Do Australian universities over sell job prospects?

Associate Professor Trevor Cullen
Australian Learning and Teaching Fellow
Edith Cowan University
Dr. Trevor Cullen’s research on health journalism
UG Tertiary education – 3 Tiers

Provide a broad educational base

Develop entrepreneurial/research/thinking skills

Teach basic industry skills
"An element of fraud in journalism education – it’s implausible that all journalism students will have a career in journalism - Universities need to be a lot more honest. We have a duty to be candid.”

– Journalism Professor at the University of Kent, UK (2009)
Universities are turning out students who often are unable to find relevant work and lacking in some of the most basic professional requirements
The revised AQF requires that undergraduate programs are designed such that graduates can demonstrate the application of knowledge and skills. This assurance of graduate outcomes, along with the improvement of work integrated learning, will enhance graduate employability.
New Work Order report (2015)

• **40% of existing jobs** will disappear - in the next 10-15 years

• Young people expected to have **an average of 17 different occupations** over the course of their life time
Unpredictable future job market?

“It is clear that we cannot see the shapes of the professions of the future.”

“This raises questions about capabilities to be built by our graduates.”

“Degrees are for life …..not just a single job.”

Prof. Margaret Gardner - Vice Chancellor of Monash University
Tertiary Courses in Australia

Think about your own discipline

Do we promise too much in our publicity?

Do we need to review and rewrite what we promote?
The Survey - 2009 & 2016

Viewed the online description of tertiary undergraduate journalism programs in Australia

Key question:

How strongly did their promotional material link journalism study with a career as a journalist
The links

Link between studying journalism and becoming a journalist

Strong
Medium
Weak
Our Journalism degree will train you to work as a journalist and writer in mainstream media.

As a Journalism graduate, you can follow a career in the media industry or as a freelance writer or producer.

You will be able to work in Australia and overseas in all fields of journalism.
The journalism degree gives you the skills and on-the-ground experience you need to succeed in modern journalism.

By the time you graduate, you’ll have the confidence and skills to put your knowledge to work. Future careers can be found in news organisations, television, radio, publishing and more.

Talk about opportunities students can follow
Weak Link

• The major/degree sharpens your career focus

• Studying journalism means you get the right balance of practical and theoretical subjects and you get to design your own degree.

• The course offers practical knowledge and theoretical understanding of journalism

Information is vague and uncommitted
Journalism at ECU

• This major introduces students to the world of online and digital journalism. It focuses on building knowledge, developing research and analytical skills and acquiring practical skills for an ever-changing media landscape.

• Covers working in audio, video and online environments, and the legal and ethical frameworks of Journalism.
Surveys - 2009 & 2016

2009
27 universities
Job prospects
Strong link 14
Medium 6
Weak 7

2016
30 universities
Job prospects
Strong link 7
Medium 17
Weak 6
Other Sources of information

- High School career days
- Annual Open Day
- Newspaper or TV advertising
- Social Media
- Word and mouth
- Reputation
Other Reasons

- Promotional material is here to stay.

- Universities will entice students regardless of career prospects.

- Educators talk about realistic job expectations.
What does this mean for students?
Traditional linear pathways??????

Once upon a time

Study Medicine - Doctor
Study Accounting - Accountant
Study Journalism - Journalist
Study Engineering - Engineer
Finish Law - become a lawyer
What can we do?

Employment
Focus on defined job prospects

Employability
• Skills
• Life long learning
• Remain relevant to the workplace
Employment

Fully ready ?

Job ready ?

Start ready?
Redesign Courses

Journalism

- Less mainstream jobs
- Less professional placements
- Continual job cuts

Content Creators

- Writing
- Speaking
- Digital
- Publish across platforms
- Social media
- Entrepreneurial -
- Start ups
- Samsung journalism
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Job Title</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Corporate Communications Advisor</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Audio Operator</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Digital Journalist</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Data Journalist</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Digital Lead, Sport</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Frontend Developer <em>(Immediate start)</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shooter/Editor, The Feed</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Story Producer, The Feed</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Rethink work and careers

Digital disrupted workforce

Universities have to / encourage provide more cross-disciplinary skills

Digital and social media skills
Graduates of the future

Broad intellectual and critical thinking skills

Problem solvers

Team players

Entrepreneurs

Communicating, social media, networking skills
Two Take home questions

Does your university promise too much?

Do we need rethink what we teach?
TRUST ME I'M A LECTURER
Don't Make Me Use My Teacher Voice!