

EXPERIENTIAL LEARNING IN PLANNING EDUCATION



University of the
Sunshine Coast
The best of both worlds

ISSUE 03 | AUGUST 2013

THE FOCUS

This newsletter features outcomes of the second phase of our project: two of our case studies in experiential learning activities which will be expanded on in the online toolkit now under development. We foreshadow recommendations about PIA planning school accreditation arising

from our project, and workshops and upcoming presentations about the project. Time on the project has flown quickly past. All members of the project team are working towards the final report deadline at end of September 2013.

Case Study Samplers

Over the past twelve months the project's university partners have been testing existing and new ideas for experiential learning activities and assessment tasks in their classes. Two brief samplers of the types of activities cased studied are included in this newsletter.

This data collection phase included evaluation of the chosen activities and tasks by students, staff and professional practitioners, as well as critical reflection by the project partners. Full case studies have now been written up for each test case to inform a deeper understanding of the experiential learning principles developed in this project and to create resources for the project's toolkit website.



Dr Nicola Verdon from Sheffield Hallam University giving a lecture on rural life in Sheffield.

International Study Tour—La Trobe University

Recently 42 Humanities and Social Science students (including 20 undergraduate Planning students) from across five courses and seven disciplines completed a two week study tour which was an accredited subject in Sheffield, UK in conjunction with Sheffield Hallam University. The subject focused on the history and development of Sheffield and the global forces that have shaped it through examination of its people, economy and urban form. Working in multidisciplinary teams, students focused on critical aspects of the city (its culture, literature, history, demography, migration, politics and planning) through a range of case studies, fieldwork, research, practical exercises and site visits, in exploring the city's story, culture and role in the world.

Preliminary feedback from students demonstrated the transformative nature of such study tours in an overseas setting in building confidence to successfully tackle new learning settings, the challenges of being outside of their comfort zone and to produce high quality presentations under time and resource constraints.

Link to video of the tour: www.latrobe.edu.au/news/articles/2013/release/study-tour-to-historic-uk



Students visiting Park Hill Council Estate and investigating its regeneration.



Students on a visit to Chatsworth House bumped into Vernon an ex-town planner!





Day in the Life of a Planner – Edith Cowan University

Based on a work-integrated learning approach students are guided by the unit coordinator to find a suitable planning practice in order to 'shadow' a planning practitioner in the private or public sector. Students work with the unit coordinator to organise this work placement and to develop their own criteria to reflect on practice experienced in the unit (course).

The students work on a variety of projects that require the application of knowledge and theory acquired in the classroom. Each student works with a mentor in the planning practitioner's office for a minimum of one day. They received constructive feedback on workplace activities from the practitioner. Students are exposed to 'real world' statutory and strategic planning projects, including urban design, urban development and sustainable transport projects.



Final year ECU work-placement students presenting to industry partners.

Toolkit website

Work has also commenced on the material which will be extracted from the case-studies to be included in the toolkit. Planning academics will be able access resources enabling them to make changes to their existing practice in developing experiential learning and teaching resources. They can 'tweak' their course by adding a small experiential learning activity or simply improving informal assessment of student learning outcomes. Or they can plan more major changes to course activities and methods of assessment to improve experiential learning outcomes.

Planning School Accreditation Policy Recommendations

At the July workshop, the project team discussed potential suggestions for improvements to the PIA planning school accreditation policy. Feedback from our student surveys of Experiential Learning activities shows that these learning outcomes cannot be achieved in any other way. The main benefits of integrating EL throughout a planning education are that it:

- improves student confidence about having the skills to be able to deal with complex issues and instills the idea of lifelong learning in graduates;
- exposes students to issues of diversity of communities such as age, gender, cultural, disability, and Indigenous; and

- contributes to graduate attributes desired by prospective employers such as communication, teamwork, and critical thinking.

The team believes that, in seeking accreditation, a university needs to be able to demonstrate how it is using EL across a four year undergraduate program, with course activities building in greater complexity and exposure to real world experience in each year of the program. EL could be evidenced through a range of activities, from guest presenters, field trips, role plays, and design studios of a 'real' site or client. The final report will suggest changes that could be considered to the PIA accreditation policy.

HOW TO FIND OUT MORE ABOUT THE PROJECT EXPERIENTIAL LEARNING

Visit our website at www.usc.edu.au/explearning which has copies of the previous newsletters and the recent presentation given at the PIA National Congress 2013.

OR

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION

Please contact Christine Slade, Project Manager, email cslade@usc.edu.au

UPCOMING EVENTS

- ANZAPS workshop 27–29 September 2013 hosted by University of Canberra—opportunity for you to give us your feedback about our proposed changes to the accreditation policy.
- ISOCARP Congress presentation 1–4 October at Royal International Convention Centre, Brisbane.

Support for this project has been provided by the Australian Government Office for Learning and Teaching. The views in this project do not necessarily reflect the views of the Australian Government Office for Learning and Teaching.

