

From the Annual Conference for the Development of Teaching and Learning in History

Colin Brooks began this session by reflecting on the perils of multiplicity of choice e.g. Irish Studies; Latin - American Studies etc., and how these choices keep expanding, becoming a threat to coherence.

The effect on history is the different expectations and conventions across disciplines e.g. American Studies students see themselves primarily interested in literature and may 'borrow in' a lecturer from History instead of having their own. Colin feels that in such courses, the first year should be more discipline based and broaden out later instead of the other way round.

Richard Hawkins then gave a PowerPoint presentation on a project on Area Studies he has conducted, showing how some courses are on the decline. His university has a lot of Widening Participation students, who may not have studied history before, and have a lack of knowledge of chronology. He warned of the dangers of offering courses such as War Studies that often attract the wrong people. They have tried combining Levels 1 and 2 modules to use staff more efficiently and to give the students a sense of group identity. Richard recently did a survey on an Area Studies programme, The Holocaust and the Age of Total War, and he found that only about one third had a history qualification. This was, he felt, reflected in the way students wanted lecturers to be neutral in their teaching.