole*. More pictorially or colloquially speaking, one could also say that the continuum between the fields of practice has to do with *connecting the dots*.

The seven fields of practice are a set of coordinates¹ that inform the student journey.

The seven fields of practice we are referring to are:

- 1. Spirit of Place (Genius Loci)**
- 2. Practical Skills**
- 3. Biodynamic Ecology**
- 4. Therapeutic Education**
- 5. Holistic Support and Care**
- 6. Holistic Medicine**
- 7. Transformative Leadership and Management**

The seven fields of practice applied to the student curriculum represent activities that are provided and facilitated in different contexts: in the home, in the college, on the farm, etc. In the student experience they are not felt to be separate but as parts of a whole.

In order for the student to journey through this experience, it is important that practitioners know the nature and application of each field and how it connects the whole.

Students are guided consciously through the different practices but the existence of the seven fields of practice is embedded, rather than explicit, in the curriculum. According to the individual learning plan of each student, the constellation and order of coordinates change. In the student journey, the order and importance of the seven fields of practice is completely individual and relates to the nature, aspirations and needs of the student.

The seven fields of practice in staff continuing professional development provide a set of theories and practices that are consciously learnt, taught, applied, researched, reflected upon and improved. In the staff curriculum, the order and chronology of the seven fields of practice is predetermined. In the Practical Skills Therapeutic Education Foundation Certificate, stage 1 introduces the learner to Genius Loci (Spirit of Place) and the significance of Practical Skills; in stage 2 of the programme, the emphasis is on Biodynamic Ecology its therapeutic and educational value and in stage 3, the focus is on human development – Holistic Support and Care and Holistic Medicine. An introduction to Transformative Leadership and Management is provided in the two programmes delivered by Tourmaline.

¹ The use of the word 'coordinate' should be understood as it is commonly used in geography (longitude and latitude) as a means of orientation from the reading of a map or as it is also used in physics where it is a set of numbers or points that provide a *frame of reference*.

The seven fields of practice are also explicitly researched in the Masters in Practical Skills Therapeutic Education. There the sequence is as above and takes the learner from the Spirit of Place right through to social entrepreneurship.

The order in which the seven fields of practice are taught and researched in the staff curriculum is an embedded didactic self-assessment process.

The Theory of Holistic and Integrative Education

The idea of integrative education has, in the UK, been researched and developed since the early nineteenth century. During the eighteen sixties, John Ruskin became aware of the decline of the vernacular crafts and in response he availed considerable proportions of his fortune to set up and support enterprises to research the dignity of craft work in Britain (The Complete Works of John Ruskin, 1903). In Stuttgart 1919, the benefactor of the Waldorf-Astoria cigarette factory, Emil Molt, asked Rudolf Steiner to design a curriculum for the children of the employees. The uniqueness of the curriculum was that it integrated handwork, practical and academic learning in accordance with Steiner's own idea of human phasic development (Steiner, 1947). A number of contemporary thinkers are engaged with the idea of interconnectedness and its value both within vocational practice, systems and approaches. With his 'Integral Methodological Pluralism', Ken Wilber represents an example of taking this approach to high levels of implementation –

“By using an integral approach we are able to facilitate and dramatically accelerate cross-disciplinary and trans-disciplinary knowledge, thus creating the world's first truly integral learning community” (Wilber, 2006, p. 3)

The holistic and integrative approach to education represents a paradigm, which aims to facilitate learners and students, staff and management to learn and work within a continuum of activities. Providers of holistic and integrative education commonly design learning opportunities that facilitate for the learners, the experience of the connectedness between learning and work and the link between the development of physical, social and cognitive abilities.

The principle that textbooks alone do not contextualise the learning experience is often fundamental to the curriculum design and commonly, the design is based on finding a balance between practical and theoretical learning. It is understood that disconnected learning carries the risk of creating disconnected thinking. Disconnected thinking and a lack of awareness of the natural continuum between one area of life and another may cause a fragmented approach to life where the seed is not connected with the food on the table.

Dr Aric Sigman is an academic researcher who has performed extensive research on the method of Ruskin Mill Trust. About the integrative approach in Ruskin Mill Trust, he says:

“A curriculum is not ‘delivered’ to a student in a vacuum, it exists within a context and environment that either potentiate learning of the curriculum, or impede it. The learning environment - both physical and social – is central to student outcome. (OECD, 2002). Moreover, to produce functional, employable students, it is imperative to cultivate socially and emotionally viable young people who are able to cope and use what they have learned outside of the college environment. (Dam, 2003) (Nyhusa & Pons, 2005) The social and emotional landscape of a college is the second, an interesting chapter in the story of how a curriculum exerts its fullest effects. In the case of colleges of the Ruskin Mill Trust, there are a variety of factors aside from the curricula worthy of examination.” (Sigman, 2008)

Literature on Holistic and Integrative Education

For your own research purposes – a range of theoretical foundations for the development of Practical Skills Therapeutic Education as a method for designing integrative and holistic education can be found in the works of:

Gert Biesta (Beyond Learning, 2006)

Yvan Illich (Deschooling Society, 1970)

Karl König (Being Human, 1983)

Jean Lave and Etienne Wenger (Situational Learning: Legitimate Peripheral Learning, 1991)

William Morris (The Collected Works of William Morris, 1910)

John Ruskin (The Complete Works of John Ruskin, 1903)

Richard Sennett (The Craftsman, 2008)

Aric Sigman (Practically Minded, 2012), (Well-Connected, 2008)

Rudolf Steiner (The Riddle of Humanity, 1990), (Study of Man, 1947)

Frank Wilson (The Hand, 1998), (The Real Meaning of Hands-On Education, 1999)

More literature can also be found in the Bibliography.

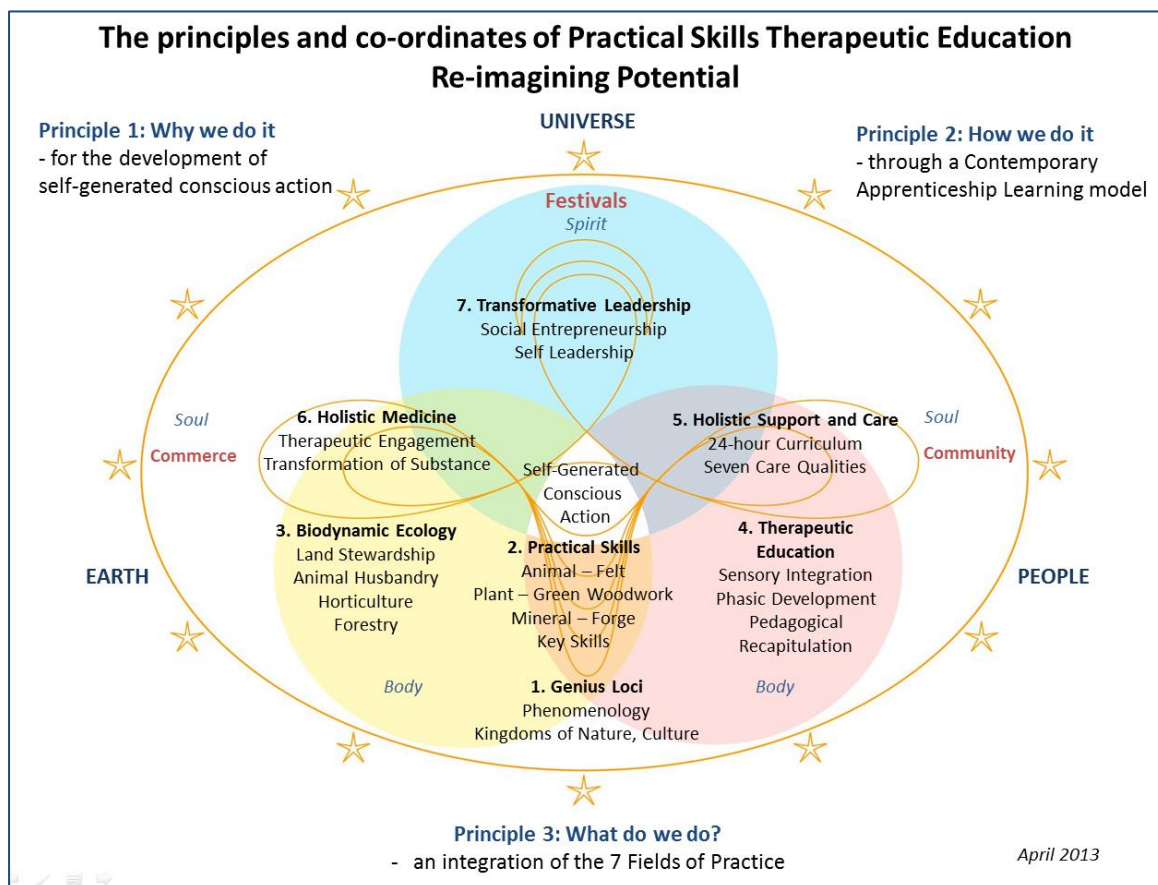
Concluding Question and Answer

What is provided in the Integrated Learning Curriculum for students?

The curriculum for students is a continuum of seven fields of practice, which form a holistic integration of practical skills educational and therapeutic activities. The Student Journey is a context within which students may acquire the tools and confidence for transition into society and contribute positively to it in ways that make them feel fulfilled.

The Seven Fields of Practice

What follows is a description of the principles of each field of practice. The intention of this chapter is to introduce you as a practitioner to the nature and characteristics of each field with the further aim of exploring the connectedness – continuum – between them.



Genius Loci – Spirit of Place

Visitors to the Ruskin Mill sites will comment on the visible care and attention for spaces, landscape and buildings. Since the earliest beginnings of Ruskin Mill Trust, the conscious approach to the nature and characteristics of ‘places’ and ‘spaces’ has informed the way the organisation has developed.

In the chapter on the Historical Context, page 12, Aonghus Gordon tells the story of a process intimately linked to the regeneration of Ruskin Mill and the Horsley Valley.

The idea of working consciously with places, buildings and landscape is not unique to Ruskin Mill Trust. The process of consciously entering a new locality with the *Spirit of Place* in mind is to be found in a considerable amount of literature. It can be compared, for example, with the notion of *Zeitgeist* or *Spirit of the Time* in the works of Robert Sheldrake (*The Rebirth of Nature: The Greening of Science and God*, 1990).



Freeman College before and after renovation

Over the years, a specific method has been developed and practiced by Ruskin Mill Trust when entering a new locality. This practice is known as the Genius Loci Audit and has been performed when a new site has been acquired. This audit supports the discovery of how the local ‘genius’ of the place may inform the Trust’s curriculum with living and skilful practice. Examples include the development of the three colleges, Plas Dwbl Farm College and Clervaux Trust as well as the many additional sites connected to those locations.

The Genius Loci Audit

The Trust uses a ‘Goethean’ method of research in which the participant and the place develop a deep empathetic relationship.

“One phrase that Goethe used to describe his method was *delicate empiricism (Zarte Empirie)*- the effort to understand a thing’s meaning through prolonged empathetic looking and seeing grounded in direct experience. He sought to use firsthand encounter directed in a kindly but rigorous way to know the thing *in itself*... Rather than remove himself from the thing, Goethe sought to encounter it intimately through the educable powers of human perception” (Seamon, D. 1998)

In this way, certain insights can arise which continue to build a dialogue, often for many years to come. The Trust is very grateful to have worked with Dr Isis Brook on a number of aspects of this and a number of her texts and insights have been included here.

The Genius Loci Audit is a seven-stage process, not all requiring an equal amount of time, in fact, some stages can be done in hours, whilst others can take one on a personal journey. For the purpose of the Practitioner’s Guide we will cover the first three stages in some detail, although Stages 4-7 will be dealt with in less detail.

Stage 1: Collecting the information: mineral, plant, animal and human

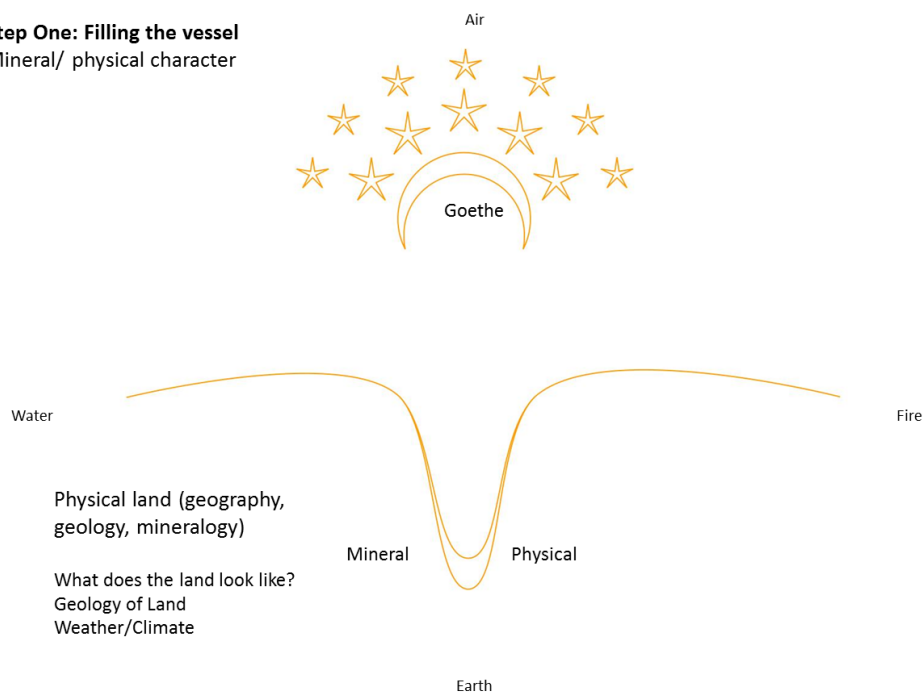
“We need to perceive it as if we had never encountered it before. From that perception we begin to record all that we can about the phenomenon. To do this recording we need to use all our senses. We are in a process of meeting a being on its own terms and not overlay it with our preconceptions or normal ways of thinking. Not just personal feelings, but all our theories about a phenomenon need to be held back in order to let the ‘facts’ speak for themselves. Recording our observations can be done in a number of ways, for example, writing detailed descriptions. However, drawing the phenomenon is one of the best ways to focus one's attention on the previously unnoticed detail and the relationships between parts”.

Dr Isis Brook

Stage 1 has four key steps:

Step 1: A shared participatory experience with the teams who will be involved in the running of a new site or facility. An intimate relationship is built through research into the four kingdoms of nature, starting with the very foundation of the site, the rocks (granite, limestone or sandstone) upon which all the activities will eventually unfold.

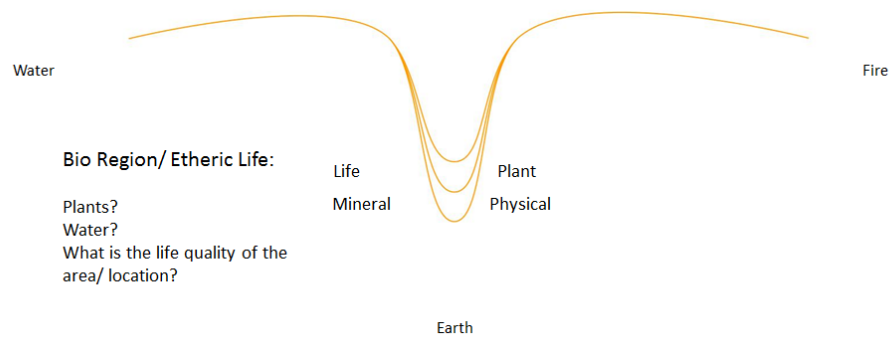
Step One: Filling the vessel
Mineral/ physical character



The intention of this first step in the audit is to restore and honour any new partnership with the place in a creative, interactive gesture.

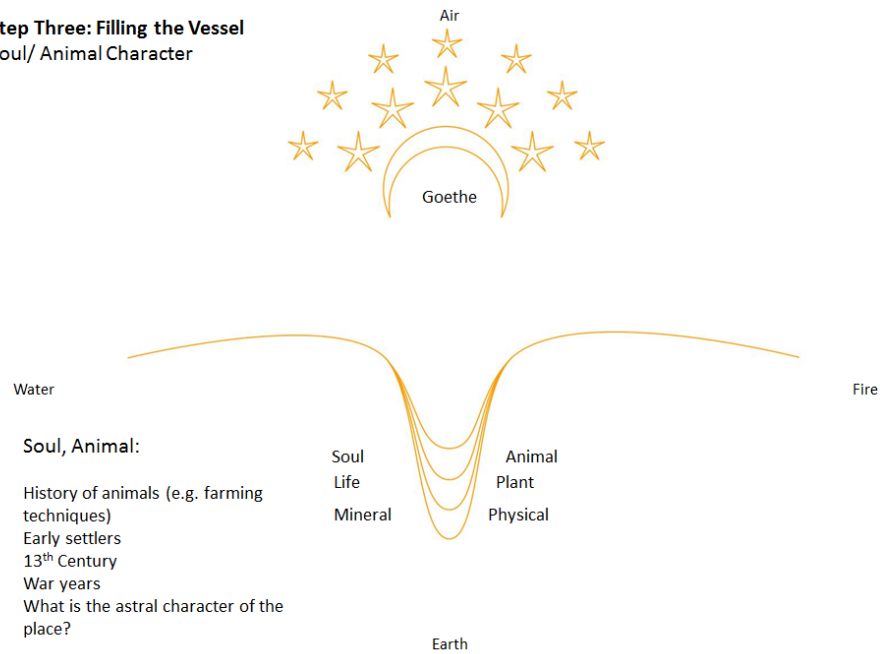
Step 2: the engagement with flora and timeline. In the Horsley Valley this timeline was taken right back to the Ice Age. The discovery of Small-leaf Lime in Park Wood, a pioneer of the post-glacial habitat, gave rise to a deep and profound bonding to the place in respect for the longevity and sacredness of the wood.

Step Two: Filling the Vessel
Life/ plant character



Step 3: entering into dialogue with the animal kingdom. This step investigates the animal husbandry that has shaped and formed local agriculture. This includes an identification of the types of animals that were predominant in different timelines of the locality, for example, a mammoth’s tooth found in the clay of the Stroud valleys. Currently in the Horsley Valley (Ruskin Mill College) there is a strong presence in the lower valley of reptiles, eels and frogs as well as herons; whilst badgers, foxes and deer inhabit the hillsides and woods; sheep and cattle graze in the pastures at the summit.

Step Three: Filling the Vessel
Soul/ Animal Character

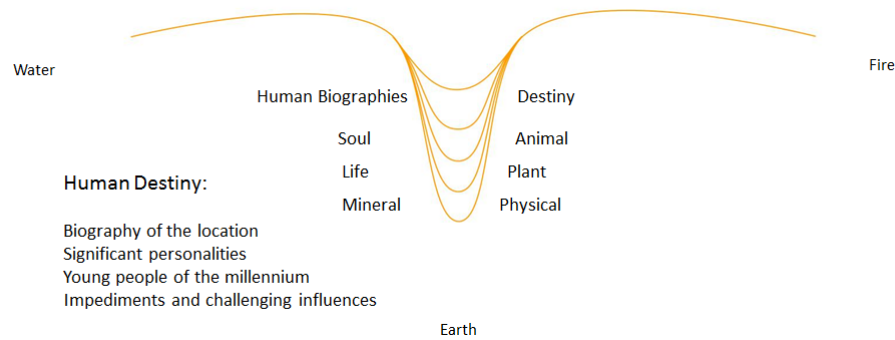


This activity supports the understanding of the human presence and lineage of the site. This third stage is sometimes referred to as ‘the place of interior’ or the ‘soul-space’.

It is in the third step that a particular relationship of connection between animal and human becomes so evident.

Step 4: Discovering the human impact and history. What emerges from this work is a picture of the nature of the way human consciousness imprints itself into our relationship to landscape over time. This gives rise to the remarkable diversity of the landscape in which entrepreneurship, ecclesiastical and industrial activity has such a profound shaping effect on the area.

Step Four: Filling the vessel
Biography of Location
– the Human sphere



This step is an investigation of the developments from early settlers through to the agrarian culture and in particular during the medieval period. There are countless villages whose very design was informed by our culture of working with nature.

A key component in this aspect of the audit is to appreciate the power of how sacred places in the hunter-gatherer and Celtic period; a stone circle or temple, for example, often gave rise to the building of churches and cathedrals. Monastic orders were often seen as the power-points of veneration both in the landscape and in the built environment. Engaging with drawings and other documentation can be the key to understanding this lineage.

In this phase of the audit it is possible to understand the major impact of both ecclesiastical and cathedral communities on shaping the region during the medieval period. The emergence of learning and social structures has still left a major impact on today's culture. By documenting both individual and community action it is possible to build a deep and lasting relationship to the place. This relationship may equally develop insight not only for the positive and the remarkable achievements of human skill and imagination, but also a number of negative situations that have also been created. It is possible, again through empathy, to carry these more negative aspects into the audit and to understand them with compassion; often similar to the way we are

required to appreciate a student biography. It is during this fourth step that this attitude of compassion develops an initiative for transformation.

Stage 2: Bringing the parts into the whole

Stage 2 is a celebration: it is the sharing of our research, building the parts back into the whole. In this way, we start to invite the 'being' of the place to emerge. It is an exercise of deep imagination, anchored on factual information, giving rise to understanding. Here again, Dr Isis Brook makes a valuable contribution from the context of Goethe's *Exact Sensorial Imagination*:

"You have captured the frozen present of your phenomenon but things in the world are always in flux. It exists through a process and in a context so to get to what it really is, we are going to have to move in that process ourselves so that we can in some sense begin to *accompany it in its being*. We do this by using the human faculty of imagination. The aim of this activity is to perceive the phenomenon as a dynamic entity. Imagine its processes of becoming, try to live into them.

With a living entity it is easy to move into this second stage because the phenomenon just seems to require it in order for us to see it as a living entity.

We can't capture the livingness of even a plant if we stick with exact sense perception. Our thinking in that mode is too static to live into the phenomenon and experience it as changing and growing. With minerals we have to imagine our way into their slow becoming and changing. Something of the phenomenon has to live in us if we are to make a connection between, for example, the sapling and the tree. Our thinking has to be mobilised to grasp that the stuff of the world is all the time changing. We are imaginatively engaged in those same processes and placing our imagination *in the service of the phenomenon*."

Dr Isis Brook

By bringing the parts back into the whole, we move seamlessly into Stage 3.

Stage 3: Finding the Essence

Finding the Essence or as Goethe called it *seeing in beholding*, is often achieved through an artistic expression, a poem, an insight. This is where the work starts to show a sense of having entered and encountered the place. It is a mode of being open in which the essence becomes a potential presence or a 'gesture'. These insights are often gained through the dialogue of the group, a form of inter-subjective verification.

Stage 4: Who are you?

At this stage we may be in a position to encounter what can be termed the 'being' of the place, hence the challenging address "who are you?" To arrive at an insight in which 'being-ness' is tangible invites a new level of reciprocity; it's the point at which our intuition becomes active. It is also correct that being 'one with the object' is a challenging phenomenon. To 'meld' with the place, the being or the object demands effort of intention and again is held objectively through the collaborative social process. It may be only a fleeting insight, an intuition that flashes past in a moment one least expects. In the case of the Horsley Valley, countless people have described the valley as being a deeply forgiving place, highly adaptable, always encouraging, and ready to give whilst at the same time needing attention, consciousness and most of all, appreciation from adults to its changing beauty through the seasons.

Stage 5: May we have permission to re-create?

In this process, you are inviting the future in. Having presented yourself with the being of the place you are now asking for permission to engage in transformation. This requires an understanding of what 'health' is. At this point you may also be challenged by being able to see a pathology: what is not healthy with reference to the place. Through this relationship an understanding, a diagnosis may emerge. Along with this insight and diagnosis there comes a call for a transformation of the site.

In the case of the Trust's vision and the biography of the students and their journey, we are required to offer restoration and a healthy environment in which to develop. Listening to the site, the student's developmental phase and re-imagined potential for both the site and the student may give an indication of an emergent syllabus and curriculum. Through the melding of biography of place and student, there is a third and important detail; namely the Objectives of the Trust, or the organisation's vision, which need to be used as the lens. The vision and organising principle in the case of Ruskin Mill Trust is Rudolf Steiner's Spiritual Science. Through this lens many of the diverse activities on offer to the students arise through that lens and the historical context found by the Audit, developing a renewed imagination for the potential to re-create. For example, the application of Biodynamic Agriculture is widely used, enabling deep sensory integration. It is also not only to bring the Objectives, the organisation, into dialogue with the act of re-creation, but also the individual inspirers, for example John Ruskin and William Morris, along with Rudolf Steiner act as both contributors with their own biographies, literature and entrepreneurship. If the intention of the organisation is strong, the insights gained and the alchemy that has been undertaken with the Genius Loci, the student biography and the vision of

the organisation may act as a strong ripple effect, radiating out but ultimately rooted in place and context.

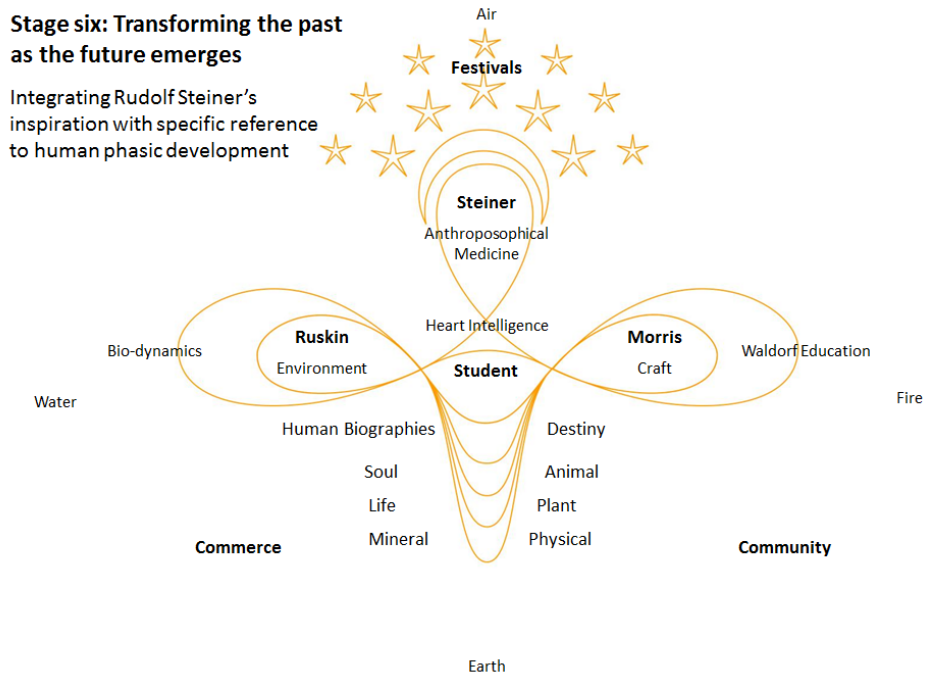
These processes take different timelines with different localities and constellations of people. Some processes can be very quick, even a day, provided thorough preparation has been undertaken. It is often the case that an on-going process over several months would be more desirable but to complete the process into manifestation may take anything up to 10 years (as in the case of Glasshouse College).

The biography of place, students and individuals creates an entirely unique community of practitioners. This process 'beckons the future' having invoked the principle of transformation out of having discovered the 'being' of the place.

Stage 6: Transforming the past as the future emerges

Many communities and cultures understand the value of inter-generational intelligence and practice. At the same time, bringing research as a design principle of organisational vision serves to renew practice. Stage 6 is about understanding why a traditional craft activity might be highly effective in the development of the student curriculum. Green wood work is an example of how the lens of Rudolf Steiner's Sensory Integration was applied to a craft that was practiced locally for hundreds of years as a means of economy. As an activity it integrates many of the senses that Rudolf Steiner education is built upon, making it a highly a therapeutic educational process.

What was a past activity is renewed by the new consciousness brought to light by looking at the activity through an educational modality. Both the works of Ruskin and Morris are given renewed impetus by braiding Biodynamics into Ruskin's practice and Rudolf Steiner education into Morris's craft vision for social and educational renewal. In this way the Genius Loci audit becomes indispensable through providing insight from the past in order to bring insight to the future.



The Audit also gives expression to what was once iconic in the industrial genius of hand-production. In Ruskin Mill College it was textiles connected to sheep. At Glasshouse it was glass, connected to coal and clay. In Freeman College, it was the coal and the grit-stone, melting the metals and grinding the cutlery. These iconic activities are liberated, honoured by the Genius Loci Audit and apprised with the eye of Rudolf Steiner's Human Developmental insights.

Stage 7: Manifesting the intention

In spite of owning a property, for a project to be successful there is a highly complex web of factors that need to coalesce, to emerge. In a situation where there is limited resource it can be astonishing how many instances fall into place as if the project has been pre-ordained. Watching the choreography of events is the sure sign that the future and the present are working in support of the vision. In the example of the development of Horsley Valley, the project and development phase could be described as a series of co-operative and timely events which allowed a highly accelerated experience for the college to take root. The needs of the students

formed a powerful intention for solutions, staff, finance to work as one. There are times, maybe over weeks or months, when there is a sense of grace that the project has been endowed with a 'fair wind'. Equally, during events of obstruction the whole genius loci process supports insights to understand why those events have come to challenge and to be overcome, to generate new alignments, relationships of necessity for the future to embed. It is a question very often of seeing the meta-picture which can be informed and enhanced by the Audit.

Practitioners on the Genius Loci

Here is what practitioners in Ruskin Mill Trust said about the Genius Loci:

“Sourcing wherever possible the materials from local landscape. Cooperating with other people e.g. the Woodland Management Tutor provides charcoal for the forge. I make conscious effort to make this clear to students. The materials are ‘gifts’ from the land: they are an expression of Genius Loci sacrifice and generosity. We need to be aware of this and give thanks through our attitude for the gifts. This is done well when we do not waste and create excellent work.”

Practical skills

The method of Ruskin Mill Trust has grown out of evidence-based practice. In the early days, Aonghus Gordon worked with a group of young people on the regeneration of Ruskin Mill. It was partly the remarkable and unmistakable positive effect that this activity had on the young people that prompted the development of what we now know as the Practical Skills Therapeutic Education method.

The power of practical skills as an educational activity is widely acknowledged and also researched. There are two very useful sources of literature and authors who have inspired the Ruskin Mill Trust method, Frank Wilson (The Hand, 1998) and more recently, Aric Sigman (Practically Minded, 2012). The significance of working with the hands has been recognised as a means to developing cognitive and emotional skills as well as physical skills. Here Sigman speaks about Wilson's findings:

“Frank R. Wilson, a neurologist at the University of California School of Medicine considers the hand as a “musculoskeletal organism” emphasizing the centrality to intelligence of our human hand and how crucial the manipulation of the hands are to cognitive learning. The hand should not be regarded as a mere “appendix”, but rather, a fundamental part of the way we create (Wilson, 2005a,b).” (Sigman, 2012, p. 16)

In the Integrated Learning Curriculum, the practical skills component is designed to support the student's cognitive, emotional and physical development. It is also consciously placed in the curriculum to support the personal learning and thinking skills including the abilities to *think creatively, solve problems, enquire, follow instruction and work independently*.

Functional skills development (numeracy and literacy) is embedded into the practical skills through direct application – measuring, weighing and counting, for example, is a key part of the production of artefacts.

A central theme running through the Practical Skills Therapeutic Education method and its applications is the engagement with meaningful activities. One may well ask *which activity is not meaningful* but particularly in the case of people with learning difficulties and disabilities, the practical application of communication, word and number in the workshops make these otherwise abstract concepts much easier to grasp.

The other major reason for talking about the importance of *meaningful activities* is the development of confidence and self-esteem through visible achievement. We can only imagine the feeling of a young student after creating their first functional item. This wave of satisfaction

and legitimate pride may serve as a driver for completing other tasks and dedicating him or herself to other meaningful activities. There is a natural, healthy and transparent progression embedded in the development of artefacts from modest achievement to excellence. The aspiration that grows out of the engagement with a 'master' inspires the imagination and self-motivation to excel. The Contemporary Apprenticeship Learning model and conscious role modelling is therefore central to the practical skills activities.

Dimensions of Space and Locus of Control

As we know, there are a number of features that characterises human beings. One of the most remarkable of those is that we are upright – vertical.

Craft activities in particular are an exploration – and an exercise – of moving in space between the vertical, the horizontal and the sagittal dimensions, or planes. The practical skills activities challenge us to find our centre and control our movements.

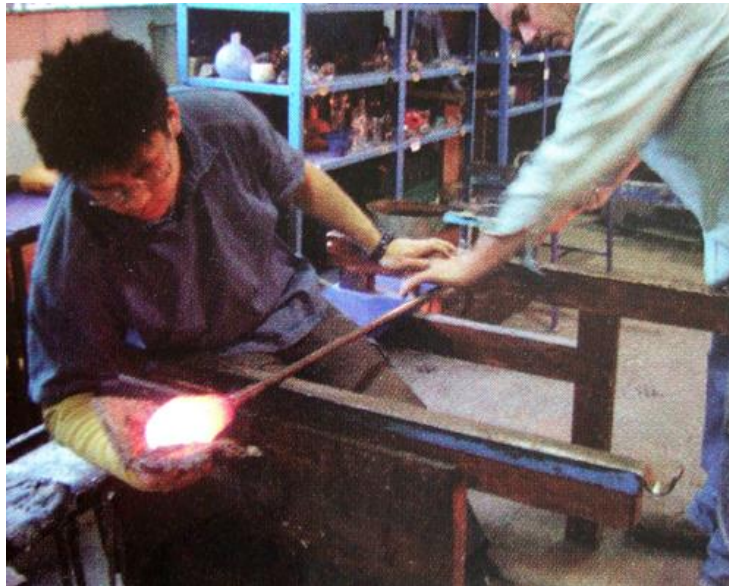
The term *locus of control* commonly refers to the definition presented by Julian Rotter (Internal Versus External Control of Reinforcement A Case History of a Variable , 1990). Rotter proposed that internal and external locus of control is a *continuum between a sense of personal power that is determined from within or power that is granted from without*. This means that a person may develop internal or external control over time or indeed possess both but in different situations.

Within the method of Practical Skills Therapeutic Education the students are exposed to activities that challenge their physical dispositions in space. With time, students may gain a sense of control through the meeting of physical, ordered and lawful resistance. The activity of acquiring skill, however modest it may seem, and producing an artefact that has meaning and value, serves to induce the development of confidence and the desire to take charge and contribute to life. This experience may move the locus of control from external towards the internal.

Wilson (1998) writes:

“When personal discovery and desire prompts anybody to do something well with their hands, an extremely complicated process is initiated that endows work with a powerful emotional charge. People are changed significantly and irreversibly, it seems, when movement, thought and feeling fuse during the active long-term pursuit of personal goals” (Wilson F. R., 1998, p. 9).

Ruskin Mill cross-college research April 2009



Glass making at Glasshouse College.

“Heat, constant rotation of rods, sense of movement, sight – how hot does it look? Speed – not a moment to spare. Breathing – how much it takes to blow. Courage needed to face the heat, to roll hot glass with a wet newspaper – intense and exhausting. The blowing tested the limits of my lungs and using the jacks tested my hands – finally getting some of it right was exhilarating – a real sense of achievement and Roger is a remarkable teacher. Glass production is embryology-as-craft – this can be a powerful way to do ‘virtual reconstructive work’ – helping students retroactively re-form their instrument of destiny. The tutor aimed directly for our will – the heart’s joy would take care of itself. An exemplary way to reach students – they find their own way – and our student/teacher Darryl exemplified this. This is an excellent thing to do especially for those whose lives have led them to see life ‘through a glass darkly’.” (Eugene Schwartz. US Educational Consultant)

In the meeting with resistance in space and time students have the potential to develop a sense of balance and mastery, which evolves from the ability to acquire practical skills. Actively engaged within the dimensions of space, the student may experience a re-configuration that is generated by their own activity. This experience may then foster a sense of control *over* an object as well as the sense of *being* controlled – but the control comes from the lawfulness of the material and from environment within which the student is engaged. It is therefore an acceptable experience that may even create inner calm because it makes sense.

Focus, Grasp and Step

Karl König is another source of inspiration in the development of Practical Skills Therapeutic Education. He founded the Camphill movement, which is known world wide for its particular community based approach to caring for people with learning difficulties and disabilities. König spoke of three activities that signify the human being as it moves in space: *focus, grasp* and *step*.

König's description of focus, grasp and step is a template to assess our ability to inhabit and self-generate orientation. Body geography and physical self-awareness is a learned process and it has to be learnt through repetition. Exercising rhythmical repetition within the dimensions of space is foundational for a healthy childhood.

We develop focus as a consequence of controlling our gaze. Moving from gaze to focus describes awareness of depth and it enables us to perceive 'into' or 'in depth'. Observing the gaze or focus of students can tell us more than any other assessment tool.

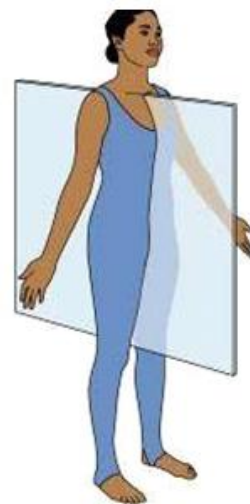
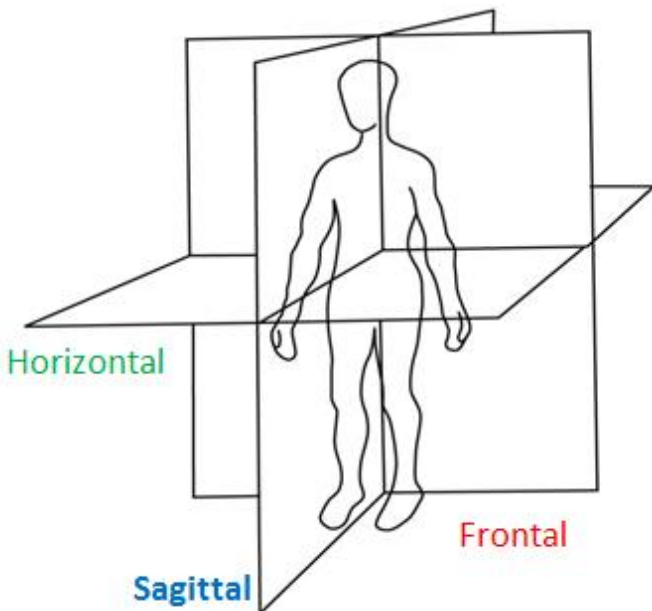
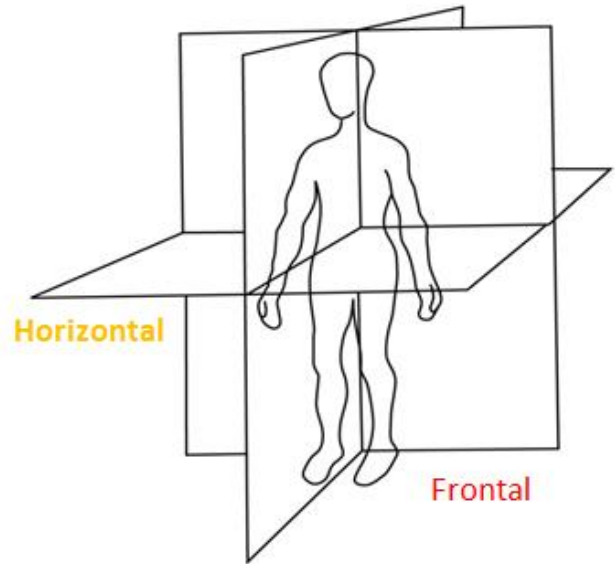
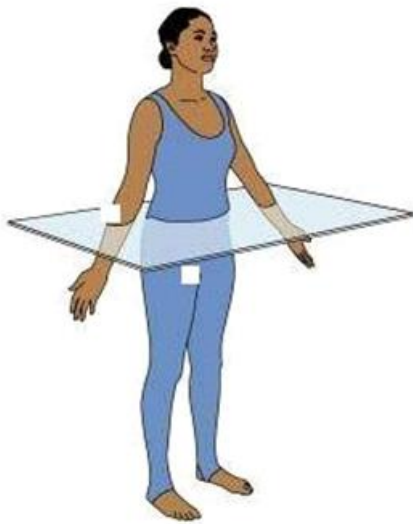
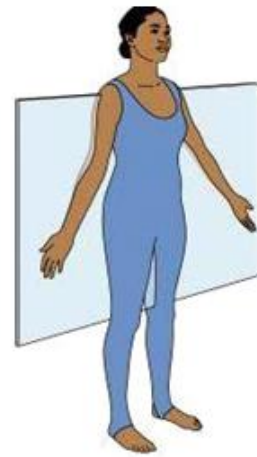
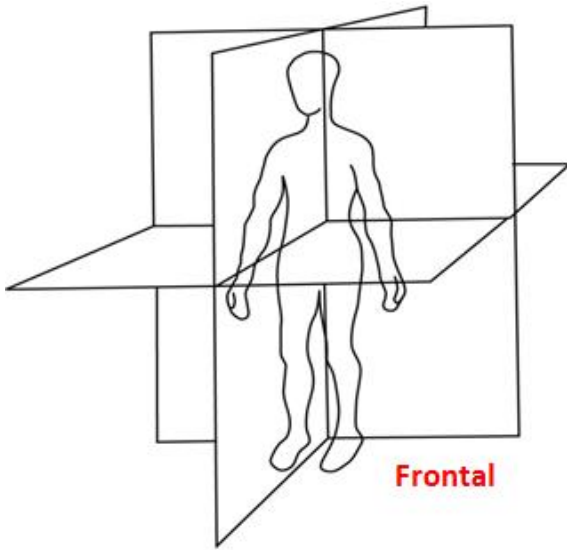
It is through step that we take control of our body. The first step we take denotes the start of developing physical autonomy. It requires us to develop differentiation. König says:

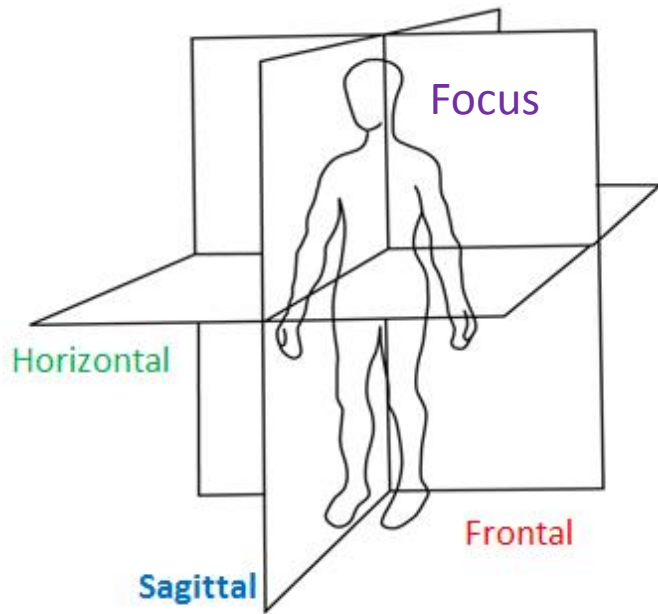
“We experience the world by becoming aware of it “analytically,” step by step” (König, 1983, p. 45).

König (1983) describes the importance of the sequence we go through as we develop uprightiness and this coherence can serve as a diagnostic tool in the practical application of Practical Skills Therapeutic Education.

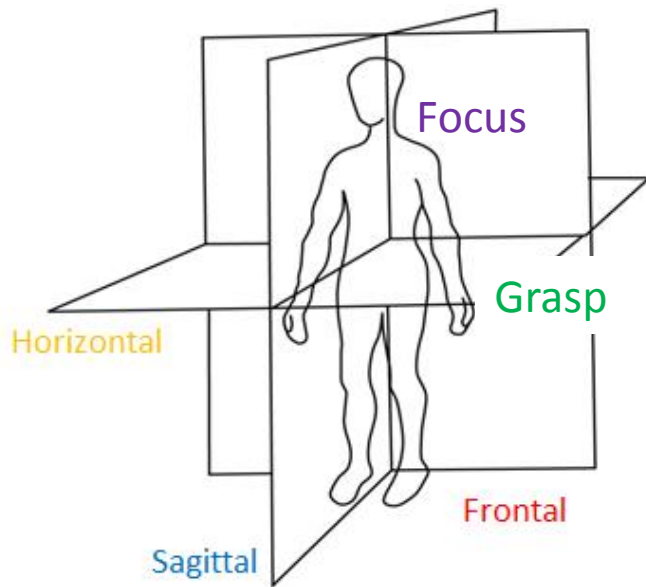
As an example: hesitation to move in to the frontal plane or to hold back is supported in particular by the art of blacksmithing. The horizontal plane of the anvil meets the frontal plane and the lawfulness of the hammer, shaping the malleable hot metal. However, it is not achieved without sagittal control. It is when the three planes merge as described that the following occurs:

“seeing in one plane (gazing) becomes seeing in two planes (focusing), and this experience of going from gaze to focus is not simply the means of perceiving objects. It also contains something that gives us a dull, semi-conscious ego awareness.”(König, 1983, p. 47)

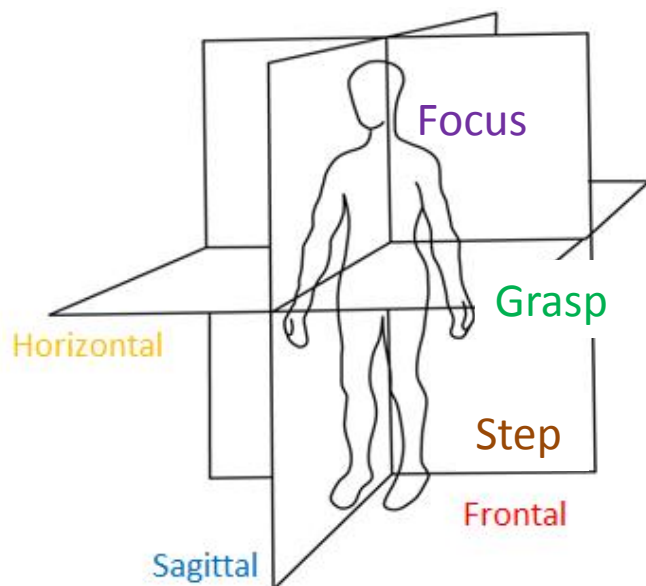




Focus-
Sagittal + Frontal



Grasp-
Sagittal + Horizontal



Step-
Sagittal+ Horizontal + Frontal

Some workshops call upon the application of focus, grasp and step individually and others integrate all three. Focus is linked to developing attention. Practical activities can modulate the axis of focusing. In a similar manner physical grasping of a hammer generates intension. The coordination of the dimensions of space in the practical activity of blacksmithing, as an example, requires all three attributes of focus, grasp and step. König says further:

“[...] the sagittal plane linked with the frontal (focus), the sagittal with the horizontal (grasp), and all three together – sagittal, frontal and horizontal (step). The result is nothing less than the vertical line of our ego-experience. This line lies in the sagittal plane separating right and left and runs through our entire organism and our entire existence. Only when it is constantly experienced in focusing, grasping and stepping do I experience myself as an individual” (König, 1983, p. 49).

Focus

Grasp

Step



Focus
Grasp

Step





Focus

Grasp

Step

Practitioners on Practical Skills

Here is what practitioners in Ruskin Mill Trust said about Practical Skills:

“Rather than just teaching practical skills, as teachers we see how it’s mirrored in the student’s personal development... being aware of the impact of the educational process on the student as a human being. The value is also in the success the student feels when they finish their first piece... they may want to destroy their first, second piece but as they go on they want to keep it, give it away and that mirrors their reintegration into society.”

“Students learn to endure silence, focus their eyes on the activity and movement of their hands, experience and accept the need for order in movement, their mind, the room... to move securely in space; to be engaged in meaningful activity and understand the need for accuracy as an element of achievement.”

“The lawfulness of the tools and the craft give a lot of feedback. If you don’t get the bodily orientation right you will get that in the feedback from the craft – what does the saw sound like? How does it feel? There may be a bit of guidance on the bodily position but the student finds the method for themselves – by repetitive action you will get there.”

Biodynamic Ecology

Biodynamic Agriculture and Horticulture is practiced throughout the world. In Ruskin Mill Trust, Biodynamic Ecology represents a particular method and attitude practiced within the land, food and environmental curriculum. It was Rudolf Steiner who first talked about Biodynamic Agriculture. He launched this method in 1924 with a series of lectures on Agriculture (Steiner, Agriculture, 1958). What Steiner did then was in some ways to take a step further to what we now know as Organic Agriculture by addressing the complex dynamic relationships at work in nature and introduce ways of working creatively with them.

Steiner also introduced the idea that there is a relationship between *universe, earth and people*, which can be developed and enhanced in the process of farming and growing. This idea is by no means foreign or new; it is to be found particularly in many indigenous cultures still. In Ruskin Mill Trust, Biodynamic Agriculture and Horticulture has been practiced since the beginning. The land, animal, food and enterprise curriculum comes out of this idea of a holistic approach to nature and natural resources.



Ruskin Mill College Gables Farm, Park Wood and the Fish Farm. An imaginative picture by Amanda Labron

The Farm as an Organism

A central concept in Biodynamic Ecology is the idea of *the farm as an organism*. The Biodynamic Association in the UK states on its website:

“Biodynamics is a whole farm approach that seeks to manage the soils, crops, and animals on a farm in such a way that the enterprises on a farm strengthen and support each other.” (Biodynamic Association)²

Part of the farm organism concept is to work the land with all its aspects in mind. Biodynamic Ecology is in conflict with the concept of monoculture as it aims to integrate many different parts of nature in order to harmonise and enhance all those parts. This is why Biodynamic Agriculture is both criticised by conventional agriculture for not being cost-effective and praised for being perhaps the most sustainable method for farming and growing we currently have.

Working with the idea of the farm as an organism requires that we as practitioners regard and respect the farm as we would an individual. In one of the lectures on Agriculture, Steiner said:

“[A] farm is always an individuality, in the sense that one farm is never the same as another. The climate and soil conditions are the very foundation of the farm’s individuality.” (Steiner, 1993, p. 184)

It is clear to see how this approach to the land links to the vision and method of Ruskin Mill Trust – *re-imagining the potential and facilitating the development of the individual*. Through working consciously and *biodynamically* with the land in the Integrated Learning Curriculum, the students may begin to understand how all the different parts of life (people, earth and universe) may belong together and create a whole – and students may also experience deep respect for the natural processes and wonders of farming and growing.

Rhythm and Seasonality – from Seed to Table

When working on the land, the rhythm and seasonality of nature becomes apparent and tangible. Clearly, it is cold and wet in the winter – the land appears to be barren and the importance of forward planning becomes evident. In the spring, the deep gratitude for the appearance of shoots and leaves becomes a source of excitement and engagement. Harvest brings with it hard work, functional skills (measuring, weighing, distributing) but also abundance and pride in what has been produced. All those emotions and insights are bound up in the land curriculum and they may awaken dormant feelings of joy and latent skills in the students.

² For a further introduction to Biodynamics, you can access these short videos:

<http://www.biodynamic.org.uk/about-bdaa/videos/patrick-holden-endorses-biodynamics.html> and www.biodynamic.org.uk/about-bdaa/videos/intro-to-biodynamics.html

Festivals and celebrations are part of the land curriculum and mark the rhythm of the year. A student with no natural internal rhythm may then start to relax into the idea that night follows day, winter follows autumn and harvesting follows planting.

“The students are involved in the growing of the food, packing, preparing, serving and eating. The whole holistic approach is a very practical aspect of it, but when I think of seed to table I also see the students as planting the seed within themselves, nurturing it, growing it. Developing capacities and capabilities to integrate and contribute effectively to society.”
(Tutor, Glasshouse College)

The continuum of the Practical Skills Therapeutic Education is particularly visible in the land curriculum through the process of what is referred to as ‘seed to table’. Sigman says:

“Ruskin Mill institutions place great emphasis on seeing a process through from its source to an end result, striving to provide a sense of connection and continuity which goes further than the college, linking with the traditions and environment of the community in which the college exists.

*Plant Seed > Make Tools > Nurture Plant > Harvest > Prepare > **Eat** at Table*

*Fell Tree > Cut Branches > Make Pieces > Make **Chair** > Sit at Table*

*Metal blank > Hammering > Shaping > Cutlery > Eat with **Fork** at Table*

*Sheer > Process Wool > Make Plant Dye > Card > Spin > Weave > Table **Placemat***

*Melt Sand > Blow/Hand Mold > Cool > Cut Glass > **Drinking Glass** at Table*

*Grow Willow > Harvest > Weave Basket > **Bread Basket** at Table.*

While this ‘seed-to-table’ approach may be appealing at a moral, social and ethical level, there are also important cognitive factors at work that are ideal for students with learning difficulties.” (Sigman, 2008, p. 6)

The importance of healthy food is central in the Practical Skills Therapeutic Education method and within the field of Biodynamic Ecology; this can be explored to its fullest. Returning to the idea of meaningful activities, the preparing of a meal with produce from one’s own garden ‘takes the biscuit’. It has become one of the most rewarding experiences that the students have during their time at Ruskin Mill Trust and they can see how their efforts are central to it.

There are some thought provoking statistics from the National Trust that tell us this:

“On Average, Britain’s children watch more than 17 hours of television a week; that’s almost two-and-a-half hours per day, every single day of the year. Despite the rival attractions of the Internet, this is up by 12% since 2007. British children are also spending more than 20 hours a week online, mostly on social networking sites. As children grow older, their ‘electronic addictions’ increase. Britain’s 11-15 year-olds spend about half their waking lives in front of a screen: 7.5 hours a day, an increase of 40% in a decade.” (Moss, 2012, p. 4)

Biodynamic Ecology in the Integrated Learning Curriculum offers an alternative form of engagement. The curriculum is a platform for listening, communicating, moving, working, generating judgement, developing social awareness, developing attention to health and safety and the adaptation to rhythm and seasonality.



Valehead Farm, Kinver, Stourbridge

The farm as an organism represents a picture of wholeness to the student upon which one can rely. The importance of this experience relates to fostering a sense of safety and security in the natural environment so that this sense may be brought about within the student.

Practitioners on Biodynamic Ecology

Here is what practitioners in Ruskin Mill Trust said about Biodynamic Ecology:

“Students learn how to engage with nature, land, farming and gardening in a wholesome and caring manner. They can develop a good work ethic, team working and collaborative skills. Generally students respond well to the needs of the farm organism and work well within the confines of this. I feel that working and educating within these principles has a transformative effect on students. There is often measurable progress from 1st to 2nd to 3rd year; I see this in how they engage with the environment, each other, themselves, staff, and the food.”

“We are part of the organism, and there is value in how we learn to integrate ourselves within this, co-existing with nature and spirit. The BD principles and practices also help us engage with the life forces within ourselves through our thinking, feeling and willing. Consuming foods that are produced by these means supports this and provides us with the nourishment that is natural to our systems, enlivening and sustaining our being.”



Valehead Farm, Kinver, Stourbridge

Therapeutic Education

What makes education ‘therapeutic’? From the late eighties and early nineties Ruskin Mill Trust has focused on providing a context for young people with learning difficulties and disabilities and for people who are vulnerable or disadvantaged. The student journey has always placed an emphasis on facilitating *wholeness* where there is *fragmentation* and *movement* where there is *stagnation*.

The debate about what is *therapeutic* and what is *educational* is valuable and should continue. In the context of Ruskin Mill Trust, the definition of ‘therapeutic education’ is connected with the conscious approach of the practitioner when working with the student. This approach also includes an awareness of the lineage of the student’s development.

The method of Practical Skills Therapeutic Education embraces some essential concepts, which include the notion of phasic human development, the facilitation of developmental re-stepping and the idea that sensory integration involves more than five senses.

Stage 3 of the Practical Skills Therapeutic Education Foundation Certificate for staff offers an introduction to these ideas; the Masters of Science in Practical Skills Therapeutic Education is a context within which these questions can be researched and the Integrated Learning Curriculum is the practical application of the method.

The aim of applying these particular ideas in the student journey is that practitioners in Ruskin Mill Trust take a creative and holistic approach to the work with students and develop awareness of the whole human being. The intention there is to foster a context within which students can develop to become fulfilled, autonomous and responsible.

Phasic Human Development and Re-stepping

The method behind therapeutic education as it is practiced in Ruskin Mill Trust is rooted in the idea of ‘phasic human development’. This idea has evolved around the observation that the development of the human being is subject to a continuum of seven-year life phases. Whilst each individual is unique, the seven-year life phases have certain characteristics and features that seem to be universal and which are therefore recognisable in the biographies of different people, regardless of culture or creed.

An example may be the developmental watershed moment of changing teeth, normally around the age of 6 or 7. Other developmental events concern the cognitive and emotional development of the child, for example when the child starts saying “I” about him or herself.

Characteristics of the different life phases include abilities to keep safe or hygienic, the ability of relating to others, keeping eye contact, speaking, reading, writing, counting and more.

The particular approach to the seven-year life phases that is taken in applied Practical Skills Therapeutic Education was developed and articulated by Steiner (*The Riddle of Humanity*, 1990). The concept of phasic human development has been applied in Waldorf Schools, Camphill Communities and other related contexts throughout the world for more than ninety years.

There are important questions around how to view the evolution of human development itself; particularly in light of the fact that certain seven-year life phases seem to have accelerated. This is where the importance of practitioner research comes in and Ruskin Mill Trust supports staff to undertake work to address these and other related questions about Practical Skills Therapeutic Education.

The experienced practitioner will have observed that some students have a combination of symptoms, some of which may contradict each other. A student may appear to be highly competent in one area and very under-developed in another. Through developing an understanding of the life phases, the practitioner can help the student 're-step' the process of developing lost skills and abilities.

Many students that come through Ruskin Mill Trust have suffered trauma, loss or from other causes that may have arrested their development in certain life phases. If the practitioner knows and recognises the characteristics of the life phases, this may help the process of understanding what the student needs. It may be a question of asking what is *age-appropriate* for the student around a particular development-related challenge. Looking at the problem area in light of a particular life phase may also highlight when certain traumatic events took place in the student's biography. This is highly important for the further support and care that is offered to the student and should be brought as a question to the student case study. Other practitioners may have had similar or different observations that need to be considered.

The Twelve Senses

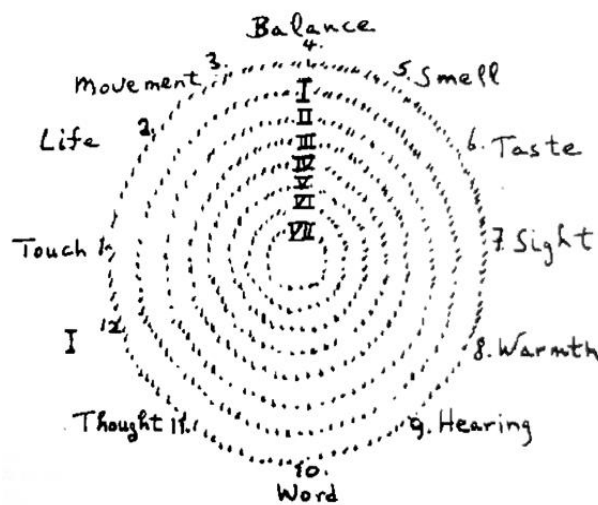
Others perceive us and we perceive others through our senses. We translate our experiences through the use of our senses and for some people with learning difficulties and disabilities this translation process is compromised. Limited use of the senses gives rise to impairment of judgement.

In the development of autonomy, our senses are required to be developed and 'polished'. This process of developing and 'polishing' suggests that there are certain experiences that can build, repair and enhance sensing and sensory integration. The higher the level of sensory integration,

the greater is the opportunity for having rich experiences. Practical Skills Therapeutic Education is designed to enhance, restore, integrate and develop full sensory integration.

The other informing principle inside the field of therapeutic education is the concept of the *twelve senses*. The idea of having more than five or six senses is not new or unique to Practical Skills Therapeutic Education. Sir Ken Robinson (Sir Ken Robinson: A wider notion of ability, 2009)³ challenges our traditional understanding of the senses and refers to alternative ideas and traditions particularly in indigenous cultures.

Steiner introduced the idea that there are twelve senses: lower senses, middle senses and higher senses. The lower four senses are: life, touch, movement and balance. The middle senses are:



Steiner's Twelve Senses
From "The Riddle of Humanity", Dornach 12th August 1916

warmth, smell, taste and sight. The higher senses are: hearing, concept, ego and speech.

The debate around the number of recognised senses is of great significance. Among the many alternative practices introduced to practitioners in Ruskin Mill Trust, the idea of twelve senses is the one that has been most readily taken up. We assume that the reason is that the

direct experience of developing *balance*,

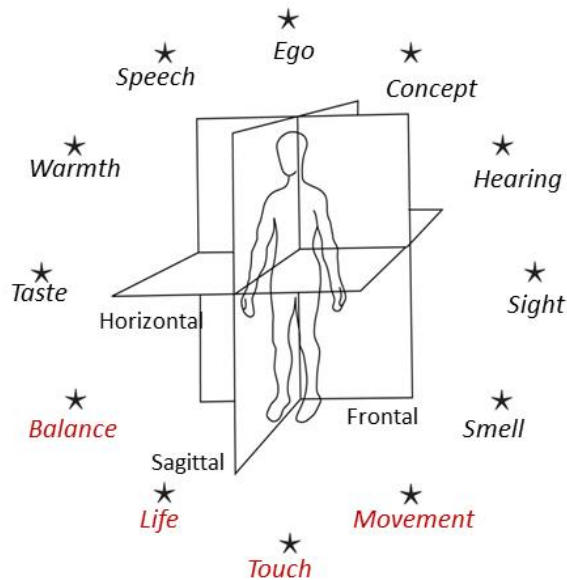
for example, or the *sense of self* is so explicit particularly through the practical skills activities. There is an argument for the fact that working with the idea of twelve senses rather than five is a safe risk to take even for those who struggle to accept a non-traditional view.

When the Practical Skills Therapeutic Education practitioner facilitates sensory integration, it is essential to develop awareness for the variety of different senses and their development – even if the idea of twelve senses seems to you more like a question than a fact.

³ There is an interesting interview with Dr Ken Robinson you may wish to see [ADD LINK](#)

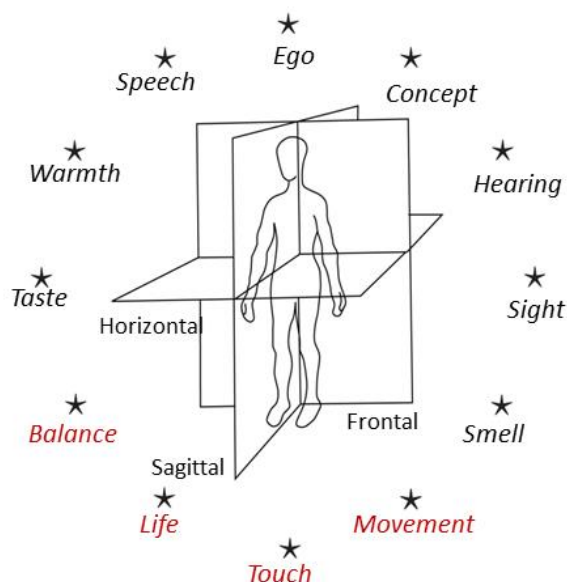
The four “Foundation Senses”

Touch



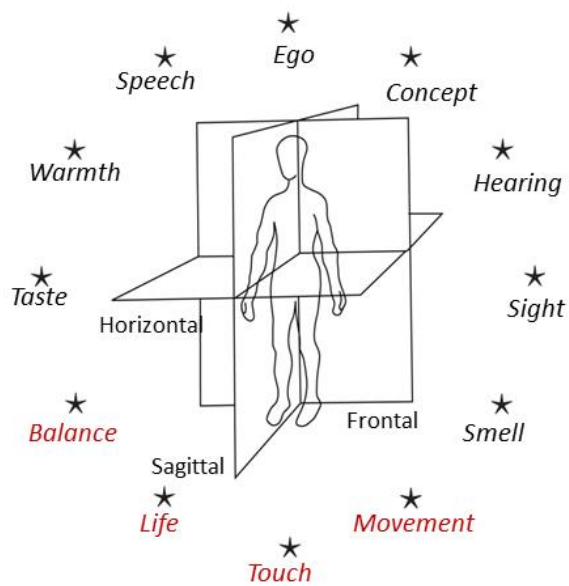
- How did I enter the world?
- Do I touch something or is something touching me?
- Something on the outside keeps knocking against my body surface
- Sense of touch has a task
- Have a longing to touch things
- By means of touch we gain certainty about something
- Things are connected and things are separate
- Touch expresses intimacy
- Touch establishes boundary and separation, connection both at once

Life



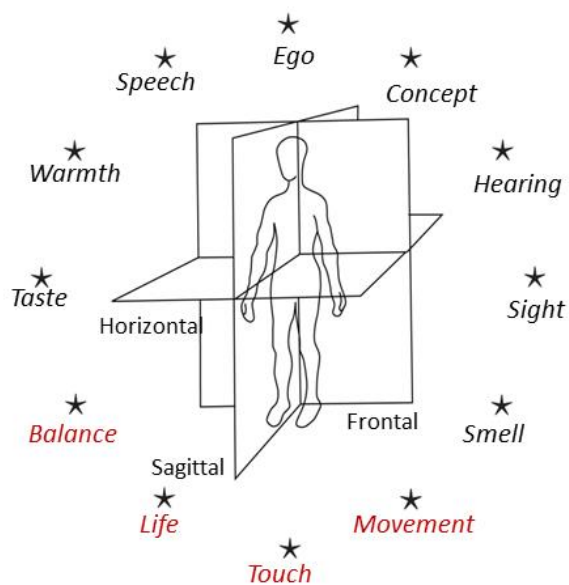
- A self-monitoring of our own constitution
- The first sense in the experience of pain
- Pain is the extreme manifestation of the life sense
- You eliminate pain, you eliminate learning: “don’t touch – it’s hot!”
- Pain and memory, pleasure and memory
- Pain is learning, it is painful to learn
- From pain to conscience
- From conscience to compassion

Movement



- Movement is not merely the ability to move
- Can we feel inside that we are moving?
- Inner movement, to move an emotion
- A sense for self-movement
- Muscle sense movement
- Can we be master of our entire body?
- Where in our body are we not in charge?
- Moving from left to right
- Moving from forward to backward, up and down
- Only part of 'our' body is at our service and the 'our' is what we perceive
- Involuntary movement
- From our sense of movement comes our sense for a goal

Balance



- From our sense of balance we can keep our balance?
- The sense of balance places us into the world
- Balance in relationship to something else
- Example – the world outside and the world inside keeping balance
- To stand upright is synthesis of left to right, front to back, up and down
- Keeping our balance by synthesis of our environmental forces
- Tightrope walker keeps balance by 'filling the space'
- Filling space around us
- Keeping our balance generates a sense of comfort

Practitioners on Therapeutic Education

Here is what practitioners in Ruskin Mill Trust said about Therapeutic Education:

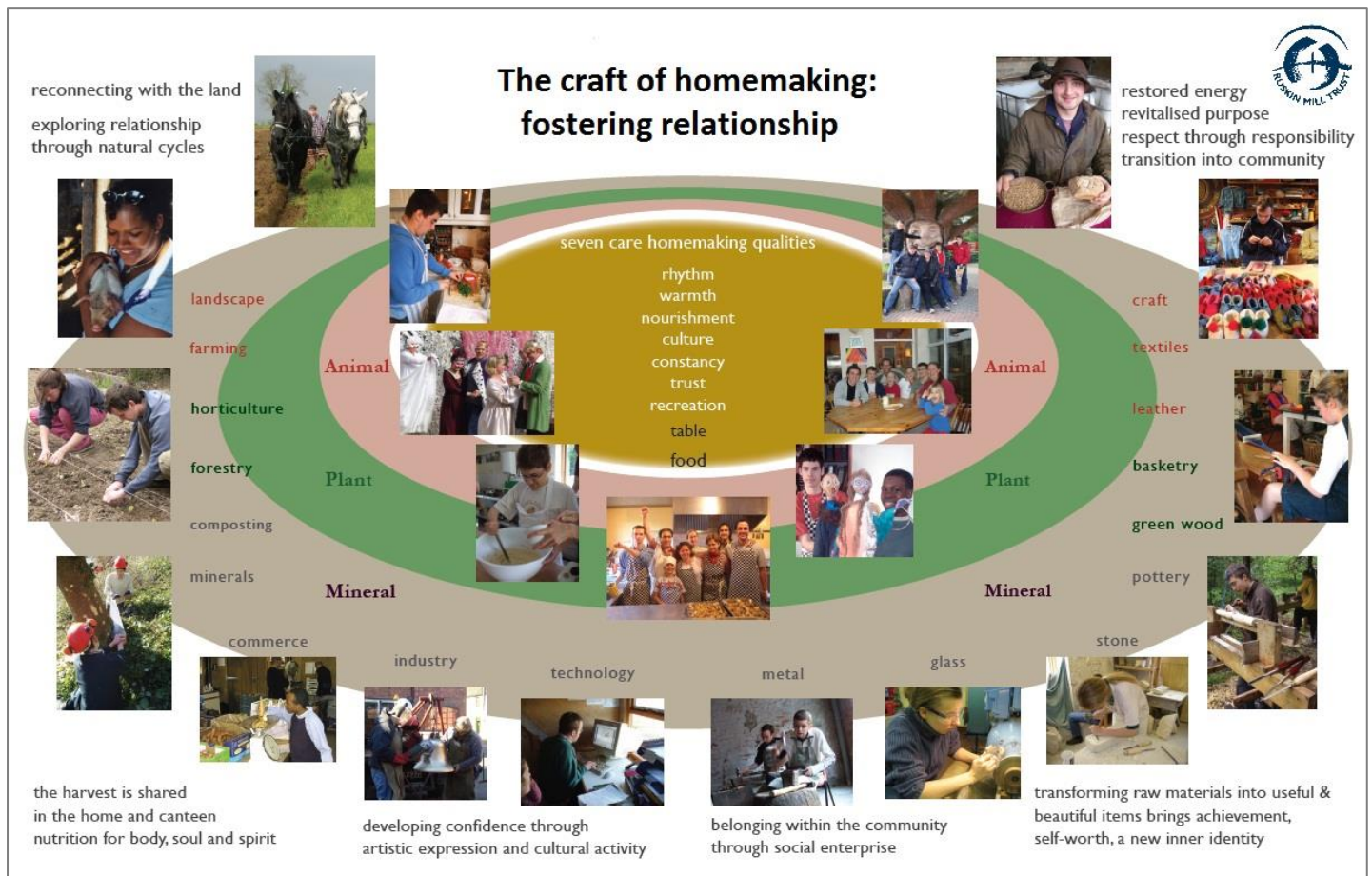
“...an accessible vehicle of learning for young adults to re-braid their systems of thinking, feeling and doing in a way that promotes their self-development... it applies to everyone, that’s the beauty.”

“A mechanism through which healing and learning takes place in a holistic manner, utilising various methodologies to engage with the head, hand, heart and place.”

“Engaging first and then question later...educating through doing, with the craft as the ‘hub’; history, biology, maths, English, geography come in as you’re doing the craft at any level, from a gypsy peg to a Windsor chair.”



Holistic Support and Care



Holistic support and care within Practical Skills Therapeutic Education represents the 24-hour curriculum and in particular, the part that takes place in the residential provision. There, students are engaged in 'home making' and the development of basic living skills.

The 24-hour curriculum is based on the idea that family life and the effort to live semi-independently is as much a learning experience as the activity of developing practical or functional skills. The model for holistic support and care that is applied in Ruskin Mill Trust is also based on observations about what context is most conducive to the development of healthy relationships. In Transform Residential, the Shared Lives Providers undertake extensive training and education to create a safe and nourishing environment where students can find a good balance of peace and positive challenges.

The interaction with other attentive and caring adults and peers at home may pave the way for the students to be able to create appropriate relationships with other people in the future. It is essential that Shared Lives Providers and practitioners work together and keep good lines of communication open so that the day curriculum can support the residential curriculum and vice

versa. This particular relationship between 'day' and 'night' in the student journey is one of the most important links in the continuum of Practical Skills Therapeutic Education.

The Seven Care Qualities

The main contribution that Steiner's work has made to the practice of holistic support and care in Ruskin Mill Trust is the idea of the 'seven life processes'. According to Steiner, the seven life processes are the fundamental conditions for life and he names them as follows: breathing, warming, nourishing, secreting, maintaining, growing and reproducing (The Riddle of Humanity, 1990). The first four replicate the first few hours of the human life – breath, warmth, nourishment and secretion. These take place within hours of birth. Looking at the further three processes, we are then required to take ourselves on in the maintaining of our health and wellbeing, then growing and finally, reproducing.

The idea of the seven life processes is common in mainstream education. In the UK, this is part of the national curriculum for primary schools:

“Life processes are taught discretely as part of the Key Stage 1 (KS1) and Key Stage 2 (KS2) programmes of study, while at Key Stage 3 (KS3) and Key Stage 4 (KS4) [...] at KS1 pupils should be taught the differences between things that are living and things that have never been alive; that animals, including humans, move, feed, grow, use their senses and reproduce; to relate life processes to animals and plants found in the local environment. At KS2 this is developed and they should be taught that the life processes common to humans and other animals include nutrition, movement, growth and reproduction; to make links between life processes in familiar animals and plants and the environments in which they are found.” (Department for Education, National Curriculum)

Though these life processes may seem fundamental and deeply embedded in the life of every person on the planet, it is evident that many vulnerable people or people with complex needs have to struggle with these most basic human conditions.

As an example, it is well known that post-traumatic stress disorder can cause a person to suffer from constant in-breath, which in time can prevent the person from keeping warm, from reproducing or even from controlling natural discharge. In this way, the seven life processes become fundamental building blocks for an environment that can re-create the conditions for life.

Ruskin Mill Trust has taken inspiration from the seven life processes and developed a set of 'Seven Care Qualities' that practitioners and Shared Lives Providers engaged in the students' welfare could work with creatively.

The seven care qualities developed by Ruskin Mill Trust are drawn from Steiner's seven life processes and are embedded in Holistic Support and Care. They are:

1. Rhythm

- Daily living
- House work
- Eat, sleep, work
- Form in nature
- The daily meal
- Grace

2. Warmth

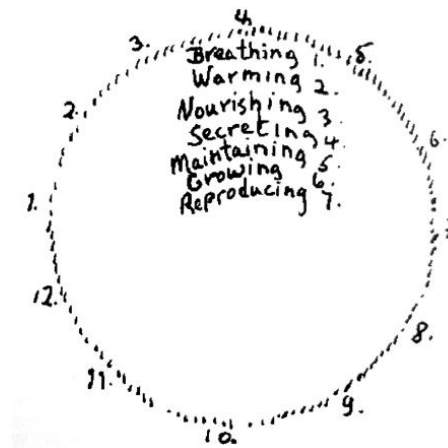
- A warm home
- Warm food
- Warm clothing
- A warm welcome
- Inner warmth
- Giving and receiving

3. Nourishment

- Safe and healthy
- Biodynamic food
- Organic food
- Local food
- Seasonal food
- Body and soul

4. Trust

- Reliability
- Honesty
- Recognising strengths
- Risk taking
- Good in a crisis



Steiner's Seven Life Processes
From "The Riddle of Humanity",
Dornach

5. Constancy

- Predictability
- Security
- Routine
- Measured responses
- Informed choice
- Coping with change

6. Culture

- High standards
- Natural materials
- Students craft work
- The cultural programme
- Diversity
- Manners
- Uplifting

7. Recreation

- Vitality
- Play
- Service
- Giving back
- Community
- Living with others
- Re-generation

It is only through time that all seven qualities become attributes of an independent and self-reliant person. The conscious application of these basic functions that keep humans safe and healthy, plays an important part in showing young students the need to care for self and others.

“[Rhythms] are very important in the household... every morning you wake up have breakfast, cleaning once a week; those routines and rituals. So often if you’re not fed and cared for when you’re young, you’re reliving it. So the rhythm gives you a sense of structure. I found that for the shared life carer rhythm made it easier too. It’s more easeful because [there is] rhythm in the body and rhythm in the mind.” (Shared Life Provider, Ruskin Mill College)

Though the basic nature of the care qualities are easily understood, the creative approach to how and when they can be consciously worked with is less evident. For that reason, Shared Lives Providers in Transform Residential are required to complete a level 3 Certificate in Holistic Support and Care, which addresses the seven care qualities and how they can be applied in the home environment.

Holistic Approaches and Therapeutic Attitudes

There is a wide range of ideas and sources of inspiration that can be found in the holistic support and care model at Ruskin Mill Trust. The other main focus in this field of practice relates to approaches and attitudes when facilitating an environment that may assist the student’s development:

Carl Rogers talked about the development of empathy, congruence and unconditional positive regard as key attributes when working with vulnerable people (On Becoming a Person, 1967). The unconditional positive regard in particular becomes important when faced with what may appear to be inappropriate or unreasonable behaviour. Holding a student in unconditional positive regard does not mean that the inappropriate behaviour becomes acceptable, rather it helps to contextualise the event so that it does not damage the relationship with the student or cause permanent resentment.

Similarly, Steiner talked about the development of objective compassion and a therapeutic attitude (Curative Education, 1972), key qualities in order to facilitate a safe and caring environment for vulnerable people.

Susan Harter talks about the complex development of individuation and connectedness and she explains why those two states are not mutually exclusive (The Construction of the Self, 1999). The point of complexity, says Harter, lies where the adolescent’s *individuation from the family* on the one hand should not imply the severance of the *psychological connectedness with the family* on the other. Because the intention of the 24-hour curriculum is the development of autonomy, balancing this complexity correctly is a vital part of facilitating residential care for students in Ruskin Mill Trust.

The residential provision plays a major role in the student’s development of autonomy and independence. Richard Sennett raises an interesting point in his exploration of ‘autonomy’. He

states that the development of autonomy depends on how it is granted to you by another (Respect, 2003). Autonomy, he says, is dependent on an experience of external validation. This idea is important to keep in mind when working closely with students. Sennett explains how the acknowledgement of others strengthens the self. He also states that anxieties about self-worth may prevent us granting autonomy to others.

Clearly, the interaction between peers, residential and daytime support workers, Shared Lives Providers and practitioners may become templates for how students develop their own abilities to interact. Conscious role modeling and the right attitude are again key to the facilitation of the student journey.

Practitioners on Holistic Support and Care

Here is what practitioners in Ruskin Mill Trust said about Holistic Support and Care:

“It’s about living with and sharing space with other humans, shared caring of responsibilities... the most challenging thing for anyone is living with a group of people not your own family. As a student you will either create a resistance or you’ll see it as something that works... if you sit on the periphery you can be isolated but if you join in you can find your place.”

“For the shared life provider you want to feel like you’re really contributing to growth, autonomy and a sense of worth...”

“For the student as any other adult, personal autonomy comes from creating a space where you can manage all the other things going on around you”.



Students celebrating a meal in a Ruskin Mill Trust household

Holistic Medicine

It was identified at an early stage that in addition to the educational offer to students, higher levels of specialism would be needed to support the students' development, recreation and wellbeing. The approach that was taken in response to this need was to develop a holistic medicine and therapy offer that echoes the integrative educational methodologies applied in the curriculum.

Ruskin Mill Trust engages a number of doctors, nurses and therapists to provide primary care as well as supplementary therapies. Part of the Holistic Support and Care Certificate at level 3, delivered to staff in Ruskin Mill Trust is delivered by one of the doctors and covers important subjects such as the development and maintaining of resilience and therapeutic attitudes. A range of therapies is offered to students in Ruskin Mill Trust and the intention is to create as much support as possible for the learning and development processes of the student journey.

Holistic Therapies

During their time at Ruskin Mill Trust, students can access counselling and support groups. Various practitioners have undertaken education and training to be able to integrate a range of therapeutic approaches in their work.

Steiner introduced a number of holistic complementary therapies to support health and restorative practice. Eurythmy Therapy, as an example, is prescribed by the anthroposophical doctor or by the student study group. This type of movement therapy integrates spatial awareness with a sense of self through a direct experience of the body. (Curative Education, 1972). Rhythmical Massage Therapy is offered to support students with deep anxiety. This form of holistic intervention through gentle touch offers a restorative experience to those who have been subject to physical abuse. Art and Music Therapy are used as creative and participatory therapeutic interventions – working with the imagination and with biographical issues through form, colour and sound.

The rationale for applying complementary and Anthroposophic therapies is again in accordance with and recognition of the whole human being approach.

Embedding Awareness in Everyday Practice

The overarching paradigm in Practical Skills Therapeutic Education is to create awareness of the field of holistic medicine in the every-day practice of staff supporting or delivering the Integrated Learning Curriculum.

The list of subjects covered in the workshops (including the Holistic Support and Care Certificate level 3) gives an impression of the depth and breadth of this field. The workshops are offered to practitioners, support and attendance staff, and Shared Lives Providers primarily and they include, but are not limited to, the subjects listed here:

1. The 3-fold system: nerve, rhythmic, metabolic
2. The Ruskin Mill approach
 - a. Tools for transforming matter to transform self
 - b. Journey of self-discovery in education
 - c. Hand, head and heart
3. The Role of the Rhythmic System
 - d. Heart rate variability
 - e. Influence of emotions
 - f. Strengthening self-healing in the rhythmic system
4. Emotions and Learning
 - g. Cortical functions
 - h. Positive and negative emotions
 - i. Physiology and emotions
 - j. Emotional intelligence
 - k. Managing emotions as a tool for initiating change and personal transformation
 - l. Positive emotions and resilience
 - m. Core values in developing empathy
5. Tools for Education and Therapy
 - n. Managing difficult relationships
 - o. Creating coherence practice
6. Supporting the Development of the Student
 - p. Contemplation of student's development
 - q. Contemplation of personal relationship
7. Practices
 - r. Review
 - s. Creating confidence
 - t. Mental rehearsing

The more practitioners can embed this knowledge in their practice, the more rounded is the support and care for students. Holistic medicine is a field of specialism that can be enhanced through collaboration between practitioners, support staff, doctors and nurses. The student study is a great means by which this collaboration can take place.

Practitioners on Holistic Medicine

Here is what practitioners in Ruskin Mill Trust said about Holistic Medicine:

“Therapies help the student to be part of the College’s life, help them feel less overwhelmed, calmer.”

[Referring to Rhythmic Massage] “The repetition has a calming effect; the fact that you have it each week the body remembers the movements and remembers its healthy rhythms, helping to reduce anxiety. It helps people to ‘be’ within their own bodies. Not being able to be yourself leads to anxiety.”

Transformative leadership and management

Until quite recently, the field of leadership and management was not overtly recognised as a direct contributor to the Practical Skills Therapeutic Education as a method. It was only in the last 3 years that the link between the development of self-leadership in students and the development of leadership in the trust was articulated.

Another interesting parallel became apparent when we coined and articulated the Contemporary Apprenticeship Learning model. The current principals running the colleges have themselves been ‘grown’ through role modelling and apprenticeship. They have held different positions and become familiar with the different aspects of Practical Skills Therapeutic Education through hands-on engagement. This is not a necessary condition for becoming a leader in Ruskin Mill Trust but may in some cases be a sufficient one.

Alongside hands-on learning, leaders and managers in Ruskin Mill Trust also undertake role specific or preparatory education and training in the field. More recently, the Hiram Education and Research Team in collaboration with Tourmaline Ltd have developed a programme that fosters the key qualities for staff wishing to take on management positions or develop their practice.

Role Modelling and Self-Leadership

The facilitation of the student journey requires systems and organisation that can truly serve an educational environment where students are on a path towards self-leadership. Role modelling from leaders and managers in both the commercial and educational context and on a human level is paramount.

There are a number of interesting authors who have inspired the current development of leadership and management within Ruskin Mill Trust. David Rooke and William Torbert are among them; they say:

“[...] we’ve found that leaders who [...] undertake a voyage of personal understanding and development can transform not only their own capabilities but also those of their companies.” (Seven Transformations of Leadership, 2005)



In the development of self-generated conscious action, leaders, managers, staff and students are all subject to the intention and the action of the other. The Contemporary Apprenticeship Learning model requires conscious role modelling. This is an artistic process that relies on the self-awareness of the individual.

The intention in Ruskin Mill Trust is that leaders take a creative approach to what is coming towards them from the future.

Managers in Ruskin Mill Trust are required to foresee and act on the immediate requirements of the organisation. Their role requires a thorough understanding of this responsibility in relationship to other roles and responsibilities.

One could define the difference between the leader and the manager in the following way: The leader needs to provide the direction of the organisation and the manager needs to take us there.

Leaders and managers in Ruskin Mill Trust carry the constant responsibility of being role models not only to the students but also to staff and peers. Conscious role modelling is dependent on high levels of self-awareness. It is for that reason staff training in leadership and management has been developed.

Self-reflective practice is a key activity for any leader and manager. It is the precondition for developing self-leadership and conscious role modelling. For a leader or manager, it is highly challenging that self-reflective practice involves *time*. Commonly, a lack of time to reflect is a factor in the life of most professional people in responsible roles – until such time as it is consciously prioritised!

Aesthetic Intelligence and Situational Awareness

The work of Rochelle Mucha is another source of inspiration for the field of leadership and management in Practical Skills Therapeutic Education. Mucha talks about the development of multiple intelligences – from the social, creative and cultural to the spiritual (Aesthetic Intelligence: Reclaim the Power of Your Senses, 2009). Her notion of Aesthetic Intelligence is deeply linked to the vision and method of Ruskin Mill Trust. This is another point where the continuum between the different fields of practice becomes apparent. Aesthetic intelligence, according to Mucha, is connected to *situational awareness* and this quality can be traced back to where we started: *with the conscious approach to the Genius Loci*.

Being a leader or a manager in Ruskin Mill Trust requires high levels of situational awareness and sound judgement. It requires insight into the holistic approaches and the therapeutic attitudes we have explored above.

The development of situational awareness can be seen as an artistic sense that integrates all the senses. It includes what could be called ‘a 360 degree gesture’ which Steiner calls *intuition* (The Philosophy of Freedom, 1999). Mucha calls this gesture ‘the sixth sense’ (Aesthetic Intelligence: Reclaim the Power of Your Senses, 2009).

Connected to the idea of multiple intelligences and situational awareness is the inner attitude of owning one’s own destiny.



Freeman College Student Michael Nares
graduating from
The University of Sheffield in 2007

‘Destiny’ may in this context be understood as *that which comes towards us from the future*. Owning one’s destiny is connected to three attitudes: *taking ownership, act and let happen*. Leadership may be developed through the conscious engagement with destiny in such a way that ownership becomes a tool for recognising the inherent choreography as it unfolds in our personal and professional lives.

The aspiration for the development of leadership and management in Ruskin Mill Trust is that personal accountability and responsibility is approached with aesthetic, artistic and creative action.

This aspiration is equally available to the students and can be developed in the meeting with resistance. Self-ownership in the context of resistance may become the hallmark for the development of self-generated conscious action.

Authority can be bestowed upon another just as freedom can be granted to another. Self-generated conscious action and owning one's destiny can only be developed from within. It is, as Rooke and Torbert states, a "voyage of personal understanding and development" (Seven Transformations of Leadership, 2005).

Practitioners on Transformative Leadership and Management

Here is what practitioners in Ruskin Mill Trust said about Transformative Leadership and Management:

"You can't be an effective leader until you've developed self-leadership. You have to be courageous, to be able to go out on a limb, be prepared to make mistakes and accept criticism."

"A pause is essential for leaders. Between receiving information and then taking the next steps, a reflective moment. Reactive decisions create bad leadership decisions and that can get out of control easily."

"There has to be a level of belief that you can change and improve things. That can be difficult if you feel that things are against you."

"Crucial to anything I do is to understand my own motivation in doing things. I try to work out what my motivations are and check the integrity in what I'm doing and why."



"[Before I came here] I could never look anyone in the eyes... now I'm here I've grown up a lot and I can now look people in the eye."

(Kyle Elwood, Freeman College Student. Graduated 2008)

"Moving beyond what we've been able to prove through science, our theory is that the heart links us to a higher intelligence through an intuitive domain where spirit and humanness merge. This intuitive domain is something much larger than the perceptual capability of the human race has yet been able to grasp. But we can develop the perceptual capacity as we learn to do what sages and philosophers have asked us to do for ages: listen to and follow the wisdom of the heart."

(Doc Childre and Howard Martin. The Heartmath Solution)

Star Outcomes Assessment Framework

ILLW Assessment and Review of Progress - *measuring the distance that students travel on their journey through the Integrated Learning for Living and Work (ILLW) programme*

Assessment

Students entering college have aspirations and dreams that they wish to fulfil during their time at college and after they leave. Local Authorities, who fund the student's college placement, expect the college to support a student to make progress towards, and ideally achieve the outcomes that have been identified and agreed will help the student to achieve their aspirations during and beyond their time at college.

Therefore, it is essential that the college assesses students before they start their college placement in order to:

1. Establish a profile of a student's strengths and areas for improvement
2. Review and clarify with the student what his or her aspirations for the future are
3. Formulate and agree clear outcomes and milestones for their course at college

Once a student starts their college course it is essential, both for the student and the local authority funders, that the college ensures that there is on-going, regular assessment of the student's progress towards their chosen outcomes, which is referred to as 'measuring distance travelled'. In this way the student and the funder receive regular feedback on progress and where necessary, can agree adjustments to the individual student's programme and their funding.

The question is what is it exactly that needs to be assessed and monitored in order to measure distance travelled? Given that Ruskin Mill Trust colleges work with some of the most complex young people with learning difficulties and/or disabilities who have an entitlement for further education in the UK, it is important that assessments include a wide range of skills and capacities that encompass the whole person, for example physical, emotional and cognitive engagement and attributes. In addition, the Local Authority as funders, the Department for Education (DfE) and the Education Funding Agency (EFA) all expect the college's assessment to include English, maths, communication, living skills and work readiness. Consequently, Ruskin Mill Trust has designed an assessment and recording framework, which is referred to as the 'ARF'.

The ARF encompasses three stages in the student's college journey. It starts with the **Pre-entry Assessment Stage** when the student is applying for a college placement. It continues with the **Post-entry Stage**, whilst the student is enrolled on their college course and it finishes with the **Transition Stage**, when the student prepares to leave the college. During each stage a selection of the following assessment tools are used to monitor a student's progress towards achieving their agreed outcomes and to inform goal setting.

1. **Outcome Star for students in specialist colleges** – this is the core person centred assessment and planning tool (available online) used by the student journey manager and student to review and plan the student's personal learning and development pathway through and beyond the college placement (for more detail please see the section on the Outcome Star below)
2. **Functional Skills Assessment** (currently the online BKSBS diagnostic assessment is used by each RMT college) – qualified functional skills tutors carry out this assessment and use it to monitor students' progress in learning maths, English and communication skills
3. **Speech and Language Assessment** – qualified speech and language therapists carry out this assessment and use it to monitor progress of specific communication skills
4. **Independent Living Skills Assessment**– this is carried out by residential carers for potential residential students or in partnership with the Admissions Team and parents for day students
5. **Independent Travel Assessment**- this is carried out by the pre-entry assessor initially and then by designated staff during the post-entry stage
6. **Care Plan** – This is completed at pre-entry by a designated residential manager and then regularly reviewed with the student and residential carer after the student starts their course
7. **Risk Assessment** – this is started by the pre-entry assessor at the admissions stage of the student's journey and updated as necessary by student journey managers once a student starts college
8. **Work Readiness Assessment*** – this is carried out by designated tutors who can offer vocational learning experience in their subject area during the post-entry stage
9. **Mental Capacity Assessment*** - this is completed by the student journey manager only when required during the post entry stage

*these assessments are only undertaken from the post –entry stage onwards

Using the Outcome Star for students in specialist colleges

Introduction

Although all of the above assessment tools are used by the student journey managers to review and evidence a student's progress and distance travelled, whilst enrolled on Ruskin Mill Trust's Integrated Learning for Living and Work Programme, the **Outcome Star for students in specialist colleges** has been designed, in collaboration with Triangle Consultants, to align with the type of learning and development that is both encouraged and facilitated through engaging in the Practical Skills Therapeutic Education curriculum offered at each college.

The Nine Assessment Areas

The Outcome Star assessment process is, at its core collaborative and person centred and involves students and their student journey managers in discussion to review and plan their learning and development journey with reference to the following assessment areas: Practical skills, Communication and social skills, Learning skills, Managing health, Living skills and self-care, Friends and relationships, Well-being, Social responsibility and Work Readiness, as illustrated on the nine pointed star (Figure1) below:

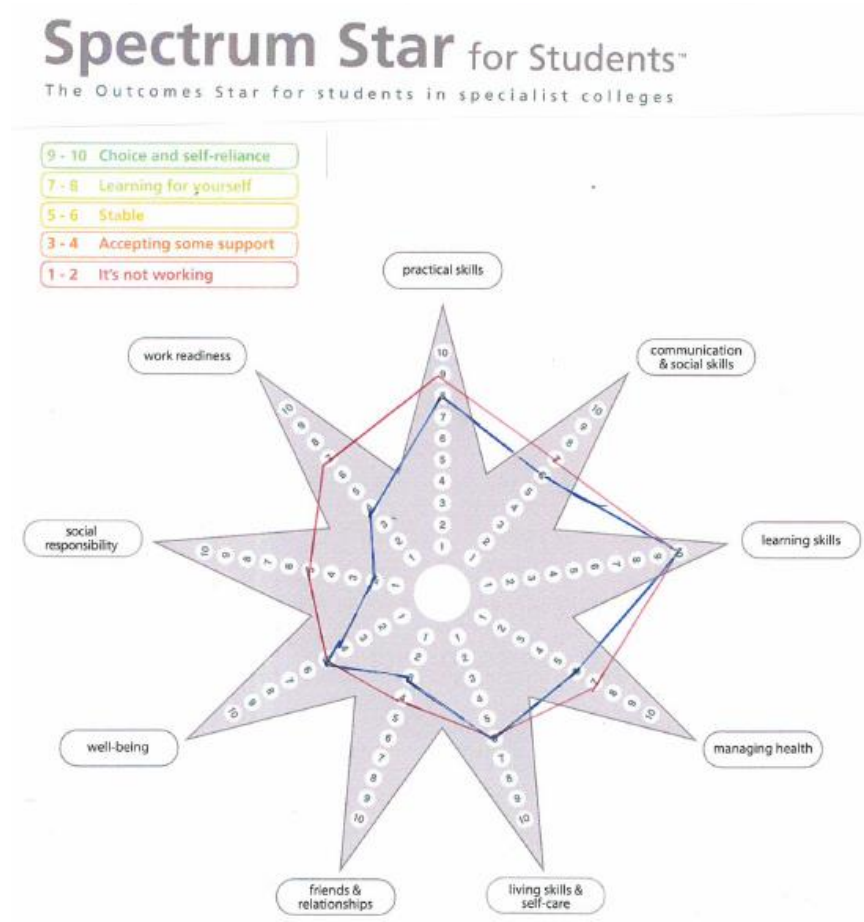


Figure 1 - Outcome Star: Example with the colour coded journey of change and evidence of distance travelled after the first review (red line)

The 5 stages of the journey of change

The Outcome Star framework also includes a colour coded five stage journey of change, with each stage consisting of two steps. This means that in total there are 10 steps on the journey of change for each assessment area as outlined below:

1. Red stage – it's not working
2. Orange stage – accepting some support
3. Yellow stage – stable
4. Light green stage - learning for yourself
5. Dark green stage – choice and self-reliance

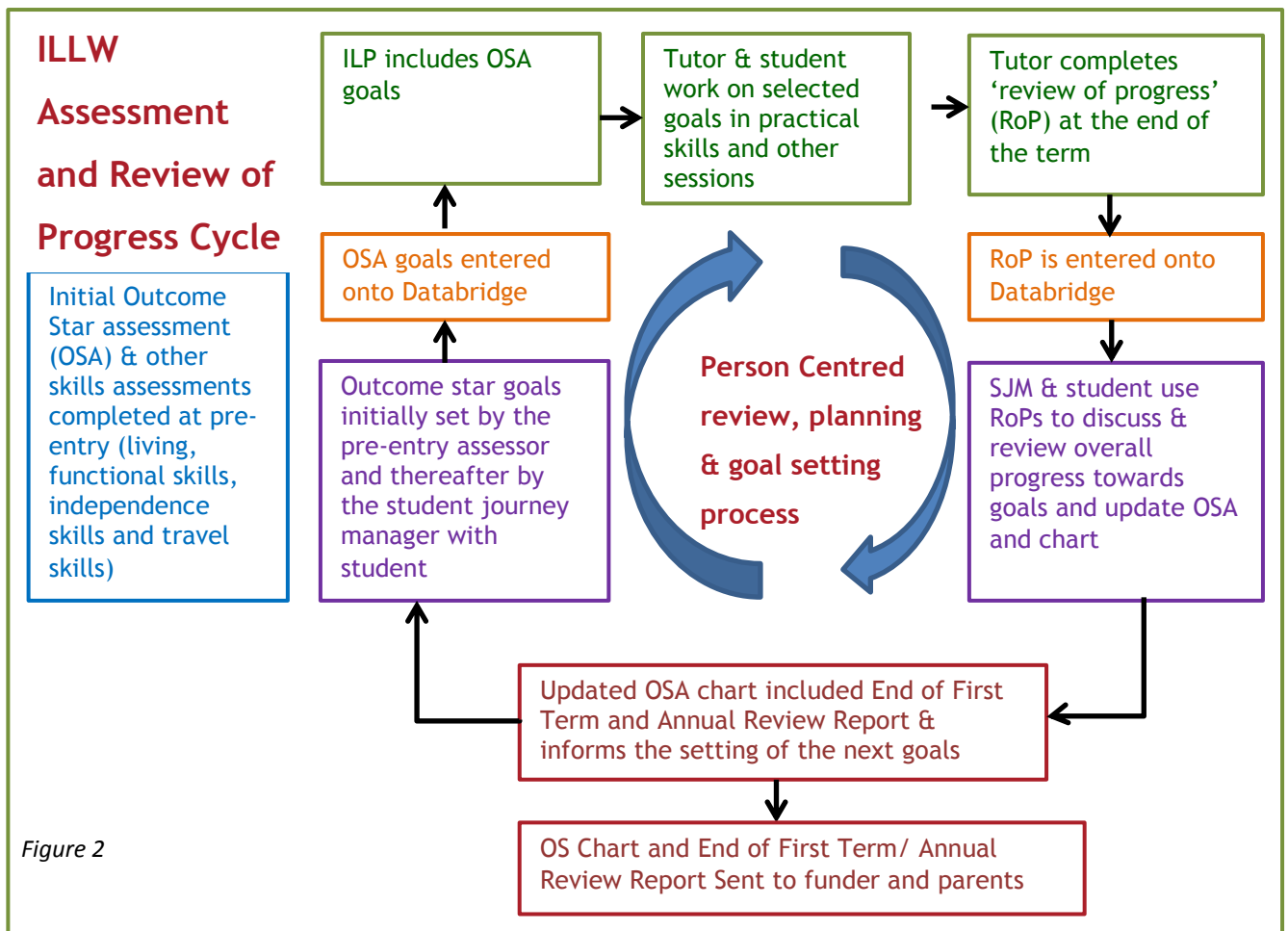
Each stage has a clear description of the strengths, weaknesses, successes and challenges that a student is likely to experience and exhibit at each step of their journey. This allows the student and student journey managers to refer to the range of descriptions and using feedback from tutors, residential carers and other sources e.g. updated assessments etc. to decide which stage and step best reflects the student's place in their journey within each assessment area.

Setting an individual baseline

Each of the 10 steps in the journey of change corresponds to a place along one of the assessment arms on the star chart. After the initial work that students and their student journey managers do together to clarify and agree which stage and step of each assessment area best describes the student, a baseline can be plotted on a star chart as illustrated by the [blue line](#) on the example above. All notes and star charts are logged onto the Outcome Star website data base, which student journey managers have access to and can use with their students.

Setting Person Centred Goals using the Outcome Star

Following each Outcome Star review the student and the student journey manager will agree and set the goals that will be most relevant in supporting the student to progress along their chosen journey of change. These Outcome Star goals will be added to the student's ILP and where appropriate the student's tutors and residential carers will be expected to include these goals as part of the work they do with the student. At the end of each term, tutors and residential carers will be expected to review and report on the student's progress towards achieving the Outcome Star Goals (see diagram 2 below)



Measuring Distance Travelled

Students and their student journey managers will reflect on the feedback from the end of term review of progress reports and use this information to agree where progress has been made and where the next area of focus for learning should be.

At least once a year, prior to the student's annual review meeting a review of the complete Outcome Star assessment will take place. The differences in the Star Chart from one year to the next, as illustrated above, evidences the distance travelled by a student in the nine assessment areas.

The star chart evidences changes from one assessment period to another and can be used by the student and the student journey manager during the annual review to describe and demonstrate the achievements and progress that has been made towards the outcomes that were agreed prior to starting college. Where necessary, changes can be made to the outcomes according to the emerging needs and aspirations of the student at that point in time.

The Benefits of the Outcome Star to students and colleges

The fact that the Outcome Star process involves iterative, person centred review and planning and is well supported by student journey managers, means that it has the potential to empower students to own and direct their personal transformation and development. This in turn implicitly and explicitly prepares a student for their transition out of the college and into their next stage of life, which for most young people will require them to possess higher levels of self-reflection, confidence and autonomy than they did when they started college.

The Outcome Star allows colleges to evidence individual distance travelled in reference to initial outcomes, which is a key requirement from funders. It also allows each college to aggregate achievement and distance travelled data and analyse it by gender, year group, ethnicity etc., which is information that Ofsted is particularly keen for colleges to understand and use as part of their planning and quality improvement processes.

Consequently, the Outcome Star is a very important assessment tool that, if used correctly, not only has the potential to support each student in their personal learning and development journey, but also allows the college to clearly demonstrate and evidence the positive outcomes its students achieve.

Integrated Learning for Living and Work

Integrated Learning for Living and Work is a curriculum for learners who have behavioural, emotional, cognitive or other barriers to learning. Learners are supported to address these barriers through a range of practical skills activities that integrate the mind, the emotions and the body. Integrated into these activities are a range of transferable skills, such as number and word skills, social skills, practical skills and personal skills.

As learners gain confidence and ability they progress into a range of vocationally orientated qualifications, such as BTECs and Functional Skills, work experience or some other relevant progression related activity. Each learner is supported to find their own pathway through the curriculum according to their individual needs and abilities. The aim is that all learners progress towards the goal of increased independence and autonomy, whether in preparing for employment, identifying a pathway of further learning or being able to manage an independent living situation.

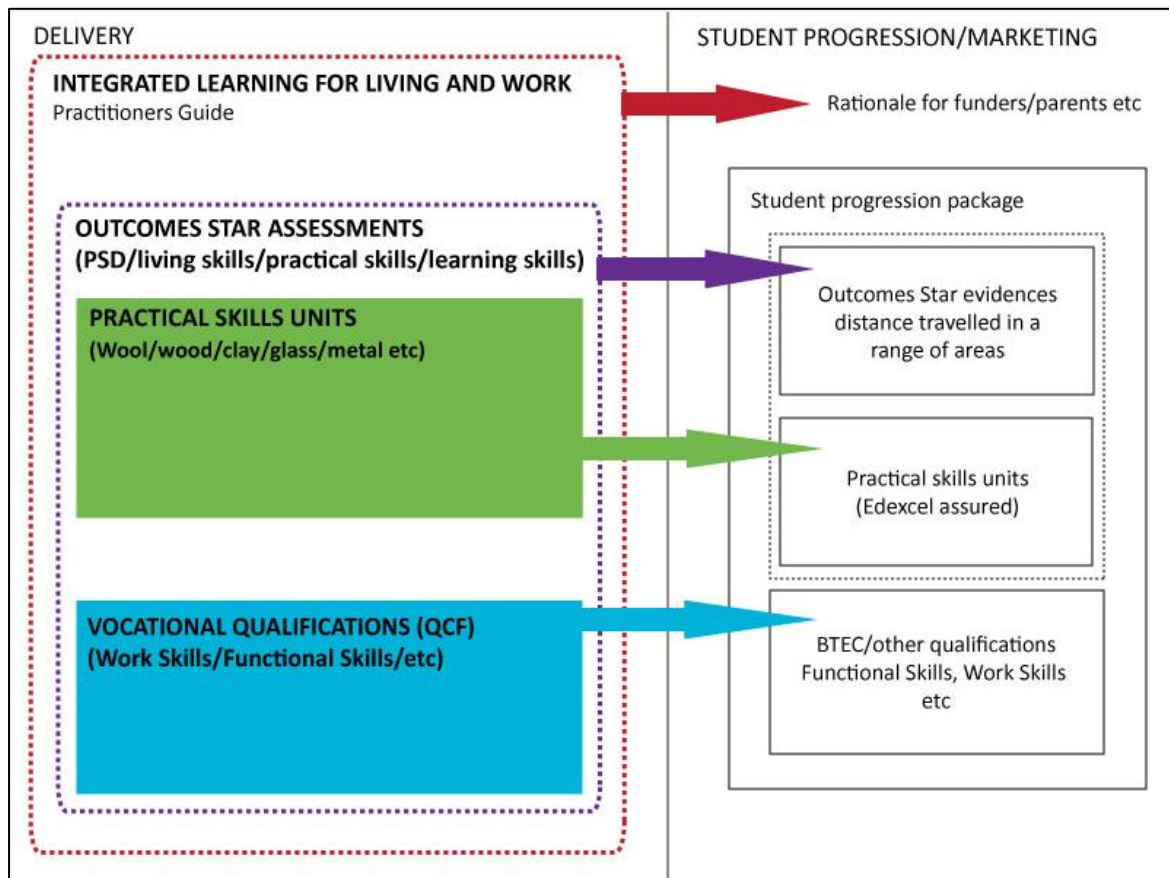
The Practical Skills Units

The Practical Skills Units are the formal structure within which practical skills in the curriculum are delivered, quality assured and accredited. Learners will often begin with these before progressing into BTEC, Functional Skills, work experience or other more 'formal' learning. They can therefore be seen as a bridge into formal learning for students who may, for a variety of reasons, be unable to access formal learning. The units cover a range of subjects such as Forge, Green Woodwork, Balm Making, Glass Blowing etc. and are delivered at Entry Level 2, 3 and Level 1.

The units contain learning outcomes and assessment criteria that are deliberately broad in focus so that learners can meet the criteria in a wide range of ways. Each unit focuses on four areas: working with others, a specific practical skill, basic embedded functional skills (word and number) and reflective skills. Each unit also contains a detailed delivery guidance for tutors which gives guidance on how the practical skills can be used to facilitate student learning and growth in the four areas. As well as the evidencing that takes place in the unit, student progression is tracked using the Outcomes Star. This tracks progress across the whole curriculum rather than in the shorter, unit sized blocks.



Overview of the Integrated Learning for Living and Work Curriculum



Appendix 1: Writing Delivery Guidance for the ILLW Units

The guidance below was distributed to all Ruskin Mill Colleges and the teams in each college were utilising it in the process of drafting Practical Skills Therapeutic Education units for the Integrated Foundation Learning curriculum.

Introduction

The following is an outline description of how to write delivery guidance for PSTE units. The aim with the delivery guidance of these units is that it is based on current best practice of skilled PSTE tutors. This is developed through one or more interviews with the tutor(s) in question and ideally more than one tutor will be involved. The following gives some suggestions as to how to carry out the interviews and how to write the guidance from the interview. These are suggestions only and developers can modify this approach if they find better ways of doing things. The guidance from these units will form part of the *Practitioners Guide*, which will be the main point of reference for all PSTE practice.

Conducting an interview

The interview should be an open and interesting conversation rather than a fixed list of questions, however the interview also needs to provide some specific information (outlined below). Interviewers should therefore find the right balance between open conversation - where the unexpected can occur - and fixed interview with questions and answers.

The suggested structure is as follows:

Description of key activities

The interviewer can begin by asking the practitioner to describe, step-by-step *how they work* with the students during the course of a typical block. For each key activity that is described, the interviewer should try to get answers to the following three questions. (These questions correspond to the three columns on the delivery guidance template).

- a. What is the name of the activity? (e.g., splitting wood)
- b. What do students do in carrying out this activity and how should the tutor facilitate the activity from a PSTE perspective?
- c. What is the possible therapeutic (and other) learning that can result from this activity?

In answering question c, the interviewer should be aware that they are looking for three areas of learning:

- i. *Cognitive* (for example: word and number skills, planning, reflection)
- ii. *Emotional/social* (for example: impulse control, focus of attention, team work)
- iii. *Practical* (for example: spatial awareness, fine motor skills, balance)

It might be easier to begin by describing the whole block in practical terms only (i.e. columns one and two), and then move on to therapeutic learning, or it may be easier to do both simultaneously. This is up to the interviewer and the tutor. By the end of this process there should be both a description of all the main activities that take place in a typical block and a description of the therapeutic/other learning that is embedded within these activities.

Key topics

The following topics should also be addressed. Some of these will happen naturally as the tutor goes through the above step-by-step description. If the subject does not arise, the interviewer should draw it out in an appropriate way. Tutors may not be able to address all the topics listed below. They should only address the ones that are relevant to their practice.

Key topics to be addressed:

Participation in general workshop activities: How is the student involved in general workshop activities that have a supporting or social role, such as repairing, cleaning, maintaining, helping others.

Developing attention: How does the practical skill engage the student in developing sustained attention, and what are the strategies to facilitate this?

Progression of the student experience: How does the student's experience and learning evolve during the practical skills block? (For example: this might be in connection with the different stages of creating a craft object).

Review and reflection: How is the student engaged in review and reflection on what they have done?

Three planes of space: How does the student engage with the three planes of space in this practical skill?

Sustainable sourcing of materials: Are materials used in the workshop sustainably sourced, and if so, how is the student engaged in this?

Overall diagnostic/therapeutic focus: What overall therapeutic focus does this practical skill have? (e.g. particularly effective for calming hyperactivity, etc.). This question might also be answered in connection to the material being used (e.g. wool).

Connection to place (Genius loci): How does the practical skills activity connect the student to the local environment? (this might also combine with no. 6: 'sourcing of materials')

Giving back: How does the practical skill involve the student in a 'give back' process of service where they engage not with their own needs but the needs of others? (e.g. commercial/community application)

The interview should be recorded in any way that works best for the interviewer, bearing in mind that this should be a resource that others can make sense of afterwards. Interviewers can also make an audio recording and work from this if this is preferred. The interview notes should ideally, not be written directly into the delivery guidance template. This would limit the possibility of reorganising the information into relevant sections afterwards.

Writing the delivery guidance

Interviewers should write up their notes from the interview into the delivery guidance template provided (see separate document). The formulation should be as a narrative rather than as bullet points or single words. (Please refer to existing delivery guidance examples for general formulation and style.) They should look for the simplest and clearest way of presenting the information and refer to existing delivery guidance for how to divide and name sections etc. If there are any sections in existing delivery guidance examples that are similar, they can be copied and pasted, making minor changes where necessary. Please also note that all existing delivery guidance examples are drafts that are subject to change. Please also note that at this stage the delivery guidance does not need to refer to the learning outcomes or assessment criteria of the unit as these will not have been finalised.

Once a first draft of the delivery guidance has been completed, the interviewer should send it to the tutor(s) they have interviewed so that they can make any changes or further suggestions.

Once the draft delivery guidance has been checked by the tutor(s) and returned, it should be reviewed for finalisation. This will include writing the unit descriptor (learning outcomes and assessment criteria) and referencing the delivery guidance to these. A final version will be sent to the tutor(s) and the interviewer for any final comments.

Appendix 2: Ruskin Mill Trust Quality Standards of Proficiency for Practitioners

This section presents the development of standards of proficiency for Practical Skills Therapeutic Education practitioners in Ruskin Mill Trust. The standards will be finalised in the academic year 2012-2013 and used as benchmarks for the development of student and staff curricula. The standards are also developed for succession building purposes among practitioners.

We have presented the standards in five sections:

1. Knowledge of the theory of Practical Skills Therapeutic Education
2. Understanding the rationale of Practical Skills Therapeutic Education
3. Ability to implement and apply Practical Skills Therapeutic Education
4. Professional development
5. Professional accountability

1. Knowledge of the theory of Practical Skills Therapeutic Education

A PSTE practitioner must know:

- 1.1. The charitable objectives, vision, values, method and purpose of Ruskin Mill Trust
- 1.2. The organisational structure of Ruskin Mill Trust
- 1.3. The Ruskin Mill Trust strategic plan
- 1.4. The three fundamental principles of Practical Skills Therapeutic Education
- 1.5. The Practical Skills Therapeutic Education student curriculum and its quality assurance framework
- 1.6. The statutory requirements of safe working practice as described and defined in the policies and procedures of Ruskin Mill Trust
- 1.7. The framework of compliance and regulation that applies to the Practical Skills Therapeutic Education provision in Ruskin Mill Trust
- 1.8. The fundamental principles of Biodynamic Ecology and its applications
- 1.9. The fundamental principles of phasic human development as indicated by Dr. Rudolf Steiner in relation to contemporary research on the subject
- 1.10. Principles of reincarnation and karma
- 1.11. The fundamental principles of holistic and Anthroposophic medicine and therapies
- 1.12. The fundamental principles to holistic support and care

- 1.13. The various types of syndromes and complex needs worked within the context Practical Skills Therapeutic Education
- 1.14. The value of developing self-leadership
- 1.15. The importance of becoming a conscious role model
- 1.16. The value of supporting the development of transformative leadership and management

2. Understanding the rationale of Practical Skills Therapeutic Education

A PSTE practitioner must understand:

- 2.1. The Practical Skills Therapeutic Education informed student curriculum and its quality assurance framework
- 2.2. The principle of supporting the development of self-generated conscious action
- 2.3. The principle of Contemporary Apprenticeship Learning model
- 2.4. The principle of integrating *the seven fields of practice* in the context of Practical Skills Therapeutic Education
- 2.5. His/her own role as a practitioner in the organisation as a whole
- 2.6. The embedded continuum between curriculum activities and the importance of consciously applying coherence
- 2.7. The importance of building a continuum between organisational departments
- 2.8. The importance of conscious role modelling
- 2.9. The importance of safe working practice as described and defined in the policies and procedures of Ruskin Mill Trust
- 2.10. A range of methods of managing challenging behaviour
- 2.11. The basic function of diagnostic and assessment tools in the context of Practical Skills Therapeutic Education
- 2.12. The fundamental methods and intervention processes that derive from Anthroposophic principles and concepts
- 2.13. The importance of working consciously with the 'spirit of place' through phenomenological inquiry
- 2.14. The therapeutic value of practical skills education
- 2.15. The role of sensory integration in the context of Practical Skills Therapeutic Education
- 2.16. The therapeutic value of Biodynamic Ecology and its applications
- 2.17. The approach to phasic human development as indicated by Dr. Rudolf Steiner
- 2.18. The value of an holistic approach to support and care

- 2.19. The value of holistic and Anthroposophic medicine and therapies
- 2.20. The key concepts and principles of the bodies of knowledge which are relevant to his/her profession
- 2.21. The significance of creating a safe and appropriate therapeutic work and learning environment in the context of a Practical Skills Therapeutic Education provision
- 2.22. The methods for and value of multi-disciplinary team meetings
- 2.23. The importance of self-reflective practice, contemplative inquiry
- 2.24. The importance of knowledge exchange and practice sharing both within and outside of Ruskin Mill Trust
- 2.25. The importance of establishing and maintaining professional relationships with organisations both within and outside of Ruskin Mill Trust, including the utilisation of practice and practitioners on other sites within Ruskin Mill Trust

3. Ability to implement and apply Practical Skills Therapeutic Education

A PSTE practitioner must be able to:

- 3.1. Apply the principle of supporting the development of self-generated conscious action
- 3.2. Apply the Contemporary Apprenticeship Learning model
- 3.3. Work consciously with the integrative approach to *the seven fields of practice*, drawing on each field to enhance own practice
- 3.4. Practice and educate in accordance with the Practical Skills Therapeutic Education informed student curriculum and its quality assurance framework
- 3.5. Implement ways of ensuring the continuum between curriculum activities
- 3.6. Apply the fundamental principles of holistic support and care
- 3.7. Apply fundamental methods and intervention processes with an emphasis on those that derive from Anthroposophic principles and concepts
- 3.8. Recognise where a specific intervention is inappropriate and substitute an alternative approach or arrange an appropriate referral
- 3.9. Create a safe and appropriate work and learning environment in the context of the Practical Skills Therapeutic Education provision
- 3.10. Actively support life-skills development in the person with complex needs
- 3.11. Actively pursue connecting the learning environment (college) with the living environment (residential) where applicable by –
 - 3.11.1. Encouraging communication, practice sharing and the acknowledgment of student achievement in the home

- 3.11.2. Ensuring that the student work, where possible and appropriate, is acknowledged and utilised in the home
- 3.12. Apply safe working practices as described and defined in the policies and procedures of Ruskin Mill Trust
- 3.13. Carry out appropriate risk assessments

4. Professional development

A PSTE practitioner must engage in:

- 4.1. Self-reflective practice and the recording of own progression
- 4.2. Developing an attitude of objective compassion for students and colleagues
- 4.3. Developing self-leadership and conscious role modelling
- 4.4. Developing effective communication with other practitioners and sharing good working practices
- 4.5. Continuing Professional Development as provided by the Hiram Education and Research Team and as required by Ruskin Mill Trust
- 4.6. Developing and maintaining professional, collaborative partnership building with peer-organisations both within and outside Ruskin Mill Trust

5. Professional accountability

A PSTE practitioner must at all times endeavour to:

- 5.1. Apply and work in accordance with the vision and values of Ruskin Mill Trust
- 5.2. Apply and work in accordance with the Practical Skills Therapeutic Education informed student curriculum
- 5.3. Apply and work in accordance with the methods, practices and standards described and defined in the 'Practical Skills Therapeutic Education Practitioners' Guide'
- 5.4. Comply with the policies and procedures of Ruskin Mill Trust
- 5.5. Keep appropriate records of work, learning, assessment, practice and professional development where required by Ruskin Mill Trust

The above standards are a first draft and they are currently out for consultation with stakeholder groups.

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