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Strand: Masters Strand

1. Research question

I am developing a Short course to be assessed under the proposed new Junior Certificate History which will specifically look at the key revolutionary period of 1913-1923 in Ireland. On completion of the research I hope to have collated and gathered material, documents and classroom resources which will contribute to a full Short course module to be assessed at Junior Certificate level.

2. Introduction and background to the research

As a student and teacher of History, I am continually looking for ways to bring History to life and have an added passion for modern Irish history. Considering we are in the middle of the centenary of this important decade in Irish history I feel that there should be extra emphasis placed on developing and assessing students learning and skills using the vast array of written and audio-visual sources available from this period and about this period of Irish history. Last summer I was part of a week long course for Post-Primary teachers ran by An Foras Feasa in Maynooth University and in conjunction with the Letters 1916 project and the Bureau of Military Archives which looked to develop lesson plans and classroom resources based around the happenings of 1916 in Ireland. Drawing on some of the resources and materials which we accessed for the project, I will look to further develop upon some of the outcomes of the project. Considering that history is no longer a compulsory subject to Junior Certificate level this Short course will be designed to facilitate the expansion of key skills such as evaluation, analysis, critical thinking, presentation, debating to name a few. It will also be a means to assess students in a range of different methods. The period that will be explored will be the revolutionary era of Ireland which began in 1912-13 and ended in the creation of the Free State in 1923. My objectives for the Short course would be informed and guided by the Department of Education's 24 Statements of Learning for Junior Cycle and also the NCCA's Template and Guidelines on Short courses. The course will ideally be focused on using numerous formative assessment strategies within lessons which should allow students greater freedom to choose their own specific areas of interest to study. I envisage including a

broad range of options available to students such as presentations, group work, projects, artwork among others for the final assessment of the course. A short course such as this has huge potential in terms of cross- curricular possibilities, uses in Transition Year while also looking towards Senior Cycle History and Politics and Society and could be tailored towards local historical research in individual schools and areas throughout the country. This section should tell us why you are exploring this question. What gave you the idea? What problem are you trying to solve? What was your inspiration? It should also summarise any other similar research you have come across or readings that are relevant to the issue.

3. Research/ project plan

I plan to gather a wide range of primary, secondary and visual sources along with other historically relevant material available online while also drawing on some resources which I have developed myself. For example, I am looking at the Bureau of Military Archives website for witness statements from this period which can be used in various different ways for classroom lessons. Other websites and sources which will be explored for relevant resources and ideas include newspaper articles, UCD and Trinity college archives, Scoilnet.ie, PDST.ie, Century Ireland, NLI.ie, BBC.co.uk, RTE.ie to name but a few. A fellow student from Maynooth University, Feargal Flanagan, and I are looking at common areas in relation to Short Course development and will collaborate on certain areas and themes and gather and share findings and information from our respective research. This section should include an outline of what you plan to do, what research methods you will use and what data you will be collecting and from whom. If you are taking an action research approach, you could describe the actions that you or your colleagues will be taking.

4. Progress to date

Over the past number of months, I have been working on building up a wide range of different resources some of which I have tried with students and some which need further development for use in the classroom. I am currently in the process of finishing my research thesis for the Professional Masters of Education in Maynooth University, however this will be completed by May. Over the summer months I will then be able to concentrate on further research and development of materials and resources and look at ways to link these to relevant Statements of Learning and appropriate Short Course assessment methods.