



CABS LTSE 2023 Workshop

Enabling practical application of employability skills
through authentic simulation technology.

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This workshop (structure)

1. What is it ?

- Simulation example 'MSX'

2. How do you use it ?

- Demo and then.... **Let's have a [quick] go !**

3. What about Employability Skills Development ?

- incl. our recent/current research

Final Question and Answer session

Q&A at the end svp

Introduction to the technology



- Pearson simulation product – [MyStrategyExperience](#) [‘MSX’]
note: there are similarly structured sim’s for Marketing, Operations, etc
- Cohort-wide simulation for PG students at Aston Business School;
also used in final stage BSc degree apprentice course
- Two stages: (i) self-study and tasks, then (ii) group decision-making
- 6 x Board meetings [BMs]
 - Agenda Item Selection
 - Multi-Choice Decision-making Exercise
 - Broad range of topics based on environmental reports and general strategy direction of the organisation (provided in sim).

Key features of the MSX simulation :



- Simulation is **Qualitative**
 - though with data (financial and non-financial results; so leader-boards!)
- but.... **it's about management decisions**,
 - not about 'gaming' figures/data permutations.
NB conducive to evaluation and reflection – good for assessments!
- **Environmental Reports**, updated before each Board Meeting [BM].
 - conditions change e.g. for BM3, significant recession approaching!
- Each working group will have prepared an outline **mini-business plan** [optional template provided] with three-year targets/forecasts.
- The final (six) BMs' Phase runs across those three years, so opportunity to **evaluate actual results against intended performance** (as Mintzberg!)

Demonstration... Let's do [a bit of] it!



Five Things to Know about simulation company 'WRSX'



1. an **International Advertising Agency – B2B** (not B2C), sales revenue £400m/yr
large international clients: automotive/transport, FMCG, health and pharma, telecoms
– *a core competence is sophisticated high-level CRM.*
2. **Strong in North America and Europe**; less so yet in Asia Pacific, LatAm.
3. is behind competitors on **Digital Capabilities and Services.**
4. **Merger of three** original agencies in New York, Paris, London
– still high levels of **regional management autonomy** (duplication?)
 - Paris – entrepreneurial, quite diversified, intimate client relationships, CSR/ethics?
 - NYC – NorAm is 50% of group profit, but young creatives are frustrated and leaving
 - London – neither Paris nor NYC but successfully fostered a satellite in Singapore
5. **Share price** recently dipping – *strategic drift?*
key issues: slow growth; confidence in WRSX leadership; CSR/governance

Info you get for each BM

WRSX Business Environment

Board Meeting Three

Andy Carnelley, WRSX Business Analyst

1: Environment Report

Board Meeting Three

Executive Summary Agenda Item: 1



2: Agenda item options (6 summaries)

From: Leena Chakrabati, Chief Financial Officer

To: Board Directors

Outsourcing Central Services

As Chief Financial Officer, part of my brief is to cut costs. My proposal is to outsource 1 function to a specialist supplier of HR services. The major HR functions that could be outsourced would be:

- HR Strategy
- payroll and benefits
- recruitment
- dispute resolution
- pay negotiations with trade unions
- training and development



Board Meeting Three

Board Agenda Item: 6



From: Tommy-Lee Pope, MD Direct Marketing, New York Office

To: Board Directors

Bringing Down Print Costs through Group Buying Power

Our Direct Marketing operation in New York has been looking at how to save costs. We have been struggling to make a profit and Lloyd Silberstein, who is on compassionate leave this week, asked me to come up with suggestions as to how cost-savings could be achieved in the business.

Our Direct Mail (or junk mail as it is sometimes called) business is a low-margin business and bringing down our print costs would have a great influence on our margins. The pressure to 'buy American' here is significant and we may find that some

3: Agenda item action options A-B-C-D (details for each of the chosen four)

How it appears to students...

Board Meeting Executive Summary



Global Advertising



Executive Summary

Executive Summary Agenda Items:

Board Meeting 1 Executive Summary Agenda Item: One



From: Sylvie Tourre, Head of PR, Paris Office
To: Board Directors



Market Opportunity in China

We have had a number of meetings with clients recently where they have expressed surprise that WRSX is not in China currently. Many of our competitors are already established there and it is seen by some as the market opportunity of the future.

There Are Two Issues for the Board to Consider:

- Should WRSX consider China as a suitable opportunity for expansion in this financial year?
- What is an appropriate way for WRSX to enter the Chinese market?

This is a major decision for WRSX with potentially significant long-term implications for the business. We need to think about the purpose of our entering this market. Also, how we can position ourselves in a way that delivers value for our clients and where we can be competitive against other global players and against the local Chinese agencies. The Board will need to decide if it should put the resources into developing a presence in China and also, if it does decide to go ahead, how to ensure success.

Agenda Item Summaries:

Here are the six Agenda Item Executive Summaries for this Board Meeting. To view, please scroll down and click the summary headings. Select the four you want to include in your Board Meeting by clicking the buttons on the right and clicking the 'Submit Agenda Items' button:

1. **Market opportunity in China – Sylvie Tourre, Head of PR, Paris** ☐
2. **Sustainability profile of Group – Rod Raoul Saurez, Non-Executive Director, WRSX Group** ☐
3. **Motivating the Gaming Generation - Serge Toussaint, MD, Paris Office** ☐
4. **Non-performing business within the Group - Victor Frederick Xao, MD, London & Singapore Offices** ☐
5. **Cultural change in New York – Francoise Mellier, Group HR/Talent Director** ☐
6. **Investment in Data Analytics - Jay Bravura, Silverfish - New Media, London Office** ☐

Once you have read the six Executive Summaries of the Agenda Items for this board meeting, decide

select four
(of the six)
to get
more detail and
the A-B-C-D
action options

BM3: what our students would do

Class Activity (say 75 mins): conduct and decide for WRSX **BM3**...

Each group to discuss and agree...

- **Results thru BM2 and the BM3 environmental report**
note: a nasty recession in Europe and NorAm (= cost pressures)
- **Which four (of six) agenda items to pick ?**
Tell tutor which items chosen (30 mins max!), then
- **Analyse the extra info for the four items**
and recommend Action choices A-B-C-D

and... Gatekeepers upload and get results, then back to the Leader Board!

PS always with a reminder to take/keep notes on the rationale for decisions taken

BM3: choose four priority agenda items



1. **Outsourcing central services** – Leena Chakrabati, Chief Financial Officer
2. **Launching Cine FX in London and New York**
– Jean-Luc Breton, Managing Director, Cine FX Paris
3. **Market opportunity Asian SMEs**
– Xiuxiu Li, Marketing Manager, The Tube, WRSX Group, Singapore
4. **Competitive advantage through backward integration into reprographics?**
– John Hooper, Managing Director, WRSX Retail Advertising
5. **Changing organisational structure to meet our strategic challenges**
– Bjorn Krog Jensen, Group Market, Insights Director, WRSX Group London
and Dominic Osborne, Managing Director, Barton Consulting Group, New York
6. **Bringing down print costs through Group buying power**
– Tommy-Lee Pope, MD Direct Marketing, New York Office

Instruction... what you need to do

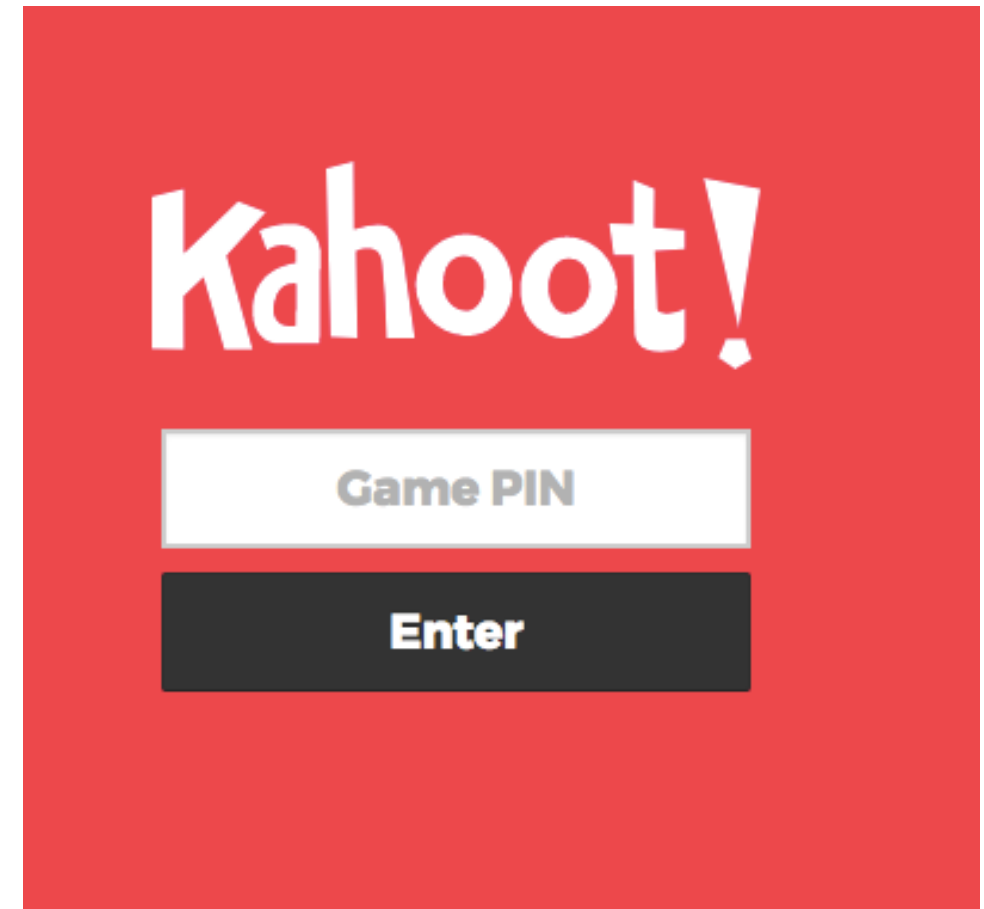


via... a quick *Kahoot!* survey/quiz

LTSE: Sims and Employability skills

Please log in to **kahoot.it** (not kahoot.com !!)
via your smartphone/iPad on your browser
(*or use the Kahoot! app if you already have it*)

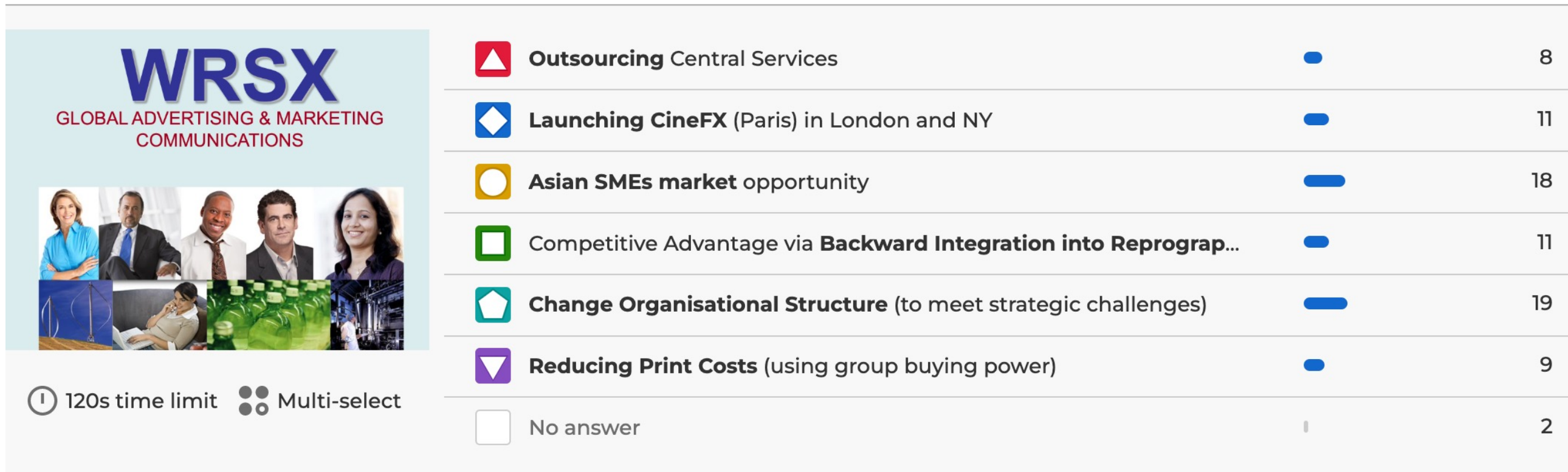
Then enter our game PIN code...



What did we choose; how did we do?

LTSE: Sims and Employability skills (poll) – final Q7/7

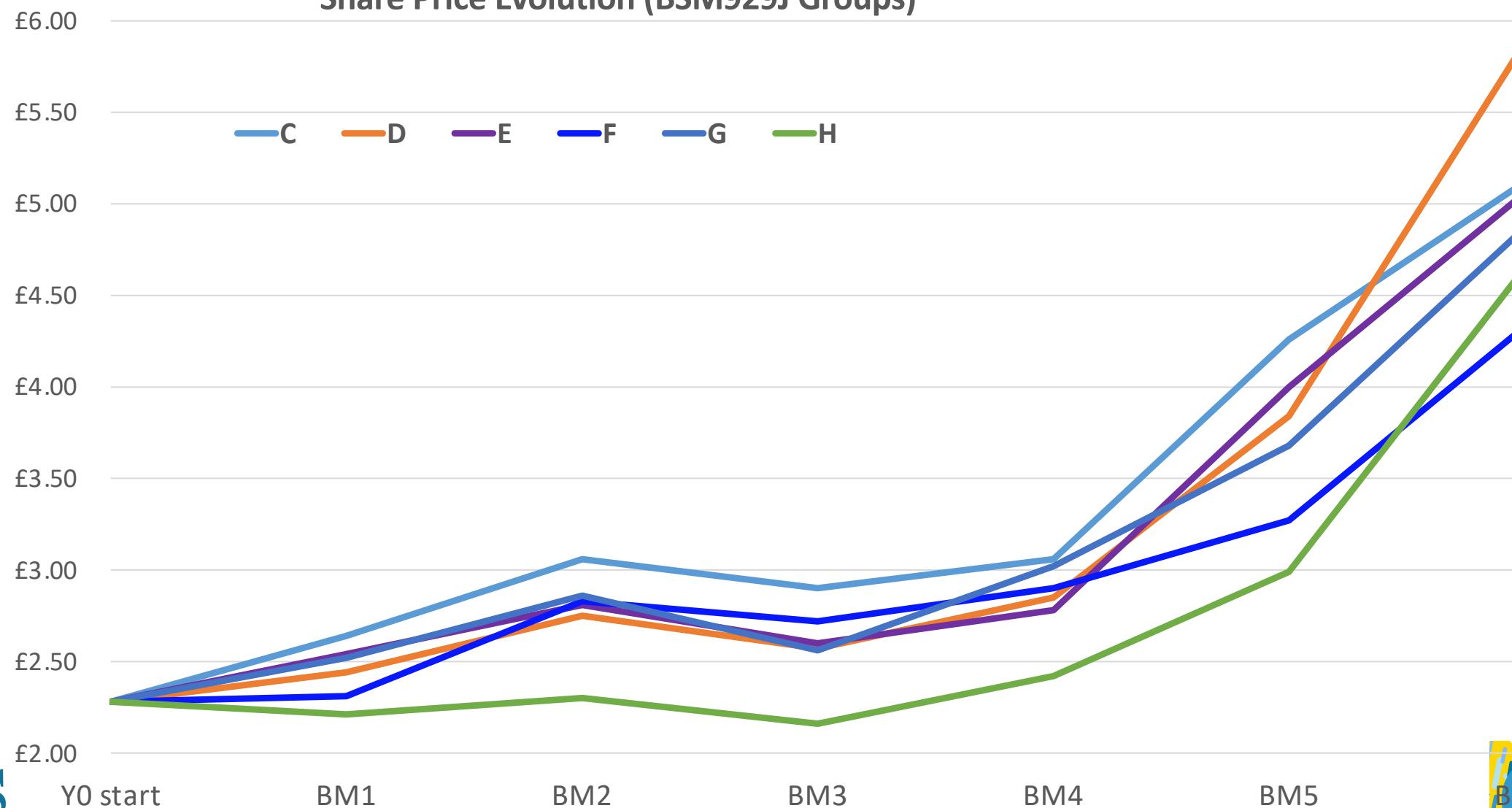
7 -Poll Which 4 agenda items (of 6 options) are most strategic



Leader Board evolution

(longer vs shorter-term decision focus!)

Share Price Evolution (BSM929J Groups)



Assessing Using the Sim

- Students...
 - Report on decisions made
 - Reflect on the decision making process
 - Evaluate the outcomes of the decisions made
 - Reflect on alternative decisions that could have been made
- Overall a holistic assessment piece that uses the simulation as a catalyst for deeper reflection on the process of strategizing and working in teams.

n.b. We discuss this further in our book chapter, “How to develop assessment based around teaching simulations” *in* Games, Simulations and Playful Learning. (2023). Edward Elgar.

2023 Project – postgrad study



- MSc students:
 - Cohort of mainly international students on international business management courses:
e.g. Strategy & IB, Strategic Marketing Management, AI with Business Strategy, etc.
 - Large single year cohort (n=193) studying a one-semester Strategic Management module
 - incorporating the same multi-week strategy simulation as in the undergrad study
 - Identical questions in selected categories, incl. Employability skills
- Project objectives:
 - To validate (or not) evidence reported in previous literature on benefits of SBT for undergrads;
a similar research methodology applied but now to a postgrad cohort
note: 35% response rate
 - To establish point of reference for a broader study, establishing data with SBT
for later evaluation vs. data with OTJT.

Question Sets

– student's self-perceptions



- a) The simulation experience
- b) Undertaking simulated board meetings
- c) Module learning outcomes/ learning development
- d) Employability skills development

Statement agreement on a five point scale

1 = Definitely Disagree

2= Disagree

3 = Neutral

4 = Agree

5 = Definitely Agree

2023 Project – postgrad study



- Interim Conclusions:

- Across sex and age, generally observe a positive mean i.e. positive perception across all categories
- Responses to three of the 11 employability questions (EMP 8-9-10) demonstrated strong positive relationship to overall employability (overall EMP).

- Future research tasks:

- Comparison with previously reported UG data
- Explore qualitatively the employability outcome observations
- Expand to other Postgrad groups/cohort to validate/expand data sets
- Simulation vs OTJT (work with the Uni Placement Team – pre-/post-placement groups)

Questions and suggestions?

Further Reading

- Crockford, J, Hordosy, R & Simms, KS (2015), 'I really needed a job, like, for money and stuff': Student finance, part-time work and the student experience at a northern red-brick university.', *Widening Participation and Lifelong Learning*, vol. 17, no. 3, pp. 89-109. <https://doi.org/10.5456/WPLL.17.3.89s>
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- [Kerridge, C.](#) & [Evans, J.](#) (2023), 'Employment Skills Development in a Simulation Activity: an investigation of postgraduate student perceptions, *Developments in Business Simulation and Experiential Learning, Proceedings [DBSEL] Vol.50* pp. 397-399
- Loon, M, Evans, J and Kerridge, C (2015) '[*Learning with a strategic management simulation game: a case study.*](#)' *The International Journal of Management Education*, 13 (3). pp. 371-380.
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- Wilton, N (2012) The impact of work placements on skills development and career outcomes for business and management graduates, *Studies in Higher Education*, vol. 37, no.5, pp603-620, DOI: [10.1080/03075079.2010.532548](https://doi.org/10.1080/03075079.2010.532548)

Thank You

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