

## **Title - Heritage, Tourism and Sustainability – Developing a Heritage Walking Trail**

**Keywords** - Assessment, Curriculum Development , Sustainability

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**School / Dept** - Food Science and Environmental Health

**Institution** - Dublin Institute of Technology

**Activity** - Students study the concepts of heritage in the context of tourism and develop a heritage walking trail project.

**Group** - Class of 10 - 20 masters-level tourism management students.

**Aim** - To introduce students to the concepts of heritage and its potential as an agent of sustainable tourism.

**Context / Background** - The module is presented in a series of 12 sessions, delivered on a weekly basis. Each session consists of a one hour lecture followed by a one hour applied practical class.

The lectures introduce students to the concepts of heritage and the relationship between heritage and tourism, particularly in regard to sustainable development. The practical classes enable students to develop their ideas for a Heritage Walking Trail project. The form of the walking trail is developed progressively over the length of the module and is presented through the medium of poster presentations. The project is assessed through a process of continuous assessment.

**Example** - Students are issued with a programme document at the beginning of the module. This sets out the aims and objectives and provides details of the lecture content and the development of the heritage project, in terms of time-table and assessment targets.

The lecture programme explores both the natural and human heritage in their historic settings. The natural heritage includes land forms, landscapes, flora, fauna, and habitats; the human heritage includes archaeology, rural and urban settlement, architecture, and social history.

The students each select an individual heritage area or topic they wish to explore by developing a heritage walking trail. This is achieved through the preparation and presentation of a sequence of six poster presentations, completed over the timescale of the module. The poster work includes the geographical and historical context of the chosen site, a heritage audit of the study area, the identification of the trail theme, a map of the trail, and details of the heritage features of the trail.

The presentation technique concentrates on the use of visual images arranged in a collage format with minimal supporting text, all arranged on A2 mounting board. It is assumed that the students have no previous experience of poster work and their presentation skills are built up gradually on a week to week basis.

The student work is developed by one poster topic at a time and each student is encouraged to focus largely on visual images and to follow a consistent and simple house style in terms of graphics. The students present their work each week for a class discussion, critique and assessment. This assessment is undertaken in two stages. As each poster is completed, it is assessed and awarded a provisional mark. In this way the students can monitor their progress. The course concludes with an exhibition of the students' work. At this stage the final assessment takes place, when the marks accrued are reviewed and consolidated.

**Other comments** - Feedback from students has been most positive and indicates their understanding and appreciation of heritage, as well as their acquisition of skills, in terms of sustainable heritage project development and visual presentation. Recent student comments include:

- The mix of theoretical, practical and interactive work makes for interesting classes
- The course offered very good insights into heritage and sustainability
- The format of the project offered a very successful learning dynamic.

Peer review of the module format has also been positive and a number of undergraduate tourism modules are now delivered in similar formats.

In order to maximise learning, students are encouraged to focus their projects on modest sites, where they can explore their subject in depth. In addition, students are encouraged - where possible - to share the results of their work with the community of their chosen area. This can be achieved by presenting an exhibition of the student work at a local venue.

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