

# Communication skills and confidence-building for journalists: a pilot study.

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# ENHANCING FOR IMPACT

RGU'S ANNUAL LEARNING AND TEACHING CONFERENCE

## Communication Skills and Confidence Building for Journalists: a Pilot Study

*Lynne Mennie and Dr Fiona McKay*

# Skills gap and Employability

- RGU teaching staff: decline in the ability of students to collaborate, contribute to class discussion, give or receive feedback, and talk to people they didn't already know.
- [Bloomberg \(2018\)](#) found that “soft skills” is the most significant area in which new graduates are lacking, particularly team working, problem solving and adaptability.
- [The Society for Human Resource Management \(2019\)](#) reports that the majority of its members struggle to recruit staff who have strong communication, listening or inter-personal skills.
- Students missing soft skills: problem solving, critical thinking, innovation and creativity; the ability to deal with complexity and ambiguity; and communication

# Challenges post-COVID

- Students struggling to transition to face-to-face interaction
- More at ease using digital media than talking in person
- Impact on communication and networking skills, confidence and resilience
- Specific challenges for students of journalism



# The Proposal

- **Create:** a series of six bespoke workshops built into current CB1259 Broadcast Journalism and Production module
- **Cohort:** Stage 1 Journalism students 18 (11 with 100% attendance)
- **Tutor:** background leading young people's workshops, drama production and presentation, coaching and counselling skills
- **Assessment:** workshop attendance, essay on the importance of people/communication skills (20%)

# Skills Development

- Physical and self awareness
- How we present ourselves
- Listening and awareness
- Non-verbal and verbal communication
- Presentation of an idea
- Collaborating to develop an idea
- Receiving and giving constructive critical feedback
- Problem solving
- Working as an individual
- Working as part of a team
- Taking the lead



# The Workshops

- Parallel to learning outcomes of the module
- Practical exercises tailored to the needs of the group (inclusive environment)
- Reflections recorded and submitted after each workshop, as well as assessment
- Last two sessions: student choose a way to showcase their skills: podcast

# The Result

- Students more relaxed, positive, energetic, engaged
- Increased confidence and communication skills
- Better quality assessments for CB1259 – more confident in interviewing new people



# Testimonials

“Overall, I feel as if these sessions helped me improve on my confidence that lockdown had taken away from me, improving my **communication and people skills**. Because of these sessions I am not as scared to go up and speak to someone in an interview which is crucial in journalism.

I would recommend continuing this module with next year’s students and maybe even have it introduced to other courses that involve any level of confidence and people skills.”

# Testimonials

“My biggest takeaway from the pilot is that I always need to challenge myself and be ambitious. I usually doubt myself a lot and second guess things that are on my mind and as a result I stay quiet. But throughout the last six sessions, each week I have **challenged myself, spoke what was on my mind and learned a lot** that will help me throughout university and my career.”

# Testimonials

“The communication workshop was a **transformative** experience for me. It is almost difficult to articulate how much of an impact I believe Judith’s sessions have had on my people skills. Like many, the Coronavirus pandemic had led to me to a life of isolation and solitude. Where previously I felt more than comfortable talking in groups, making friends and presenting, the prolonged period of quarantine had turned me into somewhat of a recluse. Particularly in the first semester, I felt intimidated speaking in class, overthought every word I spoke and every choice I made. I would panic about having a voice break or being judged for my outfit, out of fear of what people would think.”

# The Future

- Permanently embed into S1 teaching
- Build further sessions in S2 (pilot)
- Widen model to other School courses

