

# Exploring student identity and transition through portfolio development



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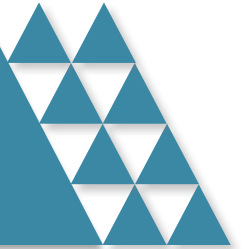
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RECORDING  
ACHIEVEMENT



# Session Plan

- The Module
- The Study
- Discussion
- Conclusions

# The Module





# Professional Identity through Portfolio Development

- Capstone project, a compulsory module during the concluding trimester at the University
- Designed to answer particular needs of final year students by assisting them in transition from their student to professional identity



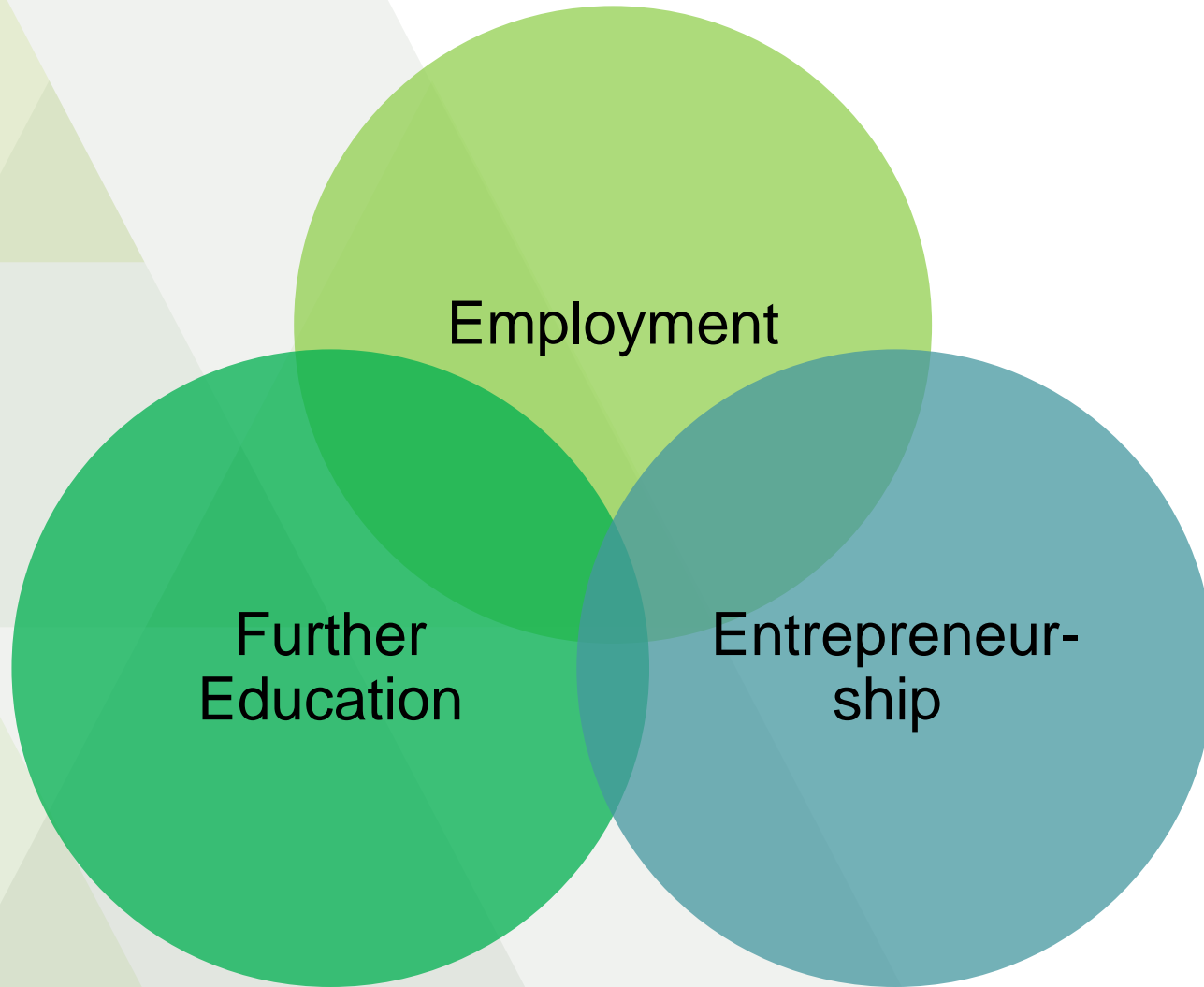
# Module Aim

- Supporting students during development of a sense of professional identity
- Reflecting on their journey through Higher Education and the development of their graduate attributes
- Providing opportunities to exercise planning processes and career development
- Consolidating students' lifelong learning skills
- Enabling students to enhance professional skills and competencies

# The Students

- Eclectic cohort:
  - BSc (Hons) Creative Computing
  - BSc (Hons) Interactive Media Design
  - BSc (Hons) Digital Media
  - BSc (Hons) Sound Design
  - BSc (Hons) Web Design and Development
  - Global Courses

# Something for Everyone (?)



# Module Structure

## Lectures and workshops

- Careers, Confident Futures, Bright Red Triangle, Research and Innovation Office
- CV, Job applications, Personal statements, Covering letters
- Research and funding
- Building resilience, Networking skills, Dealing with change, Working with feedback
- **Mock interviews**

## Masterclasses

- Industry mentors, academics, artists, graduates
- UK based and International practitioners

## Practical classes

- Review of relevant resources, reflection on industry standards
- Portfolio design, peer review



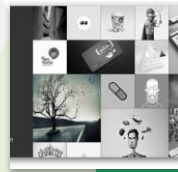


# Assessment



## Reflective Essay

- To capture graduate journey and personal development during studies through university and college
- To demonstrate a critical understanding of graduateness and professional identity with relation to relevant academic theories as well as industry requirements



## Portfolio

- To develop a professional portfolio (in on-line form), together with accompanying design rationale
- Feedback provided by Industry rep



## Mystery box

- Process portfolio
- Degree Showcase
- Competencies report
- Improved piece

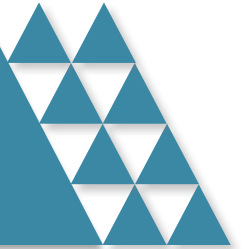


Most Importantly ...



KEEP  
CALM  
AND  
TELL YOUR  
STORY

# The Study



# Research Questions

- How do final year students construct their identities?
- Where identity work is undertaken, what factors lead to an adaptation of identity?

# Methodology

- Survey of identity at the start: as student, as creative computing student and as professional
- 58 students on the course
- Follow up survey at the end
- n=27 completed both pre and post surveys
- Follow up interviews n=7

# Findings: Identity

Statement	Student responses as %		
	Before the module	After the module	Difference
Being a student is important to me	65%	88%	+23
Being a student makes me feel good about myself	85%	92%	+7
I strongly define myself as a digital media student	92%	88%	-4
I strongly define myself as a digital media practitioner	61%	73%	+12

## Findings: Portfolio

Which best describes your portfolio	Student responses as %		
	Before the module	After the module	Difference
Ready to share with a potential employer/client	7%	30%	+23
In need of some further work	52%	67%	+15
In need of substantial development	41%	4%	-37



# Findings: Interviews

- Evidence of “identity work”: lab-based ingroups, recognising external contacts through masterclasses
- “It’s who you know”
- Evidence of extra-curricular work: paid and unpaid
- Increased confidence if referred by course leader
- “Sacrificing grades for professional work”
- Mock interview raised many times: observed “possible selves” pre-cursor to new identity





## What advice would you offer students who will study this module in its present form?

The reflective essay is really helpful allowing you to sum up your time in university and can help when creating your honours project development report.

Make use of the one to one interviews and other resources as they are very useful.

It's important to attend the lectures organised. There are lots of great opportunities to learn about different avenues of exploration and take full advantage of.

In the end the module is worth it for the experience and knowledge gained.

Don't take what is being offered by this module for granted.

Use this opportunity to really maximise your employability by taking on board all the feedback given to you.

I would advise them to attend as much as possible, there was a lot of valuable information available.

Make the most of going to all the workshops, there's a lot of variation and lots to learn from people who have experience and knowledge.

Practise writing reflectively about your experiences, it can prove a challenge!

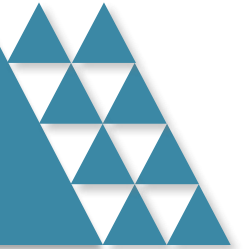
Attend every class

Take as much as you can - it's all geared towards your next step. Before you know it your 4th year will be over and you need to be prepared for the next phase in your life (whatever that is).

Make great use of the Academic support available. Try to attend as many classes as possible and talk in class. There is nothing worse than sitting there when the lecturer is asking the whole room a question and no one answers, it'll make the time go faster. Once you understand what is needed of you in each assessment, get started on it. easier said than done, but start writing. even if its not great, it is MUCH easier to edit a written piece than to sit there trying to reach work count. Make bullet points. plan it out. it's about you, your experiences can't be wrong, get writing. You'll have plenty of time between hand-ins to review it and ask for advice to make sure YOUR experiences are written in a way which is suitable for an academic report.

Do a portfolio in advance and refine it during this module

# Discussion



- Practitioner identity increased from 61% to 73%
- However, biggest shift was an increase in student identity (from 65% to 88%)
- Factors: intensity of final year, ingroup behaviour, identity salience
- Mock interviews: developing a new self-narrative

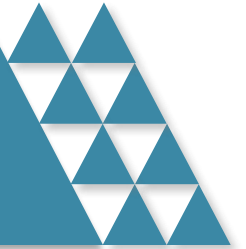
# We are not finished yet!

- Where are we now? New students, new challenges
- Where are they now? Old students, new challenges

# Few numbers ...

Statement	Student responses as %		
	Before the module	After the module	Difference
My portfolio is composed entirely of coursework	40	25	-15
My portfolio reflects extra-curricular work	55	80	+25
My portfolio reflects my module choices	65	45	-20
I am proud of my portfolio	45	85	+40

# Conclusions





- A final year reflective employability module focussed on identity transition changed the way students viewed themselves
- Students reflecting upon their learning experience
- Mapping between current and future identities
- The mock interviews were opportunities to experiment with their adapted identities
- Students had a portfolio to show potential employers

Thank you!

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