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

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