

Elevating Professional Skills Through Authentic, Scaffolded Learning in a Financial Planning Capstone

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Abstract

This paper presents an evidence-based redesign of a financial planning capstone unit in an accredited Australian financial planning degree. Five innovations were introduced to strengthen students' professional capability development: (1) an authentic, dynamic client case; (2) a practitioner-led workshop on client engagement; (3) layered scaffolding to support digital literacy and professional communication skills; (4) a redesigned assessment structure featuring role-based expert pitches evaluated by industry judges; and (5) structured teamwork supports to develop collaborative capability. The impact of the redesign was evaluated by triangulating student performance, student evaluations, thematic analysis of reflective accounts, and an independent expert peer review. Findings demonstrate improved communication, teamwork, and perceived job readiness, alongside stronger alignment between assessment tasks and real-world financial planning practice.

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Introduction

In the wake of financial advice scandals such as Storm Financial in 2009, the Australian Government raised the educational entry requirements for financial advisers with the introduction of the Corporations Amendment (Professional Standards of Financial Advisers) Act 2017.² Amongst other requirements, the increased standards require new financial advisers to have an approved degree listed in the Corporations (Relevant Providers Degrees, Qualifications and Courses Standard) Determination 2021.

As a result of these regulatory changes and increased industry demand (Johnson et al., 2016), the Australian higher education sector experienced a proliferation of financial planning degrees at the postgraduate and undergraduate levels from 1995, when only two degrees were offered, to 88 approved financial planning degrees at the undergraduate level and 91 at the postgraduate level offered by Australian higher education providers across all states and territories (excluding the Northern Territory) by 2024. Although prescribing technical competencies in key areas is an encouraging step toward establishing financial planning as a profession, technical knowledge alone is insufficient to ensure that graduates are

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² Storm Financial was an Australian financial planning company which collapsed in 2009 after funnelling clients' retirement savings into highly leveraged investments, resulting in substantial losses (Parliamentary Joint Committee on Corporations and Financial Services, 2009).

“job ready” (Goetz et al., 2005; Brimble et al., 2012; West et al., 2019).

One potential solution to improve graduate job readiness is to develop professional capabilities through real-world learning in collaboration with industry, typically in the form of structured work-integrated learning (WIL) placements such as paraplanning traineeships (Smith, 2012). However, following the Hayne Royal Commission in 2019, major Australian banks withdrew from offering wealth advisory services, causing a contraction in large-scale, structured WIL opportunities.³ With students reliant on small to medium-sized advice practices, many of which lack formal internship structures, universities face increasing pressure to create authentic, practice-oriented learning experiences within the academic setting.

Guided by research on authentic learning in developing professional capability (see e.g., Kaider et al., 2017; Stein et al., 2004), this paper presents an evidence-based redesign of the financial planning capstone unit, combining authentic, dynamic client scenarios with industry-led, applied skills workshops to replicate the kinds of professional learning experiences typically gained through workplace settings. The redesign of this unit was approached as a collaborative effort among industry partners, learning advisors, and academic experts to create scaffolds that support the development of professional skills, including digital literacy, teamwork, and communication with clients.⁴

To evaluate the redesigned learning experience, multiple sources of evidence were triangulated, including student academic performance, student evaluations, reflective accounts, and an independent expert peer review. Together, these data provided early evidence of improved student capability development and stronger

alignment between assessment activities and professional practice. Yet, future improvements are needed to ensure that skills-development scaffolding is built at both the degree and unit levels. The efficient use of financial planning software was identified in the post-redesign student feedback as an ongoing challenge. This feedback indicates that the support designed to develop students’ digital capability requires recalibration. Digital capability is a key professional skill that financial planning graduates need to adapt to technological advancements such as digital and mobile advice (Power, 2017). Another area of future exploration is establishing a community of best practices to ensure that financial planning educators work together to improve future offerings of financial planning degrees and uphold a high-quality standard of educational practice.

The paper has practical implications for financial planning educators: academics may find the detailed description of the financial planning capstone redesign and its evaluation helpful when reviewing and updating their learning and assessment activities. It also offers value to practitioners by demonstrating how their expertise can be utilized in more sustained, strategic ways beyond guest lectures to help shape the next generation of financial planners, thereby strengthening the connection between financial planning education and the profession.

This paper proceeds as follows: Section 2 outlines the teaching approach in the financial planning capstone and introduces the innovations implemented through the redesign; Section 3 reports on the impact of the redesign on student performance and student evaluations, including an independent expert peer review. Section 4 discusses the educator and student reflections on the redesign experience, and Section 5 concludes.

³ The Royal Commission into Misconduct in the Banking, Superannuation and Financial Services Industry (2017-2019), commonly known as the Hayne Royal Commission, was a major public inquiry uncovering systemic compliance failures in Australia. The findings led to substantial remediation costs, reputational damage, and increased regulatory scrutiny, prompting major

banks to withdraw from providing financial planning services.

⁴ Scaffolds in a teaching context refer here to instructional and other supports to assist students in completing complex professional tasks. For a discussion of how teaching scaffolds have been defined in the education literature, refer to Simons and Klein (2007).

Redesigning the teaching approach in the financial planning capstone

At this Australian university, students complete a financial planning major as part of their undergraduate business degree. The major consists of financial planning units covering various aspects of financial advice, such as retirement strategies, including superannuation⁵, insurance and risk planning, and investment management. This paper focuses on the capstone unit, the final unit of the major, which draws together the various areas covered in previous units. The capstone objective is to build students' capabilities in:

- i. collecting and analyzing client data to develop innovative and effective financial planning recommendations;
- ii. professionally communicating their recommendations to clients in writing as well as verbally;
- iii. providing ethical advice in the best interest of their clients by working individually and in teams; and
- iv. identifying their professional strengths, abilities, and values by critical reflection.

To achieve these objectives, students are tasked to create a Statement of Advice (SoA) in teams of four using financial planning software for a hypothetical client case study.⁶ Since the preparation of a SoA is complex and adheres to strict regulatory requirements (see s947B, s947C Corporations Act 2001; Australian Securities and Investments Commission [ASIC] 2021), the task has been broken down into the following assessment items (including the assessment weight towards students' final result):

1. Client interview and client data analysis (20%);
2. Preparation of SoA (50%); and
3. Presentation and personal reflection (30%).

In the first assessment item, students individually collect and organize the client data in a fact find and report findings from analyzing the client data in a client file note. Students need to summarize key insights from their analysis in an email to the client to obtain their agreement on the scope of the advice and the financial objectives.

The second assessment item requires students to work in teams to develop a compliant SoA using state-of-the-art financial planning software (XPlan) based on their findings from the first assessment item. Students can compare their notes from their first assessment to find the most appropriate recommendations for the client.

The third assessment item consists of two parts. The first part is a 15-minute presentation. The second part of the final assessment consists of reflecting on their learning, critically evaluating the development of their professional skills, and identifying the values that define their future professional identity.

Given the centrality of the capstone unit for developing students' professional capabilities, it was important to identify the barriers and shortcomings students encountered in their learning experience. Reviewing student evaluations from previous offerings revealed a wide array of responses to whether they agree that this unit provided them with the opportunity to improve their knowledge and skills. Ratings ranged from strongly agree (5) to disagree (1). Students' comments such as "*client information was unrealistic*," "*a little more structure regarding the first two assignments*," "*there was no guidance about what should be included*," and "*even just explaining the basic expectations that would have been helpful*" suggest that the assessment needed to be redesigned, and support was needed in completing these tasks. Consequently, a redesign was implemented in 2023. The main innovations of the redesign are presented in Table 1.

⁵ Superannuation refers to Australia's mandatory retirement savings system, where employers are required to contribute a legislated percentages of an employee's earnings to a regulated trust fund that invests on the employee's behalf until retirement.

⁶ Under the Australian Corporations Act 2001 (s 946), financial advisers must provide a SoA to retail clients when proposing financial product recommendations.

Table 1: Summary of Key Teaching Innovations in the Financial Planning Capstone Redesign

Innovation	Problem or Feedback Prompting the Change	Description of the Innovation	How It Was Implemented
1. Authentic, industry-validated client case with staged ethical complexity	Prior case lacked realism and depth due to missing practitioner input	A comprehensive case based on practitioner feedback, including staged disclosure mid-semester to simulate a change in client circumstances to which students have to respond by considering the impact on financial strategies and client relationship	Developed draft case → reviewed by program lead + two advisers → integrated revisions. Mid-semester “curveball” released with ensuing class discussion on compliance and ethics.
2. Practitioner-modelled client discovery workshop using student-generated questions	Student feedback indicated a lack of confidence in their capability and a desire for more guidance early in the semester	Practitioner workshop modelling professional communication and rapport-building. Live critique of student developed client questions during the workshop	Each student posts 2–3 questions on a digital forum → instructor forwards thematically collated pool of questions to advisers → advisers pre-screen questions and provide feedback to help students get a better understanding of how to conduct an effective client meeting.
3. Layered scaffolding of digital and professional skills support	Student evaluations indicated gaps in skills development	Integrated labs and skills workshop to develop digital competency and professional capabilities, such as ethical reasoning, teamwork and communication.	XPlan labs (Weeks 2 & 9); ethics masterclass (Week 7); teamwork workshop (Week 5); pitching/presentation skills workshop (Week 11); and career advancement class (Week 13)
4. Redesigned assessment structure with role-based expert pitches and industry judging	Previous assessment (pre-recorded team video) rewarded generic content repetition and lacked individual accountability	Each student assumes an “expert role” (retirement, risk, investment, etc.) and delivers a live pitch to an industry-judging panel that ‘probes’ each student on their contribution to their team’s SoA.	Students present financial strategies developed in their ‘expert role’ in a 3-minute live pitch → industry judging panel asks probing questions and scores pitches using a structured rubric (Appendix A).
5. Structured teamwork supports to develop collaborative capability	Research identified teamwork as a challenging graduate skill to develop often affected by social loafing and coordination issues (De Prada et al. 2022; Chang & Brickman, 2018).	Teamwork support scaffolds include role assignment, meeting documentation, and peer evaluation to promote accountability, clarify responsibilities, and support team coordination.	Designated role assignment, including team lead, is implemented through the team contract → teamwork is ‘practiced’ through structured meetings, each recorded using a guided meeting template → meeting records and anonymous peer-evaluations inform individual teamwork marks.

Note: This table summarises the five (5) key innovations of the capstone redesign, including the specific problem or gap addressed, details about the innovation and how they were implemented.

The following discussion provides additional details on the teaching innovations presented in Table 1.

Innovation #1 One of the main changes was to improve the authenticity of the hypothetical client case study, which all student teams used as the basis for preparing their financial strategies.⁷ A draft of the case study was circulated to the financial planning subject area coordinator, a former practicing financial adviser, and two currently practicing financial planners for feedback. Based on their suggestions, the case study was enriched with additional client-specific details to more closely resemble authentic client scenarios. Another real-world feature was the release of additional client information midway through the semester to test students' ability to pivot and adapt to new information.⁸

Innovation #2 In addition, to support student skill development, a series of guest speakers were invited to class. The guest speakers were invited to discuss specific aspects of skills development. For instance, in Week 2, each student was asked to submit up to three (3) questions they would ask clients in an initial meeting to a digital discussion forum. The submissions were categorized by the lead educator and discussed at a briefing with the invited guest speakers, two experienced financial planners, who picked a sample from the student question pool to discuss during their workshop in Week 3. During the workshop session, students received feedback on the effectiveness of their questions in eliciting information from clients from the practitioners, who also shared their experiences with establishing rapport with clients and building client relationships.

Innovation #3 Other skills development support scaffolds were livestream demonstrations of financial modeling in XPlan by an experienced paraplanner. In the lead-up to the assessments, skills development workshops on teamwork, pitching, and career advancement were delivered by senior learning educators. Finally, a seminar on ethics in financial planning was delivered by a leading academic

expert in the field of business ethics. Various templates (e.g., client file note, self-reflection, meeting notes, etc.) with guiding prompts and questions were created to aid students with the completion of the assessments.⁹

Innovation #4 was the redesign of the student presentations. In the previous offering, students pre-recorded a 15-minute video on Zoom presenting their team's SoA. When reviewing the unit, it was found that this part of the assessment regime could be streamlined by cutting down the repetitiveness in presentations as each team member essentially presented on the same financial plan. The aim of updating this assessment piece was also to provide students with the opportunity to receive instant feedback on their presentations by changing the format to a live presentation. The redesigned assessment requirements asked students to present their advice as a team, with each team member "pitching" a specific part of the financial plan within 3 minutes. Overall, each team had 15 minutes to present, which gave them a bit of a buffer in case one of the team members exceeded their allocated time limit. Presentations were all scheduled for Week 12, and teams could present in person or online. The benefit of scheduling all presentations in one workshop was that students could receive feedback on their pitches from a panel of judges consisting of financial planning professionals. For evaluating the student presentations, each judge was tasked to focus on one student per team and provided a scoring sheet to assess the appropriateness and effectiveness of the presented strategies, the delivery style, and the engagement with questions from the audience and the judges.¹⁰

Innovation #5 To better assess students' teamwork skills, specific scaffolding for teamwork was developed. As suggested by Chang and Brickman (2018), students were instructed to sign a team contract at the beginning of the semester. In the team contract, each student agreed to take on an "expert" role within the team, e.g., retirement expert, insurance expert, etc. To support coordination, the team contract also required the nomination

⁷ Although all teams worked on the same client case, the open-ended nature of the task and the breadth of strategy options available in financial planning typically result in considerable variation in the recommendations developed by different teams.

⁸ The full text of the client scenario is available upon request.

⁹ Teaching resources are available upon request.

¹⁰ The scoring sheet is available upon request.

of a team lead to monitor team progress and serve as the main point of contact. This role determined which part of the advice they were responsible for developing throughout the semester. The role assignment also meant that each student presented a different segment of the SoA. Additionally, students were required to meet at least five (5) times during the semester and for each meeting complete a meeting record using a template with prompts to guide agenda

setting, capturing main discussion points and contributions, and creating a post-meeting action register. Finally, students filled out an anonymous peer-evaluation form to rate each other's contributions. The marking rubric was then adapted to assess students' teamwork capability based on the submitted meeting records. Individual marks were adjusted based on the anonymous peer evaluation forms.

Evaluation of the Redesign: Initial Indicators of Impact

This section presents emerging evidence of the impact of the teaching innovations, drawing on three sources: academic performance; student evaluations; and feedback received from an expert peer reviewer of educational practice.

Student performance and evaluation

Prior to the redesign, the average student scored 69.6 out of 100 points in 2022 ($n = 35$; $SD = 12.6$). In 2023, the average score was 78.3 out of 100 ($n = 27$; $SD = 5.7$), an improvement of 12.5% over the last time the unit was run. This difference is statistically significant (t -stat = 3.559; $df = 48$; $p < 0.001$). Figure 1 compares the pre- and post-redesign distribution of final grades.¹¹

Figure 1: Financial Planning Capstone YoY Results Comparison

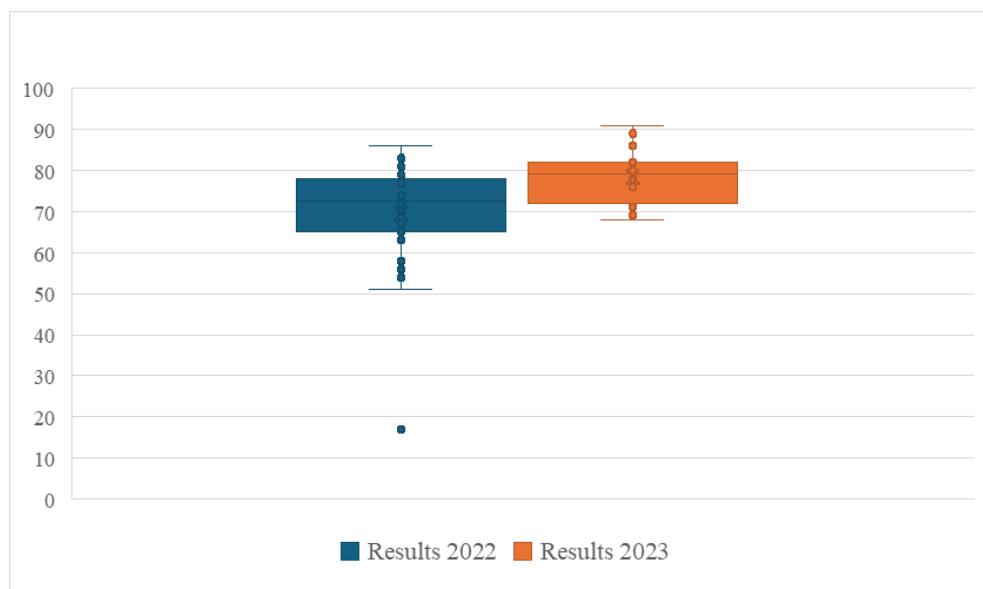


Figure 1 shows academic performance in a year-on-year (YoY) comparison. Academic performance is measured on a scale from 0 to 100. The results are determined at the end of the semester based on the total across the three assessment items: client data analysis (20%); SoA (50%); and presentation and self-reflection (30%). The weighting of the assessment items remained constant over the years. 2022 was the year prior to the implementation of the redesign. 2023 was after the redesign.

¹¹ These results should be interpreted cautiously, as student performance can be influenced by cohort characteristics, prior experience, and other contextual factors beyond the control of the study. Nevertheless, because the assessment tasks are

explicitly mapped to the unit's professional and technical learning outcomes, improved grades may offer a limited but meaningful indication that students were better able to demonstrate the required capabilities.

The university runs a standard student survey each semester to gather data on students' learning experiences at the unit level. The learning experience is assessed through questions about satisfaction, learner engagement, assessment feedback, and skills development. Comparing the evaluations prior to the redesign (2022) with the results post-implementation (2023) reveals the following results: 'unit satisfaction' increased from 75% to 86% agree; 'learner engagement' remained stable at 100% agree; 'usefulness of assessment feedback received' improved from 50% to 86% agree; and 'opportunities for skills development increased' from 75% to 86%.¹²

Expert peer review

An expert peer review of the financial planning capstone teaching approach was conducted after the redesign. The review was undertaken by a Senior Fellow of the Higher Education Academy (SFHEA) from another faculty, following standard institutional processes. Key points from the review are summarized below:

- **Authenticity and industry alignment:** The assessment tasks were judged to be highly authentic and closely aligned with the skills, technologies, and expectations of contemporary financial planning practice. The inclusion of a dynamic client scenario introducing new information mid-semester was viewed as a valuable mechanism for deepening ethical reasoning and adaptive judgement.
- **Integration of industry expertise:** The reviewer highlighted the "seamless integration" of practitioner input throughout the unit, which strengthened the relevance and professional orientation of the learning experience. Students gained meaningful learning opportunities and developed communication and teamwork skills that will support their transition to professional practice.
- **Evidence-based redesign:** The redesign was perceived as a thoughtful response to student feedback from past offerings and universal issues with skills development in

higher education and specifically in financial planning.

- **Structured skills development:** Specialized workshops (e.g., ethical advice, pitching, XPlan modelling) were commended as effective scaffolds supporting students' capability development.

The reviewer also identified areas for future improvement. In particular, greater collaboration with unit coordinators of earlier subjects was suggested as a way to strengthen the development of professional skills leading into the capstone. The reviewer emphasized that a whole-of-degree approach would distribute the skills development more evenly across the degree, enabling repeated practice and greater independence by the capstone stage. Overall, the peer review offers credible external support for the effectiveness of the redesign while highlighting opportunities for further refinement

Reflections on the Redesign: Student and Educator Insights

This section presents a reflective analysis of the redesign, informed by insights from the educator and students. Student reflections from their final assessment were thematically analysed to capture how learners engaged with the redesigned activities.¹³ The discussion links the pedagogical evidence that informed each innovation with students' reported learning experiences, offering a consolidated view of how the redesign supported the development of professional skills.

Innovation #1 Authenticity in assessment and learning is required based on the need for a better transition of financial planning students into the profession by enhancing their learning experience at university (Goetz et al. 2005; Brimble et al. 2012; West et al. 2019). Authentic assessment has been associated with increased professional competency (Thurab-Nkosi et al. 2018; Sewagegn et al. 2020). The re-developed assessment design meets the characteristics of an authentic learning experience (Ashford-

¹² The 2022 response rate was 11.8%. In 2023, the response rate was 25.9%. The standard survey provides unit-level feedback but does not collect item-level data on specific components of the redesign. As a result, students' perceptions cannot

be disaggregated by individual learning outcomes or activities.

¹³ The thematic analysis for this paper was conducted in Leximancer. The technical details of the thematic analysis are available upon request.

Rowe et al. 2014): In collaborative teams, students develop a SoA as their “final product”. There is an opportunity to learn from structured assessment feedback (i.e., marking rubrics) and from real-world experts’ suggestions. The final assessment encompasses an element of metacognition in the form of a self-reflective account. Deliberate reflections allow students to effectively engage with their learning experience (Ribeiro et al., 2019). Self-reflective practice helps emerging practitioners shape their “professional identity” (Leering, 2014).

Student evaluations, reflections, and the peer review attested to the authenticity of the assessment. The thematic analysis captured students’ appreciation of the real-world aspect of the assessment.¹⁴ For instance, a student commented:

“The insights gained from this experience will profoundly inform my future practice as a professional financial adviser. This scenario, where I had the opportunity to combine the knowledge from my degree into a real-world context, has provided valuable lessons that will shape my approach to client service and financial planning.”

Innovation #2 The teaching approach adopted for the financial planning capstone strongly emphasizes collaboration with industry experts. Feedback from practicing financial planners on students’ client interview questions enriched the curriculum by providing real-world insights, ensuring students’ learning is relevant and applicable to professional contexts. The additional “fireside chat”-style panel talk is a highly resource-effective experiential learning activity that exposes students to real-world challenges financial planners face and experiencing face-to-face conversations with senior leaders in the field (Voss and Blackburne, 2019). A student with professional experience noted that these insights gave them a better understanding of managing a client discussion and factors that can impact client behavior:

“In the capstone unit itself, weeks 3 and 4 are good examples of this, where a focus is made from presenters on understanding their

approach to managing a client discussion and giving consideration to behavioural outcomes that can impact client behaviour. My experience within the industry has shown me that often, the technically best client strategy is not necessarily the right strategy for that client if behavioural traits for the client are not aligned to that outcome.”

Innovation #3 Vygotsky’s (1978) Zone of Proximal Development suggests that learners can accomplish more with guidance and support from others. In the prior offering, skill development scaffolding was lacking, and students were mainly left to their own devices when it came to learning how to work in teams, communicate professionally, and present to clients. To fill this gap, various instructional and resource support scaffolds were implemented (see Section 2). In reflection, the scaffolding seems to have been effective. The student evaluations suggest improved skills development (see Section 3.1). However, the complexity of the financial planning technology (XPlan) remained a challenge. One student reflected:

“The main challenge for me was XPlan. I was confident in the superannuation strategies that I was recommending within the plan, but I was undermined by my lack of proficiency within XPlan to communicate and reinforce my recommendations - especially through the utilisation of the tools within XPlan”.

This reflection was also supported by student comments identifying similar struggles in the student feedback survey. In hindsight, the first workshop could have been more engaging. The first industry-led workshop was fast-paced and very process-oriented, with little insight into how the output from the software would be used in practice. In contrast, the second workshop was modeled around a client case. Students were much more engaged as they could see the practical relevance of the XPlan tool. Based on these observations, the introductory workshop

¹⁴ Twelve (12) students independently mentioned the concept “real-world” in connection to “case study”,

“scenario”, “context”, or “setting” in their reflections.

may need to be revised to provide a better learning experience.

Innovation#4 Communication is consistently identified as one of the most critical capabilities for graduate financial planners, yet higher education providers could do more to develop this skill (West et al. 2019; Grable & Goetz 2017). Research in higher education shows that structured engagement with industry experts can strengthen student learning and contribute to the formation of their emerging professional identity (Ashton 2009; Riley et al. 2021). In line with this evidence, the redesigned capstone incorporated structured, practitioner-led feedback through the judged live presentations to strengthen students' ability to articulate the rationale behind strategies and manage client conversations. As illustrated in the quote below, students found the feedback received from the financial planning judging panel valuable, identifying "communication" as a critical skill that this unit helped them to develop.

"Understanding the "why" behind financial planning decisions has been a game-changer. It's not just about executing tasks; it's about comprehending the underlying rationale and being able to effectively communicate it to clients, fostering trust and credibility."

Innovation #5 Teamwork is one of the most sought after graduate capabilities in business education, yet the most challenging for students to develop (Jackson 2010). Reflections from this unit align with this broader pattern, with many students identifying teamwork as an area of difficulty. The literature consistently reports that these challenges are associated with social loafing and poor coordination (Hall & Buzwell 2013; Chang & Brickman 2018). In response, the redesigned capstone incorporated explicit teamwork instructional and resource scaffolds (see Table 1) as suggested by Simons and Klein (2007). These supports were intended to provide structure while enabling students to experience the realities of collaborative professional work. Student reflections strongly supported the value of this approach:

"The assignment's predefined roles were a welcome change, and while defined, still called for considerable teamwork given the interconnected nature of an SOA. It was evident that

some sections required other to be completed, which emphasised the need for seamless team cooperation."

Together, student and educator reflections affirm that the redesign meaningfully strengthened the authenticity, relevance, and pedagogical coherence of the capstone experience. They also illuminate areas for further improvement, especially in supporting students' digital capabilities. These insights provide a valuable roadmap for future iterations of the unit and reinforce the importance of sustained, evidence-based enhancement in preparing students for the realities of professional financial planning practice.

Conclusion

The redesign of the financial planning capstone unit demonstrated how authentic learning and targeted professional skills development can enhance students' job readiness within an academic setting. By integrating realistic client scenarios, structured collaboration with industry partners, and support scaffolds for key capabilities, the revised unit offered students a more supported and professionally aligned learning experience. Evidence from student reflections, an independent expert peer review, and other impact indicators suggests that the redesign improved students' understanding of the financial planning process and professional capabilities such as communication and teamwork.

Despite these promising outcomes, ongoing refinement is required. Student evaluations highlighted persistent challenges in developing digital capability, particularly in navigating financial planning software. Future iterations of the unit will explore additional supports, such as engaging an XPlan-proficient co-facilitator and further embedding digital literacy development across the semester. The expert peer review also emphasized the need for a stronger whole-of-degree approach to capability development by mapping where key professional skills are introduced, practiced and assessed across the curriculum.

To support broader cross-institutional curriculum alignment, the establishment of a financial planning pedagogy community of practice (CoP) is proposed. CoPs, groups that share expertise through ongoing dialogue and collaborative problem-solving, have been

shown to enhance teaching quality and student outcomes (Wenger & Synder 2000; Vescio et al 2008). Nesting such a CoP within existing education networks (e.g., the Academy of Financial Services) offers a sustainable mechanism for sharing innovations, coordinating curriculum development, and building collective capability among financial planning educators.

Beyond its institution-specific context, this redesign offers a transferable model for financial planning educators seeking to integrate authentic client scenarios, practitioner engagement, and structured capability scaffolding within their own curricula. By illustrating how industry expertise can be incorporated in sustained and meaningful ways, the study also highlights opportunities for practitioners to shape the professional readiness of emerging advisers. These insights contribute to ongoing sector-wide conversations about strengthening the quality and relevance of financial planning education.

Overall, this study provides insights into how universities can design authentic, industry-aligned capstone experiences that meaningfully support students' transition into the financial planning profession. The findings underscore the value of practitioner engagement, targeted scaffolding, and collaborative curriculum design in preparing graduates to meet the evolving expectations of the advice industry.

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