An Academic Essentials Case Study

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| Title | **Applied projects: Working with local businesses** |
| Brief | In a second-year module, students work in groups with a local business to help them develop a digital marketing strategy. The students are given a formative assessment task to provide opportunities to use assessment *for learning* and provide feedforward (Sambell at al, 2012). For this they produce a screencast – recording an 8-10 minute presentation with audio, that outlines the draft version of the report they will complete as an assessed summative task. This is presented to the business and followed by questions and formative feedback. The students then have a further period to enhance their video and the written report prior to submission.   |
| Profile | **Tutor names** | Sue Beckingham |
| **Email address** | s.beckingham@shu.ac.uk |
| **College** | BTE |
| **Department** | Computing |
| **Size of cohort** | 40-60 |
| **Technologies used** | PowerPoint, Screencast-o-matic, Zoom |
| **Hallam Model** | **Engage, Challenge and Collaborate** |

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| The Aim |
| The objective is to get the students to pull together a succinct ‘executive summary’ of the work they have done. Time is built in for questions. This approach provides an opportunity to get early formative feedback from both the tutor and the Client. Furthermore it allows the students to clarify any points that have not been resolved via email.  |

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| Benefits |
| * The formative assessment provides a milestone for the students and avoids ‘last minute’ work.
* The students can act on the formative feedback and improve the clarity/content of the report.
* The tutor can identify weak spots and direct students to further research or suggest ways to present the findings.
* In the final taught sessions the tutor can re-focus on areas that will help the student enhance their written report.
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| The Approach |
| The students work in groups of 4-5 and are assigned a small local business or charity to work with to develop their digital marketing strategy. In advance of the first meeting with their client, they undertake some research about the business and collate a list of questions. Meetings either take place within SHU or via Zoom. The students go on to undertake further research, a competitor analysis, and then apply the theory to develop a strategy and six-month action plan. Approximately 2 weeks prior to the summative submission date, the students create a screencast (or voice over PowerPoint) of their research, summarising the key findings and the recommendations they are proposing the business implements. The formative presentations are 8-10 minutes long with 15 minutes for discussion/questions/formative feedback. These take place in class time.  |

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| The Outcome / Impact |
| Take up for this formative assessment (with the exception of sickness) has always been 100%. The Client has the opportunity to ask questions and the students. Having built a working relationship with these small businesses, the students are always keen to improve their work prior to the final submission. They have valued the formative feedback and used this to further enhance their work.  |

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| Future Developments |
| This approach has been in place for the last 5 years and continues to work well with good feedback from the clients and the students. |

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| Recommendations |
| * Keep the presentations short and build in time for questions.
* Remind the students that they need to pull out the ‘key points’ only and state that further detail will be in the report.
* Encourage the students to make use of tables, images and screenshots to avoid reading from the slides.
* Ask students to assign one member of the group to take notes during the questions/formative feedback.
* Encourage the students to reflect on the skills they have developed through this applied project. Highlight that this could be a useful addition to their CV or used as an example during an interview to demonstrate specific skills.
* Highly recommend working with the [Applied Live Projects team](https://www.shu.ac.uk/Study-here/Why-choose-us/Employability/Employability-is-built-into-your-course/Venture-Matrix) (previously called the Venture Matrix).
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