| 1. How has my concept developed since the start of the project? | At the beginning of the project, I identified my concept as: after visiting the Weir garden and exploring the hidden beauty of the organic forms there, I decided to express these hidden sides by taking the formal elements of pattern, texture and colour from these sources, and using them to create final pieces of a mixed media, 3D format. However, as I continued to research and the project went on, I found the material combination of fabric manipulation, papermaking and brass to express those chosen formal elements, and the form of a basket, which linked to humanity’s own natural curiosity, a trait that of course led me to explore the plants in the Weir Garden, and the viewer to explore the hidden side of my final pieces in the same way. |
| 2. Did I meet my aims and objectives? | In this project, my Aims were:  
- **To develop my skills** in my favourite materials – metal and textiles – as well as gaining skills in other areas and new materials, such as ceramics or print. Through doing sampling into various new processes and materials, I have already achieved this objective. Now that I have made the final pieces, I have also expanded on my own skills in fabric manipulation, in papermaking, and especially in soldering technique, which allowed me to make such complex pieces.  
- **To learn about the possibilities of mixed media**, and push their boundaries. Since I have done sampling into a range, I have only begun to learn about what can be achieved. However, since then, I expanded upon my sampling to end up combining metal, paper and fabric in an unusual way, which ended with me experimenting with the unusual combination of papermaking, fabric manipulation and brass.  
- **To take my inspirations from a single source or location**, and to focus on formal elements that I’m not comfortable with. So far, I have taken my inspiration from the Weir Garden exclusively and picked out the elements of texture, pattern and colour. These elements were carried through into my final pieces in a way that didn’t copy the original source itself, but instead the identified aspects, completing this objective.  
- **To produce a range of polished, quality final outcomes.** In the end, each piece required extensive sampling and designing, and after deciding to add the finishing touches to the collection of three final baskets, I had gone for quality over quantity.  
Objectives Identified in Mid-point Evaluation:  
- **Make at least 3 final baskets** - I did successfully manage to make three - and I would also like to present these in a way that fulfils my concept in the final exhibition. Currently my idea is to put each on a shelf of staggered heights, so that the inside can only be seen by actually leaning over and looking, and extra effort has to be used to see the others, like standing on toes.  
- **Develop my own smocking, applique and ruffling techniques (or variations of existing ones),** which I did in fact do, even though I didn’t use the original smocking technique, and instead varied an existing technique. |
- Try making paper from foraged organic fibres. I did not manage to complete this objective, but I did experiment with adding various organic materials into other card pulps.
- Photograph the baskets within the Weir Garden, in order to create a link back to the original source. I was unable to complete this objective, simply due to a lack of time.
- Restructure and update my weekly plan, which will allow me to complete those objectives effectively within the timescale. I did restructure my plan.

### 3. What did I enjoy?

I have really enjoyed working with so many different materials in this project, and especially exploring how they look when paired together, and how the joining techniques totally affect the aesthetic. I have also loved keeping the concept simple – at last – and expressing the hidden sides of the weir garden’s flora in my designs. It gives the pieces a somewhat interactive feel, and the viewer and extra surprise. Also, I think I have found a love for fabric manipulation and papermaking, two material processes that I didn’t even know existed before I started this project. Not to mention complex metals construction, which although can be difficult and frustrating at times, is extremely rewarding in the end. Lastly, I enjoyed putting the baskets together at the end, as once the final stitch was in place and they were finished and seamless, they seemed to begin to work a magic.

### 4. How did my research feed into the project?

The main threads of research that have had a big impact on my project are:

**Primary:**
- The trips to the weir garden, as these visits were essential to gathering my bank of sources, including photographs, sketches and rubbings. I then selected main sources, identified their hidden sides, and derived the three formal elements of texture, pattern and colour, which of course fed directly into my designs for the final pieces.
- My investigation of the structure of real baskets, as this influenced not only my experimentations into basketry techniques, but also my ideas about construction, and specifically the warp and weft frame basket construction of the final pieces, which is a twist on other basketry methods. It also helped me put the final wire frames together, considering tension and other such aspects, like in basketry.
- My sampling with mixed media has been absolutely essential, as it caused me to reconsider the very techniques themselves – reading a book that questions what basketry really is – and led me to redefining how I looked at the concept of basketry, deciding to instead develop techniques to suit the materials at hand, just like how basketry was originally done. Sampling also helped me develop my designs and come up with solutions as I made the final pieces.

**Secondary:**
- My research into the visual elements used on vessels, as this led me to identify a number of artists to investigate further, and through researching these artists I was led to the mixed media basket artist John Garrett, and then discovered modern contemporary basketry. These visual elements helped me enrich and experiment with my designs, which led into my ideas for the final pieces.
- Researching into contemporary basketry and the history of basketry, as this led me to discover that the heart of the project was about the curiosity...
of human beings and how we explore and see potential in our surroundings, which is what led to the practise of basketry. Upon realising this, I chose the basket as the form for my final pieces, and researched further into techniques and their history.

- Reading the books on fabric manipulation, combining metal, paper and fabric and using papermaking in basketry, as these fed straight into my final samples and directly influenced my choice of material combinations for my final pieces, and what processes I chose to push. They also continued to feed into my test sampling even as I made the final pieces, and helped me develop solutions to my aesthetic problems with the baskets.

5. What **skills** have I gained?

| I have gained skills in working with **brass** (soldering, using thin metal, wire manipulation, polishing), **fabric manipulation** (smocking, applique, bunching, pleating, tucking), **papermaking** (using different fibres, embossing, working to a former), **ceramics** (hand building, biscuit firing), **wood** (cutting and smoothing) and **steel** (cutting and polishing). I have also gained a unique set of skills in combining the materials of paper, fabric and metal into controlled and seamless 3D forms – namely baskets, for now. |

6. What **went well**?

| The primary research into the weir garden was much more successful than I had expected, and I discovered so many hidden sides and secrets that I didn’t expect to find. Also, separating the formal elements from the inspirations themselves was a technique that gave me a clarity of mind in my designs and helped me avoid copying the inspiration directly, which was something that I had never even tried before. Furthermore, my sampling led to techniques that I had never even heard of, which was what I had hoped it would do. I loved them even more than I could’ve anticipated, though, which was a big bonus. The designs of the bowl forms led to me making **paper models**, and since I wanted them to fold down and fit inside the sketchbook that had to be **octagonal**, which were an unexpected twist on the shape of the final pieces that I embraced. Finally, in discovering those new techniques and experimenting with the ways that they could combine, I discovered that a fabric seam could be adapted to join metal to textiles and paper, and give the surfaces of the pieces a perfect, seamless finish. Furthermore, the final pieces themselves were successful, as my planned method of construction needed few changes, and using the same basket frame and form, areas of plain and manipulated fabric and papermaking bowl forms created a coherence between the pieces, defining them as a collection. The pieces themselves were totally different from what I had in mind when I began the project, but were still beautiful and, above all, sturdy. |

7. What **went wrong** and how did I overcome it?

| I have done problem solving in the following areas: Theoretical: Many of the initial mixed media samples were no good when using traditional basketry techniques designed for reeds and grasses, so I returned to basketry research and emerged with a new perspective on their combinations, which led to the combination of the fabric and paper cladding around a metal basket form. I went through many different designs in deciding on the final form of the baskets, and then through another set deciding on the way in which I could combine the materials, but it was through trial and error with the designs and visualisation with what could work that I ended up with my final |
solutions. Even after coming to what I thought were the final solutions, looking at the material or technique in situ changed my mind, and caused me to work out new ways of adapting these techniques to fit my designs.

Practical:

- In making the first metal frame for the final piece, I struggled with a variety of issues with the soldering, mainly problems with getting the solder to flow, heating the pieces equally with regards to the thickness of the metal, stopping it from buckling under the heat, keeping the pieces in place and joining correctly whilst soldering and creating a sturdy join with solder all along the length. I solved all of these problems by trying different approaches until I found one that worked.
- Since then, I have developed my skills even further to end up with stronger and quicker joins in soldering.
- I have had to adapt the fabric manipulation techniques in order to get them to express the desired texture, and look good with the chosen material and on the metal frame itself.
- Since handmade paper is so weak, I have worked out ways of reinforcing it on multiple occasions, and also of covering up flaked areas and exposed stitches. I also re-used the sheets to form the bowls and also create a lovely crumpled texture, instead of creating a new, smooth pulp.
- When joining all of the pieces together and finishing them off to a good standard of quality, I had to work out how to get rid of any visible seams, sometimes using invisible thread, and how to reinforce the inside of the basket. In the end, I used stuffing to puff out the fabric and nestle the paper, whilst also giving it a satisfying weight and tactility.

8. What have I learnt?

So far, I have learnt that the key to working well with mixed media is to treat each of the separate materials with respect and as their own entity – rather than simply mashing them together – and by bringing out the individual potential in each one and putting them together in a simple way, they play off each other as formal elements.

I have learnt that by researching a form’s history and background and really extending my research around the subject matter, I can link this back into the concept and design decisions, giving the design a much stronger autonomy and meaning.

Furthermore, I have begun to learn about the importance of sampling and experimentation when it comes to the formal elements of texture, pattern and colour, as these are often be impossible to properly simulate in the mind. The formal elements that I’m used to working with – line, shape, tone, form etc. – are much easier to picture and calculate.

Lastly, I have come to realise that creating strong links between the pieces of a collection is the key to their success, and to value quality over quantity when making my pieces, so that the final outcomes are able to fulfil my original concept to a good level.

This project has been a learning curve for working with combinations of materials, particularly the three I chose to realise my final outcomes, and I have gained many skills to take forwards into my degree course, which was what I wanted out of the project. Overall, very pleased with how it went, and with how my final pieces were able to convey my original concept accurately, despite being totally different to what I originally imagined.