

Abertay 25: Dundee's Changemakers case study for SCA

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The project:

Abertay University celebrated its 25th Anniversary in 2019 and began an ambitious project, funded by Heritage Lottery Fund, to publicise its heritage far and wide. We unlocked information about 25 innovations and changemakers from Abertay's newly opened archives, covering a wide range of stories dating back to the institution's founding in 1888. We asked secondary school students (S2-S3) to [explore these 25 stories further](#).

To aid the students, we recruited volunteer facilitators who would assist their groups through the research journey using the Enquiry Learning Approach that is explained in detail in the education resources on the [SCA's website](#). The research done by each group would then culminate in a variety of creative outputs chosen by the school students and displayed in various formats.

The project, as a whole, is an Education and Outreach project, but it covers three other categories within that:

Research and Working in Partnership – collecting information with volunteers and schools about Abertay University's 131-year history using archives and memory exchanges.

Access to Archives and Advocacy– promoting Abertay University's archives as well as the various uses of archives within local, national and international communities

Skills Development – providing training and development opportunities for secondary school aged children, volunteers and colleagues at the university.



Enter: Douglas

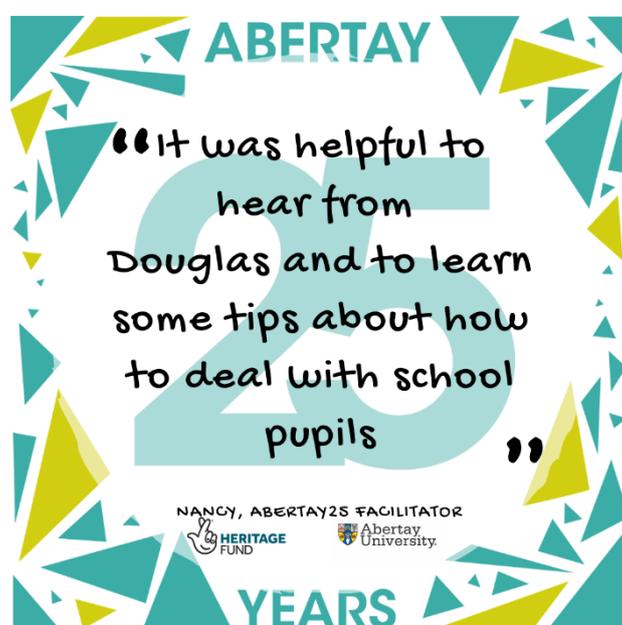
We knew from the outset that this project was very ambitious. A large element of our project brief stated that we would work with and train 15-20 volunteer facilitators on the Enquiry Learning Approach, each chosen for their experience with research –

not necessarily working with young people. Those 15-20 volunteers would then disperse into schools across Dundee and train 150 Young Ambassadors on how to research a story using a selection of archives and questioning techniques outlined in Douglas' previous work.

We initially asked for Douglas' help to develop training for the volunteer facilitators based on the Enquiry Learning Approach on identifying archive material that would interest S2-S3 pupils and lend themselves well to discussion. The advice he gave us on "quick-fire" selection was then put into a subsequent training session for our volunteers that gave them an insight into what was needed for this part of the Enquiry Learning Approach. This gave them a good start for the work ahead.

We had ongoing discussions with the volunteers as they did their research, and as the dates of their first school sessions got closer we became aware of some understandable uncertainty amongst them about how to facilitate discussions with the young people they would be working with. At this point we asked for Douglas to be involved in a session with the volunteers where he could address their concerns and give the benefit of his experience as an educator and working with archives in an educational context.

The day was extremely successful, covering elements about establishing roles between teachers and volunteers; how to introduce the "golden document" to start the discussion and maintaining the conversation later on; and emphasising the need for flexibility in the discussion process. The most important message that was put across was that whilst preparation was really important, time in the classroom was limited and the volunteers should not feel guilty about not getting through everything. They could pick up from where they left off in the next session.



The mood from the session was summed up by one volunteer that called afterwards to say that he really appreciated Douglas being at the training event and that he went away feeling clearer about what he had to do. The addition of training in active learning techniques that Hope had learnt about from one of Douglas's workshops also helped to build their confidence

It's worth saying that after this event Morgan Academy joined the project, offering its whole second year group (around 150 pupils), substantially increasing the number

of Young Ambassadors that the volunteers would engage with. This was something that they all felt confident enough to do, and we feel that Douglas's training contributed a large amount to that outcome.

Douglas's support for Abertay 25 went beyond his input to the volunteer training. He has been a valuable source of support throughout a project that has been a steep learning curve for us as well as the volunteers, providing guidance and confidence for us where we were a bit unsure about elements of it.

Our last meeting was no different, which was spent designing and planning a memory exchange project – Memories Re-animated – that would lead us into the second phase of the Heritage Lottery Fund project. Together, with his guidance we went through the logistics and planning of the project; risk assessment; contingency planning and sustainability of it. With Douglas' direction, we moved within a matter of hours from feeling a bit unconfident about our direction, to knowing exactly what our project entailed and how we would achieve our goals (see the Appendix). At the point of writing this has had to be put on hold due to the Covid-19 pandemic but we are confident it will run once the crisis is over.

Ultimately, Douglas' expertise has been vital throughout our project, from its initial concept (using the SCA's online resources designed by Douglas to help with initial planning), beginnings (training us and our facilitators, project planning and risk assessing) and beyond (helping to plan our entire Memories Re-animated project).



Phase 1 Outcomes

As you will all know, what we plan and what we deliver are usually two slightly different things.

Our Phase 1 project targets were to recruit 15-20 volunteers, research 25 stories of people and innovations associated with the university's history, and engage with 150 Young Ambassadors in secondary schools.

By the end of the Phase, 25 stories had been identified and researched to varying degrees (these can be seen at <https://www.abertay.ac.uk/about/the-university/archive/first-of-abertays-firsts/>). 249 Young Ambassadors, with the help of 12 facilitators and 4 volunteer assistants, researched 14 of the 25 stories in-depth and produced creative outputs from each.

The creative outputs themselves have been inspiring. They've included letters from people that have been researched, artistic collages using shipbuilding plans, game designs, creating wounds (using make-up) that would be encountered by nurses, a puppet show, and even a rap song inspired by one of the stories.

Feedback received from the schools so far has also been very positive. We are however still awaiting feedback from some groups that had finished working on their stories just as the COVID-19 pandemic occurred, and as a result this has had an impact on our ability to fully measure success of this phase.

Despite all this, we can share the following outcomes:

Outcomes for heritage

Heritage is better interpreted and explained – Douglas helped us and our volunteers develop various techniques for communicating our research to young people in Dundee. We also became better equipped and more confident in facilitating open discussions on a wide range of topics from individual histories to linking information found in archives to local news. By using Douglas' Enquiry Learning Approach and active learning techniques, heritage has been used as a tool for interdisciplinary learning in 4 schools in Dundee.

Heritage collections & other research have been accessed – Douglas empowered our volunteers and enabled them to share their research skills and knowledge of archive sources with their group of Young Ambassadors. He helped to make this phase of the project a success that demonstrates the more opportunities we provide young people to interpret archives and other primary sources, the better chance they have of developing the skills necessary to enhance their learning experience beyond the project. Feedback from one group of Young Ambassadors revealed that the research element of the project was by far their favourite part, with delivering presentations and teamwork falling shortly after. It is wonderful to see pupils enjoying the research side of an archive project, and hopefully this will instil a curiosity in them to continue researching and using the archive resources they are now aware of and have confidence in accessing.



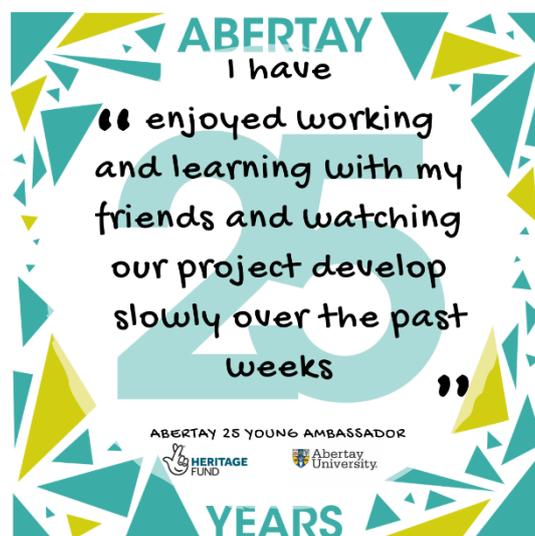
Outcomes for community

People have learnt about their heritage – 25 stories from Abertay University's archives were researched by university archives staff and local volunteers. 14 of these were researched and interpreted further by 249 pupils across Dundee. The research discovered links with the university and Dundee's Central mosque, strengthened our understanding of Abertay's international reach and has celebrated some of the inspirational women who came to the institution. Dundee is the city of discovery, and so we expected people to have a strong link to their local heritage already which was reflected in the pre-project feedback. However, the ability to use local resources and use Douglas' techniques to really engage our Young Ambassadors with the stories they were researching has resulted in a 4% increase in our participants' understanding of the history, heritage and culture of Dundee, and their pride in being a part of Dundee.

People have developed skills: The project gave everyone the ability to develop skills, whether it was the volunteers learning techniques from Douglas how to confidently and efficiently communicate with young people, or the Young Ambassadors learning life skills in presentation, research, communication, team-working, time management, and decision-making. Feedback from some of our Young Ambassadors on this is below:



People have had an enjoyable experience: 78% of Young Ambassadors (whose feedback we received before the COVID-19 lockdown) stated that they would recommend a similar project to a friend. This is important in terms of sustainability. The feedback gathered so far demonstrates that an archive research project in schools, linking to the Curriculum for Excellence and using the Enquiry Learning Approach method devised by Douglas is one that is popular with young people and workable in schools. Verbal feedback from teachers has also been positive, with Grove Academy indicating it will definitely be using the approach again.



Conclusion

This study has highlighted the important role Douglas played in the Abertay 25 project so far in providing much needed support in developing the confidence of the volunteer facilitators, and in helping us to plan and prepare for the next stage of the project – Memories Re-animated.

Douglas' positive and constructive way of working through a project, his encouragement and proactivitiy has been (and still is) incredibly valuable to the Abertay 25 project.

The educational consultancy service that he provides through the SCA and the creativity and expertise he brings to any project is a valuable asset that can be recommended to any archive service looking to engage effectively and successfully with schools in their area.



Appendix

“Memories Re-animated” Proposal

Background

The Abertay 25 NLHF application states that between January to June 2020 a memory exchange will be run with 10 postgraduate students, an unspecified number of Young Ambassadors, and former staff / alumni / Honorary Graduates. The outcome is stated as a “memory exchange project with university students providing input (social science perspective). An intergenerational heritage/ art and music project about memories and Dundee”

In addition, a portal will be set up to allow members of the public to submit items and memories relating to the University and its predecessor organisations.

Development of the portal is underway separately. The purpose of this document is to provide an outline proposal for how the outreach element of the memory exchange could be conducted and achieved.

Memories Re-animated Aims

The aims of the proposed project are as follows:

- Document more recent history of the institution through memory exchange recordings conducted as an interview / conversation process. Recordings will become part of the archive collections.
- Develop listening and talking skills amongst our Young Ambassadors and Postgraduate Students
- Develop technology skills amongst Young Ambassadors through: recording and processing activities; simple stop motion creation and filming activities
- Develop mentoring skills amongst our Postgraduate Students
- Develop intergenerational understanding through the memory exchange process, which will allow Young People to share their thoughts and aspirations about further education and future life with the interviewees.
- Create new, and develop existing relationships between the University and the community (including local industries and businesses).
- Raise awareness of the archive amongst the community by using the existing collections to stimulate conversations, and also to encourage donations to the archives.

Memories Re-animated Outline

Space available in the University, coupled with PVG / supervision considerations has affected the numbers involved. 2 large areas in the University providing a total of 6 supervise-able spaces for conducting interviews are available, and access to these on specific dates has been requested.

The project will therefore consist of 6 postgraduate students and 12 Young Ambassadors (10 school pupils and 2 Young Carers) facilitating and conducting memory exchange conversations and recording interviews with a maximum of 48 former staff, and alumni over the course of 4 sessions. Part of the process will include the Young People being asked by the interviewee about their experience of being at the university and aspirations for the future.

Short sections of the recordings will be selected for use in a creative project that will allow the Young Ambassadors, mentored by the postgraduate students, to create simple stop-motion animations to illustrate them. An example of an output from this process, carried out by the collaborative Sounding Borders project, is available at <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=sl2himMUVQE>

The finished project will be showcased at an event that will display the animations, along with material from the Research Phase and from the establishment of the archive. This event will also

provide an opportunity for members of the public to share their own memories in a variety of ways (including recording memories in a portable booth, posting their memories on a large layout plan of the campus etc)

The animations will also be posted permanently on the University's website in the Abertay 25 section along with other outputs from the project and showcase event.

Phases and Content

Phases

Overall timescale: January-November

Jan-March Phase 1 - Planning and Training

This includes recruiting postgraduate students and Young Ambassadors; selecting volunteers for interviewing; scheduling events (training, memory exchanges, recording selection, animation creation, showcase development and implementation, and website development); planning training content; developing permissions forms (covering copyright and GDPR)

Training session will be for a day and will include listening and talking skills exercises; practice interviews with volunteer interviewees (including preparation); practice processing and transcription

April-June Phase 2 - Memory exchange interviews.

4 half day events with 6 PG students and 12 Young Ambassadors, interviewing a maximum of 48 interviewees. Each session will involve 6 PG students, 6 YA, and a maximum of 12 interviewees. They will each consist of a conversation starter stimulated by archives (everyone); more formal recorded interviews in groups of four (1 PG student, 1 YA, 2 interviewees) lasting 30 minutes (5 minutes settling in; c. 10 minutes per interviewee (x2) with option to extend by 3 minutes if the interview is going well); 5 minutes x1 for YAs answer to question); Processing and transcription of recordings by both PG students and YAs.

July-August Phase 3 – recording selection, training and preparation for phase 4

Selection done initially by Archivist and Public Engagement Officer (PEO); stop-motion training for PG students (2 half-days); final selection agreed with PG students at 1 final preparation sessions to plan for Phase 4

Sept-Oct Phase 4 – stop motion creation between PG students and Young Ambassadors; development of showcase event

Films of up to 2 minutes' length created over 2 half day sessions – first session to consist of story boarding and creation of art to be used in filming; second session consists of filming and editing. Each team to consist of 1 PG student + 2 YAs (each session will have 6 PGs + 12 YAs – 2 sessions to be run in total)

Archivist, PEO, and WEAVE to develop showcase event

November Installation and implementation of showcase event

Nov-Feb Development and implementation of website showcase

Outputs

- A maximum of 480 minutes of interviews with older generation
- 120 minutes of interviews with the younger generation

- 6 stop motion animations
- Showcase event
- Website providing permanent showcase for selected outcomes

Possible Memory Exchange Themes

These should be broad enough to keep the interviews and discussions as open as possible, but still steer them in particular directions. We also need to be mindful of core outcomes in the application regarding women and BAME communities

- The staff experience (lecturers; senior management; support staff (e.g. estates, library etc), changing roles and experiences of women working at the university)
- The student experience (learning at the university; extra-curricular activities; student activism in the SA; experiences of international students)
- Industrial Connections (e.g. mechanical engineering, jute, local and international connections between the university and business etc)
- Becoming a university (the change from DIT to Abertay University explained by those that were there)

Resources

Equipment

- 6 Zoom H1N recorders at c. £80 each – may need sponsorship for these. Also check what options Computer Arts Dept have available.
- At least 12 lapel microphones – c. £10 each
- Filming equipment – can be done through ipads / ipods on goose grip stands (x6 set-up) c. £200 each – may need sponsorship for these if they cannot be borrowed.
- Stop-motion software – purchase Stop Motion Studio + Stop Motion Remote Camera apps from Apple website (c. £7 each)
- Use Library computers for transcribing and get 12 guest accounts

Participants

- Schools – Braeview Academy (5 pupils); Craigie High School (5 pupils). If Young Carers are involved then alter numbers – 2 Young Carers and 8 pupils from each school.
- Postgraduate Students (6 students)
- Former Staff / alumni / Honorary Graduates (max 48 volunteers)
- Archivist and PEO
- WEAVE, if possible. Alternative possibility is the Events Team.

Space

- Abertay University Events space and 2 ECR rooms
- Archives reading room (3065) and adjoining rooms
- Exhibition space - TBC

Other

- PVG checks for postgraduate students £59 each, or Basic Disclosure if that is all that is needed (£25 each - <https://www.mygov.scot/basic-disclosure/apply-for-basic-disclosure/>). Seek clarification on this.
- Transport costs for pupils / interviewees - TBC

Potential Risks

Risk	Mitigation
Schools won't participate	Provide details of project, inc time and resource commitments (emphasise how little is involved - 3.5 days spread in half days over 10 months), numbers required, curriculum and skills development benefits, prestige to school, profile of types of Young Ambassadors required
Schools concern over transport	Use transport budget to get pupils to Abertay, or arrange for community space near the schools for events
Schools concern over supervision of YAs	Suggest non-teacher supervision could be used (e.g. Deputes). Arrange PVG checks for postgraduates.
Postgraduate students won't engage	Engage early (i.e. in December / January) with Computer Arts lecturers and Grad School to explain project and emphasise benefits to students (CV, HEAR, developing mentoring skills). Emphasise low time commitment. Consider possibility of widening out to undergraduates.
Students or YAs drop out in the middle of the project	This is manageable if it happens in the middle of a phase. Replace with new PGs or YAs in the summer or at the beginning of the summer term.
Not enough interviewees come forward	Invite them to multiple events and mix and match them if required
The process of Phases 2 or 4 over-run	Test these out in the preparation / planning phases first to time them and if necessary, extend the timings of the sessions accordingly.
Lack of finance for resources	Cost resources required in detail and if necessary source sponsorship with help from the Fundraising team (e.g. for sound recorders). Monitor accounting regularly. If necessary, request permission from NLHF to vire money from other budget headings in order to meet costs.
Lack of space to conduct 10 interview sessions	Consider alternative combinations that will require less space, e.g. reducing the number of interviewees to 10 in each session. Be aware though that changes in combinations may reduce the amount of interview work the PG students are able to do and put them in a predominantly supervisory role, which is something we'd like to avoid.

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Abertay 25 project

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