Inside Out Project

Criminology students at Durham have an exciting opportunity, to take one of their modules as an Inside-Out student. Following 18 months of planning and partnership building with local prisons, Durham became the first in Europe to deliver Inside-Out in autumn 2014. All third year criminology undergraduates and some Masters students have the option to complete a credit-bearing criminology module inside a nearby prison for one afternoon each week for ten weeks, designed and delivered as an Inside-Out course.

The programme brings together Durham University criminology students (Outside) with residents from within the prison (Inside) to discuss and study criminology issues as equals.

Together students explore issues of criminal justice with the aim of creating a transformative learning experience through critical thinking, collaborative problem solving and group work, whilst challenging the preconceptions that they and their peers may previously have held. All ‘Inside’ and ‘Outside’ students take the same Durham University-accredited 10 week module where they receive careful guidance from Durham University criminology staff who completed the Inside-Out training programme in the United States and are certified Inside-Out instructors. In line with its ethos of equality through education, all students – ‘Inside’ and ‘Outside’ students – who pass the Durham University Inside-Out module receive the same accreditation.

The programme is facilitated by Dr Kate O’Brien, Dr Hannah King and Professor Fiona Measham with a mixture of readings, discussions and reflective essays. When studying together a mixed seating arrangement between inside and outside students makes a powerful statement about our common humanity and fosters a shared sense of equality as students have an equal voice in the learning process.

The programme is cited as an example of good practice nationally in the Dame Sally Coates Review of Prison Education (2016) and the Prisoners’ Education Trust.

The students who have all graduated from the programme found it to be a transformative experience which has helped them contextualise and rethink what they have learned in the classroom.
“The Inside-Out programme was both designed and structured in a highly effective way, which brought out the best in both the inside and outside students. Furthermore, the delivery of the course was exceptional, with Fiona, Kate and Hannah supporting the students academically as well as emotionally. As such, the course was highly beneficial to all students and truly stood out as the best, and most important, part of my academic career so far.”

Adam Waugh, MSc Criminology student (2016-17)

“I have been involved in the Criminal Justice System for over 24 years and this programme has had the most positive impact on my understanding of criminological issues. I have developed both academically and personally, challenging some of the views and prejudice that I held. I should stress that I don’t believe the views of students could have been as deeply challenged had it not been for the skill of the facilitators, Kate, Hannah and Fiona.”

Dave Coxon (MSc Criminology student 2016-18, current Inside-Out Teaching Assistant)

“The work they are engaged in as well as their initiative in setting up a UK Inside-Out network and Inside-Out Training Centre in collaboration with the men from the HMP Frankland Think Tank, is both inspiring and exemplary of their commitment to excellence in teaching contemporary Criminology in Higher Education.”

Dr. Eric C G Baumgartner (CELTA, BA, MA Distinction, FHEA), Head of Sociology, Nottingham Trent University.

“Inside-Out is obviously a highlight of both the undergraduate and postgraduate criminology programmes. Colleagues are to be commended for their innovation and insight in ‘importing’ the programme from the US. I know that a few other universities have since followed suit or are planning to do so. Durham should be congratulated for blazing the trail here. This is not easy teaching. It is very time (and energy and emotion) consuming. It demands a lot of thought, care, maturity, sensitivity and preparation. Delivering it well does not sit/fit simply with standard academic work-loading models. Academic managers are therefore to be applauded for investing in Inside-Out because ‘pay-offs’ are not obvious or immediate – but are more intrinsic, long-term and real. It might not be easy teaching but the idea is quite simple: deliver a module to and together with students who are in prison and students who are not, so challenging all sorts of divisions and presumptions.”
Professor Robert MacDonald, BA DPhil FAcSS, External Examiner for Durham University’s BA Criminology (Professor of Sociology, Visiting Professor, Danish Centre for Youth Research, University of Aalborg, Adjunct Research Professor, Department of Sociology, Monash University)

For further information see www.durham.ac.uk/sociology/crim/insideout