INTRODUCTORY BUSINESS COMMUNICATION COURSE FOR

POST-SECONDARY STUDENTS

By

Maria Trujillo

(Bachelor of Commerce, 2012)

PROJECT SUBMITTED IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS FOR

THE DEGREE OF MASTER OF EDUCATION

IN

MULTIDISCIPLINARY LEADERSHIP

UNIVERSITY OF NORTHERN BRITISH COLUMBIA

APRIL 2019

Acknowledgement and Dedication

I would like to express my sincere gratitude to my supervisor, Dr. Catherine Whalen, for her continuous support, knowledge, guidance, and enthusiasm throughout this project. I would have not been able to accomplish the completion of this paper without her assistance and dedication. I also want to thank Dr. Christine Ho Younghusband for being a co-supervisor along my committee members Deb Koehn and Anne Sommerfeld for their effort on my project. Lastly, I would like to thank my son Mateo Trujillo for his support and encouragement to complete this project.

Abstract

The intent of this research project is to inform educators about the development and implementation of an Introductory Business Communications course at the post-secondary institution level. This course has evolved over the past two years of implementation. The information provided in this project is divided into the following sections: researcher's personal location, project purpose, project significance, project literature review, and a concluding chapter that presents project lessons, project recommendations, future implications and concluding statements. The appendices section of this project includes the newly revised course package that has resulted from the lessons learned in the past two years of teaching an Introductory Business Communications course at a post-secondary institution.

Table of Contents

Glossary

1. Competency Skills are the abilities, skills, and knowledge that are needed by employees to be successful (Guffey, Lowey, & Almonte, 2018).

2. Employability Skills are the skills, understandings and personal attributes that are beneficial to self, the work place and the community that make post-secondary graduates more likely to gain employment and be successful in their chosen occupations (Yorke, 2004).

3. Soft Skills are defined as the career attributes such as team skills, communication skills, ethics, time-management skills, and an appreciation for diversity (Mitchell, Skinner, & White, 2010).

4. Networking is the process where individuals attempt to develop and maintain relationships with others who have the potential to assist them in their work or career (Forret & Dougherty, 2001).

5. Work Integrated Learning (WIL) is cited in the Co-operative Education and Work-Intergraded Learning (2019) as a model and process of curricular experience education which formally and intentionally integrates a student's academic studies within a workplace or practice setting.

Chapter One: The Project Framework

Upon completion of my Master of Education course requirements, I elected to conduct a research project targeted at creating an Introductory Business Communications course. The information provided in this chapter introduces the overall framework that identifies researcher personal location, the project rationale, the project significance, the project purpose and concluding remarks.

Personal Location

I am currently a student career centre coordinator at a post-secondary institution. I work closely with employers to organize campus recruitment events including volunteer fairs, career fairs, and employer information sessions that connect students with local employers. These events are pivotal as they introduce students to career options and help them gain knowledge regarding skills and qualifications employers are seeking. Prior to the coordinator role, I was an employment counsellor for a number of local different non-profit organizations where I assisted individuals with career testing, career exploration, and job search strategies. My present coordinator role involves advising, educating, and assisting students with exploring a range of careers and the details required to search for work and gain successful employment.

Project Rationale

The role of being a post-secondary career coordinator has led to an awareness that post-secondary institutions need to better support and prepare students for employment upon graduation. My rationale for developing an Introductory Business Communications course resonates with the frustrations I experienced as a result of not having pertinent knowledge about desired employability skills and career choices available to new graduates. The Canadian Association of Career Educators and Employers (2013) indicated that employers hire students

who have employability skills such as the ability to communicate work in teams, solve-problems, and exhibit ethics in the work place. The employers I regularly connect with have also indicate they desire students with these skills; however, they express their concerns that many post-secondary students lack the ability to transfer educational knowledge and skills to the professional setting regarding the aforementioned employability skills. In response to these employers' concerns, I developed and implemented an Introductory Business Communications course that has evolved over the past two years.

Project Significance

Guffey, Lowey, and Almonte (2018) noted that employers place a heavy focus on the transferable skills that may relate to a particular position in their workplace, but these employability skills can be transferred to various applications and circumstances. The significance of developing an Introductory Business Communications course will increase students' awareness of the desirable skills employers are seeking and work toward developing these skills while gaining sense and meaning of their own employable strengths and challenges. The course content will expose students to critical career and professional pathways through formal education and skill development that will assist with securing employment upon graduation.

Project Purpose

The Introductory Business Communications course was developed and implemented to assist post-secondary students to transition from an academic setting to a workplace environment. The main reason for offering the course was to create an opportunity for students to learn about career options, academic credential requirements, desirable employee personal attributes, job opportunities, networking, and job search strategies. I am aware that one course

will not provide all the desired employability skills, but it is a start to bring familiarity to School

of Business students with the idea in mind that one day it may become a mandatory course in all

disciplines in the institution.

Project Background

Most post-secondary institutions currently do not offer a course to assist students to

transition from post-secondary to the workplace. Ritter, Small, Mortimer, and Doll (2017)

expressed the need for post-secondary institutions to develop and integrate a business

communications course into the curriculum to assist and prepare students with career decisions

(Freeman, 2012). Rancourt (2019) also supported the need for a course that will provide students

with the opportunity to gain confidence and explore careers in their discipline to make

appropriate career decisions. Baporikar and Shah (2012) indicated that employers are looking for

employment candidates that can communicate and demonstrate critical thinking, problem-

solving, analytical skills, and team work as essential skills sets. The overall intent of this type of

course is to encourage students to be engaged with their education and express optimism

regarding a future career by having a clear goal in mind (Schenic, Anctil, Smith, & Dahir, 2012).

Chapter Conclusion and Project Overview

In summary, this chapter presented the research project framework that sets the tone for

the complete project report. The sections included the researcher personal location, project

rationale, project significance, project purpose, and background of the project. The information

in this chapter was formulated and supported by my professional and personal

experiences/reflections, in addition to a review of the research literature outlying the importance

of meeting post-secondary student needs to gain an understanding and development of

employability skills employers are now seeking in new hires. The research process provided

evidence to determine and highlight the gaps regarding what is expected of new hires and what skills students are leaving post-secondary institutions with upon graduation. It also highlighted the support and resources institutions provide as a collaborative process. Chapter Two will consist of a literature review of scholarly research around concepts of post-secondary student challenges, career goals, and personal growth; the necessary of post-secondary education. The role of academic and career counsellor/coordinators; and the importance of a career focus, key employability skills such as soft and hard skills, networking, and marketing oneself for the workforce. The additional chapters in this project report are Chapter Three: Methodology; Chapter Four: Key Findings and Lessons Learned; Chapter Five: Recommendations, Future Implications and Concluding Remarks.

Chapter Two: Literature Review

The purpose of this chapter is to review the research literature about educating and preparing post-secondary students to plan and make career decisions that will secure gainful employment upon degree completion. Past research stated that completing high school education is no longer sufficient to secure employment since most occupations require a bachelor's degree or higher (Hermanowicz, 2003). Completing a degree and transitioning into a career is problematic for many students because they do not have a clear vision of their career path (Shearer, 2009). Yorke (1999) conducted a study that noted the top influential reason for leaving school is because students have a difficulty in choosing an educational program. This chapter will focus on several topics regarding the importance of setting career goals and key competencies related to employment such as: student challenges, career goals and personal growth, necessity of post-secondary education, academic career counsellor role, key employability skills, networking, and the importance of interviews.

Student Challenges

Research work from Velasco (2011) indicated that students need to learn how to market themselves to stand out in the eyes of employers who are seeking the right person to hire into their organizations. As a student career coordinator, it is with experience that I can state many students do not know how to market themselves, how to develop a cover letter and a resume, how to prepare for interviews, how to apply for jobs, or how to network with employers. The conversations I have had with employers when they have expressed concerns with students lacking employability skills leads me to believe students employment opportunities are being negatively impacted due to their personal lack of employability skills.

A career coordinator's role is to have conversations with current post-secondary students about career exploration, job search strategies, and professionalism in the workplace. Many of these students are unsure about their career path and often struggle with choosing an academic field of study that will lead to a career. Failure or doing poorly in these courses impacts their grade point average (GPA) and may cause some students to be placed on academic probation which is supported in the literature in that failure to succeed may lead to frustration, self-esteem issues, and questioning if attending university is the right choice for them (Lepre, 2007). Chase and Keen (1981) conducted research on this matter that revealed students who have no clear direction of their career path find it difficult to choose a major and do well in school. These researchers noted that when students postpone the declaration of a major focus area have significantly lower grades and are less academically motivated. Hull and Banks (2005) and Shearer (2009) also supported the notion that when a delay in choosing a major focus area of study occurs at the post-secondary level there is a high chance those students will withdraw from the institution. Ellis (2016) supported this notion in stating that students who declare a major focus will take specific courses in a specific disciple and commit to a future career.

Career Goals and Personal Growth

Schaeffer and Rivera (2014) explored the research by Kenny, Haase, Jackson, and Perry (2006) and concluded that developing career awareness is important for helping students to make appropriate academic and career decisions for the future. Students that participate in career intervention initiatives increases their sense of belonging and become engaged in a specific field of study or discipline which leads to overall academic achievement. Schaefer and Rivera (2014) also noted the idea of neglecting career ready components is a disadvantage for students transitioning from academic to the workplace. Students who receive assistance from their

institution start to recognize and develop their unique talents that leads to academic success and a smoother transition into a career. Students who have a career plan in place are prepared for university course work and have a higher success rate in school because they are focused (Evans & Burck, 1992). The literature revealed concerns with undergraduate programs not emphasizing essential workplace skills such as communication, problem solving, team work, professionalism, and interpersonal skills and the challenges that are associated with students graduate transitions (Abraham & Karns, 2009).

Necessity of Post-Secondary Education

Career development education and preparation is crucial in post-secondary institutions because of the overall impact on student success with their academic studies and transitioning to the workplace (Schaefer & Rivera, 2014). Lepre's (2007) research has noted that post-secondary education is no longer considered an option, yet it is necessary to secure a prosperous career. Gordon and Steel (2003) estimated between 20% and 50% of students enter their freshman year of post-secondary education undecided about their discipline major and future career plans. These researchers also noted 50% to 70% of all undergraduates will change their discipline major and future career plans at least once during university (Gordon & Steel, 2003, p.74).

Students must figure out an academic and career plan to be successful in life (Lepre, 2007). Branda and Sarah (2010) added to this notion in stating that those students who do have a plan often have little knowledge about the academic requirements to secure employment in their field of study and little knowledge about the jobs related to their discipline. Teaching students how to explore careers in their discipline can help them to feel confident and become more engaged in their education (Rancourt, 2019).

Post-secondary institutions are striving to enhance student knowledge about the labour force and create future leaders through initiatives such as internships, co-operative education, research, and on campus job opportunities as resources to support students (University of Northern British Columbia, 2019). The University of Thompson Rivers and McGill University are currently offering an Introduction to Business Communications course to their students (Thomson Rivers University, 2019; McGill University, 2019) as examples of a growing trend across the country. The course calendars indicated that students learn how to plan and write a variety of business documents including memos, letters, reports and proposals as course objectives. The expectation of students in these courses is to develop appropriate business language skills that are used in professional settings such as spelling, grammar, punctuation, voice, tone, and overall professionalism in the workplace. All of these factors are basic communication competencies that should be required in all post-secondary courses (Waldeck, Durante, Helmuth, & Marcia, 2012).

Work-Integrated Learning (WIL) programs provide an opportunity to integrate academic programming with practical work experience to gain a deeper insight on career goals and employment opportunities (Co-operative Education and Work-Integrated Learning, 2018). There are different types of WIL programs students can join such as co-operative education, practicum internships, service learning, and clinical and field placements (Co-operative Education and Work-Integrated Learning, 2018). The goal of these programs is to offer students a broader learning environment and help them to transition from a post-secondary environment to the workplace (Shen, 2018). These programs also benefit the employers in having access to students and bridging relationships with institutions (Co-operative Education and Work-Integrated Learning, 2018). Work-integrated learning serves to provide opportunities for students to build

soft-skills such as communication, teamwork, and work ethic while continuing to achieve in an academic setting (Fede, Gorman, & Cimini, 2018).

The aforementioned information is an indicator of need for a strong partnership between post-secondary institutions and the local employers that will address the core employability skills and competencies students require as they progress through school and transition to a future career upon graduation (Brown, 2015). Brown (2015) also advocated for the benefits both parties receive when educational institutions produce employable graduates.

Role of Academic and Career Counsellors/Coordinators

Academic and career counsellors play an important role assisting students who are undecided in the decision-making processes and career searching process (Kim, Jang, Jung, Lee, Puig, & Lee, 2014). My main focuses as the student career coordinator is to build and maintain relationships with local employers as a partnership with a common objective of fostering the development of future leaders. Thomas and McDaniel (2004) found that students who completed a career planning course had increased knowledge of career options and confidence in their ability to make career decisions. It is important, as an institution, to assist undecided students by creating effective programs focused on academic requirements and career options. It is important for career counsellors to provide information to assist students in making appropriate and attainable career goals (Kim, et al, 2014). Lepre (2007) found that students benefit from educators that help them to explore career options as early as Grade 8.

Career and Academic counsellors assist underprepared students make decisions based on their personal interests. These counsellors can help students identify problems they might be experiencing with making choices and develop career goals with them to avoid frustration and prevent disappointment. Working collaboratively with students will encourage them to continue

on with their studies and meet their career objectives as providing them resources to increase their academic understanding (Palmer, 2009). Peterson (1993) stated that there is a relationship between career decision making, self-efficacy, and academic integration as factors related to and influential for student retention. Further to this research, Lease (2004) found that students who struggle with career decision making are at a risk of dropping out of post-secondary educational programs. Counsellors can intervene in these situations through a focus on career transitioning that would assist with promoting student academic success and the formulation of career plans and decisions (Shearer, 2009).

Career Focus

While many post-secondary students are not career ready, there are a certain number of post-secondary students who are proactive and determined to find careers for themselves that add meaning, purpose, and satisfaction to their lives (Gysbers & Lapan, 2009). Career ready means that students are work ready and possess the interpersonal relationship skills needed to prosper in the workplace (Lapan, 2004). These students have the knowledge, skills, and a clear vision of their future career plans. Career ready students know how to engage in various current and potential roles and take advantage of any opportunities that will lead them to a career advantage. These students understand the importance of succeeding in school and graduating. Schenick, Anctil, Smith, and Dahir (2012) indicated there is a positive connection between career development and academic achievement through increased school engagement. Gyspers and Lapan (2009) identified the following behaviour and skills for career readiness such as social competence, diversity skills, positive work habits, personal qualities, personality, emotional states, and entrepreneurship. Post-secondary institutions need to focus on programs that contributes to students' success in the areas of academic development, career development, and

personal/social development for career readiness (Gysbers & Henderson, 2012). The example of the Business Communications courses offered across the country is an example of post-secondary institutions taking into consideration student and employer (McGill University, 2019; Thompson Rivers, 2019).

Key Employability Skills: Soft and Hard Skills

Soft skills known to be desired in the workplace are communication skills, problem-solving, team work, critical thinking, and many other interpersonal skills (Guffey, Lowey, & Almonte, 2018). Soft skills are the personal attributes that allow employees to interact effectively with others. These skills are acquired through everyday engagement and interactions with others and are exhibited in the ability to communicate, work in teams, solve-problems, think critically, and have strong a work ethic. Guffey, Lowey, and Almonte (2018) also revealed that employers in all occupational fields place the greatest value on employees' soft skills with communication skills being a priority over their technical skills in the field. The Canadian Association of Career Educators and Employers (2013) considered communication skills to be one of the most important skills employers require from graduating students, which has been the case since the late 1990s (Floyd & Gordon, 1998).

Alshare, Lane, and Miller (2011) indicated that communication and interpersonal skills are one of top desired attributes for prospective employees. Balcar (2016) supported this finding in stating that soft skills are one of the most set essential career attributes employers consider when interviewing. These skills are valued in all business sectors whether it is an entry level position or a senior position (Guffey et al., 2018). Employers pay more attention to soft skills when hiring students. The consideration of soft skills gives employers a competitive advantage and fosters a positive environment that affects the success of the organization (Brown, 2015).

Employers are interested in students who have a combination of hard skills (Ritter, Small, Mortimer, & Doll, 2017) and soft skills such as working collaboratively with others, building rapport, troubleshooting, and demonstrating professionalism in the workplace (Hazelwood, 2014). The combination of hard skills and soft skills are referred to as employability skills or key competencies (Guffey et al., 2018).

Atlay and Harris (2000) stated that it is important to develop students' wider attributes and skills along with subject knowledge to improve employability options. Recent post-secondary graduates usually have no job experience related to their discipline and as a result they can only bring academic knowledge and their own personality (Velasco, 2011). Selecting the right candidate with the appropriate personality and interpersonal attributes supersedes academic capabilities (Schull, Morton, Coleman, & Mills 2012). Overall, organizations highly value personality and personal qualities when recruiting post-secondary students (Velasco, 2011).

The downside to the need for communication skills was revealed in a survey conducted by National Association of Colleges and Employers (2015) that indicated employers found a decrease in the level of communication skills in students newly graduating from post-secondary institutions. The Strada Education Network (2017) surveyed students from the Strada-Gallup College that revealed student felt unprepared to enter the workforce. This is an issue that employers are facing and are spending money to train their employees on communication skills (Alshare, Lane, and Miller 2001). For that reason, strong soft skills, such as communication skills are directly related to academic achievement and career success.

Networking and Marketing Yourself

Employers host networking events such as information interview sessions on post-secondary campuses in order to meet and connect with students before graduation (Wood, 2018).

Students who attend employers' events like career fairs find opportunities to connect with

potential employers and learn about the different careers that might be of interest (Koblyk,

2017). Employers use these events to put faces to names and often hire students they have

interacted with or who have been recommended by someone they know (Dupley, 2018).

Bradford (2005) stated that eighty percent of jobs are not posted (p.15). Networking allows

students to find out about the hidden job market (Guffey et al., 2018). Guffey et al. (2018) also

suggested that students who reach out to recruiters before graduation tend to find employment

related to their academic studies. Dupley (2018) expressed the importance of networking with

employers and people within post-secondary institutions to build relationships and gain

knowledge about career options, job requirements for certain careers, and the availability of job

opportunities.

Employers use social media to reach out to students and graduates about job

opportunities as an inexpensive but instant marketing tool (Micik & Micudova, 2018; Peterson

and Dover 2014). LinkedIn is a professional social media site being the dominant force for job

searching and recruiting candidates (Guffey et al., 2018). It is a great way for students to connect

with employers and search for job openings (Peterson & Dover, 2014,). One study showed that

70 percent of undergraduate students have not created a LinkedIn profile (Peterson & Dover,

2014, p. 17). Students should be encouraged to create a professional LinkedIn profile to let

recruiters know about their work experience and competency skills (Guffey et al., 2018) while at

the same time be cautions not to post any inappropriate picture and comments (Danielle, 2018)

because employers have terminated employees (Jokda, 2018). Employers have commented to me

regarding their use of social media to check the online presence of potential employees. Guffey,

Lowey, and Dover (2014) clearly supported the notion that social media accounts must present a

professional demeanor because these sites play a key role in students' career success. This point leads me to believe post-secondary institutions should be educating students the benefits and challenges using these networks and the overall impact the content displayed in peoples' profiles has on future employment and overall success.

Interviews

Students who have an understanding of employers' needs and expectations are more likely to present themselves with confidence during interviews (Koblyk, 2017). These students understand the process and are able to communicate the soft skills and hard skills they have developed through their education and past work experiences. These particular students are at a competitive advantage over students who cannot articulate relevant skills to the job posting either in written or oral forms.

Students need to be familiar with behavioural, situational, and traditional interviews (Guffey et al., 2018). Each interview targets different competencies and attributes employers are looking for. Behavioural interview questions focus on a specific situation from the past in order to allow the candidate to describe how they behaved in that scenario (Guffey et al., 2018). Situational interview questions focus on specific experiences that may happen on the job and how candidates will handle it (Guffey et al., 2018). Situational interviews target scenarios that could happen in the future where behavioural interview target past experience (Guffey et al., 2018). Traditional interviews focus on common questions that are more related to the candidate's qualities, skills, and experience. (Guffey et al., 2018).

Chapter Conclusion

  The literature reviewed for this chapter provided an overview of the importance of education and career readiness preparation for post-secondary students who will eventually transition from an academic setting to the workforce after graduation. The topics explored in the literature encapsulated the importance of setting career goals and outlining key competencies related to employment throughout this chapter as: student challenges, career goals and personal growth, necessity of post-secondary education, academic and career counsellor role, key employability skills, networking and marking, and the importance of interviews. Chapter 3 will provide an overview of how this research project unfolded leading to the development and implementation of a Business Communications course.

Chapter Three: Method and Project Plan

The purpose of this project was to design and implement an Introductory Business Communications course for undergraduate students at a post-secondary institution based on my professional experiences as a Student Career Coordinator and a Sessional Instructor with a post-secondary institution. The development revision of powerpoints, assignments, and exercise and other parts of the course over the past two years has allowed me to gain the knowledge and understanding of students' and employers' needs. The actual practical experience of teaching the course and delivering the course made me extremely sensitive to the time management and organization necessary to successfully deliver such a course at the post-secondary level.

Resources

As I examined a range of sources form the research literature including journals, articles, reports, books, university websites, and professional association websites related to my project topic of developing and implementing an Introductory Business Communications course. My personal experience as a Student Career Coordinator for over twelve years as well as a Sessional Instructor teaching a Business Communications course for two years I provide an internal expert opinion on this topic.

Project Methodology

It is evident throughout the research that institutions need to develop and implement a Business Communication course into the curriculum schedules (Ritter et al., 2017). I have identified a gap in teaching when it comes to preparing students to transition from post-secondary education to the workplace. Employers and students have addressed concerns regarding the lack of knowledge and skills entering the workplace to me in my capacity as a student career centre coordinator.

I decided to develop an Introductory Business Communication course because of the conversations in my role as a career coordinator. The structure of this course involves class activities, videos, presentations, group exercises, guest presenters, and community involvement. A text book titled *Essential of Business Communication* (Guffey et al., 2018) is a required reading for this course. The main topics from the text that are covered in this course are: self-awareness, business communication, daily workplace and transcription writing, social media, job search, cover letter and resume writing, networking, behavioural interviews, professional communication, and business presentations. These topics are presented in greater detail in the course descriptions located in Chapter 4.

Reflective Business Communications Course

The purpose of this project was to create a relevant course that would increase post-secondary students' awareness of potential careers and assist with choosing a major discipline that aligns with their future career goals. The course provides career information, academic credential requirements, and job search strategies to students. Students will gain the knowledge, tools, and resources necessary for successfully securing employment upon graduating. The Introductory Business Communications course increases student involvement on campus and further engages them in their studies.

Building the Syllabus

I first identified what textbook I would be using for the course before I started to build the course syllabus. The textbook chosen was Gaffey et al. (2018) titled *Essential of Business Communication*. I chose this text because of the key concepts and topics mentioned above were all incorporated in the book. My decision to focus on self-awareness, business communication, daily workplace and transcription writing, social media, job search, cover letter and resume

writing, networking, behavioural interviews, professional communication, and business presentations topics was mainly due to my understanding of what students needed to know for career preparation and what they did not know as a result of my experience as a student career coordinator. My experience and the opportunity to work closely with employers over the past twelve years enabled me to identify the common skills most students tended to be missing. I developed a course syllabus for Business Communications 200 (see Appendix A).

Assignments and Evaluations

The student evaluative process involved the completion of five assignments with variant weighting in addition to a quiz part way through the course and a final exam. The first assignment is a memo that is use to teach students how to write a concise and effective business memo that requires soft skills to be successful. The second assignment is a resume and cover letter exercise for the purpose of helping students identify their skills and relate them to a specific job posting. The assignment provides students an opportunity to practice tailoring a resume and cover letter. Students receive constructive feedback on their resume and cover letter to improve for future job applications. The third assignment is to create a LinkedIn profile to be presented on a professional social networking site used by employers for recruitment. The fourth assignment is a case study used to determine students' ability to collaborate and use their critical thinking skills while exercising their analytical and problem-solving skills. The fifth assignment is a presentation for the purpose of an introduction to public speaking and practicing their articulation of a topic. The presentation assignment also allows me to evaluate their communication skills and their overall professionalism. Students also have to submit peer evaluation feedback to evaluate all presentation groups, which acts as a vehicle to practice giving and receiving constructive feedback. Overall, these assignments were created in order to target

the key soft skills employers are seeking in newly graduated students (see Appendix B and Appendix C). I created a rubric for each assignment in order to provide clear content and grading expectations regarding how they will be evaluated and the breakdown of marks. The rubric also assisted me to be as consistent and fair as possible when evaluating student learning (see Appendix D-I).

The purpose of providing both a quiz and a final exam as part of the evaluative process is to test key hard skills that are essential in securing employment. The hard skills tested are knowledge-based questions focusing on the information provided in each chapter of the course textbook.

Project Limitations/Challenges

One challenge with developing the Introductory Business Communications course was obtaining information about similar courses offered in other British Columbia (BC) post-secondary institutions. The post-secondary institutions title courses differently or offer them in different programs which made it difficult to find similar courses offered in other institutions. Another challenge was allotting the appropriate amount of time to present each chapter, while still having time to complete classroom activities. This was remedied by reaching out to other professors and instructors and gathering information from their teaching experience. The course syllabus was revised based on their feedback and my experience.

Summary

Chapter 3 provided the readers with a description of the research methodology and an introduction to the Introductory Business Communications course. The details of the course description are presented in greater detail in Chapter Four.

Chapter Four: Business Communications Course

Course Description

The Business Communications course provides the basic written and oral business communication skills employers are seeking in new hires. The course content and interactive initiatives of the classroom activities provide students' the knowledge content and practical experience to assist with the transition from post-secondary education to a career in the work world. The duration of this course provides ample opportunities for students to articulate thoughts and the skills employers require through written and oral formats. The course covers topics such as self-awareness, business communication, daily workplace and transcription writing, social media, job search, cover letter and resume writing, networking, behavioural interviews, professional communication, and business presentations.

The course is designed to include ten chapters to address the aforementioned topics. These chapters include Chapter One: Self-Awareness; Chapter Two: Business Communication; Chapter Three: Daily Workplace Transcription and Writing; Chapter Four: Social Media; Chapter Five: Job Search; Chapter Six: Cover Letter and Resume Writing; Chapter Seven: Networking; Chapter Eight: Behavioural Interviews; Chapter Nine: Professional Communication; and, Chapter Ten: Business Presentations.

The *Self-Awareness* chapter (Chapter 1) is about identifying one's interests, values, and personal styles to make a better-informed career and lifestyle decisions. The *Business Communications* chapter (Chapter 2) is about the ability to communicate effectively in person and by email in the workplace. The *Daily Workplace Transcription and Writing* chapter (Chapter 3) is about creating professional business documents. The *Social Media* chapter (Chapter 4) is about using social media appropriate and professionally. The *Job Search* chapter (Chapter 5) is

about learning job search websites and strategies for searching careers. The *Cover Letter and Resume Writing* chapter (Chapter 6) is about creating a professional resume and cover letter by identifying transferable skills developed through post-secondary education and past work experience. The *Networking* chapter (Chapter 7) is about the importance of connecting and building relationships with employers to learn about career opportunities and career field of interest. The *Behavioral Interviews* chapter (Chapter 8) is about the different types of employment interviews and answering interview questions using the situation task action result (STAR) method. The *Professional Communication* chapter (Chapter 9) is about being professional in the workplace and understanding the importance of teamwork. The *Business Presentation* chapter (Chapter 10) is about presentation skills and creating professional presentations. All these segments enhance students' personal and professional knowledge in guiding them to make appropriate decisions when the times comes to transition between the two world of education and the work force.

Course Objectives

At the completion of this course students will:

- Understand the importance of becoming an effective business communicator
- Identify potential careers that fit their personal profile;
- Create business documents using appropriate format, tone, and style;
- Identify essential elements of preferred work environment;
- Conduct research and learn about employment requirements;
- Develop effective oral/visual presentations skills;
- Learn the importance of networking and developing a resume and cover letter; and,
- Learn about job search strategies and how to market themselves to employers

Course Schedule

Chapter One: Self-Awareness

Students will complete a career assessment tool to learn about personal attributes. The Personality Dimensions Career Assessment will be administered for students to gain greater knowledge of their traits, abilities, interests, and careers. The Personality Dimensions will:

- Help students identify their leadership and learning styles

- Identify careers that are suitable for them according to their personality profile

- Learn about introverts and extroverts and how it plays a role in their career decision making (see Appendix J).

Chapter Two: Business Communication

Students will learn about communicating effectively in the workplace. Communicating effectively play a significant role in obtaining a career and being completive in the marketplace. Student will learn:

- The importance of nonverbal communications, the impact it has, and how it can be interpreted

- Develop listening skills and overcome barriers to effective listening

- Recognize cultural diversity and benefits of diverse workforce

- Communication strategies to prevent miscommunication

Chapter Three: Daily Workplace Transcription and Writing

Students will learn to write professional messages through emails, letters, and social media websites. Techniques and strategies will be discussed on how to organize and draft messages. Students learn to:

- Create a variety of business documents using appropriate format, tone, and style

- Explain the pros and cons of e-mail, social media and how to use it professionally

- Revise messages to achieve conciseness, clarity, and impact

- Describe effective techniques for proof-reading documents

Chapter Four: Social Media

Students will gain a great understanding of using social media appropriately and the impact it could have on their career. Students will learn to:

- Use social networking sites professionally

- Create a LinkedIn profile

- Keep sensitive information private

- Avoid posting inappropriate pictures and information.

Chapter Five: Job Search.

Students will learn how to look for employment and how to market themselves in a competitive market. Techniques and strategies are discussed on conducting an active job search. Students will:

- Learn the different types of job search websites and how to search for careers

- Research careers of interest to gain an understanding the set of skills and qualifications required for careers

- View job postings to learn about employment requirements

- Navigate BC Work Future and Human Resources and Skills Development Canada websites to view National Occupational Classification (NOC)

Chapter Six: Cover Letter and Resume Writing.

Students will learn to develop a professional resume and cover letter tailored to a specific position. Students:

- Learn the different types of resumes including advantage and disadvantages of each one

- Identify transferable skills that relate to the position

- Write a persuasive cover letter and resume by building interest and discussing personal traits

Chapter Seven: Networking.

Students will learn the importance of networking with others and connecting with potential employers about job opportunities. Networking will help students to determine their career choice. Students will learn the importance of:

- Networking to find hidden market job opportunities and build relationships

- Attend career fairs

- Attend information sessions to meet employers and learn about employment opportunities within organizations

- Connect with Professional Associations

- Job shadowing, and learning about volunteering opportunities on campus and in the community

Chapter Eight: Behavioural interviews.

Students will be exposed to the different types of employment interviews and process. Students

will learn to:

- Use the STAR method to answer behavioural interview questions

- Prepare before, during, and after an interview

- Practice behavioural interviews with classmates

- Dress professionally and research the company

Chapter Nine: Professional Communication

Students will learn about professionalism in the workplace including business etiquette and

ethical behavior. Students will gain an understanding of:

- Require soft skills in the workplace by employers in all types of careers

- Demonstrate professional telephone and in person etiquette

- Build strong nonverbal skills and importance of teamwork

- Respond professionally to workplace criticism

Chapter Ten: Business Presentations

Students will learn about presentation skills and how to create professional presentations.

- Organize and design effective presentations to capture audience attention

- Use appropriate visual aids to deliver presentations

- Develop and exhibit effective oral/visual presentation skills

Assignments

Students will complete five assignments related to the workplace environment such as: writing a memo writing; developing a resume and cover letter tailored to a specific job; creating a LinkedIn profile; analyzing a case study; and perform a group presentation to present the case study.

Guest Presenters

Employers from different sectors are invited to attend the Business Communications class as guest lecturers on the various aforementioned topics related to job opportunities, required or essential employee skills, and hiring processes.

Tests

Students will be assessed through a quiz half way through the semester and a final exam to evaluate their learning.

Summary

The Business Communications Course provides post-secondary students the resources and skills to transition from post-secondary education to the workplace. This course allows students to gain practical experience through networking, job searching, and communicating effectively in person and through social media with employers. The Business Communication course contributes to our students' success by meeting their academic and career goals.

Chapter Five: Lessons Learned and Conclusions

Working on this project has allowed me to reflect on the challenges and rewards I faced in my first year as an instructor through the development, design, and implementation of a Introductory Business Communications course at a post-secondary institution. The research project key findings, recommendations, researcher's reflections, and overall conclusions are present throughout this chapter.

Key Findings

Post-secondary institutions need to support students transitioning from an academic setting to the labour force through the development and implementation of a Introductory Business Communications course into their curriculum programming. This course could benefit students by providing them the skills, knowledge, information, and resources they need to successfully transition after graduation. This course will introduce students to essential career information early in their post-secondary education and provide an introduction to the employability skills and knowledge employers are seeking.

Employers are paying more attention to soft skills as communication skills, a valuable skill required at any position within any business sector (Brown, 2015). The soft skills are essential skills and employers are putting more emphasis on them rather than high grades (Velasco, 2012). Although academic knowledge through formal education is important to have and apply for jobs, employers are considering students that possess personal attributes.

The Introductory Business Communications course has the potential to strengthen the partnered relationship between as both by working together in order to create and maintain updated material for the course while educating and preparing students for the future.

Researcher's Reflections

As a first-time instructor, one of the challenges was to create a course syllabus that included content and class activities to instigate and improve student awareness and learning processes while being participatory and engaged. The planning and development of the course involved more time than expected to create PowerPoints, videos, and the protocol necessary to secure guest lecturers. One key realization was how much an instructor needs adapt to classroom dynamics and restructure the content and activities to meet the needs of the students. I quickly understood the need for instructors to be organized as an essential quality to deliver a constructive class.

I found it challenging to create effective class activities and assignments in relationship to the content in order to embed reflective practice through practical experience leading to employment security. I learned that certain activities worked well while others were ineffective. For example, I no longer have students contact employers and conduct an informational interview. Instead, I have them partner with another student in class and have them take turns conducting an informational interview with each other. I changed the activity as having them conduct the informational interviews in class allows me to monitor and provide feedback. I realized the effectiveness of the classroom experience was dependent on the group of students. I made changes to the assessment rubric for each assignment to create clear expectations for students and to have an understanding of the grading structure. The revisions also allowed me to provide clear and concise and relative feedback as an instructor. Also, reflecting on my journey working on this project, one of the lessons I have learned is not to include bonus assignments for students. Bonus marks are not an effective way of measuring students' knowledge of course material.

Recommendations

Given my two years of experience with teaching the Introductory Business Communications course. I can certainly validate several recommendation regarding the course design and delivery as: 1) Behavioural mock interviews with employers should be implemented and be open to constructive feedback; 2) The requirement of more peer evaluative assessment in the form of constructive feedback for presentations and other assignments would emphasize the pros and cons as a method to encourage critical thinking, communication and leadership skills in a professional manner; 3) Student reflective practice regarding the course content that will improve student learning process through a course synthesis assignment to summarize overall learning in a six page document; and 4) Bonus marks should not be included as it may inflate the grade. The benefit of these recommendations is the notion that students can self-identify with the essential soft skills which are also known as employability skills.

Conclusion

An Introductory Business Communications course should be mandatory in all undergraduate programs at post-secondary institutions. This particular course is one solution to meet student needs to transition to the workforce.

Although there were challenges to preparing and delivering the Business Communications course, it was evident that students did benefit from taking the course. One method of feedback was the student course evaluations that provide positive feedback about my teaching and about how useful they found the course content and assignments. They commented on how much they learned and how they did not realize how important the content was until nearing the end of the course. I also received many emails and had students come to my office to express how beneficial they found the course to be as for some it was the first time, they

prepared resumes, cover letters, composed memos and professional emails, and created a LinkdIn profile. It is evident that there are significant benefits to the Introductory Business Communications course based on the student feedback received, but further research is required to examine the benefits of an Introductory Business Communications course and the long-term effects on students.

References

Abraham, S. E., & Karns, L. A. (2009). Do business schools value the competencies that business value? *Journal of Education for Business, 8*(1), 350-356.

Alshare, K. A., Lane, P. L., & Miller, D. (2011). Business communication skills in information systems (IS) curricula: Perspectives of IS educators and students. *Journal of Education for Business, 86*(1), 186-194.

Andrews, J., & Higson, H. (2010). Graduate employability, "soft skills" versus "hard" business knowledge: A European study. *Higher Education in Europe, 33*(4), 411-422. doi: 10.1080/03797720802522627

Atlay, M., & Harris, R. (2000). An Institutional approach to developing students' "Transferable" skills. *Innovations in Education & Training International, 37*(1), 76-84.

Balcar, J., (2016). Is it better to invest in hard or soft skills?. *Economic and Labour Relations Review, 27*(4), 453-470.

Baporikar, N., & Shah, A. (2012). Quality of higher education in 21st century: A case of Oman. *Journal of Educational and Instructional Studies in the World, 2*(2), 9-18.

Bradford, S. L. (2005). "Experts offer their tips for fruitful networking," *Wall Street Journal, Executive Career Site.* Retrieved from www.careerjournalaleurope.com/jobhunting/networking/2005215-bradford.html

Barkley, D. (2018). Finding your community in graduate school. University Affairs, Retrieved April 18, 2019 from https://www.universityaffairs.ca/career-advice/graduate-matters/finding-community-graduate-school/

Brown, L. A., (2015). The course valuation model and 10 steps to increase value: The Business communication course. *Journal of Education for Business, 90*(1), 340-346.

Canadian Association of Career Educators and Employers (2013). *2013 Campus Recruitment Report-Recruitment Summary*. Retrieved April 18, 2019 from https://www.cacee.com/_Library/docs/2013_CACEE_Campus_Recruitment_Report_-_Recruiter_Summary_Final.pdf

Co-operative Education and Work-Integrated Learning (1973). *What is co-operative education?*. Retrieved from https://www.cewilcanada.ca/co-op-defined.html

Castillo, M. (2012). Practicing professionalism. *Health Care Registration: The Newsletter for Health Care Registration Professionals, 21*(12), 8-9.

Caven, P. (2017). Five things undergrads can do now to prepare to enter the job market. *Globe and Mail*. Retrieved from http://www.theglobeandmail.com/report-on-business/careers/leadership-lab/five-things-undergrads-can-do-now-to-prepare-to-enter-the-job-market/art...

Chase, C., & Keene, J. (1981). Major declaration and academic motivations. *Journal of College Student Personnel*, *22*(6), 496-501.

Dupley, S. (2019). Identifying and communicating your grad skills for employment. *University Affairs*. Retrieved from http://www.universityaffairs,ca/creer-advice/responsibilities-may-include/identifying-and-communicating-your-grad-skills-foremploymnet/

Ellis, J. L. (2016). Continuing the support: Programs for second-year college students. *Journal of Student Affairs, 23*(1), 51-93.

Evan, Jr., J. H., & Burck, H. D. (1992). The effects of career development interventions on academic achievements: A metal-analysis. *Journal of Counselling & Development, 7*(1), 63-68.

Fede, J. H., Gorman, K. S., & Climini, M. E. (2017). Student employment as a model for experiential learning. *Journal of Experiential Education, 41*(1), 107-124.

Floyd, C. J., & Gordon, M. E., (1998). What skills are more important? A comparison of employers, student, and staff perceptions. *Journal of Marketing Education, 20*(2), 103-109.

Forret, M. L., & Dougherty, T. W. (2001). Correlates of networking behavior for managerial and professional employees. *Group & Organization Management, 26*(1), 283-311.

Freeman, E. (2012). The design and implementation of a career orientation course for undergraduate majors. *College Teaching*, *60*(1), 154-163. doi:10.1080/87567555.2012.669424

Guffey, M. E., Lowey, D., & Almonte, R. (2018). *Essentials of business communication* (9th ed.). Toronto, ON: Nelson Education Ltd.

Gordon, V. (1985). *Students with uncertain academic goals*. In L. Noel, R. Levitz, D. Saluri, & Associates.

Gordon, V. N., & Steel, G. E. (2003). Undecided first-year students: A 25-year longitudinal study. *Journal of the First-Year Experience & Students in Transition*, *15*(1), 19-38.

Graimle. S. S., & Woosley, S. A. (2005). An exploration of the factors that affect the academic success of college sophomores. *College Student Journal, 36*(1), 367-376.

Graunke, S. S., & Woolsey, S. A. (2005). An exploration of the factors that affect the academic success of college sophomores. *College Student Journal, 39*(2), 367–376

Gysbers, N. C., & Henderson, P. (2012). *Developing & managing your school guidance & counseling program* (5th ed.). Alexandria, VA: American Counseling Association.

Gysbers, N. C., & Lapan, R. T. (2009). *Strengths-based career development for school guidance and counseling programs*. Chelsea, MI: Counseling Outfitters.

Hazelwood, J. P., (2014). Soft skills, hard success: Employers seek leaders who offer more than just education and credentials. *Black Enterprise, 45*(1), 1-3.

Hermanowicz. J. (2003). *College attrition at American research universities: Comparative case studie*s. New York: Agathon Press.

Hooker, S., & Brand, B. (2010). College knowledge: A critical component of college and career readiness. *New Directions for Youth Development, 127*(1), 75-85. doi:10.1002/yd.364

Hughes, A. N., Gibbons, M. M., & Mynatt, B. (2013). Using narrative career counseling with the underprepared college student. *Career Development Quarterly*, *61*(1), 40-49. doi:10.1002/j.2161-0045.2013.00034

Hull-Banks, E., Robinson, S., Befort, C., Sollenberger, S., Nicpon, F. M., Huser, L. (2005). Career goals and retention-related factors among college freshmen. *Journal of Career Development*, *32*(1), 16-30.

JIST (Producer) (2007). *Networking your way to a new job* [DVD*]*. Canada: Montreal.

JIST (Producer) (2007). *Quick job search* [DVD]. Canada: Montreal.

JIST (Producer) (2007). *Workplace Communication Skills* [DVD]. Canada: Montreal.

Jodka, S. H. (2018). Five common employer social media mistakes and how to avoid them. *Employee Relations Law Journal, 44*(1), 15-20.

Koblyk, L. (2017). Do interviews always need to be brimming with confidence?. University

    Affairs. from http://www.universityaffairs.ca/career-advice/careers-cafe/interviewees-

    always-need-brimming-confidence/

Kolajo, E. F. (2004). From developmental education to graduation: A community college

    experience. *Community College Journal of Research and Practice*, *28*(1), 365-371. doi:

    10.1080/10668920490424078

Kim, B., Jang, S. H., Jung, S. H., Lee, B. H., Puig, A., & Lee, S. M. (2014). A moderated

    mediation model of planned happenstance skills, career engagement, career decision self-

    efficacy, and career decision certainty. *The Career Development Quarterly, 62*(1), 56-69.

Lapan, R. T. (2004). *Career development across the K-16 years: Connecting the present to*

    satisfying and successful futures. Alexandria, VA: American Counseling Association.

Lease, S. H. (2004). Effect of locus of control, work knowledge, and mentoring on career

    decision-making difficulties: Testing the role of race and academic institution. *Journal of*

    Career Assessment, *12*(1), 239-254. doi: 10.1177 / 1069072703261537

Lepre, C. R. (2007). Getting through to them: Reaching students who need career counseling.

    Career Development Quarterly, 56(1), 74-84.

Marra, J., & Schweitzer, J. C. (1992). Undergraduate student advising: Options for advertising

    education. *Journalism and Mass Communication Educator, 47*(1), 56-66.

McMaster University (2019). Lifelong Learning for a Brighter World. Retrieved from

    https://www.mcmastercce.ca/human-resources-management/courses

Micik, M., & Micudova, K. (2018). Employer brand building: Using social media and career

    websites to attract generation Y. *Economics and Sociology, 11*(3), 171-189.

Mitchell, G. A., Skinner, L. B., & White, B. J. (2010). Essential soft skills for success in the twenty-first-century workforce as perceived by business educators. *The Delta Pi Epsilon Journal, 52*(1), 43-53. Retrieved from https://www.scribd.com/document/28348027/Essential-Soft-Skills-success-in-the-twenty-first-century-workforce-pdf

National Association for College and Employers. (2015). *Employers grade candidate attributes.* Retrieved April 8, 2019 from https://www.naceweb.org/s02182015/employers-grade-job-candidate-skills-abilities.aspx?land-surv-lp-2soit-empgr-03202015

JIST (2006). *Networking your way to a new job (DVD).*

Palmer, R. T., Davis, R. J., & Hilton, A. A. (2009). Exploring the challenges that threaten to impede the academic success of academically underprepared Black males at HBCU. *Journal of College Student Development, 50*(1), 429-445. doi: 10.1353/csd.0.0078

Peterson, S. L. (1993). Career decision-making self-efficacy and institutional integration of underprepared college students. *Research in Higher Education, 34*(6) 659-684. doi: 10.1007/BF009922155

Peterson. R., M., & Dover. H. F. (2014). Building student networks with Linkedin: The potential for connections, internships, and jobs. *Marketing Education Review, 24*(1), *15-20. doi: 10.2753/MER1052-8008240102*

Farr, M. (Producer) (2006*). Quick Job Search Video* (DVD).

Rancourt, D. (2019). Career exploration needs to start before students graduate. *University Affairs.* Retrieved from https://www.universityaffairs.ca/career-advice/responsibilities-may-include/career-exploration-needs-to-start-before-students-graduate/

Ritter, B. A., Small, E. E., Mortimer, J. W., & Doll, J. L. (2017). Designing management curriculum for workplace readiness: Developing students' soft skills. *Journal of Management Education, 42*(1), 80-103.

Schaefer, M. B., & Rivera, L. M. (2014). Working collaboratively in a small secondary (6-12) school to facilitate career development. *Journal of American Secondary Education*, *42*(2), 51-68.

Schenick, P. M., Anctil, T. M., Smith, C. K., & Dahir, C. (2012). Coming full circle: Reoccurring career development trends in schools. *The Career Development Quarterly, 60*(1), 221-230.

Schull, D. N., Morton, J. M., Coleman, G. T., & Mills, P.C. (2012). Final-year student and employer views of essential personal, interpersonal and professional attributes for new veterinary science graduates. *Journal of Australian Veterinary 90*(3), 100-104. doi: 10.1111/j.1751-0813.2011.00874.x

Shearer, C. B. (2009). Exploring the relationship between intrapersonal intelligence and university students' career confusion: Implications for counseling, academic success, and school-to-career transition. *Journal of Employment Counseling, 46*(2), 52-61.

Shen, A. (208). About half of graduating students have learning-related work experience, survey finds. *University Affairs*. Retrieved from http://www.universityaffairs.ca/news/news-article/about-half-of-graduating-students-have-a-learning-related-work-experience-survey-finds/

Strada Education Network (2017). *New survey reveals of confidence in workforce readiness among college students.* Retrieved from

https://stradaeducation.gallup.com/reports/225161/2017-strada-gallup-college-student-survey.aspx?g_source=link_newsv9&g_campaign=item_244139&g_medium=copy

Thomas, J. H., & McDaniel, C. R. (2004). Effectiveness of a required course in career planning for psychology majors. *Teaching of Psychology, 31*(1), 22-27.

Thompson Rivers University (2019). *Programs and Courses*. Retrieved from

https://www.tru.ca/programs/courses.html

University of Northern British Columbia (2019). *About UNBC*. Retrieved from

https://www.unbc.ca/about-unbc/facts

Velasco, M. S. (2011). More than just good grades: Candidates 'perceptions about the skills and attributes employers seek in new graduates. *Journal of Business Economics and Management, 13*(3), 499-517. doi: 10.3846/16111699.2011.620150

Yorke, M. (1999). *Leaving early: Undergraduate non-completion in higher education*. London: Falmer Press.

Wood, M. (2018). Lessons learned from departments that support career readiness of grad students. *University Affairs*. Retrieved from https://universityaffairs.ca/career-advice/beyond-the-professoria...rned-from-departments-that-support-career-readiness-of-grad-students/

JIST (2016). *Workplace Communication Skills* (DVD).

Appendix A: Comm 200 Syllabus

Business Communications

Instructor: Maria Trujillo
E-mail: maria.trujillo@unbc.ca
Office Location: 7-232

Office Hours: Wednesdays 9:00 – 11:00am, or by appointment
Class Day/Time: Tuesdays 6:00 – 8:50pm
Class Location: 7-158

Course Description

This course provides basic skills in written and oral business communication. It assists students to transition from academic to business writing and to effectively organize and deliver written and orally presented business reports. Topics covered in this course includes: communication skills, business writing process, developing speaking skills, and communicating for employment such as resume and cover letter writing as well as preparing for interviews. Students are introduced to the case study method and the writing and delivery of solutions for business cases.

Course Objectives

The objectives of this course are:

- Understand the importance of becoming an effective business communicator
- Identify potential careers that fit their personal profile;
- Create business documents using appropriate format, tone, and style;
- Identify essential elements of preferred work environment;
- Conduct research and learn about employment requirements;
- Develop effective oral/visual presentations skills;
- Learn the importance of networking and developing a resume and cover letter; and,
- Learn about job search strategies and how to market themselves to employers

Course Format

This is a 12-week course meeting once a week for approximately 2 hours and 50 minutes.

Course Activities

Course activities include lectures, readings, individual and collaborative writing, oral presentations, and discussion.

Required Text

Guffey, Mary Ellen, et al. *Essentials of Business Communications*. 9th Canadian ed., Nelson Education, 2016

COURSE ASSIGNMENTS AND GRADE WEIGHTING:

Component	Due Date	Grade Weight
Attendance	Throughout Semester	10%
Memo Assignment	February 5, 2019	5%
Quiz	February 12, 2019	10%
Resume and Cover Letter (including Job Posting)	February 26, 2019	20%
LinkedIn Profile	February 26, 2019	5%
Case Study Assignment & PowerPoint	March 26, 2019	15%
Oral/Visual Presentation	March 26, 2019	5%
Final Exam	During Exam Period	30%

Note:
- Class participation marks are primarily based on in-class group engagement. Included In-Class-participation is attendance

Blackboard

Students may access announcements and course information such as the syllabus and assignment guidelines via Blackboard http://learn.unbc.ca.

Classroom Etiquette

Cell phones must be turned off or placed on silent mode during class; if it is essential that you make or receive a call during class, please leave the classroom quietly. The use of electronic devices is restricted to the current class. It is paramount that students respect others' views and

opinions. You are expected to act in a polite and professional manner, just as you would in a respectful employment situation.

Attendance and Class Participation

It is expected that students will attend all classes. Make notes as you do the readings, and write down any questions you may have that you would like discussed in class. Alternatively, you are encouraged to email questions and also attend office hours if you have questions that were not addressed in class. It cannot be stressed enough that completing the readings in advance of class, participating in class discussions and exercises, and doing the assigned work is key to your success in this class, and in turn to getting the most from your university education.

Assignments

Assignments must be submitted through blackboard on the due date. If you are unable to hand in an assignment in class or during office hours, hand it to the Student Career Centre office (7-232) Agora location, across from the bookstore. Late assignments without proper documentation will receive a reduced grade of 10% per day up to three days and will not be graded after three days. If you miss a scheduled assignment due to medical or compassionate grounds, you must present relevant documentation (e.g. physician's note).

By enrolling in this course, you hereby acknowledge and consent to the use of SafeAssign by the instructor and/or TA. SafeAssign is a third party service licensed for use by UNBC. learn.unbc.ca. SafeAssign is used for originality checking to help detect plagiarism. Students are not required to create an account with learn.unbc.ca SafeAssign, but their work may be submitted to SafeAssign, under the terms of the learn.unbc.ca SafeAssign terms of use and privacy agreement. This agreement includes the retention of your submitted work as part of the learn.unbc.ca SafeAssign database. Any student with a concern about using the learn.unbc.ca SafeAssign service must notify the instructor at least two weeks in advance of any submission deadline.

Final Exams

Do not schedule travel during the midterm or final exam period that may conflict with your final exam!

Case Study and Presentation

Case study assignment and PowerPoint are due on the same date presenting.

Case study should include the following:
1. A written paper 3-4 pages, double spaced, and Time New Romans 12 font with title page
2. A class presentation based on the written paper with a PowerPoint. Time allotted up to 15-20 minutes per group

Group Presentation 4-5 people per group.
Please include the following in your presentation:
1. An overview of the case
2. Apply the theory or concepts from the course
3. Answer the questions at the end of the case

Memo Assignment

1. A written memo of 1 page maximum following the memo format
2. Submit it through blackboard

Resume / Cover Letter Assignment

1. Resume and cover letter tailored to a specific job posting
2. Job posting must be included
3. Submit it through blackboard

LinkedIn Profile Assignment

1. Create a LinkedIn profile

2. Invite me on LinkedIn by using the link provided https://www.linkedin.com/in/maria-trujillo-16ab692b/

Academic Integrity

Plagiarism is a serious offence. All students are responsible for familiarizing themselves with and following the rules concerning plagiarism, in addition to all of the Academic Regulations and Policies of the university, as they appear in the current UNBC Undergraduate Academic Calendar.

Ethical Standards

The following behaviors are considered unethical:

1. Telling the instructor that you "need" a certain grade
2. Asking for extra assignments for the purpose of raising a grade
3. Asking that the grade be raised because it is very close to the next higher grade
4. Asking that the grade be raised because you did very well on one part of the course or grading scheme
5. Asking for a higher grade because you don't like the grading scheme

6. Asking to be allowed to turn in an assignment late - even a few minutes late - because of computer or printer problems or any other reason
7. Asking to be treated better than other students by making an exception to the rules
8. Asking for any other unfair advantage in grading.

Conduct in Examinations

"Students must present appropriate identification upon entering the examination room. Appropriate identification is defined as a UNBC student card and/or some other form of photo identification acceptable to the proctor." The following regulations [Regulation 40 Undergraduate Calendar] apply to the conduct of examinations:

a. Books, papers, or other materials or devices must not be in the possession of the student during an exam except by the express permission of the examiner. Specifically, without such permission no laptop computers, mobile phone sets, handheld electronic devices or the like may be in possession of the student in the examination room.

b. No candidate is permitted to enter the examination room more than 30 minutes after the beginning of the examination, or permitted to leave within 30 minutes after the examination has started.

c. Candidates must not communicate in any way with other candidates in the examination room.

d. Candidates must not leave their seats, except when granted permission by the proctor.

e. Candidates must turn in all materials, including rough work, upon leaving the examination room.

f. Food and beverages other than water are not permitted in the examination room.

Do not schedule travel that may conflict with exams! There will be no makeup exams. If you miss an exam, you will receive zero marks. Exceptions may be made for documented medical reasons or extenuating circumstances. In such a case, it is the responsibility of the student to inform the instructor immediately.

Grading System: Grading System

Excellent	A+	=	90-100
	A	=	85-89.9
	A-	=	80-84.9

Good	B+	=	77-79.9
	B	=	73-76.9
	B-	=	70-72.9
Satisfactory	C+	=	67-69.9
	C	=	63-66.9
Marginal	C-	=	60-62.9
	D+	=	57-59.9
	D	=	53-56.9
	D-	=	50-52.9
Failure:	F	=	0-49.9

Access Resource Centre

If there are students in this course who, because of a disability, may have a need for special academic accommodations, please come and discuss this with me, or contact staff at the Access Resource Centre (arc@unbc.ca) located in the Teaching and Learning Centre, Room 10-1048 on the main campus. Students can also call the ARC at (250) 960-5682. Regional students can call the Centre toll-free at 1(888) 960-5682.

Academic Success Centre

The Academic Success Centre offers support for mathematics, writing, study skills, physics, statistics, commerce and economics. Services are available through one-to-one tutoring at the centre (room 10-2584; second floor of the Teaching and Learning Building); drop-in writing support is available on the first floor of the Library; and drop-in math/physics/statistics support is available at MACE (room 10-2088). Online support, including online writing tutoring, is available through the website at www.unbc.ca/asc. Peer-led supplemental sessions (SI and PLTL) are held for select courses – more information will be announced in classes.

Academic Advising

For academic advising please contact the Recruitment and Advising Centre Room 7-714, by email: advising@unbc.ca or via phone at 250-960-6494.

Respect

Please demonstrate respect to your fellow students who express their thoughts and explore new ideas in the course.

COMM 200 – COURSE SCHEDULE

The schedule is subject to minor changes and may be adjusted according to student need. Additional readings include handouts, etc.

Week	Topic	Readings	What's Due
Class 1	Course Overview Etiquette / Expectations Chapter 1 – Self Awareness Personality Dimensions Career Assessment	Course Syllabus Chapter 2	
Class 2	Chapter 2 – Business communication in the digital age Video: Workplace Communication Skills	Chapter 3	Due list of group members
Class 3	Chapter 3 – Daily workplace writing channels Memo Exercise	Chapter 4	
Class 4	Chapter 4 – Social Media LinkedIn – Guess Speaker	Chapter 5	
Class 5	Chapter 5 – Job Search Job search sites Video: Quick Job Search Video	Chapter 6	Memo Assignment due

Class 6	Chapter 6 – Resume and Cover Letter Resume Exercise	Bring your resume Chapter 7	
Class 7	Chapter 7 - Networking Video: Networking Your Way To A New Job Guess Speaker / Employer	Chapter 8	Quiz
Feb. 19	Reading Week – No Class		
Class 8	Chapter 8 – Interviews and follow-up Video - Quick interview and Salary Negotiation	Chapter 9	Job posting, Cover letter and Resume due LinkedIn Profile due
Class 9	Chapter 9- Communicating professionally in person Guess Speaker / Employer	Chapter 11	
Class 10	Chapter 10 – Business presentations		
Class 11	2 Guess Speaker (s) / Employer Case study Exercise		
Class 12	Student Presentations & Final Review		PowerPoint , Case Study Assignment & Peer Evaluation due
	Final Exam - TBA		

Old Syllabus

Week	Topic	Readings	What's Due
Class 1	Chapter 1 Course Overview Etiquette / Expectations	Course Syllabus Essentials of Business overview Chapter 2	

	Intro. to Business Communications Personality Dimensions Career Assessment		
Class 2	Chapter 2 – Business communication in the digital age Video: Workplace Communication Skills	Chapter 3	Due list of group members
Class 3	Chapter 3 – Daily workplace writing channels Memo Exercise	Chapter 4	
Class 4	Chapter 4 – Social Media LinkedIn – Guess Speaker	Chapter 5	
Class 5	Chapter 5 – Job Search Job search sites Video: Quick Job Search Video	Chapter 6	Memo Assignment due
Class 6	Chapter 6 – Resume and Cover Letter Resume Exercise	Bring your resume Chapter 7	
Class 7	Chapter 7 - Networking Video: Networking Your Way To A New Job Guess Speaker / Employer	Chapter 8	Quiz
Feb. 19	Reading Week – No Class		
Class 8	Chapter 8 – Interviews and follow-up Video - Quick interview and Salary Negotiation	Chapter 9	Job posting, Cover letter and Resume due LinkedIn Profile due
Class 9	Chapter 9- Communicating professionally in person	Chapter 11	

	Guess Speaker / Employer		
Class 10	Chapter 10 – Business presentations		
Class 11	2 Guess Speaker (s) / Employer Case study Exercise		
Class 12	Student Presentations		PowerPoint , Case Study Assignment & Peer Evaluation due
Class 13	Student Presentations & Final Review		
	Final Exam - TBA		

Appendix B: Memo Assignment

Memo Instructions:

1. A written memo of 1 page maximum following the memo format

2. Memo must be submitted through blackboard by the beginning of class

3. Follow memo rubric

As the manager of a large organization, you have notice that some employees are using social media during working hours. You feel that employees should be working during working hours and only using social media on breaks or on personal time. The problem is that your company has no social media policy and you feel that the company needs to implement a social media policy.

Your task: Choose a company you are familiar with and prepare a memo explaining why you think social media policy is necessary in the workplace for all employees. Decide what action you want. Address the memo to all employees.

Appendix C: Peer Evaluation

This must be turned in with the final report before the report and mark will be returned. You may turn your evaluation in directly to the instructor's office. Please evaluate each group member including yourself on a scale of 1 (poor) to 5 (excellent) on the following. (please circle)

Group Name: _____

Your Name: _____

1 2 3 4 5   You met all deadlines including meetings as agreed.

1 2 3 4 5   The quality of my work was of the highest calibre.

1 2 3 4 5   I completed all work that was expected of me promptly.

Indicate contributions/responsibilities to the group project:

Group Member 1: _____

1 2 3 4 5   This member met all deadlines including meetings as agreed upon.

1 2 3 4 5   The quality of his/her work was of the highest calibre.

1 2 3 4 5   This member completed all work that was expected of him/her promptly.

1 2 3 4 5   I would like to work on another project with this member.

Indicate contributions/responsibilities to the group project:

Group Member 2: _____

1 2 3 4 5   This member met all deadlines including meetings as agreed upon.

1 2 3 4 5   The quality of his/her work was of the highest calibre.

1 2 3 4 5   This member completed all work that was expected of him/her promptly.

1 2 3 4 5   I would like to work on another project with this member.

Indicate contributions/responsibilities to the group project:

_____

Group Member 3: _____

1 2 3 4 5   This member met all deadlines including meetings as agreed upon.

1 2 3 4 5   The quality of his/her work was of the highest calibre.

1 2 3 4 5   This member completed all work that was expected of him/her promptly.

1 2 3 4 5   I would like to work on another project with this member.

Indicate contributions/responsibilities to the group project:

_____

Group Member 4: _____

1 2 3 4 5   This member met all deadlines including meetings as agreed upon.

1 2 3 4 5   The quality of his/her work was of the highest calibre.

1 2 3 4 5   This member completed all work that was expected of him/her promptly.

1 2 3 4 5   I would like to work on another project with this member.

Indicate contributions/responsibilities to the group project:

_____

Group Member 5: _____

1 2 3 4 5   This member met all deadlines including meetings as agreed upon.

1 2 3 4 5   The quality of his/her work was of the highest calibre.

1 2 3 4 5   This member completed all work that was expected of him/her promptly.

1 2 3 4 5   I would like to work on another project with this member.

Indicate contributions/responsibilities to the group project:

Appendix D: Memo Rubric

1. A written memo of one page maximum following the memo format and Time New

   Romans 12 font.

2. Memo must be submitted through blackboard.

Excellent Memo	Acceptable Memo	Unacceptable Memo
• Requires no revision • follows format specifics and assignment requirements • No mechanical errors (spelling, punctuation) • Attend to the audience's needs • Maintains "you" attitude throughout • Uses positive language, even when delivering bad news • Written with flair • Uses appropriate tone and is an asset to company image	• Requires some revision • Follows format specifics and assignment requirements • Has some noticeable mechanical errors • May inaccurately estimate the audience • May not emphasize "you" attitude • May include negative language, and tone	• Requires major revision • Does not follow format specifics and/ or assignment requirements • Has noticeable mechanical errors • Uses inappropriate tone and language

Appendix E: Resume Rubric

CRITERIA	EXCELLENT	AVERAGE	POOR	GRADING
Style, Appearance, & Tone	• Font style and size is 11 Aria or 12 Time New Romans • Formatting is consistent • Section heading reflect content • Resume is targeted to the job posting • Bullets not paragraphs	• Page appears crowded • Inconsistence with font and spacing	• Font style is unreadable • Font is too small or too big • Includes paragraphs and not bullets	5
Grammar, Spelling, & Punctuation	• Error free spelling and punctuation • Error free spacing • Grammar is appropriate (verb tense, and pronouns)	• Contains minor errors (spacing and punctuation) • Some bullets have periods, some do not	• 3 or more errors • 2 or more of the same type of error	6
Contact Information	• Includes name, address, email, and phone number, city/town, & province • Name stands out on the resume • Include professional email	• Name does not stand out • Email is not professional	• Missing contact information • Inappropriate or unprofessional email	5
Objective Section	• Brief and tailored to the position	• tailored to the position but not being brief	• Too wordy and vague • Not stating the position you are applying for	2
Summary of Strengths and Skills Section	• 5-6 bullets highlighting your skills, strengths, and qualifications tailored to the position • Bullets are concise, direct and indicate accomplishments • Use action words • Results are quantified appropriately	• Verb tense is incorrect for 1 or 2 entries • 2-3 bullets are not concise, direct, and indicate accomplishme nts • Results are not quantified	• Too wordy and vague • Irrelevant information • Not using action words • Using paragraphs to describe responsibiliti es	5

			appropriate for one or two entries	
Education Section	• Chronological order of education • Include degree major and/or minor • Relevant courses (1 or 2) including description of what you have learned • Institution name, location, and dates	• Degree is abbreviated (BComm)	• Lack of chronological order of education • Missing declared majors and/or minors • Missing dates, location, and institution names • Relevant courses not explained	12
Experience and/ or Volunteer Section	• Appropriate format (Chronological, Combination, or Functional resume) • Include position title, organization name, city/town, & dates • Use bullets and start with action words • Bullets are concise, direct, and indicate accomplishments • Describe key responsibilities and quantified results • Relevant information tailored to the position	• Missing one of the information (position title, organization name, city/town, & dates) • Verb tense is incorrect for 1 or 2 entries • Bullets are not concise, direct, and indicate accomplishments • Results are not quantified appropriate for one or two entries	• Missing position title, organization name, city/town, & dates • Using paragraphs to describe responsibilities • Verb tense is incorrect • Bullets are wordy, vague, and results are not quantified • Not using action words • Irrelevant information	12

Reference Section	- Include references contact information (job title, organization name, email, & phone) - Well organized	Missing one of the reference contact information (job title, organization name, email, & phone)	- Not including reference contact - Missing reference contact (job title, organization name, email, & phone)	3
Marks				50

Appendix F: Cover Letter Rubric

CRITERIA	EXCELLENT	AVERAGE	POOR	GRADING
Style, Appearance, & Tone	• Font is consistent with resume • Font style and size is readable • Paragraphs must be well organized	• Font is inconsistent • Page is crowded	• Font is too small or too big • Includes too many bullets • Paragraphs are not well organized	10
Grammar, Spelling, & Punctuation	• Error free spelling and punctuation • Error free spacing • Grammar is appropriate (verb tense, and pronouns)	• Contains minor errors (spacing and punctuation)	• 3 or more errors • 2 or more of the same type of error	10
Format & Content	• Letter follows all standard formatting (spacing, dates, signature, contact information etc.) • Letter is appealing and engages them to learn more about you • Letter is tailored to the job posting • Highlights the skills, education, experience, and accomplishments • Provide information that is relevant to the job	• 1 or 2 formatting errors • Letter is appealing but does not engage the employer to learn more about you • Skills, education, experience, and accomplishments are addressed but not well explained	• Letter does not follow all standard formatting • Letter is not tailored to the position • Skills, education, experience, and accomplishments are not highlighted • Irrelevant information	30
Marks				50

Appendix G: LinkedIn Rubric

Photo	• Professional headshot	10
Education	• Chronological order of education • Institution name, location, and dates • Grade 12	10
Work Experience & Volunteer Experience	• Position title, organization name, city/town, & dates • Describe key responsibilities and quantified results • Use action words and focus on relevant information to the position	10
Grammar / Spelling	• Error free spelling and punctuation • Grammar is appropriate (verb tense, and pronouns)	10
Tone	• Positive language and action words	10
Total:		50 marks

Appendix H: Case Study Rubric

- A written paper 3-4 pages, double spaced, and Time New Romans 12 font with title page

- The generic content of the written report may have the following format:

1. **Title Page**

2. **Introduction**
   - Identify the key problems and issues in the case study
   - Include a thesis statement and summarize the outcome of your analysis in couple sentences

3. **Background**
   - Include background information, facts and the most important issues
   - Demonstrate you have done research

4. **Problem Statement if any**
   - Identify the issue(s)that exist in the case and need to be addressed
   - Include relevant theory and course concepts

5. **Identification of pros and cons**
   - What are some of the advantages and disadvantages of the case study?

6. **Your view of points**
   - What is your perspective?
   - Provide solutions or changes needed
   - Explain why these solutions and provide evidence

7. **Recommendations**
   - Discuss strategies to the solution(s)
   - Recommend further action to resolve some of the issues
   - What should be done and who should do it?
   - Theory and coursework can be applied.

8. **Conclusions**
   - Summary the case

9. **References, Appendix and or Tables**

Marking Rubric – Written Paper:

Structure (clarity and logic flow)	15
Appropriate business language and tone	15
Relevance to course content	30
Grammar/ spelling	15
Analysis of the problem and justification for solution	25
Total:	**100 marks**

Appendix I: Presentation Rubric

Presentations	Name	Name	Name	Name
Appearance (appropriate business attire)	10			
Professionalism (tone and interaction with students)	10			
Clarity (presentation is clear and easy to follow)	10			
Time management (maximum 2-3 minutes per member)	10			
Delivery (eye contact and oral speaking)	10			
Total:	50 marks			

Appendix J: Personality Dimensions Career Samples

Gold Occupations

Accountant	Management Consultant
Air Traffic Controller	Media/Public Relations
Archivist & Curator	Medical Technologist
Business Management	Nursing
Career Development	Occupational Therapist
Coaching Life Skills/Athletics	Organizational Development
Counsellor	Paralegal
Dietician or Nutritionist	Park Ranger
Economist	Pharmacist
Editor	Police or Corrections Officer
Events Coordinator	Project Management
Financial Planner	Public Administrator
Forensics	Publicity Writer
Geneticist	Purchasing Agent
Health Care/Service Worker	Radio/TV Broadcasting
Human Resources	School Administrator or
Industrial & Labour Relations	School Principal
Lawyer	Social Services Worker
Librarian	Statistician
Lifeguard	Stockbroker

Blue Occupations

Actor, Entertainer	Human Services Worker
Administrator: Education	Hypnotherapy
Administration: Health	Industrial / Labour Relations
Advertising	Insurance Agent, Broker
Advocate	Interior Design
Aerobic Teacher	Laboratory Technologist
Airline Representative	Lawyer, Attorney, Judge
Art Therapist	Librarian
Biologist	Market Analyst
Career Development Practitioner	Marketing Specialist
Child Care Worker	Motivational Speaker
Coach: Executive, Life Skills, Athletics	Musician
Community Affairs Coordinator	Nursing
Composer, Lyricist, Musician	Occupational Therapist
Consultant	Pharmacist
Cosmetologist	Political Advisor
Dental Assistant	Researcher
Divorce Mediator	Sign Language Interpreter
Education	Speech Pathologist
Family Care Worker	Teacher
Flight Attendant	Travel Agent / Consultant
Editor	Wedding Consultant

Orange Occupations

Acting Coach	Firefighter
Actor of Entertainer	Flight Attendant
Adventure Training	Florist
Advertising	Hairdresser or Barber
Banking	Helicopter Pilot
Bartender	Interior Design
Bio-mechanics	Lawyer, Attorney, Judge
Broadcast Technician	Lifeguard
Carpenter	Manager
Cashier	Mechanic
Child Care Worker	Musician
Choreographer	Nursing
Construction Worker	Negotiator
Cosmetologist	Optometrist
Counsellor	Painter, Decorator
Dancer	Paramedic
Dancer Teacher	Physiotherapist
Cruise Director	Pilot
Editor	Police, Private Investigator
Dental Assistant/Hygienist	Politician
Electrician	Producer: Movies, Radio
Entrepreneur	Race Car Driver

Green Occupations

Accountants	Marine Biologist
Anthropologist	Marketing Personnel
Archaeologist	Medical Technicians
Artists	Mortgage Brokers
Bio-medical	Nursing
Business	Occupational Therapist
Chemical Engineers	Pharmacist
Computer programmers	Photographers
Dental Hygienist	Physical Scientists
Doctors, Surgeons	Political Analyst/Advisor
Electrician	Researcher
Entertainers	Respiratory Therapist
Environmental	Sales (technician)
High School Teachers	Social Scientists
Hospitality	Software Programmer
Human Resources	Systems Analysis
International Development	Surveyor
Journalists	University teachers
Lawyers	Veterinarian or
Librarians	Vet Technician