Active Blended Learning: Using a Media Suite to create authentic learning experiences

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Introduction:

Consultation with industry identified the growing importance and need to equip students with soft skills to make students more employable.

Soft Skills that industry want:

- Effective communication
- Planning and research skills
- Teamwork and interpersonal skills
- Creativity and innovation
- Collaboration

Objectives:

1) Design and deliver an industry standard Media Suite to enable and empower students and staff to develop *soft skills* that employers want and produce media (audio and video) content for internal and external purposes

2) Leverage the Media Suite capabilities to enhance learning, provide training, make it part of the assessment process, increase student engagement whilst making learning fun and increasing the chances of students becoming more employable

(Succi & Canovi, 2019)

Methodology:

Creating authentic learning experiences through authentic active blended learning to drive student engagement, learning and develop employability skills. (Han, 2024)

Media Studio put a 'Spotlight' on:

- Research, Enterprise, Teaching & Learning activities
- Student stories
- Raise awareness of School and Institution
- Industry insights

Ultimately creating a community of learners in a multidisciplinary learning environment.

(Lombardi & Oblinger, 2007)

Student Experience:

"Each student had 25 minutes to deliver a podcast on a topic of their choice. Students were initially apprehensive, but all successfully contributed to the assessment task, the overwhelming majority gave their verbal response as the best assessment they had over the entire three years of study."

- Level 6 Programme Leader

Outputs:

The Salford Business School Media Suite launched in Academic year 2023-2024 within the first 3 months, over 150 students from Levels 4, 5, 6 and 10 academics had used the facility, as part of the assessment process, to record a podcast episode as a group.

In the academic year 2024-2025 approximately 500 students and staff will use the Media Suite as part of the teaching, learning and assessment process. The Media Suite has seen student participation from Levels 4, 5, 6 and 7, some of whom are now creating their own content and posting on LinkedIn.

In addition to this, the school is currently delivering podcast training for academics and has over 10 members of staff creating podcast episodes/series for internal and external use as well as integrating podcasting into the assessment process.

By empowering academic staff to utilise the Media Suite and integrate its capabilities into their teaching and learning practice, students can learn, develop and create their own podcast episode in an authentic and safe space. Students reflected how they felt empowered, enthused and now felt confident that they would not feel daunted once in industry. Both students and academic colleagues were given training on best practice, what to do and what not to do.

References:
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