

IATL Pedagogic Intervention Grant, Dr Alison Cooley Students as Researchers at the British Museum

The IATL Pedagogic Intervention Grant transformed the usual experience of the first years embarking upon a trip to the British Museum towards the end of the core module, Roman Culture and Society. We usually hold an annual trip to the British Museum as part of the revision programme for the module, but being able to visit the Pompeii and Herculaneum exhibition, and then following this up with a poster competition really added extra value to the usual student experience. The high level of student engagement with the exhibition was shown by the large number of high quality posters produced by the students, and by the number of students who chose to answer an exam essay on the exhibition.

The students were well prepared for the trip. An extra briefing session of one hour was undertaken in the first week of the summer term by the module coordinator and staff from Library and Skills. The module coordinator worked with Library staff to produce a website for the project.

<http://www2.warwick.ac.uk/fac/arts/classics/students/modules/rcs/bmtrip/>

This gave the students advice on what to do at the exhibition and how to design their posters on their return. It also covered the question of copyright for images. Students were encouraged to work in pairs or threes to collaborate in producing their posters; this introduced a new element of teamwork into the module. Posters had to be produced within 10 days of the trip, and a postgraduate student who had taught on the module this year offered a drop-in session to trouble-shoot poster problems. The posters were then judged over two hours by a panel of module staff, library staff, and students from the 2nd and 3rd years, so that the results could be announced in the final lecture of the year in Week 4. 20 posters were submitted electronically, and were judged on big screens in the Learning Grid. The posters showed a real range of interests among the students (ranging from paintings and mosaics to statues and even a loaf of bread), and many of the posters demonstrated that the students had both reflected deeply on the exhibition and had also then consolidated this by research in the library afterwards. There was also a sense of fun in some of the posters, showing that the students had enjoyed the process – with the statue of Eumachia being depicted blasted out of Vesuvius in one case!

The two best posters were printed out and have been proudly displayed at the recent University Open Days. They have also been uploaded to the departmental website.

<http://www2.warwick.ac.uk/fac/arts/classics/research/undergrads/#BMposters>

Pedagogic objectives achieved

- Students continued to engage with what they'd seen at the BM after their return to campus
- Students had the opportunity for groupwork, developing collaborative skills

- It provided a stimulating way for students to revise for end-of-year exams by looking at original ancient artefacts
- Students developed new skills in presenting their research to a public audience in poster format

I should add to this report an acknowledgement of the fantastic support I have received from Library staff, especially Sian Prosser, Helen Ireland, and Karina. I received encouragement and advice all the way along the planning process, and had several hours of informal discussion with them – discussing how to make images available to the students, how to encourage the students to source their own images, how to give training in poster design, and how to carry out the judging in the Teaching Grid. We all worked together over the course of about 3 months to make this project work well. I strongly feel that this IATL grant produced a spirit of collegiality and collaboration among staff and students alike, a sense of anticipation and excitement in visiting the exhibition, and the development of individual research interests and skills among the students. I also learnt a lot about how to design a poster too!

Budget spent:

£700 Exhibition tickets

£64 Exhibition catalogue x4, as prizes for students

£46 Poster printing

£190 Coach subsidy

Total: £1000