

## Teaching Development Fund: Evaluative Report

### Section 1: Project Summary

**Project Title:**

Promoting decolonising cross-disciplinary practice among Undergraduate and Postgraduate students at Bath University

**Project Applicants:** Elena Minelli, Shona McIntosh, Enrico Cecconi

**Total Amount of Funding Requested:** £ 1000

**Actual Expenditure (please provide a breakdown of expenditure):**

Breakdown of money spent so far:

Guest's Travel costs and Accommodation: £500

Guest's fees: £200

Booking and Catering for talks and events: £100

£800 spent

£200 to be allocated to follow-up activities involving Undergraduate and Postgraduate students – see **Dissemination** and **Other information** below.

**Short Summary of the Project and Aims** (~200 words: *this is an updated version of the summary in your original proposal and gives the reader an overview of what the project was about*)

In line with [Equality, Diversity and Inclusion](#) policies, this project aimed to uncover blackness in teaching/learning and establish networking across the University and beyond.

During the 3-day Project the following activities were successfully carried out:

- UG Italian language students (PoLIS, yrs 1-4) participated in one preparatory workshop and one in-presence seminar facilitated by the Italian Afro-Italian film producer and activist [Fred Kuwornu](#). Two final year students helped preparing and running Fred main Talk/Event.
- Fred Kuwornu's Talk 'Documenting Black Italy' took place on 17<sup>th</sup> Nov, 18.15-21.00, on campus. It was a very well attended hybrid event with the participation of external Institutions. Fred showed extracts of documentaries he had produced on European Afro-descendants in Art (Renaissance in Italy and Portugal), History and contemporary Cinema. This was followed by engaging discussions with students and members of staff.
- PG students (Education and Mechanical Engineering) and staff, including Librarians, attended a documentary-making workshop facilitated by Fred. Short documentaries were produced by participants showing the legacies of colonisation, decolonisation and inclusion currently present on Bath University campus – eg. the printing machine in the Library.
- A few students and members of staff took part in the 'Bath Uncomfortable Past' walk run by Dr Christina Horwath and Ben Van Praag (PHD student).
- As follow-up, in July 2023, on 5th October 2023 at PoLIS PGR Induction the FHSS Librarian will share examples of Decolonisation practice at Bristol University in the presence of a PGR's DoS. The diversification of reading lists will also be discussed.

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**Audience for report:** this report will be used for several purposes to help share your project outputs and experiences. It will be sent to Education, Quality and Standards Committee (which oversees the TDF) for noting; it will act as a case study on your project to be published on the TDF website so that other people can find out about what you did and / or use your outputs; and your notes about your experiences of running the project will be collated with others and shared with new project holders to help them in thinking about their project plan. Hence, the report needs to be concise and understandable to a professional (e.g. other academics and colleagues in higher education), lay (i.e. not necessarily in your discipline or field of expertise) audience. Bullet points are acceptable (e.g. in listing project outputs). Please include any references, if appropriate.

For further advice and guidance on writing your report please contact Steph Kamffer, Project Officer, [szk22@bath.ac.uk](mailto:szk22@bath.ac.uk)

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### Section 2: Evaluative Case Study

#### **The Solution: Approach** (max 300 words: *this describes what you actually did to achieve the outcomes / outputs*)

In the language preparatory seminars, vocabulary and cultural aspects were introduced according to the students' level (eg. simple present tense and biographical questions in year 1). All groups subsequently met Fred in presence and asked him questions in a Q&A format. All conversations were entirely in Italian, allowing for full-immersion with native speakers - a unique experience, particularly for First year students ([Appendix 2 a, b, c, d](#)).

All activities were student-led and highly interactive. Fred's approach was informal and personal, and his 'story' could be told and interpreted at different levels. The enthusiastic participation of the lecturers monitoring and co-facilitating the activities was a key to success.

Engaging undergraduate students is not always an easy task. Hence, all events were timetabled and some fell in class-time. The students knew that the topic 'Afroitalians' was in their syllabus, Coursework and Exam. Embedding this 3-day event within the students' curriculum was a very motivating teaching/learning strategy.

Fred's Talk was delivered in English and attracted a good number of students and staff across the university. At the end of the talk, catering was provided with Italian food. This social time was of pivotal importance for bringing people together and fostering networking among people with historical, artistic, cultural, and socio-political interests.

The Talk was hybrid due to timing - a November evening - and to Fred Kuwornu's strong international reputation, which we knew would attract external audience. The remote interaction was carefully monitored by an undergraduate student, who rated this experience very positively ([Appendix 3](#)).

Feedback was collected on hard copies after the talk ([Appendix 4](#)) and sent out online via the same mailing lists used to advertise the event. Whereas most participants completed the hard copy, only a handful returned feedback online. This proved that opting for a hard copy on this occasion was successful.

#### **Outcomes** (max 300 words: *this is a brief description of the specific resources, research findings, events or other activities / results arising from your project*)

Working on the same topic of 'Afro-Italians and Blackness' with students of different years (1-4) strengthened collaboration among lecturers of the Italian team. It threw light on the variety of spoken language abilities across the groups and proved that lower language skills (1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> year) do not necessarily hinder engagement in discussions of high socio-cultural value. This suggests potentials for cross-language events in the future.

Following the positive response of 2<sup>nd</sup> year students, [a book](#) by an Afroitalian presented by Fred Kuwornu was purchased by the Library. A topic based on this book and the related Netflix series [Zero](#) was introduced in the syllabus and a question was set in the Exam. The students continued to engage with the topic in Semester 2 and performed well in the Exam, which proved that multimedia exploration of socio-cultural topics can create continuity in the students' learning by fostering inclusivity.

The response of final year students generated interesting considerations. The students participated with enthusiasm to the sessions offered as informal 'Italian Language Cafès'. The variety of topics covered when preparing questions on 'Blackness and Afro-Italians' was

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impressive, ranging from very personal to highly academic topics. Students were very engaged in the follow-up session as well, preparing a presentation in Italian on the 'Bath Uncomfortable Past' leaflet ([Appendix 6 a, b](#)) aimed to future students and/or Italian tourists. The outcomes revealed that students were best engaged when they could relate to their personal experience: students discovering truths they did not know about familiar buildings in Bath, and/or British citizens making similar considerations about their own towns.

The 3-hour documentary-making workshop demonstrated that innovative and highly engaging teaching/learning activities do not necessarily require sophisticated tools - mobile phones worked well - or long preparation time. Documentary-making is highly motivating and can be adapted for other teaching/learning and assessment uses ([Appendix 7](#)).

**Evaluation:** (max 300 words: this gives an overview of the effectiveness of and lessons learnt from the process of running the project AND the quality / value of the outputs: this is important to enable the reader to learn from your experiences)

The practical organisation of Fred Kuwornu's 3-day stay in Bath involved: finding a suitable time for Fred, students and staff; booking transports and accommodation via [Clarity](#) - not an easy task due to errors in the system. Luckily, the train strike of 18<sup>th</sup> November did not affect our Guest's journey, as booking was left open. We would recommend this format when booking trains for future events.

Prior to the event, the project team dedicated considerable amount of time reviewing the teaching/learning objectives and liaising with Fred via email and phone. This preparatory phase worked well, thanks to the excellent communication among team members and careful planning ([Appendix 1](#)). Students and staff who could contribute to the project, eg. [DEKcNO](#), were contacted and the event was advertised internally and externally. The marketing team was involved, screens, posters and reminders across the University proved very effective. Free registration with Eventbrite was required for attendance in person only. Retrospectively, it would have been useful to have a separate registration for attendance online linked to Outlook Calendar. This would have allowed us to send feedback forms individually to remote participants.

The socialising event after the talk was very successful and last longer than expected. Having Fred Kuwornu on campus rather than online proved to be a very effective move, as confirmed by the feedback ([Appendix 5](#)). The main feedback points raised from students and staff revealed that this event was highly innovative, inspiring and engaging and had a strong impact on participants in different ways: it raised awareness of colonising signs in arts and media; it showed the potentials of video making in teaching, learning and researching; it inspired lecturers to introduce historical analysis of sources, when teaching and supervising research students; it disclosed unknown aspects of Italian history, art and culture.

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**Dissemination:** (max 300 words: this gives an overview of the wider impact of your project beyond the main team)

Aim 1: Engage language PoLIS students in interactive learning on Afroitalians, blackness and inclusion.

The work started with Fred Kuwornu with undergraduate students of Italian will continue with current and future students. The topic 'Afro-Italians' has been introduced into the syllabi of year 1, 2 and 4 and study/teaching material will continue to be updated and made available to students. An extra hour seminar in presence has been added to the timetable of year 4 called 'Conversations with Afro-Italians', during which we will invite speakers, view short videos/documentaries and continue to discuss this topic as the legacy of Fred's past and current work.

Aim 2: Foster innovative cross-disciplinary learning/teaching practice across the university and beyond.

The positive response received from year 1 and 2 undergraduate students suggests that cross-language activities facilitated by native speakers are successful. We will continue to organise similar events and invite Italian Exchange students currently studying at PoLIS and other Departments.

Colleagues from Bristol University who attended Fred Kuwornu's Talk expressed their willingness to collaborate with us on this theme. In particular, a colleague from the Italian Department, inspired by Fred's Talk, attended the Summer School 'Teaching Black Italy' in January 2023. Following our project, they have been successful in their own application for Education funding. They have therefore invited the Italo-Egyptian rapper [Amir Issaa](#) to run a workshop on song writing at their Department in the current academic year and offer it to PoLIS students as well at Bath campus. This great initiative will lead to further collaboration between the two Departments.

Aim 3: Foster positive collaboration and networking across the University

The short videos produced during the video-making workshop have inspired some Librarians at Bath University, who intend to include further elements of 'decolonising practice' in their Induction sessions for UG and PG students. Plans to review the cataloguing system have also been suggested.

**Future Use** (A brief statement of how the project outcomes will be used in the future or further developed)

The positive outcomes of this project will encourage colleagues and students to undertake collaborative and innovative cross-departmental projects, on themes that can be explored at interdisciplinary and multidisciplinary level.

Both students and staff have been inspired by the presence of Fred Kuwornu, a professional film producer/director and an educator. Students and staff have expressed their desire to have more events like this at the University and explore further video-making as innovative teaching/learning technique.

We will therefore pursue further opportunities for collaborative and innovative work with the support of the Centre for Learning and Teaching and, possibly, external Institutions such as the Institute of Italian Culture, London.

One outcome of the Legacies of Colonialism workshop was the creation of a teaching resource. Here, staff can find slides giving an introduction to the concepts of post-colonial theory and

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decolonial approaches, an activity plan to include in an interactive lecture aimed at undergraduates, and an example of an edited mini-documentary made as part of the workshop with Fred Kuwornu. Also included is a follow-up reading list should any staff wish to develop their understanding of decolonial theory ([Appendix 8](#)).

**Other Information:** *(this section is optional and is for anything else you might want to say about the project that has not already been discussed)*

We are grateful for the great opportunity this TDF has given us and the multiple doors it has opened.

Partly due to prolonged strike action during the academic year 2022-23 and limited availability of staff, there has been some delay in the organisation of follow-up activities, which resulted in approx. £200 remaining to be spent. We intend to use this remaining funding in the academic year 2023-24 to organise events in line with the dissemination practice outlined in Aim 2, *Foster innovative cross-disciplinary learning/teaching practice across the university and beyond* (workshop on Afroitalian rapper in collaboration with Bristol University).