

Development of a Career Preparation Program in the School of Accountancy at QUT for First to Final Year Students

Sherrena Buckby
Trevor Stanley

School of Accountancy
Queensland University of Technology
BRISBANE, AUSTRALIA

Objectives of the Program

The key objective of the development of a unique Career Preparation Program within the School of Accountancy at QUT was firstly, to encourage students to develop a longitudinal view of career preparation across the three years of their degree program as opposed to traditionally focusing on career issues only in the final year of their degree and secondly, to encourage them to visualize the benefits of developing an individual career preparation program as a means of improving their chances of success in graduate recruitment in their final year. The third objective of the program was to foster a stronger relationship between the School of Accountancy and undergraduate accountancy students early in their degree program.

As Accountancy employers in Brisbane have recently moved to recruiting graduates from first and second year student work placement programs as opposed to graduate recruitment programs, it was imperative that accountancy students focus on career preparation opportunities from first year onwards. This program has been designed to encourage students in orientation to start focusing on building career skills. The program visually presents to students the process they need to develop to improve their employment skills and thus improve their performance in graduate recruitment processes in their final year of study. The program also encourages first year students to engage with the School of Accountancy, QUT's Careers & Employment Division and the Accountancy Professional bodies early in their degree program which assists students to develop a strong sense of collegiality and belonging to the accountancy profession.

Relevance to Student First Year Experience

The program encourages first year students to see that developing skills and experience which will be useful for future employment as accountants is an important part of their degree program. The program aims to get students started on developing these career skills and experience during first, second and third years of their degree, not leaving it all until third year when it is often too late. The program also encourages students to focus on the importance of graduate capabilities (generic skills), recording their student experiences online for use in future recruitment activities, how to use prior work and personal experiences to develop better resume writing and interview skills, and how participating in career preparation opportunities both within the university and with the accountancy professional bodies and firms will assist them with interviews, applications and ultimately getting a job.

To assist with student career preparation skills, a number of activities have been embedded into teaching units across the degree program. First year students spend time in developing their ability to record student experiences and artefacts into the QUT Student portfolio online tool. “The QUT Student e-Portfolio is a university-wide, online tool designed to enhance the learning process and assist students with the critical transition from university to graduate employment. It provides an environment in which students can document and present different aspects of their academic, professional and personal development” (QUT 2007). Second year students develop skills at resume writing whilst third year students are encouraged to improve their oral communication and interview skills.

Development of the Program

The program was developed in 2005 to improve the preparation of QUT Accountancy students for graduate recruitment purposes and to improve student engagement with the school and the accountancy profession. The program consists of a brochure (see Figure 1) which is given to students in first year orientation sessions, powerpoint slides which present the key aspects of the program to first year students during orientation sessions and a website of career resources which have been developed around the career preparation diagram. Supporting this program is a number of key career preparation opportunities coordinated by academic staff within the School of Accountancy, career initiatives from the Careers and Employment Division at QUT and career activities developed by the two accountancy professional bodies.

The career preparation website which was developed in 2006 (see Figure 2), includes resources and tips from past students and external bodies, a calendar of career events, links to professional bodies websites, detailed explanations of graduate capabilities (generic skills) and the student portfolio system. The website aims to provide first year students with key resource and advice on careers, writing applications, interviews etc. The website also helps students to understand the importance of generic skills and other experiences (part time work etc) in developing career skills and why undertaking career preparation opportunities assists students with future recruitment processes.

First year students are sent regular emails about the program and career preparation opportunities. The web resource is actively linked to all the online teaching sites of all units in the School of Accountancy and is actively promoted by academic staff in first year units.

Figure 1 - Career Preparation Program Diagram (part of Brochure)

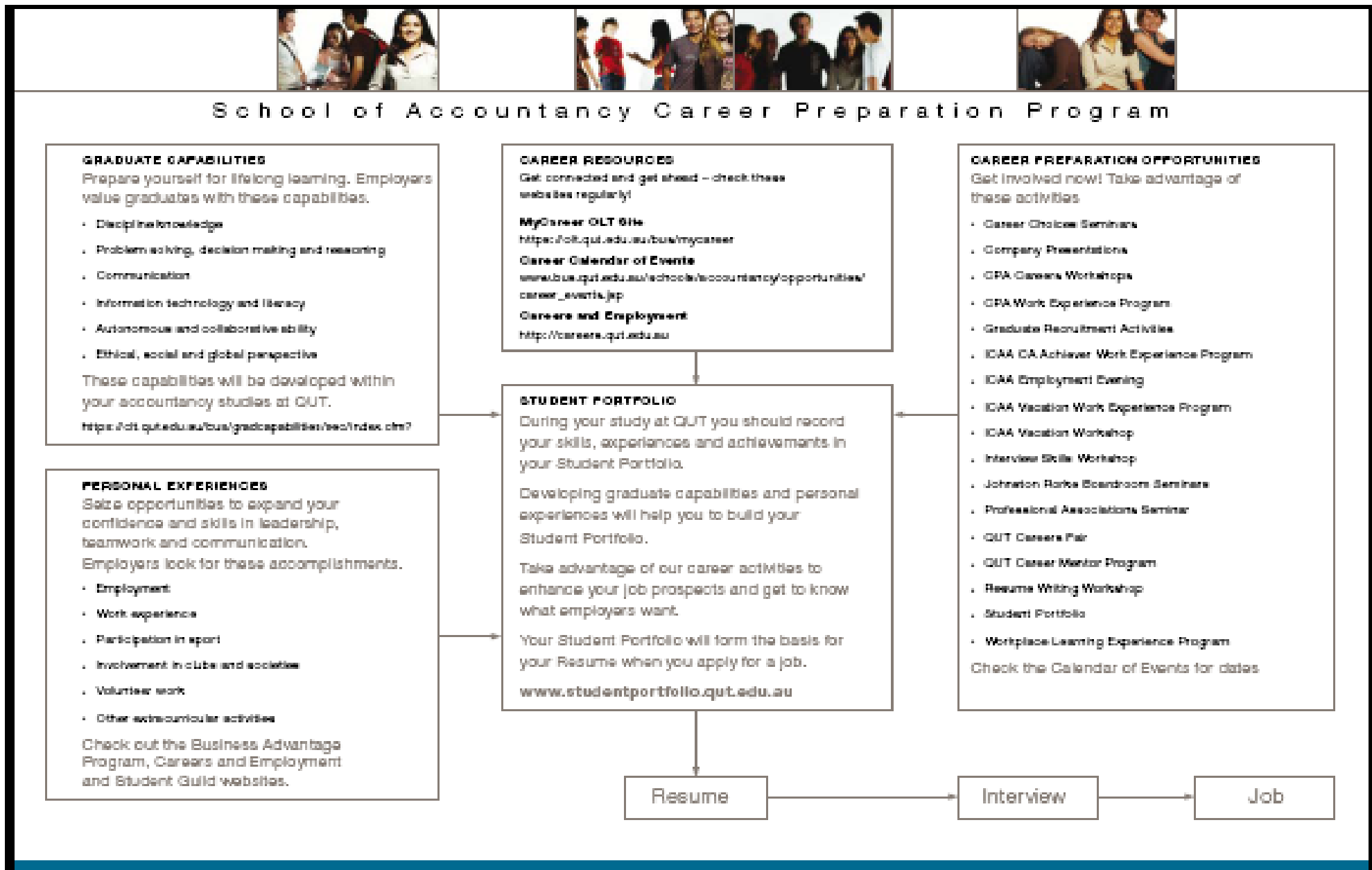


Figure 2 – Career Preparation Program Website

**START YOUR CAREER PREPARATION NOW...
ITS A JUNGLE OUT THERE!**

GRADUATE CAPABILITIES
employers value these capabilities

PERSONAL EXPERIENCES
employers look for these accomplishments

STUDENT PORTFOLIO
your student portfolio builds your resume

discover what employers want

enhance your job prospects

get involved!

CAREER RESOURCES

CAREER PREPARATION OPPORTUNITIES

APPLYING FOR A JOB → **GETTING AN INTERVIEW** → **STARTING A JOB**

Page visits since 19/04/06: 3878

QUT These pages are best viewed in Internet Explorer v5.5 or later on PC and Mozilla v1.4 on Mac. The OLT system is developed and maintained by TALSS. All files uploaded on OLT have been scanned for viruses. [Copyright ©](#) | [Privacy](#) | [Feedback](#) | [Information Facilities Rules](#) | [Disclaimer](#)

Local intranet

start First year exp confer... MYCAREER| School o... 12:09 PM

Results of the program to date

The anecdotal evidence from students is that they have found the career preparation program to be a valuable resource in assisting them to make the transition from university to an accountancy career. The fact that the career preparation website has had 2682 hits since its inception in April 2006 is clear evidence of the student use of this resource. Since the development of this program of activities, we have seen evidence from accountancy employers of an increase in QUT students being chosen for graduate positions and an improvement in the reputation of QUT accountancy students in the marketplace. Whilst this program may not account for all of this improvement, we do believe it has had considerable impact in the improvement of QUT's accountancy students in terms of career preparation skills.

References

Queensland University of Technology (2007) Student Portfolio Website Accessed February 2007 at <http://www.studentportfolio.qut.edu.au/projectinfo/>.