

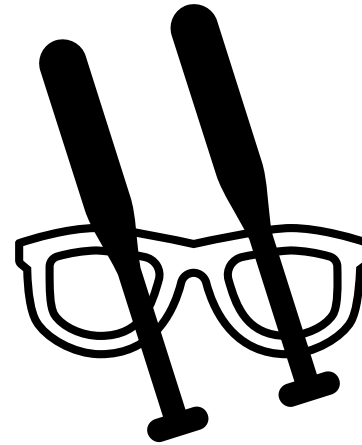
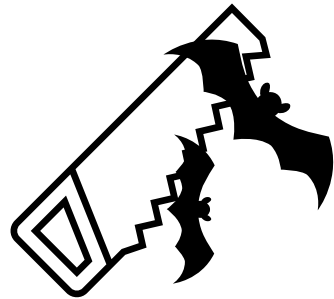
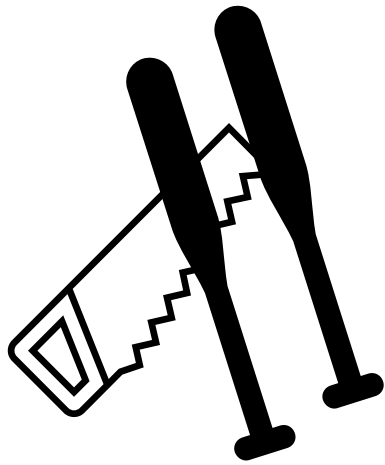
An Introduction to Ambiguity

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29/04/2024



I saw bats



Lexical ambiguity

“Typical” student pathway

- Primary education
- Secondary education
 - GCSEs (or equivalent)
 - A-levels (or equivalent)
- Higher education

Very structured by default

Program and content is structured
but the approach is not

A * A * A

The problem

- Students often struggle with:
 - Open-ended problems/briefs
 - Unknowns and incomplete data
- Most apparent in third- and fourth-year project work
- How can students become more comfortable in such environments?

The solution

- Devise a low (zero)-stakes exercise to emulate issues
- Support the students in being comfortable with unknowns
- An exercise that is fun, engaging, and relatable

Food for thought: An engineering exercise

- 30 mins briefing lecture
 - Background provided and task introduced
- 2x ~ 2-hour tutorials
 - Get to know group members
 - Tackle the problem
 - Produce a poster
- 1x Mini poster conference



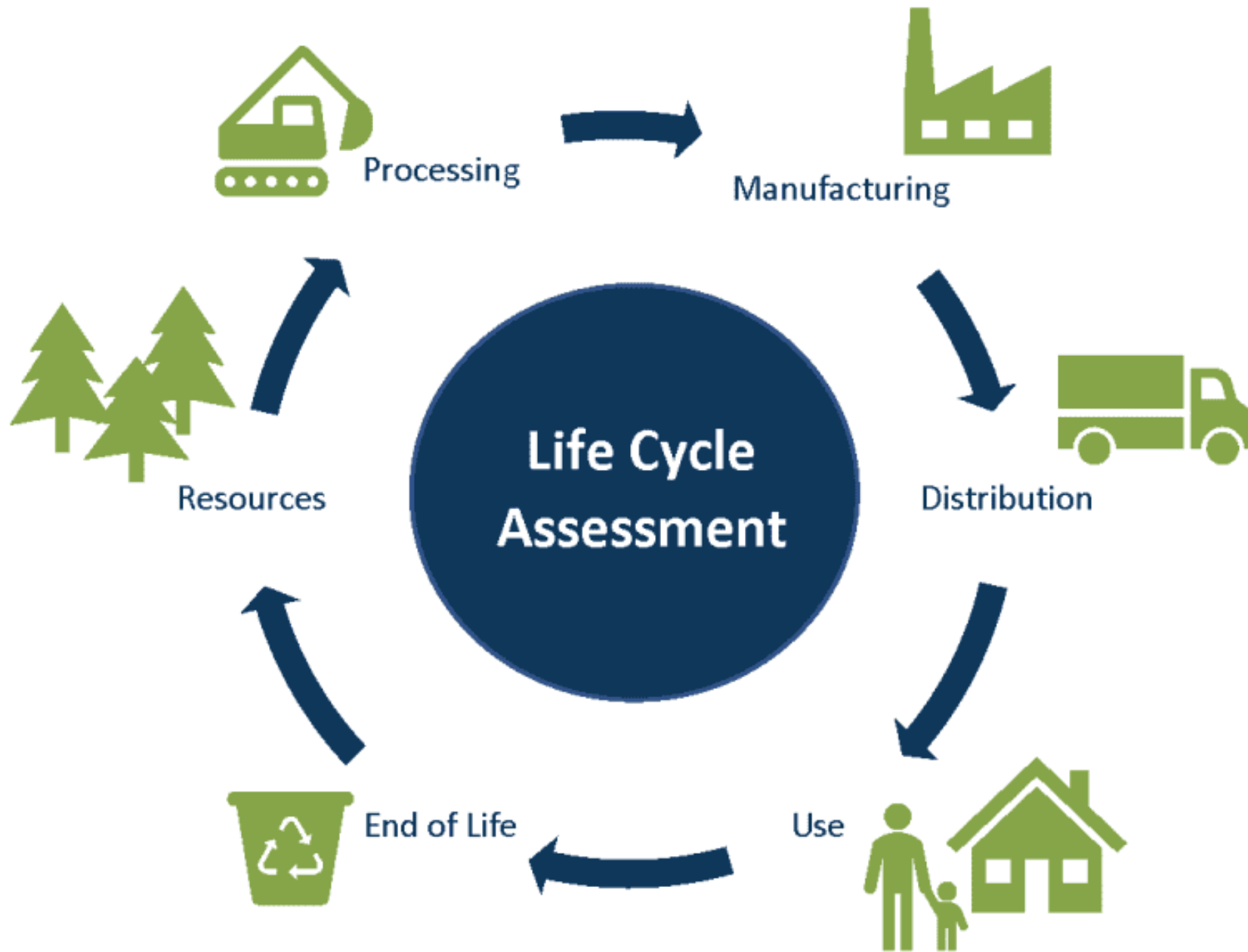
IMPERIAL

Festival of Learning and Teaching 2024



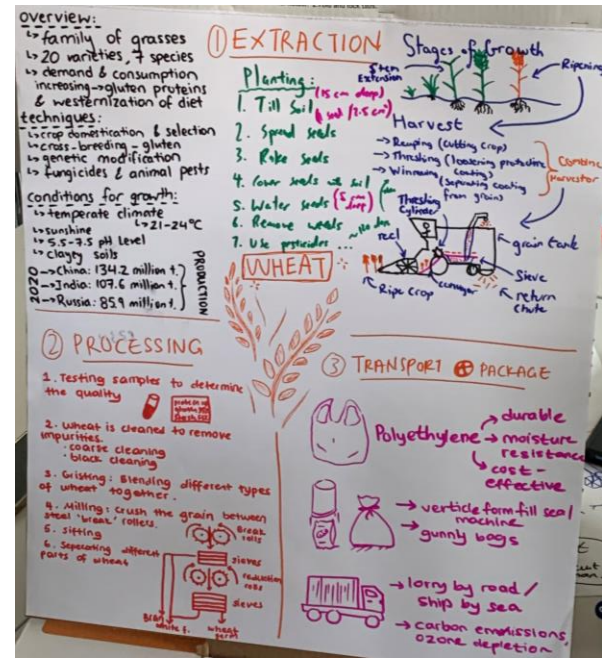
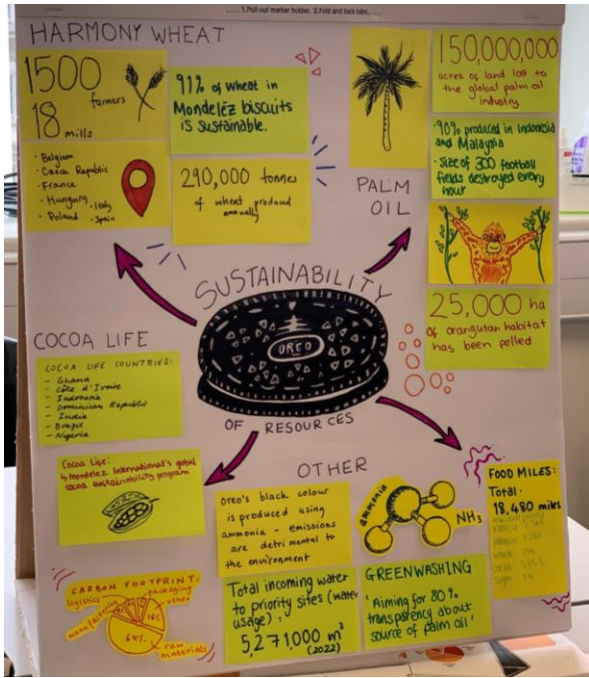
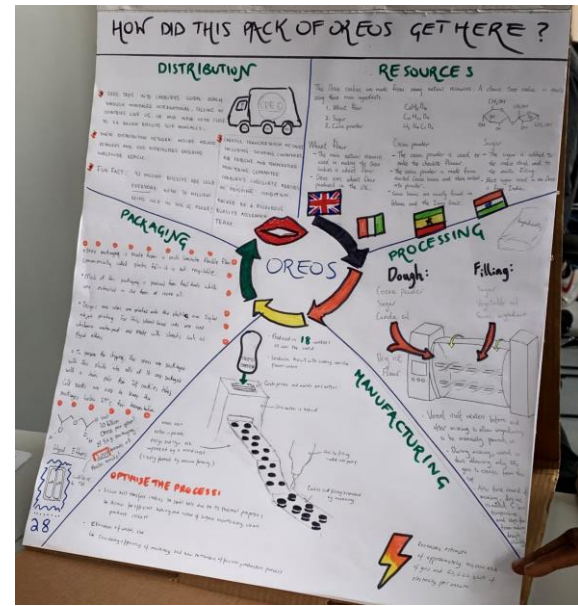
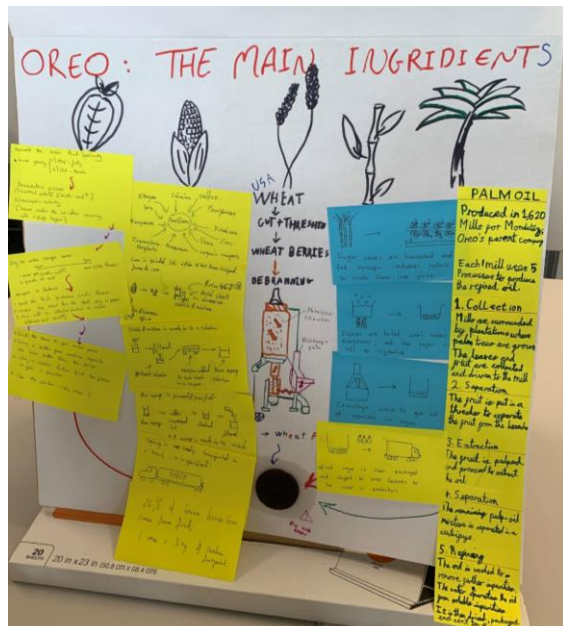
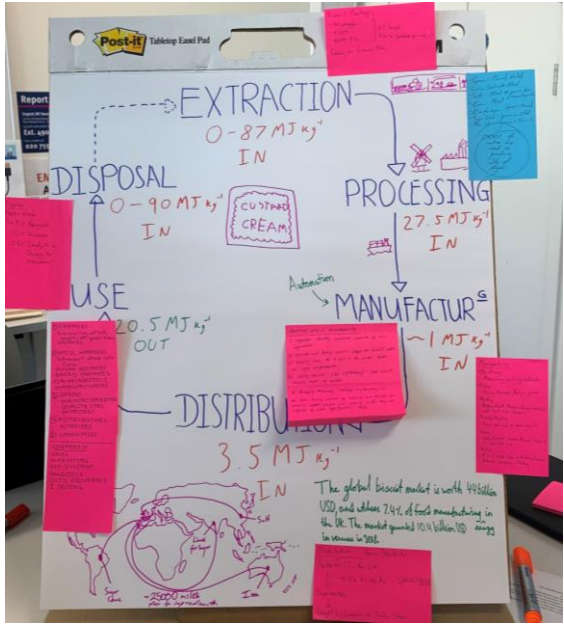
How did these biscuits get here?





Facilitation

- Groups of 5
- 40:1, student:staff ratio
 - Or 8:1, group:staff ratio
- No right or wrong approach
- Heavily dependent on TFs to make a success
 - To create an insurmountable task
 - To encourage a structured approach to the task in the given timeframe
 - To encourage deeper, root-cause thinking



Outcomes

- Exposure to an open-ended task
- Confidence in decision making and problem solving
- Resilience with ambiguity

Summary

- Students struggle with ambiguous pathways and open-ended problems
- Developed an open-ended exercise for students in Welcome Week
 - Question: clear and structured
 - Approach: fuzzy and vague
- Cultivated skills for future project work