

Shadowing Permaculture Design Courses

Introduction

This short guide covers our Designed Visions teaching team processes and the roles of an apprentice on one of our design courses.

Shadowing a design course provides several opportunities and involves certain commitments, outlined below.

Opportunities

Your first opportunity is the chance to review the permaculture design course content again. This may well include some different elements, especially if your original permaculture design course (PDC) was not with us. In addition, you have the opportunity to observe the processes that we use in conveying the course information, a level that most people miss the first time around in the need to absorb content.

We also offer the opportunity to start teaching one or more subjects, either by delivering part or all of a session's content. We offer whatever support is required for you to do this, supplying our session notes and offering planning time when needed.

Additionally, you also get to see the way that courses are run behind the scenes, including being involved in team meetings and other processes before, during and after the course.

Commitments

We commit to:

- Provide you with the opportunity to get some 'real life' teaching practice.
- Answer any questions you have about our teaching and course processes.

We ask you to commit to:

- Be available for the whole course or whatever days have been pre-arranged.
- Be willing to stretch yourself a little and to make a positive contribution to the course.

Course Pattern

Course structure

The course is divided into these segments:

- The theory-heavy introduction to ethics, principles and design process.
- The application of permaculture thinking to different areas (soil, water, etc.).
- The design practice.

Daily structure

Each morning we start with a morning circle. This is an opportunity to check in about the needs of the group, create anticipation about the day's events, review the previous day and deliver any additional announcements. This is led by one of the teaching team members*.

During the day there are four or five main sessions, consisting of theory, group work, practicals, exercises, site visits, etc. We aim to keep mornings more theory orientated and afternoons, especially directly after lunch, more active.

During the evening the sessions are a little more relaxed and consist mostly of slideshows and videos.

Your Roles

Your role during sessions

Primarily you are in that all-important observation phase and as such it is not expected that you should 'do' a great deal during many of the course sessions. We anticipate that you will spend most of your time observing and making notes during sessions. When a question arises about a choice of delivery process, make a note so that you can ask about it later. Sometimes an opportunity can arise during a session (such as when the group is engaged in discussion or group work) to ask such questions.

As an extra pair of eyes & ears, your observation of the group's energy is also valued. Similarly if you observe any interactions that may need attention, or hear from participants that need any additional support, either pass on that information to a lead tutor, or *if it feels appropriate* deal with it directly yourself at the time and report back at the next meeting.

Your role in recording the course is also valued, either in sharing your notes or in taking photos of sessions if the teacher is otherwise engaged.

Additionally, if urns or kettles need switching on in advance of breaks, your help is valued in ensuring that they are.

Teaching practice

We encourage you to have a go at teaching at least one session on a full design course, or a section of two or more. When choosing which session to have a go at, you could use the following criteria to help you make your choice:

- *Teach your passion.*
- *Teach whatever you have direct experience of.*
- *Teach what you need to learn.*

We can supply our notes in advance of the session if it helps you to plan (but hey, you might already be more of an expert than we are on a particular subject!). We'd certainly need to discuss what you are planning to cover (without needing a full session plan) at least a day ahead of the course starting, to avoid us covering some of the same material elsewhere.

Helpful roles outside sessions

- Being available to answer any permaculture related questions that you can.
- Helping participants with venue-related issues.
- Leading support groups** where appropriate.
- Helping to ensure good timekeeping.

Team Meetings

Before the course

The teaching team meets at the venue before the start of the course to plan out the fine details of the timetable, who is doing what, the different aspects of the venue etc. On a residential, this is usually the day before the participants arrive, but this may vary depending on the degree of set up that a venue requires.

During the course

The teaching team meets daily throughout a residential course to plan and review.

We meet:

- Each morning (briefly) to finalise the plan for the day.
- Every lunch time to review the previous 24 hours.
- Each evening to plan the following day.

The role of chair* is rotated each day and that person is responsible for getting the team together to meet and to keep the meeting to the agreed time.

After the course

The teaching team also meets at the end of a course for an hour or two, to review and evaluate all aspects of the course, including teaching, group dynamics, suitability of venue, site visits etc.

Costs

We are happy to offer shadowing opportunities in exchange for support in running the course. On residential PDCs you will need to cover the cost of your food and accommodation. This will vary depending on the venue. Contact us to ensure that you know in advance what these will be (sometimes we may refer you to contact the venue directly).

Opportunities

Opportunities to shadow on Designed Visions courses are limited (usually a maximum of two per course), so we recommend booking up with us as early as possible. At the time of writing, most courses during the next six months are fully shadowed.

While we prefer to work with apprentices who have already made the commitment of participating in our Teacher Training course, we are happy to hear from anyone who is able to demonstrate their commitment to becoming a permaculture teacher.

We look forward to learning more about permaculture with you soon!

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Aranya" with a small infinity symbol and a flourish at the end.

*These are roles that we suggest you also commit to taking your turn at.

** Support groups are times set aside during the day (usually half an hour) where course participants are involved in processes that support their stay, such as food preparation, firewood gathering etc.