
Students as Agents for Change in Learning and Teaching

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Project blog: <https://blogs.exeter.ac.uk/studentprojects>

Project website: <http://as.exeter.ac.uk/support/educationenhancementprojects/change>

Case study 4 – The University of Exeter Business School: Photographic Competition

Introduction

The Business School Film and Photo Competition and Exhibition sought to develop a conversation amongst students about the origins, backgrounds, culture and landscapes of fellow students. With a brief of, 'What's special about where you come from?' students were invited to submit either a film of up to 10 minutes and/or a set of five or six photos representing their localities. Student involvement – particularly in generating content – has been vital to outcomes achieved so far.

Organising the competition

The inaugural photo exhibition arose from a desire for technologies in the Business School curriculum to be used to develop students' understanding of each other. Initial ideas involved use of the Flip video, with students being encouraged to create content offering a personal view of home. Later, the competition was extended to photographic sets - both visual means offering a unique glimpse into student lives when not at university. The competition format was devised to both focus students' minds on themes, and to incentivise participation and quality entries.



Outcomes

In the four weeks following the 2009-10 Christmas break, 29 entries were received from Business School students representing: various Chinese provinces; Taiwan; Thailand; Siberia; Zimbabwe; Italy; Bulgaria; Germany; France and of course many from the UK. Video proved less popular than we had anticipated with only two entries (China and Malaysia) offered in this format. Nonetheless, the quality of all entries was simply superb, offering a real and compelling insight into each of the localities represented. Recognising the value and power of entries, the competition prize fund trebled thanks to generous extra contributions from the Business School, which allowed a total of four prizes to be awarded (three photographic and one video). In determining prize-winners, judges were recruited from the Business School teaching and professional services staff, as well as the international office and the University's art curator.

Once prizes were selected, an exhibition of entrants' work was held over 3 weeks in the Streatham Court Lecture Theatre Corridor – a prominent and well-used space leading to major teaching space with an associated high footfall. Over the course of the exhibition, both students and staff alike could always be seen exploring the entries.

See the: [Photographic Exhibition Flyer - What's special about where you come from?](#)

There were a number of further exciting outcomes.

- A guestbook was included to gather feedback and reactions to the exhibition. The following represent just a selection of the many comments received:

“The pictures are amazing and very deep. They celebrate cultural diversity in our Business School and show a great amount of ethnic representation.”

Felas Takriti - 2nd year Management and Leadership

“Absolutely fantastic! Whenever I walk through there is always a lot of interest. A brilliant addition to the lecture theatre corridor and the Business School.”

Mike Robertson - Study Abroad Coordinator

‘A lovely exhibition! I am inspired to take up photography so I can capture scenes as beautiful as those displayed. I hope this exhibition sets a precedent for future years!’

M. Cooper - 3rd year Accounting and Finance

- The Business School marketing office wrote a summary of the competition and prize winners for their website news.
See: [Business Students show Hidden Photographic Talents](#)
- A beautiful booklet of the photos has been published on Issuu.
See the: [Photographic Competition Magazine](#)
- Some of the Business school’s favourite photos were made into a video card for their 2010 Christmas greetings.
See: Video Card: [Season’s Greetings from the Business School](#)

Recommendations

Over the course of this hugely successful exhibition, there has been much enthusiasm for exhibitions such as this to form a part of the annual Business School calendar. The exhibition has also generated interest from other schools seeking to replicate certain aspects of this project in their own areas. Overall, the success of the exhibition shows, with a little organisation, how students working with their own basic camera technology can celebrate the diversity of their backgrounds. With this in mind, it is recommended that a similar competition be explored in the next academic year. Using this years’ exhibition as a firm foundation, there is the possibility to explore differing themes which each year and over time will offer an incredibly deep insight into student backgrounds.

*Dale Potter
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