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English, John and Ireland, Chris

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

Inspiring tomorrow's professionals

**THE AWARDS**  
AWARD WINNER  
UNIVERSITY OF THE YEAR



**THE AWARDS** 2012  
WINNER  
Entrepreneurial University of the Year



# Why a conundrum?



1<sup>st</sup> 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



	Initial Self-Review	Portfolio Section					Final Self-Review
		1	2	3	4-11	12	
<b>Generic Competencies</b>							
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?



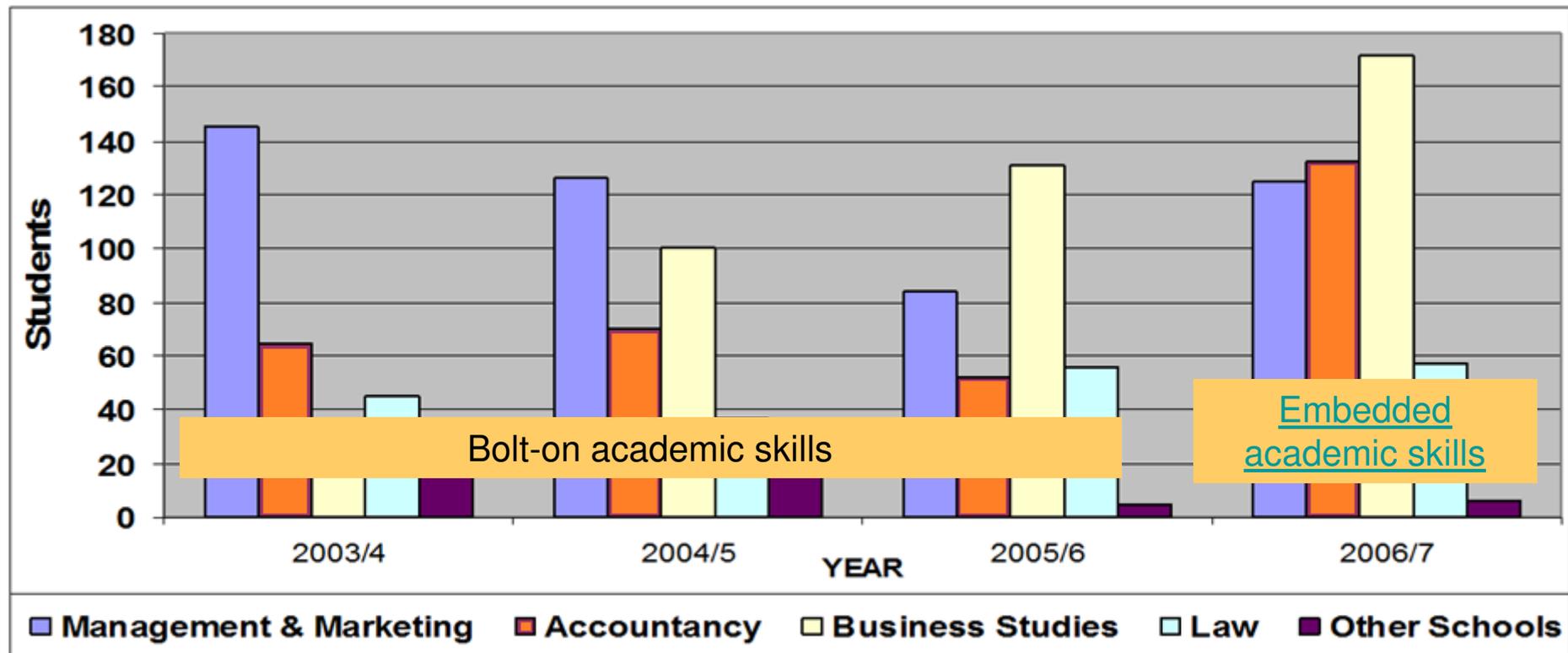
- Overview of this year's cohort (149 students)
  - Average for 20 areas was 5.25
  - 12 rated themselves between 7.5 to 9.0 !!!!!
  - 15 rated themselves below 4.0 !!!!!
- Hence the conundrum

# 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

# 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



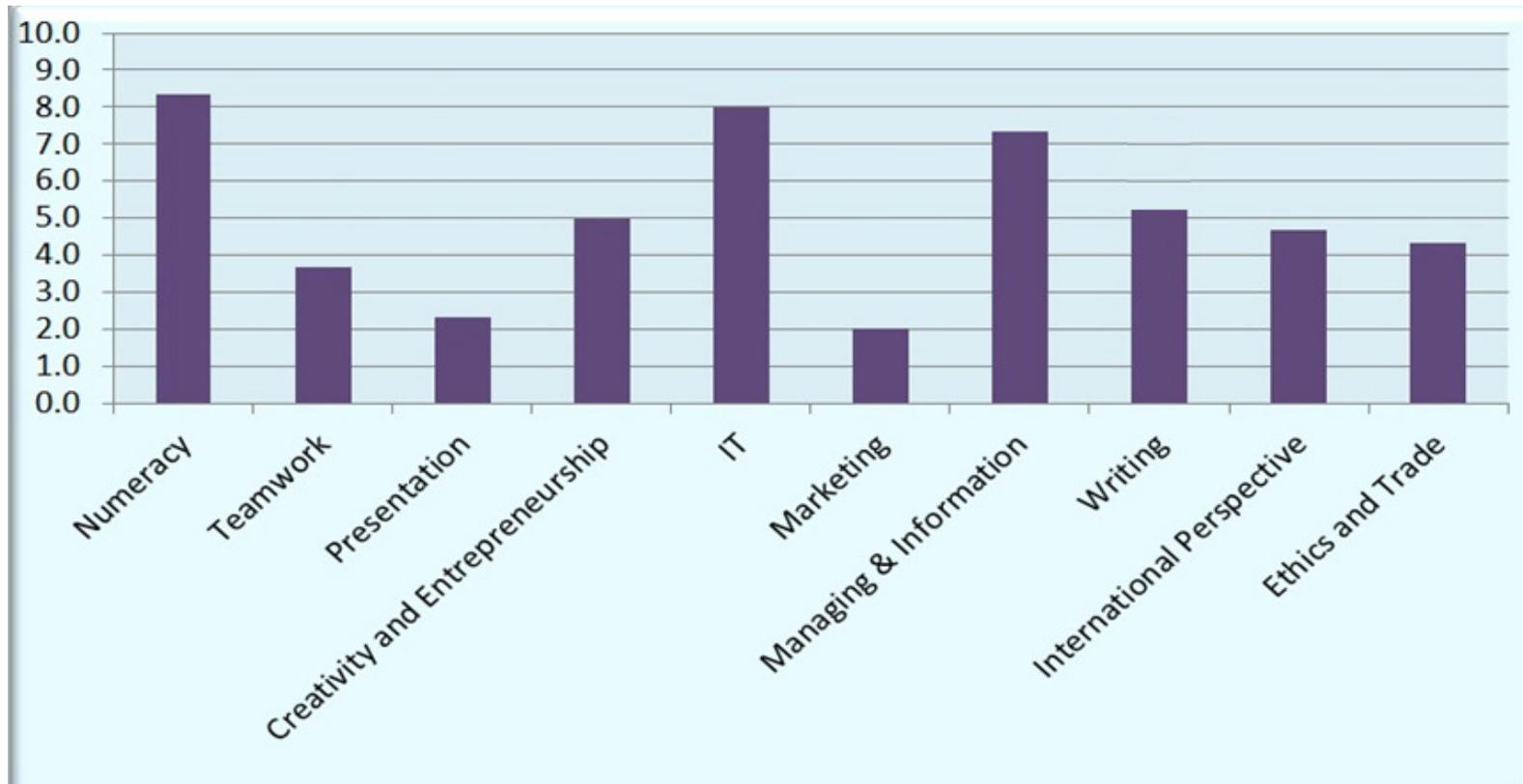
- Surprise basic maths diagnostic due to mixed ability
- Score <50% = extra maths classes
- Can include A level students – why?
- The Z Z Z rule:-  
“After 3 years in Poland I was so resigned due to outdated teaching and assessments based on the 3 z rule – **zakuc**, **zdac**, **zapmniec**. Thanks to 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



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# Evidence informed approach

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

# MC-Dip helps us to focus initiatives



- The English and Ireland presentation model:
  - 1<sup>st</sup> Presentation (formative) only give positive feedback
  - 2<sup>nd</sup> Presentation (formative) give positive and developmental feedback
  - 3<sup>rd</sup> 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 1<sup>st</sup> 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 2<sup>nd</sup> 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 <sup>st</sup> 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
<b>Presentations</b>	<b>4.77</b>	<b>5.97</b>	<b>1.20</b>
Marketing	5.38	5.95	0.57
Teamwork	6.43	6.91	0.48
<b>Average (10 areas)</b>	<b>5.68</b>	<b>6.24</b>	<b>0.56</b>

# 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 😞
<b>Peer</b>	<b>7074</b>	<b>6012</b>	14657	19101
<b>Responses</b>	<b>351</b>	<b>351</b>	431	431
<b>Average</b>	<b>20.15</b>	<b>17.13</b>	34.01	44.32
<b>Self</b>	<b>2919</b>	<b>2470</b>	3883	3610
<b>Responses</b>	<b>86</b>	<b>86</b>	81	81
<b>Average</b>	<b>33.94</b>	<b>28.72</b>	47.94	44.57
<b>Tutor</b>	<b>2287</b>	<b>1126</b>	1489	3528
<b>Responses</b>	<b>25</b>	<b>25</b>	23	23
<b>Average</b>	<b>91.48</b>	<b>45.04</b>	64.74	153.39

# Use of the peer feedback

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

# 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 <sup>st</sup> four weeks	End of term two	Change	1 <sup>st</sup> 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
<b>Presentations</b>	<b>4.77</b>	<b>5.97</b>	<b>1.20</b>	<b>4.77</b>	<b>6.24</b>	<b>1.47</b>
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
<b>Average (10 areas)</b>	<b>5.68</b>	<b>6.24</b>	<b>0.56</b>	<b>5.69</b>	<b>6.33</b>	<b>0.64</b>

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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