Developing a New Approach to Assessment Strategy to Increase Employability

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Knowledge for knowledge’s sake

All degrees provided a basis of transferable skills

Only a few ‘vocational’ subject areas had defined career paths

Jumping off point for deciding on your career

US graduation as ‘commencement’
The future is uncertain...

- Brexit ....?
- Apprenticeships
- Employment
- Contraction of HE sector
But some things are certain and not likely to change:

- Students’ investment in their future
- Higher fees = greater expectations = complaints?
- Professional body accreditation
- Students want jobs - how are we preparing them for this?
"On average I have a few seconds to look at CVs, and if it’s a good one, I’ll then spend maybe a minute more!

It’s massive difference between someone getting a job and someone who doesn’t.

So any poor training is jeopardising people’s potential careers...."

Philip Rogers BSc (Hons) PhD MCIEEM MRSB CBIol Jacobs Divisional Director, Ecology Environment, Maritime and Resilience
So are we preparing our students for jobs?

This is the basis of degree apprenticeships that are being designed and led by employers.
What do exams demonstrate?

http://www.justintarte.com/2015/06/is-it-time-to-eliminate-final-exams.html
ESSAYS VS WORKPLACE SKILLS

But how long?
3000 words?
As short as possible?

"This Internet is great for research. I think my report on California breaks a Guinness World Record. 174.513 separate sources!"
"Not that the story need be long, but it will take a long while to make it short."

[Letter to Harrison Blake; November 16, 1857]"

– Henry David Thoreau, Letters to Various Persons

tags: conciseness, precision, storytelling, writing
COMMUNICATING INFORMATION EFFECTIVELY....

- Executive summaries
- Graphs
- Tables
- Photos
- Visualisation
- Infographics
- As few words as possible?
WORKPLACE READY?

What knowledge skills and behaviours do our students need in the workplace?

Will they be sitting exams? Writing long essays?

What will our graduates be doing in the workplace in 2021?
COMPETENCY BASED INTERVIEWS
A transcript is not enough...

- We need to use competency based assessment.
- Standard in medical disciplines - acronym CBME
- *Attitude, skills and behaviours* that are needed in the professional context

- Increasingly our students face competency based interviews
  - Scenarios
  - Case studies
  - Assessment centres

- Need to evidence their skills and demonstrate competencies
setting assignments that reflect tasks likely to be encountered in the workplace, thus equipping students with demonstrable evidence to enhance employability
ENVIRONMENTAL LAW & POLICY

- Removed exam
- Respond to a scenario by advising a client
- Peer feedback to the presentation
- Written up as a client briefing
Critically evaluate a current policy presented by an outside speaker, the author.

- Pull out main details
- Using cross referencing
- Produce a summary
A portfolio indexed against the Chartered Institute competency framework

Reflecting on learning, preparation for professional CPD recording

Each student selected a species

- Compared and contrasted survey methods
- Wrote a method statement, as required for planning and licence applications
- Shared across the class
Second year civil engineering students undertake a mock CCS auditor’s inspection on a real site
- Find the site
- Arrange a visit
- Complete a risk assessment
- Carry out an inspection
- Present findings to the site team
- Present findings to class
- Prepare a report
- Submit feedback form
MSc Civil Engineering students these skills are taught through a real-life case study based on a civil engineering disaster (e.g. the collapse of Carillion) where students are required to take on the role of a team of management consultants and analyse the circumstances leading up to the disaster and formally present their findings in a role play situation.
WHAT DO THE STUDENTS THINK?

"a particular highlight was the phase 1 / management plan, EIA critiquing published environment statements and Law scenario advising clients"

"Through this task the group learnt new things about the construction industry."

"This was the best coursework we'd done all year"

"assessed work has given me great grounding and the confidence for my future career"

"The visit was incredibly informative, we were walked around the site and all our questions were answered in depth."

"exams aren’t representative of employment related activities"
YOUR TURN ….

In groups

• What are the assessment challenges for your programmes?

• Is there anything you could adapt for create a more employability focused outcome?

• Do you have any concerns about the way we prepare students for the working environment?
KEEP IN TOUCH!

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