

Mission Impossible? Preparing Business School Graduates for a Post-Banking Royal Commission World

ABSTRACT:

Financial institutions in Australia have recently been exposed for normalised bad behaviour by the Banking Royal Commission and business schools stand accused by critical management scholars of perpetuating a corporate culture that prioritises maximizing shareholder profit to the detriment of broader stakeholder concerns. Our research aim was to understand how well business schools have prepared their students to enact personal and social responsibility in workplaces through an investigation into the experience and perspectives of current student interns and graduates. We employ a qualitative and exploratory multi methods approach. Our findings serve to inform pedagogy and practice that supports business school students to develop purposeful, critically considered approaches to professional practice and emerging professional identity.

Key Words: *PRME, agency, deliberate professional, responsible management education, critical reflexive practice, business ethics*

INTRODUCTION

The ‘Final Report’ of the Royal Commission into Banking in Australia (February 2019) revealed an alarming level of normalised bad behaviour and institutional inertia across the banking and finance sector in Australia. The report noted that professional associations, industry bodies and educational institutions serve to maintain the cultural status quo of corporations driven by short-term incentives and returns, shareholder primacy, and a dominant market logic. These drivers underpin the damaging and unethical practices that were brought so graphically to light in televised revelations of the Royal Commission (O’Brien, 2019). At the same time, trust in business was at an all-time low (Edelman, 2019)

Business schools play a significant role in the education and preparation of graduates who go on to populate, manage and lead financial institutions as well as other business enterprises. Given the exposure of the unethical behaviour taking place within these institutions (O’Brien, 2019), business schools stand accused by critical management scholars of perpetuating a corporate culture that prioritises maximizing shareholder profit to the detriment of broader stakeholder concerns. This has been a pervasive criticism in business management literature (Ghoshal, 2005; Parker, 2018).

Given these ongoing issues, the following study explores how well student interns and graduates are prepared for the ethical challenges in their workplaces, as brought to light by the Royal Commission, and the attributes, skills and knowledge that they need to navigate a post-Royal Commission environment. In particular we investigate the lived experience of student interns and graduate perspectives – largely missing from the literature. The research findings may then inform business schools on how best to deliver their work integrated learning programs, higher education teaching and learning practices, professional learning and micro-credentials in order to equip its students. Hence, the study is guided by the following research questions:

What are the lived experiences of student interns and graduates in navigating the embedded ethical challenges in their internships and graduate employment? and

What are the perceived gaps in their capacity to navigate these issues, and how can business schools best prepare them?

The research explores these issues through the case study of an Australian business school (hereafter: “The Business School”) that is a signatory to the United Nations’ Principles of Responsible Management Education (PRME). The research is aligned with the mission of business schools that are committed to the six PRME principles (purpose, values, methods, research, partnership and dialogue - see Table 1). We apply the PRME principles of *research* that advances understanding in sustainable social, environmental and economic value, *partnership* to explore joint approaches, and *dialogue* to facilitate debate among stakeholders, in order to contribute to *purpose* (developing capabilities of students), *values* of global responsibility, and *methods* that create effective learning experiences for responsible leadership (see Table 1).

Insert Table 1 about here

The paper proceeds as follows. Using key insights from the Banking Royal Commission findings, and recent critique of business schools we introduce the research context. This is followed by a review of relevant literature across responsible management education, reflexivity, critical thinking and experiential learning. We then introduce the conceptual framework that informs our research design: the “deliberate professional” (Trede & McEwen, 2012; 2016).

Our research methods use a highly engaged qualitative and exploratory multi methods approach. Business school students and alumni, employed across banking, finance and other corporate sectors were engaged in the project. Our data was drawn from facilitated debate and dialogue via a deliberative forum, focus groups, and reflective writing. The findings may serve to inform pedagogy and practice that supports business school students to develop purposeful, critically considered and intentional approaches to both professional practice and their emerging professional identities (Trede & McEwen, 2012; 2016).

RESEARCH CONTEXT

Following a series of scandals across the banking finance sector in Australia, a Royal Commission into Misconduct in the Banking, Superannuation and Financial Services Industry took place throughout 2018. Members of the public submitted more than 10,000 complaints about financial services entities and public hearings involving customers, employees, and those responsible for their governance revealed extensive unethical practices across the sector.

The Final Report of the Royal Commission was released in February 2019, leading to a series of recommendations including in culture and governance, where culture is understood as “the shared values and norms can be seen as both reflecting and constituting the culture of an entity. Foregrounding the Royal Commission, the Prudential Inquiry into the Commonwealth Bank of Australia (2018) had similarly identified “culture” as a key lever in addressing misconduct - “cultural change that moves the dial from reactive and complacent to empowered, challenging and striving for best practice in risk identification and remediation” (Australian Prudential Regulation Authority, 2018, p.4). From the executive summary, the culture of the bank was demonstrated by a widespread sense of complacency from the top down; loss of customer voice; reactive rather than proactive responses to risk; favouring of consensus over constructive criticism and a lack of intellectual curiosity and critical thinking.

Since business schools educate and prepare graduates who go on to manage and lead financial institutions, questions over the role and responsibilities of business schools arise: Can business schools play a role in helping to restore trust in the banking and finance sector and business more broadly? How can the curriculum prepare and equip graduates to navigate embedded ethical challenges? Can business schools challenge existing mindsets to cultivate critical reasoning and moral accountability in their graduates? What teaching and learning practices could be developed to this end? These questions underpin the aims of the research project.

LITERATURE REVIEW

The problem with business schools

Following several corporate, environmental and financial crises, along with a succession of leadership and corporate scandals linked to poor decision making and questionable ethical practice in the business sector, the role and performance of business schools has also come under fire (Cunliffe 2016; Godemann et al., 2011; Issa & Pick 2018; Mokoqama & Fields, 2017). Business schools are tasked to produce the next generation of managers and to ensure graduates are taught to recognise, reflect upon and critically examine issues pertaining to business ethics, to ensure they are adequately equipped to make sustainable decisions in their professional lives (Godemann et al. 2011; Issa & Pick 2018). A key issue highlighted in both academic and mainstream articles is that the practices of business schools are not aligned with their stated ideals and purpose theory (Bennis & O’Toole 2005; Parker 2018; Peters & Thomas 2020). Indeed, Goshal (2005, p. 75) makes the point that: “[o]ur theories and ideas have done much to strengthen the management practices that we are all so loudly condemning.”

Responsible Management Education

A growing response by business schools to this criticism is to focus on responsible management education (RME), centred around ideas of values, accountability, moral decision-making, ethical virtues and character, and sustainable relationships (Hibbert & Cunliffe 2015, p. 4). One approach had been to adopt the PRME. Yet there is still a disconnect between ideals/rhetoric and practice. In a study of a European business school signed up to the PRME, Høgdal, Rasche, Schoeneborn and Scotti (2021) explore the “hidden curriculum” including how the formal curriculum is delivered, how students and lecturers interact, and how the school is governed. They found a lack of alignment between the school’s formal responsible management education claims and students’ lived experiences meant that the concepts such as CSR were considered “buzzwords” (Høgdal et al., 2021, p. 179).

According to Laasch, Suddaby, Freeman and Jamali (2020), responsible management as a field of research is further problematised by three key issues: lack of consensus on what constitutes

responsible management, RME is considered synonymous with multiple other fields of research, and RME is considered a subfield of research to other more established research areas (such as CSR or humanistic education). Further, there is a significant gap in understanding student and graduate experience and perspectives related to RME that this study aims to address. With its organisational-centric focus in the RME literature, we now turn to transdisciplinary research (Laasch et al., 2020) to build the connection between the principles of RME, real-world practice and student experience.

Reflexivity, relationality and moral responsibility

A growing body of theory and research argues that learning to be critically reflexive is central to preparing students for ethical practice (Berti, Nikolova, Jarvis & Pitsis, 2020; Cunliffe 2016; Hibbert & Cunliffe 2015; Tourish, Craig & Amernic, 2010). Cunliffe (2016) draws connections between reflexivity and ethics, suggesting that reflexivity “...offers a way of foregrounding our moral and ethical responsibility” (p. 741), defining reflexivity as “questioning what we, and others, might be taking for granted—what is being said and not said—and examining the impact this has or might have” (Cunliffe 2016, p. 741). The implications for teaching are clear – embracing reflexivity in the classroom involves a shift away from instruction to a relational exchange. Guided experiential learning, dialogue and discussion enable radical changes in perspective (Cunliffe 2016; Hibbert & Cunliffe 2015).

Theoretical Framework: The ‘Deliberate Professional’

One framework which offers such a proposition is the “deliberate professional” (Trede & McEwen, 2016). For most business schools, a key objective is to prepare learners to be “future practitioners who have a voice and make a difference” (Trede & McEwen 2013, p. 9). As outlined, educational theorists recognise the importance of cultivating the critically reflective professional – those graduates who consciously, thoughtfully, and courageously consider how to “be” in the practice world (Trede & McEwen, 2016). Educating the deliberate professional is a teaching approach that prepares students for professional practice encompassing a deliberate consideration of their actions with the aim of encouraging greater agency and responsible action. The aims of ‘deliberating’ are underpinned by three pedagogical concepts: 1. critical consciousness raising; 2. autonomy and self-

directed learning; 3. critical thinking (Trede, McEwen & Trede 2016, p. 16). A focus on what is probable, possible, and impossible in terms of past actions to help inform future actions is also integral to framework. Theoretical underpinnings from both hermeneutic and critical traditions draw from theorists including Arendt, Barnett, Bauman, Bourdieu, Habermas & Newman as cited in Trede & McEwen (2013). Empirical research suggests that such transformative learning requires praxis, that is, critical reflection plus practical action where students enact their new knowledge in their everyday lives (Trede & McEwen, 2016). The four core attributes of the deliberate professional are set out in Table 2 below.

Insert Table 2 about here

Supporting students to become reflexive, socially responsible and action-oriented professionals requires the development of these core attributes, including through work integrated learning activity (Trede & Jackson, 2019). Agency, as the “capacity for individual action within a complex world of social structure” is an integral component of the deliberate professional as it “builds a strong interrelationship between self, purpose and choice” (Trede & Jackson 2019, p. 3). Importantly, within the DP framework, agency is seen as a “highly interdependent concept that is shaped not only by individual students but also by the social, cultural workplace contexts and how these position students and enable or hinder agency (Trede & Jackson, 2019, p.3). Importantly, the authors acknowledge a limitation of the approach is that it fails to account for unequal power relations in the workplace.

METHODOLOGY

Case Selection

The research takes a qualitative case study approach (Cresswell, 2007), investigating a bounded system (the Business School) through multi-methods data collection to explore case-based themes. Our case is a large Australian Business School with 25 undergraduate and postgraduate programs. In addition to being a signatory to the PRME), the University has developed a “Social Impact Framework” which includes as its remit to develop Students to have the agency to enact personal and social responsibility (Gusheh, Firth, Netherton & Pettigrew, 2019, p.15.)

Data Collection

We drew from 3 methods across three research stages: online pre-forum reflections, forum and focus groups, and a post–forum feedback survey. In order to investigate the research questions, the inclusion criteria for the research sample was for those students and alumni who had corporate work experience, either as an intern or as a graduate. We therefore undertook purposive sampling of a Bachelor program within the Business School where students are required to complete corporate internships, often in banking and finance, and are offered a graduate role on degree completion. The program also maintains an active alumni community from which to draw participants. In addition, postgraduate alumni of the Business School community whose interest in the Banking Royal Commission outcomes was fostered in the earlier deliberative forum were invited to participate.

Invitations to participate were distributed with the support of the program director and framed as an opportunity to address the role of business schools, based on personal experience following the findings of the Banking Royal Commission. Participants were grouped as follows: current students who had undertaken a corporate internship, recent graduates – up to 5 years since graduation, longer term graduates – more than 5 years since graduation and postgraduate alumni. Challenges in recruiting participants, in particular a series of COVID-19 related lock-downs and difficulty in accessing alumni meant that the research design had to be adapted. This included changing face-to-face interviews to online open-ended surveys and holding the focus groups over the one evening. Participation rates are detailed in Table 3.

Insert Table 3 about here

Multi-Methods

A multi- methods approach was employed to tackle the research questions:

1. *Pre-forum reflection*

Participants were initially invited to respond to a confidential online survey to reflect on a significant workplace ethical challenge they had observed or encountered during an internship, or following graduation, and how well they felt prepared to deal with the situation. A critical incident

method (Flanagan, 1954; Simmons, 2017) was employed to inform the second stage of data collection. (See Appendix 2 for survey questions).

2. *Forum and focus groups*

Following the pre-forum surveys participants were invited to attend a research event at the Business School consisting of a deliberative forum and focus groups, in order to tackle the research questions. Both focus groups (Kamberelis & Dimitriadis, 2011) and deliberative forums (Dryzek & Stevenson, 2011) provide an authentic setting for “collective conversations” and an exploration of multiple perspectives on complex issues. Participants formed peer-based focus groups led by facilitators, with 23 participants across the four cohorts (see Table 2). During the focus groups facilitators were provided with an interview guide (Appendix 3) to enable a semi-structured approach, with questions acting as prompts to uncover critical areas of interest while remaining open to pursue new and unanticipated themes (Patton, 2015). Students were first encouraged to reflect on and share a critical incident (Flanagan, 1954; Simmons, 2017) from their own experience. Focus group discussion then explored the extent to which participants felt prepared by the business school to navigate ethical challenges in the workplace. A volunteer from each group feedback key issues to the large group. The evening ended with a deliberative discussion on the key issues raised in each group.

3: *Post – Forum Feedback Survey*

Immediately following the focus group event, participants were emailed a link to an anonymised feedback survey in order to capture any reflections on their experience of the research process, any further reflections, and on any impact the research may have made. (See Appendix 4 for the survey questions).

Data Analysis

A constructivist grounded approach to data gathering and analysis seeks to understand emergent multiple realities (Charmaz 2014) by taking an inductive, interpretive, open-ended, and contextualised perspective, where reality is socially constructed, and data provides thick description (Creswell & Miller, 2000). Using grounded techniques including the recursive process of constant

comparison and saturation (Charmaz, 2014), data across the three stages of research (including the transcribed forum and focus groups) underwent three iterative phases of analysis. This included initial coding of emergent issues followed by focussed coding including descriptive, in vivo, emotive and theoretical codes used to integrate categories of analysis. The process of focussed coding was aided using NVivo software, exploring matrix queries, densely coded and overlapping nodes in the data, giving rise to dominant themes (Bazeley, 2013). Tentative identification of analytic categories drawn from the focussed codes then led to a summary of findings. Appendix 5 provides an overview of the Nvivo data analysis.

Limitations

Our study has several limitations. The sample size was limited due to the COVID-19 pandemic, directly impacting numbers of participants attending the forum and focus groups event. Secondly, whilst we chose to focus on the one undergraduate program due to its corporate internships and graduate roles, we recognise that not all undergraduate students have this opportunity, leading to different experiences as regards navigating ethical challenges in their careers. By involving a broader postgraduate group in the research, we hope to have addressed this in some way by including the later stages of professional life. We note the exploratory nature of our study here.

FINDINGS

Experience of normalised bad behaviour emerged early in the pre-forum surveys with student interns carrying out important tasks without adequate knowledge or guidance, whilst simultaneously lacking the seniority to have raised concerns taken seriously. For longer term graduates, questionable practices, weak HR, disinterested management, and the emotional cost of choosing to leave a workplace due to unethical practice were key themes.

Insert Table 4 about here

Table 4 sets out the findings with seven interconnected categories to emerge from the data, together with related themes and sub themes. In analysing the findings, the responses from across the participant peer groups (See Appendix 5) read as a ‘developmental arc’ aligning nicely to the four

elements of the deliberate professional, as graduates journey through their professional lives. What emerges clearly is the need for greater accountability by both business schools in their RME approaches and graduate employers in their intern and graduate programs, in order to foster the development of students and graduates who have “the agency to enact personal and social responsibility” (Gusheh, et al., 2019). Looking at the findings from each of the peer groups:

- *Student interns – feeling like a novice*

Student interns reported a lack of preparedness for their early placements: “you just don’t have the knowledge to ask the right questions. The amount of responsibility I got ... was too early.” A strongly felt sense of insufficiency in knowledge, training and experience meant that many of the students did not feel they had the ability to be heard. This created a sense of vulnerability for some students where “dodgy practices” were normalised, and students felt compromised. Most felt that University could better prepare them by looking more at practice and less at theory, for example, peer support rated highly with this group: “just sharing your story, having forums like this where young students can hear from people who have faced those problems in the workplace, because there’s no other way to learn that it’s okay to speak up, if you haven’t heard from someone who has been able to successfully do so without some negative repercussion”. Similarly – a more real-world approach to ethical issues at University would be helpful: “at uni basically everything you do is black or white ... so textbook compared to what it’s like in the industry.”

- *Recent graduates – career aspirants*

Recent graduates who have entered the workforce within the last five years take a pragmatic approach, and career aspirations are front of mind. They recognise that their early internships were challenging due to a general lack of knowledge. They understand the importance of networks and workplace relationships. Several the student’s organisations have been involved in the fallout of the Banking Royal Commission and have witnessed the human cost on both their customers and their managers. However, their approach towards their organisations is career focused, having secured a graduate position for themselves. There was concern about not wanting to “rock the boat”: “It’s sometimes hard to raise something to a manager, not because of fear of getting punished, but more of like a respect factor”.

- *Longer term graduates – experience begets wisdom*

For graduates who have been in the workforce for more than five years, there has been significant opportunity for professional and personal development. This cohort includes participants who have been directly impacted by the fallout from the global financial crisis: “You look back over the experience you gained in real working life and think “wow”, wouldn’t it be great to be able to try to bring that forward or accelerate that earlier on in foundations of your education.” Participants in this group take a purposeful approach to their working lives with a number of them having left jobs due to a clash in values and witnessing unethical practices they had raised within their organizations but were not adequately dealt with. This group were also well aware of the emotional costs and long-term impacts of unethical practices on both themselves and the company. They had come to understand, that to try to bring about change in an organisation is not always possible: “Everything’s set up for the companies to protect their own interests.” In terms of preparing graduates: “It’s beyond teaching in subjects, sitting through just a broader ethical subject which has a test at the end of it. There are no right or wrong answers.” Instead: “taking an experiential case study-based approach” would be of value.

- *Postgraduate alumni – war stories and the broader view*

The post graduate alumni took a broad ranging approach in their responses. Most had at least one “war story” where they had left a workplace due to poor ethical practices. Based on their own experiences they were keen to address what Universities could do for their students: “... the lived experience, classroom scenarios where you actually get to do a real thing or you role play something that is actually emotionally felt...” and “encourage the young people to have the courage to speak up but we also think it’s really important to give them techniques about speaking up”. Participants also addressed the role of the business school: “It’s important obviously for the faculty to demonstrate these sorts of traits that we’re encouraging because there’s nothing like leading by example.”

DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

We have learnt through the voices of the participants that there are some significant obstacles to exercising agency in the workplace, particularly as an intern or early graduate. There is a strong

relationship between having voice, “knowing what to say and the right questions to ask”, as well as issues of power, influence and the “ability to be heard”. Confidence, courage, supportive relationships (managers, peers) are valuable resources to be nurtured. Responding to normalised unethical practice involves an understanding of workplace culture. Additionally, there are personal impacts from ethical fallouts and consideration of some of the bigger issues such as power in context: individual vs institutionalised practice, is required.

All participants understood the value of learning from their own and others’ experience and the vital role that business schools can play, both in how their formal curriculum is delivered and their “hidden curriculum” (Høgdaal et al., 2019) - how students and lecturers interact, and how the school is governed. Universities can lead by example. Experiential, critically reflexive and agentic learning that robustly engages with issues revealed in this research, and that provides for honest dialogue on shared experiences must be the way forward for business schools that are serious about embracing RME. The deliberate professional framework (Trede and Mc Ewen, 2016) is promising. Some subjects within the case study School are on track. However, as the research and literature confirms, a whole of business school response is needed (Kitchener & Delbridge, 2020).

In conclusion, our study has shed light on important issues if business schools are to take the opportunity to flourish into the future. Despite the commitment of hundreds of business schools to PRME there is still a disconnect between ideals/rhetoric and practice. There is also a disconnect between what is delivered in the curriculum and real-world experience. A lack of coherence across the curriculum regarding theories and ethical practice currently exists. The voice and experience of graduates is rarely present in the literature and student perspectives are not well understood. With less than half of the Banking Royal Commission Recommendations implemented since its release, momentum for change aimed at addressing misconduct in the financial services sector, and business more broadly, has slowed. The importance of business schools to prepare our graduates to navigate ethical challenges and enact personal and social responsibility is greater than ever.

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Table 1: The Six Principles of Responsible Management Education

Principle 1: Purpose - We will develop the capabilities of students to be future generators of sustainable value for business and society at large and to work for an inclusive and sustainable global economy.

Principle 2: Values - We will incorporate into our academic activities, curricula, and organisational practices the values of global social responsibility as portrayed in international initiatives such as the United Nations Global Compact.

Principle 3: Method - We will create educational frameworks, materials, processes and environments that enable effective learning experiences for responsible leadership.

Principle 4: Research - We will engage in conceptual and empirical research that advances our understanding about the role, dynamics, and impact of corporations in the creation of sustainable social, environmental and economic value.

Principle 5: Partnership - We will interact with managers of business corporations to extend our knowledge of their challenges in meeting social and environmental responsibilities and to explore jointly effective approaches to meeting these challenges

Principle 6: Dialogue - We will facilitate and support dialog and debate among educators, students, business, government, consumers, media, civil society organisations and other interested groups and stakeholders on critical issues related to global social responsibility and sustainability

(United Nations 2021a)

Table 2: The four core attributes of the deliberate professional are set out in Table 2 below.

- Deliberate on the complexity of practice and workplace cultures and environments.
- Understand what is probable, possible and impossible in relation to existing and changing practices.
- Take a deliberate stance in positioning oneself in practice as well as in making technical decisions and
- Be aware of and responsible for the consequences of actions taken or actions not taken in relation to the ‘doing’, ‘saying’, ‘knowing’ and ‘relating’ in practice (Trede, McEwen & Trede 2016, p. 7).

Table 3: Overview of multi-method sample

Method	Number of participants
1. Pre-forum Reflection	13
2. Forum and Focus Group Event.	
- Current Bachelor program students	6
- Recent Bachelor program graduates (< 5yrs)	5
- Longer term Bachelor program graduate (>5yrs)	5
- Postgraduate Alumni (7)	7
- Total	23
3. Feedback Survey	10

Table 4: Data analysis - key categories and themes

Key Category	Dominant Theme	Sub Themes
AGENCY SUPPORTED OR SUPPRESSED	Ability to be heard	(Dis) Respectful communication
	Courage to act	(In) Appropriate response
		Authenticity in practice
		Autonomy - freedom to choose
		Benefit of experience
		Building confidence
		Career goals and priorities
		Deliberate practice and education
		Feeling like a novice - age as a factor
		Self-awareness
BRIDGE BETWEEN UNIVERSITY AND REAL WORLD (ETHICS)	Theory vs practice	Critical thinking
		Education - real world application
		Learning ethics at Uni
		Pressure to follow set path
		Sharing experience for learning ethical practice
		Usefulness of degree or internship
KNOWLEDGE OR EXPERIENCE (GAPS)	Insufficiency- knowledge, training, experience	Unclear on required process

7. Teaching and Learning

		Knowing what to say & asking the right questions
		Learning from experience
		Learning from others
		Knowledge or context legacy
		(Un) Ethical Practice and standards
		Overworked - under staffed
		Realistic expectations
ORGANISATIONAL CULTURE	Day-to-day processes	Politics at work
	Systemic problems	Transparency - lack of
		University context
		What informs organisational ethical knowledge and approach
		What informs personal ethical knowledge and approach
		Workplace (not) prepared for interns
ETHICALLY CONFLICTED	Dodgy Practice	Normalised abnormalities
	Whistle blower	Escalating issue
		Risk job for ethical action
		Conflict of (personal) interests
EMOTIONAL COST	Emotional and physical impacts	Being humiliated, shamed or undermined
		Consequences of fallout - personal or group
		Fear of mistakes
		Feeling helpless - powerless
		Feeling unprepared
		Long term impact
		Loyalty challenged
		Resignation or losing job
		Conflict of (personal) interests
		Deliberate ethical or moral practice
RELATIONSHIPS	Manager and CEO as Pivotal	Positive connections or influences
	Influence of peers/ colleagues	Relationships with external clients or stakeholders
	Power Imbalance	Lack of support
	Shared experience	Management ignoring issue
		Management taking actions to rectify
		Preserving relationships
		Supervisor's role - reaching out
		Networks influence

Appendix 1

Invitation to Participate

You have been invited to participate because you are a student or graduate of UTS Business School. You will have experienced working in a business setting in your internship or graduate employment and may have an interest in this research as a thought leadership opportunity for UTS Business School.

Before you decide to participate in this research study, please check the selection criteria:

Inclusion criteria

- Current student who has undertaken or is undertaking an internship or with work experience
- Graduate – up to 5 years since graduation
- Graduate – more than 5 years since graduation

Exclusion Criteria -

- Current student who has not yet undertaken an internship/work experience

Appendix 2

Questions for Pre- Forum Journaling

Q. 1 Please describe an incident you have observed or personally encountered in the workplace (e.g. during an internship, or following graduation) that raised ethical concerns* for you. What was the situation or context? What actions did you or others take? What else could have been done? What were the outcomes?

** Ethical concerns may involve acting in the best interest of stakeholders such as customers, clients, community or the environment; not misleading or deceiving; acting fairly; delivering services with reasonable care and skill or where you may, for example, feel under pressure to act in ways you feel uncomfortable with. The significant incident may have had positive, negative or neutral outcomes.*

Please use an alias for any individuals or organisations to ensure confidentiality.

Q.2 Please choose the option that best describes your response to the following statement:

"I feel prepared to deal with ethical challenges in the workplace"

Likert Scale: agree – disagree

Q.3 What resources are you able to draw upon to navigate ethical challenges?

Examples of resources might include mentors, previous experience, personal traits (eg resilience, honesty ...), workplace protocols, industry codes of practice, corporate leadership.

Q.4 In what way(s) (if any) have your experiences at the UTS Business School prepared you to navigate ethical challenges?

Q.5 Which of the following best describes your relationship to UTS Business School (please select one)?

Current BAcc student

Recent BAcc graduate (2017 or later)

BAcc Alumni (graduated before 2017)

Other – Postgrads and Graduate Alumni

Q.6 Which of the following best describes your gender (please select one)?

Female/ male/ Transgender/ Intersex/ Non- binary/ Prefer not to say /Other (pls specify)

Q.7 Thank you very much for your time. We look forward to your participation at our Leadership Forum which will be a catered event with industry and business school leaders on May 24, 2021 from 6pm.

Appendix 3

Facilitator's Interview Guide for Focus Groups

“SEMI- STRUCTURED INTERVIEW GUIDE FOR FOCUS GROUPS”

1. Reminder of Confidentiality.

Discussion recorded, transcribed and de-identified. [Chatham house rule](#) applies: “participants are free to use the information received, but neither the identity nor the affiliation of the speaker(s), nor that of any other participant, may be revealed”.

2. Introductions (including facilitator)

- First names,
- Briefly your working background – *no need to name employers*
- And briefly your interest in this topic.

3. Go over the Ground Rules for the Group (previous page)

4. Individual Reflection (3-4 minutes)

- Using the paper provided (for you to keep)
- We've heard about some of the workplace experiences through the pre-forum survey that challenged people's values and raised ethical concerns*. Please take a couple of minutes to reflect on your own experience of an incident you have observed or personally encountered in the workplace (e.g. during an internship, or following graduation) that raised ethical concerns for you. (Those participants that submitted a reflection on the pre-forum survey may prefer to refer to the example already submitted)
 - Describe the situation or context.
 - How did you feel about the situation?
 - How did you decide what to do?
 - What actions did you or others take? What, if any, were the outcomes?
 - How prepared did you feel to navigate this situation?

** Ethical concerns may involve acting in the best interest of stakeholders such as customers, clients, community or the environment; not misleading or deceiving; acting fairly; delivering services with reasonable care and skill or where you may, for example, feel under pressure to act in ways you feel uncomfortable with. The significant incident may have had positive, negative or neutral outcomes.*

5. In Pairs – Share Experiences (5-7 mins)

- Commonalities, differences.

6. Collective Reflection (20 minutes)

- Then invite anyone who is comfortable, to share their reflections with the full group, using the questions below to aid the discussion. No need to identify the organisation.
- As an alternative **back-up** you may present your group with a hypothetical ethical challenge (pasted below - based on the pre-forum survey), which the group can brainstorm responses to, using the questions below.

Questions to explore with the group. NB: Be open to pursue new and unanticipated themes the students and alumni bring up themselves. Use the following questions as a guide to get the conversation going:

- i. How did you deal the situation? What resources did you (or the person you observed) draw from – e.g. previous experience, practice, relationships,

- skills, knowledge, attributes?
- ii. To what extent did the business school *prepare* you for the situation? What was useful? What were the *gaps*? (curriculum, extra-curricular, relationship with staff etc.)
 - iii. What are the implications for how business schools should best prepare its students? A creative *brainstorm*.
 - iv. Are there other questions we should be asking here?
 - v. How realistic is it to expect a graduate to speak out when “bosses don’t want people to rock the boat”? Is this a dangerous proposition- are we setting students up to fail?
 - vi. Does getting promoted alter your moral compass? Is the higher you rise in an organisation the less likely you are to speak out against unethical practice. ([HBR](#))
 - vii. Other thoughts?

7. Feedback to the Bigger Group (2-3 minutes)

- Leave a few minutes to decide as a group what are the key ideas that have emerged that you would like to share with the larger group? Who would like to feed this back?

Return to Main Room

Appendix 4

Questions for Post-Forum Reflections

Q1 - Have any aspects of the research (e.g. pre-forum written reflection, focus group discussion) impacted on your insights into ethical challenges in the workplace?

Please explain the impact and what you might do differently due to these insights in the box below

Q2 - Have any aspects of the research (e.g. pre-forum written reflection, focus group discussion) impacted on your insights into the role of business schools?

Can you please elaborate on your response?

Q3 - Is there anything else you would like to share with us?

Appendix 5

NVivo data analysis: Participant peer group by focused coding.

Analytical Codes and Categories	Current student	Recent graduate	Long term graduate	PostGrad Alumni
1 : AGENCY SUPPORTED OR SUPPRESSED	10.33%	10.07%	41.03%	17.46%
2 : (In) Appropriate response	5.94%	7.81%	31.31%	34.9%
3 : Ability to be heard	18.84%	7.91%	36.56%	22.16%
4 : Feeling like a novice - age as a factor	8.77%	12.54%	49.97%	1.71%
5 : Authenticity in practice	0%	0%	48.54%	29.39%
6 : Autonomy - freedom to choose	0%	7.66%	28.2%	14.75%
7 : Being humiliated, shamed or undermined	0%	0%	73.74%	26.26%
8 : Benefit of experience	9.01%	1.48%	46.62%	28.83%
9 : Building confidence	15.38%	6.67%	50.98%	0%
10 : Career goals and priorities	0%	29.5%	49.07%	18.37%
11 : Conflicting priorities	0%	5.41%	44.02%	24.28%
12 : Courage to act	0%	35.5%	7.06%	47.52%
13 : Deliberate practice and education	8.85%	1.88%	42.75%	18.82%
14 : My purpose and fit in work environment	9.63%	20.35%	47.97%	11.16%
15 : (Dis) Respectful communication	9.09%	14.55%	35.64%	26.64%
16 : Self-awareness	0%	4.17%	31.69%	30.28%
17 : Taking action and courage to act	10.13%	9.01%	38.88%	25.56%
18 : BRIDGE BETWEEN UNIVERSITY AND REAL WORLD (ETHICS)	16.49%	15.35%	30.24%	15.7%
19 : Business of business schools	0%	0%	0%	67.96%
20 : Critical thinking	9.32%	14.06%	30.98%	14.83%
21 : Education - real world application	16.77%	12.24%	40.74%	14.39%
22 : Learning ethics in uni & what is taught	8.33%	7.14%	39.08%	21.25%
23 : Pressure to follow set path	0%	100%	0%	0%
24 : Sharing experience for learning ethical practice	28.91%	24.1%	23.28%	4.48%
25 : Theory vs practice	30.02%	3.19%	35.96%	11.42%
26 : Usefulness of degree or internship	22.59%	18.62%	35.72%	7.27%
27 : Value of intern experience to intern and company	15.12%	52.6%	32.27%	0%
28 : CLIENTS AND OTHER STAKEHOLDERS	1.34%	31.96%	29.39%	37.31%
29 : Client and customer interactions poor	0%	9.66%	33.4%	56.93%
30 : Clients and customers - outcomes for	2.74%	52.37%	33.93%	10.96%
31 : Relationships with external clients or stakeholders	1.86%	16.12%	30.09%	51.93%
32 : DAY-TO-DAY PROCESSES	17.66%	21.21%	27.61%	19.05%
33 : Coherence between different levels of organisation	0%	18.33%	21.41%	48.25%
34 : Overworked - under staffed	42.62%	57.38%	0%	0%
35 : Realistic expectations	0%	20.17%	43.24%	6.44%
36 : Systemic problems	0%	22.11%	35.12%	30.38%
37 : That's just my job	26.82%	38.98%	23.14%	11.05%
38 : Time effecting outcomes	27.72%	52.23%	8.13%	11.91%
39 : Work standard suffering	69.91%	10.84%	19.25%	0%
40 : Working or studying from home	69.23%	0%	0%	0%
41 : ETHICALLY CONFLICTED	14.63%	7.79%	27.9%	28.87%

7. Teaching and Learning

42 : Addressing ethical issues	5.59%	9.07%	30.39%	40.11%
43 : Against organisation's procedures	19.32%	11.62%	50.68%	18.38%
44 : Alarming to me (against own values)	16.1%	0%	34.6%	35.04%
45 : Broader eco system or context	0%	0%	0%	49.48%
46 : Business in disarray	4.68%	56.73%	38.6%	0%
47 : Conflict of (personal) interests	27.97%	9.91%	32.66%	20.21%
48 : Deliberate ethical or moral practice	10.25%	3.75%	39.88%	37.86%
49 : Discrepancies with figures	74.18%	0%	25.82%	0%
50 : Escalating issue	27.77%	17.79%	18.35%	36.08%
51 : Ethics as a continuous process	0%	0%	32.76%	32.8%
52 : Feeling like dobbing	21.88%	38.39%	39.73%	0%
53 : Imperfectly (un)balanced	0%	0%	66.8%	20.55%
54 : Legal requirements and illegal practice	36.47%	14.42%	44.36%	4.75%
55 : Normalised abnormalities	21.27%	14.4%	43.72%	4.06%
56 : Noticing discrepancies	15.99%	0%	61.27%	9.73%
57 : DODGY PRACTICE	22.33%	16.36%	25.27%	18.38%
58 : Risk job for ethical action	9.63%	0%	13.08%	64.21%
59 : Unethical - suspicious	8.52%	7.24%	36.06%	28.89%
60 : Whistle blower	29.2%	0%	56.68%	14.13%
64 : Consequences of fallout - personal or group	0%	24.14%	22.45%	32.28%
65 : Long term impact	20.06%	0%	39.47%	18.68%
66 : Impacting company - I can't ignore this	15.48%	5.49%	67.51%	11.53%
67 : Resignation or losing job	5.13%	0%	32%	44.51%
68 : KNOWLDEGE OR EXPERIENCE (GAPS)	23.62%	20.56%	23.87%	17.49%
69 : I was learning	47.64%	12.77%	39.59%	0%
70 : Insufficient experience	51.03%	14.89%	26.01%	8.07%
71 : Insufficient information	22.11%	37.96%	39.93%	0%
72 : Insufficiency- knowledge, training	39.11%	26.06%	25.13%	9.7%
73 : Insufficient training	100%	0%	0%	0%
74 : Knowing what to say & asking the right questions	20.51%	10.36%	21.27%	18.38%
75 : Knowledge or context legacy	9.01%	26.29%	18.02%	46.68%
76 : Learning from experience	6.86%	14.37%	60.96%	12.45%
77 : Learning from others	45.18%	19.65%	20.47%	4.23%
78 : Unclear on required process	72.55%	0%	27.45%	0%
79 : Unsure of what to do	50.71%	13.21%	13.68%	22.41%
80 : MANAGER AND CEOS AS PIVOTAL	20.49%	14.83%	32.68%	19.38%
81 : Management helping	22.19%	0%	42.5%	0%
82 : Management ignoring issue	17.29%	18.98%	38.57%	25.15%
83 : Management taking actions to rectify	17.7%	30.2%	52.1%	0%
84 : Manager devaluing others	0%	0%	41%	59%
85 : Role of Manager or CEO	26.85%	13.94%	38.98%	20.23%
86 : Supervisor's role - reaching out to	42.22%	0%	39%	18.78%
87 : EMOTIONAL COST	19.41%	13%	34.47%	18.57%
88 : (Un) Confidence	46%	19.36%	19.36%	15.28%
89 : Early in career - feeling novice	57.75%	13.15%	21.25%	7.84%
90 : Emotional or physical impacts	27.47%	0%	45.47%	27.06%
91 : Fear of mistakes	43.26%	56.74%	0%	0%
92 : Feeling helpless - powerless	6.03%	0%	52.37%	41.61%
93 : Feeling unprepared	28.29%	0%	45.35%	26.35%
94 : Loyalty challenged	0%	100%	0%	0%
95 : ORGANISATIONAL CULTURE	16.68%	16.65%	32.57%	15.02%

7. Teaching and Learning

96 : Politics at work	0%	0%	52.39%	39.56%
97 : (Un) Ethical Practice and standards	7.33%	35.13%	33.24%	9.54%
98 : Practice standard (against)	7.9%	21.25%	45.83%	18.3%
99 : Transparency lack of	15.59%	38.4%	10.22%	7.76%
100 : University context	0%	0%	0%	0%
101 : What informs organisational ethical knowledge and approach	11.85%	9.88%	40.24%	20.22%
102 : What informs personal ethical knowledge and approach	19.51%	12.22%	29.62%	5.06%
103 : Workplace (not) prepared for interns	63.09%	20.94%	15.98%	0%
104 : Workplace culture	0%	4.81%	57.7%	20.06%
105 : Positive connections or influences	16.49%	12.02%	58.13%	13.36%
106 : POWER IMBALANCE	6.68%	15.73%	27.18%	28.81%
107 : Royal Commission	0%	0%	49.72%	35.35%
108 : Setting the scene - background info	23.14%	3.51%	45.44%	27.91%
109 : WORK RELATIONSHIPS	20.55%	20.85%	32.45%	16.32%
110 : Influence of peer or colleague	44.86%	9.58%	38.07%	7.49%
111 : Lack of support	35.81%	0%	0%	64.19%
112 : Networks influence	0%	80%	0%	11.59%
113 : Preserving relationships	0%	62.46%	37.54%	0%
114 : PEER RELATIONSHIPS	52.03%	29.98%	17.99%	0%
115 : Shared experience	0%	61.83%	11.48%	26.7%