

## Enterprise Teaching Case Study

<b>Example / Case Title</b>	Enterprise and Employability – a taught module
<b>Name</b>	Brian S. Rushton, Martin D. Eaton and David A. Eastwood
<b>School / Department</b>	Environmental Sciences
<b>Institution</b>	University of Ulster
<b>Activity</b>	This case study describes the module Enterprise and Employability, which is at level 2 and worth 10 credit points (100 total student effort hours).
<b>Student Group</b>	<p>Compulsory for honours degree Year 2 students taking Environmental Science or Geography with the Diploma in Industrial Studies option (the Diploma qualification entails a year's work experience with an approved placement provider, for example the Ordnance Survey for Northern Ireland, Loughs Agency, Environmental and Heritage Service, local County Councils, Water Testing Laboratories, Health and Safety agencies, etc.)</p> <p>Optional module for Honours degree Year 2 students taking Environmental Science or Geography without the Diploma in Industrial Studies.</p> <p>Optional module for Associate Bachelor Degree Year 2 students taking routes in Environmental Studies or Geography. (The Associate Bachelor's degree is a two-year Foundation Degree.)</p> <p>Typically the module has between 30 and 40 students per year.</p>
<b>Aim</b>	<p>The aims of the module are to:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>provide students with a range of environmentally orientated business and management skills and practices, in order that they can integrate more successfully into a particular company or to set up their own business. In particular, recognition of future business opportunities is an important goal;</li> <li>provide students with the skills necessary to successfully acquire a position with a suitable, relevant placement provider; and</li> <li>assist students in the development of their own career paths.</li> </ol>
<b>Context / Background</b>	The module has operated since 2002/03 and was included in the programme as a response to a University initiative focussing upon entrepreneurship. All students were to be imbued with an understanding of, and an opportunity to partake in the

	<p>development of entrepreneurial activity. Our School took the decision to link entrepreneurship with improving employability skills (both self-employed and graduate level) in a new module, Enterprise and Employability. As a ten credit point module, this can be studied in combination with another module, Business and the Environment.</p> <p>This decision was prompted by the need to provide students with a range of environmentally orientated business and management skills and practices in order that they can integrate more successfully into a particular company or even set up their own business. In particular, we believe that the recognition of future business opportunities is an important goal. Students should also be developing their own career paths and this module provides the mechanisms for them to do that.</p>
<p><b>Example description</b></p>	<p>The learning outcomes for this module have been developed and refined over a number of years and are now as follows:</p> <p>By the end of this module, the students will:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Have developed knowledge of important areas of business and management with respect to the new development process and the entrepreneurial business plan. This will include key sources of business support and finance, the steps required to research a market and protect the intellectual property for a business opportunity, the management of people and operations, and financial forecasts (Entrepreneurial learning outcome);</li> <li>2. Understand the context in which new products or services are developed within Environmental Science and Geography (Entrepreneurial learning outcome);</li> <li>3. Have developed an awareness of a range of environmental and geographical career opportunities (Employment learning outcome);</li> <li>4. Have reflected on their own career choices and developed action plans to support these (Employment learning outcome); and</li> <li>5. Have developed the skills necessary for applying for work placements and employment (Employment learning outcome).</li> </ol> <p>The twin themes of the module are delivered in parallel, each allocated two hours per week for six weeks.</p> <p>The employment part of the module is focussed around the theme of 'Developing Your Own Career Potential'. The students have to: identify their own skills and assess their specific strengths and weaknesses; identify options within the Environmental Science and Geography job market; and prepare CVs, application forms and letters and take part in a mock interview. Skills auditing is facilitated by the on-line Personal Development and Planning System (<a href="http://www.pds.ulster.ac.uk">www.pds.ulster.ac.uk</a>).</p> <p>Entrepreneurship is approached through a number of focussed sessions. These are:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a. Environmental Problems and New Business Opportunities.</li> </ol> <p>This covers such topics as: Finding business ideas; Case studies of industrial problems becoming business opportunities; Eco-innovation; and Environmental</p>

legislation and Government and EU policy for businesses, focussing particularly on SMEs.

b. Management and the New Product Development Process

This covers such topics as: The business, science park and research scenes in Northern Ireland; The new product development (NPD) process; Intellectual property; Innovation and technology transfer; Project planning; and Business plans.

c. Marketing

This covers such topics as: Factors which influence our products; Customers; Competitors; The marketing mix; The marketing budget; and The marketing plan.

d. Managing people, operations and quality

This covers such topics as: Recruiting and appraising staff; Working in teams; Operations; and Quality assurance.

e. Finance

This covers such topics as: Cash flow, profit and loss statements and balance sheets; Financial forecasts; and Sources of finance and venturing.

**Teaching and Learning Methods**

Teaching is delivered in a number of formal lectures and informal workshops where the students engage in active (and often) lively discussions. The teaching staff help to mentor groups of students as they create and develop their business ideas. Visits to 'spin out companies' and talks from invited experts are used to enhance the real world context of the students' learning experience. Private study is an important aspect of this module and is supported by extensive study notes, as well as sign posting to websites of organisations involved in aspects of business planning and case studies. Students are expected to work independently and in groups; students are encouraged to use an online group discussion tool to aid communication between members.

The module has an underlying skills' 'agenda' and these are delivered as part of the teaching. Those that have been identified are:

- a. Innovative thinking and creative skills (achieved through the formulation of a business proposition based on a market need);
- b. Intellectual skills (achieved through evaluation and analysis of a business proposition);
- c. Communication skills (achieved through the preparation of written reports, oral presentation and interview experience);
- d. Group working skills (achieved through class discussion, and group development from forming to performing within the group feasibility study assignment);
- e. Project planning and management skills (achieved through the development of the group feasibility study for a business proposition);
- f. Self-management skills (achieved through time organisation and meeting deadlines); and
- g. Independent learning skills (achieved through private study, working

	<p>independently on assignments and critical personal reflection on career path progression).</p> <p>The module is assessed by 100% coursework and counts for 1/12 of the Year Two mark. There are two components:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a. A group business plan presentation and report (50%); and</li> <li>b. A career portfolio (50%). This component has three elements, a job application letter and CV (20%), a skills audit and evidence of PDP/PD work (10%) and interview preparation and performance at a mock interview (20%).</li> </ol> <p>Four members of staff are involved in the delivery of this module, three members of staff from within the School and one member of staff from the Career Service.</p>
<p><b>Results / Feedback</b></p>	<p>The staff (and students!) enjoy the informality of this module. The interview and post-interview sessions, in particular, are insightful. The students take them extremely seriously and are often highly nervous and apprehensive about the interview and its outcome – so, although artificial, the students gain enormously from the process. Despite the fact that the large majority have part-time jobs they have usually not had a subject-related interview before and it is a real ‘eye-opener’ for them. It is very time-consuming and engages two members of staff for about three days work. Workshop sessions are particularly informative and involve interaction with systems that have been developed centrally for the benefit of students. They also serve as a useful and critical forum for highlighting issues associated with the PD system and suggesting improvements.</p> <p><b>Feedback</b></p> <p>We have an excellent monitor of students’ performance through their engagement with placement. Over the last five years, no student has failed industrial placement and their overall performance has been excellent. Feedback from industrial placement providers is crucial here and these are typical comments received:</p> <p>“... has gained in confidence and continues to prove very enterprising and shows initiative when ever possible.”</p> <p>“... will challenge others to think of new ideas and more effective ways of getting the work done.”</p> <p>They indicate that the students have been well-prepared for the placement experience and that they have approached the work with a great deal of enthusiasm, professionalism and motivation:</p> <p>“... a highly valued member of the team.”</p> <p>“... incredible enthusiasm ... self motivated ... meticulous planning ...continually turns out work of exceptionally high quality.”</p> <p>However, it is difficult to relate this directly to the preparation and background derived from the Enterprise and Employability module itself as the group of students who finally obtain a placement, which is optional, is often, though not always, composed of the better students. On placement visits students will often cite the module as being the one that developed their ideas and gave them the motivation to progress to placement and to consider business opportunities.</p>

	<p><b>Effective Learning</b></p> <p>The module is delivered in a very ‘user-friendly’ manner with interactive sessions being a strong feature. This undoubtedly leads to a more relaxed atmosphere for learning. The workshops are usually stimulating sessions. Nevertheless, some students rarely engage with the teaching and some fail to attend more than a handful of the sessions on offer – this is unfortunate but also true of more ‘main-stream’ modules.</p> <p>Placement opportunities in the Environmental Science and Geography areas are not easy to come by – unlike those in the health area of Biology, for example. Whilst some placements are notified to the Placement Tutor each year these are not sufficient to cover all the students who want to take the placement option. Thus students have to search out placement providers for themselves and they seem to be very successful at doing this with perhaps three or four new placements being found each year – the job searching skills acquired being put to a very practical use.</p> <p><b>Future changes</b></p> <p>The module has run more or less unchanged for the last three years except for minor ‘tweaking’ of the teaching schedule and assessment. However, with two members of staff due to retire in the near future the delivery of the module may need a radical rethink with the possibilities of delivering some content through e-teaching.</p> <p>The success of students on placement indicates that the module clearly meets the employability aims; application of entrepreneurship skills is likely to be happening post-graduation and we have no specific data on that.</p>
<p><b>Further comments or information</b></p>	<p>Whilst a primary focus of this module is the preparation of students for placement, the skills acquired in this part of the module would also benefit students when they seek employment in their final year.</p> <p>General guidance can be found in:</p> <p>Yorke, M., series editor (2004). <i>Learning and employability</i>. LTSN Generic Centre, York.</p> <p>This is a series of short, but highly informative, booklets published by the LTSN Generic Centre. The six booklets are:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Employability in higher education: what it is – what it is not (M. Yorke)</li> <li>2. Employability: judging and communicating achievements (M. Yorke and P.T. Knight)</li> <li>3. Embedding employability into the curriculum (M. Yorke and P.T. Knight)</li> <li>4. Reflection and employability (J. Moon)</li> <li>5. Widening participation and employability (G. Layer)</li> <li>6. Entrepreneurship and higher education: an employability perspective (N. Moreland)</li> </ol>