

The Business Edge employability skills framework: A contextualised approach

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The development of industry-relevant employability skills is now widely considered by industry, governments and accrediting bodies to be as important as attaining disciplinary knowledge for undergraduate students. In Australia, the Employability Skills Framework (ESF) has been central to the national development of employability skills across many education sectors, however, the need for universities to overcome the weaknesses inherent in this somewhat dated framework, as well as contextualise the requirement and development of skills, is apparent. This paper, first outlines these concerns, and then summarises one attempt to overcome them through discussion of the development of the ESF for the Business Edge (BE) program offered by the Faculty of Business and Law at Edith Cowan University, in Western Australia. Significantly, this new BE ESF provides a more solid foundation for the successful learning, assessing, mapping and reporting of employability skills. This not only ensures curricula content is adequately addressing the required skills, but assists with devising scaffolding pathways for sequential learning and avoids duplication across the constituent units. It also presents a valuable tool for imparting the precise nature of the program to relevant stakeholders, and may assist other universities in their quest to systematically develop, assess and report on employability skills.

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Denise is completing her PhD on non-technical skills in business undergraduates at the University of Western Australia. She has facilitated in vocational and higher education in the UK and Australian and ran her own business in tourism for a number of years. She lectures on and coordinates a unit in Business Edge, an employability skills program for business undergraduates at Edith Cowan University. Her research interest relates to the transfer of non-technical skills in graduates.

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Linda Riebe is the Program Coordinator of Business Edge, an employability skills program for business undergraduates in the Faculty of Business and Law. Linda worked in the education sector for twelve years and, prior to this, she worked in investment banking for ten years. Linda brings both industry and educational experience to her position as a lecturer, unit and program coordinator in Business Edge. Her current research interest is related to developing teamwork as a transferable employability skill.