

IATL

inclusive active
innovative learning
interdisciplinary
teaching international

SPRING 2013



**STUDENT
SPECIAL**

STUDENTS AS LEARNERS AND EDUCATORS

Students, particularly those at undergraduate level, all too often see themselves as passive recipients of education, experiencing university life as the mere consumption of knowledge. Sadly, educators do not always understand the importance of lifelong learning: this means that many students drift through their university years without being encouraged and supported to truly challenge existing agendas.

Although the expertise and dedication shown by academics in developing and disseminating knowledge is invaluable, it is important to recognise and celebrate the achievements of students who have managed to move beyond mere consumption during their undergraduate education. Increasingly, students are choosing to engage in education themselves, developing their own academic identities and directly influencing the ways in which they and their peers experience education.

At Warwick, there are numerous examples of this two-way process of learning and teaching, ranging from individual

contributions to academia and industry to collective action and political debate. While all of them are very different, there is one underlying feature that defines them and instills their importance: students are gaining confidence in their own capabilities by being innovative, creative and curious.

In this newsletter we are proud to showcase a variety of these different experiences. Some of them are academic and some professional, but all of them have been tremendously significant in the personal development of the students involved.

In academia, outdated restrictions are gradually falling away, demonstrating that talented students can contribute to the current literature and reinforcing the importance of undergraduate research and academic conferences aimed specifically at them. Nowhere will this be more significant than at the forthcoming inaugural Monash-Warwick Conference of Undergraduate Research in May 2013, where students will be given the opportunity to publish and present their own research at an international level.

Moreover, the teaching and learning experience need not be limited to traditional academia, for a true education is about learning skills, developing talents and preparing for the real world in a variety of ways. Student exchange programmes are giving today's undergraduates new perspectives on their work and challenging the assumptions they make about the world they live in, while inter-varsity debates allow them to engage with and learn from pressing contemporary issues.

Ultimately, today's modern undergraduate must be encouraged to perform two roles – that of the learner and that of the educator – for only in active participation can they unlock their real potential, enhance their educational experience and prepare themselves for excellence in the outside world. And equally important, once they move to the real world they should not forget they should continue to be both learners and educators.

Calum Murray and Jure Jeric

(MORE) FEEDBACK, PLEASE!

Since admitting to being “disappointed” with poor approval ratings in the 2012 National Student Survey (NSS), the University has placed increased focus upon feedback for assessed work in all its departments. Last year’s NSS showed that only 61% of students were at least “satisfied” with their feedback, demanding action from departments across the University. In response, feedback has been made the new buzzword on campus in an effort to re-energise student development. And it’s not simply rhetoric. The Warwick Student Community Statement was signed in October 2012, articulating the University’s commitment to “relevant and meaningful feedback that will help your academic development within a reasonable timescale”, provided within four weeks of submitting work. Additionally, various initiatives have been introduced, including the Fabulous Feedback competition, which operates in conjunction with the Students’ Union. Some departments have also chosen to adopt the Student Assignment Management System (SAMS), which allows work to be submitted

electronically and alerts students when feedback becomes available. In general the system has been praised by students, with William Laye (Chemistry) describing it as “relatively simple, uncomplicated and very effective at doing what it set out to do: laying out clear feedback.”

It is evident, however, that the approaches of different departments are not uniform and some have clearer objectives than others when it comes to regulating feedback. Justin Greaves, the Director of Student Experience and Progression for Politics and International Studies, emphasised the importance of his new role and why it was developed as a position within the department: “In this role I have oversight of all student progression and am able to focus on a case-by-case basis on the feedback on formative and summative assessments for each student ... This allows me to tailor the support I am able to offer students and to help them in the best way I can.”

However, general student opinion suggests that such support may not be available in every department. Daniel Cousins (Third Year, Civil Engineering)

commented that, “feedback seems to vary greatly depending on the lecturer. For certain modules it has been reasonably good while for others it is virtually non-existent.”

It also seems that many students regret the differing attitudes to feedback of individual members of staff. Maria Butler (Fourth Year, French Studies with Italian) added that “there is an overall lack of conformity between different lecturers’ feedback styles and this is where Fabulous Feedback could help tackle the problem”

In order to be a real success, the competition ideally needs votes from every student but as of yet it hasn’t had the publicity it needs. The universal application of SAMS might ensure that certain requirements are met, but while all these initiatives are potentially effective there are still steps to be made to ensure that every student has equal access to the comprehensive and helpful feedback they need.

Hannah Buck

STUDY ABROAD: OPENING A WORLD OF POSSIBILITIES



Once-in-a-lifetime experience

“Studying at the University of California was both the biggest challenge and the greatest experience of my life: a chance to study at one of the finest academic institutions in the world, working with world-renowned professors and building strong academic relationships.

Although this was difficult at times, I was provided with a great deal of support and encouragement. I responded with a huge amount of enthusiasm and hard work, and went on to do very well. My year at UC Berkeley has undoubtedly helped me in my final year at Warwick, giving me greater confidence in my academic abilities and greater knowledge of what aspects of my degree I enjoy and wish to take further.

Finally, it has given me greater direction and focus for my future. My year at UC Berkeley was a once-in-a-lifetime experience and I know that what I have learned will help me both in my final year at Warwick and in the future.”

Grace Young

Want to be a teacher in Norway?



Left to Right: Ava Labelle, Jordan Sargent, Jo Thorpe, Anne Hindkjær (Danish student), Heather Barnett.

Many students left home on the ERASMUS scheme this year, but only a few found themselves heading back to nursery school. For four students at Warwick's Institute of Education, their academic year began with a class full of children, some plastic bricks and a crash course in Norwegian.

Heather Barnett, Ava Labelle, Jordan Sargent and Jo Thorpe – all studying Childhood, Education and Society – were selected for the scheme, which allows students to teach at Lohove and Prestgaards primary schools while studying at Queen Maud University College.

The trip provided many new experiences, in particular an introduction to an entirely different outlook on children's education. "All the classes were grouped vertically, not horizontally by age as we do in this country", said Heather, "and it was really interesting to see the older children interact with the babies".

Jordan added that she was surprised that lessons were typically less structured and that the children didn't study maths until they were seven. "I was talking to a teacher in England and they couldn't believe that such a policy could work", she said, "but evidently it does!"

The unconventional learning environment even challenged their understanding of classroom discipline, as Ava explained: "We went to a year one class, and we were surprised to find them sitting still, ready to learn. We'd got used to seeing the children running amok in the woods, but they were actually very mature."

Most of all, the visit provided invaluable experience for their future careers. "It'll stand in good stead for my PGCE", remarked Jo, "I'm applying for it this year, and I think it shows a bit of individualism to go off and do something like this."

Back at Warwick, the foursome are now preparing for their summer exams, which will undoubtedly be aided by this unique experience.

Calum Murray

Finally conducting on-site investigations

"As a third-year undergraduate, I found Warwick's Venice programme for Art Historians a shining highlight of my time at university. After years of studying in eager anticipation, the opportunity to finally study within the great city was a huge privilege.

In addition to the very comprehensive course offered by the History of Art department, which included site visits to numerous churches and galleries in Venice as well as places further afield such as Padua and Bologna, language classes were offered by the University of Ca' Foscari for those interested in improving their Italian.

I found the entire experience hugely beneficial to my learning. I was able to engage with my course in a completely different way, as the freedom to conduct on-site investigations into my case studies as well as to immerse myself in a thriving artistic culture was of inordinate value to my undergraduate degree."

Ed Borland



AT HER FEET

"In October 2012, the performance of *At Her Feet*, a play by South African playwright Nadia Davids, was performed at Warwick University's Reinvention Centre. I produced the project, which was made possible by a grant from the IATL Student as Producer Scheme, and had to liaise and communicate with three teams: the production team in South Africa, the playwright's team in London, and our team in Warwick. This international project was challenging and stimulating for both the audience and production team, bringing issues such as Islamophobia and the struggle of Cape Muslim women into reality for undergraduates, postgraduates and lecturers alike.

Not only did the project interest me academically, but it also tested my abilities to persuade, negotiate and liaise between the various teams involved with the project. This valuable and rare experience combined both academia and the challenges that come with running any large project, but in a way that most students are not exposed to, and in doing so allowed me to develop skills which I consider to be incredibly valuable for me both individually and in terms of a career."

Charlotte Finley

HOW TO BECOME A PUBLISHED AUTHOR



"In the summer of 2011, I gained IATL funding to complete a research project in Colombia. Having examined global entrepreneurial data, I found that Colombia had far higher gender equality for entrepreneurs than the UK. I wanted to explore the reasons for this gap and hoped to prove that Britain can learn much from 'developing' nations. I was in my first year and the process seemed daunting: I wrote a funding proposal and project outline, explaining all my costs, found an academic supervisor, and established my safety during the trip. I spent July travelling around Colombia on a truck, speaking to any female entrepreneurs I could find. Conducting research is initially quite scary, but it gets much easier once people realise you just want to understand. When I returned, I wrote a report for IATL, which (after intense editing) became a piece in the Reinvention journal. Academically, I have learned so much. Not simply about government policy towards entrepreneurs, but how to propose a project independently, gain funding, carry out research, and eventually get published. IATL funding gave me a view into the academic world that you cannot get during your undergraduate courses. I am truly grateful for the incredible experience."

Jennifer Quigley-Jones

IATL GRANT DEADLINES

We offer grants for all Warwick staff as Academic Fellowships (to develop or revise a module or course), Pedagogic Interventions (for a one-off event which will enhance teaching and learning) and Strategic Project Grants for larger projects which address the University's strategic aims.

We offer grants to students under our Student as Producer strand for performance-based and research projects. We also encourage students to work together on projects with other students or staff with the Student as Producer (Collaboration) grants.

IATL also offers Performance Festival bursaries to support student performance projects taking place outside The University of Warwick, for example The National Student Drama Festival and The Edinburgh Fringe Festival.

For more information about these grants and how to apply, check Funding on the IATL website www.warwick.ac.uk/iatl/funding

STAFF FUNDING:

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| Pedagogic Interventions, Academic Fellowships, Strategic Projects | 10 May 2013 |
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STUDENT FUNDING:

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| Student as Producer (Performance) | 15 March 2013 21 June 2013 |
| Performance Festival Bursaries | 22 March 2013 |

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