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LEARNING AND TEACHING EXPECTATIONS OF COURSEWORK POSTGRADUATE STUDENTS: AN AUSTRALIAN CASE-STUDY

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ABSTRACT: Postgraduate coursework programs (PCW) have expanded to provide both specialised knowledge, and a broader base of knowledge for students wishing to change careers. As all categories of university programs are being subjected to increasing degrees of accountability two similar PCWs in Australia, focused around environment and planning, were investigated to ascertain their performance, which was assessed through a survey of the students. A framework of features of PCWs was developed from the literature associated with post-graduate education and this framework served as the basis for developing the structure of the survey. The internet based survey had responses from 35% of the enrolled students. Over 60% of respondents were studying to assist in a career change. A range of results was apparent with two particular insights for educators being apparent. Respondents wanted to see the career relevance of their experiences and theories they studied, and were seeking flexible study options. Respondents also indicated strong preferences for being guided in their learning. While these results come from only one case study, they provide educators developing and running PCW with insights into the concerns of students, and which may be important in the operation of PCWs more generally.

KEYWORDS: Post-graduate, Coursework, Pedagogy, Assessment, Australia

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1. INTRODUCTION: Postgraduate research programs have been a basic element of universities' activities, but unlike undergraduate programs have had relatively small numbers of enrolments. By comparison postgraduate coursework (PCW) programs have developed noticeably in the latter part of the Twentieth Century and have become increasingly sought by students. We can speculate that this demand is driven by the growth in knowledge and a related expansion in the range of disciplines and fields of employment. This in turn leads students to undertake study past their bachelor degree as Coulthard (1) reported: to increase job opportunities; to enhance professional practice; for academic stimulation; to acquire new skills and knowledge; and from interest in the subject area/discipline. As Cluett and Skene (2) found, PCW students are much more likely to be: mature-aged with some break from study; working part or full-time; and attending campus during evening and/or weekend sessions, if not studying by distance or internet modes. To cater for this demand PCW programs have been established to enable students to both expand their knowledge of their discipline, and to move into new areas of employment. With the former, specific previous study in the discipline is usually a prerequisite (as levels of knowledge are being developed), whereas for the latter any of a range of prerequisite studies may be acceptable (as multi-disciplinary understanding is being developed).

Concurrently, educational activities at universities are being given increasing levels of oversight. Expectations for the outcomes of research programs are measured and affect a university's funding. Similarly, since the end of the 1990s teaching quality in undergraduate programs has begun to affect the attraction of students and funding. Likewise PCW programs have also been drawn into the systems for measuring and assessing their quality, specifically in terms of teaching. In Australia since the late 1990s, university programs, whether under or postgraduate, have been assessed as part of the Australian Qualifications Framework, noted by DEEWR (3). Within this framework the Australian Government has reviewed a range of aspects of universities' teaching, culminating with the Bradley Review. A significant element of the review, and the Government's response, Commonwealth of Australia (4), was the proposal to enable greater access for students from low socio-economic backgrounds. As a consequence the Deputy Prime Minister, Julia Gillard (5; no page), noted that "Increased access needs to be coupled with a stronger focus on quality." In the same address she outlined the creation of the Tertiary Education Quality and Standards Agency to, as explained by DEEWR (6; no page) "regulate university and non-university higher education providers, monitor quality and set standards. Its primary task will be to ensure that students receive a high quality education at any of our higher education providers."

This increased focus on accountability of educators is not restricted to Australia. For example Attwood (7) reports on the findings of audits of colleges in the United Kingdom, and Yeo (8) discusses the use of an instrument for

assessing students' experience of higher education used by institutions in Singapore. However, in the context of the changes being introduced in Australia we sought to gain insight into the extent to which two closely related PCWs offered at RMIT University were meeting the expectations and needs of the enrolled students.

The Masters Social Science (Environment & Planning) and Masters Social Science (International Urban and Environmental Management) were developed separately in the late 1990s to satisfy the needs of different student groups, but since the mid-2000s have become essentially the one program EP-IUEM. The program is designed to provide for students who want to enter the environment or planning professions and attracts students who have recently completed their undergraduate degree in some other field, or who have been working for some years and want to change their careers (the majority of students). Some students come from a background in the environment or planning profession and enrol to broaden their expertise.

Within Australia education for environment and planning professionals is well established. While not being able to collect data for all identified environment programs, Cosgrove and Thomas (9) reported that that since the 1970s there had been "a strong growth in the number of environmental science and environmental engineering courses, especially in the 1980s and 1990s, while a small increase in environmental studies and environmental education courses had occurred." (p28) This finding built on the earlier work of Thomas (10) where from 1980s research indicated 25 masters and graduate diploma programs were instigated. University programs to educate planners have been around even longer, since the 1950s, noted Budge (11). Importantly, according to Heywood (12), universities have the prime role for the provision of 'basic knowledge and life-long learning' for planners, through undergraduate programs (4 years duration) or where postgraduate studies are taken in addition to an undergraduate degree. Both undergraduate or postgraduate options for entry to the planning profession are important options to maintain for Budge (11), who is nonetheless "inclined to the view that the postgraduate route is better" (p11) This postgraduate option is discussed by Whitzman (13), who notes that in Europe it has become the norm, and is the case at several Australian universities.

2. LEARNING AND TEACHING ISSUES OF POSTGRADUATE COURSEWORK PROGRAMS: Unless we know whether our students progress, and whether they experience difficulties along the way we cannot plan for quality. While Cluett and Skene (2) discovered that PCW student experiences are largely under-represented in literature, and Australian institutions are relatively rarely discussed, there are instances of relevant research. A substantial piece of research was commissioned by the Australian Universities Teaching Committee and reported by Reid et.al. (14). It focused on 24 programs in a number of Australian universities, across the fields of Health, Business and Education and made recommendations which can be used as a check-list for reviewing and benchmarking postgraduate programs. Similar work has been reported [(2), (15) - (19)].

From their research at Curtin University Rashford and Dowsett (18) listed the following factors that influenced postgraduate students' levels of satisfaction with their programs:

- Clear information about the program and procedures
- Suitable student selection method
- Engaging and stimulating program content
- Matching assessment with course level and structure
- Adequate facilities and resources
- Being part of a learning community
- Valuing student feedback

While not having a one-to-one relationship, these factors have close connections to the 'best practice criteria' identified by Reid et.al. (14):

- Curriculum content needs enough intellectual depth, scholarly currency and practical applicability to justify it being offered at a postgraduate level
- Assessment requirements need to be aligned with course objectives, and flexible enough to link theory with professional practice
- That teaching or learning interaction needs to engage the students as adult learners whose experience is valued

Reflection on these points, and the experiences reported in a range of literature, enabled us to identify specific issues that affect the teaching and learning experiences of PCW students as:

- Infrastructure, Facilities and Policies – for example Cluett and Skene (2) found that students noted a gap between their expectations of available resources and those actually provided.
- Student Characteristics and Capabilities – Fogarty and Pete (20) found that adult learners bring a wealth of experience and knowledge with them, which can be used to enrich learning environments, noted by McInnis et.al. (17).
- Orientation and Belonging – Tinto (21) proposed that students' ability to integrate (socially & academically) into a learning environment has a major influence on whether they complete their programs and supports the

contention of Reid et.al. (14) that lack of group identity is a most important barrier to a positive PCW student experience

- Program Clarity and Content – Munn et.al. (22) discuss that the information and advice provided to students needs to be very clear to detail what is being offered, what they will be required to do, and what they can expect.
- Delivery Method and Organisation - many issues can be identified in the areas of delivery methods and organisation that effect teaching and learning experiences, for example the average age of postgraduate students means they have adult responsibilities and attitudes, often making traditional classroom hours inconvenient according to Poole and Spear (23).
- Pedagogy – researching attributes of the adult learner, Knowles (24) found they are autonomous, self-directed, practical and realistic; they tend to focus on the 'how' over any other line of enquiry, so need to be actively involved in, or even control, the learning process. Preferred approaches to teaching enable learners to be actively engaged, promoted by Sotto (25), flexible and student centred, noted by Mansell and Parkin, (26).
- Guidance, Assessment and Feedback - McGivney (27) feels that progress and well-being of mature students often depend on the amount of support and understanding they receive. Yet Munn et.al. (22) found mature students made little use of college wide guidance provision and sought help from their tutors. Guidance also comes through assessment. Rashford and Dowsett (18) found that assessment needs to reflect the content and structure of the learning materials. Further, as noted by Fogarty and Pete (20) adults are continually self-appraising as they learn, so Munn et.al. (22) conclude that continuous assessment is often preferred by mature students.
- Completion of Program - a major theme noted by McGivney (27) in research related to the non-completion of a program is uncertainty of what is required for completion. Further Mansell and Parkin, (26) found that student support and the provision of accurate information is essential.

Many of the issues associated with the above points are based around the effective management of expectations. Expectations in terms of what students expect from the programs and the providers, as well as what the lecturers and supervisors expect from the students. In this regard, Reid et.al. (14) concluded that university staff perceive certain things differently from students, while McGivney (27) contends that providing good quality post graduate programs is much about the understanding and fit between the students' and the universities' expectations of each other. As a consequence of considering all these aspects of PCW we identified 42 questions that shaped the survey described below.

3. BACKGROUND TO THE SURVEY OF THE EP-IUEM PROGRAM: In addition to a section on background information, to provide the individuals' statistic, the survey contained five sections which asked questions about students' expectations, aims and motivations, resource allocation, assessment and feedback and covered topics that were identified as potential issues in the literature review. The survey was then uploaded onto Surveymonkey.com, which is an international provider of web-based survey solutions. Using this service not only ensures complete anonymity for the respondents, but provides effective analytical tools that enable fast analysis of the data. The vast majority of the questions required one click responses, and were multiple-choice to minimise the time required to submit a response and encourage a high response rate.

The survey was conducted form late July to mid-August, 2010. It was promoted to all the 311 students enrolled in the Environment and Planning (EP) and the International Urban and Environmental Management (IUEM) (ie. the EP-IUEM program) via the program email list and sent by the Discipline Head. The emails contained a link to the survey home page, and two follow-up emails were sent to remind students to contribute. The survey was completed by 109 students; a response rate of 35%. The information in Figure 1 indicates that the sample of respondents was representative of the students enrolled in the programs.

The Programs

Both the Masters Social Science (Environment & Planning) and Masters Social Science (International Urban and Environmental Management) have a component Graduate Certificate and a Graduate Diploma.

For the purposes of the survey data for the three components of the Masters Social Science (Environment & Planning) were aggregated as 'EP' data; likewise for the Masters Social Science (International Urban and Environmental Management) – IUEM data.

Data for the Programs

The 311 students are enrolled as follows (showing percent of total):

Masters Environment & Planning	61%
Masters International Urban & Environmental Management	23%

Graduate Diploma in Environment & Planning	10%
Graduate Certificate in Environment & Planning	4%
Graduate Diploma International Urban & Environmental Management	0.3%
Graduate Certificate International Urban & Environmental Management	1%

Data for the Sample

The 109 students who took part in the survey were enrolled as follows:	
Masters Environment & Planning	62%
Masters International Urban & Environmental Management	24%
Graduate Diploma in Environment & Planning	10%
Graduate Certificate in Environment & Planning	5%

(101% due to rounding)

(None of the students who responded were enrolled in the Graduate Diploma or Graduate Certificate in International Urban and Environmental Management.)

Of the sample:

- 30% were aged between 31 – 35 years old, 28% 26 – 30 years old.
- 70% were female and 30% male
- 63% lived in Metro Melbourne, whilst 10% lived overseas
- 93% were domestic students living in Australia,
- 87% have English as a first language
- 33% took place in an orientation event
- 67% were completing the course predominately face to face contact
- 43% intended to finish the program in the year following the survey (2011)

Students can elect to focus their studies on one of three 'streams'. The main stream of study identified was planning (60% of sample), environment (20%), international (5%), and no particular stream (14%).

The majority of respondents studied via face to face means (67%).

Respondents' reasons for choosing the program of study over those of another institution included: the topics covered (67%), city location (44%), online options (36%) and flexible delivery (29%).

Respondents' current working status included - working within a related field to their study (45%), working in an unrelated field (31%), studying full time (16%), and unemployed (8%). Of those working, 27% worked for state government, 18% for local government and 12% for an Australian consultant (some did not respond).

Figure I: Case study background

4. RESULTS OF THE SURVEY: Occasionally more than one of the 42 survey questions related to one of the nine specific issues identified previously (e.g. pedagogy). Hence in the following we have not presented data for separate questions, but combined the relevant results to be reported under the specific issue.

In addition to the specific issues derived from the literature we had asked whether students felt their expectations were being met. The results of this exercise are reported below, followed by the data relevant to the specific issues. To give these results context we asked what the students hoped to gain from their studies. Of the respondents 62% indicated wanting career change, 42% personal satisfaction and 35% indicated skills/ knowledge needed to enter the work force (multiple responses were permitted so the total is greater than 100%).

4.1. EXPECTATIONS MET*:* Subsequently, 62% of the respondents felt that the program was meeting their needs for studying. For the 38% who felt their needs were not met, comments were made relating to the currency and relevance of some program components and the need for an optional placement / internship for those needing industry experience.

In terms of meeting their overall expectations, 50% the respondents said the program was doing so. Of the remaining, 40% felt they were partially met, 7% were not sure, and 4% stated 'no'. What has met expectations is the knowledge of academic staff and the assessment requirements. Negative comments focussed on the level of contact with academic staff, the organisation of some subjects, the currency of teaching materials, and the need for increased flexibility with subjects. A subsidiary question asked if they felt the program offered value for money, and the responses were roughly equally distributed across 'yes', 'partially' and 'no'.

To provide some insight into these responses we sought their thoughts on their experiences in the program. When asked to recount an occasion that they really enjoyed or felt worked really well for them, 81 responded, making positive comments in four key areas of program delivery: teaching styles, delivery method, course resources and

materials and assessment tasks. Comments were made about online subjects, and those that were mentioned favourably had been well designed for online delivery, rather than a simple reworking of an existing face to face subject. The willingness of tutors to participate in online discussions also affects the quality of an online subject – those with little to no feedback are clearly a problem for online students. Assessment tasks that were open and allowed students to explore topics of interest but were also clear on exactly what was required were identified as enjoyable assessment experiences.

Fewer (no. 71) responded to the negative question (what was not enjoyable or did not work), yet many raised more than one issue. The main negative comments related to tutorials (receiving the largest number of comments), online discussions, and group work. Other less-frequently mentioned issues related to poor subject information, continuity in classroom sessions, subject design and organisation, assessment, accessing and managing resources and online learning experiences.

4.2. INFRASTRUCTURE, FACILITIES AND POLICIES*:* Resources allocated to the program were most often rated as good, except the learning space and facilities which were ranked lower. Although feedback on technological use in the classroom was rated as good, other comments about the out-dated and unreliable audio visual facilities were also received. The best ranked resource was the expertise of teaching staff, with 32% of students ranking it as excellent.

4.3. STUDENT CAPABILITIES AND CHARACTERISTICS*:* The survey posed the question "What would you say is your current level of need is in developing the following?" and listed four areas of development: professional knowledge; academic skills; reflective skills; transferable skills. This question therefore identifies not only the gaps, but perceived areas of strength.

One hundred students responded, and results for this multiple-choice question were scaled where Great (need) was 1, Considerable - 2, Noticeable - 3, Little - 4, None - 5. Analysis of the results provided in Table 1. These data show that professional knowledge is eagerly sought by the respondents, which is similar to the findings of Coulthard (1). However, reflective and academic skills are of less interest and academic skills are of minor importance (at least for many of the respondents), a finding consistent with the work of Zemke and Zemke (28) who identify students' motivations to be a preference for real world issues, personal growth, and engaging learning.

	Scaled score	**Highest percentage of responses**
Professional knowledge	2.0	Great (need) 39%
Academic skills	3.1	Little 40%
Reflective skills	2.9	Little 35%
Transferable skills	2.9	Little 32%

Table I – Importance of Skills

4.4. ORIENTATION & BELONGING*:* Of those responding, only 33% took part in an orientation program. Orientation activities reported included the pre-semester orientation session, a program information evening, some Orientation Week activities, and library tours. Several comments were recorded about the need for more program specific activities and facilities. This is consistent with the finding of Cluett and Skene (2) that PCW students often miss out on forming a relationship with their program.

4.5. PROGRAM CLARITY AND APPROPRIATENESS: For 73% of the respondents the information provided about the program was felt to provide a good outline of the program. Although several suggested the program title needs to be more specific, to reflect what is being studied, and a number of comments related to the depth of information provided in subject outlines and the timetabling information. This suggests that the proposals of Munn et.al. (22), about clear information, have generally been followed.

The range of subjects was mentioned as a deciding factor in choosing the program. However, when asked about the range of subjects offered 39% of respondents felt it was satisfying their needs, 48% felt it was partially doing so, and 13% felt it was not satisfactory. Related comments indicated that the program content tended to be broad and shallow, without providing the depth of knowledge or skills that some were seeking. In relation to these results, Cluett and Skene (2) had found noticeable misunderstanding about the level of theory and practice in programs. The same may be the case for the EP-IUEM students, however, additional research will be required to assess this possibility.

4.6. DELIVERY METHOD & ORGANISATION: Respondents were asked to rank seven delivery methods where Most (enjoyed) was 1, and Least (enjoyed) was 7. Analysis of the results provided in Table 2. The most popular form of delivery was lectures, with 38% of students rating this as their most enjoyed method, while 13% said the same of

tutorials and seminars. Possibly because post graduate students are seeking high-level (expert) information, they value lectures; even though Knowles (24) identified their autonomous approaches, and Poole and Spear (23) had noted a preference for more flexible arrangements. Lectures considered of high quality have been the ones were the lecturer introduced and facilitated the session with enthusiasm, a clear level of expertise and with images that bring the topic to life. The lecturers' expertise is a key attractor for many postgraduate students.

Delivery method	Scaled score
Lecture	2.2
Tutorial	3.0
Seminar	3.0
Class Debate	3.9
Small Group Discussion	3.9
Group Work	5.9
Online	4.2

Table II – Preferred delivery method

Respondents commented that the quality of tutorials/seminars varied depending on the tutors' skills and ability, and where there was a clear aim for the session. Tutorials were enjoyed when there was a discussion(s) or a practical activity, with tutor and students sharing ideas and debating issues and solutions. These comments reflect other research such as Poole and Spear (23) who emphasise the learning that occurs through person to person situations. Allocating part of the tutorial time for open discussion and for guidance with assignments was favoured.

The least enjoyed form of delivery was group work; 45% of respondents identifying this as their least enjoyed, and only 1% saying it was Most enjoyed. However, there was an ambiguous response to online delivery being Most enjoyed by 21% and Least enjoyed by 29%, which appeared to be related to their access preferences (i.e. whether they took subjects by online mode of not); however, of those mainly enrolling online, 59% ranked the online method as Most enjoyed. Positive comments related to the flexibility provided, and being 'part' of the class enrolled in, by accessing the lectures remotely while interacting with students electronically to discuss issues, ideas and materials. Negative responses may have been affected by the currency of information and access to academics, noted previously.

4.7. PEDAGOGY*:* A key expectation of adults about learning is the application of their new found knowledge. In this context, when asked "do you feel you are able to transfer knowledge / skills gained to the workplace quickly?" 59% of respondents agreed that they could, 30% were not sure, 5% felt they could not, and 6% stated not applicable. A subsequent question asked for their preferences regarding the focus of the program – that is theory or practice based. The vast majority of respondents (76%) preferred the program to link theory to practical aspects, while 6% preferred a theory base and 18% prefer practical focus. The practical emphasis for PCW students was also found by Fogarty and Pete (20) and Zemke and Zemke (28).

Responses were also sought about preferences regarding a pedagogy that was student or teacher focused. A teacher focus was preferred by 65% a teacher directed learning approach over a student directed focus (35%). This is surprising given the report of Knowles (24), and more recent work [(14), (25)] indicating the preference for students to be actively engaged.

4.8. GUIDANCE, ASSESSMENT AND FEEDBACK*:* Support and guidance is an issue for postgraduate students. Comments indicated the respondents wanted guidance about the selection of subjects regarding their areas of interest and future work possibilities; both Coulthard (1) and Reid et.al. (14) had previously identified the need for career counselling. Those enrolled in online subjects sought direction in the electronic discussions, commenting they need the same kind of direction and control that would be provided by the tutor in a face to face class to ensure the discussion stays on topic. A general comment related to the need for staff to be available for student consultations.

Guidance about their academic abilities comes through assessment and related feedback, which is important for mature students to identify areas in need of improvement. As can be seen from Table 3, there was a strong preference for essays or written reports.

Type of assessment	% respondents who had *experienced* the assessment method	% respondents who *preferred* the assessment method
Essay	99	72
Written report	73	50
Oral presentation	64	23
Other written forms	34	20
Group work	45	10
Other (including test/exam)	8	10

Note – respondents could indicate up to 2 preferences

Table III – Preferred assessment method

Comments provided suggested that the preferred assessment package would be one that is not so heavily weighted towards one or two essays, but based on more smaller regular and continuous contributions by the student and feedback from the lecturer. Adults are continually self-appraising as they learn Fogarty and Pete (20), so frequent assessment is often preferred by mature students Munn et.at. (22), as indicated by the respondents. Suggestions for the preferred approach included linking the type of assessment to what industry does, for example: writing client reports / news articles / statistical reports and email responses to a problem, as well as student contributions to the discussion board. The desirability for assessment requirements to be flexible enough to link theory with professional practice, which accords with these comments, has been noted by Reid et.al. (14) yet there was a strong dislike of group work, which is prevalent in industry. We can speculate that this dislike stems from the difficulties PCW students can find in meeting to undertake group projects, and the possibility for inconsistent contributions of group members, if the assessment method does not take this into account. As indicated above (in Pedagogy), assessment tasks that encourage active involvement and discussion within the class, and interactive class sessions to add to the quality of the collective learning are identified in the literature. This relates closely to the observations of McInnis et.at. (17) regarding the rich learning environment created by the experiences that postgraduate students bring to the class-room. So again it is surprising that the respondents showed little interest in these options.

The dislike for group work was also apparent when we sought opinions about who should be responsible for the assessment, see Table 4. The preference for teacher-based assessment is consistent with the preference for essays and reports which would be assessed by the academic/teacher.

Responsibility for assessment	**% respondents who had *experienced* the assessment method**	**% respondents who *preferred* the assessment method**
Teacher-based assessment	99	97
Self (student-based) assessment	19	12
Peer assessment	16	11
Group assessment	17	9

Note – respondents could indicate up to 2 preferences

Table IV – Preferred responsibility for assessment

Irrespective of the assessment method, Reid et.al. (14) proposed that there needs to be consistency of standards between subjects and teachers, and that the assessment is fair and transparent. The development of assessment criteria is important for both points and, according to the respondents, assessment criteria were provided always for 26% of respondents, usually for 61%, and sometimes for 13%. No respondent indicated having an assessment task with no criteria provided. In addition the design and purpose of the assessment tacks was explained and clear for 89% but not for 11%.

The need for a high level of feedback has been noted by others, like Fogarty and Pete (20). For 55% of the survey respondents an appropriate level of feedback had been received, while 30% were not sure, and 15% disagreed that feedback had been appropriate.

The time frame in which students received feedback is important, if they are to improve their academic performance. When asked if they felt they received timely feedback on their work, 75% of respondents felt they did, 13% felt they did not, and 12% were unsure. These responses regarding feedback suggest that there was compatibility with the need, identified by Reid et.al. (14), that teachers are personally supportive, and that the specific difficulties faced by mature PCW students are taken into account McGivney (27).

Comments received suggested that the level, quality and timeliness of the feedback varies greatly (from excellent to none at all). Also indicated was that students expect and need feedback that is: constructive; clear and easy to understand; and provided quickly. A lack of clarity, about the role of assessment and the role of feedback, was also suggested, and which may have influenced the number of the 'unsure' responses. Comments were also made about a general occurrence of one or two major pieces of work in the second half of the subject, whereas these respondents had a preference for more regular smaller pieces of assessment work – suggesting an assessment approach which would allow for frequent feedback and which could be used to build up to one final assessment.

4.9. COMPLETION OF PROGRAM: Regarding the observation of McGivney (27) about the importance of information in relation to completion, responses reported above (under Expectations met and Program Clarity and Appropriateness) indicated that generally the respondents were satisfied with the information provided. As an issue affecting their ability to complete the program respondents reported greater concern about: work commitments (74%), domestic commitments (33%), the timetabling of subjects (32%), cost (15%), on line access (11%), other (6%) (multiple responses were allowed). Many commented on the issue of subjects they wished to take being time-tabled at the same time, resulting in some having to take online courses when their preferred format is face to face; Cluett and Skene (2) noted a similar concern.

Despite these pressures and irritants, there were strong motivations to continue with the program for respondents. Several motivations were important, as indicated below (multiple responses were allowed):

- 83% relevance to their career goals
- 59% enjoyment of the program
- 38% ability to transfer and use knowledge
- 25% choice and flexibility in how to learn
- 18% interaction with other students
- 13% engagement with academic staff
- 14% other (around half who selected other, commented on the fact that it would be a waste of money to quit the course and not come out with their qualification aspirations.)

Enjoyment and engagement with staff and other students were identified and consistent with the argument that a student's ability to integrate (socially & academically) into a learning environment has a major influence on whether they complete their program Tinto (21). Further, the important consequences of studying, according to the results of Cluett and Skene (2), were making friends and networks amongst other students; an enjoyment of the subjects covered; and an enjoyment of the stimulation of learning. These findings which are generally consistent with those of our survey. In addition, the importance of increasing job opportunities, and enhancing professional practice, as identified by Coulthard (1) are apparent in our survey results.

5. DIRECTIONS FOR POSTGRADUATE EDUCATORS: Providing good quality post graduate programs is largely about the understanding and fit between the students' and the university's expectations of each other McGivney (27).

For our case study, the knowledge and expertise of academic staff generally fitted the students' expectations, however, dissatisfaction was apparent with the currency of some of this expertise and its relevance to industry and the outside world. Other issues with staff were raised, mainly the ability to access them one-to-one, questionable teaching methods and varying levels of involvement in online discussions and email communication. These findings are consistent with those of Cluett and Skene (2) regarding the gaps students identify between their expectations, and the actual provision of resources. We can speculate that human nature is such that it would be unlikely for people to be entirely happy with what was provided, however, the results point to issues (above) where improvement can be sought. It was also apparent that while the overall expectations of many students were being met, there was a noticeable group for which there was a gap; a finding consistent with that of Coulthard (1) who found several issues (such as access to academics and feedback) reducing the satisfaction of students.

As suggested by the range of results there are many issues that provide guidance for developing PCW programs. At one level a lot could be said about the clarity and currency of information; yet this would be something that could be taken as general good practice. However, two issues come through in different sections of the results. Both are important for organisation and running of the EP-IUEM program, and would appear to be as relevant to other PCW programs.

First is the focus on career development, and the associated study to assist students to achieve their career goals. Our survey results indicate that students have a strong interest in career development, and support the findings of others, for example [(1), (2)]. Specifically the respondents were undertaking PCW to assist in a career change. They wanted to develop skills and professional knowledge that would have a direct relevance to their employment, and career goals. In this context, of using PCW to help their career development, they were seeking flexibility in their studies, and wanted to see the practical aspects (career relevance) of the theories they were being introduced to.

Second is the pedagogy and its associated delivery mechanisms. Our respondents indicated strong preferences for being guided in their learning. They generally preferred a teacher focused approach to their learning, with preferences for lectures, essays, and teacher derived assessment. Comments about feedback suggest the students preferred to be reliant on others (specifically the teacher) for feedback. At one level this is a surprise as the literature indicates that a learner-centred pedagogy is appropriate [(14), (24), (27)]. Also, their career focus suggests that this emphasis, on the individual, would lead to students wanting a high degree of control for their own leaning. However, observations suggest PCW study is demanding of students who frequently have full-time employment, with increasing demands on their time from employers, and family commitments so that the time and energy available to put into study is less than ideal. As a result, they are likely to want to achieve their study and career goals efficiently, and relying on a teacher to guide them has this advantage.

These findings indicate that those designing PCW programs should give careful attention to the extent to which their program will satisfy students' goals for career development and the relevance of their studies to those careers. As our case study illustrates, the main focus for students' studying is probably not specifically academic; acquiring academic knowledge, or a love of learning. Further, we need to be thoughtful about the way their education is provided. Others have found that a learner-centred pedagogy is preferable. However, our case study suggests otherwise. It may be that the learner-centred approach is more appropriate for students who have fewer demands or pressures on them from employers or family (e.g. we would generally expect this with undergraduate students).

Alternatively, the design of a learner-centred pedagogy for PCW may need particular thought so that the students felt that it was worth the effort (if this was an accurate assumption). On this point, additional research would be most valuable: to see whether our case study respondents' preferences are similar to other PCW students; and to examine the value of learner-centred approaches in PCW programs, and how it could be developed. For the benefit of future PCW students we intend to research these issues, and would welcome others following a similar interest.

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