Furniture manufacturers benefit from London Met expertise

Furniture manufacturers, Nomique, are collaborating with students of London Met's MA in design research for disability to gain creative insight and specialised expertise as they develop a new multi-functional task chair.

For over 20 years Nomique's founders have been involved in office seating, but although fluent in the mechanics of task chairs, they sought to approach the development of their new chair from a completely different perspective.

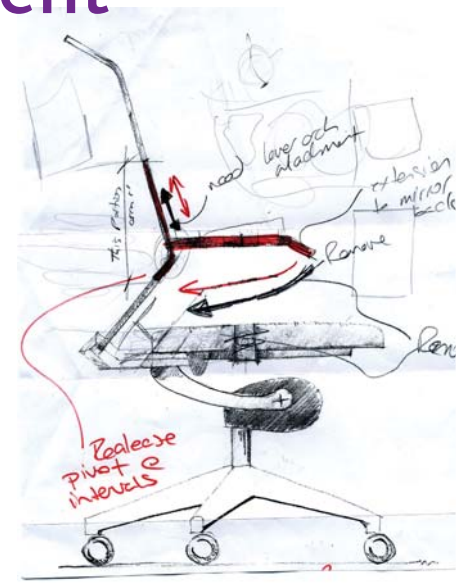
John Coleman, the designer of the new chair for Nomique, made contact with Smadar Samson, course leader for MA design research for disability, as he researched new approaches to existing office seating restrictions.

The project was placed in the hands of a unique cohort of MA students with expertise both in product design and in physiotherapy and occupational therapy. They examined Nomique's design and identified areas for further research and development, such as lumber support, control mechanisms, armrest, footrest, seat pan, and instruction interface.

Nomique's managing director, John Ravenhall, commented: " We were astounded by the depth, accuracy and level of professionalism with which the research was put forward... We were very excited by the high level of innovation and creativity shown to solve each ergonomic problem, but probably more importantly the majority of the ideas clearly enhanced the chairs sales appeal and added real value to the product."

The new chair will be launched at the forthcoming Design Prima exhibition in London.

The success of the project is summed up by Smadar Samson: "Both London Met and Nomique have learnt a great deal from this close collaboration, the students in gaining real exposure to serious business practices



balanced by design aesthetics; and Nomique in understanding how healthcare professionals and designers from outside their industry can benefit such a challenging project."

For information about the course, please visit:
www.londonmet.ac.uk/pgprospectus/courses/design-research-for-disability.cfm
or email s.samson@londonmet.ac.uk

RESEARCH NEWS

Health research initiatives

Professor Michael A. Crawford, director of the Institute of Brain Chemistry and Human Nutrition at London Met, has recently been involved in several science forums speaking about studies he carried out more than thirty years ago, as well as some of his more recent research initiatives.

Back in 1972, Michael Crawford and his colleague Andrew Sinclair were the first to provide pioneering evidence of the effect of omega 3 fatty acids in the growth, function and evolution of the brain. Today, this issue is at the forefront of the debate around nutritional health, which Professor Crawford describes as "all the rage with a lot of hype and misinformation."

In light of the renewed interest in this area, Professor Crawford was asked to share his findings about the risks and benefits of eating seafood during National Science Week and at a meeting held by the American Association for the Advancement of Science in March.

In 1972, Professor Crawford predicted that "unless something was done about the rape of the food system with regard to dietary fats, brain disorders would assume the position as number one killer by the end of the twentieth century."

His forecast was sourced from evidence that suggested dietary fats were a primary cause of arterial disease and consequent heart disease. Since the health of the brain depends on good blood flow, Professor Crawford concluded that the brain would undoubtedly be the next in line.

Just over thirty years later, this is now the case. As Crawford states, "prediction and test of prediction is what science is about." His case is further supported by official figures published in the *European Journal of Neurology* in June 2005, which reveal that brain disorders account for 25 per cent of the total EU health budget.

Professor Crawford's more recent research has focused on the influence of distorted modern diets on foetal development, with specific consideration of the east-end demographic. Alongside this, a study into disorders associated with pregnancy and other adverse developmental outcomes which affect brain development is also being conducted.

A study conveying the relationship between malnutrition and diabetes in pregnancy has led to a new grant from the EU. This will be used to facilitate additional research into malnutrition and its role in diabetes, obesity and hypertension in the early stages of life.

For more information, email Professor Michael A. Crawford at m.crawford@londonmet.ac.uk