BUILDING CAREER IDENTITY AMONG LARGE GROUPS:
LESSONS LEARNED FROM APPLIED EXPERIENCE
a Case Study by MARIANA KAISELER

❶ **In which subject was your case study used?**	
Sport, Health, and Exercise Sciences.	
❷ **How many** students has your work/example involved?	
Approximately 330 students across four courses.	
❸ **How long** have you been doing this work for?	
3 years	
❹ Was it **designed into** the course originally **or** added in and **subsequently embedded**? Explain in relation to your work	
The module is a 20 credits module, embedded into the courses. It's a long and thin module running across two semesters.	
❺ **What was the aim** of your work?	

The module aims:
- develop personal and career awareness
- build equal opportunities for development
- develop quality development experiences informed by experiential learning and deep self-reflection as an applied practitioner
- Encourage students to learn by finding meaning through using inclusive teaching approaches.

Overall developing students as reflective, self-managing practitioners who are committed to their own development and growth (Lester & Costley, 2010). Building a range of soft skills including confidence, problem-solving communication beyond taught curriculum aligned with their future career interests. Additionally, the module allows students to deep reflect about their future career and audit their strengths and areas of development acknowledging the diverse community. Once the skills audit is completed, students have gained a very good understanding of their profile and how it can be developed leading to their future career path. The next step for students was to search and engage in 120h development opportunities aligned with their future career interests and profile needs. The 120h development opportunities are totally flexible and should be tailored and informed by an idiosyncratic approach to each student needs, socio-cultural context, and career aspirations.

Examples of 120h tasks completed include a physical placement in a club shadowing a performance analyst; an interview with a physiotherapy within the NHS to understand day to day life in the role and main challenges; attending a journal club to develop critical thinking and further knowledge in the area; attend a performance analysis course offered by the University to develop a skills set in data analysis; reading papers and expanding learning through developing written skills; shadowing a PE teacher in their primary school. Some of these opportunities were advertised by the University, building on consultancy and research networks.

Additionally, a wide range of courses and activities were promoted through the University to the cohort, catering for the different interests, profile and needs. This includes workshops in performance analysis, skills for learning courses, research assistant roles, research participation, shadowing MSc Students placements and research projects. Additionally, 50% of the hours could be gained through paid work, for students that were already engaging in such opportunities. Students acquiring hours through this route should make clear what skills were

being developed according to their need's assessment and career aspirations. Assessment exercises considered each student personal development and growth throughout the module by analysing skills through learning tasks and reflection logs.

⑥ What was the main purpose of this work and how does it link to the course and module learning outcomes?

The work is embedded into the courses, the module is a 20-credit module in each course at Level 5 and the learning outcomes are described below.

LO1: To develop a greater self-awareness of employability network and individual strengths and areas of development with respect to current/future personal, academic and career development needs.

LO2: To have developed the ability to construct an appropriate career development plan and undertake appropriate development opportunities identified with this through the use of a negotiated learning experience.

LO3: To have developed the ability to reflect upon work-based learning experience, professional development and employability skills.

⑦ What academic level are the students? Why is it most suitable/suited for them?

Level 5 students: allowing students to become more mature after their first year at university, while also giving them an opportunity to gain experience beyond taught curriculum in their courses. Hence, preparing them nicely in terms of career readiness and awareness for level 6 Final Year Project choices and career prospects afterwards.

⑧ Does your case study relate to any of the literature outlined in the introductory literature review? (Maybe pick no more than 2-3 strong links)?

The module development and pedagogies align with Tomlinson's Graduate capital model and research in the field of careers and employability across the different dimensions: Human Capital; Social Capital; Cultural Capital; Psychological Capital; identity Capital.

Examples include:

Human Capital - valuing subject specificity skills, within and beyond the curriculum; include technical courses to develop technical and critical thinking skills.

Social capital- encourage students to network in social media, create a professional profile; raise awareness on the importance of social networks and personal branding.

Cultural capital - awareness of their own persona strengths, and areas of development, as well as understanding organisations values, philosophies and how they adapt in this environment. This is part of the assessment activities where students select a job description and critically conduct a skills audit of where they are and areas for development leading to their application for hat role.

Psychological Capital - through the process of finding 120h independently students face a combination of challenges, setbacks, risks (e.g., not being selected for a placement; no replies to emails). To navigate these challenges students, need to find effective solutions and mainly adapt, through this process they develop resilience and growth as an individual and young professional.

Identity capital - support students' maturity in thinking about their future self and career, tailor themselves to the labour market and develop those skills. Students develop in the module a higher awareness and willingness to invest and care about their future self as a professional in a certain area.

⑨ Is your work embedded into a module/throughout a course?

Yes, as per explanation above.

⑩	Was your work **assessed**? **How**? Does this assessment **build on** any of the key themes?

Assessment includes two components:
- E-Portfolio (written assessment) describing the student journey in planning their skills audit and 120h hours; followed by a log of practice documenting the hours and reflecting on key lessons learned.
- Self recorded interview- where students record a video answering a set of 4 questions reflecting on their skills, knowledge and experience for that role.

These variety of assessments allow students to keep track and self-reflect during their journey while being able to make informed choices. Finally, the interview allows students an opportunity to orally articulate their development journey. The diversity of assessments meets different learning styles and provides an inclusive assessment approach.

⑪	**Main theme:** What did your work do to maximise your students' sense of belonging? Can you outline how it impacted on academic and social belonging and how?

Promoting a safe space for students to discover themselves share their fears, challenges and reflect about future career as a professional, and how to get there. Promoting intrinsic motivation though task related activities focusing on their own development, goals and process leading to their goal. Promoting equal opportunities and valuing not only achievements but mostly progress towards development. Inspiring students to actively search for opportunities within their courses, speak with other colleagues, tutors, be aware of events and research and more importantly get involved in the community and course beyond taught curriculum activities.

⑫	**Sub-themes:** - Did your work also address any/all of the following subthemes? (All the case studies do to a greater and lesser extent…) - Inclusivity in its broadest sense (embedded, flexible learning environment, flexible assessment, relatable …. etc. - Students as developing professionals - Employability skills such as confidence building, impression management, collaboration and teamwork?

Yes, inclusivity was at forefront of teaching, through providing examples of a wide range of profession professions, careers, ethnicities, challenges. Also, through valuing students and their stage of development, whatever that was (e.g., someone working in MacDonalds would be praised for their achievement and for passing an interview process. Similarly, they were asked about their communication skills development in their job, main challenges and lessons learned) so students felt that they had a safe space to share and learn from each other in whatever context they were.

Inclusive teaching and assessment, allowing flexibility of choices and focusing on own development rather than others. Inclusive placements ranging from students ongoing roles in their communities to contracts in professional clubs everything and anything would be valued as long as it showed development.

Employability skills were embedded throughout the journey of building a self-reflective diary, searching for the hours, developing confidence in approaching others and building a personal brand.

⑬	**Main benefits and successes of your work** (for example, student feedback, sustainable, improved data/ results, noticeable change in behaviours, good feedback from stakeholders and employers, measurable change in metrics)
	Student feedback through survey and focus groups. Good achievement in the module and completion of the 120h. Some students reached part time jobs through their placements in the module and went on to work full time after Level 6.
⑭	**Main challenges for your work** (for example, is it scalable, manageable again, too difficult to evaluate, resource heavy, too risky, not enough ownership…?)
	Challenges are mainly related with leadership and management of administrative processes involved and coordination of such a large module, staff pool and liaising with central services. This requires far more hours than what is accountable in deployment. Main challenges are also related with staff teaching motivation, acknowledging that this is a non-science module being taught in sport science courses.
⑮	**Main outcomes** How do you know it was successful? (was your work measurable? Any Data? Student views? Feedback from colleagues? Other evaluation such as change at wider course and institutional level?)
	The success of the module is showcased by the students grades and progression even at challenges times such as COVID, these have never been affected and students were able to continue their development. Despite the challenging times navigated, with increased implications for this applied module, creative solutions were found co-created with student through focus groups to understand their needs and ideas. This co-production has led to new online development ideas (e.g., social media campaigns, design strategy; interviews with professionals; exploring new careers) hence through the challenges navigated new opportunities have been found to enrich the module and accommodate new ways of thinking and being. As a result, formal and informal feedback from students, grades and behaviour observed for some students (e.g., interest in research, member of the journal club after the module, continue working on projects initiated in the module) showcases the value of the module to their own identity and course overall. Effective solutions were found to students were able to overcome challenges and find creative development opportunities that still foster their development.