



PTAS Project Report (for SMALL PROJECT GRANTS)

Project Title:

Student-led portfolio assessment in a large pre-honours cross-university elective.

Principal Investigator : Michael Barany

School / Department : Social and Political Science / Science Technology and Innovation Studies

Team members : Michael Barany, Sophie Buijsen

For further information, please contact: Michael Barany, M.Barany@ed.ac.uk

Grant recipients are expected to submit a brief report at the conclusion of their project which outlines briefly the following : nature of work completed; outcomes; benefits to student learning/student experience; dissemination activity (where relevant – actual and planned) and how the activity could inform future work or be transferred to other subject areas in the University. The brief report will be published on the IAD web pages.

Brief Report (maximum 500 words)

What did you do?

We undertook research and development on a new approach to student-led assessment in History of Science 1 by Barany (organiser) and Buijsen (lead tutor and project research assistant). The grant supported efforts beyond the ordinary scope of assessment design and implementation to track student experiences, develop enriched guidance and exemplars, suggest adjustments to ongoing and future implementation, and evaluate the assessment at the end of the course. We administered a longitudinal survey of student experience and expectations, monitored student feedback during the course, and analysed student submissions in the context of these data.

What did you find out?

As expected, the new assessment met with uncertainty from students at the start. We tracked students' growing confidence during the semester as they calibrated their expectations and study approach and became familiar with the course. Students came to value the design and take advantage of its benefits for both subject exploration and skill development. We identified supports that helped students gain confidence and benefit from the course design, some of which were implemented as we went and others of which will inform future iterations. The self-evaluation component of the student-led assessment design was especially effective at supporting student insight and engagement. We found that students generally had an accurate view of their performance, with most final tutor-assigned and formally moderated marks confirming or slightly increasing those proposed in self-evaluations.

How did you disseminate your findings?

The project team jointly presented preliminary findings at the university's 2021 Teaching and Learning Conference, generating an enthusiastic response and stimulating discussion. A preliminary report will be further edited and shared within SSPS and CAHSS. The project team



also hope to publish an account of this assessment model in an appropriate newsletter relevant to History of Science university teaching, as anticipated in the proposal.

What have been the benefits to student learning?

We found that students at all levels of engagement in the course, from those aiming for distinction marks to those hoping for an easy and horizon-broadening course they could pass as part of a demanding schedule, showed both enriched attainment of the course learning goals and an enriched appreciation of what they had attained. The assessment design appeared to increase course accessibility for students with a wide variety of backgrounds and preparation while creating effective opportunities for students to develop skills and perspectives most relevant to their own degrees and ambitions. The course's external examiner commended the "creative, innovative and exciting approaches" as "a thoroughly excellent example of student-led imaginative learning and assessment."

How could these benefits be extended to other parts of the university?

The assessment model, as studied and improved through this study, has a broad potential to be adopted in courses at multiple different levels in the university. It is most suited to courses with multi-disciplinary enrolments and/or with exploratory designs that do not need to serve as foundations for specific future points of the curriculum, particularly at the pre-honours level. Findings and recommendations will be made available to the university community through appropriate channels.

Who can be contacted for further details?

Michael Barany, M.Barany@ed.ac.uk



Financial statement (please delete as appropriate):

[Please see recent email communications on this point. The total expended is £1,335.85.]

This project has remaining funds unused and we require details of how to return the balance. The Principal Investigator or School Administrator appropriate can provide financial statements showing the funding usage as and when required by the UoE Development Trusts who may require it for auditing purposes.

Please send an electronic PDF copy of this report to:

Email: iad.teach@ed.ac.uk