

## (Critical Review) Development of Learning Resources within Higher Education in Response to the Challenges of COVID 19

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### ABSTRACT

*This brief paper describes how additional learning resources can be developed at a module level within higher education. The context to further meet the requirements of a rapidly changing environment within the higher education context and to meet different trends and challenges such as employers' expectations and challenges facing graduates to secure appropriate employment considering their disciplines. The case study reflects key considerations to ensure further students' success as universities in the UK shifted from face-to-face delivery to quick online delivery due to the challenges presented by the Covid-19 virus spreading in the UK and Globally. In addition, the case study provides key considerations during the curriculum development process, such as constructive alignment, students' backgrounds and diversity, and utilization of additional resources at the organizational level, such as Library Services and IT.*

### INTRODUCTION

This brief paper provides a case study of how additional learning resources were designed to respond to the shift from face-to-face to online delivery due to the Covid-19 virus spreading. To meet further the learning outcomes, develop key employability skills, engage students, and ensure that students are working towards the assessment in one of the core modules in the CERT HE programs at the University of Wales Trinity Saint David – London. The module is delivered in the final term of the year/program: Professional career development Module (Level 4), derived from [Biggs \(1999\)](#) argument that previously, students at university seemed to be happy about having the traditional way of learning, which is by attending lectures and supporting tutorials regardless of the challenges around the learning process, whereas nowadays teaching is more demanding as students' body have become more diversified in many different ways ([Alharahsheh & Pius, 2019](#)) such as age, background, experience, domestic and international, and have various prior educational achievements ([Alharahsheh & Pius, 2020b](#)).

### The Learning Resources

The additional learning resources were designed to create extra support in clarifying the assessment for students from an early stage of the module delivery and to meet the session's learning outcomes. The module's key learning outcomes are outlined as the following.

1. Understand the skills and knowledge needed for working effectively.
2. Demonstrate readiness for employability and personal advancement by understanding personal strengths and areas for further development.
3. Establish employment goals and develop a personal action plan.”

These learning outcomes were quoted from the main module descriptor, Scheme of work, and assessments for the professional career development module. To ensure the achievement of the learning outcomes outlined for the module and meet the new changes and challenges of having to deliver classes online using interactive platforms due to the spread of the Covid-19 virus. There was a collective decision of the program management to have a collaborative review of the main teaching material, assessment, and additional supporting learning resources to ensure complete success in achieving the module's requirements, considering the practicality of the module as it was mainly aimed to develop key employability skills for students. Several additional activities were designed by the module leader and with the support of the teaching team and the program management, such as those highlighted in ([Appendix 1,2,3](#)). Those activities aimed to bridge the gap in skills ([Alharahsheh & Pius, 2020](#)) and enhance the application to contexts beyond the classroom ([Alharahsheh & Pius, 2019; Alharahsheh, 2019](#)).

Furthermore, the module leader has considered different experiences shared by the teaching team, such as challenges of online engagement and diversity of the student population in the classroom, to enhance the appropriateness of the new materials further developed such as ([Appendix 1,2,3](#)) ([Alharahsheh, 2019b; Helmi & Pius, 2018](#)). In addition, the module leader aimed to be more research-informed during the review process to highlight key trends and developments to enhance further students' understanding of their employability skills ([Helmi et al., 2018a](#)), considered institutional resources to further enhance the richness of students' experience during the online learning process ([Helmi et al., 2018b](#)) such as digital resources and online library services, and considered reflections from previous experiences and collection of students' feedback to ensure fitness of online activities every week ([Alharahsheh, 2019b; Helmi & Pius, 2018a](#)).

Different additional activities were utilized across different lectures to give students a better understanding of the educational and reflective writing process. At the same time, they are being engaged online, connect with the assessment requirements, actively engage all students in the learning process, get students to work together in online groups, application of the knowledge they had from lectures to their contexts ([Alharahsheh & Pius, 2020b; Alharahsheh & Pius, 2019](#)). All activities were designed based on the module's learning outcomes to enhance formative assessment, increase students' engagement and to learn online, and allow all students to start their summative assessment, which was developed as the following:

1. An online Job interview is a role-play between two students; each one of the participants plays the role of interviewer and interviewee.
2. A 2000 words report demonstrating readiness for personal development and employment. Students are actively encouraged to outline and apply key employability skills such as online interviewing skills, time management, self-awareness, management skills, problem-solving skills, online presentation skills, and reflective abilities.

### ***The Approach***

There are several reasons which influenced the plan to design those extra learning resources and activities in the professional career development module:

### ***Learning outcomes:***

According to [Watson \(2002\)](#), learning outcomes can be defined as “Something that students can do now that they could not do previously .... It is a change in people because of a learning experience”. His definition of learning outcomes clearly shows that depending on the subject being taught, there should be a deep learning experience to meet the learning outcomes. As shown previously, one of the module's learning outcomes is “Establish employment goals and develop a personal action plan.” The way the additional learning resources were designed aimed to give extra explanation and clarification of key developments of the labor market beyond the classroom, key employability skills required, and the ability to relate to different contexts based on students' backgrounds and interests. The newly

developed activities were made relevant to the coursework, a summative assessment (Job interview role-plays and 2000 words report).

***Constructive alignment:***

Based on [Biggs & Tang \(2007\)](#) that constructive alignment requires us as educators to close the gap between the academically prepared students with the less academically prepared students. Those designed activities were planned to close this gap by making the ones who are less academically prepared get to the level of the academically prepared; the learning resources utilized in lectures and tutorials gave students the opportunity to learn considering their academic level, room to enhance engagement between peers, and both way communications between students and their lecturers. Furthermore, resources aimed to enhance the application of theory into practice. They were planned based on a student-centered learning approach which enables all to question and investigate things based on the new knowledge they gained and their prior experience ([Biggs, 1993](#)).

***Blooms Taxonomy:***

Based on [Bloom's \(1956\)](#) framework, which provides a breakdown of learning in different stages, those activities were influenced by this framework as they followed the stages beginning from forming the knowledge of the process of writing and ending up with the application to their contexts to make sense of the newly formed knowledge.

***Students' centered approach and being the Facilitator as a teacher:***

[Shuell \(1986\)](#) states that it is the teacher's responsibility to design and utilize engaging learning activities that are more likely to achieve better outcomes, depending on how students learn and form the knowledge ([Maslow, 1987](#)). According to [Jones \(2007\)](#) that students centered learning approach can be defined as creating learning methods that shift the learning process and instructions from the teacher to the learner; this approach perfectly fits our students as a high percentage of them come from diverse backgrounds such as length of professional experience, cultures, and age range ([Helmi et al., 2018c](#)). Consequently, during weekly classes, students were given enough opportunity to relate what they learned to their contexts through peer-to-peer discussions and independent research.

***Use of technology:***

During the process of curriculum review, there was deep consideration of using key features of the technology available such as the ability to create additional online rooms for one-to-one meetings, facilitation of online role plays, additional opportunities for engagement to provide formative feedback, and additional opportunities to enhance peer to peer learning such as online discussion platforms. Furthermore, summative assessments (role plays) were delivered online using an interactive platform, with the additional professional support of different departments, such as the IT department.

**CONCLUSION**

Students and how they learn should be the main driver of our teaching planning and curriculum development to meet new changes and challenges, such as the shift to online teaching due to the spread of the Covid-19 virus. Educators need to consider the fitness of their delivery style, material quality and appropriateness to the level, and assessments to ensure the ability to achieve the given learning outcomes of the module. It is vital for academic managers such as module leaders and program managers to utilize additional institutional support to enhance further the learning experience, such as digital resources, careers, IT services, and library services. Furthermore, curriculum developers and educators should always aim to reflect current trends and challenges beyond the classroom, such as understanding key employability skills required in the labor market, consideration of engaging external key players such as leading employers or professional bodies, and, more importantly, we should consider our students' backgrounds to ensure fitness of the academic offer concerning their diversity and progression interests. However, academic quality should always be maintained by considering key reference points such as quality assurance agencies, program learning outcomes, and key institutional policies and procedures.

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## **APPENDIX**

### ***Appendix 1:***

#### **Discussion:**

**What is your view on the main challenges facing graduates from the business management disciplines?**

**Do these challenges differ from a person to another? And why?**

#### **The Biggest Challenges Facing University Graduates:**

<https://recruitingtimes.org/business-movers-shakers/21246/biggest-challenges-facing-university-graduates/>

#### **Most popular graduate jobs:**

<https://www.graduate-jobs.com/gco/Booklet/graduate-job-market.jsp>

### ***Appendix 2:***

During online lectures/tutorials, students were asked to pair and select different online job adverts based on their interests and background beyond their classroom. For example, the following questions were raised based on (CEO and Manager) posts.

#### **Questions:**

**What were the personal traits required for the CEO position advertised?**

**What were the personal traits required for the manager position?**

**Group discussion: Read the examples individually 10-15 minutes and then discuss the questions in groups (10 minutes)**

### ***Appendix 3:***

Students were asked to identify key professional bodies related to their own current professions or their potential career direction. Based on the identification of at least one body, students were asked to identify their importance for professionals and the benefit of keeping in touch with such bodies.

Examples of some professional bodies discussed:

**List of different professional bodies related to management:**

- [Arts Marketing Association](#)
  - [Association for Information and Image Management](#)
  - [Association for Project Management](#)
  - [Association of Accounting Technicians](#)
  - [Association of Chartered Certified Accountants](#)
  - [Association of International Accountants](#)
  - [Association of Taxation Technicians](#)
  - [British Institute of Facilities Management](#)
  - [Certificate in Quantitative Finance Institute](#)
  - [Certified Practicing Accountants \(Australia\)](#)
  - [Chartered Financial Analyst \(UK\)](#)
  - [Chartered Institute of Bankers](#)
  - [Chartered Institute of Internal Auditors](#)
  - [Chartered Institute of Loss Adjusters](#)
  - [Chartered Institute of Management Accountants](#)
  - [Chartered Institute of Marketing](#)
  - [Chartered Institute of Payroll Professionals](#)
  - [Chartered Institute of Public Finance and Accountancy](#)
  - [Chartered Institute of Public Relations](#)
  - [Chartered Institute of Purchasing & Supply](#)
  - [Chartered Institute of Securities & Investment](#)
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