
Development of CPD by the cultural sector and HEIs

Overview

ArtWorks North East developed a series of accredited and non-accredited evening short courses for artists and media practitioners who work or aspire to work in participatory settings. The courses were part of ArtWorks' exploration to see how employers, commissioners, artists and training providers can jointly consider artist development opportunities. They were piloted in cultural venues in Tyne & Wear between September 2013 and January 2014.

The short courses addressed the pathfinder's research question: what is the progression in learning for students and emerging artists in relation to participatory settings? A report commissioned by ArtWorks North East compiled the findings from ArtWorks pathfinders and recommended a flexible programme of study that combines practical skills such as facilitation and project management, and which develops knowledge about different target groups.

How the work sought to address the issue

The short courses offered opportunities to combine practice, theory, debate and reflection supported by material, toolkits and online resources. The series was delivered by a team of 22 experienced arts practitioners and lecturers from Sunderland and Northumbria universities across a range of arts and media disciplines. The short courses ranged from non-accredited courses at stage 0, through to accredited courses at stage 1, stage 3 and postgraduate to cater for artists at different career stages (NICAT levels 3, 4, 6 and 7). All courses incorporated common core principles and context based sessions. A website was developed to host resources for the series (www.artworks-u.org.uk)

What it achieved

Twenty five people attended one or more of the sessions. Twenty two of them followed the non-accredited route, one successfully completed Stage 1 Participatory Arts in Health and two studied for the Postgraduate Participatory Arts Live Project. An independent evaluation of the short courses found that the courses have been very well received and valued by participants. Both students and the delivery team referred to inspiring conversations, pushing boundaries, learning new approaches and sharing good practice

Lessons learned

The pilot demonstrated the need for a longer lead-in time for marketing and student recruitment. Students preferred shorter sessions (maximum two hours) and potentially daytime sessions. Undergraduates or artists with little experience needed more basic activities and more directed instruction, whereas postgraduate students and experienced artists wanted critical perspectives to help them conceptualise their practice. Fees for the delivery team should include sufficient preparation time for artists who may not have extensive experience in development of academic courses.

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What is happening with the learning now

ArtWorks North East went on to pilot a modified version of a non-accredited short course in May 2014. This was in collaboration with Cultural Spring which is the Sunderland-led Creative People and Places in the North East. It was offered in the daytime and attracted among others, artists who were interested in developing their practice in order to apply for available work in the region. A regular offer to artists across all three Creative People and Places programmes is being rolled out in 2015.

The courses offered at postgraduate level are to be combined into a model for an MA in Participatory Practice.

Opportunities for other stakeholders

Joint development of CPD by the cultural sector and HEIs can provide enhanced provision and development opportunities for all parties involved – artists, academics and students – with opportunities to learn, share best practice, reflect and network.

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