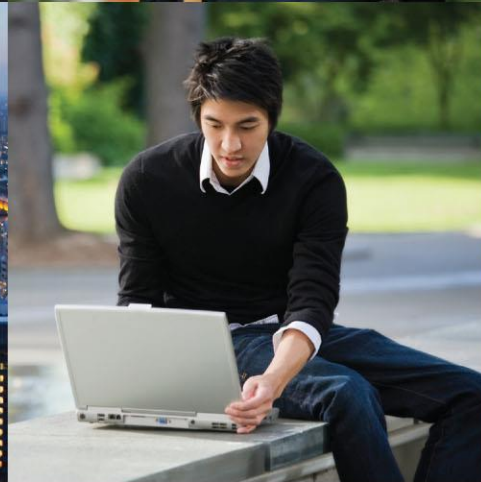# REGENT'S
UNIVERSITY LONDON

London Conference on Employer Engagement in Education and Training 2016

The experiences and attitudes of graduates towards employability-related support in undergraduate degree programmes and the potential role for externally-facing student projects

Dr Simon O'Leary
Principal Lecturer, Regent's University London
21st-22nd July 2016

Case study .....

1. **Why?**

2. Research findings.

3. Consultancy projects

4. Key issues.

- A kaleidoscope of change for today's graduates ….
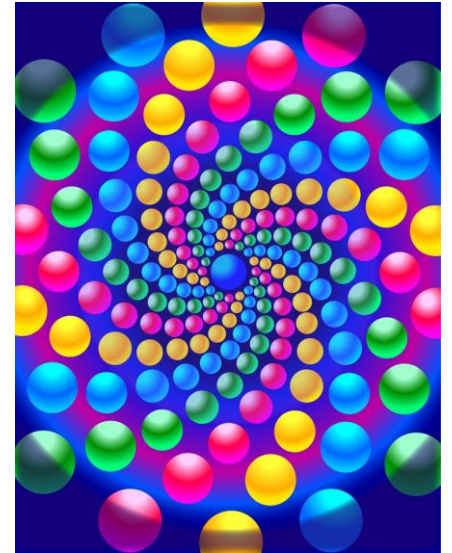

Emerging economies

Alternative energies

Innovation

Financial crises

Genetics

Natural resources

Information sources

Communications …..

The premise .....

- Gap opening up …

Global developments

Employer needs

Graduate capabilities

Widening gap?

1950's 1960's 1970's 1980's 1990's 2000's 2010's 2020's

REGENT'S
UNIVERSITY LONDON

The premise .....

- Gap opening up …

Global developments

Graduate capabilities

Bridging the gap: **Opportunity for graduate development through externally-facing student projects**

1950's 1960's 1970's 1980's 1990's 2000's 2010's 2020's

REGENT'S
UNIVERSITY LONDON
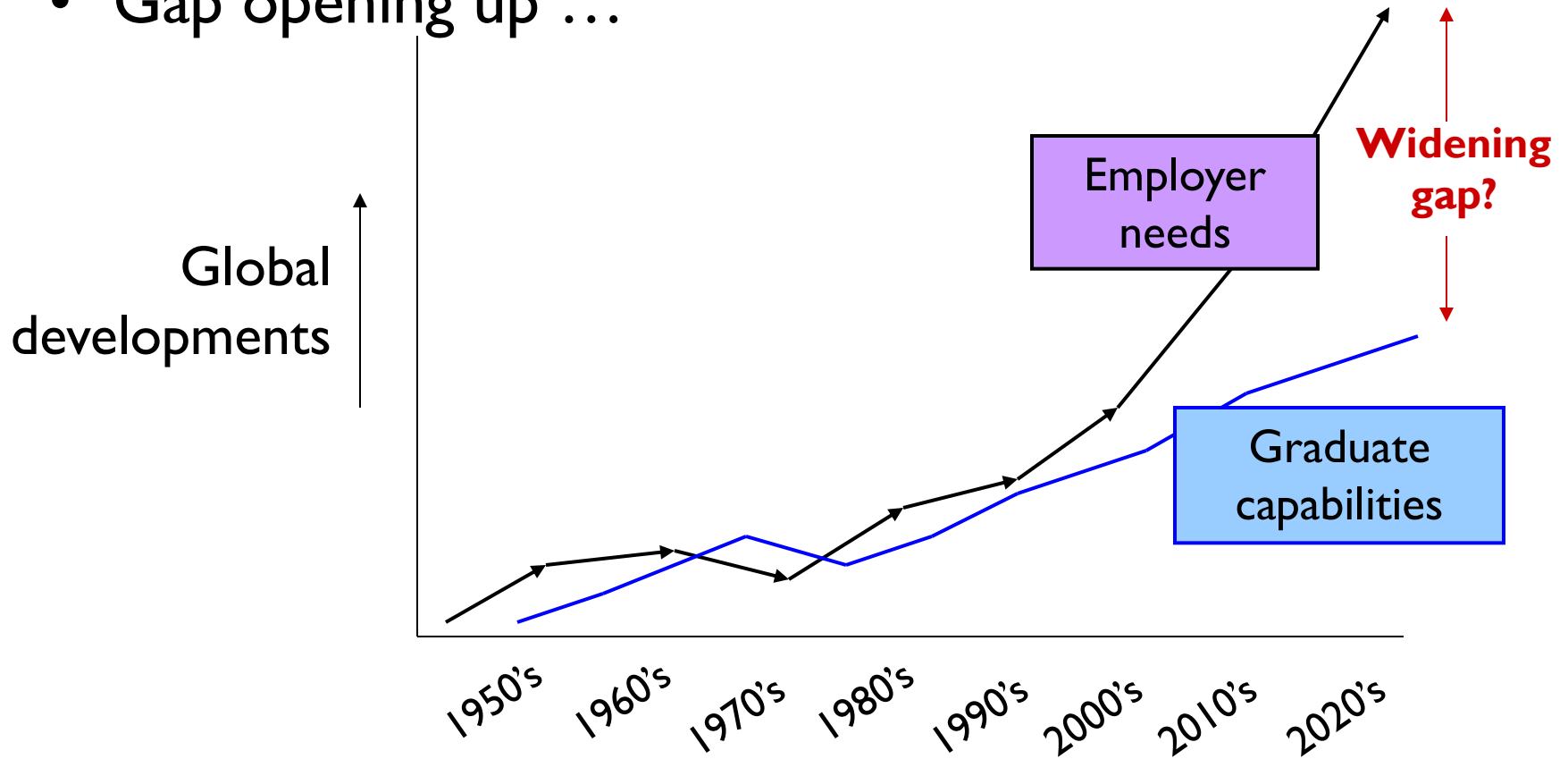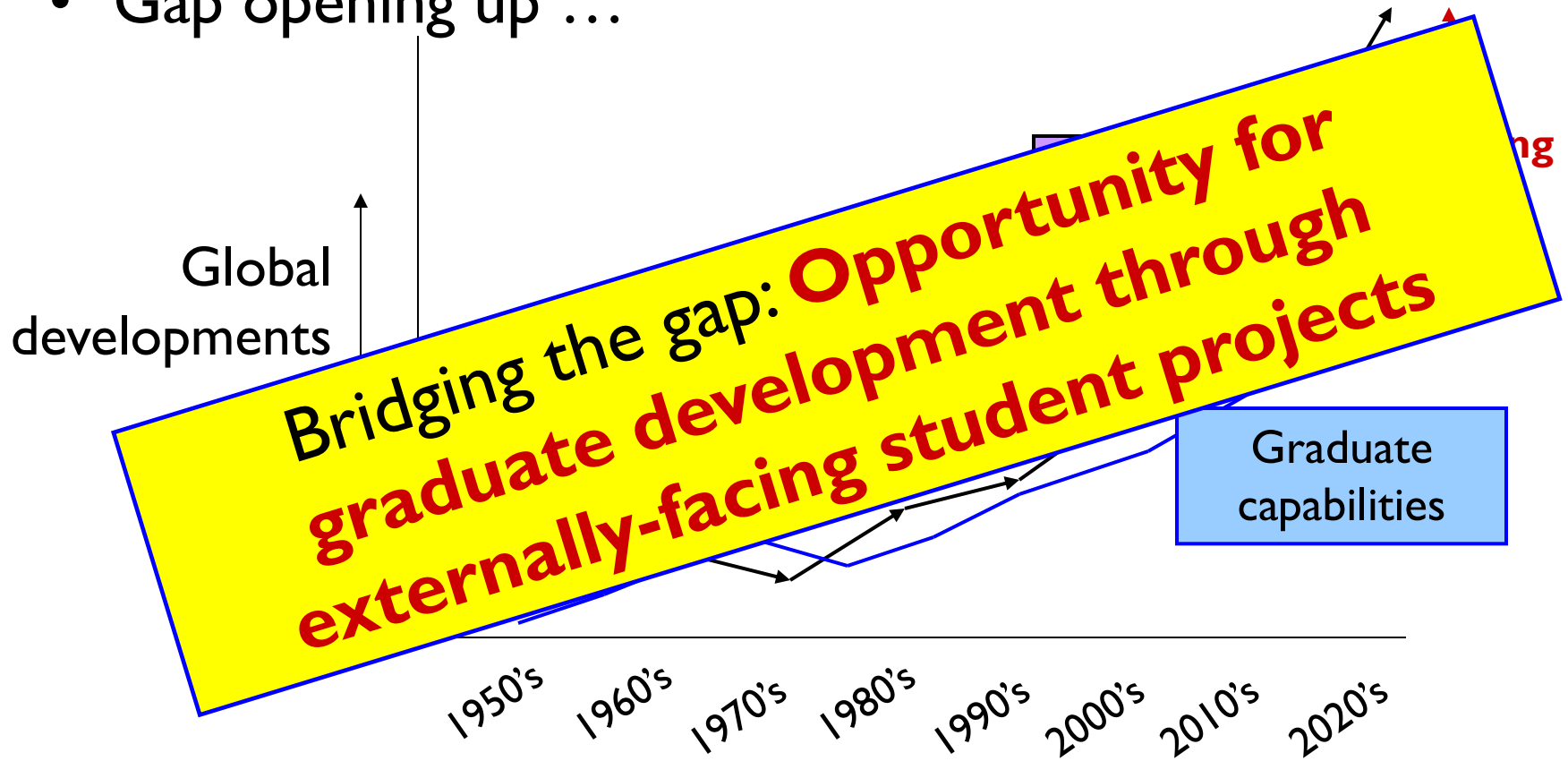
The significance ....

• 2014: UK government all-party parliamentary group report "An Education System fit for an Entrepreneur"

• 2015: Priority theme for the Higher Education Academy HEA and Higher Education Funding Council England HEFCE

• 2016: Numerous journal papers over the last decade in Studies in Higher Education, International Journal of Human Resource Management, Education and Training and many others.

Student loans to cover costs of higher education

  • HE as an investment

National Student Survey

  • Student views increasingly important

Teaching and research

  • Balance between the two under review

Employability ....

- A widely accepted definition of employability has been given by the Higher Education Academy (2012):

  ✓ **a set of achievements, skills, understandings and personal attributes that make graduates more likely to gain employment and be successful in their chosen occupations, which benefits themselves, the workforce, the community and the economy.**

Selected highlights:
.... chosen occupation ...
.... more likely ...
.... breadth of stakeholders ...

REGENT'S
UNIVERSITY LONDON

External partners ….

- Can add value across subject disciplines

- Understanding of how to apply the knowledge, skills, capabilities and experiences accrued during a degree programme, in the world of work

- Applies across the spectrum; from established organisations to new start-ups in the private, public and third-sectors:

  - ✓ To survive and prosper, established large organisations are constantly evolving and finding new ways to do things

  - ✓ Medium and smaller size organisations may need to act even quicker

Challenges that external partners face ....

How?

Costings, pricing, research, plans, equipment

Finance and budgets

Teamwork, working together, individual and group targets

Customers, clients, suppliers

Employees and contractors

When?

Who?

Why?

Ideas, big and small

Positioning and psychology

Attitudes

Personality, characteristics and confidence
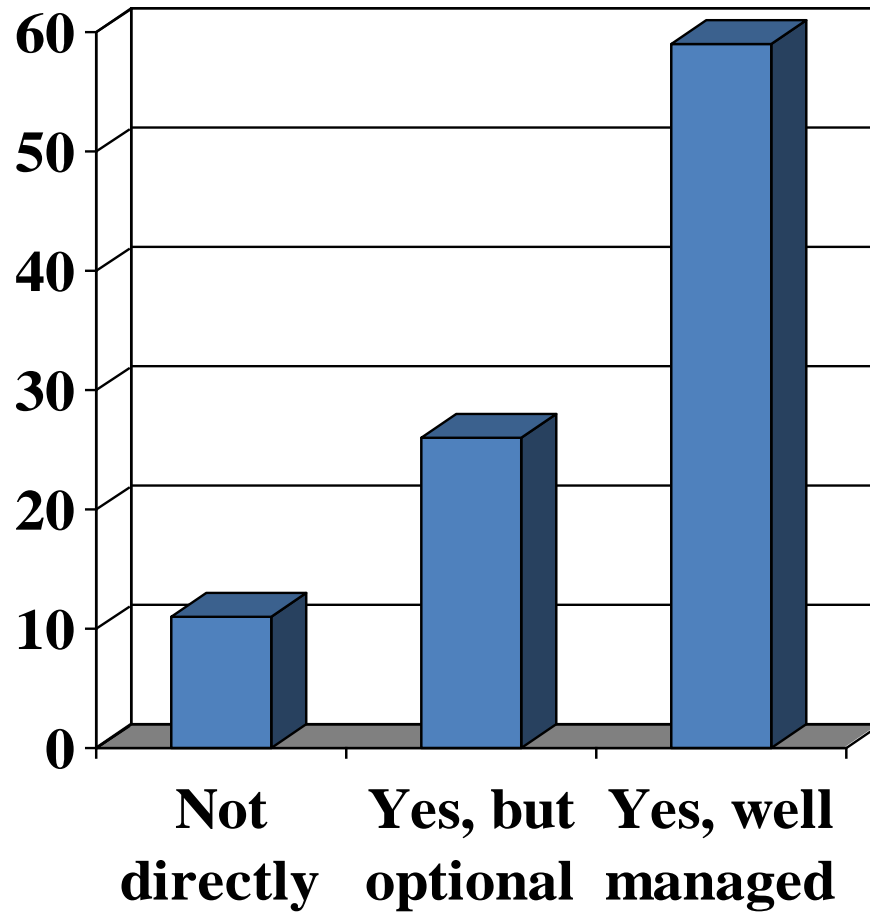
What?

Leadership, creativity and innovation

Where?

Case study .....

1. Why?

2. **Research findings.**
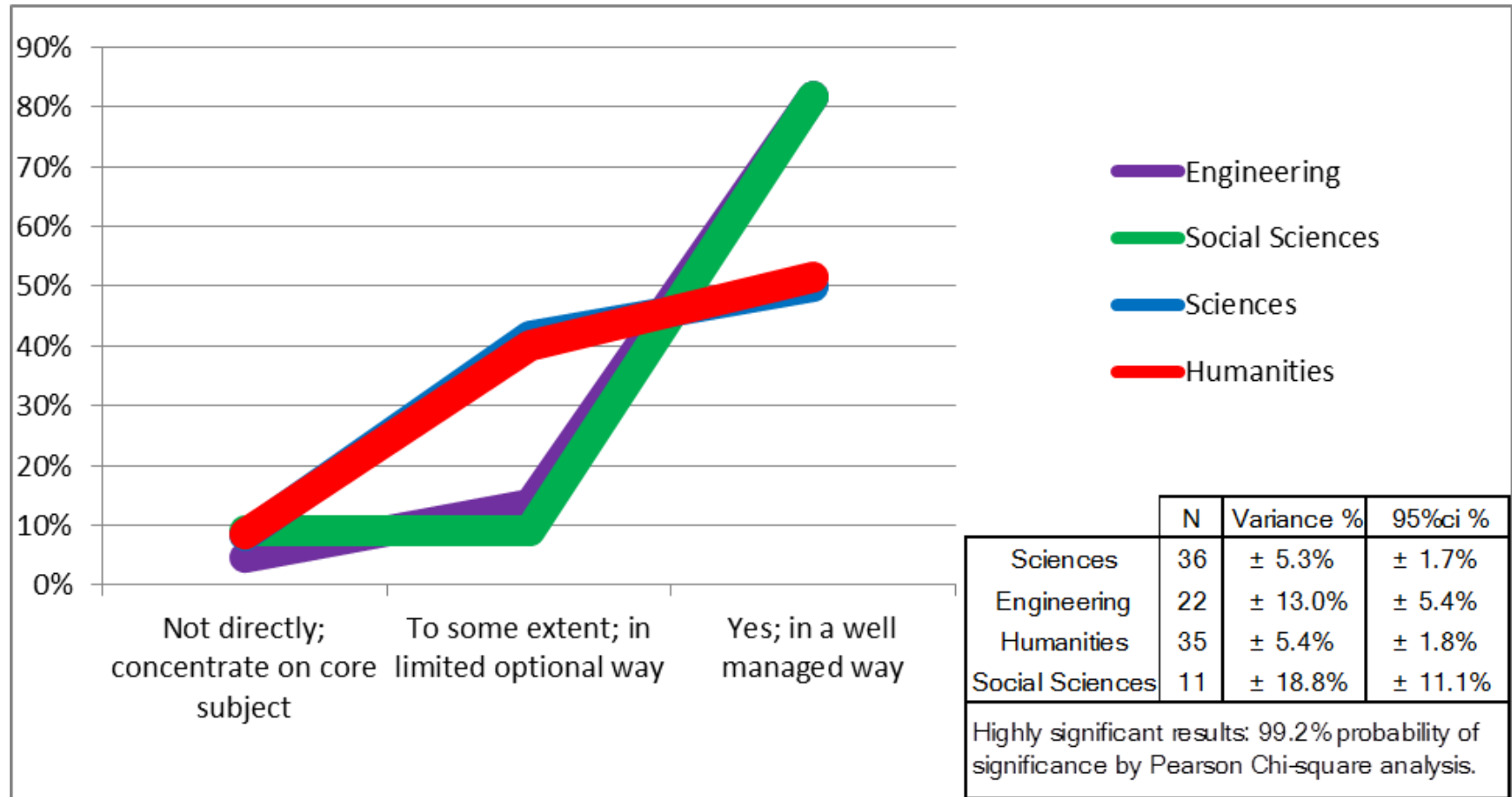
3. Consultancy projects

4. Key issues.

Graduate survey

Differences across the disciplines

	N	Variance %	95%ci %
Sciences	36	± 5.3%	± 1.7%
Engineering	22	± 13.0%	± 5.4%
Humanities	35	± 5.4%	± 1.8%
Social Sciences	11	± 18.8%	± 11.1%
Highly significant results: 99.2% probability of significance by Pearson Chi-square analysis.			

O'Leary, S. (2016), Graduates' experiences of, and attitudes towards, the inclusion of employability-related support in undergraduate degree programmes; trends and variations by subject discipline and gender, Journal of Education & Work. http://www.tandfonline.com/doi/pdf/10.1080/13639080.2015.1122181

REGENT'S
UNIVERSITY LONDON

Graduate survey - some highlights

Benefits:
- Better understanding of employer needs is considered the main benefit.

Delivery:
- Since 2000, more employability-related support overall but trend towards careers services and external speakers, with reduced inputs from departmental staff.
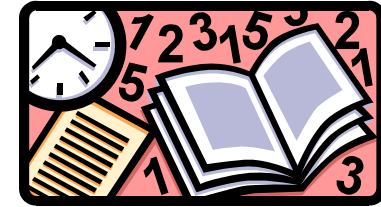
Disciplines:
- Engineering make much use of business, management and external speakers.
- Sciences involve careers services more.
- Humanities has the largest opportunity gap.

Employability benefits …. using the 3C's

Content

Accumulation of relevant hand-on knowledge and networks ….

Capability

Direct application in a relevant employer context ….

Character

Work alone and in teams …..

O'Leary, S. (2012), Impact of Entrepreneurship Teaching in Higher Education on the Employability of Scientists and Engineers, Industry and Higher Education Journal, Vol.26, No.6, pp.431-442. http://www.ingentaconnect.com/content/ip/ihe/2012/00000026/00000006/art00003

Case study .....

1. Why?

2. Research findings.

3. **Consultancy projects**

4. Key issues.

Consultancy Projects

Dissertation Report

15,000 words

Individual student

Supervisor

Research format

Consultancy Project

10,000 words report
2,000 reflective report
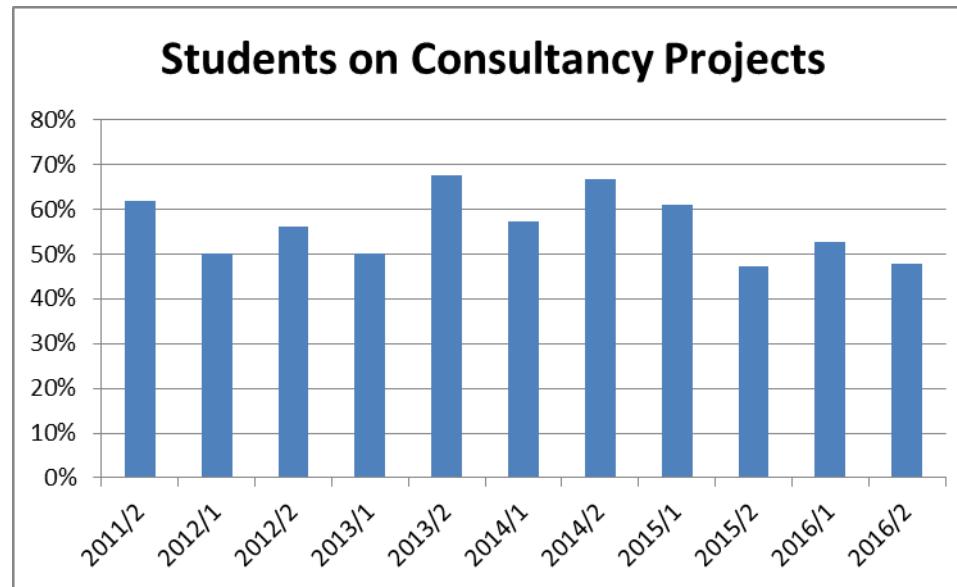Presentation 30 minutes

Student team

Supervisor & Client

Research/business format

Table 1: Analysis of MALBM Dissertation and Consultancy Projects 2011 to 2016.

Students on Consultancy Projects

319 students; 2 cohorts per year.
57% chose the Consultancy Project
43% chose the Dissertation Report

Examples of employability-related quotes made in consultancy project reflective reports

1. "… essential contribution for my future career …"

2. "…very good practical experience … enhance my skills … transferable skills …"

3. "… helped me improve my skills …"

4. "… stepped out of my comfort zone, and feel it has provided me with more confidence to enter the job market."

5. "I learned so much through this project. It is because of this opportunity that I feel even more excited … working in this sector in the future."

6. "… I feel more confident about my qualifications … greatest part of the programme."

Table 2: Projections on demands for consultancy projects.

Student numbers	Dissertation students	Consultancy students (1)	Consultancy Projects (2)	Clients identified By students	By team (3)
100	50	50	25	13	13
200	100	100	50	25	25
300	150	150	75	38	38
400	200	200	100	50	50
500	250	250	125	63	63
(1) The Consultancy Project take-up rate				**50%**	
(2) Average team size on a Consultancy Project				**2**	
(3) Clients to be found by Programme Team				**50%**	

REGENT'S
UNIVERSITY LONDON

Case study .....

1. Why?

2. Research findings.

3. Consultancy projects

4. **Key issues.**

Involving External Partners:

- Embedding the initiative into the curriculum.

- Delivery by a mix of academics and professionals.

- Cross-faculty liaisons.

- Finding project opportunities.

- Working in groups and as individuals.

- Output such as reports and presentations.