



Cultural Academy: An innovative approach to developing culturally aware professionals

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University of Surrey 2008/09 Cultural Academy

<http://culturalacademy.pbwiki.com>

<http://immersivexperience.pbwiki.com>

30% of our students originate from over 130 different countries. They have chosen to experience another culture as part of their education



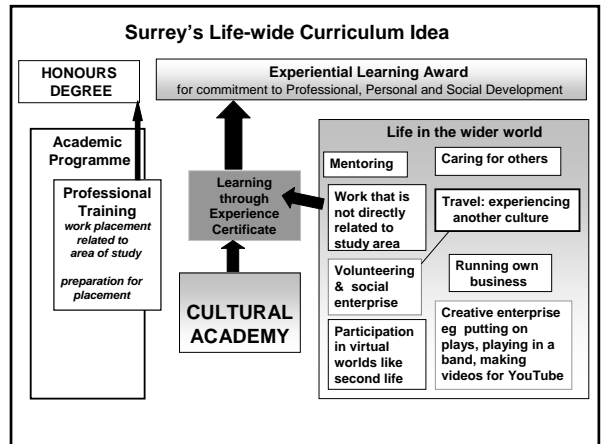
UK students are themselves culturally diverse



Surrey is 42nd and 49th for its proportion of international staff and students respectively in the THES - QS World University Rankings



Over 10% of our students on our year-long professional training scheme are placed in another country



Cultural Academy experience aims to:

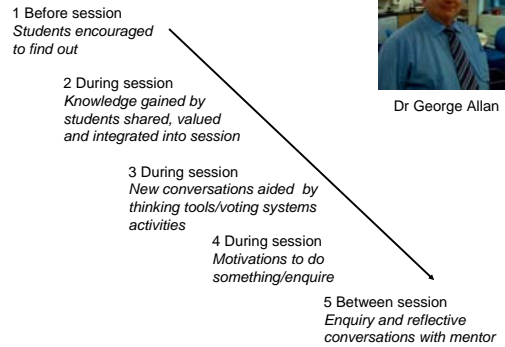
- Support a culturally diverse community so that participants are able to share their experiences and understandings of culture
- Engage participants in thinking about their own cultural identity
- Facilitate enquiry into our own multicultural campus society
- Influence the university – help it appreciate the cultural dimension of learning for a complex world
- Have fun learning – help people create a sense of cultural wellbeing
- Help our international students make the transition to a new way of life.



Pedagogic model – Enquiry Based Learning (productive and appreciative enquiry)



Dr George Allan



our community of enquirers



Norman Jackson

Nimmi Hutnick

Vasso Vydelingum



Sarah Campbell
Y3 Psychology
evaluation & campus surveys

Lori Riley
M level student
micro-conversation research

Ben Mercer & William Patterson
film makers

THE 08-09 Cultural Academy

- CA comprises two connected processes:
- 1) A multi-cultural welcome workshop designed to help students coming from a culture that is very different to our own to share their sense of bewilderment and help each other make sense of their new environment
- 2) A series of four workshops and two or three enterprises. The later begin in October and are completed in March during the University's International Festival. A description of the Cultural Academy with illustrative film and student commentary can be found at
- <http://surreyculturalacademy.pbwiki.com>
- http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=-zD_bsyclg

Activities for the 08-09 group

- Multi-Cultural welcome
- Student led design of workshops
- Planning and organising a multi-cultural party: The Big Cultural Bash
- Designing and producing a Multi-cultural guide
- Sharing their experiences of the CA & disseminating info to fellow students at the I Festival March 09

What did they think?

- Evaluations reveal high levels of personal agency represent the tendency to understand one's action in terms of its consequences and implications for professional practice.
- *'Knowing more about other cultures', 'finding new things about other cultures', and 'the diversity of everybody's culture' as fascinating.*
- Planning and organising the multicultural party: the "Big Cultural Bash" and creating a Guide to the Multi-Cultural Campus were found to be successful and worthwhile cultural enterprises.

Evaluation of Learning: Sarah Campbell psychology placement student

Participants' responses show personal growth and professional development :

New skills - new ways to research and ask questions, all used terms in their accounts such as 'enquiry' and 'appreciative enquiry'

Knowledge *'The names session taught me that whilst for some a name is simply a tag they are known by, for others it may be a form of family or cultural pride'.*

'When I drew my (concept) map I felt it was comprehensive, and was doubtful whether I would be able to add much to it. I added plenty, developing ideas and adding new ones'.

Self-Awareness: *'It was the first time I realized just how personal the idea of 'cultural identity' is to each and every one of us.'*

New things about themselves: *'I learned what culture is and to respect its deeper meanings'; 'I learned to be more patient with others'.*

New insights on learning. *'I began to feel that the type of learning I had been accustomed to was only one type of learning that could be beneficial'.*

Wider context

Participants generalised their thoughts and learning in the Cultural Academy to wider contexts.

*'It gives you a flavour of how culture penetrates every aspect of our lives'.
'Such education makes our interactions with others in today's global society more rich and effective-learning for a complex world'.*

Stereotypes challenged

Participants said how much Cultural Academy made them think about existing stereotypes or assumptions they held, and whether these were a result of actual experience or the contexts they had been exposed to.

'I think there are a lot of impressions and judgements I had about certain countries or ethnic groups...I started to think there may be a lot of assumptions we make'

Similarities as important as differences

All participants expected to see differences but were surprised by the similarities. 'I discovered that there are many similarities'; 'we were not as different as we initially thought'; 'I realised the differences but also the similarities'.

Enhanced appreciation: 'The most important thing I have learnt in Cultural Academy is the need for a positive attitude towards different cultures'.

Sense of community: relationships, trust and mutual respect:

Participants recognised that the relationships they had developed 'was one of the best things about the Academy', 'the special relationships that were formed came from trust and respect, this meant the group could achieve more'.

How is C A contributing to students' development of professional capability?

- **P** – Personal Skill & Development
- **R** – Reflective Practice
- **O** – Organisational skills
- **F** – Feelings for others
- **E** – Emotional intelligence
- **S** – Sensitivity and empathy
- **S** – Self Awareness
- **I** – Innovative and social enterprising
- **O** – Openness to other people/cultures
- **N** – Non judgemental
- **A** – Anti - discriminatory practice
- **L** – Liberated and free cultural enquirer

Final Word

- Developing the spirit to be 'a certain sort of person'.... a sort of person that cares about culture, wants to learn about it and be part of a multicultural world
- Any Questions?

