

Creating Contemporary Student Learning Environments
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Linking Workplace Events with Classroom Learning

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Project Background

- Creating Future-Proof Graduates
- NTFS Project 2007 £200,000 from HEA + contribution from University
- Initial Partners
 - Every Faculty and a number of Central Departments
 - Employers from music, law and housing
 - Centre for Recording Achievement
 - Palatine – HEA subject centre for Dance, Drama and Music
 - University of Bedfordshire



Project Objectives

- Linking the classroom with professional practice
- Bridging the gap between teaching and learning and professional demands
- The project aims:
 - To produce a suite of simulated critical incident case studies to enhance students employability skills
 - To involve employers, students and HE staff in the production of the case studies
 - To evaluate the effectiveness of these critical incidents in enhancing skills for employment across a range of disciplines / sectors
 - To produce an evaluation toolkit



Defining transformative learning

- [\[1\]](#) Transformative learning happens as adult learners make sense of their experiences
- Transformation happens as engendering real and meaningful cognitive and intellectual change
- Traditional deep approaches to learning contribute towards this process, but may not achieve sufficient impact

[\[1\]](#) Mezirow, 1991; Harvey and Knight, 1996, cited in Corder et al., 1999

So how can we start the process of transformation?

- Need to create learning environments which challenge base ideas and instinctive approaches to catalyse critical thinking and reflection
- Contemporary work environments require employees who can think creatively, reflect on and solve problems, and work effectively within teams [\[2\]](#)
- Our approach – creating critical incidents – ‘triggers’

[\[2\]](#) Chapman *et al.*, 2005



The first stage – identifying key skills

- Interviews on skills and critical incidents:
 - **Employers** – exploring their perceptions and inviting them to describe specific critical incidents which exemplify the required skills or the consequences of their absence
 - Interviewing **lecturers** in the respective discipline to illuminate their perceptions of what students need to equip themselves for their chosen profession
 - Interviewing **current students** re their expectations for the skills they would need for the respective labour market
 - Interviewing **new and recent graduates** re their experiences of their preparedness for graduate employment – also analysing previous research



Second stage – linking skills to critical incidents

Small teams or individuals working on the scenarios

Scenario 1 - Cultural awareness

Scenario 2 – Ethical Dilemmas

Scenario 3 – Overcomplicating issues

Scenario 4 – Time management / prioritising

Scenario 5 – The Sorcerer's Apprentice – when to say “I don't know”

Scenario 6 – Numbers and the workplace

...and more...

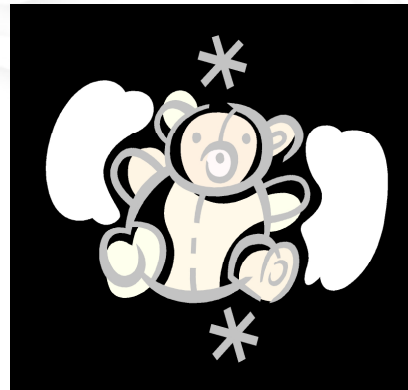


Critical Incident 1

Cultural Awareness – What?

Scenario 1 - Cultural awareness: teacher in foreign country offends local customs using inappropriate lesson plan

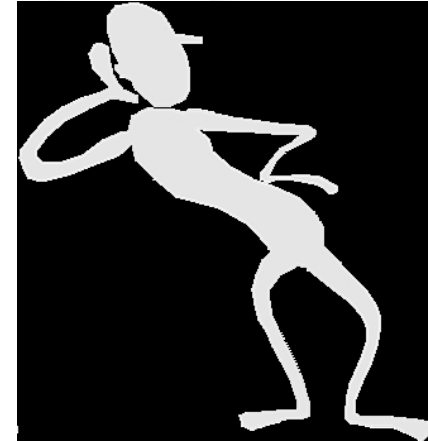
Cultural Awareness Scenario - working documents



Critical Incident 2

Ethical Dilemmas – How?

- Scenario 2 - A third person overhears two colleagues discussing personal information about a client which should not be in the public domain.
- A video re-enactment of the interchange as overhead; role-play material to explore what might happen with different responses; teaching notes.
- Professional ethics are an important consideration in many settings



Critical Incident 3

Overcomplicating Issues - Why?

- Scenario 3 - Students learn a great deal about their subject in their courses but then feel they must demonstrate all of their learning in the interface with the client



Future steps

- Piloting – evaluation, refinement and review
- Evaluation toolkit – tried and tested
- Continue to identify critical incidents – aiming for 8
- Dissemination – conference, papers, materials, web: www.moodle.bcu.ac.uk > [Staff Courses > Creating Future-Proof Graduates](#)



Our questions to you

- What has your experience of critical incidents been? Can you think of a scenario that impacted on you?
- Is there room for critical incident simulation in your curriculum?
- Would you like to pilot one of these scenarios with your students?

Contact us: futureproof@bcu.ac.uk

