Embedding Competencies in MSc Curricula – Case Insights from Business Development Course Provision

Dr Gillian Armstrong
Ulster Business School
The University Vision

“To be a model of an outstanding regional university with a national and international reputation for quality.”
University Campuses

Magee

Coleraine

Jordanstown

Belfast
Ulster Business School

- Largest Business Faculty / School in the UK and Ireland
- Over 5,000 students enrolled annually
- Approximately 140 academic staff
- Approximately 40 clerical/administrative staff
Excellence in Teaching and Research

- Rated “Excellent” in teaching and learning on an objective and externally assessed basis (QAA).

- 85% of staff submitted to the 2008 RAE are “internationally” recognised in terms of the “originality, significance and rigour” of their work.

- Engaged with businesses through student work placement, teaching, research and knowledge transfer.
UU Departments / Business Units

- Arts
- Business & Mgt
- Computing & Engineering
- Life and Health Sciences
- Social Sciences
- Art, Design & the Built Environment

Departments

- Accounting
- Marketing, Entrepreneurship and Strategy
- Management
- Business, Retail and Fin Services
- Hospitality and Tourism Management
- International Business

Other components
- Research School
- Business Institute
Postgraduate programmes

- Accounting Graduate Diploma
- Advanced Accounting PgD / MSc
- Agri-food Business Development PgD / MSc
- Applied Management PgD / MSc
- Business Administration Master MBA
- Business Development and Innovation PgD / MSc
- Business Improvement PgD / MSc
- Cultural Management MSc
- Executive Leadership MSc
Academic Infrastructure (QAA)

- Code of practice
- Framework for higher education qualifications
- Subject benchmark statements
  - Master’s degrees in Business and Management
  - Specialist Master’s degrees
- Programme specifications (Dearing Report) – description of intended learning outcomes
MSc – Skills Required (QAA)

“Graduates are expected to be able to demonstrate a range of range of cognitive and intellectual skills together with techniques specific to business and management. They They should also demonstrate personal and interpersonal interpersonal skills”.

These include:

- think critically and be creative
- the ability to conduct research
- solve complex problems and make decisions
- leadership and performance management..
Generic Learning Outcomes / Competencies

- Knowledge and Understanding
- Intellectual Skills
- Professional / Practical Skills
- Transferable / Key Skills
Developing and Embedding Learning

- External QAA reference points
- National and regional policy
- Consultation with key stakeholders
  - Business Advisory Forum (Industrial Mentor)
  - International perspectives and visiting professoriate
  - Independent market research
  - Communication with professional bodies and potential funding bodies
  - AGR research on employer’s needs
The Development Process..

- Draft programme structure and overall aims submitted internally *(Specialist Master’s Degree)* and to Government for funding
- Rationale, evidence of demand and proposed programme in detail developed
- Formal validation exercise with external review
- Launched in Sept 2006 and commenced in January 2007 as a PgD / MSc Agri-food Business Development
- Secured 26 part-time students in the first two years.
MSc in Agri-Food Business Development

Expressions of interest are invited for the 2008 intake of the MSc in Agri-Food Business Development commencing in January 2009. The programme is designed and delivered by the University of Ulster in association with Babson College.

This two-year, part-time programme is a dynamic initiative designed to place marketing, innovation and entrepreneurship at the core of business development and help agri-food companies to maximise growth through a customer-focused re-orientation. Completion of a dissertation leads to an MSc in Agri-food Business Development.

The modules are:
- Agri-Food Business Development
- Consumer Behaviour and Market Positioning
- Managing Effective Communications
- Creativity and Innovation
- International Agri-Food Marketing
- Food Supply Chain Management
- Leadership and Change
- Entrepreneurship in Agri-Food Business
- Agri-Food Business Dissertation

To find out more contact:
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Forthcoming Marketing Seminar

Competing Against the Multi-national Retail Giants by Prof. John Stanton of St. Joseph's University, Philadelphia on Thursday 28th November 2008 at 8.30pm in University of Ulster, Jordanstown.
Tel: 028 9036 6472 for details.
Programme Structure

Year 1
- Agri-Food Business Development
- Consumer Behaviour and Market Positioning
- Managing Effective Communications
- Creativity & Innovation

Year 2
- International Agri-food Marketing
- Food Supply Chain Management
- Leadership & Change
- Entrepreneurship in Agri-food Business

Agri-Food Business Dissertation (including Research Methods Development)
Developing learning outcomes / Programme Specification

- The overall aim of the programme is to add significant value through the development of strategic marketing, innovation and entrepreneurial thinking within an agri-food business development context

- **K** – Knowledge and Understanding
- **I** – Intellectual Skills
- **P** – Professional / Practical Skills
- **T** – Transferable Skills
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Using Teaching, Learning and Assessment to Embed..

- **Teaching and Learning Methods (immersive 3 day blocks)** – Interactive lectures, application to own business and self, student led discussion and reflection in seminars, practical workshops to analyse data, group tutorial support, case study presentation / insight.

- **Assessment (coursework : exam)** – Group oral presentation and written report *based on research, analysis and strategic implications of market trends*..., reflective portfolio and commentary, entrepreneurial strategic plan, dissertation, examination *including a pre-seen case study to evaluate knowledge, understanding and application*.
Module Specifications – Consumer Behaviour

- **Aim** – To provide a research-driven understanding of consumer behaviour.

- **K1** – To know and understand key paradigms and models of consumer behaviour.

- **I3** – Enhance critically thinking skills to better evaluate the appropriateness of marketing strategies.

- **P2** – Complete coursework that demonstrates systematic information gathering, critical evaluation and synthesis in the formulation of marketing strategy.

- **T1** – Demonstrate proficiency in written and oral communication using a variety of media.
Consumer Behaviour module..

- K – in-depth knowledge..
- I – think critically and creatively..
- P – offer solutions to problems, data usage..
- T – communicate, work as a team, use technology effectively.

- 3 hour exam (with pre-seen case study)
- Identifying market opportunities
- Analysing a range of data / entrepreneurial...
- Group oral presentation and written report
Entrepreneurship in Agri-food

- K – in-depth knowledge,
- I – think critically and creatively,
- P – offer solutions to problems, data usage,
- T – communicate, work as a team, use technology effectively.
- Application of concepts to live cases
- Develop strategy to sustain a live business
- Critically assess market / financial info
- Group presentation of proposed strategy, reflective commentary on outcomes for themselves
The Results – Feedback..

“This is without doubt the best organised, most relevant and personally challenging course I have participated in since leaving University in 1995. Excellent speakers combined with group discussion among industry peers, ensures a total relevance to the Food Industry, its challenges and opportunities. I have no doubt that this course is helping me develop personally as well as increasing my contribution to the Kerry Foods organisation.”

Paul Barbour
Ireland Sales Manager Kerry Foods
"I have really enjoyed the course so far and find it invaluable in terms of integrating the work into my business. It is a juggling act with a full time business, my family life and study, but it has really broadened by horizons and makes me think ‘outside the box’ and look at new ways of marketing and innovating within my business."

Ian Marshall
Owner/Manager
Glenmar Dairy Farm
"The knowledge gained on this course has given me the confidence to question accepted norms within the business. I am now better at my job than I was a year ago, the job has not changed but my approach to it has. With everything from routine e-mails to evaluation and decision making the skills, knowledge and contact opportunities this course offers are making me more effective and my business challenges more enjoyable."

Mark Simpson
Market Development Manager
United Molasses (Ireland) Ltd
"I have found the MSc in Agri-food Business Development to be very interesting and challenging. It has encouraged me to think differently, to look inside the business from the outside and to analyse how I run my business. The Lecturers/invited speakers have been inspiring and have real knowledge of industry, which is important. It has allowed me to think that it is OK to take calculated risks, in fact innovation is imperative to moving the business forward."

Jilly Dougan
Managing Director
Moyallon Foods Ltd
"As a marketing graduate topping up on the theory is great but it has been the practical elements, elements, guest speakers and group discussions where others share their experiences of the experiences of the agri-food industry embedded in the course, where I have learned the the most."

Karen Ligget
Marketing Manager
Dunbia
"During this course I have made a lot of business contacts and I feel that these people will be able to help me throughout my future career. The mixture of experienced managers and managers and graduates really works well in the course and I feel that I have learned a lot about the agri-food business, and will benefit greatly from it."

Chris McAlinden
Production Manager
Dale Farm Ltd
Our Experiences / Challenges..

- Ensuring that the programme had a strong theoretical base and provided a range of skills relevant to practice.
- Industry need for competencies / skills to enhance capability development and lead a transformation strategy!!
- Needs of graduates vs. experienced managers
- Range of entry requirements – 38% secured places through APEL.
- Immersive teaching and tendency to over assess.
- Want to ensure that Business Schools’ contributions to skill / competency development are consistent with needs of major stakeholders.