

# Numeracy and the History Undergraduate



Commenced: 2005

## What is it?

The project aims to promote learner autonomy by facilitating a learning environment for the development of undergraduate student research projects. The project is focused on a core level 5 module on a BA (Hons) History programme. The module helps prepare students to undertake a self-directed research project which may form the basis for their final year dissertation work. Particular emphasis is placed on student reflection on their own learning development and the module also includes a Personal Development Files (PDF) element. In addition the project has been widened to accommodate a collaborative venture with the University of Central Lancashire (UCLAN) which is linked to their Employability CETL. This aspect of the project is concerned with the role of numeracy within the undergraduate history curriculum which carries with it interesting, not to say dynamic, implications for learner autonomy.

## What is involved?

The module is structured around four taught seminar/workshops which at the beginning of the module help guide the students towards their individual project. The latter is undertaken during the remainder of the module. During 2005-06 the module team is experimenting with a newly constructed blackboard site to enhance the process of inter-active learning, and in particular integrating it with small group work by linking the group's activity to a set of seminar based exercises. The PDF component is seen as an essential means of enhancing learner autonomy by raising the importance of learner reflection. A more long-term objective is to use the collaborative project with UCLAN to raise student confidence in the deployment of numeracy skills.

## Why is the project important to the CETL and the University?

To help facilitate the participation of history students in a progressive inter-active learning environment where they are encouraged to reflect on their own learning and to be increasingly aware of their own capabilities and learning opportunities. This is developed within the context not of 'independent study' (a standard feature of history degrees) but of promoting learner autonomy within an open and flexible framework which aims to foster student confidence in their own learning. This goes directly to learner engagement and

underpins the process by which history students themselves can disseminate their ideas and articulate the relevance of their skills and capabilities in non-university environments. The collaborative work with UCLAN opens up a linkage with another CETL and provides the means of other funding opportunities

## What do you hope the project will achieve?

In the short-term, to use the new blackboard site to provide an inter-active learning source for the students which will enable them both to develop their research based projects and to integrate the PDF component. Also important is the process of disseminating to other history staff around the module's development and to involve staff directly in providing advice and guidance to students. In the long-term, building on the collaboration with UCLAN and developing contacts with other historians engaged with CETLS to widen the scope of dissemination to the broader history/humanities community.

## What impact do you hope the project will have?

The initial impact will be on the BA (Hons) History Programme which has approximately 250 students and is supported by around 12 colleagues. The aim is to facilitate a high level of engagement in the evaluation of seminars/workshops/group work etc as a means of promoting the greater participation of students in their own learning. The linkages with historians in other universities will widen the impact of the project as well as providing a learning curve for the project team.

## Future Developments

As part of the projects on-going activities, future developments include the establishment of procedures for evaluating the student's engagement with the blackboard site and how this might support the PDF initiative. There will be further developments in the collaborative aspects of the project, including a joint paper (with the colleague from UCLAN) to be delivered at a national conference.



Sheffield  
Hallam University

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## Links

### Project Academic Research Activity

Roger Lloyd-Jones (SHU) and Geoff Timmins (UCLAN) 'Numeracy and the History Undergraduate'. 8<sup>th</sup> Annual History in Higher Education Conference, University of Oxford April 2006

### The Historian and Research Black Board Site

The Black Board sites facilitates student learning by providing:

- Module Documents. These include a comprehensive module guide with assessment, pro formas for report writing relating to the assessment, and a Learning Log for aiding reflection and planning forward.
- Learning Materials. These include information on planning historical research (e.g. aims, objectives and research questions, the use and nature of evidence, historical methods), as well as material relating to PDP (employability for history graduates, and core skills).
- Resources. These include an extensive collection of links to online history sources and online search engines for libraries, archives, and record offices.

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This information can be made available in other formats.  
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