A Team-Based "Public History" Assessment for Undergraduates: Rationale, Design and Implementation in a Medieval History Course

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The design of assessment in undergraduate history courses, as university populations grow and change, must adapt to meet and serve a range of new pedagogical imperatives and student constituencies in order to ensure both disciplinary integrity and the development of employability skills transferrable to work in other fields. In delivering an elective course on Medieval history we have developed the "Medieval Expo," a team-based assessment task that challenges students to develop a presentation aimed at educating a general audience on a specific aspect of Medieval history. The task aims, primarily, to develop students' ability to communicate complex information to a non-specialist audience as well as develop effective teamwork skills: two valuable characteristics for humanities graduates entering any career, while still reinforcing the importance of historical study. A "scaffolded research" model, providing foundational structures that guide student research, is combined with opportunities for students to exercise creative freedom, providing suitable pedagogical support yet maximizing opportunities for student engagement. The reported benefits of this task include increased student engagement with the course content; smoother transitions to tertiary study through the formation of friendships, which is crucial for retention; and increased awareness of the employability skills embedded in the liberal arts.

The purpose of an education in history at tertiary level is rarely to produce historians (Graduate Careers Australia, 2016a, 2016b, 2016c; Nicholls, 2005a, 2005b). Furthermore, many students who enroll in Medieval history courses, often available as electives in the Australian system, do so because of a personal interest and not because they intend to focus their tertiary studies in the discipline. Yet, traditionally, curriculum and assessment design in history at the tertiary level has emphasized disciplinary training and content over transferrable skills (Bulaitis, n.d.). As university populations grow and change, however, design of both curriculum and assessment in history courses, and perhaps particularly Medieval history courses, must adapt to multiple pedagogical imperatives and serve a range of constituencies. It must continue to reflect disciplinary integrity and provide foundational training for the minority of students who will become historians, as well as the larger numbers who will employ their disciplinary training in the workplace. Yet, it also needs to provide something of evident and transferrable value to history and humanities students who will eventually find work in other fields, as well as to students who will return to focus on other disciplines at the conclusion of the semester. In this article, we describe a complex task we have designed and implemented in a first-year Medieval History survey course to address these needs.

Diverse Constituents

The course in which this task takes place is open as an elective to undergraduate students from across our university who may be enrolled in Bachelor degrees as broad as Arts, Economics, Law, Science, and Medicine. The course is arranged in a common lecture plus tutorial model, requiring three contact hours (two-hour lecture and one-hour tutorial) plus nine hours of private study per week. Although our course is designated as a first-year or entry-level one, we often find later-year students enrolling as an elective option. The course can also be selected as the first building block of a major in History within a Bachelor of Arts, comprising a minimum number of core and elective courses chosen from within the discipline across a three-stage program. Full-time students would ordinarily be enrolled in four courses during a given semester of study, and they will have many competing demands on their time. In designing this new assessment task, we have tried to recognize the variety of background knowledge, experience, intentions, and timetables of our diverse constituents in order to develop a task that is structured, yet flexible enough to offer meaningful learning outcomes for all.

Rationale

A well-designed undergraduate course provides students with the means and incentives to acquire and demonstrate a wide range of discipline- and employment-related skills, as well as specialist knowledge. Traditionally, course design in tertiary history has emphasized specialist knowledge and training in disciplinary norms of academic communication, but there are many other skills that graduates will require in their careers, even if they pursue employment in the field. The work of practicing historians, for instance,

encompasses formal academic writing as well as communication to a range of audiences beyond one's peers, from students to granting bodies, to interested members of the public. Similarly, while historical work is often solitary, historians increasingly work in collaborative situations, from consultancies to co-authorship, from team-teaching to cooperative funding applications (Professional Historians Australia, n.d.; Schulz, Miller, Marrs, & Allen, 2002). It would seem, then, that tertiary historical training has a moral obligation to develop students' skills in both disciplinary and extra-disciplinary arenas, in academic and other discourses, and in teamwork as well as solitary endeavor. This is all the more important given the multiple employment destinations of students who undertake undergraduate history study.

We identified the capacity to communicate complex information clearly to a non-academic audience and the skills of effective teamwork as two characteristics of particular value to humanities graduates entering any career, including in history. We therefore decided to design and implement an assessment task that would promote the development of these skills among our student body.

Introducing a new major assessment task is a significant imposition on student time and cannot be achieved without removing something else from a course's assessment portfolio. In our case, we decided to eliminate the final examination to make way for this new task. We regarded the examination as the least useful part of the existing assessment portfolio because of its tendency to reward recollection of factual information over the more complex and valuable skill of historical thinking (Ercikan & Seixas, 2015). Furthermore, the "rush job" conditions of examination do not resemble the working conditions under which our students are likely to employ their historical or transferrable skills in the future and tend to produce poor quality work (Maxwell, 2010). Instead, we wanted to take the opportunity to create assessment that authentically reflects the kinds of challenges that students will one day need to meet, as well as the environments in which they might need to apply the skills they acquire in our class.

The Shape of the Task

The "Medieval Expo" that we discuss here is a complex assessment task undertaken over an eight-week period by small teams of undergraduates enrolled in a first-year survey course of Medieval history. The "Expo" unfolds over the latter two-thirds of semester after students have received preliminary instruction in core content and basic research skills. It complements traditional tasks such as a primary source analysis and research essay in the assessment portfolio of the course.

Student effort in the task is supported by a carefully scaffolded program of in-class interventions and instruction to assist students in developing both project content and team management skills as the work proceeds (Appendix A). We discuss this further below.

The goal of the task is to produce an authentic work of public historical communication designed to convey quality, curated information about a Medieval historical topic to a non-specialist audience. It is thus intended to encourage students to develop and use skills complementary to those tested by standard assessment formats such as academic essay writing, and especially to reflect on how the requirements of other communicative genres influence decisions about content and style. It represents a work-like situation in which students are expected to translate their academic research skills into new arenas.

Team Formation and Team Function

The Medieval Expo relies on teamwork, which is rarely incorporated into tertiary history curricula or assessment. We wanted to introduce teamwork into our course for its connection to employability (Mutch, 1998), and because of its capacity to ameliorate the sense of isolation often experienced by university students in broad degrees such as Arts, thereby promoting student retention and successful transition into tertiary study (Cartney & Rouse, 2006; Tinto, 1993). Ideally, graduates need to be able to work effectively in teams while solving "un-structured, real-world" problems (Goltz, Hietapelto, Reinsch, & Tyrell, 2008). Teamwork aligns with the graduate attributes of our degree program, which identify being a skillful team worker as a target outcome. Skills such as the ability to "work together by assisting one another to the greatest possible extent; [to be] effective at managing conflict; and … [ensuring that] each team member is responsible and accountable" are desirable in the workforce and relevant in a range of employment situations (Riebe, Roepen, Santarelli, & Marchioro, 2010, p. 529). Furthermore, teamwork can be satisfying for students because it enables them to produce a piece of work that is more complex and developed than they could achieve alone.

Despite the weight of pedagogical evidence for the value of teamwork as a learning strategy and as a desirable employability outcome, students often express a degree of resistance or anxiety around group activities. In our experience, student resistance to working in teams was reduced by framing the task as an opportunity to acquire real employment-related skills, and also by an explanation of our assessment strategy, discussed further below, which awarded grades both to the individual and the team.

The quality of activity design can also significantly ameliorate students' teamwork-related anxiety (Bacon, Stewart, & Silver, 1999; Kriflik and Mullan, 2007;

Oakley, Felder, Brent, & Elhaji, 2004). Two design features have been found materially to enhance students' comfort with teamwork activities and acquisition of relevant skills: first, team-based assessment must be supported by training in relevant skills (Oakley et al., 2004) and clearly articulated instructions (Bacon et al., 1999); second, teamwork itself must be assessed since assessment credit is a primary driver of student effort (Gibbs, 2006). The need to embed skill development for teamwork within curriculum and assessment design is especially acute in humanities disciplines, such as history, where entrenched images of the solitary scholar dominate both staff and students' conceptions of disciplinary work, and working in a team can be both unfamiliar and daunting (Bulaitis, n.d.).

In designing the Medieval Expo as a team-based task, therefore, we were aware of the need to impart the teamwork skills we expected students to display, just as we provide developmental advice on researching and structuring an essay. Our revised curriculum, therefore, incorporates tutorial time consistently throughout the task to discuss team dynamics and roles, as well as to share expectations and past experiences of teamwork. We establish teams as early in semester as is practicable (see below) to enable adequate time in the curriculum to address core skills, and because the longevity of a team is correlated with better teamwork experiences at the tertiary level (Bacon et al., 1999). After initial discussions on introductory teamwork issues, teams complete a dossier of the background knowledge, skills, and relevant experience of all team members, the better to understand the available human resources (Eberly Center for Teaching Excellence and Educational Innovation, 2015a). They then draw up a 'team contract' to govern their interactions and lodge a copy with their tutor as an insurance policy against significant discord (Eberly Center for Teaching Excellence and Educational Innovation, 2015b). These documents provide a platform for a team's first serious negotiation to determine what topic they most prefer to address (see below). In reaching this decision, we encourage teams to consider the prior knowledge and skills members bring to the table, their personal interests, the skills or knowledge they particularly hope to develop, and the chosen topics of their other assessment in the course as they decide how best to deploy their available human resources.

Over the following weeks, a proportion of class time is dedicated to introducing students gradually to a range of team-related practices, alongside continuing discussions of core content (Appendix A). For instance, subsequent tutorials include scheduled workshops on negotiating conflict and ways that 'good' students might be facilitating poor team function, such as through hoarding responsibilities (Oakley, 2002). Tutorials also incorporate regular opportunities to

practice working as teams, while debating questions of specialist knowledge: indeed, some tutors have successfully used the Expo teams as the basis of all small-group discussion in class, even asking teams to sit together regularly, in order to encourage bonding. In addition, at the half-way point of the task, students complete an anonymous, interim team evaluation in which they rank their team's function in a range of criteria (Eberly Center for Teaching Excellence and Educational Innovation, 2015b). These evaluations are returned to tutors who then provide each team with both a synoptic view of the issues most in need of attention and an opportunity to workshop possible resolutions.

Forming the teams. Carefully arranging team membership is vital for achieving equity and real-world applicability for team assessment tasks, and several methods are available (Kelly, 2008; Mantzioris & Kehrwald, 2014). We adopted a staff-driven method for appointing students to teams, to ensure diversity and approximate as closely as possible to 'real-life' situations in which employees rarely have opportunities to choose to work with friends. Although students tend to prefer self-selected teams (Bacon et al., 1999; Bosco, Jervis, & Harvey, 2009), we have found they are generally receptive to the argument that appointing teams gives them a more relevant employment experience.

Our team assignment protocol is adapted from the principles described by Oakley et al. (2004). Tutors meet with the course coordinator to appoint teams of 4 to 5 students at the end of week three of the twelve-week semester, having noted carefully the interests, habits and proficiencies of students in their classes over the first three weeks. Some tutors have found it useful to distribute personal interest questionnaires early in semester to facilitate this process. We allocate to each team at least one student whose confidence and disciplinary aptitude is already evident; attend to the gender, age, ethnic and religious (where known) diversity of teams; try to ensure that shy or quiet students are not isolated in a team of otherwise loud and confident students; and aim to allocate especially dominant students with at least one colleague who is likely to be capable of disagreeing openly. We also aim to separate students whose behavior seems disruptive to class discussion. By following these principles, we aim to provide each team with an equally strong opportunity to complete the Expo task successfully, as well as to distribute the challenges of negotiating diversity evenly across the student body.

In our institution, class size and membership tends to stabilize by the end of the third week, so this is the earliest point in the semester when appointing teams is practical. Even so, continuing fluctuation of student numbers and late withdrawals from the course mean that final team sizes have ranged from 2 to 5 in practice. Students sometimes express anxiety about a larger

workload falling on fewer shoulders. We allay their concerns, however, by explaining that the team has creative freedom to refine their project goal so that it is achievable by the remaining members. We have not noticed any discernible effects on the general quality of the final product.

Team Roles. Using the team role schema outlined by Oakley et al. (2004), we assign students to a role at the beginning of the task. Each team has four core roles: facilitator, record keeper, monitor, and time keeper. These roles ensure that the team's discussions are directed, that records of decisions are kept and circulated, that attention is paid to whether all members have understood the decisions of the team, and that the team's schedule is on track. At the beginning of the task, we distribute materials explaining these roles, and a range of additional roles that team members may adopt on an ad hoc basis, such as creative thinker or devil's advocate.

Assigning these roles draws students' attention to the diversity of skills and contributions that teamwork requires. It is also important for providing students with a clear role to play early in the task, when they are still developing their understanding of the requirements of this complex project. We assign the most confident and articulate students in each team to the position of "facilitator" for the first two weeks to ensure that teams have stable hands at the helm during the early stages of discussion that require focused leadership. We then asked teams to redistribute roles among members every two weeks to ensure that all team members have an opportunity to practice core skills of team management.

Scaffolding for Getting Started

Expecting students to exercise autonomy beyond their existing experience and skills generates anxiety among students and unnecessary additional work for staff (Hackling & Fairbrother, 1996; Willison & O'Regan, 2006). Assigning students to specific roles within their teams is one mechanism for providing solid foundations from which students can begin to develop autonomy with confidence. Additionally, we designed the Expo task to provide clear starting points and boundaries within which teams' projects take place. Student teams are given a choice of three thematic prompts as starting points for their project: Conflict; Faith and Reason; and On the Margins. Each prompt outlines an area of Medieval history about which there is public misconception, and which relate to core content of the course. For example:

> **Theme: Conflict.** The general image of Medieval life tends to emphasize violence, and regard medieval people as more bloodthirsty than today. Is this correct? Design a presentation to educate a

general audience about an aspect of conflict in society in the period after 1000.

Having chosen a theme, teams can select from a range of possible formats and format-specific parameters that act as a guide to the required effort and provide a measure of equity among dissimilar formats. Teams may choose to produce a poster (maximum 1.2m x 1.2m), a podcast (maximum 4 minutes), a video (maximum 4 minutes), or a website (maximum 1 homepage and 4 "child" pages).

Within these restrictions student teams are free to exercise creative control, but our design intentionally provides both a general starting point and an overall goal. The Expo is thus aligned to the "Scaffolded Researching" model described by Willison and O'Regan's *Research Skill Development Framework* (2006), in which foundational structures provided by the educator enable and shape the development of students' independent research.

In addition, we provide students with a recommended guide of 21–22 hours of work per team member to help them gauge and plan the size of their project. We calculate this based on a formula that takes account of institutional guidelines for the work hours required for a first-year course, the set contact hours, expected tutorial preparation time, and the grades apportioned to each assessment task as follows: 144 hours (total) = 36 hours (contact) + 36 hours (tutorial reading and preparation) + 72 hours (preparing assessment). Since the "Expo" accounts for 30% of all assessment, we advise students to expect to spend a total of (0.3 x 72 =) 21.6 hours on the task.

Creative Freedom

A degree of creative freedom and the opportunity to pursue topics of personal interest are valued by students in assessment settings, and they have been found to boost engagement (Sternberg, 2002). We therefore designed the Expo to allow considerable student autonomy both in planning and directing the project, while providing a safety net of scaffolding to guide their work, as discussed above. For example, teams have freedom to define their "non-specialist audience," but they must be able to explain their decision and how it determined their project design. Student teams have chosen audiences as diverse as primary school children, school teachers, talk-back radio listeners, and retired professionals, adapting their projects accordingly.

Teams also have freedom to determine how to distribute work within the team, allowing for each member's strengths and availability, and have some freedom to agree on penalties to be applied to team members who fail to deliver their promised

contribution. We emphasize that team members are not expected to contribute the same kind of effort to the task, provided they contribute proportionately and in a mutually agreed way.

The one creative restriction that we placed on students was that *Drunk History*, the web-series/tv comedy premised on unreliable and inebriated narrators explaining historical events, was not a suitable model for this task (O'Sullivan, 2015). We reasoned that since the goal of the Expo was to curate and explain information of an academic quality to a wider audience, such models were explicitly contrary to the project's proper aims.

In this way, the Expo is aligned to the Work Skill Development Framework for student autonomy (Bandaranaike & Willison, 2009, 2010), encouraging students to develop from a relatively "bounded" approach to tasks toward a more autonomous "scaffolded" approach, in which they are able to work independently within provided guidelines.

In our experience so far, student teams respond with real flair to the creative opportunities the Expo provides, in the process learning and demonstrating high caliber skills both of specialist research and public historical communication. Highlights of the task to date have included, for example, a mini-documentary on the relationship between the Medieval past and the pop-culture violence in "Medievalist" television and cinema, a high-school classroom poster on the history of the Crusades (Figure 1), an interactive website on Medieval childhood with activities for school children and accompanying resources for teachers (Figure 2), a satirical video on Medieval attitudes to women and a mock radio interview with leaders and participants from the Children's Crusade.
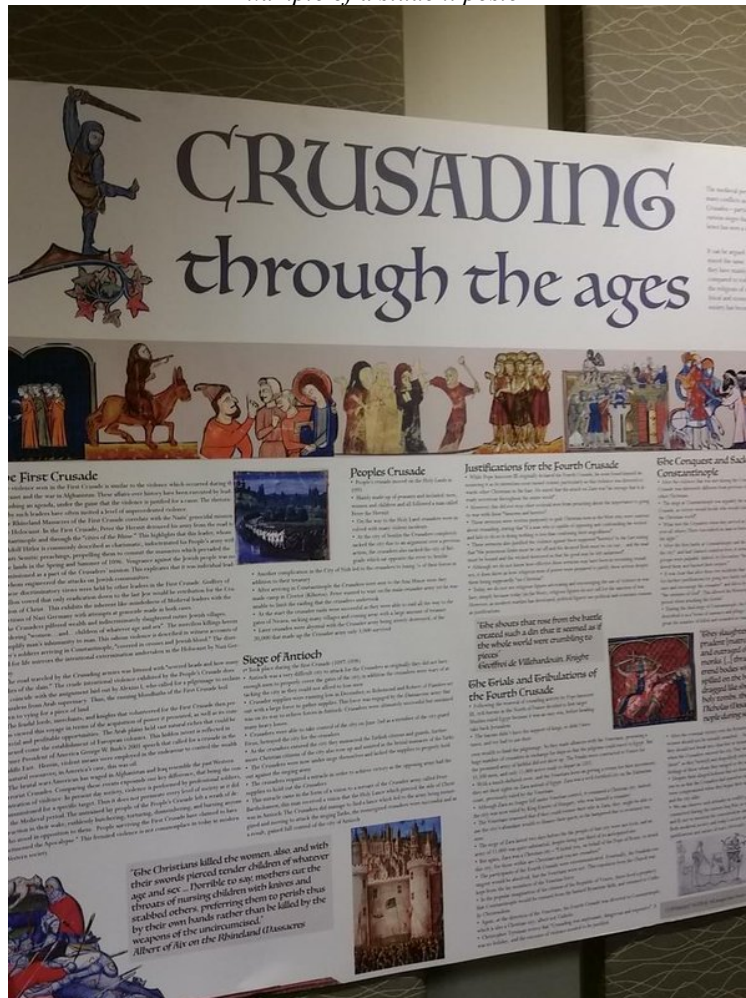
Figure 1
Example of a student poster

Figure 2
Screenshot of an example student website

Communicating Beyond the Academy

The Expo was designed as an exercise in public communication of historical information in order to provide students with experience in packaging their growing specialist knowledge in a variety of ways. "Public histories" represent opportunities for historians to translate specialist knowledge for a wider audience in which both medium and audience exert influence on what and how specialist knowledge will be conveyed (Archer & Breuer, 2015; Pope-Ruark, 2011). They therefore represent a productive example for revealing the relationship between specialist historical knowledge, communication medium, and audience to students. For example, a booklet for tourists needs to meet different criteria from a documentary for primary school children, even if both address the events of the Battle of Hastings, and both will be considerably different from a scholarly essay on the topic, even if all three-share core background research.

In our experience, students are familiar with encountering public history, but unfamiliar with appreciating, analyzing, or practicing it as a form of serious historical communication. Examples of Medieval public history communication are easy to find, from movies like *Braveheart* and drama series such as *Vikings*, through History Channel documentaries, to children's books and programs such as *Horrible Histories*, popular history books like Simon Schama's *History of Britain*, and innumerable historical fiction books, popular podcasts, websites, and re-enactment activities. To increase students' awareness of the core issues we introduce a range of such models of public history into tutorial discussion early in the course (Appendix A). Tutorial preparation materials then prompt students to consider the nature of the audience of particular examples and to discuss what effect this had on the degree of detail or simplification, as well as the nature of the narrative presented. We also encourage students to locate further examples of public history for comparative discussion at key points during semester.

These comparative discussions develop students' awareness of the differences between, for example, a scholarly article on Magna Carta and a children's song about it. We dedicate a proportion of class time to drawing out how and why historical information has been curated and expressed for a given audience, and to consider the difference between audience-appropriate

description and "dumbing down." Students are also given an opportunity to view a sample of past Expo projects across the full range of available formats, as well as to discuss in class what approach(es) seem best tailored to delivering certain types of information to certain audiences. In addition, teams can elect to bring queries about tailoring their information to their chosen format to their tutors for guidance in any of their two opportunities to seek substantive formative feedback.

In contrast to the class and consultation time we dedicate to understanding how to tailor information for a non-academic audience, our assessment design does not include practical instruction on the technical skills of producing projects in any given format. Teams are encouraged to determine their preferred format as part of their creative freedoms and organizational independence: they can leverage the existing skills of a team member or members, for example, to make a short video; or they can elect to dedicate the time commitment of a given team member to acquiring basic skills in, for example, web page production on behalf of the team. We have found students are often keen to exploit this opportunity to develop a new skill and to complete a project through which they will be able to demonstrate it to potential employers.

In-Task Troubleshooting

The skills and practices of teamwork are strongly present in our curriculum, yet the Expo task is designed to encourage self-management of the student teams and thereby to develop students' capacity for independent work. Our processes for staff intervention in team dynamics and project development outside class time are therefore deliberately minimal. This also has the useful effect of minimizing the work of oversight that would otherwise fall on tutorial or coordinating staff. Through an appointed spokesperson, teams may seek ungraded feedback from their tutor on matters of project design or content twice during the eight weeks of the task, and they may ask for advice about managing team dynamics at any time, but they are encouraged to manage conflict among themselves, especially by reference to the team contract.

In the first year of the task, we found that this system was adequate to manage dynamics in the vast majority of teams; however, the occasional teams in which serious disputes arose still occupied significant staff time. In the second year of the Expo, we therefore introduced a system for excluding students who generated significant team disruption. Because we wanted to encourage students to resolve issues autonomously where possible, and to discourage the escalation of petty disagreements, the process of formal mediation for egregious cases of team breakdown we established was relatively onerous. Under this system a troublesome student can be "fired" from a team, but

only after several formal stages of conflict resolution have been attempted and documented (Appendix B). We are direct in explaining to students that this is a system of last resort and that we expect them to make every effort to resolve conflicts internally as part of their team management responsibilities. We have found that teams who are experiencing low-level conflict typically retract their complaints and resolve their difficulties when this is explained to them. Nearly fifty student teams have passed through the Expo since this modification, and we note that student conflict rarely proceeds to formal mediation by staff. Instead students successfully resolve disagreements among themselves by using their team contracts and the problem-solving skills provided in class. Individual students have, nevertheless, occasionally absented themselves from a team by failing to attend or participate, and when this occurs, teaching staff observe practices normal in our courses to follow up, encourage participation where possible, and put struggling students in touch with support services.

The Final Performance

The ultimate Expo event is conceived as a celebration, as well as an opportunity for students to embody their developing professional identities, cementing the sense of cohort that their teamwork has developed throughout the semester. All projects go on display in a communal exhibition in which students have an opportunity to engage with and evaluate each other's work. We also invite academic staff and research students from across our school, as well as support staff from the library and learning skills teams. The event is opened by our Head of School, who issues a formal congratulation to the students on their work. This formal welcome also serves to articulate and praise the skills students have gained and demonstrated in completing the task. As Boys has observed, "…[W]hile humanities undergraduates may develop a wide range of skills which employers want, they are not as conscious of their value as other undergraduates. They need… to be made more aware of their value on the labor market" (Boys, 1992, p. 122). We therefore aim, as a parting gift, to end the task by using a figure of authority to impress upon the students the range and transferability of the skills they have acquired.

The exhibition takes place during the final lecture time of semester, lasting two hours. During this time team members take turns to act as spokespeople for their team to answer informal questions from peers and assessors, especially concerning the team's research process, design rationale, and assumptions about audience. Those who are not committed to spokesperson duties take the opportunity to browse the other work on display and to vote on the most effective

projects. Adding to the festive atmosphere, staff (and some students) come in period costume, and we award prizes and certificates to the most popular displays determined by peer evaluation. Some student teams have brought along food prepared according to period recipes to share as a supplement to their presentations. An event hashtag encourages live engagement with a wider audience, and we collate the posts from each year's event in Storify so that students can easily access and share them with family and friends.

To make the Expo a genuinely public activity, a selection of poster presentations are then placed on display in the History Department, and we circulate links to online content via social media to encourage broad interaction with the teams' projects. In this way, they ultimately reach a much wider audience than those who are able to attend the Expo event in person.

Assessing the Work, the Team, and Team Members

In any teamwork task, it is vital that assessment is directed at the team's product, the teamwork behind it, and the contribution of each team member (Davies, 2009; Devlin, 2002; Eberly Center for Teaching Excellence and Educational Innovation, 2015a; Tu and Lu, 2005). Because assessment is a primary driver of student effort (Gibbs, 2006), it can be assumed that any aspect of the task that is not rewarded in grades will not be a focus of student engagement. Therefore, if we expect students to acquire team management skills, these must be explicitly rewarded in the assessment. Students' legitimate anxiety over fairness in team-based assessment can also be allayed by mechanisms such as assessing the product of teamwork separately from each individual's contribution, or for adjusting the overall grade for each student by a "contribution factor" determined by correlating peer and self-assessment (Eberly Center for Teaching Excellence and Educational Innovation, 2015a; Oakley et al., 2004; Willcoxson, 2006). We opted for the former of these possibilities.

In our course, the Expo accounts for 30% of the available grades, awarded in two parts, each worth 50% of the task. Students receive a team grade for their project, and an individual grade for an accompanying personal portfolio documenting and reflecting on their individual contribution in the context of the team's interactions. Each student's portfolio is accompanied by a reflective coversheet in which they must evaluate the team's function and their part within it, as well as have an opportunity to recognize the contribution of other team-mates (Appendix C). In combination with in-class tasks such as the interim team evaluation, this reflective element is intended to provoke students to think deeply about their own contribution to the smooth or poor functioning of their team, as well as to articulate realistic goals for their personal development in this area.

Assessors use these reflections to modulate the individual component of the grade to reflect both the effort the student has contributed to the project itself and the student's contribution to and awareness of the nature of effective teamwork. We have found most students engage with the portfolio and its reflective requirements with honesty and humility; however, we do find some students reverting to a competitive mode in which they attempt to promote their own work by criticizing the efforts of teammates. These students are marked down for contribution relative to the hours they may have committed to the task because their animus reveals their lack of respect for their team and its decisions. Instead, we provide feedback referring back to teamwork-related discussions throughout semester, as well as advice on future team management strategies. Conversely, we mark students up if their peers recognize their contribution as valuable, and we explicitly congratulate them in their feedback for their dedication to the team's work.

In practical terms, team projects are assessed during the Expo event on the basis of the display and the explanatory discussion that team spokespeople provide. Portfolios are collected at the conclusion of the event and assessed over the following week. We use rubrics to assess both the team's project and individuals' portfolios, designed to accommodate the creativity and flexibility of the task (Appendix D).

In our Expo, any student team member who has not formally been "fired" (see above) receives the team mark (up to 15% of the total available grade for the course), even if they have not participated actively in the project. Students occasionally express dissatisfaction at this arrangement because they assume their hard work will materially benefit the missing student. However, in our experience, no student who failed to participate in a team's project has ever passed the course: failing to take part in the team is strongly correlated with failure to attend classes or to submit other assessment tasks, which are worth 85% of the total available grade. Explaining the small degree to which the team's grade will influence the overall outcome for such a "free-loader," and emphasizing the complementary importance of the individual grade typically allays anxieties concerning the fairness of the assessment system.

Outcomes

The design of the Medieval Expo encompassed a wide range of concerns. It required careful thinking about situating the task within the core curriculum, forming and managing student teams, balancing opportunities for students' creative control with the need for staff direction, embedding a range of new skills in the curriculum, assessing both the product and the process,

inducting sessional staff in new teaching and assessment methods, and explaining and justifying a novel task to students in such a way as to overcome their learned resistance to collaborative assessment. Such a seismic shift in course design and implementation naturally comes with attendant risk, but we have found the rewards to be equally, if not more, significant. They include, for instance, increased student engagement and smoother transition to tertiary study, improved employability outcomes, and greater awareness of the tools and practices of communication, both academic and public.

The calibrated degree of creative control students have over their Expo project's content and design has proven to be a significant driver of student engagement with the task, as well as the course as a whole. Students frequently report that they enjoyed the task because it allowed them to pursue a topic of particular interest. Its unconventional format also has the benefit of enabling students to learn and/or demonstrate different skills from other assessment in the course. The novelty of the format thus increases students' interest and commitment while also exerting a "levelling" effect on achievement. Students whose main skills are in areas other than traditional written expression can achieve highly. On average, of the 340 students who have submitted both a research essay and Expo project in our course over the past two years, scores in the team project were significantly higher than in the research essay (mean improvement 9.8%; paired t-test, $p < 0.001$). Increased engagement also improved students' marks for individual Expo portfolios in comparison to the research essay, although to a lesser extent (mean improvement 5.5%; paired t-test, $p < 0.001$).

In addition to enjoying creative freedoms, students in our course have reported particularly appreciating the friendships and networks they have formed through involvement in the Medieval Expo over the past two years. We regard this as a major positive outcome of the task design, and one that we hope will exert a positive influence on students' whole degree experience. Transition to tertiary study is difficult, but especially in a liberal arts degree which lacks a shared core curriculum (Clerehan, 2003; Demetriou, Goalen, & Ruddock, 2000). Both achievement and retention in Arts are affected by students' sense of social dislocation and isolation (Mestan, 2016; Tinto, 1993). Interventions that build peer connections are particularly vital at the first-year level when students' motivation is most at risk and their transition challenge is greatest (Halpike, 2014; Waters, 2003). As well as serving sound employability and disciplinary learning outcomes, therefore, the Expo encourages engagement by providing a structured opportunity for networking and

friendship formation at a crucial moment in students' development (Zhao & Kuh, 2004).

This assessment design, which develops students' employability and general awareness of ways to apply both the knowledge and skills they acquire in a course of tertiary study was intended to respond to the challenge of making the value of historical studies explicit to students and administrators who may value vocational skills more highly than apparently esoteric knowledge. As such, it can profitably be adapted to suit many disciplines seeking ways to defend their value in a competitive tertiary "market place." Beyond this, it may provide a developed model for assessment in any discipline seeking employment-like scenarios for student practice, or for disciplines in which outward facing communication, as much as academic discourse, is a core learning outcome. In our institution, for example, the Expo model has stimulated assessment design or refinement in Business and Economics, Medicine, and Information Technology.

In summary, the Medieval Expo offers a model of an integrated assessment task design for first year history students that builds employability, broadens students' experience of discipline-related and transferrable communication skills, encourages students to develop independence and self-management capabilities, increases engagement, and eases the challenges of transition into undergraduate arts programs. Although designing and implementing complex assessment tasks like this is time consuming and challenging, in our experience the effort has been well justified both in terms of student satisfaction and in the quality of learning outcomes within the course. Interestingly, it has also exerted a positive effect on staff enthusiasm and engagement, and it has also generated an excitement about undergraduate pedagogy that has diffused into other courses across our School. We look forward to future evidence of the task's impact on students' subsequent degree outcomes and ultimate employability as our first two cohorts proceed to graduation and into the workforce.

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Appendix A

Task Timeline

WEEK	ACTIVITY
4	Team formation by staff
	Thematic prompts and full task instructions are distributed
	Tutorial on teamwork:
	• "Meet your team" activities
	• Discussion of purpose of teams, assigning team roles and responsibilities
	• Team contract discussion in class
5	Completed team contracts are lodged
6	Public history discussion activity in tutorial
7	Examples of past projects available for viewing in class
	Team discussion time provided in tutorial
8	Tutorial workshop on negotiating team conflict
9	Public history discussion activity in tutorial
	Team discussion time provided in tutorial
10	Interim team evaluations completed anonymously
	Tutors use evaluations to identify common problems for trouble shooting
	Team discussion time provided in tutorial
11	Tutorial discussion:
	• How to be a spokesperson, practicalities of displaying your project
	Team discussion time provided in tutorial
12	'Expo' takes place in class
	Personal portfolios are submitted

Appendix B

Firing a Team Member

        All students in the group receive the same grade for the group component unless the group has formally "fired" a student before the Expo date. A "fired" student receives 0% for the group presentation (of a possible 15%). They can still receive marks for their individual portfolio. Groups may "fire" a student member *only* if the following procedure has been followed:

A. the group first raises the matter with their tutor and discusses possible approaches to resolving the problem(s);

B. if this fails, all group members attend a meeting with the course coordinator in which all members have an opportunity to discuss the problem(s) that are causing friction, and plan a resolution;

C. the student member is given a reasonable opportunity to show improvement (at least 1 week);

D. if no change is observed, the group issues a memo of intention to fire to the student (copied to the course coordinator) before the date of the Expo.

Adapted from (Oakley et al., 2004)

Appendix C

Portfolio Coversheet
My evaluation of team function:

☐ Sophisticated	☐ Competent	☐ Under-developed
• The team worked well together to achieve objectives. • Each member contributed in a valuable way to the project • The team worked with a high level of mutual respect and collaboration	• The team generally worked well together, with few moments of communication breakdown or conflict • Most members contributed effectively to the collaborative effort • Members were generally respectful of each other	• Team did not collaborate or communicate well • Some members worked independently, without regard to team objectives or priorities • Members often demonstrated a lack of respect for each other, or were uncooperative

Self-evaluation of my contribution to the activity

	Often	Sometimes	Seldom
I contributed constructive ideas	☐	☐	☐
I listened to and respected the ideas of others	☐	☐	☐
I compromised and cooperated	☐	☐	☐
I took initiative where needed	☐	☐	☐
I came to meetings prepared	☐	☐	☐
I communicated effectively with teammates	☐	☐	☐
I did my share of the work	☐	☐	☐
I worked collaboratively towards team goals	☐	☐	☐
My biggest strength as a team member is:			
In future group work I aim to improve:			

I estimate I contributed _____ hours of focused work to this activity.
I estimate I contributed _____ % of the group's effort towards this activity.
Overall, I feel I contributed poorly / adequately / generously / excessively to this activity. (*Circle one*)
Above and beyond award:
I would like to recognize the following group member for going above and beyond their required contribution to this activity: _____

Appendix D

Expo Assessment Criteria
 Each criterion below represents a category of assessment, within which there is flexibility to recognize the different forms and formats that student projects may have taken. Each is given a qualitative rank: absent, poor, adequate, very good, excellent; and overall comments are provided to contextualize the final grade.
Expo Project (team grade):
- Accuracy: Is the information presented in accord with academic opinion (or, if the topic is a controversial one: is the information in accordance with at least one school of opinion, or is there sound evidence for it, and/or have controversial aspects of the interpretation been highlighted)? Can the spokesperson satisfactorily account for why any generalizations have been made that could impact the precision of the historical information?
- Audience: Is there evidence of attempting to present information with clarity to a non-academic audience; has a specific potential audience been targeted (e.g., 10-year-old children), and are relevant and effective communicative approaches for that audience adopted?
- Anticipation: Is there evidence of anticipating the audience's prior understanding of the topic and of any likely questions or problems with understanding? Is there evidence that the presentation has been designed to respond to these?
- Design: Is the design effective at conveying historical information? Is the design appropriate to the assumed audience?
- Purpose: Does the presentation convey a clear historical message? Does it communicate the importance of this message in a clear way?

Personal Portfolio (individual grade):
- Contribution: Evidence of individual's contribution to thinking about, planning, and executing presentation. Students should include a self-evaluation of their contribution in the context of the team's goals and decision making processes, and an evaluation of team function. Students may nominate one group member for recognition 'above and beyond' proportional requirements. Self-nomination is permitted.
- Reasoning: Evidence of thinking, discussions and ideas about the nature of the presumed audience; what to include or exclude and why; design decisions; the purpose of the presentation; effective communication strategies; differences between academic and non-academic communication, etc.
- Research: For example, (a) Evidence of background historical research, including a bibliography of any sources used in preparing the presentation. The sources of any images used should also be provided; (b) Evidence of research into forms of [historical] communication, such as example websites, videos, images, to be used as inspiration; some evidence of discussion or ideas about which ones were found to be useful models and why.
- Preparation: Evidence of preparation for the activity, for example including brainstorming, drafts, sketches, script writing, and rehearsals relating to the presentation and/or the spokesperson role.