Meld Studios skills matrix

This matrix describes the skills and behaviours expected for each level of human-centred designer. Let's use this information to have open and detailed conversations about your professional development. Here's the process:

1. Self Assessment - Start by reflecting on each skill and noting your level of competency (Intern, beginner, Senior beginner, Expert beginner). Highlight strengths and gaps. It is normal and expected that your overall competency profile will fall across two levels.

2. Manager Assessment - We will ask someone who has worked with you recently to plot their assessment of your skill level.

3. Chat - Together review assessments and chat about your strengths (things you can teach others), gaps (things to learn from others), and what this means for your projects and professional development.

SKILL COMPETENCY
Think of skill competency as a sliding scale ranging from complete novice to master.

Novice	**No knowledge or experience.**
Beginner	You have basic knowledge and perhaps a little experience. It is a relatively new skill.
Intermediate	You have good knowledge and have started demonstrating this skill. You are fairly competent, but need to practise a few more times to build confidence.
Master	You have the knowledge and competence to repeat this skill with confidence. You can model and teach this skill to others.

COMMUNICATE THE BENEFITS

SKILL	INTENT	NOVICE	BEGINNER	INTERMEDIATE	EXPERT
Talk about the design process	Describe the philosophy of Design and the value of using it as a problem solving tool. Describe the emotional journey of stakeholders and beginners throughout the design process.	Actively participate in a project that uses the philosophy and toolset of Design. Observe and reflect on the approach.	Learn how to articulate the design process. Learn about different techniques.	Descr be the design process with enough confidence to guide a stakeholder and project team through it. Understand different techniques and know when to use them.	Describe all aspects of the design process with confidence. Provide specific examples of the value organisations can achieve by using a design approach. Talk about how to build design capability.

PLAN & MANAGE

SKILL	INTENT	NOVICE	BEGINNER	INTERMEDIATE	EXPERT
Plan the approach	Propose approach, activities, effort, and team structure. Defend the approach and negotiate terms. Factor in learnings from previous project successes and failures.	Ask about this if it is an area of interest for you.	Observe and reflect on what others are doing. Ask to be involved if this is an area of interest for you at beginner level.	Learn how to shape proposals with guidance from an expert.	Draw on previous experiences to propose meaningful and pragmatic projects to stakeholders. Deliver pitch presentations. Negotiate time and money to accommodate our desired way of working, and to ensure profitability.
Manage the project plan	Agree a detailed plan with stakeholders and the project team. Manage expectations around timing, effort, budget, and fidelity of project deliverables. Preempt and mitigate risks.	Ask about this if it is an area of interest for you.	Observe and reflect on what others are doing.	Learn how to create a detailed plan and manage expectations throughout the project. Repeat multiple times to build confidence.	Create and manage the plan with confidence. Teach others. Address challenges and pivot as needed.
Manage the process	Guide stakeholders through the design process. Acknowledge and support their emotional journey.	Observe and reflect on what others do.	Observe and reflect on what others do. Have a direct and professional relationship. Work on having a voice.	Manage the stakeholder relationship day to day. Be seen as the go-to person. Be seen as reliable and demonstrate confidence that things are in control. Be the first to flag and approach the stakeholders when things do not feel right. Repeat multiple times to build confidence.	Manage the overall stakeholder relationship on several concurrent projects. Address challenges when escalated and pivot as needed.
Manage the project team	Guide the core project team - which may include stakeholder staff - through the design process. Acknowledge and support their emotional journey.	Observe and reflect on what others do.	Observe and reflect on what others do. Flag and address challenges with the team when things do not feel right.	Guide our team on a project. Be mindful of project profitability and quality. Flag and address challenges with the team when things do not feel right. Repeat multiple times to build confidence.	Direct teams on several concurrent projects. Ensure rigour and quality of approach and outcomes. Ensure profitability. Address challenges when escalated and provide direction on how to pivot.

Design and run workshops and presentations	Set context and expectations with the audience, create enthusiasm, maintain momentum, achieve objectives.	Observe and reflect on what others do.	Help design workshops and presentations. Seek opportunities to co-present. Observe and reflect on what others do.	Design workshops and presentations with varying levels of support from an expert. Seek opportunities to present. Repeat multiple times to build confidence.	Design workshops and presentations. Present with confidence. Elaborate and defend ideas when questions are asked. Pivot as needed to ensure objectives are achieved.

UNDERSTAND & DEFINE

SKILL	INTENT	NOVICE	BEGINNER	INTERMEDIATE	EXPERT
Plan research	Understand different research methods - including one on one interviews, contextual inquiry, observational research, and group methods. Plan the activities needed to get a deep understanding of the people we are designing for. Set research objectives, choose appropriate methods, recruit appropriate participants, agree data collection methods, create a discussion guide, coordinate the research schedule, etc.	Actively participate, observe and reflect.	Learn about different methods and how to plan research.	Continue to learn about different methods. Plan research with limited support from an expert. Guide the data collection approach to set A&S up for success.	Continue to learn about different methods. Teach others. Plan, lead, and conduct large scale research with confidence.
Conduct research	Conduct research with a stakeholder's customers, staff, and stakeholders. Know how to uncover the underlying reasons for someone's behaviour and mental model.	Actively participate, observe and reflect.	Actively participate in different types of research. Seek opportunities to lead sessions. Learn how to dig deeper based on cues from the participant.	Actively participate and guide the team in different types of research. Lead sessions. Practise digging deeper based on cues from the participant.	Lead a range of research methods with confidence. Refine your skills by teaching others. Know how to pivot the approach based on cues from participants.
Analysis and synthesis	Understand different techniques for analysing research findings. Use inductive and abductive methods to look for patterns and trends in data. Connect these patterns and trends with observed phenomena in the wider world to draw meaningful and significant conclusions (insights). Use these insights to reframe the problem and generate opportunities.	Actively participate, observe and reflect.	Actively participate in A&S sessions. Learn about different approaches. Be open to ambiguity and exploring tangents. Articulate the difference between a finding, insight, and opportunity.	Same as a beginner plus guide the team on approach.	Lead A&S sessions with confidence - internal and with stakeholders. Draw on insights from past experiences to push the team's thinking. Pivot as needed to ensure rigour and quality of approach and outcomes.

Articulate findings	Describe research outcomes in a succinct way, and dig deeper depending on the context. Create stories that are meaningful and valuable for the stakeholder. Be able to tell a "3 second, 30 second, 3 minute, 30 minute, 3 hour" version of the story.	Actively participate, observe and reflect.	Observe and reflect on how others do this. Learn how to create stories that can be told at different lengths and in different contexts.	Be a good storyteller. Guide the team in creating meaningful stories.	Be a master storyteller. Build on previous experience to push the team's thinking. Ensure stories are meaningful and valuable to the stakeholder.

EXPLORE & REFINE

SKILL	INTENT	NOVICE	BEGINNER	INTERMEDIATE	EXPERT
Generate ideas	Generate ideas for how to deliver against opportunities revealed during Analysis & Synthesis. Generate multiple, competing ideas that might subsequently be combined, pulled apart, and recombined in response to further thinking, customer input, or new insight.	Actively participate, observe and reflect.	Actively participate in ideation sessions. Learn about different techniques. Think laterally. Be open to ambiguity and exploring tangents.	Same as a beginer plus guide the team using a variety of techniques.	Lead ideation sessions with confidence - internal and with stakeholders. Draw on insights from past experiences to push the team's thinking. Understand different techniques and know when to use them. Pivot as needed to ensure rigour and quality of approach and outcomes.
Create concepts	Review ideas, work through the component parts, intent, and underlying logic. Create something tangible to communicate an idea. Create variations to explore different aspects of an idea. Format could be hand-drawn sketches, paper prototypes of a mobile application, physical mock-ups of a service desk, print brochures drawn in pencil, etc.	Actively participate, observe and reflect.	Actively contribute ideas and collaborate with others to create concepts. Draw on whatever experience and creative skills you have to achieve a suitable format.	Same as a beginner plus guide the team on approach. Draw on the expertise of our visual beginners as needed.	Draw on insights from past experiences to push the team's thinking. Recognise the need to split, simplify, combine, or expand concepts. Ensure format is fit for purpose.
Evaluate concepts	Plan and conduct activities needed to test concepts with those most impacted by the experience you are designing. Set objectives, recruit participants, create materials. Know how to uncover the underlying reasons for someone's reaction to an idea. Be open to ideas failing and needing to start over.	Actively participate, observe and reflect.	Learn about different techniques and how to recruit participants. Actively participate in creating test materials.	Actively participate and guide the team in creating test materials. Plan and conduct test sessions with limited support from an expert. Recognise the need to adjust test materials based on cues from participants.	Plan, lead, and conduct testing with confidence. Know how to pivot the approach and materials based on cues from participants.

| Refine concepts | Use feedback from a range of sources - including insights from concept testing - to refine concepts and potentially reframe the problem. | Actively participate, observe and reflect. | Learn how to contribute ideas and collaborate with others to refine concepts. | Contribute ideas and guide the team in creating better defined and directed concepts. | Draw on insights from past experiences to push the team's thinking. Be able to recognise the need to pivot, reframe the problem, and explore a different concept or a variation on a theme. |

SHARE

SKILL	INTENT	NOVICE	BEGINNER	INTERMEDIATE	EXPERT
Communicate project outcomes	Understand stakeholder needs and determine the best way to communicate project outcomes. Think laterally and collaborate with others to explore options. The format may be an illustrated customer journey map, glossy magazine, newspaper, video presentation, report, physical prototype, experiential walk through, etc. Use key principles of information and visual design to simplify content and tell engaging stories.	Actively participate in the creation of deliverables. Learn how to use different tools. Share approaches and ideas from projects you've done before. Perhaps you can teach us something new.	Draw on whatever creative skills you have to help shape project deliverables. Understand how to use different tools and methods. Understand how to create a customer journey map and other types of deliverables. Lean on others if visual design is not your forte (e.g. more experienced beginners).	Same as beginner plus if you're not the one creating the deliverables, know how to direct, constructively critique, and support others during the creation process.	Direct the creation of project deliverables. Draw on learnings from previous projects to ensure quality and usefulness to the stakeholder.
Present and respond	Stand up and present to an audience with and without preparation, in formal and informal moments.	Observe and reflect on what others are doing. Speak up and share thoughts internally and with stakeholders.	Present with confidence in internal situations. Speak up and share thoughts internally and externally.	Present with confidence in internal situations. Practice public speaking with stakeholders and at external events.	Present with confidence in a range of internal and external situations, including stakeholder presentations and conferences. Confidently elaborate and defend ideas when questioned.
Basic visual communication	Use basic sketching to express ideas and tell stories.	Same for all. The level of sophistication will vary depending on your background and practice, but that's ok. Everyone can and should draw, or at least scr bble.			