

Exploring approaches to embedding employability skills in curriculum



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HREC Ref No 5201600966

HERDSA Conference Sydney 27-30 June 2017



Exploring approaches to embedding employability skills in curriculum



Context

Theoretical framework

Development Centre

Methodology

Findings



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PACE – it's unique



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Embedded in curriculum



What is PACE?

- the practical component in all of Macquarie's undergraduate degrees
- lets students gain real-world experience before they graduate – enhancing their employability
- students apply their studies in real settings – and get academic credit for it
- all PACE activities benefit students and partners simultaneously: through PACE students make an active contribution to society



PACE units – common elements

- **community engagement:** mutually beneficial partnership that helps partner achieve their mission
- **rigorous academic framework** to develop key graduate capabilities

ORIENTATION



- organisational/admin requirements
- expectations
- preparatory sessions
- any preparatory assessment tasks

EXPERIENCE/ PROJECT



- experience itself
- assessment tasks including reflective practice

FINAL WRAP-UP



- debrief
- any post-experience assessment tasks

<<< SCAFFOLDING FOR SKILLS DEVELOPMENT >>>

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Theoretical frameworks

The value of experiential learning (WIL):

Jackson, 2014; Coulson & Harvey, 2013; Billet, 2011; Coll et al., 2009; Kolb 1984

The value of AC's:

Waldman & Korbar, 2004; Howard, 1997; Keele, et al. 2010; Woodruffe, 2007;
Sturre et al., 2011; Kottke & Shultz, 1997

The value of developmental goals and feedback on skills:

Ryan 1970; Crebert et al., 2004; Maclellan, 2004; Webb 2010

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AC program development



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: soft skills of employability : communication, problem solving, influencing and negotiation, and collaboration.

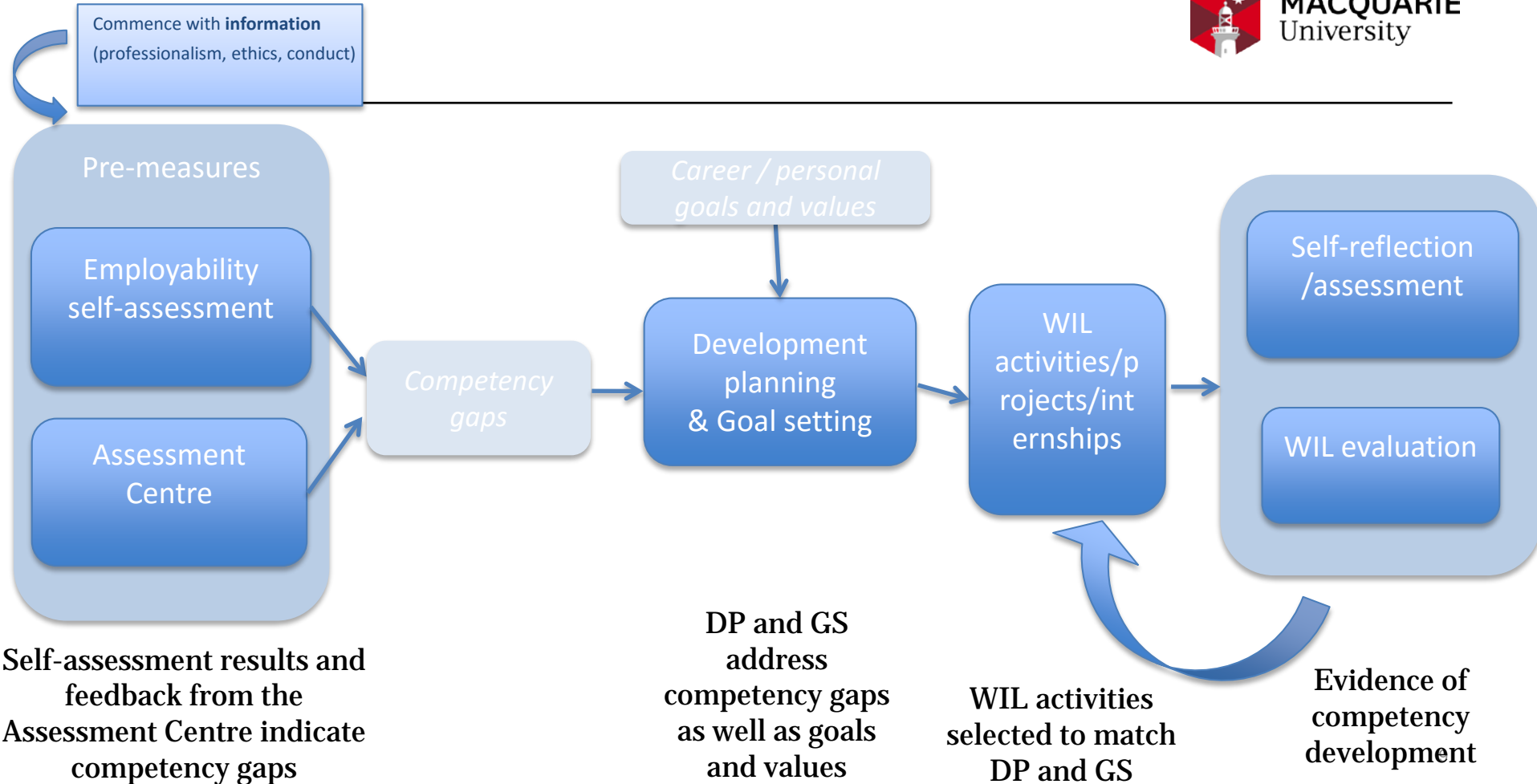
Methodology:

Pilot in a PACE unit

Pre and post questionnaires; practical exercises; feedback; goal setting

Data collection and analysis

WIL in Practice - Process overview



Employability

EMPLOYABILITY SKILLS



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We identify the key employability skills to measure

1. **team work** skills that contribute to productive working relationships and outcomes
2. **communication** skills that contribute to productive and harmonious relations between employees and customers;
3. **problem solving** skills that contribute to productive outcomes;
4. **influence & negotiation** skills that contribute to learning outcome;

Students put through 3 different activities and contexts

We used rating scales with behavioural indicators to clarify performance and development areas

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Behavioural Competency	Exercise Group Discussion	Exercise Written Task	Exercise Behavioural Interview
Communication (oral & written)	Y (oral)	Y (written)	Y (oral)
Influence & Negotiation	Y	Y	Y
Problem Solving	Y		Y
Collaboration	Y		Y

Behavioural indicators

MEASURING COMPETENCIES

Observable / measurable indicators of competence

Example:

Competency: Self-management		Rating scale
Negative behavioural indicator	Positive behavioural indicator	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> * Late to arrive * Unprofessional appearance (inappropriate clothing, messy, dirty, un-ironed) * Does not plan activities/projects in advance * Does not consider the resources needed to complete the task, asks for resources at the last minute * Submits work after the deadline * Continues with tasks even when it is clear they don't have enough time, doesn't manage expectations with others * Does not seek to better understand the task or objectives 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> * Arrives early / on-time * Appropriate professional attire and appearance * Plans activities /projects in advance to ensure enough time/resources are allocated * Prior to commencing a task considers the resources necessary for successful completion, and requests these resources * Submits work before / on the deadline * Communicates where timelines cannot be met, and manages expectations so others know when a task will be completed * Speaks with relevant parties to confirm expectations and the task requirements. 	<p>5: Demonstrates positive indicators of competence</p> <p>4: Demonstrates positive indicators of competence with little negative indicators</p> <p>3: Demonstrates similar amounts of positive and negative indicators of competence</p> <p>2: Demonstrates some positive indicators of competence, but with significant negative indicators</p> <p>1: Demonstrates little or no positive indicators of competence, as well as considerable negative evidence</p>

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Data analysis

- A thematic analysis of the interview and questionnaire data
- 'Progressive focusing' - emergent themes and common findings are identified through a systematic process of analysis and ordering of the data.
(Parlett and Hamilton, 1977, p.18)
- SPSS has been used to facilitate the analysis.
- Reporting of any negative incidences and outcomes
- An analysis of factors contributing to all outcomes (whether positive or negative).

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Data collection – preliminary findings

Mixed methods – both quantitative and qualitative

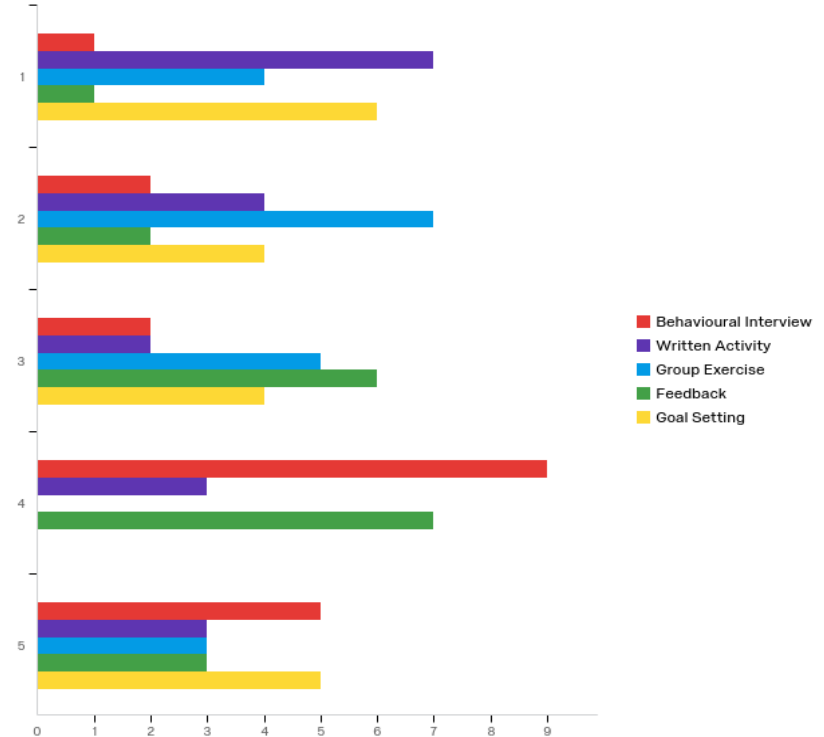
- pre & post questionnaire - qualtrics
- Survey - qualtrics
- Semi- structured interview

No statistical significance between the data sets for the questionnaires

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Preliminary findings: AC survey

Please rank how helpful you found the following aspects of the Assessment centre (select the appropriate number, 1= least helpful and 5= most helpful)



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Preliminary findings: Interview data

‘I think definitely from all those activities the goal setting was good as well [as the behavioural interview]... my interviewer just had some really good examples that I probably could never have thought of by myself. So that was an opportunity. It was really good.’ (005)

‘It definitely made you more aware of the skills that you had or skill that you could develop. ... [helped] in recognising examples or seeking out opportunities to Practice the skills’. (005)

‘One of the things I did was I kept a diary every morning. I established a routine that facilitated how I went about it [monitoring goals].’ (009)

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Conclusions

- literature indicates the importance of developing the employability skills.
- PACE as an example of the effectiveness of work-integrated learning practices
- the need for systematically assessing the skills, competencies and behaviours of undergraduates for development purposes. It also supports
- the need for ongoing feedback and critical reflection on students' progress towards development goals
- the importance of students adopting a learning goal orientation to maximise the benefit of their experience

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Next Steps



- Limitations of the process –
- Scalability – Train the trainer

Reference List: Please refer to conference paper for full list

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Thank you



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www.mq.edu.au/connect/partnerships//why-connect-with-macquarie/partner-with-pace

