

A PROCESS AND IMPACT EVALUATION OF THE FUTURE NOW: COLLABORATION IN ACTION MODULE

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

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Executive Summary

1. Brief

Future Now: Collaboration In Action is a project-based multi-disciplinary module that was implemented in 2024/25 across seven courses in the Sheffield Creative Industries Institute at Sheffield Hallam University. In this module, students collaborated with their peers, industry clients and module staff to develop an informed and imaginative response to local and global sustainable development challenges.

Students worked in groups to address a project brief that was aligned to one of five themes linked to the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals. The module aimed to help students acquire a range of skills and develop their career readiness. There were 285 students on the module, which was taught via a combination of large group lectures and smaller workshops and tutorials.

2. Methodology

A mixed-methods pre-post test design was used that combined qualitative and quantitative data to assess the impact of the module on students, clients and the university. The project also explored how the design and delivery of the module contributed to these outcomes. A Theory of Change approach was adopted to structure the evaluation.

Students were invited to take part in this evaluation via two data collection activities. The first activity related to the assessment that all students were required to submit as part of the module. This was a portfolio of work that contained evidence of their group work and engagement, their understanding of relevant critical contexts, and their reflections about the experience. A total of 20 students gave consent for the content of their assessments to be used as sources of evidence for the evaluation.

The second activity was a pre and post-module survey that asked questions about students' work readiness, which included attitudes and attributes that may support and prepare them for employment and further study. A total of 58 and 36 students completed the pre and post-module surveys respectively, but only 16 students engaged in both.

Two staff members who designed and/or delivered the module engaged in reflective activities on a Padlet site, while five industry clients participated via interviews or a survey. Evidence from documentary sources and existing student voice data were also used for the evaluation.

3. Findings and Conclusions

a. Impact on students

The evaluation concluded that the module had a range of positive outcomes and impact on many students, which will help their preparation for the future. The most pronounced differences in students were in their development of various skills and knowledge. For instance, the reflective journals illustrated progression in students'

communication, collaboration and research skills and awareness of issues relating to sustainability.

The evaluation highlighted that much deeper narratives about the impact on students exist beyond the module's learning outcomes, such as in their: ability to reflect on and understand their own positions for pursuing future career and studying options; and in their development of professional relationships.

Other students judged the module to be less beneficial for their work readiness. This was partially attributed to their beliefs that the module had not effectively utilised their skills, or doubts about the alignment of their skills and interests with the contexts of the project briefs.

b. Impact on industry clients

There was consensus among the industry clients that the module had a positive impact on them. Clients' collaborations with students instigated numerous instances of knowledge exchange, providing them with new and unique ideas from groups who they have not previously worked with.

The experiences enriched clients' understanding of particular topic areas and how they were meaningful to various audiences, which will inform their approaches to community engagement in future work.

Clients believed that their engagement on the module contributed to an educational impact on student groups. The successful and productive experiences of clients signalled the start, or continuation, of their positive relationships with the university.

c. Design and delivery of the module

There were several integral components of the module's design and delivery that influenced students' experiences and outcomes, such as: students' learning being embedded within real-life contexts, including the project briefs; and opportunities for peer learning and exposure to diverse perspectives (e.g., within student groups, and between student groups and clients/module staff).

The involvement of clients with industry expertise ensured that student groups addressed challenges that were grounded in real-life scenarios and end users. However, students' perceptions about the relevance of the module to their own courses and contexts notably shaped their experiences and learning.

Many students reported that the group work was valuable and they perceived that greater creativity and innovation were possible by working as a team. Challenges encountered in their teams affected the experiences of other students though.

d. Recommendations

The main report provided recommendations based on the evidence drawn from this evaluation, specifically for the following groups: staff designing and delivering the Future Now module; clients engaging with the module; and for those who are more broadly designing and delivering curriculum-integrated employability provision in Higher Education.

**Sheffield
Hallam
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Knowledge Applied