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***Using real-time authentic online learning scenarios to teach
criminal intelligence analysis***

By

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ABSTRACT

Criminal intelligence is an area of expertise highly sought-after internationally and within a variety of justice-related professions; however, producing university graduates with the requisite professional knowledge, as well as analytical, organisational and technical skills presents a pedagogical and technical challenge to university educators. The situation becomes even more challenging when students are undertaking their studies by distance education. This best practice session showcases the design of an online undergraduate unit for final year justice students which uses an evolving real-time criminal scenario as the focus of authentic learning activities in order to prepare students for graduate roles within the criminal intelligence and justice professions. Within the unit, students take on the role of criminal intelligence analysts, applying relevant theories, models and strategies to solve a complex but realistic crime and complete briefings and documentation to industry standards as their major summative assessment task.

The session will demonstrate how the design of the online unit corresponds to authentic learning principles, and will specifically map the elements of the unit design to Herrington & Oliver's instructional design framework for authentic learning (2000; Herrington & Herrington 2006). The session will show how a range of technologies was used to create a rich learning experience for students that could be easily maintained over multiple unit iterations without specialist technical support. The session will also discuss the unique pedagogical affordances and challenges implicated in the location of the unit within an online learning environment, and will reflect on some of the lessons learned from the development which may be relevant to other authentic online learning contexts.

Key words: *criminal intelligence, authentic learning principles, e learning*

Using real-time authentic online learning scenarios to teach criminal intelligence analysis

Key points for presentation:

Overall theme of presentation: put the audience in the student's/driver's seat –

“So you want to be an intel analyst?” The slides should look interactive (and maybe be interactive)

- Overview: what will this presentation cover? (brief, drawn from initial proposal)
- So you want to be an intel analyst? Welcome to JSB377....Start here...
 - Define an intel analyst: Intelligence (being able to add value to information by subjecting it to the elements of the intelligence process) has become the driving force in crime prevention, criminal investigation, loss prevention and risk management.
 - The predictive ability of a competent intelligence analyst is evident across both the public and private sectors. Being able to support the decision making process in a climate of uncertainty is the analyst's role and function. As such intelligence is a growth industry.
- “Start here” button leads to “Finish Here!” slide: What knowledge and skills do you need to have as a graduate intelligence analyst?

Skills and knowledge you should have developed in units previous to JSB377	New skills and knowledge you will develop in doing JSB377
Defining the research problem/task	Inductive and deductive reasoning
Assigning priorities to these tasks	Premise and Inference development
Gathering the information from a variety of sources	Information management
Examining data within a prescribed context and evaluating data according to its validity and the reliability of the source	Time management & Organisational skills
Basic research skills and corroborating information using multiple sources	Prioritising and resourcing
	Decision making in uncertainty
	Data integration and presentation

1. The Design Brief: Authentic Learning Theory applied to JSB377

Herrington & Oliver 2000: An Instructional Design Framework for Authentic Learning Environments

Herrington & Herrington 2006: The Characteristics of Authentic Learning

Provide an authentic context that reflects the way the knowledge will be used in real life	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Students acting as intel analysts to solve a problem - Intel presented in a variety of formats, evolving in realtime - Sustained and complex learning environment embedded in major assessment task which becomes focus for much of semester's learning - Students access information through LMS as required, although also presented linearly.
Authentic Activities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Design of major assessment task scaffolds activities of real intel analysts: investigate a crime, analyse intel, work out a solution, present a briefing to superior officer with industry-standard documentation. This provides focus for PBL: a messy problem with complex tasks that lead
Access to Expert Performances and the Modelling of Processes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Templates and resources provide modelling. - Future development of unit may include rich media demo performances, especially of briefing presentation. - Future development possibility: recorded Alumni and employer interviews to reflect on usefulness of the learning activity.
Multiple roles and perspectives	Students take on the professional role or identity of the intel analyst in addition to their learner role. The variety of data sources and organisations implicated in the activity provides multiple perspectives on how law enforcement agencies work to investigate and solve crimes within the Australian context.
Collaborative construction of knowledge	Not possible due to structure of unit assessment and distance mode; however, this aspect has featured in a face-to-face adaptation of the major assessment task for a co-curricular competition, with excellent results.
Reflection	Opportunities to reflect encouraged by provision of online private journal for student reflection and embedding of reflective activities in the learning activities. More reflection on the learning journey gathered through process of unit evaluation.
Articulation	A key component of the persuasive briefing, occurring in the major assessment task.
Coaching and Scaffolding	<p>Unit coordinator acts as facilitator of learning, providing opportunities for coaching at critical times using synchronous/asynchronous WCTs.</p> <p>Scaffolding also occurs through structured approach to instructions for completing major assessment task, where each stage of completion is explicitly articulated, progression-mapped and hyperlinked to relevant theory, resources, templates etc</p>
Authentic assessment	A realistic major assessment task, complete with industry standard documentation and co-evaluated by an industry professional.

- a. What issues/challenges does the literature raise and how does the unit design respond?
 - i. The “suspension of disbelief” issue in authentic online activities
- b. What design parameters were important in this unit development? (eg. integrated with Bb, use of low-barrier technologies for ease of maintenance, adaptable design, etc):
 - i. Integration with LMS
 - ii. low-barrier technologies for ease of maintenance
 - iii. adaptable design for future iterations and other purposes

2. Demonstration (here, the important thing is to show how the unit works by showing the features of the T&L approach.

These are, in descending order of importance (in case we need to cut some due to time constraints):

- a. Online distance learning
- b. Assessment schedule, emphasising authentic major task:
 - i. Realistic criminal scenario
 - ii. Real world task: convince superior officer to run this operation
 - iii. Produce industry standard documentation
 - iv. External, industry-based assessor
 - v. Step by step process which links unit learning and theory to practical application
 - vi. Interactive, engaging interface for major assessment task.
 - vii. Adaptive release rules means that students must cope with an evolving scenario
- c. Two-way communication channels support student learning:
 - i. Eg. Ask a Question forum,
 - ii. Collaborate sessions for support,
 - iii. Feedback and announcements.

3. Feedback from students and external assessor

Students were challenged with regard to their time management and organisational skills. They comment on how their failing to plan and prioritise tasks resulted in stress and confusion. Common responses in feedback evaluations included:

“What a reality check – I thought I knew my stuff until I got to the practex” ; “I could not walk away from the scenario practex without solving the problem / crime” ; “ Working on the practex was like a good book. I could not put it down“.

4. Lessons learned:

Students learned that they could not leave this piece of assessment until 1 week before it was due. By placing the assessment within an evolving real-time framework meant that students needed to monitor their intelligence feeds on a daily basis as the direction of the intelligence / investigation was constantly changing and evolving as it does in the real world. This addressed the issue of ongoing engagement in the unit. Scenario-evolution was a key element to ensuring student engagement with the material.

They also learned that you never get all of the pieces to the puzzle in the intelligence space and at some stage the intelligence professional needs to “make a call” based on the analysis of information they have at the time. This presented a challenge to students that were risk averse. To address this issue a series of scaffolding activities were introduced during the module activities to encourage the students to “make a call” in the safety of a non-assessable environment.

- a. There was intrinsic value in getting students to complete an authentic task because of the professional knowledge and skills it developed, but it did highlight that their previous studies did not always sufficiently prepare them for the “real-world”. Lesson is that authentic learning should ideally be scaffolded from the earliest stages of their studies, not implemented only in capstone experiences.
- b. Students who were not used to authentic learning struggled with aspects, eg:
 - i. Requirement to be self-motivated, including time management
 - ii. Complex, evolving nature of the problem (as opposed to an essay or MCQ) required more investment of time and effort by the students.

- iii. Some students expected that everything they needed would be given to them – managing/correcting that expectation proved an ongoing challenge.
 - iv. Some students struggled to use the online learning environment to find what they needed to do the unit. ie. online search/analysis skills.
- c. However, these challenges were important for developing students’ professional identities – but making that clear and explicit to students was important.
- d. Having a carefully scaffolded step by step process was important and successful:
- i. Overtly links theory to practice
 - ii. Having good templates and resources available and links from assessment task to these resources provided when they are required
 - iii. Tech support provided to show students exactly how to create the documentation necessary for the assessment submission.
- e. Communications strategy was essential to unit success, especially using the Ask a Question forum to manage student requests for information asynchronously.
- f. Students who completed successfully really were industry-ready: as evidenced by feedback from external assessor and students who gained employment in the field from the assessment itself.

Qld Corrective Services (Prison Intelligence Units) were key employers of our program graduates. On average 6 final year graduates are offered short term contracts from the QCS State Intelligence Group. Some of their comments included;

“we will have as many of your graduates that we can afford(\$)”.

“When they arrive at the workplace they are job ready. We spend less than 4 hrs training them and they are ready to go. We have them working on small to medium scale intelligence projects within days of their starting work”.

Student feedback clearly supported the relevance of the online program to the real world. Their confidence was evident as was their competence.

5. What happened next?

- a. Multiple successful iterations, also adapted to FTF mode.
- b. Ongoing partnerships with state and federal law enforcement agencies especially as graduate employers.
- c. Raised profile of Faculty and University.
- d. Interest from international agencies.
- e. Lessons learned have informed development of a new co-curricular law and justice competition called QUT Crime Club.

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