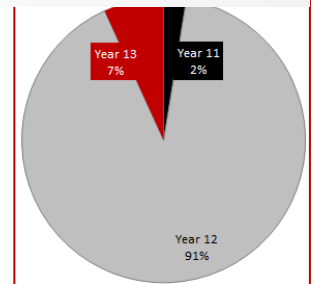


Summary

Richardson Institute Interns working alongside a member of the department of Philosophy, Politics and Religion (PPR) developed and delivered a series of Role Play activity days as part of the Department’s OFFA-funded activity. Other activities included some support for Extended Project Qualifications, and the second ‘New Political Minds’ three day residential (for more information see 50 New Political Minds 2015 report).



Overview of activity:

The Role Play activity days were designed to raise awareness of Politics and International Relations for students from Widening Participation backgrounds. Of the students who attended the day there was an equal split of males and females with the vast majority from year 12 (91%). Five schools and two sixth form colleges participated. Students from several schools were brought together to act out the characters and roles of actors in political crises, such as that associated with ISIS. The activity was designed to foster:

- a. understanding of current affairs;
- b. appreciation of values such as toleration, acceptance, co-existence, in accordance with the Government’s promotion of ‘British’ values;
- c. experiences capable of strengthening students’ CVs and personal statements.

The activity met or exceeded expectations

85%

Methods of evaluation:

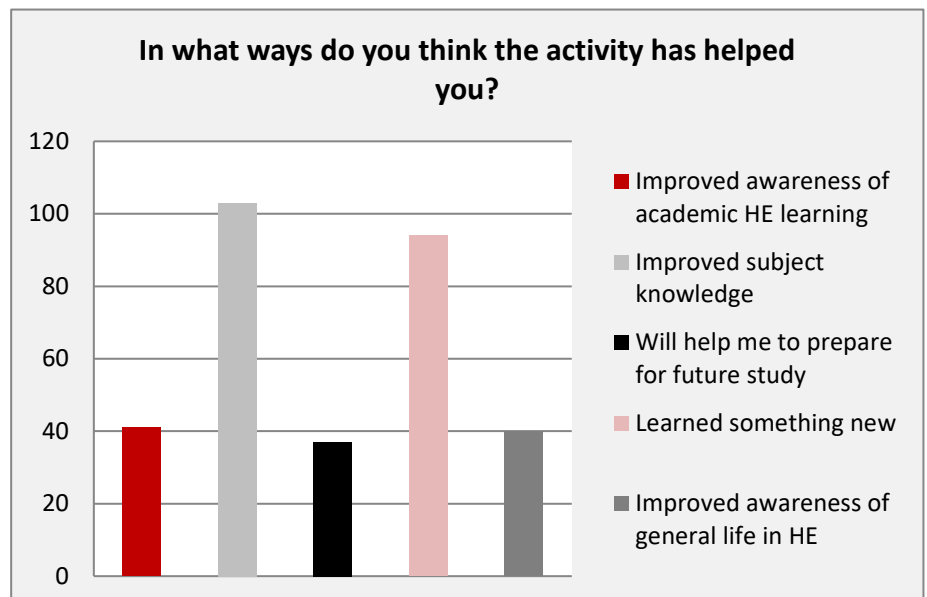
- This summary report is based on evidence collected from 124 young people that completed an evaluation survey. All the young people were assumed to meet at least one widening participation criterion (a condition for gaining access to the event).

Findings:

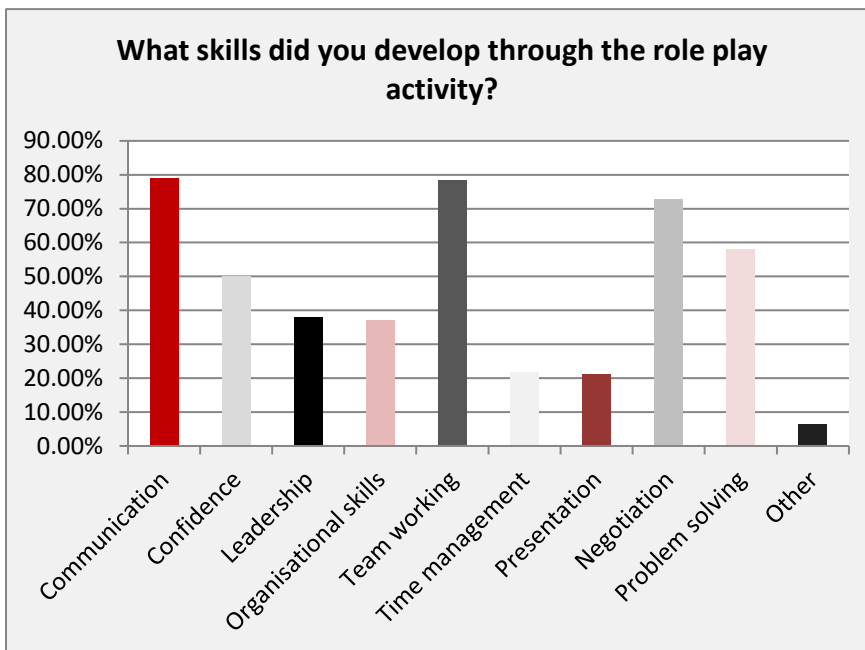
- The majority of students, **71.2%, had learned about Politics in school**. But noticeably fewer had experience of **International Relations and the Middle East Crisis at 36.7% and 26.2%** respectively.
- Students indicated the ways in which they would use the learning from the activity. The highest selected options were to **use the learning in current studies, 64.2%**, and **to enhance their CV, 62.3%**.
- 117 students provided a comment as to the most useful part of the activity. The comments illustrated that different stages of the activity appealed to different students, this included:

- learning about perspectives of other countries / actors, 26.5%;
- negotiating with others 29.9%;
- the debate, 10.3%;
- Research prior to activity 13.7%
- End summary when all views were put forward, 11.1%

“I really enjoyed making political / economic plans with my team and negotiating alliances, peace treaties and trade deals with all the different states”
Year 12 student



Influence of activity on ...



The students identified the skills which they felt they developed through the activity. **Communication (79%), negotiation (72.6%) and team working (78.2%)** were all rated highly.

Other comments included: deadline management and aggressive negotiations.

Lessons learned:

The activity was effective in raising awareness of the subject and the value of different perspectives. It appealed to students in different ways: while some commented on the

opportunity to debate, others preferred the research prior to the activity.

"...Fun and different activity, really enjoyed learning about the Middle East and understanding the tensions." Year 11 student

"The fact that it was really fast-paced; gave a good insight into how hectic Politics is" Year 12 student

"It was great to engage with people and try and puzzle through the complicated relations between all the major powers of the Middle East" Year 12 student

The motivation generated by the activity and interest in the subject matter are important factors in raising aspiration. Interest in the subject was the 2nd most popular reason given by first year students in 2015 Lancaster University Cohort Study. However, despite the positive feedback the results appear to suggest students do not necessarily make the connection with the activity and future university study. There may be several reasons for this: the activity was delivered in a school rather than on campus and there may not have been an explicit connection with how the day might prepare or be useful for informing decisions about future study.

Future ideas

- To retain the broader features of politics within the role plays as these are an effective approach to broadening students' understanding of the subject;
- To consider the following ideas to enable students to make the connection with possible HE progression:
- further briefing to teachers asking them to indicate the importance of the HE aspiration objectives as well as the subject objectives when they introduce the activity to their students;
- an opportunity for the Richardson Institute Interns to explain their journey to HE to illustrate the different pathways that are possible
- a specific reflective activity to encourage students to consider relevance.

Further information

For further information about this project: Matthew Johnson m.johnson@lancaster.ac.uk or the broader evaluation Dr Ann-Marie Houghton, REAP Director a.houghton@lancaster.ac.uk
Johnson, M., REAP and Mutton, R. (2016) *PPR-International Relations Role Play Summary Report*, Lancaster University OFFA Evaluation Available from: