STAFFORDSHIRE UNIVERSITY

Innovation and the Student Experience

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Real Time Assessment – Simulating Business Reality

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The Context

- We're sleepwalking into a crisis. There is much talk of the 'lost generation' of frustrated, angry, debt-ridden 20-somethings with diminishing career prospects. Yet employers continue to wring their hands as they pore over inadequate job applications or realise they've hired graduates with little grasp of what the world of work actually requires of them.
  - Alastair Creamer: HR Magazine 2012

Time Costs Contracts/Work/Jobs

The Assessment

- L6 module – Contemporary Management Issues
- 300+ students
- ‘Contemporary’!!!!
- Authentic
- Individual (has been developed for e-group)

What Happens?

- Contemporary topics chosen within two weeks of release date.
- Topics randomised for distribution
- Student contacted through individual e-mail
- Students have 48 hours to produce a ‘report’ for a manager on the ‘management’ task (Formative)
- Students have more time to produce final presentation (Summative)

Design Instigators

- How did it come about?
  - Students as information processers
  - Students are techno. savvy
  - Employability
  - Plagiarism
- Formative stage
- Summative Stage

Graduate feedback

- ‘This exercise has enabled me to obtain a well paid post and be an outstanding employee’
- ‘The Business Simulation has enabled me to hit the ground running better than any other graduate at this company’
- ‘The exercise is just like my work environment – I knew straight away what to do - Bring it on’

Peer feedback?

- Presented the simulation exercise to other faculties : Arts, Health, Engineering.
- All commercial work is time constrained and so the assessment has total transferability.
- This assessment focuses on employability and isn't degree specific.
- *My students wouldn't cope with this, they would be panicking about getting everything just right and they wouldn't have the time with their childcare responsibilities. It would disadvantage them*

Employer feedback

- '*This is exactly the sort of thing that we need graduates to be able to do. We need people who have the confidence to get on and take the initiative and deliver*'.
  David Webster: CEO Hanley Economic
- '*The problem with so many graduates is that they don't understand that time isn't elastic and the deadlines that they have had to face are not realistic in relation to business. This type of assessment is right for getting them doing and doing things at the right standard straight away*'.

  Wendy Dean: HR Director Steelite International

Conclusions

- Prepare students for work & using authentic real assessments
- Supportive feedback of the Business Simulation from Employers and students – enabled employability and graduates to excel in work
- But – A business simulation in an academic environment! – Technical eg SMS, and Special Needs Students

Example of the tasks…….

- Email from your line manager:
- I have been asked to make a presentation to the board on the potential criminal consequences that might occur within your global supply chain from outsourcing production. Several board members have seen news articles on the cases brought against significant companies who have been caught out by not knowing what unacceptable conditions workers producing components for their products have been working under.
- They have requested your line manager to do a presentation outlining, what other companies are doing, the impact it may have on the company including an ethical position.
- Your line manager has asked you to produce an interim report in the next 48 hours covering the main issues that they can use to develop their presentation to the Board.

Your task……

- See your topic…….

Workshop

- Topic – what sources would you use?
- What barriers might you have implementing the Business Simulation?
- How would you overcome the barriers?
- Is the time-scale right/fair?
  - What about students with disabilities
  - What about students with caring responsibilities?

The Technology bit

1. Set the Blackboard/turnitin systems up and prompted students what form the assessment takes. Including setting up a dummy turnitin submission system for practice.
2. Topics email out via a web based system using two text files
   1. topics.txt
   2. email.txt
3. Submission 48 hour later via turnitin for formative feedback using a rubric and comments. They had to give the presentation instead of me to the Directors.
4. Submission of presentation to turnitin for summative feedback

So… What happened?

What should have happened

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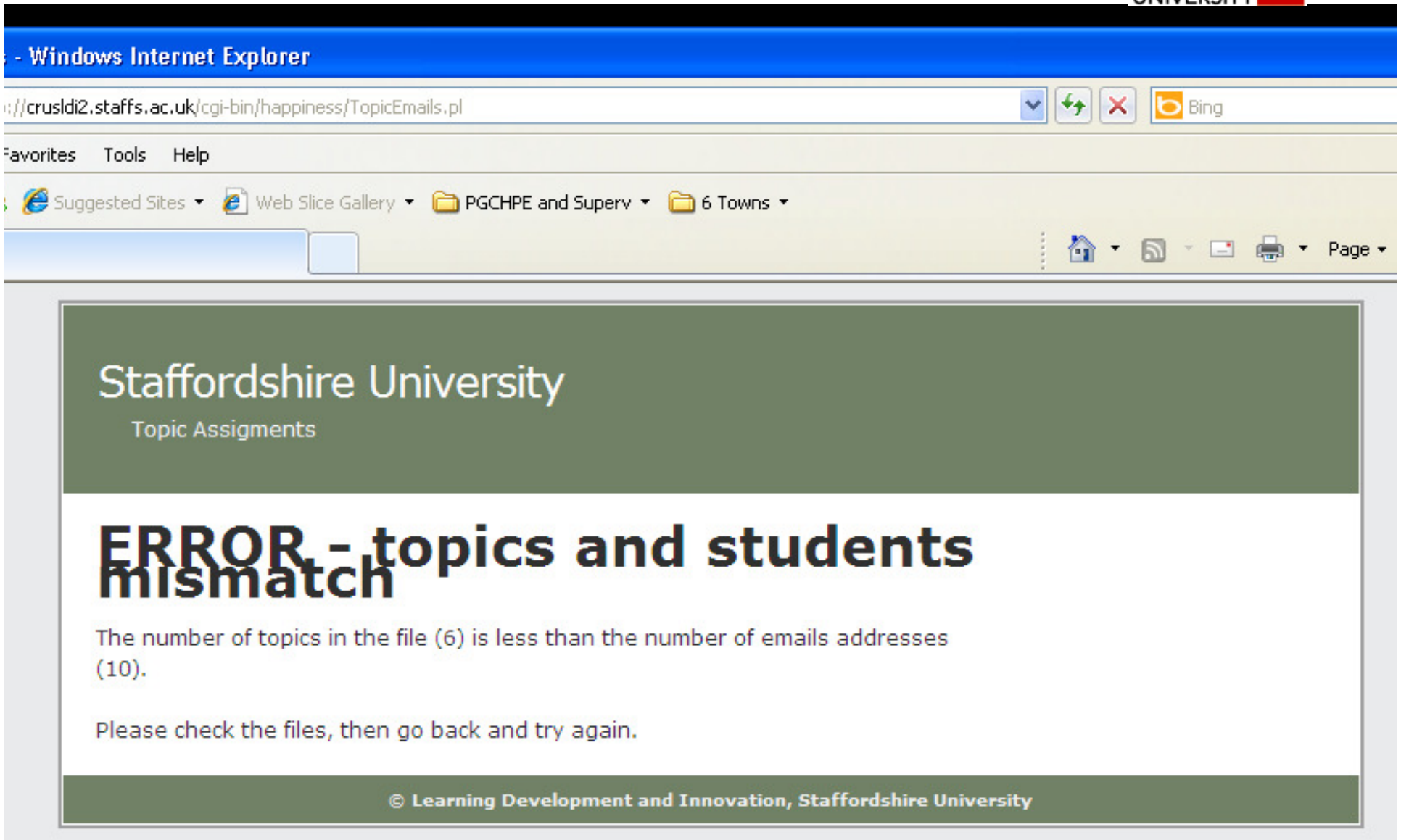
http://learning.staffs.ac.uk/tiaf/

What really happened?

Stage One

Sending out randomly selected topics to the email list



Stage One – email out topics

Initial Student Feedback on system and topics –

- In general a positive response - ‘Great idea to simulate a real business environment’

But

- ‘I don’t agree that there should be women in management… Can I change my topic?’

Stage Two –
Pilot submission

The 48 hour deadline (formative):

- 95% submitted on time
- 3% missed the deadline had rolling 10 day extension
- ‘I tried to send it the night before and then again in the morning,’
- Overall a good response for a formative assignment

Results of the submissions

- Range of work was mainly OK to excellent.
- Clearly some students have really embraced what we were trying to achieve.
- Opportunity to improve - especially for some international students who have been taught to rote learning.

Stage Three

Formative Marking and told that they had to do the presentation to senior directors

Stage Four

Summative Marking

http://blackboard.staffs.ac.uk/

NB Scoring system and number of columns

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