DESIGN FUTURES ART-DRIVEN (DFA) METHOD
Orientation guidelines for educators

Adopting the Design Futures Art-driven (DFA) Method
Developed within the MUSAE project

Purpose of This Guide

This orientation guide supports educators and facilitators, who wish to apply the **Design Futures Art-driven (DFA) Method** in their teaching or collaborative activities. It provides a clear overview of the available resources and how to integrate them into your design-led futures learning paths.

The DFA Method has been developed as part of the EU-funded **MUSAE project** and is rooted in speculative design, artistic inquiry, and futures thinking, especially as applied to **technological innovation for social and planetary wellbeing**. These guidelines will help you explore the methodology and associated tools through three core resources.

1. DFA METHOD OVERVIEW

🖥️ Access the DFA Method online

What You'll Find

The official web page presents:

- The **4 phases** of the method
  Horizon Scanning and **Visioning** which lead to the development of the future scenario,
  and **Ideating** and **Prototyping** which lead to a future-driven prototype
- Each phase includes goals, detailed activities, guiding questions, and suggested tools.
- The different activities
  Workshop activities – among various stakeholders
  Individual activities – individually research and creative exploration
  Assessment meetings – Regular evaluations to refine intermediate and final outputs

How to use it in Education

- Introduce each phase in dedicated sessions or workshops.
- Assign students to work through the method in teams using real-world challenges or future themes.
- Encourage cross-disciplinary collaboration and critical thinking throughout the process.
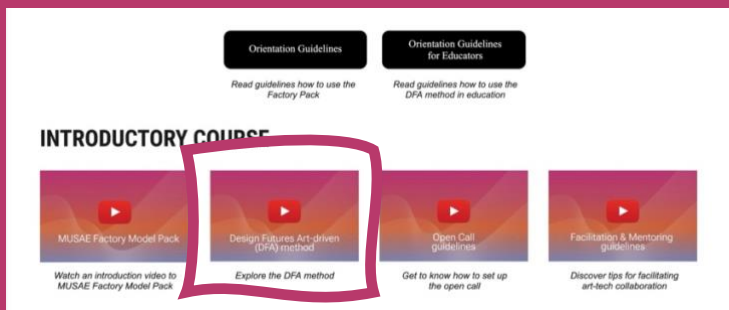
2. DFA Method Video Lesson

💻 Watch the DFA Video Lesson

What You'll Find

A narrated video introducing (highlighted in the figure):

- The **theoretical and practical foundations** of the method.
- How art-driven inquiry can be used to inspire **long-term, radical innovation**.
- The connection between design futures, technology innovation, and desirability.

How to Use It in Education

- > Use the video as an **introductory lecture** in class or as preparatory material before workshops.
- > Invite discussion: "What differentiates the DFA method from other design or foresight approaches?"
- > Ask students to reflect on their own perception of the future before and after the video.

3. DFA in Practice – The Factory Model Pack

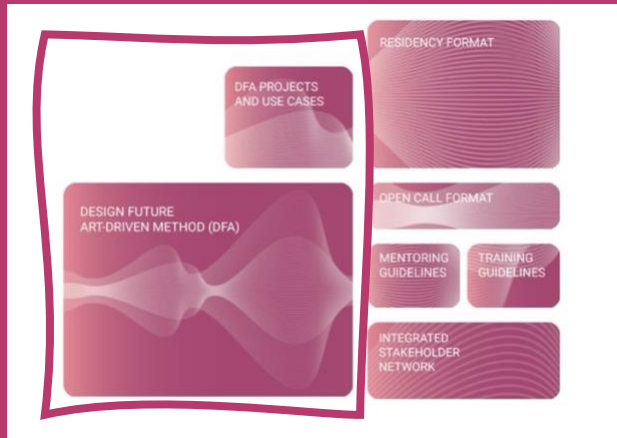🖥️ Access the Factory Model Pack

What You'll Find

A downloadable set of materials (figure below) intended for use in the **Design Futures course**, including:

- **DFA process and activities** description, templates, workshop guidelines, and documentation examples **in the DFA platform and collaboration board in the Miroverse**. Practical templates are available for download.
- **Case studies** of how DFA was applied with SMEs and designers/artists.
- Roles of different participants during the process (e.g. artists, designers, SMEs, facilitators).
- Evidence of how **scenario-driven innovation** can be fostered through the process.

How to Use It in Education

- > Use the DFA projects and use cases as models and inspiration for student projects.
- > Use the "What if" questions as prompts for group discussions or personal reflection.
- > Apply or adapt workshop templates directly in class settings.
- > Encourage students to critically analyse the outcomes and suggest alternative futures.

Tips for Facilitating the DFA Method

1. **Embrace ambiguity** – Futures work benefits from openness, not quick answers.
2. **Encourage bold thinking** – Push students to imagine radical, even uncomfortable futures.
3. **Involve diverse perspectives** – Include voices of different stakeholders and other species through the AI prompts provided in the DFA platform.
4. **Focus on experience and storytelling** – Use prototypes and narratives to make future visions tangible.
5. **Link to real-world change** – Invite students to propose transformation pathways for today, inspired by tomorrow.

Suggested Learning Path (for a 5-week or 5-session course/workshop)

Week	Topic	Materials	Activities
1	Introduction to DFA	Video Lesson	Group discussion + Futures Compass creation
2	*Horizon Scanning*	DFA Website	Trends and signals research, Domain building
3	*Visioning*	DFA Website + DFA use cases	What If cards, Futures exploration workshop
4	*Ideating*	DFA Website + DFA use cases	Future scenario development, building scenario elements and artefacts
5	*Prototyping*	DFA Website + Prototyping tools	Concept prototyping and storytelling

Questions or Feedback?

If you're implementing the DFA method and would like to share your experience, or need help tailoring the tools for your context, don't hesitate to reach out to the IDEActivity Center musae-design@polimi.it or the MUSAE community.