

e3i Employability Case Study



Information Management at level 5: option for students of Computing, Business Information Systems, Software Engineering, Corporate Communications, Business and ICT, MCT

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Subject group:	Information Systems
Number of students involved:	30
Elements of the employability framework addressed:	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Development of autonomy• Key skills development• Preparation for specific professional areas

Description of learning and teaching approach adopted

Listed below are a number of activities that I use within this module to enhance learning with regard to information and knowledge management. I believe these activities also support the employability issue 'Preparation for specific professional areas'.

1. Information Management models to disseminate in a 40min seminar with activities - student lead presentations + teaching activities developing confidence in skills required in the workplace.

Students taking this module have come from a large range of courses within ACES. They often do not know any other students on the module yet within a few weeks I want them working in groups to run a 40 minute seminar which presents a particular information management tool or model and provides activities for the rest of the tutorial group. Quick

assimilation into a new task group is an expectation that is often voiced by employers who want their new graduates to be up to speed and performing in a very short period of time. To prepare my students for this, alongside the tutorials that I lead which familiarises them with the information management tools, I provide time for students to introduce themselves first to a small group, then to the whole group, gradually building confidence and trust so that working together to deliver a 40 minute seminar, although still daunting, is something that they feel they can accomplish.

What is crucial to the success of this so early in the semester is the time that I give the students before they run their seminar. More contact time is given in semester 1 to allow for these meetings. I have suggestions for activities so that they never feel completely at sea. I also provide a student archive which shows the approach that other students have used previously. The task is treated as a low stakes, formative feedback. They have to run a seminar and attend and contribute to all the other seminars to gain 5% of the module marks. The important part of the exercise is the feedback I give immediately after the seminar, this includes a rectification of any mistaken ideas that they might have presented. The students then post their material on a discussion board which continues to contribute to the student archive.

2. Guest speakers - story telling - specific to IM issues - shows how knowledge might be transferred./ prepares for possible Information Management (IM) / Knowledge Management (KM) career
 - Last year - steel industry stories
 - This year investment banking, DTI, PWC stories: Videoed and edited by students to go into our IM archive

I have introduced the idea of videoing guest speakers as a knowledge capture exercise. I have found that my best resource for KM and IM stories has been SHU members of staff who have previously worked in the area of KM or IM. They are more prepared to be honest when initiatives have failed. The video capture is because you can never guarantee that guests will be available the following year. I'm no expert when it comes to using camcorders etc. I just talk to AV and book the equipment they advise and take it along to the talk. As long as you can put up a tripod and switch the camera on you can capture the story - I prefer to video rather than record audio. It's much more interesting looking at the face as they talk. The editing bit is trickier - not because it's hard, but

because it takes time. I ask for volunteers. There is always some one who wants to learn how to use the editing suites. You book them online and you can also book support from AV - James and Craig have been really helpful with this. My students then chop up the footage into separate stories and put title pages on each section. I'm looking forward to this year's clips as the volunteer students have, I've been told, posted a number of 'Bollywood' style videos on YouTube. I'm interested to see if they have played it straight with our clips or edited in some intro music! A member of AV staff then uploads it to their server and sends a link so that you can put that on Blackboard. Other than checking that the students know how to contact AV and chatting with AV staff about what we are trying to do, I've had no direct input into the editing of the clips. These clips can then be used as mini case studies for students to practise applying IM tools and techniques as well as demonstrating the sort of career they might pursue in information or knowledge management.

3. Research into a large organisation and the issues of using KM/ IM - shows how knowledge might be transferred/prepares for possible IM/KM career.

- company websites
- professional journals
- placement organisation/ part time employment
- offer Student Associate Scheme (teaching)
- direct experience

One of the major assessment vehicles (40%) is a portfolio in which the students apply the IM/KM tools and techniques to an organisation. There is an advantage to having access either personally or through a contact; to conduct interviews and collect data for information audits etc. Students are encouraged to find this direct contact - I even get Marilyn from SAS to talk to them about applying for the scheme which gets paid time in schools for any successful applicant. I have a mixture of level 5 and level 6 students, so some of them have already been on a placement and still have contacts. Other students are preparing for a placement and so this task would allow them to research a company that they are planning to apply to. If students don't have direct contacts they can find the information needed through company websites, news articles, journals etc. After applying the IM/KM models to their chosen organisation and producing the portfolio, they have a good idea of the mission, objectives, area of work that the organisation is involved in as well as approaches to IM/KM.

4. Progress checks based on the 'elevator pitch' concept - skill required in the workplace.

Progress check based on;

- Choice of organisation, search strategies and the sort of information available
- Modelling of the information
- Suggestions for solutions

To keep the students on track through the research process and allow them to learn from each other, I have introduced progress checks which relate to the portfolio mark scheme. Within a tutorial, each student has to prove that they are making progress by giving a snappy, 2 minute 'pitch' of their ideas. I show them a short You Tube video to give them an idea of what a pitch sounds like. All students listen to each pitch. Someone records time, someone will record feedback. I found that I needed to make time for students who were anxious about the first pitch - they wanted to practise before they did it to the group. However they were extremely surprised when they did the pitch for real

that they were all talking confidently for more than the allotted 2 minutes. These three progress checks are again low stakes, formative feedback for which they get a total of 5%. If they try a pitch but don't convince me the first week, they get a chance to do the pitch again the following week, hopefully taking on board my feedback. There are a number of benefits to this approach; students develop the skill of addressing a group succinctly; they hear about KM in a number of organisations; they learn how to apply the models to their own organisations by seeing others demonstrate the application in their organisation; I can see whether the students have understood and provide feedback.

Employability objectives and intended learning outcomes

- The development of autonomy
 - students engage in a great deal of formative feedback (giving and receiving) as part of their assessment
 - students work as a team and with minimal guidance in the form of instruction from a tutor
- Key skills development
 - development of communication and group working skills
 - development of confidence/ self esteem which students gain through presenting, and through working as a group
 - understanding the value of learning how to reflect through using the formative feedback given to them
- Preparation for specific professional areas
 - development understanding of the role of an information/knowledge manager in different organisations
 - increased knowledge of different organisations and their approach to IM/KM
 - increased insight into the successes and failures of specific IM initiatives

Description of and tips for good practice; lessons learned

Lessons Learned

I am still learning - but I developed the elevator pitch approach to progress checks after realising that I was doing more work during the progress check session than the students were and depriving the students of valuable collaborative learning because the communication was between me and the individual student.

When capturing short stories on video remember that guest speakers have exactly the same problem as students do in keeping to time. 5 min stories often end up as 15 minute stories. Shorter is better.

Key points of any feedback gathered or evaluation undertaken with students or staff

It is very important that students get to know each other early in the semester. One comment I've received a number of times is that it is assumed that 2nd year groups all know each other. Even in stable tutorial groups that is not the case. The time taken to establish the relationships at the start of the year is

appreciated by the students in this module and has been commented on directly and in staff-student meetings: for this sort of approach and with this mix of students taking time to establish relationships is essential if they are going to be able to relax and perform.

The elevator pitch has been much more successful than the previous method - despite the original anxieties. One student stated in front of the whole class that they would sacrifice their progress check marks rather than do an elevator pitch. This student has successfully done two pitches and voiced (again to the whole class) that they've gained so much confidence within this group. I wish that I had captured some of these pitches on the camcorder, but this was the first time round and I didn't know how much this might increase their anxiety.

Resources used

- Guest speakers
- AV staff
- AV equipment
- Editing suites
- LC Staff to develop searching strategies for use with online databases
- Centre for Science Education for SAS information
- Students
- YouTube

This information can be made available in other formats.
Please contact us for details.