

Developing a Meaningful Community of Practice: The Challenges and Opportunities of Revalidating a Degree Programme in Creative and Therapeutic Arts

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This poster presents the colourful and multifaceted influences on the innovative curriculum design of the BA(Hons) Creative and Therapeutic Arts newly validated programme. A critical review was initially engaged with to understand the contemporary evidence base and the recent portfolio of the course. The experienced teaching team brought influence from their varied disciplines of participatory arts, community arts, arts therapies, inclusive arts, counselling and mindfulness.

The course sits at an exciting intersection between therapeutic practice, participatory arts, arts in health and arts in education; drawing from diverse spheres of influence (Swindells *et al.*, 2016). It was a challenge to develop a curriculum that reflected this, and thus the theoretical frameworks of a wide range of subjects were consulted to develop a holistic and relevant curriculum design.



“The University of Choice in Wales and beyond for students, organisations and communities who value vocationally focused education and applied research, which provides solutions to the problems that affect society and economy” (USW, 2015)



The course is taught at the University of South Wales, where there is a strong focus on work-based, experiential learning and a widening access agenda (USW, 2016). This further informed the spiral curriculum which embedded authentic, meaningful practice-based learning at its heart.

In addition to the university context, the course benefits from the unique community arts (Clements, 2018), arts in health (Clements, Hughes and Stiller, 2015) and social prescribing context in Wales (WAG, 2015), as well as the evolving recognition of arts in health nationally (All-Parliamentary Group on Arts, Health and Wellbeing Inquiry Report, 2017). The course activities are featured in a recent Arts Council of Wales publication as an example of the breadth of good practice in this field (ACW, 2018).



Drawing from the critical review, consultation with stakeholders, engagement with the evidence base and pedagogical considerations, an evidence-based spiral curriculum has been developed, proposing a holistic and rigorous training for practitioners in participatory arts, arts in health and those interested in pathways to arts therapies. The programme has embedded the ArtWorks Cymru Quality Principles (ArtWorks Cymru, 2015) throughout to inform the professional standards of the training and practice. The course team bring a wealth of contemporary insights in research and practice across related disciplines and continue to enjoy learning from the students' fresh perspectives.



Challenges
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Creating meaningful, authentic assessments within the parameters of university policies <i>and</i> maintaining parity for all learners • Committing to theoretical frameworks of relevance to underpin the practice – not too little, not too much • Quality assuring the practice without standards of practice, QAA Quality Benchmark or code of practice

Opportunities
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Unique Welsh context; relevance of contemporary policy on Wellbeing of Future Generations and social prescribing • Opportunity to innovate and invigorate the programme and ensure its rigour for contemporary and future practice • Engage students and employers and develop a programme which meets their expectations

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