

## Submissions Abstract Book - All Papers (Included Submissions)

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Investigating a typology for identifying strategies to integrate employability skills development in teaching and assessment practice

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**Research Domain:** Learning, teaching and assessment (LTA)

**Abstract:** Graduate employability is one of the most widely discussed graduate outcomes of higher education. The paper discusses whether a typology garnered from a previous study is applicable for facilitating the identification of actual teaching and assessment of employability skills (i.e., analysis, critical thinking, communication [verbal & written] and teamwork skills), and whether it can be used to support academics from different disciplines to foster best practice possibilities to integrate the teaching and assessment of employability skills in any discipline. We used the typology to analyse data collected from a study that observed academics' teaching and assessment of math and finance subjects. We found that typology provides an important way that academics can gain insight into actual practice as well as being a useful tool for identifying range of strategies at different levels to integrate employability skills in practice.

### Paper: Introduction

Graduate employability is one of the most widely discussed graduate outcomes of higher education. The notable lack of employability skills (i.e., analysis, critical thinking, communication [verbal & written] and teamwork skills) required for work readiness is of central concern of industry and a key focus of government and higher education policy in Australia and across the globe (Bradley et al., 2008; Jackson & Chapman, 2012; Oliver & Jorre de St Jorre, 2018; Suleman, 2018). While the impetus exists for universities to produce work-ready graduates, there is a dearth of research that has investigated actual strategies for supporting academics to teach and assess employability skills.

The paper discusses whether a typology garnered from a previous study (Cotronei-Baird, 2020a; Cotronei-Baird, 2017) is applicable in supporting academics to foster best practice possibilities to integrate the teaching and assessment of employability skills in any discipline. We sought to establish this by using the typology to analyse data collected from a study that observed whether academics integrate employability skills in the teaching and assessment of math and finance subjects. The identification of the extent academics enact employability skills through teaching and assessment

practices will allow the development of evidence-based improvement to curriculum design, delivery, and assessment.

In terms of contribution, the study provides an opportunity to begin a discussion on how to use the typology for identifying gaps in employability skills integration in the curriculum, to address the graduate skills gap identified by industry and provide practical strategies that improve the integration of employability skills actually in practice. This important if universities seek to foster greater integration of employability skills development in the university curriculum by the academics who are directly involved in curriculum design, delivery, and assessment.


### Typology for identifying employability skills integration

The typology constructed from the previous research (Table 1), read from bottom up, conceptualises four different levels of practice representing the extent to which employability skills are integrated into subject curricula (from indirect to direct). The typology illustrates that academics in previous research use four different types of practice: 1) discuss, 2) demonstrate 3) facilitate and 4) assess employability skills (Cotronei-Baird, 2020a, 2020b; Cotronei-Baird, 2017).

**Table 1: A Typology for identifying employability skills integration**

Teaching practice	Examples
<b>Assess</b> employability skills	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Integrate employability skills development into the assessment tasks and instructions</li> <li>Include employability skills in assessment criteria and rubrics</li> <li>Include employability skills in written and verbal feedback</li> </ul>
<b>Facilitate</b> activities to apply employability skills	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Give students opportunity to practice and demonstrate the application of employability skills through classroom activities and pre-class task/activities</li> <li>Facilitate activities that can be used to enable students to demonstrate employability skills</li> <li>Give students opportunity to apply employability skills to real life cases, data and examples</li> </ul>
<b>Demonstrate</b> application of employability skills	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Use case studies to demonstrate employability skills</li> <li>Use data or examples relevant to your discipline, subject and students to demonstrate employability skills in practice and workplace/profession</li> <li>Show how to apply employability skills to real life examples, case studies, data, workplace/profession</li> </ul>
<b>Discuss</b> employability skills	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Mention the importance and relevance of identified employability skills in the workplace</li> <li>Explain the employability skills that are linked to the particular roles/positions relevant to your students and discipline/subject</li> </ul>

**DIRECT**



**INDIRECT**

The typology is currently being used by one of the authors to support academics in accounting and economics to integrate employability skills in their subject. For example, the typology identified skills

in an accounting subjects' curriculum, i.e., verbal communication, presentation and teamwork skills. This led to a revision of a major assignment that integrated these employability skills; that is, the introduction of the student-created video assignment (Dyki et al., 2020).

## **Methodology**

This current study investigated whether the typology is an applicable tool identify gaps in practices and to help academics teaching in other disciplines to identify practical strategies that integrate employability skills development in teaching and assessment practice. We applied the typology to Stage 3 of a larger study (see Appendix 1 Research Phases and Methods). Stage 3 included the observation of teaching and assessment practice in three math and three finance subjects.

## **Preliminary findings**

The preliminary findings from the analysis of observed practice using our typology has found that it is a useful tool to analyse the extent to which math and finance academics integrate employability skills in practice. We found that the typology enabled us to identify examples of effective practice as well as gaps in practice. For example, we found that while some academics discuss and demonstrate the value of employability skills as part of their lectures and tutorials, they are not giving students opportunity to practice and be assessed on some of the skills. In other subjects, academics may give students opportunity to practice some employability skills, for example, via class presentation, but students are not formally assessed on the employability skills. In this way, the integration of employability skills in curriculum is not systematic and consistent across subjects. The typology can be used to help generate practical strategies to improve the teaching and assessment of employability skills.

## **Conclusion**

As employability skills are now considered an important graduate learning outcome, it is necessary to investigate strategies that support academics to integrate employability skills in the university curriculum. The typology provides an important way that academics can gain insight into actual practice as well as being a useful tool for identifying range of strategies at different levels to integrate employability skills in practice. This study is distinctive, as it responds to a gap in the literature of the provision of practical strategies for academics integrate employability skills in actual teaching and assessment practices.

**References:****Reference****List**

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### Appendix 1: Research Phases and Methods

<p><b>Phase 1:</b> <i>Semi-Structured Interviews</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Academics involved in the design, delivery and assessment of the selected subjects</li> <li>• Interviews will take place prior to content analysis of curriculum documents and observation of teaching practice to ascertain academics' espoused views on the integration of employability skills in the curriculum</li> </ul>
<p><b>Phase 2:</b> <i>Content Analysis</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Subject curriculum documents, assessment tasks, assessment criteria and feedback</li> <li>• Lecture material</li> <li>• Tutorial activities/questions</li> <li>• Online/eLearning resources</li> <li>• Descriptive text in subject handbook</li> </ul>
<p><b>Phase 3:</b> <i>Direct Observations</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Teaching and Learning activities (lectures and tutorials) of the selected subjects</li> <li>• Synchronous and asynchronous eLearning delivery and activities (blogs, wikis, online tutor, quizzes, etc.)</li> </ul>
<p><b>Phase 4:</b> <i>Academics: Follow-up semi-Structured Interviews</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Academics involved in the design, delivery and assessment of one first year compulsory Bachelor of Commerce subject and one core third year accounting and economics subject.</li> <li>• Follow-up interviews will take place to explore further teaching practices or to clarify any anomalies.</li> </ul>

Application of Typology

