

**Title:** Using a university arts gallery to enhance the student learning experience

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### Session Learning Outcomes

By the end of this session, delegates will be able to:

- Discuss the presented research in relation to their own practice
- Critique and make suggestions for how to evaluate alternative learning experiences
- Suggest how similar initiatives might be created and supported in their own institutions

### Session Outline

This research was funded by a SEDA small grant – Winter and Chapman (2014)

The research presented in this session builds on a previous project 'Lessons from a Contemporary Art Gallery' which investigated the informal student learning experience in a university-based contemporary art gallery in Plymouth University (Winter et al. 2015). The research concluded that structured, disciplinary relevant gallery experiences were potentially valuable in developing students' social capital (Bourdieu 1986) and interpretive synthesis (Mansilla 2010). Recommendations from the study included: promoting the gallery as a multidisciplinary, inclusive, student relevant space; making clear links between exhibitions and disciplines; making clear benefits of engaging with art to graduate development; signposting the gallery as an integral part of the university as a scholarly community. The research project reported on here responded to these recommendations by developing and evaluating case studies of curriculum-based teaching and learning in the gallery.

The aims of the project were to:

- Conduct curriculum-based teaching and learning in the contemporary art gallery at Plymouth
- Evaluate the impacts that gallery-based teaching and learning has for students
- Promote the contemporary art gallery at Plymouth as a multidisciplinary, inclusive and student relevant space

The project engaged with academics from different disciplines (media, sociology, biomedical science and law) that developed teaching and learning experiences using two distinct exhibitions ('Walk-On', 2014 and 'Envelope', 2015). In each case the teaching was innovative and experimental – the process of designing and undertaking the teaching was captured through observation and interviewing the academics involved. The impacts for students were

explored through questionnaires and interviews. This paper presents these findings and provides research –informed recommendations for educational/academic developers who are interested in promoting teaching and learning in alternate spaces with particular emphasis on how the gallery can be used to teach educational development themes.

### **Session Activities and Approximate Timings**

The outline of the workshop is as follows;

- Presentation of research – 20 minutes
- Indicative questions for discussion 15 minutes -
- This research provides preliminary evidence of the challenges and benefits of using gallery space and contemporary art for enhancing student learning – what other forms of research and evaluation might be appropriate in this setting?
- How might participants develop similar initiatives in their own institution?
- What support might participants need themselves to do this?
- Presentation of resource(s) to assist interested parties in developing similar initiatives in their own institution – 5 minutes
- Summary discussion and question/answers – 5 minutes

### **References**

Bourdieu, P. 1986, "The Forms of Capital". In the Handbook of Theory and Research for the Sociology of Education. ed Richardson, J, G. Greenwood Press, New York. Pp. 231-258.

Mansilla, B., A. 2010. "Assessing student work at disciplinary crossroads". Change: The Magazine of Higher Learning 37: 14-21.

Winter J, Chapman S & Treasure K 2014 'Contemporary art as extra-curricular learning: Lessons from a university art gallery' The International Journal of Arts Education