

PAC Position Statement – QAA Subject Benchmarks for Business and Management 2021 (in collaboration with BAM and PSA Special Interest Groups)

Introduction business environment's

Since 2015, the date of the last QAA subject benchmark review, the socio-economic context has changed, and the speed of that change continues to accelerate. Within this, the relationship between public, private and not-for-profit sectors, and the relationship between individuals (as consumers and citizens) and organisations, has changed. This has created new challenges and there has been a greater need for partnership working. Consequently, there is a greater need for more explicit knowledge, understanding and skills that focus on these new interdependencies, organisations and sectoral differences.

QAA Subject Benchmark for Business and Management

The current benchmark statement highlights the importance of the business environment's dynamism and vibrancy; key to this is understanding organisational hybridity.

Organisational forms have become increasingly complex and sectors more permeable. Graduates need a greater awareness of this, as well as the ways in which the sectors have become so inter-related. The skills needed to navigate this increasingly complex landscape are critical for business and management graduates, especially given the increasing prevalence of portfolio careers.

Need for Greater Recognition of Public Services

The public sector represents 35-40% of GDP and 15-20% of total UK employment (more in the devolved regions). Even more are employed in hybrid organisations responsible for public service delivery. Given this, knowledge, understanding and skills related to public services are highly valuable for the employability of business and management graduates. These roles require different skills, and often operate within a different context to private sector business.

The nature of public discourse has been significantly influenced by the 'post-truth', fake news era. There has also been an increasing number of debates around the relationship between sectors and the different skills required to work within and between these different contexts. The examples of Grenfell Tower and Carillion highlight failures in the relationship between public and private organisations. Whilst public organisations can and should learn from business perspectives, and vice versa, the private sector cannot operate without the regulatory and supportive environment that the public sector creates. Grenfell Tower and Carillion provide stark examples of what happens when this goes wrong.

The UK Government's localism agenda has promoted the ability of individuals and groups to self-organise and manage public resources on behalf of communities. Yet there are questions about the capacities that communities have to implement localism as conceived by government. Existing approaches to entrepreneurship and enterprise development skills may support this agenda but must be located within a public service context. This reflects the diversity of the employment landscape and requires richer graduate skills to lead the co-production of future public services.

Conclusion

We believe that public services must be given greater prominence with the QAA Subject Benchmark statement for business and management. This would enable students to fully appreciate the ever-increasingly complex, dynamic and interdependent world that

organisations, individuals and indeed nations find themselves operating within. As the UK Learned Society for Social Work and Public Administration, we are committed to working with the QAA to ensure that the subject benchmark statements remain relevant and fit for purpose.

This position statement was developed at an away day in Edinburgh on 12 March 2019.

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