

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

Mirage Islam – Senior Lecturer in Digital Marketing, Salford Business School, University of Salford (M.A.K.R.Islam@salford.ac.uk)

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 had used the facility, as part of the assessment process, to record a podcast episode as a group.

In the first six months academic year 2024-2025 we have seen over 500 students use the Media Suite as part of the teaching, learning and assessment process – students from Levels 4, 5, 6 and 7.

In addition to this, the school now have over 10 academics now creating podcast episodes/series and for external and internal use as well as integrating into the assessment process.

By empowering academic staff to utilise the Media Suite and integrate its capabilities into their teaching and learning practice, students are able to learn, develop and create their own podcast episode in an authentic and safe space. Students reflected how they felt empowered, enthused and now felt 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:

Succi, C. and Canovi, M. (2019) 'Soft skills to enhance graduate employability: comparing students and employers' perceptions', *Studies in Higher Education*, 45(9), pp. 1834–1847. doi:

<https://doi.org/10.1080/03075079.2019.1585420>

Han, X. (2024) 'Associations between effectiveness of blended learning, student engagement, student learning outcomes, and student academic motivation in higher education', *Education and Information Technologies*,

pre-print. doi: <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10639-024-13246-1>

Lombardi, M. and Oblinger, D. (2007) *Authentic Learning for the 21st Century: An Overview*. Available at: <https://alicechristie.org/classes/530/EduCause.pdf> (Accessed: 5 February 2025).

Disclosure Statement: All materials included in the poster represent the authors' own work and anything cited or paraphrased within the text is included in the reference list. This work has not been previously published nor is it being considered for publication elsewhere. There are no conflicts of interest that might have influenced the authors in reporting their findings completely and honestly.