Improving the entrepreneurial capacity of Art & Design students through problem based curricula and multi disciplinary practice. The Arts and Humanities Entrepreneurship Hubs project at UWTSD.

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Undergraduate Art & Design education innately connects the development of abstract, conceptual and philosophical enquiry with practical training in craft and design based skills. Current HE priorities necessitate that this development of autonomous artistic practice is supported with and underpinned by teaching and learning provisions that explore the vocational and entrepreneurial potential of Art & Design.

The Arts and Humanities Entrepreneurship Hubs project (AHEH), a 3-year initiative co-funded by the European Erasmus+ programme, aims to improve the long-term prospects of Arts & Humanities graduates, equipping them with the tools and confidence they need to succeed. The project is timely because of the substantial contribution the creative industries currently contribute to national economies and is in alignment with an emerging emphasis in Universities from the primacy of philosophical enquiry towards a more holistic education that develops and supports the employability of students.

Employing a multi-method research methodology, AHEH identifies perceived gaps in the provision of enterprise education specifically aligned to the needs and interests of Arts and Humanities students. Research findings led to the development of a 5-day training programme with content provided by EU partners with expertise in enterprise education and experience of diverse and novel engagement with industry.
This paper reflects on a L5 professional practice module at Swansea College of Art, UWTSD, which disseminated the AHEH training content at a national level. Using the framework of a problem based curricula students were presented with a series of ‘challenges’ to respond to within inter-disciplinary teams. The ‘challenge films’ were posed by a range of inter-disciplinary external contributors and afforded students opportunities to consider issues related to the social and cultural contexts of their urban infrastructure, including housing, community, mental health support and urban regeneration while affording the opportunity to reflect on the benefits of participatory learning and interdisciplinary collaboration.

• Author(s) Biography:
Dr Amanda Roberts is an educator, researcher and artist. Her practice based PhD is based on the history, practice and pedagogy of life drawing in relation to contemporary female experience and her artworks are underpinned by observation, drawing and materiality. Through her pioneering work with the Welsh film and television industry and her current role developing outreach projects at UWTSD, Amanda has extensive experience in developing and delivering enterprise initiatives and entrepreneurial activities that explore the benefits of participatory learning, multi disciplinary practice and work integrated learning for the development of practice based skills and improving employment prospects.

Dr Shelley Doolan’s research has at its core her own glass-making practice. Over-arching interests include the interaction of glass and light and the way in which form and finish delineate space and mediate our experience. Shelley also has experience of working on collaborative research and innovation projects with a variety of industry partners across a range of disciplines. She has extensive experience of developing projects and securing funding as well as project management for multi-partner European projects and is currently Coordinator of the Erasmus+ funded Arts and Humanities Entrepreneurship Hubs (AHEH) project and Project Manager of the Assistive Technologies Innovation Centre (ATiC).