Title of Project: History and Policy in Practice

Project Leader: Dr Anna Maerker
Co Project Leaders and Implementors: Mel Porter and Fiona Holland

Lead Department: History

Other contributors/Departments: History & Policy, Institute of Contemporary British History

PROJECT DETAILED

Outputs: What has been produced thus far? (From 1 July – 31 Dec 2012)

Autumn term History and Policy in Practice (HPIP) course attended by 31 postgraduate history students from departments including History, ICBH, War Studies and Law. This comprised:

- Recruitment of student intern Michelle Liebst (History PhD) to assist with delivery of Autumn term programme and gain practical experience with H&P Public Affairs team (Sep-Dec 2012)
- Two, 2-hour interactive training sessions with H&P Public Affairs staff (on 25 Oct and 1 Nov), providing practical understanding of: the public policy environment in the UK; evidence-based policy making; how academics in general, and historians in particular, can engage with policy makers and media; taking opportunities and overcoming challenges.
- A one-day expert workshop on 7 Nov, chaired by History Today editor Paul Lay, with King’s historians (Edgar Jones, Pat Thane, Andrew Blick), high-profile policy makers and opinion-formers (former civil servant Sir John Chilcot, DfE Chief Research Officer Richard Bartholomew, Meridian journalist Derek Johnson, Jill Rutter of the Daycare Trust, Anthony Seldon and former Downing Street adviser James O’Shaughnessy). Students worked in groups to respond to real-world scenarios in three major policy areas: nuclear power and security, childcare policy and the power of the Prime Minister.
- Two drop-in sessions for students to seek advice and feedback on their written task: to produce a 1,000-word Action Plan for Policy Influence, showing how historical research could be applied to an issue of current policy/public concern. Deadline for submissions: 7 Jan 2013.
- Planning underway for the second HPIP course to run in Spring term; recruitment of Spring term student intern Gareth Turner (Public Policy MA).

Outcomes/Impact: To what extent are you achieving the original aims of the project? Please include examples where possible.

The intended impacts of the course are listed below, with comments from participants, speakers and the student intern. Full evaluation of the autumn term programme has taken place, and has been used to inform/adapt plans for the spring term course. Detailed evaluation material will be provided with the final report for this project.
1. Gain a comprehensive, real-life understanding from experts of the challenges and opportunities of bringing history to bear on policy making and influencing.

**Workshop participants:**
"By creating an informed and dynamic environment, supported by excellent speakers, this event helped me connect my historical research and perspective to real policy areas. I went away not only with a renewed enthusiasm for my own work, but a clear understanding of its potential to influence policy."

"This has been excellent. Well planned, dynamic, very different to normal history events and makes history feel genuinely relevant."

"Thoroughly enjoyed the day. Really liked the formal of knowledge – discussion – feedback."

**Student intern Michelle Liebst:**
"The highlight was the centrepiece of the course: the Expert Workshop... a really engaging and highly experimental event that took students out of their comfort zone while still utilising their historical skills. It was also a great privilege to see well-known speakers in a stimulating environment and provided me with exposure to a great work culture, diverse people and professional practice."

**Workshop speakers:**
"It was more than good fun - I thought good sharing of history, current political reality, and conceptual challenge."

"a most interesting and rewarding morning"

2. Gain practical experience in applying history to today's policy problems through exercises in structured training sessions.

**Training session participants:**
"…regarding yesterdays training session and the course as a whole. I think this is very good and useful definitely for myself as I would like to get involved in this type of work once I have completed my PhD."

"a really good introduction – the SWOT task was really useful."


The deadline for submission of Autumn term Action plans was 7 Jan 2013. They will be marked alongside those from the spring term course, with those received by the deadline assessed by an expert panel to decide the winner of the History Department prize. We will report on the students' work in our final report.

4. Two student interns will gain substantial professional experience on paid, 5-month studentships

**Student intern Michelle Liebst:**
"I was invited to offer new ideas for the running of the next course in February, which I will be participating in as a student. I feel very fortunate to have been involved and H&P’s progress this term has certainly made a positive contribution to the development of the next course and, hopefully, for a MA course in the future.

"I have been able to develop key graduate level skills such as multi-tasking, organisation and problem solving within a fantastic learning environment as Mel and Fiona have been extremely accommodating."
### Supportive factors: What are the main factors that are contributing to the successful progress of the project?

- Willingness of students to undertake an extra-curricular course to gain new skills and knowledge and enhance their future career prospects.
- Access to H&P’s extensive network of policy and media contacts, and top historians based at King’s, to secure high-profile and engaging speakers for expert workshop.
- Recruitment of outstanding interns from King’s postgrad student community to enable delivery of the project.
- Expertise of H&P public affairs staff to provide practical training for students, and their willingness to commit additional time beyond core work to deliver HPIP.

### Challenges: Have you experienced any barriers or challenges in developing your project? What could be done to support innovation in the curriculum?

- Bureaucracy and lack of appropriate HR systems in place to recruit and pay project interns, delaying both recruitment and payment of Autumn-term intern.
- Recruitment of students to the course proved more challenging than anticipated; a proportion of initial enquiries did not translate into sign-ups for the course.
- Balancing the delivery of an extra-curricular course and submission of written work with students’ existing MA/PhD workload and timetable e.g. it proved impossible to arrange the expert workshop on a day when no students had teaching, preventing some from staying for the whole day.
- Ensuring the course is appropriate/responsive to students’ varying experience/understanding of UK public policy making and to their specific subject interests.
- Preparing students adequately to produce a piece of written work that takes them out of their comfort zone and requires different skills to essay-writing.
- Packing into the training sessions and workshop everything we aimed to (for the Spring term, the training session is being extended to 2.5 hours and the timetable for the expert workshop revised).

### Recommendations: Based on your projects, what recommendations would you make for improving the curriculum and student experience generally? Are there any wider implications of your project for the College/University undergraduate and/or postgraduate curriculum? In particular what would be the implications of introducing your innovation on a large scale across a range of disciplines?

- There is clear demand among the history PGT and PhD student community for a practical, skills-based course of this nature; that demand could be better met if it were delivered as part of students’ core teaching timetable to prevent clashes with other teaching and deadlines for assessed work. It would be interesting to explore whether similar demand exists among undergraduate history students.
- HPIP demonstrates the benefit of an interdisciplinary approach, weaving together high-quality historical research with expert understanding of the public policy environment, to consider how history might inform and improve policy making.
- HPIP has the potential to be adapted and rolled-out either in full or shortened form to many PGT courses and for PhD students e.g. courses with a specific policy of geographic interest could include a slimmed-down, specialised version of HPIP.
- Aspects of HPIP could be considered for inclusion in KISS-DTC doctoral training programme.
- The involvement of student interns to deliver this course has been beneficial both for the students and
for H&P, but the lack of appropriate systems at College-level for their recruitment and payment has proved a bureaucratic nightmare.

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<th>Dissemination: Has the project been shared with colleagues within and beyond the institution yet? What are you plans to do so?</th>
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<td>- The project has been communicated to academic colleagues in departments across King's (including the Principal), follow-up work will communicate the successes/challenges/opportunities presented by the course e.g. through a proposed presentation at the Excellence in Teaching conference.</td>
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<td>- H&amp;P has promoted HPIP via internal and external media, with a press release issued to selected national media and an <a href="#">article published in the Student News</a> area of the King's website.</td>
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<td>- There is ongoing discussion with immediate colleagues in ICBH &amp; History to explore how the HPIP model can be integrated – in whole, or in part – to existing teaching e.g. through the History and Policy MA module.</td>
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<td>- There has been initial communication/discussion of HPIP with key contacts outside King's who might facilitate delivery of HPIP through their own institutions/funding streams e.g. AHRC, Institute for Government, Cambridge University (academic partners in H&amp;P).</td>
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