

EXPLORING COLLABORATIVE PEDAGOGIES IN EMPLOYABILITY

Action Research Study of Careers, Academics,
Students & Employers Partnership

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Agenda Style



01 PURPOSE OF OUR STUDY

02 WHAT DID WE DO

03 HOW DID IT GO

04 WHAT HAVE WE LEARNED



OVERVIEW



- A reflective account as lessons & challenges faced from the research stakeholders.
- Findings: collaboration between Careers professionals, academics, authentic employer input and students
 - ➔ student engagement, career self-efficacy & builds a stronger link between theory & practice (Ranaraja et al., 2022; Crosthwaite et al., 2018).
- Cross-sector collaboration offers a sustainable model for developing confident, work-ready graduates equipped with lifelong employability skills (Daly, 2016; Cotronei-Baird, 2020)



One of the major benefits was the propensity for **mutual professional learning**, with academics developing deeper **insight into industry** expectations and Careers professionals enhancing their **pedagogical role as co-educators**. We'll present the key lessons on communication, shared goal alignment, and adaptability in partnership work.

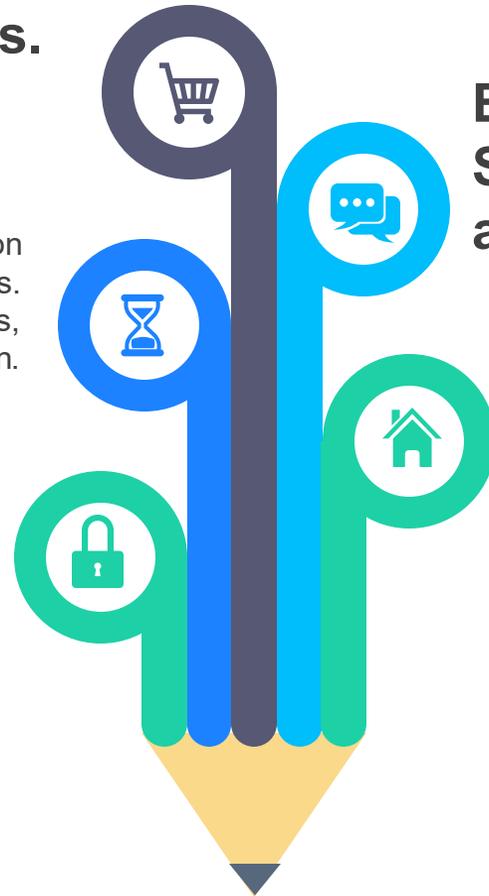
MOTIVATION AND INSPIRATION

**Word- Related Learning. Scalable.
Reach “Hard-to-reach” Students.**

CareerEDGE model (Dacre Pool & Sewell, 2007): emphasis on reflection, evaluation, and self-awareness.
SOAR model (Kumar, 2007): focus on strengths, opportunities, aspirations, and reflection on current position.

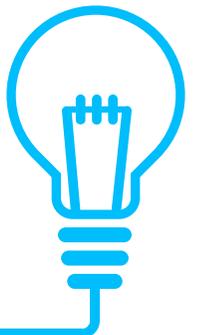
Student Partnership Model (SPARQS, 2023), positioning students as co-decision-makers in shaping aspects of the module
These academic models were aligned with the Embedding Employability Framework (AGCAS, 2025), bridging theory and professional practice.

The lecturer’s role was positioned as **facilitator, mediator,** and boundary-spanner between academic learning and professional context



Build Skills. Link theory/concept to Skills development & Real-world application.

Graduate Capitals (Tomlinson, 2017a): particular attention to human capital and social capital.
Principles of Situated Learning (Brown, Collins & Duguid, 1988), recognising that employability skills develop most effectively when learning tasks are contextual, social and tied to real-world challenges



WHAT DID WE DO ?

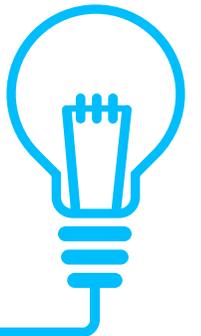
Action research.
UK higher
education
undergraduate
module.

Develop
students'
employability
skills through a
collaborative
learning
approach.

Intervention
involved group-
based activities,
case studies,
presentations &
direct
interaction with
professionals/
employers &
careers staff.

Explicit aim: to
explore role of
academics in
shifting
employability
from an
abstract
concept to a
lived, relational,
and practice-
based
experience

Emphasis on
career advisor,
industry
experts, and
students'
partnership:
discomfort as
part of learning,
and exposure
to realistic
professional
expectations.



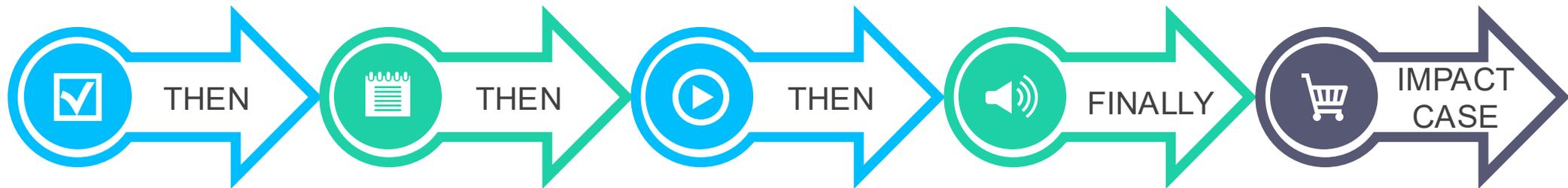
HOW DID WE DO IT?

STAGE 1

Initiate collaboration with career advisor & industry experts (assessment case studies + content + survey)

STAGE 3

Finalise data collection + analyse data (focus groups & another collection of the same survey)



WE STARTED WITH LOs

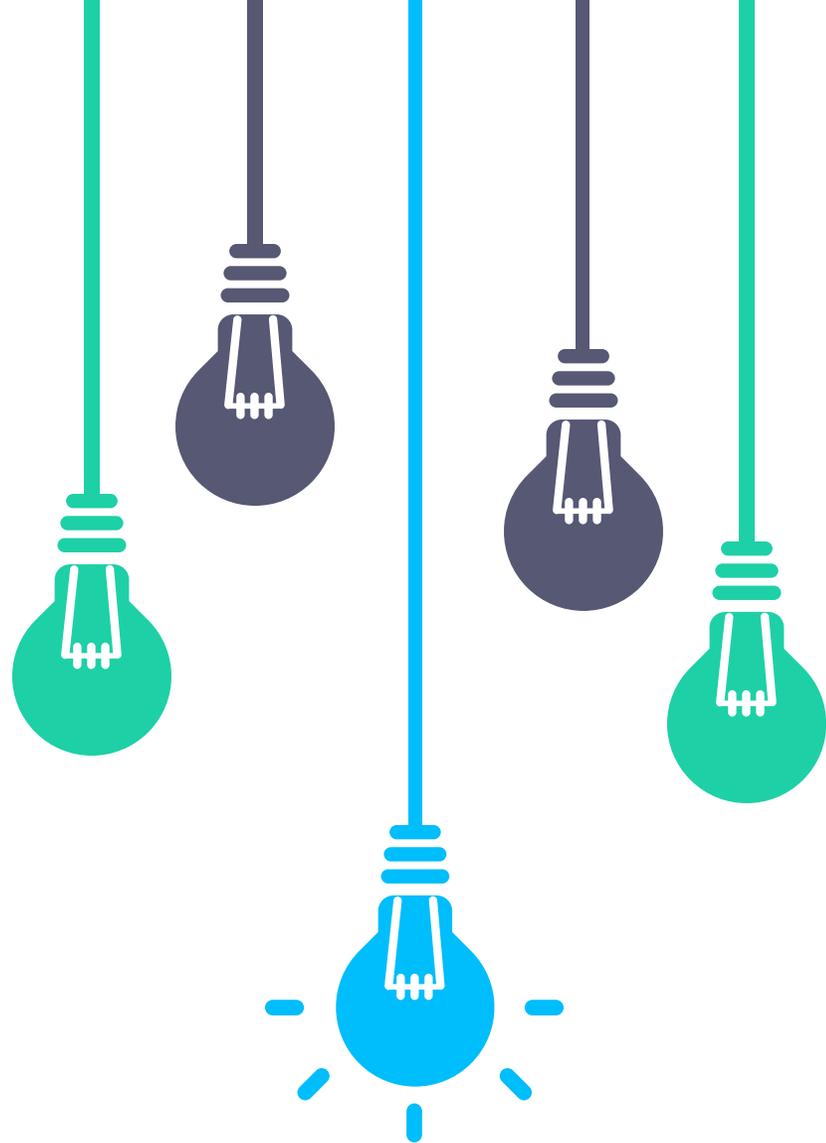
- Move beyond Theory
- Integrate Employability skills into Module Skills & Design

STAGE 2

8 action research cycles with weekly refinement; collect students' reflections & observation notes

DISSEMINATION

Share the findings with our departments and L&T



HOW DID IT GO?



Students' perspective



Career advisor's perspective



Academics' perspective



Experts' perspective

STUDENTS' PERSPECTIVE - benefits



PERSONAL DEVELOPMENT LENS

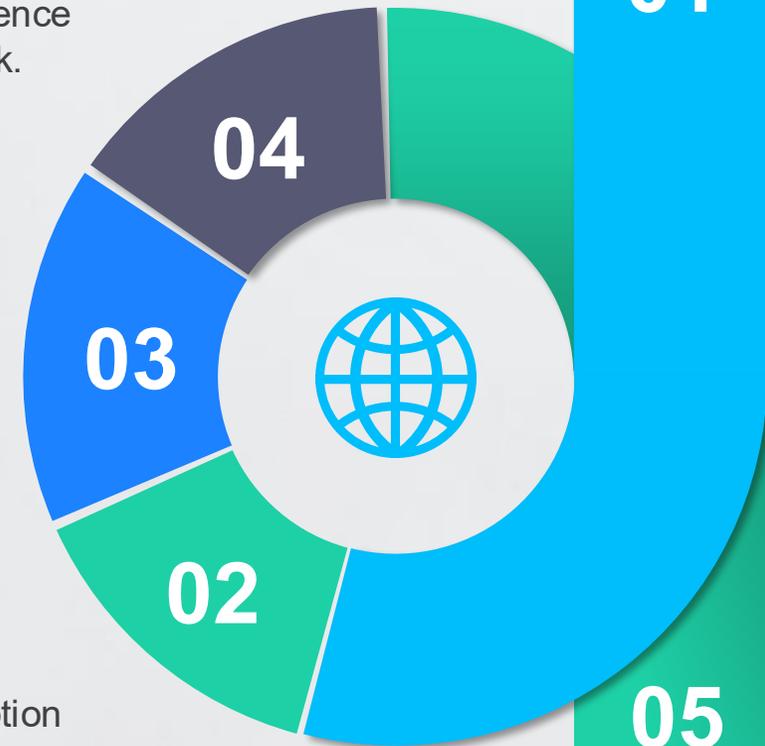
Initial reactions: anxiety, resistance & judgment, (groupwork and unfamiliar peers).

Self-awareness, confidence & willingness to speak.

Understanding of diversity, bias, & **interpersonal behaviour**

Movement from avoidance of teamwork to recognition of its **value for learning**.

Focus groups: comfort-zone disruption followed by **growth**, with students explicitly comparing themselves “before” and “after” the intervention.





STUDENTS' PERSPECTIVE - benefits

CAREER LENS



Prepare for Real Workplace Expectations

- Feel the module mirrored real organisational behaviour, expectations, & feedback processes.
- Activities were described as “real life experience” that helped them understand how to behave in a company.



Develop of Professional Skills

- Communication, teamwork, & collaboration skills in a structured but challenging environment.
- Tasks as opportunities to practise professional interaction like workplace scenarios.



Productive Challenge Leading to Growth

Students framed the challenge as a chance to apply theory to realistic business cases & develop practical professional skills.



Long-Term Career Value

Module as offering practical, experience-based learning that supports future employment & personal development

STUDENTS' PERSPECTIVE - Challenges

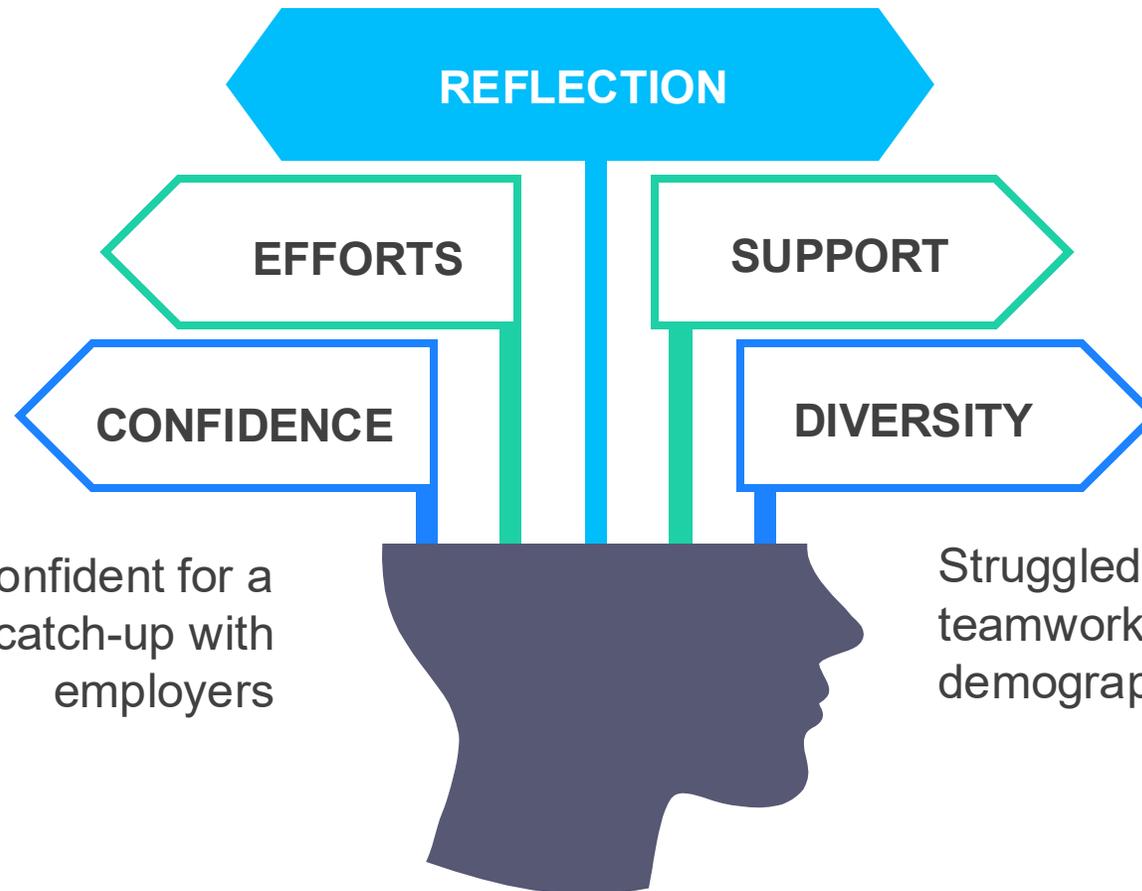
Writing reflections -
challenging task

New approach needed
efforts -> overlapped
with other modules

Presentation training

Felt unconfident for a
catch-up with
employers

Struggled with
teamwork given the
demographical range



STUDENTS' SUGGESTIONS FOR IMPROVEMENT

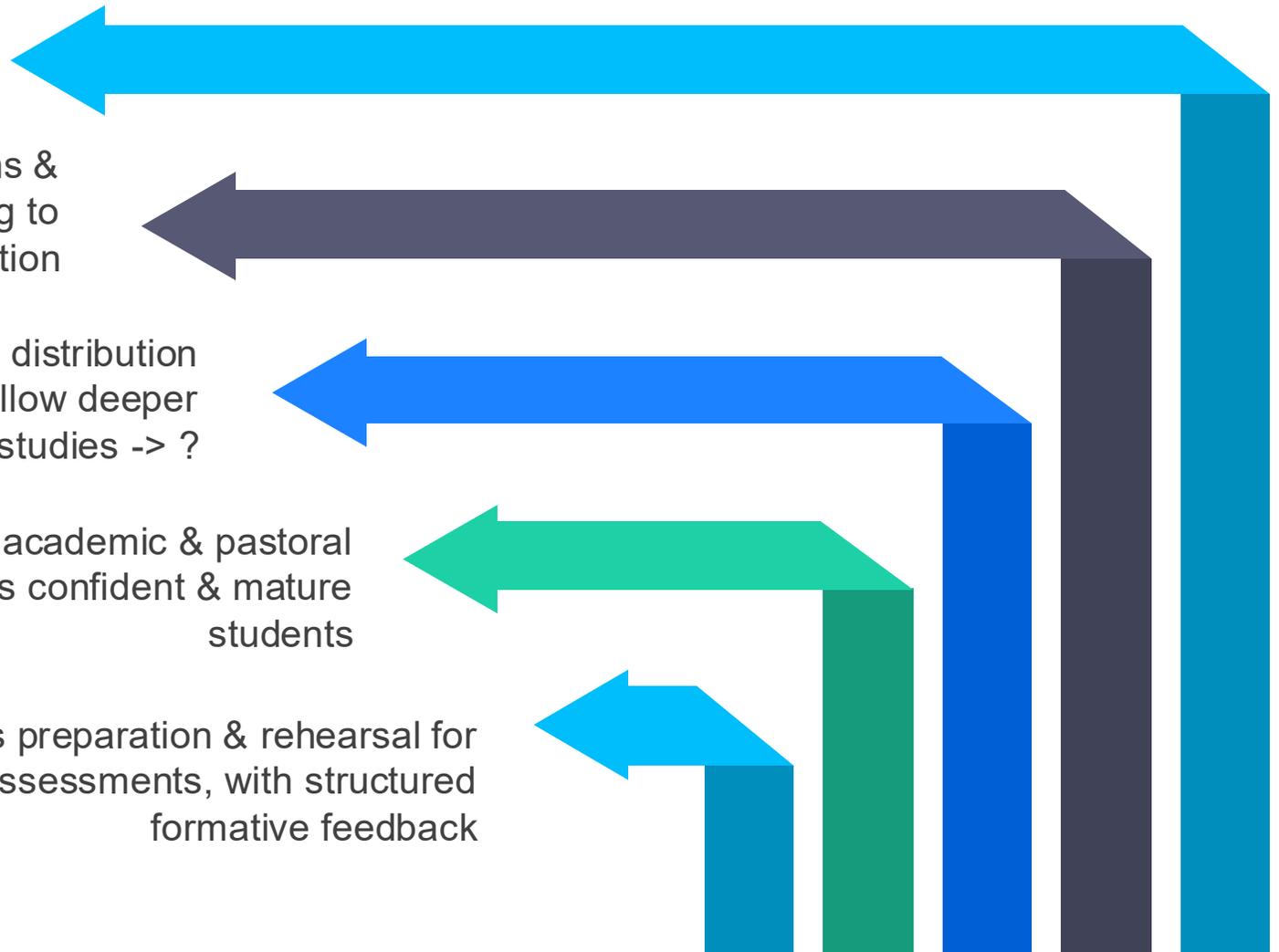
Provide: visible, low-stakes opportunity to interact with employers, (informal Q&A)-> ?

Employer involvement in presentations & assessment, with appropriate scaffolding to manage anxiety & support preparation

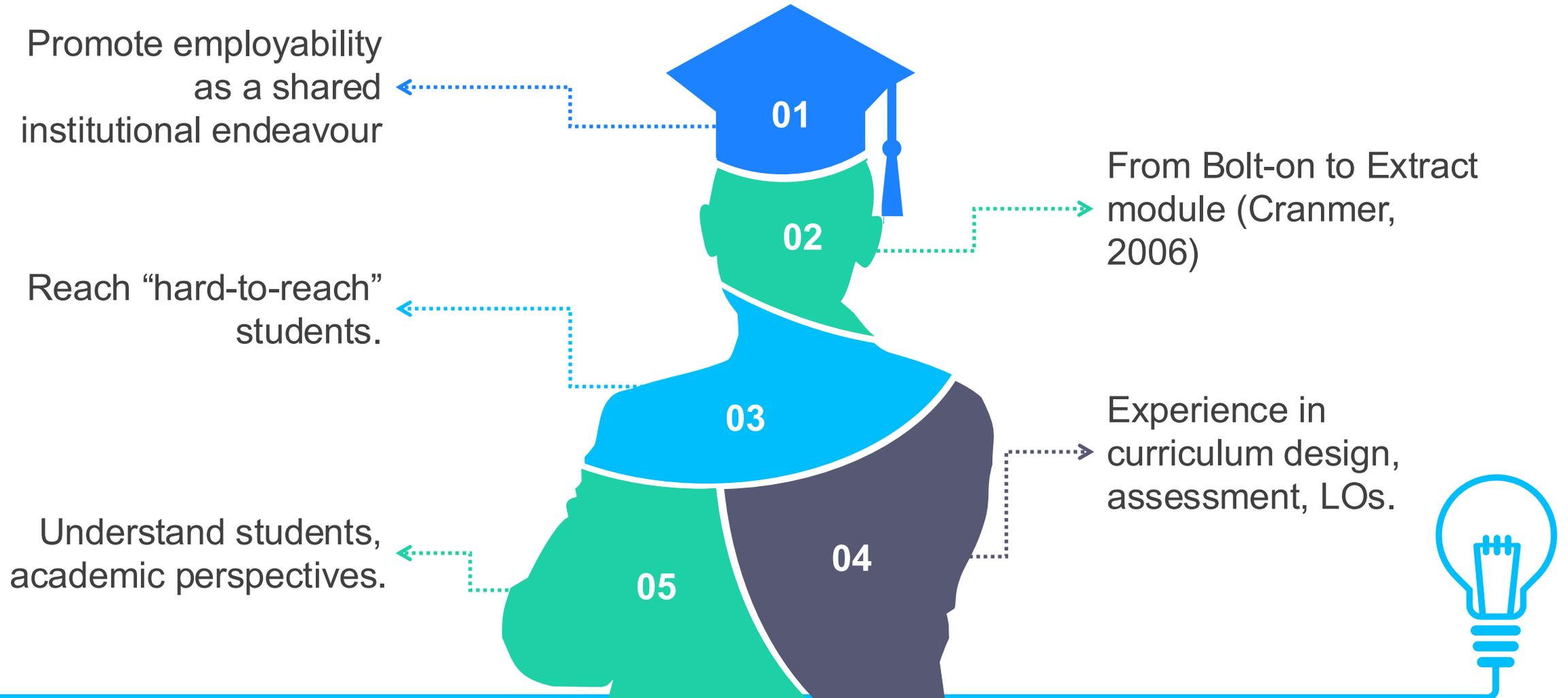
Assessment pacing & workload distribution across modules to reduce stress & allow deeper engagement with case studies -> ?

Visibility & accessibility of academic & pastoral support, particularly for less confident & mature students

Embed more in-class preparation & rehearsal for presentations and assessments, with structured formative feedback



CAREER ADVISOR'S PERSPECTIVE - Benefits



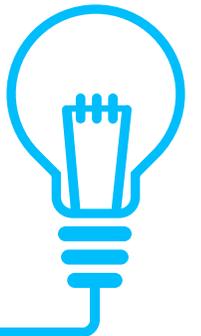
CAREER ADVISOR'S PERSPECTIVE - Challenges

Take time to influence/raise awareness/capacity for academic staff. Build process.

Balance consultant role

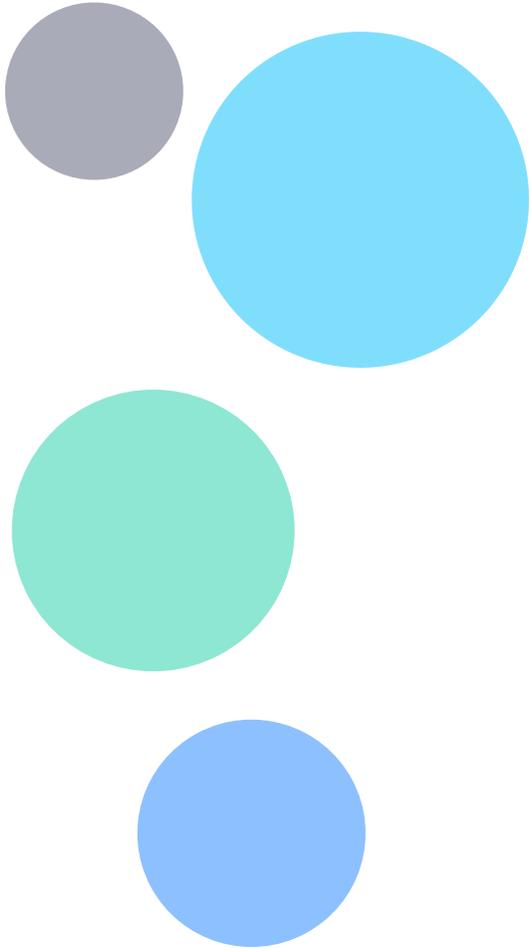
Resource allocation and role clarification.

Institutional structure challenge: how to continue to next cohort and develop further.





ACADEMICS' PERSPECTIVE - Benefits



Alignment between theory, practice, & assessment -> academics to teach disciplinary content while making **employability** development **explicit** rather than assumed

Shared pedagogical responsibility with career advisors and industry professionals, reducing the isolation of the lecturer as the sole employability “expert”

Richer **insight into students' skill development**, gained through continuous observation, reflections, and cross-professional dialogue

Greater **curriculum relevance & authenticity**, supported by real organisational problems and professional input

Professional development for academics, particularly in **reflective practice, responsive teaching, & employability-informed curriculum design**

ACADEMICS' PERSPECTIVE - Challenges

Increased time & workload demands (plan, coordinate & iterative weekly refinement)

Manage student resistance (mature/assessment-oriented students unfamiliar with collaborative & reflective pedagogies (inclusivity challenges)

Balancing academic standards with employability objectives, ensuring skills development does not dilute disciplinary depth

Logistical complexity when coordinating across roles, time zones, class sizes, & external contributors

Emotional & relational labour (manage classroom dynamics, student anxiety, & defensiveness toward non-traditional teaching approaches





EXPERTS' PERSPECTIVE - Benefits

01

Opportunity
to listen to
students'
perspective

02

Opportunity
for social
responsibility
& community
engagement

03

Theoretical
lenses into
their
organisational
problems &
solutions

EXPERTS' PERSPECTIVE - Challenges

01 Constraints on the depth of information needed vs available to share

01



03 Worries about how much technical they should go.

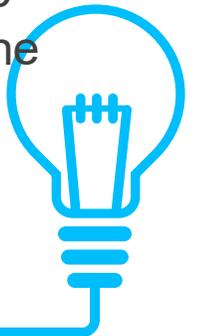
03

02

Time pressure given time zones; workload; class sizes

04

Concerns whether students will be able to grasp the realities of the problems occurring at the organisational levels



WHAT DID WE LEARN FROM IT

Support is needed - even on a little scale

Small scale pilot & progress is worth it -> little impact counts even with little support

Training and mentorship needed for such collaboration - reduces trial & error

Inclusivity gets more & more challenging in such approaches

Inter & Intra institutional collaboration is a must!



HOW CAN WE DO IT BETTER?



Training and mentorship



Learn from best practices



Learn from other contextual lessons given the international identity of students



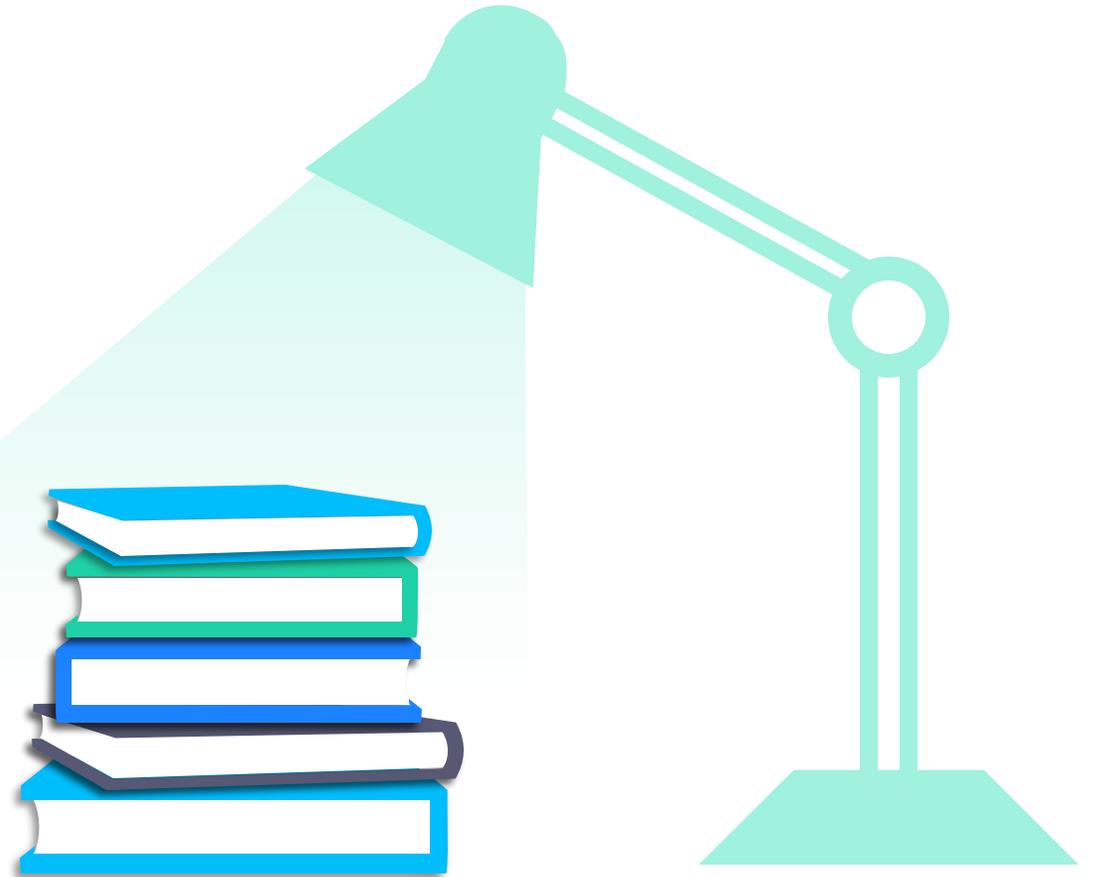
Consider students' feedback (with feasibility and applicability in mind — but?)



Resources: such as connections



Cross-modular collaborations; peer support



**THANK YOU FOR
YOUR ATTENTION!**

Questions?

