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REFLECTIONS

Enhancing Flexibility in the Curriculum and Promoting Interdisciplinarity in Arts, Humanities and Social Sciences (AHSS)

By Professor David Phinnemore, Dean of Education, Faculty of Arts, Humanities and Social Sciences

Over the last three years colleagues in Arts, Humanities and Social Sciences (AHSS) have been engaged in discussions exploring how we might enhance flexibility and promote greater interdisciplinarity in the undergraduate curriculum. A range of initiatives have been launched and measures taken that create or will create opportunities for students, depending on their degree programme, to engage with a wider set of disciplinary perspectives and subjects as well as shape more their own studies.

The most significant development has been the launch of the interdisciplinary MLibArts programme with its combination over four years of core liberal arts modules, subject and thematic pathways, options, placement and compulsory study abroad and dissertation. As Philip McGowan discusses in this issue of Reflections (pp 4-5), the programme combines new and existing modules from disciplines across AHSS with the potential to bring in contributions from subjects outside the Faculty as well.

Central to the design of the MLibArts is student choice and the pursuit of a discipline- or theme-based pathway through the programme which is then recognized in the title of the degree on graduation, e.g. MLibArts (English). This option of different 'exit routes' from



a programme is a new development for Queen's and has been picked up elsewhere in the Faculty. So, as part of the Nuffield-funded Q-Step project to promote training in quantitative skills, colleagues have designed an undergraduate 'quantitative methods' pathway that students can take as part of their studies in sociology, criminology or social policy and graduate with 'with quantitative methods' in their degree title. A similar option should soon be available to students in politics.

The idea of creating optional exit routes from single honours programmes has also inspired discussions around the expansion of minor pathways. AHSS already has a range of major-minor degrees normally involving a language as the minor, although minors are also available in politics and creative writing and other subjects. Responding in part to student interest in having the option to take a minor as part of their degree studies, the reintroduction of a wider range of minor pathways is underway. The initial focus is on subject/discipline

minors, with students in due course being able from the end of Level 1 and up until the end of first semester in Level 2 to opt to complete their degree with a minor in a second subject or discipline.

The structure of single honours degrees in AHSS means that currently very few students have the option at Level 2 and 3 of taking modules other than those in their chosen degree subject. This is despite the fact that most single honours students take optional modules at Level 1 and often in subjects they have not previously had an opportunity to study. Anthropology, Philosophy, Sociology are obvious examples. With the introduction of minor pathways as exit routes from single honours degrees, opportunities will exist for students to carry on studying throughout degree subjects in which they have might have developed an interest at Level 1.

Beyond subject/discipline minors, plans are in place for the development of several 'thematic' minors that draw on teaching strengths across AHSS and beyond. Among the options under discussion are minors in Irish Studies – potentially drawing on language, literature, history, politics, anthropology, drama, sociology – and in sustainability with, again, contributions from across different Schools. Students will take a combination of modules from a range of disciplines. The fact that some of these may be in the subject of the single honours degree means that they may not need to opt definitively for the minor exit route until the end of level 2.

Just as there is interest among staff and students within AHSS in developing thematic minors, there is interest in offering more interdisciplinary modules as part of the undergraduate curriculum. Several such modules have been developed over the last three years. Crawford Gribben and Joe Webster discuss in this issue [pp. 8-9] their experience as well as students' experiences with the module *Apocalypse!': Intellectual Conversion at the End of the World*.

Other interdisciplinary modules, often drawing on teaching interests and expertise from several Schools, are in preparation. Recently the Faculty held an open competition for the development over a three-year period of some new interdisciplinary modules to be offered at Level 1 or Level 2. Three modules are being developed: *What is to be done? Sustainability, climate change and just energy transitions in the Anthropocene* (John Barry); *Reading the Modern City* (Alex Murray and Tom Hulme); and *Radical Musics: Understanding Sounds of Defiance across Disciplines* (Ioannis Tsioulakis). A further call for proposals will be issued later in the academic year. It is hoped that the initiative might be rolled out on a cross-University basis in due course.

The development and delivery of new interdisciplinary modules is an exciting endeavour. It clearly raises challenges as colleagues' experiences and various open AHSS discussions on interdisciplinary teaching and assessment have found. It also needs creative thinking around how programmes are structured and where interdisciplinary experiences can best

fit so that students can make best use of them.

A commitment to interdisciplinary teaching also requires a shared approach to how interdisciplinarity is understood. Here the approach in AHSS is non-prescriptive with 'interdisciplinary' being used as an umbrella term to encompass a range of teaching options. At one end, there is the exposure of students in a module to more than one disciplinary perspective on a particular issue; at the other end, there are approaches that seek to combine disciplinary approaches to establish new understanding.

Debates around the nature and purpose of interdisciplinarity will certainly inform the development of modules and the emergence of thematic minors. Important too in creating opportunities for students to engage with interdisciplinarity – broadly defined – is how programmes are structured. And here, over recent years small but important changes have been made to the structure of many of the single honours degree taught in AHSS.

This in turn has led to consideration of how students on Joint honours programmes might avail of opportunities to engage with interdisciplinary modules beyond the subjects of their degree. Discussions around minor pathways have also led to proposals for [re-]introducing certain joint degree combinations; and depending on how the thematic minors develop, the potential exists for offering them as one half of a joint degree.

Clearly, much is happening in AHSS in terms of enhancing flexibility in the undergraduate curriculum and promoting interdisciplinary teaching and study opportunities. Next steps should include discussion on how the ideas and initiatives being pursued might usefully be taken up elsewhere in the University. There is also scope for exploring how the flexibility being created in the curriculum, in programmes such as the MLibArts, though thematic minors and in interdisciplinary approaches to teaching can be used to create opportunities for staff and students in AHSS to engage more with other disciplines throughout the University.



Cabinets of curiosity: museums past and present

By Dr Elaine Farrell and Professor Chris Marsh, History, Anthropology, Philosophy and Politics

Taught for the first time in 2017/18, 'Cabinets of curiosity: museums past and present' considers the development of museums from the sixteenth to the twenty-first century. In this optional level 2 module, students explore both the history of museums in the British and Irish past and the presentation of history in museums today. They encounter seventeenth-century elite gardener John Tradescant junior, whose cabinets of curiosity formed the basis of Oxford's Ashmolean Museum after his death, a legal battle between his widow Hester and scholar Elias Ashmole, and then later Hester's death in suspicious circumstances. And they encounter contemporary museum professionals like Santa Cruz Museum of Art and History director Nina Simon, described by Smithsonian Magazine in 2010 as a 'museum visionary', who advocates for audience participation in museum and exhibition design so that visitors can leave something of themselves behind.

The module combines academic research on the history of museums and museology-focused classes with a hands-on, practical dimension. As part of the assessment, students work with a local museum to develop their own exhibition of historical objects. Working in pairs or small groups, students select objects from the museum stores, research the object's provenance and context, and write an accompanying label. This year, focusing on the theme of 'Work and play', students selected objects for display from the rich stores of the Ulster Folk and Transport Museum at Cultra. Each group applied

museology techniques learned across the lectures and seminars to educate, engage and excite the visitor through a single object. Students responded extremely well to the challenge; using objects such as a toy aeroplane, an ink pot, a Yardley perfume bottle, and a ginger beer bottle, they commented on broader themes such as childhood, education, leisure, and courtship in nineteenth and twentieth-century Ulster, and through their lively and informed labels encouraged visitor dialogue and reflection.

By providing a historical framework to the study of museums, students learn the important impact of individual

museum professionals and staff bodies, governments and councils, and visitors on individual museums and the wider sector. By providing a broad historical background, they can trace changes and developments across decades and even centuries, and assess how contemporary concerns have influenced and continue to impact practices and policies in museums. The module can act as an initial step towards a museum career or collaboration, but also allows students to reflect on the materiality of the world around them.

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An object handling session with 'Cabinets of curiosity' students and History curator Fiona Byrne at the Ulster Folk and Transport Museum, March 2018



'Cabinets of curiosity' students at the display launch of 'Work and play' at the Ulster Folk and Transport Museum, with tutors Elaine Farrell and Chris Marsh, 21 April 2018

Innovation Across and Within the Curriculum: the M Liberal Arts degree

By Dr Philip McGowan, Arts, English and Languages

The M Liberal Arts degree developed out of a number of conversations in the AHSS Faculty that had been circling similar or related issues for some time: one is the extent and diversity of degree choice for students; another, the amount of flexibility on our existing joint degree programmes; also, the absence of a degree at Queen's that allowed high-achieving students the opportunity to study three (or possibly more) subjects through their degree was an obvious gap in our provision; and the continual loss of NI A Level students with three As, who have not been interested in the traditional choices available to them here (e.g., Law, Medicine), to competitors elsewhere in Ireland or the UK was something we wanted to arrest. In answer to these issues, and keen to offer something different to students who want to make a difference in the world once they graduate, the M Liberal Arts degree evolved from an initial, theoretical notion into a fully realised programme that now stands alongside similar offerings at Bristol, Warwick, UCL and Leeds. In the autumn of 2018, 73 liberal arts or related programmes across the UK are now available, a trend that has responded to the movement of students into multi- and cross-disciplinary study over the last decade.

This September, Queen's welcomed its first cohort of M Liberal Arts degree students into AHSS. Two years of discussions and planning within the Faculty about degree flexibility, inter- and multi-disciplinary teaching, and curriculum enhancement has produced our M Liberal Arts degree, a four-year programme that rethinks our commitment to teaching excellence and student attainment. Around a central spine of Liberal Arts modules delivered in each year, students choose modules that form either a specific disciplinary pathway or a more thematic one based on their particular interests. So, while some students will graduate with an M Liberal Arts (Anthropology), M Liberal Arts (English) or M Liberal Arts (French) for example, others could graduate with thematic degrees such as M Liberal Arts (Sustainability), M Liberal Arts (American Studies), or M Liberal Arts (Irish Studies). Whichever method of building their own degree that students pursue, key to the approach is their freedom to choose modules from more than one single pathway (as with Single Honours programmes) or from two pathways (as with joint degrees in the Faculty). In addition, at Stage One and Stage 2, students select from a suite of interdisciplinary modules that

have been designed to capitalise on the diverse teaching and research strengths of colleagues across AHSS. This year, for instance, our new Stage One students have the option of modules such as 'A World on the Move: Historical and Anthropological Approaches to Globalisation,' 'Adventures in the History of Ideas,' and 'Philosophy and the Good Life' while, at Stage Two, the interdisciplinary offerings include 'Apocalypse! The End of the World,' 'Environmental Crimes and Justice,' and 'Humanities and Ageing.' These interdisciplinary modules are also available to students on our more traditional degree programmes as we



look to inculcate interdisciplinarity as a key principle of third-level education in our delivery of arts and humanities subjects here in Belfast.

With help from our colleagues in Careers, Employability and Skills – thanks Claire and Greta! – and our Faculty Development Officers, Aileen, Kathy and (the other) Claire, in Stage 2 students will take the non-credit-bearing Careers and Employability module specially tailored for the Liberal Arts programme. This prepares them in advance for their Stage 3 Placement module during which they will experience a workplace environment relevant to their pathway interests and future career ambitions. In the second semester of Stage 3, students undertake international study abroad at one of our institutional partners across the world. For those students following a Language pathway through the Liberal Arts degree they will, just like Single and Joint Honours Language students, spend a full year working and learning in the country of their chosen language. Upon their return into the final, fourth year of the programme, as well as benefitting from inclusion in the Graduate School's



Master Your Leadership development programme, the M Liberal Arts students have the option of studying Master's level modules and Stage Three modules they may have missed while studying away from Queen's; they also complete a dissertation in their disciplinary or thematic pathway.

The Liberal Arts core modules have been designed with three objectives in mind: to offer a distinctive Queen's and Belfast dimension to what a Liberal Arts degree can be; to put, front and centre, the importance and value of arts, humanities and social sciences subjects, not just in terms of our degree teaching but also the society we wish to create here; and to ensure that the core teaching is kept up-to-date and in tune with contemporary developments in cultural, political and social thought. With pluralism the central component of twenty-first-century life – and capitalising on the various experiences the students will have on their degree pathways, their work placements and their periods of international study – the final year core module, 'Incorrigibly Plural,' situates multiplicity at the heart of academic debate, social engagement and higher level university teaching. Taking its title from Louis MacNeice's poem 'Snow,' this module is structured around the multiple options provided by interdisciplinarity and investigates, in part, the role of universities and arts and humanities subjects in knowing, forming and reforming our world. This builds on the Stage Three core module 'Arts and Humanities in the Contemporary World' which engages students with the intrinsic value of the arts and the humanities mapped through the personal, cultural and economic benefits of creative theory and practice within society. As part of this module's work, practitioners from relevant arts sector institutions (e.g., the Ulster Hall, the Arts Council, the Ulster Museum) as well as broadcasters, artists, photographers and writers will contribute to the students' developing conceptualisations of the public roles of their disciplines.

With Northern Ireland as one backdrop for its deliberations, the Stage Two core module 'Uses of the Past' will



explore how we understand the past and how it continually influences present-day attitudes within society. Questions related to legacy issues and the aftermath of conflict have obvious, though not exclusive, resonance to our particular context here and students will engage with a range of disciplinary approaches in the development of, for instance, anthropological, historical, literary or philosophical modes of interpretation. And it all begins with our Stage One module 'Understanding Now' which analyses a particular contemporary issue from multiple disciplinary perspectives. This year the topic that the first Liberal Arts cohort has been examining is one that appears to have taken over the news agenda since the election of a certain politician across the pond: and that's Fake News. Starting with discussions of the mainstream media and its potential for manipulation and distortion of facts alongside an excerpt from Michiko Kakutani's 2018 book *The Death of Truth: Notes on Falsehood in the Age of Trump*, students have been, and will be, debating: lying, bullshit, and objectivity (with Joe Morrison, Philosophy); truth and storytelling in a post-truth era (with Evi Chatzipanagiotidou, Anthropology); memes, citizen politics and digital culture (with Jane Lugea, English Language); and mythic thinking, Brexit, Trump and climate change (with John Barry, Politics). Thanks to each of them for their interest in, and excellent contributions to, this new module that, as a blueprint for the remaining core modules, is structured around the principle and importance of inter- and multi-disciplinary teaching. The module will conclude with Sidney Lumet's Oscar-winning 1976 film *Network* in which a television network

fabricates and then becomes the news in a bid to improve its ratings. In line with its innovative content and delivery, the assessment for this module is divided between peer-assessed group presentations (uploaded to Canvas), week-to-week seminar contributions, and a short critical essay discussing one of the main themes examined on the module. By analysing a current issue through a variety of disciplinary lenses, the module offers students a double movement: an initial one that attends to the issue under discussion anthropologically, philosophically, linguistically and politically; and a second that provides students with a grounding in each of these disciplines and how they have emerged as particular branches of learning within the academy.

The programme, while still in its infancy, is already expanding its reach and its potential, bringing not just the degree subjects in AHSS into closer collaboration: colleagues in Archaeology, Geography, and Architecture have offered modules for inclusion on the programme with, it is hoped, more disciplines coming onboard in the near future. As a driver to enable Queen's to become One University, the M Liberal Arts programme offers both staff and students a vehicle for the integration of new and dynamic collaborations into our curricula.

If you want to know more or would like to contribute to the development of the M Liberal Arts here at Queen's, please do get in touch on philip.mcgowan@qub.ac.uk. You can also follow our progress on twitter [@QUBLiberalArts](https://twitter.com/QUBLiberalArts).

Queen's Accounting and KPMG Belfast - working together to embed IT and employability skills

By Dr Danielle McConville, Queen's Management School

This article illustrates how employer engagement has led to innovations, which are designed to embed specific IT and broader employability skills, on the BSc Accounting pathway.

Like many professions, accountancy is significantly impacted by technological developments in areas such as artificial intelligence, automation and data analysis. Consequently, through harnessing these new technologies and techniques, accountancy firms are changing the way they operate and the services offered to clients.

Thus, whilst ensuring that students on the BSc Accounting pathway continue to acquire a strong foundation in Accounting-related subjects, it is necessary to develop their knowledge and practical awareness of these emerging technologies and techniques. The Accounting Group in Queen's Management School has an active Employer Liaison Group and, through this forum, together with graduate feedback, a range of core graduate IT-related skills were identified.

KPMG, a major employer of Queen's Accounting graduates, offered to work with Queen's Accounting Group to develop and deliver a series of modules designed to enhance undergraduate Accounting students' IT and employability skills.

The partnership with KPMG Belfast, which hosts the Financial Modelling Centre of Excellence for KPMG Corporate Finance in Ireland, began in 2017/18, with the firm developing and delivering separate Microsoft Excel classes to Queen's Level 1 Accounting students alongside other accounting software sessions that form part of the Level 1 Accounting Information Systems module. This enables students to receive work-relevant training, learn via real-world examples and engage with a prospective employer early in their degree programme.

Financial models are widely used by all types of organisations to inform internal and external decision making and, building on the Level 1 Excel classes, KPMG developed and deliver a new (optional) Level 2 Financial Modelling module for Queen's Accounting students commencing in 2018/19.

Carolyn McCappin (KPMG Belfast), who delivers the weekly lab-based financial modelling sessions, worked closely with Danielle McConville (Queen's Accounting Group) to develop practice-orientated, innovative assessments that reinforce the module's learning outcomes. These include: (i) building a detailed financial model based upon real-world client data; (ii) preparing and presenting a professional-style report to a 'client'; and (iii) a 'flipped' group presentation which reviews and critiques an existing model against best practice.

"The skills taught in this module mirror those taught to graduate trainees in KPMG Corporate Finance. Not only are these key skills for those working in a corporate finance environment, they

are also invaluable in a wide range of practice and industry roles. In addition to testing Excel and modelling skills, the module assessments encourage students to consider the real-world application of financial models, including interpreting their results and presenting them to a client." (Carolyn McCappin, KPMG Belfast)

The Financial Modelling module is believed to be the first of its type on the island of Ireland, combining transferable IT skills with real-world examples in a key area of specialism for accountants. Student engagement is strong and the feedback very positive, with the module being described as 'interesting', 'relevant', 'challenging' and 'enjoyable'. Once the Level 1 Excel and Level 2 Financial Modelling activities have been embedded in the undergraduate Accounting pathway, there are plans to develop a Level 3 module.

"The collaboration with KPMG is an excellent example of how academia and business can work together in order to educate, inspire and prepare students for employment. These new modules expose students to problem solving and teamwork, together with requiring them to be flexible and adaptable – skills that are essential in all walks of life." (Ciaran Connolly, Queen's Accounting Group)

The development of such skills throughout the degree programme is crucial, especially as internships and short-term placements for Level 1 and Level 2 students are now a key element of the graduate recruitment process. Hence, the partnership with KPMG sits within a wider range of activities that seek to enhance the employability of Queen's Accounting students. Moreover, the IT skills attained through the activities referred to above have facilitated changes in other modules. For example, the (compulsory) Year 2 Management Accounting module now requires all computational tutorial work to be completed using Excel. Employer-led activities organised during the Development Weeks provide students with further opportunities to apply these skills in case study-based real-world scenarios.

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From Radio Plays to Podcasting

By David Grant, School of Arts, English and Languages (SAEL)

The School of Arts, English and Languages's new Radio Drama module (DRA2014) is an experiment in interdisciplinarity which draws together expertise from three areas of SAEL – Drama, Creative Writing and Sound Engineering. With the increasing popularity of podcasting, radio drama is enjoying a new surge of interest from writers, artists and audiences alike, and it is ever easier to make short radio plays available to a wide audience. One of the great advantages of the radio play in relation to undergraduate teaching is that it combines the development of narrative, performance and technical skills without the need for the resources demanded by live performance or film. It also provides an ideal bridge between the learning experiences of students in all the constituent disciplines.

The module has been co-designed by Jimmy McAleavey, the respected dramatist and lecturer in the Seamus Heaney Centre, and David Grant, a lecturer in drama with wide experience as a theatre director. Students will spend the first half of the semester learning about the theory and history of radio drama, looking in detail at celebrated case studies like Dylan Thomas' *Under Milk Wood* and Orson Welles' *The War of the Worlds*, while at the same time working collaboratively to write and develop their own short radio plays, which they will then produce, rehearse, perform and record in the specialist facilities available to us in SARC (the Sonic Arts Research Centre, pictured).

Since the module will run for the first time in the Spring of 2019, it is too early yet to know exactly how

responsibilities will be divided between students. The working assumption is that the four Creative Writing students enrolled in the module will take the lead on developing the script, while the other students (all Single Honours Drama students, Theatre & Film-making students or Joint Drama and English students) will direct and perform. But the intention is for each student to acquire an overview of all aspects and stages of production.

Radio drama provides a particularly rich site for imaginative discovery and it is often quipped that radio provides the best scenery, as it is conjured without practical constraints inside the listener's mind. But sophisticated developments in sound design have greatly enhanced the medium's capacity to provide "sound scenery" through music, acoustical and atmospheric effects. There is also great scope for the creation of bespoke practical sound effects using gravel trays, percussion and a myriad of other tailor-made technologies.

An unusual aspect of the interdisciplinary approach on which the module is grounded is the plan to integrate the actual recording and post-production process with a different module. In the pilot year, this will be linked to the Portfolio Module taken by Chris Corrigan's Sound Design students. But as the new Broadcast Production degree becomes more established, we will also be working with Declan Keeney to include technical aspects of the work in the assessment regime of relevant modules on that programme. One idea is for the Sound and Broadcast students to treat the Drama and Creative Writing students as clients, using a kind of work simulation model.

There is already a great sense of excitement among the first cohort enrolled for this new module about the opportunity it will allow for the creation of original work which can then be disseminated online to friends and relatives. For the drama students,



Through the Square Window: The new Radio Drama module will benefit from the specialist recording facilities available at SARC

it will introduce them to microphone technique which has wider applications, and also familiarise them with the need to scale down their level of performance in a way that is also required for film and television. For the Creative Writing students it will allow them to explore the distinctive possibilities of an unfamiliar form and equip them to submit work to radio drama producers such as RTE and the BBC. And for the Sound and Broadcast students it will provide a simulation of real-world experience, requiring them to adapt their existing practice to a new context. Watch (or should we say, listen to) this space...

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'Apocalypse!': Intellectual Conversion at the End of the World

By Professor Crawford Gribben and Dr Joe Webster, School of History, Anthropology, Philosophy and Politics

It's never too early in the academic year to be convinced that "the end is nigh" – and that is certainly the case for the 120 or so students who sign up for one of the largest interdisciplinary modules in the Faculty of AHSS. Now in its fourth year, "Apocalypse! *The History and Anthropology of the End of the World*" was set up by Joe Webster and Crawford Gribben, an anthropologist and a historian with research interests in ideas and movements that focus on the end of the world. Our module seeks to profile human obsessions with the *apocalypse* in all their glorious (and sometimes inglorious) diversity and detail. Across 12 weeks of teaching, students are confronted with an array of case studies, including the Crusades, radical puritans, Jewish Zionism, American evangelical 'rapture culture', Ulster Loyalism, Doomsday Preppers, Cargo Cults, the Y2K Bug, UFO worshipers, mass suicide cults, Islamist terror, radical environmentalism, and transhumanism, all of which resonate with the module's principal themes.

The module title may sound esoteric, but apocalyptic ideas and behaviours are widespread in politics and popular culture. From fears about catastrophic climate change, to the 'War on Terror,' to predictions of an Artificial Intelligence 'singularity' or an 'antibiotics apocalypse', the theme of human endings runs deep across the globe. Given the contemporary relevance of apocalypticism, it is perhaps unsurprising that this module attracts students from a wide range of disciplines from within and beyond AHSS, including not only History and Anthropology, but also English, Sociology, Philosophy, Politics, Modern Languages, Geography, and Archaeology. With this diversity in mind, the above case studies have been selected to reflect apocalypticism from antiquity to the present day, but with particular concentration in early modernity, and the late 20th-century.

Module readings range from the biblical books of Daniel and Revelation to *The Walking Dead* graphic novels. Of

course, students are also confronted with a range of scholarly sources, which include classic historical accounts of apocalypticism, such as the Millerite 'Great Disappointment' of 1844, as well as key social scientific theories such as 'cognitive dissonance', an idea which originated from a Social Psychology study of a 'failed' UFO doomsday cult. The module also caters for different learning styles, and incorporates visual materials, including photography and film, as well as oral presentations and debates, alongside text-based analysis. One of our most popular tutorials is based around a 'Problem Based Learning' task where students are shown a series of sacred texts from a range of apocalyptic movements (from White Nationalists to Fundamentalist Mormons), and are given 5 minutes with each text to speed learn all they can about the movement which published it. Students then select one of the movements to research in depth, forming the basis of a group tutorial presentation later in the semester.

Delivering this kind of weekly tutorial teaching to 120 students would be impossible without expert help from highly qualified Teaching Assistants. One of our veteran TAs is Hilary Foye, an Anthropology PhD graduate who conducts research on contemporary Northern Irish Pentecostalism. Reflecting on her experience working as an 'Apocalypse!', Hilary writes:

I have been involved in teaching 'Apocalypse!' for three years now, and my experience as a TA has been overwhelmingly positive – in regard to the efficient administrative management of the module, the respectful approach amongst staff, the broader relevance of its content and a high level of enthusiastic student engagement. Personally, I found the module material most enriching. Undoubtedly this was down to the clear connections between many of the readings and my own anthropological PhD research on Pentecostal eschatology. However, teaching this course also afforded me a welcome opportunity to engage with an

array of ground-breaking interdisciplinary sources and draw out contrasting, but complementary perspectives in stimulating student debate.



When I asked students from a diversity of disciplines why they had chosen to sign up, they were unanimous in their response. Yes, 'Apocalypse!' was fascinating in terms of its sensational subject matter – who isn't interested in the end of the world? However, even more striking was that, regardless of their disciplinary background, students identified potential in this module for shaping their personal worldview and wider perspectives on cutting edge socio-religious issues. A case in point – some of my students, in our discussions of widely stereotyped groups such as the Jehovah's Witnesses and Exclusive Brethren, came to recognise an ethnocentric attitude in themselves and resolved to adopt an anthropological mindset in personal future encounters with them. Would I recommend this module to TAs and students alike? Unequivocally. There is knowledge for knowledge's sake, then there is knowledge that makes a difference. In this case of 'Apocalypse!', the latter applies.

As Hilary notes, student engagement is exceptionally high; many students achieve brilliant results, and some have even gone as far as setting up a staff-student 'Apocalypse!' reading group after the module has finished. One particularly brilliant individual result was achieved by Ravi Munglani; his 'Apocalypse!' Long Essay on ISIS won the 2017 Irish Association for the Academic



Study of Religion Ires prize. Reflecting on his experience of taking ‘Apocalypse!’ Ravi writes:

I was intrigued by the name and description of the ‘Apocalypse!’ Module; it definitely has the most exciting name of them all. A final year student also recommended it to me, saying it was fascinating, and led her to write her dissertation on the American Militia Movement which was profiled in the module. As promised, ‘Apocalypse!’ was a fantastic module that gave me a whole host of new ideas to grapple with, not only Historical and Anthropological but also Sociological, Theological, Psychological, Geopolitical, and many more. This multi-disciplinary approach is a real advantage, and the range of groups and time periods that you study is broader than anything else that I have seen in Queen’s History module options. True to form, the module also influenced my dissertation topic, which I have chosen to focus on Islamic eschatology. Both Joe and Crawford have been really supportive and helpful with this. Crawford also encouraged me to submit my ‘Apocalypse!’ Long Essay – on ISIS and their apocalyptic beliefs – to the Irish Society for the Academic Study of Religions Ires prize, which I was delighted to win. ‘Apocalypse!’ is definitely the most memorable module I’ve done at Queen’s, and it will stick with me for a very long time. Without a doubt, nearly all students who do this module would say the same.

Each year the module includes a guest lecture from a visiting scholar outside Queen’s. Previous lecturers have included Dr. Matthew Guest, from Durham University (speaking on apocalyptic narratives within University Christian Unions) and Dr. David Robertson, from the Open University (speaking on UFO worship and conspiracy culture). ‘Apocalypse!’ has also welcomed guest speakers from outside the academy. As part of a lecture on ‘Premillennialism’, students were given the chance to have a Q&A session with local Church leaders from several different Christian groups, including the Seventh Day Adventists and the Exclusive Brethren. Last academic year, Crawford Gribben

delivered a recorded-on-location lecture from Waco, Texas, timed to coincide with the 25th anniversary of the end of the FBI siege of David Koresh’s Branch Davidian complex – a siege which resulted in the deaths of 76 people, including Koresh himself. This year, we expect to include a presentation from a senior civil servant on the theme of ‘Civil Contingencies Planning’, examining how Northern Ireland would cope in the event of a nuclear, chemical, or biological attack.

‘Apocalypse!’ is a strongly research driven module, which has been enriched by the fact that Webster and Gribben write about the same religious movements and geographical contexts, but from different disciplinary perspectives. Our teaching collaboration on this module has also created new opportunities for research collaboration. We have presented together at conferences in the UK and USA, where we have developed particularly strong links with Andrew Crome, an Historian at Manchester Metropolitan University, and Jacob Hickman, an Anthropologist at Brigham Young University, Utah, who teach similar courses in their own institutions. Crome and Hickman will be contributing to the forthcoming *Companion on Millennialism and Apocalypticism* that is being edited by Gribben and Webster, along with Tristan Sturm, a QUB colleague in Geography, who has also guest lectured on ‘Apocalypse!’ The module has also offered opportunities to engage with Third-Sector organisations such as *INFORM* and the *Panacea Trust*, two educational charities which seek to promote public understanding about apocalyptic and other New Religious Movements.

The research culture that is being built up around ‘Apocalypse!’ has also proved to be attractive to international students. Earlier this year, Webster and Hickman worked together to bring 20 BYU students to an ‘Anthropology of Christianity’ Summer School based in Belfast. As a part of this programme, students from BYU spent three months conducting ethnographic research among different Christian congregations across Belfast, many of which examined the challenges of peace-building in a religious environment in which apocalyptic ideas have been central. ‘Apocalypse!’ has also seen other successes in international student recruitment. Webster is currently supervising Kendall Arts, an MA student from the US, who first came to QUB as an undergraduate exchange student:



*I first chose to take ‘Apocalypse!’ co-taught by Prof. Crawford Gribben and Dr. Joe Webster, because it was so far outside of my comfort zone. As a visiting student from the United States I had largely been focused in the field of history, without much exposure to anthropological theory. This course pushed me to consider what individual and group narratives, understood as a kind of apocalypticism, can reveal about small group relations, notions of self, and wider trends of societal uncertainty. The structure of the course itself was designed to expose students to a wide range of research topics and interests through alternating lecturers each class. When it came time to write my final essay for the module, I found that this inter-disciplinary approach had given me ample resources with which to approach a previously unfamiliar subject with confidence. Back in the US two years later, I chose to write my undergraduate thesis on *The Rainbow Gathering*, a group that I had discovered while taking ‘Apocalypse!’. In the Fall of 2018, this work led me back to Queen’s where I chose to pursue my Master’s in Anthropology under the supervision of Dr. Webster. Many of the questions that I developed in ‘Apocalypse!’ still fuel my research interests today.*

That Ravi and Kendall’s experience taking ‘Apocalypse!’ has genuinely changed the way they think about the world around them is proof that the module is achieving at least one of its core aims. Indeed, at the end of the final lecture, Gribben announces to the students that the module they have just completed has been about conversion – ‘We have been trying to convert you! We want the Historians to become Anthropologists and we want the Anthropologists to become Historians!’ Understood in this way, ‘Apocalypse!’ can be seen as a twelve week effort of intellectual conversion – a conversion that requires students to adopt the mindset of scholars outside their discipline, and even, in some cases, the mindset of apocalyptic ‘true believers’. But don’t worry, it isn’t the end of the world... yet.

Preparing Students for the Year Abroad – The French Perspective

By Dr Claire Moran, Arts, English and Languages

In these bleak winter days, the possibility of spending a year in Guadeloupe, in Buenos Aires, or even closer to home in Paris or Lisbon, may seem quite appealing. Languages students at Queen's do just that and we currently have over a hundred students studying or working in French, Spanish and Portuguese-speaking countries.



French and Social Anthropology Student, Lucy Ward spent her Year Abroad in La Réunion

with students gaining excellent work experience, as well as a host of transferable skills; but also, and arguably, more importantly, it has helped students to flourish personally.



'Feeling on top of the world'. Year abroad photograph of Allevard-les-Bains by Stephen McKenna

optional modules, allowed us to design the course as a mini-module within the core language module. A curriculum review by staff in 2017 coupled with focus groups with students and input from questionnaires allowed us to hone the broader aims of this course and the way it sits in our portfolio. One of the primary goals was to have, as in all our courses, an emphasis on host culture and language, but also on the practical skills that students will need on their year abroad. We were also keen to

The Year Abroad is an integral and compulsory part of a degree in Modern Languages at Queen's, with all students, regardless of pathway (Single/Joint/Minor), spending their third year abroad. It has proven to be one of the most rewarding aspects of our degree programmes for students, not only academically, with students' linguistic skills improving dramatically; professionally,

Because of the importance of this year from an academic, personal and professional perspective, all language areas at Queen's offer a tailored Year Abroad preparation class for their students. This article focuses on the experience of French Studies at Queen's in designing and delivering this multifaceted, team-led year-long programme to second-year students.

The flexibility of the French degree programme, which combines team-taught core language modules and individual research-led

make the course appealing to, and inclusive of, a wide range of students. We were conscious that the course was open to Law,



'Le premier arrondissement' from Paris, je t'aime by the Coen brothers

Management, Maths and Science students, who would not have studied literature or film since A-level. A key part of this endeavour was finding accessible texts and films that represented attractive aspects of French culture and still had a lot to teach our students. Learning about French culture through its humour seemed to be a good starting point, leading to a choice of three movies which could, in different ways, get students interested in stereotypes (Paris, je t'aime); language and regional differences (*Bienvenu chez les Ch'tis*); and class (*Le Dîner de cons*).

This central aim to engage students about the Year Abroad via French culture was linked to two other fundamental objectives. The first was to embed employability skills throughout the course in a meaningful way, while the second was to use this space to encourage students to become responsible for their own learning experience. The career focus followed on from the first year compulsory course on Professional French, which all students take. This course introduces students to French companies and business culture, giving them key skills in marketing and product design. It also complemented the existing Level 2 oral examination, which takes the form of a mock interview for a real job. In the Year Abroad course, we were keen to emphasise both practical work-place skills such as email correspondence, business meetings and using the telephone, as well as the subtler workplace issues that may emerge such as dealing with difficult situations. The choice of teaching format combining lectures, group discussions, pair work and, importantly, three dedicated weeks of role-plays with a native speaker each term would allow staff to cover a wide range of material, all the while keeping the course lively and engaging.



'In the Tuileries Gardens', Year Abroad photograph by Stacey Leckey

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Current level 3 Joint French and Politics student, Jason Bunting presenting on his year abroad in Tours, France to level 2 students in October

have watched, and an independent project that could be on any aspect of French culture, from music to sport to regional specificities. Tailored sessions from Learning Development ensure that students are equipped with the necessary skills to embark upon their assignments, all the while adding new techniques to their portfolio. In a key session, Level 3 students come in to deliver the presentations they have

prepared for their Year Abroad oral examination (which takes place just after they return from their residence abroad). This has the dual impact of giving the Level 2s food for thought on the realities of the Year Abroad and allowing them to envisage final year assessment. In this session, the Level 2 students act as mock examiners, questioning the final years about their experiences. Liaising with the French Society, who provide Year Abroad information evenings and film screenings to complement the course is equally very fruitful, creating a seamless transition between life inside and outside of the classroom.

Together, these initiatives and collaborations have, we believe, created a holistic course, which is engaging and enjoyable for both students and staff. Academically, students have performed extremely well (attaining, for example, an average of 67% in 2017). The positive reception of the course by students is visible in comments on questionnaires such as ‘very informative, it covered a lot of possible situations and was very well structured’ and ‘covers practical vocabulary and gives me things to think about before I go; ‘I liked how relaxed it was and how I was able to speak with my classmates and have fun’, or ‘I feel much more more prepared than I would have been’. External



Dr Steven Wilson pictured with some current Year Abroad students in Paris (2018)



QUB French students at a Christmas Market in France

examiners have shown a keen interest in the development of this course. It was noted as part of our ‘*exemplary practice*’ in our 2017-2018 report, especially in terms of ‘*innovative assessment*’ and ‘*skills and attainment*’ where, together with the other level two modules, it offered ‘*exactly the right platform for studying and/or working abroad, as well as advancing the students through their programme*’.



QUB French students at the Sacre-Coeur, Montmartre, Paris (2018).

Languages students at Queen’s clearly have an advantage over students at other universities in terms of their Year Abroad, not only through their access to this type of course, but also in the support they receive from staff in planning their placement, as well as in the pastoral support they benefit from while on the Year Abroad. The variety of options available to our students, from British Council English Language Assistantships, to Erasmus study, to a work placement, means that we can cater for students from different backgrounds. Whatever placement they choose, they gain the transferable skills to enter a variety of professions, such as Marketing, Human Resources, Community Development and Journalism, as well as teaching. To further improve the learning experiences and career outcomes of all of these students, we plan to investigate the possibilities of more personalised placements by means of sharing resources and expertise across AHSS and throughout the University, more broadly.

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Incorporating Technology into Entrepreneurship Education

By Dr Adam Frost and Dr Karen Bonner, Lecturers (Education) in Entrepreneurship, Queen's Management School

Entrepreneurial activity is an essential component of any economy with new venture creation acknowledged as a key driver of economic growth through increased innovation, competition and job creation. Entrepreneurship is, however, not just about creating new businesses, it is about the wider need for developing an entrepreneurial mind-set and the related entrepreneurial competencies. QAA (2018) outlines these as: creative problem solving, negotiating, influencing, leading, business and financial awareness. These competencies are often cited as key requirements for graduate employers in various sectors.

Entrepreneurial education has therefore become an integral part of teaching in many Business Schools at both the undergraduate and postgraduate level. One of the key challenges for entrepreneurship educators like ourselves, however, is providing

students with real-life experiences in which to apply their learning. The most common method of teaching and assessment in entrepreneurship education is for students to undertake a project where they research and write a business plan for a proposed venture. Whilst this is an extremely useful activity and would be a common requirement for gaining funding for a new venture, there is a significant limitation in that the students do not usually get the opportunity to see whether their ideas would actually work.

In some instances students may develop an actual product or service and have some limited experience of trying to pitch and sell this to potential customers, but there is still a very limited exposure to the realities of starting their own business. They are usually not exposed to the trials and tribulations that often occur when launching your own business and therefore do not develop the necessary skills to solve problems and make the most of new opportunities.

One way that entrepreneurship educators have been able to address these issues is with the incorporation

of computer software simulations into their teaching. These start-up simulations typically provide a true-to-life simulation of starting and running a business, with the student acting as the owner/manager making all the key decisions and seeing in real-time the effect of these decisions on business performance.

Utilising simulations for hands-on experience in the classroom

With the recognised need for its students to gain from hands-on experience of the start-up process, Queen's Management School has recently purchased a license for the use of such a simulation and has been actively incorporating it into its entrepreneurship education. The chosen simulation is *SimVenture Classic* start-up simulation which is one of the most widely used business simulation software programmes in the UK. Since its launch, the *SimVenture Classic* simulation has won 4 national awards and its popularity has continued to rise in Higher Education Institutions (www.SimVenture.com)

The SimVenture software allows students to setup and run a new business for 3 simulated years and experience how to launch, manage and successfully grow a new business. The business idea is that the students, as the owners/managers, are designing and building computers to sell in a business-to-business context.

The simulation covers all key areas of launching and managing a business under four headings:

- Marketing and Sales (Market Research & Target Markets, Competitor Research, Customer Feedback, Pricing, Sales Channels, Sales Promotions)
- Operations (Product Design, Purchasing, Production, Quality Control)



Figure 1: Overview of the SimVenture Classic Menu Screen

- Finance (Banking, Accounts, Credit Control, Fund Raising Strategies, Financial Analysis tools)
- Organisation (Location, Resources, Legal requirements, Recruitment, Training, Time Management, Efficiency)

The business simulation operates much like a game but based on the real-life decision-making process for starting and running a business. It requires students, working as individuals or teams, to make decisions under each of the areas above, as required, and analyse the subsequent business performance in terms of factors such as orders placed, sales made and subsequent profit and loss statements. The game also monitors time taken to produce orders and run the business and monitors the resulting stress levels of the owner/manager.

Embedding the simulation within entrepreneurship education at Queen's

Since the license to use the simulation was acquired in 2017, it has been incorporated in both the MBA programme and on the undergraduate Business Management degree programme at Queen's Management School.

On the undergraduate Business Management degree, final year students can select to undertake a new year-long "Business Start Up" module. In this module, students work in teams to develop an innovative new product and present an assessed business pitch outlining why this product is needed and would be commercially successful. Then, as a second assessment, they develop their idea into a full business plan that sets out and justifies their strategy for launching and managing this business. In the second semester, students then undertake the SimVenture simulation and enter their ideas for their new business. They run the simulation for 3 virtual years, making decisions around the various areas of the simulation, trying to generate and fulfil orders, produce their products and run their business efficiently and ultimately generate as much profit as possible.

After the simulation is complete, the students are assessed in two further ways; they are expected to reflect as a group and individually on the experiences of using the simulation and managing their virtual business. As a group they produce a report which outlines their business' performance and analyses the reason for how successful (or not) they have been and how this

compares to their expectations in their plan. Individually, they reflect on their group performance and on how their own knowledge and entrepreneurial skills have developed through these new forms of learning.

On the MBA programme, students undertake a module called 'Making Decisions' which comprises elements of entrepreneurship and operations management. The SimVenture software is integrated within the entrepreneurship sessions in two ways. First, students are introduced to the software by using the 'Apprentice' scenarios. Here, the software creates a number of default positions, unique to each scenario, from which the business must operate and the students are given specific tasks and a specific number of months to run the business within the scenario. Typically they will have to achieve a target for profits, monthly turnover or bank balance and sometimes a combination of all three, depending on the difficulty level. Using the software in this way helps build student confidence in its use but also makes them aware, often for the first time, of the complexity of running a business and the implications of their decision-making across all other elements of the business.

The second way in which the software is used within the MBA programme is through assessment. Here again students must use a specific scenario, in this case one of a cash-flow problem. That this scenario was selected suggests that one of the main reasons for business failure is due to cash flow issues (Ibrahim and Ellis, 1987). Hence, by using the software to understand the cause of the issue, and forcing the student to make decisions on the operational elements of the business to solve the problem, allows both integration with wider learning from the module and enables students to try out different solutions without risking any money or the survival of the business, as would happen in real life. This equips the student with an enhanced understanding of the underlying mechanisms for business success, whilst their analysis of the cause of the initial cash flow problem also provides vital insights into a common business problem; knowledge which they can use and apply throughout their career.

Engaging with potential entrepreneurs beyond the Management School

As well as benefiting Management students, there are clear opportunities for the simulation to be used more



Figure 2: MBA students using SimVenture Classic

widely across the University. Many students from other Schools and Faculties will enter workplaces where entrepreneurial skills are a requirement and some may at some point start their own business. We have therefore started the process of engaging with other Schools and Faculties and are shortly running our first workshop with engineering students as part of an entrepreneurship module they undertake. The aim of the session is to give these students a broader appreciation for the multitude of management considerations they would need to appreciate if they were to start their own business.

Engaging management and non-management students also presents us with a useful opportunity to observe how different types of students undertake the simulation and evaluate the effectiveness of the simulation in developing entrepreneurial skills in these students. These different interactions with the students are part of research project being undertaken by the two of us.

If you are interested in how the simulation could be used with your students feel free to contact us for a chat. Our contact details are: Dr Adam Frost – a.frost@qub.ac.uk and Dr Karen Bonner – k.bonner@qub.ac.uk

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Curriculum Design with the Creative Industries in Mind

By Dr Declan Keeney, Arts, English and Languages

“Have you ever Googled yourself?” I ask my first-year class in Broadcast Production, a new undergraduate degree based in the School of Arts, English and Languages (SAEL). Most of the students say “no”. There is a reason why the question is asked of course. Subsequently, everyone logs on to computers in the lab and “Googles” themselves. The majority have no obvious presence online and are difficult to find, even on social media. Employers who were asked to advise on the design of the new degree in broadcasting had suggested in focus groups that an online presence is essential for finding work in the creative industries sector. So, the first practical assignment, a photojournalism project, is introduced to the class. Students are then taught how to take photographs on digital stills cameras and how to research and write a magazine style article to go with their photographs. Then they are shown how to build their own website to host the photography work online. Twelve weeks later and they have added a video to augment that original story embedded on their home page - a video they have filmed, edited and written themselves. Now when they Google themselves, if they do not find themselves or their story online, they know they are simply using the wrong SEO (search engine optimisation) terms to be found by a Google search, something they can now fix for themselves. These practical assignments are ultimately a way to introduce our students to broadcasting but more importantly, to greatly enhance our students’ digital literacy during their first few weeks at Queen’s.

Broadcast Production is a new subject area at Queen’s, only in its second year, connecting the University to areas of the creative industries previously not represented at Queen’s, namely television, radio broadcast journalism, virtual reality and other disruptive digital media forms. This programme can be viewed as a digital storytelling degree which holds at its core significant digital literacy skills enhancement and media scholarship (Metros & Woolsey, 2006). The timing and introduction of this new subject was motivated by an explosion in the economic growth of the creative industries in Northern Ireland second only to London in the UK. The degree was designed, in part, to help address significant skills gaps identified in this area. Recent research investment is evidence of the strategic importance placed on the creative industries by government. Queen’s, in partnership with Ulster University,

has recently launched *Futures Screen NI*, a research project attracting £12m in funding through the AHRC and industry partners. Add to this the Chancellor’s budget announcement of the significant ‘City Deal’ package for Belfast which will include massive creative industries investment in a joint proposal from both universities, and it is evident that the timing is right for growing programmes in this area at Queen’s.

The first challenge then, was to create a curriculum that expanded on the successes at Queen’s in this area already, yet did not cannibalise our existing programmes’ application numbers. The second was the remit to design a degree that could be supported by both industry and academia. The recent growth in the level of applications and ultimately recruitment in this new subject area and continuing growth in the existing Film Studies programme FTE offers some evidence of early success in this regard. Building on experience of curriculum design and teaching done over a ten-year period in Film Studies, a constructivist approach was taken to the design of this new pathway. Also of influence was connectivism (Siemens, 2004), a new paradigm in teaching and learning has agency here in relation to teaching creative digital media. Whilst connectivism is a relatively new area of scholarship, much about this theory was useful in designing an agile and responsive programme that is connected to a sector that is growing and evolving rapidly. Our students need strategies to cope with the implications on their learning in the so-called ‘4th Industrial Revolution’ and the explosion of new communication based technologies. In particular, they need to know where to find the answers they need, rather than always hold this knowledge themselves, in order to be able to adapt to working environments that, at this moment in time, we cannot teach them about or indeed anticipate (Kop and Hill, 2008).

A number of external industry-led focus groups were set up to inform the programme design. Principal among these groups was a four-person team from BBC Northern



Students Alison and Sam from level 1, Broadcast Production sound checking in SARC

Ireland. This consisted of a commissioning editor, a senior executive producer, a senior engineering manager and BBC training consultant. This resulted in numerous industry recommendations and feedback on early programmes drafts and was incredibly useful in establishing what a broadcaster wants in a graduate from this programme in 2020 and beyond. A key theme that emerged in all of these focus groups was research, in particular research skills that included good critical writing skills - the kind of transferable skills that form part of many of the BA pathways at this University. This formed the backbone of the pedagogy employed and, ultimately, made it much easier to align our industry facing ambitions with academic aims and QAA subject benchmarks.

Having established a robust platform, the degree utilises a number of highly innovative teaching and assessment methodologies across the 3 years of the programme. In the context of assessment literacy, a better appreciation of the relationship between assessment and learning was achieved through engagement with the Higher Education Academy's external examiner's pilot training course held at Queen's. This proved timely and informed innovative assessment methods which are now employed across the programme. For example, in Broadcast Production students are encouraged to create work that can be shared publically. The aim is to achieve an editorial standard that allows for publication online (with permission) immediately, and that adheres to industry practices in relation to the Broadcasting Code and Ofcom guidelines.

Built around constructivist paradigms, this type of creative assessment enhances digital literacy and opportunities for feedback on a number of levels in relation to their creative practice/writing skills. The learning starts in the classroom but extends well beyond the interaction with the lecturer.

“If students are to learn desired outcomes in a reasonably effective manner, then the teacher’s fundamental task is to get students to engage in learning activities that are likely to result in their achieving those outcomes... It is helpful to remember that what the student does is actually more important in determining what is learned than what the teacher does” (Shuell, 1986: 429).

In the context of constructive alignment, not only does publically sharing assessed work draw peer review and tutor feedback, but, of course, the public can join this feedback loop offering a potentially unlimited engagement with those external to the University. In the context of a constructivist approach these are useful learning moments. Dealing with negative feedback, filtering constructive feedback, reflecting on your practice and ultimately dealing (as an industry professional would have to) with your audience are all requirements in this discipline. Therefore, the assessment is a



Broadcast students getting to grips with the new live radio studio at Queen's

learning activity (Price 2005). Students come to have a better understanding of the subject matter and their own learning through their close involvement with the assessment process.

An example of this is the ‘Radio Programme’ module. This module is designed to enrich the learning experience of the students but also to build opportunities for them to engage more deeply with campus life through programme making activities and live programme outputs each semester. The main element of assessment is a 30-minute radio programme that will feature stories about academics, wider society, creative and cultural events and more, and will be broadcast in December 2018. This year, seven 30-minute live radio programmes will be aired. This type of creative output also supports the employability agenda at every turn and in fact creates active web links for students to share with potential employers to highlight their creative practice. One other benefit is an engagement between Broadcast Production and our campus student radio station, Queen’s Radio (QR). Currently QR is in discussions about broadcasting content (i.e. our students assessed practical work) on their station. Students supporting the employability of other students in a far-reaching manifestation of the connectivist ideology employed in the original programme design.

Similarly, in BCP2003, *The Television Programme* module, in a first for Queen’s University, a one- hour magazine style live television programme will be broadcast from a new television studio in the Sonic Arts Research Centre (see photograph below). Again, the main form of assessment in this module is an assignment that will be aired publically in April 2019.

Uniquely, *Broadcast Production* offers the opportunity to reach across Faculty and Schools in a truly multidisciplinary way to tell stories of this place, the research we are doing, our achievements and life across this campus and city. Get in touch should you have a story to tell. Meantime, I suggest you Google yourself, just to see if we can find you and your potential story.

About the Author

Dr Declan Keeney is Subject Lead for *Broadcast Production* and a Co-Investigator on Future Screens NI, a joint Queen’sUU £12m research project funded by the AHRC and Industry Partners.

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Queen's Student Managed Fund: investing in the student experience

By Dr Barry Quinn, Dr Alan Hanna and Áine Gallagher, Queen's Management School (Finance)

Student-managed investment funds come in a variety of shapes and sizes. Some are run as student societies while others are faculty-led and embedded into specific modules or programmes. Some manage a portion of their university's endowment (running to millions of dollars), others effectively operate as a pen and paper exercise. In the US, the concept is well established, but in the UK and Ireland, most universities have yet to realise the benefits they offer.

Queen's Student Managed Fund (QSMF) was launched in 2012 as an extra-curricular activity to develop student investment skills and maximise the educational benefits of the Management School's newly established trading room. Initially the fund was operated on a purely virtual basis, with the first few years used to build student interest, experiment with governance structures and processes, and of, course, to raise the necessary funds. We are extremely grateful to the Development and Alumni Relations Office for their support, and to the philanthropic donors who provided the permanent capital that enabled the fund to go live in April 2016 on a 'real money' basis.

The Fund has two primary goals. The first is to achieve consistent positive returns by taking a long term value-investing approach. It is important to emphasize that students are not 'speculating' or 'day trading' but rather investing for the long term in a diversified portfolio in a manner similar to pension funds. The second (and for us, the more important goal) is to develop skills, provide practical experience, and to enhance career opportunities and ambition.

The fund is open to students from all levels of study, and from all disciplines across the University. It incorporates those who are simply interested in investing from a personal perspective, and those who are determined to secure a career in the highly competitive asset management sector. While there is an obvious appeal to students studying Finance, we have been delighted to incorporate students from subjects ranging from Maths and Engineering, to Pharmacy and Psychology. This year, QSMF has attracted over 200 students, and now manages funds in excess of £30,000.

The experiential and peer learning activities that are central to the success of QSMF are underpinned by three key design elements: hierarchical structure, authentic practice, and industry engagement.

Hierarchical Structure

The hierarchy is comprised of three layers. The top layer, the student Executive Committee, comprises corporate 'C-suite' roles including chief executive officer (CEO), chief financial officer (CFO), and chief operating officer (COO).



Photo (left to right) Joanna Singleton (Former SMF CRO [Chief Risk Officer], now Data Scientist at Allstate) Moh Musa (Former SMF CEO, now Equity Analyst at Davy) Alan Werlau (Head of Global Investment Strategy at Davy)

Collectively, they are responsible for the Fund's operation and investment decisions. Typically these roles are filled by final year and Masters students, many of whom already have commercial equity research and investment experience from industrial placements.

The remaining student body is divided into teams aligned to different market sectors into which the Fund may invest (e.g. Consumer Staples, Telecoms, Healthcare, etc). The second layer comprises Sector Heads, who oversee individual teams. The third layer consists of the Analyst and Senior Analyst roles that make up the teams. An academic oversight committee provides a further supervisory layer. The role of the oversight committee is to provide support to the Executive Committee, and to act as a light touch compliance



Chart Fund performance versus FTSE350 benchmark

to ensure prudent management in line with the Fund's long term investment objectives.

The structure allows everyone to contribute regardless of their experience or background. Student-led sessions provide introductory training into equity analysis and valuation for those without finance backgrounds. Analysts receive further coaching and on-the-job training from their Sector Heads, and access to online training and other student developed resources. Blended teams implicitly encourage peer learning and mentoring. As students develop, they can progress through the Fund by taking on more senior roles with more responsibility.

Authentic Practice

The activities undertaken by students closely resemble those conducted by professional equity analysts and investment managers. The starting point for analysts is to make detailed investigations into the suitability of investments. An authentic environment is provided by the Management School's FinTrU Trading Room, where students can access industry-leading Bloomberg terminals. The software provides a wealth of information including news, live and historical market prices, financial statements, capital structures, competitors and supply-chain analysis. This quantitative and qualitative information must be distilled into a standardised analyst report culminating in a target price and buy/sell/hold recommendation. Analysts then 'pitch' their ideas and must convince others within the team of the validity of their analysis and conclusions.

With input from each Sector, the Executive Committee constructs a balanced portfolio and make the final investment decisions. Finally, after authorisation from the Oversight Committee, trades are executed. The activities required for the on-going management of the portfolio are also designed to reflect practice. Annual reports must be produced to a professional standard to provide transparency for stakeholders (those who have donated to the fund or supported it in kind). Monitoring, compliance and risk-management functions must ensure the Fund operates within specified tolerances.

This initiative is fantastic and a game changer when it comes to getting people exposed to the markets and the responsibility around setting up a fund for long term objectives.

**Declan Breslin, US Head of Client Services,
Prime Brokerage, J.P. Morgan**

Industry Engagement

A major benefit of QSMF lies in the opportunities for students to engage with industry. As a concept, the Fund sparks immediate interest, and industry professionals have been generous with their time in supporting the initiative. Students have benefited from masterclasses, industry-led workshops and company-hosted insight days. A highlight for students over the last three years has been the annual 'stock pitching event' hosted by Davy Group (a wealth manager) in their Belfast office. Here students present their investment thesis and stock selections to a panel of industry

professionals who provide constructive feedback on their analysis. A marker of this initiative's success is this panel now includes QSMF alumni.

Benefits for Students

We believe students accrue significant benefits from active participation in the Fund. Beyond the explicit technical and investment skills, the organisational structure implicitly develops people and time management skills, team-working, critical analysis, report writing and presentation skills. Constant engagement with financial markets also raises commercial awareness. Indeed one initiative of the Executive Committee was to produce a weekly roundup email for all members, interpreting the prior week's financial news, and outlining the significance of key events over the coming week.

The SMF was fundamental in securing my internships. About 15 people from 2600 applicants got into the investment management division. SMF helped me stand out and I wouldn't have got anywhere near it without the fund.

**Matthew Bain, Sector Co-Head (Energy),
BSc Business Economics**

Industry engagement provides valuable networking opportunities and insights into future career paths. Most significantly, active membership has proved to be a 'game-changer' for students seeking placement and graduate roles in related fields. Student feedback frequently reveals that interviews become dominated by a discussion of the activities of the Fund. Moreover, many students attribute QSMF with a vital role in securing their chosen career. Recent QSMF alumni have secured highly competitive roles in companies such as Blackrock, Davy Group, Rothschilds, Bank of England and Bank of New York Mellon.

The SMF was the real talking point in interviews; as soon as I had explained the concept I found that interviewers really focused in on it. QSMF helped me further build my understanding of investing but also taught me key management and organisational skills.

Moh Musa, Former QSMF CEO, Davy Group

A survey conducted at the end of the last academic year showed that the most valued aspects of the Fund were 'learning by doing' and 'being industry ready'. A further finding was that over 90% of respondents believed participation improved their investment knowledge, team working skills, communication, and professionalism, at least to some extent. We are delighted with these results and the progress of the QSMF to date. Above all, we are enthused by the commitment of the Fund members, and deeply proud of their successes and accomplishments.

Global Skills Project: a new skills development resource has launched for Law students

By Dr Clare Patton and Richard Summerville, School of Law



Global Skills participants demonstrating their flair for drama!

Background to the development of Global Skills

Students often arrive at QUB Law with little experience of the skills necessary for their future careers. Our students graduate to a gloriously wide kaleidoscope of careers. Many of these careers demand, among other things, an ability to speak in public, use social media efficiently, or proficiently write and publish material. While some Law modules do offer skills training in these areas, and Law students have the opportunity to join various extracurricular activities, such as mooting or debating, a gap exists in the Law student experience for a holistic approach to skills training.

The founder of the Global Skills Project, Clare Patton (Director) along with Richard Summerville (Creative Director) spoke to Law students and

graduates, lawyers, academics and individuals in various industries to discover which skills they understood to be important for graduating Law students. The following were included:

[An ability to] ... speak in public, to communicate effectively with individuals and groups at many different levels of understanding, to 'tell a story' in an interesting and engaging manner; understand when to use 'plain English' and when to use more complex legalistic language; to understand social media and the impact thereof; appreciate the importance of building networks inclusive of experienced colleagues, peers, and those coming behind; interview well and 'sell' oneself; identify one's own strengths and weaknesses and how these factor when choosing a career, and to acknowledge the importance of critical thinking in life and opening up to biases and prejudices that can be held, unchallenged, or unrecognised.

The Directors took this information and placed it at the centre of the design for a unique programme which sits outside traditional Law teaching and is extra-curricular to the LLB

degree. The Global Skills Project (GSP) also looks to guidance from various sources such as the QAA Subject Benchmark Statement for Law, Solicitors Regulation Authority and the Bar Standards Board standards of a qualifying law degree and information from the Higher Education Academy. The objective of GSP is to provide skills training which is fun, extra-curricular, and not provided as part of a traditional law degree. GSP aims to give Queen's Law students an advantage over their peers as they embark on their career and life paths.

The vision for the Global Skills Project

The Global Skills Project (GSP) is made up of three core exercises each academic year which the students complete in order to gain a digital badge. At the end of their third year they will have collected nine digital badges and qualify for a medal and Global Skills Project certificate. Participants will also be able to use their participation in the GSP as either a Route A or Route B

pathway to Degree Plus (depending on whether they complete all exercises or complete some exercises and then leave the project). In addition to the nine core exercises, there are bolt-on seminars, workshops and events which all centre on developing the confidence of the participants in areas such as communication and critical thinking. The project is hosted on the Canvas platform where the students also have access to a diverse range of resources such as providing a link to the School of Law 'Summer Reading Recommendations' or 'Essay Writing Tips'. The School of Law agreed to fund a 'Student Impact Coordinator' (final year PhD candidate, Clare Rice) and Clare regularly engages with the students on the 'discussion forum' on Canvas. The benefit to this approach is that GSP participants feel included, and they also feel part of a smaller community (the project) within the larger community (the School/University). Feeling isolated and/or unsupported is an issue that many students report struggling with; the objective of GSP is that by building both an online and real world community the participants will foster a real sense of 'belonging' with their peers, the School and with Queen's.

In keeping with the 'fun' element of the project, the exercises have been designed to make sure the participants really enjoy being part of GSP. For example, the first session with which the students participated was a workshop given by David Grant (Senior Lecturer in the School of Arts, English and Language) wherein the students enjoyed an afternoon of artistic creativity not normally offered in traditional legal teaching. David introduced games and tasks that aimed to re-channel the natural anxiety we all have of speaking in public into enhanced control of breath, gesture, and voice for more effective communication to an audience. It was quite the experience to watch students enter the room fearful of speaking to the group and evolve

over the course of the afternoon into confident speakers standing at the front of the room engaging in mime and ad-libbing with impressive comic timing!

Participants of GSP will have many opportunities in the coming year to develop their public speaking skills with a Media Training workshop with BBC politics journalist Mark Devenport being their next event. Future exercises include a blogging seminar and a 'Law and Storytelling' event with a well-known personality coming to the School to talk with the students about the importance of effective communication in both the written and spoken word. GSP participants will also have the opportunity to produce a vlog and publish a blog over the course of this academic year. Engaging in such activities will not only build impactful skills but they are genuinely impressive additions for graduates to include in a CV.

Conclusion

This is the pilot year for the Global Skills Project and so the staff involved with the project are on as much of a learning curve as the students. We hope that by year end we can take the feedback from our first ever participants and use this information to assess what works well and what works less well for the students. The Directors are fortunate to have received solid support from colleagues in the School of Law with Dr Ciara Hackett joining the Steering Committee early on to offer advice and guidance in the type of exercises that would capture and maintain the interest of the students. Dr Elizabeth Agnew also recently joined the Committee and is currently writing a grant to seek external funding for a series of workshops to be held in the academic year 2019/20. Emelie Pepito (JD student) is also a valued member of the Committee who is using her varied experiences to enrich the future project portfolio.

Moreover, Professors Robin Hickey and Thérèse Murphy have been extremely supportive in offering their experiences in how best to develop GSP with the ambitious view to the project becoming a core strategy in the extra-curricular skills development in the Law School.

Of most importance to the staff involved with GSP is that the students are both enjoying participating in the project and also learning from this participation. Student feedback so far has been extremely positive. It is tremendously encouraging to engage with students who are so keen to be a part of a project which the Directors and Steering Committee spent many months designing. What we are learning is that to capture the attention of students (for a project like GSP) it is crucial to introduce them to the idea of long-term engagement from the very beginning of their degrees (Clare Patton spoke with the incoming first-years in their induction week). This means that they build their commitment to the initiative into their timetables from the very beginning and so are less likely to question whether they can find the time to participate. It is important to design a project which excites the students so the team created exercises which centre on language such as 'fun', 'media' 'well-known individuals' and 'community' and ensured that the exercises which were founded on these ideas and principles map onto the skills required by students following our early discussions with lawyers, academics etc.

The team involved with the Global Skills Project is excited about the possibilities that can grow from this innovative scheme and warmly welcomes anyone in the broader Faculty and University who wishes to offer feedback or has any questions about our project.

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Interactive Teaching Methods in University Physics for International students in China Medical University – what can we learn?

By Dr Joe Allen, Social Sciences, Education and Social Work and Professor Prof Huazhe Yang, China Medical University Shenyang, China

During 2018, I spent 4 weeks in Shenyang, Northern China where I held a number of tutorials and seminars for 15 China Queen's College (CQC) lecturers who are completing their Postgraduate Certificate in Higher Education Teaching (PGCHET). The main purpose of the visit was to facilitate the disciplinary teaching components of PGCHET by carrying out a series of teaching observations (Allen, 2016). The 15 lecturers are employed primarily by China Medical University (CMU) which operates China Queen's College in partnership with Queen's University. This mini-research project was an investigation of the teaching methods used in the International Education School (IES) of CMU. This work was carried out as a joint exercise with Professor Huazhe Yang, a Lecturer in Department of Biophysics in China Medical University.

The IES was founded in 2010, and it currently delivers degrees in Clinical Medicine. To date, nearly 1000 international students from more than 70 countries have studied in the IES with 20 core courses all taught in English. One of the first year core subjects is College Physics for which the teaching hours are 74 hours in total.

The course teachers are from mainland China and during the early stages of course delivery at IES, the teaching was delivered in the style of the traditional Chinese education system, in which knowledge is disseminated via lecture-based teaching with very limited student-educator interaction. However, it has been found that

these traditional teaching strategies are not particularly suitable for the international students and a number that had been very engaged during the class at the beginning lost interest in the learning and became reluctant to engage in the class as the semester progressed. Some of them skipped classes and as a result, many failed in the final examination. The reason was believed to lie in the differences between a western education-based teaching system and the Chinese educational system, and it was thought necessary to introduce a teaching strategy which would be more suitable for the CMU international students.

The interactive teaching approach has been associated with improvement in teaching medical students, improving interest, understanding, critical thinking and communication skills as well as higher scores for students (Abdel et al., 2017, p229; Datta et al., 2015, p239; Kisamore et al., 2009; Ruiz et al., 2017, p1694; Xu, X et al., 2018). The interactive teaching approach was selected as an appropriate teaching method to employ at IES, with the aim of this mini-research project of evaluating its success and identifying where improvements could be made, should the approach be found to be successful. This interactive teaching method involves the use and combination of components such as problem-based learning (PBL), flipped classroom, tutorials, etc., all designed to improve the interaction between the teaching staff and students, whilst stimulating the interest of students and enhancing their participation during class. Within the class setting the students would undertake an activity and then reflect on the outcomes with the teacher and their classmates (Lin, 2017, p21). As a result, the teacher is not the only dominant factor in class and the students can also work in a leading role (Datta et al., 2015, p239; Ruiz et al., 2017, p1694; Weurlander et al., 2017, p852). In the Chinese traditional educational system, the feedback of students is



CMU/CQC Staff - Dr Joe Allen front row centre - Prof. Huazhe Yang back row second in from the right

very important for education, which is in accordance with the viewpoint of western universities. Therefore, it was believed that the interactive learning method would fill the gap between the two different educational systems, and may also be an effective approach for the education of international students in China. In addition, the interactive learning method is an effective way to monitor the learning progress of the students and stimulate their interest, self-confidence and motivation. It is considered to be very important to develop the critical and creative thinking skills of the students in order to best prepare them for their future employment.

However, several studies have also found that the integration of interactive technologies might not always ensure a better learning performance or teaching efficiency (Liu et al., 2015, p110) and that the efficiency of this teaching strategy is based on many factors including the characteristics of the students, the content of the class, the combination and compatibility of different educational concepts and processes and the extent of student motivation.

Before carrying out this teaching approach, my colleague and I considered the context of the classification of educational goals (Bloom, 1956), the purposes and practices of education (Lazerson et al., 1985) and the design of the course (Fink, 2013) from both the

cognitive and effective domain. In the interactive teaching model, various components from other teaching models were also utilised in order to stimulate the interest and increase the levels of student interaction (Lazerson et al., 1985). The educational objectives are taken from the simple level of knowing through to the higher level of evaluation (Bloom, 1956). The construction of the interactive teaching session was based on the key components of teaching, i.e., learning how to learn, foundation knowledge, application and integration (Fink, 2013).

At the start of the class, the students were asked to provide a quick review of the previous class, recalling the key points of the session. During this process, they could look for useful information in textbooks, online resources or other means. Afterwards, any student who wanted to give the review would raise their hand and give their answer. The teacher would then comment on the answer they gave, pointing out the strengths and weakness of their answers, as appropriate. Finally, the teacher would take note of those who participated in the discussions, for formative assessment purposes.

After this short review process, the students were asked to discuss a subject-related historical event or phenomenon. During this process the students could not search for the answer online or from a textbook, but they could discuss with his/her neighbours; the contributions to the discussion were again analysed for formative assessment purposes. Towards the end of the class, the students were asked to re-analyse the original event/phenomenon in the light of their newly acquired knowledge. This time the students were divided into several groups for 3-5 minutes of group discussions. Afterwards, each group was asked to choose a representative to give an oral presentation to summarise the viewpoints of the group. The teacher would then comment on their presentation and ask all the students to give a mark rating the contributions of each group representative. All group members then received the same mark as the group representative. If a group was unable to agree on a consistent point of view, the teacher would then guide a short group discussion in the form of a group tutorial.

Student perceptions of this interactive teaching approach and their learning

Table 1. Academic Performance for College Physics

Reference Index		Class 2 (Traditional teaching)	Class 1 (Interactive teaching)
Mean Grade		72.087	75.358
Standard Deviation		12.262	11.011
Score Distribution	Range	Number of Students (Percentage)	Number of Students (Percentage)
	<40	0 (0%)	0 (0%)
	40-49	4 (4.34%)	0 (0%)
	50-59	5 (5.43%)	0 (0%)
	60-69	29 (31.52%)	35 (36.84%)
	70-79	27 (29.35%)	25 (26.32%)
	80-89	19 (20.65%)	21 (22.11%)
	90-99	8 (8.70%)	14 (14.74%)

experiences were collected during interviews and through an open-question, which was included in the examination paper.

A random sample of 20 students participated in the interview in which they were asked if they felt they were fully respected in the interactive approach in a way that would motivate them to study and work in CMU with a more positive way. Around 19 of the 20 students confirmed that they felt an increased sense of respect brought about by the interactive teaching approach, and some typical answers are as following: “My questions and viewpoint are fully recognized by the teacher”; “Mr Y could give us some time to think by ourselves”; “The professor will give us the chance to lead the discussion as a group leader”.

They were also asked to rate, “if the interactive teaching approach is interesting and helpful for them to participate in the class”, and the number of positive answers was also 19: “I like the Physics class very much, the teacher is also very good because he always be interactive with us”; “I like this class because there is formative assessment for me to earn score if I can answer the questions”; “I like the group discussion and oral presentation very much, it can help me to be familiar with many of my classmates and cooperate with them”

From their comments, it would seem that most of the students found the interactive teaching approach beneficial, filling the gaps in comprehension in class, and helping bridge the cultural diversity among the international students from different backgrounds. Furthermore, it helped stimulate students’ interests, self-confidence and motivation and

develop the critical and creative thinking skills of the students.

The feedback from the teaching staff was also positive overall. The teachers recognised the noticeable improvement in classroom atmosphere and the comments included “The students are very active and the classroom atmosphere then is very active”; “The classroom atmosphere is very good to exchange ideas between teachers and students”; “The atmosphere is active and positive for teaching and learning”. However, some also expressed concerns such as, “The atmosphere is sometime too active and it is very difficult to go back to continue the next part of the class”; “I sometimes wonder if they are discussing or just chatting with each other from their face expression”. Therefore, although the classroom atmosphere is improved in general, the teachers have a role to play in ensuring that all of the students remain focused on the tasks in hand.

The teachers agreed that the students’ behaviours were improved via the interactive teaching approach, compared to the traditional one: “The students’ attendance improve a lot, and fewer of them leave early”; “More students are willing to participate in the class”.

As for the teachers’ own feelings on the interactive teaching approach, comments noted a more positive mood during their teaching, an increased sense of respect and value, and an improvement in their overall teaching skills: Negative aspects noted were mainly concerned with the high demands made of the teacher’s knowledge and abilities: “I must keep the pace with the students since the thinking of the international students is

divergent, which is a challenge for me” and “I must develop my own critical and creative thinking abilities if I am to improve these abilities with students via an interactive teaching approach”.

The examination scores of the students taught with the interactive teaching approach (Class 1, 95 international students) and without (Class 2, 92 international students) were also analysed as assessment outcomes in order to compare the effect of this teaching approach (mean examination marks, distribution of score) and the details of the data can be seen in **Table 1**.

Finally, the failure rate (the number of students whose score was lower than 60 / total number of students) and the excellent rate (that is the number of students whose score was higher than 90 / total number of students) was also calculated.

The average score of the students taught through the interactive teaching approach was higher than through the traditional teaching approach, while the fail rate of the students taught using interactive teaching approach (0%) was lower (9.77%). The excellent or higher pass mark rate of the students taught by interactive teaching approach (14.74%) can be seen to be higher than the students taught by traditional teaching approach (8.70%).

In conclusion this small scale mini-research project has demonstrated that it is possible to introduce the interactive teaching model within an IES setting where all the students are overseas students. This model was assessed from the perspectives of both students and teachers. In addition, positive changes in students' academic performance in final examination were also observed.

Compared to the traditional teaching approaches, the interactive teaching approach appeared to significantly stimulate the interests of the students, thereby enhancing their participation in class. Improvements were observed in students' learning skills (understanding, communication and critical thinking skills), consequently this resulted in reduced failure rates, and increased mean grades in the final examination. Perceptions from both the students and teachers were positive, indicating a preference for this style of teaching. However, it was also indicated that a higher demand on the teachers' class time was reported as was the additional preparation time that was necessary to better develop and apply this interactive approach to teaching and learning in these university teaching contexts.

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MScABA: An innovative blended learning programme with international reputation

By Dr Katerina Dounavi, Centre for Behaviour Analysis, School of Social Sciences, Education and Social Work



Master's in Applied Behaviour Analysis, an innovative blended learning course

For a 5th consecutive year, the MScABA has continued its growth as an innovative blended learning programme that attracts students from across the globe. The programme curriculum is fully delivered online in six taught modules complemented by one on-campus workshop per module that serves to consolidate knowledge, meet tutors and work on practical case studies. Upon completion of taught modules, students initiate their dissertation on a relevant research topic and under the supervision of an expert behaviour analyst.

A key aspect of the MScABA is that it incorporates numerous innovative online learning strategies, such as formative feedback, peer-tutoring, and modelling. Core textbooks include an award winning online tool (**Simple Steps**) and a wealth of other digital resources, such as e-books, e-journals and filmed lectures. Weekly tasks, such as multiple choice tests and peer discussions, enable students to track their progress by receiving prompt feedback. Online discussion forums

also allow students to share their experiences, provide peer feedback and learn through an enriching process in which the tutor provides weekly summative feedback and moderates rather than leads learning. Evidence-based educational strategies underpin the design of the course, with the role of prompt summative feedback and peer support being prominent.

The MScABA transforms the student experience into an enriching process that increases employability by offering access to a professional certification (Board Certified Behavior Analyst, BCBA®). It also empowers students enabling them to become active partners in their learning, as they navigate through digital materials, interact with others and test their knowledge through weekly micro-tasks. Numerous student achievements, including scientific publications in flagship journals and conference presentations, as well as staff teaching awards serve as solid proof of the programme quality. During 2018-19, the MScABA welcomed a new group of students ready to learn and shape the future of behaviour analysis in Europe and beyond!

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Inter-disciplinary learning: legal and social work trainees learn together

By Dr Karen Winter, Social Sciences, Education and Social Work and Aine Maxwell, Institute of Professional Legal Studies

Social work and legal professionals working in the family court system are involved in making life changing decisions and plans for children in the aftermath of their experiences of harm, abuse, neglect and parental separation. The efficiency of the system relies, in large part, on the expertise of the professionals involved and their understanding and respect of each other's roles. There has been a concern that inefficiencies within the system are in part down to poor interprofessional relationships which are characterised by a lack of trust, mutual understanding and respect¹.

Responding to these external concerns, Mrs Maxwell and Dr Winter (professionally qualified solicitor and social worker and both senior lecturers) have designed and delivered a learning opportunity that enables social work and legal trainees to learn how to navigate interprofessional relationships within the court arena. As an approach, this is endorsed in the recommendations of the Northern Irish Family Justice report which notes:

A specific training programme for social workers in particular, which involves court practice and the involvement of the legal profession and the judiciary, may help to break down barriers and create better mutual understanding. This may also raise the morale of the social work profession and ensure a more effective justice system².

Aims and objectives of learning opportunity

The learning opportunity sits within the final year social work court work skills module and the postgraduate bar trainee court advocacy module. It is currently one of a small number of interprofessional education (IPE) opportunities between social work students and other disciplines.

The aims and objectives of this opportunity are: to develop students' knowledge of the court system and its constituent parts; to build confidence in exercising analysis, critical thinking skills and professional judgment; to enhance advocacy skills; to strengthen skills in producing high quality written and oral

evidence. These directly aim to address concerns from the sector regarding the quality of written and oral evidence³.

Content and process of the interdisciplinary learning opportunity

With tutorial support provided by academic tutors and professional input, social work students are required to organise, assess and analyse fictional case material regarding a child in danger to identify risks and develop a long-term plan for the child regarding their future care.

In so doing, students are required to engage their critical thinking skills to identify risks, weigh up their significance, exercise their own professional judgement and arrive at decisions based on a set of coherent and convincing arguments that they can personally defend both in writing and orally. Throughout, students are invited to consider not just what decision they reach but why.

This approach helps address a common concern regarding social worker court reports which is that they are too descriptive, lack analysis and that bureaucratic requirements (box filling) result in social workers' making recommendations devoid of a full and fair weighing up of the risks and options⁴.

This learning opportunity, that encourages students to reflect on the individual and contextual factors that inform decision-making, requires them



to be honest about and address their own biases, assumptions, mistakes and prejudices, a fundamental and yet sometimes overlooked aspect of training⁵.

With regards to the bar trainees, each receives 5 of the completed social work court reports and associated care plans. From these, with the support of fully qualified legal professionals, the bar trainees conduct a case analysis, research and prepare cross-examination questions. Given that they receive five different social work reports and care plans, they are exposed to a range of writing styles and varying quality of analyses – much as they would do in live court cases.

The mock court sessions run as mini workshops with each group comprising 15 social work students and 3 trainee barristers. The mock court rooms are facilitated by fully trained barristers who act as the judge in the cases and provide in-depth feedback to social work and bar trainees on their techniques in court as well as indicating areas for further development.

Rounding off the day, social work and legal trainees engage in reflection together. They discover that they have much in common (including a fear of court work, nerves and anxiety), they share ways of coping (techniques and strategies) and they learn more about what makes their roles distinctive.

Additional inter-disciplinary learning/teaching format opportunities on the module

This activity is supported by additional learning opportunities. First, field visits take place with students being facilitated by the Courts Service Northern Ireland and a District Judge to visit courts, observe practice and ask questions. Second, the delivery of the module material is supported by engaging the services of fully qualified solicitors, barristers and social workers. Third, guest lecturers, including a County Court judge, are invited to share their insights including a County Court judge. This ensures that students have access to a wealth of work related expertise and the most up-to-date practice knowledge.

Links to employability

The views of former graduates who are now employed as barristers and social workers have been collated. An indicative account of the impact on professional practice once employed is outlined below:

‘During my time at the Institute of Professional Legal Studies I found Interdisciplinary Training with the School of Social Work of great benefit to numerous aspects of my education. The training takes participants to an area that they may not be overly familiar with and requires them to learn and adapt to new areas outside of their comfort zone. This resonates and reflects what I believe is required of barristers in their first few years of practice. Not every case is alike and the fact that social work reports and documents, items

which most young barristers may not be familiar with, are required to be examined in detail through the training encapsulates how, in practice, we may be faced with documentation entirely unfamiliar to us, but we must utilise it to the best of our ability in order to make the strongest case possible for our client. Further the interdisciplinary training whilst enabling supplementary practice of advocacy, which is always useful, also allows an opportunity to practice witness handling of other professionals. This is of significant assistance and I found that this in particular was a great strength of the course, and one which is applicable and very useful upon entering into the field of practice’.

MG Barrister at Law.

Accounts have also been collated from barristers and Judiciary who have been involved in the delivery of the teaching. An indicative account of the benefits of the training is outlined below:

As a collaborative exercise, I would summarise the benefits in this way: The social work students learn the value of mastery of their evidence and material; they are given experience and guidance in addressing the court, defending their evidence, and dealing effectively with questions designed to challenge their conclusions and professional opinions; the barrister trainees have the opportunity to put their advocacy training into practical (simulated) use, and are required to assimilate material and formulate questions in a restricted time-frame, which reflects conditions in practice; both barristers and social workers learn to deal with points/matters which they may not have previously considered when preparing pre-exercise, including interventions from the court; and the social workers see the direct influence which their reports and professional conclusions/opinions have on the ultimate decision-maker. My experience with this project over the last number of years has been that all participants have consistently found it valuable, and that the participants from each

profession came out of the process with an enhanced knowledge of their own role in these proceedings, as well as the role undertaken by the other profession and, indeed, the court/decision-maker.

Evidence of engagement with, involvement of and responsiveness to students also includes: securing a Queen’s University Belfast Teaching Award in 2012 for this inter-disciplinary learning opportunity; securing a further Queen’s University student-nominated Teaching Award in 2017; and being shortlisted in 2018 for the Queen’s Students’ Education Award for the most innovative learning experience.

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Teaching Anthropology in the Anthropocene: revising the curriculum as a response to Global Challenges

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We live in a fast-changing world and are entering a new era, the Anthropocene (Crutzen 2002), which is defined by the irrevocable impacts of human activity and destruction. No matter how the future is imagined, either as technologically-driven utopias, or apocalyptically-induced dystopias, it is acknowledged that our planet, societies and cultures are confronted with monumental challenges, including ecological catastrophes, overpopulation, conflict, displacement, and the rise of xenophobia, hate, and nationalism, as political responses to these issues. Anthropology, a discipline that has the human—Anthropos—as its core focus of study, has taken up a crucial role among other social sciences and humanities to trace the transition to the new epoch and interpret the significant transformations in our ways of living. An essentially comparative subject (Eriksen 2001), anthropology brings in a global perspective that highlights the interconnectivity and interdependency even between societies that seem to be far removed from each other and unrelated. But it is also at the level of education and pedagogy that we need to address the new global challenges and internal methodological and epistemological shifts in our discipline. As a response, we have recently reoriented and revised the Anthropology curriculum and programmes at Queen’s in order to equip students with the tools to directly engage with current themes and affairs, develop skills necessary for a new world of social engagement and labour, and be able to understand the international terrain of socio-political and economic change.

In September 2018, the School of History, Anthropology, Philosophy and Politics launched a new BA Single Hons Programme in Anthropology, after a hiatus year that served the design of new modules and the reinvigoration of some of our established courses. Among those, three particular modules stand out in the way in which they address contemporary challenges as well as their emphasis on engagement with the world outside academia. ‘*Being Human: Evolution, Culture and Society*’, is our redesigned introductory module to anthropology, which is popular with a wide first-year student demographic across the AHSS Faculty. Presenting current debates on human evolution and issues of race and racism, the module relates to a series of contemporary challenges such as the threatening re-emergence of white supremacy in mainstream politics, as well as providing evidence to challenge pseudo-scientific underpinnings of

racist human categorisations. Moreover, with new sections on markets and the economy, the course provides students with grounded ways of understanding the uneven operation of contemporary global capitalism, alongside local economies, and alternative systems of human exchange, through a critical anthropological lens. ‘*Us and Them: Why Do We Have Ingroups and Outgroups?*’, a new first year module which will be taught for the first time in the spring semester of this academic year, directly addresses current issues of social polarisation, conflict, and division, which are evidently on the rise globally. Combining social and cognitive anthropology, the course invites a nuanced understanding of the reasons why humans form groups, how they become invested in them, and why they are often willing to give their lives for their fellow group members. The newly designed, second-year module ‘*Hanging Out on Street Corners:*



Anthropology students in practical ethnomusical training

Public and Applied Anthropology’, offers students the opportunity to work closely with an organisation outside academia. With a range of partners from public stakeholders and policy-related institutions, to cultural brokers and arts management groups, the module trains students in utilising their critical anthropological understanding where it matters, improving people’s lives, co-operation, and wellbeing.

The above new modules will be complemented by a range of additional options which will be offered for the first time in 2019/20. These include a module on ‘*Human Morality*’, which combines anthropology and psychology to answer fundamental questions on how humans make and evaluate moral choices. The module will look at the role of religiosity and political ideology (e.g. conservatism vs. liberalism) in these choices, through a series of current case studies relating to controversies around, for example, abortion, gay rights, economic inequality, and crime. Finally, the new anthropology curriculum expands teaching expertise through the development of thematic links with interdisciplinary teaching networks. The newly established module ‘*Radical Musics: Understanding Sounds of Defiance across Disciplines*’ is funded by the AHSS Faculty’s new initiative for the development of interdisciplinary teaching. The module will bring together staff from anthropology, music,

philosophy, history, drama and arts management, and will give students the opportunity to organise their own musical festival, challenging them to bring a critical perspective on musical subcultures to wider audiences.

As much as the re-launched degree and revised curriculum are designed to equip students with the skills and knowledge to respond to speedy changes in the world and labour demands, they also teach students to use accumulated anthropological knowledge of places, people, and their histories, and address issues with ethnographic insight, methodological meticulousness and patience. In 'Anthropology in the Meantime' (Fischer 2018) suggests that, although we may be transitioning to a new era, we also need to acknowledge that change does not take place in a vacuum, but is embedded in long socio-cultural trajectories across the globe. Studying historical anthropological texts and understanding the long-term epistemological and methodological development of the discipline are also part of the new modules and curriculum. Students learn how to discover and foreground multiple histories and narratives about humanity's pathways, and to work *in collaboration* with people on the ground in order to represent their cosmologies, ways of life and pleas. This is precisely one of the reasons that Anthropology features so prominently in a newspaper article on 'the top 50 Jobs of the future' (**Independent.ie 2014**). The ability to understand a 'fast' world through a 'slow' anthropology, an anthropology dedicated to long-term engagement with specific people and places, empowers students not only to be able to imagine alternative and sustainable futures, but also to play an active role in constructing them.

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