Practical Experiences that Signal the Employability of Graduates from Undergraduate Sport Management Programs During Job Recruitment and Selection

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“One of the greatest challenges in life

is being yourself,

in a world that is trying to make you

like everyone else.”

– Anonymous

Abstract

A high expectation exists from managers in the sport management (SM) industry sector for graduates from undergraduate (UG) SM programs to have extensive practical experience and employability. It is unclear however, from the literature reviewed, of the contribution practical experience plays to graduate employability. Also unclear is how SM employers recognise employable graduates.

The purpose of this Australian-based research was to determine how practical experience can align the learning, development, and subsequent capacity of graduates from UG SM programs, to transparently signal their employability during job recruitment and selection. This purpose was refined into three research questions with specific foci. The first research question focused on differentiating and defining SM job classifications to identify broad SM role functions. Associated with these role functions are the skills, attributes, and corresponding knowledge that UGs should develop while undertaking practical experiences in an UG SM program. The focus of the second research question was to examine how learning and development gained from practical experience can transparently be converted into employability signals and observed by prospective SM employers during job recruitment and selection. The third research question focused on providing recommendations to managers from the SM industry sector and coordinators of UG SM programs to assist both sectors prepare UGs to be employable graduates.

A mixed methods approach was adopted in three stages. In Stage One a job advertisement audit was conducted of 200 graduate-entry SM positions that stipulated a tertiary qualification and practical experience as prerequisites. The data were analysed through text coding and using descriptive statistics. In Stage Two, semi-structured interviews were conducted with 10 sport managers identified from the job audit. The

interview transcripts were coded and thematically analysed. Stage Three involved the conduct of an online employability survey which incorporated eight Employability Dimensions (Rosenberg et al., 2012) with corresponding items, garnering responses from 165 sport managers. However, following data cleansing, 92 responses were analysed using non-parametric statistics.

Analyses of the data identified six SM job classifications that distinguish broad role functions specific to the SM discipline and address research question one. Unexpectedly, the analyses also revealed a preliminary phase of employability that has not previously been identified in SM. Referred to as the Pre-Condition Phase, it introduces UG SM learning from the perspective of having preliminary industry and self-awareness before practical application within the workplace. This Phase recognises awareness factors which characterise the SM industry sector. The Observed Signals Phase, in which 10 distinct cues were identified as employability signals, responded to research question two. These signals comprise several key practical indicators to define and signify employability, and in doing so enabled the understanding of how these signals are interpreted by SM employers during job recruitment and selection. The Pre-Condition and Observed Signals Phases informed the development of 61 recommendations which collectively responded to research question three. Thirty-one of these guide managers from the SM industry sector to recognise graduate employability specifically within job recruitment and selection. The remaining 30 recommendations support coordinators of UG SM programs in preparing UGs to develop and recognise the observed signals indicators and how to self-market their employability to prospective employers.

The significance of the preliminary Pre-Condition Phase is in how it prepares UGs for practical experiences. More specifically, in how the awareness factors can complement

and potentially enhance the experiential learning gained from practical experiences, in this case, throughout the four phases of the Experiential Learning Cycle (Kolb, 1984) model. The Pre-Condition and Observed Signals Phases were significant in the formation of the Graduate Employability Cycle of Learning, developed as a result from the current research and maps a three-phase process for UGs to signal their employability that has evolved from practical experience. Phase 1 is the Pre-Condition Phase which defines the industry sector and individual awareness factors to assist preparation for UG SM practical experiences. Phase 2 comprises the Experiential Learning Cycle (Kolb, 1984) and validates the process of learning through practical experience. Phase 3, the Observed Signals Phase, identifies the experiential learning post practical experience and how this learning is converted into transferable graduate employability signals.

The current research identified awareness factors and indicators distinctive of the SM industry sector to assist UGs prepare for a career and enhance their graduate capacity to perform in an increasingly competitive SM job market. Importantly, the research findings centralise practical experience as the foundation from which UGs can transform experiential learning to self-market as an employable graduate to prospective employers. Essentially, graduate employability is developed via the collaborative efforts of managers from the SM industry sector and coordinators of UG SM programs. The research findings culminate in a new approach to graduate employability, the Graduate Employability Cycle of Learning and respective recommendations, to assist the SM industry and higher education sectors foster graduate employability, collaboratively, beyond the classroom. Future research derived from the current research findings include the exploration of a global unification between SM academic and industry accreditation associations and the conduct of a pilot study on the Graduate Employability Cycle of Learning.

Student Declaration

I, Mary Grant, declare that the PhD thesis entitled "Practical Experience that Signal the Employability of Graduates from Undergraduate Sport Management Programs During Job Recruitment and Selection", is no more than 80,000 words in length including quotes and exclusive of tables, figures, appendices, bibliography, references, and footnotes. This thesis contains no material that has been submitted previously, in whole or in part, for the award of any other academic degree or diploma. Except where otherwise indicated, this thesis is my own work.

I have conducted my research in alignment with the Australian Code for the Responsible Conduct of Research and Victoria University's Higher Degree by Research Policy and Procedures.

All research procedures reported in the thesis were approved by the Victoria University Human Research Ethics, Approval Numbers HRE15-212 and HRE-17051.

Signature of candidate 

Date: 11 February 2022

Dedication

In loving memory of my gorgeous Mum who, despite having only one year of formal education, was inspired and excited to learn and did so, proudly, every day of her life.

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To my wonderful family and my three children, who at the time were probably too young to understand how significant their silent contributions and support were to me 'getting over the line'.

Presentations

Grant, M., Hanlon, C., & Young, J. (2021). *Transforming the experiential learning of sport management undergraduates into transferable employability signals during job recruitment and selection.* Conference presentation, Sport Management Australia and New Zealand, 1-3 December 2021; Melbourne, Australia**.**

Grant, M., Hanlon, C., & Young, J. (2020). *Practical Experiences that Signal the Employability of Graduates from Undergraduate Sport Management Programs.* Research presentation, Employability Champions Network, La Trobe University 8 December 2020; Melbourne, Australia**.**

Grant, M., Hanlon, C., & Young, J. (2020). *To Be, or Not to Be [Employable]: Practical Experiences that Signal the Employability of Graduates from Undergraduate Sport Management Programs.* Research presentation, Sport and Exercise Science Seminar Series, La Trobe University 12 September 2020; Melbourne, Australia**.**

Grant, M. & Cox, M. (2018). *Exploring Your Career Capacity in the Outdoors.* Outdoor Education Conference 12 May 2018; Melbourne, Australia.

Grant, M., Hanlon, C., & Young, J. (2016). *To Be, or Not to Be [Employable]: Practical Experiences that Signal the Employability of Graduates from Undergraduate Sport Management Programs.* 3-Minute Elevator Pitch, ISEAL HDR Conference, 2 December 2016: Melbourne, Australia.

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Definition of Key Terms

The following terms are defined to clarify the context in which they are adopted throughout this research. Many of these definitions were adopted in the Stage Three online survey to ensure that participants clearly understood the meaning of terms, to avoid possible misinterpretation.

Accreditation: "Determines the technical competence, reliability and integrity of Conformity Assessment Bodies. It spans all aspects of our everyday lives to provide confidence that accredited organisations are competent and can be trusted to deliver promised levels of performance and protection for the products and services we rely on" (United Kingdom Accreditation Service. (n.d.). *Accreditation*. https://www.ukas.com/accreditation/).

Basic Literacy & Numeracy Skills [Employability Dimension 1]: "The ability to read, write, speak, listen, and perform basic mathematical procedures. Reading skills include the ability to interpret written information. Writing skills include the ability to communicate thoughts in letters and reports. Mathematical skills include the ability to solve practical problems through the use of a variety of mathematical techniques" (Rosenberg et al., 2012, p. 7).

Career development: "Helps people take more responsibility for the direction and evolution of their own careers, spanning the work experiences they pursue and the meaning, motivation, learning and relationships they develop. This perspective also encourages people to take responsibility for their definitions and interpretations of career success, according to their own internal criteria" (Amundson et al., 2002, p. 28).

Career development learning: "Learning about the content and process of career development or life/career management. The content of career development learning in

essence represents learning about self and learning about the world of work. Process learning represents the development of the skills necessary to navigate a successful and satisfying life/career" (McMahon et al., 2003, p. 6).

Critical Thinking Skills [Employability Dimension 2]: "The ability to think creatively, make decisions, and solve problems" (Rosenberg et al., 2012, p. 7).

Experiential learning: "The process whereby knowledge is created through the transformation of experience and is continuous" (Kolb, 1984, p. 41).

Emotional Intelligence: "Is a type of social intelligence that involves the ability to monitor one's own and others' emotions, to discriminate among them, and to use the information to guide one's thinking and actions" (Salovey & Mayer, 1997, p. 443).

Employability: "A psychosocial construct with three dimensions: professional identity, personal adaptability, and human capital. These dimensions act synergistically to facilitate identification in the labour market and the creation of career opportunities. Professional identity concerns work experience and aspirations, including the "who I am" or "who I want to be" of an individual as a worker. Personal adaptability concerns the ability and the willingness to change personal characteristics (e.g., knowledge, attitudes, skills) to adapt and respond better to environmental demands. Human capital is seen as a set of factors that can affect career and development opportunities such as age, education, training, professional experience, and cognitive ability" (Di Fabio, 2017, p. 108).

Experiential learning: "This perspective is called 'experiential' for two reasons. The first is to tie it clearly to its intellectual origins in the work of Dewey, Lewin, and Piaget. The second reason is to emphasise the central role that experience plays in the learning process" (Kolb, 1984, p. 20).

Graduates: "Individuals who have satisfactorily completed the requirements of an educational program and have been awarded a certificate, diploma, or degree" (Education Resources Information Centre (ERIC). (n.d.). *Definitions*. https://eric.ed.gov/?ti=Graduates).

*Graduate employability [higher education]: "*A graduate's achievements and potential to find employment, utilise transferrable skills, knowledge and personal attributes and continuously maintain a level of employability throughout a person's working life" (Yorke, 2006, p. 8).

Graduate-entry job: "Those occupations identified that normally require knowledge and skills developed on a three-year university degree to enable them to perform the associated tasks competently. A recent graduate is someone who finished full-time higher education five years ago or less" (STEM Graduates. (n.d.). *What is a graduate job?* https://www.stemgraduates.co.uk/blog/2019/01/what-is-a-graduate-job).

Hiring: "Involvement in the recruitment and selection [both defined below] processes of employment in any, but not limited to the following activities: develop or contribute to the content of a position description, review and shortlist applicants, interview panelist, or interviewer, applicant assessment, referee checks and decision making of desired applicant" (University of California Riverside (UCR). (n.d.). *Recruitment policies and procedures*. https://hr.ucr.edu/talent-acquisition/recruitment-policies-procedures).

Human Capital Theory: "The education of individuals as the key means by which both the individual accrues material advantage and by which the economy, as a whole, progresses. In a simple equation, the more and better education individuals possess, the

better their returns in financial rewards and the better the national economy flourishes" (Di Fabio, 2017, p. 108).

Industry: "Groups of firms with similar characteristics in their production processes, goods or services produced, and markets served in the wider economy" (de Valence, 2010, p. 1).

Industry standards: "A set of criteria within an industry relating to the standard functioning and carrying out of operations in their respective fields of production. In other words, it is the generally accepted requirements followed by the members of an industry" (US Legal. (n.d.). *Industrial standards*. https://definitions.uslegal.com/i/industrial-standards/).

Information Technology Skills [Employability Dimension 6]: "Include the ability to select procedures, equipment, and tools to acquire and evaluate data" (Rosenberg et al., 2012, p. 7).

Interpersonal Skills [Employability Dimension 5]: "Include the ability to work in teams, help others to learn, provide customer service, negotiate agreements, resolve differences, and work in a multicultural organisation" (Rosenberg et al., 2012, p. 7).

Job classification: "Job classification is a system for objectively and accurately defining and evaluating the duties, responsibilities, tasks, and authority level of a job. The job classification, done correctly, is a thorough description of the job responsibilities of a position without regard to the knowledge, skills, experience, and education of the individuals currently performing the job" (The Balance Careers. (n.d.). *Job Classification*. https://www.thebalancecareers.com/job-classification-1918164).

Job/position description: "A job description provides you with the opportunity to describe your general expectations of an employee. Specifically, a job description is a broad statement of a worker's responsibilities" (Carliner, 2012, p. 1).

Job Recruitment: "Searching for and obtaining a pool of potential candidates with the desired knowledge, skills and experience to allow an organisation to select the most appropriate people to fill job vacancies against defined position descriptions and specifications" (Australian Human Resources Institute (AHRI). (n.d.). *Recruitment and selection*. https://www.ahri.com.au/resources/ahriassist/recruitment-and-selection/).

Job Selection [process]: "Once a pool of candidates has been identified through the recruitment process the most appropriate candidate/s are identified through a selection process including but not limited to interviewing, reference checking and testing. The purpose of the selection process is to ensure that the best person or people are appointed to the role or roles using effective, fair and equitable assessment activities" (AHRI. (n.d.) *Recruitment and selection*. https://www.ahri.com.au/resources/ahriassist/recruitment-and-selection/).

Leadership emergence: "The degree to which a person who is not in a formal position of authority influences the other members of a group" (Côté et al., 2010, p. 2).

Leadership Skills [Employability Dimension 3]: Skills "Include the ability to motivate others to achieve organisational goals. Typical characteristics of effective leadership are responsibility, self-esteem, and the ethical qualities of integrity and honesty" (Rosenberg et al., 2012, p. 7).

Management Skills [Employability Dimension 4]: "Includes the activities of planning, organising, leading, and controlling to meet organisational goals" (Rosenberg et al., 2012, p. 7).

Occupation: "The specific role a person performs such as hairdresser, teacher or factory manager" (Foundation for Young Australians, 2017, p. 8).

Practical experience: "Life experience and work-related experience, either arranged as part of a course, carried out on a voluntary basis or gained through part-time work" (Dacre Pool & Sewell, 2007, p. 285).

Practicum: "Links theory with practice by providing regular structured and supervised opportunities for students to apply and test knowledge, skills and attitudes, developed largely in campus-based studies, to the real world" (Price, 1987, as cited in Gardner & Bartkus, 2014, p. 109).

*Qualifications framework: "*Instrument for development and classification of qualifications (at national or sectoral levels) according to a set of criteria (such as using descriptors) applicable to specified levels of learning outcomes" (European Observatoire of Sport and Employment (EOSE): (n.d.). *Glossary*. http://eose.org/glossary/qualification-framework/).

Regional: Regional Australia includes all towns, small cities and areas that lie beyond the major capital cities of Sydney, Melbourne, Brisbane, Perth, Adelaide, and Canberra and have a population of over 50,000 (Regional Australia Institute. (n.d.). *What is regional Australia?*. http://www.regionalaustralia.org.au/home/what-is-regional-australia/).

Rural: Includes small to large rural centres from population: 10,000-49,999 (Rural, Remote, and Metropolitan Areas (RRMA). (n.d.). *Classifications*. http://www.aihw.gov.au/rural-health-rrma-classification/).

Sector: "The sport industry includes three organisational sectors: public, non-profit, and commercial. These are important categories for the different types of organisations

involved in sport and are central to the creation and production of sport products, services, programs, and facilities" (Human Kinetics. (n.d.). *contemporary-sport-management-csm-sport-industry-sectors-model*. https://us.humankinetics.com/blogs/excerpt/contemporary-sport-management-csm-sport-industry-sectors-model/).

Self-organising: "A two-way process, whereby people, as the underlying elements in an economic system, are not only influenced by but also influence the system in their career behaviour" (Armundson et al., 2002, p. 27).

Signal: "Activities or attributes of individuals in a market which, by design or accident, alter the beliefs of, or convey information to, other individuals in the market" (Spence, 1974, p. 1). "Signals, then, serve to reduce information gaps or asymmetries between two parties (i.e., the audience receiving the signals and the signal sender" (Drover et al., 2018, p. 211).

Signal observability: "The extent to which outsiders are able to notice a signal and reflects the degree to which a signal is easily attended to by an organisational outsider" (Connelly et al., 2011, as cited in Drover et al., 2018, p. 217).

Sport industry: "The sport industry encompasses all upstream and downstream value adding activities emanating from the delivery of sport products and services. A sport product or service occurs when a human-controlled, goal-directed, competitive activity requiring physical prowess (irrespective of competency) is delivered or facilitated" (Westerbeek & Smith, 2004, as cited in Westerbeek, 2010, p. 1295).

Sport management: "The study and practice of all people, activities, businesses, or organisations involved in producing, facilitating, promoting, or organising any sport-related business or product" (Pederson & Thibault, 2014, p. 7).

Sport management industry sector: As a key term of reference, sport management industry sector will be used in this research to relate sport management activity to the sport industry by merging the terms sport industry, sport management, and sector as defined above. Hence, sport management industry sector will be defined as "the practice of all people, activities, businesses, or organisations involved in the delivery of sport products and services" (Pederson & Thibault, 2014, p. 7; Westerbeek & Smith, 2004, as cited in Westerbeek, 2010, p. 1295) with reference to the three sport management sectors of public, non-profit and commercial, in which these products are offered (Hoye et al., 2018).

Systems Thinking Skills [Employability Dimension 7]: "Includes the ability to understand and operate within social, organisational, and technological systems. Designing and suggesting modifications to systems and explaining the interaction of systems in the context of the global economy are elements of systems thinking" (Rosenberg et al., 2012, pp. 7-8).

Tertiary [Education or qualification]: "Any type of education pursued beyond the high school level. This includes diplomas, undergraduate and graduate certificates, and associate's, bachelor's, master's, and doctoral degrees" (Learn.org. (n.d.). *Articles*. https://learn.org/articles/What_is_Tertiary_Education.html).

Undergraduate: "A student who is working towards a bachelor degree, sometimes known as an undergraduate degree. (POSTGRAD.com). (n.d.). *What is an undergraduate student?*. https://www.postgrad.com/advice/postgraduate-studies/what-is-an-undergraduate-student/).

Volunteering: "Time willingly given for the common good and without financial gain" (Volunteering Australia, 2015, p. 2).

Work Ethic [Disposition] [Employability Dimension 8]: "An individual's disposition toward work and it includes attendance, punctuality, motivation, the ability to meet deadlines, patience, attitude, dependability, professionalism, and realistic expectations of job requirements and career advancement" (Rosenberg et al., 2012, p. 8).

Abbreviations

The following abbreviations appear in this thesis multiple times and are listed in alphabetical order.

AHRI	Australian Human Resources Institute
ALTC	Australian Learning and Teaching Council
AUD	Australian Dollars
BCA	Business Council of Australia
COSMA	Commission on Sport Management Accreditation
CPR	Cardio-Pulmonary Resuscitation
DOTS [Model]	Decision Learning, Opportunity Awareness, Transition Learning and Self-Awareness
EASM	European Association for Sport Management
ED	Employability Dimensions
ESSA	Exercise and Sports Science Australia
FYA	Foundation for Young Australians
HEA	Higher Education Academy
NACE	National Association of Colleges and Employers
NASSM	North American Society for Sport Management
NSC	National Skills Commission
SCANS	Secretary's Commission on Achieving Necessary Skills
SM	Sport Management
SMAANZ	Sport Management Association of Australia and New Zealand
SSO	State Sporting Organisation
UG	Undergraduate

UK	United Kingdom
USA	United States of America
USEM [Model]	Understanding, Skills, Efficacy Beliefs and Metacognition
WCC	Working with Children Check

Chapter One: Introduction

The purpose of this introductory chapter is to provide an overview and context to the research topic and to present the gaps noted from the review of literature. The chapter commences with a background synopsis of the underpinnings of this research, description of the problem statement, research purpose and development of the research questions. The subsequent sections outline the significance of the current research and its contribution to the body of knowledge. The chapter concludes with an overview of the thesis structure.

The current Australian-based research explored distinct factors of the sport management (SM) industry, SM higher education sectors and relevant undergraduate (UG) practical experiences that can influence a graduate's employability. The preparation of UGs to undertake SM program practicum at SM industry sector organisation workplaces will allow learning and development to formally occur. Essentially, an UG's ability to successively transfer new knowledge gained from these practical experiences into observable signals to indicate employability, is the desirable outcome.

Background

Sport in Australia has undergone considerable growth in the last 30 years to become an influential industry (Hoye et al., 2018; Mathner & Martin, 2012; Romsa et al., 2017) directly employing over 95,000 Australians in a variety of sport and active recreation roles (Hajkowicz et al., 2013; Shilbury et al., 2020). Changes in the management of sporting events and organisations at all levels of sport can be attributed to its growth and professionalisation (Hoye et al., 2018; Shilbury et al., 2020). Globalisation is a major influence of change in the way sport is consumed and constructed, largely due to the stronger integration of world economies, technology, and the speed at which the

communication between producers and consumers occurs (Hajkowicz et al., 2013; Hoye et al., 2018).

The forecast for Australian sport outlines several key influential factors likely to shape the sports sector over the next two or three decades, including the individualised pursuit of sport and fitness activities; the recognition of the health benefits of sport; and economic development (Campos-Izquierdo et al., 2015; Hajkowicz et al., 2013). The predicted influences shaping sport will affect how sport is managed in the SM industry sector and how UG SM programs will respond to the demands of not only Australians engaged in sport, but populations across the globe that are experiencing similar changes (Massey et al., 2015; Hajkowicz et al., 2013).

In the context of Australia, in 2011, State and Territory Ministers for Sport across the nation collectively developed a policy framework to align policy and develop strategies and programs by local and state governments. The aim was to develop a sport and active recreation system to increase participation and develop strong national sporting achievement and international success in sports competition (Commonwealth of Australia, 2011). In response, a coordinated approach was required instigating an evolution in the management of sport to include the application of specific management strategies distinctly adopted in modern business, government, and non-profit organisations (Hoye et al., 2018). Strategies include, to: undertake market analyses, establish a clear business direction, create a focus that matches opportunities, gauge the organisation's position in the competitive environment, and determine organisational direction and goals. These strategies were adopted into the various role functions of sport managers and broadly include sports administration, servicing sporting clubs, teams, and individuals; and managing sports venues, grounds, and facilities (Shilbury et al., 2020).

The adoption of specific management techniques and approaches in UG SM programs is necessary to avoid disconnect with industry and higher education and to work towards graduate employability (Schwarz, 2010). Learning and teaching strategies are prominent in the higher education agenda in Australia, specifically in relation to embedding national graduate employability skills and graduate capabilities (institutionally driven) into the curriculum (Emery et al., 2012; Kinash et al., 2016). Graduate capability is strengthened through applied learning within the workplace or simulated situations according to the needs of the specific discipline being studied in higher education (DeLuca & Braunstein-Minkove, 2016; Fleming & Haigh, 2017; McNeil et al., 2012).

The focus on graduate employability is reflected in the Human Capital theory (Donald et al., 2019) that proposes education can provide marketable skills and abilities to increase an individual's productivity and job performance (McIlveen et al., 2013; Piopiunik et al., 2020; Schultz, 1961). Employability in higher education expands on the Human Capital theory and the notion that higher education is an investment that renders individuals more productive (McGrath et al., 2010). Most important is reference to a graduate's ability to continuously maintain the capacity to be employed beyond graduation and throughout their working life (Minten & Forsyth, 2014; Yorke, 2006).

The review of literature presented in Chapter Two, began by broadly addressing industry, higher education, and graduates in terms of navigating graduate employability. The focus then shifted to the SM industry sector, related practical experiences and employability of graduates from UG SM programs. Emerging from the literature is the notion that the SM industry and higher education sectors need to strengthen collaborations to represent and define the SM industry sector holistically. Notably, it is gleaned from the literature that practical experience at the workplace should be at the forefront of UG

learning to provide an avenue to experience applied learning and develop industry sector knowledge, professionalism, and employability. Absent from the current literature is an indication of how graduates can signal their employability throughout job recruitment and selection. To expand on this absence, the following section provides an overview of the apparent underlying problems in the SM industry and higher education sectors and in the development of graduate employability signals.

Problem Statement

A holistic representation of the SM industry sector is essential to inspire graduates to identify with the industry and showcase their ability to prospective employers based on industry requirements (DeLuca & Braunstein-Minkove, 2016; Zimmer & Keiper, 2021). A graduate's level of employability is generally indicated by a recognition of achievements, potential to find employment, and utilisation of transferrable skills, knowledge, and personal attributes, continuously throughout their working life (Yorke, 2006). Three problems have been identified from the literature reviewed and are addressed in the following paragraphs. These comprise: a lack of consistent literature outlining distinct SM job classifications and standards; limited UG SM practical experiences upon graduation; and a lack of knowledge and research relating to employer assessment of graduate employability. Each of these problems can be associated, particularly in Australia, with the absence of a SM industry accreditation body to guide the SM discipline within the industry and higher education sectors.

The expansion of professional sport and an increase in the enrolment numbers of UG SM programs reflect an explosive demand in managing sport activity globally (de Schepper & Sotiradou, 2018; Shilbury et al., 2020; Zimmer & Keiper, 2021). The general problem is the lack of consistent literature related to job classifications and standards

associated with role functions representative of SM in Australia, hence, the subsequent lack of associated knowledge provided within the higher education SM program curriculum (de Schepper & Sotiriadou, 2018; Emery et al., 2012; Smith et al., 2018). Related is the extensive literature that highlights a positive correlation between practical experience and graduate employability, enhanced through the application of subject knowledge, skills, and career development learning (Barker, 2014; Dacre Pool & Sewell, 2007; Foster & Pierce, 2021; Smith et al., 2018). In consequence, an UG's application of subject knowledge, skills, and career development learning can become problematic to being suitably prepared for the workplace when SM job classifications and industry standards are not clearly and consistently defined (DeLuca & Braunstein-Minkove, 2016; Griffith & Rainer, 2010).

Another issue within a SM context is that it is not uncommon for UGs to graduate with limited practical experience (Emery et al., 2012). However, 80-90% of Australian SM employers preferred a normative minimum of two years' practical experience for graduate applicants from UG SM programs (Bradbury et al., 2021; Emery, et al., 2012). Literature also indicates the skills gained from practical experience and the ability to apply concepts within the workplace environment had greater worth to a workplace than grade point average, the university attended, awards, leadership positions, and interviewing skills (Bradbury et al., 2021; Norwood & Henneberry, 2006). Furthermore, practicum had less worth in terms of UG employability, if the experience was unrelated to the desired job or field of study, strengthening the notion that experiential learning in the curriculum is significant, and enhances UG preparation and employment prospects (Bradbury et al., 2021; Sagen et al., 2000).

A final concern identified in the literature is the lack of knowledge about, and research of, how employability is assessed by a prospective employer of a graduate applicant (Briggerman & Norwood, 2011; Piopiunik et al., 2020). The signals an employer identifies to best indicate the quality of prospective employees often surface after job recruitment is completed and when the employer has the opportunity to observe the new employee's "actual productivity" (Bailly, 2008, p. 962). Signalling theory identifies how using cues can expediate the timing of the realisation of an applicant's actual skill and capability by the employer during job recruitment and selection (Spence, 1973). Signalling theory (Spence, 1973) is the recognition of signals and an understanding of how to assess graduate employability by employers during job recruitment and selection, that will be paramount to the graduate (signaller) and the receiver (employer) (Drover et al., 2018).

Attributed to each problem is the absence of a SM industry accreditation body with job classifications and industry standards to guide the higher education sector through SM programs (Emery et al., 2012; Yiamouyiannis, 2013). Higher education programs must be responsive to key industry stakeholders to ensure graduates are suitably prepared to respond to evolving industry demands and standards (DeLuca & Braunstein-Minkove, 2016; Griffith & Rainer, 2010) and that program content is current and relevant (Ferns, 2012). Currently in Australia, industry organisations such as SportAccord and the Australian Sports Professionals Association are dedicated to representing, engaging, and connecting groups from the sport industry. However, these groups are not industry accredited nor governing bodies. Globally, in higher education, the discipline of SM is represented through academic associations such as Sport Management Australia and New Zealand (SMAANZ), North American Society for Sport Management (NASSM) and the European Association for Sport Management (EASM). The representation of different

associations within the SM industry and higher education sectors indicates a disparity in relaying unified and consistent industry information (Miragaia & Soares, 2017), in this case, graduate employability signals.

Research Purpose/Development of Research Questions

To address the three aforementioned problems, the purpose of this Australian-based research was to determine how practical experience can align the learning, development, and subsequent capacity of graduates from UG SM programs, to transparently signal their employability during job recruitment and selection. To delve into the purpose of this research, three key questions were identified:

1. What job classifications of advertised graduate-entry sport management positions stipulate practical experience as a prerequisite?
2. What signals do sport management employers seek from graduate-entry job applicants of practical experiences during job recruitment and selection?
3. What recommendations can be made to managers from the sport management industry sector and coordinators of undergraduate sport management programs on the signals employers seek from graduates to demonstrate employability from practical experiences?

These research questions were addressed by a mixed-methods convergent parallel design that fostered the coordinated analyses of quantitative and qualitative data to be compared and/or merged. Adopting this design facilitated comprehensive data analyses to address the research questions. The current research comprises three stages of data collection and analyses. In Stage One, a job advertisement audit which included a pilot audit, was conducted to address research question one and identify SM industry sector job classifications. Descriptive statistics were adopted to analyse the position descriptions

from the job advertisement audit. In Stage Two, qualitative data generated from semi-structured interviews conducted with SM industry employers was conducted to partly address research question two and define the composition of employability skills of UGs undertaking practical experiences. The Experiential Learning Cycle (Kolb, 1984) was applied to the interview analysis to validate the process of learning through practical experience and to serve as a conceptual framework for understanding the cycle of learning of UGs undertaking formal practical experiences. Further, the four phases of the Experiential Learning Cycle guided data analyses in Stages Two and Three of this study.

In Stage Three, an online survey was administered adopting an existing employability questionnaire (Human Resource Manager Survey [Employability Dimensions], Rosenberg et al., 2012). The online survey provided further distinction on the composition of graduate employability skills and attributes. Key indicators identified from the Stage Two interview analyses, were included in the survey. Multiple awareness factors and indicators generated from the quantitative data formed distinct signals to indicate employability. Findings addressed research question two. Finally, all findings generated from each of the three stages of the current research formed the basis from which the recommendations were developed to address research question three.

Significance and Contribution to the Body of Knowledge

Limited research has examined distinct job classifications, standards, and graduate employability in Australia within the SM industry and higher education sectors. Extensive SM literature identifies the positive association practical experience provides to graduate employability that builds subject knowledge and applies degree-based subject knowledge and skills (Brown et al., 2018; Dacre Pool & Sewell, 2007; Smith et al., 2018). To build upon existing literature and employability models relating to practical experience, the

current research identifies job classifications to characterise the SM industry sector. The examination of job classifications occurs for an UG beyond the classroom and at practical experiences within the SM workplace. Per se, the investigation of practical experiences identified graduate employability signals and methods to be adopted by sport managers to assess these signals during job recruitment and selection, and one which has not previously been examined in the SM discipline.

Importantly, identification of SM job classifications from the current research contributes to the development of graduate employability. Specifically, it provides a point of reference from where managers from the SM industry sector and coordinators of UG SM programs can prepare UGs for practical experience, employability and employment through industry exploration and self-awareness. The identification of observed employability signals will expand existing experiential learning studies to define and signify employability and enable SM employers to understand how they can interpret these signals and assess employable graduates during job recruitment and selection. Furthermore, the current research findings will add a new dimension of knowledge to existing experiential learning and graduate employability models. This will occur through provision of preliminary consideration prior to, during and following practical experiences, while equipping UGs to strategically, and transparently, signal their employability to prospective sport managers.

Thesis Structure

Divided into seven chapters, this thesis addresses the purpose of the current research. Following the introductory chapter are six remaining chapters which include: a literature review; the adopted methodology; a report of the results; a discussion of the implication of the results; industry and education recommendations; and a final statement of conclusion.

The key term definitions adopted in this research are listed prior to the introductory chapter.

Chapter two provides a review of literature and explores the SM industry and higher education sectors in regard to the development of graduate employability. The chapter delves into practical experience, employability skills and employer assessment of a graduate's employability during job recruitment and selection. Chapter three outlines the mixed method approach adopted and justifies and validates the data collection methods and analyses adopted in each of the three stages of the study.

Chapter four presents the results, which outlines the respective qualitative and quantitative data for these research stage. In doing so, depict the various awareness factors that comprise the SM industry sector landscape in relation to the skills and attributes of employable graduates. The discussion is presented in two chapters (Chapters five and six). Chapter five (Part One) comprises the discussion that presents new theoretical insights, connects results to the existing body of knowledge, including underpinning literature and existing career development and employability frameworks. This Chapter addresses research questions one and two. Chapter six (Part Two), comprises the discussion that formalises SM awareness factors and employability indicators into a framework and identifies recommendations for the SM industry and higher education sectors. Each recommendation relates to how UGs can signal their employability to prospective managers from the SM industry sector during job recruitment and selection. This Chapter addresses research question three. Finally, Chapter seven summarises the key research findings and how these findings can be applied to advance theoretical and practical knowledge. The chapter concludes with a description of limitations of this research and recommendations for future investigations.

To set the scene for the current research, the literature reviewed will be discussed in the following chapter. The review of literature will explore the discipline of SM to provide a holistic representation in terms of industry sector foundations, higher education, practical experiences, and employability signalling.

Chapter Two: Literature Review

The review of literature commences with an exploration of the SM industry, SM higher education, and SM graduates to provide the context and setting for the current research. An outline of the SM industry sector follows, noting the lack of industry standards and distinct job classifications, and the increasing expectation from sport managers for the SM higher education sector to produce employable graduates.

Career development and career development learning are then defined in relation to the significant contributions both make to a graduate's employability journey. The notion of employability, a central theme to the current research, is outlined to include employability dimensions and employability models to inform the discussion. Then the notions of signalling and practical experience are introduced with reference to the Experiential Learning Cycle (Kolb, 1984) and its significance to graduate employability research. To conclude this chapter, an exploration into job recruitment and selection pinpoints the human capital investment made by SM organisations and the challenges faced in the quest to attract quality graduates who are 'the right fit' for the organisation.

Graduate Employability: Industry, Higher Education and Graduates

As the world increases in interconnectedness and innovation and global markets develop, the demand for highly skilled workers who can adapt to the uncertainties of a rapidly changing future will rise (Ferns et al., 2019; Jackson, 2014; Payton & Knight, 2018). The 2016 World Economic Forum acknowledged the changes to occupations that have occurred over time, and how those occupations, currently most in demand, did not exist 10 years ago in many industries and countries (Business Council of Australia [BCA], 2018; Foundation for Young Australians [FYA], 2016; Leopold et al., 2016). In Australia, labour market projections point to the prospect of strong growth in the industries of health

and human services, professional, scientific, and technical services, and education and training (Healy et al., 2017). The higher education sector has an obligation to engage with industry to ensure graduate quality, enhance student experience and secure future employment prospects (Ferns et al., 2019; O'Leary, 2017; Shah et al., 2015).

Industry

Globally employers are increasingly raising their demand for capable graduates who are knowledgeable and have workplace aptitude (BCA, 2018; Radermacher & Walia, 2013; Shah et al., 2015). There is also recognition that a graduate's industry knowledge, skills, and adaptability will be an indicator of their ability to thrive in a changing world (BCA, 2018; Dinning, 2017). The increasing competition for graduate jobs has intensified employer requests for graduates who are a 'good fit' with their organisation in relation to their skills, attributes, and behaviours, and related competencies to meet industry demand (Dinning, 2017). The Australian Skills Classifications was introduced in July 2020 to provide a consistent language and strategy to compare competency levels using a 10-point scale for core competencies within an occupation (National Skills Commission [NSC], 2021). To address worker adaptability, the description of these skills and knowledge can be applied across a range of interrelated sectors, rather than confined to a specific industry (NSC, 2021).

In the United States of America (USA) the Secretary's Commission on Achieving Necessary Skills (SCANS) (1991) developed recommendations referred to as SCANS Skills which include basic skills in literacy and numeracy, thinking skills to guide decision making, and personal attributes such as responsibility. The SCANS Skills aimed to improve student skills and employability by uniting schools and industry to create a seamless transition from school to work (Cappelli, 2015). In the United Kingdom (UK),

the Confederation of British Industry in its 2015 report on skills, noted that employers' main priority for schools and universities was to improve business-relevant coursework based on the need to accelerate reforms across the education and skills systems. An important note is that graduate employer associations and university career associations are united in countries such as in Canada and the USA, or they operate separately as in the UK, Australia, and South Africa (Smith et al., 2018).

The drive towards graduate employability worldwide has been largely prompted by government and the needs of industry (Oliver et al., 2010; Shah et al., 2015). Prominent in graduate employability literature is industry's perception of, and employer satisfaction with, university graduate skills and the need for business and education to collaborate in the preparation of employable graduates (Kinash et al., 2018; Oliver, 2011; Rufai & Rushid, 2015). Traditionally, the outcome of human resources practices such as job applicant assessment and employee training are to secure workers with the skills employers need (Capelli, 2015). Yorke and Knight (2004) contend graduate workplace performance is influenced by factors other than discipline-specific knowledge and employability skills, such as labour market awareness, and work and life experience. The notion of employability has shifted higher education to increase the focus on skills provision, to enhance graduate workplace performance and meet industry expectations (Capelli, 2015; Kinash et al., 2018; Robinson et al., 2016). The most recent shift has been for industry and higher education sectors, including UGs to assume responsibility and mutual understanding, and work collaboratively to enhance the development of graduate employability (de Schepper & Sotiriadou, 2018; Jackson, 2014; Kinash et al, 2016; Tran, 2015).

Higher Education

The concept of employability is becoming increasingly understood and widely recognised through scholarly focus and subsequently through the emergence of employability innovations (Ferns et al., 2019; Kinash et al., 2016). In higher education, the focus is on learning and the promotion of higher levels of learning that will influence what occurs in the future rather than on immediate gains (Stephenson & Yorke, 2013). Expanding on this notion is the focus of higher education to influence graduates to maintain employability throughout the lifespan of their working career (Yorke, 2006). Furthermore, that the emphasis on graduate employability should be less on 'employ' and more on 'ability', with a focus on developing reflective abilities to enhance learner capacity and self-empowerment (de Schepper & Sotiriadou, 2018; Harvey, 2003).

An examination of Australia's performance and investment in higher education was reported in the Review of Australian Higher Education: The Final Report (Bradley, 2008). The report indicated that the quality of the educational experience was in decline; the established processes used to assure quality nationally, required updating; and Australia's undergraduate-attainment completion rate was disappointingly at 72 per cent. This decline generated a major concern of UG performance in higher education and Australia's obligation to ensure graduates can apply their capabilities to contribute to society and the economy (Bradley et al., 2008).

In 2010, two years following the release of the Review of Australian Higher Education (Bradley, 2008), Julia Gillard, the Australian Prime Minister released a message to Australian universities. The message called universities to "take stock, assess what needs improvement, develop plans and tools to lift the quality of teaching, lift the engagement of students and lift the expectations and performance of teachers and researchers" (Oliver, 2010, p. 352). The Australian Government backed Gillard's

challenge to universities in the 2010-2011 budget, providing $27.4 (AUD) million in funding to the Australian Learning and Teaching Council (ALTC) to move the learning and teaching agenda forward (Department of Employment, Skills, Small and Family Business, 2011; Smeal et al., 2011). A further $57.1 million (AUD) over four financial years (2014–15 to 2017–18) was allocated to the newly established Office for Learning and Teaching through the Promotion of Excellence in Learning and Teaching in Higher Education program. The allocation of funds was timely given that one in four (28.2%) university graduates who had secured full time employment indicated they were not using their skills or education in their current employment (Australian Government Department of Education and Training, 2017).

Australian universities have adopted national employability skills into university-specific graduate attributes, often with an emphasis on graduate employment outcomes (quantity) rather than excellence (quality) to reflect measures of achievement in the labour market (Jackson, 2014; Shah et al., 2015). Subsequently, graduate employability rates are increasingly measured by university rankings, which can be used to attract government funding and interest through university marketing campaigns (Healy et al., 2020). In 2016, the ‘Good practice report: Nurturing graduate employability in higher education’ (Kinash et al., 2016) was released by Bond University, as a strategic priority project on graduate employability and funded by the Australian Government Office for Learning and Teaching. Furthermore, that graduate outcomes were a whole of institution obligation by embedding employability in the everyday curriculum (Kinash et al., 2016; Pitan & Atiku, 2017).

In the USA, higher education expanded following the Second World War to predominantly focus on producing suitably qualified workers (Chadha & Toner, 2017). In

1956, the National Association of Colleges and Employers (NACE) was established and continues to connect college career service professionals, university relations and recruiting professionals, and business solution providers that serve the community (NACE, 2021; Tran, 2016). Other international corresponding associations including the National Association of Graduate Careers Advisory Services (Australia) and the Association of Graduate Careers Advisory Services (UK) provide a similar service to NACE in their respective countries (Smith et al., 2018). These associations are urged to exercise their influential role to consider industry voices and perspectives, and in doing so, to foster the scholarship of learning and teaching practices related to employability (Smith et al., 2018).

Since 2003, university career services in the UK have been central to learning and teaching developments through the notion of employability (Smith, et al., 2018). The Higher Education Academy's (HEA) active role in the UK between 2003-2015 was to produce an employability framework with corresponding resources to embed employability skills in higher education learning and contribute scholarly publications (Chadha & Toner, 2017; Smith et al., 2018). Several of the HEA publications have showcased the converging theories, policies, and practices characteristic of employability, illustrating the achievement of the HEA between 2003 and 2015 (Smith et al. 2018). Examples of these publications include career development (Watts, 2006), work-based learning (Moreland, 2005), pedagogy for employability (Pegg et al., 2012), and embedding employability into the curriculum (Yorke & Knight, 2004).

Graduates

Graduate employability is considered an achievement for graduates who complete a

higher education degree (Dacre Pool & Sewell, 2007; Jackson 2014; Kinash et al., 2016). Graduate employability from a higher education degree suggests that institutions and industry have contributed to graduates' development of knowledge, skills, identity, and reflective ability to apply and succeed within the labour market (Kinash et al., 2016; Yorke & Knight, 2006). The employability prominence in higher education is timely given the forecast that individuals will have 17 jobs/employer changes and five careers in one career lifespan, which extends from 18-75 years of age (McCrindle, 2014). Complementing this prediction is the suggestion that labour market performance and the employability of graduates will depend largely on the graduate's marketable skills, both cognitive and non-cognitive, and an ability to adapt to workplaces (Manai & Holmlund, 2015; Piopiunik et al., 2020).

Employable graduates are those with the requisite skills to obtain and create meaningful work in which they can be satisfied and successful (Dacre Pool & Sewell, 2007; Smith et al., 2018). Although graduates who complete a degree may be employable within a specific professional field related to the discipline of their degree, employment in that discipline is not guaranteed (McIlveen et al., 2013). Thus, there is growing pressure on higher education programs to produce 'work ready' graduates who are competent in their discipline with demonstrable graduate outcomes (Dinning, 2017; Rufai & Rashid, 2015). Many employers, however, report graduates lack the required skills for employment (Jackson, 2014; Majid et al., 2019; Tran, 2016). While graduate employability relies on the connection between industry and higher education sectors, graduates are ultimately responsible for their own career success (de Schepper & Sotiriadou, 2018; Rufai & Rashid, 2015; Tran, 2015).

A graduate's self-perceived employability occurs at the point of transition of human

capital (skills being the central element) from higher education into the graduate labour market as part of a life-long learning process and to sustain a career (Donald et al., 2019). Human capital in higher education relates to the UG as the means by which the education they receive, translates to the level of graduate returns and contributions to the national economy; the more education undertaken and the higher quality of education, the greater the impact (Gillies, 2017). In terms of graduate employability, human capital is a consideration at the forefront of all organisations in relation to performance and success (Majid et al., 2019). Employers seek potential employees who have a mix of values, behaviours, and an ability to contribute to the workplace (BCA, 2016; McIlveen et al., 2013; Yorke, 2004). In 2015, 'The New Work Order' report series was developed by the Foundation for Young Australians (FYA). The report series was created to guide young individuals on how to approach jobs, careers, and work, to prepare for the transition from education to work, and to highlight the skills required to navigate complex and uncertain working lives (FYA, 2016). Thorough examination of over 2.7 million job advertisements uncovered seven new job clusters in the Australian labour market identifying the skills that employers stipulate are closely connected and highly transferable within each cluster (FYA, 2016). These clusters comprise the: Generators (interpersonal interaction); Artisans (manual tasks skills); Designers (science, mathematics and design skills and knowledge); Coordinators (repetitive administration or service tasks); Informers (information, education, and business service provision); Carers (improves the mental or physical wellbeing of others); and Technologists (understanding and manipulation of digital technology).

Akin to the Australian job clusters and related employer skills demands, USA research conducted by NACE also found that employers across various industries require

similar skills from graduate applicants (DuPre & Williams, 2011). Additionally, the National Association of Colleges and Employers 2010 Job Outlook reported that graduates further need to possess several non-industry skills and characteristics to stand out from the competition. These characteristics, beginning from most important, include communication, analytical, teamwork and technical skills and a strong work ethic (DuPre & Williams, 2011; Hodge & Lear, 2011). Conversely, in the UK, the 2012 Wilson Report suggested that graduates lacked the necessary skills for business and that employers demand graduates to have a 'good fit' for their organisation in terms of skills, attributes, and behaviours (Dickerson et al., 2012; Dinning, 2017). Specifically, the UK Commission for Employment and Skills (2014) identified that skill levels in literacy, numeracy and problem-solving were a concern in terms of a worker's ability to compete for employment internationally, and to achieve workplace 'fit'. Essentially, to achieve workplace 'fit', graduates should have university-sourced opportunities to acquire and develop literacy, numeracy, and workplace skills, and to undertake practical experiences as part of their UG degree (Minocha et al., 2017).

Sport Management Industry and Higher Education Sectors

The rise of the sport industry globally is positioning sport employers at the forefront for today's graduates. A diverse range of sport career opportunities are now available compared to those that existed 20 years ago (Dinning, 2017; Seifried et al., 2021). Professional sport has prospered and UG SM programs have experienced an increase in enrolment numbers, reflecting the demand in managing sport activity (de Schepper & Sotiradou, 2018; Lubisco et al., 2019; Shilbury et al., 2020; Zimmer & Keiper, 2021). Expansive employment and self-employment opportunities within the sport sector have encouraged universities to explore what graduate employability means within SM and how

to best foster it (Dinning, 2017). Continuous industry and workplace environmental changes and growth have driven heightened expectations for successful job applicants to take on many new responsibilities and learn new skills, all while creating additional pressure and uncertainty for entry-level job seekers (Sproles & Detmering, 2012).

Gaining a true representation of the Australian SM labour market is important in a discipline with currently no consistent benchmark of the expected roles and responsibilities for an entry-level job applicant or a higher education graduate (Reeves & Hahn, 2010; Sproles & Detmering, 2012). Sport management in Australia comprises three sectors: non-profit, commercial, and public. Each sector is interrelated, with sector employees often working in collaboration to complete SM projects and gain project funding (Hoye et al., 2018). Organisations that are non-profit in the SM sector include: state sport associations, national sport organisations, and sporting clubs. The commercial sector includes business that generate a profit, and the public sector refers to federal, state, regional and local governments. Each of the three SM sectors are naturally competitive, and increasingly so, as the SM job market attracts highly qualified applicants from academic disciplines such as business and public health (DeLuca & Braunstein-Minkove, 2016; Siefried et al., 2021).

Sport managers highly value internship or practicum experience, via workplace opportunities facilitated by coordinators of UG SM programs, as a way for graduates to stand out in the competitive sports job market (Brown et al., 2018; Ferns et al., 2019; Weiss, et al., 2014). An extensive body of literature highlights a positive association between practical experience and graduate employability, strengthened by the application of subject knowledge and skills and career development learning (Barker, 2014; Brown et al., 2018; Dacre Pool & Sewell, 2007; Smith et al., 2018). Further positive learning

outcomes from practical application include an increased ability to make educated decisions during practical experiences, more specifically about their career future (Clark et al., 2010; Mathner & Martin, 2012; Nicholas & Handley, 2020). However, research also shows that SM managers are dissatisfied with the level of work readiness of graduates from universities (DeLuca & Braunstein-Minkove, 2016; Zimmer & Keiper, 2021). As such, the notion of 'work ready' graduates require the establishment of a shared vision between higher education and industry on what it is to be 'work ready' and employable in specific industries (Dinning & Brown, 2016; DuPre & Williams, 2011; Foster & Pierce, 2021; Kinash et al., 2018).

Sport Management Industry Sector Standards and Accreditation

The variety of opportunities to be involved in the sport industry is extensive and incorporates a range of events, products, and services. Consequently, this has prompted growth in the SM discipline to accommodate the expansion and complexity of the sport industry (Seifried et al., 2021). The notion of sport as a business has solidified through the ongoing scrutiny on the performance of contemporary sport organisations by the public, the organisations' members, and the government (Söderman & Dolles, 2013; Yeh, & Taylor, 2008). Performance is judged by several factors such as an increased generation of income, growth in membership, the provision of more member services, and an output of world champion athletes or teams (Cruickshank & Collins, 2012; Garner; et al., 2016; Söderman & Dolles, 2013; Yeh, & Taylor, 2008). These performance pressures, typically associated with business performance, are prominent within a sporting workplace context (Cruickshank & Collins, 2012; Garner et al., 2016; Söderman & Dolles, 2013). Despite this, specific industry standards, accreditation and job classifications are yet to be formally identified as core to the SM discipline and aligned with both the SM industry and higher

education sectors (Emery et al., 2012; Foster & Pierce, 2021; Keiper et al., 2019).

Accreditation is essentially the formal, third-party recognition and engagement of competence standards for industry-specific task performance related to the expectations of graduates entering the profession, and to relevant courses of study (Barnhill et al., 2018; Ingvarson, et al., 2006; Mathner, & Martin, 2012). In higher education, industry accreditation standards serve to assist universities to develop curriculum, to assess UG and new graduate performance (Ingvarson, et al., 2006) and provide external accountability to ensure the delivery of quality education (Yiamouyiannis et al., 2013). Meeting accreditation standards for a degree is a form of benchmarking (a quality improvement process) against a minimum standard (Oliver, 2010). Apart from this accreditation process at the degree level, Oliver (2010) notes that higher education providers are rarely otherwise benchmarked and even less so from the industry perspective of the employability of graduates (Kinash et al., 2016; Pitan & Atiku, 2017; Mathner & Martin, 2012).

In Australia, exercise and sport science is one example of an industry with an accreditation body, industry standards, re-registration, and training processes for its professionals. Exercise and Sport Science Australia (ESSA) is a professional accrediting body that establishes, advocates, and protects the career pathways of university-trained exercise science and sports science workers (ESSA, 2021). These standards form a framework that guide UG course providers in developing the curricula that satisfies Australian Qualification Framework (Level 7). ESSA also offers graduates the opportunity to become an accredited practitioner, thereby further connecting industry and higher education (ESSA, 2021). Within accreditations, a minimum number of professional learning practicum hours for approved programs is required (ESSA, 2021).

Professional accreditation bodies, such as ESSA, are self-regulating organisations that also promote their services to universities as a ‘marketing strategy’. They promote the appeal of a professionally accredited degree to incoming students (Freeman & Evans, 2016). To higher education, the appeal of professional accreditation bodies is how the perspective of industry and employers, as the consumers of the “product” of higher education (i.e., graduates) is essential to ensure teaching quality improvement and graduate employability (Baker & Esherick, 2013; Phillips & Kinser, 2018). Worldwide, the Commission on Sport Management Accreditation (COSMA) accredits higher education institutions that offer SM programs by applying curriculum accreditation standards, it does not provide SM industry standards (Mathner & Martin, 2012; Yiamouyiannis et al., 2013). In consequence, the UG SM programs are granted accreditation against curriculum standards, not industry standards, thereby suggesting a disconnect between higher education and industry (Baker & Esherick, 2013; Dinning, 2017).

Sport Management Higher Education Sector

Sport management as an academic discipline has undergone immense growth in a relatively short time, which presents several challenges (DeLuca & Braunstein-Minkove, 2016; de Schepper & Sotiriadou, 2018; Mathner & Martin, 2012). These challenges include the diverse and growing UG SM population, the increasing accountability of higher education to raise student achievement, and the prospect of UGs saturating the SM job market, which are all reminders of the competitiveness of sport employment (Koo et al., 2016; Mathner & Martin, 2012; Zimmer & Keiper, 2021). Despite the injection of a suite of subjects covering sport finance, sport administration, sport sociology, sport marketing, and practicum into UG SM programs, UGs are still reporting that guidance is

lacking around navigating the industry (de Schepper & Sotiriadou, 2018, Emery et al., 2012).

A SM graduate's lack of industry knowledge can potentially create a disconnection between a graduate's expectations of the industry and reality (Barnhill et al., 2018; Jackson & Wilton, 2017; Zimmer & Keiper, 2021). This includes general industry misconceptions such as working in sport is glamourous (Brown et al., 2018; Mathner & Martin 2012; Nicholas & Handley, 2020). Rosenberg et al. (2012) contend that students enter universities with the expectation that they will acquire the requisite knowledge, skills, and attributes to perform their jobs upon entering the workforce and to advance their careers. Employers also have an expectation that a university education will provide graduates with employability skills related to those required to perform their jobs (Dinning & Brown, 2016; Rosenberg et al., 2012). The Human Capital theory (Donald et al., 2019) supports this expectation proposing that education can enhance the marketable skills and abilities required by UGs to increase their productivity and job performance (McIlveen et al., 2013; Piopiunik et al., 2020; Schultz, 1961). Furthermore, accurate industry expectations are likely to assist UGs to make an occupational choice based on the expected satisfaction of a specific career (Barnhill et al., 2018; Jackson & Wilton, 2017; Zimmer & Keiper, 2021).

Career Development and Career Development Learning

Critical to employability is career development, career development programs, and career development learning. Career development focusses on the individual (subjective) in a working context with an emphasis on their psychological, cognitive, and behavioural characteristics and how contextual factors influence changes in their respective careers over time (Healy et al., 2020; Piopiunik et al., 2020; Zacher, et al., 2019). Undergraduate

career development programs relate to UG career decision-making and the pursuit of career goals through management and workplace practical experiences (Amundson et al., 2002). The importance of career development programs is to shift the focus to long-term employability rather than immediate employment gains (Healy et al., 2020).

Higher education creates an ideal forum for career development learning in which UGs can learn to take more responsibility for the direction and advancement of their own careers, and to interpret the meaning of career success in relation to their own unique criteria (Amundson et al., 2002; Healy et al., 2020). The focus of career development learning is two-fold. The first is learning career development content such as self-learning and the world of work, the second is learning about the process of career development which includes establishing the essential skills to navigate a successful and satisfying career (McMahon et al., 2003). The Decision Learning, Opportunity Awareness, Transition Learning and Self-Awareness (DOTS) Model (Law & Watts, 2003) incorporates both career development and career development learning and is a model that career educators worldwide have adopted over several decades (Andrews, 2014). DOTS engages students to develop an awareness of themselves as unique individuals, to explore and understand industry opportunities and further, to enhance their ability to make career decisions and transition learning into the workplace (Law & Watts, 2003). DOTS was created for use in secondary education, expanded to higher education and then extended to working with adults. It provides an example of a model that explores the relationship between career development learning and strategies to enhance the employability of students (Dacre Pool, 2017; McIlveen et al., 2013; Watts, 2006). The simplicity of the DOTS Model can be credited for its enduring popularity (Dacre Pool & Sewell, 2007; Plant, 2014). Yet, criticisms of the model include the dependence on matching an

individual to a specific working environment without addressing social and political contexts and suggestions that an individual is at fault when they are unable to secure a 'self-fulfilling' occupation (McCash, 2006). The criticisms of the DOTS Model can also be viewed as a failure to recognise its simplicity in allowing individuals to organise the highly complex career development learning concept into a manageable model (Dacre Pool & Sewell, 2007).

Employability Knowledge, Skills and Attributes

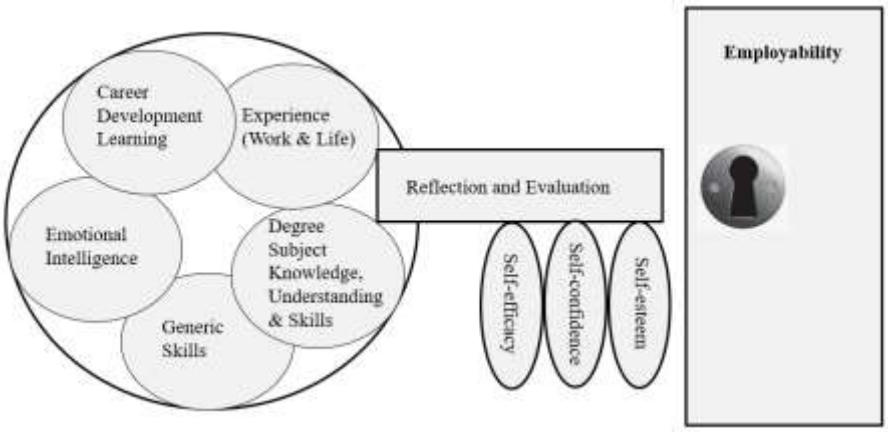
A quality education should include practical experiences and other forms of assessment to develop generic and specific competencies to improve graduate employability (Fleming, et al., 2009; O'Leary, 2017). Employability combines the appropriate knowledge, skills, and personal attributes to enhance a graduate's ability to contribute to the workplace (Yorke, 2004). Employability as a concept identifies that higher education institutions have a central responsibility to develop and support student competencies in preparation for a career post-graduation (Yorke, 2006). Undeniably, graduates need a strong foundation of knowledge, skills, and attributes to be productive managers and effective leaders (Kerr et al., 2006; Majeski et al., 2017; Tucker et al., 2000). Professional and personal attributes, values, competency, and leadership combined, represent an individual's personal brand which subsequently influences an individual's perceived career success, perceived employability, and job performance (Chen & Chung, 2017; Gorbatov et al., 2021; Khedher, 2019). Literature continues to link emotional intelligence with leadership (Côté et al., 2010; Kerr et al., 2006), career success (Aydogmus, 2019; Fall et al., 2013), employability (Chand et al., 2019; Dacre Pool, 2017), and most recently, career adaptability (Parmentier et al., 2019; Udayar et al., 2018). Further, an ability to critically reflect forms part of learning, thinking and evaluation, all of

which are key to the development of self-awareness, self-efficacy, self-confidence, self-esteem, and subsequently employability (Dacre Pool & Sewell, 2007; Moon, 2004; Peterson et al., 2015; de Schepper & Sotiriadou, 2018).

The Key to Employability Model (Dacre-Pool & Sewell, 2007) (Figure 1) provides a clear and visual response to the common question of what employability is. These authors assert the 'direction of interaction' between the various elements forms a metaphorical image of a key opening the door to employability. The nine elements of the model include: Experience (Work & Life); Degree Subject Knowledge, Understanding and Skills; Generic Skills; Emotional; Career Development Learning; Reflection and Evaluation; Self-Efficacy; Self-Confidence; and Self-Esteem. The model illustrates the theoretical concept of employability and the degree of overlap between the elements within various points of the model that are accessible to both practitioners and graduates (Dacre Pool & Sewell, 2007). For example, practical experience forms an important part of career development learning, and in many cases will inform subjective learning within the relevant course being studied. The model further recognises that no single person is ever completely employable and there are always aspects of a person's employability that can be improved; but most importantly, employability is a lifelong process (Bridgstock, 2009; Dacre Pool & Sewell, 2007; Yorke, 2006).

Figure 1

The Key to Employability (Dacre Pool & Sewell, 2007)



Based on the Key to Employability Model (Dacre Pool & Sewell, 2007) placed in a SM context, is the notion that if UGs from SM programs do not recognise the importance of basic skills and attributes, their perception of employability when seeking employment may be negatively affected (Dinning, 2017). The inclusion of self-reflection tasks in the curriculum can foster awareness of the importance of employability skills to UGs (Dacre Pool & Sewell, 2007; de Schepper & Sotiriadou, 2018). Self-reflection can be prompted by enabling UGs to acknowledge how far they have come, that they understand industry requirements, and comprehend the value of employability skills (Dacre Pool & Sewell, 2007; de Schepper & Sotiriadou; 2018; Dinning, 2017).

Several proposed employability models, for example, the Understanding, Skills, Efficacy Beliefs and Metacognition model (USEM) (Yorke and Knight, 2004) and the Decision Learning, Opportunity Awareness, Transition Learning and Self-awareness (DOTS) model (Law & Watts, 2003), typically guide the development of graduate employability. The guidance is provided not simply in terms of the immediate employment outcomes of graduates, but also how employability can be sustained over a career lifespan (Dacre Pool and Sewell, 2007; Yorke, 2006). In the 'Key to Employability'

Model (Dacre Pool & Sewell, 2007), practical experience is recognised based on its likelihood to enhance a graduate's employability. Specifically, in terms of developing key competencies and skills related to a graduate's ability to reflect on their subjective experiences (life, work, and study), and the application of learnings (Peterson, et al., 2015). Important to highlight, is that learning is a process whereby knowledge is created from the combination of comprehending experience and conveying the learning, rather than from instruction (Bergensteiner et al., 2010; Kolb, 1984). This enables graduates to capitalise on their work, life, and personal practical experiences (Dacre Pool & Sewell, 2007).

In Australia, the Employability Skills Framework Stage One (Goodwin, et al., 2012) was publicly funded to research, develop, and implement a national, cross-sectoral framework to address employability skills. The report generated from Stage One describes the outcomes of the research, collaborations, and key findings to assist promote the framework (Goodwin et al., 2012). Key findings included: a positive outlook perceived by collaborators on the provision of a framework with common language; increasing the visibility of employability skills, and the key notion that the application of a skill can be transferable (Goodwin et al., 2012).

Employability Dimensions

To address the importance of employability and specialist skills from an employer perspective, Rosenberg et al., (2012, p. 2) researched the basic employability skills required for job performance, and the need for additional training in the required skills following graduation. This research was influenced by the differing perspectives of human resources managers, recent graduates, and the faculty (of the graduate), in relation to the required skills to perform a job (Rosenberg et al., 2012). As such, Rosenberg et al. (2012)

designed and tested a questionnaire measuring the Eight Dimensions of Basic Employability Skills with human resource managers, graduates, and university faculties. These employability skills are transferable core competencies that represent essential practical knowledge, skills and abilities required to successfully perform at all levels of employment in the modern workplace (Rosenberg et al., 2012). The eight Employability Dimensions are: Basic Literacy and Numeracy Skills; Critical Thinking Skills; Leadership Skills; Management Skills; Interpersonal Skills; Information Technology Skills; Systems Thinking Skills; and Work Ethic [Disposition].

Each of these eight Employability Dimensions consist of several defining elements to illustrate the significance and depth of each employability skill, expanding from common and prescriptive lists of generic and one-dimensional employability skills. The questionnaire scale items focus on the widening gap between employers, educators, and graduates in defining what constitutes basic employability skills (Capelli, 2008; Rosenberg et al., 2012). Specifically, the items provide a comprehensive list of basic employability skills to create a mutual understanding by employers, educators, and graduates of these basic, but essential employability skills to secure graduates' preparedness for work (Rosenberg et al., 2012). The education and industry systems are interrelated; "the product of the education system is the input of industry" (Rosenberg et al., p. 14). Fundamentally, a collaborative business relationship requires the supplier (education) to understand its customers' (industry) skill needs (Rosenberg et al., 2012). Researchers globally, have adapted the Employability Dimensions questionnaire to explore factors which influence the employability of higher education graduates in comparative industry contexts (Collet et al., 2015; Finch et al., 2013; Jackson, 2014).

Signalling and Practical Experience

Observation of graduate employability is difficult however, for several decades, Signalling theory (Spence, 1973) has guided employers in their assessment of business quality and employee productivity (Cai, 2013; Drover et al., 2018). Spence's Signalling theory proposed that in most employment markets, employers face uncertainty in the capabilities and productivity of prospective employees at the time of hiring and rely on signals from applicants to address that uncertainty. Spence further proposed that signals are alterable unless they are "immutably fixed" (p. 357) such as gender and race. Education as an employability signal, has been identified to distinguish highly productive employees (Bol & Van de Werfhorst, 2011; Castagnetti et al., 2005; Dupray, 2001; Piopiunik et al., 2020; Protsch & Solga, 2015) and determine more job offers or higher employee wages (Page, 2010; Pogatsnik, 2018; Spence, 1973; Wilton, 2012). Such education is derived from Human Capital theory (Donald et al., 2009) and, prior to the 1990's, most 'signalling' researchers took the first employment after graduation as the point of observation of higher education outcomes (Cai, 2013). The process of transition from education to the workplace as the career success of graduates has since become a key indicator to measure higher education quality (Cai, 2013; Chan, 2016).

Research on graduate transition to the workplace has shifted to highlight consideration of employers' perceptions of graduate requirements for the workplace and how they influence higher education provision to UGs (Cai, 2013; Dinning, 2017; Kinash et al., 2016; Stewart et al., 2016). Variations of Spence's (1973) Signalling Theory have influenced the positive signalling by graduates transitioning into the workplace and include the signalling effect international experience can have on determining wages (Crossman & Clarke, 2009; Jacob et al., 2019); the value of active learning while engaging students in the labour market (Fleming & Haigh, 2017; Wolla, 2014); and employer

willingness to pay for experience or extracurricular activities (Norwood & Henneberry, 2006; Weiss et al., 2014, Wilton, 2012). As such, Signalling theory enhances the transparency of where organisational signals originate, the resultant impact these signals have on graduate applicants, and how these signals are addressed by a graduate in their transition from education to the workplace (Drover et al., 2018).

Experiential Learning Cycle (Kolb, 1984)

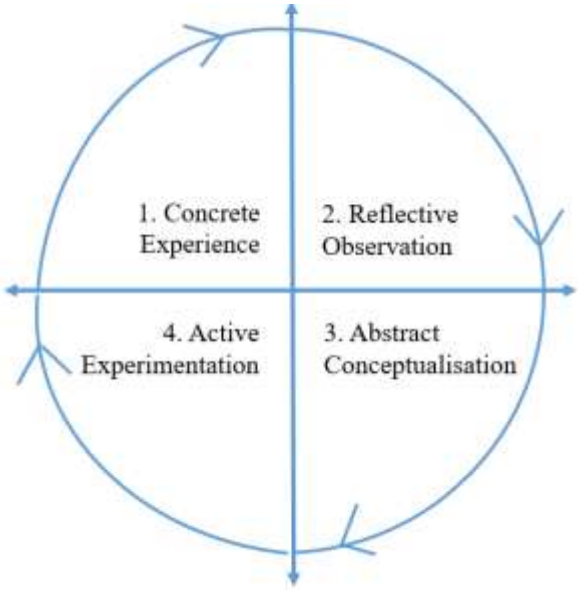
Experiential learning is defined as the process whereby knowledge is created through the transformation of [practical] experience (Chan, 2012; Kolb, 1984). Learning through practical experience outside of the classroom have become imperative elements of UG SM programs (Bradbury et al., 2021). More specifically, when practical experience is included in UG SM programs, the workplace becomes an important learning environment providing practice that is informal, contextual, and social (e.g., in terms of customer interaction) (de Schepper & Sotiriadou, 2018). Kolb (1984) describes his Experiential Learning Cycle as a "framework for examining and strengthening critical linkages among education, work and personal development" (p. 4). Furthermore, experiential learning is particularly beneficial to illustrate industry employment practices (Brown, 2007; Chinomona & Surujlal, 2012).

The Experiential Learning Cycle (Kolb, 1984) provides holistic educational experiences to assist learners navigate practical experiences through a cycle of experiencing, reflecting, thinking, and acting (Peterson et al., 2015; Vinales, 2015). Positive insights associated with the adoption of the Experiential Learning Cycle (Kolb, 1984) in higher education include, study skills learning in sport students (Groves et al., 2010; Kosnik et al., 2013); supporting teacher education (Donnelly, 2009; Fry et al., 2008); learning experience from a student perspective (Ha-Brookshire, 2008; Peterson et

al., 2015), and learning experientially through case studies (Kosnik et al., 2013; Kreber, 2001). The Experiential Learning Cycle is depicted by a four phased cycle (Figure 2). The four, in order, are: Concrete Experience (engage in new experiences); Reflective Observation (observe, reflect, and make sense of the experience); Abstract Conceptualisation (create ideas and integrate learning); and Active Experimentation (adopt problem solving decision-making to test new ideas) (Peterson et al., 2015; Vinales, 2015). 'Learning how to learn' is a notion that should be a focus of education in combination with a provision of practical experiences, to enhance the learner's relativity to these experiences, by 'flooding' all the senses to provide the best learning and graduate outcomes (Kolb & Kolb, 2018, p. 10).

Figure 2

Experiential Learning Cycle (Kolb, 1984)



Note: Structural Dimensions Underlying the Process of Experiential Learning and the Resulting Basic Knowledge Forms, (Kolb, 1984) Figure 3.1, p. 42.

The term ‘experiential’ in Kolb’s (1984) Experiential Learning Cycle provides a perspective on learning in two ways. The first is to connect the experiential learning concept to its origin which reflects the extensive works of John Dewey (1938), Kurt Lewin (1957) and Jean Piaget (1970) based on research in psychology, philosophy, and physiology (Kolb, 1984; Hedin, 2010; Miettinen, 2000). The second is to highlight the significant role that practical experience plays in the learning process (Kolb, 1984). Kolb, Dewey, Lewin, and Piaget share the same view that learning occurs in a cycle (Hedin, 2010).

The theoretical origins of experiential learning dates to the 1930’s and John Dewey’s philosophical belief that preparing students for future responsibilities and success in life occurs by means of varied practical experience as opposed to formal, traditional curricula (Bradbury et al., 2021; Dewey, 1986). The role of a teacher in the learning process is to organise the learning content and facilitate the actual experiences, based on the capabilities and readiness of the learner (Dewey, 1986; Roberts, 2003). Dewey's experiential learning theory (1938) emphasises that experiences should occur in a social environment and that learning becomes concrete when the outcomes of the personal experiences, such as the construction of knowledge, are realised and can be applied to differing situations (Dewey, 1986; Roberts, 2003).

Additional educational psychologists have contributed to the historical trajectory of the experiential learning concept, focusing their research on learning theories with an emphasis on "learning by experience" or "learning by doing" (Massari et al., 2018, p. 14). Contributions by Kurt Lewin to experiential learning theory is evident through his social psychology research on the role of feedback in group dynamics in the mid-1940’s which became an influence in the field of organisational behaviour (Bradbury et al., 2021; Hedin,

2010). Jean Piaget's theoretical contributions stem from his cognitive-developmental psychology research related to how experience shapes intelligence and how children relate experiences to make sense of their world (Bradbury et al., 2021; Hedin, 2010). Finally, the Five Stage Model of Experiential Learning (Joplin, 1981) theoretically guided experiential learning using five stages for educational contexts including: focus; challenging action; feedback; support; and debriefing. These bare close resemblance to Kolb's Experiential Learning Cycle that forms the basis of the adult thought process (Bradbury et al., 2021; Seaman et al., 2017), comprising: experience and concept, reflection, and action on a continuum (Kolb, 1984).

Practical Experience as a Signal

Practical experience when presented as an observable signal is significant. The signal represents the positive outcomes of a range of experiences, each contributing to employment at entry level (Piopiunik et al., 2020). The human cognitive process of learning and memory is invariably influenced by various emotions associated with experiences such as undertaking tests, examinations, homework, and meeting deadlines (Culver, 1998; Tyng et al., 2017). A quality education should include learning achieved by completing practical experiences and other forms of assessment to develop generic and specific competencies that improve graduate employability and emotional intelligence skills (Fleming et al., 2009; Kolb, 1984; Nelson & Low, 2011; O'Leary, 2017). A study of Australian people aged 25 years and their part-time work was conducted to identify positive outcomes associated with practical experiences (FYA, 2016). Results identified that 60% of this age-group hold a post-school qualification and 50% work full time through multiple part-time jobs. One concern from these results was that 76% of respondents did not believe they possessed relevant practical experience to gain full time

employment. The significance of practical experience to gain full time employment has been recognised globally by leading companies. These include Google, Apple, and Oracle who have recently removed the degree requirement in favour of practical experience and specific skill requirements (Marqhardson & Elnoshokaty, 2020).

In higher education, industry practical experience is regarded as a central element in teaching, which assists students to keep up-to-date with industry employment practices (Brown, 2007; Chinomona & Surujlal, 2012). In doing so, it "cultivates people to meet the needs of the labour market" (Cai, 2013, p. 457). From the student perspective, UGs who have benefited from experiential learning programs understand the opportunity that industry practical experience provides to reflect on the experience and enhance their motivation to achieve positive learning outcomes (Brown et al., 2018; Chan, 2012; Martin & Leberman, 2005). It is also an opportunity for students to explore and experience the 'real world', go beyond their comfort zone, and change perceptions of reflecting, thinking, and acting (Ha-Brookshire, 2010; Pogatsnik, 2018). Furthermore, UGs who undertake practical experience in different contexts have demonstrated an ability to perform better in interviews as graduates based on their ability to delve into their learning outcomes (Chinomona & Surujlal, 2012). Specifically, practical experience gained from practicum, voluntary experience and part-time employment is likely to produce work-ready, motivated, and committed graduates who can critically reflect, apply transferable skills and their experiential learning to the workplace (de Schepper & Sotiriadou, 2018; Simons et al., 2012; Weiss, 2014).

Practical Experience Gained from Practicum. Increasingly, contemporary labour market employers seek work-ready graduates with relevant practical experience and the non-technical skills to perform efficiently in the workplace (Jackson & Collings, 2018;

Jackson et al., 2017; Lord et al., 2019). The expectation on the higher education sector to prepare UGs astutely for the global workplace has intensified (de Schepper & Sotiriadou, 2018; Fry, et al., 2008; Jackson & Collings, 2018). Undergraduates must have the ability to apply theoretical knowledge gained from the classroom practically to industry contexts (Chinomona & Surujlal, 2012; de Schepper & Sotiriadou, 2018). Relevant practical experience gained through UG studies is an effective method to achieve this and is viewed positively by graduate employers (Jackson, 2014; Pogatsnik, 2018). Two of the most common forms of opportunities to undertake practical experience can occur through practicum (placement) or work-integrated learning (WIL) which combines formal on-campus learning with simulated or workplace opportunities (Jackson, 2014; Loon et al., 2015; Simons et al., 2012). Practicum and WIL are supervised practical experiences that are discipline- and career-based, involving active learning, critical reflection, and professional development (Simons et al., 2012).

Learning experiences, despite whether they are positive or negative, will still impact strongly on the graduate (Chan, 2012). The quality of learning through practicum is not reliant on the quality of the experience of work itself. Instead, it is focused on the student's ability to apply critical reflective practice to transform gained experience and knowledge into new learning (de Schepper & Sotiriadou, 2018; Torres et al., 2014). Similarly, the roles of practicum, are to assist UGs make the connection between coursework and the workplace (Hergert, 2009). Several studies have highlighted that practicum is of greater worth if it relates to the job or field of work (Barker, 2014; DeLuca & Braunstein-Minkove, 2016; Jackson, 2014; Fleming & Haigh, 2017). Further, practicum is highly valued by students if it has a direct connection with a student's ultimate career goals (Hergert, 2009; Robinson et al., 2016). Subsequently, UGs with practicum experiences are

often perceived by employers to be better prepared, equipped and more marketable (Ferns et al., 2019; Gault et al., 2010; Pogatsnik, 2018).

Adapting student learning from the classroom to the workplace is a long-established practice of UG SM programs (Bradbury et al., 2021; Sibson & Russell, 2011). The benefits of practicum in higher education are extensive, specifically when assessing the relevance and suitability of the curriculum; the competence of UGs; the authenticity of practicum programs and the strength of the working relationships with the industry sector (Brown et al., 2018; Jackson et al., 2017). Opportunity to reflect, assess, and evaluate while undertaking practical experience as an UG will typically enhance a student's social awareness of the organisational context in relation to their capabilities and ability to make more informed career choices (Jackson & Wilton, 2017; Mathner & Martin, 2012; de Schepper & Sotiriadou, 2018).

Sport Management employers prefer to offer graduates with UG practicum experience full-time employment opportunities over graduates with minimal or no practicum (Brown et al., 2018; Gault et al., 2010). In Australia, Sotiriadou (2011) reported that 65% of UG SM programs provide practicum subjects however, also noted that the practicum subject was more likely to be an elective. The concern of this finding is 90% of SM employers surveyed at the time of the aforementioned study, expected a minimum of two years' practical experience (Emery et al, 2012). In essence, SM graduates need practical experience to secure a job, asserting the importance of mandatory practicum in UG SM programs, and to avoid a mismatch of employer expectations of the preparation of these UGs (Emery et al., 2012; Keiper et al., 2019). In contrast, the USA boasts mandatory practicum (internship) integrated into the curriculum and exists for 86% of SM UG and graduate programs and 77% of UG, Masters, or doctorate SM programs feature an

experiential learning component (Brown et al., 2018). The Sport Management Program Review Council, developed by NASSM and National Association for Sport and Physical Education, developed 12 Sport Management Program Standards (Bradbury et al., 2021). The final of the 12 standards states the mandatory requirement of UGs to complete a minimum of 400 hours of practical experience following junior year to prepare to enter the industry (Bradbury et al., 2021).

Practical Experience Gained from Voluntary Experience. Historically, the sport sector has relied significantly on volunteers to assist with the management of large numbers of participants at all levels of sport, alleviate the associated cost of employing staff to service sport programs (Hoye et al., 2018; Ringuet-Riot et al., 2014; Wallrodt & Thieme, 2020) and to manage local sport clubs. The decision to volunteer is typically underpinned by influential factors which could include motives, life history and opportunities that uniquely combine to provide very individual initiations into volunteering (Holdsworth, 2010; MacNeela & Gannon, 2014; Wallrodt & Thieme, 2020). Volunteers reap many benefits from unpaid practical experiences including enhanced self-perception, social confidence, leadership and teamwork skills, resilience, and employability (Jackson & Wilton, 2017; Kinash et al., 2016; MacNeela & Gannon, 2014).

In the SM industry sector, motivated and committed volunteers contribute to the functioning of non-profit organisations and events. As reflected by the number of active volunteers occupying SM roles in Australia (2.3 million); Canada (1.6 million) and the UK (3.6 million) (Wicker, 2017), the range of sport and active recreation provisions, including events, would unlikely exist at the current scale without volunteers (Hoeber, 2010). Further investigation of the benefits from voluntary sport experience are the positive effects on labour market outcomes including an increased perception among hiring

managers that volunteering produces job-relevant skills and qualifications and lead to higher future earnings and full-time employment (Gault et al., 2010; Wallrodt & Thieme, 2020). Voluntary experience is positively viewed by employers more so than university practicum, based on the notion that the graduate may demonstrate increased productivity stemming from self-driven motivation or commitment (Weiss et al., 2014).

Practical Experience Gained from Employment. In the workplace, graduates with practical experience and the requisite skills to contribute to the business of an organisation, are highly sought after by respective employers (Jackson & Collings, 2018; Jackson et al., 2017; Lord et al., 2019). As such, UG engagement in part-time employment while studying is not only advantageous to increase networking and opportunities for employment within industry, but also to develop workplace skills commensurate with employability (Jackson & Collings, 2018; Kinash et al., 2016).

Individuals who train for one job will gain transferable skills applicable across 13 other jobs due to the similarity of generic skills employers' demand (FYA, 2016). One example of generic skills requirements relates to SM, where formal academic training and basic social skills are vital, while high-level transferable skills such as teamwork, professionalism and leadership gained from paid work are attractive to prospective employers (Keiper et al., 2019; Kinash et al., 2016). The benefits gained by graduates from paid practical experiences are immense and improve graduates' ranking in employers' hiring decisions, while human capital increases productivity on the job (Ferns et al., 2019; Jiang et al., 2012; Weiss, et al., 2014). The broader the range of skills, experience, and capability, the greater the signalling, and higher the causal effect on the employment chances of a graduate to enter the labour market (Piopiunik, et al., 2020).

Interaction between Industry and Higher Education

Collaboration between industry sector employers and respective higher education program coordinators contribute to quality UG training programs (Dinning, 2017; Rufai & Rashid, 2015). These collaborations encourage innovative program development, achieve mutual goals, and increase graduate employability (Braunstein-Minkove & DeLuca, 2015; Rufai & Rashid, 2015). Industry-specific graduate employability, and the respective perceived skill requirements, need to better align across the relevant industry and higher education sectors to avoid a mismatch between the required skills by industry employers and acquired skills from a university (Keiper et al., 2019; Kinash et al., 2016). To assist graduates in the acquisition of knowledge about their employability and meet industry expectations, academics who teach UGs need to possess industry-based knowledge to relate to and align UGs with sport-related jobs (Braunstein-Minkove & DeLuca, 2015). In doing so, it defines realistic industry expectations to UGs and enhances collaborations between respective industry and higher education sectors where ultimately UG industry-based learning is achieved (Barnhill et al., 2018; Dinning, 2017; Zimmer & Keiper, 2020).

A primary component of UG learning in the discipline of SM is the translation of theory to practice. Interaction between industry and higher education sectors addresses James Weese's contention that "if we're not serving practitioners, then we're not serving sport management" (1995, as cited in Braunstein-Minkove & DeLuca, 2015, p. 13). Essentially, feedback from SM industry sector supervisors on UG performance while on practicum, could complement higher education processes which assess graduate quality (Mason et al., 2009; Shah et al., 2015). Fundamentally, the consideration of UG SM program coordinators should be to act as the "critical conduit" between UGs and the industry to provide collaborative preparatory opportunities with the goal of adding value

to UG degrees, while increasing graduate employability (Braunstein-Minkove & DeLuca, 2015, p. 13; Keiper et al., 2019). Increasing graduate employability through collaborative preparatory opportunities such as practicum is particularly beneficial for UGs to demonstrate professional expertise during job recruitment and selection to influence the hiring decision of employers (Lord et al., 2019).

Job Recruitment and Selection

Job recruitment and selection processes adopted by employers, act as a guide to navigate the talent pool of graduates and labour market demands (Cai, 2013). In the discipline of SM, extensive research exists on the skills, knowledge, and attributes that SM employers seek from graduates (Tsitskari et al, 2017). Yet, limited literature relates to the job recruitment and selection of graduates from UG SM programs, despite the need to invest in thorough processes to ensure the selected employee has a strong organisational fit (Cai, 2013).

Essentially, many organisations rely on their business reputation or an employer brand to recruit strong applicants (Taylor et al., 2015). Consequently, employers need to be transparent when recruiting, in relation to the skills, knowledge, and attributes they seek from graduates, otherwise they risk creating unclear workplace expectations and representation of the industry sector (Stewart et al., 2018). Although research into job recruitment, specifically, job advertisement criteria is not extensive, studies are accessible (Anastasiou, 2014; Emery et al, 2012; Sportspeople, 2014). Imperative aspects of job advertisement criteria include analyses to systematically examine the job tasks and responsibilities and the skills, knowledge and experience required to perform in the role (French & Rumbles, 2010; Taylor et al., 2015). Subsequently, it is graduates who have work-related motivations and an awareness of the employment opportunities within

industry who will be better prepared and drawn to a job advertisement that provides the detail to indicate if the job is the best fit for them (Nicholas & Handley, 2020; Parker, & Ohly, 2008; Singh, & Greenhaus, 2004).

To recruit suitable prospective graduate applicants into sport, the applicant requires specialised knowledge of the industry sector. Launched in 1999, Sportspeople was the first agency in Australia to offer a sport specialist recruitment service for the sport, fitness, and aquatic sectors in the Australia-New Zealand job market. Over the years, the services offered by Sportspeople have extended to incorporate organisational reviews and workplace surveys (Emery et al., 2012). These reviews and surveys inform prospective applicants on job opportunities in each industry sector, together with employment rates, salaries and other indicators categorised across 20 pre-identified job classifications representative of the Australian sport, fitness, and aquatics job markets (Sportspeople, 2021). In the UK, comparable sport recruitment agencies include Executives in Sport Group (Executives in Sport Group, 2022), Sports Careers Agency (Sports Careers Agency, 2022), and a comprehensive Sport, Recreation and Recruitment agencies directory. While there were no apparent exclusive sports recruitment agencies in the USA, recruitment agencies for college athletes are prominent and include Athletes USA (Athletes USA, 2022), Sports Recruiting USA (soccer) (Sports Recruiting USA, 2022) and Platform Sports Management (Platform SM, 2022).

Research on job selection tends to focus on what applicants can do but not what happens after selection and subsequent employment (Zhao & Liden 2010). Specific selection strategies adopted by industry include artificial intelligence obtained through applicant tracking systems, recruitment software to instantaneously address candidate qualifications (Nicholson & Handley, 2020), and social media content for screening job

applicants (Jeske & Schultz, 2019). Employers typically screen prospective graduate employees against their preference of basic characteristics relating to either specialised industry preparation and/or demonstration of high ability through past achievement (Sagen et al., 2000). The unknown element of how applicants will perform in the role following selection is reliant on an employer's assessment of the applicant during job selection (Piopiunik et al., 2020; Zhao & Liden, 2010).

Traditional job selection processes are distinct and methodological however, minimal research exists on how employers assess a job applicant against the job criteria which includes skills, knowledge, and attributes for selection (Piopiunik et al., 2020). Specifically, these required skills, knowledge, and attributes are not directly observable from evidence provided in a job application or from an interview, during job recruitment and selection (Briggerman & Norwood, 2011). Practicum experiences, conversely, provide employers an opportunity to observe applicants' motivations directly and accurately, skills, work ethic and ability, thereby strengthening the selection process (Taylor et al., 2015). These experiences enable graduate applicant referees to witness their skills, knowledge and attributes and relay these to the potential employer (Pellizzari, 2010).

Chapter Summary

The rapid growth of the sport sector has resulted in increased interest and enrolments into UG SM programs (de Schepper & Sotiradou, 2018; Shilbury et al., 2020; Zimmer & Keiper, 2021) in the quest to gain employment upon graduation. Extensive literature illustrates a positive association between practical experience and graduate employability, enhanced through the application of subject knowledge and skills, and career development learning (Barker, 2014; Dacre Pool & Sewell, 2007; Smith et al., 2018). Hindering the representation of the SM industry sector in Australia is the absence of defined job

classifications and standards (de Schepper & Sotiriadou, 2018; Emery et al., 2012) to enhance SM higher education curriculum (Keiper et al., 2019; Smith et al., 2018). To build the knowledge of job classifications and standards is the need for research to form a holistic understanding of the SM industry sector by UGs and gain an ability to signal their employability to prospective employers (DeLuca & Braunstein-Minkove, 2016; Zimmer & Keiper, 2021).

Hampering a defined portrayal of the SM industry sector in Australia is the absence of a SM industry accreditation body with central industry standards and job classifications that can be applied by the higher education sector through SM programs (Emery et al., 2012; Yiamouyiannis, 2013). The absence of an associated accreditation body reinforces the vital importance of collaboration between SM industry sector organisations and coordinators of UG SM programs. In doing so this ensures graduates are suitably prepared to respond to evolving industry demands and standards (DeLuca & Braunstein-Minkove, 2016; Griffith & Rainer, 2010) and relevant course curriculum is provided (Ferns, 2012) to build knowledge and skills. The absence of an accredited body also reinforces the significance of practical experiences to learning, development, and subsequent capacity of graduates from UG SM programs, to transparently signal their employability during job recruitment and selection.

To guide curriculum and student learning, employability models such as The Key to Employability (Dacre Pool and Sewell, 2007), USEM (Knight and Yorke, 2004) and DOTS (Law & Watts, 2003) focus on how employability can be sustained over a career lifespan. The eight Employability Dimensions (Rosenberg et al., 2012) extend further to provide a comprehensive list of basic employability skills. The composition of multiple employability skills provides an in-depth perspective to create a mutual understanding by

employers, educators, and graduates of these essential employability skills to develop graduates who are work ready. In addition, and based on the works of Dewey, Lewin and Piaget, the Experiential Learning Cycle (Kolb, 1984) identifies holistic educational experiences to assist learners to navigate practical experiences (Peterson et al., 2015). Each model and cycle epitomise the learner's journey through a cycle of experiencing, reflecting, thinking, acting, and familiarisation with respective industry disciplines (Vinales, 2015).

Increased collaborations and connectedness between industry sector employers and respective higher education program coordinators represents an opportunity to encourage authentic program development, to achieve mutual goals and increase graduate employability (Braunstein-Minkove & DeLuca, 2015; Dinning, 2017; Rufai & Rashid, 2015). The discipline of SM needs to be concerned with the translation of theory to practice and define realistic industry expectations for UGs (Barnhill et al., 2018; Braunstein-Minkove & DeLuca, 2015).

To conclude, exploration into job recruitment and selection highlights the human capital investment made by organisations and challenges faced, in the quest to recruit quality graduates who are motivated, skilled and the right fit for the organisation (Nicholas & Handley, 2020; Parker, & Ohly, 2008; Singh, & Greenhaus, 2004). Restricting this process is the lack of knowledge and research into how graduate employability is assessed by a prospective employer (Briggerman & Norwood, 2011; Piopiunik et al., 2020), in particular, SM in Australia (Emery, et al., 2012).

The current research addresses this lack of knowledge. Chapter three outlines the mixed methods approach adopted to determine how practical experience can enhance the learning, development, and subsequent capacity of graduates from UG SM programs to

transparently signal their employability during job recruitment and selection. Justification and validation of the study design, methods of data collection, and analyses associated in each stage of the research are also presented.

Chapter Three: Methodology

The focus of this chapter is to provide an overview of the methodological approach and comprehensive rationale for the method design adopted to address the current research purpose. The purpose is to determine how practical experience can align the learning, development, and subsequent capacity of graduates from UG SM programs, to transparently signal their employability during job recruitment and selection.

The chapter is divided into two key sections. First, an outline of research methods and an overview of the research design and progression of the method implementation are presented. Second, the three method stages adopted to answer the three research questions are reported. To address the absence of literature on SM job classifications and need for graduate practical experience, research question one focused on the identification of these classifications and corresponding practical experience requirements. To address the lack of knowledge on signalling during job recruitment and selection, research question two aimed to identify the signals that SM employers seek on the practical experiences of graduate-entry job applicants. To address the lack of understanding of how sport managers assess whether a graduate is employable, research question three sought to identify what recommendations can be made for managers from the SM industry sector and coordinators of UG SM programs. Specifically, the three research questions are:

1. What job classifications of advertised graduate-entry sport management positions stipulate practical experience as a prerequisite?
2. What signals do sport management employers seek from graduate-entry job applicants of practical experiences during job recruitment and selection?
3. What recommendations can be made to managers from the sport management industry sector and coordinators of undergraduate sport management programs on the signals

employers seek from graduates to demonstrate employability from practical experiences?

Research Methods

Research methods are designed to collect and analyse data to explore and address research questions (Sweeney, 2016). Research questions are shaped by the purpose of a study and subsequently form the methods and design of an investigation (Bryman, 2016; Onwuegbuzie & Leech, 2006). Research methods have evolved over the years to form two broad categories, qualitative and quantitative methods (Sweeney, 2016). Essentially the purpose of qualitative and quantitative methods studies and their possible outcomes must be clear to ensure the best approach, such as: explanatory, exploratory and descriptive, is adopted (Strydom, 2013). An explanatory approach seeks to answer the 'how' and 'why', while an exploratory or descriptive approach searches for the 'who, what, where and when' answers (Edwards & Skinner, 2010; Yin, 2012). All three explore and seek to answer questions, and to ascertain the meaning of experiences from the perspective of participants (Harrison et al., 2017).

Qualitative research methods focus on the process of understanding a research query as a humanistic or idealistic approach (Pathak et al., 2013). Data that is considered qualitative are typically written or spoken words, or observations with a non-direct numerical interpretation, allowing the researcher to build a complex, holistic picture of the participant that is generated in a setting familiar to them (Check & Schutt, 2017; Khan, 2014).

Exploratory, explanatory, and descriptive approaches can be adopted through qualitative methods, to understand an individual's beliefs, experiences, attitudes, behaviour, and interactions and to enhance the involvement of everyone related to the

study (Pathak et al., 2013; Strydom, 2013). Semi-structured interviews, case studies, and content analyses are common examples of qualitative methods of research (Qu & Dumay, 2011; Sadovnik, 2017; Williams, 2007).

Quantitative research methods are based on numeric data to provide large representative samples; reliably confirm or disconfirm theoretical hypotheses; and clearly summarise numerical data in various means to others (Fassinger & Morrow, 2013). Gathering quantitative data typically focuses on needs assessment (e.g., large-scale surveys) to identify what is going on before explaining it and know why something behaves the way it does enabling the confidence to introduce an intervention to change it (Harrison et al., 2017; Strydom, 2013). A combination of exploratory, explanatory, and descriptive approaches can be adopted to discover the characteristics of some social occurrence (e.g., age and sex) and to understand or explain the relationships between events or processes (Check & Schutt, 2017). These approaches can also determine the social change and associated practical outcomes and suggested interventions (Check & Schutt, 2017; Strydom, 2013). Customary quantitative methods examples include, correlational, observational studies, and surveys (Stockemer et al., 2019; Williams, 2007).

Adopting qualitative and quantitative methods to research studies allow for exploration and understanding of individual perspectives to a related topic and to the relationships between events or processes, respectively (Check & Schutt, 2017; Pathak et al., 2013; Strydom, 2013). When combined, qualitative and quantitative methods become mixed methods, offering a deeper understanding of the phenomenon being studied, than that of a single method (Baran, 2022). Mixing both methods to a single study will deliver the evidence required to develop a rich understanding of the research problem (Baran, 2022).

Mixed Methods

A mixed methods design of research adopts qualitative and quantitative approaches (written and numerical respectively) to answer research questions (Williams, 2007). Mixed method research questions comprise interconnected qualitative and quantitative elements. For example: “what and how” or “what and why”, will produce study conclusions or inferences (Onwuegbuzie & Leech, 2006; Tashakkori & Cresswell, 2007).

Employing a combination of qualitative and quantitative methods in a single approach strengthens the method while conversely minimising the weakness of adopting a single approach (Clark & Ivankova, 2016; Williams, 2007). The sample sizes of quantitative compared to qualitative research methods tend to be larger, yet offer limited description (Bradner, 2018). On the other hand, qualitative methods provide a detailed description of the subject matter, however, the weakness in the limited sample sizes poses challenges for researchers when generalising results beyond the sample (Bradner, 2018).

Debate has centred on the mixed methods approach in relation to the distinct differences in qualitative and quantitative approaches, sparking suggestions that neither should be combined (Bryman, 2016). Despite these suggestions, the body of supporting knowledge underpinning mixed methods approaches to research in disciplines such as health and sport is increasingly becoming popular and recognised as conventional (Guetterman et al., 2015; McKenna et al., 2021). Conventional mixed method research designs include: convergent parallel, explanatory sequential, exploratory sequential, and embedded (Sweeney, 2016).

Research Design

To address the three research questions and strengthen the research design of the current study, a mixed methods design was employed. Based on the limited existing

literature, an exploratory approach was deemed the most appropriate. Each research question was methodically developed using an exploratory approach to achieve the right question sequence and ensure the questions generated the required information (Brace, 2018). It enabled, for example, to understand the signals ('what') that managers ('who') seek throughout job recruitment and selection ('when'), which indicate a graduate's employability from having had a practical experience ('where'). The mixed method approach was applied in three stages to the current research according to the order of the research questions. Each stage projects a forward motion or development of the individual, similar to the Experiential Learning Cycle (Kolb, 1984), the Key to Employability (Dacre Pool & Sewell, 2007), and the shared notion that practical experience and respective subjective learning can enhance a graduate's employability.

In Stage One, a job advertisement audit was the method adopted to analyse content related to the SM industry sector. Content analyses involves "detailed and systematic examinations of a particular body of materials" (Leedy & Ormrod, 2001, p. 155). In the current research, job advertisements and corresponding job descriptions were examined. Content analyses can be qualitative and quantitative, focusing on interpreting and understanding data (Oleinik, 2011). These examinations occur to detect patterns, themes, or biases (Leedy & Ormrod, 2001; Williams, 2007). In the current research, examination focused on detecting patterns (industry awareness factors) and themes (job classifications).

In Stage Two, a semi-structured interview method was chosen due to the flexibility, accessibility, and capability of disclosing the often, hidden facets of human and organisational behaviour (Qu & Dumay, 2011) and sampling to choose respondents (Bryman, 2016). Semi-structured questions focused on the 'who, what, where and when' (Onwuegbuzie et al., 2010). The content of these questions was developed from the

literature reviewed. The coding analysis was guided by the Experiential Learning Cycle (Kolb, 1984) to identify the importance placed on practical experience, from a sport manager's perspective, to gauge a graduate's employability. Fundamentally, the knowledge gained from practical experience is created from the combination of comprehending experience and conveying the learning (experiential learning), rather than from instruction (Bergensteiner et al., 2010; Kolb, 1984).

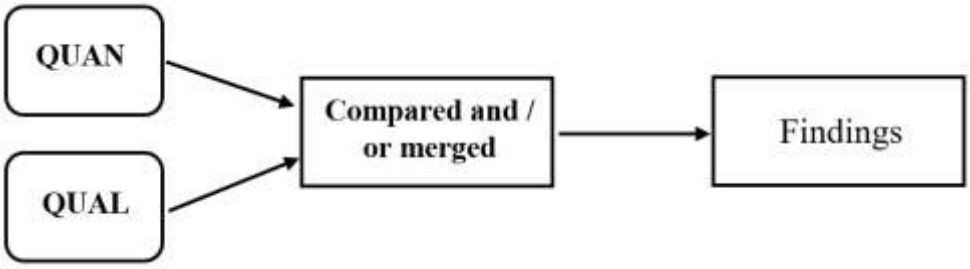
In Stage Three, an online survey was the method adopted in the current research to explore the term 'employability' in relation to graduates from UG SM programs. The exploration was based on the perception of participants (sport managers) through a ranking process (Strohacker et al., 2019). The survey design was guided by the existing employability HRM Survey tool which measures the Eight Dimensions of Basic Employability Skills (Rosenberg et al., 2012). The 'what' (signals) and 'how' (transparent employability) was examined in this research in relation to what signals are relevant and how managers from the SM industry sector can recognise these as an indicator of graduate employability during job recruitment and selection. Adopting an online survey method provided an ability to quantitatively compare responses (Bryman, 2016). To assist with this comparison, cross-validation via 'within-method triangulation' was used to converge and corroborate results (Azulai & Rankin, 2012) and assess the reliability and validity of content analysis (Oleinik, 2011).

Based on the simultaneous collection of quantitative and qualitative data, a convergent parallel design (Figure 3) was adopted. The design allowed merging of results to enable a complete understanding of a phenomenon (Bryman, 2016). By adopting this method analyses, data were able to be compared and/or merged to form a combined and complete representation whereby quantitative data contributed to the scope of

knowledge/concepts gained from the qualitative data (Bryman, 2016; Teddlie & Tashakkori, 2006). The convergent parallel design supports a mixed method approach to better understand the research problem and progression of method implementation (Bryman, 2016).

Figure 3

Convergent Parallel Design (Bryman, 2016)



Note: Social Research Methods (p. 639) by Bryman, A., 2016, Oxford, United Kingdom. Oxford University Press.

Progression of Method Implementation

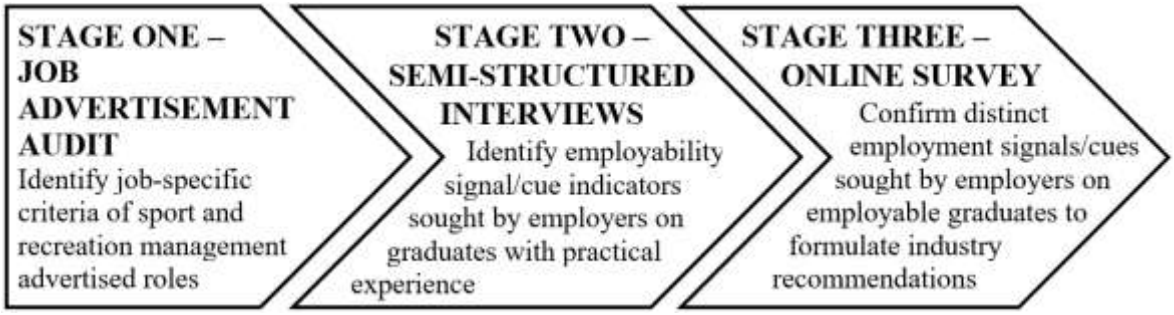
While the current study adopted a convergent parallel design for utilising quantitative and qualitative data, the three stages occurred consecutively. Furthermore, analyses from the early stage informed elements of the subsequent stages (Onwuegbuzie et al., 2010). A technique referred to as "complementarity development" uses the findings from one method to help inform the other method (Greene et al., 1989, p. 258; Onwuegbuzie et al., 2010).

Complementarity development in the current study was evident. A progression of data existed where, for example, Stage One data analysis identified the SM job classifications. These job classifications were used to target participants for the semi-structured interviews (Stage Two), and the demographic characteristics were used to identify organisation type groups and salary ranges for the online survey (Stage Three).

The three progressive method stages (Figure 4) were designed to determine how practical experience can align the learning, development, and subsequent capacity of graduates from UG SM programs, to transparently signal their employability during job recruitment and selection.

Figure 4

Progressive Method Stages



Stage One – Job Advertisement Audit

The purpose of data collection and analysis is to organise and elicit meaning and extract rational conclusions (Bengtsson, 2016). To determine meaning and draw conclusions, content analysis, which comprises both a quantitative (Krippendorff, 2018; Riffe et al., 2019) and a qualitative methodology (Assarroudi et al., 2018; Elo & Kyngäs, 2008), is a method which can be used inductively or deductively (Assarroudi et al., 2018; Bengtsson, 2016; Elo & Kyngäs, 2008). In the Stage One audit, content analyses using job advertisements and a systematic process of examining text, were adopted. The benefit of this process was its ability to inspect a large volume of publicly accessible advertisements with limited resources and cost (Kennan et al., 2008; Reeves and Hahn, 2010). The objective of Stage One was to identify the job classifications of advertised graduate-entry SM positions that stipulate practical experience as a prerequisite. A pilot audit and audit

were conducted respectively over a three-week and six-month period. These audits will be discussed in the following section.

Pilot Audit

To confirm criteria, processes and sources for the audit, a pilot study was first conducted. The purpose of the pilot study, in this case, was similar to the importance noted of piloting and pre-testing questions for self-administered questionnaires, namely, to uncover and address problems before executing the final job audit investigation (Bryman, 2016). Findings from the pilot were discussed with the student's two supervisors (Morin, 2013). As a result, the criteria were confirmed, terminology representing graduate/entry level jobs was determined, and key job websites that advertise relevant positions were identified. A three-week pilot study was conducted to: identify which criteria constituted or indicated graduate relevant jobs; enable streamline data-collection processes; and confirm recruitment websites to review. Job title and the terminology used in each job description for example, were explored to determine graduate or entry-level jobs (Reeves & Hahn, 2010; Kennan et al., 2008).

Data Collection. The criteria for the advertised job collection included the location of the advertised jobs, namely SM positions in the state of Victoria (Australia) that were at graduate-entry level and stipulated practical experience and a tertiary qualification (or specific degree) as a prerequisite. Victoria was the selected state due to the crowning of Melbourne as the sporting capital of the World (Rovere, 2016), with an abundance of sport facilities and home to 37 of the 96 Australian recognised national sport organisations head offices (Sport Australia, 2021). This includes the Melbourne-based national offices of the five sports in Australia with the highest weighted estimate of participation instances for children and/or adults: 1) swimming (adults and children); 2) tennis (adults); 3) golf

(adults); 4) Australian Rules football (children); and 5) basketball (children) (Eime et al., 2020).

The job advertisements with corresponding job descriptions, were collected weekly over a three-week period in March 2015. A total of 35 job advertisements and corresponding job descriptions were gathered. The key words ‘sport’ and ‘recreation’ helped locate appropriate SM positions. By the end of the three weeks, after testing the reach of the terms, ‘sport’ and ‘recreation’ separately, it was evident that ‘sport’ captured a larger number of job advertisements than ‘recreation’, also capturing the same advertisements collected under ‘recreation’. Three additional key terms, ‘graduate-entry job’, ‘practical experience’, and the associated specification of a ‘tertiary qualification’ or specific ‘degree’ were used to guide the job audit process (Field, 2009). These key terms contributed to the identification of titles that indicated entry level jobs (Reeves & Hahn, 2010). Data was recorded in date order (of collection) in an MS Excel spreadsheet and sorted into column headings representing specific details of the advertised position.

Data Analysis. The MS Excel spreadsheet developed for the collection of data and used to sort data into 14 column headings (Table 1) was exported to IBM SPSS 22 where the column headings became variable labels for analysis. These headings were derived from the content in each job advertisement and corresponding job description collected. To ensure data validation, content was cross-checked with the two thesis supervisors (Pradana et al., 2019). As a result of the cross-checking, each of the headings were justified and remained the same.

Table 1

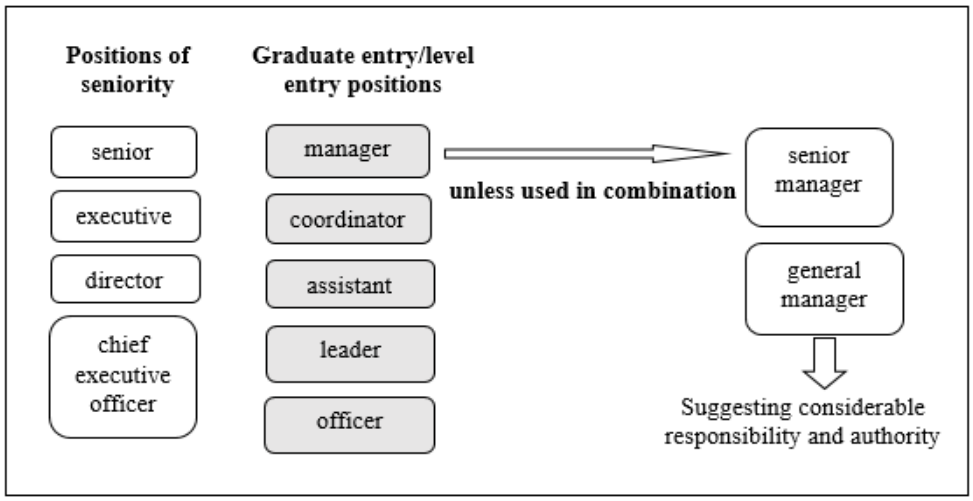
Data Information Spreadsheet Columns/Variables

Job Number
Organisation
Position
Graduate entry key terms
Search date
Job Status (Full/part time/casual)
Hours/days week
Salary
Tertiary qualifications
Job Classification
Experience (type)
Experience (years)
Working with Children Check
Additional qualifications/licences

Findings from the pilot study identified position titles in terms of seniority and titles specific to a graduate or entry level position. The terms manager, coordinator, assistant, leader, or officer (unless used in combination with the terms senior or general) characterised the graduate or entry-level jobs (Figure 5).

Figure 5

Terms of Reference Indicating Graduate or Entry-Level Jobs



Audit

Job advertisements with corresponding job descriptions were collected over a six-month period from mid-April to mid-October 2015. Collections occurred weekly to capture current postings. Twelve websites in total were used to source job descriptions (Appendix A). Two types of websites were searched, either sport-specific or generic. The sport-specific websites were selected based on central sporting organisations offering job recruitment services (e.g., Sportspeople, SMAANZ and the Australian Sports Commission (now Sport Australia)). The generic websites (e.g., Seek, Jobseeker, and Career One) represented major Victorian and Australian sites (Kennan et al., 2008) based on the popularity/recognition of brand as reputable recruitment websites where sport employment is actively promoted.

Data Collection. The publicly accessible job descriptions that met the audit criteria, were downloaded and screened for duplicates (Reeves & Hahn, 2010). A summary page, in Microsoft (MS) Word, outlined the websites visited and dates accessed. This information and the number of job advertisements collected from each website, was

updated for each weekly search. Websites were searched in the order they appeared on the MS Word summary page (Appendix A) and careful checking ensured that duplicated job descriptions were excluded. Job descriptions were numbered and stored in an electronic folder in corresponding job number order.

Following the filing of each job description, the salary (expressed yearly) was calculated from figures provided in each job description for an hourly or part-time rate or identified from a specific salary band. For example, for a local council salary band, the corresponding local council banding was checked first and where banding amounts were not identified, the Pay and Conditions Guide – Local Government and Industry Award 2010 (Fair Work Ombusdman, Australian Government, July 2015) was used to identify the banding amount.

Data Analysis. In the absence of job classifications aligned across the SM industry, the Sportspeople job classifications (Table 2) provided a reference point given the job classifications underlying Sportspeople's advertisements strongly represent the broad sport industry in Australia (Smith & Smolianov, 2016). The 20 classifications identified by Sportspeople to categorise advertised jobs for the sport, aquatics, and fitness industry are outlined in Table 2.

Table 2

Classification of Advertised Jobs Used on Sportspeople Website

Administration/Finance/Operations	Food and Beverage/Hospitality
Aquatics	Government
Coaching/High Performance	Graduate/Entry Level
Community Club	Institutes
Customer/Membership/Athlete Services	Lifestyle/Yoga/Pilates/Massage
Development/Participation/Programs	Medicine & Science/Psychology/Athlete
Education	Services
Elite Athlete Friendly	
Events/Competitions	Peak Body/Sport Organisation
Executive	Referee/Umpire Judge Official
Fitness	Retail/Apparel/Merchandising

Note: Retail/Apparel/Merchandising was one of the six original job classifications identified in Stage One. By 2016 this classification was superseded by the classification Marketing/Media/PR/Communications.

These job classifications served to identify relevant industry roles from which to target prospective interviewees (i.e., sport managers) for recruitment for Stage Two. Out of the 20 Sportspeople job classifications used to group the advertised positions, findings from the audit identified six as the most relevant to indicate graduate-entry level and respective practical experience. The job description information related to these six classifications revealed the desired skills, knowledge, and experience applicable. Consequently, the advertisements and respective descriptions collected for these job classifications were grouped according to the associated position function.

At the end of the six-month audit, the MS Excel data originally developed from the pilot study, was exported to IBM SPSS 22 for analysis. Most data, however, was in text form and not numerical, based on the written job description information. As a result, to enable the conduct of descriptive statistics with all the variables, textual data from the job advertisements and corresponding job descriptions were numerically coded for analysis. The content corresponding to each variable were assigned a numerical code (Pallant, 2013) for example, the variable Job Classification 1 = Administration/Finance/Operations. These descriptive statistics were presented as frequencies and percentages. Mean and standard deviation were also recorded for the continuous variables of salary and experience (years) variables.

Job classifications were determined by the function of the role identified in the job title/description, as opposed to the industry sector it represented (Javed et al., 2015; Zhu et al., 2016). For example, Leisure Programs Officer was a position advertised for a local council. To allocate to a job classification, the position was allocated to the Development/Participation/Programs job classification because it represented the function of the advertised job and corresponding job description.

Stage Two – Semi-Structured Interviews

The objective of the semi-structured interviews was to explore the signals that sport managers seek from graduate-entry during job recruitment and selection. A low-risk ethics application was submitted and reviewed by the Victoria University Human Research Ethics Committee. Subsequently, ethics approval: HRE15-212 was gained for the conduct of semi-structured interviews.

Interview Design

The fundamental strength of qualitative research lies in its potential to explore a topic in-depth (Carlsen & Glenton, 2011). Methods adopted to conduct semi-structured interviews act as a tool to capture the voice of the interviewee and how they make meaning of their own experiences (Rabionet, 2011). In regards to the current research and need to capture the 'voice' of the recruiting sport manager, semi-structured interviews were deemed appropriate.

The literature reviewed was fundamental to informing the design of the semi-structured interview questions. Three key problems identified in the literature reviewed, founded the structure of the interview questions. The three problems identified were: a lack of consistent literature outlining distinct SM job classifications and standards; limited UG SM practical experiences upon graduation; and a lack of knowledge and research relating to employer assessment of graduate employability during job recruitment and selection. In total, eight semi-structured interview questions (Appendix B) were methodically developed using an exploratory approach to achieve the question sequence and ensure the questions generated the required information (Brace, 2018). For example, the semi-structured interview question 'What are your beliefs on the value of practical experience for graduates?', was aimed at gauging sport managers' perceptions of the value of practical experience (Taylor et al., 2015). While the interview question 'What guides you when confirming the selection criteria for sport management graduate positions?', was directed at identifying what knowledge, skills and attributes sport managers seek from applicants that could potentially be recognised as employability signals (Emery et al., 2012). Fundamentally, the face-to-face semi-structured interview design aimed at identifying new employability knowledge while leaving an opening for participants to

extend new meaning to the research focus by providing a response in their own words and in the way they think (Galletta, 2012; Qu & Dumay, 2011).

Participants

When identifying prospective interviewees, it was crucial they represented a cross-section of the six job classifications identified in Stage One. A stratified random sampling technique was used to ensure representation of the six job classifications in the sample and that the sampling error was kept to a minimum (Bryman, 2016; Teddlie & Yu, 2007). The stratified random sampling method was used to identify prospective interviewees. The sample was selected from the Stage One MS Excel database which was grouped by job classification and alphabetically ordered, specifically reflecting the function of the advertised position. Initially, 10 participants were identified and selected from every twentieth position on the database, for example at positions 20, 40, 60, and so on, up to 200. The sampling at every twentieth position ensured that each of the six job classifications were represented at least once (Bryman, 2016), thereby addressing the additional complex requirements of stratified sampling (Teddlie & Yu, 2007). Publicly accessible contact details were used to connect with the identified manager based on the sampling technique adopted. If no publicly accessible contact details were provided, the job description was used to identify the manager that the role reported to and the respective organisation website was searched to identify the associated person.

In instances, where no contact details were possible, random selection continued where the position directly below the one with no contact details was selected on the MS Excel spreadsheet. This person replaced the initial manager selected, provided these contact details were available. For example, if the selected job in twentieth position on the database did not have any contact details or names to pursue, then the job in the twenty-

first position was selected. If this job had no contact details, then the job above the original job number, number nineteen, became the replacement. The process was repeated as required while keeping close to the sampling fraction of 1 in 20 (Bryman, 2016).

Procedure

An invitation email was sent to the identified sport manager by the researcher to participate in the study (Appendix C). The email included an 'Information to Participants' form that outlined the purpose and requirements of the research, it also included a consent form (Appendix D). If no response was received a follow-up email was sent one week after as a reminder of the initial invitation (Bryman, 2016). No further contact was made with individuals beyond this point if they had not responded to either invitation. Subsequently, new managers were selected via stratified random sampling from the database.

Invited managers were given the opportunity to ask questions before confirming their consent to participate. When managers expressed interest, a confirmation email was sent with a reminder to complete the consent form and a request to provide at least three dates and times of when they were available to meet with the researcher. Interview dates and times were set, and signed consent forms returned prior to the conduct of interviews. The number of interviews was determined by the number needed to achieve data saturation which was assessed based on the degree of theme development and theme importance (Hennink et al., 2017). As a result, interviews were conducted until data and meaning become repetitious, new information or insights ceased, and it was deemed collection of additional data was not necessarily going to lead to more information (Bryman, 2016; Mason, 2010). Saturation was determined by transcript coding outlined in the following data analysis.

Data Collection

The interview setting was the participant's workplace specifically selected to enhance interviewee's responsiveness and comfort in a familiar environment (Longhurst, 2003). Specifically, interviews were conducted in a workplace meeting room (or similar). Interviews took approximately 35 minutes and were audio-taped. Immediately following the interview, the audio recordings were transcribed into a Word document. Each transcription was checked via the audio of the interview, amended where necessary, de-identified and sent to each interviewee for member-checking to ensure quality control and to deepen understanding and strengthen findings (Barusch et al., 2011; Harper & Cole, 2012). Each interviewee was given a week to respond under the mutual understanding that if no response was made, the transcripts in their original format were used. Feedback was altered as per instruction from interviewees who did respond. Interview transcriptions were produced a few days after each corresponding interview and coded immediately to determine data saturation.

Data Analysis

Interview data was coded using NVivo12 for analysis. Deductive and inductive coding guided the identification of themes. Deductively derived codes were determined by the four fixed phases of the Experiential Learning Cycle: 'Concrete Experience, Reflective Observation, Abstract Conceptualisation and Active Experimentation' (Kolb, 1984). Data unable to be deductively coded into the four phase themes were inductively coded. Inductive codes evolved as unforeseen concepts arose in the interviews (Morse et al., 2012). These codes were subsequently grouped into themes.

Themes were formed when the code emerged in three or more responses (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2011). The thematic categorisation process aimed to ensure data was

thoroughly considered from the outset, appropriately positioned into sub-themes and then into predetermined (deductive/inductive) themes (Wong, 2008). Information from each theme provided an insight into the signals employers sought from graduates in relation to their practical experience and subsequent employability (Barker, 2014).

Stage Three – Online Survey

The objective of the Stage Three online survey was to explore the signals that sport managers seek from graduate-entry job applicants and how UGs can transparently signal their employability. These were explored in the context of job recruitment and selection.

Participants

To gain a broader representation of paid sport managers across Australia, participants invited to complete the online survey (Appendix E) were sport and recreation managers from organisations in all states and territories, across Australia. The term 'recreation' was added to the inclusion criteria to capture a broader spectrum of sport managers working in a range of employment contexts. In addition, the following criteria guided participant selection. These managers needed to:

1. Perform at least one of the six job classifications identified from Stage One
2. Be involved in the recruitment and selection of their organisation related to graduates within the six identified job classifications.

The number of volunteers in Australian sport is recognised (AusPlay, 2021), however the number of paid sport and recreation managers in Australia is publicly not available. As an estimation, this number would be extensive when considering the number of sport managers working across the six job classifications in local government, community, state, national and peak sporting bodies, corporate sport, and local, state, national, and international sporting events. Hence, a minimum sample size was calculated

to ensure the viability of analysis and a power analysis was conducted using an effect size of 0.5, an error probability of 0.05 and a power of 0.80 across six groups (which represent the six job classifications). A priori and F-test were selected. The F-Test was chosen to examine variances within the samples and to test the overall fit of the model to a set of observed data (Field, 2009; see analysis section). A priori tests explored the existence of differences among participant groups and the post-hoc tests to determine among which pairs of participant groups differences existed (De Jong et al., 2010). The minimum sample size calculated by the power analysis was 60 participants.

Participant recruitment of sport and recreation managers was conducted using 13 sources, with multiple networks to help expand distribution of the survey. A presentation was conducted by the researcher of the current study, at the Sports Federations' Annual General Meeting (Vicsport office, November 2016). The purpose of attendance at the meeting was to raise awareness about the thesis topic, and to gain support with the national distribution of the Stage Three online survey, nationally. Following the presentation, five State Sports Federations within Australia, from Victoria, South Australia, Western Australia, New South Wales, and Queensland, agreed to disseminate the online survey link via newsletters and social media to their respective staff members. The national offices of two leading non-profit community sport and leisure providers in Australia, professional associations, peak sport and recreation industry bodies, and networks from several universities offering SM or similar courses also agreed to distribute the survey to industry organisation partners. Representatives from each of these organisations (Table 3) were forwarded an image file (Appendix F) with information and a survey URL to allow advertising on social media, organisation newsletters and websites. Additionally, a direct post was created to market the survey on LinkedIn (Appendix G).

Direct posts were created on various industry LinkedIn groups, Twitter, and university Alumni sites. The Alumni posts were created on two Australian university alumni sites, which was possible due to these being universities the researcher had attended as a student. Monthly reminders were posted on social media sites to regularly refresh recruitment efforts. The University Careers Counsellors who also promoted the survey, represented universities that offered SM or equivalent courses (Appendix H).

Table 3

Survey Dissemination Sources

Industry organisations	**Social Media Sites**
State sport federations and equivalent	LinkedIn – various sport and activity groups
Peak Industry Bodies – Aquatic, recreation, and leisure	Twitter
Non-profit community sport and leisure providers – Two leading providers	Alumni Groups – Two universities
University Careers Counsellors	

Incentives can encourage survey participation (Crews & Curtis, 2011). An incentive for the current study was for participants to enter a draw to win $500 (AUD) to purchase sports equipment/resources for a nominated sports club/facility. Responses were anonymous excluding respondents who chose to provide a contact email address or telephone number for the final survey question, to enter the draw. The URL of the online survey was anonymous as the sole purpose of the question was to obtain details (optional) for the draw. The winner was drawn on Monday 14 August 2017 and duly notified.

Measures

The terms questionnaire and survey were used concurrently in relation to the online survey. The term ‘questionnaire’ referred to the survey tool, ‘Human Resources Manager (HRM) Survey – Retail CPP questionnaire’ (Rosenberg et al., 2012) (Appendix I) used to measure Employability Dimensions. The term ‘survey’ referred to the items developed for the current research.

The survey design was guided by the existing employability HRM Survey tool which measures the Eight Dimensions of Basic Employability Skills (Rosenberg et al., 2012). The eight Employability Dimensions are: Basic Literacy and Numeracy Skills; Critical Thinking Skills; Leadership Skills; Management Skills; Interpersonal Skills; Information Technology Skills; Systems Thinking Skills; and Work Ethic. Each of these eight Employability Dimensions comprised four to 11 items characterising the skills and attributes required for an individual to demonstrate capacity. New employability knowledge inductively gained from the Stage Two interview analysis were included as sub-scale items into the survey tool under suitably aligned Employability Dimensions. The deductive knowledge gained from the Stage Two interview analysis guided the survey data analysis and is explained in the respective Data Analysis section.

The online survey included three sections and a total of 66 items. In summary, Section 1 included nine items on demographics and details to outline the job role of each respondent. Section 2 asked about employability qualities and included 47 items from the ‘HRM Survey – Retail CPP questionnaire’ and a further nine items adapted from inductive themes derived from Stage Two. Section 3 included one single open-ended question asking for further comment.

Section 1: Respondent Demographics and Job Information. Section 1 of the survey collected demographic information and job role details (see Appendix E – Online Survey) from each respondent. Questions one and two focused on the study inclusion criteria including the identification of role and involvement in hiring employees. To assist with clarity, a definition related to hiring (refer to Definition of Key Terms), was included in the survey. If respondents did not meet both criteria, the system automatically thanked and released them from the survey.

In question three, respondents were asked to select their employment status (e.g., full-time, part-time, etc.) within the sport and recreation industry sector. Question four sought the respondent's age and provided selection from five-year age ranges, beginning at 18-23 and ending at 60+ (Australian Bureau of Statistics, 2017). Question five asked about the respondent's annual income among a range of $14,000 (AUD) increments, starting from $0-14,000 and finishing at $90,000+ (AUD). These income increments were determined from salaries indicated in each job description gathered via the Stage One job advertisement audit.

Question six asked the respondent's gender and the seventh question asked about the respondent's workplace location in the form of a postcode. Question eight focused on the participant's organisation in terms of the nature of business operations and type of workplace. Fourteen response options were provided for question eight including an "Other" option. The 13 response options for question eight were guided by the Stage One job advertisement audit analysis related to the nature of business operations and type of workplace. The "Other" options for questions six and eight included a text box for respondents to write their answer. This option aimed to capture responses not already represented among the existing response options. Thematic and numerical coding using

IBM SPSS 25 enabled the grouping and quantitative analyses of the write-in responses (Pallant, 2013). Finally, question nine asked whether the respondent's workplace had hired graduates from UG sport and recreation management courses.

Section 2: Employability Dimensions. The second section of the survey utilised Rosenberg et al.'s (2012) 'Human Resource Manager (HRM) Survey – Retail CPP questionnaire' that measures Eight Dimensions of Basic Employability Skills. The scale items focused on the widening gap between employers, educators, and students with the purpose to define what constitutes basic employability skills. Cited by 303 researchers to date (as of January 2022), the eight Employability Dimensions within Rosenberg et al.'s article, have formed the basis to explore the factors which influence the employability of higher education graduates on a global scale (Collet et al., 2015; Finch et al., 2013; Jackson, 2014).

Permission was granted (Stuart Rosenberg & Ronald Heimler, 2017) for the current researcher to use the HRM questionnaire. This included the order and wording of items and the completion and scoring instructions. Only Part II of the three-part HRM – Retail CPP questionnaire was used based on the suitability of questions required for the purpose of the current research. Part I covered demographics and Part III asked about whether managers perceived graduates willing to undertake further training and professional development. The HRM – Retail CPP questionnaire was selected due to the similarity of the targeted sample, namely managers who recruited and selected graduates.

The multi-item scale, based on the items from the HRM – Retail CPP questionnaire, was used to reflect the often complex and multidimensional attitudes or values of respondents (Bryman, 2016; Johns, 2010), thereby strengthening content validity. The multiple-item scale aspect was selected to reduce the probability of a respondent

misunderstanding a question. It was also beneficial to provide more accurate readings than can be obtained from a single item, particularly if the item wording is too general and does not reflect the true state-of-affairs of the respondent (Bangor et al, 2009; Bryman, 2016; Johns, 2010).

There were eight sub-scales representing the eight Employability Dimensions (Rosenberg et al., 2012) of the original questionnaire. These eight Employability Dimensions are: Basic Literacy and Numeracy Skills; Critical Thinking Skills; Leadership Skills; Management Skills; Interpersonal Skills; Information Technology Skills; Systems Thinking Skills; and Work Ethic. Each Employability Dimension sub-scale instruction began with "Recent graduates with 1-2 years of experience:" thereby encouraging respondents to consider the importance of recent SM graduates possessing the items listed for each of the eight Dimensions (See Table 4 for sub-scale item examples; See Appendix E – Online Survey, Section 2 for the full survey). Respondents selected one response per item, from a five-point Likert scale (left to right), Strongly Disagree; Disagree; Slightly Agree; Agree; and Strongly Agree. These response options appeared in the same order as in the original questionnaire (Pallant, 2013; Rosenberg et al., 2012).

Table 4

Example: Survey Sub-Scale Items Aligned to Employability Dimension 1 (Rosenberg et al., 2012)

Employability Dimension 1	Sub-Scale Items
Basic Literacy and Numeracy Skills	Understand and perform basic mathematic computations.
	Organise basic ideas; communicate orally to get their message across in discussions or a presentation.
	Communicate basic thoughts, ideas, and messages in writing in a clear, concise, and logical manner. If needed, they can create documents, such as letters, directions, manuals, reports, graphs, and flow charts.
	Interpret, and respond to basic verbal messages/cues.

Nine additional employability items were sourced from the new knowledge gained from the Stage Two interview themes and added to the existing the HRM – Retail CPP questionnaire dimensions (Rosenberg et al., 2012). These new items (Table 5) were specific to the sport context which was important because the existing HRM – Retail CPP questionnaire items were more generalised for use in various employment sectors. Consideration of each employability sub-theme from Stage Two (and corresponding codes) was essential when tracking against existing HRM – Retail CPP questionnaire items. This process helped identify new employability traits, identified in Stage Two, not already covered by the original questionnaire. The new sport-specific items aligned to the questionnaire's existing Employability Dimension groupings based on the respective definitions provided by Rosenberg et al. (2012). It was essential to word these items similarly to existing items for semantic and grammatical consistency (Pogorilyy & Kramov, 2020). The nine new items identified from Stage Two analysis that aligned to five Employability Dimensions are identified in Table 5.

Table 5

Additional Survey Items Aligned to Employability Dimensions (Rosenberg et al., 2012)

Employability Dimension	Additional Survey Items
Critical Thinking Skills	Gain additional, relevant, training qualifications.
Leadership Skills	Gain the support of key referees.
	Demonstrate commitment to the industry through voluntary experience.
Interpersonal Skills	Demonstrate their ability using experiences from their extra-curricular activities.
Systems Thinking Skills	Comprehend the complexities of sport organisation operations.
	Know about specific sports.
	Link prior experience to deliver best practice.
	Know how the role contributes to the organisation.
Work Ethic	Understand the benefits of experience.

The Critical Thinking Skills Employability Dimension, which reflects skills such as thinking creatively, making decisions, and problem solving (SCANS, 1991 as cited in Rosenberg et al., 2012), gained two new items from Stage Two. The first was ‘gaining additional, relevant training qualifications’, which implied the need of an individual to maintain currency and industry relevance. The second additional item in this Employability Dimension was ‘demonstrate commitment to the industry through voluntary experience’. This represented the typical leadership characteristics of responsibility, self-esteem, and the ethical qualities of integrity and honesty (Rosenberg et al., 2012) which

"key referees" would support and result from the ability to think critically (Simon & Warner, 1992).

The Interpersonal Skills Employability Dimension, which includes elements such as "the ability to work in teams, help others to learn, provide customer service, negotiate agreements, resolve differences, and work in a multicultural organisation" (SCANS, 1991, as cited in Rosenberg et al., 2012, p. 7), gained a single new item from Stage Two. This new item was 'demonstrate their ability using experiences from their extra-curricular activities'. The elements of this definition involved working with other people and implied a level of good communication is required. A common assumption by SM employers recruiting for graduate-entry roles was that most extra-curricular activities undertaken by graduates would involve other people and required the use of interpersonal skills to communicate (Pinto & Ramalheira, 2017).

The Systems Thinking Skills Employability Dimension, which includes elements such as "the ability to understand and operate within social, organisational, and technological systems" (Rosenberg et al., 2012, p. 7), gained four new items from Stage Two. These new items, listed in Table 5, related to the knowledge associated with complex sport organisation operations and link prior experiences and role contributions to benefit organisations.

The final Employability Dimension that gained a new item from Stage Two themes was Work Ethic, which is defined by, but not limited to, an individual's disposition toward work and includes, "motivation, the ability to meet deadlines, patience, attitude, dependability, professionalism, and realistic expectations of job requirements and career advancement" (Rosenberg et al., 2012, p. 8). The new item added to this Employability

Dimension, ‘understand the benefits of experience’ prompts the graduate to recognise whether their contributions to the organisation made a difference.

Section 3: Open-ended question. The final question on the survey was open-ended to prompt respondents to write an answer to the question, “What else may be helpful to outline in relation to cues which may indicate graduates' employability from having had an experience?” Accordingly, their answer is not limited to a list of suggested options (Brace, 2018). This question prompted respondents to answer in their own words to potentially provide a range of responses not previously contemplated by a limited, pre-existing list (Brace, 2018; Bryman, 2016).

Pilot Survey

First a pilot was conducted. The purpose was to assess item comprehension, information on the appropriateness and relevance of items to the target population, and to ensure an analysis of the questions was made from the viewpoint of the respondent to enhance the validity of results (Bowden et al., 2002). The pilot was crucial as the survey was self-administered and respondents were not able to seek clarification during completion (Bangor et al., 2009; Johns, 2010).

Face and content validity (Brace, 2018) of the survey were checked by a panel of six experts in the sport and recreation management, consulting, and research fields, comprising four industry representatives and two academics. The background of each pilot tester was important to match the eligibility criteria of the respondents who would be answering the online survey (Brace, 2018). Intentionally, all pilot testers were working, or had previously worked within the sport and recreation management industry and were selected to provide either a research or industry perspective on the survey structure. The online survey link was sent to each individual to complete within a one-week timeframe.

A follow-up meeting was allocated provide verbal feedback via the telephone and on three occasions, face-to-face. These experts examined the scale content validity by considering whether items were relevant and backed by the body of knowledge in the area (Bryman, 2016; Johns, 2010).

Testing the content validity of new items created from the themes in the qualitative Stage Two study was essential. Content validity was tested through each expert's consideration of whether the questions flowed, could be understood to identify any jargon and ambiguity, and the likelihood of maintaining a respondent's attention (Brace, 2018; Bryman, 2016). Based on the responses from the experts, only minor amendments to instruction and wording, such as the tense of the first word, were required. For example, "Comprehending sport organisation operations" was a statement drawn from the semi-structured interviews transcripts. For the online survey, the altered item became "Comprehend the complexities of sport organisation operations". No alterations were made to the order in which the original HRM – Retail CPP questionnaire items appeared.

Data Collection

Ethics approval for the Stage Three online survey was provided by the Victoria University Human Research Ethics Committee (HRE17051). The survey was considered low risk and met the requirements of the National Health and Medical Research Council's National Statement on Ethical Conduct in Human Research (2007). Qualtrics was the online survey tool used to host the survey that could be completed on most electronic devices including a mobile [smart] phone. The URL link to the online survey was an anonymous link to ensure that no identifiable details of the respondent could be accessed unless the survey specifically asked for this information (Qualtrics Support, 2017), in this case to be eligible to win the $500 (AUD) prize money. The landing page contained

informed consent and survey information text and an option to ‘Opt out’ or ‘Continue’ was provided (see Appendix E – Online Survey, Section 1). Respondents who chose to ‘Opt out’ were diverted to the end of the survey and received a message thanking them for considering participation. Respondents who continued and did not select one of the six job classifications, were also taken to the end of the survey where a thank you message was delivered.

Respondents who chose one of the six job classifications were taken to the preliminary demographic and employer information which continued to the eight employability scales. The length of time required to complete the survey was 10-15 minutes and this time guidance was indicated on the landing page of the survey. The survey was designed to ensure that respondents answered each item before they could move to the next to facilitate completion of all questions unless respondents opted out of the survey. Respondents were advised that they could exit and return to complete the survey at any time before the prescribed closing date. The definitions to specific words were located directly below each question.

A 10-week timeframe was provided to respondents to complete the survey. The timeframe was chosen to account for an initial two weeks to allow for the dissemination of the online survey through networking channels and ensure that the survey was advertised at least twice in respective organisation social media sources.

Data Analysis

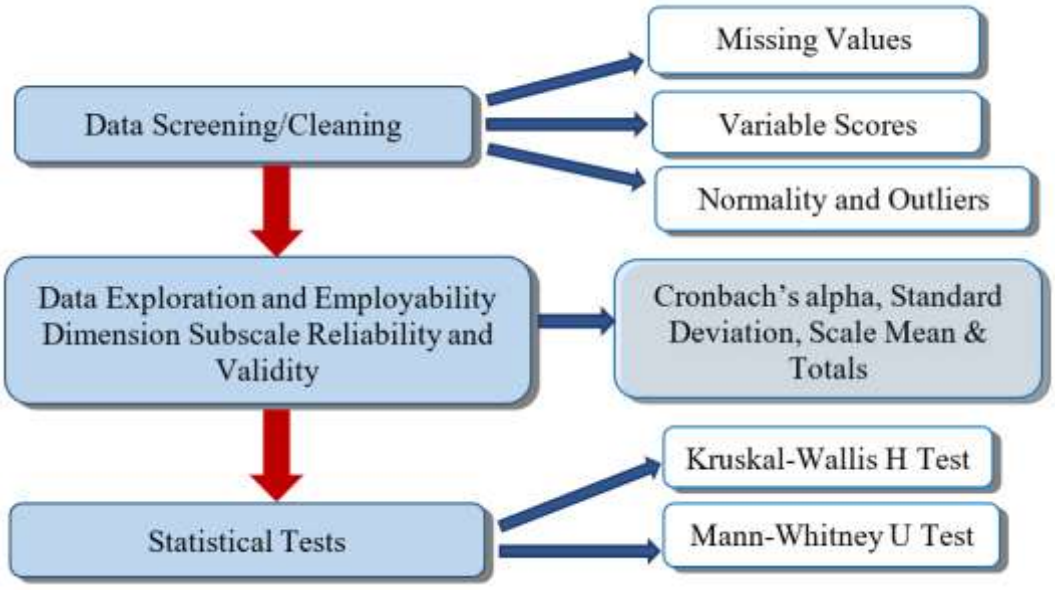
The quantitative data analysis process commenced with data screening and cleaning, data exploration, Employability Dimension (Rosenberg et al., 2012) sub-scale reliability and validity, and statistical testing. The online survey data was analysed using the four Experiential Learning Cycle phases (Kolb, 1984) to categorise the data. In this analysis, a

new perspective was provided to: a) indicate in which phases of the learning cycle are the Employability Dimensions items developed; and b) to identify where the projections of these Employability Dimensions occur as indicators of signals in the learning process.

The data analysis process began with data cleaning, moved on to assessing the shape of distributions, and then to testing the Employability Dimension (Rosenberg et al., 2012) sub-scale reliability. Cross-validation via 'within-method triangulation' was used to converge and corroborate results (Azulai & Rankin, 2012). Small sample sizes influenced the decision on the choice of statistical analysis, which are reliant on the outcomes of initial data cleaning and exploration. For example, sample sizes influence the data distribution of data and thus whether parametric or non-parametric testing should be undertaken (Bryman, 2016; Pallant, 2013; Rossi et al., 2013). A design for the Quantitative Data Analysis Process for Stage Three of this research is outlined in Figure 6.

Figure 6

Quantitative Data Analysis Process



Note: Adapted from Bryman (2016); Pallant (2013); and Rossi et al., (2013).

Data Screening/Cleaning. The data cleaning process began with removing all respondents who had either indicated "no" they were not involved in the hiring of new employees or who had not recorded any responses following the demographics and job role items. Respondents who had completed less than half of the [66] items in Section 2, Employability Dimensions (Rosenberg et al., 2012) were also removed (listwise deletion), as significant missing data can affect the accuracy of estimating parameters (Newman, 2014; Roth & Switzer, 1995). Cleaned data from the demographics and job role section of this survey were analysed with IBM SPSS 24 and presented using descriptive text, frequencies, and percentages.

Missing Values. Missing values, due to items not being answered by specific participants, were coded with 99 = not applicable (Enders, 2011). An indication of all types of missing values in the data was essential to avoid the IBM SPSS software from recognising missing value spaces as a legitimate value within the statistical analysis (Pallant, 2013).

Variable Scores. The five-point Likert response option for items in each of the eight Employability Dimensions (Rosenberg et al., 2012) was allocated a numerical score (1 – 'not at all important' to 5 – 'extremely important'). Then the item scores for each Employability Dimension sub-scale were summed to form a total sub-scale score (Bangor et al., 2009; Bryman, 2016; Rosenberg et al., 2012) for each Employability Dimension sub-scale. IBM SPSS 24 calculated the means for each of the eight sub-scales. A higher mean score than another Employability Dimension signified the greater importance of that Dimension in relation graduate employability (Simsek & Balaban, 2010).

Normality and Outliers. To select appropriate statistical tests, the dependent variables including the eight Employability Dimensions (Rosenberg et al., 2012) and four

Experiential Learning Cycle phases (Kolb, 1984) were checked for a normal distribution (Guarnieri, 2017). Two forms of testing were used. The Shapiro-Wilk test for normal distribution and Levene's test to identify heterogeneity of variances helped confirm whether to conduct parametric or non-parametric analyses (Field, 2009). Furthermore, histograms assisted with visual assessment of the shape of distributions and Normal Q-Q Plots to provide the observed value of each score plotted against the expected value from the normal distribution (Guarnieri, 2017; Pallant, 2013). Box plots were generated to identify whether any extreme outliers were present when checking for normality (Guarnieri, 2017) for the eight Employability Dimensions and four Experiential Learning Cycle phases.

When detected, outliers were addressed immediately to minimise the potential influence on small sample sizes and statistics relating to the mean (Cousineau & Chartier, 2010; Field, 2009). Outliers were identified using the 'convert back from z-score' method to determine if any scores were beyond three standard deviations above or below the mean. Any identified outliers were then replaced using the 'next highest score plus one' method (Field, 2009). The new scores were manually changed in IBM SPSS 25 against the outlier participant number indicated on the original box plot.

Sub-Scale Reliability and Validity

Cronbach's alphas tested each sub-scale's internal reliability (Bonett & Wright, 2015; Field, 2009) for the Employability Dimensions (Rosenberg et al., 2012) and Experiential Learning Cycle phases (Kolb, 1984). In lieu of an adequate sample size to conduct factor analyses, the Cronbach's alpha tests also serve as a type of validation for the sub-scales, to determine if items correlated sufficiently to suggest they measure the same concept (Field, 2009). This helped to determine the internal consistency of items in

each of the eight Employability Dimension sub-scales including the new items added from new knowledge elicited from the Stage Two. It also determined the internal consistency of the sub-scales newly created from the Employability Dimension items, grouped according to the four Experiential Learning Cycle phases. Internal consistency was deemed acceptable if the Cronbach's alpha was greater than .7, although values above .8 were preferable, and values less than .5 were considered too heterogeneous (Pallant, 2013; Tavakol & Dennick, 2011).

Several useful outputs from conducting a Cronbach's alpha were used to analyse the data including the standard deviation, mean, Inter-Item Correlations and Corrected Item-Total Correlation. The mean measured the mid-point/balance of distribution while the standard deviation measured the spread of distribution by using the mean of the data set as a reference point and then calculating the extent to which the data deviates from the mean (Guarnieri, 2017).

The presence of positive values in the Inter-Item Correlations rows indicated items were likely measuring the same underlying characteristic, while the Corrected Item-Total Correlation indicated the degree to which each item correlated with the total score (Kelly & Daughtry, 2018; Pallant, 2013). All values were checked in the Corrected Item-Total Correlation to ensure they were above .3 as low values indicated that the item was measuring something different from the scale as a whole (Kelly & Daughtry, 2018; Pallant, 2013).

Statistical Tests Selection

With a potential small sample size, initial data exploration determined whether parametric or non-parametric statistics were appropriate for analysing the online survey data. Parametric methods make distributional assumptions because the parameters (mean

and standard deviation) of the distribution are assumed to follow a normal distribution and the dissemination of data is similar between groups or throughout the scope of study (Altman & Bland, 2009). Alternatively, non-parametric methods are used to analyse data but do not make distributional assumptions about data (Altman & Bland, 2009). Typically, non-parametric methods are applied to analyse data which do not satisfy the dispersal conditions of parametric methods such as small sample sizes (Altman & Bland, 2009; Guarnieri, 2017; Pallant, 2013).

Kruskal-Wallis H Test. An appropriate test was required to compare the importance assigned by participants in each classification of SM professionals, to each Employability Dimension (Rosenberg et al., 2012) and Experiential Learning Cycle phase (Kolb, 1984), separately, to determine the employability of SM graduates. To inform this decision survey respondent numbers were closely monitored throughout the recruitment period. This was to check against the minimum sample determined by the power calculation, and because sample size would inform the type of statistical test chosen to analyse the data (Field, 2009).

By week eight, the number of completed surveys was still low. Subsequently, a heterogeneous representation across each group occurred due to the contrast in the number of respondents that aligned to each of the job classification groups (Field, 2009; Guarnieri, 2017). A formal validation of these scales via Confirmatory Factor Analysis was considered but several assumptions were not met, namely the overall sample size was insufficient, the sample was not randomised, and multivariate normality was not met (Flora et al., 2012; Guarnieri, 2017; Pallant, 2013). Due to these reasons and potential subsequent normality tests, non-parametric testing was chosen due to the flexibility of the number and nature of the parameters that do not need to be fixed in advance (Nachar,

2008). In addition, the Employability Dimensions (Rosenberg et al., 2012) and Experiential Learning Cycle (Kolb, 1984) sub-scales data were ordinal and subsequently should be analysed using non-parametric tests (Field, 2009). Accordingly, to test for group difference between the participants in the different SM job classifications identified from the current research, the non-parametric Kruskal-Wallis H Test was selected. This is a non-parametric alternative to a two-way between-group analysis of variance and works on the principle of ranking data (Field, 2009; Pallant, 2013).

The Kruskal-Wallis H Test allowed for testing of more than two independent groups and would determine if there was a statistically significant difference (significance was set at < 0.05) among any of the six job classification groups (Field, 2009; Guarnieri, 2017). A Monte Carlo test was conducted as a more accurate test of the statistical significance of the differences among the job classification groups than using Asymp. Sig. calculations (Field, 2009). The reason was, despite some groups being small (≤ 30), the total sample of 92 was large enough to warrant the Monte Carlo Exact test (Field, 2009; Gavilanes, 2020; Preacher & Selig, 2012).

Mann-Whitney U Test. If Kruskal-Wallis H tests proved to be statistically significant, post-hoc non-parametric Mann-Whitney U tests were used to determine which pairs of the job classification groups were statistically significantly different from one another (Guarnieri, 2017; Pallant, 2013). The Mann-Whitney U test is based on the comparison of each observation from one group with each observation from a second group through comparison of medians (Nachar, 2008; Pallant, 2013). The data was sorted into ascending order in IBM SPSS 25 and then converted to ranks across the two groups, evaluated, and tested for significant differences (Field, 2009; Nachar, 2008).

Qualitative Analysis of the Open-Ended Question

To determine themes from the qualitative responses to the final question, categorisation of text via coding was undertaken in NVivo 12. This commenced with one researcher (the student) who initially categorised text using a mix of codes. From these codes, themes were formed, and patterns identified (Maguire & Delahunt, 2017; Marshall, 2002). For analytical rigor, analyst triangulation was conducted, where a secondary coder (supervisor) checked the codes, themes, and the text they represented (Beer & Takayama, 2011; Patton, 1999). Discussion around discrepancies that surfaced occurred until a final set of codes and themes was mutually agreed. One example related to the code 'Understand their own personal brand'. Discussion focused on whether this code should be aligned to the 'Commitment and ability to contribute' sub-theme in the Active Experimentation phase or the 'Self-management' sub-theme in the Reflective Observation phase of the Experiential Learning Cycle (Kolb, 1984). Upon consideration based on respective definitions, it was decided the best fit was the latter phase. This was due to the reflective nature in recognising an ability and hence being able to self-manage.

Deductive thematic analysis was guided by the four phases of the Experiential Learning Cycle (Kolb, 1984). Thematic analysis was used to derive latent level codes and themes, that is, underlying ideas, assumptions, and conceptualisations (Braun et al., 2014; Nowell et al., 2017). Given the final item sought responses on recruitment and selection information not addressed in the survey, coding was also open to new inductive knowledge and thus codes were derived at the face-value semantic level (Braun et al., 2014; Küppers, 2013).

Chapter Summary

The purpose of this chapter was to explain the overall methodological approach and justify the method design adopted in the current research. An exploratory methodological approach was adopted based on the limited research in this field. Outlined was the composition of methods utilised throughout Stage One (quantitative), Stage Two (qualitative) and Stage Three (quantitative). Justification of a mixed method was substantiated throughout each stage using crossover analyses. Selected for the strong representation of the broad sport industry in Australia, six Sportspeople job classifications were adopted in the current research to classify the main job functions of the collected SM job advertisements in Stage One. The design of semi-structured interview questions in Stage Two was guided by the three key problems identified from the literature reviewed. The design of the Online Survey conducted in Stage Three was guided by the eight dimensions of basic employability skills (Employability Dimensions) (Rosenberg et al., 2012) and inductive codes that evolved in the semi-structured interviews. Data analysis for Stages Two and Three were guided by the Experiential Learning Cycle (Kolb, 1984) to guide deductive coding.

A convergent parallel design was adopted for utilising quantitative and qualitative data throughout the three stages which occurred consecutively. As such, analyses from an early stage informed elements of the subsequent stage (Onwuegbuzie et al., 2010). This enabled complementarity development (Greene et al., 1989; Onwuegbuzie et al., 2010). The job classifications for example, identified in Stage One (quantitative) were used to target participant groups for semi-structured interviews in Stage Two (qualitative). These classifications also formed participant sub-groups for data analyses in the online survey of

Stage Three. The next chapter presents results for the three-staged method approach of the current study.

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Chapter Four: Results

The results of the current study are presented in three sections in this chapter. These sections relate to the three-staged method approach applied to this research: Stage One: Job Advertisement Audit; Stage Two: Semi-Structured Interviews; and Stage Three: Online Survey. The job advertisement audit assisted to address research question one; the semi-structured interview and online survey assisted to address research question two. Each of the three stages produced data to assist to address research question three related to recommendations for managers from the SM industry sector and coordinators from UG SM programs.

Stage One: Job Advertisement Audit

The Stage One focus was to ascertain the job classifications of advertised graduate-entry SM positions which stipulate practical experience as a prerequisite. Two hundred job advertisements and corresponding job descriptions were identified that met the inclusion criteria over a six-month period, from mid-April until October 2015, for the audit.

Frequencies and descriptive statistics were generated for nine variables to enable identification of the job classifications representing the main role functions of graduate-entry SM positions in Australia. In the Method Chapter 14 variables were identified, however, the variables: job number; position; search date; and hours/days a week were not included as variables for analyses due to the lack of relevance these had to the current study. In addition, job status (e.g., full time or part time) and salary were merged to form one variable. They were typically two variables linked in a job description. As a result, the final nine variables identified from the job advertisement audit were: organisation type, graduate-entry terms, job status, salary, required tertiary qualification, required experience (type), experience (years), Working with Children Check (WCC) and required training and

requirements.

The results distinguished the organisation types which advertised the highest number of jobs. The top three were state sporting associations (19%), followed by local government (13%) and sporting clubs (11%). The top two key graduate entry terms included manager (36%), followed by coordinator (34%). Sixty-five percent of advertisements were advertising full time (job status) graduate-entry SM jobs attracting the highest salary bracket of $61,000-$70,00 (AUD) despite 70% of job advertisements not stating salary. The required tertiary qualification of sport management (18.47%) was the most requested degree ahead of the next degree, business/business management (7.88%) and marketing (7.6%), with sport (5.76%) and event management (5.58%) experience as the most sought after. The most requested training requirements were driver's licence (18.27%) and first aid (14.55%) respectively. The variables and associated percentages identified from the audit are detailed in Table 6 and explained in the following sub-sections.

Table 6

Job Advertisement Audit – Variables and Percentages

Variable	*# **(%)***		*# **(%)***
Organisation Type	#/200 ***(%)***		#/200 ***(%)***
Local government	26 ***(13)***	Sports events and entertainment	21 ***(10.5)***
Sporting association	2 ***(1)***	Talent management	5 ***(2.5)***
Sporting club	22 ***(11)***	Sports Merchandise and apparel	2 ***(1)***
State sporting association	38 ***(19)***	Public health organisation	3 ***(1.5)***
Peak/National Sporting body	20 ***(10)***	Client services/program delivery	15 ***(7.5)***
YMCA	19 ***(9.5)***	Sports Commission/Body representing sport and recreation sector	5 ***(2.5)***
Recreation/Leisure Centre	7 ***(3.5)***		
University	5 ***(2.5)***	Sports institute/Academy	2 ***(1)***
Secondary educator	2 ***(1)***	Not Stated	3 ***(1.5)***
Sports league	3 ***(1.5)***		
Graduate-Entry Key Terms	#/200 ***(%)***		
Manager	72 ***(36)***		
Officer	41 ***(20.5)***		
Coordinator	68 ***(34)***		
Assistant	4 ***(2)***		
Leader	14 ***(7)***		
Graduate	1 ***(.5)***		
Job Status	#/200 ***(%)***		
Full time	131 ***(65.5)***		

Part time	23 ***(11.5)***
Casual	7 ***(3.5)***
Flexible – Full time or Part time	2 ***(1)***
Not stated	37 ***(18.5)***

Salary (AUD)	#/200 ***(%)***
$20,000-$30,000	1 ***(.5)***
$31,000-$40,000	0 ***(0)***
$41,000-$50,000	14 ***(7)***
$51,000-$60,000	10 ***(5)***
$61,000-$70,000	16 ***(8)***
$71,000-$85,000	12 ***(6)***
$86,000-$110,000	8 ***(4)***
Not stated	140 ***(70)***

Required Tertiary Qualification	#/368 ***(%)***		#/368 ***(%)***
Sport	1 ***(.27)***	Human Movement	7 ***(1.9)***
Recreation	37 ***(10)***	Education/Physical Education	14 ***(3.8)***
Sport Management	68 ***(18.47)***	Journalism	1 ***(1)***
Sports administration	19 ***(5)***	Tourism/Leisure	13 ***(3.53)***
Business/Business Management	29 ***(7.88)***	Sales/Retail	5 ***(1)***
Accounting/CPA	3 ***(1)***	Architecture/Engineering	3 ***(.82)***
Fitness	1 ***(.27)***	Human Resources	1 ***(.27)***
Coaching	5 ***(1)***	Horticulture/Environmental Science	1 ***(.27)***
Marketing	28 ***(7.6)***	Commerce	7 ***(1.9)***
Multimedia/Digital Media	2 ***(.54)***	Finance	2 ***(.54)***
Communications/Public Relations	12 ***(3.26)***	Facility Management	1 ***(.27)***

Public Health	2 ***(.54)***	Computer Science	***2 (.54)***
Health Promotion	5 ***(1)***	Mathematics/Economics	1 ***(.27)***
Community Service/Youth	5 ***(1)***	Social Sciences	***2 (.54)***
Project Management	9 ***(2.45)***	Outdoor Education	***2 (.54)***
Events Management/Planning	10 ***(2.47)***	Not stated	63 ***(17)***
Sport Science/High Performance	9 ***(2.45)***		

Required Experience (Type)	#/534 ***(%)***		#/534 ***(%)***
Not stated	2 ***(.37)***	Media and social media	13 ***(2.42)***
Brand Development	2 ***(.37)***	Membership	10 ***(1.86)***
Business financial management	13 ***(2.42)***	Non-profit organisation	8 ***(1.49)***
Coaching/High performance	9 ***(1.67)***	Online content production	6 ***(1.12)***
Communications	15 ***(2.79)***	Operations and account management	14 ***(2.6)***
Community development	14 ***(2.6)***	People/Staff management	16 ***(2.97)***
Community infrastructure	4 ***(.75)***	Problem-solving and conflict resolution	5 ***(.94)***
Community organisations	5 ***(.94)***	Producing radio/Broadcasting	3 ***(.56)***
Competition management	10 ***(1.86)***	Project development and delivery	17 ***(3.16)***
Computer software and web operation	6 ***(1.12)***	Project management	18 ***(3.35)***
Contract management or negotiation	6 ***(1.12)***	Public relations/Stakeholder management	13 ***(2.42)***
Copyright and editing	2 ***(.37)***	Recreation	14 ***(2.6)***
Corporate environment	4 ***(.75)***	Recreation planning	15 ***(2.79)***
Customer service	20 ***(3.72)***	Risk management	4 ***(.75)***
Database software management systems	12 ***(2.23)***	Sales	12 ***(2.23)***
Desktop publishing and design	4 ***(.75)***	Second language	1 ***(.19)***
Digital production and design	4 ***(.75)***	Sport	31 ***(5.76)***
e-commerce	1 ***(.19)***	Sporting Clubs	4 ***(.75)***
Emergency services	1 ***(.19)***	Sport/Business management	15 ***(2.79)***

Event management	30 ***(5.58)***	Sport/Business sponsorship	6 ***(1.12)***
Event photography and video	4 ***(.75)***	Sporting and aquatic environment	4 ***(.75)***
Facility management	17 ***(3.16)***	Sport/Business administration	18 ***(3.35)***
Finance modelling and forecasting	3 ***(.56)***	Sports entertainment	5 ***(.94)***
Fundraising/Funding/Sponsorship applications	5 ***(.94)***	Strategic leisure	4 ***(.75)***
Health and fitness	2 ***(.37)***	Teaching	5 ***(.94)***
Health promotion	3 ***(.56)***	Teamwork	5 ***(.94)***
Hospitality/Tourism	4 ***(.751)***	Ticketing	2 ***(.37)***
Human resources recruitment	3 ***(.56)***	VET sector	1 ***(.19)***
Inclusion/accessibility	5 ***(.94)***	Water chemicals and pool plant operations	1 ***(.19)***
IT and marketing analysis	3 ***(.56)***	Web design	2 ***(.37)***
Leadership	9 ***(1.67)***	Work with volunteers	7 ***(1.3)***
Local government	12 ***(2.23)***	Working with children	3 ***(.56)***
Marketing	24 ***(4.46)***	Youth/Multicultural	6 ***(1.12)***

Experience (Years)	
Not stated	82%
Mean	1.04
Standard Deviation	2.79

Working with Children Check	#/200 ***(%)***
Not stated	113 ***(56)***
Yes	69 ***(35)***
No	18 ***(9)***

Additional Training Requirements	#/323 ***(%)***		#/323 ***(%)***
Not stated	95 ***(29.41)***	Advanced level coaching	20 ***(6.19)***
Level 1 and 2 Coaching	1 ***(.31)***	Australian Sports Anti-Doping Authority Levels 1 & 2 e-learning	1 ***(.31)***
Police Check	24 ***(7.43)***	MYOB	1 ***(.31)***
Driver's licence	59 ***(18.27)***	Boat Licence	1 ***(.31)***
Responsible Serving of Alcohol	1 ***(.31)***	Motorbike/Truck/Forklift Licence	1 ***(.31)***
Cardio-Pulmonary Resuscitation (CPR)	22 ***(6.82)***	Lifesaving Victoria competency	1 ***(.31)***
Pool Lifeguard	15 ***(4.64)***	Aquatic Technical Officer Certificate	1 ***(.31)***
Defibrillator	2 ***(.62)***	Links Modular Software	1 ***(.31)***
Sports Officiating	1 ***(.31)***	Traffic controller	7 ***(2.17)***
AUSTSWIM	1 ***(.31)***	YMCA Safeguarding Children and Young People Framework	1 ***(.31)***
Pool Operator/Chemical Handling	5 ***(1.54)***	Second language	1 ***(.31)***
VicFit and aerobics instructor	1 ***(.31)***	Fire warden	1 ***(.31)***
First Aid	47 ***(14.55)***		
Certificates III & IV in Fitness	4 ***(1.24)***		

Organisation Type

A typology was created of the number and range of organisations advertising SM roles with the requirement of practical experience and a tertiary qualification. The top five organisations were state sporting association (19%), local government (13%), sporting club (11%), sports events and entertainment (10.5%) and peak/national sporting body (10%).

Graduate-Entry Key Terms

A total of six key terms were identified from the titles of the 200 advertised graduate-entry jobs within the area of SM. The three most used terms were manager (36%), coordinator (34%) and officer (20.5%).

Job Status and Salary

Identified from these two variables was that most of the jobs advertised were full time (66.5%). However, the majority of advertised job descriptions (70%) did not state a salary amount thereby restricting attempts to gauge an average salary for graduates from SM programs. Following the 'not stated' category (70%), the top two salary brackets were $61,000-$70,000 (8%) closely followed by $41-$50,000 (7%).

Required Tertiary Qualification

Specific disciplines were mentioned 368 times in relation to the required tertiary qualifications expected of a potential applicant. Among these mentions, 32 individual disciplines were identified. The top four disciplines, excluding 'not stated' (17%) were sport management (18%), recreation (10%), marketing (8%) and business/business administration (8%). Of the 200 job descriptions collected 60 did not specify the level of tertiary qualification required, indicating the level required could vary from Level 1 to 7 on the Australian Qualifications Framework.

Required Experience (type)

Sixty-five specific experience categories were identified from the 534 times a

required type of industry experience was mentioned in the 200 job descriptions. Many of the job descriptions listed more than one required type of experience. The top six industry experience categories were: sport [sector] (5.72%), event management (5.58%), marketing (4.46%), customer service (3.72%), and sport/business administration and project management were both 3.35%.

Experience (Years)

A total of 200 job descriptions were collected, of which 164 did not state the specific number of years of experience required/desired of applicants. In consequence, this made it difficult to gain a strong picture of the required years of practical experience required by a graduate to enter the SM industry sector. The required number of years of experience identified by the 36 respondents ranged from one to two and a half years and is presented as on overall mean and standard deviation in Table 6.

Working with Children Check

Fifty-six percent of advertised positions did not state whether a WWC was required for the position. Of the remaining number of advertised positions, nine percent had additional working with children policies or frameworks. One example includes the YMCA's Safeguarding Children and Young People Framework, to complement the required WCC for staff and volunteers.

Additional Training and Requirements

Additional items were mentioned 323 times on the required training and certifications/checks of potential applicants, of which 32 distinct requirements were identified. The top five, not including 'not stated' (29%) were: driver's licence (18%), first aid (15%), CPR (7%), police check (7%) and advanced level coaching (6%). The expectation of a driver's licence and a police check, indicate a preference for licencing and security requirements rather than additional training.

Required tertiary qualification and required experience (type) were two of the nine

variables that strongly influenced the development of the job classifications. Another variable, organisation type, was considered when a distinct SM service was evident by the organisation type, for example, sports events and entertainment. Six job classifications were identified from the audit:

1. Administration/Finance/Operations
2. Coaching/High Performance
3. Customer/Membership/Athlete Services
4. Development/Participation/Programs
5. Events/Competitions
6. Retail/Apparel/Merchandising.

Stage Two: Semi-Structured Interviews

Each of the 200 job descriptions were allocated to one of the six job classifications identified in Stage One to group the main function of the advertised role. In doing so, created a comprehensive job classifications grouping list. The list enabled a stratified sample from which to randomly select interviewees. One of these job classifications, however, was not viable due to the contact details of respective sport managers not being accessible from the four Retail/Apparel/Merchandising job advertisements on the database or on the associated organisation websites. Hence, the interviewees, were aligned with one of the five remaining job classifications (Table 7).

Table 7

Five Job Classifications

Administration/Finance/Operations
Coaching/High Performance
Customer/Membership/Athlete Services
Development/Participation/Programs
Events/Competitions

Interview recruitment ceased once thematic saturation had occurred. By the tenth interview, consistent themes had emerged and information had reached the point of saturation. Coincidentally, this resulted in an even gender split of male (5) and female (5) interviewees (Table 8), and widely represented the SM sector. These participants worked in a range of organisation types including: various state and national sporting organisations across different sports; sport and recreation within local government; secondary and higher education sport service; prominent elite sportsperson and marketing company; and multicultural youth service. Each participant was assigned a pseudo name to ensure interviewee anonymity.

Table 8

Interviewees – Sport Managers Identified from Job Advertisement Audit

Participant Name	**Organisation Type**	**Manager role**	**Male/Female**
Keighley	Education	Human Resources Coordinator	F
Jacinta	Elite athlete services	Group Account Director/Marketing and Events	F
Shannon	Local Government	Manager – Leisure Services	M
Brad	National Sporting Body	Manager – Fan Engagement and Marketing	M
Sarah	National Sporting Body	Senior Manager – Participation and Sport Development	F
Angela	State Sport Association	Community Development Manager	F
David	State Sport Association	Chief Executive Officer	M
Kate	State Sport Association	General Manager – Participation and Sport Development	F
Mark	State Sport Association	Business Operations Manager	M
Nicholas	Youth Services	Regional Coordinator North-West	M

The data were deductively organised into the four pre-determined themes/phases. These phases were from the Experiential Learning Cycle (Kolb 1984): Concrete Experience; Reflective Observation; Abstract Conceptualisation; and Active Experimentation (Appendix J).

Concrete Experience

Concrete experience was considered in terms of what a prospective employee [applicant] brings to the recruitment and selection stages of employment. Four sub-themes comprised this theme (Table 9). These reflected an applicant's experiences, performance and included: referee; application of theory to practice; experience – applicant performance; industry experience and commitment to industry.

Table 9

Phase 1 – Concrete Experience Theme: Sub-Themes and Codes

THEME	SUB-THEMES	CODES
Concrete Experience	Referee	Industry referee Referee check Referee fit to practical experience
	Application of theory to practice	Theory alone is insufficient without practical experience Evidence that an applicant can perform the job
	Experience – applicant performance	Understand how the organisation operates Ability to work within a team Work ethic demonstrated Demonstrate the application of transferable skills
	Industry experience and commitment to industry	Volunteer to demonstrate commitment and passion Understand industry operations through experience Sport-specific knowledge Industry-specific understanding

Referee. Three codes evolved from the referee sub-theme. These focused on what participants valued in relation to referee characteristics. The codes included: industry referee; referee check; and referee fit to practical experience.

Participants emphasised the importance of the applicant providing industry referees on their application and assumed that conversations about the application would have occurred between these referees and the applicant. A primary focus of discussion between the participants and the industry referees was on the capability of an applicant in regard to the advertised position's selection criteria and their ability to demonstrate attitude and work ethic in previous industry positions. As articulated by Brad:

> It always helps when there are referees in there that you either have met and worked with before or you just know, or that are in a similar role to you or some of your colleagues in another club or in another sport. That usually suggests that they [the applicant] have had the conversations about the industry that they might need in order to be applying for the role.

Referee checks were a valued source of feedback. They helped provide further insight into an applicant's characteristics, experiences or even the intentions of an applicant that are not visible from a written application and observed over a period. These checks revealed potential job expectations of the applicant. One participant expressed concern that a previously advertised position may not have offered one desired applicant enough salary to entice them to the organisation for the long-term. Angela explained:

> I would generally not call referees ahead, but we have a really, close relationship with the organisation they came from, and also [ask] some questions: what the pay was that they were aware of … from where they had come from and the experience they had. I was a bit concerned they would probably only stay for a couple months.

Referee fit to practical experience implies that the referee is 'qualified' in terms of aligning the requirements of the advertised role with the relatable work experiences of the applicant. At the time of the referee check these work experiences are discussed with the recruiting manager to enable this manager to cross-check information between the applicant and referee to ensure that selection of the right applicant transpires. Kate explained:

> … in the interview we would dive into them [the applicant] providing more examples, hearing it in their own words, that kind of thing and we can ask questions to clarify where we need to. And then in the referee checks we will also maybe check, ask them how did it go, whatever they said they're really, good at [for example] presentation skills, what opportunity did they get to present? That gets cross-referenced … [to ensure] that we have [selected] the right applicant.

Subsequently, careful questioning can prompt a referee to highlight their own 'fit' or understanding of the advertised position based on their own experiences, during a referee check. For example, a referee's familiarity of an applicant's performance in related roles they have supervised becomes evident when providing an account of how the applicant can contribute to the advertised role. As explained by Nicholas in relation to an applicant's 'fit' to the position, "I am also looking for their referees to be able to evidence their fit in terms of their practical experience".

Application of Theory to Practice. Two codes represented this sub-theme. These related to the importance of practical experience and applicant ability.

The perception by participants was that theory alone was insufficient without practical experience. This notion related to the necessity for applicants to have theoretical understanding of the industry complemented by the ability to apply this theory to practical experiences. In doing so this enabled an applicant's ability to understand job requirements and the workplace. As typified by Shannon of what an ideal candidate should possess:

> You learn a lot in the classroom but unless you actually have that practical experience sitting beside it you know the theory but when you come into the real world you pretty much get lost. That's not devaluing the theory that's really important, but that practical experience is almost just as important if not more important when you actually emphasise how critical it is and that's what I'm looking for,

The need for evidence to show that an applicant can perform the job was emphasised by participants. This notion focused on applied practices referred to in applications and during interviews that provided examples on how applicants could perform required tasks related to the advertised role. Brad outlined that practical experiences can be influential to confirm whether the applicant enjoys working in an industry based on the first-hand application of their knowledge and skills: "With study it's terrific because it … provides them with that theoretical base of how to do things but it doesn't mean that they've been at work every day full time, so it's one thing to think that you might enjoy a job as another to live and breathe it".

Experience – Applicant Performance. Four codes created this sub-theme that focused on indicators to support an applicant's ability. These included: understand how the organisation operates; ability to work within a team; work ethic demonstrated; and demonstrate the application of transferable skills. Participants reported that an applicant's performance within practical experiences could highlight how they would be an asset to the organisation and complement the advertised role. Participants provided a range of scenarios to identify applicant performance during practical experience, including: an understanding of how organisations operate; an ability to work within a team; and the demonstration of work ethic and transferable skills.

An applicant's understanding of how an organisation operates refers to the importance of knowing how the advertised role fits into the overall operations of the organisation. General participant responses related to how this lack of understanding affects an applicant's ability to relate to the advertised position from their practical experiences and in turn, their contribution to the role. Sarah emphasised one occasion where an applicant's lack of interview preparation led to a poor demonstration of her suitability to the role. It also identified a lack of understanding of the organisation, subsequently undermining the importance of the position to which she had applied. Sarah

knew this applicant extremely well and believed that she had attended the interview thinking she had the job:

> The fact that they didn't read the website – there's a whole group of information and the thing that probably gets me is while they're [aware that they are] not going to be doing a high-level job they are actually aware that their role is really important.

An applicant's ability to work in a team was an important consideration. Participants commented on the make-up of their own workplace teams, team balance and of the benefits of an applicant having had experience in working in teams in a variety of settings. Sarah pointed out the significance of graduates working in teams throughout their university degrees:

> … it's also their ability to work in a team and a lot of the graduates that have degrees now you have to do a lot of work with groups. It's actually while they have good marks and the fact that they have actually done a degree and finished is exceptional, but you also know if they've done fairly well, they have actually had to work in a group and bring a team along. Well, they might have been carried but at least they've been able to work as a group team.

Work ethic demonstrated by an applicant suggests their predisposition toward work which includes their temperament, attitude, job expectations, and professionalism. Participants commented that the range of complexities within each workplace introduces depth to practical experience that allows applicants to demonstrate an ability to work hard and respond to varying requests. Jacinta explained work ethic in her workplace in regard to the students/graduates who completed internships. Jacinta provided first-hand experience to many of these interns who in turn capitalised on their experience to gain employment:

> When you're in an industry like this, in an agency like ours where the promptness of responding to an additional workload is vital, put that at their [interns] fingertips because you know you've got some good interns there. They're already there, they're making it easier for the business so if you've [intern] got all this extra work now, there's a job there for you.

An applicant's ability to demonstrate their application of transferable skills is an important outcome from a job-related experience. Participants recognised the importance of an applicant to first understand the advertised role and then relate their job-related experiences and transferable skills to the advertised role. As stated by Angela:

> At that stage I'm really hoping that they're going to drill me for as much information as they can from the role so that I know they want to give it their best but also, they understand the different elements and they're already thinking how they might work in that role.

Industry Experience and Commitment to Industry. The final sub-theme was formed from four codes. These focused on: volunteering to demonstrate commitment and passion; understanding industry operations through experience; sport-specific knowledge; and industry-specific understanding; to demonstrate commitment to the industry.

Volunteers in sport are significant and were recognised as valuable contributors by every participant. Most participants recognised that applicants who volunteered are proactive, passionate about what they do and committed to the industry. Kate, in regard to working with elite athletes, noted the importance of volunteers to have a passion to work within the organisation rather than be driven by the elite athletes. "Participation has to be about the process and not that they care about all the elite services."

The importance of experience to gain an understanding of sport organisations and the broader industry operations within the levels of sport, was also recognised. These levels included volunteering at a community sport level, then progressing potentially

through to state, and then to elite level sport. Mark associated his own experience within a state sporting association. He believed voluntary (unpaid) experience will assist an applicant to understand an organisation in a way that can apply to paid employment, "To understand how a sports club operates you will be able to serve them much better when you [are paid to] work, that's why we give it [voluntary experience] such a high rank".

The association of an applicant's volunteering experience and participation in specific sports demonstrated a strong commitment and passion for sport. It also indicated a goal-oriented person. Jacinta explained:

> I've seen candidates come through where they actually play sport but then they also help out administratively at the club, or if it's something through their course where the clubs allow them to do social media. That to me just shows initiative in someone who's got a goal as well and not just participate in it [the sport]. I am really favourable towards that.

An applicant's understanding of the industry and characteristics of the workplace was viewed favourably as an indication the applicant has realistic industry expectations. Several participants commented that graduate-entry applicants believe working in sport is fun and prestigious, many do not consider the reality and work required to attain senior SM roles. Sarah emphasised the nature of the industry in relation to the non-traditional working hours and low pay for graduates:

> I think it's really important, especially [in] sport when it's not a 9:00 to 5:00 job most of the time, especially at entry level. It's hard work, and just taking the rose-coloured glasses off and making sure they realise they aren't going to get paid as well [high salary] when they first start out, so that's where the practical experience comes in.

Reflective Observation

The Reflective Observation phase related to an applicant's reflection of their experience and outcomes to assist in their preparation and performance in an interview. Three sub-

themes comprised this theme: an applicant's practical experience complements the role requirements; applicant preparation before interview; and practical experience outcomes. These sub-themes with corresponding codes are outlined in Table 10.

Table 10

Phase 2 - Reflective Observation Theme – Sub-Theme and Codes

THEME	SUB-THEME	CODES
Reflective Observation	Practical experience complements role	Recognise the presence of transferable skills Sport-specific knowledge Experience demonstrates relativity to role
	Application preparation for interview	Written application Verbal responses indicate applicant capability Applicant presentation in interview
	Practical experience outcomes	Apply experience to adapt to client needs Understand the gains from the experience Understand the importance of experience Apply experience to provide interview examples

Practical Experience Complements Role. An important consideration of participants was the relevance of prior practical experience in contributing to a graduate-level applicant's ability to perform the role. Related characteristics were identified that respondents believed were important to demonstrate during job recruitment and selection. These characteristics are recognised from three codes: recognise the presence of transferable skills; sport-specific knowledge; and experience demonstrates relativity to the role.

An applicant's recognition of their transferable skills was viewed favourably as an indication the applicant understands the industry enough to know which skills are transferable. Further, participants identified the association by an applicant, of their transferable skills gained from practical experience, as a sign that they understand the worth of their experiences and the value of their potential contributions to the advertised

role. Sarah highlighted her interest in the ability of an applicant to specifically relate their experiences and skills to the advertised role:

> Can they relate what they've done in the role that they're applying for? So, packing shelves could indicate that they had to [be] logistical, and if I'm going for an event role, I have to logistically map that to show time efficiency.

In non-mainstream sports, the expectation to have sport-specific knowledge was important to planning for the future of the sport. David is specific about how applicants can demonstrate this knowledge, "I ask our candidates for that role to prepare a one-minute PowerPoint presentation on what their understanding of the sport is and what they think our priorities should be". Conversely, Mark emphasised that in the popular mainstream sport association where he worked, a specific knowledge of how this sport operated from the grass roots upwards was crucial, "We do have a slight bias towards people that have an understanding of [sport]. That's not because we think they're better people…but [having] an emphasis on how a sport operates really, really helps".

Most participants preferred applicants to provide examples that highlighted how practical experience demonstrates relativity to [the] role. Preferred examples referred to observing the relativity of previous experience to the advertised role, particularly within the application. Kate elaborated:

> The CV and cover letter make a big difference. We get the CVs where they list every single thing they've done which probably isn't relevant. Have they done something similar in the past, have they worked in another sport organisation in a similar role, or have they worked in different industry and applied the same skills?

Applicant's Preparation for Interview. According to participants, an applicant's preparation for interview could take form in three ways. These include: written application; verbal responses indicate applicant capability; and applicant presentation in an interview. The participants considered the importance of each of these when selecting

an applicant for employment. A high regard for quality written applications was acknowledged that were grammatically correct and directly applied to the advertised job. Angela emphasised that the cover letter in a written application made the first impression:

> A good cover letter, that's really important … [I check] if there's any spelling mistakes…a generic letter. I like to see that the name is put in there but it's also making the letter that actually applies to that particular job. It's not just a standard letter that gets sent out and then you'd be looking at the CV…

Passionate and informative verbal responses related to the industry and impending role from questions asked during an interview, reinforced an applicant's capability. Several participants outlined that passion cannot be taught. During an interview for example, Shannon sought an applicant's passion during practical experience and throughout their degree:

> I'd rather get someone that has that passion and a love for what they're going to do because you can teach them the practical side of the role as opposed to someone that has all the knowledge but doesn't have that passion and probably won't put into the role as much.

Most participants commented on the attitude and interpersonal skills of applicants in relation to their interview presentation. More specifically, participants elaborated on how competitive the sport industry is and the importance of graduate applicants having good communication skills and the confidence to engage everyone in the interview room. Brad specifically observed how applicants presented themselves in an interview situation and stated how important humility was for a graduate to possess:

> … the really important thing I think for people who are applying for roles is they have that confidence but underpinning that is a real humility. I am amazed by the amount of people that have some pretty good experience, yet they come into the interview unaware of how much they don't know, and they might be a little bit too

confident, a little bit cocky.

Practical Experience Outcomes. Four codes formed the practical experience outcomes subtheme: apply experiences to adapt to client needs; understand the gains from experience; the importance of experience; and apply experience to provide interview examples. Each of these codes captured the fundamental expectation of participants, that an applicant can demonstrate their ability through the articulation of outcomes related to their experiences.

Demonstration of an applicant's understanding of how they apply their practical experiences to adapt to client needs was a strength stemming from their ability to reflect on each experience. Subsequently, participants believed this influenced the ability to prepare job applications and perform in interviews. An ability highly regarded by participants. Angela was clear in her explanation of the importance of applicants realising the outcomes of undertaking practical experience, either tangible or intangible, and how recognising and relating these outcomes can result in addressing client needs:

> … I think every degree needs to have an element of practicum or internship…if they can demonstrate they actually had an outcome from that, so not just: I did an internship and I punched data and ran clinics for three months, but I did an internship and came up with a new game that the kids could play, that is now included in the booklet or something like that.

Expanding on an applicant's ability to address client's needs is their capacity to reflect and understand the gains of practical experience. Specifically, in terms of recognising their skills, what they are good at from having had practical experiences to indicate what type of job they could be good at. Brad explained:

> For me if you've got a range of things that you've done that are somehow related to the job that you're applying for that means that you haven't just come across it and you've seen the title of the job and thought "I might be good at that", you have

> actually been working toward this for a period of time. I think that says a lot about the person's work ethic and future plans in itself, so I sort of gravitate straight towards their skills and experience.

Applicants who understand the importance of their practical experience were favourably recognised by participants. Importantly, that the applicant recognises their contribution in the role and to the organisation no matter how small it may be. In addition, the attributes recognised by applicants of self-motivation and working autonomously, demonstrated their understanding of the importance of practical experience. Angela suggested that applicants who understand the importance of each experience will likely recognise the part they played in the whole process of a task:

> They will understand what the outcomes are as a whole and break down the steps between now and the outcome…[S]o whether it's they initiated a program here or initiated a relationship or looked after a team, even. They have gone from A to Z, they've done that whole process and they understand all that.

Every participant outlined their preference for applicants to provide relevant and varied practical experience examples in an interview. Recognition of the importance of this experience was perceived as a contributor to an applicant's ability to articulate. In this case, articulating practical examples assists to set them apart from another applicant. Sarah explains, "I think you can actually get a lot out of that from asking them questions about what they learned from it and they should then be able to adapt questions based on that".

Abstract Conceptualisation

Two sub-themes comprised this theme. The first is method of message, which is drawn from two codes including visual appeal: application layout and structure and interviews: experience verbally articulated. The second is content of articulated message which was identified from three codes: specific roles identified; provision of examples;

and role satisfaction. These codes reflect participants' collective responses on how applicants can best address the requirements of each position to which they apply (Table 11).

Table 11

Phase 3 – Abstract Conceptualisation Theme – Sub-Theme and Codes

THEME	SUB-THEMES	CODES
Abstract Conceptualisation/	Method of message	Visual appeal: application layout and structure Interviews: experience verbally articulated
	Content of articulated message	Specific roles identified Provision of examples Role satisfaction

Method of Message. The visual appeal, layout, and structure of an application was mentioned by half of the participants as vital for applicants to provide. Specifically, an applicant's provision of important criteria information upfront in a job application to enable quick assessment by participants on whether to shortlist the applicant. The importance was further justified by Keighley in relation to the quality and visual appeal of the application:

> I like to see in the actual application more information about it [experience]. Outline it, because to be honest applications can be quite tedious to seek through when you've got 120 for one job. Those applications that are easy on the eye and really easy to read certainly get looked at.

Participants were keen to identify if in interviews, applicants could verbally articulate their practical experiences. Applicants, participants believed, must be able to speak about their practical experiences to provide evidence as examples. Nicholas's expectations focused on the articulation of practical experiences gained by applicants: "I'm looking at more than just written. I'm looking at how are they going to practically

apply themselves in that space and have they done it in similar ways before, and whether they can actually do it [which is] more than can they write a good application?"

Content of Articulated Message. Every participant reported that they were interested in the specific roles undertaken by applicants in practical experiences. Specifically, an insight into their level of responsibility and an indication of their work ethic. Kate outlined the extent to the articulation required:

> Were they assisting? Were they managing budgets? Were they driving it? How were they reporting back? What was the outcome of the project? Did they have an understanding or were they just doing what was valuable for the organisation?

Provision of examples and overall performance in an interview was essential to participants. Applicants who can articulate their suitability to the prospective employer through the provision of examples provided during the interview was a significant aspect that all participants relied on. Brad explained:

> The best candidates…can talk about their practical experience and show how well they can apply that experience in the role. So, it means that they've done their research into our organisation and they've read up on the programs we deliver…and they say well, the experiences I had at X will help this club because of this. I think letting them make that link is really important in selection.

Role satisfaction of an applicant was a strong consideration of participants. Specifically in relation to recruiting, selecting, and retaining new employees. Jacinta prefers to ask the applicant "to elaborate on what their role was, what they enjoyed, what they didn't enjoy" to gain a sense of whether the applicant will be suited to the advertised role and potentially satisfied in completing the role. The generation of the applicant was important to David, which reflected their management style. David explains:

> And when you talk about Gen-Y they want immediate gratification or satisfaction. They are very project focused and I had to change my management style a little bit

and give constant feedback. Their job is a bit like them playing a video game. They get constant feedback, increased scores, extra lives, and it's project based so they are doing many things at once, getting many balls in the air, checking on social media and I don't have a problem with that. Keeping their finger on the pulse of what's happening out there in the community. In a lot of respects they work autonomously here, we come together quite regularly to give them that feedback in person.

Active Experimentation

The capacity of applicants to adopt new knowledge and skills formed during practical experiences to make decisions and solve problems is an ability desired by most participants. Three sub-themes made up the Active Experimentation theme: applicant self-marketing; demonstration of leadership; and commitment and ability to contribute. An applicant's ability to apply their practical experience to the advertised role within the interview context emerged as advantageous for applicants wanting to present their point of difference. The Active Experimentation theme, its sub-themes and associated codes are shown in Table 12.

Table 12

Phase 4 – Active Experimentation Theme – Sub-Theme and Codes

THEME	SUB-THEME	CODES
Active Experimentation	Demonstration of leadership	Volunteer work Capability to perform Leadership experience Leadership attributes
	Applicant self-marketing	Why the applicant is the best person for the job Undertake extra-curricular activities Practical examples provided
	Commitment and ability to contribute	Organisation fit Understands association of experience to role Industry-specific practical experience

Demonstration of Leadership. To strengthen the perception of employability, participants noted the importance of each applicant to demonstrate leadership. Four codes contributed to this sub-theme: volunteer work; capability to perform; leadership experience; and leadership attributes.

To volunteer in a range of settings, according to participants, signified the leadership of an applicant. Volunteering in a range of settings was perceived to occur at university social events, through leadership opportunities offered by university, and in the community. Keighley explained:

> … It just shows someone's a bit more open to take on new challenging things …We get a lot of applications from people that have finished school, gone to university and now are in the market and there is nothing really that sets them aside from people that are out there doing different things.

The capability to perform a range of tasks was also emphasised. The range of practical experiences applicants had, was perceived by participants, as enablers that demonstrated their capacity to perform a range of tasks. Nicholas prefers to consider the transferable skills that can be gained from working in a range of roles, even if they are unrelated to sport:

> I suppose what you're looking for is transferable [skills] and overlaps and areas of interest, but also any work experience is helpful, doesn't matter what, anything that shows that someone can be reliable, they turn up, they get paid, they come back on a regular basis. They work shifts as required, that's really important.

An applicant's proactivity to gain leadership experience was valued by participants. In particular, the types of activities undertaken by the applicant to demonstrate their devotion to sport. Jacinta prefers to consider leadership displayed by an applicant in experiences external to university:

> I've seen candidates come through where they actually play sport but then they also help out administratively at the club, or where the clubs allow them to do social media. That to me just shows initiative in someone who's got a goal as well and not just participate in it, and leadership. I am really favourable towards that.

Participants recognised that applicants demonstrate leadership attributes in many forms. These include how they work with others and individually, and the different approach required based on the situation. Keighley sought applicants with "unconventional experiences as it highlights leadership attributes in a different light, namely initiative, willingness to take on new responsibilities and tasks". Nicholas was more specific about the leadership attributes he looked for in an applicant. To him whether the extra training or experience was practicum or voluntary/paid work made a difference in an applicant's ability to demonstrate leadership. Nicholas is an advocate for the benefits of voluntary/paid employment and stated that "placement is almost over-supported" in relation to the exposure students get to a range of tasks and the quality of that experience to the development of their attributes. Nicholas explains:

> I think if someone has volunteered in an area of sports engagement, they are most likely going to be pretty savvy, pretty comfortable at making decisions of life. We have students doing practicum here and you really don't know how someone is going to perform until they're in at the workplace.

Applicant Self-Marketing. All participants embraced the notion of an applicant's ability to self-market and demonstrate their point of difference. Three codes made up this sub-theme: why the applicant is the best person for the job; [applicants who] undertake extra-curricular activities; and practical examples provided as evidence to demonstrate an applicant's self-marketing ability.

Applicants who were able to identify why they were the best person for the job was favourably noted by participants, as an indication they were going beyond the advertised

job description. The focus was on the unique aspect applicants provide that sets them apart from others. Shannon's main consideration was of an applicant's practical suitability to the advertised role. Essentially "an applicant must be able to self-market, to state his/her 'point of difference' and demonstrate why he/she is the most suitable applicant to the advertised role through practical experience".

The significance of undertaking extra-curricular activities was noted by participants. Desirable examples identified include gaining training in addition to a degree, such as through workshops and experiencing culture overseas. Keighley explains her considerations relating to applicants and their participation in extra curricula activities:

> When we go to the [job] market we certainly look at applications that have experience outside, so of course it's great to go from school to university to a graduate but we generally look at someone that's done extra training, so if they've done extra training through workshops, if they've travelled and done some study overseas. We look for volunteer experience; we look for something kind of out of the ordinary that sort of sets the candidate apart from the other candidates.

The ability of the applicant to self-market their practical experiences using a range of examples, was favourably recognised by participants. Examples include the motivations to participate in extra-curricular activities to demonstrate their level of commitment to industry and leadership capability. Angela articulates this notion and suggests that applicants need to have a good understanding of what the role is to successfully complete tasks. "Can they move beyond those buzz words…and show examples of the skills they've used in the past that they would translate into what they're currently doing now?" In addition, Nicholas seeks reassurance that an applicant can perform and provide specific examples which demonstrate their ability to practically apply themselves to the advertised position. He questions applicants' completion of

similar roles or tasks, and whether they can provide evidence that they can actually do the job. “Can you talk about when you did this or how you did that?”

Commitment and Ability to Contribute. Three codes comprised this final sub-theme. These included: organisation fit; the applicant understands the association of experience to role; and industry-specific practical experience.

‘Organisation fit’ was a term referred to by all participants at least once throughout the interviews. For several reasons, participants chose this term to describe whether the applicant has what the organisation is looking for in relation to existing workers and the nature of the business and clients. Organisation fit considerations included identifying how much training an applicant would need and how much time that training would involve. Another consideration was an applicant’s ability to work within specific organisational policy and process constraints (e.g., local government). Jacinta highlighted organisation fit in relation to organisational values. Demonstration of these in the written application and face-to-face interview was deemed important, “Our core values are respect, excellence, accountability and passion, so showing us those through actions, not just words, then they are already a tick”. Distinctively, participants considered whether applicants have the capacity to diversify and assist colleagues with other roles, especially in busy periods, within any organisation they had worked. A common consideration among participants was typified by David and related to the existing workplace environment and diversification of staff:

> … and when you get to that interview stage, you have probably nutted out who your key people are. Then it’s about confirming what you thought first and foremost and then ensuring that the fit is there for your organisation … you’ve got different age groups and I’m the only guy. You have to think are my team going to work together, are there going to be personality conflicts?

An applicant who understands the association of the experience to the role, was recognised by all participants. Particularly, an applicant's thinking process and preparation in the lead up to an interview that justifies their connection to the advertised role. Brad noted the importance of an applicant's ability to connect to the advertised role:

> [If the applicant] can show us that they didn't just turn up to the job…that they learned a bit more about the business, they learned about why that business was good, they learned some of the gaps the business had, because it just shows that deeper level of understanding about where the business is at … It's not just well I did this so I should be good at this; I want: this industry is similar for this reason and that's why I think I would be good at it. It stands out because they can actually reflect on where they've come from but also the performance of where they've come from.

Industry-specific practical experience by applicants was acknowledged by all participants. The associated benefits gained from this experience included understanding employment roles and industry requirements. Shannon was particular about the applicants he sought with industry-specific experience. In his workplace, local government requires workers to understand the workplace processes and context within which the council operates and the demographics within the municipality:

> Local government experience is also a key one as you can imagine if you get up toward 200 applications…In government, there's a lot of red tape, there's a lot of ways you need to work and understand working with councillors, working in the environment… which can be quite challenging…What I look for is really practical experience and if it's local government practical experience then that goes that much further.

Graduate Definition

Inductively, Graduate Definition was identified from data (codes) that did not align to the four Experiential Learning Cycle themes/phases (Kolb, 1984). The data in this sub-

theme referred to participant responses related to the question “Please describe your understanding of the term graduate.” Responses purposefully outlined each participant’s understanding of the term and contextualised their responses. Every participant recognised that a graduate was a person who has undertaken a degree at university to gain knowledge and employment in the associated industry. The term graduate was associated with tertiary courses or Master degrees.

Stage Three: Online Survey

The qualitative results in Stage Two produced nine additional employability items (see Table 5 in Methodology) that were aligned to the relevant eight Employability Dimensions in the existing the HRM – Retail CPP questionnaire (Rosenberg et al., 2012). This formed the online survey for the current research. Quantified results related to job classifications and signals are presented in this section. The presented findings begin with a sample description that includes sample size, demographics, and job information specific to SM. Following, are reports of the sub-scale reliability and validity, normality, and outlier analyses from the adapted HRM Survey – Retail CPP questionnaire’s Employability Dimensions questionnaire (Rosenberg et al., 2012). These include the means of the additional employability items within the Employability Dimensions subscales, and the additional alignment of each sub-scale to the four Experiential Learning Cycle phases (Kolb, 1984).

Between the time the audit and surveys were conducted, a new job category was recognised by Sportspeople (2016). Marketing/Media/PR/Communications was introduced and replaced the Retail/Apparel/Merchandising job category. As a result, this new category was added as the sixth job classification for Stage Three of the current study. This job classification was a sound addition to the current research as references to sales and product marketing and merchandising which were all apparent in the former job classification of Retail/Apparel/Merchandising.

Sample Size, Respondent Demographics and Job Information

The following section outlines sample size, the demographics of respondents, and presents the results of descriptive and non-parametric comparisons between respondent groups in different job classifications. Subsequently, how importantly each of the eight Employability Dimensions (Rosenberg et al., 2012) (with and without Stage Two additional items) and the Experiential Learning Cycle phases (Kolb, 1984) 1-4 sub-scales, rated. Finally, this section presents the results of the thematic analysis of the open-ended survey question.

Sample Size. One hundred and sixty-five respondents began the survey, of these, two chose 'Opt out' and 21 respondents chose 'Other' for job classification and automatically exited the survey. A further 20 respondents who answered none, or less than half of the Employability Dimensions questionnaire were also removed. There were 30 respondents who indicated that 'no' they were not involved in the hiring of new employees. There was no missing data from the remaining valid responses. The final sample size was 92.

For inter-group comparisons, Iyer and Loxton (2008) indicate that sample sizes of at least 10 are required for every estimated parameter. However, in the current sample four of the six job classifications had respondent numbers below 10. To enable statistical analysis, the six job classifications groups were merged into three (Table 13). The reduction from six job classifications to three resulted in respondent groups with numbers sufficient for valid statistical comparison (Nachar, 2008). It is important to note, the six job classifications, external to this statistical analysis, remain the recognised classifications that represent the SM industry sector.

Table 13

Job Classifications: Sample Size

Job Classifications (6)	Number of respondents	Newly formed Job Classifications (3)	Number of respondents
Administration/Finance/ Operations	51 (55%)	Administration/Finance/ Operations	51 (55%)
Coaching/High Performance	4 (5%)	Development/Coaching/ Programs	28 (31%)
Customer/Membership/ Athlete Services	1 (1%)	Marketing/Membership/ Events/Communications	13 (14%)
Development/Participation/ Programs	24 (26%)		
Events/Competitions	10 (11%)		
Marketing/Media/PR/ Communications	2 (2%)		
TOTAL	92	TOTAL	92

The amalgamation from six to three classifications was validated based on similar functions and role outcomes. The Administration/Finance/Operations classification remained the same due to it being the highest sample size. Development/Coaching/Programs became the new job classification name that represented Coaching/High Performance and Development/Participation/Programs. Due to the nature of Coaching/High Performance roles, a good ‘fit’ was to merge this with Development/Participation/Programs as each role is interrelated with the other. For example, coaching focuses on encouraging participation and development, and high performance is associated with the development of athletes. Between coaching and high performance, the primary objective associated with this role in this classification is to

strengthen the development of participants through program delivery forged through positive relationships.

Marketing/Membership/Events/Communications was another new classification. Customer/Membership/Athlete Services, Events/Competitions and Marketing/Media/PR/Communications were merged. In each of the three classifications an overlap of functions in the discipline areas was evident. Essentially, these three classifications have a marketing element to increase membership, participation at events and competitions, and communications to provide good customer service to retain members and athletes, and to increase participation at competitions.

Demographics. Seven variables are discussed in the respondent demographic results. These include age range; annual range of income; status of employment; gender; postcode; and context of organisation. Findings presented in Table 14 identify that 67% of respondents were aged between 25-44 years with an income bracket of $60,000-90,000 (AUD) for 77% of respondents. Eighty three percent were in full time positions, 55% were male respondents and 77% of respondents resided in Victoria. In terms of the organisation context, 20% of respondents were from state sporting associations, followed by local government (13%), and national sporting organisation, sporting club and venue/facility management, each at 12%.

Table 14

Demographic Results

Variable	***%***
Age Range	
18-23	*3*
24-29	*15*
30-34	*16*
35-39	*16*
40-44	*20*
45-49	*11*
50-54	*11*
55-59	*2*
60+	*6*
Annual Range of Income (AUD)	
$0-14,000	*1*
$15-29,000	*1*
$30-44,000	*6*
$45-59,000	*15*
$60-74,000	*19*
$75-89,000	*17*
$90,000+	*41*
Status of Employment	
Full time	*83*
Part time	*12*
Casual	*3*
Other	*2*
Gender	*%*
Male	*55*
Female	*44*
Other	*1*
Postcode	
Victoria	*77*
South Australia	*8*
Queensland	*6*
New South Wales	*6*
Northern Territory	*2*
Western Australia	*2*
Tasmania	*0*
Australian Capital Territory	*0*

Context of Organisation	
Sporting Club	*12*
Corporate	*1*
State Sporting Association	*20*
National Sporting Organisation	*12*
Venue/Facility Management	*12*
State Government	*2*
Education	*4*
Higher Education	*8*
Entertainment	*0*
Fitness	*3*
Local Government	*13*
Aquatics	*0*
Hospitality	*0*
Other	*13*

In regard to the age of participants, the majority (67%) were between 25 and 44 years. The age groups, represented from highest to lowest, were 40-44; 35-39; 30-34 and 25-29. Regarding the annual range of income, 77% of respondents reported earning between $60,000-$90,000+. These were the three highest income ranges, reflecting the fact that 83% of respondents specified a full-time employment status.

The samples gender distribution showed the number of male and female respondents was similar, with only a slightly higher representation of males (51%). Only 1% of respondents selected the ‘other’ gender option. Respondents also predominantly resided in the state of Victoria (77%). Considerably smaller numbers reported residing in five other states and territory and no respondents reported residency in one state (Tasmania) and one territory (ACT).

Job Information. In terms of organisational contexts, respondents reported working in 10 different contexts, ranging from local government, state and national sporting organisations to higher education and facility/venue management. Just over a tenth of respondents selected the ‘other’ category and write-in responses reflected non-profit (3%) aged care/homeless (2%), Peak Body (2%), and national government

organisation, business, tourism, international sporting events and organising committee contexts (<1%).

Employability Dimensions (Rosenberg et al. 2012)

In this section, the analyses of results are presented on each of the eight Employability Dimensions (Rosenberg et al., 2012) sub-scales (with and without additional Stage Two items). Commencing in this section are the sub-scale normality and outlier results to determine the conduct of non-parametric testing of the data. Sub-scale reliability and validity results that determined internal consistency are presented. Indicated in the results are the respondent ranking of importance, and a statistical comparison between the job classifications and rank of importance, of the eight Employability Dimension sub-scales. In the additional analysis, the four Experiential Learning Cycle phases (Kolb, 1984) are developed to categorise the data and present sub-scale results. Results indicate in which phases of the learning cycle the individual Employability Dimensions items are developed and the rankings of importance. As such, the projections of where these Employability Dimensions items develop were identified as indicators of signals in the learning process.

Normality and Outliers. Non-parametric testing was used following the determination that the eight Employability Dimensions (Rosenberg et al., 2012) and four Experiential Learning Cycle (Kolb, 1984) phases were not normally distributed. Non-normal distribution is often due small sample sizes using non-parametric tests for analysis (Ahad et al., 2011). The mean for each of the eight Employability Dimensions (Rosenberg et al., 2012) sub-scales, with and without the new additional items from Stage Two of this research, were calculated and tabulated against their corresponding sub-scale means from the original Rosenberg et al. (2012) questionnaire.

To assess sub-scale normality, mean scores, histograms, and Normal Q-Q Plots were reviewed for each sub-scale of the eight Employability Dimensions (with the added Phase

2 items) and the four Experiential Learning Cycle phases (Kolb, 1984). Normality was also assessed by Shapiro-Wilk's tests ($p > .05$) (Guarnieri, 2017; Razali & Wah, 2011) conducted for each of the eight Employability Dimensions and the four phases (Kolb, 1984). In addition, a Levene's test was conducted to check for the assumption of homogeneity of variance for each sub-scale for every job classification participant group. Box plots helped assess sub-scale distributions for job classification participant group for each sub-scale and to identify any outliers; only one outlier was identified for Employability Dimension 1. A single score of '8', was found to be outside the range of 3 standard deviations either side of the mean (23.95 – 8.77), calculated by the 'convert back from z-score' process (Field, 2009). The score for participant number 88 was adjusted from 8 to 12 which was calculated using 'the next lowest score minus one' process. These results are shown in Table 15.

Table 15

Employability Dimensions, Experiential Learning Cycle (ELC) Phases – Normality Characteristics

Variable	Skewness	Kurtosis	Shapiro Wilk's Test (*p value*)	Levene's Test (*p value*)
Eight Employability Dimensions (Rosenberg et al., 2012)				
1 – Basic Literacy and Numeracy Skills	-*.88*	*2.37*	.90 (*.000*)	2.72 (*1.32*)
2 – Critical Thinking Skills	-*.28*	*.66*	.98 (*.201*)	.69 (*.503*)
3 – Leadership Skills	-*.50*	*.52*	.97 (*.044*)	.36 (*.702*)
4 – Management Skills	-*.26*	*.48*	.97 (*.034*)	.34 (*.715*)
5 – Interpersonal Skills	-*.53*	*.14*	.97 (*.045*)	1.18 (*.312*)
6 – Information Technology Skills	-*.32*	*.44*	.96 (*.10*)	.10 (*.902*)
7 – Systems Thinking Skills	*.06*	-*.15*	.99 (*.731*)	.43 (*.650*)
8 – Work Ethic	-*.76*	*.42*	.90 (*.000*)	.88 (*.417*)
ELC Phases (Kolb, 1984)				
1 – Concrete Experience	-*.48*	-*.54*	.96 (*.004*)	.56 (*.571*)
2 – Reflective Observation	-*.65*	*.30*	.96 (*.006*)	1.23 (*.298*)
3 – Abstract Conceptualisation	-*.42*	*.36*	.98 (*.101*)	.45 (*.642*)
4 – Active Experimentation	-*.26*	-*.28*	.99 (*.380*)	.14 (*.871*)

Examination of the histogram and Normal Q-Q Plot (Appendix K) confirmed that the score distributions for Employability Dimensions (Rosenberg et al., 2012) 1, 3, 5, 6, and 8, and Experiential Learning Cycle Phases 2, 3 and 4 (Kolb, 1984) were not normally distributed and showed a negative skew. Inspection of histogram and Normal Q-Q Plot for the Employability Dimension 7 sub-scale suggested a normal distribution (Appendix L). The Employability Dimension 2 histogram diagram (Appendix M) highlighted the bimodal shape of distribution and Experiential Learning Cycle Phase 1, a multimodal distribution. The histogram of Employability Dimension 4 visually appeared slightly negatively skewed while its Normal Q-Q Plot (Appendix N) visually depicted a normal distribution.

Sub-Scale Reliability and Validity. As part of the internal reliability testing process, calculations were made for mean, standard deviation, inter-item correlation and scale totals (see Table 15). Among the sub-scale Cronbach's Alpha values, all were .78 or above, 10 of which were between .83 and .95 representing strong internal consistency. Additionally, all 12 sub-scales recorded corrected item-total correlation scores above .30 and ranged from .32 to .70. Thus, all were above the .3 minimum, suggesting a strong correlation with associated sub-scale items.

The Systems Thinking Skills Employability Dimension 7 (Rosenberg et al., 2012) and Experiential Learning Cycle Phase 1 (Kolb, 1984) had an original inter-item correlations sub-scale ranging from .15 to .80 and .00-.87 respectively. One item from the Systems Thinking Skills and Experiential Learning Cycle Phase 1 scale: 'knows about specific sports' had low, inter-item scores. This item was one of the additional Stage Two items from the current research, added to the Systems Thinking Skills Employability Dimension 7. Deleting that item from both sub-scales resulted in a slightly increased Inter-Item Correlation range and Cronbach's alpha, prompting the deletion of the item from further analysis.

One item in the Experiential Learning Cycle Phase 2 (Kolb, 1984) scale: ‘believe in their own self-worth and maintain a positive view of their self’, had low, inter-item scores ranging from .13 to .31. The item remained for the Leadership Skills Employability Dimension 3 (Rosenberg et al., 2012) sub-scale but was deleted from further analysis within Experiential Learning Cycle Phase 2. By removing this item, the Cronbach’s alpha increased slightly, and the lowest corrected item-total correlation increased from .28 to .49.

In the Experiential Learning Cycle Phase 3 (Kolb, 1984) sub-scale, two items had relatively low inter-item correlations sub-scores: ‘understand and perform basic mathematic computations’ and ‘organise and process symbols, pictures, graphs, objects, and other information’. The corrected item-total correlations for these two items were above .30 and subsequently retained because they sufficiently correlated with the sub-scale total score. Similarly, in the Experiential Learning Cycle Phase 4 sub-scale, one item: ‘gain additional, relevant training/qualifications’, had some extremely low inter-item correlations sub-scores ranging from -.00 to .40. The item was not removed because all items in the corrected item-total correlation column were above .32. This was an additional item added to the Critical Thinking Skills Employability Dimension 2 (Rosenberg et al., 2012) and drawn from Stage Two of the current research.

Fourteen items were originally in Experiential Learning Cycle Phase 1 Concrete Experience (Kolb, 1984) sub-scale, however, the corrected item-total correlation of one scale item was below .3 and subsequently deleted. In total three additional Stage Two items were included in this variable (Table 16).

Initially there were 10 items in Experiential Learning Cycle Phase 2 Reflective Observation (Kolb, 1984); however, the corrected item-total correlation of one scale item was below .3 and deleted. In the Experiential Learning Cycle Phase 3 Abstract Conceptualisation (Kolb, 1984) there were three additional, Stage Two items included in

this variable (Table 16). There was one additional, Stage Two item included in this variable and in Experiential Learning Cycle Phase 4 Active Experimentation (Kolb, 1984) (Table 16).

Table 16

Employability Dimensions, Experiential Learning Cycle Phases – Cronbach's Alpha, Mean, Standard deviation, Inter-Item Correlation and Corrected Item-Total Correlation

Variable	Number of scale items	Cronbach's Alpha	Mean range	Standard Deviation range	Inter-Item Correlation range	Corrected Item-Total Correlation (minimum)
Eight Employability Dimensions (Rosenberg et al., 2012)						
1 – Basic Literacy and Numeracy Skills	*4*	*.83*	*3.99-4.29*	*.70-.83*	*.34-.72*	*.44*
2 – Critical Thinking Skills	*7*	*.83*	*3.48-3.77*	*.78-.96*	*.17-.62*	*.37*
3 – Leadership Skills	*7*	*.83*	*3.46-4.02*	*.65-1.03*	*.17-.73*	*.49*
4 – Management Skills	*4*	*.78*	*3.08-3.72*	*.77-1.03*	*.33-.62*	*.46*
5 – Interpersonal Skills	*7*	*.86*	*3.43-4.32*	*.65-.89*	*.31-.69*	*.55*
6 – Information Technology Skills	*7*	*.87*	*3.63-3.99*	*.87-.92*	*.32-.67*	*.61*
7 – Systems Thinking Skills	*11*	*.90*	*2.90-3.65*	*.76-1.00*	*.16-.80*	*.50*
8 – Work Ethic	*8*	*.95*	*3.91-4.39*	*.74-.93*	*.56-.87*	*.70*
Experiential Learning Cycle Phases (Kolb, 1984)						
1 – Concrete Experience	*14*	*.91*	*3.45-4.39*	*.65-1.00*	*.00-.22*	*.44*
2 – Reflective Observation	*10*	*.87*	*3.08-4.29*	*.65-1.03*	*.13-.72*	*.49*
3 – Abstract Conceptualisation	*13*	*.85*	*3.29-4.07*	*.70-.98*	*.03-.61*	*.34*
4 – Active Experimentation	*18*	*.90*	*3.20-4.23*	*.71-.96*	*-.01-.39*	*.32*

Four new sub-scale variables representing the four phases of the Experiential Learning Cycle (Kolb, 1984) were created (Table 17). The number of sub-scale items varied in each Employability Dimension (Rosenberg et al., 2012) as indicated in column two of Table 17, with the mix of Employability Dimension items that comprise each phase sub-scale. The phases with a higher concentration of Employability Dimensions sub-scales are highlighted in grey (Table 17). The Experiential Learning Cycle Phase 1 sub-scale included five of the seven Employability Dimension 5 (Interpersonal Skills) items and five of the eight Employability Dimension 8 (Work Ethic) items. Both Employability Dimensions 1 and 4 (Basic Numeracy and Literacy Skills and Management Skills) had three out of four items included in Experiential Learning Cycle Phase 2. The Experiential Learning Cycle Phase 3 sub-scale included four of the seven Employability Dimension 2, Critical Thinking Skills items. Finally, from Employability Dimension 7, seven items out of eleven appeared in Experiential Learning Cycle Phase 4.

Table 17

Employability Dimension Items Identified in the Experiential Learning Cycle Phases

Variable	**Number of Employability Dimension (ED) (Rosenberg et al., 2012)**
Experiential Learning Cycle Phase (Kolb, 1984)	
1	ED3 x2; ED5 x5; ED7 x1; and ED8 x5
2	ED1 x3; ED4 x3; ED6 x2; and ED8 x1
3	ED1 x1; ED2 x4; ED3 x2; ED4 x1; ED5 x1; ED6 x2; and ED7 x2
4	ED2 x3; ED3 x2; ED5 x1; ED6 x3; ED7 x7; and ED8 x2

Experiential Learning Cycle Phase 1, Concrete Experience (Kolb, 1984), focuses on doing or having an experience and comprised four items from Employability Dimensions 3 (Leadership), 5 (Interpersonal), 7 (Systems Thinking) and 8 (Work Ethic). These items

collectively related to a graduate's basic understanding of workplace tasks; individual motivations; and interactions with staff.

Experiential Learning Cycle Phase *2* Reflective Observation (Kolb, 1984) is about how the learner reviews and reflects on the experience undertaken. Items concerned with tasks relating to organising, communicating, interpreting, identifying, and selecting were aligned to this phase and were from Employability Dimensions 1 (Basic Literacy and Numeracy Skills), 3 (Leadership Skills), 4 (Management Skills) and 6 (Information Technology).

Experiential Learning Cycle Phase 3, Abstract Conceptualisation (Kolb, 1984), focuses on the learner concluding and learning from their experiences while understanding the connections between them. Items in this phase aligned to: the learner understanding and generating new ideas; choosing procedures or equipment, processing symbols and other information; and considering risk and linking prior experiences to deliver best practice. Highlighted in Results, Table 16, are these individual sub-scale item numbers and corresponding Employability Dimension.

In the Experiential Learning Cycle Phase 4, Active Experimentation (Kolb, 1984), the learner follows from the learning experience to plan and apply what has been learned and to observe outcomes. Employability Dimensions 2 (Critical Thinking), 3 (Leadership), 5 (Interpersonal), 6 (Information Technology), 7 (Systems Thinking) and 8 (Work Ethic) were represented. Items aligned to this Phase represented a graduate's ability to: recognise problems and strategically plan; work collaboratively and independently to achieve personal and organisation goals; use computers to acquire, organise, analyse, and communicate information; and to understand technological systems operations.

Employability Dimension: Rank of Importance. Higher sub-scale mean scores, identified in Table 18, reflect respondents attributing greater importance to the

employability skills represented in each sub-scale. Each Employability Dimension (Rosenberg et al., 2012) is presented in order of highest to lowest importance (sub-scale mean score) for the sub-scales with and without additional items from Stage Two of this study. Essentially, the sub-scales appeared in similar order demonstrating the minimal effect the additional Stage Two items had on the order of importance. Highlighted in grey (Table 18) are the top five sub-scales.

Table 18

Employability Dimension Sub-Scale Mean Scores Ordered from Most to Least Importance

Employability Dimension (ED Number)	Sub-Scale Mean Scores Without Additional Stage Two Items	Sub-Scale Mean Scores with Stage Two Additional Items
Work Ethic (ED8)	4.25	4.23 (1)
Literacy & Numeracy Skills (ED1)	4.14	4.14 (2)[a]
Critical Thinking Skills (ED2)	4.13	4.04 (3)[a]
Leadership Skills (ED3)	3.98	3.86 (5)
Interpersonal Skills (ED5)	3.89	3.89 (4)[a]
Information Technology Skills (ED6)	3.81	3.81 (6)
Management Skills (ED4)	3.43	3.43 (8)[a]
Systems Thinking Skills (ED7)	3.38	3.52 (7)[a]

Note: [a] Employability Dimension sub-scales that attracted new items from Stage Two of the current study

Descriptive comparisons of mean sub-scale scores for the Employability Dimensions (Rosenberg et al., 2012) without the additional Stage Two items across the three job classification participant groups appear in Table 19. The Employability Dimensions are ordered from most to least important according to the Administration/Finance/Operations participants' ratings. The order of rated importance for the other two participant groups are reported in brackets. The first two job classification groups list the eight Employability Dimensions in rank of importance in exactly the same order. The final job classification listing is very similarly ordered. All

three job classifications ranked Work Ethic as the most important and Management Skills as the least important Employability Dimension. The top five, in almost the exact same order, are shaded in grey in Table 19. The number in brackets identify the order in which each Employability Dimension was ranked from highest to lowest.

Table 19

Employability Dimensions without Additional Stage Two Items Mean Score by Job Classification

Employability Dimension (ED Number)	Administration /Finance/ Operations Group	Development/ Coaching/ Programs Group (Rank Order)	Marketing/ Membership/ Events/ Communication Group (Rank Order)
Work Ethic (ED8)	4.22	4.27 (1)	4.28 (1)
Literacy and Numeracy Skills (ED1)	4.22	4.09 (2)	3.92 (3)
Leadership Skills (ED3)	4.01	3.89 (3)	4.05 (2)
Interpersonal Skills (ED5)	3.96	3.79 (4)	3.86 (4)
Information Technology Skills (ED6)	3.87	3.72 (5)	3.76 (5)
Critical Thinking Skills (ED2)	3.67	3.60 (6)	3.49 (7)
Management Skills (ED4)	3.44	3.33 (7)	3.58 (6)
Systems Thinking Skills (ED7)	3.44	3.27 (8)	3.38 (8)

The Employability Dimension mean scores with the additional Stage Two items for each job classification participant group appeared in similar positions in Table 20. Job classification groups 1 and 2 list the eight Employability Dimensions in rank of importance in the exact same order. The final job classification group listing is also similarly ordered. All three job classification groups ranked Work Ethic as the most important Employability Dimension followed by Literacy and Numeracy Skills as second in rank of importance. The top five Employability Dimensions, in similar order of importance and shaded in grey, are highlighted in Table 20. The number in brackets

identifies the order in which each Employability Dimension was ranked from highest to lowest.

Table 20

Employability Dimensions with additional Stage Two items Rank order by Job Classification

Employability Dimension (ED Number)	Administration /Finance/ Operations Group	Development/ Coaching/ Programs Group	Marketing/ Membership/ Events/ Communication Group
Work Ethic (ED8)	4.22	4.25 (1)	4.25 (1)
Literacy and Numeracy Skills (ED1)[1]	4.22	4.09 (2)	3.92 (2)
Interpersonal Skills (ED5)[1]	3.97	3.79 (3)	3.80 (4)
Leadership Skills (ED3)	3.89	3.77 (4)	3.92 (3)
Information Technology Skills (ED6)[1]	3.87	3.72 (5)	3.76 (5)
Critical Thinking Skills (ED2)	3.65	3.60 (6)	3.47 (6)
Systems Thinking Skills (ED7)[1]	3.58	3.48 (7)	3.51 (8)
Management Skills (ED4)[1]	3.44	3.33 (8)	3.58 (7)

Note: [1]ED sub-scales that attracted new items from Stage Two of the current study

Experiential Learning Cycle Phases: Rank of Importance. Mean scores for the four sub-scales representing the phases of the Experiential Learning Cycle (Kolb, 1984) were calculated and presented in Table 21. All Employability Dimensions (Rosenberg et al., 2012) items, including additional Stage Two items, were allocated to one of the four Experiential Learning Cycle Phases in which the item is demonstrated by the learner. In this table the four phase sub-scale mean scores are presented by the job classification of respondents. The Phases are presented in the order of importance rated by survey respondents in the Administration/Finance/ Operations group. The order of importance ranked by participants in the other two job classification groups is indicated in brackets from highest to lowest. Job classification groups 1 (Administration/Finance/Operations) and 2 (Development/Coaching/Programs) list the four Phases in rank of importance in

exactly the same order. The third job classification group, however, differed from the other two groups merely by ranking Phase 2 the highest. Aside from Group 3 (Marketing/Membership/Events/Communication) ranking Phase 2 the highest (4.31) there is almost uniformity between the three groups on rankings. Subsequently these rankings match the order of each of the four Phases.

Table 21

Mean Scores for Experiential Learning Cycle Phases (Kolb, 1984) with Additional Stage Two Items by Job Classification

Variable Phase	Number of items	Total Mean score	Administration / Finance/ Operations Group 1	Development/ Coaching/ Programs Group 2	Marketing/ Membership/ Events/ Communication Group 3
1	13	4.02	4.34	4.27 (1)	4.25 (2)
2	9	3.84	4.33	4.21 (2)	4.31 (1)
3	13	3.75	3.80	3.70 (3)	3.64 (4)
4	18	3.67	3.70	3.59 (4)	3.66 (3)

Statistical Comparisons. Statistical comparisons were made between the three Job Classification groups on the importance of each Employability Dimension (Rosenberg et al., 2012) and the Experiential Learning Cycle phase (Kolb, 1984). The following describes the comparisons between the Kruskal-Wallis H Test and Mann Whitney U Test.

Kruskal-Wallis H Test. Kruskal-Wallis H Tests were conducted to compare the importance assigned by each of the three job classification participant groups to the eight Employability Dimensions (Rosenberg et al., 2012) and the four Experiential Learning Cycle phases (Kolb, 1984). This tests if the three Job Classification groups differed on how important respondents rated each sub-scale. Results are presented in Table 22. Overall, there were no statistical differences between the groups for any of the Employability Dimensions and Experiential Learning Cycle Phase sub-scales. Findings suggest a degree of consensus among the three Job Classification groups of the

importance attached to each Employability Dimension and Experiential Learning Cycle Phase.

Mann Whitney U Test. The results from the Kruskal-Wallis H Test revealed no statistical differences amongst the three participant groups for any of the eight Employability Dimensions or the four Experiential Learning Phases. As such, further post-hoc Mann Whitney U Tests were not required.

Table 22

Kruskal-Wallis H Test Results for Each Employability Dimension and Experiential Learning Cycle Phase across the Three Job Classification Groups.

Dependent Variable	Kruskal-Wallis H Test	Monte Carlo Significance	Administration/ Finance/Operations median	Development/ Coaching/Programs median	Marketing/ Membership/Events/ Communication median
Employability Dimensions (Rosenberg et al., 2012)					
1 – Literacy & Numeracy Skills	1.54	.47	17.00	16.00	16.00
2 – Critical Thinking Skills	1.06	.59	26.00	24.00	24.00
3 – Leadership Skills	.60	.75	28.00	27.50	26.00
4 – Management Skills	1.34	.52	14.00	14.00	15.00
5 – Interpersonal Skills	1.50	.47	28.00	28.00	27.00
6 – Information Technology Skills	.46	.81	28.00	28.00	27.00
7 – Systems Thinking Skills	.80	.68	39.00	38.00	38.00
8 – Work Ethic	.31	.86	34.00	36.00	38.00
Experiential Learning Cycle Phases (Kolb, 1984)					
1 – Concrete Experience	.24	.90	57.00	57.00	56.00
2 – Reflective Observation	.58	.74	40.00	39.00	40.00
3 – Abstract Conceptualisation	1.21	.56	49.00	48.00	49.00
4 – Active Experimentation	.96	.62	67.00	65.50	65.00

Open-Ended Question

The results of the open-ended question were deductively organised into four themes based on the four phases of the Experiential Learning Cycle (Kolb, 1984) and associated sub-themes were identified (Table 23). Data was viewed in terms of what a prospective employee brings to job recruitment and selection from having a practical experience. Not all respondents took the opportunity to provide additional information (n=53/92). The range of responses therefore, for this section was limited.

Sub-themes corresponding to those already identified in Stage Two of this research were used to categorise this data. Inductively, new codes and associated sub-themes were identified. Respondent quotes were used to illustrate the emergent themes.

Concrete Experience. Four sub-themes were identified. These related to: an application of theory to practice; experience relating to a graduate's performance; industry experience and demonstration of commitment to industry; and experience undertaken within life and work (Table 23).

Table 23

Open-Ended Question, Phase 1 – Concrete Experience Theme: Sub-Themes and Codes

THEME	SUB-THEMES	CODES
Concrete Experience	Application of theory to practice	Theory alone is not sufficient without practical experience
	Experience – graduate performance	Ability to work within a team
	Industry experience and commitment to industry	Voluntary experience to demonstrate commitment and passion
	Experience – life and work	Expectations at the workplace Extensive experience

Application of Theory to Practice. The sub-theme was created from one code: theory alone is not enough without practical experience. Five respondents acknowledged this. The sub-theme related to how the application of theory to practice is required as evidence to demonstrate that a graduate can perform the job. As typified by one respondent who recognised the "Willingness to go out and gain experience, even volunteer experience, to apply knowledge from the degree to a real workplace".

Experience – Graduate Performance. This sub-theme relates to how a graduate validates their ability to perform their role from workplace experiences. Generated from six responses, the code, ability to work in a team environment, represented a range of responses including establishing networks and working relationships. Another was the expectation that to perform well in a role, the graduate had a responsibility to "contribute to the development of and understand the importance of departmental business plans". Emphasis was placed on graduates' abilities to broaden their thinking and realise that they were not confined to a narrow job description. As noted by one respondent, the "ability to work in a team environment and adapt to requests outside their main duties" was a way this thinking could be demonstrated by graduates.

Industry Experience and Commitment to Industry. This sub-theme was created from one code, relating to a graduates' voluntary experiences to demonstrate commitment and passion. Six respondents identified that graduates who had volunteered or undertaken experience outside of their study were often proactive, passionate about what they do and committed to the industry. More specifically, one respondent acknowledged a "Willingness to go out and gain experience, even volunteer experience outside of that provided directly by the university during their study".

Experience – Life and Work. The final sub-theme, Experience – Life and Work, was created from two codes: expectations at the workplace and extensive experience. Workplace expectations (gained from six responses) related to the need for graduates to have a balanced approach/expectations to the workplace and life. Extensive life experiences (gained from four responses) related to the need for graduates to have a range of life/work/field experiences rather than spending no time in the industry, in any work capacity. The range of experiences referenced by the respondents aligned with the sports and related industries and involved voluntary, part time and intern roles.

Reflective Observation. Two sub-themes were identified. These related to a graduate's preparation before an interview and their self-management in terms of their willingness to learn and invest in their own personal brand (Table 24). Both sub-themes relate to a graduate's ability to reflect on their experience and outcomes to enable adequate job application preparation and interview performance.

Table 24

Open-Ended Question, Phase 2 – Reflective Observation Theme: Sub-Themes and Codes

THEME	SUB-THEME	CODES
Reflective Observation	Graduate preparation before interview	Written application Provision of practical experience examples
	Self-management	Willingness to learn Understand their own personal brand

Graduate Preparation before Interview. The sub-theme was drawn from two codes, written application, and provision of practical experience examples. Three respondents recognised the written application was often the first impression and one that would determine the progression of the graduate from application to an interview. Writing ability and structure were noted in that, "Grammar is a huge point. If they cannot properly form

sentences and paragraphs, then we will not consider them. And use of full words rather than social media text is important too". Furthermore, it is essential that a graduate can demonstrate professionalism and consideration of the impending role when writing the application, to ensure the content closely relates to that of the job advertisement. As noted by one respondent, "Graduates recruited via application need to demonstrate strong written skills (well written and tailored application)".

Five respondents expected that graduates could articulate their ability using practical experience examples as evidence in interviews. Acknowledgement was made of the ability to break down elements of the example including "Being able to define key elements of personal performance that would contribute to the organisation and ability to think outside normal operational strategies common in sport". It was also important that graduates have the capacity to share these examples in an interview, "The ability to share these examples in their application and in an interview situation. Often this is done extremely poorly." Finally, respondents emphasised that examples would provide evidence of the graduate's ability, as typified by one respondent "Demonstration of having worked on a project/initiative indicated an ability to work independently, creative/lateral thinking, and problem solving amongst a whole number of things".

Self-Management. The final sub-theme, self-management, was determined by two codes: willingness to learn and understand their own personal brand. Eleven respondents expected graduates to have a willingness to learn. In doing so a graduate would have the ability to learn quickly, adapt, and work autonomously. These respondents acknowledged that a lack of people resources and support in the industry meant the need to quickly learn. One respondent noted: "It is critical that they can self-manage and learn. As an industry it is rare that we have the time to walk graduates through every step of a project". Another

indicated: “It all comes down to how ready they are to learn about the role and sport they’re taking up. Considering the lack of staff in most SSO’s, being ready to go is essential for graduates”.

In addition, demonstration of a desire to learn was recognised by respondents. In particular, the “Ability to listen and absorb vast amounts of information – always a challenge when starting a new job” and “Showing the desire to want to learn”. Seven respondents anticipated that graduates should understand their own personal brand. Respondents noted that having this self-awareness will enable them to “get on with the job” and “contribute confidently with minimal reliance on staff”. The implication was that respondents expected graduates to be industry-aware and self-aware.

Abstract Conceptualisation. Two sub-themes were identified. The first related to how a graduate presents their interpersonal skills or personal attributes, usually through the interview process. The second sub-theme referred to the ability of the applicant to identify a specific role that they have previously undertaken that relates to the advertised position (Table 25).

Table 25

Open-Ended Question, Phase 3 – Abstract Conceptualisation Theme – Sub-Theme and Codes

THEME	SUB-THEME	CODES
Abstract Conceptualisation	Method of message	Demonstrate interpersonal skills or personal attributes
	Content of articulated message	Specific roles identified

Method of Message. The method of message sub-theme was drawn from the code focused on a graduate’s ability to demonstrate interpersonal skills and personal attributes. Thirteen respondents emphasised the interpersonal aspects that graduates brought to job

recruitment and selection and how important these aspects were to the dynamics of a workplace. These included, friendliness, personality, demeanour, enthusiasm, a sense of humour, use of initiative, strong work ethic, a willingness to listen and learn, use of problem-solving skills and their overall presentation.

Content of Articulated Message. One code that related to identification of specific roles was categorised into this sub-theme. An ability to articulate previous roles and specific skills to the advertised role and relate transferable skills were deemed vital by respondents:

> I look for the graduate being able to demonstrate having worked on a project/initiative. To me, this indicates an ability to work independently, creative/lateral thinking, problem solving amongst a whole number of things (provided that this is the way it is communicated in resume and interview).

Active Experimentation. Two sub-themes were identified. The first sub-theme focused on demonstration of leadership outlining the graduate's ability to perform and to demonstrate leadership attributes. The sub-theme, commitment and ability, was drawn from a graduate's capacity to adapt to new situations. Both sub-themes relate to a graduate's leadership and capacity to contribute to the workplace (Table 26).

Table 26

Open-Ended Question, Phase 4 – Active Experimentation Theme: Sub-Theme and Codes

THEME	SUB-THEME	CODES
Active Experimentation	Demonstration of leadership	Ability to perform leadership attributes
	Commitment and ability to contribute	Adapt to new situations

Demonstration of Leadership. The sub-theme, demonstration of leadership, yielded more mentions (by 14 respondents) than any other sub-theme across the four phases of the Experiential Learning Cycle (Kolb, 1984). These responses were collated under the two codes, a graduate's ability to perform, and leadership attributes. Collectively, these codes are characteristic of the evidence identifying the depth of leadership desired by respondents.

Graduates who have the ability to perform as a leader were commonly recognised as competent. As typified by one respondent in regard to performing leadership, "Competency is key for me – not necessarily in a specialised sense, but that you can leave a task with someone, and they will complete it (or ask for guidance)". In addition, the ability for graduates to publicly speak, listen, and be willing to express their opinions and ideas confidently, were indicators of leadership performance. As noted by one respondent, "all these things I wish I had years ago".

Leadership attributes displayed through initiative and proactivity were identified by five respondents. To prompt graduates to display such leadership attributes, two respondents noted that they encourage graduates, "To go above and beyond" and "If you lack experience, find a different way to provide value to the organisation you wish to work in". Respondents emphasised that having a point of difference provides graduates with an advantage over other graduates competing for the same jobs.

Commitment and Ability to Contribute. The final sub-theme was drawn from a single code related to the graduates' adaptation to new situations. Respondents reported the significance of job-related experience to assist a graduate to adapt to the workplace, attempt new/challenging tasks and contribute to the role undertaken and to the organisation. More specifically, respondents referred to the modification of a graduate's

working behaviour to suit the organisation's operations and ability to 'fit' into their workplace. Both encompassed an ability to work in a team environment and adapt to requests outside their main duties.

Chapter Summary

A three-staged method approach was applied to the current study consisting of a job advertisement audit, semi-structured interviews, and an online survey to produce findings to assist with addressing research questions one and two.

Research question one was addressed by the Stage One job advertisement audit, where six SM industry job classifications were identified, and role functions emerged that represent graduate-entry SM positions in Australia. Also emerged were job criteria including job status and salary, required tertiary qualifications and experience, and additional training and requirements. These provided characteristics representative of the SM industry sector. The identification of job classifications assisted to guide the recruitment of sport managers for the Stage Two Semi-Structured Interviews.

Research question two was addressed using two methods: Stage Two Semi-Structured Interviews and the Stage Three Online Survey. In Stage Two, sport managers were randomly selected from the Stage One job advertisement audit and interviewed via semi-structured interviews. Findings generated from these interviews revealed the employment capability of graduates with practical experience entering job recruitment and selection. Semi-structured interviews data were deductively organised into the four predetermined themes (phases) of the Experiential Learning Cycle (Kolb, 1984) to identify the employability skills developed in each of these phases and presented as observed signals during job recruitment and selection. In Stage Three, results indicated the respondent ranking of importance of the eight Employability Dimensions (Rosenberg et

al., 2012), and the statistical comparison between the job classifications and rank of importance of the eight Employability Dimension sub-scales. The three highest ranked Employability Dimensions were: Work Ethic, Basic Literacy and Numeracy Skills and Critical Thinking Skills. The three highest ranked Employability Dimensions by job classification were: Work Ethic, Basic Literacy and Numeracy Skills, and Leadership, Skills. Results also indicated in which phases of the Experiential Learning Cycle (Kolb, 1984) the individual Employability Dimensions items are developed, these represented indicators of signals in the learning process.

To build on these results and create a broader discussion, the next chapter, Discussion Part One, delved deeper to answer research questions one and two. First job classifications and additional SM industry sector findings associated with preparing UG from SM programs for practical experience are discussed. Second, the composition of 10 distinct employability signals and observation of these signals during job recruitment and selection are discussed. The findings from Stages One, Two and Three subsequently contribute to the development of recommendations to assist with addressing research question three. These recommendations to guide managers from the SM industry sector and coordinators of UG SM programs will be discussed in the Discussion Part Two chapter.

Chapter Five: Discussion (Part One)

The purpose of the current research was to determine how practical experience can align the learning, development, and subsequent capacity of graduates from UG SM programs, to transparently signal their employability during job recruitment and selection. The three research questions formed to address the research purpose were:

1. What job classifications of advertised graduate-entry sport management positions stipulate practical experience as a prerequisite?
2. What signals do sport management employers seek from graduate-entry job applicants of practical experiences during job recruitment and selection?
3. What recommendations can be made to managers from the sport management industry sector and coordinators of undergraduate sport management programs on the signals employers seek from graduates to demonstrate employability from practical experiences?

To answer these questions, the discussion of the current research is presented in two chapters. The first focuses on the discussion of results relating to research questions one and two (Discussion Part One), and the second chapter identifies the recommendations to answer research question three (Discussion Part Two). Content within these chapters evolved from the underpinning literature, existing career development and employability frameworks and results from the current research.

In the current chapter, three sections exist. The first focuses on the six job classifications of advertised graduate-entry SM positions and subsequent evolution of the of the Pre-Condition Phase. The second section discusses the signals sought by sport managers of graduate applicants during job recruitment and selection and subsequent evolution of the Observed Signals Phase. The final section is a culmination of the current

research findings to address how practical experience can align the learning, development, and subsequent capacity of graduates from UG SM programs, to transparently signal their employability during job recruitment and selection. In doing so the two phases that evolved from the current research, with the Experiential Learning Cycle, created the Graduate Employability Cycle of Learning.

Theoretical insights evolved from addressing the first two research questions revealing new industry sector knowledge to assist UGs undertake practical experience and sequentially transform their learning into observable employability signals. In particular, the Pre-Condition Phase (comprising the Industry Awareness and Self-Awareness components), the Observed Signals Phase and the Graduate Employability Cycle of Learning have evolved. Six SM job classifications were identified as an awareness factor of the SM industry sector, and one of the six identified in the Industry Awareness component of the Pre-Condition Phase. Four awareness factors formed the Self-Awareness component of this Phase. The Observed Signals Phase comprises 10 signals that SM employers observe. Essentially, these two phases complement the Experiential Learning Cycle (Kolb, 1984) and enabled the formation the Graduate Employability Cycle of Learning.

Three key phases of the Graduate Employability Cycle of Learning were identified in the current study that contribute to an UG's ability to recognise their learning before, during and after experiences and to translate these into observable employability signals after graduation. The first is the Pre-Condition Phase which answers research question one. The second is the Observed Signals Phase which answers research question two.

To answer research question one, the following two sections discuss how the job classifications were identified and the subsequent formation of the Pre-Condition Phase

which include the job classifications and additional industry, and self-awareness factors, that emerged.

Job Classifications of advertised graduate-entry sport management positions that stipulate practical experience

Six job classifications of advertised graduate-entry SM positions have been identified in the current research that stipulate practical experience as a prerequisite. Essentially, industry standards are the association of role functions typically performed within an industry, known as job classifications (The Balance Careers, 2021). The availability of industry information assists individuals to make an occupational choice based on the expected satisfaction of a specific career (Jackson & Wilton, 2017; Keiper et al., 2019; Mathner & Martin, 2012). Providing an accurate depiction of an industry will overcome the potential for inconsistencies between an UG's expectations and reality (Nicholas & Handley, 2020) and, further, will guide them on how to correct general industry misconceptions, for example, that working in sport is glamourous (Brown et al., 2018; Mathner & Martin, 2012). The composition of roles advertised by sport managers who seek suitably experienced and qualified graduate employees, as identified in the current study, enabled the identification of six SM job classifications. Six job classifications were identified that represent the main role functions of the SM industry sector in Australia. The six SM job classifications are: Administration/Finance/Operations; Coaching/High Performance; Customer/Membership/Athlete Services; Development/Participation/Programs; Events/Competitions; and Marketing/Media/PR/ Communications. These classifications are the first set of Australian groupings that outline the qualifications, skills, job knowledge, and responsibilities specifically for the SM industry sector (Emery et al., 2012; Sotiriadou, 2018). Essentially, these job classifications

can be specified in UG SM programs to inform and assist UGs to navigate the SM industry sector in the absence of an accrediting body and relevant industry standards.

These job classifications form one of the six Industry Awareness factors identified from the broader results gained in the current research. Unexpectedly, five other Industry Awareness factors and four Self-Awareness factors evolved from responding to research question one. These awareness components and associated factors formed the Pre-Condition Phase.

The Pre-Condition Phase

The Pre-Condition Phase materialises as a phase that interconnects with and theoretically provides an extension to the Experiential Learning Cycle (Kolb, 1984). It becomes the preliminary Phase to this learning cycle that students address prior to conducting practical experience. The significance of the Pre-Condition Phase is in how it prepares UGs for practical experiences. More specifically, in how two awareness components (Industry Awareness and Self-Awareness) can complement and potentially enhance learning gained during practical experiences (Figure 7).

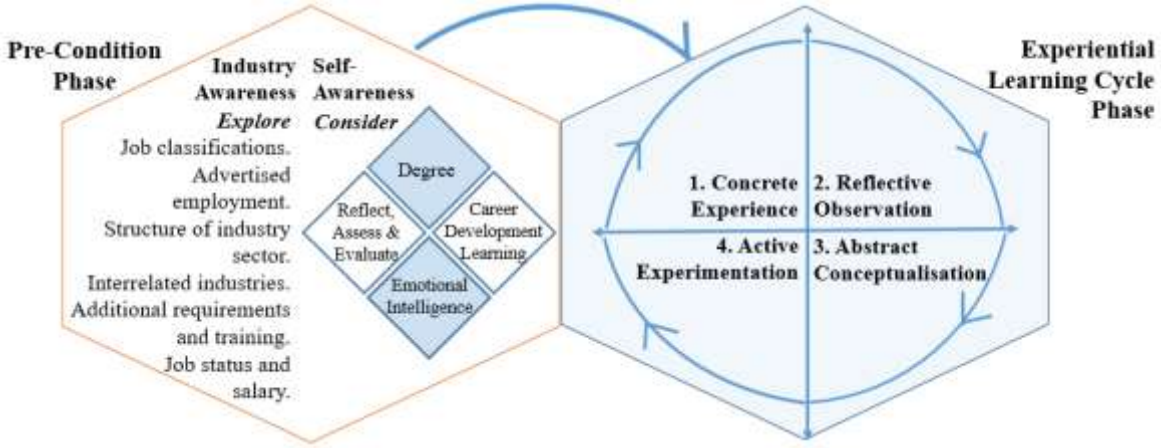
The Industry Awareness and Self-Awareness components of the Pre-Condition Phase align to elements within the widely used DOTS career development framework (Law & Watts, 2003). Specifically, the Industry Awareness component aligns with the DOTS Opportunity Awareness component (Watts, 2006). The awareness factors recognised in the Self-Awareness component directly relate to the individual's knowledge, skills, personal qualities, interests, and values within the DOTS Self-Awareness component. While DOTS, as an established model used over several decades, validates the Industry Awareness component from a SM perspective, the two awareness components of the Pre-Condition Phase build on DOTS to encourage student exploration to gain

awareness of industry ‘and’ self to strengthen an UG’s ability to practically apply learning through workplace practical experience.

Potentially, the exploration and considerations gained in this Phase will enhance learning gained from the practical experience and identified in the Experiential Learning Cycle. The Pre-Condition Phase, combined with the four phases of the Experiential Learning Cycle, allow UGs an opportunity to reflect on the industry composition and opportunities, and subsequently, build self-capacity and practical experiences.

Figure 7

Pre-Condition Phase as a Preliminary Extension of the Experiential Learning Cycle (Kolb, 1984).



Note: The full title of Degree in the Self-Awareness component is Degree Knowledge, Skills and Application.

Industry Awareness Component. The Job Advertisement Audit analysis (Stage One) conducted in the current research revealed SM managers assume graduate applicants already have an industry awareness. More broadly, findings across the three stages of this research revealed six industry awareness factors specific to job-related and SM organisation awareness essential for UGs of SM prior to undertaking practical experience. These included an awareness of: job classifications; advertised employment; structure of

industry sector; interrelated industries; additional requirements and training; and job status and salary. Each awareness factor serves to generate realistic expectations of SM UGs during practical experience that builds knowledge to assist during job recruitment and selection. Essentially, these factors help contextualise the learning that occurs throughout the experience. In addition, these factors establish the importance of the UG's self-awareness in terms of their work motivations and an awareness of the employment opportunities in any industry (Nicholas & Handley, 2020; Parker & Ohly, 2008) and predominantly, provide the starting point to the process of preparation for graduates to market their employability.

Accreditation standards provide UGs with the knowledge, skills, and professional attributes to practise the profession of choice. Until recently, there has been a lack of published research on the skills or competencies of SM graduates that employers perceive as desirable (Barnhill et al., 2018). The specific skills employers desire SM graduate applicants to possess have been identified (de Schepper & Sotiriadou, 2018; Emery et al., 2012; Romsa et al., 2017; Tsitskari et al., 2017), yet the discordance among these studies points to the lack of an industry accrediting body in Australia, to guide industry, UG SM courses and students on what standards are required. Even though not an accredited standard, the six industry awareness factors that have evolved as a result from the current research act as a starting point of reference for the SM industry and higher education sectors and UGs. Specifically, to guide UGs from SM courses on how to make educated decisions in preparation for and when undertaking practical experiences, and about their career future within the SM industry sector (Clark et al., 2010; Mathner & Martin, 2012; Nicholas & Handley, 2020). Essentially, these findings can assist to motivate UGs during

their degree to explore and become familiar with the six Industry Awareness factors, outlined in the following sub-sections.

Job Classifications. The six job classifications identified from the current research are: Administration/Finance/Operations; Coaching/High Performance; Customer/Membership/Athlete Services; Development/Participation/Programs; Events/Competitions; and Marketing/Media/PR/ Communications. When comparing these six job classifications to the core competencies of the 600 job roles listed in the Australian Skills Classifications (National Skills Commission, 2021), 13 potentially related to those of a sport manager. These were: customer service manager; facilities administrator; facilities manager; finance managers; fitness instructors; health promotion officer; outdoor adventure guides; program or project administrator; recreation officer; sports coaches, instructors and officials; sports umpire; sportspersons; and ticket sales-persons. Upon closer investigation of the core competencies associated with each role and corresponding items (skill set), it became evident that these items were generic to sport and, in most cases, did not relate to SM including the SM job classifications identified in the current research. For example, the job role of sports umpire, which contained the core competency of 'numeracy', identified the item (skill set) "use a blood pressure machine and accurately record the results". This item relating to the core competency of numeracy also broadly related to eight of the identified 13 SM roles with main role functions such as administration, facility management, customer service, and sports coaching. An alternative item corresponding to the core competency of 'numeracy' was, "check the weight and length of a product against a job ticket" directly relating this skill set to a fitness instructor role. Findings revealed, none of the recently released Australian Skills Classifications core competencies and corresponding skill sets related specifically to the roles that typify the

SM industry sector. Hence, the six SM job classifications identified from the current research are important to guide managers from the SM industry sector and coordinators of UG SM programs to instil realistic expectations of graduate-entry SM industry sector role and skill sets.

Advertised Employment. Graduates, upon completion of a higher degree, typically seek employment and endeavour to translate their industry experience when applying for related advertised employment. Specific to the SM industry sector, the six identified job classifications assist sport managers with the identification of job title terminology. Association of job title terminology from advertised employment (Emery et al., 2012; Kennan et al., 2008; Reeves & Hahn, 2010) to determine graduate entry-level positions within the sport industry (Sproles & Detmering, 2012) is vital to guide graduates in their job search. Specifically, the current research identified the title terms of assistant, officer, coordinator, leader, and manager as the terminology predominantly linked with advertised graduate-level industry job roles. Graduates who can distinguish and relate to the range of expected duties and industry standards (Carliner et al., 2015; DeLuca & Braunstein, 2016; Jackson, 2014) of advertised graduate entry-level SM positions, will naturally strengthen their self-marketing during job recruitment and selection (Brooks et al., 2014). In the absence of a SM accreditation body with corresponding industry standards, the current research findings provide new points of reference regarding advertised employment to distinguish the standards required from graduates entering the profession. Therefore, job classifications which reveal the graduate-entry nature of SM positions will assist graduates to recognise how to navigate job advertisements when seeking suitable SM industry employment.

Structure of Industry Sector. Industry job roles are undertaken in a range of workplace settings influenced by the services provided, facilities available, and the target groups which typify the structure of the corresponding industry sector. The common workplace settings identified in the current study within SM include those located in the 'non-profit' sector with sport associations and the 'public sector' in local government. These are two of the three main SM sectors which provide participation/sporting opportunities for community-based organisations and local and regional government. The third SM sector is commercial organisations (Hoye et al., 2015; Shilbury et al., 2020). The illustration of workplace context variations in the Australian labour market is important to the SM landscape to which UGs can refer to when making career choices.

Students, in preparation to graduate from UG SM programs could be encouraged to make the most of their current, informal practical experiences. Exposure to industry information throughout a higher education degree, was identified in the current research, to assist students with the development of employability before graduation. For example, each year in Australia approximately 8.5 million adults aged 15+ and 3.4 million children 14 and under participate in sport (club) sport (Sport Australia, 2021). Students could capitalise on their participation in sport by becoming involved in SM roles including club committee roles and a range of fundraising events. Volunteering in 'non-playing roles' (AusPlay, 2021) at the grass roots level is a demonstration of experience working with the sporting/local community and representative of the types of experiences that the non-profit and public sector seek from applicants of SM positions (Hoye et al., 2018; Shilbury et al., 2020). Although the SM industry sector defined in the current research is based on the Australian labour market and sporting structure, globally these sector distinctions could be applied to complement local operations. Essentially, information provided to UGs of SM

programs could include examples of pathways and benefits of experiences undertaken in the non-profit, commercial, and public sectors in SM.

Interrelated Industries. A graduate's ability to recognise, transfer and apply relative skills from external interrelated industry sectors may be their point of difference among candidates for an advertised role. The job audit conducted in the current research, identified the discipline qualifications of graduate applicants highly sought by SM industry sector employers were Sport Management, Recreation, Marketing and Business/Business Administration. The first two disciplines directly relate to the SM industry sector; however, marketing and business/business administration are more general qualifications. In addition, from the job advertisements audited, a range of required experience categories were identified. The first was sport [sector] experience followed by event management, marketing, and customer service. The latter three are desirable in many industries and indicative of the notion that individuals who train for one job will gain transferable skills that are applicable across 13 other jobs due to the similarity of the skills employers' demand (FYA, 2016). Specifically, sport managers from the current study expressed high regard for graduates who demonstrate their capability through real-life examples regardless of the industry sector represented.

Generic skills serve as a basis from which graduates can develop and transform their capabilities from a basic to a proficient level. The findings of the current research support the notion that a quality education should include practical experiences and other forms of assessment to develop students' generic and specific competencies to improve graduate employability (Fleming et al., 2009; O'Leary, 2017). This is especially important as careers and industries are rapidly transforming largely due to technological advancement (Kinash et al., 2016; FYA, 2016; Torii, 2018). The results from the current research

acknowledge the notion that transferability of these capabilities occurs in different contexts which complements previous studies (FYA, 2016; McNeil et al., 2012; Minten & Forsyth, 2014). In higher education, learning that occurs in the workplace or simulated situations is intensified when the needs of the specific discipline being studied are reflected (DeLuca & Braunstein-Minkove, 2016; Fleming & Haigh, 2017; McNeil et al., 2012). Subsequently, UGs who understand the SM labour market (Goodwin et al., 2012) and the heightened professionalism of the industry (Dowling et al., 2014; Shilbury et al., 2020) will be at an advantage. Specifically, graduate applicants who are industry-aware will recognise which transferable skills, including those from external sectors, to best promote their employability throughout job recruitment and selection.

Additional Requirements and Training. Employees who understand their role and the importance of addressing industry and workplace training requirements will likely be familiar with the clients and stakeholders. Findings from the current research identified the type of requirements and workplace training employers seek from a SM graduate in addition to their UG degree. These requirements include a driver's licence, Working with Children Check (WCC), and police check. The required types of training include gaining advanced level coaching, CPR, and First Aid certification. These requirements provide an indication of the workplace context for example, possession of a driver's licence provides assurance that an employee can undertake roles at sporting associations which service clubs across large geographical areas (Hoye et al., 2015). The requirement of WCC and police check strongly intimates the age and composition of the participant base utilising services from non-profit community organisations, most commonly in a sporting club or school sport setting (Eime et al., 2016). Finally, the additional training requirements of advanced level coaching certification, CPR and first aid are strong indicators of the nature

of the sporting workplace. That is, workplaces in a physical setting and/or where large groups of people gather (Kolar & von Treuer, 2015). Specifically, an awareness of industry working contexts, roles and transferable skills will point to the training and tangible industry requirements, in addition to an UG degree, that will strengthen a graduate's competitiveness in recruitment and selection.

It is worth noting that some requirements are particularly salient for SM contexts. There are no second chances where safety is concerned in a physical setting with large or small groups. The current research identified safety-related requirements that should be implemented to assess risk within a broad range of sporting contexts, that for example spectators, players and facility managers are exposed to (Donaldson & Finch, 2012). These also relate to contexts where there is a likelihood of litigation when negative incidences occur. Safety checks and the additional training practices of CPR and first aid are included in higher education SM practicum arrangements (Sotiriadou, 2011). These are also typically regarded as prerequisites for placement participation to reduce workplace risk and abide by occupational health and safety policy (Donaldson et al., 2013). The findings from the current research reinforce the importance that as a core business consideration, additional industry and workplace training requirements must be embedded in SM course delivery. More specifically to adequately equip graduates to instinctively assess risks and provide a duty of care.

Job Status and Salary. Many factors contribute to a graduate's attraction to work in a specific industry. Job status, in relation to time fractions and salary are two common factors. The findings from the current research suggest that a majority of graduate-entry positions advertised were full time. This finding indicates that sport sector employers recognise the importance of graduate-entry positions in workplace structures, which is

positive based on the significant reliance this sector has on volunteers (Hoye et al. 2019; Wallrodt & Thieme, 2020). Subsequently, salary is identified as an important factor influencing the career choice of graduates based on the expected satisfaction of a specific career (Mathner & Martin, 2012). Most managers surveyed in the current study earned in excess of $90,000 (AUD) annually. While not representing the salary of graduate-entry level positions, it positively reinforces a career pathway, the prospect of earning potential and opportunities for job advancement in the three SM industry sectors (Emery et al., 2012). An awareness of the industry sector structure will prepare graduates to recognise the opportunities within, and expectations of, an organisation and how to navigate position and salary prospects. Evidence gained from the current research indicates that graduate exposure to time fractions and salary representative of the SM industry sector is recommended to include within UG SM programs.

Self-Awareness Component

Understanding oneself is undoubtedly a sound starting point to explore career preferences and choices. Essentially, an UG's development of self-awareness is critical to prepare for practical experiences and to complement and potentially enhance learning gained during practical experiences. The Self-Awareness component of the Pre-Condition Phase evolved from the semi-structured interviews thematic analysis and online survey non-parametric tests, in Stages Two and Three from the current research. Identified from the data analysis was the notion that UGs who are self-aware will be better prepared through practical experience and drawn to a job that provides the best job-fit for them.

The Self-Awareness component embraces the application of four factors to enhance an UG's practical experiences. These factors include degree knowledge, skills, and application; career development learning; emotional intelligence; and reflect, assess, and

evaluate. The titles of these factors were influenced by four of the nine elements in the Key to Employability conceptual model (Dacre Pool & Sewell, 2007) based on the close alignment of a graduate's ability to develop and apply key competencies and skills, through reflection of their subjective practical experiences (work, life, and study). These four elements are: Degree Subject Knowledge, Understanding and Skills; Career Development Learning; Emotional Intelligence; and Reflecting and Evaluating. Each element was identified to develop a sense of self and capability in terms of a graduate's skills, interests, values, personality, strengths and attributes, weaknesses, knowledge, and passion related to practical experience. In doing so, the four awareness factors interconnect based on the actions taken to achieve each element. These awareness factors require the individual to draw from their own characteristics and knowledge and practically apply to enhance their learning in workplace practical experiences.

Degree Knowledge, Skills and Application. The notion of studying a degree in a specific discipline implies that relevant knowledge and skills will be gained by students to apply to the respective industry. While the knowledge of a discipline is important, equally is the self-awareness and application of this knowledge and skills (Nova, 2015). The current research identified that theory and knowledge gained from a degree were valued more when they could be applied in a practical setting to heighten an UG's understanding of the operations, skills and knowledge required in a sport and recreation sector organisation. These findings reinforce specific components of Yorke's (2006) employability definition which recognises a combination of appropriate knowledge, skills, and personal attributes to enhance a graduate's ability to contribute to the workplace. Volunteering for example, was highly regarded by the sport managers involved in the current research. Graduates who volunteer are recognised as proactive, passionate about

what they do, and committed to the industry. An UG's display of competence, connection, and commitment throughout a degree of study, positively emphasises the expression of their values, identifying with responsibility, purpose, and connection to build social confidence (MacNeela & Gannon, 2014; Ockenden & Stuart, 2014). Graduates who display values, leadership, knowledge, personal attributes, skills, and practice related to a discipline area can self-market their employability to hiring employers (Brady et al., 2018; Nicholas & Handley, 2020; Ockenden & Stuart, 2014). It is the presentation of these individual characteristics that provide the evidence in job recruitment and selection, which set a graduate apart from others in terms of doing more than simply completing a degree (Nicholas & Handley, 2020).

Career Development Learning. Career development learning is individual learning relating to one's career and not targeted to a specific industry sector. The experiential learning that arises from undertaking practical experience is valuable and can enhance employability. More specifically, to create the link between opportunities and self-capability to make decisions and apply these learnings from practical experience, and potentially to heighten a hiring employer's perception of a graduate applicant's employability (Jackson & Wilton, 2017). Findings from the current research indicate that UGs who have self-awareness in relation to decision-making and acceptance of associated responsibility and risk, can cope with the transition from an UG to the SM workplace. Practically, by embedding career development learning throughout UG SM programs, UGs will be able to learn subjectively while developing employability and capability to self-manage their careers beyond the degree.

Emotional Intelligence. There exists a strong connection between emotional intelligence and employability. Evidence from the current research highlights this

connection. Emotional intelligence was reflected when graduates believed in their own self-worth; maintained a positive view of their self; and exhibited self-control and responsibility for their own actions. Subsequently, graduates who choose ethical courses of action were able to communicate ideas effectively, and motivate, encourage, persuade, and convince others responsibly, demonstrating a level of self-awareness of their own emotional being (Majeski et al., 2017; Nelson & Low, 2011; Rosenberg et al., 2012). Nelson and Low (2011) propose that learning emotional intelligence skills through undertaking practical experience will positively contribute to an individual's mental and physical wellbeing; and improve personal career performance and satisfaction. Evidence from the literature reviewed and the current research indicates this recommendation will assist UGs to be more conscious of their own being, how they relate to others, the outcome of consequences of their own actions, and how to improve their employability.

Each learning experience is unique. The concept that learning involves emotion stems from the various emotions experienced by UGs undertaking tests, examinations, homework and to meeting deadlines (Culver, 1998; Tyng et al., 2017). Findings from the current research support the association of emotion to learning and how this notion must be embraced before any individual undertakes practical experience. Displays of passion and a commitment to industry or a sport, positive attitude and interpersonal skills by a graduate were signified by sport managers as indicators that revealed how emotion is present in learning. It is recommended that coordinators of UG SM programs implement activity, early in the course, to assist graduates to recognise emotion in learning before undertaking practical experience. Comprehension of how emotion is present in learning will help the UG to be attuned to their emotion, strengthen the individual learning experience, and the notion of what it is to be employable.

Reflect, Assess and Evaluate. Learning from lived experiences and applying improvements are products of reflection, assessment, and evaluation. Undergraduates who have an ability to reflect, assess and evaluate while undertaking practical experience will typically develop a social awareness of the organisational context (de Schepper & Sotiriadou, 2018) in relation to their capabilities and ultimately make more informed career choices (Jackson & Wilton, 2017; Mathner & Martin, 2012). It is recommended that critical reflection, self-assessment, and self-evaluation practices be embedded early in UG SM programs with associated, practice-based experience. Subsequently, an exercised ability to critically reflect, assess and evaluate practice to make informed decisions will assist UGs recognise their point of difference during job recruitment as graduates.

Signals sought by sport managers on the practical experiences of graduate applicants during job recruitment and selection

The following discussion focuses on answering research question two, to explore the signals sought by sport managers on the practical experiences of graduate applicants during job recruitment and selection. These signals are recognised as ‘Observed Signals’.

The Observed Signals identify signals that SM employers seek from graduate-entry job applicants of practical experiences during job recruitment and selection. In preparing UGs to undertake practical experiences, the current research findings suggest that it is more likely that UGs will enhance their experiential learning which is linked to the development of Observed Signals. The Employability Dimensions (Rosenberg et al., 2012) and corresponding employability survey were instrumental in forming the base from which this data was generated. Collectively, these Observed Signals are the first group of signals in Australia and potentially globally, to guide the composition of the indicators that signify

the employability of a SM graduate. These Observed Signals created the third Phase of the Graduate Employability Cycle of Learning, discussed later in this chapter.

Observed Signals Phase

It takes a combination of indicators to showcase an individual's employability. Throughout an employment process, job recruitment and selection provide an opportunity for applicants to self-market and present as the best person for the job (Zhao & Liden, 2011). Identified from the current research is the importance of graduate employability signalling, that the composition of signals should be observable and include multiple indicators to combine into one signal to validate and distinguish employability. Findings identified the observable signals that SM employers seek from graduate-entry job applicants of practical experiences during job recruitment and selection. Knowledge derived from the current research includes the identification of 10 Observed [employability] Signals gained during the recruitment and selection of graduates. These signals are transparently presented by an applicant to assist SM employers recognise graduate employability.

The composition of each signal enhances limited knowledge from existing research on how employers essentially assess a job applicant's possession of employability (Briggerman & Norwood, 2011; Piopiunik et al., 2020). These findings contrast, the common signals typically found in previous research, which focuses on one observable signal that produces an assumed outcome (Bol & Van de Werfhorst, 2011; Protsch, & Solga, 2015). For example, that reputable education institutions produce quality and highly productive students (Bol & Van de Werfhorst, 2011; Castagnetti et al., 2005; Dupray, 2001) and that Grade Point Averages indicate the level of an applicant's cognitive ability (Piopiunik et al., 2020; Pogatsnik, 2018). The consensus of previous research is that an

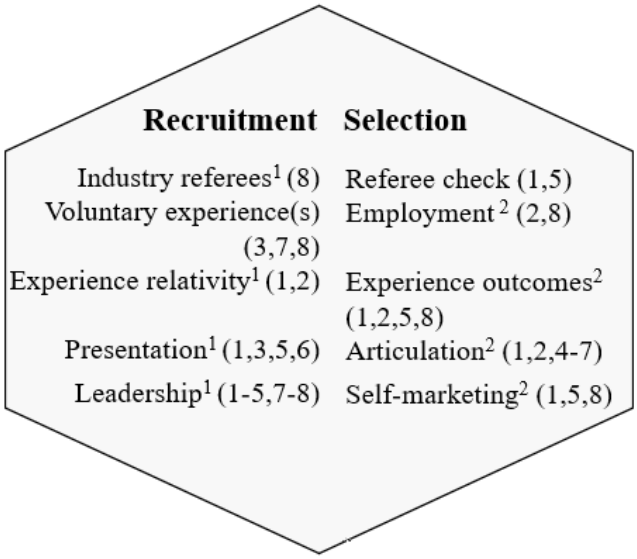
applicant's skills, productivity, and work ethic cannot be directly observed within job recruitment and selection (Bol & Van de Werfhorst, 2011; Briggerman & Norwood, 2011; Piopiunik et al., 2020).

Basic employability skills are fundamentally what employers seek from job applicants (Rosenberg et al., 2012). The Observed Signal Phase acts as a guide on key pre-employment and pre-probation points of reference for hiring SM employers (Figure 8). This Phase provides the first set of identified observable signals for SM graduates to adopt to transparently market their employability and for Australian and global SM employers to recognise during job recruitment and selection. The Observed Signals are such that they can be adapted to industry organisations external to sport, the themes and content are broad in nature to allow this transfer.

The 10 Observed Signals include: experienced industry referees; referee check: alignment of applicant and referees; voluntary experience(s); unpaid experience as a pathway to employment; practical experience related to advertised role; practical experience outcomes; presentation; articulation (content); leadership attributes; and self-marketing. The Observed Signals with the numbers 1 and 2 in Figure 8 indicate that these signals are observed by prospective SM employers in both job recruitment and selection. The Employability Dimensions (Rosenberg et al., 2012) identified in each Observed Signal are indicated in brackets in Figure 8 and include: 1 Basic Literacy and Numeracy Skills; 2 Critical Thinking Skills; 3 Leadership Skills; 4 Management Skills; 5 Interpersonal Skills; 6 Information Technology Skills; 7 Systems Thinking Skills; and 8 Work Ethic. Each signal is outlined in the Observed Signals Phase, developed from findings of the current research (Figure 8).

Figure 8

Observed Signals Phase



Note[1]: Observed Signals Phase – Signal also observed in job selection.

Note[2]: Observed Signals Phase – Signal also observed in job recruitment.

The composition of each Observed Signal includes various forms of evidence which, on their own, may indicate applicant ability but not overall employability. These collectively form one observed signal to impart a depth of new knowledge in terms of how employers can determine the presence of employability in graduate-entry applicants. The new knowledge gained from the current research could guide hiring employers regarding what signals to observe during job recruitment and selection that showcase graduate employability (Briggerman & Norwood, 2011). Importantly, the Observed Signals prompt the evidence required to indicate that a graduate applicant is employable. Findings build knowledge regarding the consideration by a graduate applicant on the most appropriate practical experiences to recognise that represent each Observed Signal, to provide evidence of their employability.

First impressions of applicants are typically formed within job selection interviews (Florea et al., 2018). The Observed Signals identified in the current research indicate employability knowledge from practical experiences can extend beyond the first impressions of graduate applicants, in this case in job recruitment and selection. Findings propose that each signal observed is informed by a combination of multiple employer observations or indicators to signify a graduate applicant's employability connected to their practical experience(s). For example, a graduate applicant listing a referee in a senior position who has observed and is happy with the applicant's work ethic. Furthermore, the employer has the expectation that conversations between the referee and applicant have occurred which contributes to a more prepared applicant (Nicholas & Handley, 2020). Additional information provided through Observed Signals about a graduate applicant can enhance a positive impression and reduce the likelihood of unknown applicant impressions that are often formed quickly and with limited information (Bol & Van de Werfhorst, 2011; Gillath et al., 2012).

Gauging the presence of observable employability skills possessed by a graduate applicant and gained from practical experiences is not an obvious task if the hiring employer does not know what to look for. In the last decade significant industry analyses and corresponding reports have been published in relation to graduate employability. Notably to highlight the employability skills required to address the needs of industry (FYA, 2017; Goodwin et al., 2012; Payton & Knight, 2019). The descriptions and definitions of industry skill lists featured in reports, however, exclude specific information for employers on how to assess the presence of these skills. As a result, the eight Employability Dimensions (Rosenberg et al., 2012) were central to the current research. This explains why each Observed Signal consists of combined indicators that refer to the

Employability Dimensions (Rosenberg et al., 2012), to assist employers assess employability skills. In practical terms, the current study suggests that considering the Employability Dimensions when promoting each observable signal to employers is vital to optimise assessment of the graduate applicant's employability and suitability to the advertised role. The realisation by a hiring employer that an applicant is not the right fit for the company or the role, after hiring, is too late and can be a costly exercise (Davis, 2013). Each of the eight Employability Dimensions depicted by a number in Table 27 and mentioned in the section following the table include:

1. Basic Literacy and Numeracy Skills (ED1)
2. Critical Thinking Skills (ED2)
3. Leadership Skills (ED3)
4. Management Skills (ED4)
5. Interpersonal Skills (ED5)
6. Information Technology Skills (ED6)
7. Systems Thinking Skills (ED7)
8. Work Ethic [Disposition] (ED8)

The Observed Signals provide evidence that a graduate applicant is employable based on gaining practical experience(s). The 10 Observed Signals identified from the current research that SM employers seek from graduate-entry job applicants, of their practical experiences during job recruitment and selection, are outlined in Table 27. Each indicator within the Observed Signal is observed during job recruitment and/or selection and aligned to the Employability Dimensions (Rosenberg et al., 2012). The indicators are also aligned to one of the four phases of the Experiential Learning Cycle (Kolb, 1984). The purpose of alignment in the table is to connect the dimensions and phases according to

where these signal indicators are developed in the Experiential Learning Cycle. These are then converted into observable employability signals during job recruitment and/or selection. Subsequently, these Observed Signal indicators will assist UGs transparently market their employability to prospective SM employers, as a graduate.

It is important to note that each of these 10 Observed Signals differ. The indicators in each signal may appear to overlap however they differ based on the varying contexts in which they occur. For example, one signal is the applicant has completed ‘voluntary experience’ and another signal relates to the ‘applicant being employed from an unpaid experience’. This unpaid experience could refer to a voluntary or practicum experience. Both signals assist the applicant’s progression to paid employment based on their demonstration of employability throughout the unpaid experience.

Table 27

Observed Signals and Indicators from Graduate Applicants

Observed Signal	Observed Signal Indicators	Employability Dimensions	Experiential Learning Cycle Phase	Recruitment 1 and/or Selection 2
Experienced industry referees.	Industry employers have reputations to uphold; would not act as a referee to any applicant. Experienced referee has noticed the hard work of the applicant.	**8** (1-7)	**1**	1 & 2
Referee check: alignment of applicant and referee.	Direct observation by referees of interpersonal communication, and critical thinking. Direct observations have occurred over a period. Referees in similar roles to recruiting managers can articulate their observations to recognise strengths, application of theory to practice, career intentions and industry satisfaction. Conversations about the industry typically occur through mentorship.	**1, 5** (2-4, 6-8)	**1**	2
Voluntary experience(s).	Indicate proactivity, passion about what they do and a commitment to the industry, and exhibit leadership and a positive work ethic. Understand that volunteering contributes to sustaining the social and economic wellbeing of communities and the industry. First-hand observation of the organisation positioning in the sporting structure and how the organisation operates, exercising systems thinking skills.	**3, 7, 8** (1-2, 4-6)	**1**	1

Unpaid experience as a pathway to employment.	Understand the nature of the sporting industry. Realistic expectations are drawn from familiarity of the industry and operations. Demonstrate a strong work ethic, an ability to think critically and overall performance have been observed throughout the course of an experience.	**2, 8** (1, 3-7)	**1**	1 & 2
Practical experience related to advertised role.	Recognise and articulate transferable skills from any industry and the relativity of non-sport roles to broader job functions in SM, e.g., planning, administration, operations, and marketing. Prior practical experiences in SM are advantageous for labour market familiarity; capacity to relate skills, attributes, and knowledge to an advertised position. All forms of communication and critical thinking are exercised.	**1, 2** (3-8)	**2**	1 & 2
Practical experience outcomes.	Recognise that learning has occurred and involved critical thinking and thorough reflection. Appreciation of the SM workplace, job roles and participants; a confirmed attraction to the industry and a representation of strong communication, interpersonal and work ethic. A confirmation of the attraction of the applicant to specific jobs and industry, building another layer of understanding of the SM landscape.	**1, 2, 5, 8** (3-4, 6-7)	**2**	1 & 2

Presentation.	Articulate their capability through all forms of communication. Visually appealing written documentation signifies an ability to use information technology and software programs. Strong verbal presentation suggests the possession of intrapersonal skills; leadership traits that represent integrity and honesty; both sought to ensure business relationships can be maintained and nurtured.	**1, 3, 5, 6** (2, 4, 7-8)	**3**	1 & 2
Articulation (content).	Communicate experience stories and connections made to advertised roles suggests applicant has researched the organisation; understands how they can contribute/make a difference; and has organisation perspective. The extent of applicant participation with the organisation, communication with colleagues and engagement with customers becomes evident. Confidence levels evident when working in teams, managing tasks to deadlines, and learning new workplace technologies and systems are articulated.	**1, 2, 4, 5, 6, 7** (3, 8)	**3**	1 & 2
Leadership attributes.	Voluntary experience and ability to forge close working relationships. Demonstrate situations that display initiative and self-motivation to undertake new tasks, communication, and decision-making in the working environment. Completed mundane and exciting tasks and projects; understands varied forms of exhibiting leadership.	**1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 7, 8** (6)	**4**	1 & 2

Self-marketing.	Provides evidence through examples. Seeks outcomes for organisation and participants. Translates evidence of ability through writing, verbally, and in interviews. Matches ability to position. Knows their point of difference and their personal brand.	**1, 5, 8** (2-4, 6-7)	**4**	1 & 2

Observed Signals. The following section explores each Observed Signal and associated indicators derived as a result from addressing research question two in the current research. The structure of the following section was determined by the name of each of the 10 Observed Signals and the corresponding indicators. A description is provided of each indicator and the associated Employability Dimensions (Rosenberg et al., 2012) that strongly align with each signal. The presence of Employability Dimensions will be distinguished by the acronym 'ED' and a respective number in brackets which align to the Employability Dimension number depicted in Table 27. Successively, the Observed Signal indicators identify which of the four phases of the Experiential Learning Cycle (Kolb, 1984) they are developed, and where each Observed Signal is presented during job recruitment and/or selection.

Experienced Industry Referees. Two Observed Signal indicators were identified relating to practical experiences and the opportunity each experience allows for potential referees to witness the capability of an UG. These include the reputation of referees and their industry expertise to recognise the application of a student while undertaking practical experience. Both indicators are developed in the Concrete Phase of the Experiential Learning Cycle (Kolb, 1984) and observed during job recruitment and selection.

In SM, the established reputations of sport managers have developed through extensive experience within the large and interconnected sport industry in Australia, typically within non-profit national and state/local sport organisations (Sherry et al., 2016; Shilbury et al., 2016). The findings from the current research suggest that recognised referees who have an established industry reputation to maintain would not likely act as a referee for applicants they would not recommend for a job. Per se, these findings suggest

that experienced and reputable referees listed on an applicant's resume, is an overt positive signal of support for an applicant's ability.

Experienced sport managers who act as referees, with many years working in SM roles and on committees and boards, are valuable for graduate applicants who have worked alongside them during practical experience. Employers who have worked with the applicant are able to represent and elucidate the unobserved characteristics of the applicant and provide direct knowledge of the applicant's work ethic (ED8) and productivity which is very hard to otherwise gauge solely from job recruitment and selection (Briggerman & Norwood, 2011; Pellizzari, 2010; Pogatsnik, 2018). The current research findings revealed that hiring employers, who know the experienced referee from industry, will often call the referee ahead of shortlisting applicants to uncover more about an applicant than is divulged in the written job application.

Referee Check: Alignment of Applicant and Referee. Four indicators are present in this Observed Signal and associated with the referee's observations and interaction with the applicant. The first two are associated with direct observation by referees of: interpersonal communication and strategic thinking; and that these direct observations have occurred over a period of time. The other two indicators relate to referees who occupy a similar role to that of the manager interested to employ a graduate. These referees can articulate their observations to recognise applicant strengths and career intentions and discuss the associated mentorship that occurred to build the applicant's knowledge and skill. These four indicators are developed in the Concrete Phase of the Experiential Learning Cycle (Kolb, 1984) and observed within job recruitment.

Direct observation by referees of interpersonal communication and critical thinking are highly sought skills and attributes by sport managers of graduate applicants (de

Schepper et al., 2018). The current research findings suggest the referee check provides further insight into the applicant's characteristics, level of experience and performance in a range of roles. Such characteristics include interpersonal communication (ED1) with colleagues and negotiating and resolving differences (ED5). These characteristics, however, are difficult to evidence by hiring managers through written applications and interviews, which are the two consistent methods used in graduate job recruitment and selection (Carless, 2007; Pollard et al., 2015).

Direct observations by referees over a period of time is one practice to establish evidence of a graduate applicant's ability. Findings from the current research emphasise the need for hiring employers to incorporate referees in the overall recruitment approach to generate a holistic perception of the graduate applicant as a prospective employee. Accurate assessment by a referee of a graduate applicant's characteristics and ability while undertaking a practical experience, is derived from direct observation that can be assumed to have occurred over a period of time (Pellizari, 2010). Thus, suggesting that a short period of time, in this case job recruitment and selection, may not provide the required time for an employer to make an accurate assessment of a graduate applicant's ability. In consequence this typifies the importance to gain input from referees.

Referees who occupy a similar role to that of the recruiting [sport] manager, typically indicate that the referee can articulate observations of the graduate applicant in the workplace. Identified in the current research is the notion that suitably qualified referees, from direct work and through observation, can articulate a graduate's application of theory to practice, their strengths, intentions, and the graduate's enjoyment of working in the industry. Importantly, graduate applicant performance in the workplace cannot be directly observed by the recruiting employer solely throughout job recruitment and

selection (Briggerman & Norwood, 2011). Therefore, a referee's first-hand insight of the graduate applicant provides much needed context to the graduate's capability and experience.

Referees who act as industry mentors to UGs undertaking practical experience in the workplace contribute to the development of the individual. One notion identified from the current research, was that sport industry referees have had conversations with the graduate throughout their working experience. Specifically, ad hoc and planned discussions between a referee and graduate applicant can provide industry awareness and offer a critique of the applicant's performance, while enhancing learning and indirectly supporting their future job applications. These conversations, or mentorship, can explicitly or implicitly influence the articulation of the graduate applicant's responses during the recruitment and selection stages and align with referee responses that occur in the referee check. The research findings also suggest the alignment of both the referee and the graduate applicant is a product of strong workplace mentorship and a contributor to Industry-Awareness component in the Pre-Condition Phase. This alignment occurs in the graduate's application during job recruitment and selection through reading, writing, speaking, and listening (ED1) and working in a team (ED5) and are all highly sought skills by sport managers and employers in general (Briggerman & Norwood, 2011; Piopiunik et al., 2018). A greater reliance on strategic referee checks will provide first-hand evidence of a graduate and highlight the right fit of that graduate applicant against the selection criteria of the advertised role. The referee check acts as a strong reference point for recruiting managers to signal the working relationship between the referee and graduate applicant.

Voluntary Experience(s). Three indicators formed this Observed Signal, aligned to the Concrete Phase of the Experiential Learning Cycle (Kolb, 1984), and are observed during job recruitment. These indicators are associated with: graduate applicants who are proactive, passionate and committed to the SM industry; who understand how volunteering contributes positively to communities; and how first-hand observations identify how organisations operate.

Graduates who undertake unpaid experiences will generate positive assumptions of character in relation to their approach to the workplace. Observations by sport managers, identified in the current study, in job recruitment and selection, indicate that graduates undertaking voluntary experience are proactive, passionate about what they do and are committed to the industry. These findings support literature that recognise the benefits of voluntary experiences based on the notion that the graduates demonstrate increased productivity stemming from self-driven motivation or commitment (Breitsohl & Ehrig, 2017; Spera et al., 2013; Weiss et al., 2014). Hence, voluntary commitment to an organisation by an applicant over a period of time is a key indicator that the applicant is likely to dedicate to an organisation for the long term (Veludo-de-Oliveira et al., 2015).

Voluntary experiences create a sound base from which applicants can develop an understanding of how volunteering contributes to sporting communities and the SM discipline. Widely noted in literature are the unpaid contributions by volunteers to sustaining the social and economic wellbeing of communities globally (Cuskelly et al., 2006; Ockenden & Stuart, 2014). In Australia, just over one third of its volunteer population are working in sport and physical recreation settings (Kappelides et al., 2019). Leadership Skills (ED3) and Work Ethic (ED8) were highlighted by sport managers in the current research, as evident in graduates who invest in industry by participating in

voluntary work in addition to university practicum. In addition, voluntary experience is valuable to sport managers if the graduate is committed, plays the known sport and volunteers through administrative roles. These findings support literature which suggest that employability is best developed through extra-curricular activity (Briggerman & Norwood, 2011; Kinash et al., 2016).

The voluntary experience also assists with a graduate's first-hand observation of the positioning of an organisation in the sporting structure and how the organisation operates (Cabellero & Walker**,** 2010), which demonstrates the graduate's application of systems thinking (ED7). An increased perception among hiring managers is that volunteering develops job-relevant skills which lead to the prospect of higher future earnings and full-time employment (Gault et al., 2010; Wallrodt & Thieme, 2020). Furthermore, the current research suggests that the observable signal of having voluntary experience provides an indicator that graduate applicants adequately prepare for the experience. Specifically, this is reflected when completing a range of tasks, and an indicator of their capacity to reflect and improve personal performance.

Unpaid Experience as a Pathway to Employment. Three indicators formed this Observed Signal, align to the Concrete Phase of the Experiential Learning Cycle (Kolb, 1984), and are observed during job recruitment and selection. These relate to graduate applicants who: understand the nature of the sporting industry; have realistic industry expectations drawn from experience; and demonstrate work ethic, critical thinking, and overall performance throughout an experience.

Graduate applicants who understand the nature of the sporting industry and who gain jobs from unpaid experiences are successful based on their planned good luck not because they are lucky. The current research findings reveal that graduates who are proactive in

planning and undertaking practicum or volunteering, understand the nature of the sporting industry directly from practical experiences. Graduates who undertake voluntary experience within specific disciplines such as SM, gain or update requisite workplace skills potentially making them attractive to and productive for employers and increase their chances of employment (Spera et al., 2013).

Drawing realistic expectations of the industry and operations are typically gained from exposure to a variety of practical experiences. Current research findings indicate that graduates who are familiar with the SM industry and operations through practical experience are likely to gain realistic expectations when searching and applying for work. In doing so, graduates with industry knowledge have more realistic industry expectations (Carliner et al., 2015), and can apply critical thinking (ED2) to make more informed career-related decisions than graduates without this knowledge (Mathner & Martin, 2012). Such expectations relate to the misconception that sport is glamorous, non-traditional working hours and relatively low pay for graduates within the SM industry sector and are associated with work standards and career satisfaction (Barnhill et al., 2018; Nicholas & Handley, 2020). Connected to industry expectations are the expectations that graduates have in relation to the university they study at and the requisite knowledge, skills, and attributes they expect to develop to perform their jobs upon entering the workforce (McIlveen et al., 2013; Piopiunik et al., 2020; Rosenberg et al., 2012).

Graduates who demonstrate a strong work ethic, ability to think critically and maintain their overall performance throughout the course of an experience, are likely to understand the type of job they would be suitable for. Findings from the current research revealed that employers valued graduates who recognise their own skills, abilities, and how they can contribute to the organisation, based on learnings gained from their practical

experiences. An ability to do so reflect an applicant's positive work ethic (ED8). More specifically, research studies have connected graduates who possess a strong work ethic and critical thinking and undertake voluntary or practicum (unpaid) experiences, with an increased likelihood of employment (de Schepper & Sotiradou, 2018; Ferns et al., 2019; Norwood & Henneberry, 2006; Wilton, 2012). The benefits of undertaking unpaid experiences are illustrated by positive outcomes such as employment.

Practical Experience Relates to Advertised Role. Three indicators created this Observed Signal, aligned to the Reflective Observation Phase of the Experiential Learning Cycle (Kolb, 1984) and observed during job recruitment and selection. These include: an applicant's recognition and articulation of transferable skills from any industry and their relativity to non-sport roles; prior practical experiences and the ability to relate skills, attributes, and knowledge; and the ability to exercise all forms of written communication and critical thinking.

Graduate applicants who can recognise and articulate transferable skills from any industry, are able to apply to a range of roles. Sport managers from the current research, emphasised the importance of graduate applicants recognising and articulating their transferable skills from practical experience in a similar role, similar sporting organisation, and/or from non-industry roles/experiences. Fundamental is the recognition of graduate practical experience from relative roles in non-sport sectors associated with the broader business functions of planning, administration, marketing, and operations (Schwarz, 2010). These associated broader business functions are prominent in the SM sector as identified in the job level classifications identified in the current research. Essentially, the ability of a graduate applicant to relate their practical experiences and transferable skills to

advertised employment demonstrates a deep knowledge of the industry (FYA, 2016; Lord et al., 2019).

Prior practical experiences encourage labour market familiarity and a capacity to relate skills, attributes, and knowledge to an advertised position. The current research identified that sport managers seek graduate applicants who have the capacity to demonstrate how they can relate their skills, attributes, and knowledge to an advertised position. Specifically, by providing information to demonstrate that they have performed a similar role in the past, possibly at another sport organisation in a similar role, or have worked in a different industry and applied the same skills. Literature supports the notion that practical experiences are likely to produce work-ready, motivated, and committed graduates who can relate and apply skills, attributes, and their experiential learning to the advertised workplace roles) (de Schepper & Sotiriadou, 2018; Simons et al., 2012; Weiss, 2014).

An ability to exercise all forms of written communication and critical thinking are highly desirable skills for employees regardless of industry. Identified from the current research is the notion that a graduate's ability to relate practical experience to an advertised role can be observed in job recruitment and selection articulated by the graduate applicant via written, verbal (ED1) and visual (interview) mediums. Critical thinking (ED2) is an integral skill to identify how practical experiences can relate to different advertised roles. Graduates involved in respective practicum programs understand that industry practical experience provides an opportunity to reflect and potentially increase their motivation to achieve positive learning outcomes (Brown et al., 2018; Chan, 2012; Martin & Leberman, 2005). As such, practical experiences allow an opportunity to explore and experience reality, go beyond a students' comfort zone, and change perceptions of

reflecting, thinking, and acting (Ha-Brookshire, 2010; Pogatsnik, 2018) which can be adopted in job applications.

Practical Experience Outcomes. Three indicators formed the Observed Signal which is aligned to the Reflective Observation Phase of the Experiential Learning Cycle (Kolb, 1984) and observed during job recruitment and selection. These relate to: a graduate applicant's recognition that learning from practical experiences; an appreciation of the SM workplace; and a confirmed attraction to the industry has occurred; to specific jobs and industries.

Graduate applicants who adopt critical thinking and thorough reflection to apply requisite skills and contribute to workplace outcomes are signalling that learning from practical experience has occurred. Indicators from the current research identified that graduate applicants who recognise practical experience outcomes are more employable and provide evidence that learning has transpired in the workplace. The findings also highlight that graduates who realise their learning outcomes and contributions within a practical experience have the capacity to think critically (ED2) and thoroughly reflect. Research has highlighted that a graduate applicant's ability to critically reflect forms part of learning, thinking and evaluation, all of which are key to the development of self-awareness and subsequently, employability (Dacre Pool & Sewell, 2007; Moon, 2004; Peterson et al., 2015). Self-reflection can be prompted by enabling UGs to acknowledge how far they have come, that they understand industry requirements, and comprehend the value of employability skills (Dacre Pool & Sewell, 2007; de Schepper & Sotiriadou; 2018; Dinning, 2017).

Extending from a critical reflection capacity is a graduate's appreciation of the SM workplace, job roles and clients, and a confirmed attraction to the industry. The current

research findings suggest applicants who reflect on each experience can apply their practical experiences to adapt to participant needs. In particular, applicants who realise the outcomes of undertaking practical experience, either tangible or intangible, are more able to recognise and relate these outcomes to servicing participant requirements. Findings align and builds from literature that identifies a graduate's ability to harness interpersonal (ED5) and communication skills (ED1) when working with clients and work colleagues, as a portrayal of their work ethic (ED8) and understanding of workplace culture (de Schepper & Sotiriadou, 2018; Wilton, 2012).

Graduates who realise the outcomes of a practical experience will appreciate the workplace, job roles and clients, and in doing so, will assist with their decision (ED2) to pursue a career in that industry (Wilton, 2012; Wingrove & Turner, 2015). Findings from the current research suggest this realisation by graduate applicants is the essence of confirming their attraction to specific jobs and industries. It also builds another layer of understanding of the SM landscape and helps graduates prepare for a respective career. This notion supports literature suggesting that practical experiences assist graduates to make an occupational choice based on the expected satisfaction of a specific career (Barnhill et al., 2018; Jackson & Wilton, 2017; Zimmer & Keiper, 2021).

Presentation. Three indicators formed this Observed Signal which is aligned to the Abstract Conceptualisation Phase of the Experiential Learning Cycle (Kolb, 1984) and observed during job recruitment and selection. These include: graduate applicants who can articulate their capability through all forms of communication; produce visually appealing written documentation; and deliver a strong verbal presentation.

Graduate applicants who articulate their capability using all forms of communication including verbal, non-verbal, written, and visual, typically generate a positive first

impression by the hiring employer. Current research findings identified strong graduate applicants submit written applications that address all job advertisement criteria, talk about their practical experience, listen and accept feedback, and generate passion for the industry through their body language. Findings indicate that communication ability (ED1) in written (job application) and verbal form (interview) are increasingly important for graduate applicants as the reliance on modern day technology, including auto-correction tools for example, which can stifle their ability to independently develop strong spelling and grammar (Stewart et al., 2016).

Visually appealing written documentation is likely to signify that an applicant pays attention to detail. The preparation of visually appealing, written documentation can also indicate an ability to use information technology tools (ED6) and software programs (Mishra, 2014). Current research findings identified that visual appeal, layout, and structure of an application and provision of important criteria information upfront in a job application are essential to enable quick assessment by employers on whether to shortlist the applicant. Submission of visually appealing resumes, for example, presents applicants with an opportunity to develop a tool for self-promotion to attain future employment opportunities (Lee & Cavanaugh, 2016).

Strong verbal presentation of graduate applicants suggests the possession of intrapersonal skills and leadership traits. Furthermore, employers seek graduate applicants who can speak effectively and demonstrate strong interpersonal (ED5) and leadership skills (ED3) that represent integrity and honesty to ensure business relationships can be maintained and nurtured (Mishra, 2014; Stewart et al., 2016). The Observed Signals identified in the current research, reflect a range of means from which a graduate's first impression can be generated. By shifting the focus to the presentation of the applicant

using all forms of communications, will expand the limited and dated literature which are reliant on a one-off assessment of applicants including the use of a one-dimensional source, for example, university attended (reputation) (Nordstrom et al., 1998; Prickett et al., 2000; Schmid Mast et al., 2011). Essentially, an applicant's ability to prepare and present a holistic showcase of their employability through strong verbal presentation, will enhance the delivery of a positive first impression to prospective employers during job recruitment and selection.

Articulation (Content). Three indicators form this Observed Signal aligned to the Abstract Conceptualisation Phase of the Experiential Learning Cycle (Kolb, 1984) and observed during job recruitment and selection. These indicators relate to the graduate applicant's: communication of experience stories and connections made to advertised roles; the extent of their participation within organisations; and the confidence levels generated.

Graduate applicants who positively communicate their experience stories, contribute to workplaces, and relate their ability, to the advertised role, are likely stand out from other applicants. The ability to communicate (ED1) their experience story and connect to the advertised role and workplace demonstrates that the graduate applicant has researched the organisation and can clearly describe how well they can contribute to the workplace (ED2). Practical experiences that encourage critical thinking allows a graduate to develop greater awareness of different perspectives within an organisation (de Schepper & Sotiriadou, 2018).

Graduate applicants who can articulate their participation in previous roles and organisations present evidence of their working relationships. Current research findings specify the significance of examples provided by graduate applicants of their performance

within previous roles to generate an insight into their level of responsibility and indication of their work practices and relationships. Such examples would signify the extent to which a graduate has participated in the organisation, communicated with colleagues, and engaged with customers (de Schepper & Sotiriadou, 2018). Furthermore, organisations exposed to constant change influenced by external pressures associated with market competitors, customers, demographics, and a global environment, provide opportunity for graduates to apply communication and critical thinking (Stewart et al., 2016).

The confidence levels generated by the graduate applicant would become evident when articulating work practices, including managing deadlines and learning new workplace technologies. The current research identified the importance of the ability of the graduate applicants' articulation of how they worked in a team, whether they managed volunteers, or planned and reported project outcomes provides hiring employers with a clear perspective of graduate performance. Key performance indicators identified in the current research that compliment previous research include: a marked increase in confidence when liaising with customers and colleagues (ED5); managing tasks to deadlines (ED4); and learning new workplace technologies (ED6) and systems (ED7) (Dreuth & Dreuth-Fewell, 2012; Wilton, 2012). These workplace soft skills typically cannot be learned in a classroom environment or by reading a text, and are difficult to measure (Stewart et al., 2016).

Leadership Attributes. Three indicators form this Observed Signal which is aligned to the Active Experimentation Phase of the Experiential Learning Cycle (Kolb, 1984) and observed during job recruitment and selection. The indicators relate to a graduate applicant's leadership in the context of gaining: voluntary experiences and forging close working relationships; ability to demonstrate situations that display initiative, motivation

and decision-making in the working environment; and an ability to complete mundane and exciting tasks and projects.

Graduate applicants who undertake voluntary experiences are typically able to forge closer working relationships. The current research findings, indicate that a strong prevalence of leadership (ED3) attributes existed in graduates who volunteer in practical settings and leadership creates strong working relationships (ED5). Leadership emergence, linked to emotional intelligence, can be observed from individuals undertaking practical experience in small groups, an environment which prompts individuals who do not possess formal authority to stand out and exhibit leadership (Côté et al., 2010; Ensari et al.; 2011; Wellman, 2017). Employers have also reported that they value the improved skills gained by graduate applicants through volunteering experiences, in addition to leadership, particularly those in communication and teamwork which are essential to develop strong working relationships (Ockenden & Stuart, 2014).

Graduate applicants who demonstrate situations that display initiative and self-motivation to undertake new tasks, communication, and decision-making in the working environment display leadership attributes. Findings from the current research identified that graduates can demonstrate leadership attributes in a variety of working contexts (ED7), specifically by adopting initiative and self-motivation (ED8) to take on new responsibilities and tasks, communicate (ED1) and make decisions (ED2). Community sport organisations offer ideal settings for sport leaders, such as coaches and athletes, who often have higher levels of symbolic power, credibility, and trust, to exercise their initiative and self-motivation to enhance community capacity building (Edwards, 2015).

Graduate applicants who complete mundane and exciting tasks and projects are likely to exhibit leadership, potentially inciting a revelation of their own leadership

attributes. Findings from the current study identified that displaying initiative, self-motivation, and making decisions are demonstrated by graduate applicants who willingly undertake exciting and mundane project tasks and ultimately work on a project until completion (ED4). In addition, skills such as motivating others, working with a team, listening to others and resolving conflicts have been identified as strong leadership skills and highly desired by sport managers (Mathner & Martin, 2012; Ockenden & Stuart, 2014).

Self-Marketing. Five indicators create this Observed Signal which is aligned to the Active Experimentation Phase of the Experiential Learning Cycle (Kolb, 1984) and observed during job recruitment and selection. These indicators relate to a graduate applicant's ability to self-market and include: provision of evidence through examples; exploration of outcomes for the organisation and clients; translation of ability through writing, verbally, and in interviews; matching ability to the position; and knowing their point of difference and personal brand.

Providing evidence of ability through examples are important to showcase the depth, range of experiences, application of ability and practical experience outcomes. Sport managers from the current research indicated the requirement for graduate applicants to self-market using a range of examples from their practical experiences. Such examples include highlighting an applicant's motivations to participate in extra-curricular activities, demonstrating a level of commitment to industry and leadership capability, demonstrating a good understanding of and practical application to the advertised position. The quality of learning through practicum is focused on the student's ability to apply critical reflective practice to transform gained experience and knowledge into new learning, through examples as evidence (de Schepper & Sotiriadou, 2018; Torres et al., 2014). Subsequently,

graduate applicants who can use examples from practicum experiences to highlight their ability, are often perceived by employers to be better prepared, equipped and more marketable (Ferns et al., 2019; Gault et al., 2010; Pogatsnik, 2018).

The capacity to explore outcomes for organisations and participants is often evident in graduate applicants who are familiar with their roles. Findings from the current research noted that sport managers value graduates who have demonstrated the capacity to diversify and assist colleagues with other roles, especially in busy periods, within former workplaces. The benefits from unpaid practical experiences in sport are reflected in the long-term benefits, more specifically, job-relevant skills and employment opportunities (Gault et al., 2010; Wallrodt & Thieme, 2020).

Graduate applicants who can translate their ability through writing, verbally and in interviews are self-marketing through a range of mediums. The current research stipulated the high regard for quality written applications that are grammatically correct and directly apply to the advertised position. Equally important are informative verbal responses related to the industry and impending role, and the importance of graduate applicants having good communication skills and the confidence to engage everyone in the interview room. A graduate applicant must initially develop the link between professional knowledge and skill application within the professional context to successfully translate evidence of their ability (Dinning, 2017).

Graduate applicants who can transparently match their ability to an advertised position is demonstrating their self-marketing ability. Demonstration of a graduate's fit to an organisation (ED8), an ability to perform tasks, and to seek successful outcomes for the organisation and clients (ED5) are examples of strong self-marketing, according to the sport managers from the current research. In addition, graduate applicants who can

translate evidence of their ability (ED1) into why they are the best person for the job is what will ultimately set them apart from the next applicant. The perceived degree of match, assessed by the recruiting employer, between the skills and ability of the graduate applicant and the advertised position, influences the likely level of job fit (Tomkovick & Swanson, 2014). A strong job fit is vital, it signifies higher work performance, higher job satisfaction and lower voluntary turnover (Tomkovick & Swanson, 2014).

Graduate applicants who establish their point of difference signal an ability to self-market and demonstrate the foundations of a personal brand. Findings from the current research identified that applicants able to identify why they were the best person for the job, showed a foresight that extended beyond the advertised job description, to show they were the best person for the job. In doing so, it sets these applicants apart from other applicants. The formation of a graduate's personal brand suggests the graduate has focused on their unique set of skills, motivations (ED8) and interests relating to their industry of choice (Manai & Holmlund, 2015). Of note is that graduates are the marketable product of their UG study (Kitchen, 1994). Subsequently, the notion of investing in graduating students as a marketable and tangible product can be used as evidence to promote the success of the UG program at a university.

Graduate Employability Cycle of Learning

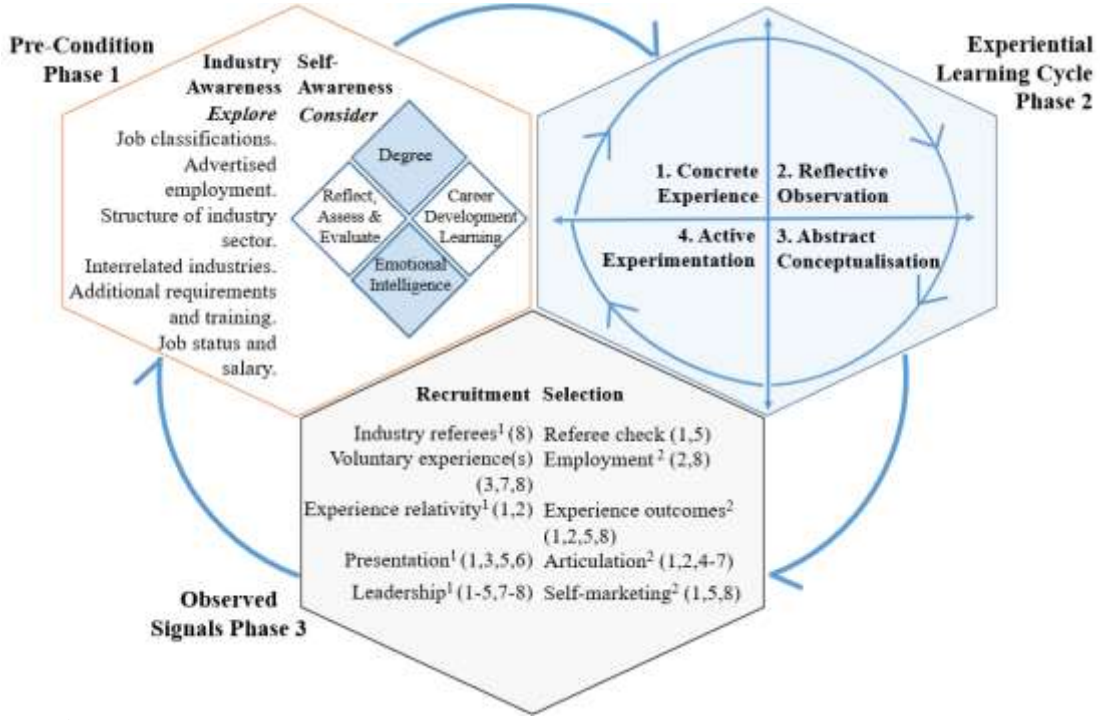
The evolution of the Graduate Employability Cycle of Learning comprises three progressive phases: the Pre-Condition Phase, the Experiential Learning Cycle (Kolb, 1984), and the Observed Signals Phase. The culmination of data gained from the three stages of the current research enabled the development or identification of these phases to form the cycle and further builds knowledge to answer research question two.

The three Phases in the Graduate Employability Cycle of Learning are portrayed in a circular rotation to demonstrate continuous learning about industry, self, and the workplace, which are associated with each practical experience. Each phase projects a forward motion or development of the individual, similar to the Key to Employability Model (Dacre Pool & Sewell, 2007), USEM Model (Yorke & Knight, 2006) and the DOTS Model (Law & Watts, 2003).

The cycle focuses on assisting UGs increase their graduate capacity to perform in an increasingly competitive job market. It will also assist the SM industry and higher education sectors to advance graduate employability collaboratively beyond the classroom. Essentially, the Graduate Employability Cycle of Learning (Figure 9) centralises practical experience as the foundation from which UGs can transform experiential learning to self-market as an employable graduate to prospective employers.

Figure 9

Graduate Employability Cycle of Learning related to Practical Experiences



Note[1]: Observed Signals Phase – Signal also observed in job selection.
Note[2]: Observed Signals Phase – Signal also observed in job recruitment.

The Graduate Employability Cycle of Learning theoretically goes beyond learning cycles or employability development cycles, it adds the dimension of how individual learning and development can be transparently marketed during job recruitment and selection. To provide context to the components that define employability from the practical experience(s) and enable transparent signalling that a graduate is employable, the Employability Dimensions (Rosenberg et al., 2012) are strongly identifiable within each Observed Signal.

The three-phase cycle guides UG preparation before, during and after the practical experience to signal their employability that has evolved from the experience. The cyclical nature of Figure 9 takes the learner through a series of revelations from exploring, and experiencing, to applying, reflecting, and connecting with their learning and employability. The Pre-Condition Phase defines the industry sector and individual awareness factors to assist the UG to prepare for practical experiences. The Experiential Learning Cycle Phase (Kolb, 1984) builds UG knowledge and performance during placement and validates the process of learning through practical experience. The 10 Observed Signals identifies the experiential learning post-practical experience and assists graduate applicants to convert learning into transferable graduate employability signals.

The Graduate Employability Cycle of Learning provides a practical visual for UGs to understand the process of learning required to foresee and develop employability outcomes and employability signalling, resulting from their practical experience(s). It also elucidates how crucial this realisation is to signal during recruitment and selection when pursuing a career. Consequentially, signalling to prospective employers allows a transparent message to be relayed to enable a graduate applicant's assessment by the SM employer, in terms of their employability during job recruitment and selection. The

Graduate Employability Cycle of Learning builds on limited literature in the SM sector related to employability signalling.

Chapter Summary

Discussion generated in this chapter was drawn from the current research findings (Chapter four) with reference to the literature reviewed (Chapter two). The chapter commenced with addressing the first research question related to graduate-entry SM job classifications that required practical experience as a prerequisite. Six job classifications emerged from the research findings.

The ability to delve into the job advertisement audit resulted in the identification of six awareness factors: job classifications [indicative of graduate entry-level]; advertised employment; structure of industry sector; interrelated industries; additional industry requirements and training; and job status and salary. These additional awareness factors define the Industry Awareness component of the Pre-Condition Phase. The Self-Awareness component, the second of the Pre-Condition Phase, comprised four self-awareness factors: the degree knowledge, skills, and application; career development learning; emotional intelligence; and reflect, assess, and evaluate. The titles of these awareness factors were influenced by four of the elements in the Key to Employability Model (Dacre Pool & Sewell, 2007). Specifically, this influence was based on the close alignment of a graduate's ability to develop and apply key competencies and skills, through reflection of their subjective practical experiences (work, life, and study). Findings suggest it is vital for UG SM students to focus on the Pre-Condition Phase prior to commencing practical experience. The reason is industry consideration and self-exploration prepare an individual to learn optimally, to focus on developing employability

while practising in the workplace, and ultimately signal their employability during job recruitment and selection.

The two components of the Pre-Condition Phase provide an extension to Experiential Learning Cycle (Kolb, 1984). These components can assist an individual prior to, and during practical experience in the SM industry sector, to gain employability based on the ability to better comprehend an industry landscape and themselves and the knowledge on how to market their employability. These findings will guide coordinators of UG SM programs within Australia and globally, of the awareness factors representative of the SM industry sector landscape. Internationally, these Pre-Condition Phase awareness factors will be relative to the delivery of sport in each country and corresponding UG SM programs. Essentially, these multiple awareness factors will guide individuals to explore the expectations of the industry sector and determine which factors to showcase to indicate their employability.

The discussion then addressed the second research question related to identifying the signals SM employers seek from graduate-entry job applicants of practical experiences during job recruitment and selection. Hence the identification of 10 Observed Signals. Each indicator within the Observed Signals is observed during job recruitment and/or selection, aligned to the Employability Dimensions (Rosenberg et al., 2012), and are developed within one of the four phases of the Experiential Learning Cycle (Kolb, 1984) when undertaking practical experience. The alignment of each Observed Signal with corresponding indicators and Employability Dimensions, purposefully connects to the corresponding phase of the Experiential Learning Cycle in which these are developed to indicate graduate employability. Findings revealed how collectively, the indicators within each Observed Signal, provide sport managers with employability cues to identify the

‘right fit’ of graduate applicants during recruitment and selection. Within Australia and internationally, this is potentially the first comprehensive set of observable employability signals that has been identified for the SM sector, specifically to assist graduate applicants to market their employability and SM employers to assess and make informed hiring decisions throughout job recruitment and selection.

The Pre-Condition and the Observed Signals Phases became Phase 1 and Phase 3 respectively, in the newly developed three-phased Graduate Employability Cycle of Learning. A visual representation of these phases identified in Figure 9 portray a circular rotation to demonstrate continuous learning gained from industry, self, and the workplace to assist a graduate in their development and signalling of employability. It is recommended the Graduate Employability Cycle of Learning as a guide to assist the SM industry and higher education sectors to advance graduate employability collaboratively beyond the classroom. Within Australia and potentially globally, this is the first graduate employability learning cycle developed for the SM industry sector related to practical experience to assist advance transparent employability signalling.

In the quest to answer research question three, evidence-based findings from the first two questions were translated into detailed recommendations for managers from the SM industry sector and coordinators of UG SM programs. These will be discussed in following chapter.

Chapter Six: Discussion (Part Two)

The purpose of this chapter is to address the final research question, what recommendations can be made to managers from the SM industry sector and coordinators of UG SM programs, on the transparent signals employers seek relating to the practical experiences of graduate applicants. Each recommendation is based on evidence gained from the current research, relating to the perceptions from SM managers involved in this study on the signals employers seek from graduates to demonstrate employability from practical experiences.

Findings reveal that a clear understanding of industry and self-awareness gained from practical experience will assist foster informed career decision making throughout a UGs SM degree. This gained awareness will also foster an UG's insight into the SM industry sector. Further findings uncover how practical experiences undertaken by UGs can produce employability indicators. These indicators can be applied as an applicant in job recruitment and selection to generate signals for managers of the SM industry sector to observe and gauge their employability.

Broadly, the notion of five career changes and 17 jobs in one career lifespan (McCrindle, 2014) reflects the rapidly changing world of employment and associated job roles on a global scale. The unpredictability of industry transformation has increased the demand for capable graduates who are innovative, adaptable, and resilient (Ferns et al., 2019). Forging partnerships between industry and higher education is not a new concept, however, to produce employable graduates, literature suggests that a centralised and more extensive and thorough partnership framework is required (Ferns et al., 2019; Pollard et al., 2015). Higher education institutions must shift the mindset of conventional practice

and work to equip UGs with specific portable skills and capabilities required to succeed in a globalised workplace (FYA, 2017).

Key Recommendations for the Sport Management Industry and Higher Education Sectors

In this chapter, the final research question is answered through provision of a set of recommendations that evolved from the findings of the current study. Each recommendation aims to enhance an UG's practical and theoretical understanding of the SM industry sector through applied higher education learning, while simultaneously engaging in their own career development and employability. Graduates must be prepared for every practical experience (Brown et al., 2018; DeLuca & Braunstein-Minkove, 2016) and understand how to translate their newly gained capability into observable signals.

The set of recommendations are presented in three sub-sections to outline the transparent signals employers seek relating to the practical experiences of SM graduates. The first sub-section relates to the six factors within the Industry Awareness component of the Pre-Condition Phase. The second relates to the four factors within the Self-Awareness component of the Pre-Condition Phase. The final sub-section is the 10 indicators within the Observed Signals Phase.

These recommendations provide guidance to managers from the SM industry sector and coordinators of UG SM programs. More specifically, guidance is provided to UGs in the preparation of a SM industry career through practical experience to enhance experiential learning, industry and self-awareness, and a capacity to signal their employability. Further, in the absence of a SM industry accreditation body that connects industry requirements with HE curriculum, the recommendations in the current research provide examples of approaches to be collaboratively adopted by managers and UG SM

coordinators. Essentially, the collaboration is to enhance opportunities for UGs to undertake practical experiences to learn and develop professionally. These collaborations will also assist UGs to explore, develop, and enable career decisions before, during and after undertaking practical experiences. Ultimately, these collaborations will enhance UG signalling of their employability throughout job recruitment and selection.

Industry Awareness

Twenty-two recommendations were identified for the six awareness factors from the Industry Awareness component. Eleven were for managers from the SM industry sector and another 11 for coordinators of UG SM programs. Collectively the recommendations highlight that the provision of UG SM program employment outcomes should involve extensive planning, implementation, and collaboration from within and external to the SM discipline area.

Past research has identified the need for UGs to establish a knowledge base of the SM industry landscape (de Schepper & Sotiriadou, 2017; Mathner & Martin, 2012) and for the education institution to forge connections with industry (Ferns et al., 2019; Pollard et al., 2015). According to Lave and Wenger (1991) learning about industry is a social process in which knowledge, a valued competence, is jointly built by competent workplace employers and embedded in a distinct social and physical environment (cited in Pogatsnik, 2018, p.147). Pogatsnik (2018) extends on this notion by elaborating that workplace learning through practical experience, exposes students to hidden knowledge and encourages participation in the community of practice, eventually merging learning with work.

The Industry Awareness component of the Pre-Condition Phase has six awareness factors that are outlined in Table 28 with corresponding recommendations drawn from the

current research that assist to build UG SM industry sector knowledge. The recommendations aligned to each awareness factors will be explained following Table 28.

To facilitate these recommendations, managers from the SM industry sector can consider and then apply each recommendation by sharing holistic industry knowledge to UGs through practicum facilitated in collaboration with coordinators of UG SM programs. The role of coordinators of SM programs is to provide UGs with underpinning SM industry sector knowledge and to foster the development of employability through practicum and throughout the delivery of the program (Brady et al., 2018; Foster & Pierce, 2021). Subsequently, it is perceived these recommendations constitute an underpinning of industry information that, collectively, would benefit UGs undertaking their foundation (first year) of an UG SM program (Smith et al., 2018).

Table 28

Industry Awareness Recommendations for the SM Industry and Higher Education Sectors

Pre-Condition Phase	Awareness Factors	Recommendations	
		SM Industry *Managers from the SM Industry Sector*	Higher Education *Coordinators of UG SM Programs*
Industry Awareness	Job classification	Create job descriptions that are thorough, distinguish function and indicate appropriate job classification.	Introduce six job classifications with examples of job roles, organisations, clients, and workplace settings.
	Advertised employment	Provide a clear organisation background and role purpose on job description. Consider job description terminology used to indicate graduate-entry level positions. Articulate key tasks, responsibilities and internal and external collaborations.	Educate how to deconstruct job descriptions. Educate how to relate to entry-level job descriptions. Promote range and intricacies of expected SM roles.
	Job status and salary	Indicate salary level in advertised job descriptions.	Educate about industry expectations: time fractions and salary in a range of jobs in the three SM sectors (commercial, non-profit, and public).
	Structure of industry sector	Provide practical opportunities for UGs to experience a SM workplace setting. Represent the SM sectors through engagement with higher education.	Provide opportunities for UGs to undertake practical experiences within SM workplaces settings. Identify SM sector operations and service provisions. Identify employment pathways of the three SM sectors.

Interrelated industries	Provide practical experiences in a range of SM functions within various departments to showcase transferable workplace skill sets. Provide practical experiences to showcase industry professionalism, internal and external collaborations, partnerships and working relationships.	Instruct how to recognise, transfer, and apply relative skills from one industry to another. Outline benefits of using critical reflection for UGs to recognise transferable skills across sectors.
Additional requirements and training	Clearly indicate additional requirements and training in advertised graduate-entry level job descriptions. Induct and educate UGs about OHS procedures, workplace operations, policies, procedures and provide employee introductions.	Address UG safety in the workplace, specifically within physical sporting environments, risk assessment, liability, and duty of care.

Job Classification. The purpose of job classifications is to provide a system to objectively and accurately define and evaluate the duties, responsibilities, and seniority level of a job (The Balance Careers, 2021). The provision of accurate industry job classification information is likely to assist UGs to identify satisfying industry roles (Barnhill et al., 2018; Jackson & Wilton, 2017), clear industry expectations (Nicholas & Handley, 2020), and exposure to an accurate depiction of the industry (Barnhill et al., 2018; Mathner & Martin, 2012). Thorough job descriptions are useful to project the classification of jobs that are representative of specific industry sectors and to characterise job function (Carliner et al., 2015; Emery et al., 2012). The current research findings indicate that the job functions in each of the six job classifications identified, typify the nature of the SM industry sector, and provide an accurate depiction of tasks and industry information. Leading from these findings a recommended strategy for managers from the SM industry sector is to create job descriptions that are thorough and distinguish job function and appropriate job classification. It is recommended coordinators of UG SM programs raise awareness of the composition of the six job classifications into the foundation year of the UG SM program. The advertised job descriptions collected from the Stage One job advertisement audit identified the type of roles, job titles, organisations, clients, and workplace settings to serve as an appropriate initiation to the scope of employment opportunities within the SM industry sector (see Results chapter, Table 6).

Advertised Employment. Advertised employment essentially acts as a marketing tool to attract applicants to work within an organisation. General and sport literature suggest that including significant details within a job description (Smith & Smolianov, 2016) using consistent industry terminology (Carliner et al., 2015) will create realistic industry expectations for potential job applicants. The current research findings support

this literature and highlight that the fundamental components of a job description include well-defined and descriptive sections and reveal specific terminology to indicate entry-level SM roles. As a result, managers from the SM industry sector are recommended to provide clear and descriptive organisational roles using terminology such as manager, coordinator, and officer, to assist graduate applicants identify with graduate-entry level positions. Additional recommendations include the need for managers from the SM industry sector to articulate key tasks and responsibilities, and internal and external collaborations. Regarding the recommendations for coordinators of UG SM programs, findings indicate the need to educate UGs on how to deconstruct job descriptions and familiarise with entry-level job descriptions, prompting UGs to recognise the range and requirements of expected SM roles. These recommendations encourage industry exploration by UGs, propagating subsequent awareness relating to the structure of the industry sector.

Job Status and Salary. Job status is a term that represents rank, prestige or category. In the current study, job status refers to category, specifically the time fraction of advertised positions, serving as an indicator of the status of SM job opportunities available to applicants. Combined with the inclusion of salary within the job description of advertised employment, job status and salary provide an additional method to indicate graduate-entry level positions (Emery et al., 2012). The current research identified that job status was commonly embedded in job descriptions of advertised employment, salary however was rarely included. Managers from the SM industry sector can embed job status (time fraction) and salary level in advertised job descriptions to assist applicants to recognise the scope of the job opportunity. It is recommended that coordinators of UG SM programs educate UGs about industry expectations related to time fractions and salary

according to the range of job roles in the three SM sectors (commercial, non-profit, and public).

Structure of Industry Sector. Ideally for UGs, an industry sector's structure is explored through practical experience, in this case within the three SM sectors (commercial, non-profit, and public). Volunteering within the sporting/local community can offer the types of experiences that the non-profit and public sector seek from applicants of SM positions (Hoye et al., 2018; Shilbury et al., 2020). The current research expands understanding of these three SM sectors in regard to the role that practical experience plays in assisting UGs to familiarise themselves with the workplace. As a result, one recommendation is for sport managers to provide practical experiences in their workplace to assist UG knowledge transition from higher education to apply in the industry. Another is for these managers to engage with higher education coordinators in practicum programs to educate UGs on the industry sector in which they work. Simultaneously, coordinators of UG SM programs are recommended to provide UGs with a range of practical experience opportunities as part of the program to expose them to the operations and service provisions of the three SM sectors and possibly increase employment potential. This recommendation supports existing literature identifying that experiential learning included in the SM curriculum, improves UG preparation and prospects of gaining employment in the sport industry (Bradbury et al., 2021; Brady et al., 2018). These recommendations promote how practical experience can be the vehicle to foster an awareness of the SM industry sector structure through experience that occurs outside the classroom.

Interrelated Industries. Undergraduates who have a strong awareness of the SM industry sector are likely to recognise how work, study, and life practical experiences from

industry sectors external to the SM industry sector, can be interrelated and adopted. Managers of the SM industry sector have recognised that the professionalism of sport has been significantly heightened over the years, as have the employability expectations of SM graduates (Foster & Pierce, 2021; Mathner & Martin, 2012; Schwarz, 2010). Tasks including marketing, operations, finance, and administration are widely present across the SM industry (Schwarz, 2010). These business-related tasks strengthen the notion that sport is a business and has job functions interconnected with industry sectors other than SM (Brady et al., 2018; Foster & Pierce, 2021). Current research findings signify the need for managers of the SM industry sector to provide practical experiences across a range of SM functions within various departments of the workplace. This allows the application of transferable skills and prospective learning. In addition, connecting UGs with the SM industry sector will showcase industry professionalism, collaborations, partnerships and working relationships within and external to the organisation. Furthermore, coordinators of UG SM programs are recommended to educate UGs on how to recognise, transfer and apply skills from interrelated industries using critical reflection of practical experiences to improve industry connections and graduate employability.

Additional Requirements and Training. Awareness of additional industry requirements and training are gained via undertaking practical experiences. Inclusion of these additional industry requirement and training details in a job description are recommended for managers from the SM industry sector. In doing so it is likely to strengthen the initial perception of the SM industry sector, formulated by a graduate applicant from the job description on the alignment between the execution of a role in practice and additional training that will make a point of difference (Carliner et al., 2015; Gomes et al., 2018). Graduate-entry job descriptions reviewed in the current research,

included additional requirements and training, and primarily referred to Occupational Health and Safety (OHS). These additional requirements and training are perceived by managers involved in the current research, to be a responsible action by SM industry sector employers to manage potential risks associated with the workplace and its operations. Findings from the current research reinforce the importance of conducting, for new employees, an induction incorporating OHS procedures, workplace operations, policies, procedures, and employee introductions to ensure that a quality and safe workplace and service is provided. Coordinators of UG SM programs are obligated to address the safety of UGs in the workplace, specifically within sporting environments, risk assessment, liability, and duty of care through site visits and workplace checks prior to the UG undertaking the practical experience (Commonwealth of Australia, 2009). Essentially, these actions by coordinators and ultimately managers from the SM industry sector, will ensure necessary precautions are taken to educate UGs regarding OHS procedures, policies, and workplace operations for all sectors of sport (Donaldson et al., 2013).

Self-Awareness

The common notion that every individual is unique has a central position in graduate employability (Reddan & Rauchle, 2017). The literature connects an UG's self-awareness to their work motivations and employment industry opportunities (Nicholas & Handley, 2020; Parker & Ohly, 2008), to improve job preparation and the likelihood of finding the best job fit (Singh & Greenhaus, 2004). To assist UGs to understand this connection are the four awareness factors within the Self-Awareness component of the current research. Undergraduates who are aware of these components and the attributes they bring to the workplace will enhance their employability and strengthen their point of difference. By recognising the Self-Awareness component's awareness factors and associated

recommendations (Table 29), managers from the SM industry sector and coordinators of UG SM programs, can contribute to the personal and professional development of UGs.

Descriptions of the recommendations for each of the four self-awareness factors are outlined for managers from the SM industry sector and coordinators of UG SM programs following Table 29. Findings show the key role that coordinators of UG SM programs can play through the delivery of the program and practicum to subsequently develop UG self-awareness and an ability to make informed career decisions. Thus, strong working partnerships between managers from the SM industry sector and coordinators of UG SM programs are essential to enable the implementation of each recommendation.

Table 29

Self-Awareness Recommendations for the SM Industry & Higher Education Sectors

Pre-Condition Phase	Awareness factors	Recommendations	
		SM Industry *Managers from the SM Industry Sector*	Higher Education *Coordinators of UG SM Programs*
Self-Awareness	Degree subject knowledge, understanding and skills	Work with coordinators of UG SM programs to understand practicum requirements and expected outcomes.	Collaborate with managers from SM industry sector to deliver practicum opportunities aligned with course learning outcomes.
	Career development learning	As an Alumnus, keep connected with the alma mater to showcase SM industry, opportunities, and pathways.	Track university SM Alumni. Collaborate with SM program lecturers in all year levels to offer course career development options.
	Emotional Intelligence	Consider and map the EI and other leadership traits of practicum supervisors.	Educate what constitutes EI, and how to enhance, when undertaking practical experiences.
	Reflect, assess, and evaluate	Collaborate with coordinators of UG SM programs to gauge feedback processes and evaluation of graduate employability/competence.	Map course subjects including self-reflection, assessment, and evaluation within a range of learning environments to demonstrate graduate employability.

Degree Subject Knowledge, Understanding and Skills. In a university program, the degree subject knowledge, understanding and skills build throughout each year of a degree. UGs who study a specific discipline and gain a bachelor's degree will improve their prospects of finding a job and employment opportunities (Bol & Van de Werfhorst, 2011; Dacre Pool & Sewell, 2007). The current research findings build on this literature with the notion that theory and knowledge gained from a degree are valued more when applied in a practical setting. Furthermore, it highlights the significance of higher education and SM industry sector alliances. These industry sector alliances promote an exchange of ideas and awareness of the workplace operations of both sectors (Ankrah & Omar, 2015; Rufai & Rashid, 2015; Sjöö & Hellström, 2019). As a result, managers from the SM industry sector are recommended to collaborate with coordinators of UG SM programs to understand practicum requirements and expected outcomes when providing SM course-related practical experiences. It is recommended that coordinators of UG SM programs, in collaboration with managers from the SM industry sector, deliver practicum opportunities aligned with course learning outcomes. Graduates who can ultimately demonstrate their values, knowledge, leadership, and commitment to industry through a degree and associated experiences (MacNeela & Gannon, 2014) are typically strong in their ability to self-market their accomplishments in addition to completing a degree (Nicholas & Handley, 2020).

Career Development Learning. Career development learning is subjective learning related to an individual's career and extends beyond the UG degree (Khapova et al., 2007). Career development learning has an innate association with graduate employability and is instrumental when applied practically throughout higher education (Majid et al., 2019; Smith, et al., 2018; Watts, 2006). Essentially, research indicates that UGs who undertake

career development learning have the best chance of securing a career in which they will be satisfied and successful (Dacre Pool & Sewell, 2007; Stanfield, 2017). Based on the current research findings, UGs can familiarise themselves with industry by being self-aware, and subsequently apply their knowledge practically through experience, to enhance their career development learning. An UG's subsequent ability to create the link between opportunities, to make decisions and apply their learning from practical experience will strengthen their employability and industry job prospects (Jackson & Wilton, 2017). Graduates who enter the industry related to their degree, are important stakeholders for higher education institutions (Pedro et al., 2020). Maintaining connections with the alma mater is one recommendation for managers of the SM industry sector to showcase the SM industry sector opportunities and pathways for UGs, first-hand. Furthermore, coordinators of UG SM programs can strengthen this process by keeping track of course alumni and collaborating with course lecturers throughout year levels to offer course career development options within subjects. Ultimately, career development learning will enhance subjective learning within the degree via industry sector alignment and provide opportunities for UGs to apply their strengths, skills, and motivations through practical experience (Stanfield, 2017).

Emotional Intelligence. The term emotional intelligence (EI) has garnered interest over the decades (Kewalramani et al., 2015). In the higher education sector, EI skills programs exist. Development of a range of EI programs however, targeting specific student populations, namely final year students, have been neglected (Jameson et al., 2016). This is despite the range of benefits they produce. For example, the career performance of UGs who learn EI skills while undertaking practical experience, are positively highlighted by gains in mental and physical wellbeing (Nelson & Low, 2011).

In practice, UGs can increase awareness of, and effectively manage, their own emotions when interacting with others and in challenging workplace scenarios facilitated in higher education (Majeski et al., 2017). Literature has established that learning involves emotion (Culver, 1998; Tyng et al., 2017). As such, an increased engagement in UGs learning can lead to benefits beyond academic gains, ranging from skill development and competence, to enhanced psychological well-being and more positive self-views (Gilar-Corbi et al., 2018; Maguire et al., 2017). An UG's display of passion and commitment to industry, or a sport, attitude, and interpersonal skills are specific indicators, emerging from the current research, that demonstrate how emotion is present in learning within the SM sector. As a result, consideration of EI and other leadership traits of practicum supervisors is one recommendation for managers in the SM industry sector when offering practical experiences to UGs to ensure learning is optimal. In preparation for practicum, coordinators of UG SM programs are recommended to educate students on what constitutes EI and how to enhance their EI when undertaking practical experiences.

Reflect, Assess, and Evaluate. Reflecting, assessing, and evaluating are actions synonymous with learning (Butler et al., 2019). It is the UGs who can critically reflect, assess, and evaluate practical experiences who will be more attuned to the social and cultural aspects of the SM organisational context (de Schepper & Sotiriadou, 2018; Gomes et al., 2018). Practical experiences provide an opportunity for industry sector employers to contribute to training, UG learning and employability, while fostering an informal preliminary experience for prospective employees to reflect, assess, evaluate, and make career decisions (Kinash et al., 2016; Mann, 2014). The current research findings expand literature by identifying that sport managers highly value UGs who can apply theory to practice, understand their contributions to practical experience outcomes, and make

improvements where possible. A demonstrated ability to reflect, assess and evaluate will contribute to informed UG decision making and act as a strong indicator of graduate employability. As such, it is recommended that managers from the SM industry sector collaborate with coordinators of UG SM programs to gauge feedback processes and evaluate graduate employability/competence. Coordinators of UG SM programs can enhance this collaboration by mapping, then implementing reflection, assessment, and evaluation activities across subject and year levels. As such, activities of this nature will assist UGs to apply their skills, attributes, and knowledge within a range of learning environments and successively translate the experiential learning into transparent employability signals.

Observed Signals

Standing out from other applicants throughout job recruitment and selection requires several interconnected, distinguishing characteristics that SM recruiting managers perceive as desirable. Graduate employability research highlights the varying perceptions of managers in relation to the desired skills and capability of job applicants (Rosenberg et al., 2012; Smith et al., 2018; Yorke, 2006). However, limited research is available to indicate how these managers assess an applicant's capability and the notion that graduate capabilities are not directly observable during job recruitment and selection (Briggerman & Norwood, 2011; Piopiunik et al., 2020). To address this limitation, the current research has identified how graduates can signal their employability during job recruitment and selection. This has been achieved through the emergence of new knowledge and practice to form the Observed Signals Phase. Collectively, the indicators within the Observed Signals Phase (Figure 8) address the complexities faced by SM managers during recruitment and selection and enables them to recognise specific graduate employability.

In relation to coordinators of UG SM programs, findings recognise the need to break down each Observed Signal and introduce these to UGs from the first year of a program as part of an extended process, to assist the student to obtain employability (Smith et al., 2018). The Observed Signal Phase, outlined in Table 30, indicates recruitment and/or selection within which these signals become transparent (Chapter 5). It also summarises the recommendations for each signal according to managers from the SM industry sector and coordinators of UG SM programs. Consideration of these recommendations could guide managers from the SM industry sector to provide quality practical experiences as a learning base from which UGs can translate their employability throughout job recruitment and selection stages. The role of the coordinators of UG SM programs is to deliver a strong program forming the foundation from which UGs can develop a holistic understanding of the SM industry sector and the individual contributions they can offer as an exposition of their employability.

Table 30

Observed Signals Recommendations for the SM Industry and Higher Education Sectors

Observed Signal	Recruitment (1) and/or Selection (2)	Recommendation	
		SM Industry *Managers from the SM Industry Sector*	Higher Education *Coordinators of UG SM Programs*
Experienced industry referees	1 & 2	Provide feedback on UG work ethic and performance. Engage UGs throughout practicum with coordinators of UG SM programs to provide a SM industry sector insight from SM manager perspective.	Ensure supervision guidelines include supervisor feedback/evaluation documentation, on UG work ethic. Promote benefits of establishing networks, mentors, and potential referees.
Referee check: alignment of applicant and referees	2	Include applicant referees within job recruitment. Choose suitable practicum supervisors (potential referee) to act as mentor and support UG employability development.	Collaborate with industry to establish strong industry mentors for practicum.
Voluntary experience(s)	1	Stay connected with coordinators of UG SM programs to advertise voluntary opportunities for practicum. Offer suitable practical experiences; provide industry insight into varying SM roles and required employability skills.	Stay connected with industry and know voluntary opportunities available to UGs. Educate UGs on value-add benefits of volunteering to SM industry sector.
Unpaid experience as a Pathway to Employment	1 & 2	Align practicum opportunities with employment outcomes.	Maintain data on all positive practicum opportunities and employment outcomes.

			Educate UGs how to strengthen a job application by including experience examples as evidence.
Practical experience related to advertised role	1 & 2	Identify the scope of prior practical experiences suitable for UGs to capably undertake advertised role.	Embed critical reflection activities related to practical experiences undertaken throughout UG SM course.
Practical experience outcomes	1 & 2	Review outcome of practical experiences with UGs and highlight their contributions to organisation.	Create practicum assessment to motivate UGs to explore SM industry sector and stimulate career conversations.
Presentation	1 & 2	Support UGs on practicums to explore and exercise the multitude of employability skills applied in the workplace. Expose UGs to a range of practicum examples as evidence of using employability skills.	Embed, across multiple SM subjects, tasks for UG to explore the eight Employability Dimensions and multitude of ways to showcase their employability.
Articulation (content)	1 & 2	Build practicum knowledge, to explore and understand complexities of industry using critical reflection. Provide practicum as an avenue for UGs to build a range of examples as evidence of ability, when applying for a job.	Implement critical thinking assessment across subject core and practicum subjects on how UGs can articulate their learning. Collaborate with managers from SM industry sector to provide the direction and support to stimulate student engagement and industry awareness during practicum.
Leadership attributes	1 & 2	Expose UGs to a range of exciting to mundane tasks to gauge enthusiasm to be involved and interested in the industry. Showcase how leadership attributes are demonstrated within the workplace and industry.	Define leadership and enable UGs to recognise leadership in everyday tasks.

Self-marketing	1 & 2	Describe the workplace to UGs on practicum highlighting mix of attributes and skills required to foster strong employee organisation fit.	Introduce the concept of personal brand and engage UGs to recognise their personal brand, strengths and what sets them apart from other applicants.

Experienced Industry Referees. Industry referees are valuable contributors to graduate employability. Literature suggests that a graduate applicant's soft skill capability in the workplace is very difficult to assess and unlikely to be revealed within job recruitment and selection (Briggerman & Norwood, 2011). Furthermore, literature notes that referees observe applicants' typical, rather than maximal, performances, which is likely to indicate an applicant's capability to perform the advertised role (Taylor et al., 2004). From the current research, findings revealed, SM referees are often known to the industry based on their experience, have a reputation to uphold, and would not likely recommend an applicant if they do not believe them capable. As first-hand witnesses of the graduate applicant, referee knowledge acts as a testimonial of the unobserved characteristics which signify graduate employability. Subsequently, the research identified that soft skill capabilities such as the work ethic and performance of UGs can be observed by employers [referees] through practical experiences.

Based on these findings, managers from the SM industry sector are recommended to provide feedback on UG work ethic and performance through formal feedback mechanisms. Thus, recommendations for coordinators of UG SM programs delivering practicum is to emphasise the inclusion of feedback/evaluation in practicum supervisor guidelines and induct practicum supervisors in preparation, should they become referees to UGs. An additional recommendation includes managers from the SM industry sector to mentor UGs throughout practicum and assist UGs with the establishment of SM industry networks. Indirectly, these sport managers will potentially forge a stronger alignment with coordinators of UG SM programs in their workplace supervisory role. As such, this would allow the provision of a SM industry sector insight from a SM manager perspective.

Hence, it is recommended that coordinators of UG SM programs promote the benefits of establishing networks, mentors, and potential referees to UGs.

Referee Check: Alignment of Applicant and Referee. Successful teams are typically built on strong internal working relationships, and a familiarity of each other's strengths and capabilities. The alignment of an applicant and referee draws similarities of the working relationship between employer and employee. In this situation, the working relationship between the referee and applicant has allowed the referee to directly observe an applicant's interpersonal communication and strategic thinking, often in a variety of workplace settings, and for an extended time frame (Pellizari, 2010; Taylor et al., 2004). These direct observations gained from a referee check are especially important during job recruitment and selection when a prospective employer typically only observes an applicant's employability skills from a written application and an interview (Carless, 2007; Pollard et al., 2015). Complementing these observations, the current research builds knowledge recognising that referees in similar employment to hiring managers can articulate their observations of a graduate applicant's: interpersonal communication; strengths; application of theory to practice; and career intentions. Findings also suggest that conversations about the industry typically occur between the referee and applicant through mentorship throughout a practical experience. It is recommended that managers from the SM industry sector formalise an approach or process to access the wealth of applicant information held by referees. Another recommendation is for managers from the SM industry sector to invest the time to choose suitable practicum supervisors (potential referee) to act as a mentor and support an UG's employability development when on practicum. At the same time, this provides an opportunity for coordinators of UG SM programs to develop an UG's understanding of the industry and their self-awareness, prior

to undertaking the practical experience. Coordinators are also recommended to collaborate with these managers to establish strong industry mentors for practicum.

Voluntary Experience(s). The motivation of an individual to undertake voluntary experiences varies. Literature has identified that one of the main motivations for higher education students to volunteer is to develop employability (Holdsworth, 2010). Employability is often best developed through extra-curricular activity (Briggerman & Norwood, 2011; Kinash et al., 2016) and can strengthen an UG's understanding of a specific organisation's operations and its positioning in the sporting structure (Cabellero & Walker**,** 2010). The estimation that just over one third of Australia's volunteer population are working in sport and physical recreation settings (Kappelides et al., 2019) supports the notion that there are no shortages of voluntary opportunities for UGs to undertake and prepare for their own careers in SM. Based on the findings of the current research, and expanding on the literature, is that graduate applicants who have volunteered have observed first-hand an organisation's positioning in the sporting structure, its operations, and the organisation's execution of social, organisational, and technological systems. In addition, the current research has identified that voluntary experiences are undertaken by proactive, passionate, and committed individuals who have positive work ethic and leadership attributes.

As a result of the findings, a recommendation for managers from the SM industry sector is staying connected with current coordinators of UG SM programs to advertise practicum voluntary opportunities. Relevant practical experiences can expose UGs to varying SM roles and provide a greater insight to the industry sector. Coordinators of UG SM programs are recommended to assist this process by maintaining connections with industry providers of practicum opportunities, to advertise opportunities to UGs and

educate them on the value-add benefits of volunteering in the SM industry sector. An accumulation of voluntary experience within the SM industry sector is fundamental to establishing a career in the industry and enhancing graduate employability.

Unpaid Experience as a Pathway to Employment. Extensive exposure to and familiarisation of an industry through unpaid experience, will potentially eliminate the likelihood of unrealistic industry sector expectations. Literature highlights unpaid experiences such as voluntary or practicum have been described as a pathway to employment (Ferns et al., 2019; Sagen et al., 2000; Trembath et al., 2010) and if related to the advertised position, increases a graduate's likelihood of employment (Ferns et al., 2019; Norwood & Henneberry, 2006; Sagen et al., 2000; Wilton, 2012). Current research findings support the notion that SM graduate applicants who engage in unpaid practical experience typically have a strong work ethic, an ability to think critically, understand the nature of the [sporting] industry and draw realistic expectations from familiarity with a workplace and its operations (Brooks et al., 2014; Sauder & Mudrick, 2018).

To increase the awareness of managers from the SM industry sector about graduate applicant capability through practical experience, is the recommendation to align practicum opportunities with employment outcomes. An outcome may not necessarily refer to a job but to the networks established while on practicum evolving into employment opportunities (Paros et al., 2020). Furthermore, coordinators of UG SM programs are recommended to maintain data on all positive practicum opportunities and employment outcomes as testimonials to promote the benefits of practical experience to UGs (Sauder & Mudrick, 2018). This notion supports current literature (Griffin & Coelhoso, 2019; Helyer & Lee, 2014) and provides another recommendation to

coordinators of UG SM programs in educating UGs on how to strengthen a job application by including experience examples as evidence of employability.

Practical Experience Related to Advertised Role. To relate practical experience to an advertised role typifies the learning that has occurred from the experience. A graduate applicant's ability to relate to practical experiences, job functions and skills to advertised roles demonstrates a deep knowledge of the industry (Lord et al., 2019). The current research findings build on this literature indicating that prior SM industry practical experiences are advantageous, they enhance an UG's familiarity with the labour market and capacity to relate skills, attributes, and knowledge to an advertised position. In addition, characterising SM industry sector knowledge and related skills can link the relativity of general management roles associated with a range of industry sectors, to broader job functions in SM such as planning, administration, and marketing.

A recommendation for managers of the SM industry sector is to identify the scope of practical experiences with UGs while undertaking practicum. The scope could include conversations on how practical experiences could act as a pre-requisite to apply to advertised SM roles similar to the practicum role undertaken by the UG. It is recommended that coordinators of UG SM programs embed critical reflection activities related to practical experiences undertaken throughout the UG SM course. Undergraduates who recognise how to relate prior experience and skills to advertised roles, will strengthen their ability to promote their employability.

Practical Experience Outcomes. Practical experiences offer UGs with opportunities to learn about a range of industry and workplace aspects. Associated outcomes assist graduates with career decision making and offer greater insight to pursue a career in the corresponding industry (Wilton, 2012; Wingrove & Turner, 2015). Central to

the current research findings is that graduates who recognise the learning and outcomes gained from their practical experiences are perceived by managers as critical thinkers and highly employable. The research findings also indicated that an applicants' satisfaction of the SM workplace, its associated job roles, and clients, as a confirmation of their attraction to the industry. As such, practical experiences play a critical role to assist UGs develop the professional practice skills of communication, interpersonal skills, and work ethic, and understanding of workplace values, standards, and cultural systems needed to make the successful transition from university to the workplace (Sauder & Mudrick, 2018).

It is recommended, as a result from these findings, that managers from the SM industry sector review the outcomes of practical experiences with the UGs and highlight their contributions made to the organisation. Coordinators of UG SM programs are recommended to create practicum assessments to motivate UGs to explore the SM industry sector and stimulate career conversation. Practical engagement in the workplace is an avenue to enhance career development learning and inform the career decision making of UGs.

Presentation. First impressions of graduate applicants are generated through various means of communication. During job recruitment and selection, written and verbal communication are key. The presence of strong intrapersonal and leadership skills strengthens the notion that business relationships can be maintained and nurtured by applicants (Mishra, 2014; Stewart et al., 2016). The current research findings build on this notion when graduate applicants can articulate their employability through a range of communication channels. A prime example is during recruitment when an applicant provides thorough and well-written document that is visually appealing and presented in logical format. Similarly, the current research identified that strong verbal presentation

projects strong interpersonal skills, leadership traits representing integrity and honesty. These employability skills were reflected in several of the newly formed observed signals in the current research and reinforce the importance of an applicant to present strong indicators.

As a result, a recommendation for managers from the SM industry sector is to support UGs to recognise the range of practicum examples they could provide as evidence of their ability to apply multiple employability skills in the workplace. Coordinators of UG SM programs are recommended to embed, across multiple SM subjects, tasks for UGs to explore the eight Employability Dimensions (Rosenberg, et al., 2012) and identify how to showcase them in terms of their employability. Adopting these actions in the recruitment and selection stage of employment, and the workplace, will assist UGs to make a strong presentation.

Articulation (Content). Articulation of knowledge and skills gained through practical experience and evidenced with examples, provides a mechanism for graduates to showcase their capability and point of difference. It is important for UGs to apply critical thinking and develop cultural awareness of an organisation and its operations based on their exposure to external workplace pressures associated with market competitors, customers, and demographics (de Schepper & Sotiriadou, 2018; Stewart et al., 2016). Based on the current research findings, an applicant's ability to critically reflect, relate experience stories and state connections to the advertised role suggest the applicant has researched the organisation and understands how they can contribute/make a difference to the workplace. In particular, the level and range of role responsibility, specific roles undertaken and extent to which the applicant worked in a team and with clients are typical aspects that need articulation.

In practical terms, to assist UGs articulate what they have to offer to prospective employers, it is recommended that managers from the SM industry sector encourage UG critical reflection to understand the complexities of the industry. Subsequently, from UG critical reflection, another recommendation is to provide practicum as an avenue to build applied industry examples as evidence of ability and organisational fit when applying for jobs. Furthermore, it is recommended that managers from the SM industry sector collaborate with coordinators of UG SM programs to provide direction and support to stimulate student engagement and industry awareness during practicum. Coordinators of UG SM programs are recommended to implement critical thinking assessment in various core and practicum subjects to guide UGs on how they can articulate the content of their learning. Articulation of various learning experiences will prepare UGs for job recruitment and selection.

Leadership Attributes. Leadership is a term typically associated with public figures occupying prominent positions of authority. Leadership emergence is recognised as an observation of individuals with no formal leadership authority, stepping up to exhibit leadership attributes within small groups, while undertaking practical experience (Côté et al., 2010; Wellman, 2017). Building on this notion, the current research findings highlight that graduate applicants who voluntarily undertake experience, have capacity to forge close working relationships and show initiative, all of which are strong leadership indicators (Diskiene et al., 2019; Sisk et al, 2021). Additional leadership attribute examples identified in the current research include applicants who demonstrate strong communications, are self-motivated to take on exciting and mundane tasks and projects that they commit to until completion.

As a result, a recommendation for managers from the SM industry sector is to expose UGs to a range of tasks and responsibilities to gauge their interest in SM roles and the industry. Exposure to a range of tasks will provide an avenue for UGs to showcase how their leadership attributes are demonstrated within and external to the workplace and industry. Also, it is recommended that coordinators of UG SM programs educate UGs on leadership, enabling them to understand that everyday tasks and gestures can indicate the presence of leadership and employability.

Self-Marketing. Self-awareness must precede self-marketing to understand the indicators that can be marketed. The closer the perceived degree of match between the skills and ability of the graduate applicant to the advertised position, the stronger the level of job fit (Tomkovick & Swanson, 2014). Equally, an applicant who has defined their strengths, motivations and point of difference in a personal brand also represents a strong fit to the industry of choice (Manai & Holmlund, 2015). Current research findings present a range of indicators that suggest an applicant can demonstrate their ability to be a strong self-marketer and demonstrate their fit within an organisation using written and verbal communication. These indicators, include seeking outcomes for the organisation and clients, matching their ability to advertised positions and knowing their point of difference and personal brand.

To assist graduate self-marketing, it is recommended that managers from the SM industry sector provide an insight of the current workplace environment to UGs on practicum. In doing so highlight the mix of attributes and skills required to foster a strong organisational fit. Coordinators of UG SM programs are recommended to introduce the concept of personal brand and engage students on how to recognise their personal brand, strengths and what sets them apart from other applicants. As such, one desired outcome

from UG SM programs are employable graduates, the marketable product of learning, who will successfully represent the university they studied at, in the SM industry sector.

Chapter Summary

Addressed in this chapter was the answer to the final research question: what recommendations can be made to managers from the SM industry sector and coordinators of UG SM programs on the signals employers seek from graduates to demonstrate employability from practical experiences? Derived from the current research, a total of 61 recommendations (Appendix O) were made and presented in three sub-sections to outline the transparent signals employers seek relating to the practical experiences of SM graduates. The first sub-section is the Industry Awareness component of the Pre-Condition Phase. The six awareness factors in this component generated 22 recommendations. The second sub-section is the Self-Awareness component of the Pre-Condition Phase. The four awareness factors produced nine recommendations. The final sub-section is the 10 Observed Signals. The indicators that form these signals generated 30 recommendations.

The purpose of these recommendations is to strengthen an UG's practical and theoretical understanding of the vital role practical experience/signalling plays in evidencing their employability, through applied higher education learning. The recommendations for managers from the SM industry sector and coordinators of UG SM programs focus on the elements required to signal the employability of a graduate applicant during recruitment and selection to assist gain employment. Each recommendation has been formulated to enrich existing and applied higher education learnings to the SM industry sector and with the aim to increase an UG's sense of awareness related to the industry, self, and their employability.

As a collective, the recommendations serve to educate managers in the SM industry sector and coordinators of UG SM programs and to enhance collaborations between these professionals. It is anticipated the outcomes of these collaborations will benefit the SM industry sector by gaining more quality graduates. The higher education sector within the SM discipline will also benefit in terms of securing graduate employability. Ultimately, it is envisaged these recommendations will aim to stimulate a passion and commitment by coordinators of UG SM programs to provide guidance tailored to support UGs to navigate the SM industry sector. In doing so assist UGs recognise and build an ability to showcase their employability consistently, in the immediate, near, and distant future. The next chapter is the seventh and final chapter that summarises the current research and draws a conclusion to the thesis.

Chapter Seven: Conclusion

The purpose of this chapter is to draw conclusions from the key research findings. The chapter commences with an overview of the current Australian research directed by the problems identified in the literature review, namely, the absence of SM job classifications and standards, limited UG SM practical experiences, and employer assessment of graduate employability. These problems led to the formation of the purpose of the research and identification of three associated research questions. The research questions guided the decision to implement an exploratory approach that included a mixed methods approach. Results assisted to address the three research questions. Findings that combined the literature review and results enabled answers to the research questions. In doing so, the Pre-Condition and Observed Signals Phases, the Graduate Employability Cycle of Learning, and recommendations were formed to guide managers from the SM industry sector and coordinators of UG SM programs. Each of these Phases are outlined in the following sections in terms of their contribution to theoretical and practical knowledge. Finally, to build on the current research and assist future studies, research limitations and a direction for future investigation are identified.

Overview of the Research and Key Findings

The purpose of the current research was to determine how practical experience can align the learning, development, and subsequent capacity of graduates from UG SM programs, to transparently signal their employability during job recruitment and selection. The literature reviewed provided the theoretical base, background knowledge, and highlighted the knowledge gaps. These included: a lack of consistent literature outlining distinct SM job classifications and standards; limited UG SM practical experiences upon graduation; and a lack of knowledge and research relating to employer assessment of

graduate employability. These knowledge gaps led to the formation of the following three questions addressed in this research:

1. What job classifications of advertised graduate-entry sport management positions stipulate practical experience as a prerequisite?
2. What signals do sport management employers seek from graduate-entry job applicants of practical experiences during job recruitment and selection?
3. What recommendations can be made to managers from the sport management industry sector and coordinators of undergraduate sport management programs on the signals employers seek from graduates to demonstrate employability from practical experiences?

Three stages of investigation were conducted using a mixed method process of convergent parallel design, crossover analyses and 'complementarity development' (Greene et al., 1989) to answer the three research questions. In the first stage, a job audit was conducted of advertised graduate-entry SM job descriptions for Victorian-based roles. Descriptive statistics were used to establish an informative base from which six job classifications of the SM industry sector were identified, answering research question one. In the second stage stratified random sampling was used to identify SM industry sector managers who represented the job roles that aligned to the six job classifications. The content of the interview questions (Appendix B) was developed from the literature reviewed using an exploratory approach to achieve the right question sequence and ensure the questions generated the required information (Brace, 2018). The coding analysis was guided by the Experiential Learning Cycle (Kolb, 1984). The interview questions were developed to assist with addressing the second research question related to the signals that indicate a graduate's employability based on their practical experience. To further build on

answering research question two, in Stage Three an online survey (Appendix F) was implemented using the Employability Dimensions (Rosenberg, et al., 2012) questionnaire as the foundation and additional items gained from the semi-structured interview data. Collectively, findings from the job advertisement audit, semi-structured interviews and online survey contributed to addressing research question three to identify industry and higher education sector recommendations.

Existing theoretical models underpinning research in graduate employability and experiential learning were used to support the significance that practical experience has on graduate employability. The four phases of the Experiential Learning Cycle (Kolb, 1984) guided the data analyses generated in Stages Two and Three to validate and provide meaning of the experiential learning gained by UGs through practical experience. The questionnaire, developed by Rosenberg et al., (2012) which was used as the main content of the Stage Three online survey in the current study, adopted the eight Employability Dimensions scale items to fully define what constitutes basic employability skills. The eight Employability Dimensions (Rosenberg et al., 2012) were analysed using the four Experiential Learning Cycle phases to categorise the data providing two new perspectives. These were to: 1) indicate in which phases of the learning cycle the Employability Dimensions items are developed; and 2) identify where the projections of these Employability Dimensions occur as indicators of signals in the learning process.

Subsequently, key research outcomes built theoretical and practical knowledge in the SM industry and higher education sectors related to practical experience, to help educate UGs on the SM industry sector and enhance graduate employability signalling during job recruitment and selection. As a result of addressing research question one, the six job classifications were identified. In addition, formation of the Pre-Condition Phase

(Industry Awareness and Self-Awareness components) which include the job classifications, and additional industry and self-awareness factors, emerged. The outcome from addressing research question two was the development of the Observed Signals Phase with 10 distinct signals. Subsequently, these two phases complemented the Experiential Learning Cycle (Kolb, 1984) and enabled the formation the Graduate Employability Cycle of Learning.

Contribution to Theoretical Knowledge

Sport management as an academic discipline has experienced immense growth and heightened demand for university education since the 1990s (de Schepper & Sotiradou, 2018; Mathner & Martin, 2012; Shilbury et al., 2020). The current research has been instrumental in analysing the sector beyond the classroom, more specifically through practical experience and directly within industry. In doing so, industry sector complexities are revealed that are not readily transparent through classroom activities yet are essential to enable graduates to signal their employability during job recruitment and selection. In this section, new theoretical knowledge gained from the current research is presented in the Pre-Condition Phase, Observed Signals Phase, and overall Graduate Employability Cycle of Learning.

Pre-Condition Phase

Practical experience is likely to enhance a graduate's employability (Bradbury et al., 2021; Jackson, 2012). The significance of practical experience in this context has been reinforced in employability frameworks (e.g., Dacre Pool & Sewell, 2007; Rosenberg et al., 2012) and an Experiential Learning Cycle model (Kolb, 1984). Practical experience and graduate employability are central components of the current research. Findings from this research revealed a Pre-Condition Phase for graduates to embrace in preparation to

undertake practical experience and be applied prior to the phases taken during the experience (Experiential Learning Cycle Kolb, 1984). The new Pre-Condition Phase (Figure 6) comprises two components: Industry Awareness and Self-Awareness. These components introduce UG learning from the perspective of having preliminary industry and self-awareness before practical application within the workplace. The significance of the preliminary Pre-Condition Phase is in how it proactively prepares UGs for practical experiences. More specifically, in how the awareness factors complement and potentially enhance learning during the experiential learning gained, in this case throughout the four phases of the Experiential Learning Cycle model.

Observed Signals Phase

Within the SM industry sector, research has increasingly focused on employers' expectations of a graduate's employability and the various skill sets associated with the graduate's ability and industry requirements (Mathner & Martin, 2012; Tsitskari et al., 2017; Yiamouyiannis et al., 2013). The new Observed Signals developed from the current research comprise various skill set indicators to inform the presence of employability (Table 30). The Observed Signals extend from the underpinning skills and knowledge identified by the [Australian] Employability Skills Framework Stage One (Goodwin, et al., 2012) to create a benchmark for the Australian SM industry.

The 10 Observed Signals act as a framework to guide managers from the SM industry sector and coordinators from UG SM programs to assist UGs identify employability signals from practical experience. Then, to guide UGs on how to transparently showcase these signals during job recruitment and selection. Within the SM industry sector globally, minimal graduate employability literature exists (Keiper et al., 2019). Among recent research, the identification of required SM industry sector

employability skills has been explored in the sport and recreation industry in Greece (Tsitaskari et al., 2017), from the perspective of sport industry employers in the UK (Dinning, 2017), and identified as required student skills in the USA (Keiper et al., 2019). The knowledge gained from the current research in the Observed Signals Phase, however, extends beyond listed SM industry sector employability skills through the identification of multiple indicators that form each signal, guiding employers to assess the employability of graduates (see Figure 8). Each Observed Signal is aligned to one or more of the eight Employability Dimensions (Rosenberg et al., 2012) within the key findings of the current research. This adds theoretical strength to the connection of each signal with graduate employability and the desirable employability skills outlined by sport managers. The Observed Signals framework will guide sport managers to make informed decisions regarding the employability of graduates, based on UG knowledge and skills gained throughout their practical experiences, during job recruitment and selection.

Graduate Employability Cycle of Learning

Graduate employability is a universal term used across industry sectors worldwide. To build on this term, the Graduate Employability Cycle of Learning (Figure 9) was developed from the current research and encompasses the cycle of learning identified for employability to be recognised by the SM industry and respective higher education sectors and UGs. It brings together the progression of learning gained from practical experience and includes the Pre-Condition Phase, Experiential Learning Cycle (Kolb, 1984) and the Observed Signals Phase. The Graduate Employability Cycle of Learning represents the learning gained before, during and after practical experience. Globally, this is the first graduate employability learning cycle developed for the SM industry sector. Potentially it could be applied across other industry sectors due to the transferability of the industry and

self-awareness factors from the Pre-Condition Phase, the four phases of the Experiential Learning Cycle, and the 10 Observed Signals. The contribution of this learning cycle to industry knowledge extends beyond existing models such as The Key to Employability model (Dacre Pool & Sewell, 2007) that focuses on what constitutes employability.

Contribution to Practical Knowledge

The application of knowledge to industry practice is important in all industry sectors (FYA, 2016). Sport management research indicates that, applying theoretical knowledge from UG SM programs to address industry expectations in the workplace, is a positive first step for UGs to create a favourable impression while highlighting their employability to prospective SM industry sector employers (Keiper et al., 2019; Koo et al., 2016). This is particularly important as competition for employment within the SM industry sector has increased significantly over the years (de Mathner & Martin, 2012; Koo et al., 2016; Zimmer & Keiper, 2021). Subsequently, so has the demand for SM practicum opportunities which allows employers to observe and contribute to the development of necessary workplace skills of UGs (Brown et al., 2018; Keiper et al., 2019). The current research has identified two new Phases and an employability cycle of learning to assist the SM industry and higher education sectors to engage UGs throughout a SM program to enhance their employability. In addition, 61 recommendations have been identified for the SM industry and higher education sectors on the transparent signals related to practical experience and employability.

The Pre-Condition Phase, Observed Signals Phase, and Graduate Employability Cycle of Learning are discussed regarding their contribution to practical knowledge. The recommendations derived from each of these phases are embedded into the following sub-

sections as practical actions for managers from the SM industry sector and coordinators of UG SM programs.

Pre-Condition Phase

Graduate employability is associated with the direct working alliances between higher education and industry. It is the mutual support that fosters a graduate's development of knowledge, skills, identity, and reflective ability to apply and succeed in industry (Jackson & Wilton, 2017; Kinash et al., 2016; Yorke & Knight, 2006). An example of direct working alliances between industry and higher education is highlighted in a recent study in which employers, higher education, alumni, and students identified that assessment related to practical experience was the missing link between theory and practice in the workplace (Kinash et al., 2018). This Australian research recommended that to strengthen this link there was a need to increase focus on assessment design, guide reflection to link assessment, graduate employability, and career identity, and promote enhanced collaboration between employers and universities (Kinash et al., 2018). The Pre-Condition Phase developed from the current research could become the point of reference from where an UG could fill this missing link between theory and practice and reflect on learnings associated with graduate employability and career identity. In addition, coordinators of UG SM programs could design assessments to encourage reflection of practical experience learnings and its link to graduate employability and promote an enhanced collaboration between SM industry and higher education sectors.

Exploration of industry distinctions is essential for UGs to understand the intricacies, in this case of the SM industry sector, and importantly to influence their employability (de Schepper & Sotiriadou, 2018; Emery et al., 2012). Principally, the awareness factors gained in the Industry Awareness component of the Pre-Condition Phase collectively form

the foundation of an industry profile and introduce six new job classifications specifically identified for the SM industry sector. Combined, the Industry Awareness and Self-Awareness components of the Pre-Condition Phase, signify the importance of gaining industry knowledge, subjective perspective of graduate employability and is a pathway to the attainment of graduate employability through practical experience. The Pre-Condition Phase prepares an UG on the learnings gained in relation to industry awareness and self-knowledge before undertaking practical experiences. This phase has aligned recommendations that have been formulated from the current research to encourage the SM industry and higher education sectors to collaborate. Ultimately, this collaboration acts as the vehicle to drive graduate awareness of industry processes and workplace environments when they undertake practical experience, gain graduate employability knowledge, and eventually enter the SM workforce.

Essentially, the current research findings suggest UGs focus on the Pre-Condition Phase prior to commencing practical experience. The reason is industry consideration and self-exploration prepare an individual to learn optimally, to focus on developing employability while practising in the workplace, and ultimately signal their employability during job recruitment and selection.

Observed Signals Phase

The practical contributions of the 10 new Observed Signals derived from the current research are two-fold. The first relates to the formation of each Observed Signal from a range of indicators that, when applied practically, signal that a graduate applicant is employable. The second refers to the presence of Employability Dimensions (Rosenberg, et al., 2012), aligned with each Observed Signal and within which of the four phases of the Experiential Learning Cycle (Kolb, 1984) these are developed. In Australia, national

employability skills have been adopted into university-specific graduate attributes, often focusing on graduate employment outcomes (quantity), rather than excellence (quality) to reflect measures of achievement in the labour market (Jackson, 2014; Shah et al., 2015). The new Observed Signals expand practically on existing employability models and skills including Yorke and Knights' (2006) USEM Model and the Employability Skills Framework Stage One (Goodwin, et al., 2012), by providing practical evidence of employability. In a practical context, the Observed Signals aim to enhance a SM employer's awareness of a graduate applicant's employability and organisational fit at the time of recruitment. More so, the Observed Signals can provide context and direction specific to SM rather than the general graduate employability relative to the skills within occupations and across the labour market in Australia (National Skills Commission, 2021).

The recommendations that have emerged from the current research are comprehensively outlined in Chapter 6. From the 30 recommendations associated with the 10 Observed Signals, 16 offer guidance for recruiting sport managers on how to recognise these employability signals during job recruitment and selection. The remaining 14 recommendations provide a focus for coordinators of UG SM programs to prepare UGs pre- and post-practicum to develop employability. Educating managers on the Observed Signals and associated recommendations are significant contributions to the limited research on practical experience related to job recruitment and selection of graduates and their employability within the SM industry sector.

Sixty-one recommendations (Appendix O) were identified from the current research that are aligned with the Pre-Condition and Observed Signals Phases. These recommendations provide managers from the SM industry sector and coordinators of UG SM programs, with strategies to employ in the workplace and at university. The benefits

extend globally as these recommendations can be adopted to relative SM industry sectors in each country and corresponding UG SM programs. For example, the current research can act as a source of information to support newly redesigned curriculum of the UG SM program at the Texas A&M University (USA). Specifically, new knowledge provided in the Graduate Employability Learning Cycle and recommendations developed from the current research could form the basis of pedagogy and practicum policy. This new knowledge could inform the UG SM program coordinators at the Texas A&M University on how to implement learning outcomes aimed at preparing and increasing UG employability and meeting SM industry sector requirements (Zimmer & Keiper, 2020).

The Graduate Employability Cycle of Learning

The Graduate Employability Cycle of Learning is a new learning cycle generated from the current research, specifically related to graduate employability. The Pre-Condition and Observed Signals Phases of the cycle highlight the important connection between career development and graduate employability in higher education and its application within the SM industry sector. The disciplines of graduate employability and career development, however, have clear research distinctions, as such practical collaboration is limited between the two disciplines (Healy et al., 2020). When both disciplines are practically applied, as explained by Healy et al., (2020), it could "inform an evidence-based integrative pedagogy of careers and employability learning in higher education" (p. 11). The Graduate Employability Cycle of Learning encourages the interaction of the SM industry and higher education sectors in employability and career development within the three phases of the cycle.

Well-known models of graduate employability include the Understanding, Skills, Efficacy Beliefs and Metacognition model (USEM) (Yorke and Knight, 2004), the

Decision Learning, Opportunity Awareness, Transition Learning and Self-awareness (DOTS) model (Watts, 2006), and the Key to Employability model (Dacre Pool & Sewell, 2007). Fundamentally, each of these models focus on the composition of required elements to assist a graduate practically develop their employability. The Graduate Employability Cycle of Learning adds a new dimension of knowledge to these graduate employability models, as it provides preliminary consideration prior to, during and following practical experience, and equips UGs strategically with tangible Observed Signals specific to SM. The Cycle enhances an UG's preparation to develop employability skills through practice and apply observed signals during job recruitment and selection as tangible evidence of their learning and employability.

Key Limitations and Future Research

Specific limitations of the current research are discussed in this section. They relate to the geographic collection of data. In addition, this section identifies future global research opportunities to build on theoretical and practical graduate employability knowledge that has evolved from the current research.

The collection of Victorian-based job advertisement data from national recruitment websites in Stage One of the current research presented the first limitation. The focus of Stage One was on the collection and audit of job advertisements to explore the landscape of the SM industry sector in the state of Victoria (Australia) with Melbourne crowned the world's sporting capital (Rovere, 2016), thereby geographically limiting the number of audited job advertisements. Six SM job classifications were identified from the audit to assist coordinators of UG SM programs to educate UGs about the operations and characteristics of the SM industry sector. The six were chosen from a total of 20 existing Sportspeople job classifications, which collectively, are used in Australia to recruit and

select job seekers more broadly within the fitness, sport, and leisure industries (Pearson et al., 2009). These six are a starting point for future Australian research in this field, to provide formal distinctions of SM job classifications that align the curriculum of existing UG SM programs.

Globally, while research related to employability in the SM industry sector exists, few have focused on the SM industry job classifications, industry standards, and exploration into the alignment of SM curriculum and learning with the needs and expectations of the SM industry. Future research on a global scale could explore the unification of SM academic associations (e.g., EASM, SMAANZ, WASM, COSMA) and industry associations (e.g., SportAccord, Australian Sports Professionals Association) to develop global standardised and aligned job classifications, industry standards and a commitment to building practicum career pathway opportunities for UG students.

Data gained for the current research moved from Victorian (Stages One and Two) to Australian based (Stage Three) thereby presenting a limitation from a global perspective. The findings that addressed the three research questions and developed the two new Phases, Graduate Employability Learning Cycle, and recommendations are specific to the SM industry sector in Australia. The data collected to develop these recommendations could constrain the transferability of the representation of the SM sector on a global scale. Literature outlining SM industry sector expectations of graduates, and specifically general employability skills, exists, however, none provide a distinct learning cycle for the development of graduate employability. Globally, this provides a key opportunity for future research to pilot the Graduate Employability Cycle of Learning developed from the current research. The corresponding research recommendations (Chapter 6) could be applied to test the cohesion of the transition throughout each Phase of this employability

cycle within the SM local operations of the respective country. Application of the Graduate Employability Cycle of Learning could potentially internationally guide the alignment of SM curriculum and higher education with industry needs and expectations to achieve graduate employability.

Another limitation to the research was the low national response rate to the Stage Three online survey (n=92) following cleansing of the data. Inter-group comparisons were compromised for four of the six job classification groups due to the sample sizes falling below the required 10 for every estimated parameter (Iyer & Loxton, 2008). Subsequently, this resulted in the amalgamation of job classification groups from six to three strictly for data analysis purposes for the Stage Three online survey. Sport management literature identifies that sport managers are represented across the three SM sectors, commercial, non-profit, and public (Parnell et al., 2017) in a range of SM roles, yet there is a lack of centralised operations to define and support the industry sector (Emery et al., 2013). Future research could explore the collaboration of SM industry sector representatives from the three SM sectors to identify if associated curriculum and practicum experiences vary across the settings and need to be addressed in the Graduate Employability Cycle of Learning.

A limitation related to the length of time that has passed since the Stage One Job Advertisement Audit was conducted, presents another consideration. The rapid growth of sport and subsequent increase in demand for UG SM programs over the last seven years may have affected the job criteria within advertised positions (Hoye et al., 2018; Lubisco et al., 2019). For example, it is possible that the response to this demand in recent years could have prompted an increase to full time and/or part time positions advertised and to the prerequisites of applicants (Lubisco et al., 2019). Hence, a broader range of job

criteria, including those related to practical experience for graduates in SM roles may be evident. Future research could build from the six job classifications that have been identified from the current research to explore the range of opportunities advertised for graduates of higher education SM programs.

The final limitation to the research relates to the COVID-19 global pandemic that has impacted the conduct of practical experiences in the workplace (Foster & Pierce, 2021). Given the hands-on nature of the SM industry sector, the delivery of practicum and sporting activity throughout the pandemic was severely restricted and most community-based sport operations halted (Skinner & Smith, 2021). The subsequent workplace readiness for UG SM soon-to-be graduates, was stifled (Christian et al., 2021; Foster & Pierce, 2021). Future research could provide a focus on the effects of the pandemic to undertake practical experiences in alternative settings to the physical SM workplace and suggest alternative approaches to experiential learning. The Graduate Employability Cycle of Learning could be adopted to guide the new approaches to practical experiences to ensure that the development of graduate employability is not negatively affected from the impact of COVID-19.

Final Conclusion

The current research examined how practical experience can align the learning, development, and subsequent capacity of graduates from UG SM programs, to transparently signal their employability during job recruitment and selection. To achieve this, the review of literature identified that SM industry sector managers expect graduate applicants to have practical experience, industry skills, and theoretical and practical knowledge. These expectations relate to the recognition and assessment by sport managers of the employability of graduates entering the SM industry sector through job recruitment

and selection. Complicating the work on the employability of UGs was the identified lack of industry standards and job classifications to define the SM industry sector, in turn this attributed to an absence of a central SM governing body to administer industry standards. Consequently, the gaps in defining the SM industry sector's practical experience landscape and accompanying knowledge and practical application, presented a strong rationale for the current research.

Data from the current research enabled the development of practice-based learning phases. From this, theoretical and practical insights were gained to extend research and SM industry and higher education sector knowledge. The new Pre-Condition and Observed Signals Phases extend theoretically and practically to existing employability skill frameworks (e.g., Eight Dimensions of Employability Skills [Rosenberg et al., 2012]), experiential learning models (e.g., Experiential Learning Cycle [Kolb, 1984]), graduate employability exemplars (e.g., The Key to Employability [Dacre Pool & Sewell, 2012]), and are specific to the SM industry sector. The Pre-Condition Phase provide insights on industry and self- awareness factors that SM UGs need to prepare for prior to gaining practical experiences. The Observed Signals provide new insight into job recruitment and selection, expanding on the limited literature related to how recruiting sport managers assess whether a graduate is employable before hiring. The practical application that can be gained from these two phases is a potential resource for guiding managers in the SM industry sector and coordinators of UG SM programs to educate UGs on graduate employability specifically within the SM industry sector. The new Graduate Employability Cycle of Learning is a significant outcome of the current research. Globally it provides the first graduate employability learning cycle specifically developed for the SM industry and higher education sectors.

The recommendations developed from the Pre-Condition and Observed Signals Phases, identify how managers from the SM industry sector and coordinators of UG SM programs can assist UGs develop and transparently signal their employability during job recruitment and selection. These recommendations provide SM industry managers with a list of Observable Signals that can indicate graduate employability and organisational fit during job recruitment and selection. The recommendations provide coordinators of UG SM programs with evidence-based material to support SM curriculum and practical workplace experiences, and guide UGs to recognise the strategies adopted to develop employability.

Finally, the current research was undertaken to ultimately develop resources to guide graduates of UG SM programs on how to use practical experience as the foundation to build learning and strengthen employability. The Graduate Employability Cycle of Learning is the new practical experience model identified from the current research that maps the SM UG journey. It commences from industry and self-awareness, to undertaking practical experiences, and finally to translating the learning to observable signals that provide evidence of graduate employability during job recruitment and selection. The new knowledge developed from the current research and the limitations, present directions for future research in this field. Findings reinforce the need for a SM industry body in Australia to establish industry standards and strengthen collaborations between the SM industry and higher education sectors. Until this occurs, the knowledge gained from the current study provides recommended actions for the SM industry and higher education sectors to collaborate for the benefit of graduates and the future of the industry.

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Appendix A

Websites Used to Source Job Descriptions

STAGE ONE – Job Advertisement Audit

CRITERIA: Stage One – 6 months, job description collection: 09/04/15 – 04/10/15
Job descriptions will be collected once a week from each of the listed websites based on the following criteria:

Criteria	Description
Location	Victorian-based
Qualifications	PDs must request a tertiary qualification (essential or desirable)
Graduate-entry – key terms	✓Officer ✓Coordinator ✓Assistant ✓Leader ✓Graduate ✓Manager (unless used in a description or title indicating the following): X Senior X Executive X CEO X Director
Experience	Any experience that is required for any length of time
Position criteria	PDs will not be collected if requirements for the position are not indicated
Search words	"Sport", "Management" and "Recreation"
Classifications	Classifications are from the 17 listed by Sportspeople. Jobs will be classified according to the function of the role and not the organisation function, unless a suitable classification is not available for a job role. Facility management = Administration/Financial/Operations Media/Marketing/Communications = Events/Competitions or Customers/Membership or Development/Participation/Programs DEPENDING on the nature of the marketing role e.g. if it is to increase participation or advertise upcoming events, etc.
Salary	Does not exceed $100,000 (AUD) p.a. unless the range starts below $100K and goes over $100K at the top of the range.
Peak Body	"Peak bodies are generally associations or groups that are established to develop common standards or processes, or to take action common to all members, to lobby government and promote the interests of members. Your club's peak bodies can do all of these things, and they can also give you a forum for voicing any issues that might be common to your club's membership. In doing this, your peak bodies may then agree on a universal action or policy that applies right across your sport." http://www.ausport.gov.au/supporting/clubs/resource_library/administration/working_with_your_peak_body

Appendix A continued

SPORT-SPECIFIC websites

Name	Web address
Sport and Recreation Victoria	www.dtpli.vic.gov.au/about-the-department/careers-with-us **Location:** All; **Job Function:** Arts and Sports; **Dept/Agency:** All; **Work type:** All http://www.vic.gov.au/employment-workplace/jobs-vacancies/job-vacancies.html https://jobs.careers.vic.gov.au/jobtools/jncustomsearch.jobsearch?in_organid=14123

GENERIC websites

Name	Web address
Indeed.com	www.indeed.com.au
Jobseeker.com	www.jobseeker.com.au
Seek.com	http://www.seek.com.au/ **Key words**: "Sport" "Management" **Classification**: Sport & Rec/**Sub Class**: "Management" **Sal range**: $0-$100K **Location**: Melbourne & VIC
CareerOne	http://jobsearch.careerone.com.au/ **Job title**: Sport & Rec; **Key words**: "Sport" "Management"
LinkedIn	https://au.linkedin.com/job/jobs-in-australia/
Job Search Australia	http://www.jobsearch.com.au/

Appendix B

Semi-Structured Interview Questions

1. Please describe your understanding of the term graduate.

2. Please outline what you look for in the recruitment stage from an applicant applying for a graduate position.

3. Please outline what you look for in the selection stage from an applicant applying for a graduate position.

4. What guides you when confirming the selection criteria for sport management graduate positions?

5. What are your beliefs on the value of practical experience for graduates?

6. What do you look for during the recruitment stage in relation to a graduate's practical experience?

7. What do you look for during the selection stage in relation to a graduate's practical experience?

8. Please explain if paid work; voluntary work; or placement/internship are more valuable to you?

Appendix C

Sport Manager Email Invitation (Semi-Structured Interviews)

VICTORIA UNIVERSITY
MELBOURNE AUSTRALIA

INFORMATION TO PARTICIPANTS INVOLVED IN RESEARCH

You are invited to participate

You are invited to participate in a research project titled "Practical experience to signal the employability of graduates from undergraduate sport management programs".

This project is being conducted by a student researcher Mary Grant as part of a PhD study at Victoria University under the supervision of Associate Professor Clare Hanlon and Dr Janet Young from the College of Sport and Exercise Science.

Project explanation

The aim of the research is to explore the signals that employers seek from graduates of undergraduate sport management programs to the practical experience gained from work, study and in other facets of life where practical experiences may be gained. It will identify the signals that sport managers seek and observe during the job recruitment and selection process of the graduate's practical experience that may be of influence to gaining employment.

Managers from the sport management industry will be involved in face-to-face semi-structured interviews to identify signals they seek from graduates on their practical experience during the recruitment and selection process. The research findings will inform academics teaching higher education sport management programs on curriculum and course design, and guide graduates on how to strengthen their ability to positively signal their employability in recruitment and selection processes. Further, the research findings will also expand current research on employability.

What will I be asked to do?

Participants will be asked for their written consent to participate in a face-to-face semi-structured interview of one hour in duration.

What will I gain from participating?

Your contributions will benefit the sport management industry via valuable, specific and current industry information to academics teaching into higher education sport management programs, on curriculum and course design. It will further assist graduates from these programs to better prepare for job recruitment and selection processes and to directly present their skills, knowledge and capability from practical experiences to sport managers to signify their suitability to advertised jobs at the time of recruitment.

How will the information I give be used?

All information – data and records – will be coded and non-identifiable and will be used to write a thesis, journal article(s), conference presentation(s) and potentially a book chapter

and research report to collaborating organisations.

What are the potential risks of participating in this project?

There are no foreseeable risks beyond the normal experience of everyday life, in either the short or long term, associated with participation in this project.

How will this project be conducted?

Graduate-entry sport management job advertisements that stipulate tertiary qualification (or degree) and practical experience as prerequisites will be collected over a six-month period via sport-specific and generic publicly-accessible job search websites. The job descriptions will be coded using SPSS. Data obtained from job advertisements will be recorded onto a tailored Excel spreadsheet designed for the purposes of this research and then exported to SPSS and coded for further analysis.

Managers from organisations providing sport management services who have advertised via specific websites for graduate-entry sport management employees within Victoria. The number of participants interviewed will be capped when the point of saturation is reached. Interview data will be transcribed exactly from an electronic audio voice file to text data. Content analysis will be used to analyse the data. Kolb's (1984) Experiential Learning Cycle, Pool & Sewell's (2007) Key to Employability model, Spence's (1973) Signaling theory and a literature review will serve as a framework to inform the data analysis process. Ongoing research team discussions regarding data analyses and themes will be conducted to manage potential researcher bias. NVIVO software will assist with the coding and analyses of data.

The findings will be written and disseminated via a thesis, journal publication(s), conference proceedings and potentially a book chapter(s).

Who is conducting the study?

Victoria University, College of Sport and Exercise Science:

Mary Grant (03) 9919 4534, 0412 082 129

Associate Professor Clare Hanlon (03) 9919 4383

Dr. Janet Young (03) 9919 4762

Any queries about your participation in this project may be directed to the Chief Investigator listed above.

If you have any queries or complaints about the way you have been treated, you may contact the Ethics Secretary, Victoria University Human Research Ethics Committee, Office for Research, Victoria University, PO Box 14428, Melbourne, VIC, 8001, email researchethics@vu.edu.au or phone (03) 9919 4781 or 4461.

Appendix D

Participant Consent Form (Semi-Structured Interviews)

CONSENT FORM FOR PARTICIPANTS INVOLVED IN RESEARCH

INFORMATION TO PARTICIPANTS:

We would like to invite you to be a part of a study that examines how practical experience can potentially signal the employability of graduates from undergraduate sport management programs.

The aim of the research is to explore the signals that employers seek from graduates of undergraduate sport management programs in relation to the practical experience gained from work, study and in other facets of life where practical experience may be gained. It will identify the signals that sport managers seek and observe during the job recruitment and selection process of the graduate's practical experience which indicate that may be influential to gaining employment.

Managers from the sport management industry will be interviewed via face-to-face semi-structured interviews to identify the signals they seek from graduates on their practical experience during the recruitment and selection process. The research findings will inform academics teaching into higher education sport management programs on curriculum and course design, and instruct graduates on how to strengthen their ability to positively signal their employability in recruitment and selection processes. Further, the research findings will also expand current research on employability.

CERTIFICATION BY SUBJECT:

I, _____
of _____ (Participant's suburb)

certify that I am at least 18 years old and I am voluntarily giving my consent to participate in the study: "Practical experience to signal the employability of graduates from undergraduate sport management programs" being conducted at Victoria University by:

Mary Grant
Associate Professor Clare Hanlon and
Dr. Janet Young.

VICTORIA UNIVERSITY
MELBOURNE AUSTRALIA

I certify that the objectives of the study, together with any risks and safeguards associated with the procedures listed hereunder to be carried out in the research, have been fully explained to me by Mary Grant and I freely consent to participation involving the following procedures:

- An invitation to participate in the research by letter (electronic or mail) will be issued. Informed Consent and Information to Participants forms are attached;
- There will be an opportunity to freely discuss this research with family/friends/colleagues/workplace for a minimum of a week;
- Contact information will be included to enable prospective participants to contact the investigators if they have questions regarding participation;
- Participants who consent via email will be contacted by the research project officer to organise an interview time; and
- Participants will be asked to bring their signed Consent form to the interview. Copies of the Consent form will be available at the interview if the participant has not brought it to the interview and in this case the form will be signed prior to the conduct of the interview.

I certify that I have had the opportunity to have any questions answered and I understand that I can withdraw from this study at any time and that this withdrawal will not jeopardise me in any way.

I have been informed that the information I provide will be kept confidential.

Signed: _____

Date: _____

Any queries about your participation in this project may be directed to the researcher

Mary Grant (03) 9919 4534, 0412 082 129

Associate Professor Clare Hanlon (03) 9919 4383

Dr Janet Young (03) 9919 4762

If you have any queries or complaints about the way you have been treated, you may contact the Ethics Secretary, Victoria University Human Research Ethics Committee, Office for Research, Victoria University, PO Box 14428, Melbourne, VIC, 8001, email Researchethics@vu.edu.au or phone (03) 9919 4781 or 4461.

Appendix E

Online Survey (Stage 3)

Stage 3 - Online Survey - FINAL

Thank you for choosing to participate in this online survey. Your contribution will be of significant benefit to the sport and recreation industry workforce and future industry professionals.

WHAT IS THE STUDY ABOUT?
To explore the cues that employers seek from graduates of undergraduate sport and recreation management programs in relation to the practical experience undertaken via work, study and in other facets of life. The cues are those observed by employers during the job recruitment and selection process which indicate the components of graduates' practical experiences which may be influential to gaining employment.

PARTICIPANTS
Sport and recreation managers undertaking specified roles.

BENEFITS TO THE INDUSTRY
Your support in this study will assist to address a key issue in the sport and recreation management industry which is how employers actually assess job candidates' possession of skills, knowledge and capabilities and how graduates' practical experiences may be influential to gaining employment.

Industry experience and the experience of professional practice are often regarded as a central element in higher education teaching. Your involvement as an industry professional is crucial to create synergy between teaching and what is essentially happening in industry to provide

optimal student learning. Your involvement will also contribute to the continuing education of the industry's students – the future.

WHAT ARE THE POTENTIAL RISKS OF PARTICIPATING IN THIS PROJECT?
None. Data will be confidential and participants will not be identified.

HOW LONG WILL THE SURVEY TAKE TO COMPLETE?
10-15 minutes.

WHO CAN I CONTACT IF I HAVE ANY QUESTIONS?
Mary Grant, email: mary.grant@vu.edu.au or (03) 9919 4534.

CONSENT
- ❍ Continue (1)
- ❍ Opt out (2)

Condition: Opt out Is Selected. Skip To: End of Block.

Q1 Select one classification below which best demonstrates the main function of your role:

- ❍ Administration/Finance/Operations (1)
- ❍ Coaching/High Performance (2)
- ❍ Development/Participation/Programs (3)
- ❍ Customer/Membership/Athlete Services (4)
- ❍ Marketing/Media/PR/Communications (5)
- ❍ Events/Competitions (6)
- ❍ None of the above (7)

Condition: None of the above Is Selected. Skip To: End of Block.

Q2 Are you involved in the hiring of new employees?

Hiring: Develop or contribute to the content of a job description, review and shortlist applicants, interview panelist, or interviewer, applicant assessment, referee checks and decision making of desired applicant.

- ❍ Yes (1)
- ❍ No (2)

Q3 Select the status of your employment:

Part time [employee]: works on average, less than 38 hours per week; usually works regular hours each week; is entitled to the same benefits as a full time employee, but on a pro-rata basis; and is a permanent employee or on a fixed term contract.
Casual: Irregular hours are worked. Sick leave or annual leave are not paid.

- ❍ Full time (1)
- ❍ Part time (2)
- ❍ Casual (3)
- ❍ Other (4) _____

Q4 Select your age range (AUD):

- ❍ 18-23 (1)
- ❍ 24-29 (2)
- ❍ 30-34 (3)
- ❍ 35-39 (4)
- ❍ 40-44 (5)
- ❍ 45-49 (6)
- ❍ 50-54 (7)
- ❍ 55-59 (8)
- ❍ 60+ (9)

Q5 Select your annual range of income (AUD):

- ❍ $0-14,000 (1)
- ❍ $15-29,000 (2)
- ❍ $30-44,000 (3)
- ❍ $45-59,000 (4)
- ❍ $60-74,000 (5)
- ❍ $75-89,000 (6)
- ❍ $90,000+ (7)

Q6 Which is your gender:

- ❍ Male (1)
- ❍ Female (2)
- ❍ Other (3) _____

Q7 Please state the postcode of the office from which you work.

Q8 Which best describes the context of your organisation?

- ❍ Sporting Club (1)
- ❍ Corporate (2)
- ❍ State Sporting Association (3)
- ❍ National Sporting Organisation (4)
- ❍ Venue/Facility Management (5)
- ❍ State Government (6)
- ❍ Education (7)
- ❍ Higher Education (8)
- ❍ Entertainment (9)
- ❍ Fitness (10)
- ❍ Local Government (11)
- ❍ Aquatics (12)
- ❍ Hospitality (13)
- ❍ Other (14) _____

Q9 Does your organisation hire (or have hired in the past)
graduates from undergraduate sport and recreation management courses?

Graduate: A person who has successfully completed...has been awarded an undergraduate or first academic degree (https://eric.ed.gov/?ti=Graduates).
Sport and recreation management: Sport management is an industrious field concerning the business aspects of sport and recreation. The functions of sport managers are varied and

include, but are not limited to, the six job classifications as outlined in question 1 of this survey.

- ❍ Yes (1)
- ❍ No (2)

From this point in the survey, there are eight sections with a range of 4-11 questions in each.

Each question will be rated on a five-point Likert scale.

Please consider the level to which you agree to each item in relation to the skills you look for when hiring a graduate with 1-2 years of experience.

What stands out to you during the recruitment and selection stages of employment in relation to graduates' ability to demonstrate capacity to perform well in a sport and recreation management role within your organisation?

Job recruitment: Obtaining a pool of potential candidates with the desired knowledge, skills and experience to allow an organisation to select the most appropriate people to fill job vacancies against defined position descriptions and specifications (https://www.ahri.com.au/resources/ahriassist/recruitment-and-selection/)
Job selection: The most appropriate candidate(s) are identified through a selection process: interviewing, reference checking and testing (https://www.ahri.com.au/resources/ahriassist/recruitment-and-selection/).

SECTION 1: Basic Literacy and Numeracy Skills
Recent graduates with 1-2 years of experience:

	Strongly Disagree (1)	Disagree (2)	Slightly Agree (3)	Agree (4)	Strongly Agree (5)
Understand and perform basic mathematic computations. (1)	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍
Organise basic ideas; communicate orally to get their message across in discussions or a presentation. (2)	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍
Communicate basic thoughts, ideas, and messages in writing in a clear, concise and logical manner. If needed, they can create documents such as letters, directions, manuals, reports, graphs, and flow charts. (3)	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍
Interpret, and respond to basic verbal messages/cues. (4)	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍
Communicate basic thoughts, ideas, and messages in writing in a clear, concise and logical manner. If needed, they can create documents such as letters, directions, manuals, reports, graphs, and flow charts. (5)	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍

SECTION 2: Critical Thinking Skills.
Recent graduates with 1-2 years of experience:

	Strongly Disagree (1)	Disagree (2)	Slightly Agree (3)	Agree (4)	Strongly Agree (5)
Generate new ideas. (1)	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍
Specify goals, generate alternatives, consider risks, and evaluate and choose the best alternative. (2)	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍
Recognise problems and devise and implement a plan of action. (3)	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍
Organise and process symbols, pictures, graphs, objects and other information. (4)	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍
Use efficient learning techniques to acquire and apply new knowledge and skills from multiple print and digital sources. (5)	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍
Discover a rule or principle underlying the relationship between two or more objects and apply it when solving a problem. (6)	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍
Gain additional, relevant, training/qualifications. (7)	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍

SECTION 3: Leadership Skills.
Recent graduates with 1-2 years of experience:

	Strongly Disagree (1)	Disagree (2)	Slightly Agree (3)	Agree (4)	Strongly Agree (5)
Exert a high level of effort and persevere towards goal attainment. (1)	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍
Believe in their own self-worth and maintain a positive view of their self. (2)	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍
Set personal goals, monitor progress, exhibit self-control, and take responsibility for their actions. (3)	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍
Choose ethical courses of action. (4)	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍
Communicate ideas effectively, motivate, encourage, persuade, and convince others responsibly. (5)	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍
Gain the support of key referees. (6)	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍
Demonstrate commitment to the industry through voluntary experience. (7)	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍

SECTION 4: Management Skills.
Recent graduates with 1-2 years of experience:

	Strongly Disagree (1)	Disagree (2)	Slightly Agree (3)	Agree (4)	Strongly Agree (5)
Select goal-relevant activities, rank them, allocate time, and prepare and follow schedules. (1)	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍
Use or prepare budgets, make forecasts, keep records, and make adjustments to meet objectives. (2)	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍
Acquire, store, allocate, and use materials or space efficiently. (3)	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍
Assess employees' skills and distribute work accordingly, evaluate performance and provide feedback. (4)	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍

SECTION 5: Interpersonal Skills.
Recent graduates with 1-2 years of experience:

	Strongly Disagree (1)	Disagree (2)	Slightly Agree (3)	Agree (4)	Strongly Agree (5)
Have conflict resolution skills, work in cooperation with others and contribute to group efforts. (1)	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍
Teach other employees new skills. (2)	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍
Interacts with clients/customers to communicate product/service benefits and satisfy customers' expectations. (3)	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍
Work toward agreements involving exchange of resources and can resolve divergent interests. (4)	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍
Work well with men and women from diverse backgrounds. (5)	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍
Demonstrate understanding, friendliness, adaptability, empathy, and politeness in group settings. (6)	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍
Demonstrate their ability using experiences from their extra-curricular activities. (8)	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍

SECTION 6: Information Technology Skills.
Recent graduates with 1-2 years of experience:

	Strongly Disagree (1)	Disagree (2)	Slightly Agree (3)	Agree (4)	Strongly Agree (5)
Choose procedures, tools or equipment including computers and related technology. (1)	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍
Understand overall intent and proper procedures for setup and operation of computers and computer software. (2)	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍
Prevent, identify, or solve problems with equipment, including computers and other technology. (3)	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍
Identify the need for data, obtain data from existing sources or create it, and evaluate its relevance and accuracy. (4)	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍
Organise, process, and maintain written or computerised records and other forms of information. (5)	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍
Select and analyse information and communicate the results to others in oral, written, graphic, pictorial or multimedia methods. (6)	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍
Use computers to acquire, organise, analyse, and communicate information and demonstrate some proficiency with standard software. (7)	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍

SECTION 7: Systems Thinking Skills.
Recent graduates with 1-2 years of experience:

	Strongly Disagree (1)	Disagree (2)	Slightly Agree (3)	Agree (4)	Strongly Agree (5)
Know how social, organisational, and technological systems work. (1)	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍
Distinguish trends, predict impacts of actions on system operations. (2)	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍
Make suggestions to modify existing systems to improve products and services and develop new or alternative systems. (3)	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍
Assess the efficient operation of social, organisational and technological systems. (4)	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍
Recognise the efficient operation of social, organisational and technological systems. (5)	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍
Understand the interaction and interrelationship of systems within an organisation. (6)	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍
Understand the interaction and interrelationship of systems in a global economy. (7)	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍
Comprehend the complexities of sport organisation operations. (8)	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍
Know about specific sports. (9)	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍
Link prior experience to deliver best practice. (10)	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍
Know how the role contributes to the organisation. (11)	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍

SECTION 8: Work Ethic.

Recent graduates with 1-2 years of experience:

	Strongly Disagree (1)	Disagree (2)	Slightly Agree (3)	Agree (4)	Strongly Agree (5)
Attend required organisational meetings and events. (1)	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍
Are on time for organisational meetings and events. (2)	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍
Achieve organisational and personal goals independently. (3)	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍
Complete work on-time. (4)	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍
Understand the organisation's protocols and procedures. (5)	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍
Demonstrate a positive attitude at work. (6)	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍
Are dependable. (7)	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍
Understand the benefits of experience. (8)	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍

What else may be helpful to outline in relation to cues which may indicate graduates' employability from having had an experience?

Thank you for taking the time to complete this survey. Your response has been recorded.
Please contact Mary Grant: mary.grant@vu.edu.au or (03) 9919 4534 should you have any queries or concerns.

Appendix F

Social Media Image File (Stage 3)

Appendix G

Direct Post, LinkedIn (Stage 3)

Graduate employability research (Sport and recreation industry sectors)
ARE YOU A SPORT AND RECREATION MANAGER IN A ROLE INVOLVING ANY OF THE FOLLOWING FUNCTIONS?
Participation, program development, administration, operations, finance, events, competitions, media, marketing, communications, coaching, high performance, or membership.
You can provide your support to this study simply by completing the following 10-15 minute ONLINE SURVEY. Please click here:
https://vuau.qualtrics.com/jfe/form/SV_2fXgP5E1bzhviKN
SURVEY CLOSES: 10 August 2017

Appendix H

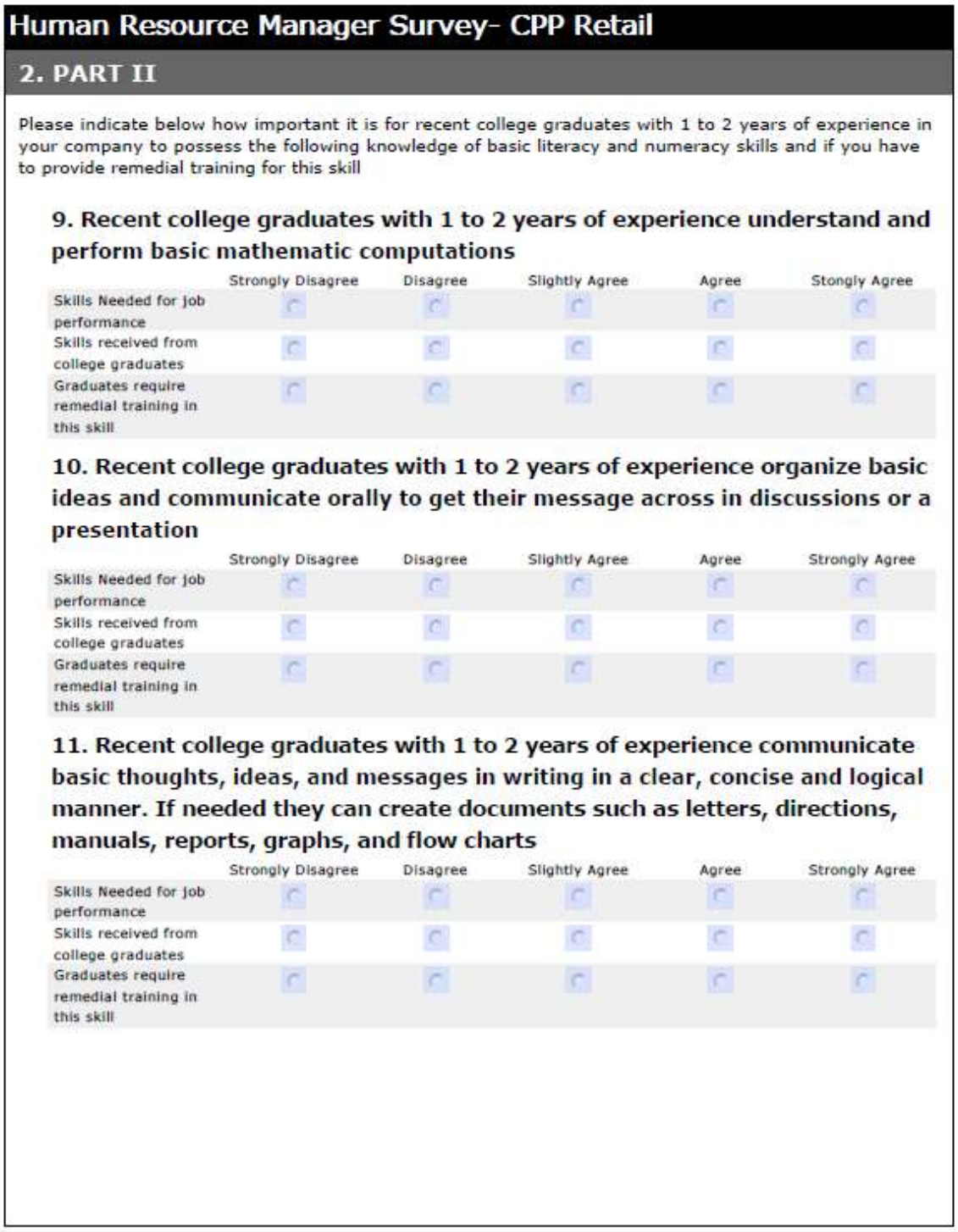
University Careers Counsellors (Sport Management Courses) (Stage 3)

University	**Careers** (contact names have been removed)
Victoria University (Vic)	CDE Programs Officer
The University of South Australia (SA)	Project Support/Coordinator Career Shop
Bond University (Qld)	Career Development Centre
Deakin University (Vic)	PVC, Graduate Employment Division
La Trobe University (Vic)	Centre for Sport and Social Impact
University of Southern Queensland	Director (Advancement of Learning and Teaching)
The University of Queensland (Qld)	Health and Behaviour Sciences (HR)
University of Technology Sydney (NSW)	Careers Services
University of Sydney (NSW)	Career Development Manager
University of Tasmania (Tas)	Career Development and Employment
Murdoch University (WA)	Careers and Employment Centre
Griffith University (Qld)	Careers and Employment
Edith Cowan University (WA)	ECU Careers and Leadership Services
James Cook University (Qld)	Careers and Employment Office
Southern Cross University (NSW)	Manager, Career Development Service
Central Queensland University (Qld)	Student Experience Directorate CQUni Careers
University of Canberra (ACT)	Careers UC Work Integrated Learning (WIL) Team
Federation University Australia (Vic)	Director, Student Careers and Employment
Charles Sturt University (NSW)	Manager, Career Development
RMIT University	Careers Consultant

Appendix I

Original Employability Dimensions Questionnaire HRM Survey Retail CPP (Part II)

(Rosenberg, Heimler & Morote, 2012)



Human Resource Manager Survey- CPP Retail

2. PART II

Please indicate below how important it is for recent college graduates with 1 to 2 years of experience in your company to possess the following knowledge of basic literacy and numeracy skills and if you have to provide remedial training for this skill

9. Recent college graduates with 1 to 2 years of experience understand and perform basic mathematic computations

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Slightly Agree	Agree	Strongly Agree
Skills Needed for job performance					
Skills received from college graduates					
Graduates require remedial training in this skill					

10. Recent college graduates with 1 to 2 years of experience organize basic ideas and communicate orally to get their message across in discussions or a presentation

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Slightly Agree	Agree	Strongly Agree
Skills Needed for job performance					
Skills received from college graduates					
Graduates require remedial training in this skill					

11. Recent college graduates with 1 to 2 years of experience communicate basic thoughts, ideas, and messages in writing in a clear, concise and logical manner. If needed they can create documents such as letters, directions, manuals, reports, graphs, and flow charts

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Slightly Agree	Agree	Strongly Agree
Skills Needed for job performance					
Skills received from college graduates					
Graduates require remedial training in this skill					

Page 3

Human Resource Manager Survey- CPP Retail

12. Recent college graduates with 1 to 2 years of experience interpret and respond to basic verbal messages/cues.

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Slightly Agree	Agree	Strongly Agree
Skills Needed for job performance					
Skills received from college graduates					
Graduates require remedial training in this skill					

13. Recent college graduates with 1 to 2 years of experience communicate basic thoughts, ideas, and messages in writing in a clear, concise and logical manner. If needed they can create documents such as letters, directions, manuals, reports, graphs, and flow charts.

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Slightly Agree	Agree	Strongly Agree
Skills Needed for job performance					
Skills received from college graduates					
Graduates require remedial training in this skill					

Human Resource Manager Survey- CPP Retail

3. PART II Continued

Please indicate below how important it is for recent college graduates with 1 to 2 years of experience in your company to possess the following knowledge of critical thinking skills and if you have to provide remedial training for this skill

14. Recent college graduates with 1 to 2 years of experience generate new ideas

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Slightly Agree	Agree	Strongly Agree
Skills needed for job performance					
Skills received from college graduates					
Graduates require remedial training in this skill					

15. Recent college graduates with 1 to 2 years of experience specify goals, generates alternatives, consider risks, and evaluate and choose the best alternative

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Slightly Agree	Agree	Strongly Agree
Skills needed for job performance					
Skills received from college graduates					
Graduates require remedial training in this skill					

16. Recent college graduates with 1 to 2 years of experience recognize problems and devise and implement a plan of action

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Slightly Agree	Agree	Strongly Agree
Skills needed for job performance					
Skills received from college graduates					
Graduates require remedial training in this skill					

17. Recent college graduates with 1 to 2 years of experience organize and processes symbols, pictures, graphs, objects and other information

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Slightly Agree	Agree	Strongly Agree
Skills needed for job performance					
Skills received from college graduates					
Graduates require remedial training in this skill					

Human Resource Manager Survey- CPP Retail

18. Recent college graduates with 1 to 2 years of experience use efficient learning techniques to acquire and apply new knowledge and skills from multiple print and digital sources

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Slightly Agree	Agree	Strongly Agree
Skills needed for job performance					
Skills received from college graduates					
Graduates require remedial training in this skill					

19. Recent college graduates with 1 to 2 years of experience discover a rule or principle underlying the relationship between two or more objects and apply it when solving a problem

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Slightly Agree	Agree	Strongly Agree
Skills needed for job performance					
Skills received from college graduates					
Graduates require remedial training in this skill					

Human Resource Manager Survey- CPP Retail

4. PART II Continued

Please indicate below how important it is for recent college graduates with 1 to 2 years of experience in your company to possess the following leadership skills and if you have to provide remedial training for this skill

20. Recent college graduates with 1 to 2 years of experience exert a high level of effort and persevere towards goal attainment

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Slightly Agree	Agree	Strongly Agree
Skills needed for job performance					
Skills received from college graduates					
Graduates require remedial training in this skill					

21. Recent college graduates with 1 to 2 years of experience believe in their own self-worth and maintain a positive view of their self

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Slightly Agree	Agree	Strongly Agree
Skills needed for job performance					
Skills received from college graduates					
Graduates require remedial training in this skill					

22. Recent college graduates with 1 to 2 years of experience set personal goals, monitor progress, exhibit self control and take responsibility for their actions

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Slightly Agree	Agree	Strongly Agree
Skills needed for job performance					
Skills received from college graduates					
Graduates require remedial training in this skill					

23. Recent college graduates with 1 to 2 years of experience choose ethical courses of action

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Slightly Agree	Agree	Strongly Agree
Skills needed for job performance					
Skills received from college graduates					
Graduates require remedial training in this skill					

Human Resource Manager Survey- CPP Retail

24. Recent college graduates with 1 to 2 years of experience communicate ideas effectively, motivate, encourage, persuade and convince others responsibly

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Slightly Agree	Agree	Strongly Agree
Skills needed for job performance					
Skills received from college graduates					
Graduates require remedial training in this skill					

Human Resource Manager Survey- CPP Retail

5. PART II Continued

Please indicate below how important it is for recent college graduates with 1 to 2 years of experience in your company to possess the following management skills and if you have to provide remedial training for this skill.

25. Recent college graduates with 1 to 2 years of experience select goal-relevant activities, rank them, allocate time, and prepare and follow schedules

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Slightly Agree	Agree	Strongly Agree
Skills needed for job performance					
Skills received from college graduates					
Graduates require remedial training in this skill					

26. Recent college graduates with 1 to 2 years of experience use or prepare budgets, make forecasts, keep records, and make adjustments to meet objectives

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Slightly Agree	Agree	Strongly Agree
Skills needed for job performance					
Skills received from college graduates					
Graduates require remedial training in this skill					

27. Recent college graduates with 1 to 2 years of experience acquire, store, allocate, and use materials efficiently

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Slightly Agree	Agree	Strongly Agree
Skills needed for job performance					
Skills received from college graduates					
Graduates require remedial training in this skill					

Human Resource Manager Survey- CPP Retail

28. Recent college graduates with 1 to 2 years of experience assess employees' skills and distribute work accordingly, evaluate performance and provide feedback

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Slightly Agree	Agree	Strongly Agree
Skills needed for job performance					
Skills received from college graduates					
Graduates require remedial training in this skill					

Human Resource Manager Survey- CPP Retail

6. PART II Continued

Please indicate below how important it is for recent college graduates with 1-2 years of experience in your company to possess the following interpersonal skills and if you have to provide remedial training for this skill.

29. Recent college graduates with 1 to 2 years of experience have conflict resolution skills, work in cooperation with others and contribute to group efforts constructively

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Slightly Agree	Agree	Strongly Agree
Skills needed for job performance					
Skills received from college graduates					
Graduates require remedial training in this skill					

30. Recent college graduates with 1 to 2 years of experience teach other employees new skills

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Slightly Agree	Agree	Strongly Agree
Skills needed for job performance					
Skills received from college graduates					
Graduates require remedial training in this skill					

31. Recent college graduates with 1 to 2 years of experience interact with clients/customers to communicate product/service benefits and satisfy customers' expectations

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Slightly Agree	Agree	Strongly Agree
Skills needed for job performance					
Skills received from college graduates					
Graduates require remedial training in this skill					

Human Resource Manager Survey- CPP Retail

32. Recent college graduates with 1 to 2 years of experience work toward agreements involving exchange of resources and can resolve divergent interests

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Slightly Agree	Agree	Strongly Agree
Skills needed for job performance					
Skills received from college graduates					
Graduates require remedial training in this skill					

33. Recent college graduates with 1 to 2 years of experience work well with men and women from diverse backgrounds

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Slightly Agree	Agree	Strongly Agree
Skills needed for job performance					
Skills received from college graduates					
Graduates require remedial training in this skill					

34. Recent college graduates with 1 to 2 years of experience demonstrate understanding, friendliness, adaptability, empathy, and politeness in group settings

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Slightly Agree	Agree	Strongly Agree
Skills needed for job performance					
Skills received from college graduates					
Graduates require remedial training in this skill					

Human Resource Manager Survey- CPP Retail

7. PART II Continued

Please indicate below how important it is for recent college graduates with 1-2 years of experience in your company to possess the following information technology skills and if you have to provide remedial training for this skill.

35. Recent college graduates with 1 to 2 years of experience choose procedures, tools or equipment including computers and related technology

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Slightly Agree	Agree	Strongly Agree
Skills needed for job performance					
Skills received from college graduates					
Graduates require remedial training in this skill					

36. Recent college graduates with 1 to 2 years of experience understand overall intent and proper procedures for setup and operation of computers and computer software

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Slightly Agree	Agree	Strongly Agree
Skills needed for job performance					
Skills received from college graduates					
Graduates require remedial training in this skill					

37. Recent college graduates with 1 to 2 years of experience prevent, identify, or solve problems with equipment, including computers and other technology

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Slightly Agree	Agree	Strongly Agree
Skills needed for job performance					
Skills received from college graduates					
Graduates require remedial training in this skill					

Human Resource Manager Survey- CPP Retail

38. Recent college graduates with 1 to 2 years of experience identify the need for data, obtain data from existing sources or create it, and evaluate its relevance and accuracy

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Slightly Agree	Agree	Strongly Agree
Skills needed for job performance					
Skills received from college graduates					
Graduates require remedial training in this skill					

39. Recent college graduates with 1 to 2 years of experience organize, process and maintain written or computerized records and other forms of information

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Slightly Agree	Agree	Strongly Agree
Skills needed for job performance					
Skills received from college graduates					
Graduates require remedial training in this skill					

40. Recent college graduates with 1 to 2 years of experience select and analyze information and communicate the results to others in oral, written, graphic, pictorial or multimedia methods

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Slightly Agree	Agree	Strongly Agree
Skills needed for job performance					
Skills received from college graduates					
Graduates require remedial training in this skill					

41. Recent college graduates with 1 to 2 years of experience use computers to acquire, organize, analyze and communicate information and demonstrate some proficiency with standard software

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Slightly Agree	Agree	Strongly Agree
Skills needed for job performance					
Skills received from college graduates					
Graduates require remedial training in this skill					

Human Resource Manager Survey- CPP Retail

8. PART II Continued

Please indicate below how important it is for recent college graduates with 1-2 years of experience to possess the following systems thinking skills is in your job and if you have to provide remedial training for this skill.

42. Recent college graduates with 1 to 2 years of experience know how social, organizational, and technological systems work

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Slightly Agree	Agree	Strongly Agree
Skills needed for job performance					
Skills received from college graduates					
Graduates require remedial training in this skill					

43. Recent college graduates with 1 to 2 years of experience distinguish trends, predict impacts of actions on system operations

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Slightly Agree	Agree	Strongly Agree
Skills needed for job performance					
Skills received from college graduates					
Graduates require remedial training in this skill					

44. Recent college graduates with 1 to 2 years of experience make suggestions to modify existing systems to improve products and services and develop new or alternative systems

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Slightly Agree	Agree	Strongly Agree
Skills needed for job performance					
Skills received from college graduates					
Graduates require remedial training in this skill					

45. Recent college graduates with 1 to 2 years of experience assess the efficient operation of social, organizational and technological systems

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Slightly Agree	Agree	Strongly Agree
Skills needed for job performance					
Skills received from college graduates					
Graduates require remedial training in this skill					

Human Resource Manager Survey- CPP Retail

46. Recent college graduates with 1 to 2 years of experience recognize the efficient operation of social, organizational and technological systems

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Slightly Agree	Agree	Strongly Agree
Skills needed for job performance					
Skills received from college graduates					
Graduates require remedial training in this skill					

47. Recent college graduates with 1 to 2 years of experience understand the interaction and interrelationship of systems within an organization

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Slightly Agree	Agree	Strongly Agree
Skills needed for job performance					
Skills received from college graduates					
Graduates require remedial training in this skill					

48. Recent college graduates with 1 to 2 years of experience understand the interaction and interrelationship of systems in a global economy

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Slightly Agree	Agree	Strongly Agree
Skills needed for job performance					
Skills received from college graduates					
Graduates require remedial training in this skill					

Human Resource Manager Survey- CPP Retail

9. PART II Continued

Please indicate below how important it is for recent college graduates with 1-2 years of experience to possess the following work ethic skills and if you have to provide remedial training for this skill.

49. Recent college graduates with 1 to 2 years of experience attend required organizational meetings and events

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Slightly Agree	Agree	Strongly Agree
Skills needed for job performance					
Skills received from college graduates					
Graduates require remedial training in this skill					

50. Recent college graduates with 1 to 2 years of experience are on time for organizational meetings and events

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Slightly Agree	Agree	Strongly Agree
Skills needed for job performance					
Skills received from college graduates					
Graduates require remedial training in this skill					

51. Recent college graduates with 1 to 2 years of experience achieve organizational and personal goals independently

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Slightly Agree	Agree	Strongly Agree
Skills needed for job performance					
Skills received from college graduates					
Graduates require remedial training in this skill					

52. Recent college graduates with 1 to 2 years of experience complete their work on-time

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Slightly Agree	Agree	Strongly Agree
Skills needed for job performance					
Skills received from college graduates					
Graduates require remedial training in this skill					

Human Resource Manager Survey- CPP Retail

53. Recent college graduates with 1 to 2 years of experience understand the organization's protocols and procedures

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Slightly Agree	Agree	Strongly Agree
Skills needed for job performance					
Skills received from college graduates					
Graduates require remedial training in this skill					

54. Recent college graduates with 1 to 2 years of experience demonstrate a postitive attitude at work

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Slightly Agree	Agree	Strongly Agree
Skills needed for job performance					
Skills received from college graduates					
Graduates require remedial training in this skill					

55. Recent college graduates with 1 to 2 years of experience are dependable

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Slightly Agree	Agree	Strongly Agree
Skills needed for job performance					
Skills received from college graduates					
Graduates require remedial training in this skill					

Human Resource Manager Survey- CPP Retail

10. PART III

56. Recent college graduates with 1 to 2 years of experience are willing to proactively seek coaches and mentors to assess their performance and career advancement

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Slightly Agree	Agree	Strongly Agree
Select One	○	○	○	○	○

57. Recent college graduates with 1 to 2 years of experience are willing to put the interests of the company and co-workers ahead of their own

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Slightly Agree	Agree	Strongly Agree
Select One	○	○	○	○	○

58. Recent college graduates with 1 to 2 years of experience are willing to make suggestions to their supervisor or employer for increasing productivity, increasing sales or reducing costs.

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Slightly Agree	Agree	Strongly Agree
Select One	○	○	○	○	○

59. Recent college graduates with 1 to 2 years of experience are willing to identify opportunities in their organization as if it was their own company

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Slightly Agree	Agree	Strongly Agree
Select One	○	○	○	○	○

60. Recent college graduates with 1 to 2 years of experience are willing to continually assess their career passions, skills and convictions.

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Slightly Agree	Agree	Strongly Agree
Select One	○	○	○	○	○

61. Recent college graduates with 1 to 2 years of experience are willing to build consensus with co-workers

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Slightly Agree	Agree	Strongly Agree
Select One	○	○	○	○	○

62. Recent college graduates with 1 to 2 years of experience are willing to participate in self-managed teams that jointly make decisions

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Slightly Agree	Agree	Strongly Agree
Select One	○	○	○	○	○

63. Recent college graduates with 1 to 2 years of experience are willing to mediate conflicts within the organization

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Slightly Agree	Agree	Strongly Agree
Select One	○	○	○	○	○

Human Resource Manager Survey- CPP Retail

64. Recent college graduates with 1 to 2 years of experience are willing to speak up even with dissenting views to support the organization

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Slightly Agree	Agree	Strongly Agree
Select One					

65. Recent college graduates with 1 to 2 years of experience are willing to act on opportunities that they identify in their organization

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Slightly Agree	Agree	Strongly Agree
Select One					

66. Recent college graduates with 1 to 2 years of experience are willing to continually learn and develop professionally

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Slightly Agree	Agree	Strongly Agree
Select One					

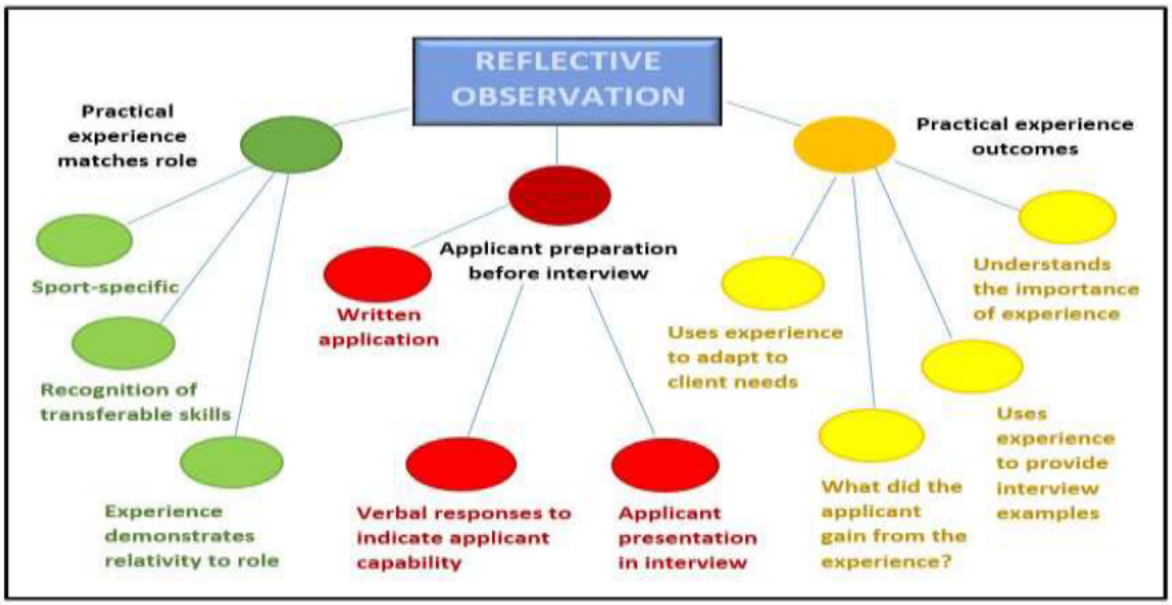
Appendix J

Themes for Stage 2: Categorised Adopting Phases 1-4 Experiential Learning Cycle (Kolb, 1984)

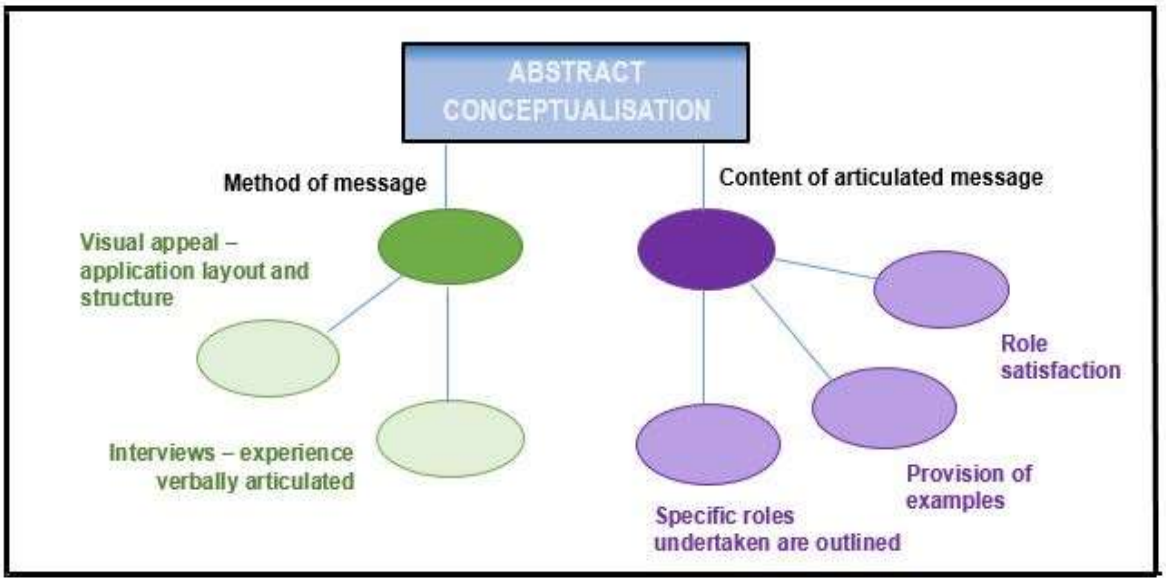
Phase 1 – Concrete Experience Theme: Sub-Theme and Codes

THEME	SUB-THEME	CODES
CONCRETE EXPERIENCE	Referee	Referee check Referee fit to practical experience Industry referees Seniority of referee
	Application of theory to practice	Theory alone is not enough without practical experience Evidence that an applicant can do the job
	Experience – applicant performance	Understand how the organisation operates Ability to work within a team Work ethic demonstrated Demonstrate the application of transferable skills
	Industry experience and commitment to industry	Volunteering to demonstrate commitment and passion Understanding industry operations through experience Sport-specific understanding Industry-specific understanding

Phase 2 - Reflective Observation Theme – Sub-Themes and Codes



Phase 3 – Abstract Conceptualisation Theme – Sub-Themes and Codes

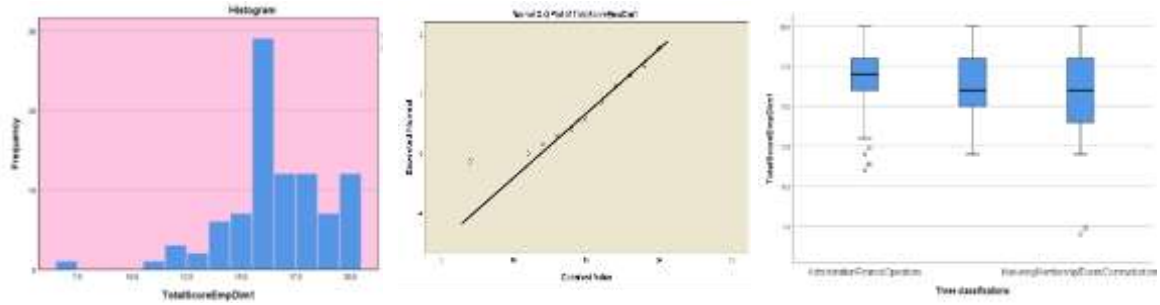


Phase 4 – Active Experimentation Theme – Sub-Themes and Codes

Appendix K

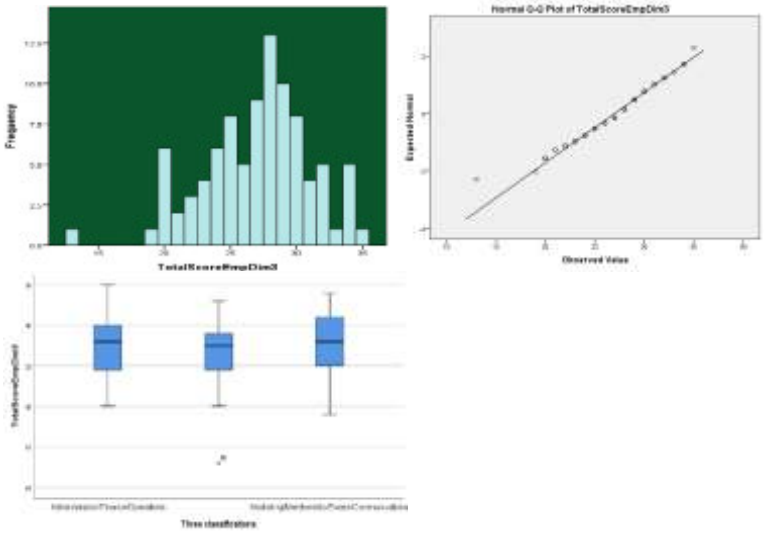
Histogram, Normal Q-Q Plot & Box Plot: Employability Dimensions 1, 3, 5, 6, 8; Experiential Learning Cycle Phases 2-4 (Kolb, 1984)

Histogram, Normal Q-Q Plot & Box Plot: Employability Dimension 1 – Basic Literacy and Numeracy Skills



Note: Histogram & Normal Q-Q Plot represent the sub-scores for Employability Dimension 1 – Basic Literacy and Numeracy Skills of all three groups (job classifications). The box plot shows individual groups distribution for Employability Dimension 1.

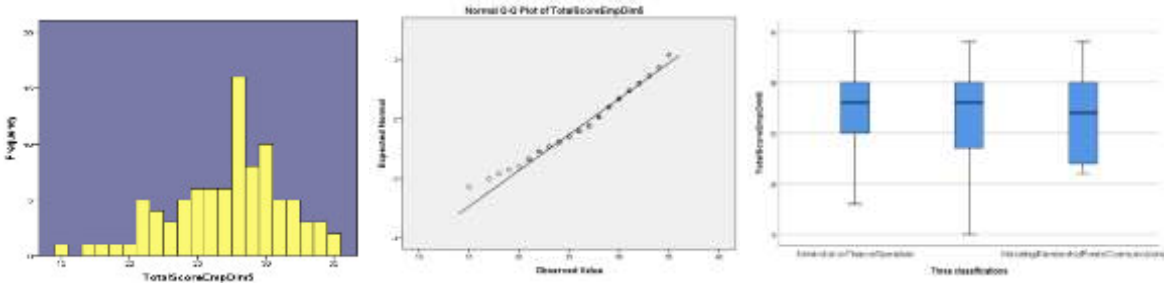
Histogram, Normal Q-Q Plot & Box Plot: Employability Dimension 3 – Leadership Skills



Note: Histogram & Normal Q-Q Plot represent the sub-scores for Employability Dimension 3 – Leadership Skills of all three groups (job classifications). The box plot shows individual groups distribution for Employability Dimension 3.

Histogram, Normal Q-Q Plot & Box Plot: <u>Employability Dimension 5</u> –

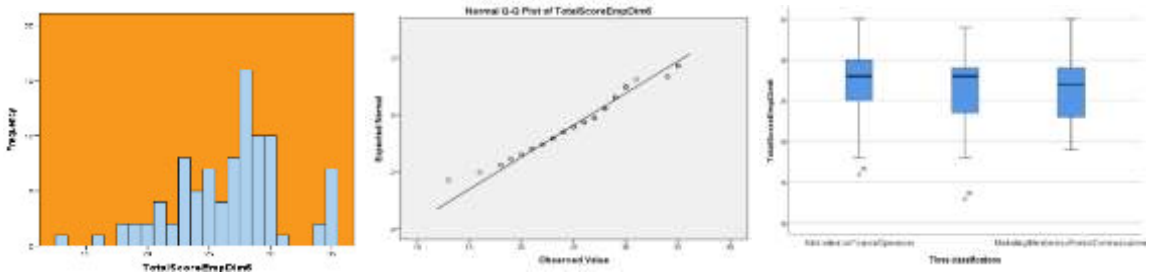
Interpersonal Skills



Note: Histogram & Normal Q-Q Plot represent the sub-scores for Employability Dimension 4 – Interpersonal Skills of all three groups (job classifications). The box plot shows individual groups distribution for Employability Dimension 5.

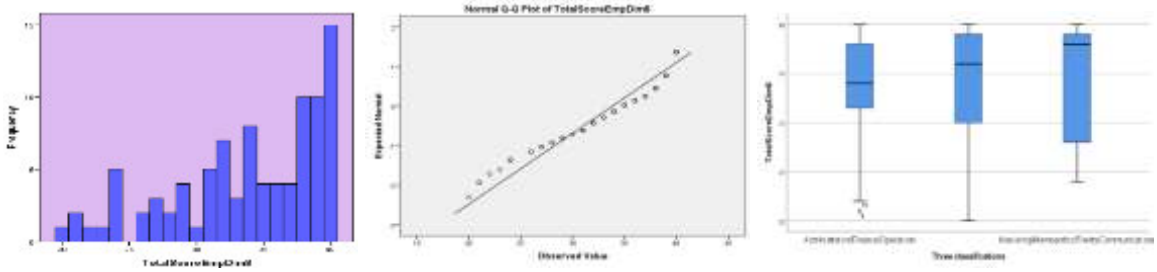
Histogram, Normal Q-Q Plot & Box Plot: <u>Employability Dimension 6</u> – Information

Technology Skills



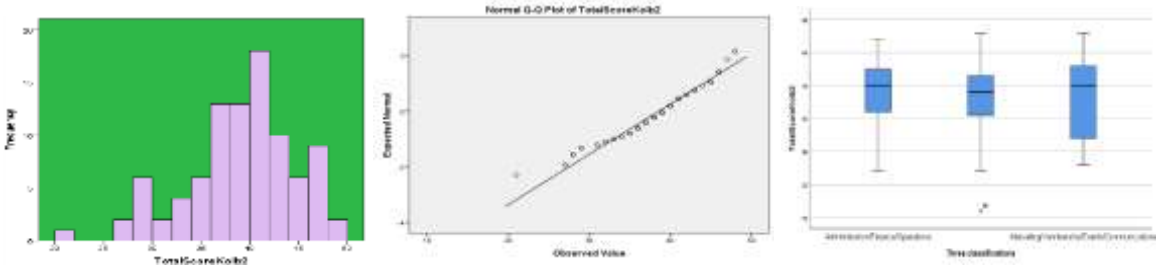
Note: Histogram & Normal Q-Q Plot represent the sub-scores for Employability Dimension 6 – Information Technology Skills of all three groups (job classifications). The box plot shows individual groups distribution for Employability Dimension 6.

Histogram, Normal Q-Q Plot & Box Plot: <u>Employability Dimension 8</u> – Work Ethic



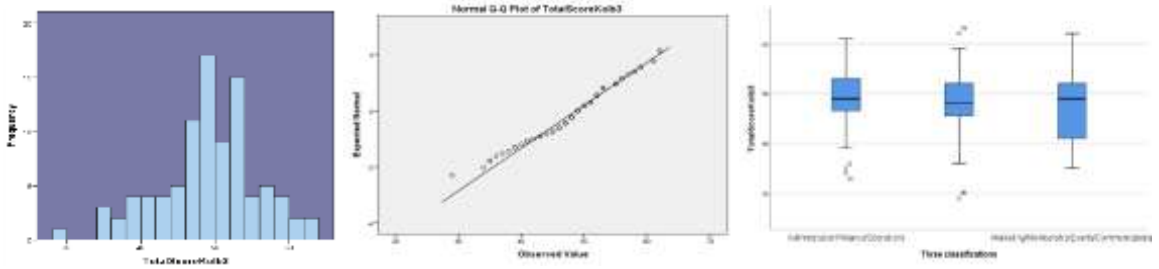
Note: Histogram & Normal Q-Q Plot represent the sub-scores for Employability Dimension 8 –Work Ethic of all three groups (job classifications). The box plot shows individual groups distribution for Employability Dimension 8.

Histogram, Normal Q-Q Plot & Box Plot: Experiential Learning Cycle Phase 2 (Kolb, 1984) – Reflective Observation



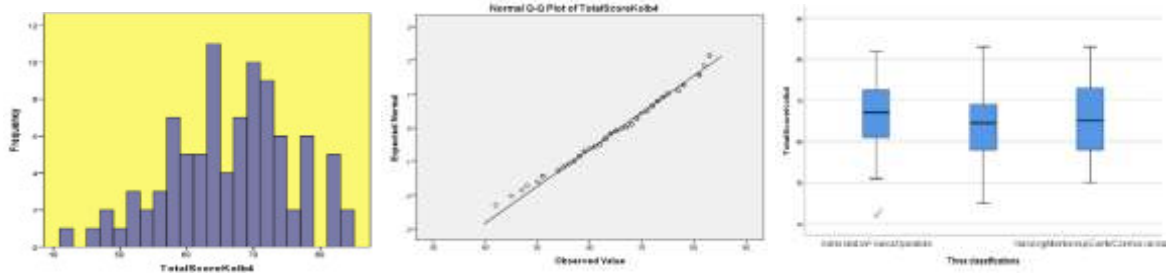
Note: Histogram & Normal Q-Q Plot represent the sub-scores for Experiential Learning Cycle Phase 2 – Reflective Observation of all three groups (job classifications). The box plot shows individual groups distribution for Experiential Learning Cycle Phase 2.

Histogram, Normal Q-Q Plot & Box Plot: Experiential Learning Cycle Phase 3 (Kolb 1984) – Abstract Conceptualisation



Note: Histogram & Normal Q-Q Plot represent the sub-scores for Experiential Learning Cycle Phase 3 – Abstract Conceptualisation of all three groups (job classifications). The box plot shows individual groups distribution for Experiential Learning Cycle Phase 3.

Histogram, Normal Q-Q Plot & Box Plot: Experiential Learning Cycle Phase 4 (Kolb, 1984) – Active Experimentation

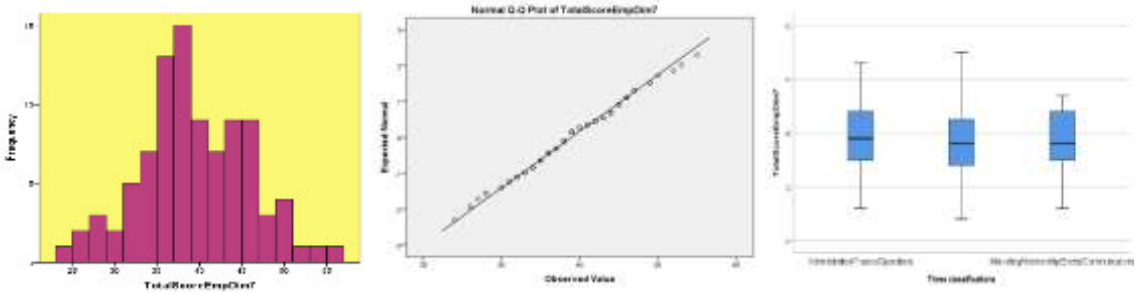


Note: Histogram & Normal Q-Q Plot represent the sub-scores for Experiential Learning Cycle Phase 4 – Active Experimentation of all three groups (job classifications). The box plot shows individual groups distribution for Experiential Learning Cycle Phase 4.

Appendix L

Histogram, Normal Q-Q Plot & Box Plot: Employability Dimension 7

Histogram, Normal Q-Q Plot & Box Plot: Employability Dimension 7 – Systems Thinking Skills

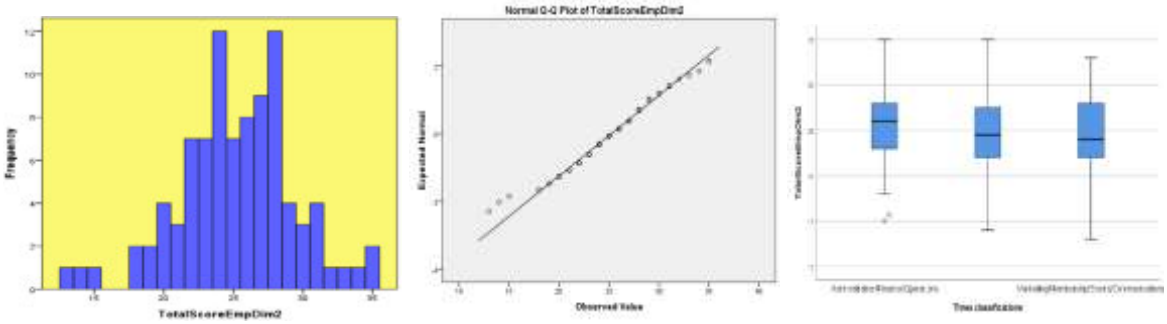


Note: Histogram & Normal Q-Q Plot represent the sub-scores for Employability Dimension 7 – Systems Thinking Skills of all three groups (job classifications). The box plot shows individual groups distribution for Employability Dimension 7.

Appendix M

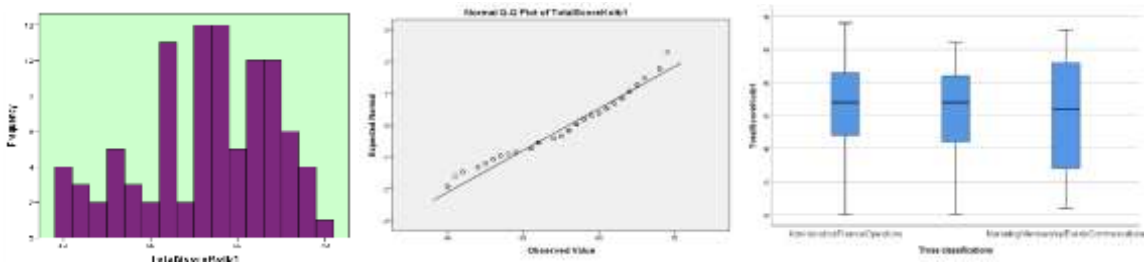
Histogram, Normal Q-Q Plot & Box Plot: Employability Dimension 2; Experiential Learning Cycle Phase 1 (Kolb, 1984).

Histogram, Normal Q-Q Plot & Box Plot: Employability Dimension 2 – Critical Thinking Skills



Note: Histogram & Normal Q-Q Plot represent the sub-scores for Employability Dimension 2 – Critical Thinking Skills of all three groups (job classifications). The box plot shows individual groups distribution for Employability Dimension 2.

Histogram, Normal Q-Q Plot & Box Plot: Experiential Learning Cycle Phase 1 (Kolb, 1984) – Concrete Experience

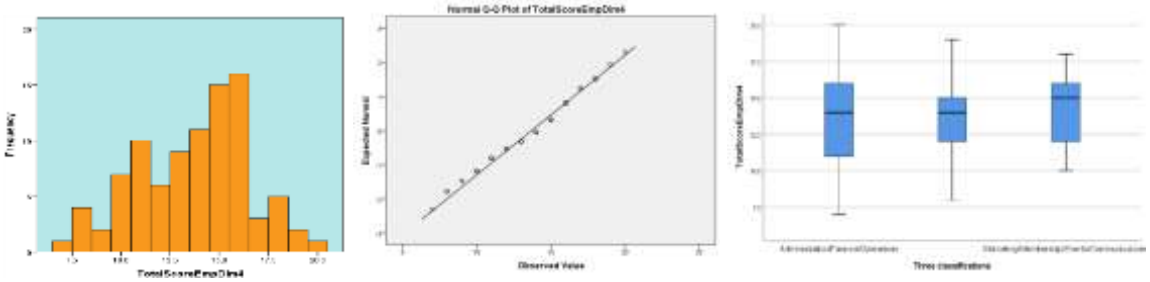


Note: Histogram & Normal Q-Q Plot represent the sub-scores for Experiential Learning Cycle Phase 1 – Concrete Experience of all three groups (job classifications). The box plot shows individual groups distribution for Experiential Learning Cycle Phase 1.

Appendix N

Histogram, Normal Q-Q Plot & Box Plot: Employability Dimension 4

Histogram, Normal Q-Q Plot & Box plot: Employability Dimension 4 – Management Skills



Note: Histogram & Normal Q-Q Plot represent the sub-scores for Employability Dimension 4 – Management Skills of all three groups (job classifications). The box plot shows individual groups distribution for Employability Dimension 4.

Appendix O

Recommendations Summary

Industry Awareness Component (Pre-Condition Phase) – 22 Recommendations

Pre-Condition Phase	Awareness Factors	Recommendations	
		SM Industry *Managers from the SM Industry Sector*	Higher Education *Coordinators of UG SM Programs*
Industry Awareness	Job classification	Create job descriptions that are thorough, distinguish function and indicate appropriate job classification.	Introduce six job classifications with examples of job roles, organisations, clients, and workplace settings.
	Advertised employment	Provide a clear organisation background and role purpose on job description. Consider job description terminology used to indicate graduate-entry level positions. Articulate key tasks, responsibilities and internal and external collaborations.	Educate how to deconstruct job descriptions. Educate how to relate to entry-level job descriptions. Promote range and intricacies of expected SM roles.
	Job status and salary	Indicate salary level in advertised job descriptions.	Educate about industry expectations: time fractions and salary in a range of jobs in the three SM sectors (commercial, non-profit, and public).
	Structure of industry sector	Provide practical opportunities for UGs to experience a SM workplace setting. Represent the SM sectors through engagement with higher education.	Provide opportunities for UGs to undertake practical experiences within SM workplaces settings. Identify SM sector operations and service provisions. Identify employment pathways of the three SM sectors.

Interrelated industries	Provide practical experiences in a range of SM functions within various departments to showcase transferable workplace skill sets. Provide practical experiences to showcase industry professionalism, internal and external collaborations, partnerships and working relationships.	Instruct how to recognise, transfer, and apply relative skills from one industry to another. Outline benefits of using critical reflection for UGs to recognise transferable skills across sectors.
Additional requirements and training	Clearly indicate additional requirements and training in advertised graduate-entry level job descriptions. Induct and educate UGs about OHS procedures, workplace operations, policies, procedures and provide employee introductions.	Address UG safety in the workplace, specifically within physical sporting environments, risk assessment, liability, and duty of care.

Self-Awareness Component (Pre-Condition Phase) – 9 Recommendations

Pre-Condition Phase	Awareness factors	Recommendations	
		SM Industry *Managers from the SM Industry Sector*	Higher Education *Coordinators of UG SM Programs*
Self-Awareness	Degree subject knowledge, understanding and skills	Work with coordinators of UG SM programs to understand practicum requirements and expected outcomes.	Collaborate with managers from SM industry sector to deliver practicum opportunities aligned with course learning outcomes.
	Career development learning	As an Alumnus, keep connected with the alma mater to showcase SM industry, opportunities, and pathways.	Track university SM Alumni. Collaborate with SM program lecturers in all year levels to offer course career development options.
	Emotional Intelligence	Consider and map the EI and other leadership traits of practicum supervisors.	Educate what constitutes EI, and how to enhance, when undertaking practical experiences.
	Reflect, assess, and evaluate	Collaborate with coordinators of UG SM programs to gauge feedback processes and evaluation of graduate employability/competence.	Map course subjects including self-reflection, assessment, and evaluation within a range of learning environments to demonstrate graduate employability.

Self-Awareness Component (Pre-Condition Phase) – 30 Recommendations

Observed Signal	Recommendation SM Industry *Managers from the SM Industry Sector*	 Higher Education *Coordinators of UG SM Programs*
Experienced industry referees	Provide feedback on UG work ethic and performance. Engage UGs throughout practicum with coordinators of UG SM programs to provide a SM industry sector insight from SM manager perspective.	Ensure supervision guidelines include supervisor feedback/evaluation documentation, on UG work ethic. Promote benefits of establishing networks, mentors, and potential referees.
Referee check: alignment of applicant and referees	Include applicant referees within job recruitment. Choose suitable practicum supervisors (potential referee) to act as mentor and support UG employability development.	Collaborate with industry to establish strong industry mentors for practicum.
Voluntary experience(s)	Stay connected with coordinators of UG SM programs to advertise voluntary opportunities for practicum. Offer suitable practical experiences; provide industry insight into varying SM roles and required employability skills.	Stay connected with industry and know voluntary opportunities available to UGs. Educate UGs on value-add benefits of volunteering to SM industry sector.
Unpaid experience as a Pathway to Employment	Align practicum opportunities with employment outcomes.	Maintain data on all positive practicum opportunities and employment outcomes. Educate UGs how to strengthen a job application by including experience examples as evidence.
Practical experience related to advertised role	Specify types of prior practical experiences suitable for UGs to capably undertake advertised role.	Embed critical reflection activities related to practical experiences undertaken throughout UG SM course.

Practical experience outcomes	Review outcome of practical experiences with UGs and highlight their contributions to organisation.	Create practicum assessment to motivate UGs to explore SM industry sector and stimulate career conversations.
Presentation	Support UGs on practicums to explore and exercise the multitude of employability skills applied in the workplace. Expose UGs to a range of practicum examples as evidence of using employability skills.	Embed, across multiple SM subjects, tasks for UG to explore the eight Employability Dimensions and multitude of ways to showcase their employability.
Articulation (content)	Build practicum knowledge, to explore and understand complexities of industry using critical reflection. Provide practicum as an avenue for UGs to build a range of examples as evidence of ability, when applying for a job.	Implement critical thinking assessment across subject core and practicum subjects on how UGs can articulate their learning. Collaborate with managers from SM industry sector to provide the direction and support to stimulate student engagement and industry awareness during practicum.
Leadership attributes	Expose UGs to a range of exciting to mundane tasks to gauge enthusiasm to be involved and interested in the industry. Showcase how leadership attributes are demonstrated within the workplace and industry.	Define leadership and enable UGs to recognise leadership in everyday tasks.
Self-marketing	Describe the workplace to UGs on practicum highlighting mix of attributes and skills required to foster strong employee organisation fit.	Introduce the concept of personal brand and engage UGs to recognise their personal brand, strengths and what sets them apart from other applicants.