

FINAL REPORT: HISTORY IN PRACTICE PROJECT

SUMMARY

The HISTORY IN PRACTICE PROJECT (HIPP) was an experimental project on student-community engagement in curriculum design. The main goal was to include student engagement in the development of the module to design a module that attended to the needs of the learner, while the involvement of community-facing organizations was to ensure that the module worked well for these and similar organizations.

Originally intended for six students to participate; however, in the end only five did. They ranged from second to final year students, but none of them were in their first year of study. The five students attended all workshops and participated in all activities.

In the original plan, five representatives from five different community organizations agreed to participate:

- Rugby Art Gallery and Museum
- Warwick Country Records Office
- Modern Records Centre, University of Warwick
- Compton Verney Art Gallery and Park
- Culture Coventry

However, in the end, only four of the five organizations were represented—Compton Verney Art Gallery and Park were not able to attend any of the workshops.

There were two 2.5 hour workshops, but instead of a third workshop, the project lead, Meleisa Ono-George, met with each community organization individually between in March 2018. The first workshop was held on 1 November 2017 and the second workshop on 24 January 2018, both at the Modern Records Centre. Five second and final year undergraduate history students participated in both workshops; however, only four out of five representatives from the heritage organizations participated. One organization dropped out without clear explanation; however, this has had little impact on the way the project has gone. In addition to the lead academic, Meleisa Ono-George, the workshops also included another academic from the Department of History, Mark Knights; as well as a community development manager, Mark Hinton, and the project administrator, Elsa Thaiparambil Oommen.

In the first workshop, Meleisa gave an overview of the Department, the module proposal process at Warwick, and other things that were important to provide context for a new module. Meleisa also presented on the QAA (Quality Assurance Agency for HE) subject benchmark and other criteria required by the university for new modules, for instance, the

number of hours and academic terms. Participants spent quite a bit of time thinking through the aims of an ideal module and challenges working with university and community may present. Students and community representatives also spent some time working out the learning outcomes for the module

In the second workshop, participants looked at the learning outcomes again, but this time in relation to possible assessments. They also looked at the syllabus, and possibilities for internships. Up until this workshop, the group had been discussing designing a final year undergraduate module. However, the assessment criteria for final year modules in the Department of History is fixed and rather restrictive. Thus, following some discussion, the group decided that instead of designing a final year module, which was the original plan, a second-year module would allow for a more diverse assessment and a much more interesting module. Students input also revealed that a second-year module that involved a internship would be more suited to the student lifecycle in the second opposed to the final year of study.

Following the second workshop, Meleisa solicited feedback from participants using an online survey. The feedback was universally positive:

“The workshops were very productive and interesting. I especially found it interesting to interact with museum curators which was something different and new.”

“General discussions with input from the students was valuable. Module assessment was interesting and could present some difficulties depending on how 'creative' students want to be.”

“I found it an interesting workshop that enabled all different viewpoints to be addressed as part of the project proposal. As both the participants who would be taking part in this project and contributors who would be enabling access to the participants were able to provide their viewpoints I felt that this gave the future project time to iron out any issues that may not have been thought off.”

Following the second workshop, Meleisa used the notes from the first and second workshop to draft a MA1 form to propose a new module. The strikes in March and April 2018 prevented a third workshop and instead, Meleisa, went out to the different organizations and had a discussion with them about the draft module and internships. Once all interviews were completed, the MA1 form was submitted to the Department of History and approved. All participants were asked to submit feedback on the consultation process.

In addition to the cancellation of the third workshop, the module did not run in October 2018, as originally planned because the project lead, Meleisa Ono-George, went on maternity leave. Instead of running the full module, trial placements were run at the community partners and managed by Meleisa's maternity cover, Dr Carys Howells. The students involved in the trial internships were unconnected with any module, but worked with three of the partner organizations. The feedback from both students and organizations has been exceptional. For instance, one student wrote that:

“This internship in the Warwickshire County Record Office has been, in every level, even more rewarding than I initially imagined...The internship allowed me to acquire new knowledge, both practical and theoretical....my time in the Warwickshire County Record Office, although brief, has helped me a lot from a professional point of view, because I am sure that it will be a plus in my history studies and it will make a difference in my CV.

The success of these internships has provided further evidence that placements as part of HIPP module is likely to be successful. The trial internships have also encouraged the Department of History to look at the introduction of a one-term internships programme for History students more generally.

OUTCOMES AND DISSEMINATION

University of Warwick Community

The HIPP project was presented at the Education Conference on 15 May 2018 at the University of Warwick. The feedback was very positive. The discussion in the session raised questions about how student-community engagement in curriculum design can be shared as a practice to other teaching staff at the university, something to consider going forward.

Coventry Community Consultation and Networking

On the 22 June 2018, Meleisa worked with Mark Knights to organize an event, entitled The Coventry History Forum, held at the Coventry Transportation Museum in the centre of the city. This event was by invitation only and included representatives from a wide range of history-focused and heritage groups, organizations and societies based in Warwickshire, as well as a few students and academics. The event was set up to build relationships with community partners on the possibility of offering internships as part of the new History in Practice module, as well as an opportunity to consult with community partners on the possibility of Warwick University establishing a Centre for Public and Community-Engaged History. In the case of the latter focus, by consulting with community partners, this event drew upon best practice by involving community stakeholders from the onset in designing a hub that is hoped will become a collaborative and innovative community-university space.

Module

The primary outcome and sustainability of this project is the second-year module that has been produced, [History in Practice: Public History and Heritage](#). The module has retained the focus on public history and includes a significant component of student-community collaboration in the production of public history via 48-72-hour internship beginning in the second term. The module also includes five weeks in which students can determine the skills focus of the seminars, and four weeks where students can input on contemporary controversies or issues related to public production, representation, dissemination or use of history.

The module did not run in October 2018, as originally planned, as the module convener was on leave. At the time of writing this report, the module had been advertised as part of the

Department of History offering, open to one group (maximum of 16 students) for the 2019-2020 year. Module allocation has yet to be completed.

Internships/partnerships

Besides the module itself, one of the most valuable outcomes of this project has been the networks that have been forged. Meleisa has been in discussion with several different groups and organizations around potential placements, but even beyond HIPP individuals involved with the HIPP project have been able to build new partnerships with local history and heritage organization. This includes the development of a collaborative project, for which an application for funding has recently been submitted to the Arts Humanities and Research Funding Council.

Centre for Community and Public History

The work has also revealed an interest in the establishment of a Centre for Public and Community-Engaged History among academics from various departments at the University of Warwick and among local history-focused and community organizations. As part of the Coventry History Forum, held on the 22 June 2018, we received positive feedback and a clear desire for such a space. The Centre for Public and Community-Engaged History would bring together academics, students and local community members interested in the practice, production and dissemination of historical scholarship outside of academia and the university community. This includes the dissemination of academic research within local community, but also includes the co-design and co-production of research between academics, sponsored students and community partners. An IATL Strategic Funding bid may be sought on the next funding round to support the initial development of this centre.

CONCLUSION

Student engagement in HIPP helped in shaping a module that attends to the needs of the learner, while the involvement of community-facing organizations that produce public history in this project was integral to ensuring a module that will work well for these and similar organizations. HIPP was a successful project, but there were some deviation from the original timeline and plan. However, these deviations were minor and had minimal impact in the completion of the project. The impact of the deviations meant an underspend in the budget and a delay in the running of the module. Through student-community partnership, HIPP produced a module that is academically engaging, contributes to student personal development beyond the classroom, and supports the production of local history and heritage. It has met all the aims set out in the original proposal and except for some minor delays, such as one of the organizations dropping out and the university strikes, the project has otherwise gone as planned.