**SSAS 3001: An Introduction to Teaching: The Ambassador Scheme in the Social Sciences**

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| **Name:** Grace Cameron  **Degree:** BSc Applied Social Sciences (Criminology with Psychological Studies)  **Year of Graduation:** 2014 |
| **What were your main reasons for wanting to take the module?**  I had always wondered whether working with children after graduating was something that would interest me, and when I saw the email from Carol Davis [Social Sciences Employability Co-ordinator] about the Undergraduate Ambassador Scheme (UAS) module, I thought it would be an excellent way for me to find out if teaching was something I would enjoy.  I thought that the module would offer me some real work experience in a professional setting, and a chance to ‘get out of’ the every-day university setting. |
| **Where was your placement and what did you do during your placement?**  I was placed in a local primary school in Southampton with a Year 3 class, and therefore observed many different classes, including English, Maths, Science, History, Geography and Physical Education.  The module specifies that you are to complete a minimum of 40 hours on placement. I totalled 45 hours on placement, but I honestly could have stayed for more!  After an initial induction at the school, I had my first placement with the Year Three class. It started as just observation at the start, finding out what the classroom set up was like, getting to know the pupils, seeing how the teacher taught her lessons etc. However, I really wanted to get involved with helping the children, and I believe that’s a key quality you should have if you want to take this module – enthusiasm! I worked with different groups of children throughout my placement: those with special educational needs, those in lower sets, those in the top set, and those somewhere around the middle. It was really beneficial for me to experience what it was like interacting with children who possess different strengths.  Having no formal teaching experience before the placement, I was anxious about how the children and the teacher would react to me as a teaching assistant. Admittedly, there were a few times where I did feel nervous and unsure, but with an excellent support structure in place for the module, I always felt that I could communicate these issues. There are some things I can take from the module that I feel will really help me in the future, such as the way I communicate with different groups, and ensuring I change my learning styles to suit children of all abilities. |
| **Part of the assessment for this Undergraduate Ambassador Scheme (UAS) module involves doing a special project. What was your special project?**  The title of my special project was ‘Ancient Egyptian Hieroglyphics and Maths Puzzles’, and the basic concept was that children would complete worksheets using hieroglyphic codes to solve some maths problems.  I created two different sets of worksheets; one for the main body of the class and a differentiated one for the lower set. Across the top of the worksheets was a hieroglyphic code that showed numbers represented as hieroglyphic symbols i.e. 1 would equate to a picture of a river, 2 would equate to a picture of a bird, etc. Below this code were a series of maths puzzles where children needed to use addition, subtraction, multiplication and division to solve the problems, and then write the answer in the code format as above.  The children responded really well to my Special Project, and this was demonstrated both verbally in their comments and through the marking of their worksheets. The majority of the pupils also moved onto an extension activity where they could create their own codes and puzzles. |
| **Do you think this module will be helpful for your future career plans? If so, in what ways?**  The UAS placement provided me with the ambition, confidence and encouragement to apply for a PGCE Primary course. I felt that, without the module, I would not have had enough experience or motivation to apply for the course, and at interview, what I did on my module came up a lot and really supported my ambitions for wanting to be a teacher. The teachers’ comments (that formed part of the assessment) will also be incredibly useful going forward into teacher training.  I am now going to be studying a PGCE Primary (Humanities) course at the University of Exeter in September 2014.  I think it’s also worth noting that you don’t have to want to be a teacher to do the module – I wasn’t 100% sure I wanted to teach before this module, but it gave me true inspiration. |
| **Was the overall experience of doing the module a useful one? How do you feel you have benefitted from taking the module?**  What I learnt from the UAS module and placement is invaluable, and I cannot emphasise enough what a fantastic module it is to take. It provided me with confidence and ambition, and helped me build on my leadership and teamwork skills.  Getting to work in a professional environment was fantastic work experience, and without having done my placement, I don’t feel I would have been able to apply for a PGCE and subsequently be successful.  The module really taught me a lot about myself, and what I can improve upon and build on in order to better myself in my future career. |
| **Would you recommend this module to other students and if so why?**  Absolutely. The module is well organised, thought out and there is support whenever you need it. It’s an excellent opportunity to try your hand at something you might not be able to organise by yourself, and is a great opportunity to gain some professional work experience. It looks desirable to employers and graduate schemes, plus gives you more skills and experience to put on your CV. |
| **What advice would you give to future students who plan to take this module?**  - Organise your induction early (don’t leave it until two or three weeks into term!)  - Use your initiative  - Ask questions if you’re unsure  - Stay up to date on your journals and write reflectively – it will make writing your report much easier!  - Form and maintain those professional relationships; you never know when you might need your host teacher or the module coordinator for a reference  - Enjoy yourself! |