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Empowerment Through Research: Bridging Academia and Society

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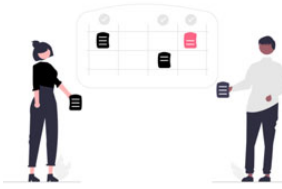
Enhancing Social and Emotional Learning and Employability through Team-based Live Brief Projects

Live Briefs

Live brief projects can be described as a type of “experiential learning where students are supported through their university to work on a real world project involving a client or user” (Rochon, 2022) and can afford transformative experiential learning (Sara, 2011; Wink, 2005).

Boz et al. (2021) define Live Briefs as a type of work-integrated learning (WIL) and an approach to engaging and assessing students “by using current, real-world activities devised and presented by professional partners in collaboration with academic staff.”

The existing literature on Live Brief projects demonstrates the variability and flexibility of the approach (see Table 1).



Country	Students	Size of teams	Level	Mode	Subject context	Notes and references
Poland	296	4	P	F2F (?)	Informatics / Software	Included inter-university teams (Porubán and Bačíková, 2016)
USA	unknown	3-5	U + P	F2F	Human-Computer Interaction	Involved cross-disciplinary and inter-level teams (Bethel, 2017)
Germany	63	up to 17	U / P	O + F2F	Marketing	Included large inter-university teams (Baaken, Kiel and Kliewe, 2015)
USA, Canada, UK, Australia	6000+	~5	U / P	O	Various	Experiential learning software vendor perspective (James, Humez and Laufenberg, 2020)
Australia	100+	3-8	U / P	O + F2F	Business & Management	(Schonell and Macklin, 2019)
Ireland	48	6	P	F2F	Marketing	(Freeman et al., 2020)
USA	4+	4	U + P	F2F	Engineering / Manufacturing	(Perrin et al., 2008)
UK	~30	~5	U	F2F	Architecture / IT Consultancy	(Sara, 2011)

Table 1 - Published examples of live briefs being utilised in Higher Education Institutions.

U + P = individual teams included both undergraduate (U) and postgraduate (P) students

U / P = undergraduate (U) and postgraduate (P) students were not mixed

O + F2F = individual teams included both online (O) and face-to-face (F2F) students

Student-staff-stakeholder partnerships, authentic assessment, and employability

Harrington, et al. (2014) define a partnership as a relationship where “all participants are actively engaged in and stand to gain from the process of learning and working together”.

“Authentic assessment should be that which enables a student to find their place in society and be recognised for their contribution to that society” (McArthur, 2023)

Employability

Oliver (2015) refers to employability as “a process of learning for life” and builds on the definition presented by Yorke (2006) by proposing that:

“Employability means that students and graduates can discern, acquire, adapt and continually enhance the skills, understandings and personal attributes that make them more likely to find and create meaningful paid and unpaid work that benefits themselves, the workforce, the community and the economy.” (Oliver, 2015)

Live Briefs Projects at BNU

#	Project Title	Categories	Themes	Stakeholders	Student type
P1	Wycombe District Council World War I Heritage Trail Map	Social; Education	Local history; Community education	Local Authority	U
P2	Safe Places Administrative Portal	Social; Health	Community support; Mental health	Local Authority; Community Interest Company (CIC)	U
P3	360-degree Virtual Property Tours for Estate Agents	Commercial	Business optimisation; Property market	Module Tutor	U
P4	Property Data Mapping Tool	Commercial	Geographic Information Systems (GIS); Housing and planning	Local entrepreneur	U
P5	Signly Meet	Social; Commercial	British Sign Language (BSL); Accessibility	Startup founder	A
P6	Apprenticeship Learning Tracker	Commercial; Education	Vocational education	Module Tutor	U
P7	Embedded Trigger Warnings for a Media Streaming Service	Social; Commercial	Digital accessibility; Mental health	Digital Accessibility Manager	A
P8	MediLingo: Medical Terminology Learning App	Commercial; Education	Educational Technology; Healthcare education	Extra-departmental academic	U
P9	Reflecta: reflection for learning and wellbeing	Commercial; Education; Health	Wellbeing; Reflective learning; Privacy	Extra-departmental academic	A
P10	Digital Communication Solutions for Private Healthcare Providers	Commercial; Health	Digital healthcare	General Practitioner (GP)	U
P11	Food Poverty Mapping Project	Social; Health	Civic engagement; Food poverty	Head of Civic Engagement within university	A / U

Table 2 - Example Live Briefs deployed in final-year “Digital Innovation” module at BNU between 2016-2023 within a Computing subject context.

A = Apprentices (part-time)

U = Undergraduate (full-time)

Social and Emotional Learning

Social and Emotional Learning (SEL) enables students to acquire and apply the knowledge, skills, and attitudes needed to manage emotions, develop empathy, and build healthy identities (CASEL, n.d.). Emotionally engaging students can support wellbeing (Grové and Laletas, 2020; Edwards et al., 2019) and Live briefs with a significant social or civic focus can be of greater pedagogical value as underpinned by student feedback, enhancing their motivation and a deeper sense of commitment to the learning process.



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