AUTHENTIC ASSESSMENT & EMPLOYABILITY

IDEAS AND APPROACHES FROM ACROSS THE UNIVERSITY
PREFACE

This document has been compiled as part of the ECU Curriculum Framework initiative (formerly Curriculum 2012 & Beyond), to help academics design authentic assessments and promote the development of employability skills in their units and courses. The examples and approaches that follow are drawn from across the University and illustrate the range of good practice in the principles of authentic assessment and employability. It is hoped they will inspire and act as a catalyst for ongoing discussion and improvement in teaching and learning.

The exemplars have been collected through interviews with, and submissions by, unit coordinators and course coordinators over the past six months. This information has been supplemented by desktop surveys of units known by the authors to be strong examples of authentic assessment and explicit in their teaching of employability skills. The sampling of exemplars should not be considered to be comprehensive or exhaustive of good teaching across the University, for there are many more that did not make this edition. What follows represents an effort to obtain an exemplar from each faculty and school and demonstrates a particular aspect that may transfer to other disciplines or subject areas.

The exemplars and stories in this document have been grouped into two halves: those primarily concerned with authentic assessment and those focusing on the development of employability skills. In the main, authentic assessment exemplars highlight specific real-world tasks and contexts, while employability exemplars focus on generic skill development in authentic contexts. Of course the two groupings are not mutually exclusive and elements of overlap exist.

The authors take this opportunity to sincerely thank the following staff for their contribution and their patience in our efforts to compile this document. We congratulate them for their work and their commitment to teaching and learning, for the benefit of their students.

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SECTION 1
AUTHENTIC ASSESSMENTS
FOCUSING ON INDUSTRY NEEDS

CONTEXT
The Bachelor of Science (Web Technology, Y08) offers a work integrated learning (WIL) placement worth one semester’s credit (60 credit points) to students who achieve a weighted average mark of 65% or higher across their course. This is a capstone practicum unit in which academic supervisors ensure that an agreed plan of work is executed and in-company supervision is carried out by an industrial supervisor.

TASK DESCRIPTION
Students are encouraged to take responsibility for their learning by conducting independent study and research, and by adopting an ‘action learning’ process which requires them to reflect on their past actions to improve their future, professional, decision making skills.

The assessment task is structured around a Performance Development Report (worth 30%), a Work Integrated Outcomes Report (45%) and a Host Organization Report (25%). Students are assessed on their ability to: meet project deadlines; create appropriate solutions to industry problems; implement these solutions; and adequately reflect on and adjust their work performance.

BENEFITS TO STAFF AND STUDENTS
The WIL program is popular amongst students, as indicated in this comment from the Unit Coordinator (UC) below:

“International students in particular are very keen to be involved because the work experience is such a key factor in being employed.”

HELPFUL TIPS AND ADVICE
Because of the 65% course average required to be eligible to apply for the program, it is important that students are informed of WIL opportunities from day one of their studies.

Future WIL programs must be responsive to change. This program is constantly developing as staff receive feedback from students and their industry hosts. Since the program’s inception, students now undertake a two-week probationary period, obtain security clearance, and participate in an interview process before being accepted to a placement.

“The best advice would be to keep your program as general as possible. We have had students who have travelled to the United Arab Emirates and they used exactly the same instruments and mechanisms and it worked perfectly” (UC).

Unit Coordinator: Dr Justin Brown
Computer Science
USING INDUSTRY LINKS TO SPRINGBOARD CAREERS

CONTEXT

Practical Broadcasting (BRO3010) introduces students to broadcast production and presentation techniques. It is a core unit in the broadcasting major in the Bachelor of Communications and typically has about 50 students enrolled across two tutorial groups. It runs in collaboration with students from the Screen Academy to draw broader expertise into the unit.

In 2012, ECU was commissioned by West TV to provide four 24-minute lifestyle/current affairs programs. Each program featured a variety of reports sourced, shot, presented and produced by students. The quality of the programs was of such a high professional standard, that all were included in final broadcasts. Following this success, in 2013 national broadcaster Channel Seven commissioned the production of three more programs.

TASK DESCRIPTION

Students work in groups of two to three to develop story items which are submitted mid-to-late semester for assessment. The Unit Coordinator, ECU tutors and industry partners provide feedback to improve the items and make them more suitable for broadcasting. Students are asked to incorporate the feedback and then the product is reassessed. Finally, the individual stories are placed into a program and assessed on how they fit into the overall genre and theme set by the Unit Coordinator in collaboration with industry partners. Themes used in the past such as ‘Local Heroes’ and ‘Away But Home’ provide the impetus for broad-based community engagement.

Each program has a different production team. The students take on the role of producers, presenters, reporters, camera operators, segment editors and they complete assembly of the program.

The assessment provides evidence for the following learning outcomes:

1. operate broadcast equipment in the studio and the field;
2. produce a range of materials for broadcast via radio, television and the web;
3. work in teams to create radio and television programs;
4. evaluate the suitability of material for broadcast; and
5. present a completed e-portfolio to potential employers.

The assessment criteria include technical proficiency using recording and editing equipment, as well as the more critical and creative aspects of broadcast production such as script writing and thematic fit.

BENEFITS TO STAFF AND STUDENTS

Although a stressful assessment, when students see their programs on public broadcasts, the sense of achievement is immense. Having a product that family and friends can view adds to this rewarding experience. The 2012 cohort created their own Facebook pages during the semester, developing a sense of camaraderie through the process. They used the site to congratulate each other when the programs were aired. For students from the Screen Academy, possessing a TV credit is an important contribution towards their portfolios.

For staff, there is the development and maintenance of industry links with Perth Now, WA Today and Channel 7.

HELPFUL TIPS AND ADVICE

The ECU broadcasting graduates have a fabulous reputation in the industry, however this has not spread to secondary schools where potential students and their parents remain unaware of the success of the major. This is an area that staff aim to address in the future.

This assessment leverages the strong industry relationships of teaching staff to engage students in real-world tasks and publicise their work. However, strong industry relationships may be common to other disciplines and subjects. Further, students’ work can also be highlighted and publicised through the use of free social media.

Unit Coordinator: Mr David Smith
Broadcasting
GETTING AUTHENTIC FEEDBACK FROM INDUSTRY REPRESENTATIVES

CONTEXT
Coastal Engineering (ENS4252) is a fourth year elective unit offered within the Bachelor of Engineering (Civil) and Bachelor of Engineering (Civil & Environmental) courses and has approximately ten enrolments in the semester. The unit provides an introduction to the design and construction of coastal and harbour facilities and other marine structures. Topics include port facilities, moorings, harbour design and associated works, and the use of appropriate materials for marine construction.

TASK DESCRIPTION
Students work in teams of three to four and are tasked to conduct a site investigation and propose a design for an authentic shore protection structure system on a real, given site. This includes providing detailed design calculations to assess the proposed structure for its performance under normal service loads and under one selected extreme load (e.g. traffic, winds, surge, earthquakes, and tsunamis). The design is developed throughout the semester with students having the opportunity to submit drafts and obtain feedback.

The final report is reviewed by industry representatives and includes a statement of the problem, descriptions and analyses congruent with industry expectations.

BENEFITS TO STAFF AND STUDENTS
This task is a simplified version of a typical engineering coastal design brief using a real, given site. Students are supported in their design development (through scaffolding of the tasks) which would not normally occur in the workplace. Consequently, they have the unique experience to work on proposing an actual shore protection system with the added value of receiving feedback from practising professional engineers who assess the designs. The collaboration within the teams mimics the usual design office process.

HELPFUL TIPS AND ADVICE
It is important to line up the industry representatives early and, if possible, at least one semester prior. Students require on-going informal feedback during the design process, which is possible due to the low student numbers. By closely linking design development to the lecture content, student learning can be maximised.

Unit Coordinator: Dr Hang Vu
Engineering

Having the task marked by industry representatives was motivating to students, and the representatives were very satisfied with the standard of work.
DESIGNING ILLUSTRATIONS FOR REAL CLIENTS

CONTEXT

Vector Illustration (DES2104) is a second year elective unit across a number of majors attracting approximately 40 students per semester. The unit introduces students to a range of techniques, styles and applications involved in the design and construction of vector-based illustrations.

The assessment below challenges students to produce work of a standard appropriate for a graduation portfolio: work that proves to a potential employer that they are capable of pushing technical boundaries and able to deal with unusual, complex tasks. This includes making concepts and complex systems, which cannot be photographed, ‘visible’.

TASK DESCRIPTION

Recent students were asked to develop industry standard editorial illustrations for HD Magazine; create designs for the novelist Annabel Smith; and produce illustrations for the Gravity Centre of Australia (i.e. an association that has both produced and displayed student work).

Students were assessed on their ability to create hierarchical, visual explanations of complex data; to work within the technical parameters of large format print and prepress specifications; to understand current trends in vector-based design soft are (demonstrated in the standard of their design’s graphic elements); and to accurately express the client’s desired information.

A reflective task was added to the assessment where students were expected to provide a rationale that clearly explains their design decisions with regard to composition, colour and text.

BENEFITS TO STAFF AND STUDENTS

Students reported that they thoroughly enjoyed this unit, especially seeing their work in print and on display for the public. The projects have real-world impact and are often used in exhibitions. The nature of the assessment increased student confidence, helped them to build portfolio material, and provided them with the opportunity to develop industry contacts.

With the success of this unit, most units in the graphic design major now involve some work for a real client. The artistically challenging nature of the assessment tasks and the opportunity to publicly display their work have increased students’ motivation and satisfaction.

HELPFUL TIPS AND ADVICE

It is worth noting that in developing real-world assessment tasks, unit coordinators need to be careful to align their goals with those of their industry at large. The Unit Coordinator suggests:

“We need to be mindful of doing work for nothing, which might be seen, especially by the Australian Graphic Design Association, as undercutting the very industry our students are about to enter.”

Unit Coordinator: Dr Hanadi Haddad

Design

Students are building a portfolio while working with real-world tasks.
SCHOOL OF EDUCATION

CONNECTING RESEARCH WITH PRACTICE IN A CLINIC

CONTEXT
Intensive Mathematics Clinic (MPE4102) is a fourth year elective for School of Education students (i.e. pre-service teachers). The unit is conducted over the winter school period, is held on-campus and is worth 15 credit points. Approximately 50 students enrol in the unit. The unit develops the skills and knowledge necessary for reflective, critical inquiry in the teaching of mathematics. It enables students to participate in wider professional debates by providing an opportunity to explore the connection between research and practice.

TASK DESCRIPTION
A mathematics clinic forms the centrepiece of the unit and is conducted over two weeks during the winter intersemester period when teaching spaces are more freely available. Each student works with a child (8–11 years old) who is experiencing difficulty with mathematics. Students must use a range of data gathering and analysis techniques to determine the specific area of difficulty for the child. They must evaluate the data and design a session plan to teach the problematic concepts diagnosed. The student then delivers the lesson (or ‘intervention’), assesses for learning and then reflects on the experience.

During the clinic, students are observed and assisted by academics teaching in the unit. Students allocate three hours per day during the clinic: two hours of research and/or teaching preparation and one hour to work with the child. There are two assessment tasks built around the clinic: a session plan and a final report to communicate their findings. The report includes discussions around the intervention tools and a brief literature review.

Upon completion of the unit students should be able to:
1. work collaboratively with colleagues on a systematic inquiry into an aspect of teaching mathematics;
2. apply appropriate tools for diagnosing children’s abilities in mathematics;
3. produce a session plan to create a sequence of learning experiences in mathematics for one child;
4. use appropriate computer software to complete and present a report;
5. discuss and present aspects of the inquiry to interested groups; and
6. produce a written report analysing findings using a range of data gathering and analysis techniques, combining qualitative and quantitative processes.

The assessment criteria for the report (worth 70% of the unit) covers components such as the intervention tool and how this is aligned to the diagnosis; the quality of the child’s profiling and interventions; links to NAPLAN testing; and university writing conventions.

BENEFITS TO STAFF AND STUDENTS
For the student, the unit provides an opportunity to be involved in authentic high-level teaching activities such as learning diagnosis, planning and implementing interventions and reflective practice. The unit complements and builds on course content taught in previous years by linking theory with practice. It also gives the student greater confidence when working with children, their families and their supervisors or mentors.

For the child and their family, it can build confidence; provide parents with evidence of their child’s mathematical skills and progress; and enhance relationships between the child, the parent and their teachers.

HELPFUL TIPS AND ADVICE
Mutuality of benefit to all stakeholders is paramount to the success of this assessment. In this case, the student, the child, the parent/s and the child’s school all benefit from the experience. Naturally, a strong industry reputation and relationships with nearby schools are critical for the success of this unit.

Unit Coordinator: Dr Paula Mildenhall
Education
COLLABORATING TO DESIGN
A STREET FESTIVAL

CONTEXT

Design Practices Project (DES3208) is a core unit in the graphic design major. It is available to students in second semester and it attracts approximately 50 students. This unit addresses issues of project design management and design production by engaging students at a professional level of competence in a large, complex, design project. Students are expected to create formal design briefs and design documentation to support their ultimate design outcomes.

TASK DESCRIPTION

The assessment provides students with the opportunity to work on projects for, and with, the City of Vincent. Last year, students worked on designs for the two major street festivals the City runs: the Beaufort Street Festival and the Oxford Street Festival. These festivals involved graphic design students working collaboratively with environmental and spatial design students at a third year level. The City briefed students (informally) about specific design problems associated with holding a street festival. These included creating visuals for various aspects of the festival, dealing with parking problems, activating dead or antisocial spaces, and addressing ‘hardscape’ to alleviate microclimate issues (such as brick and concrete holding too much heat).

BENEFITS TO STAFF AND STUDENTS

The strategy driving this assessment is for students to have ‘real’ work in their portfolios prior to graduation so that they have some work experience that covers typical early-career graphics work. The complex nature of the festival projects require students to push beyond their technical boundaries and demonstrate that they are capable of completing more demanding and unusual tasks for clients.

The noted projects culminated in presentations to representatives from the City of Vincent. Following the presentation, officials from the City invited ECU to have students present some of their project work to Council for further attention.

HELPFUL TIPS AND ADVICE

Early preparation and communication with key stakeholders is important. The City of Vincent is contacted early in semester one to prepare the series running in semester two. It is also important to debrief with the client about what it has been like dealing with the students, and for ECU staff to discuss how any further interactions can be improved for ongoing development.

Unit Coordinator: Dr Stuart Medley
Graphic Design

Students welcome the opportunity to do substantial work for a real client (out of the classroom) and the best performing students had their work selected for public exhibition.
Analysis of Sensorimotor Systems (SPE2104) is a second year unit offered on-campus with enrolments of approximately 30 students in the semester. Students study the normal structure, function and innervation of the respiratory, phonatory, speech production and hearing systems. They learn to use acoustic analysis and the instruments used to assess speech and swallowing disorders as well as hearing loss. Students work with clients from a diverse range of cultural and linguistic backgrounds.

**TASK DESCRIPTION**

In order to complete an assessed laboratory report, students need to attend a WAAPA voice screening session to assess the voice of a first year student enrolled at WAAPA. During the voice screening session students obtain relevant case history information and use PRAAT, an acoustic analysis program, to collect voice samples. The students each write a report to interpret the results from the session. To meet the assessment outcomes students need to:

1. demonstrate competency in the use of acoustic analysis software to record, digitise and analyse voice quality in speech samples;
2. interpret and report the results of laboratory exercises with reference to the context of current literature; and
3. contrast and report the procedures involved in the clinical use of instrumental analysis of speech impairment.

**BENEFITS TO STAFF AND STUDENTS**

Collecting the data and writing these reports provides a real-world experience for students as they are required to meet their client, identify a baseline through rapport building, and use software and report writing conventions commonly used in the workplace.

**HELPFUL TIPS AND ADVICE**

This task requires close collaboration with WAAPA staff and students to coordinate appropriate times for both the information sessions and data collection. Students need to be well briefed as opportunities to collect the data are limited and do not allow for non-attendance.

*Unit Coordinator: Dr Charn Nang, in collaboration with Julia Moody and Donald Woodburn (WAAPA)*

*Speech Pathology*
Interactive Web Development (CSG2431) is a core unit in the Bachelor of Science (Web Technology) degree and is offered on-campus and online, attracting approximately 30 students each semester.

The unit focuses upon the development of dynamic, database driven, web-based content management systems (CMSs), an increasingly prominent aspect of modern software development which encompasses everything from Facebook to Blackboard.

**TASK DESCRIPTION**

The unit has two assessments. The first assessment requires students to code a web-based content management system with fairly simple criteria, focusing on interaction with the database (retrieving data and inserting data). The system requires user accounts and access levels to be managed. The second assessment builds upon the first, requiring students to add more sophisticated functionality and implement more complex business logic into the system.

The theme of the CMS changes each semester, typically mirroring realistic examples and scenarios. Prior themes have involved social networking, movie discussion, room booking, volunteer management and more. These assessments develop crucial skills for any modern web developer, and the 'build then expand' relationship between the two assignments reflects the progression of on-going development projects in the field.

**BENEFITS TO STAFF AND STUDENTS**

This assessment structure has been well received by students for a number of years. It challenges them, but they appreciate the realism of the task and often go beyond the brief to add features that add value to their projects.

**HELPFUL TIPS AND ADVICE**

The current format is the result of numerous years of tweaking. Some of the minor aspects not already mentioned are explained below:

1. Allocate a small amount of marks for 'extra features and/or demonstration of deeper understanding' to encourage high-performing students to go beyond the brief and seek inspiration from the field as to how they can further improve their work.
2. Emphasise the 'build then expand' relationship between the assessments and the importance of treating them as one project.
3. Decide what you are assessing or trying to teach and build the assessments around this.
4. Draw inspiration from real-world scenarios but don’t let them force an awkward or inappropriate assessment. Simplify, remove or change aspects as necessary. If students could create projects with the complexity and depth of prominent projects in the field, they wouldn’t be students!

Unit Coordinator: Dr Greg Baatard
Computer Science

Students are easily able to see the value of what they create and the ways in which their projects relate to the full-blown web applications they use on a daily basis.
Biomedical Ethics (SCH3145) is a third year, first semester, on-campus unit attracting approximately 50 students divided into two tutorial groups. The unit is focused on developing a critical awareness among prospective health care professionals and student researchers as to the nature, function and importance of ethical issues across a broad range of health, biomedical and health care issues.

The unit combines the study of the theoretical bases of ethics in the context of health related areas with discussion of real-life moral dilemmas. This case-based learning is applied during the compulsory one-hour weekly tutorials and involves students working in teams/small groups to discuss ethical issues affecting professionals in the field of medical sciences, for example, issues associated with autonomy and consent. The students analyse and discuss ethical dilemmas in case studies presented to them; apply the ethical principles and theories to support their arguments/counter arguments; and generate decisions that mirror those made in a work setting or consultative process.

This case-based learning approach provides an opportunity for students to consider how theory applies to practical situations in the workplace, and the team discussions simulate this practice.

This is a third year unit which focuses on higher order critical thinking, communication and collaborative working skills. Similar activities applied to first and second year units would require more time spent scaffolding these skills.

Unit Coordinator: Dr Navneet Jalani
Biomedical Sciences
SCHOOL OF COMMUNICATION & ARTS

SIMULATING AN INDUSTRY DEADLINE

CONTEXT

Introduction to Journalism (JOU2111) is a core unit in the journalism program with enrolments of approximately 80 students per semester. The unit provides an introduction to the principles and practices of the journalistic process and covers both practical and critical dimensions. This includes reporting and editing skills, news and feature writing, and exploring the legal, social, ethical and political aspects of current events.

TASK DESCRIPTION

As part of the unit’s assessed tasks, students are ‘notified’ of a simulated media conference held during a specified lecture. Students are advised to actively participate in this interview and ask quality questions to ensure a ‘newsworthy’ story. A guest lecturer (normally a WAAPA staff member) is invited to give the media conference and students are asked to play the role of the press. The guest speaks briefly and then asks if students have any questions. It is the students’ responsibility to get the most out of the interview by asking questions; if no questions are asked, the guest will remain silent. They are briefed immediately prior to the arrival of the guest speaker and pre-warned if they do not ask questions during the conference, they will have nothing to write about. Students are then provided 90 minutes during the subsequent tutorial to write and file a 400-word news story to simulate a deadline, and are reminded that journalism is competitive. They are challenged to write the most ‘newsworthy’ story using the same interview.

BENEFITS TO STAFF AND STUDENTS

This assessment exposes students to the reality of working in journalism as they are tasked with gathering information (from the interview) and writing a short news story within a restricted time frame (simulating deadlines). They are also challenged to submit a newsworthy article with a competitive edge, exposing the competitive nature of journalism.

HELPFUL TIPS AND ADVICE

As this is a core unit for first and second year students, it is important to further develop students’ skills in preparation for the task. In addition, students need to be fully advised on the time and date the conference is to be held to ensure attendance. It is important for students to work on the write-up during class time directly after the interview. This avoids issues if students have further classes after the unit’s session, which may disadvantage them by restricting their writing time compared to students with no classes.

Unit Coordinator Assoc. Professor Trevor Cullen
Journalism

Students are challenged to submit a competitive, newsworthy article in a simulated deadline.
The capacity for self-reflection is an essential component when participating in professional and clinical supervision.
SECTION 2
EMPLOYABILITY
SELF-DIRECTED INTERNSHIPS

CONTEXT
Professional Placement (CMM3104) is a self-directed and self-motivated work integrated learning (WIL) unit available as an elective in all 22 Majors in the School of Communication and Arts. Students with a grade average of at least 70% across their course can apply automatically, but where the average is less than 70%, they will be assessed for inclusion on a case by case basis. The unit is offered both semesters to increase flexibility for the student.

TASK DESCRIPTION
The work integrated learning is 160 hours (or 20 days) negotiated with the Unit Coordinator or Tutor and can be completed in one or two different placements. The students timetable the hours in negotiation with their workplace supervisor and take into account the workload of their other units. Some students complete the bulk of their hours during university holiday periods. Prior to starting the placement, students must negotiate timing with their Tutor so that approvals, insurance and learning agreements are in place to ensure it is a genuine working experience.

In consultation with their Unit Coordinator, students create their own learning agreement and use this to guide their placement activities. Students must then negotiate how their learning aims can be achieved with their workplace supervisor: in many respects it represents a management by objectives process. The learning agreement helps students to maintain a focus on their aims and familiarises them with the formal documentation of goals.

During the placement, each student is required to maintain a portfolio showing examples of work undertaken, with a self-reflection on his or her performance and the value of the experience. The format of the portfolio is flexible and will often reflect the student’s field of study. The portfolio and a report from the student’s workplace supervisor form the primary assessment for the unit. The unit is pass/fail so that if a student’s submission is below standard it is returned to them to adjust and resubmit. This allows for a more holistic view of the learning experience rather than the just the mark.

The learning expectations of students focus on workplace skills and include:
1. the ability to plan and execute a strategy to find a professional placement;
2. the ability to make a substantial professional contribution to a workplace;
3. a demonstration of the skills required by the workplace; and
4. a display of initiative, reliability and competence in their duties.

BENEFIT TO STAFF AND STUDENTS
As the primary responsibility for finding placements and the advancement of administrative processes are in the hands of the student, the unit provides each student with experience in the activities required for an actual job search when they graduate. These activities include job-searching, preparing a resume, writing application letters, and compiling a professional portfolio.

Many students say it is great to see the profession in action, although in some cases, it is not what they anticipate. Thus the placement allows students to confirm, adjust and better understand the expectations of industry.

For the Unit Coordinator, placements and portfolios are staggered throughout the semester which distributes the marking load more evenly.

HELPFUL TIPS AND ADVICE
The difficult part for students is finding the host organisation. Students are told early in the course that they need to start networking to find their own placement. Some students are already active or sufficiently networked in their industry. To assist those that are not, the school provides a list of organisations that have taken students in the past and advertises information from organisations that have approached the school looking for students. It is also useful to provide standard program information for students to present to outside organisations.

For insurance/legal reasons there have been changes to the timing of placements and cut-off dates need to be in place if a placement organisation is not found. As a result some students will over enrol or audit classes in case they have to withdraw from this unit.

It is important to consider the style of assessment and grading schema when coordinating different requirements across the school.

Unit Coordinator: Mr Kim Harrison. First Year Coordinator SCA: Dr Hanadi Haddad.

Design
CONSULTING WITH INDUSTRY TO CONTINUALLY IMPROVE PLACEMENTS

CONTEXT
The placement Unit Coordinator schedules meetings with industry hosts where they discuss the strengths, weaknesses and the skill sets students may need to meet industry trends and demands. The discussions assist staff to refine teaching and learning frameworks. Work integrated learning (WIL), employability skill development and authentic assessments are continually adjusted, updated, and improved within the Bachelor of Science (Web Technology) course and across the school.

TASK DESCRIPTION
The importance of generic employability skills in industry is evidenced by the following quotes from Justin Brown (JB):

“It’s not just the technical skills, it’s the working skills. Are you easy to work with? Are you flexible? Do you learn quickly? These are all of the things that are coming out as key employability practice.

“If you want to be a lone wolf then you’re going to struggle to get a job in industry because all of our employers are saying we would rather have someone we can work with as a team and who we can occasionally put in front of our clients.”

BENEFITS TO STAFF AND STUDENTS
Industry expectations that have been identified within the WIL program have been integrated into other units and courses throughout the school. In addition, teaching staff have been able to use industry feedback to improve students’ employability outcomes.

“Students that got employed the quickest worked hard, they fit in, they were flexible, and they learnt quickly” (JB).

The benefits of industry/university relationships have even extended to previous students who are now employed by host organisations. ECU alumni are increasingly tasked with managing new placement students, thereby developing their management experience.

HELPFUL TIPS AND ADVICE
One of the key elements contributing to the success of the program is the effort placed on the development and maintenance of industry relationships. Regular and frank discussions are important for real improvement.

Unit Coordinator Dr Justin Brown
Computer Science
CONCEPT

ECU’s broadcasting major is the only one of its kind in Australia. The major provides an introduction to contemporary broadcast media, from radio and television to web-based and mobile technologies. A cornerstone of the major is the development of the students’ ability to generate ideas (and one of ECU’s graduate attributes), a valuable attribute in editorial decision making. The major was developed in close consultation with the industry and teaching staff seek to maintain a close, ongoing and mutually beneficial relationship with their industry partners. This relationship includes the review of unit content and assessments by professional practitioners, ensuring it meets industry requirements. As David Smith explained:

“Our whole focus is to get people into jobs, and so as a result, we use assessment points that are closely related to industry expectations.

“We tell students that there is an industry standard and we are helping them to reach that standard. It is no use setting the bar low for students because this is a very demanding industry and students will need to be ready to make the best of it when they get the chance.”

Employability skills highlighted in the learning and assessment tasks include working in teams, and receiving and providing feedback about students’ own and other’s performance.

BENEFITS TO STAFF AND STUDENTS

All tutors and lecturers within the major are professional broadcasters or journalists. They work closely with the students to build both their theoretical and technical abilities throughout the major. Work produced by students is often published or broadcast to the wider community.

Teaching staff instruct students on the behavioural expectations and workplace culture of the industry.

“If someone has the wrong attitude for the industry it becomes even more difficult for them to succeed. So graduate attributes and positive employability skills become even more important at enhancing individuals’ chances of staying in the industry.

“We are trying to work with the industry so that it becomes obvious that the only place students need to come to advance is here. We want to be a centre of excellence” (Smith).

HELPFUL TIPS AND ADVICE

Incorporating the industry knowledge of teaching staff to support student learning can be a cornerstone of course presentation. The broadcasting major is popular with students, as they recognise and appreciate the ‘edge’ staff provide them when seeking employment.

“As the only undergraduate broadcasting program in the country, we give [students] an extended skill set above students from other institutions” (Smith).

Course Coordinator: Mr David Smith
Broadcasting
SCHOOL OF NURSING & MIDWIFERY

USING SIMULATIONS TO PREPARE FOR PRACTICA

CONTEXT
Health assessment Skills and Practice (NPP1101) is the first workplace integrated learning (WIL) unit in a series of six clinical practice units within the Bachelor of Science (Nursing). Due to the practical nature of the unit, it is offered on-campus only with enrolments of approximately 420 students across the Joondalup and Bunbury campuses. Health assessment is a foundational skill for nurses in all contexts of care. The unit is designed to develop the knowledge, techniques and skills required by the professional nurse to perform holistic, comprehensive, health assessments, including the physical examination of individuals.

TASK DESCRIPTION
The unit includes both simulation workshops and a clinical practicum (aged care, 40 hours in allocated rotation). The practicum requires students to assume management of 15–30% of the Registered Nurse (RN) workload and develop competency in the workplace in accordance with the Australian Nursing and Midwifery Council Competencies for the Registered Nurse. Clinical practice agreements require that students attend their placements on a full-time basis, which includes working the ‘real-world’ hours of an RN (weekends, night shifts and public holidays). To simulate real-world expectations, students must supply medical certificates for days missed.

The simulated workshops involve students practising general, physical and mental health assessments relevant to nursing practices in a health care setting, using instruments commonly used in clinical practice. In addition, case-based learning simulations enable students to distinguish between normal and abnormal findings and apply infection control skills to safely participate in a real health care setting in preparation for their practicum.

BENEFITS TO STAFF AND STUDENTS
The simulations provide an opportunity for students to prepare for and practise the skills required for participation in the practicum, in a safe environment. The nature of the practicum gives students exposure to the real-world experience of the nursing profession.

HELPFUL TIPS AND ADVICE
The assessments are pass or fail due to the professional competency skill development associated with the unit. Student participation in both the workshops and the practicum is compulsory and those who miss some or part of a workshop will need to negotiate a make-up session or a demonstration with their lecturer. Students need to be clearly briefed on these expectations.

Unit Coordinator: Ms Mary Ryder
Nursing

Giving students the opportunity to develop the knowledge, techniques and skills required by the professional nurse.
Transition to Teaching (EDU4260) is a core fourth year unit in the Bachelor of Education (Primary) course, attracting approximately 60 students in a semester. The unit prepares students to make an effective transition, from university to employment as a classroom teacher, in a range of teaching contexts. Students familiarise themselves with workplace operations, support mechanisms and policies, in readiness for employment.

**TASK DESCRIPTION**

As part of their assessed tasks, students are required to create a professional portfolio. They have the choice of presenting information in an electronic or hard-copy format, however they are encouraged to use an e-portfolio* and are provided training in its use. In 2013, a little over half of the students submitted an e-portfolio.

The professional portfolio comprises:

1. an updated CV/résumé;
2. referees and references (both personal and professional);
3. a personal teaching philosophy statement; and
4. evidence of graduate teacher standards.

Students are required to address graduate teacher standards as selection criteria, demonstrating their competency for each.

*PebblePad is the e-portfolio software used by pre-service teachers. Under a licence agreement with PebblePad, ECU graduates have free access to PebblePad for one year after graduation, and if they wish to extend their use of the software they can enter a paid agreement with the company.

**BENEFITS TO STAFF AND STUDENTS**

A professional portfolio enables undergraduates to think about career options, show their knowledge and skills, and match their experiences to industry standards, to promote and position themselves to potential employers. Students are encouraged to use a variety of media to illustrate their experiences (e.g. video, sketches, pictures and written documents). The task encourages them to become job-ready, self-aware and reflective individuals. It is a long-term, professional growth plan.

**HELPFUL TIPS AND ADVICE**

Staff need to be familiar with the basic functions of PebblePad. Dr Ken Robinson and the e-portfolio team, who showed staff and students how to use PebblePad, were instrumental in the successful implementation of this task.

It is useful to streamline features of PebblePad available to students to suit this specific task. For example, if you prefer that students don’t share their work with each other you can disable this particular function.

Timelines need to be very clear to avoid students claiming submissions that may not be made, and advanced booking of computer labs will avoid disappointment due to their high demand.

_**Unit Coordinator: Ms Gail Berman**_*

Primary Education
RAISING ROLE AWARENESS
THROUGH A JOINT TRAINING INITIATIVE

CONTEXT
In early 2010, the ECU journalism program and the Western Australia Police Academy Detective Training School (WAPADTS) launched a unique training initiative involving joint training sessions.

TASK DESCRIPTION
The training sessions involve mock scenarios providing an opportunity for trainee detectives to practise being interviewed by a ‘media pack’ of journalism students, while journalism students get valuable practice interviewing police and writing their stories. Initial questioning is led by the Lecturer until the journalism students understand what is required, only interjecting with a question when students go ‘off track’ (teaching through demonstration). The Lecturer also takes photos to allow students to view and reflect on their facial expressions and other body language that may impact the interview.

A typical training session involves approximately 4–10 journalism students working as a ‘pack’ interviewing 10–20 detectives in training. The detectives are interviewed individually and talk about a mock crime. With each new detective, a journalism student is selected to write up the interview. Students retreat to the Police Academy canteen for lunch to write up their stories and determine what details they do not yet have, and what information they have been asking for but cannot use. Students must email their stories to the lecturer by the following morning to simulate industry deadlines. The stories are marked with tracked changes and emailed back to the students as well as the WAPADTS, so they too can learn from the written stories.

The sessions run two or three times per semester and the opportunity to participate is promoted to all journalism students. The sessions are compulsory for students enrolled in work placements and treated as an extra-curricular activity for those who are not. WAPADTS kindly provide participation certificates for students.

BENEFITS TO STAFF AND STUDENTS
Prior to this initiative, ECU students had no specific training for interviewing detectives for crime reporting and WAPADTS’s training was conducted in-house. The training has improved the trainee journalists’ and detectives’ understanding about the constraints each party faces. Both parties feel more confident about their ability to elicit and convey accurate information, and are more willing to attempt to do so, than prior to the training.

Unit Coordinator: Dr Kayt Davies in conjunction with WAPADTS

“...It was an excellent experience how you need to think on your feet in those situations, as well as great insight into the Police perspective.”

(student feedback)
CREATING AN INTERPROFESSIONAL LEARNING OPPORTUNITY

CONTEXT

Current initiatives towards inclusion policies (e.g. students with special educational needs are catered for within mainstream classrooms), has highlighted the need for workplace competencies to include skills linked to interprofessional collaboration. In order to support inclusion policies, and to provide an opportunity for interprofessional learning and collaboration between education and speech pathology students, an authentic learning opportunity was created between two schools from different faculties. This collaborative practice enabled students to explore and learn about each other’s role and work through cases to expand and strengthen notions of collaborative teaching and learning within the University and fieldwork settings. The rationale behind the initiative was that effective interprofessional collaboration could be fostered during their undergraduate training, as well as the continuing professional development options provided in their prospective courses.

TASK DESCRIPTION

The task is a three hour professional development workshop attended by second year speech pathology students and third year secondary education students. The workshop comprises an initial lecture on inclusion, outlining relevant theoretical background and legislative underpinnings, and then a tutorial to discuss some of the practical implications of an inclusion policy for teachers and speech pathologists in schools. The students form small interprofessional groups where they share their perceptions of their respective role when supporting mainstreamed children who have special needs, and review and discuss two video case studies of school students with disability in the classroom.

For the education students, the topic of collaboration formed an assessable part of their course. In contrast, for the speech pathology students, the session was part of a unit covering principles underlying intervention, including teamwork and collaborative and interprofessional practice.

BENEFITS TO STAFF AND STUDENTS

This task initiates students to continuing professional development as pre-service practitioners. Furthermore, as inclusion policies will require interprofessional collaboration between speech pathology and education professionals within a workplace setting, this initiative exposes students to these alternate fields whilst at the same time providing an opportunity for them to develop collaboration skills within a (simulated) professional setting.

An evaluation of the initiative revealed that students valued the collaboration, teamwork and opportunities to understand how they could work together in a ‘real life’ setting. Some of the highlights for students included:

“Learning how SPs (Speech Pathologists) can aid me as a teacher in the classroom” (education student).

“Sharing what we each learn and using the knowledge in a team to work towards a goal” (SP student).

HELPFUL TIPS AND ADVICE

Students noted the sessions were too short and they would prefer more time for interacting and more opportunities for collaboration throughout the semester. Speech pathology students also noted collaborating with primary school pre-service teachers would be beneficial as they would likely be working with primary school-aged children.

The facilitators experienced logistical difficulties in finding a suitable time for all participants, and the additional requirement to arrange travel across campuses for students.

Unit Coordinators: Dr John O’Rourke & Associate Professor Deborah Hersh
Secondary Education + Speech Pathology
PREPARING TO WORK IN AN EFFECTIVE TEAM

CONTEXT
Health and Healthcare Systems (NCS1101) is a core first year, first semester, theory unit within the Bachelor of Science (Nursing) degree. It is offered on-campus and off-campus and has annual enrolments of approximately 500 students. The unit explores the role of the Registered Nurse within the Australian healthcare system, with learning outcomes centred on an understanding of the concepts of health, professionalism, accountability and clinical governance. Critical to the role are the essential skills of reflective practice and group work. The following assessment task was designed for students to practise these skills while demonstrating their understanding of theoretical concepts.

TASK DESCRIPTION
The task is structured in two stages and is summatively assessed. In stage one, students work collaboratively (in groups of five), to produce an information poster explaining learned aspects of the unit content. Tutorial time is dedicated to this work and wiki spaces are set up on Blackboard for correspondence and exchange of ideas for both on-campus and off-campus students. On-campus students present their completed poster to their peers in tutorials and online students submit group presentation notes.

In stage two, students compile a written report about the group work process undertaken in stage one. The individual report is structured by a given model of reflection. Students relate their group work experiences to the models, concepts and theories about group work taught in the unit, including leadership, delegation and shared goals.

BENEFITS TO STAFF AND STUDENTS
The task enables students to practise the skills of reflection and group work, deepening their appreciation and understanding of the underpinning theories. Students reported that despite some initial reticence around group work, they realised the benefit of this approach, and in particular, the sharing of different skills, prior knowledge and experiences. Importantly, students are given the opportunity to develop supportive social relationships in this early stage of their learning journey, which aligns with ECU Curriculum Framework principles about the first year experience.

The utilisation of a range of oral, written and visual communication modes are integral to the assessment task and helps improve the students’ confidence and technology skills. In addition, the task develops ECU’s graduate attributes for communication and teamwork.

HELPFUL TIPS AND ADVICE
During the group work process, students are encouraged to keep a reflective log of team interactions which they can draw upon to write their report. Students require support in setting up and using wikis which record individual student contributions and overall group interaction. Groups should be set up after census date to reduce the impact of attention on group dynamics and productivity.

Unit Coordinator: Ms Lesley Andrew
Nursing

Students are given the opportunity to develop supportive social relationships in this early stage of their learning journey.
Marketing Principles and Practice (MKT1600) is a core first year unit in the Bachelor of Business course that introduces the principles and concepts of marketing. There are roughly 400 students enrolled across a number of majors and the unit is taught online, on-campus, onshore and offshore. The previous unit assessments (a poster and a theoretical essay) scaffold the necessary academic skills so that students are ready for the final authentic task below.

**TASK DESCRIPTION**

Students are required to review the available information on Apple Computers. They research newspaper articles, magazine articles, You Tube, Google financials and biographies to explore the business story that is Apple, with specific attention to the marketing concepts that are presented in the lectures. Apple was chosen because there is much data that is freely available, they are exemplars in marketing concepts, there was a change in leadership of the CEO due to the death of Steve Jobs, and they were coming under fierce competition from a number of rivals. Students are then required to four-page article reviewing this information and integrating the marketing concepts taught in the lectures for a popular business journal such as Business Review Weekly or the Harvard Business Review. The learning outcomes addressed in this assessment include the students’ ability to: [1] analyse and evaluate the role of marketing in business organisations; [2] apply the marketing concepts and principles to goods and services markets; and [3] become a more knowledgeable consumer.

**BENEFITS FOR STAFF AND STUDENTS**

Apart from developing the core employability skill of writing, students extend their technology and creative skills enormously when producing the poster and the magazine article. The article also provides a ready portfolio piece to show a prospective employer.

For staff, it is incredibly rewarding to see students stretch themselves and to share their pride when they produce work that they thought was beyond their capability. An unintended benefit for staff is the bank of exemplars produced each semester that provides the basis for review and critique for the next cohort of students. Market changes neatly captured in previous years can be used as learning points for subsequent cohorts.

**HELPFUL TIPS AND ADVICE**

For a first year unit, it is better to nominate the company rather than allow the students to choose because they tend to spend too much time making this decision instead of getting on with the task. Also, if there is one company for the whole cohort, there is a greater chance of students collaborating and sharing ideas, than if they are each working on different ones.

Choose a company that has the potential to provide an authentic context for the concepts and theorems that will be taught. This way, concepts can be taught in a lecture, illustrated by the chosen company and then incorporated by the student into their assessments. A company (or context) that is topical, complex and with a high degree of future uncertainty provides a vehicle for very wide and yet fully aligned learning.

*Unit Coordinator: Dr Stephen Fanning*

*Marketing*
Addiction Studies: Social action (aDS3355) is a third year unit embedded in a number of courses across the faculty. The unit helps prepare students for public health roles where health professionals are required to convert research findings into accessible formats for public consumption. The assessment is comprised of three interdependent tasks that build in complexity. The feedback from each task helps students improve the next, leading to the final task which develops key academic skills required of honours programs and higher degrees by research, as well as graduate attributes such as critical appraisal skills and communication.

**TASK DESCRIPTION**

In class, students read a journal article related to the weekly lecture and extract the main points to share with the group and with the Lecturer. This gives the Lecturer the opportunity to provide direction and assist students to identify key concepts and facts. Students then locate their own research article (published in the last 12 months) and discuss the key findings with their peers in small groups. In class, they write the introduction for an academic essay that will summarise the findings and they receive peer feedback on their work. Students then go on to write the rest of the essay independently.

For the second task, students are required to write a 200-word letter to the editor of a daily newspaper explaining the significance of their chosen article, but importantly, for a different audience.

For the final, more complex task, students take the Lecturer’s feedback received for the initial summary and the letter to the editor, and incorporate the views and findings of at least five other journal articles into a more extensive and critical essay that examines the subject area more fully.

Throughout the semester (and in a timely manner), specific skills need to be developed to help students complete each task. Aspects of writing such as the ‘academic voice’ and the flow and segue of concepts are taught. Resources are provided such as a list of verbs that students can use to describe research outputs (e.g., described, discussed, analysed, suggested, argued, proposed, etc.). The marking key for assessments is explicitly debriefed in class so students can get a clear understanding of the expectations for each criterion. This is clarified further when students use the marking key to ‘mark’ an exemplar paper from the previous cohort in class.

**BENEFITS FOR STAFF AND STUDENTS**

The tasks are closely linked and each clearly builds upon the one before. As a result of this design, students have to use feedback from each task when they write the next. Academic and writing skills are refined in the first task, so that critical aspects can be the focus of feedback on the more complex final task. For staff, there is great satisfaction in seeing improvements in the writing ability of the students, and the final essay is much easier to mark as a result of earlier feedback.

Anecdotal evidence from graduating students confirms that the conversion of research outputs into more accessible formats is very much a ‘real-world’ task as this is, in fact, part of the daily work of a public health graduate.

**HELPFUL TIPS AND ADVICE**

Provide students with plenty of opportunities both in class and online to ask questions about the assignment tasks. Discussion boards are useful ways of facilitating these exchanges and reducing email traffic for both delivery modes. Bring backup articles for analysis if students are having a hard time finding something suitable for the first summary task, and provide examples of letters to editors.

The letter format is an important agent of change in communities because of the potential political impact, so students are encouraged to be as emotional as they wish as long as they do not get any facts wrong.

Unit Coordinator Dr Shelley Beatty
Public Health
Managerial Accounting (ACC2360) is a second year elective unit in the accounting major in the Bachelor of Business course. There are approximately 70 students in the unit and they are placed in tutorial groups of 20.

The unit develops an understanding of how managerial accounting adds value to organisations’ strategic and operational decision making processes. It emphasises the skills required in the managerial planning and control of decision making process (e.g. problem solving, critical thinking, data analysis, communication, collaboration and teamwork skills). In addition, it introduces the principles that are relevant for internal decision making and reporting. These skills enable accountants to work within national and international companies, and the private and public sectors.

**TASK DESCRIPTION**

The assessment presents students with a real work scenario: a fictional entrepreneur approaches a managerial accounting team (comprised of four students) to assist in the establishment of a new organisation within a selected industry. The teams take part in the strategic planning process for their newly proposed organisations, which involves planning meetings, investigating an industry, applying their knowledge of managerial accounting practices to the scenario, and submitting an industry standard report to their entrepreneur client, advising them of their findings.

The Unit Coordinator provides students with a potential list of industries. They may select from this list or nominate another industry to investigate. Each team member signs and submits a team contract (an MOU between members) to establish team norms, roles and performance expectations. So as to mirror a real work setting, all meetings are minuted, responsibilities allocated, and action lists compiled. These activities are reported on at consecutive meetings and submitted as part of the assessment.

Students prepare a report applying ‘Porter’s Five Forces analysis’ to advise the entrepreneur of the best generic business strategy to follow. In addition, students compile a ‘Balanced Scorecard’ for their chosen industry, which is representative of the measures and formats used in the industry.

**BENEFITS TO STAFF AND STUDENTS**

This assessment exposes students to the reality of working within a managerial accounting team and the roles and responsibilities inherent. It simulates the professional requirements of being answerable to actions resulting from meetings, complying with MOUs, and working to meet the needs of their client. The assessment gives students the opportunity to apply their theoretical knowledge to an authentic situation, where they need to critically evaluate a proposal, advise and report to a client.

**HELPFUL TIPS AND ADVICE**

Time spent developing the students’ collaboration skills is very important, especially as this is a second year unit comprising several international students. Opportunities to work on the project in class, and activities encouraging teamwork skills, assists students overcome some ‘group work hurdles’. At a second year level, the use of templates for their MOUs and minutes assists in developing students’ understanding of expectations and scaffolds for future activities.

*Unit Coordinator: Mrs Martie Riemer*  
*Accounting*
PRACTISING PROFESSIONAL CONDUCT

CONTEXT
Professional Conduct and Communication (NCS1102), is a core first year unit in the undergraduate Nursing program and is offered both on-campus and off-campus with enrolments of approximately 300 students. Communication and professional conduct of the nurse, as a service provider and contributor to the health care community, are central to the unit. These skills are developed through collaborative learning activities, case studies and role-plays, as demonstrated in the assessment that follows.

TASK DESCRIPTION
As part of the unit’s assessed tasks, students (in groups) choose from a selection of scenarios depicting ethical dilemmas (e.g., “You observe a nurse write a patient’s observations on the patient chart without the nurse actually doing the observations. What do you do?”). Students are then required to analyse their scenario and consider the communication, conflict management and professional conduct skills they could use to successfully manage the situation. They then present the scenario as a role play which is used as a prompt for a class discussion. The students are assessed on their communication and ability to work in teams.

BENEFITS TO STAFF AND STUDENTS
This assessment and the unit are couched in employability skills related to the nursing profession, and one of the students’ first experiences of group work in the course. The following quote from a student is typical of the experience:

“There was a very positive experience and is evidence that when everyone is motivated and working for the same outcome it can be a real learning experience and opportunity for personal growth.”

The assessment provides an opportunity for students to demonstrate and appreciate the responsibilities of individuals working within the health care community, that is, to act and communicate empathically and effectively, to adhere to professional conduct standards, and to manage difficult situations.

HELPFUL TIPS AND ADVICE
This is a core unit for first year students so it is important to equip students with the necessary teamwork skills in preparation for the task. As the unit is offered online, all students are provided training in the use of Mindmeister (online mind mapping software). The software enables students to share their work and also differentiates student input into the group task, making marking more efficient.

Unit Coordinator: Ms Rochelle Russo
Nursing

“Employability Exemplar #12

When everyone is working for the same outcome it can be a real learning experience and opportunity for personal growth.”
(student feedback)
SCHOOL OF EDUCATION

BEING IMMERSED IN A COMMUNITY THROUGH A RESIDENCY PROGRAM

CONTEXT
The Teacher Residency Program (TRP) is an innovative teacher education program offering graduate diplomas in early childhood, primary and secondary school teaching. What distinguishes the TRP from conventional graduate diploma programs are the extra time and support structures for the students (residents) in school-based learning. The recruitment process, involving both the University and the schools, identifies applicants with a high level of aptitude and commitment to become a teacher. The program emphasises integration of teaching knowledge and practice to produce higher quality graduates who are more ‘school ready’.

TASK DESCRIPTION
The school-based learning component is comprised of two days per week, with each semester being spent in a different school. The total of 100 days residency by students is more than twice the minimum for registration required in conventional graduate diploma programs. Originally, each student’s residency consisted of observation, teaching practice and weekly reflective discussion and planning with the mentor teacher. To better integrate school and university learning, this experience was extended to include school-based assignments, an activity book structure based on week-by-week topics, and school-based professional learning workshops.

BENEFITS TO STAFF AND STUDENTS
All residents agreed that the two days per week spent in schools is conducive to developing good teaching practice. The program enabled them to observe good teaching, to build relationships with their pupils, to bring theory and practice together, and to experience progress through a school year.

The majority of mentor teachers and school principals associated with the program believe that TRP students performed admirably in their teaching practice. The principals commented that the residency students were able to think deeply about and evaluate their teaching, were prepared to take on the role of teacher, and had experienced real-world immersion in schools.

HELPFUL TIPS AND ADVICE
It is important to provide clear guidance to residents about what is expected of them and to emphasise the integration of theory and practice. Unit coordinators must maintain and facilitate regular contact between residents, mentor teachers and university colleagues.

Unit Coordinator: Dr Lorraine Hammond
Education

The program allows for longer student residencies leading to more ‘school ready’ teachers.
WRITING AND PRODUCING AN ONLINE PUBLICATION

CONTEXT

Vortext33 is an online publication written and produced by students as part of their assessments for Feature Writing (CCC3311) and News Writing (CCC3310), which form part of the Bachelor of Arts (Y40) program at ECU’s South West Campus. The publication is populated with real news stories from the region and provides an authentic workplace context that develops students’ skills, whilst working under the supervision of experienced journalists.

The concept for the e-news publication was drawn from an exemplar developed by Kayt Davies, titled 3rd Degree, which is the Mount Lawley Campus’ version of the publication. Vortext33 illustrates how an exemplar is put into practice.

TASK DESCRIPTION

The ‘crew’ of Vortext33 is a dedicated group of journalism students who work as journalists and sub-editors. They take the publication through every stage of its lifecycle, from newsgathering to uploading the stories to the website. Students collect their news from a wide variety of sources and each story passes through a series of checkpoints to ensure that it is relevant, accurate and newsworthy (rather than advertising, for example).

The stories are sourced from within the local community through family and friends, investigation and research, by interviewing community members and by attending community events. A team of three sub-editors are tasked with grammar/spell checks, fact/legal checks and uploading to the site. Tasks are allocated based on students’ skill set (as would occur in a real-world situation), and a final review is conducted by the Unit Coordinator. The remaining students are responsible for sourcing and collecting information and writing; however, the editors also have the opportunity for story-writing.

Access to the publication is via subscription online, through ‘like’ tags of social media sites (e.g. Facebook and Tumblr), and from promotion to students enrolled at the campus.

BENEFITS TO STAFF AND STUDENTS

The publication replicates a real-world workplace situation, resulting in students developing skills to manage interpersonal conflicts, make decisions, respect each other’s varying capabilities, and learn and enhance the practical skills required for this work. This project brings workplace integrated learning to students who have a sense of ownership over the publication. Participation gives students a holistic experience within the field of journalism including photography, editing, management, writing and formatting, team work and interviewing skills. The students, who come from various disciplines within the Bachelor of Arts, are expected to ‘stretch beyond their comfort zones’ and are challenged to develop and extend their skills.

“It’s been a great opportunity to go out into the community and have a resource you can direct people to so that they can see your stories” (student feedback).

“I have developed many skills in writing, editing, layout and design and photography” (student feedback).

In addition, a list of the existing and previous journalists who have contributed to the publication is available on the site along with their articles. The list has previously resulted in employment opportunities for students.

HELPFUL TIPS AND ADVICE

Honesty in collecting and ‘telling’ a story, and ensuring proper citations, are an important part of the process in writing and developing content for publication. The serious ramifications for not being honest and up front about where materials are sourced and story accuracy, are reiterated to students due to the public availability of Vortext33.

Unit Coordinator: Dr Donna Mazza
Bachelor of Arts
SCHOOL OF BUSINESS

WORKING FOR A COMMUNITY ORGANISATION

CONTEXT

Business Career Development (BES3100) is the third year capstone unit in the Business Edge program in the Faculty of Business and Law. The program was designed to explicitly develop employability skills and is core to the Bachelor of Business course. Approximately 250 students are enrolled in the unit.

The Bachelor of Business attracts a large number of international students who for a variety of reasons find it difficult to get placements and internships in Perth. The following assessment task provides a number of options for students to further develop their employability skills while engaging with the local community. To facilitate this, the Unit Coordinator partnered with Community Vision, a not for profit organisation based in the City of Joondalup.

TASK DESCRIPTION

Students are formally recruited to be part of the Community Vision project by submitting a cover letter, a resume and selection criteria (these are products of their previous assessment). They form teams of up to four members and choose a project from a list developed by the Unit Coordinator and the CEO of Community Vision. The projects are targeted at specific student groups and majors.

In the past students have been instrumental in developing or delivering sporting events for children, computer classes for seniors, community-based organic garden spaces, strategic and human resources capability reviews, FIFO assistance packages, marketing plans, promotional and fund raising activities for Community Vision, and Chinese cross cultural competence workshops.

The main assessment product from the task is a group business report which explains the key business issues for the organisation and outlines workable and innovative solutions to address them. The students also provide an invoice that details their activities working with Community Vision. The invoice itemises the work undertaken (research, writing, delivery etc.), the number of hours billed, the person who completed each task, and the charge out rate for the different types of tasks completed on the project. This part of the assessment provides a clear indication of the magnitude of work involved in such projects and prepares students for contract work when they graduate.

The task aligns to unit learning outcomes where students should be able to: [a] produce a complex piece of work which demonstrates sound knowledge of the business environment and employs a range of business writing and research skills; and [b] evaluate the importance of ethics, social responsibility, sustainability and accountability from an individual and organisational perspective. Assessment criteria are developed in collaboration with the CEO of Community Vision and are explicitly linked to ECU graduate attributes, and a list of ten key employability skills identified by industry groups and faculty research.

BENEFITS TO STAFF AND STUDENTS

The students are highly motivated by the assessment and easily surpass the 15-hour minimum requirement to work with Community Vision. The flexibility of the program means that students can design a project to suit their major or area of interest. Students have been approached to work for Community Vision after the experience. Anecdotal evidence from surveys indicates that these projects imbue a high level of pride and empowerment for international students who are not easily able to find internships due to visa restrictions and business attitudes.

For staff, the benefits are many. Partnering with Community Vision is a good example of actively working with external partners, in what is an often neglected sector of industry. From a teaching and learning perspective, the engagement allows highly motivated students to test themselves in an environment characterised by low budgets and scant resources. The learning experience is valuable and only possible from external engagement.

HELPFUL TIPS AND ADVICE

It is strongly advised to work with one community group that has multiple projects rather than work with multiple community groups with individual projects. Students need to be formally inducted into the host organisation and all the necessary risk assessments need to be completed.

Staff need to be flexible with their assessment criteria, especially if projects are tailored to suit the student or the host organisation. The Not for Profit sector is a willing partner but, one that is often stretched by low operating budgets and staffing issues. This places additional strain on both parties and often results in additional time allocation to ensure projects are successful. The student inductions are critical to the success of the project to ensure the appropriate students are selected to help make a difference to the sponsors.

Unit Coordinator: Mr Gary Marchioro

Business Edge

“[the unit]...told about the real facts of life and the real situations in the workplace.”

(student feedback)