

John Bagnall, online Student of option course Willingly to War

My name is John Bagnall and I'm studying for the MSc in Modern, British and Irish History here at Edinburgh and I use the online course for the module "The Origins of the First World War" as a substitute as part of my on-site course.

Overall I would rate my experience of the online module a solid ten out of ten. I really did enjoy this course.

Both the quality of the course and the teaching were excellent. You never felt that your ideas were being hammered down or you never really felt that you were wrong, but you were able to advance your own ideas and thoughts through that. The material that was offered was both extensive but approachable and readily available. I felt I was supported well and help was there when I needed it.

I had some reservations about doing the online module, mostly because it was something I'd never done before but in time and actually not that much time at all I very quickly realised that there were many advantages to doing the online course as opposed to an on-site module.

The main one of those was the vast majority of the teaching was done over the course of a full week in a discussion forum which allowed you to post ideas and questions as you went, and so by the time you actually got to the live online seminar everything, well the conversation was already at quite an advanced stage by that point, which really allowed you to dig in and unpack the ideas that you wanted to and you got through a lot for each module in each week I think.

I think when debating it's easier to put your points across when you're not necessarily standing directly in front of the person. I mean you're talking about very heated topics which a lot of people do feel passionately about and so that sort of space, it's almost as if you're thinking in your own head and debating with the ideas in your own head so you can really let go, unravel, let everything out and really push for what you want to push and then refine your own ideas from that based on what other people argue back at you, and I think that skill is of so much importance to the historian, just being able to debate well and present your own ideas, and this online course really helped me to develop my skills in that area.