

Title - Live Projects

Keywords - Employability, Groupwork, Professional Development Planning, Assessment

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Institution - Napier University

Activity - Student groups act as consultants to industry to investigate a workplace issue.

Group - Level 3 Hospitality, Tourism and Festival & Event Management students

Aim - To integrate academic and prior experiential knowledge with that of personal development attributes and employability skills by undertaking a realistic tourism/leisure/hospitality industry-based live project.

Context / Background - This module represents a dynamic, collaborative and interactive process whereby students research elements of business activity. The Live Project is a third year core module for most students in the School of Marketing and Tourism. It has been developed to allow students to learn from and to operate as part of a cohesive team in a consultant role with an organisation. The live project provides the vehicle by which a business proposition can be illustrated, analysed and future directional policy formulated. The project should enable students to systematically analyse the aims and objectives of the proposition and to select the best means of achieving these. The module is designed to enable an interactive, 'deep approach' to learning and to foster the development of reflective skills.

Example - The projects are not based upon a contrived scenario; they are real situations presented by senior representatives from commercial or not-for-profit organisations, who meet and liaise regularly with the student teams, and who contribute to the assessment. Organisations provide the University with a range of areas for the project and a brief is agreed. Teams of students are assigned to particular projects and they are required to develop a suitable methodology for researching the organisation. Supported by the module leader, project tutor and host organisation, the students analyse the issue and present an oral and written report on their findings. Assessment is carried out jointly by the University and the client organisation. As well as attending lectures and workshops, regular team and business meetings need to be scheduled to ensure the project is meeting the client needs and expectations.

Assessment is based upon the 'product' and 'the process' with contributions to the marks from the host organisation, the project tutor and student peer assessment.

	Written Report	Oral Presentation	Peer Group
Industrialist	30%	10%	-
Project Tutor	30%	10%	1
Students	-	-	20%

Aspects of assessment worthy of particular comment are:

Teamwork skills peer assessment: At the start of the module students discuss and agree criteria for awarding marks to team colleagues for the process and team work skills. Individual marks awarded by students are confidential - only the average is published. The team agree ground-rules and 'yellow'/'red' card penalties at the outset and they complete a formal mid-semester review of teamwork progress.

Feedback: This is a very important aspect of the learning approach. Students are expected to submit draft work at several stages and to seek and act on feedback at various points during the project. They are expected to give and receive constructive feedback on their own and their peers' teamwork skills. Each team is given the opportunity to attend a final oral feedback session with the module leader. Most students discuss their strengths and weaknesses and their key learning outcomes in a very open and forthright manner.

Industry involvement: Many organisations collaborate on a regular basis. They are enthusiastic about the projects, enjoy working with the students and will try to meet all reasonable student requests. They expect to be consulted during the project and give ongoing feedback on the project and the students' ability to work as a team, as well as contributing to the assessment marks for the report and oral presentation.

Other comments - In addition to specific subject knowledge this learning experience enables students to develop and provide evidence of a range of employability skills and attributes including: project management, information /communication technology, problem identification and solving, selection of appropriate research methods, critical thinking, creativity, teamworking, professional behaviour, oral and written communication for business, and time management.

- In addition to the benefits that the students gain there are benefits for the University and the host organisations. For the external partners there is an opportunity to get to grips with a problem or task which industry might not have time or resources to tackle; access to university expertise and resources; opportunity to contribute to the education programme and, in some cases, encourage staff development.
- The university benefits include building links and networks in the wider business community; a better understanding of employers'

requirements with respect to graduate skills; opportunities to contribute to the economic and social strength of the local area; active learning programmes for students.

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