

'Showing Off' – promoting undergraduate Media work beyond the bounds of the University

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Background

This project sought to enhance the undergraduate experience and the subsequent employability of Media graduates through engagement with exhibition design, curating and events organising.

The funding provided an 'Exhibition Box' which was utilised within the new and innovative Photography and Digital Media module – Exhibiting and Exhibitions.

The 'Exhibition Box' provided reusable equipment for display (flats, frames, benches, mounting, display cases etc), marketing materials (flyer template) and a guidance pack.

With the support of a tutor, students became project managers for Photographic and Digital Media exhibitions at the Broadstairs Campus.

Through the module's content of guest speakers, exhibition planning workshops, gallery visits and committee meetings, students have taken exhibition planning through to successful delivery.

The project has also brought external speakers into the University to share industry and creative arts experience and has encouraged greater networking with external agencies.

Approach/methodology

The approach used was transferring theory into practice.

Outcomes

Three exhibitions have thus far benefited from this project:

- *You Are Here!*
- *The 'C' Word*
- *FOL10*

In addition an ongoing visual project has been formed:

OPEN EYE which offers further opportunity to promote and exhibit work publicly.

Exhibition feedback from visitors has been very positive and the students' formative and summative evaluations of the module evidence their perception of the module's relevance.

Students benefit through being equipped with employable skills and through engagement in activities and experiences which have currency beyond the University.

Based upon the quality of the work exhibited, students have been invited to undertake commissioned work. For example, the Mayor of Margate and his various officers requested that their formal portraits be taken by one of the photography students. Other students are now contributing images to Thanet District Council, Canterbury City Council and the Environment Agency.

The project has provided a case study for the Department to document and examine its underpinning philosophy of theory/practice interchange.

Enhancing RIT

Evaluation of the project will be disseminated across CCCU as a model for engaging students in project management and forging links with external partners.

Reflections and any future plans

The 'Exhibition Box' has a legacy. Future students who take this module will 'inherit' the reusable exhibition equipment and most importantly benefit from a now established culture of exhibition. At the point of proposal the Broadstairs Campus had yet to develop any tradition in exhibiting visual students' work. Now students assume and expect to exhibit throughout the year.

Students, buoyed by their campus success, have subsequently exhibited throughout Kent and London. Since the initial exhibition, students have not only sought further opportunities to exhibit but have repeatedly taken the initiative whilst demonstrating a clear understanding for project feasibility and the need to approach tasks in a pragmatic, confident/competent way.

Discussions are currently underway with Thanet District Council for additional exhibition space at Broadstairs Harbour. This area of the town has a tremendous footfall and would offer further opportunity for students to show their work publicly.

Discussions are also taking place with the Sidney Cooper Gallery in Canterbury to show key works from summer 2010 and it is hoped that some London space will be secured for graduation work by 2011.

As the related programmes have developed in both numbers and ambition, the need for still more exhibition space and equipment is beginning to become apparent. Whilst challenging, this can only be perceived as a positive and ways to facilitate expansion are currently being explored.

Feedback from the Visitors Book includes:

This fantastic exhibition is a tremendous credit to the Media Department, its staff and, above all, its students. The University has much to be proud of here. I thought it was brilliant.

I didn't realise that the quality of work amongst students was so high and I am glad that the exhibition has shown me the amazing work students are doing.

A superb display of high-quality work, showing both skill and imagination. I enjoyed the exhibition immensely.

What a stunning show – congratulations to all!

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The exhibition



Students building the exhibition