

Arts Faculty Assembly, 4 March 2021

The Arts Faculty Assembly had a special focus on Education this term. The Faculty was joined by seventeen members of the Education Executive: Jo Angouri, Christopher Bisping, Paul Blagburn, Andy Clark, Megan Clarke, Will Curtis, Shingai Dzumbira, Katharine Gray, Jonny Heron, Chris Hughes, Laura McGowan, Maureen McLaughlin, Colin Sparrow, Pat Tissington, Amber Thomas, Chris Twine and Roberta Wooldridge-Smith. The Assembly acted as a showcase for some innovative modules and there were some small group discussion on a variety of important topics (all summarised later in this Newsletter). However, the Assembly began congratulating a prize winner: Dr Lydia Plath from History. The same day it was announced that Professor Michael Scott of Classic and Ancient History had also won an award.

Prize Winners



Lydia won the inaugural [Inclusive Curriculum Competition](#) from the professional association, Historians of the Twentieth-Century US. The aim of the competition was to encourage further debate about curricula that draw students into an encounter with new topics and themes, that expose students to a variety of critical perspectives upon those topics and themes, that seek to flatten hierarchies and model an ethos of mutual intellectual respect within the classroom.

Lydia spoke at the Assembly of her 15 CATS module, [America in Black and White? Contemporary US Race and Racism in Historical Context](#). She noted that the module 'is deliberately designed with anti-racism at its heart, and it has been consistently popular with students, and especially students of colour, for that reason. In this module, students are not only included and respected: they are empowered.'



Michael, who is co-director of [Warwick Institute of Engagement](#), has won the [Classical Association prize](#) which is an annual award for the individual who has done the most to raise the profile of Classics in the public eye. It is effectively the biggest UK prize for public engagement in Classics. Michael works widely with schools as well as writing books for a wider audience. He has a decade of experience presenting TV programmes for the BBC and ITV. He works with [Warwick Classics Network](#) and is a Trustee of [Classics for All](#), a charity that supports state schools across the UK to introduce or develop the teaching of classical subjects. Michael's module, [From Confucius to Constantine: Ancient Global History](#) allows students to produce a digital assessment based on the new ancient global history portal [Oiko.world](#).

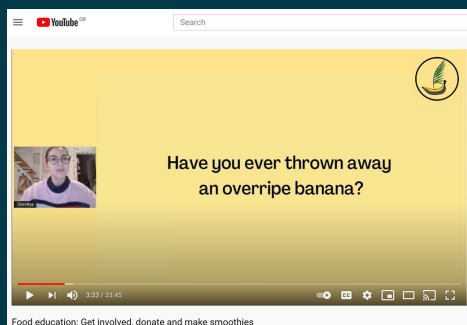
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Spotlight on Innovative Modules

Public Engagement: Connecting Communities to Research

Kate Astbury and Naomi Kay highlighted the work they have been doing on this 12/15 CATS IATL [module](#). The module gives both a theoretical and practical introduction to engagement. Students design, plan and deliver their own public engagement activity exploring subjects like evaluation, digital engagement, effective story-telling and place making. The module is assessed by a series of blogs, a short video, and students took part in a final live event online.



Remaking Shakespeare

Emma Mason, on behalf of Stephen Purcell and Ursula Clayton discussed this exciting [module](#) offered by English and Comparative Literary Studies. This module is usually taught in an "open-space" style, combining close textual analysis and archival work with discussion and "on your feet" practical exploration. The assessment includes an innovative 'creative project' which in the past has included computer games, sculptures, fine art, set design and performance.



Faculty Assembly Small Group Discussions

The second half of the assembly was devoted to small group discussion on eight topics: assessment, digital pedagogies, international mobility, inclusive teaching, student engagement, teaching public engagement, transition and managing workload. Each group was chaired by a member of the faculty and had a mix of faculty staff and members of the Education Executive. The chairs then fed back to the whole Assembly a summary of their discussions. These summaries may be found on the next pages of the newsletter.



ARTS FACULTY EDUCATION COMMITTEE TEAM 2020-2021

Chair: Sarah Richardson

Deputy Chairs: Jenny Burns and Tim White

Secretary: Alison Greenhalgh

Assistant Secretary: Helen Hotten

For Arts Education Committee

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For FYBOE

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KEY DATES FOR 2020-21

5 May 2021, 1200-1400 Arts Faculty Education Committee

29 September 2021, 1000-1200 First Year Board of Examiners for the Faculty of Arts (Please note there will be no summer meeting of FYBOE, instead exam boards will take place in Departments)

Faculty Assembly Small Group Sessions

Assessment (Chair: David Fearn)

Q1. Assessment Load

Discussion: Diversification is great, and is a prominent feature of faculty pedagogies right now - it was noted that the faculty had moved away from the sense of a fixed model of 50:50 coursework/exam some time ago. But are the university structures that are currently in place a hindrance / restriction?

Students felt that pressure/anxiety was often caused by the close linkage between submission deadlines and specific assessment points; and Andy Clark from EdExec observed that assessment credits could be spread out more evenly across the year (knowledge of what works in other faculties might help us here to some extent).

There is increasing doubt from some in faculty about the pedagogical nature of exam assessment (especially for essay-writing), alongside recognition that for some disciplines/areas, especially language-related, robust assessment via exams would very much need to continue. Very interesting to hear that while students might not feel that they are being over-assessed, the pressure of specific credit-bearing assessment points was clearly perceived as a factor.

Q2. Pedagogical Diversity

Discussion: It was noted that, for pedagogical diversity to work effectively, students will need very clear framing, specific assessment criteria, and feedback of good quality to help them understand and cope with the rationale. Shared best-practice at faculty-level, via shared forms of information made easily accessible, was a desideratum. It is impossible to 'sand-box' module diversity including assessment diversity in advance of delivery.

Q3. Strategy

Discussion: it was observed that in similar institutions elsewhere (e.g. Exeter, Manchester) a semester system appears to work better for 15 CAT modules. Would a semester system enable a better spread of assessment across the year? It was raised by EdExec that if we decrease reliance on exams then we can make better use of term 3 for different types of assessment activity. While this was recognized, the clear need for coherent understanding of arts staff research time was also very much required, esp. given how far behind many of us feel on this in the current context where working from home without proper access to facilities/libraries is not in any way sustainable.

EdExec observed that there are 5 central exam periods in the Warwick year at present. But the shape of current faculty teaching within terms means that only one of these (summer) is at present feasible.

A semester system will not work for teaching & research staff in Arts if it has the practical impact of reducing rather than enhancing research opportunities/time. There is also the need to have teaching pedagogies that are informed by staff research interests/expertise, and do not exist simply because students have wanted something new or that the institution feels that change is good; this is not what inclusive education is about.

The need would be to build in flexibility so that departments/schools could each decide what would work best for them, without further heavy investments of time in administration, another serious challenge here (clear that many colleagues have had virtually no research time since start of Covid19, and are crying out for help!).

Clear need in all of this for university logistics to be driven by staff research-led teaching pedagogy (in all its diversity), and not vice versa. So an excellent opportunity to work together between Arts faculty and EdExec for mutual understanding and to move forward, for the benefit of academic staff and their students.

Inclusive Teaching (Chair: Damien Homer)

The discussion in our session considered the conditions that needed to be in place to build and sustain an accessible and inclusive curriculum. Colleagues shared their views on a number of issues related to this theme, including: regular curriculum reviews to ensure there is different perspectives and diversity; ensuring students were part of the process of evaluating modules, not just through questionnaires; providing feedback loops to all interested parties to ensure there are tangible outcomes; and supporting staff and students to feel confident in sharing their views. We also discussed student-led module creation, where staff and students co-create learning together, it was also considered that perhaps smaller departments are able to be more responsive to student feedback.

Faculty Assembly Small Group Sessions

Public Engagement (Chair: Michael Scott)

Discussion covered the following topics:

- An acknowledgement of a vast amount of diversification of assessment had taken place in the Faculty, with many of the new assessment methods having potential public audiences.
- A need identified to create database of the public engagement elements of modules on the books across Departments, to allow staff to learn from one another and share experiences.
- Departments seem to feel that providing robust criteria for alternative assessment no longer a difficulty/impediment
- Difficulty is more felt in connecting these assessment pieces/ wider potential public facing work streams in modules, with a public audience. This was felt to be an excellent time to address this given recent appointment of FoA curator for new Arts building, as well as appointment of Digital DSEP.
- Potential for Faculty to curate a digital space for all Departments to use that connects students' work with a set of different publics/ could be marketed as a 'resource' for schools etc. In this space, student work could be exhibited and responded to by public (as part of PE dialogue), and thus public engagement aspects of the work (e.g. thinking about register/ audience/ empathy with their current knowledge/ interest, as well as the skills to successfully convey the argument) could be highlighted and more deeply engrained in module teaching and assessment. Equally would allow students to showcase their work to employers (as not hidden behind Moodle walls etc requiring a Warwick log in). This digital space could then also interact with other Arts/ Culture parts/ spaces of the University - including IATL, WAC. It could also provide a stepping stone for students who would then grow in confidence to exhibit their public facing/engaging work at a planned WIE/ IATL 'ICUR-style' Public Engagement conference in Welcome Week (there was also some enthusiasm for an FoA UG Research Festival).
- Such a FoA Digital Public Space would probably require students to respond to marking comments on a piece of work to address any critical issues before a Department would be happy for that work to be made public (and thus be a reflection on the Department).

Digital Pedagogies (Chair: Mark Storey)

Our group was asked to consider what we'd learned about digital and online pedagogies during the last year, and what we wanted to take forward into next year and beyond. A few key themes emerged:

- The last year has accelerated a move to digital pedagogies and upskilled many colleagues in digital tools, and this can be grasped positively by the Faculty as a chance to augment our teaching and engage our students with the opportunities of digital humanities.
- We are still understanding the distinction between digital tools (ie. software and online platforms) and digital pedagogies and assessment. Simply piling up more tools doesn't necessarily improve teaching, so as we go into next year and beyond it will be important to think at module and programme level about which tools we want to embed more deeply and invest in long term, as well as how we keep hold of the advantages of some asynchronous elements while recognising the value of the on-campus experience. They need to exist together, and they need resources.
- The language we and the wider institution use to explain digital and blended learning is important: for many, blended learning was already a key part of their work -- the use of digital and online tools within classroom-based teaching. Online teaching is 'face to face', and we unhelpfully undermine the work and value of online teaching when we suggest it is a diminished version of the 'real thing'. As a Faculty and especially as an institution we need to be better at advocating the legitimacy of online or 'blended' teaching and the positive -- and as yet unrecognised -- possibilities it enables.

Faculty Assembly Small Group Sessions

Managing Workload (Chair: Penny Roberts)

The impact of moving more activities online. While acknowledging that the move of much teaching online this year provided opportunities for thinking about the provision of more blended learning in the future, concerns were raised about the increased workloads that had resulted due to greater preparation and assessment, as well as health and safety issues due to long hours spent on screens.

The proliferation of administrative processes. There was discussion of the need for better co-ordination between central services and the departments to mitigate the impact of the introduction of new processes and systems on the workload of professional services staff in particular. Concerns were raised about the proliferation of online administration for academics often distracting from the human interaction which is at the core of teaching and learning. The systems need to enable a better student (and staff) experience.

Impact of a standardised workload model. It was agreed that there would be benefits to a more standardised model especially across the Faculty while allowing for sufficient flexibility and discipline-specific variation where required. A move to semesterisation ought to be considered.

Student Engagement (Chairs: David Lees and Gavin Schwartz-Leeper)

We were joined by a range of colleagues from the Faculty, one of the Arts Faculty Student Reps, and two colleagues from the Education Executive (Roberta Wooldridge-Smith and Laura McGowan) to discuss student engagement. We began the discussion by discussing our shared experiences of student engagement in the current academic year. Colleagues raised the issue of engaging students in activities beyond the classroom and beyond academic matters. We discussed the difficulties of replacing the traditional after-seminar or after-lecture chat and we shared successful efforts at building communities in departments through extra-curricular activities such as film screenings. Colleagues discussed the ways in which this extra engagement of students (beyond the 'typical' engagement of students in the classroom) was both rewarding and exhausting, given academic workload during the present year. We discussed student experiences of this trend and the efforts of Student Opportunity to develop ways of supporting students through, for example, skills sessions, where teachers have built in the chance to engage students in a friendly, social discussion before and after sessions. We also discussed the way in which the online space has raised difficulties for first-year students and the necessarily more transient PGT community in the Faculty and colleagues shared ways of engaging these students. We also looked ahead to term 3 and the opportunity to use face-to-face discussions as a way of boosting departmental communities and engaging students across all levels of study.

Transition (Chair: Lydia Plath)

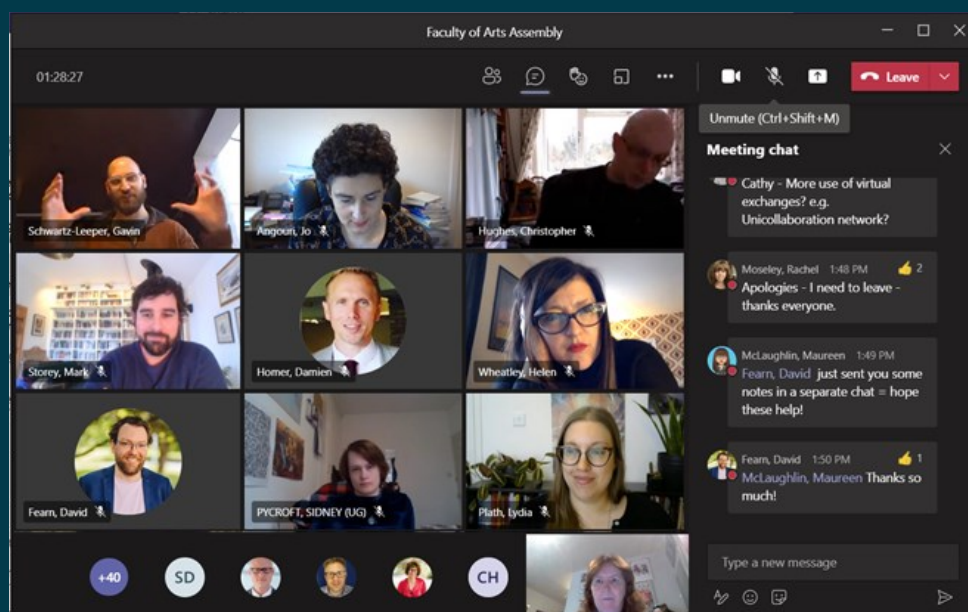
We discussed a range of issues relating to welcome and transition, but all with a broader view about how transition is (at least) a year long endeavour, and needs to be linked into our student support more broadly. We discussed particular concerns about incoming UG students next year, who will have missed substantial amounts of schooling and may therefore have increased needs for wellbeing support around feelings of isolation. We felt that maintaining some of the mitigation measures from this year will likely be necessary. A key issue was raised about how to engage students in social learning related to their studies, and the good practice in History and English of structured "walks" were highlighted. We noted that opportunities for students to work together in groups (e.g. for assessment) would help to build community. Other good practice that we discussed from SMLC was that smaller group seminars worked well to increase engagement in socially-distanced classrooms, which may be a lesson for us next year if social distancing is likely to still be a necessity. We hope that the spaces in the new Arts Building will provide more capacity for this kind of small group, social learning activities, at least once social distancing is no longer required. Finally, one of the key pieces of feedback about online learning this year from students has been about a lack of structure due to the nature of asynchronous activities (some good practice from Psychology in providing "suggested" times to watch an asynchronous lecture), and so that might be something to focus on more for next year. Finally we noted that we were focusing predominately on UG students, but that these issues will also be important for PG as well.

Faculty Assembly Small Group Sessions

International Mobility (Chair: Cathy Hampton)

We inevitably touched on Brexit, where our brief discussion centred on the ending of the Erasmus programme. Its impact is felt not only in the ending of some long-running partnerships and the complications of future visa arrangements, but in the loss of the multilingual classroom experience that the presence of incoming Erasmus students contributed to (both at UG and PG level). This loss is felt at the level of language learning and teaching (particularly in terms of preparing students not specialising in languages for short-stay and research trips abroad). Eutopia alliances will help mitigate this in the medium to longer term.

We noted that whilst the new Turing Scheme will allow us to bid for funds for outgoing students, it will not fund incoming students. We were also concerned that Turing might alter the direction of travel away from Europe and multilingualism, and towards US / Canadian / Australian and other residencies where the lingua franca is English. We wanted to stress the importance of linking internationalisation at Warwick firmly with a multilingual mindset and actively to promote this. We noted that a number of staff in the Faculty are multilingual, and we would like to find out more about staff with language skills (probably via a Faculty survey). Possibilities for celebrating and enhancing our 'multilingual mindset' in the future might include running some cross-Faculty foreign language events (reading / discussion groups; lectures). Certainly, it can only be to the good to find out more about what our collective linguistic and transcultural aims are. We are intending to meet again as a group, and if you would like to join us, please let me know at c.m.hampton@warwick.ac.uk



FACULTY EDUCATION COMMITTEE NEWSLETTER

The Faculty Education Committee Newsletter will be published twice a term. As well as news from the Education Committee the Newsletter will share best practice; celebrate our students and alumni; and focus on key areas of educational strategy. If you would like to have an item

CONGRATULATIONS TO FACULTY OF ARTS STUDENTS SUCCESSFUL IN THE SU ELECTIONS

A number of Arts Faculty Students were successful in the spring elections for the Students' Union.

Full Time Officers

- Jacob Jefferson (History) - Democracy and Development Officer
- Charlton Sayer (History/Politics) - Welfare and Campaigns Officer

Part Time Officers

- Magiesha Maheswaran (English) - Ethnic Minorities Officer
- Noga Levy-Rapoport (History/Politics) - LGBTUA+ Officer
- Naomi Carter (GSD) - Women's Officer
- Hannah Micuta (Life Sciences/GSD) - Environment and Ethics Officer

Arts Faculty Representatives

- Jake Newbury (History)
- Sidney Pycroft (History/Politics)
- Jack Sperry (History/Politics)