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Graduate Employability in the Curriculum: Student 'expectations v outcomes'. Is it a bridge too far? - a real conundrum!

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Shift 2014:
Enhancing Employment Outcomes: What Works?



Student “Expectations v Outcomes”



Is it a bridge too far? - a real conundrum!

Presented by John English and Chris Ireland, The Business School

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THE AWARDS
AWARD WINNER
UNIVERSITY OF THE YEAR



THE AWARDS
2012
WINNER
Entrepreneurial University of the Year



Why a conundrum?



1st Year Accountancy module – AIO students

Where are they in terms of employability?

Establish a baseline

Employability Competencies ([Rees et al, 2007](#))

Introduced 6 years ago

“Expectations v Outcomes”

PDP Review & Development – Self Review



		Portfolio Section					
	Initial Self-Review	1	2	3	4-11	12	Final Self-Review
Generic Competencies							
Influencing	2					4	4
Interpersonal Sensitivity	5			3			6
Listening	4						5
Planning and Organising	7	6					4
Questioning	3		4				4
Teamwork	7		5			7	7
Written Communication	2	3		4			5

Why a conundrum?



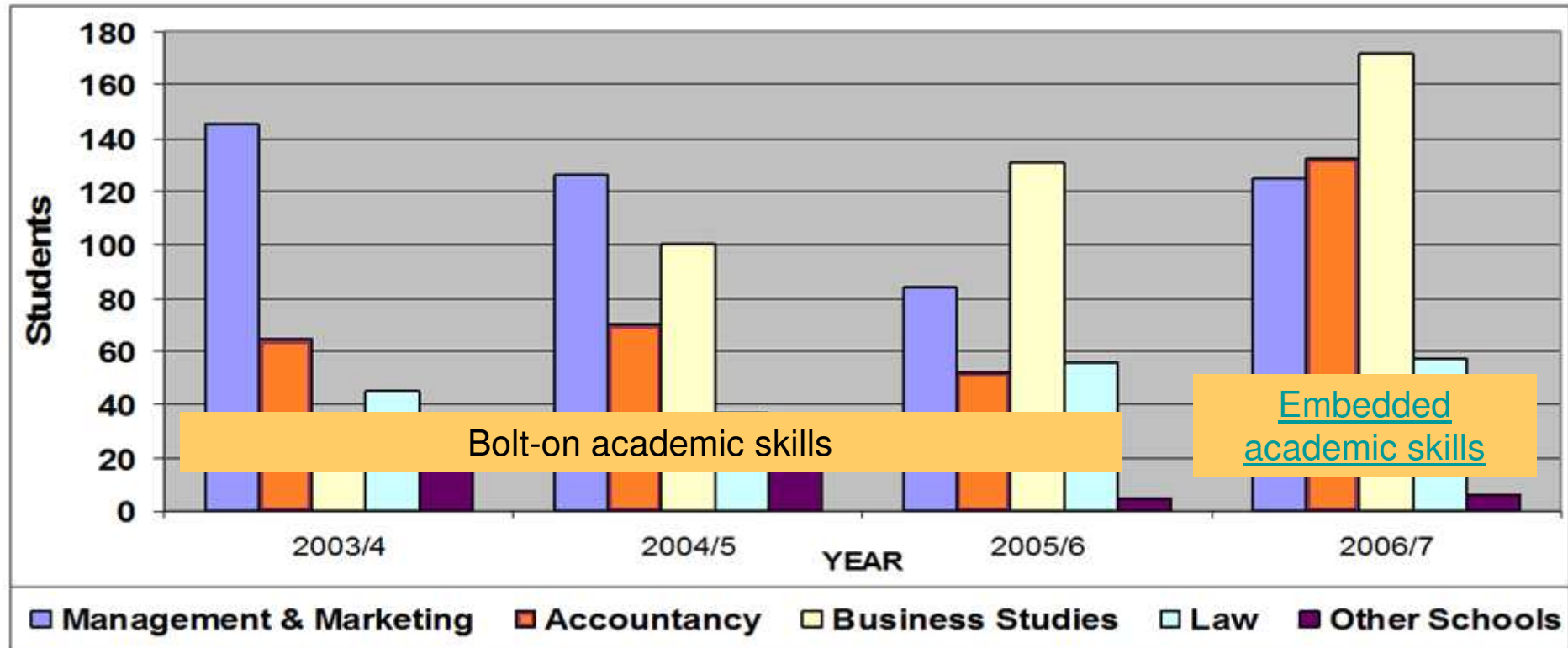
- Overview of this year's cohort (149 students)
 - Average for 20 areas was 5.25
 - 12 rated themselves between 7.5 to 9.0 !!!!!
 - 15 rated themselves below 4.0 !!!!!
- Hence the conundrum

HE's employability conundrum? – Two contrasting views



- *It has nothing to do with Higher Education*
- *It has everything to do with Higher Education*
- *A pragmatic approach*
 - *developing both academic and vocational skills under the employability banner*

Student visits to Academic Skills



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New Module: Lecturer's Nightmare?



- Personal Development Planning
- Academic Skills and Vocational Skills
- Professional Body requirements
- Reflective writing
- Using formative exercises
- Enhancing the personal tutor system
- Shift student focus from numeracy
- Encourage placements

Our light bulb moment: Placements



Placement emphasis - GradCo Ltd

Initial phase

- preparing to apply
- applying

Development phase

- placement contracts
- employability
- fun
- cross boundaries

Baseline: understand where the journey begins



Often

underprepared for independent learning

do not meet our expectations

‘we’ can be too critical

We try to meet them halfway

to develop into UK HE students

to prepare future employable graduates

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2007 Induction Report



Expectation: Do not delay

“We want to get on with studying; that’s what we are here for!”

Outcome: Immediate engagement

Teaching and formative assessment start in Induction Week

Induction Week Day Two



- Short essay about placement
- Many students have avoided writing since GCSEs.
- Collaborative approach (PAL assisted)
- Writing conventions/Attention to detail

Week One, Day One



- Surprise basic maths diagnostic due to mixed ability
- Score <50% = extra maths classes
- Can include A level students – why?
- The Z Z Z rule:-

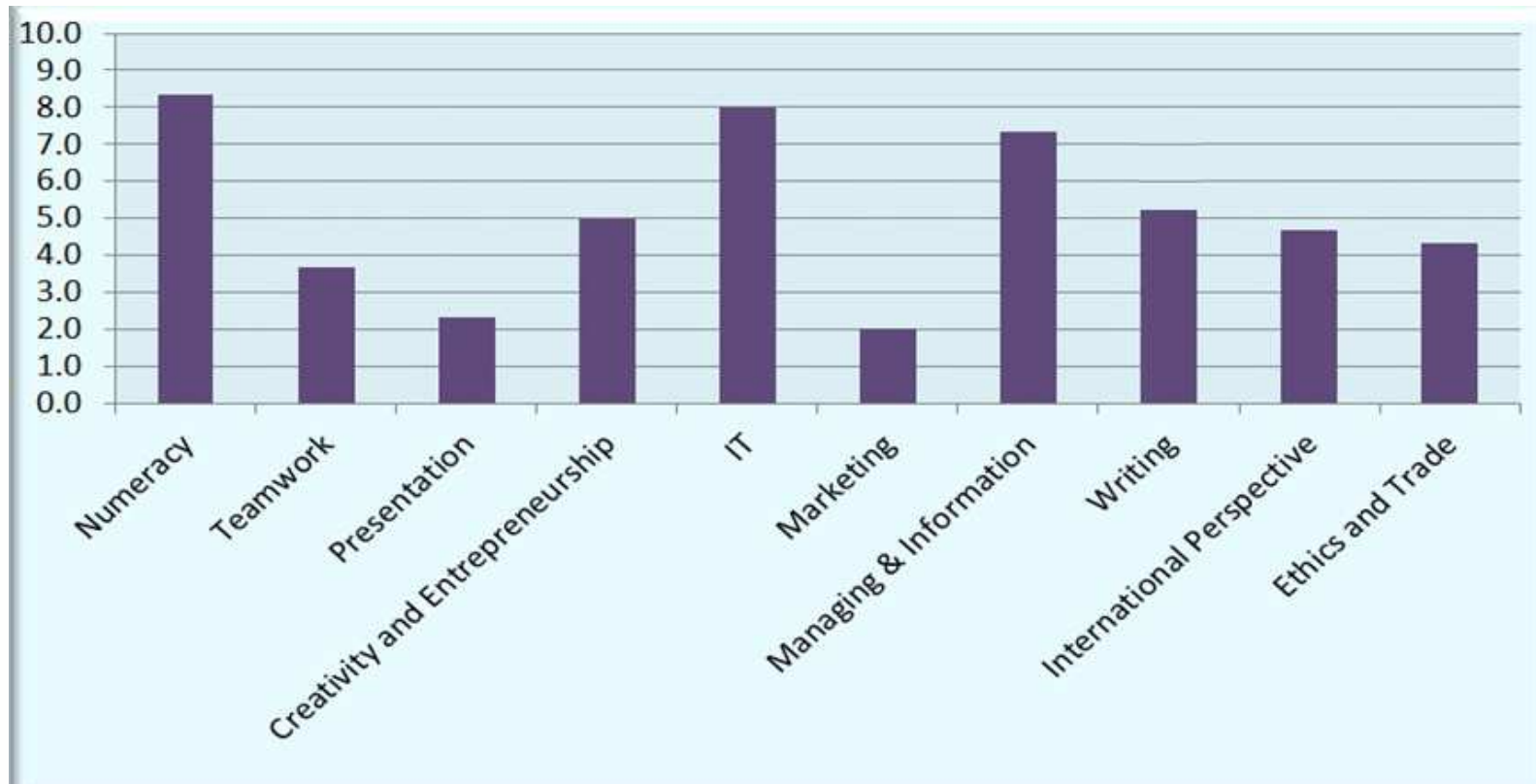
“After 3 years in Poland I was so resigned due to outdated teaching and assessments based on the 3 z rule – **zakuc, zdac, zapmniec**. Thanks to John my happiness of business and economics came back also made an impossible thing happen – I even got to like statistics.”

MC-Dip (Skills Diagnostic)



- One of our Baseline Assessments
- First introduced 5 years ago
- Highlights areas for development
- Provides evidence for reflection

Typical MC-Dip Skills Audit



Evidence informed approach

Using the MC-Dip learning styles on-line	Year 2010/11		
	1 st four weeks	End of term two	Change
Writing Style	5.42		
Numeracy	7.05		
ICT	7.14		
Presentations	4.77		
Marketing	5.38		
Teamwork	6.43		
Average (10 areas)	5.68		15

MC-Dip helps us to focus initiatives



- The English and Ireland presentation model:
 - 1st Presentation (formative) only give positive feedback
 - 2nd Presentation (formative) give positive and developmental feedback
 - 3rd Presentation (summative) rehearse with the academic development tutors



ACCA Business Game



Business Challenge (ACCA)

Students act as a consultancy group for a Local Authority and help them make the right decision.

Students present their solution on flip chart paper using the 1st stage of our presentation model.



**A place to live? A place to shop?
A place to park?
A place for healthy learning?**

**You must decide for your local
community**

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Which employability competencies would you expect to develop in this exercise?



- A) Adaptability / flexibility
- B) Analysis
- C) Decisiveness
- D) Initiative
- E) Teamwork / working with others
- F) Tolerance of stress

ACCA Business Game

What do the students say?



Financial Awareness – “During the meetings **I wasn't able to provide the group with any figures**, it took me a long time to understand where the numbers came from, although I felt behind in my course **my group were very supportive** and they helped me. I have decided **I will prepare figures before a meeting in future** as this will help my understanding”

Interpersonal Sensitivity – “**I am too adamant** about my point of view. In this task I respected the views of others as they were better than my own. From the feedback **I realise I must respect others' views** ... something I will continue to do throughout my University course”

Strauss Pricing Exercise

Strauss Pricing (Module Leader)

Students help a client by producing a budgets, pricing strategy and a creative marketing slide for a new unique light weight caravan recliner.

The team solution must be presented by PowerPoint using the 2nd stage of our presentation model.



£150 - Premium pricing?

£124.99 - Penetration pricing?

£72 + £36 - Cost plus pricing?

**You must help the client to
decide**

Which employability competencies would you expect to develop in this exercise?



- A) Attention to detail
- B) Planning and organising
- C) Leadership
- D) Time management
- E) Creativity
- F) Technical knowledge

Strauss Pricing Exercise

What do the students say?



Tolerance for Stress - “When I discovered we had to do presentations my heart skipped a few beats and **I was hit with nerves. Could I fake illness** to get out of doing them? – the formative process ... has really helped me overcome the fears of presenting and I am finding ways of managing the stress.”

Worried Y1 Student (2010) now Chancellor’s prize winner who has even presented at our conferences.

Leadership - “Ever since starting school **I have never enjoyed taking the lead** or responsibility for a task. I felt quite pleased when my team asked me to be a team leader as this gave me the opportunity to **get over my fears and take control of a situation**”

Did the process have an impact?



Using the MC-Dip learning styles on-line	Year 2010/11		
	1 st four weeks	End of term two	Change
Writing Style	5.42	5.98	0.51
Numeracy	7.05	7.31	0.26
ICT	7.14	7.52	0.38
Presentations	4.77	5.97	1.20
Marketing	5.38	5.95	0.57
Teamwork	6.43	6.91	0.48
Average (10 areas)	5.68	6.24	0.56

The issues faced in 2010/11



- Ever larger numbers on the 1st year
 - Doubled since 2006/7
- Greater numbers of non-UK students
- Presentation Feedback Process
 - Writing, Collating, Delivering and Engaging the Students
- Course needs
 - Referencing, critical thinking and presentation style

A solution for 11/12 presentations



- Working SMARTER
- IT and paperless process
- Student peer assessment and feedback
- Multiple student roles

The data (feedback in words)

Presentation	ACCA Game 😊	ACCA Game 😞	Strauss 😊	Strauss 😞
Peer	7074	6012	14657	19101
Responses	351	351	431	431
Average	20.15	17.13	34.01	44.32
Self	2919	2470	3883	3610
Responses	86	86	81	81
Average	33.94	28.72	47.94	44.57
Tutor	2287	1126	1489	3528
Responses	25	25	23	23
Average	91.48	45.04	64.74	153.39

Use of the peer feedback

	Yes	No	%
I used ACCA PEER feedback to prepare for the Strauss Presentation	66	32	67
I used Strauss PEER feedback to prepare for the final presentation	87	11	88

The way forward?



- AIO was the start
- Employability is now embedded across the degree
- Dissemination events – across the University
- If we could wave a magic wand we would solve
 - time management, planning and organisation,
 - commercial awareness and professionalism

Does the process still have an impact?



Using the MC-Dip learning styles on-line	Year 2010/11			Year 2012/13		
	1 st four weeks	End of term two	Change	1 st four weeks	End of term two	Change
Writing Style	5.42	5.98	0.51	5.61	6.31	0.69
Numeracy	7.05	7.31	0.26	6.92	7.35	0.43
ICT	7.14	7.52	0.38	6.88	7.28	0.40
Presentations	4.77	5.97	1.20	4.77	6.24	1.47
Marketing	5.38	5.95	0.57	5.23	6.04	0.81
Teamwork	6.43	6.91	0.48	5.34	5.61	0.26
Average (10 areas)	5.68	6.24	0.56	5.69	6.33	0.64

We are making a difference?

These are extracts from student reflections from a year ago



“The best thing about this portfolio is ... it has really felt like a journey where I ...‘identified’ my deepest weaknesses to make myself better which is something I never would have done ... the mark I will receive isn’t important as the way it has changed me as a person is far more valuable.”

“I have grown throughout the first year... unlocked motivation I did not even know I had.... I have learnt many skills to do with ... presentations, working in groups and how questioning and confidence has a lot to do with your ability to perform as well....I have also taken into account the peer reviews of our last presentation me and my group will take this on board”

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We are making a difference.
This email extract was received from
a 2009 graduate - Katie:



It would probably be a good time to say ... how valuable your module, words of wisdom and help was in getting me here – thank you John.

I only wish that I could give back some words of wisdom in how to get your students to buy in to the concept of PDP and soft skills because they are definitely the key to getting onto good graduate schemes and becoming well rounded professionals – just like you said they would."

We are making a difference?
This is what our sponsor says:



“As ever it was a pleasure yesterday - Your prize winners were a class act and ... proof of the impact the AIO module is having ... in the way they genuinely appreciate what it has done for them. These are the sorts of things that will prepare your students well for graduation and entering the employment market. What you do with them is fantastic in giving them a focus ... beyond graduation and developing them ... more broadly than the academic curriculum!”

We are making a difference?
This is what Fiona and Keeran say:



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A bridge too far?
No it's the start of their fantastic journey



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