Integrating Employability Skills into the Business Curriculum

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ABSTRACT

The development of employability skills is an important graduate outcome of most contemporary university degrees. Given the critical role of academics to teach and assess curriculum, academics are held responsible for furthering the employability skills development of university graduates. Yet little is known about the extent to which academics consider graduate employability skills to be an important aspect of the academic role, and the factors that influence academics' teaching and assessment of employability skills.

This study has investigated to what extent academics integrate employability skills into the university business curriculum. Based on the Theories of Action Framework, this research investigated academics' beliefs and self-reported practices and compared these to their actual teaching and assessment practices. Qualitative data were collected through interviews with academics and content analysis of curriculum documents was conducted to investigate beliefs and self-reported practices. The data, drawn from direct observation of teaching and assessment practices and follow-up interviews, were analysed to investigate actual teaching and assessment practices to learn about the factors that influence the teaching and assessment of employability skills.

The findings demonstrate that academics hold a common understanding of employability skills, and acknowledge that the skills are an important part of teaching and assessment practice. However, employability skills are not systematically and consistently integrated in teaching and assessment practice. The disjuncture between beliefs and practice can be explained by the individual nature of teaching and assessment practice that is influenced by the academic discipline and a number of contextual and external factors. As such, academics face a number of competing challenges, constraints and demands within the scope of their practice that impede the consistent and systematic integration of employability skills within the business curriculum.

In terms of contribution, the study has conceptualised a typology for identifying gaps in employability skills integration in the curriculum to address the graduate skills gap identified by industry and to ameliorate the incongruence between what academics want to do and what they actually do in practice. The study argues that universities need to recognise the complexity of academic work within their disciplinary boundaries. This recognition is important if universities seek to foster greater integration of employability skills development in the university curriculum by the academics who are directly involved in curriculum design, delivery, and assessment.

DECLARATION

i. the thesis comprises only my original work toward the PhD,

ii. due acknowledgment has been made in the text to all other material used,

iii. the thesis is fewer than 100,000 words in length, exclusive of tables, bibliographies, and appendices

Signed ……

Date …….

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GLOSSARY OF TERMS

Term	Definition
Curriculum Learning Outcomes	The goals that we want students to achieve. Includes subject objectives and generic skills objectives
Formal Curriculum	The formal curriculum is the curriculum where formal learning takes place in a university program through subject materials, lectures, tutorials, seminars, and assessment tasks. The informal curriculum is anything that takes place outside the subject of the discipline within degree programs.
Industry Frameworks	Frameworks developed by industry, sometimes in conjunction with Government that define employability skills, and/or guide and direct the integration of employability skills in the university curriculum. The three Industry Frameworks referred to in this thesis are: The Mayer Competencies (1992), The Employability Skills Framework (2002) and The Core Skills for Work Framework (2013)
Program Level	In this thesis, the Program Level refers to the degree program under the Bachelor of Commerce Degree. Students can complete a degree major in the Accounting, Economics, Finance, Management or Marketing programs offered.
Subject Coordinators	Academics who design and deliver the subject curriculum
Subject Objectives	The subject objectives inform students what we expect that they know about the subject upon completion
Technical Skills	The skills related specifically to the discipline or a profession
Tutors	Teaching assistants/adjuncts who deliver and assess, but do not design, the curriculum

Chapter One: Introduction

Employability skills development has become an important graduate outcome of most contemporary university degrees. A focus on graduate employability skills development represents one significant shift in the role of the university as evidenced by the fact that curriculum learning outcomes are more closely aligned with industry needs and graduate employment rates (Oliver, 2011, 2015). Key drivers of this shift are industry and employers who argue that the fast-paced and rapidly changing contemporary workplace environment requires employees who are not only equipped with discipline knowledge and technical skills, but who also possess employability skills that enable them to succeed in a rapidly and continually changing contemporary workplace. For the purposes of this study, the main employability skills are identified as analysis, critical thinking, problem-solving, communication and teamwork skills (BCA, 2016; BIHECC, 2007; Campbell & Kresyman, 2015; Candy, 2000; de la Harpe & David, 2012). These employability skills are more often deemed to be critical enablers for graduates to gain and maintain employment in contemporary workplaces.

To ensure graduates meet the employability skills requirements of the contemporary workplace, there is an increased necessity for universities to foster a commitment from academics[1] to integrate employability skills development in the design, delivery and assessment of curriculum. As a result, there has been a shift in university curriculum, which now focuses on the inclusion of learning outcomes specifically

[1] In this study academics refers to subject coordinators/lecturers (who design and deliver the curriculum) and tutors (teaching assistants/adjuncts) who deliver and assess, but do not design, the curriculum.

aimed at developing graduates who possess a set of employability skills that will enable them to respond to the continually changing labour force.

While universities are now focusing more on developing students' professional knowledge and skills that are considered to be relevant and valued in the modern workplace, employers continue to report that graduates often lack the employability skills to make them work-ready (ACER, 2001; Curtis & McKenzie, 2001; DEST, 2002, 2006; GCA, 2016b) The graduate skills gap has generated discussion and debate about the extent to which universities are willing or able to integrate employability skills within the curriculum (Ansell, 2016; B-HERT, 2002a, 2002b; BIHECC, 2007). Moreover, whether university curriculum includes employability skills required for graduate work readiness is being questioned (Jackson, 2009b, 2012, 2013c, 2014a; Jackson & Chapman, 2012a, 2012b; Messum, Wilkes, Peters, & Jackson, 2016). Little is known however, about how academics integrate employability skills in teaching and assessment practice. This thesis aims to shed light on the extent to which employability skills are in fact integrated in curriculum by investigating to what extent academics integrate employability skills in actual teaching and assessment practice.

This introductory chapter sets the context of the study by presenting a discussion of the changing demands of higher education in Australia. The overall purpose of this chapter is to propose a research agenda to investigate to what extent academics integrate employability skills in the university curriculum. The following section includes an overview of how the demands on higher education have contributed to the

university curriculum reform. This chapter closes with an outline of the study and a description of how the thesis is structured and organised.

1.1 The changing demands of higher education in Australia

Higher education in Australia has undergone dramatic changes in the past two decades. Alongside government policy that fosters the widening participation of people into higher education (Gregory & Jones, 2009), one of the most noticeable changes is the drive for universities to produce work-ready graduates as a response to the changing economy and workplace.

The economy and workplace have largely shifted from agricultural and manufacturing industries to a 'knowledge-based economy'[2] (Birrell & Edwards, 2009; Coaldrake & Stedman, 2013; Enders, de Boer, & Weyer, 2013; Marginson, 2000). In a 'knowledge-based economy', high-technology industries have expanded the fastest and there has been an upsurge in service sectors, such as education, communication, and information technology industries (ABS, 2012). The 'knowledge-based economy' has stimulated demands from industry and employer groups for an increase in the number of university-educated employees (Birrell & Edwards, 2009; Coaldrake & Stedman, 2013; Marginson, 2000). Consequently, changes in the perceived role and purpose of higher education have emerged as the university has shifted from an institution that educates elite members of society to one that educates the mass population in preparation for the expanding work roles in a knowledge-based economy (Becher & Trowler, 2001; Candy, 2000).

[2] A knowledge-based economy (KBE) defines economies as dependent on the production, distribution and use of knowledge, with high-technology industries expanding the fastest, and the upsurge of the service sector such as education, communication and information (OECD, 1996). High-technology investment, industries, and requirements for a highly skilled labour force characterise a KBE. KBE is viewed as the main driver of wealth creation and employment across all industries because of technological, cultural, social and managerial knowledge (ABS, 2012). It is argued that a KBE has influenced changes beyond economic growth and has led to structural changes to economies and society and, in turn, has had a significant impact on the way people live and work.

A distinction between a university-educated workforce and a work-ready workforce has come to the fore with the shift to mass education. A university-educated workplace is defined as one that requires employees to be educated with the university's discipline-specific knowledge and technical skills required of roles in the contemporary workplace. On the other hand, a work-ready workforce is defined as one that is prepared with both discipline-specific and employability skills required for the contemporary work setting (de la Harpe & David, 2012; Paglis, 2013). The requirement for a work-ready workforce has been documented in industry reports that discuss graduate employability skills of the future (Bennett, Richardson, & McKinnon, 2016; Kinash, Crane, Judd, & Knight, 2016b; KPMG, 2014). While discipline specific skills continue to be considered important (AIG, 2006, 2009; Pool & Sewell, 2007), the employability skills that influence work readiness and enhance gradates' ability to gain and maintain employment have gained significant attention in recent years.

The skills that determine work readiness are defined as a set of employability skills that enable graduates to respond to the rapidly changing workplace. (AlphaBeta, 2016; Curtis & McKenzie, 2001; Goedegebuure, Massaro, Meek, & Pettigrew, 2017). The falling of employment rate outcomes, the increased competition for jobs and an increase in university student numbers has meant more graduates are available for the workplace than the workplace requires, resulting in more attention being given to employability skills (Norton, 2017). Graduate employability skills, therefore, are considered a pre-condition to meet the anticipated demand for employable graduates required to drive forward the knowledge economy, and have become a core focus of industry requirements.

Increasingly, employers report that hiring decisions are made more often on the basis of graduates' employability skills than on discipline-specific skills (Bennett, 2002; Curtis & McKenzie, 2001; Finch, Leah, Baldwin, & Zehner, 2013; GCA, 2016b; McMurray, Dutton, McQuaid, & Richard, 2016). Employers also report that the university degrees are becoming less relevant to employers in situations when graduates lack the right employability skills for the workplace (Burke, 2016; Krook, 2017a, 2017b; Singhal, 2017). Success at work is often considered by industry and employers to be influenced more by the possession of employability skills than by the specific degree undertaken (AlphaBeta, 2016; GCA, 2015; Harvey, 2000). Yet, despite the shifts in opinion about the relevance of a university degree, graduate employers continue to look to higher education institutions to ensure graduates are work-ready; with 61.1 percent of graduate employers suggesting that the greatest area of improvement is for higher education institutions to give graduates industry-based experience (GCA, 2016b).

In Australia, the expected role of universities in preparing university graduates with employability skills is visible in government-funded reviews such as the Business, Industry and Higher Education Collaboration Council report on Graduate Employability skills (BIHECC, 2007), the Bradley review (Bradley, Noonan, Nugent, & Scales, 2008), The Higher Education base funding review (Lomax-Smith, 2011) and the Review of the Demand Driven Funding report (Kemp & Norton, 2014). The reports emphasise the important role of employability skills in developing work-ready graduates for contemporary workplaces. The employability skills in government reports emphasise higher levels of skills acquired from a bachelor degree qualification and above, rather than those skills gained via Vocational Education and Training

(VET) qualifications (Birrell & Edwards, 2009). The expectation is that future employees are not only knowledgeable and efficient in the use of technology, have the capacity for lifelong learning, be adaptable and flexible, but also possess skills that enable them to communicate both in written and verbal form, be able to work well with others, are able to problem-solve, critically analyse, and make decisions in both local and global contexts (BIHECC, 2007; Candy, 2000; Curtis & McKenzie, 2001). Universities, therefore, are faced with the challenge of ensuring that teaching and assessment practices respond to the requirement to prepare future graduates with a complex set of employability skills. The changing role of the university in producing employable graduates as discussed above, particularly by instilling a set of complex employability skills in curriculum, has been an important catalyst for higher education curriculum reform.

1.2 The changing context of university curriculum

The change in the perceived role of the university has seen a review of university curriculum. Industry frameworks guide the integration of employability skills in curriculum (CSfW, 2013; Curtis & McKenzie, 2001; Cushnahan, 2009; DEST, 2002; Mayer, 1992). The industry frameworks also direct better relationships and engagement between industry and higher education curriculum development (B-HERT, 2002a; Moore & Morton, 2017). National regulatory bodies such as the Australian Tertiary Education Quality and Standards Agency (TEQSA), regulate the higher education sector. The Australian Qualifications Framework (AQF) guides education institutions (across all sectors) to promote 'life-long learning' (AQF, 2013; CSfW, 2013) and the inclusion of broad-based knowledge and skills related to professional work (AQF, 2013). Specifically, the learning outcomes for the

Bachelor's Degree are expressed in the AQF with the use of the terms 'knowledge, skills and the application of the knowledge' (AQF, 2013). Knowledge refers to what a graduate is expected to know and understand, and is expressed in terms of depth, breadth, kinds of knowledge, and complexity (AQF, 2013). Skills are defined as 'what a graduate can do' and include intuition, logical and critical thinking, technical skills, written and verbal communication skills, literacy and numeracy skills, and interpersonal skills (AQF, 2013).

The changing context of university curriculum has meant an increase in demands for accountability and efficiency (Gregory & Jones, 2009). Government policy, funding, and reporting arrangements increasingly emphasise embedding employability skills within curriculum learning outcomes objectives, teaching and learning activities and assessment. The Government evaluates university performance on employability outcomes (BCA, 2011). The Commonwealth Government has funded a number of strategies to measure graduate learning outcomes, for example, through the Graduate Skills Assessment Instrument (Curtis & McKenzie, 2001), Course Experience and Postgraduate Research Experience Questionnaires, and the Graduate Destination survey (DEST, 2002; 2006). A focus on 'assurance of learning', which is most apparent in standards for accrediting bodies such as the accounting professional bodies and the American Association of Collegiate Schools of Business (AACSB,), has sought to ensure the alignment of employability skills development with teaching, learning, and assessment (ALTC, 2010; Hancock et al., 2009; Howieson, 2003). More recently, there has been discussion of micro-credentialing as an alternative to documenting evidence of graduate attainment of employability skills (Milligan & Kennedy, 2017).

In addition to frameworks and policies to guide and direct the integration of employability skills in the university curriculum, universities are increasingly promoted as preparing graduates for employability in an effort to attract students. The focus on global rankings for employability, published in the *Times Higher Education Rankings,* promotes the universities that are best placed for preparing graduates to attain jobs (Bothwell, 2015a, 2015b). Universities are evaluated in terms of their capacity to produce work-ready graduates in terms of employability skills development opportunities through the university curriculum (Harvey, 2000; Hills, Robertson, Walker, Adey, & Nixon, 2003).

Many Australian universities include, as part of their mission statements and objectives and future plan statements, a set of graduate attributes (Bath, Smith, Stein, & Swann, 2004). The graduate attributes define the role and purpose of universities and align with universities overarching purpose of contributing to the advancement of the national economy and wider society (Curtis & McKenzie, 2001; Oliver, 2015). Overall, the graduate attribute statements are an articulation of what universities espouse that the curriculum achieves. For most universities, graduate attribute statements identify and discuss employability, and identify a range of employability skills integrated in and across university curriculum.

At the degree and program levels, employability skills are included as learning objectives and outcomes of curriculum (AQF, 2013; Harvey, 2005; James, Lefoe, & Hadi, 2004; Norton, 2017; Oliver, 2013, 2015). Employers have, in many instances, played an influential role in the design and development of university curriculum and programs (Crebert, Bates, Bell, & Parick, 2004; Moore & Morton, 2017). The

employability skills embedded in the curriculum documents align with those most valued by industry (Fallows & Steven, 2000; Harvey, 2005). The revision of existing curriculum or design of new curriculum are measures that seek to find new ways to develop and enhance students' employability skills (Crebert et al., 2004; Grant-Smith, Cathcart, & Williams, 2016; Litchfield, Frawley, & Nettleton, 2010). Some changes to curriculum include employment development opportunities such as work placement (Crebert et al., 2004), work-integrated learning programs (Ferns & Lilly, 2015; Freudenberg, Brimble, & Cameron, 2011; Gibson et al., 2002; Harris-Reeves & Mahoney, 2017; Jackson, 2015; Leong & Kavanagh, 2013; Natoli, Jackling, Kaider, & Clark, 2013; Norton, 2017; Schech, Kelton, Carati, & Kingsmill, 2017), and work-related learning (Hills et al., 2003).

There is an implied assumption that the capacity of universities to produce quality graduates depends on the quality of the university curriculum and employment skills development opportunities through the curriculum (Hills et al., 2003). An emphasis on the collaboration between employers, policy makers, and universities is often considered central to ensuring the university curriculum is relevant to contemporary industry needs (GCA, 2016b; Tran, 2015). In addition, there is a growing expectation that graduates will need to demonstrate where and how they developed the skills during their undergraduate education (Washer, 2007).

The expectation that universities should or are able to develop graduates' employability skills is a contested issue, with many questioning the extent to which universities have the capacity and right strategies to develop graduates' employability skills (Cranmer, 2006; Heath, 2010; Holmes, 2013). Of most concern is that, despite

the integration of employability skills in curriculum, at both university and program levels, there is much concern that graduates continue to lack those employability skills considered necessary for the contemporary workplace (see Artess, Mellors-Bourne, & Hooley, 2017; Azevedo, Apfelthaler, & Hurst, 2012; Grant-Smith et al., 2016; Jackson, 2009a, 2012, 2014a).

Industry and employer reports indicate that graduate employers are mostly satisfied with university graduates' discipline knowledge and technical skills, but are less satisfied with the university graduates' employability skills (AlphaBeta, 2016; Artess et al., 2017; BIHECC, 2007; Burke, 2016; GCA, 2016b; Grant-Smith et al., 2016; Kinash, Crane, Judd, & Knight, 2016a). Graduate employers rated academic results as the best rated attribute their 2014 graduate recruits possessed (90.8 percent), while verbal communication skills were rated 79.9 percent, written communication skills rated 78 percent, and presentation skills rated 76.6 percent as good or very good. The three least desirable graduate characteristics identified by graduate employers are 'arrogance' (24.8%), 'poor oral communication' (24.5%) and 'poor communication skills' (21.5%) (GCA, 2016b). In addition, other employability skills are sought by employers, for instance, the Australia Industry Groups (AIG) report that problem-solving and interpersonal skills are considered as highly important by employers as much as oral business communication skills (4.3 out of 5.0). Yet employers reported they are finding it difficult to employ graduates who have such skills (AIG, 2006, 2009; DETYA, 2000; Norton, 2017).

Employers' ratings of graduates' employability skills align with reports of the increasing difficulty graduates have had in securing full-time employment since 2009,

indicating that the lack of employability skills may be contributing to the decrease in graduate employment outcomes (AIG, 2006, 2009; GCA, 2014, 2015; Norton, 2017). In 2015, 61.6 percent of bachelor degree graduates were available for full-time employment, with 68.8 percent in full-time employment within four months of completing their qualifications. This is a slight increase from 68.1 percent in 2014, but down from 71.3 percent in 2013, and 76.3 percent in 2012 (GCA, 2016a, p. 4).

As argued by Sin and Neave (2016, p. 1448), while higher education had previously been considered not only necessary, but also adequate for obtaining employment, it is now perceived to be 'insufficient', while still necessary to ensure graduate employability. Differences in what is included as part of the curriculum, and what industry and employers seek as relevant ready-made graduate employability skills, have been well-reported (Alshare, Lane, & Miller, 2011; Andrews & Higson, 2008; Curtis & McKenzie, 2001; GCA, 2015; Herrington & Arnold, 2013; Jackson, 2012, 2013a, 2014a; Jackson & Chapman, 2012b; Osmani et al., 2015). The skills missing from the curriculum are often those considered to be more work-related skills that are most challenging to assess in a classroom, such as responsiveness to client needs, teamwork, and applying what has been learned to professional practice and communication skills (Grant-Smith et al., 2016; Harper & Vered, 2017; Wells, Gerbic, Kranenburg, & Bygrave, 2009). Others argue that the skills are those that need to be transferrable across roles in a rapidly changing workplace (AlphaBeta, 2016; Jackson, 2016a), with many questioning to what extent universities are able to develop graduates with such skills.

The graduate skill gap has prompted questions about universities' willingness and

ability to integrate employability skills development within the university curriculum. The concern of the graduate skill gap has led to a number of reports on the challenges associated with effective employability skills development through the university curriculum. Some researchers have sought to understand this divergence between promotion and practice by focusing on three areas: employer beliefs, students' perceptions and academics' perceptions.

Research with an employer belief aspect seeks to understand to what extent employers believe that new graduates possess the necessary skills. The lack of clarity, consistency, and theoretical basis of the skills demanded (AlphaBeta, 2016; Cranmer, 2006; Knight & Yorke, 2004) and the problems associated with confining the concept of graduate employability to a skills-based approach (Bridgstock, 2009; Jackson, 2016b) has been explained as creating confusion and preventing the integration of the right employability skills in curriculum. Research centered on student perception asks whether students perceive that they have been given the opportunity to develop the requisite employability skills (Jackling & De Lange, 2009). Some of the research reports on the problems associated with graduates acquiring and transferring the skills from the university to the workplace context (Jackson, 2014c, 2016a).

While some research has indicated that the teaching of employability skills development has been resisted by academics (Baker & Henson, 2010; Harvey, 2000; Lees, 2002), however for the most part, research on the work of academics has focused on their perceptions rather than their actual teaching and assessment practices. For instance, research has reported that academics' perceive that it is difficult to integrate employability skills development in the curriculum and perceive

to lack support for the teaching employability skills (for instance see Baker & Henson, 2010; Barrie, 2006; Bennett, Dunne, & Carre, 1999; Crebert, 2002; de la Harpe & David, 2012; Grant-Smith et al., 2016; Jackson, 2014a, 2014b; Oliver, 2013; Radloff, de la Harpe, Dalton, Thomas, & Lawson, 2008). Some of the research focused on academic perception seeks to understand whether academics' perceptions of important employability skills match those identified by employers whilst others have reported on the perception of the difficulty in engaging academics with skills development (Baker & Henson, 2010; Bennett et al., 1999; Crebert, 2002; de la Harpe & David, 2012; Hills et al., 2003; Radloff et al., 2008) and the perceived lack of adequate support for staff (Barrie, 2006; Radloff et al., 2008). Much of the research on academics' perceptions has concluded that academics do not believe that preparing graduates for work readiness is part of the role of universities or academics. (Baker & Henson, 2010; de la Harpe, Radloff, & Wyber, 2000; Harvey, 2000; Tariq & Cochrane, 2004). More specifically, it has been reported that some academics believe that to 'train' students to develop employability skills is not a requirement of the teaching role of a university academic (Cranmer, 2006; de Le Harpe et al., 2000). Others have reported that academics do not, in fact, value the teaching of employability skills, or state that they prefer to give the task of students' employability skills development to others outside of the curriculum, such as university career units or 'bolt-on' work skills classes or programs (Star & Hammer, 2008, p. 245).

While the responsibility for teaching and assessing students' learning outcomes ultimately lies with the academics that design, deliver and assess curriculum, there is a noticeable lack of research on academics' teaching and assessment practices. What

is specifically lacking in current research is an understanding as to what extent academics' beliefs and self-reported practices are played out in actual practice. Thus, while concerns relating to the divergence between promotion of employability skills development and lack of teaching and assessment of employability skills have been raised, the existing research has only attempted to explain it, there has been little systematic examination of academics' actual teaching and assessment of employability skills within the university curriculum. In the current context, where the integration of employability skills within university curriculum is driven by industry and government policy, it is imperative that an examination of academics' actual teaching and assessment practices be conducted.

1.3 The Study

The purpose of this study is to examine the teaching and assessment of employability skills by university academies and the factors that influence their practice. To conduct this study, the thesis asks the following key research question:

To what extent are employability skills enacted in the business curriculum?

To investigate academics' teaching and assessment of employment skills, this study begins by identifying academics' beliefs and self-reported practices in relation to teaching employability skills within the university curriculum. It is then followed by an investigation of actual practice in order to examine the disjuncture between beliefs and practices. Thus, the following subsidiary questions are asked. The first two questions seek to investigate academics' understanding, beliefs, and self-reported practice, and questions three and four investigate actual practice. Practice is referred to both teaching and assessment of employability skills:

1. How do academics understand employability skills?
2. What level of importance do academics place on employability skills in university curriculum and their role in teaching and assessing employability skills?
3. To what extent and how are employability skills taught in practice?
4. To what extent and how are employability skills assessed in practice?

Since the university curriculum is understood and enacted within degree programs, this study will investigate the conceptions, beliefs, and enactment of employability skills in a business degree program in one large Australian university. The large Australian university selected for this study is a well-established, research-intensive Australian institution.

The reason for conducting the study at one university site rather than multiple sites is because the main objective is to conduct an in-depth study of academics' understanding and beliefs of employability skills, and the interrelating factors that may affect actual teaching and assessment practices. The business degree program is selected because it is a degree program that has emerged within the changing landscape of a higher education curriculum. As academics are influential in the design, delivery, and assessment of the formal[3] discipline curriculum, it follows that an examination of what happens in the formal curriculum, from the point of view and experiences of the academics, is timely given the changing landscape of university curriculum. The study is located in two different disciplines within business education: the accounting and economics discipline. The formal university curriculum within disciplines is an essential area of study because it is the common experience of

[3] The formal curriculum is the curriculum where formal learning takes place in a university program through subject materials, lectures, tutorials, seminars, and assessment tasks. The informal curriculum is anything that takes place outside the subject of the discipline within degree programs.

all university students completing a university degree. For this reason, extra-curricular activities offered by the universities are not investigated.

1.3.1 Theoretical Framework

The Theories of Action framework (Argyris & Schön, 1974) is used in this study to guide the research methods and the process of analysis. The Theories of Action framework proposes that individuals hold theories about their actions or practices that reflect their individual values, strategies, and underlying assumptions about practice (Argyris & Schön, 1974). In explaining individuals' theories about their actions, however, Argyris and Schön (1974) distinguish between two types of action theories: espoused theories of action and theories-in-use.

Espoused theories of action are those used by individuals to explain and justify their proposed behaviour or actions in a given situation (Argyris & Schön, 1974). This is the theory that encompasses individuals' aims and intentions for the action. For the most part, individuals' practices are explained by what individuals say they do in practice. Self-reported practices are usually justified in terms of what individuals say they believe about their actions and what they intend to achieve, rather than what actually happens in practice.

Observing individuals' actions in practice, however, exposes what Argyris and Schön (1974) term theories-in-use. The important aspect of the theoretical framework is that individuals' theories-in-use may or may not be compatible with espoused theories, and individuals may or may not be aware of this. While there has been some research undertaken that investigates theories of practice in higher education (de la Harpe & David, 2012; de la Harpe, et al., 2000; Jones, 2009a; Kane, Sandretto, & Heath, 2002;

Nghia, 2017), previous research has been limited because it has not identified theories-in-use by observing actual practice. As argued by Kane et al (2002), previous research has drawn conclusions about practice based on self-reported statements about one's practice and not on actual observed practice. As such, academics' actual theories-in-use are unknown.

To investigate whether there is a congruence and/or a lack of congruence between academics' espoused theories and theories-in-use, and to examine the possible causes of a disjuncture between what academics espouse and what they do in practice, this study used the Theory of Action Framework to guide the methodology in two main ways. First the study is based on data collected from academics about their espoused theories through semi-structured interviews and content analysis of curriculum documents. Second, academics' practices are investigated through the direct observation of teaching and assessment practices and follow-up semi-structured interviews, so that their theories-in-use can be investigated.

The observation of actual teaching and assessment practices in this study extends previous research by examining the relationship between self-reported practice and actual practice, and taking into account both what academics believe and say they do and what they actually do. This will allow for the identification of factors that impede the enactment of beliefs and self-reported practice. The observation of practice will shed light on the disjuncture between self-reported practice and actual practice, and it is at the disjuncture that useful ways to improve actual practice can be identified.

1.3.2 Terminology

'Employability skills' is a contentious concept because of the array of terminology used to describe it. Employability skills have often been used as synonyms for 'competencies', 'generic skills', 'professional skills', 'graduate outcomes', 'graduate capabilities', or 'transferable skills' (Clanchy & Ballard, 1995; de la Harpe et al., 2000; Jones, 2010; Radloff et al., 2008). The different terms are also evident in the many government and business reports over the past two decades (CSfW, 2013; DEEWR, 2012). In this thesis, the term 'employability skills' is used to mean the generic skills (beyond discipline knowledge and technical skills) considered necessary and relevant for the workplace. It is argued that this term sits comfortably in the Australian workplace context and can be extended to culturally and similarly developed regions of the world, such as North America, the UK, and Ireland.

1.3.3 Scope & limits

In examining how academics integrate employability skills into their teaching and assessment practices, this study focuses on academics responsible for teaching and assessing over 2,000 students in four subjects, in two disciplines in a range of delivery spaces over a 12-week period for each subject. Thus, the study has included subject coordinators who design the curriculum and assessment and who mostly deliver lectures, and also tutors who do not design curriculum, including assessment, but who are directly responsible for delivering curriculum to small tutorial or workshop groups and assessing students' work.

A number of limits have been set from the outset to make the project more focused and manageable. First, the study is conducted at one university site rather than multiple sites because the main objective is an in-depth study of academics'

understanding and beliefs about employability skills, and the interrelating factors that may affect their teaching and assessment practices. The study is focused on two disciplines (accounting and economics), in business education only. While it is acknowledged that the question of employability skills development is relevant across all universities, disciplines, and faculties, the issues around employability skills development of undergraduate business students is more pronounced in the current contemporary workplace.

1.3.4 Contribution

This study contributes to new knowledge and understanding of academics' willingness and capacity to prepare graduates with employability skills by examining academics' teaching and assessment practice beyond their self-reports. The observation of actual practice provides an opportunity to identify actual factors that support or hinder practice. This knowledge can contribute to the development of future business curriculum that adds clarity and provides concrete examples of the range of factors that support or hinder the integration of employability skills in the business curriculum. The identification of the factors that support or impede the enactment of employability skills through teaching and assessment practices will allow the development of evidence-based improvement to curriculum design, delivery, and assessment.

1.4 Organisation of thesis

This thesis is organised in seven chapters. Following this Introduction, Chapter Two presents a review of the literature focusing on how 'employability skills' are understood by three main stakeholders: industry, governments, and universities. This

review identifies how the main stakeholders direct the responsibility of graduates' employability skills development to the university curriculum, specifically to the academics charged with the design, delivery, and assessment of curriculum. The purpose of Chapter Three is to place the study in the context of disciplines within a business degree program.

In order to explore the enactment of employability skills by academics in the curriculum in the context of academic disciplines, Chapter Four describes and justifies the methodological framework selected for the study. The study adopts the 'Theories of Action' theoretical framework, and employs qualitative methods over four stages to answer the research questions; including initial semi-structured interviews and content analysis of curriculum documents to investigate academics' espoused theories, followed by direct observation of teaching and assessment practices, and semi-structured follow-up interviews to investigate academics' theories-in-use. This choice of qualitative methods is important, given that little is known about academics' teaching and assessment of employability skills in the academic curriculum in a university context. This chapter includes an outline of data sampling, the data analysis steps, and the trustworthiness and limitations considerations associated with the selected study methods.

The next two chapters (Chapters 5 & 6) present the analyses of the findings. Chapter Five conveys the main findings of the accounting academics' understanding and beliefs. It then compares such understanding and beliefs to their actual teaching and assessment practice. Chapter Six follows the same format as Chapter Five, and presents an analysis of the findings of the economics academics espoused

understanding and beliefs. The chapter also compares such understanding and beliefs to their actual teaching and assessment practice.

The findings chapters are followed by Chapter Seven, which provides a synthesis and discussion of the analyses of the findings. The chapter is structured by following the theoretical framework, 'Theories of Action', which has guided the study methods and analysis. Chapter Seven presents a synthesis of academics' espoused theories and theories-in-use, and provides an overview of the key themes that emerge from this study. Chapter Seven also presents the conclusions from the study and discusses the implications for practice and research and the contributions and limitations of the study. The chapter concludes with a set of recommendations for academic professional development and future research on university curriculum development that focuses on the investigation of actual practice to determine the factors that hinder or support the integration of employability skills development through academics' teaching and assessment practices.

Chapter Two: Conceptualising employability skills

For more than two decades, industry, policy makers and universities have been involved in a complex dialogue and debate about the development of graduate employability skills. This chapter demonstrates that, while the three main stakeholders hold slightly different conceptions of employability skills, a commonality among the stakeholders is they assert from a macro and policy level that employability skills are a matter of significance to graduate learning outcomes of contemporary universities. While the responsibility for teaching and assessing students' learning outcomes ultimately lies with academics who design, deliver and assess curriculum, there is a noticeable lack of research on academics' teaching and assessment practices, in particular to what extent academics' beliefs and self-reported practices are played out in actual practice.

The chapter reviews how industry, government and universities understand employability skills. Specifically, this chapter identifies how the main stakeholders direct the responsibility of graduates' employability skills development to the university curriculum, specifically to the academics charged with the design, delivery, and assessment of curriculum. Industry understands employability skills in the context of the skills needs of the workplace and the economy. Industry sets forth the view that the university contributes to the development of graduates who have acquired the skills that meet employers' demands for work-ready graduates. Government's understanding of employability skills is embedded in its role and responsibility to facilitate a healthy economy. Government policy seeks to influence the university sector, to guide practices that contribute to the development of graduates' employability skills by benchmarking and measuring graduate employment outcomes.

Universities' conceptualisation of employability skills is best understood in the context of university graduate attribute statements. The graduate attribute statements are indicative of the role university curriculum has in producing citizens and employees.

Despite how each of the stakeholders understands and discusses employability skills, there is a consensus that priority should be given to the development and enhancement of university graduates' employability skills. While there might be consensus at the macro and policy level, it is less clear what actually occurs at the practice level; in particular, the extent to which employability skills development takes place at academics' teaching and assessment practice levels.

2.1 Industry conceptions

From industry's perspective, employees are a key component in ensuring the success and ongoing prosperity of the national economy (B-HERT, 2002a, 2002b; BIHECC, 2007). In a 2009 AIG report, 39.7% of employers stated that improving graduate employability skills is a priority area (AIG, 2009). More recently, employers have rated verbal communication as being an important skill they believe candidates should possess (GCA, 2016b; Gray & Koncz, 2016). Therefore, the identification of employability skills based on the needs of industry has become and continues to be a focus of industry.

The identification and definition of employability skills that have been adopted by industry have been documented in three main frameworks: The Mayer Competencies (Mayer, 1992), the Employability Skills Framework that emerged out of the

Employability Skills for the Future Report (DEST, 2002), and the Core Skills for Work (CSfW, 2013) Framework (see Table 2.1). The frameworks are illustrative of different terms and ways that employability skills have been discussed; that is, from competencies to employability skills and then to core skills.

Table 2.1: The evolution of industry conceptions of employability skills

Industry Frameworks		
Mayer Competencies 1992	**Employability Skills (*Employability Skills for the Future Report*, 2002)**	**Core Skills for Work Framework, 2013**
• Communication of ideas • Using mathematical ideas & techniques • Working with others in teams • Solving problems • Planning & Organising ideas • Collecting, analysing and organising • Discipline knowledge and skills • Using technology	Personal attributes: • Loyalty • Commitment • Honesty and integrity • Enthusiasm • Reliability • Personal presentation • Commonsense • Positive self-esteem • Sense of humour • Balanced attitude to work and home life • Ability to deal with pressure • Motivation • Adaptability The key skill identified with personal attributes: • Communication • Teamwork • Problem Solving • Initiative and enterprise • Planning and organising • Self-management • Learning • Technology	**Non-technical skills and knowledge** **Cluster 1: Navigate the world of work** • Navigate career and work life • Work with roles, rights and protocols **Cluster 2: Interact with others** • Communicate for work • Connect and work with others • Recognise and utilise diverse perspectives **Cluster 3: Get the work done** • Plan and organise • Make decisions • Identify and solve problems • Create and innovate • Work in a digital world

2.1.1 The Mayer Competencies

> *Key Competencies are competencies essential for effective participation in the emerging patterns of work and organisation. They focus on the capacity to apply knowledge and skills in an integrated way in work situations (Mayer, 1992).*

The Mayer Competencies provide insight into industry's early conceptions of employability skills (see Table 2.1 above). The Mayer Competencies provide a set of

seven core competencies that underpin employability. The identified competencies reflect a shift amongst industry that work-based generic competencies are essential for 'work readiness' and are distinct to job-specific knowledge and skills (Mayer, 1992). 'Work readiness', however, is expressed in an abstract way in the Mayer Competencies. In particular, there is a lack of description of how the competencies can be translated into effective workplace practice (Conford, 2005). Instead, the competencies are broad visionary statements presented from a macro level about the transmission and application of the skills '…to new situations and environments' (Mayer, 1992, p. 7). An important outcome of the Mayer Competencies, however, is the emergence of the idea that higher education is responsible for producing competent, work- ready employees. A limitation of this view is that the identification of the relevant educational sectors is left open and undefined, resulting in integration of the competencies at the VET program level instead of university program level (Curtis & McKenzie, 2001). Consequently, concerns arose about whether the Mayer Competencies were conceived to be applicable to university qualifications.

2.1.2 The Employability Skills Framework (2002)

In 2001, there was a call for a better understanding of the skills required for employability. A research project was designed to provide the Department of Education and Training with a detailed understanding of the skills industry requires from future employees. The Employability Skills Framework that emerged from this research used the concept of 'employability skills' for the first time (BIHECC, 2007; DEST, 2002). The use of the term employability skills is illustrative of an understanding of skills as being distinct to job-specific skills. The Employability Skills Framework identifies eight employability skills that are expected to sit alongside job-specific and personal attributes (see Table 2.1 above). The eight

employability skills are given priority since they are assumed to be the skills that equip the future workforce to meet the challenges of a continued and rapidly changing contemporary knowledge-based economy.

The Employability Skills Framework has included higher education more specifically alongside other educational institutions. The inclusion of higher education in the framework is indicative of the important shift, as industry increasingly looked to university graduates as important future employees. Yet the role of the educational sector in employability skills development is presented as a visionary framework from a macro level, in much the same way as the Mayer Competencies. While it is presented as a framework 'intended' to be used by teachers who are directly responsible for developing curriculum and training programs, in schools, VET and higher education (Curtis & McKenzie, 2001, p. 37), there is no mandate to include, in the curriculum, the set of employability skills articulated in the framework. More importantly, there is no clear link showing how employability skills are directly applicable to university education. Most importantly, how the skills can be applied, embedded and taught in practice was not made explicit (Hutchinson, 2013). Rather, the Employability Skills Framework is presented as macro level evidence that employers seek a broad set of employability skills in university graduates (BIHECC, 2007).

2.1.3 The Core Skills for Work Framework (2013)

The Core Skills for Work (CSfW, 2013) framework was developed in response to problems associated with a lack of understanding and integration of employability skills by universities. The need to have a 'common language' of employability skills was voiced by industry (CSfW, 2013). To provide clarity and consensus of the term,

the employability skills have been categorised under three broad clusters in the CSfW: navigation of the world of work, interaction with others and getting the work done (see Table 2.1 above). The clusters are statements about the applicability of employability skills to aspects of work beyond job or discipline-specific knowledge and skills (CSfW, 2013, p. 1). The CSfW has brought university education into the discussion of employability skills development more directly than previous frameworks. However, the CSfW Framework continues to reflect an understanding of how employability skills can be integrated into the educational sector from a macro level perspective of industry. Employability skills development is underpinned by the theoretical understanding of the developmental approach that assumes that the development of skill performance takes place over five different stages (CSfW, 2013). Thus, there seems to be an implicit assumption made that the interpretation and implementation of employability skills are the responsibly of the educators within the respective institutions.

As discussed above, industry has played a leading role in directing universities to develop graduates with specified employability skills. However, as discussed in the next section, government policy and frameworks provided the means by which employability skills development has become directly documented into the university curriculum.

2.2 Government conceptions

In contrast to industry, Government policy and frameworks have been designed to sharpen the focus on employability skills development through the university curriculum. Government understanding of employability skills is embedded in its role

of ensuring the wellbeing and prosperity of the nation. In Australia, reviews such as the Business, Industry and Higher Education Collaboration Council Report *Graduate Employability Skills* (BIHECC, 2007) and the Bradley Review (Bradley et al., 2008) have urged governments to make changes to higher education. The recommendations, include increasing the pool of the university-educated workforce to meet the needs of the knowledge economy, and to enhance the ability of university graduates to compete for jobs at a global level (Bradley et al., 2008). Following the Bradley recommendations (Bradley et al., 2008), government policy and funding arrangements have supported increasing the number and diversity of university-educated people, particularly students from under-represented, low SES backgrounds (Birrell & Edwards, 2009; King & James, 2013; Putnam & Gill, 2011). The expansion and diversification of higher education has resulted in growing concerns and greater uncertainty about the quality of graduates, particularly to what extent graduates are work-ready for the contemporary workplace (Becher & Trowler, 2001; McKay & Devlin, 2015; Whiteford, Shah, & Nair, 2013).

As a way to ensure graduate work readiness, curriculum has come under scrutiny to encourage transparency and accountability of design and delivery. Government standards and frameworks have been developed to guide universities on how to best prepare university graduates for the contemporary workplace. The Bradley Review made recommendations to improve the quality of higher education graduates by establishing a national regulator; the Tertiary Education Quality and Standards Agency (TEQSA) (Bradley et al., 2008). The Higher Education Standards Framework (The Standards) (HESF, 2015) set out the requirements a higher education provider must meet in order to be registered by TEQSA to operate in Australia as a provider of

higher education. As a tool for monitoring the standards of higher education, it is envisaged that TEQSA is able to assess university compliance with the Standards as a way to improve the quality of higher education, teaching, research, and the student experience. Furthermore, it is envisioned that TEQSA will act as a reference point for international comparisons of the provision of higher education

While The Standards (HESF, 2015) advocate that university activities and experiences should be consistent with learning outcomes, they do not specify the learning outcomes standards. It is difficult to define standards because there is no clear, explicit understanding of what academic standards mean or how universities should apply them in practice to achieve quality graduate outcomes. In particular, it is unclear how The Standards are directly related to employability outcomes (Thompson-Whiteside, 2013).

Government funded reviews have led the way to the development of qualification standards to include more specific statements that direct higher education to integrate employability skills into the curriculum. While the primary reason for the development of the Australian Qualifications Framework in 1995 was to ensure the consistency of qualification levels and titles across the educational sector (Coles, Keevy, Bateman, & Keating, 2014), the main objective was to promote lifelong learning by ensuring clarity as to what graduates are expected to know, understand and be able to do as a result of their learning (AQF, 2013, p. 11). A more concrete articulation of the contribution higher education can make to employability is visible in the review of the 1995 AQF. The review resulted in an increase in the prominence of 'employability skills' in the 2013 AQF (Bowman, 2010). The AQF (2013) seeks to

clarify the different terms for employability skills adopted by the different educational sectors. For instance, the 'generic skills' in the AQF are described as being equivalent to 'employability skills' and 'graduate attributes or capabilities' adopted by the VET sector and the Australian Higher Education sector respectively. To ensure that university education is meeting expectations, the Commonwealth government has funded a number of strategies to measure graduates' acquisition of employability skills through the Graduate Skills Assessment Instrument (ACER, 2001; Curtis & McKenzie, 2001).

Overall, while industry has directed universities to develop graduates with specified employability skills, government policy and frameworks sharpened the focus of employability skills development more directly on the undergraduate curriculum. Government understandings of employability skills sit with the context of Government responsibility to facilitate a healthy economy by ensuring work-ready graduates. Thus, government policy and frameworks send the message that the role of university curriculum is to produce graduates who possess employability skills. However, there is a lack of clarity about how employability skills development is enacted through the university curriculum. There is an assumption that a university education has the capacity to produce graduates equipped with the employability skills necessary to respond to an unpredictable and rapidly-moving global economy (Marginson & Considine, 2000).

2.3 Employability skills in the university context

Accompanying the shifts over the last two decades have been the significant changes to the university sector characterised by discussion of the contribution universities can

make to economic capital (Marginson, 2000; Marginson & Considine, 2000). One outcome of the changes has been the emergence of the employability skills agenda embedded in the university context. Yet there is a lack of clarity about how universities conceptualise employability skills. One important way to understand how employability skills are perceived, in the university context, is to examine how universities discuss and report on university graduate outcomes. There are two main ways in which universities present graduate outcomes, first, through graduate employment rate outcomes and, second, through the university graduate attributes.

2.3.1 University graduate employment rate outcomes

Graduate employment outcome rates[4] have been drawn upon as evidence of the capacity of universities to produce employable graduates. These include: Graduate Careers Australia's annual report on graduate recruitment practices and trends (GCA, 2014, 2015, 2016a, 2016b), the recent media attention to the role of the university in preparing graduates for employability (Ansell, 2016; Burke, 2016; Havergal, 2015; Krook, 2017a, 2017b), the publication of employment outcome rankings by the *Times Higher Education World University Rankings* (Bothwell, 2015a, 2015b), and the *Quality Indicators for Learning and Teaching* (QILT). In 2015, over one-in-three employers indicate that they choose to recruit graduates from particular higher education intuitions over others, with the most cited reason (38.0%) being that the 'caliber of the graduates was higher' (GCA, 2016b, p. 13). Many universities now include in their vision or mission statements the capacity to prepare graduates for gaining employment (Monash, 2014; UOM, 2015; UOS, 2016).

[4] The number of graduates employed full time, four months after graduation, is used to measure employment outcomes (ABS, 2012).

It is well argued, however, that employment rates are determined by a number of factors other than university education. Employment rates are influenced by labour market demands (Brown, Hesketh, & Williams, 2003; Knight & Yorke, 2004) and a range of other factors that interact with labour market opportunities (Finch et al., 2013; Harvey, 2001; Little, 2001; Morley, 2001), such as gender, race, social class and disability (Morley, 2001). There is also a common concern reflected in the literature that the reputation of an institution, attendance status, study mode, age, discipline, residency, job search strategies, and course quality (Jackson, 2016a) are also factors that determine employment outcomes.

Despite the discussion of the range of external factors that determine employment outcomes, the role of universities in equipping students with employability skills has become an important point of discussion and research in higher education literature (for instance see Cranmer, 2006; de la Harpe & David, 2012; de la Harpe & Thomas, 2009; Grant-Smith et al., 2016; Hills et al., 2003; Holmes, 2001; Holmes, 2013; Jackson, 2012, 2013a, 2014a; Mason, Williams, & Cranmer, 2009; Moore & Morton, 2017; Washer, 2007) . There is an indication that there are contrasting views, within university literature, about the capacity of the role of the university in developing and expanding students' understanding of the curriculum and developing the skills required for the workplace (Bennett et al., 2016). These different perspectives are visible in the graduate attribute statements promoted by most Australian universities.

2.3.2 University graduate attributes

In the higher education sector, employability skills are considered an important subset of graduate attributes because they should enhance graduates' employment prospects (Crebert et al., 2004; Jackling & De Lange, 2009; Oliver, 2015). A commonly-cited

definition of graduate attributes is the qualities, skills and understanding a university community encourages its graduates to develop, through their university degree, that enable them to contribute to their roles as citizens and future employees (Bowden, Hart, King, Trigwell, & Watts, 2000; Pool & Sewell, 2007). The graduate attribute statements have also been extended to their influence on graduates' ability for life-long learning (Bath et al., 2004; de la Harpe & David, 2012). Graduate attribute statements are highly regarded by employers, who consider that graduates' possession of the stated attributes contributes to the country's economic prosperity and economic capital (BIHECC, 2007; Hager & Holland, 2006). Increasingly more emphasis has been placed on the graduate attributes that enable graduates to meet the challenges of a diverse and rapidly changing workplace

Graduate attribute statements are used to inform curriculum design (Barrie, Hughes, & Smith, 2009, Oliver, 2015). There are two main ways universities have sought to ensure that graduate attributes are universally emphasised at the university level; first, by mapping the attributes onto the university curriculum and, second, by focusing on extra-curricular programs and activities. This thesis is interested in the development of employability skills through the formal university curriculum. The formal[5] curriculum is an essential area of study because it is the common experience of all university students. The approach taken has been to provide a top-down support to academics so they can integrate employability skills into the curriculum. For instance, the National Graduate Attributes Project (GAP) initiative brought key people together

[5] The formal curriculum is the curriculum where formal learning takes place in a university program through subject materials, lectures, tutorials, seminars, and assessment tasks. The informal curriculum is anything that takes place outside of the subject of the discipline within degree programs.

to work in the graduate attributes field to articulate the various uses and assessment of graduate attributes.

There is concern, however, that the inclusion of graduate attributes in the rhetoric of most universities' mission statements has limited influence on curriculum change (Barrie et al., 2009). The higher education research often concludes that the graduate attributes that are included in the curriculum do not always match industry requirements (Ang, D'Alessandro, & Winzar, 2014; BIHECC, 2007; Hager, Holland, & Beckett, 2002; James et al., 2004; Rosenberg, Heimler, & Morote, 2012), and the inclusion of graduate attributes in the curriculum does not necessarily ensure that graduates are work-ready (Bennett et al., 2016; Harvey & Shahjahan, 2013). It has been noted that academics' and students' perspectives of subject curriculum learning outcomes do not always align with the graduate attribute statements (Bath et al., 2004) and there is a lack of understanding as to whether employability skills can be taught effectively in the classroom and transferred to the workplace (Cranmer, 2006; Jackson, 2016a; Mason et al., 2009). Finally, it is argued that although there is availability of the provision of resources and strategies that assist academics to integrate the skills into the curriculum and course design (Ang et al., 2014; BIHECC, 2007) there continues to be evidence that curriculum change has contributed little to changing the graduate skills gap.

There is also concern that, for the most part, employability skills are not part of the formal curriculum (Kinash et al., 2016a; Kinash, Crane, Knight, Dowling, & Mitchell, 2014; Knight & Yorke, 2004). It is argued that since employability skills development opportunities are mostly embedded in extra-curricular activities and programs that sit

outside or alongside the formal curriculum; such as through work experience, work placement, and career advice, and the like (Harvey & Shahjahan, 2013; Kinash & Crane, 2015; Kinash et al., 2014; Rae, 2007) students cannot take advantage of the extra curricula opportunities because of the time taken to keep us with the requirements of the overcrowded curriculum (Bridgstock, 2009; Fraser & Thomas, 2013; Kinash et al., 2016a). This aligns with reports of graduates continuing to assert that lack of, or underdevelopment of, employability skills is one of the critical disadvantages they face in the transition from university to the workplace (Bennett et al., 2016).

Despite the reports about the concerns that employability skills are not integrated directly or clearly into teaching and assessment practices, current research does not consider practices of academics that are directly responsible for teaching and assessment (Radloff et al., 2008). Any higher education research that has focused on the work of the academic has tended to focus on academics' perceptions about whether they should be responsible for preparing graduates for employability, with many academics reporting that they do not believe preparing graduates to be work-ready is part of the role of universities or academic teaching (Baker & Henson, 2010; Cranmer, 2006; de la Harpe et al., 2000; Harvey, 2000; Mason et al., 2009; Tariq & Cochrane, 2004). Therefore, little is known with regard to what extent academics integrate employability skills in actual practice and the factors that may hinder or support their practice.

2.4 Summary

This chapter has argued that the three main stakeholders have discussed employability skills at a macro and policy level. While the three main stakeholders have slightly different conceptions of employability skills, they have all argued that the development of graduate employability skills is a significant role of universities. Industry understands employability skills in the context of the skill needs of the workplace and the economy. Industry, therefore, directs universities to prepare graduates with identified employability skills. Government's understanding of employability skills is embedded in its role to sharpen the focus of employability skills development through the curriculum. Universities' graduate attributes are indicative of the integration of employability skills into the university curriculum. However, despite the contribution each of the main stakeholders has made in order to focus attention on the significance of employability skills development as an important university graduate learning outcome, there is a lack of clarity about how employability skills are understood by those academics charged with the teaching and assessment of curriculum.

The following chapter argues that, to investigate the enactment of employability skills in academics' practice, research must focus on the work of academics in their respective disciplines. It is argued that disciplines invite particular understandings and pedagogical practices that will influence academics' beliefs and practices related to the current drivers for universities to integrate employability skills into the business curriculum. This study, that investigates practice in the disciplines, in turn ensures that the focus of investigation is the formal curriculum. As argued above, the formal curriculum is an important area of study since it is the common experience of all

university students, as it is the site for the design, delivery and assessment of learning outcomes.

Chapter Three: Teaching and assessment practices in the business disciplines

The work of university academics is primarily located in disciplines. Academic disciplines have well-defined boundaries that are shaped by disciplinary knowledge. This literature on discipline (Becher & Trowler, 2001; Neumann, Parry, & Becher, 2002) argues that the business disciplines invite particular understanding and pedagogical practices that will influence academics' beliefs and practices. Yet despite the broad agreement that disciplines influence academics' practices, this chapter argues that, in the current context of changes to the landscape of higher education and university curriculum reform, other factors that influence practice also interrelate with the work of the academic in business disciplines. As such, the business disciplines can be described as being fluid rather than static (Manathunga & Brew, 2012) amidst the current changes to the perceived role of the university that has been influenced by the significance of employability skills development as an important learning outcome. As such, the role of the academic within a business discipline is complex. The complexity of the role of academics within business disciplines reinforces the importance of investigating the teaching and assessment of employability skills, from the perspective of academics within their disciplines.

This chapter begins with an overview of the theoretical literature on university disciplines as the basis for understanding the work of academics within business disciplines. It draws on Becher's and Trowler's (2001) work on the classifications of disciplines that has informed thinking and research that emphasises the way in which university teaching and assessment are embedded within disciplines (Becher & Trowler, 2001; Neumann et al., 2002).

Following the theoretical overview, the chapter turns to the factors that have influenced the emergence of new disciplines and changes to existing university disciplines, with a particular focus on the emergence of business education. This section of the chapter makes the case that, while changes to disciplines have emerged, there continue to be obvious shared beliefs and practices within disciplines. For this reason, disciplines continue to have an important influence on academics' teaching and assessment practices. This is examined through a discussion of the shifting nature and permanence of the accounting and economics disciplines. This chapter then moves to a discussion of what we know about disciplinary responses to the growing employability skills agenda within the accounting and economics disciplines, and how this may influence the teaching and assessment of employability skills within disciplines. This chapter ends with a discussion of a range of other factors that may affect academic practice within disciplines. Therefore, the central argument of this chapter is that, it is imperative to investigate the extent to which academics integrate employability skills development into actual teaching and assessment practices within their disciplines, through the formal curriculum.

3.1 Academic disciplines

In the university context, disciplines usually affect how academic departments and faculties are organised (Becher & Trowler, 2001; Beyer & Lodahl, 1976). The classification of disciplines provides broad statements about disciplines (Trowler, 2012). The understanding of knowledge within the disciplinary boundaries provides a useful way to distinguish disciplines from one another (Neumann, 2001; Neumann et al., 2002). The extent to which disciplinary knowledge influences academics' beliefs and practices within disciplines can therefore be examined (Becher & Trowler, 2001).

This is important for understanding the teaching and assessment practices of academics in contemporary universities, in particular, to shed light on the extent academics respond to the call for the integration of employability skills in the disciplines of university business education.

3.1.1 The emergence of the business disciplines

Historically, business education was part of the vocational tertiary education (VET) sector and primarily performed the function of vocational training for the business sector. Massification and the marketisation of higher education have played a role in the rise to prominence of the business degree in universities (Parker & Guthrie, 2010). The growth of university undergraduate business degrees took place following the amalgamations of the Colleges of Advanced Education (CAEs) in the 1980s and continued to grow in popular demand by fee-paying undergraduate and postgraduate international students (Parker & Guthrie, 2010; Ryan, 2010). The disciplines of most undergraduate business degrees include Accounting, Economics, Finance, Management, and Marketing.

This study has focused on the accounting and economic disciplines. The accounting discipline is a relatively new discipline in a university context. During the early years of the 20th Century, accounting education took place primarily outside the university context. Most qualified accountants had limited formal education and were more likely to have gained the required accounting skills through an apprenticeship or by being self-taught (Bolte-Lee & Foster, 2003). Accounting entered the university context as a discipline of professional practice with professional accounting practitioners who were at the forefront of establishment of accounting as a university discipline (Bolte-Lee & Foster, 2003). University accounting academics were almost

always practicing accountants, and played a leading role in the design and direction of accounting curriculum by focusing mostly on accounting practice (Bolte-Lee & Foster, 2003; Van Wyhe, 2007). In contrast to the accounting discipline that has entered the university context as a relatively new and emerging discipline, the economics discipline has a long history as a university discipline. The discipline had its beginnings at the graduate level and gradually moved into offerings at undergraduate level. The economics discipline was first positioned in theology and the classics and subsequently transitioned from the liberal arts to the social sciences and eventually to business education (Parrish, 1967).

3.1.2 Discipline classifications

The extent to which the discipline influences academics' beliefs is embedded in the work on the classification of disciplines. Becher and Trowler (2001) present a framework of discipline classifications that draws upon Biglin's' (1973a, 1973b) typology of discipline differences. The disciplines are divided into four domains: hard and soft, pure and applied, to give a four-cell matrix (see Table 3.1 below) (Becher & Trowler, 2001; Neumann, 2001; Neumann et al., 2002; Trowler, 2009).

Table 3.1: The discipline classifications
Adapted from (Becher & Trowler, 2001; Neumann, 2001; Neumann et al., 2002; Trowler, 2009)

	Hard	**Soft**
Pure	Cumulative, atomistic structure, concerned with universal simplification, and quantitative emphasis, mastery of the physical environment	Holistic approach, rely on breadth of intellectual ideas, and qualitative focus
Applied	Focus on problem solving, and application of knowledge to create products and techniques, mastery of the physical environment, both qualitative and quantitative approaches. **ECONOMICS DISCIPLINE**	Focus on personal growth, reflective practice, and lifelong learning to create protocols and procedures. Concerned with the enhancement of professional practice, large use of case studies and case law **ACCOUNTING DISCIPLINE**

Knowledge within the hard disciplines is typified as cumulative, is believed to have well-developed boundaries and theories, and research is based on quantitative and causal propositions. In soft disciplines, knowledge is characterised as holistic and having a qualitative bias with unclear boundaries and unspecified theoretical structure. Research in soft disciplines is based on less well-defined problems and influenced by trends. Applied disciplines are regulated by external influences and/or professional bodies and linked closely to a profession, while the pure disciplines are self-regulating disciplines and not directly linked to a profession (Becher & Trowler, 2001). As argued by Trowler (2012), a view of the central significance of disciplines' influence on the beliefs and work of the academics indicates that academics' backgrounds and individual agency are considered insignificant compared to their socialisation into the knowledge structures of discipline domains that influence beliefs and practice.

According to classification of disciplines (Table 3.1 above), the accounting discipline can be categorised as a soft/applied discipline because it has been and continues to be regulated by professional accounting bodies and seeks to take on a holistic approach and integrates intellectual ideas. Bernstein (1990) argues that the 'distribution rules' of disciplines have the effect of regulating what is considered to be 'worthwhile knowledge'. Evidence of the 'distribution rules' referred to by Bernstein (1990) is visible in the influential role the accounting profession has had in the design and direction of the accounting curriculum. While the economics discipline may initially have been considered a 'soft' discipline, particularly when it was associated with theology, the classics and social sciences, over time, economics came to be

considered a ‘hard/pure’ discipline due to the influence of the more theoretically rigorous application of econometrics.

3.2 Teaching and assessment practices within disciplines

Teaching and assessment differences between disciplines have been explained using the disciplinary classifications (Neumann, 2001; Neumann et al., 2002). As noted in Table 3.2 below, there are pedagogical differences as to how academics approach curriculum design, and teaching and assessment practices within the discipline classifications. For example, the extent to which lectures, seminars, tutorials, and laboratories are used as a teaching method, the number of contact hours with students, the preparation time academics devote to design and delivery of curriculum, and the differences between the amount of undergraduate and postgraduate teaching are all influenced by the discipline (Ballantyne, Bain, & Packer, 1999; Hativa, 1997; Neumann, 2001; Smeby, 1996). The discipline may also influence the different goals and teaching styles adopted within disciplines (Neumann, 2001). Further research has also indicated that different values and emphasis placed on assessment (Braxton, 1995; Neumann, 2001; Shay, 2005) and subject and curriculum structure (Young, 2010) are influenced by the disciplines. In addition, disciplines may influence to what extent assessment assessment is considered a mechanism ‘of learning or for learning’ (Kinash, McGillivray, & Crane, 2017).

Table 3.2: Teaching and assessment practices within the discipline classifications Adapted from Neumann (Young, 2010)

Discipline Category	Teaching Practices	Assessment Practices Purpose/Type
Hard Pure	• Large group lectures • Supplemented by class lab sessions or fieldwork • Problem classes	• Knowledge acquisition • Quantitative • Objective tests/exams • Norm referencing
Soft Pure	• Face to face settings in smaller groups • Occasional lectures • Seminars and web-based discussion groups	• Knowledge application and integration • Essays • Short answer papers • Project reports • Oral presentations • Continuous • Formative assessment (assessment criteria) Summative assessment
Hard Applied	• Practical experiences • Large lectures • Lab work or workshops, problem classes	• Knowledge application and integration: essays • Preference for exams, including multiple choice covering large amounts of factual knowledge • Rigorous testing (eliminate weaker students) • More devoted to problem solving or practice-related skill assessment
Soft Applied	• Practical experiences • Face to face settings • Smaller classes emphasis on open ended discussion and debate through seminars and tutorials • Contributions from experienced practitioners	• Knowledge application and integration: essays • Aim to enhance professional practice and procedures • Essay and project-based assessment predominate • Peer & self-assessment tasks are common • Constructive, informative feedback • Problem-solving and theoretical underpinning

The different teaching and assessment practices across disciplines indicate that the disciplinary beliefs have strong, structural and pervasive influences, not only on teaching methods, but also on the beliefs held about teaching, learning and assessment (Hativa, 1997; Neumann et al., 2002). For instance, research has indicated that academics working within hard disciplines tend to use a teacher-focused approach, whilst in soft disciplines they are more likely to use a student-focused approach (Lindblom-Ylanne, Trigwell, Nevgi, & Ashwin, 2006). Other research has indicated that discipline position in the hard-soft and pure-applied dimensions gives rise to

distinctive meanings about learning; for instance, learning by doing in computer science (hard discipline), while soft-applied disciplines such as public administration and library disciplines adhere closely to beliefs about learning that follow professional orientation (Ylijoki, 2000).

The epistemological differences have implications for the design of assessment that determine beliefs about appropriateness of assessment design for particular disciplines. For example, multiple choice questions are unlikely to be administered in arts programs (Young, 2010). If, indeed, academics' teaching and assessment approaches differ among disciplines (Hativa, 1997; Neumann, 2001; Neumann et al., 2002), then a consideration of the extent to which the discipline influences academics' understanding of employability skills and to what extent academics integrate the teaching and assessment of employability skills into their curriculum is required. In order to understand the influence disciplines, have on academics' understanding and practice, the following section provides an overview of the shift of the accounting and economics discipline in a business degree program, in particular in the current higher education climate focused on the enhancement of university graduate employability outcomes.

3.2.1 The accounting discipline

Accounting education has faced increasing pressure to enhance the work readiness of its graduates. As the profession has faced changes amidst the rapidly and continually evolving workplace, the role of the professional accountant has changed from a mostly quantitative role to an advisory and consulting role (Bunney, Sharplin, & Howitt, 2015; Hancock et al., 2009; Howieson, 2003). The Mathews Report (Mathews, 2004) in 1990 is indicative of early signs of the support for reforms to

accounting education as a result of the changes. There has been a growing expectation that employability skills are included as a set of higher order skills, such as analytical and critical analysis skills, together with the ability to engage and communicate with clients, negotiate and act strategically, and make ethical business and accounting judgements (Hancock et al., 2009).

The accounting profession has continued, in recent years, to play a significant role in pushing for a reform of accounting education to develop work-ready accounting graduates. One way the accounting profession has influenced curriculum has been in a push for alignment of the accounting curriculum with professional practice via the accreditation process (Poullaos & Sian, 2010). The expectation that accounting graduates must demonstrate possession of employability skills is now a very well-established expectation of accounting graduates (Jackson & Hancock, 2010; Leong & Kavanagh, 2013; Tempone et al., 2012). The two professional accounting bodies in Australia: CPA and the Institute of Chartered Accountants that accredit Australian accounting degree programs influence the basic structure of the degree program (Mathews, 2004). CPA Australia requires that universities, as part of their professional accreditation, report how they integrate employability skills into their accounting degree programs (Jackling & De Lange, 2009. Employability skills are also emphasised as important by accounting employers in the U.S. (Hancock et al., 2010). The Association to Advance Collegiate Schools of Business (AACSB) has been particularly influential in the accounting education program, with the inclusion of the requirement that business programs include a set of learning outcomes that enable students to demonstrate their acquisition of employability skills (Hancock et al., 2009, 2010).

The emphasis on the responsibility of the accounting curriculum to ensure the development of graduates' employability skills aligns with the drivers for curriculum reform. University graduates' acquisition of employability skills is considered to contribute to the economic benefit of employers and the economy; a view that is driven by business and professional associations. However, the emphasis on producing graduates with employability skills that are considered to be life-long learning and transferable skill sets (Bunney, Sharplin, & Howitt, 2015) lends itself to the argument that the prime focus of university education is in its social role of producing socially responsible graduates and not just the production of graduates as an economic resource. The social role of universities is supported by the view that employability skills development transcends disciplinary boundaries (Bunney et al., 2015). However, the research indicates a push for employability skills to be understood within the disciplinary context (Jones, 2010). CPA Australia and the Institute of Chartered Accountants recommend that employability skills should be integrated into the accounting program and not offered as standalone subjects (CPA, 2008; Leong & Kavanagh, 2013).

Despite the debates about the expected role of universities, the higher education literature reports on a range of strategies that have been implemented, seeking to change the teaching and assessment methods of accounting education (for example see Bui & Porter, 2010; Bunney et al., 2015; Calvert & Kurji, 2012; Cord, Bowrey, & Clements, 2010a, 2010b; Tempone et al., 2012). Teaching and learning approaches to engage students with the accounting discipline through practical experience are one way that teaching and learning practices have been adopted to develop accounting students' employability skills (Bunney et al., 2015). For instance, students involved in

the Commerce Internship Programme (CIP) at the University of Wollongong complete an elective subject that provides them with an opportunity to be placed in organisations for a 16-day internship experience during their undergraduate studies. The reflective journals, which were part of the students' final assessment task for the CIP, showed that the students were able to identity and discuss organisational culture. The students were thus able to gain insight into the accounting discipline and how to work in a professional manner, the ability to apply accounting concepts to the contemporary practice of accounting, and the development of employability skills such as analysis, critical thinking, communication, teamwork, and time management skills, as well as learning the discipline's technical skills (Cord et al., 2010a).

The work readiness of accounting graduates is increasingly defined, therefore, as not only gaining accounting knowledge, but also the ability to apply that knowledge to practice, and gaining a range of employability skills required for accounting positions. Service-learning projects have also been used to address some of the graduate competencies required of accounting students, including employability skills, professional practice and citizenship behaviour (Calvert & Kurji, 2012). In addition, it has been argued that Work Integrated Learning contributes to closing the gap between the skills required of accountants and the skills graduates develop during their university degree (Leong & Kavanagh, 2013).

More recently, professional and industry bodies have called upon universities to respond to the concerns of an apparent accounting graduate skills gap (Howieson, 2003; Jackling & De Lange, 2009). While interested stakeholders initially focused on clarifying the employability skills required for the accounting profession, stakeholder

concerns have turned increasingly to the challenges of integrating employability skills within university accounting programs (Hancock et al., 2009; Howieson, 2003). Of particular concern have been the challenges faced by accounting academics to make changes to objectives and teaching practices (Hancock et al., 2009), and ensuring that accounting education is relevant to the contemporary accounting profession (Pan & Perera, 2012).

There are signs that accounting academics have faced challenges in making changes to teaching practices geared toward the development of students' employability skills (Bunney et al., 2015; Hancock et al., 2009). Reports of a lack of strategies adopted by accounting academics to help students build the skills necessary is a challenge, despite the fact that the employability skills have been identified and mapped out in the curriculum documents (Stoner & Milner, 2010). Furthermore, there are reports which suggest that there continues to be little emphasis placed on the integration of employability skills' in the accounting curriculum over and above the importance of the teaching of discipline knowledge and technical skill development (De Lange, Jackling, & Gut, 2006; Palm & Bisman, 2010). The scholarly literature also points to the need for changes in academics' attitudes toward the curriculum, particularly in relation to assumptions that the transfer of employability skills to the workplace is automatic (Jackson & Hancock, 2010).

To understand the challenges faced by accounting academics, research has sought to examine whether there is a mismatch between the accounting curriculum and what is required in the workplace (Pan & Perera, 2012), whether there is a divergence between the expectations of employers and accounting graduates of the generic skills

required for employability (Jackling & De Lange, 2009; Kavanagh & Drennan, 2008), and divergence between employers' expectations of graduates and the actual work performance of accounting graduates (Bui & Porter, 2010). Despite the research on the gaps and divergence, it is unclear how accounting academics understand and enact employability skills in the accounting curriculum through their actual teaching and assessment practice.

3.2.2 The economics discipline

Situated in business education in most contemporary universities, there seems to be agreement among many economic academics that the core purpose of a study in economics at university level is to teach students to 'think like an economist' (Becker, 2000; Siegfried, Bartlett, Hansen, & Kelley, 1991). Thus, it follows that, since academics identify primarily with their discipline (Becher & Trowler, 2001; Neumann, 2001), academics' engagement with their discipline contributes to the permanence of disciplinary cultures. Despite the shift across discipline classifications, the permanence of economic academics' beliefs and practices indicates that economic academics' understanding and practice continues to be informed by the boundaries of their discipline (Becher & Trowler, 2001). For instance, in order to 'think like an economist', graduates are required to be able to use economic theories and concepts to aid in their understanding of economic problems in different economic, social and political settings (Siegfried et al., 1991). For this reason, economic academics understand that development of the skills and capabilities within the economics discipline is linked closely to the economic discipline knowledge that is core to the economics curriculum. Thus, disciplinary cultures reflect how academics understand their discipline and their teaching and assessment practice within their discipline (Becher & Trowler, 2001).

Since the 1990s, an interest in improving the quality of the teaching of economics has come to the fore. The argument posited in the higher education literature is that, while economic graduates gain in-depth knowledge of core economic principles and are required to develop and practice the mathematical expression of these principles, the curriculum excludes the adoption of teaching practices that enable students to develop the skills required for application of economic concepts to contemporary and real-life practices (Colander & McGoldrick, 2009; O'Donnell, 2010, 2014). Some argue that initiatives which include giving students the opportunity to be immersed in a 'skill-forming environment in the context of a discipline-based course' will educate economics students to apply discipline knowledge to practice (O'Donnell, 2010, p. 270). Hansen (1993, 2001) argues that the best way to develop economics students' ability to apply economic knowledge and skills to practice is through the acquisition of proficiencies. These proficiencies include: 1) access to existing knowledge, 2) display command of existing knowledge, 3) interpret existing knowledge, 4) interpret and manipulate economic data, 5) apply existing knowledge, and 6) create new knowledge (Hansen, 2001).

A focus on proficiencies seems to align with improving the ability of economic students to apply economic knowledge, principles and concepts to practice. O'Donnell (2010, 2014) argues that employability skills are best deployed in pluralist economics courses. Such practices, as argued by Hansen (1993, 2001) and O'Donnell (2010, 2014), require a move away from traditional passive learning environments that are common in economics classrooms. The literature on economic education, however, reports that teaching methods in the economics discipline continue to adhere to how things have always been done. Teaching is mostly in a one-way lecture format and

there continues to be an ongoing reliance on textbooks and problem sets, which focus on knowledge acquisition (Becker, 2000, 2004; ~~Becker~~ & Watts, 2001a). In addition, the literature purports that assessment continues to be narrowly based upon examinations made up of multiple-choice and true-false tests (Becker & Watts, 2001a, 2001b), which assess 'recognition and understanding' rather than higher levels of cognitive knowledge (Hansen, 2001, p. 234).

Regardless of the call for changes to teaching and assessment practice in the economics discipline, there is little explicit information on how economic academics understand the current growing emphasis on graduate employability skills. In particular, little is known about how economic academics define employability skills, and how curriculum design, teaching and assessment practices reflect their understanding and beliefs about the university and academic roles in teaching and assessing employability skills.

Given the different responses to the employability skills agenda reported in the higher education literature, this chapter argues that academics' beliefs and practices that seek to develop and enhance employability skills are investigated in the context of the specific discipline. As a result, it is expected that there will be divergent understandings of the employability skills agenda, differences in the employability skills that are identified as necessary for graduate employability and the beliefs about academics' roles in the development and enhancement of students' employability skills, and differences in the adoption and explanation for actual teaching and assessment practices between accounting and economic academics.

3.3 Other factors that may affect academic practice within disciplines

In addition to disciplinary differences, a number of studies have shown a complex interaction of multiple factors that interact with disciplinary epistemology, such as social factors, and institutional context (Shay, 2005; Shulman, 2005a, 2005b; Ylijoki, 2000; Young, 2010; Young & Chapman, 2010), as well as historical and geographical factors (Becher & Trowler, 2001; Trowler, 2012). Such factors have had some influence in changing teaching and research approaches within disciplines (Coates, 2013; Marginson, 2000; Marginson & Considine, 2000). As argued by Shulman (2005a, 2005b), curriculum design and teaching practices, while strongly influenced by the discipline are also dependent upon to what extent academics' teaching and assessment practice focuses on preparing their students for a particular profession. A consideration of the multiple influences aligns with the argument, put forward by Manathunga and Brew (2012), that viewing disciplines as distinct and constant ignores the fluidity of disciplines.

In recent decades, discussions of forces that influence academic practice have come to the fore. The range of factors that influence practice can be placed on a spectrum that moves from structural factors to individual agentic factors (see Figure 3.1 below) (Trowler, 2012).

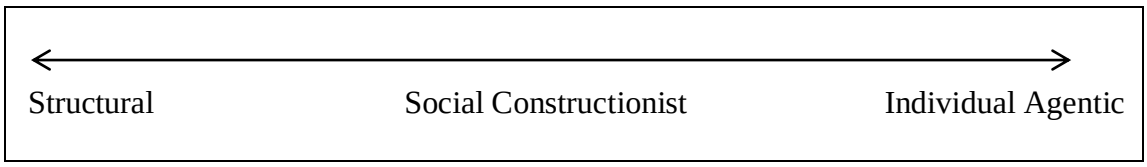


Figure 3.1: Factors that influence practice.
Adapted from (Trowler, 2012)

Structural factors impose regulations and predictions on practice. As discussed above, one of the most significant structural factors is the epistemological character of the

discipline; in other words, the nature of the knowledge embedded within the discipline (Becher & Trowler, 2001; Trowler, 2012). As noted above, other research has examined to what extent knowledge embedded within a discipline influences teaching and assessment practices (Neumann, 2001; Neumann et al., 2002). As argued by Neumann (2001); Neumann et al. (2002) the discipline is considered to have a strong and structural influence on teaching and assessment practices.

A social-constructionist position sits at the mid-point of the spectrum (see Figure 3.1 above). A social constructionist examines how academics construct beliefs about teaching, assessment and student learning, as a result of experiences within the disciplinary teaching and assessment context. The social constructivist explanation for the differences argues that academics construct their own meanings about knowledge and practice (Shay, 2005; Trowler, 2012). The meanings develop over time and are influenced by a range of external and internal factors (Trowler, 2012). For instance, experiences within the disciplinary context can result in changes to the constructs academics make about their approaches to teaching and assessment practice and conceptions about student learning (Bamber, 2012; Lindblom-Ylanne et al., 2006; Shay, 2005; Trigwell & Prosser, 1996, 1997; Trowler & Cooper, 2002). These constructs can invoke different ways academics approach their practice, for instance, using case studies or videos to help students understand knowledge, challenging student, or helping students who are facing difficulties to acquire discipline and technical skills (Trowler, 2012).

The final factor on the right of spectrum, Individual Agentic, (see Figure 3.1. above), refers to Individual agency and includes the choices, actions, beliefs and attitudes of

individuals that influence practice. Individual agency can sometimes be more significant in shaping practice than the structural factors (Ashwin, 2008; Trowler, 2012). However, individual agency can be structured by institutions and wider social structures (Ashwin, 2008). Moreover, factors such as the identity of academics, power relations, and the meanings attached to particular practices and recurrent practices can influence individual agency and, therefore, actual practice (Hativa, 1997).

3.4 Summary

This chapter has argued that academics' understanding and practices, which seek to develop and enhance employability skills, are best studied in the context of the formal curriculum of disciplines. As disciplines are central to curriculum design and practice, it is imperative to examine academics' understanding of employability skills, and how that understanding influences teaching and assessment practices within discipline curriculum. The discussion of the emergence of business disciplines has demonstrated the significance of internal and external pressures and demands on disciplinary practices (Ylijoki, 2000; Young & Chapman, 2010).

In this study, the teaching and assessment practices of academics in the disciplines of accounting and economics are examined. If, indeed, teaching and assessment practices differ between the disciplines, then a consideration of the extent to which the discipline influences academics' understanding and practice is required. The investigation of differences between accounting and economics disciplines will illuminate the range of other factors that may hinder or support the teaching and assessment of employability skill development within academic disciplines. However, to date, the study of the academics' actual practices working within disciplines is

limited and thus little is known about employability skills development through actual teaching and assessment of university curriculum. The gap in the research and higher education literature provides the justification for the methodological framework of this study, as discussed in the following chapter.

Chapter Four: Methodology

This study extends previous research by investigating the extent to which employability skills are enacted in academics' actual practice. The available research, as discussed in previous chapters, has indicated that, while graduate employability skills development has become an important graduate learning outcome in most universities, little is known about the extent academics integrate employability skills development through their actual teaching and assessment practice. To investigate academics' actual practice, the study investigates whether there is a mismatch between academics' beliefs/self-reported practice and actual practice. This chapter outlines the research aims and questions that investigated academics' beliefs, self-reported practice, actual teaching and assessment practice, and possible factors for the disjuncture between self-reported practice and actual practice. The chapter describes the rationale for the methodological framework, including how the study site, degree program, subjects, and participants were chosen, and the methods of data collection and analysis.

4.1 Research aim and questions

Despite the mapping of employability skills within the university curriculum, reports from industry and government continue to indicate that graduates lack those skills that make graduates work-ready. The concern about a graduate skills gap has generated discussion and debate as to the extent universities are willing or able to teach and assess employability skills through the university curriculum. While research has attempted to explain the gaps in graduates' employability skills, there has been little systematic examination of how academics offer employability skills development through the university curriculum. To investigate academics' teaching and assessment

practice, this study explored academics' beliefs and self-reported practices about teaching and assessment of employability skills and actual practice.

The central research question for this study is:

To what extent are employability skills enacted in the business curriculum?

The following subsidiary research questions were formulated to guide the analysis. The first two subsidiary questions sought to investigate academics' understanding and beliefs, and subsidiary questions three and four investigate actual practice. Practice refers to both the teaching and assessment of employability skills:

1. How do academics understand employability skills?
2. What level of importance do academics place on employability skills in university curriculum and their role in teaching and assessing employability skills?
3. To what extent and how are employability skills taught?
4. To what extent and how are employability skills assessed?

4.2 Methodological Framework

In order to answer the research questions, this study adopted a qualitative methodological framework. Qualitative research allows for the collection of data that captures the understanding of a topic of importance from the people who are directly involved (Patton, 2002). This is important, given that the research questions seek to investigate to what extent academics integrate employability skills in actual teaching and assessment practice rather than just focusing on self-reported practice. The overall research question requires direct investigation of academics' understanding, beliefs, and practices from academics' perspectives and experiences. This is important, given that little is known about the practice of academics who are expected to design, deliver, and assess university curriculum and to think about and respond to

the call to develop students' employability skills through the teaching and assessment of university curriculum.

4. 2.1 Philosophical Assumptions

This study is located within a social constructivist theoretical perspective. Social constructivist ontology privileges the participants' experience as related to and observed by the researcher (Creswell, 2012; Rudestam & Newton, 2007). A constructionist researcher expects that different stakeholders will have different experiences and perceptions (Patton, 2002). By taking a social constructionist position for this study has enabled the researcher to capture academics' understanding, beliefs and practice from their 'worldview' (Creswell, 2012), by focusing on academics who work in one institution, in one degree program, within their specific disciplines (accounting and economics).

The perspectives and experiences of the academics have been captured through open-ended semi-structured interviews, curriculum document analysis, and direct observations of teaching and assessment practices. Thus, the research examined the complexity of the perspective and experiences, rather than narrowing the meaning into specified categories (Creswell, 2012). To ensure that the meanings are drawn from academics' words and experiences, the interview questions were broad and open-ended. In this way, the researcher could listen to what academics say and do about their practice rather than starting with a theory or explanations as would be the case for a positivist worldview (Creswell, 2012). While interpretation of what academics say and do can flow from or be shaped by the researchers' own personal, cultural and historical experiences, the purpose of the methodological framework for this study is to allow the academics to describe their understanding and beliefs from

their own experiences, and the researcher to observe academics' actual practice. In this way, the subjective meanings given by academics were investigated to identify and explain the factors that affect the integration of employability skills in their teaching and assessment practice. Thus, the social constructivist world view is important in this study because academics' understanding, beliefs and actual practice were explored inductively, to develop a theoretical understanding of the meanings given to understanding, beliefs and practice (Creswell, 2012), from the point of view of the academics.

Research concerned with the participants' perceptions and actions, and the meanings they give to their practice are, therefore, central in answering the research question: 'To what extent are employability skills enacted in the business curriculum?' Firstly, academics' understanding of employability skills were collected through semi-structured interviews that asked academics to provide a definition of the term employability skills and to identify skills that they deem to be employability skills. Beliefs about the role of university curriculum and the academic role in teaching and assessment of employability skills and academics' self-reported practice were also collected through the semi-structured interviews. During the interviews, academics' beliefs and self-reported practices were discussed through multiple perspectives, using the words of the academics as collected through the semi-structured interviews. The interviews enabled academics to express their understanding, beliefs and self-reported practices openly.

Academics' understandings and beliefs were also reported by considering to what extent understanding, beliefs and reported practices are visible in curriculum

documents as espoused theories (that is what the curriculum documents espouse that teaching and assessment practice seeks to achieve and the intended student learning outcomes). Insight into academics' understanding and beliefs of employability skills is imperative, given that the term 'employability skills', as previously indicated, is a complex term with a lack of agreed understanding among the main stakeholders. The lack of an agreed understanding of the term is further exacerbated by a lack of research into academics' understanding of the concept and to what extent teaching and assessment of the skills takes place directly by academics through the university curriculum.

In order to understand academics' actual teaching and assessment practices, the researcher investigated practices directly through the lived experiences of the academics in their workplace (Creswell, 2012). The direct observation of teaching and assessment practices enabled information to be gathered about academics' actual practice, and the follow-up semi-structured interviews were used to investigate how academics explain their practice and the purpose of their practice. The study is, therefore, not intended to be generalisable because it is concerned with the depth and quality of the insights gained about understanding and practice, which are the central aims of the study. The study does not intend to reach a conclusion about which understanding or perception of practice is right, or more true or more real than the other.

4.2.2 Theoretical Framework

The Theories of Action framework (Argyris & Schön, 1974) was used to shape the study, the methods selected, and the process of analysis. The Theories of Action framework proposes that individuals hold theories about their actions or practices that

reflect their individual values, strategies, and underlying assumptions about practice (Argyris & Schön, 1974). Argyris and Schön (1974) distinguish between two types of action theories: espoused theories of action and theories-in-use. When individuals explain and justify their proposed behaviour or actions in a given situation, they are expressing espoused theories (in other words, what they aim for and believe they do in practice). Individuals' theories-in-use, however, are individuals' actual theories of practice, as observed by what individuals actually do in practice. The observation of actual practice can provide important information about factors that may impede individuals in acting upon what they believe and say they do in practice (Argyris & Schön, 1974). In this way, the Theories of Action, as a broad framework, enables the examination of the relationship between academics' espoused theories and theories-in-use, and the factors that impede putting espoused theories into practice.

The Theory of Action Framework guided the research methods in two main ways. The first part of the study investigates academics' espoused theories of action (understanding and beliefs about employability skills and what they say they do in practice), and the second part of the study investigated academics' theories-in-use (what they do in actual practice). The study utilised three types of methods to investigate academics' espoused theories and theories-in-use. Initial, semi-structured interviews and the content analysis of curriculum documents provided two techniques for gathering and analysing the data (Corbin & Strauss, 2015) of academics' understandings, beliefs and self-reported practices. The direct observation of academics' actual teaching, the content analysis of actual assessment practice, and the follow-up semi-structured interviews provided the opportunity to investigate academics' theories-in-use.

4.3 Data Collection

The next section explains and justifies the process used to select the research site, degree program, disciplines, subjects, and academics for this study.

4.3.1 Sampling and selection

The data was selected using a purposeful sampling strategy (Creswell, 2012; Patton, 2002). Purposeful sampling 'means that the inquirer selects individuals and sites for study because they can purposefully inform an understanding of the research problem and central phenomenon in the study' (Creswell, 2012, p. 125). Purposeful sampling is appropriate for this study because the intention has been to sample academics working in particular disciplines in a university who teach and assess university curriculum.

The strategy of criterion sampling (Patton, 2002) has been used in this study. Criterion sampling required selecting the site of the study and participants that met some pre-determined criteria (Patton, 2002). In contrast to a quantitative study, the use of criterion sampling has guided the identification of the site of study, the business program, the two disciplines, and four academics for in-depth analysis, particularly in relation to the meanings academics give for the observed practice that has enabled the factors that affect practice to emerge. The criteria for selection are discussed in more detail below.

4.3.2 The Research Site

To answer the research questions, the study was carried out in one large university that offers a well-established business degree at the undergraduate level. Selecting academics teaching within one institution and within one business degree program

ensures there is a common experience shared by academics. As Patton (2002) asserts, the selected site for qualitative research should provide the most information that in turn will have the greatest impact on the development of knowledge regarding the area of research (Patton, 2002).

The large Australian university selected for this study is a well-established teaching and research-intensive Australian institution that has experienced the changes to the higher education landscape discussed in chapters 1 and 2. The purpose for conducting the study at one university site, rather than multiple sites, is that the main objective of the study was an in-depth study of academics' understanding and beliefs of employability skills and, most importantly, to ascertain the interrelating factors that may affect teaching and assessment practices across two different disciplines, within one degree program, in one institution. As such, it was anticipated that the single site would enable a focused approach by generating a depth of rich data on disciplinary differences within one university degree program.

4.3.3 The business program

A Bachelor of Commerce degree was selected for this study. The criterion for selecting the Bachelor of Commerce is that it is a university degree program that has emerged within the changing landscape of higher education (Parker & Guthrie, 2010). The research and scholarly work on higher education indicates that there is concern from industry, employers and government about the mismatch between industry expectations of required employability skills that business graduates should possess, versus what they actually possess, and what the curriculum offers. In addition, the Bachelor of Commerce degree was selected because it is designed to expose students to a variety of business disciplines prior to selecting a major (usually at the beginning

of the students' second year of study). The discipline areas include: Accounting, Economics, Finance, Management, and Marketing.

4.3.4 The business disciplines

As outlined in Chapter 3, it is critical that academics' understandings of employability skills and practices be investigated within the context of specific disciplines. This study selected two core business discipline areas within the Bachelor of Commerce degree, Accounting and Economics, as the focus of the research. Both disciplines have been selected because they have well-defined disciplinary cultures, so the relationships among disciplinary epistemology and understanding and practice can be examined. At the same time, however, it can be observed that both disciplines have undergone shifts influenced by a number of historical and geographical factors, and demonstrate that the boundaries between hard and soft, pure and applied, are not absolute distinctions (Becher & Trowler, 2001). The accounting discipline is an example of a relatively new and emerging discipline that has entered the university context with the emergence of business education. The economics discipline, while having a long history as a university discipline, evolved as a discipline of business education with the emergence of business degree programs. The significance of selecting the accounting and economics disciplines is explained in more detail below.

The accounting discipline was selected because the accounting profession has undergone, and continues to undergo, change as a result of the rapid transformation of communication and accounting technology (Howieson, 2003). Consequently, much of accounting practice lies in the fields of business advisory services, which has meant that future accountants will take on the role of 'knowledge' workers and thus, along with their technical skills, will be required to possess employability skills in analysis,

problem-solving, communication and client relations (Howieson, 2003). The economics discipline was selected because it is an area of study that requires students to develop the employability skills of problem-solving and data analysis, in both business and government. It is also a discipline area that seeks to develop graduates' employability skills rather than just discipline specific skills.

4.3.5 The selected subjects

In total, four subjects were selected from the Bachelor of Commerce Degree Program; two from the accounting discipline and two from the economics discipline. In selecting subjects for this study, the researcher took into account compulsory and core subjects qualifying for the Bachelor of Commerce Degree, as well as subjects at the first year level (at the beginning of the degree program) and third year subjects (taken in the final year of the undergraduate degree). Two compulsory subjects for all Bachelor of Commerce students were selected, and two core subjects required completing a major in each of the discipline areas were selected.

The compulsory subjects aim to provide students with a solid foundation in business. The subjects include: Microeconomics, Macroeconomics, Quantitative methods and Organisational behaviour. Regardless of students' chosen major, students must complete these subjects in the first and second year. One of the compulsory first year economics subjects (out of the three first year compulsory subjects that Bachelor of Commerce Students must complete) was selected.

The core subjects are those taken in the different Commerce disciplines: Accounting, Economics, Finance, Management and Marketing. The core subjects must be completed in order for students to complete their selected major(s) and, for the

accounting discipline; the core subjects are required for accreditation. A first year core accounting subject was selected because it is a subject open to any discipline and does not require that students have a background in accounting. This was an important subject to select because there is no compulsory first year accounting subject; however, it is a subject that many first year students, regardless of their discipline, select as part of the requirements of the Bachelor of Commerce Degree program. In addition to the first year subjects, one core, third level subject was selected from each discipline. There are no core economics subjects at first year, two at second year and three at third year.

4.3.6 The academics selected

The criteria set for selecting academics is based upon the fact that they are best placed to talk about their perceptions and experiences, and enable the researcher to observe their actual teaching and assessment practices. The reason for purposeful samples and the strategy of criterion sampling align with the research questions that sought to investigate and report on rich information about academics' understanding, beliefs and practices that yield deep insights and understanding, rather than empirical generalisations (Patton, 2002, p. 230). Each of the selected samples is described in more detail below. Thus, the academics involved in the design, delivery and assessment of the curriculum, as well as those who deliver and assess (not design), were selected. In total, four subject coordinators/lecturers (who design and deliver the curriculum) and four tutors (teaching assistants/adjuncts who deliver, but do not design the curriculum) were selected from each subject. In total, the academics are responsible for teaching over 2,000 students in one year. Table 4.1 provides an overview of the study site, degree, subjects and participants.

Table 4.1: Summary of study site, degree, subject and participants

University – Large, well-established Australian University	
Bachelor of Commerce (well-established undergraduate degree) specializing in majors in the disciplines of Accounting, Economics, Finance, Management & Marketing	
Accounting Discipline	**Economics Discipline**
First Year Subject (core/required for accreditation): • Subject Coordinator • Academic Tutor	First Year Subject (compulsory for BCom) • Subject Coordinator • Academic Tutor
Third Year Subject (core/required for accreditation): • Subject Coordinator • Academic Tutor	Third Year Subject (core for pathway to Honours in Economics) • Subject Coordinator • Academic Tutor

Following ethics approval (see Appendix 1), the selected academics were contacted, via email, informing them of the study and seeking their support (Appendix 2), and included the Plain Language Statement (Appendix 3) and Consent Form (Appendix 4).

4.4 Research phases and methods

Since the investigation of academics' espoused theories and theories-in-use was central to this study, data was collected in four sequential phases (see Table 4.2 below) involving semi-structured interviews (see Appendix 5), content analysis of academics' curriculum documents, the direct observation of teaching and assessment practices, and follow-up semi-structured interviews (see Appendix 7).

Table 4.2: Research Phases and Methods

Phase 1: *Semi-Structured Interviews*	• Academics involved in the design, delivery and assessment of one first year compulsory subject, one first year core accounting subject, and one core third year accounting and economics subject. • Interviews took place prior to content analysis of curriculum documents and direct observation of teaching practice to ascertain academics' understanding and espoused views on the integration of employability skills into the curriculum
Phase 2: *Content Analysis*	• Program graduate attribute statements • Descriptive text in subject handbook • Descriptive text in subject curriculum documents, assessment tasks, assessment criteria and feedback • Assessment criteria and feedback (written)
Phase 3: *Direct Observations*	• Teaching and Learning activities (lectures and tutorials) of the selected subjects • Assessment tasks and feedback (verbal)
Phase 4: *Academics: Follow-up semi-Structured Interviews*	• Academics involved in the design, delivery and assessment of one first year compulsory subject, one first year core accounting subject, and one third year core accounting and economics subject. • Follow-up interviews will take place to further explore the teaching and assessment practices observed and described, or to clarify any anomalies.

4.4.1 Phase 1: Semi-structured interviews with academics

The semi-structured face-to-face interviews took place prior to content analysis of curriculum documents and the direct observation of teaching and assessment practices. The aim of the initial semi-structured interviews was to explore academics' understanding of employability skills, their beliefs of the integration of employability skills within university curriculum and their academic roles, and the intentions and rationale with which they support their views. An interview schedule (see Appendix 5) was used to guide the discussions; however, the questions were of an open-ended nature.

Open-ended questions differ from standardised questionnaires because they allow for an understanding of issues discussed from the point of view of the participants (Patton, 2002). The interview started with a discussion with each of the academics about their teaching background and level of experience, information about the

subject, and number of enrolled students. The academics were then asked to define the term 'employability skills'. The focus of this question was to allow the academics to give their own definition rather than asking academics state their understanding of the term by providing them with a range of definitions of employability skills and their associated skills, attributes and behaviours that is presented by industry, governments, universities and scholarly work and research of higher education. The aim was to have participants identify and describe the concepts in their own words, to identify the skills, attributes and/or behaviours they regard and describe as employability skills, and to gain insight into how they categorise each component of the term.

The open-ended questions then moved on to seek information about the level of importance the academics attach to developing students' employability skills, who they think is responsible for the development of students' employability skills, and what they do in their teaching practice. The probing questions under each of these topics sought to garner responses from academics related to examples of viewpoints, experiences, practice and plans they have made or seek to make to develop student learning outcomes, teaching and learning activities, and assessment strategies.

While each interview was guided by the same schedule, each interview was unique in the sense that the probing questions asked were in relation to the issues and points raised by each of the academics. Thus, the order of the questions and the manner in which questions were phrased depended upon the academics' responses and the direction the discussion took. Therefore, interviews varied in responses and timing, with each interview lasting from forty to ninety minutes. Examples of the types of

questions asked are provided in the draft semi-structured interview schedule (see Appendix 5). All interviews were recorded with the permission of the participants. Interviews took no more than one-hour. The researcher developed and utilised an interview protocol that enabled the researcher to take notes, during the interview, about responses from the interviewees (Creswell, 2012).

4.4.2 Phase 2: Collection of and content analysis of curriculum documentation

Phase 2 of the research involved the collection and content analysis of all curriculum documentation related to the Bachelor of Commerce Degree, the discipline areas selected and the selected compulsory and core subject materials. This involved collecting university documentation of the Faculty of Business and Economic vision and graduate attribute statements on the respective Department university website and handbook information about the degree program and the relevant subject objective statements, subject guidelines assessment task and instructions, assessment criteria, assessment feedback, tutorial and lecture notes, tutorial and lecture instructions, and online/eLearning resources. The curriculum documents were collected to examine to what extent the integration of employability skills is part of the design of the program and subject curriculum.

Curriculum documents are useful because they have been developed for the purposes of the subject without knowledge about the current study (Yin, 2009) and, thus, have been developed for the sole purpose of designing, delivery and assessment of curriculum. This is important for this study since a content analysis of the documents provides insight as to what extent the integration of employability skills is espoused in the design of curriculum documentation.

Access to university curriculum documentation was readily available on the university and department websites. Permission was gained from the subject coordinators to access documents specific to the subject that is only available to enrolled students, teaching and administrative staff. Thus, all of the subject coordinators of each subject gave the researcher access to their subjects' Learning Management System, which contained the relevant resources required by students, including subject guidelines, lecture and tutorial notes and instructions, reading material, assessment task instructions, assessment criteria, and other useful resources to assist students to complete the subject. Each of the subject coordinators gave permission for the researcher to access samples of assessed work and feedback.

4.4.3 Phase 3: Direct Observation of teaching practice

Direct observation is a method for understanding more deeply what people understand about their perspectives and actual practices. For this study, direct observation of teaching and assessment practices were conducted in an effort to understand the academics' understanding of and perspective on employability skills, beyond what the participants said in their first interview, by observing what actually happened in the classroom and through assessment practices. In addition, by employing direct observation of teaching and assessment practices the researcher was able to observe aspects of teaching practice that were not mentioned or described by the academics in the first interview, and which were able to be explored in more detail in the follow-up interview. In this way, direct observations have the advantage of observing practices the participants may not have paid attention to, or been unwilling or unable to talk about (Patton, 2002).

Since qualitative studies are naturalistic or authentic because they take place in the 'real' setting (Patton, 2002), the observations of teaching practice took place in the actual teaching setting of each academic. Therefore, the place of teaching practice observed depended upon the teaching academic. In this way the observation over the entire semester period (12 weeks) of the lectures, tutorials and workshops of the selected compulsory and core subjects were conducted in a first year economics subject and a third year accounting subject during Semester 1 2014 and a first year accounting subject and third year economics subject during Semester 2 2014.

The role of the researcher in this study was as an observer, and therefore did not involve themselves in any participation in the teaching and assessment practice of the subjects observed. As Patton (2002) contends, the observational data must be in-depth and detailed. Therefore, in a manner similar to conducting the semi-structured interviews, the observations were structured by developing an observational protocol (Creswell, 2007: p. 137) and provided open-ended space for noting the details of the teaching being observed, time, topic, and different stages of the teaching period (See Appendix 6). The observational protocol was developed and used as a method for recording descriptive notes on what was observed.

The observational protocol was used for each class observed. The template available on the laptop enabled the researcher to take notes during observation, rather than writing the descriptions after the observations. In this way, the researcher was able to describe and reflect on the observations accurately at the moment that they occurred. The researcher focused only on describing what was observed. Running notes during the observation were made as a means to focus questioning during the follow-up

interviews. The physical setting of the classroom, as well as behaviours, interactions, and activities, were noted. Reflective notes about the experiences of observing the classes, hunches, and learning were also documented (Creswell, 2007; Grix, 2010).

4.4.4 Phase 4: Follow-up semi-structured interviews

Semi-structured interviews were conducted with the academics following the content analysis of curriculum documentation and the direct observation of teaching in practice. During these follow-up interviews academics were asked about recalled examples of actual teaching and assessment practices (see Appendix 7). The aim was to seek an understanding, from the academics' perspectives, of the reasons why decisions were made regarding teaching and learning activities, assessment tasks, and feedback to students in order to further explore the academics' intentions and rationale for specific teaching and assessment practices.

A number of questions were prepared in advance, which formed the interview schedule for the follow-up interviews (see Appendix 7 for interview schedule). The questions were used as a tool to allow the academics to reflect on and talk about particular teaching and assessment practices observed. The interview schedule included an initial question of discovery to enable academics to raise issues directly related to specific examples observed. Probing questions were used to obtain a holistic and more detailed picture of the practices observed, and also to encourage academics to express their views freely and openly. Directive questions were avoided, as they can lead the respondent's answer. The order of the questions and the manner in which questions were phrased depended upon the responses and, therefore, varied between interviews. Each interview lasted between forty and ninety minutes. The types of questions that were asked are provided in the draft interview schedule

(Appendix 7). All interviews were recorded with the permission of the participants. The researcher developed and utilised an interview protocol that enabled the researcher to take notes during the interview about the responses from the interviewees (Creswell, 2012).

4.5 Data analysis

4.5.1 Phase 1: Data Analysis of Initial Semi-Structured Interviews

For the initial semi-structured interviews, a thematic analysis of academics' responses was conducted. Each interview transcript was initially read, in its entirety, several times and notes were written in the margins of the transcripts (Miles, Huberman, & Saldana, 2014; Patton, 2002). This first step allowed an understanding of the interview in its entirety. The initial step was enhanced and completed by listening to the recording of the interviews several times, whilst simultaneously taking notes in the margins of the interview transcript that is, identifying which parts of the transcript spoke about aspects related to the broad themes informed by the research questions. The aim was to be immersed in the interview and gain an appreciation of the whole interview before breaking it up into codes and categories. These steps enhanced understanding of the whole interview and allowed for a summary description of each teaching academics' responses under four broad themes that align with the subsidiary research questions. Those themes are: 1) Understanding of Employability Skills, 2) Level of importance of the development of their students' employability skills, 3) Who is responsible for developing students' employability skills 4) What academics say they do in practice. Following the initial reading of the whole transcripts, the data

was organised into computer files, using NVivo to manage the data under the themes identified.

Codes were assigned to each of the points participants made in discussing their definition of employability skills. Academics' understanding of employability skills, and their espoused view of the integration of the development of students' employability skills, unfolded as the codes were developed under each of the broad themes by drawing codes from the interviews themselves. In this way, the codes and categories emerged from what the academics had said during the interviews; known as In Vivo Coding (Miles et al., 2014). In Vivo Coding was considered appropriate for this first coding stage because the core focus of this study was to privilege the academics' definitions of employability skills and their espoused views of the integration of the development of students' employability skills within the curriculum and their teaching role. For example, the codes assigned to academics' definitions of employability skills began with the term 'Two-part definition' because each of the academics mentioned that the term employability skills are made up of two parts or a combination of two parts.

During the interviews, probing questions enabled further clarification of the definition of each part of the whole term by focusing on the identified skills for each component of the term provided by the academics. For each part of the definition, the academics identified and described the skills. The skills were assigned codes that represented the meaning given to the skill by the academics. Assigning codes to the description of each part of the definition of employability skills involved an inductive analysis (Patton, 2002) of the interview data, by focusing on the actual words used by the

academics and assigning the words as codes; thus, this step sought to discover patterns and themes in the words the academics used to define employability skills (Patton, 2002). This process allowed for 'opening up the codes to reflect the view of participants in a traditional qualitative way' (Creswell, 2012) Thus, the steps did not include coding of a pre-developed list of employability skills, as has been the case in previous research on employability skills (for example see Cranmer, 2006; Jackson, 2013b; Jackson & Chapman, 2012a; Mason et al., 2009; Tanyel, Mitchell, & McAlum, 1999). For this reason, the process of coding was conducted over several stages to develop the final codes.

Moving to the process of refinement was necessary when it was established that codes were too broad and there were many overlaps and/or some of the codes did not actually reflect any of the broad themes identified. The codes were reviewed and re-reviewed in the NVivo database and were reduced and combined to narrow the number of codes. The refinement and reduction of codes allowed for the development of codes that best described the academics' understanding of employability skills.

After the initial codes were assigned within NVivo, the codes for each academic were sorted in a table and moved to a word document. In the left-hand column of the table, the code was noted and, in the right-hand column, an example of the direct quote that represented the code was provided. For example, the code 'technical skills' was assigned to the following quote:

> *…As well as the technical skills associated with the discipline. So, I think what industry tells us is that the technical skills associated with the discipline are kind of accepted and they're a given…*

The information in the table was then used to write a summary of each academic's understanding of identified employability skills.

The theme concerned with the level of importance academics place on the development of students' employability skills emerged from the interview question regarding whether academics know the university's position on the development of students' employability skills. The responses and viewpoints given by the academics, during the initial semi-structured interviews, were categorised under the theme: 'the level of importance they placed on the development of students' employability skills' because the coding pointed to statements made about the university's position in terms of who determines the level of importance. The same inductive process used for the first theme was applied by focusing on the actual words used by the academics. The codes were developed according to whether the importance was driven by the teaching academic, industry, senior academics or the university. For instance, the code 'important to me' was assigned for the following quote:

> *Well, for me it is important because I was very involved in the student society and professional development and working with firms and students.*

The list of codes and corresponding quotes are, therefore, unique to each of the academics. This was an important step in writing a summary for each academic, under each discipline. The two broad summaries were titled: 1) accounting discipline and 2) economics discipline. For each discipline, the summary included the academics' beliefs about each of the themes drawn from the research questions. Each academic's' summary included a description of their definition of employability skills, the level of importance they placed on the role of the university curriculum and academic role, who they think should be responsible for developing graduates' employability skills,

and what they say are their teaching and assessment practices and what they say they actually do to teach and assess employability skills.

4.5.2 Phase 2: Data Analysis of Curriculum Documents

A content analysis of the curriculum documents was conducted for two purposes. First, to identify and describe the discipline and the subject purpose and aims. The program level descriptions, handbook descriptions of the subject and subject guidelines for each subject were used, along with a summary of the discipline and the subject that forms the background information of the selected discipline. Second, to identify and describe to what extent employability skills are visible in the curriculum documents, a content analyses of the documents was conducted. The analyses sought to determine if the curriculum documents support or corroborate academics' understanding and beliefs, and what they say they do in practice.

Analysis of the curriculum documents was conducted in a similar manner to the semi-structured interview responses, in that the operations of 'open coding', as advocated by Corbin and Strauss (2015), was utilised. An inductive process was adopted by drawing out the practices and the meanings that stand out in the documents. Each of the meanings was categorised and given a label. This process was conducted iteratively by gradually building on the categories of codes, allowing the researcher to assess whether there are any meaningful themes emerging from the documents to help answer the research question. The analysis of documents enabled the researcher to corroborate and augment evidence gained from other sources (Yin, 2009), that is, from the semi-structured interviews and direct observations.

4.5.3 Phase 3: Data Analysis of Direct Observations

Phase three of the study involved the direct observation of teaching practice. The aim of this phase of the study was to gain a broad picture of the teaching and learning activities used by each of the academics over the course of the subject delivery. Christie's (2002) curriculum macrogenres model was adapted for this study, to guide the selection of teaching and learning activities from the direct observations made of teaching practice. A macrogenre refers to a 'sequence of lessons' that can last over several weeks. Christie (2002) uses the notion of macrogenres for an analysis of classroom talk because it can be used as a tool to trace activities over a period of time (p. 98). Consequently, the notion of macrogenre was useful for this study because it has enabled the identification of teaching and assessment practices over a period of time. The curriculum macrogenres selected for this study are the sequence of lessons of the four selected subjects that span 12 weeks (over one semester) (see Table 4.3).

Table 4.3: Selected Subjects and Classroom types (for each macrogenre)

Subjects	**Macrogenre** **Sequence of lessons over 12 weeks**		
	Classroom Type Observed	**1 class per week**	**Duration**
First Year Accounting	Lectures	12 weeks	2 hours
	Tutorials	12 weeks	1 hour
Third Year Accounting	Lectures	12 weeks	2 hours
	Workshop	12 weeks	1.5 hours
First Year Economics	Lectures	12 weeks	2 hours (2 x 1 hours)
	Tutorials	12 weeks	1 hour
Third Year Economics	Lectures	12 weeks	2 hours (2 x 1 hour)
	Tutorials	12 weeks	I hour

4.5.4 Phase 4: Data Analysis of Follow-up semi-structured interviews

Phase four of the study involved semi-structured interviews with the academics about the teaching and assessment practices observed at the end of the teaching semester. The aim of discussing academics' teaching and assessment practices was to gain a

more accurate picture of the practices observed. This enabled insight into the factors that influence academics' choices of teaching and assessment methods. The post-interviews (phase 4) allowed an in-depth analysis of the teaching and assessment practices observed, to explore in-depth, academics 'theories-in-use' (Argyris & Schön, 1974) by gaining an understanding of how academics explain their teaching and assessment practices. By addressing academics' 'theories-in-use', the study aimed to explore the relationship between academics' understanding and beliefs about employability skills and their actual teaching and assessment practices. In this way, this study has investigated, not only academics' understanding, beliefs and level of importance of the role of the university curriculum and academic role in the development of graduates' employability skills, but also has enabled an exploration of the extent to which the integration of employability skills is played out in actual teaching and assessment practice.

4.6 Trustworthiness of methodological framework

Trustworthiness refers to the ability of the researcher to demonstrate that 'the findings of an inquiry are worth paying attention to, worth taking account of' (Lincoln & Guba, 1985, p. 290). Overall triangulation enables corroboration of the different methods of data collection and analysis. To ensure trustworthiness, this study adopted triangulation of method by using multiple methods to collect and analyse data; that is semi-structured interviews, content analysis of curriculum documents, direct observations of teaching and assessment practice and follow-up semi-structured interviews. Any inconsistency or conflicting findings enable researchers to examine more closely the integrity of the data collection and analysis methods, and encourage an investigation to explain validation or discrepancies (Miles et al., 2014) This is

important for this study as it seeks to examine to what extent beliefs and self-reported practice influence actual teaching and assessment practice.

Trustworthiness was enhanced with open-ended interview questions. The use of an interview protocol provided a way to ensure the trustworthiness of reported observations, interpretations and generalisations made from the interview responses, thus providing assurance of internal validity (Rudestam & Newton, 2007). Trustworthiness was also sought by recording all interviews, with permission of the participants. The transcripts of the interviews were provided to the academics to confirm the transcripts were a true and correct accounting of the interviews and to receive any feedback before analysis was conducted. The researcher also ensured the authenticity of the interview and direct observations of practice through the use of the interview and observational protocol that enabled the researcher to take notes during the interviews and direct observations (Creswell, 2012). Furthermore, the use of an interview and observation protocol provided a way to ensure the trustworthiness of reported observations, interpretations and generalisations made from the interview responses, thus providing assurance of internal validity (Rudestam & Newton, 2007).

Since this study took place in the setting in which academics' work (Patton, 2002), the content analysis of curriculum documents and observations of practice is authentic. The content analysis of curriculum documents and the direct observations provide a genuine method for understanding more deeply academics' understanding and beliefs, through their actual practice. The direct observations have the advantage of observing practices the participants may not have paid attention to or were unwilling or unable to talk about (Patton, 2002).

Criticisms have been raised about the limitations of using formal documents (in this study the curriculum documents) as research data because they may be incomplete or inaccurate (Patton, 2002). However, for the purposes of this study, the curriculum documents, as they are presented on the university and department websites, is valuable data because this is the information that students receive regarding their learning and this in turn is a formal articulation of the academics' teaching and assessment practices. Curriculum documents are therefore authentic because they have been developed without knowledge of the study in mind (Yin, 2009).

This study does not seek to ascertain whether the information in the curriculum documents is accurate. Instead, the curriculum documents allow for the identification of academics' understanding, beliefs and self-reported practice of employability skills as espoused in the curriculum documents, and to what extent their espoused theories of the development of students' employability skills are visible in the curriculum documents. For this reason, collecting and analysing the various curriculum documents provided a way to examine the program, subjects and teaching practice in a way that cannot always be captured successfully in an interview context, which is limited to what academics say they do or do not do.

While it has been acknowledged above that the role of the researcher in this study was as an observer during the direct observation of teaching and assessment practice, it was easier to be an observer in the lectures, in comparison to the tutorials and workshops, since lectures consisted of large numbers of students (100 to 500 students) and the researcher was able to sit unobtrusively in the lecture theatre among the other students and was not directly visible to the lecturer. However, the tutorial and

workshops were made up of 20 and 30 students respectively and, thus, the presence of the researcher was more obvious to both the teaching academic and students. One of the disadvantages of direct observation is that the presence of the researcher may change the situation in ways unknown to the researcher (Patton, 2002). Consequently, it may be the case that the academics, who were aware of the researcher's presence and observation of all of their lectures and tutorials during the semester, may have changed their teaching practice in some ways that are not obvious to the researcher. However, after three classes, the researcher was 'less noticed' by academics and students.

One of the main advantages of gaining the data via direct observation is that the observations made are of actual practice in the actual working space of academics where they teach and assess students. Therefore, collecting data via direct observation outweighs collecting data solely via interview, as the researcher would have only gained a partial view interpreted through what academics say about their practice. To enhance the trustworthiness of the observations, as discussed above, in a manner similar to conducting the semi-structured interviews, the observations were structured by developing an observational protocol (Creswell, 2007: p. 137) (See Appendix 6). The use of an observation protocol provided a way to ensure the trustworthiness of reported observations and interpretations, by entering the teaching area with no predetermined results to support (Patton, 2002, p. 51).

4.7 Limitations of methodology

This study examined the beliefs and practices of a small number of academics in one university in Australia. The aim of the study was to conduct an in-depth analysis of a

specific phenomenon, that is, academics' understanding and beliefs of employability skills and, most importantly, the study objective was to understand academics' teaching and assessment practices, to ascertain the interrelating factors that may affect teaching and assessment practices across two different disciplines within a degree program in one institution. As such, qualitative methodology is not designed to be generalisable as it was anticipated that the focused approach would generate rich, in-depth data on disciplinary differences within one university degree program. The focus of an in-depth study meant limiting the scope of the study to make the project manageable.

4.8 Summary

The chapter described the rationale for the methodology adopted to investigate the extent to which academics integrate employability skills in the business curriculum. Overall, this chapter has demonstrated that the collection and analysis of qualitative data over four phases aligns with the Theories of Action framework that enabled an investigation of both academics' espoused theories about practice and actual practices. The chapter considered the trustworthiness and limitations associated with this study and demonstrated that a qualitative study of academics in one large Australian university in two different disciplines in business education enabled an in-depth investigation of the mismatch between academics' beliefs and practices. This is important, given that little is known about the practice of academics, who are expected to design, deliver and assess the university curriculum, by responding to the call to develop students' employability skills through the university curriculum. The following two chapters present the analysis of the main findings from the

investigation of beliefs and practices of academics working in the accounting discipline (Chapter 5) and the economic discipline (Chapter 6).

Chapter Five: Accounting

This chapter examines accounting academics' teaching and assessment practices. Drawing on the initial interview data and content analysis of curriculum documents, the findings indicate that the accounting academics strongly support the concept of employability skills as broadly understood by industry, government and higher education. Most importantly, the accounting academics espouse that employability skills occupy an important place in the university curriculum and academic role.

Despite the strong support for employability skills development, the observation of teaching practice and explanations about practice gathered from academics during the follow-up interviews, indicate a mostly inconsistent, non-systematic approach to the integration of employability skills development. While the accounting academics espouse that they mostly integrate employability skills directly through the demonstration, facilitation and assessment of a range of employability skills, in actual practice, accounting academics' integration of employability skills is indirect because they tend to use teaching methods that are categorised as a low form of teaching practice and primarily integrate a limited number of employability skills (mostly analysis and evaluation skills). It was found that the accounting academics less often integrate a wide range of employability skills. The findings indicate that there is a lack of consistent and systematic teaching and assessment of employability skills both within and across the accounting subjects. The data indicates that academics face a number of competing challenges, constraints and demands within their discipline, indicating that the academic role, position and experience, within the boundaries of the accounting discipline, influence to what extent employability skills are integrated in actual teaching and assessment practice.

For reporting purposes, the data of accounting academics' understanding, beliefs and actual practice has been presented in the following order to align with the Theories of Action Framework. The chapter presents the data on how employability skills are understood and espoused in curriculum documents initially followed by academics' understandings and beliefs collected through the initial semi structured interviews. The data is presented in this way so that accounting academics' espoused theories can be captured initially in curriculum documents and compared with what they discuss in the initial semi-structured interviews before the observed teaching and assessment practice data is presented. When the accounting academics explain and justify their understanding of employability skills and their proposed behaviour or actions related to their teaching and assessment of employability skills, they are expressing espoused theories (in other words, what they aim for and believe they do in practice).

The reporting of the findings related to accounting academics' espoused theories is presented under four broad themes that align with the subsidiary research questions. Those themes are: 1) Understanding of Employability Skills, 2) Level of importance of the development of their students' employability skills, 3) Who is responsible for developing students' employability skills 4) What academics say they do in practice. Under each of these broad themes the data that provide unique insights into accounting academics' espoused beliefs are reported. Accounting academics' espoused beliefs are compared to the data obtained from the observation of practice and exposes accounting academics' actual theories of practice, as observed by what the academics actually do in practice. Overall, the data is presented in this way so that the findings can be compared to economic academics' espoused beliefs and theories of practice as reported in the following chapter.

5.1 Curriculum Documents

In order to gain an understanding of how accounting subjects in business education espouse the integration of employability skills in their teaching and assessment practice, this study undertook a content analysis of the accounting subjects' curriculum documents; including an accounting program statement on the website, the Subject Handbook (which is available to the public on the University website) and the Subject Guideline (which is available to students enrolled in the subject).

The program objective statements on the Department of Accounting website promote an accounting major as one situated in the expectations of future graduate accountants entering the workforce:

> *'This degree equips our graduates with the skills to succeed in the rapidly changing employment environment, and prepares them to become future leaders' (Department of Accounting website, March 25, 2015).*

The promotion of the accounting major aligns with current expectations that future professional accountants will develop skills that sit alongside the technical knowledge of an accountant, as indicated in the information provided about the accounting degree on the University website:

> *Professional accountants are valued in every industry, especially as the accounting field becomes exceptionally sophisticated. Because accountants act as strategic advisers and business partners, they must understand business issues and processes and have the skills necessary for sound decision-making (Department of Accounting website, March 25, 2015).*

The statement also aligns with higher-education research that points to the changes faced by the accounting profession. The rapid transformation of communication and accounting technology that has resulted in future accountants taking on the role of 'knowledge' workers, links to the call of accounting graduates to acquire analysis,

problem-solving, communication and client relation skills (Howieson, 2003). As indicated in the statement below, the accounting program supports the notion that accounting graduates develop a set of skills that are considered to be broader than technical skills:

> *Accounting is the language of business. Organisations use accounting to demonstrate performance to external parties, and manager's use accounting to understand the workings within an organisation. The ability to understand and interpret information is crucial, because numerous stakeholders and users need to know how organisations operate and perform… (Department of Accounting Website, 25 March 2015).*

The expectation that employability skills are integrated into Australian universities is visible in the accounting subject curriculum documents. A range of employability skills is documented. The identified skills align with a common understanding of employability skills among the main stakeholders that has evolved for more than 20 years (Howieson, 2003). As shown in Table 5.1 below, the documented subject aims and subject learning outcomes align with the three clusters of the Core Skills for Work Developmental Framework (CSfW, 2013).

Table 5.1: Alignment of Core Skills for Work Framework and Subject Guideline

Accounting Subject Guideline	**Core Skills for Work Framework**
The overall aim: • Introduction to the nature of accounting and its role in both financial markets and within organisations (First Year). • Decisions that can be made based on accounting information (First Year) • For students to be informed users of accounting information (First Year) • Contextualise student learning in real world practice (Third Year) **Subject Objectives:** • Explain the **purposes** of accounting within financial markets and business organisations (First Year); • Identify **different business structures** and their **information requirements** (First Year); • Explain the notion of "responsibility accounting" (Third Year)	**Cluster 1** Navigate the world of work Manage career and work life Work with roles, rights and protocols

Awareness issues: • The real-life changes faced by organisations in planning and controlling for organisational activities (Third Year); • The important role management accountants play in supporting the development and use of performance measurement and control systems (Third Year)	
Collaborative learning Teamwork Oral communication Written communication Receptiveness to alternative ideas	**Cluster 2** Interact with others Communicate for work Connect and work with others Recognise and utilise diverse perspectives
Problem-solving skills Application of theory to practice Interpretation Analysis Critical thinking Evaluation of data & other information Evaluation, analysis and interpretation of contextual and case-based information Accessing data and other information from a range of sources Synthesis of data and other information Statistical reasoning Use of computer software	**Cluster 3** Get the work done Plan and organise Make decisions Identify and solve problems Create and innovate Work in a digital world

Cluster 1 of the CSfW Framework refers to the skills required to manage work, knowing work roles, and rights and responsibilities. Such statements align with the accounting subjects' aim that the subjects will equip students with information about the nature of the accounting role at the organisational level. For instance, the subject aim states that students are introduced to the work of the accountant including understanding the nature of the work and work requirements. Moreover, the statements in the subject guidelines reflect the expectations driven directly by the accounting industry. To practice as a professional accountant in Australia, graduates are required to become members of one of the three professional accounting bodies: Certificated Practicing Accountants Australia (CPAA), Institute of Chartered Accountants Australia, or Institute of Public Accountants (Bunney et al., 2015; De Lange, Jackling, & Gut, 2006; Mathews, 2004). The alignment of accounting subjects with the accreditation requirements is reinforced by what accounting academics say about the expectations of industry as indicated by the following quote.

> *There's definitely a lot of press around what the accounting graduate is. We can teach them the technical skills. Industry are much more hammering [us] about the critical thinking, communication, teamwork. (First Year Accounting Subject Coordinator).*

The second area of alignment with the CSfW Framework is visible in the employability skills listed under the 'generic skills' statements in the subject guidelines. The statements align closely with Cluster 2 of the CSfW that explicitly conceptualises and articulates skills, knowledge and understanding required to work and interact with others. The third Cluster of the CSfW Framework provides specific statements about getting the work done in the workplace, to plan, organise, make decisions, problem solve innovate and work with technology. The statements align closely with a range of other generic skills statements embedded in the subject curriculum documents that are accepted as employability skills by the main stakeholders. The skills such as problem-solving skills, application of theory to practice, interpretation, analysis, and critical thinking skills are explicitly mentioned in the accounting curriculum documents.

As argued by Schön (1987), the relationship between practice competence and professional knowledge considers how future professionals can be taught to handle 'indeterminate zones'[6] of practice. The requirement for future accountants to respond to complex and ill-defined situations in the workplace has figured prominently in recent controversies about the accounting profession (Bunney et al., 2015). There is a growing argument that universities should seek to ensure future university graduates and accountants are prepared to take on the role of 'knowledge' workers and be able to apply the employability skills in analysis, problem-solving, communication and

[6] Indeterminate zones of practice – situations of practice that are defined as uncertain, unique and value conflict (Schön, 1987).

client relations (De Lange et al., 2006; Hancock et al., 2009; Howieson, 2003; Tempone et al., 2012). In particular, the belief in the transferability of employability skills from university to the workplace has seen a push by industry for universities to embed the identified employability skills into accounting programs. In this way, accountants are able to respond to workplace situations that go beyond accounting knowledge and technical skills application (BIHECC, 2007; Bunney et al., 2015; Curtis & McKenzie, 2001). Professional bodies, such as CPA Australia, have indicated that universities, as part of their professional accreditation, should report how they integrate employability skills in their accounting degree programs (De Lange et al., 2006). The reliance on accreditation highlights a clear and influential link between industry requirements and the actual accounting curriculum.

5. 2 Understanding of employability skills

In order to gain insight into accounting academics' understanding of employability skills, accounting academics were asked to indicate how they define employability skills. The accounting academics' definition is consistent with industry, government and university definitions, as discussed in chapter 2. The following statement captures accounting academics' definition:

> *'Well I think most of us take employability skills to mean... a combination of the technical skills associated with the discipline, plus the more generic skills and attributes (3rd Year Accounting Subject Coordinator)*

The accounting academics indicated that the employability skills that are additional to the discipline knowledge and technical skills, are the core employability skills for enhancing graduates' work readiness. The accounting academics in this study mostly used the term 'generic' skills, but also used the terms 'non-technical' skills and 'soft'

skills interchangeably to refer to the identified employability skills. The most talked about employability skills are listed below in order of frequency:

- Analysis skills
- Evaluation skills
- Problem-solving skills
- Critical thinking skills
- Communication
- Teamwork skills

With a specific emphasis of the discipline of accounting, the accounting academics identified a range of employability skills consistent with industry, government and university definitions; namely, written and verbal communication skills, and teamwork skills. The accounting academics also were in support of a holistic understanding of what graduates need to ensure employability, that is, that both discipline specific skills and the range of employability skills are required if accounting graduates are ready for the contemporary workforce. The accounting academics emphasised, however, that possession of the specific employability skills identified, as listed above, places accounting students in a better position to be work-ready for the contemporary workplace.

The next section provides an overview of the extent to which accounting academics believe employability skills are important, and in doing so, seeks to analyse whether there are particular skills that are more highly regarded than others among the list accounting academics identified.

5.3 Beliefs about the importance of employability skills

Since the findings indicate that accounting academics hold a shared understanding of a broad range of employability skills, the academics were asked to discuss their views about the importance of employability skills. The findings show that, overall, accounting academics believe employability skills are important for ensuring future accounting graduates are ready for the workplace. The accounting academics stated that employability skills are important for accounting graduates' work readiness because they align closely with the requirements and expectations of the accounting industry and professional and employer accounting bodies.

The accounting academics were also asked to indicate the employability skills they deem to be important for work readiness. The accounting academics indicated that a range of skills determines work readiness. The most common employability skills identified are analysis, evaluation, problem-solving, verbal and written communication skills, and teamwork skills.

> *Accounting specifically, obviously the theory is the backbone and is really important for students to understand. But then also there are the practical and soft skills. It's the skills that we develop in students to make them more employable. So, soft skills in particular, there's a number of skills that I think they [industry] look for. That is, teamwork is clearly one [and] communication skills are the other (First Year Accounting Tutor).*

While the findings indicate some differences between subject coordinators and tutors on the factors that have influenced their beliefs about the important employability skills they identify, all the accounting academics discuss the factors specifically in relation to the influence of industry on the accounting profession and thus curriculum. The subject coordinators emphasised that the employability skills that ensure work readiness are those based on the criteria set by industry. The subject coordinators

further explained that their knowledge of industry reports on the skill shortages, their experience with the accreditation process and their experience with moves by the universities to respond to industry requirements to ensure that employability skills are included in accounting curriculum documents, have contributed to their perception of the importance of employability skills and the identified skills that determine work readiness.

> *So I think what industry tells us is that the technical skills associated with the discipline are kind of accepted and they're a given and we need to promote these other generic skills and soft skills, such as problem-solving and teamwork and communication skills (Third Year Accounting Subject Coordinator).*

One of the subject coordinators indicated that his knowledge of industry expectations has enabled him to identify that students "…have got the technical skills [that industry expects] but they don't necessarily know what to do with technical skills, what an accounting report means, how to analyse the report". This knowledge of the skills gap was noted by this academic as one of the reasons for a redesign of the subject he delivers to ensure that the subject curriculum aligns more closely with industry expectations.

In contrast, tutors refer to their most recent experiences as accounting students, or completing internships or applying for their first graduate roles. Such experiences have been described as the reason for enabling them to develop the belief about what skills employers expect students to have acquired in order to be work ready:

> *My view of the skills that students need has come completely from just my background, my internship…Well, for me it is important because I was very involved in the student society and professional development and working with firms and students. I guess where I'm taking what I believe the skills to be is essentially from my knowledge of the firms' (First Year Accounting Tutor).*

In the same way subject coordinators, tutors indicated that the acquisition of employability skills is the basis for identifying work ready employees and is closely aligned with their perception of industry expectations. As such, tutors also refer to a range of employability skills. The following quote is illustrative of the nature of the conversation with the tutors around the significant employability skills required by accounting graduates:

> *I think they are the foundations of what's going to be a good employee, someone who you enjoy working with, someone who can think critically, solve problems* (Third Year Accounting Tutor).

Despite the different influences that guide accounting academics' perceptions, the academics stated that employability skills are important for enhancing accounting graduates' work readiness and share a view that they align with the expectations from industry.

5.3.1 Employability skills in the curriculum

Consistent with the importance accounting academics expressed about employability skills for work readiness, the accounting academics stated that universities have a responsibility to ensure that employability skills are integrated into university curriculum:

> *Employers are looking for these skills. Employers have a big say in setting... the theory or the practical work that we run through each week. But if they're looking for employability skills, the onus is on the university to try and develop those (First Year Accounting Tutor).*

The accounting academics indicated that the university should provide the opportunity for students to develop employability skills through the accounting degree program. The academics suggested the need for a consistent approach across

the accounting program so that the most appropriate employability skills are integrated into the most appropriate subjects.

> *...Definitely [should embed employability skills in every subject] I don't necessarily think it's all skills in every subject, but I think across the major we should be able to hit everything...some things should be stepping stone because of the number of subjects (First Year Accounting Subject Coordinator).*

As suggested by the first year accounting tutor, the subject and its structure influence the skills that should be integrated into particular subjects:

> *Developing those skills – teamwork, communication, leadership - across all subjects really depends I guess on the subject and how it's structured. Each subject is structured very differently. There should be I guess - for example, in one major there should be a plan that would develop those skills along the way (First Year Accounting Tutor).*

However, as indicated by the following first year accounting academic, the challenge for academics teaching in the Department of Accounting is that the Department has not followed through with ensuring that employability skills are integrated into the curriculum. The academic indicated this is the reason for gaps between what is expected and what is actually acquired in practice:

> *I see us falling down in accounting in the second and third years, second year subjects in particular. They're very technical subjects and I think we can do a lot more with the employability, generic skills in those subjects. Some of the third year subjects have it but there's a gap (First Year Accounting Subject Coordinator).*

Overall, the interview data has indicated that accounting academics believe employability skills should be integrated into the university curriculum. Academics expressed the importance of a degree program having a clear and consistent strategy for ensuring that the most appropriate skills are embedded into the most appropriate subjects across the accounting degree program. This view seems to align with the top-down government and university policy approach that has sought to drive the

integration of employability skills with the university curriculum. For this reason, the academics suggest that students should be given the opportunity to develop the right employability skills during their university degree to ensure work readiness. In order to investigate such assumptions more closely, the study asked academics, during the interview, to discuss their academic role and the extent to which and how they teach and assess employability skills.

5.3.2 The role of academics

In order to determine to what extent academics say they teach and assess employability skills, they were asked about the level of importance of the academic role to integrate employability skills in their teaching and assessment practice. The interviews with the accounting academics indicate they have a role in preparing future graduates for the workplace. As indicated by the following comment, the accounting academics indicate that their academic teaching role prepares future graduates for the workplace.

> *Well, I don't necessarily see it as – in my head, as part of my teaching role to teach employability skills, I just want to make them better individuals, which might improve [their opportunity to get a job] …I'm not thinking… "I want them to get a job". I know that what I do with the students will help them do that…" (Third Year Accounting Subject Coordinator)*

To prepare future graduates for work readiness, the accounting academics state that they want to give students the opportunity to enhance students' work readiness, through the practice and demonstration of employability skills. However, they also expressed that it is not feasible to assess how well the academic role contributes to the acquisition of some employability skills, such as presentation and collaboration skills:

> *…Is it possible to measure how well we improve someone's presentations skills from start to finish? I doubt it… I'm not saying we don't contribute. I just think it's hard to measure how much we contribute. (Third year Accounting Subject Coordinator)*

The inability to measure improvements made to some employability skills acquisition is reinforced by statements made by some academics that the attainment of particular employability skills will not become visible to graduates until they are expected to use the skills in the workplace:

> *Yeah, it can be very difficult to do that [to assess the teamwork skills and put the outcomes on a transcript]. I think what they get out of it potentially in tutorials by working in a team is indirectly - they won't know that it's improving their teamwork skills, but indirectly they take all these experiences throughout the semester, and maybe when they're at an internship application day and they're working in a team to do some problems, they'll be able to apply what they've done throughout the semester. (First Year Accounting Tutor)*

Overall, accounting academics' statements indicate that they believe they are responsible for preparing future accounting graduates for work readiness. Thus, the accounting academics share a view that their academic role is and should be centred on giving students the opportunity to develop employability skills required for work readiness. However, there was an indication of concern that to what extent academics are able to play a role to ensure students acquire the skills is hard to measure.

5.4 Self-reported teaching practice

In order to understand whether accounting academics' beliefs about the importance of employability skills influences self-reported practice, the accounting academics were asked to talk specifically about what they do, in practice, as teaching academics. The purpose of this stage of the study was to understand to what extent academics' self-reported practices align with their beliefs.

Academics report that, as part of their teaching role, they integrate employability skills in three main ways. First, they state that they demonstrate the importance of

employability skills relevant to the workplace, second that they facilitate student activities that enable students to acquire the important employability skills and, third they assess employability skills. The three forms of teaching practices reported by the academics indicate that academics seek to ensure that the teaching of employability skills is explicit and direct through demonstrations, facilitation and assessment of employability skills. Each of the three types of teaching practices reported by the accounting academics is explored in more detail below.

5.4.1 Demonstrating the importance of employability

During the interviews, all of the academics were explicit in stating that preparing future graduates for the workplace is a significant part of what academics do in their teaching role. This shared view is indicated by the following quote:

> *In today's world it's not what you know, it's asking - can I use the knowledge? We're moving away from that - there's very few process jobs left. It's about understanding, that is, whether they can apply the information. We need to teach that from day one. (First Year Accounting Subject Coordinator)*

When asked to explain specifically how they teach employability skills development, all of the academics explained that they demonstrate directly to students the relevance of employability skills to the workplace. The academics spoke about two main ways that they demonstrate employability skills. First, some academics stated that they use explicit workplace examples to demonstrate the importance of employability skills. As indicated by the following quote, this academic draws upon her own workplace experiences to demonstrate directly to students the relevance of employability skills in the workplace:

> *In my workshops, I try and make as many references as I can to how this will help them as a graduate, how it will help them through graduate recruitment. I think I'm in a position to do that because I left Deloitte last year. I worked there for two years so I kind of have an understanding of what's going to help them, so I try and do that as quick as I can… I try and use as many practical*

> *examples as I can. So, whenever I can I'll say, with my experience at Deloitte it's my understanding that organisations do this. I try and use the terminology that was used within professional services. (Third Year Accounting Tutor)*

The second way academics state they demonstrate the relevance of employability skills is by demonstrating industry expectations to students, explicitly and directly, during class time. As indicated by the following quote, ensuring that the most up-to-date and relevant reports by industry are brought into the classroom ensures that demonstrations are explicit and direct:

> *One of the things I do, and I need to do this semester, is I've got a list of recent articles on what the industry is saying… This is what the accounting industry is saying what they expect from accounting grads in a workplace. (First Year Accounting Subject Coordinator)*

The majority of academics claim that demonstrating directly, through explicit and relevant examples, gives students the opportunity to learn what is involved in the accounting work in the contemporary workplace. In particular, they state that demonstrating what is actually expected gives students an opportunity to learn employability skills beyond technical accounting skills. The accounting academics were, thus, specific in the distinction between the ability to complete debits, credits and other accounting calculations (defined as technical skills) and employability skills.

Missing from academics' self-reported practice of demonstrating employability skills is an explanation of the specific employability skills that are integrated through such demonstrations. Rather, the accounting academics report that they make sure subject content and relevant examples or case studies are as 'realistic as possible' to ensure that future graduates are work-ready.

> *The other thing I think we try to do in [the subject] is to make it as "realistic" as possible…a lot of the company examples, or organisational examples…I think they make a bit more of a connection. So, I'll often say to them, "let's assume you're the – whatever it is. What would we do here?" I don't know whether that helps with employability skills, but I think it might help them with awareness…it moves them away from thinking about something as a student. I think and they think well, actually by this time next year, I might be in this situation. (Third Year Subject Coordinator)*

Overall, the academics report that, by demonstrating the importance of employability skills, they play a role in providing students with an opportunity to connect what they are learning in the classroom to the workplace. In this way, their statements indicate they believe that, by demonstrating, they give students the opportunity to learn the skills they need to be ready for work. However, how and which skills are integrated directly through demonstration was not explored by the academics. Consistent with accounting academics' beliefs about their teaching role, academics share a belief that demonstration of the skills is a direct part of their teaching practice that gives students the opportunity to acquire the skills. In line with this view, the academics also talked about facilitating activities that provide opportunity for students to acquire skills, as discussed in the next section.

5.4.2 Facilitating activities to develop employability skills

In addition to academics' self-reported practice of demonstrating the relevance of employability skills, the majority of academics reported that their teaching practice provides students with the opportunity to practice, develop or demonstrate a range of employability skills.

> *…as a tutor, you're there pretty much to just facilitate learning. So, the way I approach the tutorials is as much as possible I want to do minimal talking. As much as possible, I want to ask probing questions and get them to do the thinking and answer the questions, get them really problem solving and thinking. (First Year Accounting Tutor)*

The accounting academics stated that, to successfully facilitate activities that integrate employability skills development, they first and foremost prioritise the transmission of accounting knowledge and facilitate technical skill application tasks. Academics report, therefore, that the facilitation of activities that give students opportunity to practice, develop or demonstrate employability skills can only be put into practice after they have ensured that their teaching has enabled students to grasp the discipline's knowledge and technical skills. This view reflects an understanding as reported in the scholarly literature that future accounting professionals need to obtain the knowledge and skills according to what is expected of them by the profession (Leveson, 2004). Such beliefs align with what Schön (1987, p. 33) refers to as 'professional's knowing-in-action'; in other words, that accounting students are prepared, as professionals, to know what they are doing in-action which is 'embedded in the socially and institutionally structured context shared by a community of practitioners'.

All of the academics stated that, as part of their teaching role, they must ensure they facilitate the most appropriate student tasks and activities to achieve the aim of providing students with the opportunity to practice, develop or demonstrate a range of employability skills. The types of tasks and activities they referred to included guiding students to complete set tasks, such as reading set material, and completion of questions and online quizzes prior to attending lectures, tutorials or workshops. Such tasks were outside of academics' direct teaching of the knowledge and skills during class time, as indicated by what the following academic said:

> *I stressed to students via email announcements, "Please make sure you do the pre-reading. In lectures, here's what I'm giving you. I'm giving you a case study scenario and we will go through the case applying your reading". (First year Accounting Subject Coordinator)*

Therefore, the accounting academics stated that, by ensuring students complete the pre-class tasks, they are able to dedicate class time to facilitating a range of activities for students to practice, develop or demonstrate employability skills. As indicated by the following academic, the facilitation of small group activities provides a good opportunity for students to practice and demonstrate presentation and decision-making while at the same time students are demonstrating their understanding of the knowledge and technical task:

> *One other thing I do try and do is go around to each group while they're doing their group work and make sure they're on the right track, and ask them those probing questions. So still getting them to think without giving them the answer… I'm setting their decision-making in a framework so that they can be able to present it clearly as well. (First Year Accounting Tutor)*

Furthermore, the following academic indicated that facilitating interactive and collaborative activities provides the environment for students to develop, enhance or demonstrate verbal communication, presentation and collaboration skills.

> *We do a bit of group work in a subject. We try and make the tutes interactive. So, I wouldn't say we specifically go out to tick the boxes saying that we've got teamwork skills. It's probably more the way we get across, the way we do things, such as a group assignment. In my tutes we might have three or four questions. So, I tend to get small groups doing each question and then a presentation. (First Year Subject Coordinator)*

It was also noted by the academics that their teaching practice, which facilitates small group work, group discussion and group presentations, provides opportunity for students to develop a range of other employability skills such as teamwork:

> *I guess the three things I'm looking for [during tutorials] is applying problem solving to the theory is the first one. Is the teamwork - break them up into small groups - and then is the communication, presentation, through presenting to the class. (First Year Accounting tutor)*

Overall, the accounting academics report their teaching practice provides opportunities for their students to practice develop or demonstrate employability

skills. The accounting academics report that, by facilitating such opportunities, students will develop a range of employability skills. An important aspect of this form of teaching practice shared by the accounting academics is the assumption that employability skills can be integrated effectively on the condition that students have gained the relevant discipline knowledge and technical skills.

5.4.3 Assessing employability skills

Assessment of a range of employability skills was reported by all accounting academics. In addition to drawing on the interview data, a content analysis of available assessment task instructions and assessment criteria was conducted. This content analysis was carried out in order to investigate to what extent the assessment of employability skills is espoused by academics and how this information is communicated to students via the curriculum documents. The findings indicate that all the accounting academics narrow the identified skills. The accounting academics, therefore, espouse, through their curriculum documents, that the assessment of analysis and evaluation skills are central to all of the assessments they set and that written skills and teamwork/collaboration skills are sometimes measured through assessment tasks.

Before presenting the findings of accounting academics' espoused assessment practice, a brief overview of the type of assessment set in each subject is provided below, to clearly identify the types of assessments set in the accounting curriculum. It is expected that students complete three pieces of assessment for the first-year accounting subject and four pieces of assessment for the third-year accounting subject. Both subjects include a preparation and contribution component (tutorial and workshop respectively), two timed pieces of assessments (test and exams) and a group

assignment. A significant difference between the first and third year accounting group assignments is that the first-year accounting subject includes three parts of the group assignment, including an accounting calculation component, analysis and an individual peer assessment component. The third year accounting subject does not include a peer assessment component, but includes an optional team based Bonus Question.

Table 5.2: Accounting Assessment Tasks

Accounting First Year	**Accounting Third Year**
Tutorial participation & contribution • Tutorial Work: Individual • Written Submission for Feedback – FA (1%) • Written Submission for Feedback – MA (1%) Total: 10%	Workshop preparation & contribution Individual Total: 8%
Group Assignment Part A (5%) Group Assignment Part B (15%) Group Assignment Part C: Individual (peer assessment) Modification of assignment group grades to allow for individual performance Total: 30%	Group Assignment Total: 12%
Final Exam Individual 3 hours Total 70%	Mid-term test Total: 10%
	Final Exam Individual 3-hours Total: 70%
	Bonus Question (optional)

When academics were asked what they looked for when assessing employability skills through the set assessment tasks, all of the accounting academics stated that analysis and evaluation skills are the core employability skills assessed. The academics made an explicit distinction between discipline content knowledge and analysis and evaluation skills. The example excerpt below, of notes taken from the observation of a first year lecture, is illustrative of the type of advice students receive on the important distinction between memorising content and conducting analysis and evaluation.

The academics ask students during the lecture: "How will we assess you? Focus on understanding not memorization'

[Slide] Assessment – the academic says, "this is not just about numbers/debit and credit - not a lot of calculations on the exam. Only 22% of number crunching at the last exam". [Mostly about analysis and evaluation. Show understanding].
(First Year Accounting, Lecture 1)

The core focus of assessment of analysis and evaluation skills is explicit in the instructions for the group assignments for each subject. The outline of the first year group assignment, as indicated in the excerpt below (Figure 5.1), is an example of such instructions. Part A of the assignment consists of technical skills application, and the primary component of Part B instructs students that they are expected to analyse the calculations component of Part A.

Assignment

This is a group assignment in which groups will need to do Financial Statement Analysis on two hypothetical companies to decide which company is the best to invest in. Part A is the calculations, Part B is the writing of a report analysing the information and making recommendations, and Part C is a self/peer review.

Figure 5.1: First Year Accounting Subject Guideline

One of the academics reinforced the priority given to the assessment of analysis and evaluation skills when he stated the following:

> *Part B [of the group assignment] is the analysis. It's the – "you've done the numbers, I give you the correct solutions, go away, tell me what that means". (First Year Accounting Subject Coordinator)*

The priority given to analysis and evaluation skills is also evident in the assessment criteria for the first year group assignment below (Figure 5.2). It is made explicit in stating that the different components of the written report are assessed to determine the extent to which students are able to identify the strengths and weaknesses of each

part of the report, as indicated by the highlighted sections on the assessment criteria below:

Body of report – Asset Efficiency	**Concisely identifies the key** strengths and weaknesses in Asset Efficiency for both companies and links in the reasons behind these. Well written in a professional manner. Where appropriate links with other sections.	Identifies **most** of the key strengths and weaknesses in Asset Efficiency for both companies and links in the reasons behind these. Written in a professional manner. Where appropriate links with other sections.	**Some** of the key strengths and weaknesses are included, and/or has not linked in the reasons behind these. Uses some unprofessional language. May not be consistent with other sections of the report.	Required strengths and weaknesses in regards to Asset Efficiency are **mostly absent**. Little or no linking in of the key reasons. Written in a mostly unprofessional manner. May not be consistent with other sections of the report.	Off topic – does not address the area of Asset Efficiency or identify the reasons.	1	
Body of report – Liquidity	**Concisely identifies the key** strengths and weaknesses in Liquidity for both companies and links in the reasons behind these. Well written in a professional manner. Where appropriate links with other sections.	Identifies **most** of the key strengths and weaknesses in Liquidity for both companies and links in the reasons behind these. Written in a professional manner. Where appropriate links with other sections.	**Some** of the key strengths and weaknesses are included, and/or has not linked in the reasons behind these. Uses some unprofessional language. May not be consistent with other sections of the report.	Required strengths and weaknesses in regards to Liquidity are **mostly absent**. Little or no linking in of the key reasons. Written in a mostly unprofessional manner. May not be consistent with other sections of the report.	Off topic – does not address the area of Liquidity or identify the reasons.	1	
Body of report – Capital Structure	**Concisely identifies the key** strengths and weaknesses in Capital Structure for both companies and links in the reasons behind these. Well written in a professional manner. Where appropriate links with other sections.	Identifies **most** of the key strengths and weaknesses in Capital Structure for both companies and links in the reasons behind these. Written in a professional manner. Where appropriate links with other sections.	**Some** of the key strengths and weaknesses are included, and/or has not linked in the reasons behind these. Uses some unprofessional language. May not be consistent with other sections of the report.	Required strengths and weaknesses in regards to Capital Structure are **mostly absent**. Little or no linking in of the key reasons. Written in a mostly unprofessional manner. May not be consistent with other sections of the report.	Off topic – does not address the area of Capital Structure or identify the reasons.	1	
Body of report – Market Performance	**Concisely identifies the key** strengths and weaknesses in Market Performance for both companies and links in the reasons behind these. Well written in a professional manner. Where appropriate links with other sections.	Identifies **most** of the key strengths and weaknesses in Market Performance for both companies and links in the reasons behind these. Written in a professional manner. Where appropriate links with other sections.	**Some** of the key strengths and weaknesses are included, and/or has not linked in the reasons behind these. Uses some unprofessional language. May not be consistent with other sections of the report.	Required strengths and weaknesses in regards to Market Performance are **mostly absent**. Little or no linking in of the key reasons. Written in a mostly unprofessional manner. May not be consistent with other sections of the report.	Off topic – does not address the area of Market Performance or identify the reasons.	2	
Conclusion	The conclusion is a concise summary of the strengths and weaknesses identified, linking the various sections of the report together. Written in a professional tone.	The conclusion summarises **most of the strengths and weaknesses identified** and is successful in linking the various sections of the report together. Written in a mostly professional tone.	**Too lengthy or too brief to accurately summarize. Uses some** unprofessional language and does not fully link the various sections of the report together.	**Fails to accurately report the strengths and weaknesses identified** and does not link the various sections of the report.	Off topic- does not meet the requirements of a conclusion in linking the sections of the report together and summarising the strengths and weaknesses of each company.	1	

Figure 5.2: Third Year Accounting Group Assignment Assessment Criteria

The assessment of analysis and evaluation skills is also explicit in the instructions for the third year group assignment. The instructions explicitly and directly inform students that their assignment will be assessed according to their ability to analyse and evaluate the data they produced. As indicated below (Figure 5.3), Question One of the group assignment asks students to demonstrate discipline knowledge, as well as the ability to evaluate and analyse that discipline knowledge (worth 8 marks). Question

two is explicit in directing students to develop and evaluate a 'balanced score card'[7] and develop some recommendations about using the scorecard (together worth 16 marks).

1. Present an argument either ***for*** or ***against*** the use of relative performance evaluation when operationalized as a *'stack-ranking'* system. To do this well, you will need to research the topic and collect relevant articles for you to construct a well-reasoned and informed argument.
(8 marks)

2. The three divisions of ML are key to ML's performance. Select **one** of the three divisions. Construct a balanced scorecard suitable for evaluating the performance of the division and divisional (head) manager of the division you have selected.

   Your scorecard should include suitable measures that reflect the divisional and organisational-level strategies and objectives; as well as the key principles developed by the organisation-wide committee.

   In a paragraph or two justify your measures.
   (8 marks)

3. Suggest a suitable *remuneration structure* for the divisional manager whose scorecard you developed in question two. Outline your plan's objectives and provide details about each key component. Your BSC should form a key component of the measurement aspect of the remuneration plan.

   In a paragraph or two explain how your plan will achieve its objectives.
   (8 marks)

Figure 5.3: Third year accounting Group Assignment Information Sheet

Furthermore, analysis and evaluation skills are reported as being assessed via class contribution and participation. The instructions about tutorial/workshop participation provided in the subject guidelines explicitly inform students that the task requires students to be engaged in discussion of the pre-class questions and classroom tasks in order to put into practice and be assessed on analysis and evaluation skills. In addition, as highlighted in the excerpt below (Figure 5.4), the written instructions related to 'contribution and participation' in the third year accounting subject indicate that the mark students receive is reflective of students' discussion of the material they prepared prior to the class and participation in group discussions and activities.

[7] A balanced score card is a strategic planning and management system used to evaluate the performance of an organisation

Contribution and Participation

Please note that **mere attendance at workshops will not be considered when determining student contributions to workshops and in group-based discussions and activities.** Students must actively and voluntarily contribute to workshop discussions, which will only be possible if students satisfactorily prepare for each session. Student involvement in class-based group activities is equally important. While some students are more enthusiastic about participating in workshop discussions than others, all students derive the benefit from the contributions of others. Consequently, the onus is on the student to participate. Participation may occur in a variety of ways but might commonly include:

- Contributions to discussions on the basis of prepared responses or as an extension/alternative perspective to another student's response;
- Contributions to within-seminar activities, such as designated group work;
- Preparedness to respond to direct questions from the workshop leader;
- Participation in, and contribution to, group discussions/activities.
- High level of engagement with what is occurring in the workshops.

Figure 5.4: Third year accounting Subject Guideline

To further substantiate the integration of the assessment of employability skills into the accounting curriculum, this study conducted an analysis of verbal assessment instructions given directly to students during class time. The observation of teaching practice has indicated the assessment instructions provided during lectures, tutorials or workshops explicitly informed students that analytical and evaluation skills are the primary focus of the assessment. As indicated in the following two excerpts, the third year academic was observed giving explicit instructions that analysis and evaluation are a core focus of the assignment:

> The academic circles second last point on the slide about "relative performance evaluation" and link this topic to the assignment instructions whereby students are asked to evaluate a scorecard. He states "how to compare scorecard performance across divisions – i.e. relatively one division vs. the other and how that will play out in a bonus system structure. We can also see this at the individual level…" – The academic puts an article up on the overhead – 'Rank and Yank' system. Also has Microsoft article that "ditched its ranking system". The academic provides an explanation of what ranking means – and then states "I ask you about this…you are asked to have an opinion…I think it says on the assignment question 'paper position...and create an argument…' because the assignment commences with this stacked ranking system and the organisation wants to replace it.'" **(Third Year Accounting, Lecture 5)**

Such examples of observed verbal instructions were not isolated to one subject or one academic. For instance, the instructions provided during the first year lecture illustrate the explicit instructions that analysis and evaluation skills are central to assessment:

> The academic discusses the assignment. He reminds students the due date. He provides some "Hints of advice", he states: "do not repeat the ratios in word form – key – what we did two weeks in tutorial. You must investigate the reasons behind the changes and recommend. Before you start, brainstorm ideas of the reasons for changes etc. Use the marking rubric at end of the assignment because that is what the markers use and use this and ask yourself will I get full marks' **(First Year Accounting, Tutorial 9)**

The information and advice about the final exam illustrates more explicitly that analysis and evaluation skills are the core focus of assessment and not tied to one type of assessment. In the following excerpt of an observed lecture, the academics' instructions on how best to prepare for the upcoming final exam refer specifically to the directive words such as 'evaluate' in the exam questions:

> During the lecture, the subject coordinator highlights the directive words 'evaluate' and continues to move through the questions on the sample exam explaining what students could draw on to answer the questions [to be able to evaluate). **(Third Year Accounting, Lecture 11)**

During the interview, the academic was asked to discuss the purpose of taking students through a sample exam. He stated that the overall purpose is to enable students to understand that the exam will not simply seek evidence of content knowledge. He explained that the aim is for students to be able to demonstrate analysis and evaluation skills through application and making suggestions**:**

> *The value of getting students to complete this exercise is that it allows students to understand the nature of the questions on the exam – what is expected from this subject. Not just content knowledge but application, able to make suggestions. (Third Year Subject Coordinator)*

Although accounting academics had indicated during the initial interviews that they believe it is challenging to assess to what extent students acquire presentation and teamwork/collaboration skills, the assessment of communication and collaboration skills is included in the criteria for assessing class contribution (Figure 5.5):

The following information is included as a guide to student contributions:

Outstanding Contributor

This student's contributions reflect exceptional preparation. This student asks probing questions, explains points of confusion and engages in debate with other contributors, and may provide alternate perspectives. This student also leads group-based activities in class and provides valuable insights in group discussions. If this student were not a member of the workshop, the quality of class and group discussions would diminish significantly.

Good Contributor

Contributions in class reflect thorough preparation. This student offers ideas, asks questions and contributes to debate, but the level of contribution is less rich than the "outstanding contributor". If this student were not a member of the workshop, the quality of class and group discussions would diminish considerably.

Adequate Contributor

Contributions in class reflect satisfactory preparation. This student offers ideas and comments occasionally in class discussions and group work, asks some questions but doesn't generate debate. If this student were not a member of the workshop, there would be less overall interaction.

Non-Participant

There are two types of non-participants. First, those students who may not directly contribute to class or group discussion, but are engaged in the dynamics of workshop activities. Second, those students who have has said very little or nothing in workshops and also appear dis-engaged with the activities of the workshop. . Hence, there is an inadequate basis for evaluation. If this student were not a member of the class, the quality of the discussion would not be changed.

Figure 5.5: Third year accounting Subject Guideline

The assessment of collaboration work is also visible in instructions provided in the subject guidelines that publish criteria for 'highly graded assignments' (Figure 5.6). As indicated in the following example, 'successful group collaboration' is listed as one of the factors that contribute to highly graded assignments.

Assignment Expectations
Highly-graded assignments are likely to successfully demonstrate [to a high standard] the ability to:

1. Distill the key elements of the case.
2. Search appropriate data bases and websites to source suitable information regarding issues raised in the case.
3. Apply the sourced literature and information to the specific issues of the case and the circumstances of the case setting.
4. Draw on the facts of the case to respond to the specific questions.
5. Respond to the questions in a succinct fashion.
6. Demonstrate, by the standard of the work submitted, successful group collaboration.

Figure 5.6: First Year Accounting Subject Guideline

5.4.4 Summary of beliefs and self-reported practice

The three types of teaching practice reported by the accounting academics aligns with accounting academics' belief their teaching practice gives students opportunity to develop employability skills (see Table 5.3 below).

Table 5.3: Comparison of accounting academics' beliefs and self-reported practice

Belief	Self-reported practice
Employability skills are important for ensuring future accounting graduates are ready for the workplace.	• Demonstrate the importance of employability • Facilitate activities to develop employability skills • Assess employability skills
A range of employability skills are important for accounting graduates: align with industry, employer and professional body requirements	
Employability skills occupy an important place in the university curriculum and academic role	
Teaching practice provides opportunities for students to acquire employability skills	

Reported teaching practice mostly includes a demonstration of the relevance and importance of employability skills in the workplace through the direct delivery of accounting content and technical skills, and by seeking to ensure their teaching practice provides opportunity for students to put into practice and demonstrate the acquisition of employability skills through the acquisition of content knowledge and technical skills, and through the facilitation of class activities. Accounting academics reported that they adopt a range of interactive activities, small group discussions,

team-based assignments to support students to acquire a range of employability skills, such as verbal communication, problem solving, critical thinking, and teamwork/collaborative skills through content knowledge. The accounting academics in this study did not view the demonstration and facilitation of such practices as the direct teaching of employability skills, but rather as the creation of opportunities for students to develop, practice and demonstrate the skills.

Accounting academics self-reported assessment practice indicates that there is both an alignment and a disjuncture between accounting academics' beliefs and self-reported practice. The interview data indicates there is agreement among the accounting academics that the assessment of analysis and evaluation skills is a taken-for granted part of their teaching role which, in turn, influences academics to report that their assessment practice is mostly focused on analysis and evaluation skills. A disjuncture between beliefs and espoused assessment practice is visible in the discussion of academics' beliefs about assessing other employability skills, in particular presentation and teamwork/collaboration skills. The interview data indicates that, while there is a shared belief among the accounting academics that the extent to which academics are able to contribute to the acquisition of such skills is unknown, academics report that they assess verbal and written communication and collaboration skills via some assessment tasks. However, the fact that not all assessment tasks assess communication and collaboration skills is indicative of their belief that it is not always possible to do so.

The following section presents the findings from the final phase of the study related to the accounting discipline, which investigated to what extent accounting academics

actually integrate employability skills into accounting curriculum design, delivery and assessment. The purpose of this phase of the study was to investigate to what extent and how accounting academics enact employability skills in actual teaching and assessment practice.

5.5 The observed teaching practice

This section reports on the data collected from direct observation of academics' teaching practice. Data of observed practice was collected using curriculum macrogenres (Christie, 2002), across a 'sequence of lessons' over a 12-week teaching period. Drawing on the coded observations, this typology of accounting academics' teaching practice has been developed. The typology conceptualises four different levels of teaching practice. The levels represent the extent to which employability skills are integrated into the curriculum. The different types of teaching practices are listed in descending order from direct to indirect as indicated in Table 5.4. The typology is read from bottom up.

Table 5.4: Typology: Accounting academics' observed teaching practice

Teaching practice	Examples of observed teaching practices	
Assesses employability skills	• **Small range** of employability skills are assessed • Gives **feedback on small range** of employability skills (analysis and written skills)	**Direct** ↑
Facilitates activities to apply employability skills	• Gives students **some practice in application** of some employability skills to case-studies and accounting data (analysis, evaluation, decision-making) • Gives **student practice in applying some** employability skills to real life case studies and accounting data.	
Demonstrates application of employability skills	• Case studies and accounting data to **discuss some employability** skills (analysis, evaluation and decision-making skills) • **Shows how to apply some employability skills** to real life case examples and accounting data (analysis, evaluation and decision-making skills)	
Discusses employability skills	• Mentions some **employability skills** for the workplace (analysis evaluation, decision-making, teamwork skills) • **Infrequently explains the importance of some** employability skills for the accounting role (analysis, evaluation, decision-making)	↓ **Indirect**

The four types of teaching practices observed are discussed below in order of frequency. In contrast to accounting academics' espoused theories, the most common practice shown, as indicated in the shaded area in Table 5.3, is the "Discussion of employability skills" rather than the demonstration of employability skills (a more direct form of practice in comparison to "Discussion of employability skills"). "Discussion of employability skills", according to the typology (which has been developed by what was observed), is categorised as the most indirect form of teaching practice. It is the most indirect because academics were observed mentioning or identifying employability skills more so than directly getting students to practice or demonstrate the skills. "Facilitate activities to apply employability skills" was the next most often observed form of practice. It is categorised as the second highest type of direct integration of employability skills development; however, academics were shown to more often facilitate activities to develop students' discipline content knowledge and technical skills, rather than activities for students to develop, practice or demonstrate a range of employability skills, as indicated in their belief and self-reported practice statements. "Demonstrates application of employability skills", was less often observed and "Assessment of employability skills" categorised as the most direct form of integration is the least likely practice observed.

5.5.1 Discusses employability skills

The discussion of employability skills was observed most frequently across a 'sequence of lessons' over a 12-week teaching period (see Appendix 8). Although it is categorised as the most indirect form of teaching practice, it is regarded as an important first step to the integration of employability skills in the curriculum as it provides the foundation for the movement toward direct integration via

demonstration, facilitation and assessment (see Table 5.3). However, discussion of employability skills was not consistently a dominant form of practice across all classes observed. Discussion of employability skills was observed in 7 out of 12 of the first year accounting lectures, in weeks 3, 5, 7 and 11 of the first year accounting tutorials, in weeks 1, 5, 6, 7, 9 and 11 of the third year accounting lectures, and in 9 out of 12 weeks in the third year accounting workshops. The excerpt below, drawn from the observation notes, provides important information about a common theme observed; that is, when accounting academics discussed employability skills they were primarily making a link between the use of employability skills in relation to the requirements of the workplace or accounting role at the organisational level:

> "When we analyse, we can think about this as a two-pronged effect – from the organisational perspective what is best for the firm? Refers to the Birch paper covered in the last lecture '…nuances of Birch paper are critical to our understanding'. Discusses what was best for the firm…mentions that day to day we don't always have time to make this analysis– there can be tensions between work units and what is best for the firm. This is the 'fun stuff' – could teach this topic through calculations, but I prefer to teach through the 'fun stuff'" – **(Third year accounting, Workshop 5)**

While discussion of employability skills is a common form of practice, a disjuncture between beliefs and practice is found in the employability skills that are discussed. In contrast to accounting academics' belief that there are a range of employability skills that determine work readiness, with the most common being analysis, evaluation, critical thinking, problem solving, verbal and written communication skills, presentation and teamwork skills, the academics were mostly observed discussing the importance and relevance of analysis and evaluation skills only.

> The academic is observed saying directly to students during the lecture: "Maybe accounting is an art as well as a science and we need to put those together. And that is really what that reading is designed to do. It is designed to break your preconceived notions about what you think about accounting, because it isn't boring, there is so much **interpretation and judgement**. And you will hear that word a lot, so much so that we have had students in the past in consults say to my lecturer colleagues, 'judgment oh that is such an accounting word!'. That's good; I want you to think of it as an accounting word. It's not that there is a definitive answer – it is open to debate…"**(First Year Accounting, Lecture 1)**

The dominance of analysis and evaluation skills observed is reinforced by academics' self-reported practice. More importantly, it was reinforced by the explanation of their teaching practices during the follow-up interviews. The academics explained that the observed teaching practice ensures that students are made aware of the importance of the distinction between knowledge acquisition and application of knowledge. This importance was justified by the academics, who explained that their primary purpose of the observed teaching practice is to ensure that students master discipline content; in this case via case analysis in relation to a work setting as evident in the observed lecture below.

> [we use] "Lengthy cases and the kind of case will be looked at 6 or so times. Regardless of the context of the case – it is the **application** that is important/requires the development of **analysis skills**. 'A really neat case…broad questions I want you to deal with.' Questions may have questions within questions – so watch that. There are no particular answers/but can say some wrong things about it. One of the fundamental pedagogical things we want to do, learn 'some stuff' and **apply to a setting** – a foundational objective of the subject' **(Third Year Accounting, Workshop 2)**

In addition, academics were observed explaining to their students the distinction between accounting technical skills and analysis and evaluation skills:

> [The academic explains directly to students] "Here is the thing…some of you are thinking…how do I know, why don't you tell me the distribution and I will tell you how much each gets…is that right? [some acknowledgement from students received] …but what is the fun in that? I can get a computer to do that…what value is that? So, it looks like it's subjective - and I know it is a little – but how do I know? –I want you to go to these uncharted waters and think, what **judgements** need to be made, **by you thinking about the judgements is where you do the learning – it's not about how much you give to each – but it's about what were you thinking when you decided that, what did you bring on board, that is what you should embrace rather than just give me the percentages and I will give you the answers**. Having said that, in the first instance, I want to know the percentages, and then I will ask you how you got to that…" **(Third year accounting, workshop 7)**

Moreover, the academics emphasised strongly the distinction between technical skills and analysis skills when they discussed directly with students that accounting is more than just a subject about calculating debit and credit. They emphasised that accounting requires much evaluation and judgement making; thus, an indication of the effectiveness of some indirect and implicit teaching of employability skills.

> *So, what we are interested in, in accounting is the understanding of its nature its function. Why are the rules that way? What should the rules be? How can we describe better what is happening in this economic environment? By better I mean – representing in a way that is more informative to the decision makers that are interacting with that business. So that we need to understand the nature and function of accounting. Why does accounting exist? How old is accounting? Waits for a student response. Student response 5,000 years. Says he will take that as a 'good estimate'. Goes back to history – of accounting. Then about what accounting is – old trade (accounting information – to make accounting decision – what a fair trade is – i.e. trade sheep and cattle.* ***(First Year Accounting, Lecture 1)***

The next most frequently discussed skill is decision-making, as indicated in the following excerpts. This is a skill that was rarely mentioned by the accounting academics during the interview, yet the observed practice saw academics discussing this skill often during the semester across all subjects. In a manner similar to analysis and evaluation skills, decision-making skills were most often discussed in relation to

the requirements of the subject; in the following case, in relation to calculation task, and seem to be considered an indirect outcome of their teaching practice.

- [The tutor asks students] "Why calculate the NPV [say what NPV is] of something – what do we use it for? For decision-making. – Decisions about what?"
- The tutor asks the students to read the first part of the handout that has been given out – scenario. Students reading it in their own time (The tutor gives students some time to do this).
- Question/Answers with students – around decision rule/uses the white board to put the response. What does it mean if the NPV is greater than 0? Student response. The tutor summarises and expands the students' response and emphasises the importance of decision-making skills. **(First Year Accounting, Tutorial 5)**

The above examples indicate that accounting academics' discussion of employability skills is focused on selected skills; namely analysis, evaluation and, sometimes, decision-making skills. The observations of teaching practice over the 12-week period indicate that practice is a reflection of the generally accepted view that the academic role is primarily concerned with ensuring their students acquire the knowledge for the specialist field (Shulman, 2005a, 2005b). It also reinforces the notion that practice takes place within the established scholarship of disciplines (Becher & Trowler, 2001) that shapes the accepted knowledge and practices that take place with the field. This view was reinforced by the following quote made by one academic during the follow-up interviews:

> *I think it's [learning] content. It really is about the content. It's about the development of skills. I don't like the word skills I must admit. But the development of attributes or whatever they are that enable us to be better in whatever it is we want to be doing. Which is technical content but also broadening of their mind and being able to communicate and articulate using accounting as a language. (Third Year Accounting Subject Coordinator)*

The observed teaching practice, therefore, is consistent with academics' belief that specified employability skills are important for accounting students alongside accounting knowledge and technical skills. However, the academics are not explicit to students that the skills are relevant for work readiness. While all the accounting academics said that they seek to ensure students are taught to be aware of the importance of employability skills as part of their teaching practice, observed practice indicates they are an implicit part of teaching practice rather than a direct and explicit. This was affirmed in the follow-up interviews, as shown in the following quote:

> *There's a range of things [students should be doing]. So, some of its content related, [that they need to know] that accounting is judgment based, it's not that black and white…we are going to be testing their understanding, not testing that rote learning (First Year Accounting Subject Coordinator)*

The inconsistent nature of practice is most evident in the discussion of communication and teamwork skills. Despite academics' belief that communication and teamwork skills are considered important employability skills, in practice, the academics paid inconsistent and minimal attention to the skills in their teaching practice; that is, only one academic was observed making an announcement during two lectures that a report writing session would be delivered by a staff member from Academics Skills as a way to provide information on developing report-writing skills. To investigate the purpose of the report-writing workshop, the academic was asked to indicate the reasons for offering the 'Report Writing Skills Session'. The subject coordinator explained that the report writing session is required because his previous experience has enabled him to identify student problems with 'language skills':

> *We do have a problem with the international students and their language skills. So, in some ways I'm trying to plug holes. I would much prefer a more systematic universal approach to supporting students whose languages skills may not be to the level expected. So, I think - so one of the reasons we introduced the report writing skill workshop was based on that we know*

> *students do actually struggle with that [language skills] (First Year Accounting Subject Coordinator)*

Furthermore, the academic stated that the Report Writing Workshops are important to guide students to present their work in the correct business report structure for the completion of the subject assessment given that, in previous semesters, reports were incorrectly formatted:

> *Writing Workshops are to make sure they present their work in the correct format and write well. It's for those who need the support. We recognise that they are first year and may have not written a business report before – so we provide support to do so. I believe it's important to learn about presenting a written report; it's relevant to the workplace.* (First Year Accounting Tutor)

It seems that, in this instance, the academics' experiences with past students have enabled him to identify areas that need attention for the purpose of successful completion of assessment in the subject. It could be argued that offering the report writing session indicates an implicit rather than a direct and explicit message to students that report writing is a skill required in the workplace and, thus, worthy of a skills development session for the students. However, this was not clearly articulated to the students. It suggests that students do not view the teaching of written skill development as a core part of the subject learning outcomes. During the follow-up interviews, this was confirmed when the academic explained that written skills are considered separate to the teaching of discipline content, as exemplified by the following quote:

> *I much prefer a more systematic universal approach to supporting students whose language skills may not be to the level expected. So, one of the reasons we introduced the report writing skill workshop was based on that we know students do actually struggle with written skills how to write a report… A lot of the generic skills aren't content skills. I can't teach written skills. My background is not in that. I know what a good business report is…I know how to teach it, but I'm not qualified (First Year Accounting Subject Coordinator).*

The observation of practice has shed light on the influence the academic position and expertise have on decisions academics make about their practice. For instance, the offering of the report-writing session depends on academic position and experience. These two factors, in this instance, interrelate with the disciplinary context within which this academic works. It seems, that overall however, that academic position and experience have shaped the academics' practice; that is, curriculum design, the sequence of curriculum, the selected teaching and learning activities, and assessment (Bernstein, 1975, 1990; Sadovnik, 1995).

5.5.2 Facilitates student activities

The observed teaching practice "Facilitation of student activities" was the next most common form of teaching practice observed among the accounting academics. This is categorised as the second highest direct form of teaching practice on the typology because it provides opportunities for students to practice and demonstrate the employability skills. Such teaching practice was observed when academics directly and explicitly facilitated students in completing set activities, in pairs and groups, during both the lecture and tutorials/workshops, although more often in the tutorials/workshops than in lectures (Appendix 8). The facilitation of such activities aligns with academics' view that the tutorials/workshops have been designed to be interactive:

> *The workshop is meant to be interactive, whereas the lecture is not structured to be interactive. (Third Year Accounting Subject Coordinator)*

The following excerpts is an example of an observation of students working in small groups to analyse data that was then used to facilitate a teacher-led, whole group discussion during a workshop:

The academic points out that it is worth looking at the case from Flamholtz' perspective by considering the framework of an organisational control system as depicted in the diagram – [the diagram is provided on the overhead slide]. On the next page is a table of information/data to guide the analysis. The academic explains this requirement to make connections between article and case. The academic states 'I won't do this every week but this allows us to move forward. I want you to spend 7-8 minutes together …' [in small groups of 4 to 5 students]. The academic selects two groups of students to focus on 'outside of core control system', next three groups to focus on core control system in the case (different sections on the table).

Students work in their small groups on the set task. Following the group work, the academic invites students to a whole class discussion. The academics first provide a summary – in some way says this is about looking at the 'old and new'. Asks students from each group to give points from their group analysis and as students give their responses the academic adds the points on the table on the overhead.
(Third year accounting, Workshop 3)

The following is an example of a regular small group activity and presentation during the first year tutorial. Students were observed working in groups of 4 to analyse and make recommendations. The students were observed presenting their analyses and recommendations in table form on the white board:

The tutor divides the students into four small groups [4 students) and each student has to give themselves a number from 1 to 4. The tutor gives each number a different role within Company Alpha

On the overhead, the tutor provides an overview of each position for each person.

Person 1: CEO of Alpha and explains the relationship to Alpha.
Person 2: A young professional and explains their relationship to Alpha
Person 3: Recently retired CEO of Alpha, age 63 and you had the job for 20 years. Explain their relationship with Alpha
Person 4: CFO of Alpha and explain their relationship with alpha (the chief accountant)

The tutor provides on overview of what is Alpha? Problems/decisions/options - Lists the points on an overhead/teacher-led discussion
Student Group Work/Collaboration: in small groups the students discuss and note decisions they have to make, options they have, and each person, based on their character, has to decide what decision they would make and then consider an option the group will make together (which strategy they would adopt)

> The analysis and recommendations are presented by each group in Table form, consisting of problems the group faces and possible solutions. They present these to the other students, using the white board.
> **(First Year Accounting, Tutorial 2)**

Despite the observation of the facilitation of activities mostly taking place in tutorials/workshops, the facilitation of student activities was sometimes observed during the lecture; indicating accounting academics seeking to take steps of moving away from traditional lecture delivery as espoused by the academics. For instance, during a lecture to 500 students, one academic was observed facilitating an activity that asked students to work in pairs to identify the information they would need to conduct an analysis. The example below shows how the analysis is conducted through hands-on activities that required students to work collaboratively with peers and contribute to classroom discussion during the lecture.

> **Lecture Exercise.** Academic informs students he wants them to think about a case called 'Professors' Potato Chips' and the type of information needed by different stakeholders: investor, lender, supplier, customer, employee, or government, about the company. The information is provided on the lecture slide and includes an image of a potato chip company. The academic gives students 2 minutes to talk to the person next to them (in pairs) about the type of information required by each stakeholder – by informing students "we will brain storm a bit".
> Students discuss the required information for 2 minutes
> Academic asks students: "If you were investor in 'Professor Potato Chips' what sort of accounting information would you want to know?" – students call out responses. Academic repeats the responses, encourages more responses, and sometimes offers definitions of the terms provided by the students.
> The academic continues to seek responses from students for each of the stakeholders. This is followed by a discussion between the academic and students about the importance of such information to analyse decisions about investing in the company **(First Year Accounting, Lecture 1).**

The following is another good example of an academic facilitating small group activities during the third year lecture. This lecture consisted of 70 students. The

activity facilitated students putting analysis skills into practice through collaboration and discussion.

Developing BSC measurement at Coors.
Divides the lecture group in 3: 1) financial, 2) customer and 3) learning and growth – based on the areas for which performance measures need to be developed for the COORS case study.

Academic asks students to talk to someone next to them to develop suitable measures. He says: "The key is can we develop measures that are appropriate?" Refers back to the case study, which still appears on the right-hand screen. On the left-hand screen, the information 'Developing BSC measures at COORS' and table headings: **Strategic Objective/Measures.**

Academic states directly to the students, "Using the table - we need to add a couple of financial measures from each side of the room"

Provides students time to talk among themselves. Gave the option for students to work on their own – but most of the students are talking to someone next to them. Academic is observed moving around the lecture theatre, listening to and commenting on students' discussion. This is followed by students providing measures for each category and a discussion of the measures for the scorecard **(Third Year Accounting, Lecture 5)**

As accounting is considered to be an applied discipline, it could be argued that it is more likely to be perceived as part of the accounting culture to provide direct opportunities for students to put into practice the employability skills required for professional practice, as indicated by the following quote.

> *I think it's the next step in their learning. They have to learn to move away from being the apprentice…they have to start making these decisions for themselves (First Year Accounting Subject Coordinator).*

The facilitation of activities to put into practice and/or develop employability skills in lectures and tutorials/workshops, however, were infrequent and inconsistent. An important finding during the follow-up interviews was the tensions faced by academics in making decisions between teaching practice that facilitates pair and

small group activities that integrate employability skills development, or facilitating such activities as a way to deliver or manage discipline content:

> *I always worry a little bit about forced group work. So, some students, rightly or wrongly, but they want to just...particularly in a lecture, if I ask them to do tasks in a lecture, some of them sort of get a bit, "I'm in lecture mode. Just tell me what you want to tell me...and let me go." I don't blame them for that either, but I guess I'm always trying to think of ways to make the lecture okay, so that's why I either try to show a video or show something, or give them an example that's different, or get them to do something in the lecture. (Third Year Accounting Subject Coordinator)*

This type of tension was further expressed by an academic who stated his concern that focusing on developing communication skills during the lecture poses a risk of taking the focus away from the importance of developing students' accounting technical skills. It seems that, despite academics' beliefs and self-reported practice, inconsistent integration of the employability skills reflects the concern that a focus on employability skills, in particular, the integration of communication and teamwork skills development, conflicts with their primary purpose of academic teaching, that is, the delivery of content knowledge and technical skills as illustrated by the following quote:

> *So, the fact that they've got to talk to each other and convey is important - we're in the business of communication in accounting. So, they've got to be able to communicate. It's not just all one-way or one form of communication even though that is an important function [of teaching]. I think sometimes I go too far. I need to remind them sometimes that the basics and the calculations and the technical stuff are really important. So, I'm actually forcing myself to say that more often. (Third Year Accounting Subject Coordinator)*

Tutors, on the other hand, explained their decisions to integrate some employability skills development in their teaching practice is limited because they do not have a lot to say about how the subject curriculum is designed. This was a further constraint because of the requirements of the set, overcrowded curriculum and time constraints.

At the same time, in alignment with the subject coordinators' concerns, there was a consensus among the tutors that integrating particular employability skills, such as communication and teamwork skills into their tutorials would take the focus away from their expected role of delivering content. The accounting tutors indicated they used a range of interactive activities to manage class content, rather than teach communication or teamwork skills, even though they are aware that the interactive activities have the capacity for students to practice and demonstrate some of these employability skills. In this way, the integration of a range of employability skills is considered to be an indirect part of their teaching practice. In explaining the reasons for the practices observed, one tutor explained, during the follow-up-interviews, that the main purpose of such activities, while resulting in students gaining the ability to work collaboratively, was to gain content knowledge:

> *So, by getting them together, in a small group, it's kind of getting them to… you know one person might know what to do here, the other might know what to do there or they might come to agree on how they think it should go and its small group learning. (First Year Accounting Tutor).*

As shown in the study conducted by Jones (2013), academics that have less input into and influence on the design of curriculum, but more face-to-face contact with students in small tutorials/workshops, have a better idea about the complexity of teaching. The tensions faced by tutors became evident in the tutors' teaching practices and in what they said about their practice during the follow-up interviews, as indicated below:

> *As a tutor, I've never kind of thought of that because no one's ever told me that the onus is on me to teach communication ad presentation skills. But I definitely think tutors do play a role. I experienced my own tutors in the past and I look at the tutor cohort now and their different teaching methods and I think there should be - yeah, tutors should definitely play a role in that because that's where most of the interaction comes and the lectures. Not many students have the opportunity to interact in a big lecture (First Year Accounting Tutor)*

Academics, therefore, were very clear about the distinction between facilitating activities to practice and demonstrate employability skills, and learning the subjects' content. The academic's quote below clearly illustrates further the tensions between content knowledge acquisition and employability skills:

> *So, I don't really think about it in terms of employability when I'm doing that but it's more to make sure that the quality of the learning across the class. So, if one group's going to present to the entire class and I didn't do that [probe/ensure they are on the right track], they might present a really poorly structured, poor quality answer and then the rest of the class will suffer and not be able to learn that content as well. So, if I go in and ask probing questions and I get them on the right track, get them thinking about the right things, so when someone's presenting and they're running through it, they're learning themselves or when they present to the class it's clear and it can be well understood by everyone else. (First Year Accounting Tutor)*

For the most part, the priority of facilitation of activities was to ensure students gain discipline content, analysis, evaluation and problem-solving skills and that, in doing so, they would acquire and put into practice a range of employability skills, such as communication, presentation and teamwork skills. However, the observation of teaching practice has highlighted the tensions faced by academics who seek to make decisions between focusing on the integration of a range of employability skills and the delivery of discipline content, with many academics pointing out that awareness of their departmental learning objects require that students gain the content knowledge and technical skills expected for the subject. It therefore requires that they academics focus on the delivery of content knowledge before employability skills (in particular, as discussed below).

5.5.3 Demonstrates application of employability skills

"Demonstration of the application of employability skills" refers to explicit showcasing, directly from teacher to student, of how the employability skills are applied or applicable to the workplace. While the "demonstration of application of

employability skills" was espoused by accounting academics as the dominant form of teaching practice, in actual practice it was the third most common part of teaching practice across all teaching spaces and lessons over a 12-week period (Appendix 8). Nevertheless, it was a more regular way that accounting academics integrated employability skills across both subjects and classroom formats. The demonstration of employability skills was observed more often in lectures than tutorials. It was observed in the first year accounting lectures more often than the first year tutorial (during weeks two, three, five, six, eight and ten in the first year accounting lecture and in weeks seven and twelve in the first year accounting tutorial), and in weeks two, three, four, five, eight and twelve in the third year accounting lecture, and in weeks eight, nine and ten in the third year accounting workshop.

In addition, any demonstration of employability skills was dominated by the demonstration of analysis skills, rather than the range of employability skills as espoused by academics in their self-reported statements about practice. In the following example, the academic demonstrated the analysis of the advantages and disadvantages of intervention and non-intervention in practice, in order to make a decision in the same way they would be expected to do so in the workplace.

> Academic says, "You are the financial minister…highly respected, you've done your analysis, what will you do? This guy is sitting outside your office to ask you what you will do. What will you do? You're neatly dressed in your suit, …what are you going to do? What are your options? To intervene or not intervene? Agreed?' [the academic does not seek responses from students]
>
> **Next Slide: So, what action (if any) to take?** Intervene or not intervene.
>
> The options are in a table form on the slide/with notes of the options – and the academic works through these considering the advantages/disadvantages of whether to intervene or not intervene…. The academic gives some options on

what could be done and considers the outcomes by considering the points on the slide and explores them in more detail with some examples. **(Third Year Accounting, Lecture 2)**

In many of the demonstrations observed, however, the academics mostly demonstrated the analysis of a case or data to ensure that definitions and explanations of accounting concepts were being delivered and learned. In the following excerpt, the academic focused on demonstrating the difference between the terms income and assets, and mentioned how they are needed for analysis, but analysis skills are not demonstrated.

Lecture Example: Tigers born in a zoo Revenue or gain? Students are quiet. The academic seeks students' responses. He revisits the definitions i.e. is it an income? An asset? Is a Tiger an asset for a zoo? What do we need for the Tiger to be an asset for a zoo? Lists these…then asks – if there was a baby Tiger at the zoo – would we expect more visitors to the zoo – student responses received. The academic states, "There is an event because of the birth of the Tiger? So, can we measure the value of the Tiger??" – student response received "cost".

Academic considers the response – "Can we measure the cost? Is it legal to sell Tigers? Is a Tiger an endangered species? So, can I sell them? Can there be a market value then? Tigers are not an asset - so baby Tigers is not an income because we can't measure them – gets confusing, doesn't it? Point is – comes under judgment – the sheep farmer – judgment – if meat – income. If wool producer – a gain. I have to ask myself – what is it for **my** business? **(First Year Accounting, Lecture 5)**

In the following example, the academic focused on analysis of a financial statement but, in doing so, the focus was on the identification and definitions of key accounting concepts.

The academics explain to students that he will start looking at what expenses are changing. Shows these figures on the board as he points to the figures on the financial statement and underlines these. To show how depreciation has gone down – He explains wages and crosses this out, saying 'it isn't an issue because it hasn't gone up differently'. Explains why it is important to consider what has gone up differently. Discusses each of these – administrative, depreciation, sales and marketing, occupancy expenses. Focuses on sales and marketing and explains why this is a good thing and ticks it on the statement.

> Considers occupancy – shows students what occupancy is – goes to the notes of the statement and says "this is about electricity, gas…" and asks the students what has been happening in Victoria. A student response is received that costs for these services are going up. The academic explains, "so this is the same for everyone – so tick this." He then explains that he only needs to look at two things – admin and depreciations. Demonstrates to students that they will need to go back and read these notes to explain what these mean/entail. He puts these definitions in the financial statement document on the screen, using the document camera. He then considers the cost of administration that has gone up by 60% and labels this as "bad debt" (identifies this as a problem) – makes a note that this is a concern…the academic says – "I know there is a problem, but don't know what it is yet".

During the following up interviews, one of the accounting subject coordinators with over 10 years of experience, explained, that the identification of students' lack of ability to conduct analysis and evaluation on the exam in a previous semester, was the reason he demonstrates directly to the students during the lecture how to unpack exam questions. The main motive was to show students that analysis and evaluation skills are core requirements of the exam, as indicated by the following excerpt of an observation during the first year accounting lecture.

> **Slide: So, what's the purpose of this topic?**
> **NOT** here to teach you what the financial statements for companies X, Y and Z mean. – Rather to give you the tools and understanding to question and evaluate the financial statements of companies X, Y and Z **to determine what it means for you and whatever decision you make (First Year Accounting, Lecture 3)**

The majority of demonstrations of employability skills, therefore, are dominated by demonstrations of discipline content, and most of the emphasis on employability skills is limited to analysis skills only. For the most part, it seems that demonstration of the relevance of skills in the workplace is an implicit rather than direct part of teaching practice. It seems that accounting academics' practice reflect the priority given to the preparation of graduates with knowledge of the discipline despite the fact that academics espouse that employability skills development has become an integral

part of their academic role. This can be explained by the fact that, as noted above, espoused theories shared among academics are influenced by the accounting discipline that has been shaped by the accounting industry and professional bodies. In contrast, however, actual practice decisions are made on an individual level resulting in differences in the extent to which integration of employability skills takes place. There are, thus, inconsistences of practice within the discipline itself. Such differences can be explained by the factors faced by individual academics, for example, academics' level of experiences and academic positions.

5.5.4 Assesses employability skills

Although assessment of employability skills is categorised as the highest level and most direct form of integration, in practice, the assessment of employability skills was minimal and inconsistent. As indicated in Tables 5.5 and 5.6 below, the assessment of analysis and evaluation skills was most often assessed through written work produced in the group assignments, tests and exams, rather than class contribution and participation.

Table 5.5: Employability Skills identified in First Year Accounting Assessment

First Year	Analysis Skills	Problem solving skills	Critical thinking skills	Written	Verbal	Teamwork
Tutorial participation & contribution	✓					
Group Assignment	✓			✓		✓
Final Exam	✓					

Table 5.6: Employability Skills identified in Third Year Accounting Assessment

Third Year	Analysis Skills	Problem solving skills	Critical thinking skills	Written	Verbal	Teamwork
Workshop participation & contribution	✓					
Test						
Group Assignment	✓			✓		
Final Exam	✓					
Bonus Question	✓					✓

Indirect and inconsistent integration of employability skills is further exemplified in the decisions academics made to assess class contribution and participation. For example, accounting academics convey, through both verbal and written assessment instructions, that analysis and evaluation are assessed through 'class participation and contribution'. Consequently, the message sent to students is that they are expected to be engaged during class time by contributing to class discussion, and collaborating and working with others in teams. This is shown in the excerpt below of the instructions provided to students during class time by the academic regarding the nature of the assessment of contribution and participation.

> [Academic provides an overview of why they call these class's workshops rather than tutorials] "…We run them a little differently, there is more to say than you would in another subject'. They are "Workshops" because that's how it is run, "we talk, contribute, work in groups…"
> **(Third year accounting, Workshop 1)**
>
> [The lecture is] Not about me talking for two hours. It will be interactive. I expect students to get engaged and ask questions – not to sit silently – you learn best when you engage and ask questions **(First Year Accounting, Lecture 1)**

In actual practice, however, the academic explained that such activities were adopted for the purposes of management of classroom time. In particular, to ensure that the

required content was covered rather than the explicit adoption of activities for student to develop employability skills:

It seems that practical difficulties, as a result of time constraints to manage the subject content, pose challenges for academics to enact their espoused theories. It was expressed by academics that the integration of employability skills requires teaching practices that weigh heavily on academic time. This was shown by academics that stated that attendance, rather than students' quality of contribution and participation, is assessed. In practice, the summative score students received for 'class participation and contribution' does not reflect an assessment of analysis or evaluation skills, but rather a score of attendance. This inconsistency was common across both subjects.

> *Students are told they don't get a score just for turning up; well they kind of do, but they're told they won't get a score just for turning up… I'm hopeless at it, but normally I would get the photo list of students in the class and just make a few ticks and crosses through the semester of individual students and we sort of score it on that basis, high attendance students get eight and the poor ones get two or three if they're hardly ever there or something, if that. (Third Year Accounting Subject Coordinator)*

> *Marking attendance to me doesn't mean participation. So, you can tell the students are concerned about it but there will be the students who realise that it's only worth one per cent and so each thing's worth one per cent of one per cent, it's nothing. There are a lot of students that figure that out but a lot of students don't actually get that and they just think it's really important that they're there at the tute. (First Year Accounting tutor)*

Moreover, while some academics stated that they, at times, choose to judge the quality of students' participation, it was unclear how the quality of participation was assessed. This was the case because academics did not provide an explanation, during the interview as to what they meant by adjusting marks for participation.

> *So, the online test, so they will get a certain grade over the semester from that, then how it works there, is we adjust the final grade based on attendance. So, if they attended all the tutes[8] we can go up to plus two. If they don't attend, it will go down negative two but then as tutors we also have the ability to adjust based on participation. So, if based on that model, there's a student that had plus two and I don't believe that they have participated in class the entire semester, I can adjust it downwards but in terms of the effect on their overall grade, it's very miniscule. (First Year Accounting Tutor)*

In addition to the practical difficulties associated with assessing quality of participation, the accounting academics' assessment practice is dominated by the assessment of understanding and application as exemplified in the following statement:

> *Assessment is set to test their understanding. I would hope we do more than assess their knowledge. I think knowledge you can rote learn but understanding requires students to apply and explain clearly. (First Year Accounting Subject Coordinator)*

It was also found that the assessment of written skills was found to be minimal. For instance, only a small proportion (10%) of marks are allocated to assessing written work; that is, sentence structure and vocabulary for the first year accounting group assignment (Figure 5.7).

Sentence Structure and Vocabulary	Full range of sentence patterns (simple, compound, complex), effectively used; **error-free** sentence-level grammar; broad and fluent range of vocabulary; elaboration and detail achieved through full use of ***business terms***; concise and appropriate use of vocabulary; correct use of ***word forms and word choice***.	Mastery of sentence patterns demonstrated; may have **occasional** grammatical errors on the sentence level (e.g. word deletions/ additions; run-on sentences or fragments); flexibility in range; appropriate use of ***business terms*** and other vocabulary in a variety of situations; mostly correct use of ***word forms*** and ***word choice***; occasional wordiness or colloquialisms.	Sentence patterns most often successfully used; **several** grammatical errors on the sentence level (e.g. word deletions/ additions, tense, fragments, or run on sentences); adequate range; no precise use of subtle meanings displayed; ***business terms*** only used occasionally; vocabulary **sometimes** used inappropriately; instances of wordiness or colloquialisms; often incorrect use of ***word forms***.	**Narrow** range; **many *word form*** errors; ***business terms*** and other vocabulary **often** used inappropriately; only basic and elementary meanings are conveyed; multiple instances of wordiness or colloquialisms; simple and complex sentences attempted but often unsuccessful; frequent fragments or run-on sentences; **grammatical errors distract from meaning.**	Attempts at simple sentences often not successful; **many** grammatical errors; **simple** vocabulary often inappropriately used; no control of ***word choice and word forms***; **no** attempt to use ***business terms***; wordiness and colloquialisms throughout.	1	

Figure 5.7: First Year Accounting, Group Assignment – Business Report

[8] The term "tutes" is an Australian colloquial reference to "tutorials".

While the students are provided feedback on a scale from "suitable to unsuitable" for written work (presentation, grammar, expression, readability) for the third year group assignment, there are no marks allocated for the written work (Figure 5.8).

Presentation, grammar, expression, readability	Suitable_____Unsuitable

Figure 5.8: Third Year Accounting Group Assignment

In explanation for the minimal assessment of written skills, one academic offered the following:

> *I wouldn't say we explicitly do it [develop students' written skills], however, the assignment does have a fair bit around presentation [of the written report], grammar structure (**First Year Accounting Subject Coordinator**)*

The content analysis of assessment documents has shown that only one assignment assessed collaborative work via a peer self-assessment score in the form of a peer review. The peer review component instructs students to assess each of their group member's contribution for the first year group assignment, as indicated below in Figure 5.9:

Peer and self-evaluation	**Scaling of individual marks is possible based on peer assessment;** deliberate attempts to deceive will result in penalties being applied.	+/-	
This section will only be used if individual marks differ from the overall group mark	**Group Member**	**Adjustment**	**Total**

Figure 5.9: First Year Accounting, Group Assignment

One of the academics provided an explanation of how the peer evaluation score could potentially assess teamwork; however, it was not explicit that teamwork skills are assessed, given that the peer evaluation was used as a means to identify and respond to individual student's lack of contribution to the assignment.

> *…This is where they can assess their group members as well. I guess that's our measure of teamwork… the reason why it's there is for [the lecturer] to be able to assess which group members haven't put in. It's not really used to assess teamwork. Well, it is, because you can tell which teams have done well and not, but we don't take that a step further and actually analyse. We understand which teams have done well, but we don't take that information and do anything with it. It's mainly for the individual adjustment… (First Year Accounting Tutor)*

> *Basically, we're looking for the students to rate each other, making sure that everyone's participated, everyone's listening to each other, questions, like that. It's just really helping me to identify freeloaders and if I feel there is a freeloader, I think I need to talk to the group or look at the reviews. I've amended a few - of 110 assignments, I think I differentiated about three and pretty much every single time I marked a student down, the student fully admitted that he didn't put the work in as the others. (First Year Accounting Subject Coordinator)*

Overall, the assessment of analysis and evaluation skills is the most common employability skill assessed; however, in practice, they are assessed less often than indicated by academics in their self-reported practice. Inconsistent with academics' beliefs and self-reported practice, the assessment of written skills and collaboration skills are of minimal significance. No other employability skills identified by academics during the interviews and documented in their curriculum documents are assessed. Overall, most often the assessment of content knowledge takes priority and the assessment of employability skills is inconsistent. This aligns with the teaching practice observed.

5.5 Summary

This chapter has analysed the accounting academics' enactment of employability skills development in the teaching and assessment of accounting curriculum. Whilst accounting academics strongly support the direct teaching and assessment of a range of employability skills, there is evidence to suggest that the teaching and assessment

practice of employability skills is mostly indirect and is primarily focused on the teaching of a limited number of employability skills, that is mostly analysis and evaluation skills. For the most part, in the classroom, academics were observed integrating employability skills in relation to the subject content and completing assessment requirements, rather than as a direct link to the workplace and work readiness. This is expected, given that the traditional and primary role of universities is to prepare graduates with discipline knowledge and discipline specific skills.

The observation of teaching practice illuminates the disjuncture between reported beliefs and actual practice. While industry and employer groups influence accounting academics beliefs and self-reported practice, their teaching and assessment practices are influenced by a range of interrelated factors including their, academic experience, position and department requirements. This is in contrast to the requirement for universities to adopt pedagogical practices that are thought to be effective for equipping academics to integrate employability skills more consistently into their curriculum.

The findings in this chapter have important implications for teaching and assessment practices. Most importantly, accounting students are receiving mixed messages about the importance of employability skills development through the university curriculum. This is seen in the contradictions between what is visible and espoused in the curriculum documents, on the one hand, and how employability skills are integrated into teaching and assessment practice, on the other. In practice, academics' teaching and assessment of employability skills is an individual decision, influenced by the academic position and experience that interrelate with the disciplinary context

within the department of accounting. As a result, the extent to which individual academics integrate employability skills in teaching and assessment practice varies, despite the common shared understanding; beliefs and self-reported practices indicate that employability skills are a direct and explicit part of practice.

The following chapter presents an analysis of the main findings of academics working in a contrasting discipline in business education; the economics discipline. The decision to draw on a contrasting discipline in business education was made in order to investigate the extent to which specific disciplinary context influences teaching and assessment of graduates' employability skills.

Chapter Six: Economics

The previous chapter investigated the extent to which employability skills development is enacted in the accounting curriculum. To understand how another discipline within business education understands and implements employability skills in their teaching and assessment practice, this chapter examines the teaching and assessment practice of economic academics.

Drawing on the initial interview data and content analysis of curriculum documents, the economic academics support the concept of employability skills, as understood by industry, government and higher education. However, they place the most emphasis on analysis skills as the employability skill most relevant to economics graduates. Furthermore, the economic academics refer to employability skills as influencing employment outcomes, rather than work readiness, as stipulated by the accounting academics. Therefore, there are some disciplinary differences in the identification of the most salient skills between the accounting and economics academics. The accounting academics strongly refer to a range of skills required for work readiness, while economic academics emphasise the importance of analysis skills as being the most relevant skills for economic graduates' employment outcomes.

Despite the strong support academics give to analysis skills as an important employability skill for economic graduates, the observation of teaching and assessment practices indicates that, the economics discipline content (knowledge, concepts, theories) is the central focus of economic academics' teaching and assessment practice. There are a number of complex factors that interrelate with economic academics' practice and this seems to hinder economic academics teaching

what they believe and report they do in practice. The data indicates that economic academics face a number of competing challenges, constraints and demands as a result of their adherence to disciplinary traditions. While the majority of teaching and assessment decisions are made at an individual level, these decisions are influenced by departmental and institutional factors that have and continue to inform the nature of teaching and assessment within the economics discipline.

For reporting purposes, the data of economics academics' understanding, beliefs and actual practice has been presented in the following order to align with the Theories of Action Framework. The chapter presents the data on how employability skills are understood and espoused in curriculum documents initially followed by academics' understandings and beliefs collected through the initial semi structured interviews. The data is presented in this way so that economic academics' espoused theories can be captured initially in curriculum documents and compared with what they discuss in the initial semi-structured interviews before the observed teaching and assessment practice data is presented. When the economic academics explain and justify their understanding of employability skills and their proposed behaviour or actions related to their teaching and assessment of employability skills, they are expressing espoused theories (in other words, what they aim for and believe they do in practice).

The reporting of the findings related to economic academics' espoused theories is presented under four broad themes that align with the subsidiary research questions. Those themes are: 1) Understanding of Employability Skills, 2) Level of importance of the development of their students' employability skills, 3) Who is responsible for developing students' employability skills 4) What academics say they do in practice.

Under each of these broad themes the data that provide unique insights into economic academics' espoused beliefs are reported. The espoused beliefs are compared to the data obtained from the observation of practice enabling insight into economic academics' actual theories of practice, as observed by what the academics actually do in practice. Overall, the data is presented in this way so that the findings can be compared to the accounting academics' espoused beliefs and theories-in-use as reported in the previous chapter.

6.1 Curriculum documents

A content analysis of the economic curriculum documents (the economic program website, the Subject Handbook and Subject Guideline) reveals that a range of employability skills is documented. The skills listed are the same range of employability skills identified by the government and industry (outlined in in Chapter 2) and the in the accounting curriculum documents discussed in the previous chapter. However, there are some inconsistencies in the employability skills emphasised in the various economic curriculum documents. The inconsistency aligns with studies that show that there is a lack of agreement as to what extent employability skills should be an integral component of curriculum (Clanchy & Ballard, 1995; Jones, 2009a)

The information provided on the Department of Economics' website, at the outset states explicitly that the study of economics develops students' problem-solving and data analysis skills applicable to both a business and government setting:

> *The economics major develops problem-solving and data analysis skills for use in both business and government settings. With an economics major, you will be equipped with the tools to make smarter decisions about the varying*

> *types of problems that confront those working in the commercial world or in government (Economics program website, accessed 25 March 2015).*

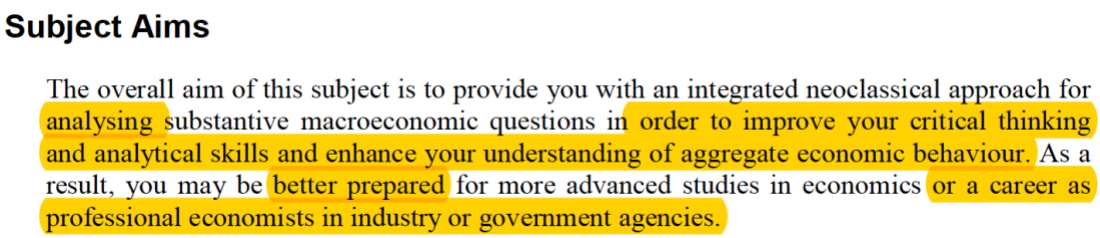
However, in the statement below, the term 'skills' on the same web page, is discussed as broad transferable skills while, at the same time, statements that identify critical and problem-solving skills are presented as being highly regarded by employers:

> *You can study economics to become a professional economist, to develop skills complementary to other disciplines, or to gain a better understanding of the role economics plays in our lives and in society. Completion of an Economics major is highly regarded by employers because it demonstrates your capacity for critical analysis and problem solving and indicates an ability to communicate ideas and structure arguments clearly (Economics program website, accessed 25 March 2015).*

An examination of the description of the subject in the subject handbook and the subject guidelines has shown that, in contrast to the accounting discipline that explicitly and directly identifies and describes identical lists in the two curriculum documents, the economics first year subject guidelines do not include a list of skills under the 'Generic Skill Objectives' statements, while the Handbook description and third year documents do. Instead, the first year subject guidelines provide a broad statement about the significance of the study of first year economics in developing students' skills relevant to the role of an economist. The statement about skills acquisition directly and explicitly informs students that they acquire core, discipline-specific, skills, together with analytical skills that align with the objectives and statements advertised on their website below

> *All this suggests that an economist must have two main skills – first, a 'tool-kit' of approaches to modelling the economy; and second, knowledge of how to apply those approaches to develop theories which fit the specific situations in which the economist is interested. (Economics program website, accessed 25 March 2015)*

In contrast to the first year subject guideline, the statements included in the third year economic subject guideline (see Figure 6.1 below) are direct and explicit about specific employability skills' acquisition through the subject curriculum rather than being made up of broad statements about skills relevant to an economist. The identified skills in the third year subject guideline align closely with industry, government and university frameworks in the same way as they are listed in the accounting documentation. For instance, the subject aim identifies 'critical thinking and analytical skills', suggesting that the skills will be enhanced by completing the subject. Moreover, the statement explicitly provides an explanation that the critical thinking and analytical skills, in turn, will allow students to be 'prepared' not only for advanced studies in economics, but also a career as 'a professional economist' in industry as indicated below:



Subject Aims

The overall aim of this subject is to provide you with an integrated neoclassical approach for analysing substantive macroeconomic questions in order to improve your critical thinking and analytical skills and enhance your understanding of aggregate economic behaviour. As a result, you may be better prepared for more advanced studies in economics or a career as professional economists in industry or government agencies.

Figure 6.1: Third Year Subject Guideline

Of importance, however, is that the content analysis of the curriculum documents has shown that overall employability skills identified or described in the subject handbook and subject guidelines of both economic subjects together, as indicated in Table 6.1 below, seem to align closely with the three clusters of the Core Skills for Work Framework (CSfW, 2013) developed by industry and government.

Table 6.1: Core Skills for Work Framework and Subject Aims and Objectives

Economics Curriculum Documents	Core Skills for Work Framework
First Year Subject Guideline: discussion of the role of the economists. It outlines that students will acquire the two main skills required of an economist. **Third Year Economics subject guideline:** provides a direct link to employability by referring to the particular student skill enhancement that will enable employability in the economics profession. It states that students 'critical thinking and analytical skills' improvement will allow students to be 'prepared' for a career as a professional economist in industry or government agencies	Navigate the world of work Manage career and work life Work with roles, rights and protocols
First and third year handbook and Third Year subject guideline: • Written communication • Oral communication • Collaborative learning • Teamwork • Oral communication • Receptiveness to alternative ideas	Interact with others Communicate for work Connect and work with others Recognise and utilise diverse perspectives
First and third year handbook and Third Year subject guideline: • Problem-solving skills • Application of theory to practice • Interpretation and analysis • Critical thinking • Synthesis of data & other information • Evaluation of data & other information • Statistical reasoning • Use of computer software • Accessing Data and other information from a range of sources	Get the work done Plan and organise Make decisions Identify and solve problems Create and innovate Work in a digital world

Alignment between the employability skills visible in the subject curriculum documents and the CSfW Framework indicates that, overall, there is an expectation that a study in economics provides economics students with a set of employability skills on par with how they are discussed and documented in industry, government and higher education frameworks. The statements about employability skills align with the view that they are the skills required to support successful participation in the workplace. The next section describes to what extent economic academics' understanding of employability skills aligns with espoused statements.

6.2 Understanding of employability skills

The economic academics were asked to indicate what they understand the term employability skills to mean. The following statement captures the understanding by all the economic academics, that is, employability skills are understood to be skills considered 'valuable' to a person in the workplace.

> *...Most fundamentally, skills that are going to be valuable for a person in the workforce and therefore they're going to enhance the person's employability because they're seen as having these skills that are valuable in the workforce (Third Year Economics Subject Coordinator*).

Consistent with the accounting academics, as described in Chapter 5, and the main stakeholders, discussed in Chapter 2, the economic academics define employability skills as consisting of two main types of skills: the discipline-specific skills and the employability skills. In contrast to the accounting academics, the economic academics talk about the employability skills as fostering better employment outcomes rather than as skills required for work readiness, as indicated by the following quote:

> *There are two types. One is we're training people to be commerce graduates and so I guess one of the skills is knowledge of economics in a way that they'll actually be able to apply that in the workplace... the discipline specific skills. Then there are the generic skills, which are the things like being able to communicate, that involve being able to explain clearly, being able to know what audience it is you're writing for or talking to. (First Year Economics Subject Coordinator)*

The economic academics identify mostly the same range of employability skills as the accounting academics did, as illustrated in Table 6.2 below. The skills economic academics most often discussed are listed below in order of frequency and compared to the skills most talked about by accounting academics. Common among all academics is that analysis skill is the most often talked about, while communication skills are less frequently discussed. The economic academics do not identify teamwork skills.

Table 6.2: Economics and Accounting identified employability skills

Economics	Accounting
• Analysis skills • Problem-solving skills • Critical thinking skills • Communication skills	• Analysis skills • Problem-solving skills • Critical thinking skills • Communication • Teamwork skills

The economic academics discuss analysis skills as the most valuable employability skill. This is most notable in statements made by the economic academics indicating that analysis skills are considered to be an employability skill specific to the economic discipline. For instance, an academic stated that an economist would be "constructing models on the job" and that students need not only acquire information "to do the job of an economist, but also to be able to understand the information in terms of changes and the causes of change". The ability to understand issues or events is explained as requiring the ability to conduct analysis:

> *I think the skills I have in mind are those that will enable graduates to analyse a question. For example, if the government announces some policy, like a budget cut or some change in the interest rate or this kind of policy, it is important that they are able to analyse, because economic factors are all interlinked... So, I hope to be able to help [students] develop the ability to be able to identify the interactions and also to be able to identify what would be the direct interaction, the major interaction… that one may dominate in the long run? It's this ability to be able to link what we have learned in the first few years, and then to apply to a particular policy analysis. (Third Year Economics Subject, Subject Coordinator)*

At the same time, the economic academics stated that students must have the capacity to be able to 'adapt' analysis skills on the job:

> *I think a lot of the employability skills are, like a lot of what an economist would do in a job would be to basically be constructing models or to be doing analysis on particular case studies. Some of the skills are going to be quite esoteric to their job. Some of them are going to be using the statistical package that that company uses which I guess having a much more academically focussed kind of curriculum would help a lot. If you've got the fundamentals down, then you can pick up any sort of system or any sort of*

> *method of doing things and be able to quite comfortably adapt those skills to that particular business. (First Year Economics, Tutor)*

Overall, the findings indicate that the economic academics understand employability skills mostly in the same way as the accounting academics and the main stakeholders. However, in comparison to the accounting academics, economic academics did not mention teamwork skills as an employability skill relevant to the work that economics graduates will be required to do in the workplace.

The next section presents the findings related to how economic academics indicated the level of importance the economic academics placed on employability skills in the university context and part of the academic role. It also sheds light on whether economic academics'' beliefs about the importance of employability skills align with the skills they most often talked about.

6.3 Beliefs about the importance of employability skills

The findings show that, overall, there is a consensus among economic academics that employability skills are important for ensuring future economic graduates have gained the skills required in the workplace:

> *'...Most fundamentally, skills that are going to be valuable for a person in the workforce and therefore they're going to enhance the person's employability because they're seen as having these skills that are valuable in the workforce'.* (First Year Subject Coordinator)

Unlike the accounting academics, who identify a range of employability skills that determine work readiness, the economic academics explain that analysis skills are important for fostering better employment outcomes because they hold practical

relevance to the economic discipline and to the workplace, as indicated by the following quote:

> *Analysis skills… perhaps like by being able to recognise that the newspaper article can actually be understood by using these economic theories or concepts. It might be about being able contribute at work to a discussion about something like price setting or it might be if you're in public policy, contribute to discussion about or analysis of something like policies for climate change. (First Year Economic Subject Coordinator)*

One subject coordinator, quoted below, states that her experience in teaching a third year economics subject has shown her that analysis skills are important because they are directly applicable to the type of work economic graduates will be expected to do in the workplace:

> *For a lot of students, this would be their final subject. It's the final compulsory subject for their degree for major in economics. So, most of them probably will go to work right after this. So, I think the skills I have in mind are to be able to analyse a question, to be able to, for example, like economics, you do a piece of economic analysis. For example, if the government announces some policy, like some budget, a budget cut or some change in the interest rate or this kind of policy, the knowledge to be able to analyse [is important]*. (Third Year Subject Coordinator)

The findings indicate, however, that there are inconsistencies among the economic academics in how they talk about the importance of employability skills. Unlike the accounting subject coordinators, who discuss the importance of employability skills as evolving from the direct influence of industry and employer accreditation, the economic subject coordinators conceptualise the importance directly through their understanding of students' pathways from university to the workplace. One academic stated that his experience in a university context has shown him it is important for new graduates to be able to 'apply' economic theories/concepts to practice in the workplace.

> *…After a few years I guess I was thinking okay, some of this stuff really is so useful. You kind of find out what your students are doing afterwards; the type of*

> *jobs they're doing with their economics degree. Then I gradually had this realisation that what I really should be doing with my teaching is directing towards making sure people have the ability to apply economics. (First Year Economics Subject Coordinator)*

The tutors, on the other hand, explain that their understanding of the importance of employability skills stems from their view about what is required in various roles in the workplace. The economic tutors, however, do not explain the factors that have led to their understanding of the importance they place on employability skills in the same way as explained by the accounting tutors in Chapter 5. While the accounting tutors explained that their experience in applying for jobs, being involved in extra curricula activities, and internships has enabled them to learn what employers want from new graduates, the economic tutors pointed to their understanding of the nature of roles related to the economics discipline as though such understandings are 'common knowledge', as indicated in the following quote:

> *In the field of economics, I think they should know at least a basic econometrics program, how to use them, to analyse them …they should be able to analyse and like many disciplines the tasks that they are given, like the business-related tasks. I think the quantitative skills are very important as well. (Third Year Economics Tutor)*

While the economic academics identified additional employability skills when asked to offer their definition of employability skills during the initial interviews, that is, they included problem solving, critical thinking and communication skills, the economic academics did not discuss these additional employability skills as contributing to employability outcomes specifically to economics students. The focus was solely on analysis skills. Only one academic mentioned communication skills as an important skill required in the workplace:

> *Communication skills - it's an important skill, I think if one goes to work at the RBA or Treasury [they will be expected to] write a report and then to present*

> *the report. So, I think writing and presenting… [Are important skills]?* (Third Year Economics Subject Coordinator)

Overall, the findings indicate that the economic academics believe it is vitally important for economic graduates to have gained analysis skills because the ability to conduct analysis is most valued in the workplace. The economic academics mostly minimised the significance of the other employability skills identified during the initial interview when they were asked to define employability skills.

The next section analyses the level of importance that economic academics placed on employability skills in the university curriculum and considers the extent to which employability skills are the focus of their self-reported practice about their academic teaching role.

6.3.1 Employability skills in the curriculum

The economic academics stated that the curriculum plays an important role in ensuring that their students acquire the employability skills that have practical relevance in the workplace. This point is consistent with economic academics' belief that there are specific employability skills that are the most valued in the workplace for economics graduates. The skills considered to be of most practical relevance to the workplace are analytical skills:

> *As a Bachelor of Commerce student…they should be able to analyse the tasks that they are given, like the business-related tasks. (Third Year Economics Tutor)*

With a focus on analysis skills, economic academics indicated that the curriculum should give students an opportunity to be prepared for employment in the economic profession by ensuring that analysis skills are integrated into the curriculum.

> *'... when you prepare your curriculum; you need to have some what you want the student to achieve. In all my teaching years, I have always tried very hard to also prepare students for the employment in the industry as a professional economist rather than as a researcher in a university, therefore they require the ability to analyse. (Third Year Economics Subject Coordinator)*

In discussing employability skills more generally, the economic academics indicated a lack of awareness of the range of skills industry seeks in graduates:

> *I would think it is quite important [to train people for the workplace], but I'm not quite sure what kind of skills that they [industry] are looking for when people do enter the workforce. (Third Year Economics Subject Coordinator)*

One academic suggested that the University should provide academics with information about the employability skills industry seeks in new graduates. She argued that, in this way, academics would be able to include the right employability skills within the curriculum.

> *I think it would be good to give academics some idea from the industry's [point of view] what kind of student they're looking for, what skills students are lacking and what kind of a preparation they're not getting enough of... I also feel the university, maybe as a Faculty, need to bring industry people to talk more with the academics. Because I try very hard to do that but I don't think all of my colleagues do the same as me. Some academics just teach within their comfort zone. (Third Year Economics Subject Coordinator)*

In addition to a lack of knowledge of the skills industry expects, the economic academics also pointed out that it is often too difficult for subjects to integrate employability skills beyond analysis skills as part of a particular subject curriculum. However, they pointed to an implicit assumption that skills are developed through the curriculum:

> *I think it's quite hard for subjects to incorporate like, say, these four areas [presentation, oral and written communication skills]. But I think as a part of the whole Bachelor of Commerce program, I think they should develop those skills. (Third Year Economics Tutor)*

As a result of the lack understanding by economic academics of the skills industry expects from future graduates, the economic academics turned to a discussion about the responsibility of the University or Faculty to ensure that employability skills are included in the curriculum:

> *I guess the generic skills, that's really something that I guess hopefully is built up across all the courses people do in the Faculty. I think it's really the Faculty's responsibility to be doing the overall management of that to make sure what students get at the end of the degree. (First Year Economics Subject Coordinator)*

Overall, the interview data indicate that, consistent with the importance economic academics place on employability skills, there is agreement that the skill of analysis is the most important skill that should be integrated into the economic curriculum. There is also agreement among the economic academics that the subject coordinators who design the subject curriculum are responsible for the integration of analysis into the curriculum. Economic academics were less explicit about other employability skills. For the most part, economic academics assume that a university degree will ensure that students acquire the other relevant employability skills that prepare graduates adequately for the workplace.

6.3.2 The role of the academic

From the outset, all economic academics stated that preparing students for the economics profession is considered to be a core part of what they do in their teaching role, as indicated by the following quote.

> *To teach the subject well: is to get students interested and excited about economics. Encourage them to work hard and to want to become economists. (First Year Economics Tutor)*

Specifically, the economic academics were explicit in stating that their role is to teach students to apply analysis skills to discipline knowledge relevant to practice, as the following quotes indicate:

> *So, I think it's almost kind of tautological then that what you're doing is doing stuff that's useful for employability. Because okay, what are you going to do - what do you do when you're employed? Well you apply this knowledge to these problems that you come up against in business or public policy. (First Year Subject Coordinator)*

Teaching students how to analyse content knowledge was most often talked about as a foundation to build and enhance what economic graduates will require in the workplace. As indicated by the following two quotes, the economic academics who teach into both the first and third year subjects consider analysis skills to be the specific employability skill of most relevance for economic graduates moving on to economic related positions in the workplace:

> *So, I guess I see I've got a particular responsibility to try and give people who are doing a commerce degree, this practical knowledge of economics so they can apply it in a practical way. (First Year Economics Subject Coordinator)*

> *I think academics need to bring students to the major policy debate or the major events in the business world to…Yeah, let them think. Let them think and try to apply what are the principles of economics and try to use that to analyse. So first, they need to be aware of these facts, these kinds of policies, these debates, these questions or events and then apply [in practice]. (Third Year Economics Subject Coordinator)*

In seeking to ascertain more clearly academics' beliefs about teaching other employability skills identified and visible in the curriculum documents, the economic academics were asked during the interview to consider the skills they identified previously as 'employability skills'. The data indicates that the academics are ambiguous about their roles in teaching such skills. Common statements made by the economic academics indicate that they do not teach employability skills, such as oral and written communication, and presentation skills.

So as a result, trying to teach writing skills would take far too much focus away from the economics… (First Year Economics Tutor)

Yet, one academic mentioned that the development of verbal communication is a 'by-product' of the teaching practice, rather than a direct part of their teaching role, as indicated by the following quote:

*So, you could say that we're trying to **develop the oral skills** and all that sort of stuff. So yeah, there's other stuff but I think that's kind of a **by-product** of. You sort of have some of that stuff in mind when you design things like the tutorial. But, yeah, I mean in really, really big-picture terms, it's about teaching those concepts and how to apply them. If you really can apply them then there are a lot of other things that go with that. (First Year Economics Subject Coordinator)*

At the same time, however, the tutors in particular, expressed that they would like to do more in their teaching role to contribute to students developing other specific employability skills beyond analysis skills. One of the tutors stated that he faced barriers as result of the design of the tutorials, indicating that, given the amount of content to be covered, he only has enough time to run through the set tutorial tasks:

I think that's one of the weaknesses of the tutorials; it might be the design of the tutorials. So, the way I run the tutorial is, so we have three or four questions per tutorial. The amount of the questions; the length of tutorial is just enough for an hour for me to go through the questions. (Third year Economics Tutor)

The first year economics tutor was more explicit in stating he did not have enough time to give students the opportunity to participate in activities that would enable them to practice employability skills, such as oral communication skills, as indicated in the following quote:

I can try to encourage students to speak up. It's usually quite difficult but with the right amount of enthusiasm it's possible. But again, it's all constrained by time. Like if I had two and a half hours... ...I could do something that's far more interactive and gives students the ability to practice their public speaking and what not. (First Year Economics Tutor)

Overall, economic academics indicated that their teaching role places upon them the direct responsibility to prepare economic graduates for the workplace in a manner that is specific to the economics discipline. However, what it means to economic academics to prepare future gradates for the workplace differs from what it means to the accounting academics. The economic academics explained that the priority of their teaching role is to ensure that students acquire analysis skills. Furthermore, in order to acquire analysis skills, the economic academics indicated it is their responsibility to ensure they deliver the economic content knowledge so that students have the core foundation to put analysis skills into practice, as part of their learning. Moreover, the economic academics are ambiguous about their role in teaching other employability skills; they either indicated that it is not their role, could be a by-product of their role, and some indicated they would like to do more to teach other employability skills but are constrained from doing so due to limitations, such as time constraints.

6.4 Self-reported teaching practice

Economic academics report three main types of teaching practice that seek to ensure students acquire the employability skills that have most practical relevance to the workplace. First, they report that their teaching practice is focused on demonstrating the practical relevance of analysis skills; second, that their teaching practice facilitates the practice of analysis skills; and, third, that they assess analysis skills. In alignment with their beliefs about the importance of employability skills relevant to economic students and beliefs about their teaching responsibility, economic academics' self-reported practice did not mention integrating the development employability skills beyond analysis skills.

6.4.1 Demonstrate the relevance of employability skills

The economic academics reported that the core focus of their teaching practice is to demonstrate the 'relevance of employability skills". The economic academics reported that the demonstration of employability skills takes place in both the lectures and tutorials, as indicated by the following two examples. The first quote below reports on teaching practice during the lecture, where demonstration is explained as a way to engage students. It seems, from this quote, that the importance rests on emphasising the 'impression' that the demonstration adds to students' employability.

> *One of the ways of engaging them is by demonstrating - you've got to put yourself in their mind and think okay, why are they doing this? So, the best way you can actually get them to learn the material is by engaging them and making it relevant to them which, again, means that you've got to make them think that it's adding to their employability. (First Year Economics Subject Coordinator)*

This second quote below shows that the academics believe the purpose of references to the 'real world' of economics is a way to make the subject matter more interesting and relevant to the students:

> *I try and make economics interesting because people often think it is quite dry and boring. So, I try to show students the real world implications and use the real world examples to look at a variety of different things. (First Year Economics Tutor)*

The subject coordinators, in particular, reported that, since their teaching practice during the lecture is mostly one-way content transmission because of the large student cohort, the demonstration provides the best way for students to 'master' the skills they need:

> *So, there's really not obviously a lot of chance for the students to say a lot of stuff or ask questions or anything like that. It is the case then in that subject the lecture is largely one-way transmission of information because of the volume constraints. So, I accept that it is about this one-way transmission. So firstly, I have lectures that engage the students with the material. Then secondly, I explain the concepts and demonstrate the methods in a way that*

> *provides a solid basis for the students to master them. (First Year Economics Subject Coordinator)*

By demonstrating economic calculations and/or application of economic concepts and principles, the academics stated that students learn how to conduct an analysis of the results that, in turn, will help them develop their analysis skills:

> *I will teach them basically a modeling framework in this subject, so it's basically a very unified approach, a unified model, to be able to analyse a lot of questions. So, that's one approach I will demonstrate how to analyse several macroeconomic issues and to teach students how to apply that, I relate the content to real world examples, have a model that's instructive to the real world case. (Third Year Economics Subject Coordinator)*

However, the third year economics subject coordinator indicated that, on most occasions, because of the large student cohort, lecturing content is her priority so that she can be certain to get through all the discipline content knowledge she needs to deliver rather than providing demonstrations or applications of the concepts:

> *So, I decided not to do that [demonstrate completing application/calculations] because I felt if I do that, I wouldn't be able to finish. So, I just depend on lecturing. I don't write at all, I just say everything and highlight and discuss. (Third Year Economic Subject Coordinator)*

Overall, the economic academics report they mostly demonstrate the relevance of economic content to employability and facilitate opportunities for students to acquire economic content knowledge. The academics do not report that they teach employability skills. However, there was some indication that, given the large classes, academics were restricted by how much they can demonstrate and facilitate the development of employability skills during their classes and thus they reported relying primarily on delivering discipline content.

6.4.2 Facilitate activities to apply analysis skills

The economic academics report that a good part of their teaching practice aims to facilitate the application of analysis skills.

> *I guess it's like I say [to students] in that introductory lecture. What I'm hoping students will have is some capacity to apply the particular concepts and theories that we've studied in this subject, which are like a competitive market model, managerial economics and game theory. So that I guess apply, perhaps like by being able to recognise a newspaper article can actually be understood using these economic theories or concepts. That yeah, I guess when you recognise that it's a professional discipline then the whole purpose of teaching is to get students to a point of being able to apply their knowledge in practice. (First Year Economics Subject Coordinator).*

All of the economic academics' statements indicate a consensus that teaching practice that facilitates the application of analysis skills takes place mostly in the tutorials because the tutorials are considered to be the practical side of the subject, while the lecture is focused on delivery of content:

> *Well tutorials I guess that's they're really important because it's the one opportunity in that subject, that students do have to do some structure and active learning with an expert tutor. Yeah, I guess I see that tutorials as two things. First of all, an opportunity just to check that the students understand what the concept or theory or the method is and then secondly, it's this kind of first structured attempt to let them actually try and apply the concept or theory. (First Year Economics Subject Coordinator)*

All the tutors reported that their teaching practice aligns with the design of the tutorial that expects tutors to facilitate student activities to apply analysis skills in practice:

> *…the tutorials are all about…having a first go at practicing being able to apply those concepts and methods. (First Year Economics Subject Coordinator)*

> *Tutorials are more hands on – to work through the formulas or some of the theory. (Third Year Economics Subject Coordinator)*

> *The tutorial is mostly practical application, doing the questions, working through the questions that will be assessed. (First Year Tutor Economics)*

The economic academics' do not report that they facilitate opportunity for students to develop the other skills documented in most of their curriculum documents and identified during the interviews. However, self-reported practice is consistent with academics' belief that their teaching role is focused on preparing students with analysis skills because of the significance that economic academics place on the employability outcomes of economic graduates. Only one academic indicated that their teaching practice that facilitates the application of analysis skills, might provide a way for students to develop some of the other important employability skills:

> *I guess there's the stuff like interpersonal skills and that as well, which I wouldn't say we have a particular responsibility for but we do try and - in week one - the socialisation tutorial which is about trying to create an environment in tutorials where everyone feels comfortable and all the students can interact and stuff like that. So yeah, so I guess we're trying to do a little bit in that way as well. (First Year Economics Subject Coordinator)*

Overall, the economic academics' self-reported practice indicates facilitation of activities focused on giving students an opportunity to put analysis skills into practice. The economic academics do not report that they specifically teach analysis skills, but rather that they facilitate opportunities. In addition, the economic academics did not report that they facilitate activities that give students the opportunity to practice other skills that are visible in their understanding of employability skills espoused during the interviews and visible in the economics curriculum documents.

6.4.3 Assess employability skills

As expected, during the interviews all the economic academics reported that they assess analysis skills. However, two unexpected findings were revealed through a content analysis of available assessment task instructions and assessment criteria. First, the findings indicate that, although all economic academics indicated analysis skills are a core priority of their teaching of employability skills, the assessment of

analysis skills was not always reported directly to students. Second, the findings indicate that, although economic academics had stated it is not part of their role to teach and assess written skills, assessment of written skills was reported directly to students in some instructions and explanations of assessment.

The analysis of economic academics' self-reported assessment practice is preceded by a brief overview of the type of assessment set in each subject, in order to clearly identify the types of assessments set in the economic curriculum (Table 6.3). It is expected that students will complete five pieces of assessment for the first year economics subjects. Students are assessed based on their tutorial attendance and participation. There are two timed pieces of assessment in the form of a multiple-choice test early in the semester, a final exam at the end of semester, and two assignments.

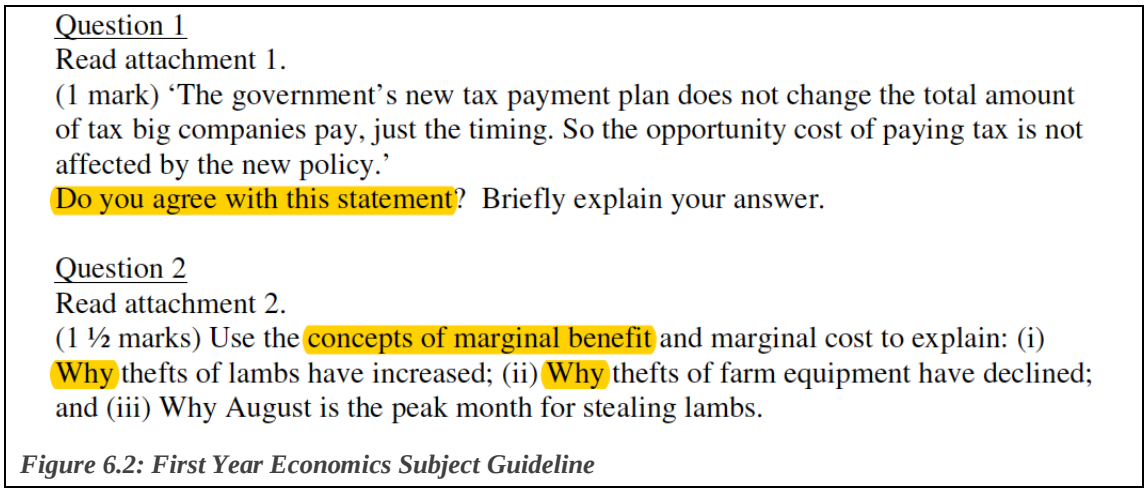
Table 6.3: Economics Assessment Tasks

Economics First Year	**Economics Third Year**
Tutorial Participation & Attendance Individual 10%	Tutorial participation Individual 10%
Multiple Choice Exam Online Individual 5%	Group Assignment 1 10%
Assignment 1 Individual 7 Questions 10%	Group Assignment 2 3 problem sets 10%
Assignment 2 Individual 15% Part A: 5 questions Part B: Case Study	Mid-Semester exam Individual 15%
Final Exam Individual 2-hours 60%	Final Exam Individual 2-hours 55%

Both the first and third year subject coordinators indicated, during the interviews, that students are expected to demonstrate mostly analysis skills as illustrated by the following quote.

> *... In my assignments, I have short essay questions, so basically, I expect them **analyse** it, to give a short paragraph, **to be able to just very concisely answer the question**, but to be able to identify the most important... I also have an assignment that asks them to process data. I have some data facts and then do some intuitive explanations. (Third year subject coordinator)*

The first year subject curriculum documents, however, was the only subject that espoused that analysis skills are actually assessed in practice. This is evident in the nature of the assignment questions that ask students to agree or disagree with a statement in question 1 and explains 'why' for question 2 (see figure 6.2). The other assessment tasks focused on discipline content knowledge and calculations.



Question 1
Read attachment 1.
(1 mark) 'The government's new tax payment plan does not change the total amount of tax big companies pay, just the timing. So the opportunity cost of paying tax is not affected by the new policy.'
Do you agree with this statement? Briefly explain your answer.

Question 2
Read attachment 2.
(1 ½ marks) Use the concepts of marginal benefit and marginal cost to explain: (i) Why thefts of lambs have increased; (ii) Why thefts of farm equipment have declined; and (iii) Why August is the peak month for stealing lambs.

Figure 6.2: First Year Economics Subject Guideline

During the initial interviews, the first year economic academic reinforced that analysis skills are considered central to assessment practice.

> *The number 1 criteria is **the quality of analysis** in the application…the first assessment is very directed… use the demand and supply model to **analyse**… In the second assessment, some of the questions are, again, a bit directed. But then through that mini-case study, the **here's the problem and here's the theory you need to analyse it**. Students are being told well to choose a problem make a decision what the right theory is to analyse it. (First Year Economics Subject Coordinator.)*

In addition to analysis skills, written skills are also espoused in the first year subject documentation, but only in relation to the assessment of the two written assignments, as highlighted below in figures 6.3 (Assignment 1) and Figure 6.4 (Assignment 2) below.

Marking Criteria
Three main factors will be considered in marking your assignment:

a) **Knowledge of economic concepts** – For example: Has the answer used the appropriate economic concepts? Does the answer show a thorough understanding of those concepts?

b) **Quality of analysis and application of economic concepts** – For example: Is there a logical and thorough supporting argument or description of how conclusions have been drawn? Have economic concepts been applied in an effective manner in the particular application? Are assumptions clearly described? Is an understanding shown of any relevant qualifications to the conclusion?

c) **Presentation** – For example: Are the writing style and organisation of material such that the main ideas and arguments can be understood? Are diagrams presented clearly and effectively integrated with text?
(Assignment 1)

Figure 6.3: First Year Economics Subject Guideline

Four main factors will be considered in **marking your case study**:

a) **Knowledge of economic concepts** – For example: Has the answer used the appropriate economic concepts? Does the answer show a thorough understanding of those concepts?
b) **Quality of analysis and application of economic concepts** – For example: Is there a logical and thorough supporting argument or description of how conclusions have been drawn? Have economic concepts been applied in an effective manner in the particular application? Are assumptions clearly described? Is an understanding shown of any relevant qualifications to the conclusion?
c) **Presentation** – For example: Are the writing style and organisation of material such that the main ideas and arguments can be understood? Are diagrams presented clearly and effectively integrated with text?
d) **Research** – Have examples been chosen that have taken some effort to find? What is the quality of evidence supporting arguments that are made?
(Assignment 2)

Figure 6.4: First Year Economics Subject Guideline

Similarities and differences in academics' beliefs and self-reported assessment practice, therefore, indicate both an alignment and disjuncture between economic academics' beliefs and self-reported practice. Congruence between economic academics' belief and self-reported practice is evident when academics stated during the initial interviews that assessing analysis skills is considered to take priority over other skills in their teaching role.

> *The assessment's all directed at getting them to be able to apply - do what I say in the first lecture, which is to be able to apply the material. (First Year Economics Subject Coordinator)*

> *For my assessment, I usually build in computer skills, so students have to do a little bit of data work, some simulations, they can use Excel. So, the assessment should be some work that I know they can do…some equations. But I would also give them some actual sensible parameter values and let them to do the simulation…a small project, a practical assignment. I also have an assignment that asks them to process data. I have some data facts and then require some intuitive explanations. (Third Year Economics Subject Coordinator)*

A disjuncture between beliefs (the importance given to the integration of employability skills in practice) and self-reported practice has thus been found in two distinct ways. First, academics do not always report that analysis skills are assessed, despite the fact that all the economic academics indicated analysis skills are a central employability skill that economic students should acquire through curriculum design, delivery and assessment. The academics reported that assessment across both subjects' focuses on content knowledge, as indicated by the following explanation about the purpose of a multiple-choice test administered in the first year economic subjects:

> *[The Multiple-Choice Test is] designed develop the content knowledge of the demand/supply model because it is important for much of what they are expected to do [its purpose is] '…to really force the students to really revise the stuff hard'. (First year Economics Subject Coordinator)*

Second, the interview data indicates that, while there is a shared belief among the economic academics that writing skills are not part of their teaching role, one of the economic academics espoused during the interview and via the assessment documentation, that writing skills are assessed in two of the five assignments. This particular academic, who is responsible for the design of assessment, has long experience (over 10 years) teaching economics in the university. His self-reported practice may be explained by his observation of the shift in university curriculum that has taken place over the past twenty years. As discussed in Chapters 1 and 2, the shift has driven the requirement for universities to include employability skills in the curriculum.

6.4.4 Summary of beliefs and self-reported practice

As indicated in Table 6.4 below, consistent with economic academics' beliefs, the economic academics report that they demonstrate the relevance of analysis skills, facilitate activities for students to apply analysis skills and assess analysis skills. However, the assessment of analysis skills was not always reported to students because they were only visible in half of assessment tasks. This indicates that the focus of self-reported practice was mostly on the assessment of analysis skills through the discipline content and calculations.

Table 6.4: Comparison of economic academics' beliefs and self-reported practice

Belief	Self-reported practice
Employability skills are important for economic graduates	• Demonstrates the relevance of analysis skills • Facilitates activities to apply analysis skills • Assesses analysis and written skills
Economic curriculum plays a role in ensuring that economic students acquire the employability skills that have practical relevance in the workplace.	
Preparing students for the economics profession is a core part of what economic academics do in their teaching role.	
Their role is to teach students to apply analysis skills	

6.5 The observed teaching practice

This section reports on the data collected from direct observation of academics' practice, using curriculum macrogenres (Christie, 2002), across a 'sequence of lessons' over a 12-week teaching period. Drawing on the coded observations, a typology of economic academics' teaching practice has been developed (see Table 6.5 below). The purpose of this phase of the study was to investigate to what extent economic academics' espoused theory, articulated through their beliefs and reported practice, governs their actual teaching and assessment practice.

The different types of teaching practices observed are listed in descending order from direct to indirect as indicated in Table 6.5. The typology is read from bottom up. The levels represent the extent to which employability skills are integrated into the curriculum. Overall, economic academics' observed practices are compared to those of the accounting academics. The observation of economic academics' teaching practices indicates they use the same four types of teaching practices as those observed by the accounting disciplines (Table 6.5 below). However, there is a marked difference in the frequency and significance of teaching practices and the employability skills that were the focus of teaching practice.

Table 6.5: Typology: Economic academics' observed teaching practice

Teaching practice	Examples of observed teaching practices
Assesses employability skills	• **Mentions two types of employability skills** in **some of the assessment** criteria (analysis and written skills) • Gives **written feedback on two types** of employability skills (analysis and written skills)
Facilitates activities to apply employability skills	• **Gives students practice in application of two** types of employability skills to case-studies and economic data (analysis, decision-making)
Demonstrates employability skills	• Uses cases studies and economic data **to apply two types** of employability skills (analysis and decision-making skills)
Discusses employability skills	• **Mentions the importance of some** employability skills (analysis, evaluation) • **Mentions the importance of one** employability skill for the workplace (analysis skill)

Direct ↑ **Indirect**

The four types of teaching practices observed are discussed below in order of frequency. In contrast to self-reported practice, the observation of practice indicates economic academics' teaching of employability skills, including the teaching of analysis skills, is mostly indirect. The majority of teaching practice focused on the demonstration, facilitation and assessment of discipline content rather than employability skills; indicating that economic academics take a more indirect approach that is incongruous with what they state that they do in practice.

6.5.1 Demonstrates application of employability skills

As indicated on the typology (Table 6.5), in total, the "Demonstration of employability skills" is the most frequently observed teaching practice. However, the "Demonstration of employability skills" was not a significant form of teaching practice consistently across all economic subjects and teaching spaces. The "Demonstration of employability skills" was mostly observed in first year lectures (10 out of 12 lectures), infrequently in the first year economics tutorials (2 out of 11

tutorials), rarely in the third year lectures (1 out of 12 lectures), and not at all in the third year tutorials.

Consistent with self-reported practice, the "demonstration of employability skills" was related mostly to the delivery of economic theories, models and concepts and their application and calculation, rather than to the relevance of the workplace. In demonstrating analysis skills, the economic academics were observed demonstrating how to analyse the implications through the visual demonstration of calculations, as indicated in the following example of the notes taken about the practice during the observations:

> **Direct Control:** provides a definition of this term. Draws up a graph. Gives an example of this i.e. minimum wage. Considers the effect on market outcome – direct effect is on the price/as he talks about this writes the formula on the right hand overhead slide. Considers a maximum price? On the right-hand slide – demonstrates this in a graph as he talks about it. 'An example would be like the case study for this subject CEO salary or rent ceilings like they have in NY (max price you can charge people for rent).' Moves the previous example to the left-hand slide. Says this is what the case study 2.9 is about – CEO pays should be regulated in the US after the GFC. He spends some time explaining what is said in the case/potential problems etc….the implications of imposing a maximum price. How it affects the choices people make to choose to work in the banking sector/implications for attracting good quality people…. Talks about the case study what policy makers and other commentators have said… to make a contribution rather than regulating CEO's salaries. **Maximum quantity trading [Slide]** – back to the graph on the right-hand slide. Quota – gives the example of taxing licenses in Melbourne – where government regulates how many or land available for home building/the government regulates this – as examples of quotes and discusses that affect the market outcome. The direct effect on the quantity – equilibrium shifts (shows this on the graph – where the new equilibrium is). Demonstrates what is going to happen when the quantity is restricted – get an increase price…talks about this as he demonstrates on the slide **(Economics, First Year, Week 3, Lecture 6)**

Although there is a consensus among the economic academics that analysis skills are important employability skills, the demonstration of application of analysis skills was not a common form of teaching practice in the third year economic subjects. The third

year subject coordinator demonstrated the application of analysis skills only once, as illustrated in the following excerpt from the observed teaching practice:

> **Utility Maximisation [slide]**– refers to the scenario 'Franco' and asks which one would he use. The academic provides the answer – the question is not directed in a way for the students to answer – continues with notes on the overhead slides – includes written notes and formula – indicating the choices Franco would make. Continues to explain the indifference curves – notes and formula on the slide and discusses this directly to the students.
>
> Graph – on the overhead slide – already pre-drawn and explains what it represents.
>
> Formula – already on the overhead – explains the formula – directly to the students using mouse to point to particular points in the formula.
>
> Mathematical representation – maximisation problem on the overhead. Uses mouse to point to particular points in the formula as the academic describes what these represent.
>
> [The notes are on A4 documents – not PowerPoint].
>
> Back to graph – Figure 3.2 Utility-maximising consumption plan – already pre-drawn graph and uses mouse to refer to the lines/curves and what they represent in relation to the topic and equations discussed. Moves from graph to the notes and equations. Continues to link back to the scenario of 'Franco' as he moves through different time periods of his life.
> **Solving the utility maximization problem [Slide]** – formulas/equations provided on the overhead slide – and talks about these equations. Continues with the information/further reference to formulas – explaining the formulas – using the mouse to point to various parts of the equations.
> **(Third year economics, Week 2, Lecture 4)**

For the most part, third year economic academics were observed demonstrating discipline specific calculations and application of economic theories/concepts to data and cases. The following excerpt, drawn from the observation notes, is an example of the nature of the demonstrations:

The Steady State [slides] with some information that [the Academic] speaks directly to. Reads directly from the slides/expands upon them. Additional equation on the slides – works through the already typed up formulas. Refers to it as a numerical example – Figure 5.6 on the slide 'The Steady State' an already prepared graph and she [the academic] discusses what it represents/refers to – using the cursor to point to the different parts/line curves on the graph.

Back to the slides with notes – consists of notes and equations. Moves to another Figure 5.7 Convergence to the Steady State – discusses/points to the different parts/curves on the graph. **Effects of Growth on Welfare Across Generations** [slides] substantial notes/reads these/expands in some places. Goes back to the previous table 5.1 – back to the notes – moving through these quite quickly. Notes: Persistent Growth – notes on the overhead slide. My filed notes: [A very content transfer lecture – however, lots of reading notes on board/graphs and formulas already pre-written – students have the notes beforehand – most students have copies of the slides either in hard copy or on their tablet/lap top. Not many students taking notes – very quiet lecture theatre. It is hard to know how much content students are taking in – students gradually leave the lecture theatre early] **(Third Year Economics, Week 3, Lecture 6)**

The third year subject coordinator, an early career academic, indicated during the follow-up interviews, that the large size lecture class posed challenges to do more than simply deliver content:

> *I think it's hard to demonstrate the calculations during the lecture. Firstly, there is no whiteboard there. If I demonstrate using document camera, I need to switch. A switch over takes time. I don't have time...I don't expect them to get to grasp the formulas right away, because they have tutorials to that, the tutorials are very structured. Since the lectures are large, it is only possible just to go through the major points quickly (Third Year Economic Subject Coordinator).*

On the other hand, the first year subject coordinator, an experienced lecturer, indicated he found ways to manage teaching in large classes that aims to involve students directly in the learning via activities that serve to demonstrate economic concepts:

So, we've got to be much more aware of teaching effectively. Reading adds on little bit to your understanding contributes to the approach - the philosophy that you take about teaching…. Actually, the Director of the Teaching and Learning [unit] put together these packages of readings on different topics. I remember this was about half-way through when I was teaching, she put together a package of readings on teaching large classes were really helpful- I think one of them was the best reading I've seen specifically on teaching large classes (First Year Economics Subject Coordinator)

As illustrated in the excerpt below, the first year economic academic was observed during the large lecture using a game that involved some students as a means to demonstrate an economic concept.

In-class experiment conducted. The academic asks for student teams of 1, 2, 3, 4 & 5 and a timekeeper. Selects the students. The academic has tennis balls in one bucket and one empty bucket. He provides an overview of the task – to get the balls from one bucket to the other (they are sitting about 2.5 metres away from each other). Provides an overview of the rules, i.e. that they can't throw it, bounce, roll. Can't carry the bucket.

Team of one start – 30 seconds (6 tennis balls).

Team of two – for 30 seconds have to put balls in the buckets. Tallies these results on the overhead slide that has a ready prepared table. Team of two: 8 tennis balls

Team of three –one, two, three students passing the ball to each other in a row– 16 tennis balls in bucket.

Team of four – four students in a row – passing the balls to each other – 16 tennis balls in bucket.

Team of five – also in a row passing the balls to each other for 30 seconds = 18 tennis balls
Handed the students a prize – chocolates for contributing.

The academic explains to the students that this activity illustrates the marginal labour – the addition of output when one unit of labour is added. Roughly – corresponds to an idea called 'diminishing marginal input'. Gives the example of a sandwich shop that hires a second worker and then a third worker. He explains the implication is that as labour increases without the size of shop changing the amount of work each worker adds diminishes. Links this back to the in-class activity – more people adds more problems i.e. without changing the floor space.

[Fun activity – students very willing to be involved/the audience cheering the students on. This activity has allowed students to observe in practice what the academic is lecturing about – that is 'diminishing marginal input' this is the topic to follow. He then adds an example of the sandwich shop – allowing the students to understand what this concept means by way of a practical task and linked to a straightforward example they all can relate to i.e. the sandwich shop floor.
(First year Economics, Week 6, Lecture 12)

The subject coordinator explained, during the follow-up interview, that the overall purpose of demonstrating through games during the lecture was to teach an economic concept by demonstrating the analysis of the concept in practice:

> *I mean the technical purpose of it is I guess that **it's supposed to illustrate** this idea of diminishing marginal product, which it does. Sometimes it's absolutely perfect. Sometimes it doesn't work out so well. So, you've always got to be able to think on your feet of how it is you're going to describe what bits of the example do fit. (First Year Economics Subject Coordinator)*

Although the demonstration of employability skills was observed as a dominant form of practice in total in the economics discipline, it is not a consistent teaching approach across all economic subjects. In the same way as experienced by the accounting academics, decisions about practice are made at an individual staff level and there are, therefore, inconsistencies of practice within the economics discipline itself. Demonstration of analysis skills was observed mostly in the first year economics lectures, infrequently in the first year economics tutorial, rarely in the third year lectures, and not at all in the third year tutorials. The dominance of the one way content delivery observed aligns with the current literature on economic education, which reports that teaching methods in the economics discipline, despite the call to move away from traditional passive learning environments common in economic classrooms, continue to adhere to how things have always been done (O'Donnell, 2010, 2014). As indicated in the literature, teaching is carried out mostly via the one-

way lecture format and there continues to be a reliance on textbooks and problem sets, which focus largely on knowledge acquisition at the expense of 'real-world' application of this knowledge (Becker, 2000, 2004; Becker & Watts, 2001a). However, the findings from this study have indicated that academics that continue to rely on one-way content delivery with limited student interaction do so because they face a number of challenges and constraints; namely lack of time, large classroom sizes and lack of experience.

6.5.2 Discusses employability skills

The 'Discussion of employability skills' was the second most frequent form of teaching practice observed in total across all economic subjects. However, as indicated in tables 1 to 4 (Appendix 9), the economic academics infrequently discuss employability skills. The discussion of employability skills was observed in only 3 of the 12 first year lectures, two of the 11 first year tutorials, two of 12 third year lectures, and one tutorial of 12 third year tutorials.

Inconsistent with academics' self-reported teaching practice, the observation of the discussion of employability skills indicates that economic academics did not prioritise analysis skills. In addition, other employability skills, such as decision-making skills, were also discussed, as indicated below in the excerpt of observed teaching practice in both the first and third year economic lectures:

> [The Academic] refers to the methods/theories – explains that to understand human activity (social interaction), and decision making '…you have to make as an individual or in work life – in business or government sector, you need a set of skills that can be applied to understand human behaviour and interaction and guide decisions you need to make. **(First Year Economics, Week 1, Lecture 1)**

> [The academic] refers to students possibly working at Reserve Bank Australia (RBA)after university i.e. 'you may be involved in the decision processes at RBA, banks' staff are expected to prepare a detailed report….' **(Third Year Economics, Week 9 Lecture?)**

Overall, the observation indicates that economic academics very rarely discuss employability skills, including analysis skills, as part of their teaching practice. The first year economic academics were observed discussing employability skills more often than third year economic academics. However, the number of times throughout the semester is very low. In contrast to economic academics' espoused theories, it seems that in practice, the economic students are not made aware that academics view analysis skills as important, key skills for economic graduates.

6.5.3 Facilitates the application of employability skills

While the economic academics reported that they facilitate the application of analysis skills, the facilitation of activities to conduct analysis was rarely observed. The facilitation of activities to analyse was observed in two first year tutorials only and was absent from lectures. Thus, the incongruence between self-reported practice and actual practice was most significant between what was reported to take place in tutorials and what was actually observed. The findings further indicate the inconsistencies of practice across the discipline.

All of the economic academics reported that the tutorials are designed for practical application. However, with the exceptions of two first year tutorials, the academics were mostly observed working out the tutorial problems on the whiteboard, with little observed facilitation of activities that enable students to put analysis skills into practice. While the first year tutor was observed mostly giving students some

opportunity to work on the problem sets individually during the tutorial, there was minimal facilitation of activities that gave students the opportunity to actually put analysis skills into practice. This type of practice was consistent across all tutorials, including the third year economics tutorials, where the tutor was observed completing the problem tasks on the whiteboard step-by-step during the tutorial, and writing worded responses on the board, as students copied the information. His teaching practice did not include giving students any opportunity to complete problem sets during class time, or any facilitation of activities for students to apply employability skills in practice.

To investigate the explanation for tutors' teaching practices, they were asked to explain the purpose of their observed teaching practices. The first year tutor explained that he considers that his teaching practice seeks to ensure students understand content and application of economic concepts:

> *[Demonstrating and providing one-to-one support] - It's something that I like doing in all of my classes at every sort of - I even like doing that in second year classes and in fourth year classes if possible. But particularly in first year is that it's very easy to identify when students are having an issue and if they are then the solution's usually not that difficult. (First Year Economics Tutor)*

In contrast, the third year tutor explained that he believes his teaching role of demonstrating the completion of calculations will enable students to gain the ability to complete problems independently. This indicates that this tutor does not consider it to be his responsibility to teach students practical application or analysis skills. It seems he is just concerned with providing content knowledge via solutions to algebraic problems:

> *[I'm trying to get students to understand and know how to complete the calculation or the algebra] the method of doing it and then I expect them to do*

> *it again by themselves. I hope that because they are third years, they should be responsible for their own learning. (Third Year Economics Tutor)*

The first year tutor, on the other hand, explained that teaching employability skills is an 'implied' part of teaching practice, but not always possible in actual practice:

> *Most of its implied [expectation to teach students to develop employability skills] and a lot of it's because it's really quite tough to find time to do anything that's outside of the materials being covered. Like when I'm able to I'll mention about how this relates to actual economic policy and what not, but that's time permitting. (First Year Economics Tutor)*

Although the academics reported that they facilitate activities for students to apply employability skills, in actual practice, it was a minimal form of teaching practice observed. Academics were mostly observed facilitating activities for the purposes of delivering content knowledge, in order to acquire core concepts and to observe calculations being completed. In explanations for teaching practices observed, the economic academics stated that the core purpose of teaching practice and activities observed was to deliver content and sometimes to seek ways to identify whether students understand the core concepts they require to do well in the subject. There is some indication that academics are not aware of how to facilitate activities to enable students to develop employability skills. In addition, some academics expressed that it is not possible to teach employability skills in the time they are given and with the large amount of content they need to deliver. One academic explained that dedicating time to employability skills would take the focus away from what is important about first year economics content:

> *I don't want students to get bogged down in the wrong stuff. I guess that suggests that the focus here is to understand the economics and not to get too bogged down into the written work. (First Year Economics Tutor)*

In contrast to economic academics' self-reported practice, economic students are rarely given the opportunity to practice the analysis of economic concepts during

class time, even though it was espoused that such application activities mostly take place during tutorial time. For the most part, in the first year tutorial and consistently in the third year tutorial, students watched and listened to their tutor complete the set tutorial problem sets on the whiteboard, with some student interaction with the tutorial in the form of questions and answers, in the first year tutorial, and rarely in the third year tutorial. This "one-way demonstration" teaching method aligns with the current literature on economic education (for instance see Becker, 2004; Becker & Watts, 2001; O'Donnell, 2010, 2014), which reports that teaching methods in the economics discipline, despite the call to move away from traditional passive learning environments, are common in economic classrooms today. Students thus receive mostly one-way content format delivery, in both lectures and tutorials, and there continues to be a heavy reliance on problem sets, an indication that students are not adequately informed of the importance of employability skills development.

6.5.4 Assesses employability skills

The assessment of employability skills is not a significant part of economic academics' teaching practice. While the typology (Table 6.5) indicates that economic academics were observed assessing two employability skills, analysis and written communication skills, as indicated in Tables 6.6 and 6.7 below, findings from the content analysis of all assessment criteria, and verbal and written feedback, the two employability skills were not assessed consistently or explicitly, in the first year and third year accounting subjects, as indicated in Tables 6.6 and 6.7.

Table 6.6: Employability Skills identified in First Year Economics Assessment

First Year Accounting Assessment	Analysis	Critical Thinking	Problem Solving	Written	Verbal
Tutorial participation & attendance					
Multiple Choice Test Online					
Assignment 1	✓			✓	
Assignment 2	✓		✓	✓	
Final Exam					

Table 6.7: Employability Skills identified in Third Year Economics Assessment

Third Year Accounting Assessment	Analysis	Critical Thinking	Problem Solving	Written	Verbal
Tutorial participation & attendance					
Group Assignment 1	✓				
Group Assignment 2	✓				
Mid Semester Exam					
Final Exam					

Although economic academics reported that they assess analysis skills, the two assignments for the first year subject were the only assessment tasks on which feedback on analysis skills was given, as indicated in the following examples (see Appendix 10). For all other assessments of first and third year subjects, students were given a summative score without written feedback. The first year tutor was the only tutor observed, during teaching practice, to give students verbal feedback on analysis skills during the class time, as indicated below:

> Hand back assignments. Average mark 11.5. Most people had problems with questions 1 and 5. Feedback about case study – most people didn't have enough research to support claims. Be able to provide evidence what you say would be nice. **(First Year Tutorial 12)**

Consistent with reported practice identified through the assessment instructions, the assessment of written skills was observed only through two of the five assignments in the first year economics subject. While assessment instructions indicated that written skills are one of the factors that will be used to assess the two assignments, the assessment of written skills is inconsistent in two ways. First, students are not

provided with an assessment criteria that incudes written skills. Second, the content analysis of the written feedback given to students indicates the feedback of written skills is mostly implicit or absent in the feedback on the assignment (see Appendix 10).

When the first year academic was asked to explain the assessment of written skills, his comment indicates that the assessment of written skills will take the focus away from what is important about teaching first year economics concepts, and ensuring students are able to complete the required calculations/formulas accurately. This was reinforced by the observation that economic academics are more likely to assess discipline content and ignore clarity of written work. In this case, overlooking written work was most pertinent when reference was made to the work of students for whom English is the second language. For example, one academic explained it is more important to assess students' ability to understand and apply key economic concepts rather than assess their actual written work.

> *One of things that we don't put that much emphasis on is the presentation of the assessment. We are very much focused on, understanding the intuition and getting the economics right. The presentation is not hugely important and that's pretty consistent through a lot of economics, is that there's very, very little formal essay writing. There's very, very little I guess formal written communication at all (**First Year Economics Tutor)***

Although all the economic academics believe that employability skills, specifically analysis skills, are most valued in the workplace, the observation and content analysis of assessment indicate that in practice, assessment of analysis skills remains largely un-assessed across the economics discipline. Although all economic academics said they sometimes assess written skills, in practice, the assessment of written skills is not a consistent part of economic academics' assessment practice. This finding indicates

that the message students receive is that the acquisition and demonstration of discipline knowledge alone is far more important than employability skills acquisition and development and ultimately that employability skills are not a dominant part of the curriculum. This was confirmed by the fact that economic academics were observed focusing solely on the development of students' understanding of content covered in the subject:

> *I guess with someone with poor writing skills is that they're going to have - obviously the English is going to be a bit sloppy and the construction of the question may be a bit sloppy. But that could also be due to low effort. So, it tends to be the students who nail all the economic concepts are the ones who put in effort, or they either put in effort or they understand the material well enough. So, the easiest way tends to be just to look directly for their understanding of the economic concepts. (First Year Economics Tutor)*

For the most part, assessment tends to focus on the development of understanding of economic concepts and technical application, as noted by the following quote:

> *I think because they taught a lot of the techniques; that is, the derivations. That's quite important for the assessment, in particular for the final exam and for the assignments (Third Year Economics Subject Coordinator).*

The economic academics seem to be more concerned than accounting academics with teaching and assessing declarative knowledge and technical skills, as shown in the comment below:

> *Since I know if they are going be a professional economist, I think it's important that they know the basic economics, the knowledge; that is, the economic theory, the literature and also the development of the economic - some experience, development of experience of some major countries. Also, some data facts, like some policies, some data facts (Third Year Economics Subject Coordinator)*

6.6 Summary

This chapter has analysed the economic academics' enactment of employability skills development in the economics curriculum. The analysis identified the factors that

influence teaching and assessment practice in the economics discipline. The content analysis of the economics curriculum documents shows that, whilst economic academics identify a range of employability skills and indicate that there is an attempt made to integrate employability skills in teaching and assessment practice, in actual practice this rarely occurs. The interview data indicates that economic academics understand their academic role as specifically related to preparing economic graduates with analysis skills as the most salient employability skill. Analysis of the data indicates that disciplinary factors associated with the work of the academic in the university context, influence economic academics' self-reported practice, rather than industry, as is the case for accounting academics. This is understandable, given that the economic discipline is not regulated by industry and professional bodies in the same way accounting academics are. Nevertheless, the economic academics report an awareness of employability skills' development as an important university graduate learning outcome.

Despite the strong emphasis placed on the importance of analysis skills, as a key employability skill for economic graduates, the majority of teaching and assessment practices focus on academic staff demonstrating, discussing, and facilitating activities for the purposes of content delivery and assessment of discipline content alone. The key factors suggested for the disjuncture between espoused theories and theories-in-use are the academic position and experience shaped by the boundaries of the economic discipline; namely, the structural aspects of the Bachelor of Commerce degree, economics department requirements, large classroom sizes and the overcrowded curriculum.

The disjuncture between what program and subject level objectives espouse, and what is actually taking place in practice, provides an explanation for the continued mismatch between what industry expects, and what is taught and assessed in the university classroom and lecture theatre. It would appear that economic academics continue to be guided by a discipline with a long tradition as a university discipline and not by the reforms to university curriculum. Therefore, it seems that government and university policy has limited influence on the work of academics in the economics discipline due to the continuing influence of the tradition of the economics discipline. The predominant focus on ensuring the teaching of discipline knowledge and skills suggests that economics students are not taught explicitly and directly the importance of employability skills that are expected by industry, government and higher education policy

Chapter Seven: Enacting employability skills in the business curriculum

This study investigated to what extent academics[9] integrate employability skills development into their teaching and assessment practice. It has shed light on the disjuncture between the significance that academics attach to the teaching and assessment of employability skills through their curriculum and the extent to which academics integrate these skills in actual teaching and assessment practice. The study findings have highlighted that the espoused theories held by academics (what academics believe and say they do in practice) do not necessarily influence their practice. The observation of actual practice has identified the factors that hinder academics acting upon what they believe and report that they do in practice.

The disjuncture between beliefs and practice can be explained by the individual nature of teaching and assessment practice that is influenced by the academic position, experience, and departmental and institutional requirements within the disciplines that they work in. As such, academics face a number of competing challenges, constraints and demands within the scope of their practice that impede the consistent and systematic integration of employability skills. Therefore, this study has conceptualised a typology of employability skills integration to address the graduate skills gap identified by industry to ameliorate the incongruence between what academics want to do and actually do in practice. This thesis argues that universities need to recognise the complexity of academic work within their disciplinary boundaries. Recognition of disciplinary boundaries is supported by recent research that has indicated that contextual and disciplinary factors act as enablers and barriers to embedding graduate outcomes (Bond et al., 2017). This recognition is important, if

[9] In this study academics refers to subject coordinators/lecturers (who design and deliver the curriculum) and tutors (teaching assistants/adjuncts) who deliver and assess, but do not design, the curriculum).

universities seek to foster greater integration of employability skills development in the university curriculum by the academics who are directly involved in curriculum design, delivery, and assessment.

This chapter is structured as follows. Overall, the chapter provides a synthesis of the findings and proffers recommendations and future research to further develop in-depth investigation of teaching and assessment of employability skills via the university curriculum. The chapter begins with a broad overview of the findings, including a discussion of the possible factors affecting to what extent academics enact employability skills in the university curriculum. The identified factors are drawn from the observed practices and follow-up interviews. The synthesis of the findings and factors that hinder practice provides a basis for identification of the implications of how universities shape their strategies and policies.

7.1 Overview of research findings

The findings of the study indicate a disjuncture between the significance academics attach to employability skills development and the extent to which academics integrate employability skills development into their teaching and assessment practice. This disjuncture suggests that the changes to the higher education landscape, in particular, curriculum reforms that have driven the mapping of employability skills development in the university curriculum, has had a limited effect on academics' teaching and assessment practice.

Academics teaching and assessment practice can be seen as a response to the number of competing challenges, constraints and demands within their disciplinary practice.

The challenges, constraints and demands impede the systematic and consistent integration of employability skills development as a core part of their teaching and assessment practice. This is reinforced by a recent study that reports that different the discussion about assessment among educators, students and employers vary (Kinash, McGillivray & Crane, 2017). However, even though educators mentioned assessment more so than students and employers, an explicit link between assessment and employability is not made by educators (Kinash, McGillivray & Crane, 2017). The inconsistency and lack of systematic integration was observed in both the accounting and economics discipline. This means that there is a constant tension at play for academics attempting to perform their teaching function, which is compounded by the addition of a further requirement above and beyond their already established academic role. This problematises the academic role and thus makes it difficult to for academics to respond adequately to the competing challenges, constraints and demands placed upon them. However, whilst the literature suggests that academics resist this impetus (Baker & Henson, 2010; Harvey, 2000; Radloff et al., 2008), this study showed that academics are in fact not resistive, but challenged by these shifts and are willing to comply with these shifts, however they are at times unsure of how to proceed, or do not feel they have the resources or skills to respond adequately. It is as if there is another layer of bureaucratic responsibility on top of an already busy and complex teaching load.

Academics' individual agency, which may be determined by academic position and experience, influences the extent to which academics integrate employability skills into teaching and assessment practice. The subject coordinators, who are directly responsible for the design of curriculum, are more likely to make decisions to

redesign the subject curriculum to include additional strategies that give students an opportunity to develop employability skills that are aligned to achieving the subject learning objectives. This was observed with the inclusion of strategies to enhance students' written and report-writing skills, analysis, evaluation, critical thinking, and problem-solving skills, by the subject coordinators.

The findings show that individual agency is also influenced by academic position and may interrelate with expectations held within disciplines. This is important because academics' choices about the focus of their teaching and assessment practice can be considered to be an inherent response to the expectations within their disciplines. At the same time, the academics in this study, seem to make individual decisions that are either constrained or enhanced by academic position or experience; indicating as argued by Ashwin (2008, p. 152), that the relationship between structure and individual agency shifts 'overtime and between situations'. Understanding the teaching and assessment of employability skills through the observation of actual practice highlights that although academics espouse that government and higher education strategic policy expects that university curriculum include the teaching and assessment of employability skills development is important and part of their role, are not always a consistent, explicit and direct part of teaching and assessment practices.

Another explanation for inconsistencies of practice across and within disciplines is the extent to which individual agency can be exercised by academics. The findings from this study suggest that differing levels of experience result in different teaching and assessment practices. Experienced academics, more so than novice academics, tend to rely on their experience to tailor their teaching and assessment practice to integrate

employability skills development (regardless of their academic position). For example, academics that indicated that they had more knowledge and experience about the requirements of industry, and engaged in curriculum reform to meet these requirements, and/or had worked in or alongside industry in their academic role, were more likely to integrate employability skills more directly in teaching and assessment practice. There is also an indication that such experiences are influenced by the discipline. The following quote illustrates the influence of experience on the individual agency of a tutor teaching accounting:

> *I didn't pay much attention to the subject learning objectives. I focused on my experience as a student, my observation of other tutors, my knowledge of the workplace and then tried to put that into my teaching. But, in saying that, I think that that would align with the teaching objectives. I don't think there's a disparity in my approach and what's expected of me according to the teaching objectives (Third Year Accounting Tutor).*

Experienced academics also reported being influenced by their expectations about quality standards of students' work. As a result, they were more likely and more often observed to try out new ways to directly integrate employability skills' development opportunities in their teaching and assessment practice. The purpose was to reduce the potential problems in current students, based on the challenges faced by students in the past. For example, the identification that students lack the ability to conduct analysis and evaluation on the exam from previous semesters influenced both accounting and economics academics, to embed skills-based sessions, or workshops.

Novice academics have a stronger sense to adhere to expected university, department and subject norms, particularly in covering required content in the time given or following marking assessment guidelines. The academics indicated, in the follow-up interview, that such decisions are based on what they know they have to do or can do

within the constraints of time and their expected roles. This was a shared experience in both disciplines. Novice academics are less likely to try something new that could potentially take them away from covering or assessing the expected set content. The more experienced academics tend to make judgements about teaching and assessment practice based largely on experience, whereas novice academics, on the other hand, seem to be more restricted in making decisions about teaching and assessment according to subject and departmental requirements. This suggests the academic position and experience within disciplines influence practice more so than academics' beliefs about the importance of making changes so that they can integrate graduate employability skills development directly through their teaching and assessment practice. In addition, it demonstrates the tensions that academics face in making decisions about the integration of employability skills development into their curriculum. Such contractions were observed despite the fact that curriculum documents indicate graduate employability skills development is an important and core learning outcome.

Academics' teaching practice is mostly influenced by the discipline in which they work. This confirms previous research that has shown that employability skills are conceptualised and taught in different ways across the different disciplines (Jones, 2009a, 2009b, 2010, 2013). This resonates with the observed teaching and assessment practice in this study. For example, it was observed that facilitation of interactive student activities to practice analysis skills in the accounting subjects provided more opportunity for students to acquire, demonstrate, or practice analysis skills in the context of making sound accounting decisions relevant to the workplace or organisational level. In contrast, the economics academics spend most of their

classroom time demonstrating the analysis of economics concepts. In doing so, they provided minimal reference to the workplace.

The disciplinary differences observed indicate that disciplinary affiliation shapes how individual academics make choices about the extent to which they integrate employability skills into their teaching practice. The influence of industry accreditation body here plays a significant role. For instance, the accounting academics have shown that their practice, more often than that of economic academics, reflects the response to the directions given by the profession and industry bodies. Since accounting is a younger discipline in the university context and its development as a university curriculum has been more closely aligned with industry and professional accreditation requirements, the accounting academics' practice is more illustrative of the direct employment and industry link, in comparison to economics. The teaching practices observed in the accounting disciplines, for instance, are more likely to facilitate activities to give students the opportunity to practice and demonstrate some employability skills. In comparison, the economics academics indicate that teaching practice is influenced less by industry expectations. Economics academics tend to be more focused on one-way content delivery and demonstrations of concepts, rather than the facilitation of student activities that enable the practice and demonstration of employability skills. Furthermore, the economic academics focused more on making the link to the subject content requirements, particularly assessment, rather than requirements for the workplace.

In the same way as teaching practice, academics' assessment practice is mostly influenced by the discipline in which they work. The accounting academics were

observed more than economic academics providing opportunities for students to demonstrate some employability skills through assessment tasks. The fact that accounting subjects embed more practical, project-based assessment tasks seems to align with the aim of enhancing students' professional practice. This was less likely to take place via the economic assessment tasks. These differences reflect the interpretation of employability skills held by academics within their disciplines. Accounting academics' assessment approaches show characteristics commonly associated with other soft/applied disciplines (Neumann, 2001; Neumann et al., 2002). Since the nature of the accounting discipline is applied, it provides an explanation for much more hands-on assessment that often takes place in small student groups, whereas in economics, because of their discipline structure, they tend to use mostly individual assessment for students to demonstrate discipline knowledge. As such, the economic academics' assessment practice was more focused on assessing students' understanding of the content or materials covered in the subject. This may explain why the economics academics tend to use multiple choice tests and rely heavily on exams that require students to show an understanding of economic concepts and technical skills, rather than the application of employability skills with practical relevance to the workplace.

The disciplinary differences are not surprising, given that the plethora of research on disciplinary cultures for more than two decades has shown that disciplinary culture influences teaching and assessment practices (Neumann, 2001; Neumann et al., 2002). An important finding that has emerged as a result of investigating actual practice rather than relying on academics' beliefs and self-reported practice, however, is the extent to which academics' integration of employability skills development is

influenced by the discipline within which they work. The continued reported graduate employability skills gap, therefore, may actually reflect variation in interpretation of what it means to teach and assess employability skills within disciplines. The mostly indirect, implicit and inconsistent practice is shaped by the extent that the discipline within which academics work expects students to develop employability skills. Since expectations for students' learning shapes teaching pedagogy (Fang, 1996; Jorre de St Jorre & Oliver, 2018; Norton, Richardson, Hartley, Newsted, & Mayes, 2005), it is suggested that the type of teaching and assessment practices adopted depend on the establishment of this expectation. This suggests that the employability skills agenda, driven by industry, government, and higher education policy, has not had a consistent influence on academics' practice across all disciplines. A key observation made is that academics make decisions about teaching and assessment practice at an individual level, influenced by the program requirements, academic position and experience, and departmental constraints within the boundaries of the disciplines.

Overall, the emphasis on employability skills as an important learning outcome, espoused by academics, has not changed the practices of academics in a significant and consistent way. For the most part, academics' response to the employability skills agenda is mostly an individual endeavour, and this is reflected in the observed practices whereby academics face tensions in deciding how to integrate teaching and assessment of employability skills into the already established curriculum. Given that government policy, funding, and reporting arrangements emphasise embedding employability skills within curriculum learning outcomes, insight into actual practice is timely. It seems that the main change that has taken place with the drive to include employability skills development in the university curriculum has been on the

documentation of employability skills in the curriculum, and minimal and mostly inconsistent direct and explicit enactment of employability skills development in actual practice.

7.3 Implications for policy and practice

The findings of this study have implications on how universities shape their policies and practice to enhance graduates' employability skills directly through teaching and assessment practices. In order for universities to foster an increased direct and consistent integration of employability skills development through the university curriculum, universities must recognise the factors that hinder academics enacting directly and consistently what they believe and report is part of their teaching and assessment practice. The following proposals point to implications of the identified factors and are followed by specific recommendations directed at universities and targeted to the work of academics in disciplines.

Since academic work tends to take place at individual levels, it has implications for ensuring a consistent, systematic, and explicit response to teaching and assessment of employability skills across and within disciplines. The top down policy approach to integrating employability skills, which dominates the university response across most contemporary universities, fails to understand the realities of experiences in the day-to-day work of academics directly responsible for educating the future graduate workforce. The number of challenges, constraints and demands placed upon academics charged with the role of integrating employability skills as part of their teaching and assessment practice are ignored. This has implications for clarity of understanding of the continued reported graduate skills gap. Insight into academics'

actual practice is an important contribution to the understanding of academics' response to the employability skills agenda in contemporary universities. Espoused theories, as highlighted in curriculum documents and what academics say they do in practice, do not consistently influence practice because academics face various challenges, constraints and demands on a daily basis. These are the result of the individual nature of the academic work within the boundaries of their disciplines. A university program perspective must be taken to enhance academics' putting into place what they believe is important. Thus, recognition of the challenges, constraints and demands is the first step to foster congruence between beliefs and practice.

Academics face numerous pressures, constraints and challenges that result in indirect and inconsistent emphasis being placed on the teaching and assessment of employability skills. This contradicts the importance that the academics in this study espouse about the role of the university and the academic in integrating employability skills into their curriculum. Practical difficulties as a result of time constraints, overcrowded curriculum and, for some academics, large classes, poses challenges for academics to enact their beliefs consistently and directly. Academics indicated that the direct integration of employability skills is challenging since it requires teaching practices that weigh heavily on their time and ability. This was shown by academics who in practice found it easier, given time constraints and ability, to demonstrate calculations rather than demonstrate and discuss analysis, during large lectures, or to assess attendance rather than assess students' quality of tutorial contributions and participation, or to assess understanding and application of key concepts rather than written skills. In addition, the use of small group/interactive activities during the lecture was kept to a minimum so as not to take the focus away from delivery content

knowledge and technical skills. Such individual decisions reflect that academics' theories-in-use are not influenced by academics' direct engagement with the employability skills agenda despite the fact that the academics espouse that these skills are tantamount to teaching and assessing discipline specific content.

The numerous pressures, constraints and challenges faced by academics may explain why recent research has shown that students tend to not perceive a link between university learning, assessment and employability (Jorre de St Jorre & Oliver, 2018; Kinash, McGillivray, & Crane, 2017). The investigation of actual practice in this study suggests that inconsistencies of practice have implications for the student experience. In contrast to academics' self-reported practice, students are not consistently given explicit and direct opportunities to develop employability skills through the university curriculum. This aligns with recent research that indicates that since students are unlikely to consider assessment in relation to employability, that academics are not explicitly making the link between assessment and employability (Jorre de St Jorre & Oliver, 2018; Kinash, McGillivray, & Crane, 2017). The variation in teaching and assessment practice means student exposure to employability skills development opportunities varies, from discipline to discipline and subject to subject within the same discipline, as well as across different disciplines within the same degree program. It is, therefore, unknown to what extent students acquire employability skills through the whole degree program during their university studies. It may explain, therefore, the continued gap in the acquisition of employability skills reported by industry. This may explain the continued concerns industry reports about the graduate employability skills gap. The inconsistencies of teaching and assessment practice bring to bear the reality that the academic role in

contemporary universities has on student learning outcomes. If indeed contemporary universities espouse that employability skills development is an important university learning outcome, identifying the factors that impede academics' practice is an important area of research. Identification of the factors provides the opportunity to explore measures to enhance the enactment of employability skills development more directly, explicitly and consistently through the university curriculum. This is imperative to ensure that students are provided with consistent, explicit and direct opportunities to develop employability skills.

7.4 Recommendations

Since curriculum design, delivery and assessment mostly take place within disciplines (Barnett, 2004, 2009; Barnett & Coate, 2007; Barnett et al., 2001; Speight, Lackovic, & Cooker, 2013), it is important for university policymakers and managers to recognise and be aware of the various factors that shape academic practice. As academics face competing challenges, constraints and demands in their academic role on a daily basis, there needs to be a better alignment between universities' strategies and the challenges, constraints and demands faced by university academics who are responsible for integrating employability skills in practice (Enders, de Boer, & Weyer, 2017; Thomson, 2015; Thomson & Trigwell, 2016).

If practice is strongly conditioned by disciplinary, practical, and structural factors, the integration of employability skills must be addressed with knowledge about the experience of academics at the discipline level, rather than assuming that the integration of employability skills via external, top-down strategies and policies will take place. This requires regular consultation and dialogue with academics at all

levels and experiences particularly at the department level and across departments of a whole degree program. Research has indicated that conversations between colleagues, within and across disciplines, play a distinct and important role in supporting academics in learning and managing their teaching practice (Enders, de Boer, & Weyer, 2017; Thomson, 2015; Thomson & Trigwell, 2016). Thus, such conversations are particularly important given that research has indicated that the academic environment is increasingly typified by a decline in trust and collegiality (Knight & Trowler, 2000)

In order to have such conversations, it is recommended that academics and program directors use a typology for identifying and evaluating teaching and assessment practice in such a way that concrete changes can be discussed and made to ensure the direct and consistent integration of employability skills in practice. This will provide opportunities to identify strategies that will assist academics to overcome the challenges and demands that hinder practice. As the typologies in Chapters 5 and 6 (Table 5.4 and Table 6.5) present accurate representations of academics' teaching and assessment practices, and reflect the lived experiences of the academics, the following typology drawn from the findings has been developed (Table 7.1 below) to identify and observed practices via direct observation of teaching and assessment practice.

Table 7.1: Typology for obseving academics' teaching and assessment practice

Teaching practice	Examples of observed teaching practices
Assesses employability skills	• Identify the employability skills that are integrated into assessment tasks and instructions • Identify the employability skills that are integrated into written and verbal feedback • Identify the employability skills included in assessment criteria/rubrics
Facilitates activities to apply employability skills	• Identify the employability skills that are integrated into classroom activities that give students opportunity to practice and demonstrate the application of employability skills. • What different activities are or can be used to enable students to demonstrate and practice employability skills?
Demonstrates application of employability skills	• Identify the demonstration of employability skills by the academics directly to the students. • Are demonstrations of employability skills linked to the workplace?
Discusses employability skills	• Are employability skills mentioned/discussed by the academics? • Identify the discussion of employability skills that are linked to the workplace. • Is the importance of employability skills mentioned by the academics?

Direct ▲ **Indirect**

It is recommended that this typology be used to identify the disjuncture between espoused theories (beliefs and self-reported practice) and actual practice. The typology provides an important way that academics and curriculum program developers can gain insight into actual practice.

The typology operates as an indication of the range of levels of integration of employability skills in the curriculum. The typology is read from bottom up; that is by identifying any evidence of indirect to direct practices. Any gaps in practices at any level can be accounted for in the development of the curriculum. It is highly recommended that university curriculum include a range of practices starting with indirect and scaffolding toward more mostly and consistent direct teaching practice. For example, an academic may begin a lecture or tutorial/workshop by discussing employability skills and its relevance to the workplace. They can then build onto the

discussion by demonstrating employability in practice and then moving toward more explicit practices that enable students to acquire, practice and demonstrate the skills through the facilitation of student activities and assessment tasks such as team based activities and assignments.

The typology enables curriculum design, delivery and assessment, which have largely been private, discipline-based activities undertaken by individual academics, to be observed and then evaluated at all levels; that is, at the discipline, department, and institutional levels. This is imperative given that higher education needs to address the issue of graduate employment outcomes. Employability skills must be conceptualised as a core part of the delivery and assessment of discipline content, not as separate add on. This requirement is reinforced by recent research that indicates that students found that when academics discuss, contextualise and assess the learning outcomes specifically aligned with employability, they demonstrated greater confidence and understanding of the usefulness of curriculum learning outcomes and were more prepared and confident in the capabilities to gain employment (Jorre de St Jorre & Oliver, 2018). The argument that academic skills and employability skills are a false dichotomy is well argued (Rust & Froud, 2011; Rust & Froud, 2016). Therefore, the typology developed from the findings of this study makes an important contribution to practice because it provides the mechanism to bridge employability skills and discipline content and for both to be treated as a core part of university discipline curriculum.

More attention to the value in the academic teaching role, for both novice and experienced academics across all academic positions is also highly recommended. In

paying more attention to the academic role in integrating employability skills as part of the discipline content, performance indicators, recruitment, and reward structures should pay attention to the complexity of academics' role in their teaching and assessment activities (Barnett et al., 2001). This is particularly important, given the change and expansion of the higher education student cohort, the substantial realities of multiple academic roles, the rise of fixed-term academic staff, and the growth in the number of casual and sessional academics (Andrews et al., 2016; Beaton, 2017; Hitch, Mahoney, & Macfarlane, 2017; Ryan, Burgess, Connell, & Groen, 2013; Ryan, Connell, & Burgess, 2017). As such, paying attention to professional development of academics requires policy and funding to support a wider range of academic roles, and employment arrangements to further develop and deepen their practice orientation (Thomson & Trigwell, 2016; Turner, Huang, Poverjuc, & Wyness, 2016). This is particularly important given the reluctance of universities to invest in this area (Andrews et al., 2016). As argued by Percy and Beaumont (2008), quality teaching practice requires the recognition of the contribution of all those involved in the process of teaching, including casual tutors.

7.5 Limitations of the study

This study is restricted to academics in one institution, one degree program and two disciplines only. The aim of the study was to conduct an in-depth analysis of a specific phenomenon and it was anticipated that the focused approach would generate rich, in-depth data on disciplinary differences within one university degree program.

The academics that agreed to participate in this study knew the study was about employability skills and their relationship to curriculum. Perhaps the academics

agreed to be part of this study because they were already predisposed to or interested in employability skills development through their curriculum. The implications associated in engaging in 'double-loop learning' have been addressed by Argyris and Schön (1974). That is, the attention given to employability skills during the initial interviews with academics may have prompted some academics to integrate some employability skills, albeit inconsistently, into practice. The sample, therefore, may be biased, and care needs to be taken in generalising the findings that were an outcome of this study.

This study focused on examining beliefs and practices of academics teaching at the undergraduate level in one moment in time. A longitudinal study that encompasses both undergraduate and postgraduate teaching and assessment practices may highlight different practices. Furthermore, focusing only on academics does not take into account how students respond to these practices. An investigation of students' experiences is important given that recent research has indicated that when students are engaged with the graduate capabilities that influence employability (Jorre de St Jorre & Oliver, 2018) and are more highly positive and aware of their employability and what extent university learning and teaching has contributed to their perceived employability (Jackson & Wilton, 2017), they are more likely to be better prepared and confident in their abilities to enter the workforce. It is also acknowledged that, by separating the beliefs and practices of academics from those of students, it is unknown to what extent academics' individual agency and other external factors may have been influenced by the degree to which academics' decisions are made according to the expectations students place on academics (Ashwin, 2008).

7.6 Future Research

The findings from this study highlight the need for further research to specifically extend the in-depth investigation of teaching and assessment of employability skills via the university curriculum adopted in this study. The topic of employability skills is a pressing issue for Australian universities in the context of the realities of a continually changing higher education environment. While the findings show that there are broad disciplinary commonalities and differences in self-reported practices and actual practices, and other mitigating factors that interrelate with disciplinary culture, this study did not consider differences within other disciplines across the business faculty or within other faculties and across different universities. Expanding the research to a larger number of disciplines is highly recommended. Research investigating teaching and assessment practices in different disciplines would be valuable in providing further support for the understanding of the challenges, constraints and demands faced by academics in contemporary universities found in this study. Furthermore, it may provide greater insight as to what extent external and internal factors to the discipline influence beliefs and practice across disciplines and institutions in the tertiary sector. As argued by Barnett et al. (2001), disciplinary differences need to be investigated so that institution-wide strategies and policy on curriculum can consider the variations. Since graduate employability skills development is an issue of growing importance in higher education, nationally and internationally, future research should also include an investigation of academics' beliefs and practices at a national and international level.

Since this study examined the integration of employability skills from the perspective of academics only, it is important that future research examine how students, as one

of the main participants in higher education, perceive and experience the integration of employability skills into the curriculum. Future research should also consider the trends and variations across and over time. In this way, the beliefs and experiences of undergraduate and postgraduate students, as well as graduates in the workplace, should be investigated. Gaining insight into undergraduate, post-graduate and graduate students' perceptions and experiences would not only add an important dimension to our conceptual understanding of the topic, but is an essential aspect of curriculum development and teaching improvement.

7.6 Study Contributions

This study captured understanding, beliefs, and practices directly from the academics from two disciplines. This is important, given that the key research question sought to investigate to what extent academics integrate employability skills into the university curriculum. This study enabled a focused approach to the topic by generating rich and deep data on actual practice. This study captured the practice of academics responsible for teaching over 2,000 students, in four subjects, in two disciplines, in a range of delivery spaces, over a 12-week period for each subject. This study thus makes an important contribution to understanding academics' practices because it is set in the authentic workplace of the academic, using observational data that is in-depth and detailed. The researcher entered and reported on teaching and assessment observations and interpretations by entering the teaching area with no predetermined results or perceptions about practice. This study is thus distinctive, as it responds to a gap in the literature that indicates how little it is known about the extent to which academics integrate employability skills in actual teaching and assessment practices. The fact that the challenges, constraints and demands faced by academics can place

barriers on academics to act upon their beliefs and self-reported practice indicates that the experiences of academics provide important information about the factors that hinder practice that they espouse they value. In response, the study has conceptualised a typology of employability skills integration to address the graduate skills gap identified by industry to ameliorate the incongruence between what academics want to do and what they actually do in practice.

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APPENDICES

Appendix 1: Ethics Approval

24 February 2014

THE UNIVERSITY OF MELBOURNE

Dr Chi Baik
Melbourne Graduate School of Education
The University of Melbourne

Dear **Dr Baik,**

I am pleased to advise that the **Melbourne Graduate School of Education Human Ethics Advisory Group (MGSE HEAG)** has approved the following **Minimal Risk** application:

Project title:	**An examination of the extent that academics integrate employability skills in the business curriculum.**
Researchers:	**Chi Baik, Valeria Cotronei-Baird and Sophie Arkoudis.**
Ethics ID:	**1341261**
MGSE HEAG ID:	**242/13**

The project has been approved for the period: **24 February 2014** to **31 December 2014.**

It is your responsibility to ensure that all people associated with the Project are made aware of what has actually been approved.

Research projects are normally approved to 31 December of the year of approval. Projects may be renewed yearly for up to a total of five years upon receipt of a satisfactory annual report. If a project is to continue beyond five years a new application will normally need to be submitted.

Please note that the following conditions apply to your approval. Failure to abide by these conditions may result in suspension or discontinuation of approval and/or disciplinary action.

(a) **Limit of Approval:** Approval is limited strictly to the research as submitted in your Project application.

(b) **Amendments to Project:** Any subsequent variations or modifications you might wish to make to the Project must be notified formally to the Human Ethics Advisory Group for further consideration and approval before the revised Project can commence. If the Human Ethics Advisory Group considers that the proposed amendments are significant, you may be required to submit a new application for approval of the revised Project.

(c) **Incidents or adverse affects:** Researchers must report immediately to the Advisory Group and the relevant Sub-Committee anything which might affect the ethical acceptance of the protocol including adverse effects on participants or unforeseen events that might affect continued ethical acceptability of the Project. Failure to do so may result in suspension or cancellation of approval.

(d) **Monitoring:** All projects are subject to monitoring at any time by the Human Research Ethics Committee.

(e) **Annual Report:** Please be aware that the Human Research Ethics Committee requires that researchers submit an annual report on each of their projects at the end of the year, or at the conclusion of a project if it continues for less than this time. Failure to submit an annual report will mean that ethics approval will lapse.

(f) **Auditing:** All projects may be subject to audit by members of the Sub-Committee.

Please quote the ethics registration number and the name of the Project in any future correspondence.

On behalf of the Ethics Committee I wish you well in your research.

Yours sincerely

Associate Professor Dianne Vella-Brodrick
Chairperson, Melbourne Graduate School of Education Human Ethics Advisory Group
Phone: 83440254, Email: dianne.vella-brodrick@unimelb.edu.au

cc: **Valeria Cotronei-Baird, Sophie Arkoudis and Human Research Ethics Committee, Melbourne Research Office.**

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Appendix 2: Email to academics

Dear

I write to invite you to participate in a research project on integrating employability skills in the business curriculum, which is being conducted in the Faculty by Ms. Valerie Cotronei-Baird under the supervision of Dr Chi Baik and Associate Professor Sophie Arkoudis of the CSHE. This research has received clearance from the Human Research Ethics Committee.

The aim of the study is to develop an understanding of what actually happens in practice for an academic asked to integrate graduate employability skills into their curriculum. Valerie will seek to interview academics that are directly involved in the design, delivery and assessment of curriculum of a discipline that is central to a business degree program. The interviews will be supplemented by teaching observation and content analysis of curriculum documentation. This study will focus on the disciplines of Accounting and Economics.

I believe this is a very important and timely study as employability skills are now considered an important graduate learning outcome in higher education broadly and specifically at the University of Melbourne. This study will contribute to the development of new knowledge of higher education curriculum development with a specific focus on the inclusion of graduate employability skills in the business faculty. This knowledge can therefore lend to the development of future business faculty curriculum that adds clarity and provides concrete examples of what works and what does not work in the teaching and learning environment. For this reason, I too have agreed to be part of this study and encourage you to give consent to being involved.

If you are amenable to participating in the study Valerie will be in contact with you regarding further details of the research and to arrange a meeting to discuss your participation in this worthy project.

Appendix 3: Plain Language Statement

THE UNIVERSITY OF MELBOURNE

ACADEMIC PLAIN LANGUAGE STATEMENT:

Dr Chi Baik (Supervisor)
Centre for the Study of Higher Education
Graduate School of Education
ph: 8344 4212
Professor Sophie Arkoudis (Supervisor)
Centre for the Study of Higher Education
Graduate School of Education
ph: 8344 7434
Ms Valeria Cotronei-Baird (PhD Student)
Centre for the Study of Higher Education
Graduate School of Education
ph: 8344 7099

Project: "An examination of the extent that academics integrate employability skills in the business curriculum"
You are invited to participate in the above research project, which is being conducted by Ms Valeria Cotronei-Baird under the supervision of Dr Chi Baik and Professor Sophie Arkoudis. This research has received clearance from the Human Research Ethics Committee.

Introduction
The aim of this study is to develop an understanding of the actual practice for an academic asked to integrate graduate employability skills into their curriculum. Rather than focusing on a range of perceptions and beliefs by way of explanation for the divergence between promotion and practice of the integration of employability skills within curriculum, this research will focus on the actual experiences of business faculty academics that are expected to integrate employability skills in their curriculum.

What will I be asked to do?
Should you agree to participate, you would be asked to contribute in three ways. First we would ask you to participate in two semi-structured interviews (no more than 1-hour each) to develop an understanding of the actual practice for an academic asked to integrate graduate employability skills into their curriculum. The first interview will take place prior to semester teaching commences and the follow-up interview will take place at the end of semester. With your permission, the interview would be digitally recorded so that we can make an accurate record of what you say. When the recording has been transcribed, you would be provided with a copy of the transcript, so that you can verify that the information is correct and/or request deletions.

Secondly, we ask permission to gain access and conduct a content analysis of your curriculum documents; including: program level documents, subject guidelines/syllabus, assessment task and instructions, assessment criteria, assessment feedback, tutorial and lecture notes, tutorial and lecture instructions, online/eLearning resources and any other relevant curriculum documents. A copy of the data collected and summary report of the content analysis will be provided so that you can verify that the information is correct and/or request deletions or amendments to the analysis made.

HREC: 1341261.1; **Date:** 28/02/14; **Version:** 2

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Thirdly, we ask permission to directly observe teaching practice. This will entail the direct observation of actual teaching environments of your subject, that is, tutorials, lectures, workshops and/or online/eLearning delivery and activities. A copy of the data collected and summary report of the content analysis so that you can verify that the information refers only to analysis of the teaching to inform the researcher to what extent employability skills is integrated into the curriculum rather than a judgment of quality of teaching. This process will also provide you the opportunity to verify that the information recorded is correct and/or request deletions or amendments to the analysis made.

How will my confidentiality be protected?
We intend to protect your anonymity and the confidentiality of your responses to the fullest possible extent, within the limits of the law. Your name and contact details will be kept in a separate, password-protected computer file from any data that you supply. This will only be able to be linked to your responses by the researchers, for example, in order to know where we should send your interview transcript for checking. In the final report, you will be referred to by a pseudonym. We will remove any references to personal information that might allow someone to guess your identity; however, you should note that as the number of people we seek to interview is very small, it is possible that someone may still be able to identify you.

How will I receive feedback?
Once the thesis arising from this research has been completed, a brief summary of the findings will be available to you on application at the Centre for the Study of Higher Education, Melbourne Graduate School of Education. It is also possible that the results will be presented at academic conferences and in journal articles.

Do I have to take part?
Participation in this study is voluntary. Should you wish to withdraw at any stage, or to withdraw any unprocessed data you have supplied, you are free to do so without prejudice. Your decision to participate or not, or to withdraw, will not affect your relationship with this Faculty or affect any services you may receive now or in the future.

Where can I get further information?
Please contact the researchers if you have any questions or if would like more information about the project. If you have any concerns about the conduct of the project which you do not wish to discuss with the research team please contact the Executive Officer, Human Research Ethics, The University of Melbourne, ph: 8344 2073; fax 9347 6739

How do I agree to participate?

If you would like to participate, please indicate that you have read and understood this information by signing the consent form and returning it in the envelope provided. The researchers will then contact you to arrange a mutually convenient time conduct the interviews, obtain access to your curriculum documents and observe your teaching environments.

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Appendix 4: Consent Form

Academic Consent Form
Melbourne Graduate School of Education
Centre for the Study of Higher Education

THE UNIVERSITY OF MELBOURNE

Project: "An examination of the extent that academics integrate employability skills in the business curriculum"
Dr Chi Baik (Supervisor)
Professor Sophie Arkoudis (Supervisor)
Ms Valeria Cotronei-Baird (PhD Student)

Name of participant: _____

Name of investigator(s):

1. I consent to participate in this project, the details of which have been explained to me, and I have been provided with a written plain language statement to keep.

2. I understand that after I sign and return this consent form it will be retained by the researcher.

3. I understand that my participation will involve two ***semi-structured interviews, content analysis of my subject's curriculum documents and direct observation*** **of my teaching** and I agree that the researcher may use the results as described in the plain language statement.

4. I acknowledge that:

   (a) the project is for the purpose of research;

   (b) I have been informed that there will be no direct observation of the students. The students will been informed on the purpose the research and that they are not the participants of the study.

   (c) the possible effects of participating in ***the semi-structured interviews, content analysis and direct observation*** have been explained to my satisfaction;

   (d) I have been Informed that in the final report, I will be referred to by a pseudonym and that the researchers will remove any references to personal information that might allow someone to guess my identity.

   (e) I have been informed that as the number of participants is very small; it is possible that someone may still be able to identify me.

   (f) I have been informed that I am free to withdraw from the project at any time without explanation or prejudice and to withdraw any unprocessed data I have provided;

   (g) I have been informed that the confidentiality of the information I provide will be safeguarded subject to any legal requirements;

   (h) I have been informed that with my consent the ***semi-structured interviews will be digitally recorded and I understand that recordings*** will be kept perpetuity and at least for a minimum period of 15 years through digital archiving;

   (i) I have been informed that a copy of the research findings will be forwarded to me, should I agree to this.

I consent to this ***interview*** being recorded ☐ **yes** ☐ **no** (please tick)

I wish to receive a copy of the summary project report on research findings ☐ **yes** ☐ **no** (please tick)

Participant signature: _____ Date: _____

HREC1341261; Date: 13/07/17; **Version:** 2

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Appendix 5: Semi-structural interview questions

Interview Protocol: Semi-Structured Interviews
Project: An examination of the extent that academics integrate employability skills in the business curriculum

Date of interview	
Time of interview	
Place	
Interviewer	**Valeria Cotronei-Baird**
Interviewee:	
Position of interviewee:	
Project Description	

Proposed Questions
1. What is your understanding of employability skills?
2. What skills do you think your students should possess upon the completion of your subject?
3. What would you describe as your role in preparing future graduates with required employability skills?
4. What do you know about the university's direction with regard to the integration of employability skills within curriculum?
5. To what extent is the integration of employability skills integrated at the program level of your faculty?
6. What do you think is the best way to prepare students with a broad range of skills that will prepare them for employment in the workplace? • What is the purpose of lectures/tutorials/workshops/e-learning delivery? • What is the purpose of assessment? • Room that you teach from – is it conducive to the practice/learning of employability skills?
7. Have you made any recent changes to your curriculum that seeks to include employability skills? If yes, in what ways? If not, why not?
8. Do you see the need to make changes to your curriculum in the future? Why/Why not?
9. Other questions/notes

Appendix 6: The observational protocol

Direct Observation of Teaching Practice Protocol
Project: An examination of the extent that academics integrate employability skills in the business curriculum

Description Notes	**Reflection Notes**
Subject Code/Name	
Semester	
Week Number	
Date of observation	
Time of Observation	
Observer:	Valeria Cotronei-Baird
Academic being observed:	
Position of individual being observed:	
Topic	
Type of teaching delivery	
Describe place of observation (layout, physical setting)	
Introduction/Opening to teaching delivery	
Describe Teaching delivery	
Closing	

Appendix 7: Follow-up semi-structured interview questions

Interview Protocol: Follow-up Semi-Structured Interviews
Project: An examination of the extent that academics integrate employability skills in the business curriculum

Date of follow-up interview	
Time of follow-up interview	
Place	
Interviewer	**Valeria Cotronei-Baird**
Interviewee:	
Position of interviewee:	
Project Description	

Questions about curriculum documentation
1. Tell more about learning outcome (x, y, z)
2. Give me an example of how you set out to ensure learning outcome (x, y, z) was achieved by the students.
3. Tell me more about (x, y, z) learning and teaching activity? Why was this included? What are the benefits it has for student learning or the acquisition of employability skills
Questions about observed teaching and learning activities (including any online activities)
1. Tell me more about (example of observed teaching activity).
2. Why did you decide to do (example) during (specific tutorial/lecture/workshop)?
3. What is the purpose of (example of activity/questions/tasks)?
Questions about assessment and feedback
1. Describe the skills students gained from completing assessment (a, b, c).
2. Describe what ways did assessment (a, b, c) provide students with the
3. Describe in what ways do you see feedback on assessment as a means to allow students to reflect on the skills gained/practiced/enhanced.
4. In what way does feedback on assessment provide students the opportunity to learn what skills are important for employment?
Other questions/comments

Appendix 8: Accounting: Observed practice overview

Table 1: First Year Accounting Lecture

	1	**2**	**3**	**4**	**5**	**6**	**7**	**8**	**9**	**10**	**11**	**12**
Discusses employability skills (7)	✓			✓		✓		✓		✓	✓	✓
Explains the role of the employability skills in the accounting role (8)	✓	✓	✓				✓	✓	✓		✓	✓
Demonstrates application of employability skills (6)		✓	✓		✓	✓		✓		✓		
Facilitates student activities to practice employability skills (5)	✓				✓		✓	✓		✓		

Table 2: First Year Accounting Tutorials

	1	**2**	**3**	**4**	**5**	**6**	**7**	**8**	**9**	**10**	**11**	**12**
Discusses employability skills (4)			✓		✓		✓				✓	
Explains the role of the employability skills in the accounting role (3)	✓							✓	✓			
Demonstrates application of employability skills (2)							✓					✓
Facilitates student activities to practice employability skills (11)	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓		✓	✓	✓	✓	

Table 3: Third Year Accounting Lectures

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12
Discusses employability skills (6)	✓				✓	✓	✓		✓		✓	
Explains the role of the employability skills in the accounting role (1)										✓		
Demonstrates application of employability skills (6)		✓	✓	✓	✓			✓				✓
Facilitates student activities to practice employability skills (3)					✓		✓		✓			

Table 4: Third Year Accounting workshops

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12
Discusses employability skills (9)	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓		✓	✓		
Explains the role of the employability skills in the accounting role (2)									✓		✓	
Demonstrates application of employability skills (3)								✓	✓	✓		
Facilitates student activities to practice employability skills (9)	✓	✓	✓	✓		✓	✓		✓	✓	✓	

Appendix 9: Economic: Observed practice overview

Table 1: First Year Economics Lectures

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12
Discusses employability skills (3)	✓					✓		✓				
Discuss employability skills of the economists (1)						✓						
Demonstrates application of employability skills (10)		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	

Table 2: First Year Economics Tutorials

	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	
Discusses employability skills 2)									✓	✓		
Demonstrates application of employability skills (2)			✓	✓								
Facilitates student activities to practice employability skills (2)					✓	✓						

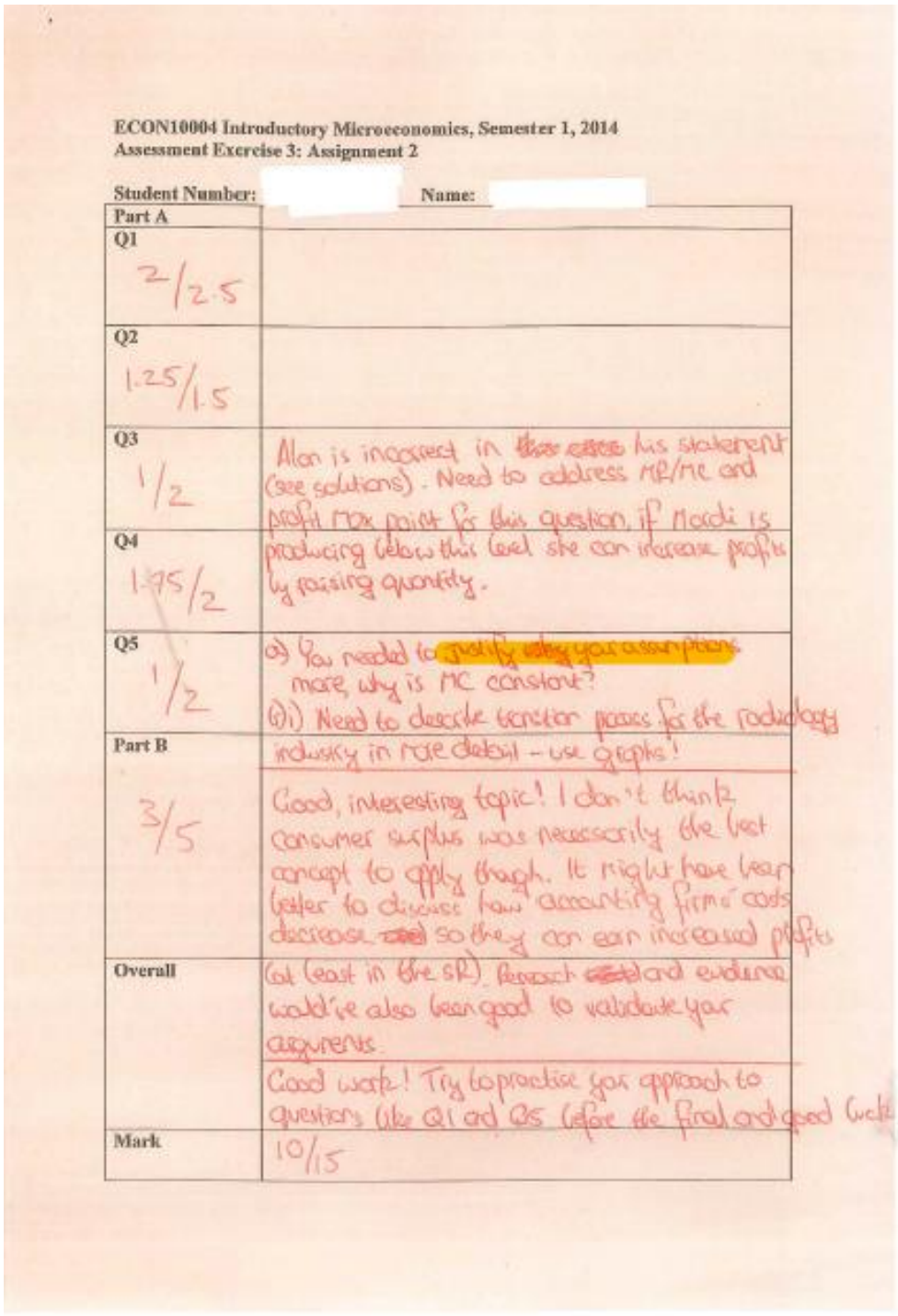
Table 3: Third Year Economics Lecture

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12
Discusses employability skills (2)	✓								✓			
Demonstrates application of employability skills (1)		✓										

Table 4: Third Year Tutorials

	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12
Discusses employability skills (1)			✓								

Appendix 10: Examples of written feedback on economics assessment task



ECON10004 Introductory Microeconomics, Semester 1, 2014
Assessment Exercise 3: Assignment 2

Student Number: Name:

Part A	
Q1 2/2.5	
Q2 1.25/1.5	
Q3 1/2	Alan is incorrect in this case his statement (see solutions). Need to address MR/MC and profit max point for this question. If Naoki is producing below this level she can increase profits by raising quantity.
Q4 1.75/2	
Q5 1/2	a) You needed to justify why your assumptions more, why is MC constant? b)i) Need to describe tension points for the radiology industry in more detail – use graphs!
Part B 3/5	Good, interesting topic! I don't think consumer surplus was necessarily the best concept to apply though. It might have been better to discuss how accounting firms' costs decrease so they can earn increased profits (at least in the SR). Research and evidence would've also been good to validate your arguments. Good work! Try to practise your approach to questions like Q1 and Q5 before the final and good luck
Overall	
Mark	10/15

Student Number: _____ Name: _____

Part A	
Q1 0.5/2.5	a) The Derard curve wouldn't shift and needed you needed to show $Wp > p^*$. - see solutions/comments b) Its much easier to represent welfare situations by labelling the graph with letters and summarising these in a table (as in lectures/tutorials).
Q2 1/1.5	
Q3 0/2	This response was very difficult to understand when answering this style of question try to address each comment made by each person seperately and state whether they're correct or incorrect - see solutions/comments.
Q4 1.5/2	
Q5 0.75/2	a) Asked to draw SRAC, where was this? b) Need to describe process of industry adjustment to decreased costs in more detail (profits, market entry, etc...)
Part B 3.5/5	This was a great topic (4) you analysis and application of supply and demand concepts needed to be more detailed and focused (I think you looked at too many housing markets). Graphs would've been very useful to illustrate your arguments.
Overall	Emily - I realise this assignment came at a bad time for you. Part B was good (4) in Part A you need to apply the skills we've taught in this course as well as your intuition (which is good) and express this more clearly. Good luck on the final exam!
Mark	7.5/15

Student Number: Name:

Part A	
Q1 1.25	
Q2 1.5	
Q3 2	
Q4 2	
Q5 1.5	
Part B 4	Good clear explanation. Thinking about the welfare effects on [redacted] C, S & the role of govt would've been good
Overall 12.5	
Mark	

Student Number: **Name:**

Part A	
Q1 ½	• See assignment
Q2 1½	• This was well answered
Q3 1½	• Good answer, but you needed to explain why average total costs were decreasing
Q4 1½	• Good answer, but you just needed to link it back to the question.
Q5 0	• Your answer did not focus on the cost curves at all. If it had, it may have helped with your understanding of the question.
Part B 4	• This was good analysis although it needed to be extended to get the full marks
Overall 9/15	
Mark	

Q1 1	• Picked up key concept.
Q2 1 ½	• Very well written, this makes it easier to mark.
Q3 ½	• Misinterpretation of the article in relation to applying knowledge of outside goods.
Q4 ½	• The supply shifts do not wholly occur, the expectations of price lowing affect demand only.
Q5 ½	• Economics was good, but the question was not interpreted correctly.
Q6 2	• Great economic analysis and question was interpreted correctly.
Q7 2 ½	• Great use of graphs. It was important to use graphs, especially in Q5.
Overall 8 ½	• Economic intuition was great. • There were some issues with extracting the correct information from the articles, but this will come with practice.
Mark 8½/10	