

# Work Based Projects In The Humanities: Autonomous Learners And Satisfied Students?

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## Background

- Work Based Projects in the Humanities established for 15 years but no quantifiable research undertaken.
- 19 level 6 students **leading** projects across external and SHU based projects
- 64 level 5 students involved in projects across external and SHU based projects

## Rationale

- Create a benchmark for WBP in the Humanities
- Engage students in a transparent research exercise in assessing their perceptions of self as autonomous learners throughout the module.
- Gather feedback from partner/stakeholder agencies on their perception of our students' learning/skills.
- Gain knowledge on how to improve tutor delivery, module design and student experience.

## Method/ Approach

- Mind map of student expectation of WBP outcomes
- 3 Skill Audits across the academic year
- Feedback sought from project hosts
- Goal Free questionnaire concerning student perceptions of:
  - skill, attributes and strategy acquisition;
  - degree relevance;
  - transfer of skill/employability;
  - advice to tutor on module improvement;
  - advice to new students;
  - how to advertise WBP.

## Evaluation

- Mind Maps give a pictorial representation of thinking processes
- Total scoring of 3 self assessed Skills Audits across the academic year graphically represented ( See Fig 1)
- Responses to 6 goal free questions collated as a bank of evidence.

## Successes

- The students valued the experience; saw its relevance particularly towards employability, independence, degree and university experience as a whole.
- Skills self assessment started at different levels for second and final years but grew in proportion across the WBP experience. (See Fig 1)
- Feedback through the 6 goal free questions was either positive or supportive criticism
- Realisation of personal growth

## Unexpected spin-off

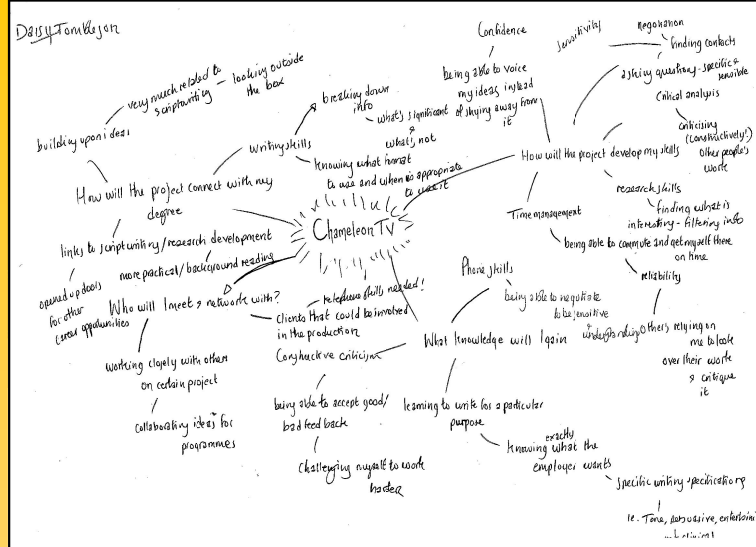
- Students enjoyed sharing ideas and learning of others' projects
- Counteracting isolation on non-voc courses for vulnerable students
- Clearer picture of career management

## Challenges/ Development needed

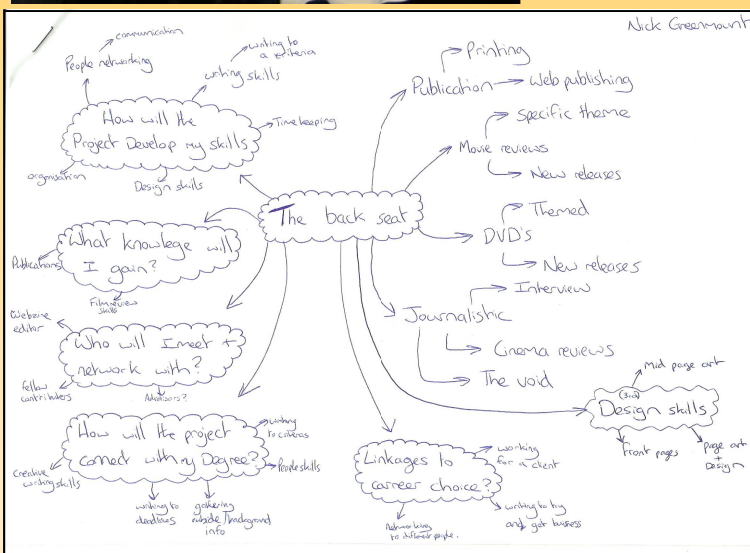
- Time/ support for additional research student needed to analyse more data
- Collating written feedback: every response is different- how to summarise or represent?
- Limited time to contact project host/stakeholder feedback.

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Right: Daisy builds the bigger picture on her WBP at Chameleon TV company



Left: Amy, Francine and Collette, Work Based Project students sweep Volunteering England Gold Awards and runner up Hallam Volunteer of Year



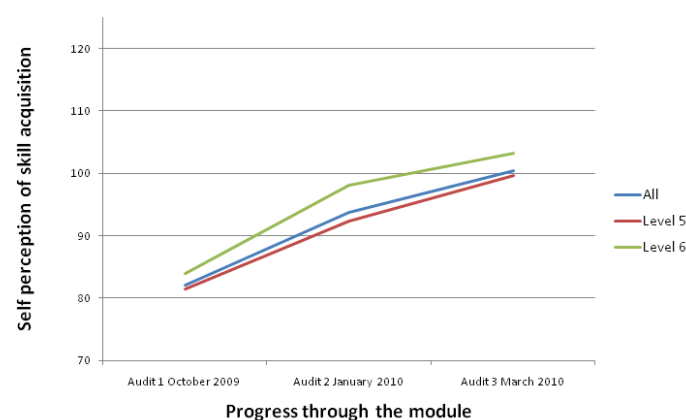
## The students said:

*'A course that allows you to prove to yourself and others that you can stand on your own 2 feet in real situations, not just in an exam hall.'*  
*'WBP add variety to a degree and provides a student with a fantastic opportunity. It is a great learning curve.'*  
*'Harder than you think but totally worth it!'*  
*'Throws you out of the safe university world into reality'*  
*'I think it is a brilliant way to display independence.'*  
*'There is something for every personality and every ability. I've got so much out of it that I know I will use in my future career.'*  
*'It's helped with the loneliness'*  
*Brilliant in helping you realise the skills you already have and what you have acquired'*

Above: Nick maps out his film journalism ideas and the wider implications for his degree and career choice

Right: Fig 1: Increase in perceived skills acquisition at levels 5 and 6.

## Self-perception of skill acquisition differentiated by module level



Left: Sheffield 6th formers learn about the work of the UK Human Trafficking Centre from WBP students studying on the BA English Language degree. 6th formers asked about the project and the flexibility of the degree through WBP.

## Project hosts said:

*'Work-based Learning has proved to be a considerable asset to Hallam Volunteering. Recognising that student-led volunteer projects can provide invaluable experience and the skills required to thrive in today's workplace and economy, rewarding volunteers with accreditation has provided great incentive for students to take advantage of the opportunities which HV offer. My personal experience with WBL has been exceptionally positive; as the co-ordinator for 8 student-led projects, I have noticed that many of the volunteers who have been especially dedicated or eager to take on extra responsibility are enrolled in WBL. Overall, those volunteers who are aware that they are required to self-reflect and evidence their experience for WBL have been particularly organised this year and have made excellent contributions'. Julia Fitzgerald –Hallam Volunteering Coordinator*