

# Participatory Design Research for Curriculum Development of Graduate Programs for Workplace Professionals

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**Abstract.** The designer-researchers in this case study used participatory design research to investigate developing two interdisciplinary master's degree programs tailored for workplace professionals in professional writing, media journalism, and public relations. Administrators asked faculty to develop programs that moved costs associated with education onto students, increased graduate enrollment, and improved graduate retention. This article shares details 16 workplace professionals gave during four focus groups and on a questionnaire. This article encourages participatory design for curriculum development of graduate degrees and offers the authors' apparatus and reflections in order to give others a potential starting place.

**Keywords.** workplace professional, curriculum development, master's degrees, graduate degrees, interdisciplinary degree, professional writing, media journalism, public relations, distance education, professional writing, technical communication, flexible learning, user-centered design, participatory design

**T**he faculty in the case study discussed in this article received a top-down directive to develop one to two interdisciplinary master's degree programs involving some combination of professional writing (PW), media journalism (MJ), and public relations (PR). The programs were

to incorporate alternative delivery methods and move at least some associated costs of education onto students. This directive came in the context of decreasing state support, economic hardship, and declining enrollment and retention at a small, former teacher's college. A regional, urban university obtained the college to serve its outlying rural areas, expecting the campus to use flexible delivery options to help students overcome the challenges of travel time and costs of attending classes.

The directive indicated the graduate programs were to improve graduate recruitment and retention and support the economic development of campus. The purpose of the research, discussed here, was to simultaneously learn what was needed in order to create successful graduate programs and to design them as tailored for PW, MJ, and PR workplace professionals. The faculty who received this directive chose workplace professionals as their target learners in order to increase their chances at success, and they chose participatory design (PD) for curricula development in order to better construct these graduate programs with and for these practitioners. The purposes of this article are to (a) encourage PD for curriculum development of graduate degrees, (b) provide a potential place for others to begin such research-design by sharing the apparatus and reflections upon them, and (c) share details workplace professionals gave at one site.

## **Background**

Although retention, recruitment, and finances are global concerns, it is important to understand local contexts when planning new curricula. A variety of factors seemed to contribute to diminishing recruitment and retention at the small campus, located nearly one and a half hours from the city. Existing programs were too similar to those nearby. The Internet was unavailable, unreliable, or unaffordable in the rural areas, meaning some students traveled up to three hours each way to attend. Many faculty members questioned distance delivery, students perceived remote campuses as inferior, and people used the classist referent "country" to describe the socio-geographic area of this campus. So, unless students benefitted from flexible delivery or a unique program, many had little incentive to attend this particular small campus and, therefore, tried to enroll at the city whenever feasible. If they needed to travel hours, they may as well go to the main, "reputable" campus.

Given these contexts and some pressure from legislation, the smaller university's administration explored a number of strategies to cover costs. Out of a popular liberal arts graduate degree, they created a program wherein students received no in-state tuition or other "financial breaks"

and, thus, paid the full costs of their education. Going into its third year, the program remained somewhat popular, but the higher price tag for a degree available elsewhere did not provide the payout hoped for by administration. While there was not enough data to know if this degree was sustainable, these results suggested they could not yet rule out “no breaks” degrees from consideration.

Administration wanted to continue testing degrees that shifted costs onto students, so they adjusted variables and tried again. Unlike the liberal arts degree, the administration’s second attempt was a unique, professional, international business degree program focused on a very specific industry and was aggressively marketed overseas, targeting students who were denied admissions to such programs in their own countries. Administration saw the target students as highly motivated to pay for a graduate degree of this type. In terms of increasing enrollments and reducing financial stress, this program had some success; however, the nuanced combination of factors that went into making the program work also made it difficult to replicate even if other faculty, who sometimes viewed this scenario as predatory, would consider doing so.

Administration still sought a third graduate degree that moved costs onto students. Recognizing the first two as insufficient, they wanted a unique, applied, graduate degree that mattered locally. They turned to PW, MJ, and PR, seeing each as a potentially saleable degree program by itself and together as being in high demand, especially with media as a unifying factor. No institutions in this state offered PW within graduate degrees, and, while others offered communication and journalism, none emphasized PR or MJ. In the eyes of administrators, offering these concentrations together also made financial sense because the combination required just one administrative unit.

The university assigned one person each from PW, MJ, and PR to a Curriculum Development Committee (the Committee), charging them with creating one to two graduate degrees from these areas and enrolling students who would pay more than typical tuition costs. The Committee members did not really want to work together. Faculty in these areas sometimes dismissed each other’s disciplines, and they suspected potential students and their employers might be dismissive of a combined degree. If they could not address such tensions within an interdisciplinary degree, the programs would all be at risk.

The Committee saw their task as determining how to make a combined program work. This task was a problem-solving research and design challenge, and the Committee could not solve it alone. They needed the

students and stakeholders. The Committee judiciously selected workplace professionals, reasoning that professionals were most able to afford the higher costs, especially during the economic downturn; that employers would want higher quality employees; and that employees would want graduate credentials to be more promotable, marketable, and mobile. The Committee hoped that meeting the needs of workplace professionals would compel them to overlook the costs. Although, choosing workplace professionals meant targeting students closer to the city, which contradicted the university's original objective of reaching people in rural areas.

To tailor their graduate programs for workplace professionals, the Committee conducted research by using participatory design (PD). PD is a way to “understand knowledge by doing” (Spinuzzi, 2005, p. 163), where “doing” means to “iteratively construct the emerging design” from “research results as co-interpreted by the designer-researchers and the participants who will use the design” (Spinuzzi, 2005, p. 164). Technical communication professionals in academe and industry became familiar with PD most especially through user-centered design (UCD), a form of PD that, since entering technical communication, has been a methodological and philosophical approach to researching and designing with users from the beginning of and throughout the design process (Dumas & Redish, 1993; Hackos, 2000; Hackos & Redish, 1998; Johnson, 1998; Nielsen, 1989; Nielsen, 1992; Norman and Draper, 1986; Rubin, 1994). Clay Spinuzzi (2005) explained that PD, often used during times of change, was an approach “just as much about *design*—producing artifacts, systems, work organizations, and practical or tacit knowledge—as it is about *research*. In this methodology, design is research” (p. 164). In this case, the iterative process using a variety of research methods was meant to systematically collect and check user data against faculty and administrator needs, desires, and assumptions about what workplace professionals and students want, need, and expect.

## Literature Review

When the Committee began research on PD curricula development, their inclination for the literature review was quite simple. Each member would survey relevant literature and develop a canon for their discipline. For PW, this would be akin to developing the new *Central Works in Technical Communication* (Johnson-Eilola & Selber, 2004), *Solving Problems in Technical Communication* (Johnson-Eilola & Selber, 2013), or the *Technical Communication Body of Knowledge* (TC BOK). Then, the Committee would synthesize the individual surveys into a combined canon for the new degrees. While

the Committee understood the need to problematize canons, this served as a *topos* to begin working together across disciplines.

The initial move was clearly a misstep. For one, faculty members already knew the canonical work in their own fields, and, so, in their crisis-driven environment where disciplines and programs were fighting for existence, such an activity sometimes bordered on trying to prove worth or superiority. These experiences indicated that dividing and conquering the literature review task was also dividing the faculty. Second, this divide kept them in their familiar territory instead of investigating what they did not know in the other disciplines.

Peter Vandenberg and Jennifer Clary-Lemon (2010) provided a more thoughtful frame for thinking about a master's program, which they described as "uniquely connected to its institutional home in a way that the PhD is not" (265). They explained that "by default," master's degrees must be responsive, diverse, and flexible, emerging as "more of a sluice between the institution at large and the wider community of which it is a part" (p. 265). According to the authors' follow-up with programs listed in the 2005 *Rhetoric Review* survey, successful master's programs usually responded to a local need, specific employment opportunities, or some institutional demand.

The Committee needed a better understanding of its wider community, particularly the needs of workplace professionals as students. Research to help practitioners and pedagogues understand technical communication as situated in professional and workplace contexts started in the mid 1980's with Lee Odell and Dixie Goswami's *Writing in Nonacademic Settings* and proliferated in the 1990s and early 2000s with collections by Rachel Spilka (1993), John Reynolds, Carolyn Matalene, Joyce Magnotto, Donald Samson, and Lynn Sadler (1995), Jean A Lutz and C. Gilbert Storms (1998), Jim Henry (2000) and more. While such research continues, this work provided insight about what writers needed to be successful and what they needed to know in the workplace, which can be used to frame thinking about curricula. However, these works did not tell the Committee about workplace professionals as students, and "[p]rogram designers need a clear vision of their goals and target student group" (Rude, 2005, p. 70). The Committee needed to determine what workplace professionals needed to succeed as students.

In their contribution to the *ASHE-ERIC Higher Education Report*, John Weidman, Darla Twale, and Elizabeth Stein (2001) promoted a plan of improving graduate program enrollment and retention through a collaborative, holistic approach to meeting graduate student needs. Their

strategy involved alternative learning approaches designed to end feelings of isolation felt by graduate students during the solitary process of writing a thesis or dissertation. The authors asserted that “collaborative learning communities, while helpful for many different types of graduate students, seem to be especially critical for the growing population of part-time and distance learning students” (Weidman, Twale, & Stein, 2001, pp. 95), and they encouraged interactive group learning with team activities to build collaborative skills. They suggested improving graduate programs by focusing on group work and professional networking and by upholding a collaborative educational community that encouraged questioning, debate, and critical thinking.

Regarding the online technical communication classroom, Angela Eaton (2013) replicated an earlier study designed to determine student needs. Students wanted online degrees because online degrees fit around work schedules and there were no relevant programs nearby. Students sought master’s degrees to improve their skills and retain their jobs. The students valued faculty who maintained an active presence; who had organized, structured courses; and who understood technology. Based on their Survey of Technical and Professional Writing Programs, Nancy Allen and Steven T. Benninghoff (2004) stressed that to be successful, programs must successfully develop students’ technological skills. Their article, “Closer Look at Four Developing Programs,” highlighted how Weber State University, Virginia Tech, Michigan State and Rensselaer State all had multiple courses that introduced students to new technology. It would seem that theory is fine, but practice is supreme.

The Committee needed to answer other questions. What scholarship about developing graduate degrees in their fields already existed? What challenges were already faced, problems addressed, and advice given? What were the experiences and outcomes of those designing interdisciplinary or professional degrees?

In a case similar to the one in this article, Barry Maid and Barbara D’Angelo (2013) asked, “What Do You Do When the Ground Beneath Your Feet Shifts?” Their article addressed the rise and shift of the Multimedia Writing and Technical Communication program at an Arizona State University campus meant to serve a geographic area where many students worked full time. This once independent program was rehoused in another school under a different unit and then given a new name, “Technical Communication.” The program lost control over its own budget, and the allotment for administrative tasks was decreased, resulting in fewer resources for assessment or ongoing conversations among program developers,

faculty, and participants. As pointed out by Michael J. Giordano (2000), programs can easily disappear in turf and budget wars. The move also separated the program from its campus partners, some of which were also moved, and placed them in a less hospitable environment. The program became more generic but increased enrollment.

Before the administrative troubles escalated at Arizona State, the program found success by focusing first on establishing outcomes, standardizing course structure and modules, and then regularly assessing the program. The effectiveness of the classes declined, however, as flexible course design increased: Flexibility “resulted in inconsistency across sections,” thereby eroding the “programmatically cohesion based on outcomes and the curricular consistency” (Maid & D’Angelo, 2013, p. 16). Maid and D’Angelo (2013) advised that it is foundational that others taking on such work “be as inclusive as possible on the front end and then create options for all faculty teaching the course to engage in ongoing curricular development” (p. 20) as well as include flexibility for “pedagogical preferences and expertise” (p. 20) while being structured and consistent in learning outcomes and design.

Because the Committee worried about the program failing, they looked to the literature to see what causes failure. Programs in rhetoric, technical, professional, and scientific communication traditionally failed because they struggled to establish identities (Johnson, 2009) and had low program visibility (Leslie & Northcut, 2013). Kathryn Rentz, Mary Beth Debs, and Lisa Meloncon (2010) highlighted three tenants for professional writing programs to succeed in environments that are not just their own: become “visible contributors” by finding ways to integrate the “program’s purpose and needs into the Department’s priorities” (p. 290), “use caution when responding to the demand for professional writing coming from outside the department and encourage demand[s] coming from inside” (p. 291), and lastly “nurture an intellectual...compatibility across English subfields” (p. 292). The last tenant is clearly important because “most (81 of 127; 63.8%) technical communication programs are housed in departments of English” (Yeats & Thompson, 2010). Rentz et al. (2010) had wide and varied allegiances but learned to focus first on their students before adjusting classes or policies for others.

Johndan Johnson-Eilola and Stuart A. Selber (2001) also argued for engaging in ongoing cooperative development to enhance programs in one of only a few articles to offer advice on overcoming challenges of academics working with practitioners. They highlighted gaps of knowledge between practitioners and academics, indicating that neither camp can

seem to agree on what to value in the other. Indeed, they cautioned us not to view the interactions of academics and practitioners as “a one-way process: students graduate to the ‘real world’” (Johnson-Eilola & Selber, 2001, p. 412). For a program to be successful, the path needs to be recursive.

## **Methods**

The Committee started the PD curriculum development process by conducting four focus groups and implementing a questionnaire with workplace professionals. In PD, “research tends to be expressed in a purpose statement rather than a research question” (Spinuzzi, 2005, p. 169). Overall, the purpose of this research was to design interdisciplinary graduate programs tailored for workplace professionals. More specifically, the purpose of this research was to determine workplace professionals’ interests in postgraduate, potentially interdisciplinary, degree programs in the fields of PW, MJ, and PR. To do so, the Committee aimed to identify what workplace professionals wanted to learn, by what means, and under what conditions, and what would aid or prohibit workplace professionals as learners from successfully completing their programs. As discussed in this article, the Committee also wanted to understand workplace professionals’ expectations of people, support, and the learning experience. Finally, the Committee wanted to know what advice workplace professionals had and what should be explored during future research.

## **Designer-Researchers: The Committee**

The designer-researchers are the Committee members and an independent facilitator. Member 1, a newly tenured professor, previously worked as a PR practitioner. Member 2, up for tenure during the time of this development, previously worked as a print journalist and then news editor. Member 3, an author of this article, was an interim faculty member while a PW faculty member was on leave and the department searched for two new tenure-track faculty members in PW. They each received one course of re-assigned time for one semester, which is the timeframe for the PD research discussed, here. The independent facilitator worked at a consultancy that conducts research for companies and trains people in research methods. She was compensated per her current rate.

## **Participants: Workplace Professionals**

The goal in PD research, as the Committee applied it to curriculum development, was formative: to develop and solve problems for a particular situation. So, rather than select participants through random sampling,

researchers recruit actual students and stakeholders. Because there were no actual students, yet, it was important to recruit active members of the target professional communities. Sixteen workplace professionals participated (without compensation other than snacks); although, the findings were based on 15 participants because one asked to be excluded from publications. Six participants identified primarily as PW, five as journalism, and four as PR.

### ***Sampling***

For initial analysis, 15 was an acceptable number of participants for two main reasons. First, the primary power in PD is internal validity, which the Committee accounted for in their design. Spinuzzi (2005) explained that internal validity in PD relies upon three criteria: quality of life for workers built in through reflection, agreement, and codetermination (see also Bødker & Grønbaek, 1991; Muller, 1991); collaborative development through involvement, consensus, agreement, and representation; and iterative processes through continual participation of revisiting stages and sustained reflection (Spinuzzi, 2005, pp. 169-171). The Committee used PD to design for “quality of life,” focusing on goals of higher education, disciplinary values, and accessibility of graduate credentials to learners. Regarding criteria two and three, the questionnaire and focus groups were just the first methods in an iterative, reflective process of co-designing with workplace professionals. Results of these additional iterations are outside the scope of this article.

Second, tailoring curricula for particular audiences is better measured by usability standards for gaining insights and identifying problems for practical purposes at a local site than it is for researching knowledge that is generalizable for other locations. Early research regarding usability indicated a need for only a small number of users (Al-Awar, Chapanis, & Ford, 1981; Virzi, 1990; Virzi, 1992; Wright & Monk, 1991). And, although later research problematized such findings (Spool & Schroeder, 2001; Bevan, Barnum, Cockton, Nielsen, Spool, & Wixon, 2003), more recent research suggested that five to ten participants could be acceptable when researchers understood what that number means (Nielsen, 2000). In an examination of 83 cases of usability studies conducted by the Nielsen Norman Group, having more users did not lead to “appreciably” more insights (Nielsen, 2012). The first five to eight users of a test found up to 85% of the problems that more than 31% of users would face, but finding more problems and improving the design came, not necessarily by running any particular test with more users but, by testing more tasks, conduct-

ing additional iterations, and triangulating through a variety of methods (Lindgaard & Chattratichart, 2007; Nielsen, 2012; Nielsen, 2013). From the perspective of return on investment, then, additional users are more valuable in these subsequent steps, the discussions of which are outside the scope of this article. The Committee planned additional research to complete after this initial analysis: walkthroughs, interviews, collaborative design sessions, and open meetings with multiple stakeholders.

### ***Selection***

Over a period of five weeks, the Committee recruited workplace professionals in three ways. They invited attendees at meetings of the Society for Technical Communication, the International Public Relations Society, and the Media, Entertainment, & Arts Alliance. They asked their 17-member advisory board (including fellows, government agents, company and organization board members, and editors of news organizations, television stations, and journals) for referrals, and contacted those referrals via telephone. Finally, the Committee sent a press release to chapter presidents of related organizations, advisory board members, and university announcement channels. In each case, participants were told the university was investigating the possibility of developing graduate degrees in PW, MJ, and PR and researchers wanted input from workplace professionals.

### **Data Gathering: Procedures**

In a university facility in the city, the Committee conducted two 50-minute focus groups on two consecutive Friday nights, for a total of four sessions. The facilitator welcomed participants, prompted them to complete the informed consent form and questionnaire, and then encouraged them to talk with other participants. The facilitator then seated participants to best facilitate conversation, explained the purpose for the meeting, emphasized that they were helping develop graduate degrees, overviewed the process, indicated that they were being audio recorded, reminded them that they could withdraw from participation at any time, and asked if anyone wanted to leave.

To increase confidence in the validity of notes the Committee took during the focus groups and to increase reliability of understanding responses across team members, the Committee stepped aside in order to summarize what they heard during the facilitated conversation. The facilitator read the Committee's summary to the groups and asked participants to verify its accuracy. A Committee member recorded responses. The Committee thanked the professionals, encouraging them to participate in the

next steps, refer participants, and phone or email comments or questions. The research team debriefed, focusing on accuracy of data and verifiability across each other, and they noted identifiable patterns or surprises. During later analyses, the team referred to handwritten notes from the sessions, the debrief, and the audio recordings.

### **Apparatus: Questionnaire and Focus Group**

The apparatus included an informed consent form, questionnaire, and a focus group note-taking form with script. The independent facilitator designed the apparatus in consultation with the researcher-designers and based on their goals.

#### ***Questionnaire***

Researchers distributed a questionnaire (see Appendix A) to learn about participant demographics: where they lived or worked in proximity to campus, professional qualifications and engagement in professional development, and employment disciplines, positions, and roles. The Committee chose a questionnaire for the economy of time in answering, balanced with the ease of analyzing and comparing results because of uniform questions and, for most of the questions, a highly standardized structure.

#### ***Focus groups***

The Committee chose focus groups to help researchers make decisions and guide product or program development because these groups are designed to make people feel comfortable and get them to disclose something (Greenbaum, 2000; Krueger & Casey, 2009). When people disclose something, they influence others, and focus groups help researchers observe responses and how people and responses influence others (Greenbaum, 2000; Krueger & Casey, 2009). According to Richard A. Krueger and Mary Anne Casey (2009), if there are at least three focus groups, they can help researchers find a range of opinions in a group that otherwise has some similarity. The Committee sought opinions and insights into program development from groups of people interested in graduate studies. The focus group script and note-taking form contains a rationale for each question (see Appendix B).

### **Findings**

Findings in this section summarize demographic and professional data as well as responses to questions about workplace professionals' interests in post baccalaureate education, expectations about graduate programs, and

their deciding factors for enrolling and maintaining enrollments. When looking at tables in this section, numbers in parentheses indicate the number of respondents who made such a remark.

## **Demographics**

General demographic data about participant age, gender, and family makeup can be found in Table 1 (see Appendix C for Tables 1-19). There are not enough participants for the data to be generalizable to other sites or to the degrees being developed, but this gives a starting place for thinking about the next iterations of research.

Although the Committee wanted to understand how having dependents at home might influence the likelihood of participating in post-baccalaureate education, the data received was unreliable because more respondents left the question blank than those who answered it. In response to other questions in the initial analysis, participants indicated that the university should provide childcare. Future iterations in this PD need to emphasize the importance of participants disclosing such information if the Committee is expected to design appropriate support systems.

The questionnaire asked where participants lived and worked, although this is not represented in the table. During the focus groups, students said they would travel no more than 30 minutes on a regular basis to get to class. Almost no respondents lived within 30 miles of the rural campus, which makes sense given the Committee recruited at meetings held in the city. Although the Committee found this worrisome, these participants did not expect classes in these proposed degrees to meet on a regular basis. We address this later.

## **Professional Data**

When the questionnaire and focus group data regarding professional details were combined, it became clear that, during future iterations, terminology needs to be analyzed and operationalized more fully. The Committee used the term “professional writing” because it was the name of an existing undergraduate emphasis. Although the Committee meant “professional writing” to generally reference technical communication, workplace professionals viewed the term as an umbrella descriptor, not an indicator of a specific discipline: Six participants identified on the questionnaire as professional writers, but, according to focus group conversations, they meant that they wrote for a living. Three “professional writers” worked as technical communicators, two as journalists, and another as a television scriptwriter. Although the Committee thought it was representing a broad

version of technical communication, others did not understand the term that way.

When the technical communicators explained their profession during the combined focus group, MJ and PR administrators implied that such a profession was inferior because MJ and PR professionals do technical communication work as a mere part of their “actual” work. Consequently, a participant suggested that including technical communication in the graduate programs would diminish the program’s worth, to which others agreed. During informal conversations before the focus group, one participant said to a Committee member, “I can’t believe they have us here with these technical writing people.” Another participant whispered, “It’s the journalists who shouldn’t be here.” These comments might reflect only this small group, that the Committee did not define the disciplines, or that the PW member of the Committee was brought in from elsewhere while the MJ and PR members were well-established practitioners in the area. Alternatively, MJ and PR might simply be dismissive of technical communication and, therefore, such an interdisciplinary degree might be doomed to failure. In any case, the data indicate technical communication was neither well defined nor well represented in the participant group and the Committee has more work to do to figure out the relationships between disciplines. The Committee decidedly did not define the disciplines. They wanted to gauge responses, which is a power of focus groups. Future iterations need an established technical communicator to connect the Committee to the technical communication community.

Subsequent iterations need participants to fully understand each discipline. During PD, designer-researchers need to further investigate how the disciplines might fit together from the perspectives of skills, knowledge, and working relationships. Additionally, participant answers on the questionnaire suggested that “trainer” and “manager” be explored as potential content areas, and answers during focus groups suggested that “script-writer” (screen and television) be explored more fully.

## **Workplace Professionals’ Interests in Post-Baccalaureate Education**

Before developing graduate programs, it seemed important to know if workplace professionals were even interested in them.

### ***Have they looked?***

When combining participants who have completed graduate work with those who have investigated it, 66.66% of participants were interested in

post-baccalaureate education (see Appendix C for Figure 1), which suggests it is worth continuing analyses.

### ***Why did they look?***

Most often, employment factors prompted participants to look into post-baccalaureate work, as did educational and environmental factors (see Table 3). The responses highlight the importance of the Committee investigating which theories, practices, and research would support learners and which would make them competitive within each discipline.

### ***What benefits did they perceive?***

Although participants investigated post-baccalaureate education primarily because of employment factors, their perceived benefits included knowledge, personal benefits, and marketability nearly equally (see Table 4). The responses emphasize the need to use future iterations to determine what knowledge, practices, and theories would be most valuable in the workplaces.

### ***What did they most desire in such programs?***

The quality of graduates (4) was named most often as the desired characteristic of graduate programs, followed by program reputation (2), accreditation (1), and recognition at work for education (1). These results indicate a need to define “quality graduate” during PD, and it might indicate the need to emphasize to students that their peers believe their performance is not only a matter for themselves but also for upholding the reputation of their classmates and program.

The desire for a program with multiple exit points (accreditation, certificate, and master’s degree) was stated with great emphasis, indicating the Committee needs to think strategically about how to study these options further. Some employers required journalists to have specific accreditations, which is why accreditation was emphasized, but thinking about the program as one whole with multiple exit points was new. Scholarship related to certification programs can help begin such investigations (for example, Carliner, Pohland, & Jong, 2014; Carnevale, Rose, & Hanson, 2012; Nugent, 2013).

## **Expectations about Graduate Programs**

When workplace professionals were asked about their expectations for graduate programs, they focused on three areas: people, support, and the learning experience.

## ***Expectations of People***

Workplace professionals had expectations for faculty and other graduates.

**Faculty.** Undeniably, workplace professionals expected faculty to have a practitioner background (see Table 5). They expected those who did not would supplement the classes with guest lecturers that were practitioners. As development of the degree moves ahead, the Committee needs to consider how to meet these needs while also considering what workplace professionals may not yet know is important.

**Graduates.** Workplace professionals identified two key expectations of graduates (see Table 6): Experience (14) and an understanding of the industry (13). Understanding of the industry was particularly important at the graduate level, and practical experiences mattered more than the degree focus. These suggest curricula may need to focus on practice as situated in conceptual knowledge, which is something to explore in future PD phases. It also raises more questions about how to define technical communication and the degree focus; how to explain “the industry,” especially within an interdisciplinary program; and how to fit these questions together.

## ***Expectations of Support***

Workplace professionals had expectations for support regarding faculty and staff (24), the library (20), and technology (20).

**Faculty and staff.** Table 7 identifies workplace professionals’ expectations for faculty and staff. There was general consensus that workplace professionals expected the same professional standards in academe as they did in industry. Overwhelmingly, workplace professionals expected timely—for many, immediate—responses from people at the university, particularly faculty. Elsewhere, dissatisfaction with faculty communication was also common. A 2010 project on student expectations found that students were most disappointed with activities linked to student-faculty interaction, including communication frequency and faculty availability (Manuso, Desmarais, Parkinson, & Pettigrew, 2010). As the PD moves along, designer-researchers need to determine how to manage this demand.

The expectation that the university provide childcare was surprising, but it came from more than one focus group, so the

response was not a result of group dynamics. Given the number of people who answered that they had children at home and the number of people who did not answer, childcare may be a key consideration to investigate through PD. If the degrees are an imperative to the university, and childcare is imperative for recruitment and retention, it might be worth making childcare available.

**Library.** Table 8 identifies expectations about the library. Some participants expected the library to “serve” them rather than just be available to them. They wanted all course-related materials to be available online, thus eliminating the costs and chores of purchasing materials. They also expected librarians to gather materials and, as one person suggested and others agreed, send them to learners. If this transfer was not completed electronically, it might be done via postal service or courier. Future iterations in this PD need to determine how to manage these expectations and investigate the return on investment of such services, particularly if this audience is key to success. Britt Fagerheim (2013) provides hope for such students when describing new instructional materials and “embedded librarians” designed to serve students.

**Technology.** Participant responses about technology, as identified in Table 9, implied technology was a course topic or tool rather than a course delivery mode. In short, participants expected a business center so they could still function in their professional capacities from campus, and, to a lesser extent, to use technology to engage in the class while away from campus. Campus stakeholders need to be involved to determine how to address or manage these expectations.

### ***Expectations of the Learning Experience***

Participants also identified expectations and desires for support, resources, and their educational experience. In each case, future iterations of the PD research need to further investigate needed and desired characteristics of the learning experience.

**Place.** Given the background of the directive to build these degrees, place was a key concern during PD. While administration assumed campus should provide distance courses, participants called for more nuanced solutions (see Table 10). While participants did not reach consensus about how often to meet face-to-

face, it was clear that they expected to do so. They indicated that they valued interacting with others face-to-face, did not want to go to campus every week, but also did not want a distance degree. This highlighted the need to use PD research to consider flexible delivery options.

**Time.** Participants gave varied responses when asked when they would like to participate in graduate courses (see Table 11). Evenings, weekends, and holidays stood out as the most common responses. This feedback suggests, if tailoring to workplace professionals is paramount to the success of the programs, then faculty might need to rethink their work hours; although, further research needs to be conducted to see if other workplace professionals have similar expectations. One focus group session called for rethinking time altogether because the goal of education was not seat time but demonstrating knowledge and skills. This group suggested meeting at the beginning of the semester to go over the course and deciding as a class when and where it would meet. These responses further emphasized the need to consider flexible delivery options.

**Environment and delivery.** When asked about the learning environment, participants did not reach consensus (see Table 12). During one focus group, participants imagined remote learning centers where students shared physical workspace, could meet up with others, or could get their own work done. These would be located close to their homes or workplaces and would be offered in addition to class environment. Participants indicated there should be a variety of course structures both for face-to-face and alternative meetings (see Table 13). These responses underscore an increasing need to explore flexible delivery options.

**Curriculum.** The most common expectations, here, were: work focused on application, alternatives to theses, and program credit for workplace competencies (see Table 14). The Committee had expected to hear more about content. They were also hoping to obtain information to help them think about ways to combine theories, practices, and knowledge within interdisciplinary programs. Additional PD research needs to concentrate on content, and it needs to include workplace professionals as well as a more exhaustive literature review that synthesizes materials from across

these disciplines. The literature review would help the Committee members become familiar with the key research in the other fields.

**Instruction.** Despite a pattern of responses indicating participants did not want traditional instruction by meeting weekly on campus, when asked how they learned and about a worthwhile learning experience, most participants identified some sort of formal sessions (see Table 15). When combining this response with other responses about how participants learned—talking and experience—the data suggested that what people say they want and what they need may not completely align. Throughout the PD process, the Committee needs to identify how to best balance wants and needs.

## **Deciding Factors**

Although 66.66% of participants expressed interest in graduate work, the Committee wanted to know the deciding factors for enrolling and completing graduate programs.

### ***Reflections***

After reflecting upon their conversations, participants' primary thought was employers needed to offer incentives for additional education (see Table 16). Given the Committee was targeting workplace professionals, it is important for them to involve employers as stakeholders throughout the rest of the PD research and to determine potential incentives. Further, participants indicated there should not be any or, at most, low educational fees, and there should be low interest loans available. Given the Committee chose workplace professionals because of a perceived ability to afford "no breaks" programs, more work needs to be done to work with employer and campus stakeholders along with potential learners in order to see if the solutions are viable.

### ***Deciding Factors for Enrolling***

Key deciding factors for enrolling included *ethos* of both the program and faculty, flexibility in the structure of the program, and support from employers (see Table 17). The clinchers for workplace professionals to enroll, though, were program excellence and relevance (see Table 18), highlighting the significance of non-pecuniary benefits. Focus group participants wanted an improved personal status or employment situation. At least according to what participants said, then, even if the programs were flexible

and supported by employers, to get people to enroll, the programs would need excellence, relevance, and an influence on the potential learner's personal or professional status. The Committee needs to do more research to understand how participants define excellence, relevance, and personal and professional status.

### ***Barriers to Enrolling in or Completing Programs***

Workplace professionals identified the following barriers to enrolling or completing graduate programs: resources, content, faculty and pedagogy, personal motivation, knowledge, access, and poor quality students (see Table 19). As hypothesized, time was the biggest hurdle. Counter to the assumption that professionals had (or would be willing to spend) financial resources to enroll at all, no less to enroll in "no breaks" degrees, workplace professionals were concerned about costs. This finding aligns with results from other studies. Gayle V. Davidson-Shivers, Wilhelmina C. Savenye, and Karen L. Rasmussen (2012), for example, identified budgeting and the student body as two barriers to education. This finding stresses the importance of the Committee co-designing and co-researching with workplace professionals to determine ways to incentivize the programs and to bring data back to administration to discuss implications and solutions.

## **Discussion**

This discussion provides broad stroke profiles of participants based on this first pass at gathering information, and it offers additional notes about revising the apparatus for future use.

### **Profiles of Potential Students**

After analyses, it is common for PD designer-researchers to develop user profiles. The Committee needs more data before making more concrete, representative profiles, but they were able to produce a first glance at three emerging profiles they could use to move forward, profiles they will continue to develop as they continue their research. Because the following profiles emerged from participant responses, and because some participants had more than one response, participants may be included in more than one profile. For example, one respondent whose personal mission was to create the best journalism-training program in the country already hired employees but indicated an interest in further education to improve skills and increase knowledge.

Although the Committee thought it was investigating potential students and master's degree programs, three categories of participants emerged: those who may want graduate degrees, those who may want

accreditation or certificates, and those who may want to hire graduates. Unsurprisingly, there was a correlation between those with the lowest salaries and those who expressed interest in obtaining graduate credentials and, inversely, between those with the highest salaries and expressed interest in hiring.

One unexpected characteristic seemed to have some significance across categories: The majority of people interested in obtaining graduate credentials had been in their current position for one year or less, even if they had been in the field much longer. Further investigation is needed to determine the strength of this correlation. This characteristic may reflect that active membership in professional organizations includes a high percentage of job changers or that job changers were more likely than other members to participate in this study. The Committee plans to consider alternative ways of recruiting for future iterations.

### ***Pursuing graduate degree, 20% of respondents***

Based on this exploration, the profile for a person who aims to complete a graduate degree is anywhere between 20 and 69 years of age (based on one response in each category: 20-29, 40-49, and 60-69) with an undetermined gender, marital status, and number of dependents living at home. This person has a 67% likelihood of being in the lower salary range with a 33% chance of being in the upper range. The person could be a manager (65%) or freelancer (35%) without a stated goal, with the goal to keep doing the same thing, or with a goal to achieve something particular for which the education is integral. Participants who expressed interest in obtaining a graduate degree were in their field for an average of 13.6 years and a median of 13 years but in their current positions only one year or less. Further studies would look at potential students and employers separately. There needs to be more data about workplace professionals who may be interested in obtaining graduate degrees. The participants in this study seemed more likely to want to employ graduates, suggesting it was worth pursuing the PD research.

### ***Seeking professional credentials, 33.33% of respondents (only 7% of professional writers)***

Based on this investigation, the person who aims for professional credentials through accreditation or a certificate is most likely (5:3) male and married or is female and single or not revealing marital status, with a slightly higher chance than not of being between 40 and 49 years of age (2 respondents in this category)—or might be anywhere between 20 and 59

(based on one response in each category 20-29, 30-39, and 50-59). There is a 60% chance the person earns in the lower salary range, a 20% chance the person is in the highest category but sees this as a way to achieve a goal, or 20% chance they are in the middle category. Most likely, the person seeking professional credentials is seeking to keep doing what they are doing (40%) but could be looking to obtain a job at a larger corporation (20%), or, as stated, pursue a particular goal (20%). This person has an average of 19 years in the field with only about nine months in the current position. The person is likely a manager, executive, or owner, as all respondents fit this categorization.

Before professional writing faculty add this data to an argument for developing accreditation or certificate programs, they should consider that only one of these five respondents identifies as a professional writer. Three of these participants identify as journalists, and their conversations during the focus group indicated what they want to do requires accreditation, certificates, or both. This data is not to dissuade people from developing certificate programs—only to help interpret this profile.

### ***Looking to hire, 53% of respondents***

Based on this exploration, those interested in hiring graduates are most likely (75%) between 40-49, more likely to be male than female (5:3) and likely to work at a consultancy or as a freelancer (50%), in a corporation with over 500 people (37.5%), or at a non-government agency (12.5%). Of those who expressed an interest in hiring graduates, three (37.5%) were executives, two (25%) consultants or contractors, one (12.5%) an owner, one (12.5%) a manager, and one (12.5%) a writer. Based on the respondents in this case, it is 50% likely the person who wants to hire is from the upper salary range, 38% likely to be from the middle range, and 12% likely to be from the lowest salary range. It is most likely that those who want to hire have been in their field for 20 years (mode), with a mean of 16.88 years and a median of 13 years. It is 50% likely that they've been in their position for less than a year but with a mean of 3.75 years and a median of 5 years.

Those interested in hiring had a wider range of goals than those interested in pursuing graduate work. In addition to the goal of building the best journalism training program in the country, one participant aimed to hire and expand a consultancy, one to complete "a master's degree in organizational communication via distance education," two left the 5-year goal question blank, and one wrote, "None." Two responded differently: "Take it as it comes (always have)" and "Continue learning, enjoy, increase flexibility."

## **Lessons Learned: Apparatus**

As a note to other designer-researchers who might conduct similar studies, the Committee would change, or define, confusing or misleading wording on the questionnaire. The Committee recommends eliminating “suburb” from the zip code question because it assumes everyone lives or works in the suburbs; changing “award” under qualifications because people listed accolades rather than the degrees or certificates they received; considering changing any wording that assumes the final deliverable will necessarily be a master’s degree, unless the goal is to see how people respond to that idea; and, more importantly, clarifying about dependents, adding “zero” and “choose not to answer” so that researchers can determine whether a blank indicated zero or an ignored question.

In addition, the Committee suggests thinking more fully about the goal for obtaining information about disciplines at any given point in the process. If the goal is to have professionals fit into predefined disciplines, then use those categories; however, as the focus groups demonstrated, this led to some misleading answers. The Committee thought they had accounted for such problems because they recruited and received participants from the target professional organizations. If the goal is to think about how to better represent the actual disciplines and roles of people at these organizations, then, perhaps, let participants fill in answers. Most likely, the purpose and method will vary throughout the PD research.

Focus groups should focus on what researchers really want to know. Future focus groups facilitated by the Committee might focus less on finances and more on participant needs. In this case, the Committee was responding to a particular directive from administration and wanted data to be able to address it. The Committee would like a future group to “dream” about their ideal degree in these areas before being asked any further questions. This setup would help the Committee see what people wanted without being influenced by the researchers’ framework of possibilities.

## **Conclusion**

The number of participants interested in hiring potential students suggested a need for such graduates; thus, it was worth the researchers’ time to conduct a next iteration in this PD. The preliminary research revealed working professionals bring a complex set of performance expectations for graduate programs, some more unrealistic than others. Working professionals expected the university environment to mimic the professional environment and provide perks like childcare. The professionals knew when and how they wanted to learn but had less input about the actual cur-

riculum, which the researchers wanted to know more about. Developing a program meeting the needs of working professionals would be a balancing act. At least according to this first iteration, programs would need to be affordable but offer a reputation of excellence and distinction for graduates. They must benefit the student with both financial and non-pecuniary gains. Programs have to be flexible but not too flexible. Programs have to be up to date on the latest technological advances but still offer personal face-to-face interactions. The next iteration of research would be designed to answer questions identified throughout the findings.

## Epilogue

At the time this first iteration ended, the project was put on hold for a number of reasons, including hiring two PW faculty members. There were larger problems, though, including increasing tension among disciplines. Tension was stated before disciplines started working together, revealed during the literature review, and indicated through snide comments participants made during the focus groups. Additionally, during an open session to discuss progress toward the graduate degrees, faculty from across the school questioned participatory design (PD). Students, they argued, could not possibly know what they needed. The PD process illuminated additional obstacles within the university setting. Participants gave little input about content and a lot of input about the logistics and reputation needed to convince them to enroll in the program, missing the primary intent of the study.

In the end, a full professor decided to resign after completing the initial PD research. The resignation may have been hastened by this PD research for developing professional degrees, but it existed among contentions already prevalent across campus. A chair and a vice president had previously been released and, in a demonstration of solidarity, several remaining faculty members had simultaneously resigned their administrative appointments. These resignations and changes were a moment for reflection, where critical discourse analyses might determine the fate of many programs and departments on campus, where everyone from the highest levels of the university would need to assess the institutions' values, vision, mission, structures, and practices and then determine what comes next.

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## Appendix A: Focus Group Registration Form & Questionnaire

As a note, in order to retain confidentiality, all identifying information about the institution has been removed from these materials. The included documents retain errors. It is slightly possible that any errors on the questionnaire could have influenced perceptions of the researchers and, by association, the potential programs or even campus, particularly given its current context.

### Personal Information

1. Name:

2. Suburb where you a) live: b) postcode:

3. Suburb where you a) work: b) postcode:

4. Age:

20-29

30-39

40-49

50-59

60 and over

5.  Male  Female

6. Marital/Family situation:

Single

Married/partner

Number of dependents living with you:

7. Do you have a tertiary qualifications/s (e.g., diplomas, certificates, degrees?)

Name of Award	Name of Institution	Date Awarded

8. Do you consider yourself: (more than one may apply)

- Journalist
- Professional Writer
- Public Relations Practitioner
- Other:

9. How would you describe your interest in a professional postgraduate program? (more than one may apply)

- Enrollment in the course
- Accreditation of the course by a professional body
- Employment of graduates of the course
- Other:

## **Employment**

10. What position do you currently hold:

11. How long have you been in that position?

12. How long have you worked in your chosen field?

13. Would you categorize yourself as (more than one may apply):

- An employer
- An employee of an organization
- Approximately how many people in this organization? \_\_\_\_\_

Is the organization:

- Corporate
- Government
- Non government organization
- Consultancy
- Other: \_\_\_\_\_

- A partner in a partnership arrangement

How many partners? \_\_\_\_\_

How many people? \_\_\_\_\_

- Self employed

Do you employ other people?  Yes  No

If you answered yes, how many other people do you employ?

full-time \_\_\_\_\_

part-time or freelance \_\_\_\_\_

- Freelance

14. Your gross annual salary:

20,000 - 39,000

60,000 - 79,000

40,000 - 49,000

80,000 plus

15. Were you previously in another field (or fields)?  Yes  No

If so, what was it and how long were you there?

16. What is your short-term (five year) career goal?

### **Professional Development Activities**

17. Do you attend professional development further education courses/conferences?

Yes  No

18. How many have you attended [in the last year]?

19. How many do you usually attend?

\_\_\_\_\_ per two years

\_\_\_\_\_ per year

\_\_\_\_\_ per six months

\_\_\_\_\_ per month

20. What professional associations are you a member of?

<b>Name of Association</b>	<b>Describe Your Level of Activity (e.g. member only, committee member)</b>

21. What was the reason for joining the above association(s)?

## **Appendix B: Focus Group Questions**

Rationales for the questions are included in square brackets. Prompts were given after asking questions only when they were needed to spark conversation or seek more specificity. Errors on the focus group script and note-taking form had no negative impact on the research because the researchers were the only people to see them.

The descriptions of the following questions have been paraphrased from Richard Krueger in his book *Focus Groups* and from his seminar course in focus groups. Thanks Dick!!

Focus Group

Number

Date

Time

Place

Participants

Seating Arrangement

Moderator

Co-Moderator

### **Opening Question**

1. Please introduce yourself and tell us something you have always wanted to learn but haven't gotten around to . . . yet!

[Rationale: to give each participant an opportunity to speak and to share some personal information with the rest of the group, which underscores a characteristic they all have in common]

### **Introductory Questions**

2. How do you currently learn new knowledge and skills about your field?

[Rationale: to get the participants to think about learning new skills or knowledge as something they are already doing; to find out how they currently learn new information.]

3. Think about something you have recently learned which you have been able to apply at work. eg., knowledge which has given you new insight to your work; something technical; or inter-personal, such as how to communicate more effectively with a co-worker.

- a. What are some of the things you have recently learned?  
general knowledge  
technical skills  
management skills
- b. What made it worthwhile?
- c. How could it have been improved?

Prompts

What other categories?

Where were you? (atmosphere, noise level, what else)

Who were you with? (co-workers, family, students, alone, who else)

How did you learn it? (taught by other, self taught, etc.)

What made it worthwhile?

How could it have been improved?

[Rationale: to have participants visualize a learning experience that probably occurred outside the classroom; to have participants recognize their current participation in alternative learning approaches; to have them consider the factors which contribute to the learning experience - person, place, etc; to create a group experience in which everyone participates and reinforces the researchers desire for details of personal experience.]

### **Transitional Questions**

4. To what extent have you looked at existing post graduate degree programs?
  - a. For what reasons have you looked at these programs?

- b. What were the positives and the negatives of these programs?

[Rationale: to determine the extent to which the group is interested in a postgraduate degree by seeing what steps they have actually taken in looking at other programs; to examine “why” they are interested in a postgraduate degree by looking at the features of current programs they are interested in (attributes) and what their motivations are (influences)].

## Key Questions

5. A full-cost postgraduate program is one in which the students pay for the majority of their university courses and which is sensitive to consumer needs and expectations.
  - a. What are your expectations and needs as an adult learner in terms of how, when and where you want to receive postgraduate education?

Prompts

types of courses

learning environment (university classrooms, at home, seminars . . .)

modes of delivery . . .

types of students (same degree seeking students or mixed)

types of professors (academic only or field experience too)

Note: Keep in mind that the types of services you want will also determine the costs of the program:

Where would you like to learn in a postgraduate program?

When would you like to learn in a postgraduate program?

How would you like to learn in a postgraduate program?

Participatory Design for Graduate Programs

What subjects should be covered in a postgraduate program?

Who should be able to participate in a postgraduate program?

Who should teach a postgraduate program?

What knowledge, skills and experience [teachers] should they have?

What types of administrative support would you want in this program?

Prompts

contacting professors and tutors (email, phone-in office hours, in-person in office hours, fax)

what other services?

- b. What types of postgraduate student services would you want in this program?

Potential Prompts

library access (checkout length, other libraries); parking; computers, fax, photocopying, and telephone access; learning assistance; child care; email; address and access; what other services?; contacting professors and tutors (email, phone-in office hours, in-person in office hours, answering machine, fax); what other services

- c. Out of all of these things what are the essential features that the fees must cover?

[Rationale: to introduce the concept of full fee-cost degrees and to determine the types of courses, modes of learning and delivery, types of students and professors, and administrative and student services they would want in a full-cost program.]

6. There are three designs proposed for full-cost postgraduate degree programs. One program would be developed to cross-skill areas in Professional Writing, Journalism, and Public Relations

to offer a broad based degree. The second design would offer a highly specialized degree in each of the prospective areas of Professional Writing, Journalism and Public Relations. And the third design would be a combination of two of these programs.

[Rationale: to introduce the interdisciplinary degrees and to determine which would be most appealing and why (attributes)].

7. [No overview because 6 was numbered without questions]

- a. Which of these three degree designs to you find most viable?
- b. What would be the advantages of the broad based degree?
- c. What would be the disadvantages of the broad based degree?
- d. What would be the advantages of a specialized degree?
- e. What would be the disadvantages of a specialized degree?
- f. What would be the advantages of the combination degree? (which two programs would be a good combination)?
- g. What would be the disadvantages of the combination degree?

[Rationale: To determine whether participants prefer to propose specialized degrees or broad based degree programs and what they consider to be the advantages and disadvantages of each.]

- h. What special features are you looking for from postgraduate education?
- i. what are the career benefits of a postgraduate degree?
- j. what are the personal benefits of a postgraduate degree?
- k. what would encourage you to enter a postgraduate degree program?

8. What would be the clincher? What would make this program a sale for you?

Prompts

employer tuition reimbursement; study leave; promotion; higher salary; etc.

distance learning; flexible academic year; entry and reentry;  
assessment process/review

[Rationale: To identify incentives or support which could be provided to increase employment; to present to employers as ways in which they could promote postgraduate education for employees. To present to university administration to promote postgraduate enrollment.]

9. What are the current or past barriers which have prevented you from pursuing a postgraduate degree?

[Rationale: To identify barriers which prevent potential student from enrolling in postgraduate programs.]

### **Ending Questions**

The purpose of these questions is to bring closure to the end of the discussion and to enable the participants to think back on previous comments. These questions are critical to the analysis.

#### ***Summary Question***

10. Is this an adequate summary?

[This question gives a summary of the key points which have been raised during this discussion and focus primarily on the key questions. The assistant moderator gives a brief 3-minute summary after which the participants asked "is this an adequate summary?"]

#### ***Final Question***

[This is a standardized question asked at the end of the focus group to determine that nothing of significant importance has been left out of the discussion. The moderator gives a short overview of the purpose of the study and asks the final question "Have we missed anything?"]

[It is best to have 10 minutes left of the allotted time for this question. This question is particularly important at the beginning of a series of focus groups to assure that the questioning route is complete and logical.]

Have we missed anything?

The purpose of this research is to determine the interest in full cost postgraduate degree programs in the fields of Professional Writing, Journalism, and Public Relations. IN part, we are interested in knowing what potential candidates want to learn, by what methods and ways of learning, and the services and conditions which will aid them in successfully completing their degree. Is there anything that we have missed that you feel is important for us to explore in future research on this topic? Do you have any advice for us?

Thank you for joining us this evening.

Your contribution of time and insight is much appreciated. If you have further questions you would like to ask about the degree programs, [researchers] will be available to answer them.

## Appendix C: Tables and Figure

**Table 1. Personal Data about Gender, Age Range, and Family Makeup of Participants**

	Focus Group				Participants	
	Combined	PW	MJ	PR	Total Number	Percent of
<b>Gender</b>						
Female	3	1	2	1	7	46.66
Male	2	2	3	1	8	53.33
<b>Age Range</b>						
20-29	1	-	-	1	2	13.33
30-39	1	-	2	-	3	20.00
40-49	1	1	2	-	4	26.67
50-59	2	2	-	1	5	33.33
60-69						
No Answer			1		1	6.67
<b>Family Makeup</b>						
Single	1	1	1	1	4	26.67
Married	4	2	1	1	9	60.00
Blank	-	-	1	-	1	6.67
People with Children at Home	2	1	2	1	6	40.00
					8 blank	53.33 blank

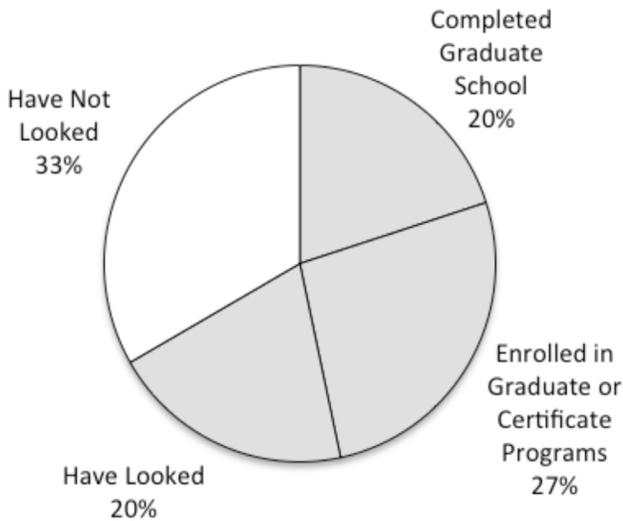
**Table 2. Professional Data about Participants' Experience, Disciplines, Positions, Salary, and Interests Regarding Post Baccalaureate Education**

Profession	Years		Current Position		Organization			Inter-ested in		
	In Position	In Field	Role	As	Kind	Number of People	Salary Quartile	Hiring	Accreditation	Graduate Degree
PW Consultant Training	<1	1.5	Editor	Casual Employee	Non govern- ment	200	Q2			
PW Consultant Training	5.5	5.5	Owner Consultant	Self Employed Freelance	Self Consul- tancy	2-3	Q3		×	
PW Training Training	<1	20	Contractor	Freelance	Self		Q2	×		
PW Management Consultant	2	20	Senior Consultant	Employee	Consultancy	12	Q3	×		
PW Journalism	<1	6	Writer	Freelance	Self		Q1	×		×
PW Journalism	7	17	Owner	Self Employed	Consultancy		Q2	×		
Journalism Training	1	20	Manager	Employer	Corporate	2000	Q2		×	×
Journalism Training	<1	23	Manager	Employer Employee	Corporate	8000	Q3		×	
Journalism	4	12	Chief Corre- spondent	Employer Employee	Corporate	500	Q3	×		
Journalism Training	1	15	Manager	Employee	Corporate	5000	Q1		×	×

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Journalism	1	15	Network Editor	Employee	Corporate	700	Q2	×		
PR	<1	8	Executive	Employee	Corporate	700	Q1		×	
PR	5	20	Executive	Employer Employee	Corporate	3500	Q3	×		
PR	10	25	Manager	Employee	Non Government	160		×		
PR Communications Consultant	<1	15	Executive	Self Employed	Consultancy		Q2			

Notes. In the Profession column, the first term indicates the discipline participants chose from a list; the italicized terms were provided by participants. "Quartile": Q2 is the median 50th percentile, Q1 is the lowest 25th percentile, and Q3 is the highest 25th percentile.



**Figure 1: Participants Who Have Looked at Post Baccalaureate Education**

**Table 3: Workplace Professionals’ Reasons for Having Considered Post Baccalaureate Education**

Category of Responses	Responses
Employment factors (9)	better compete in the market (2) receive training (2) obtain job (2) become more specialized (1) gain practical experience (1) keep up (1)
Educational factors (5)	learn to balance theory, practice, and research (2) do something properly (1) pursue an academic life (1) take time out (1)
Environmental factors (4)	talk to others (2) complete it (1) told to do so (1)

**Table 4: Workplace Professionals’ Perceived Benefits of Post Baccalaureate Education**

Category of Responses	Responses
Knowledge (9)	general knowledge (3) enhance practice (3) understand the next step up (1) think theoretically (1) identify future trends (1)
Personal benefits (8)	more money (3) build confidence (2) change from the day-to-day (2) curiosity (1)
Marketability (7)	ability to move markets/broaden options (2) find recruits (1) do a better job/study craft (2) gain qualifications (1) network (1)

**Table 5: Workplace Professionals' Expectations of Faculty**

Category of Responses	Responses
Experience (32)	industry background (8) industry and academic background (7) academic background (4) guest lecturers (4) practitioners (2) from many disciplines (2) current specialists (1) broad-based (1) from the media (1) at different levels in their careers (1) have similar experiences [to what is unclear] (1)
Reputation (8)	recognizable names (6) reputation (1) degree (1)
Communication (3)	fair (1) believes in students (1) humility (1)
Engagement (2)	committed (1) not burned out (1)

**Table 6: Workplace Professionals' Expectations of Graduates**

<b>Category of Responses</b>	<b>Responses</b>
Understanding of industry (15)	understand workings of industry (4) broad-based understanding of industry (2) basic understanding of field (2) for undergraduate students practical (1) know theory (1) understand nuts and bolts (1) for graduate students know more than nuts and bolts (1) know practical but also larger concerns (1)
Experience (14)	degree does not matter (5) practical experience (5) not too theoretical (1) have taken short courses (1) can understand technical jargon (1) have training in all areas (1)

**Table 7: Workplace Professionals' Expectations of Support from Faculty and Staff**

<b>Category of Responses</b>	<b>Responses</b>
Communication outside of class (16)	talk directly to the person (not staff or voice-mail) during the workday (7) definite contact hours with faculty (6) 24-hour turnaround from faculty (1) and staff (1) ability for asynchronous communication (1)
University support (5)	child care (4) technical support (1)
Faculty regarding class (2)	good organization (1) materials arrive on time (1)

**Table 8: Workplace Professionals' Expectations of Support from the Library**

<b>Category of Responses</b>	<b>Responses</b>
Access to (7)	Quality library (1) overseas materials (2) all materials to be online/all required materials to be online (3) indexes (1) relevant, current articles (1)
Services (5)	support staff (3) photocopying services where the library copies materials and sends them to students (1) close parking (1)
Hours (5)	long hours (3) before work (1) long hours on weekends (1)

**Table 9: Workplace Professionals' Expectations of Technological Support**

<b>Category of Responses</b>	<b>Responses</b>
Students (6)	assume all have computers/skills (4) don't assume they have any computer skills (2)
Resources (5)	access to fax, email, photocopying, and computers on campus (5) to rent computers (1) internet access to course off campus (1) access to relevant media (1) access to required resources discussion lists with faculty (1) video-conferencing with people across the country (1)
Standards (4)	set industry standards (4)

**Table 10: Workplace Professionals’ Expectations about Where They Learn**

Category of Responses	Responses
Specific places (8)	worksite (3) in the city (2) not at the office (1) at the center of industry (1) and not at the remote campus (2)
More nuanced responses (15)	would travel no more than ½ hour/short distance (4) be happy to travel (3) travel two times per year (3) no travel (2) travel once per month (1) long trip occasionally (1) to this place once every three months (1)

**Table 11: Workplace Professionals’ Expectations about When They Learn**

Category of Responses	Responses										
Time of day	<table border="1"> <tr> <td>4 pm (2)</td> <td>after 10 pm (1)</td> </tr> <tr> <td>6-8/9 pm (2)</td> <td>evenings (6)</td> </tr> <tr> <td>8-10 am (1)</td> <td>mornings (2)</td> </tr> <tr> <td>10 am to noon (1)</td> <td>never (2)</td> </tr> <tr> <td>before 6 am (1)</td> <td></td> </tr> </table>	4 pm (2)	after 10 pm (1)	6-8/9 pm (2)	evenings (6)	8-10 am (1)	mornings (2)	10 am to noon (1)	never (2)	before 6 am (1)	
4 pm (2)	after 10 pm (1)										
6-8/9 pm (2)	evenings (6)										
8-10 am (1)	mornings (2)										
10 am to noon (1)	never (2)										
before 6 am (1)											
Time	weekends (5) holidays (4)/ Easter (1) summers (1) in their own time (2) less than 15 meetings a term (1) not in a whole year course (1) asynchronously (2) synchronously (2) less than four hours on site (1)										

**Table 12: Workplace Professionals' Expectations about Their Learning Environment**

Category of Responses	Responses
	tutorial environment (3) university center (2) place to interact (2) something other than a university (2) an open university (1) a self-paced learning center (1) something other than a lecture hall (1) something high-tech (1) informal (1) at home (1)

**Table 13: Workplace Professionals' Expectations about Delivery of their Degree Program**

Category of Responses	Responses
Course structure	group activities (5) flexible (4) no lectures (4) no fixed lectures (2) lectures (1) lectures for general principles only (1) seminars (2) it depends on what they are doing—education, training, skills, or theory (1) formal education not just self-paced (1) teaching others (1) study groups (1) self-learning (1)
Media	internet (5) computer-based training (3) distance (2) video (2) teleconferences (2) no computers (1) no phones (1) written materials (1)
Interaction with faculty	guaranteed one-on-one time with faculty (2)

**Table 14: Workplace Professionals' Expectations about the Curriculum**

Category of Responses	Responses
	application (6) thesis alternatives (4) relevance (2) trends (1) range of electives (1) different skill sets (1) specific information (1) general information (1) training modules (1) internships (1) industry (1) sponsorship (1) competency based entry criteria (1) not two years of work (1)

**Table 15: Workplace Professionals' Expectations about Instruction**

<b>Category of Responses</b>	<b>Responses</b>
Formal sessions (14)	workshops (3) short courses (2) conferences (2) external training (2) internal training (2) in-house courses or groups (2) adult education classes (1) seminars (1)
Talking (9)	to others (3) colleagues in same position (2) people in office (2) other agencies (1) clients (1)
Experience (9)	as you go by doing (5) modeling (1) transfer of skills (2) send people out (1)
Reading (8)	journals (3) trade publications (2) books (2) other research (1)
Technology (5)	internet (3) videos (2)
Teaching (4)	others (3) self in unstructured way (3)

**Table 16: Participant Reflections on the Focus Groups**

Category of Responses	Responses
Employer role (13)	reward employees who finish with promotions (3) raises (4) paid release time to pursue the program (4) should offer incentives (1) work experience should count toward course credit (1)
Courses (10)	courses and program should have a good structure (1) students should be given clear notes (2) whole course and expectations should be made available to students from the first day (2) coursework should prepare them to be qualified overseas [journalists have such a certifications] (5)
Services (6)	not have to physically bring in materials (3) should be a courier service (extending to the full range of work and home locations) for dropping off or picking up materials, books, and papers (3)
Delivery (4)	synchronous work (2) self-paced (1) divided for learning styles (1) not involve other people (1)
Finances (4)	no fees (2) low fees (1) low interest loans (1)
Admission (1)	no entrance criteria (1)

**Table 17: Workplace Professionals' Deciding Factors for to Enroll**

Category of Responses	Responses
Ethos (8)	associated with high profile people (3) well established (1) excellent faculty (1) the right person teaching (1) relies upon guest lecturers (1) includes overseas people (1)
Structure (7)	multiple exit points (certificate, for example) (2) entry/reentry possible (1) flexible (1) flexible academic year (1) negotiate contracts (1) no grades—assessment for self only (1)
Support (5)	employer funds (3) employer provides study leave (2)
Communication (5)	treated as clients/university has the attitude of providing service (2) faculty tell how to make something right not what is wrong (2) opportunity to talk to others (1)
Content (4)	has a mix of ideas (1) is relevant (1) includes a mix of industries (1) includes overseas materials (1)
Marketability (4)	employers find the program credible (2) leads to a new job (1) helps further careers (1)
Affordability (2)	

**Table 18: Workplace Professionals' Clinchers for Enrolling**

Category of Responses	Responses
Excellence (7)	industry names associated as partners/patrons (2) reputation of faculty (2) reputation of institution (2) credibility (1)
Relevance (7)	content (3) relevance/not required to do irrelevant work (2) accredited (1) do hands on work, not all theory (1)
Flexibility (3)	options (1) within parameters (1) too flexible is not marketable (1)
Attitude (2)	see me as client (1) I feel wanted by institution (2)

**Table 19: Barriers to Workplace Professionals Enrolling**

<b>Category of Responses</b>	<b>Responses</b>
Resources (15)	time (9) money (5) money and time (1)
Content (5)	relevant (1) current (1) not given what is expected (1) not what looking for (2)
Faculty/pedagogy (3)	not involved (1) lack of guidance (1) busywork in course (1)
Knowledge (2)	faculty not knowledgeable (1) [school] not watching market trends (1)
Personal motivation (2)	
Access (2)	ease of access to materials (1) inflexible (1)
Poor quality students (1)	