

Guest Speakers: Linking Industry and Academia (Expectations and Experiences)

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April 2022

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Guest lectures, Cranfield & Engineering

- O This document looks at how guest lecturers from industry (and academia) can be used at universities. Using Cranfield University as a case study, we examine why and how module leaders use guest lecturers in their modules. Furthermore, we also cover the student perspective: how do students perceive this form of industry collaboration and what are their expectations from guest lectures?
- Many engineering courses at Cranfield include guest lectures from industry (and academia)
- Guest lectures have received relatively little attention in educational research and even less with regards to engineering education. However, they are a valuable way to link academia and industry. Guest lectures provide a link between the academic and professional environment (Craig et al., 2020).





Introduction to Guest Lectures

Guest Lectures in the Literature

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What do we mean by "guest lectures"?

• Henderson (2019, p. 115) defines guest lecturing as:

"the practice of inviting someone – often another academic or a professional from the field – to contribute to the curriculum of a course."

- In this document, we particularly look at the contributions from "professionals from the field", i.e. industry guest lecturers.
- In the literature, various terminology is used, e.g. "guest speakers", "visiting speakers", "industry speakers". In this document, the term "guest lecturer" is used synonymously to these terms to provide consistency.

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Guest Lectures in Engineering

Little focus on engineering

- Previous research on the use of guest lectures in university education has focussed on a range of different subject areas, e.g. marketing, advertising, accounting, teacher training, criminal justice and supply chain management (Clarke & Flaherty, 2002; Craig et al., 2020; Metrejean et al., 2002; Ostorga & Farruggio, 2013; Payne et al., 2003; Van Hoek et al., 2011).
- The use of guest lectures in STEM subjects (an exception is Casper & Balgopal, 2020) and particularly engineering is less well documented and has received little attention so far.
- However, this does not mean that guest lectures do not happen in engineering subjects or that they are of less relevance. Because of the close relationships between industry and academia in engineering, guest lectures can provide opportunities for collaboration and give students insights into current challenges and issues in the discipline.
- At Cranfield, guest lectures are used in a range of subject areas, including in a variety of engineering subject areas.





There are many reasons why guest lectures are beneficial for student learning

- **O** Additional learning resource and variety
- Comparing theory and practice
- Providing an expert and contemporary view
- **O** Opportunities for career advice, personal experience & networking
- Besides the educational benefits, guest lectures can also strengthen the connections of universities with local communities (Metrejean et al., 2002).





Additional Learning Resource & Variety

- From an educational perspective, guest lectures are an additional learning resource and can bring variety to the curriculum and so improve the educational experience (Metrejean et al., 2002; Leor, 2015; Ostorga & Farruggio, 2013).
- Guest lectures as a learning resource can motivate students and can result in active and deep learning (Anthony & Garner, 2016; Craig et al. 2020; Ostorga & Farruggio, 2013)
- This variety can relate to the different viewpoints presented by guest lecturers (Henderson, 2019; Payne et al., 2003) but also with regards to the diverse backgrounds of guest lecturers (Craig et al., 2020).
- This latter point can be of **particular relevance in engineering**, a discipline that still not known for its diverse workforce (e.g. women in engineering) and as such guest speakers can act also as **role models for students** as well as support the drive for more diversity in engineering.





Theory & Practice

- One of the most commonly cited reasons for the inclusion of guest lectures in the curriculum is the link between theory and practice that can be achieved (Ostorga & Farruggio, 2013; Van Hoek et al., 2011). This can be through providing case studies and "real" examples from the industry (Anthony & Garner, 2016; Ostorga & Farruggio, 2013; Van Hoek et al., 2011). This link between theory and practice in guest lectures can be through demonstrating "theory in action" (Van Hoek et al., 2011) and therefore validating the course content (Craig et al., 2020).
- However, guest lectures also allow students to examine contradictions and controversies between theory and practice (Ormrod, 2004; Ostorga & Farruggio, 2013) and therefore contribute to critical thinking.





Expert and Contemporary View

- A key rationale for the use of guest lectures is to provide a current and contemporary insight into challenges and issues faced by industry (Craig et al., 2020; Rowland & Algie, 2007).
- Guest lectures can provide expert knowledge in a particular field which is often unique and based on personal experience (Caspar & Balgopal, 2020; Henderson, 2019).
- Guest lectures can also be used to cover important specific subjects, that the existing faculty is less familiar with (Leor, 2015). Van Hoek et al. (2011) however warn that guest lecturers should not be used to substitute the permanent faculty but as a way to extend them.
- Guest lecturers with different seniority in industry can provide different views (e.g. analyst vs C-level) (Van Hoek et al., 2011).





Career Advice, Personal Experience & Networking

- As "representatives" from industry, guest lecturers can give students insights into their organisation, jobs opportunities as well as a personal account of their career paths. Guest lectures can also be a networking opportunity for students. This can prepare students for working in the industry upon completion of their studies and improve their employability (Metrejean et al., 2002; Henderson, 2019; McCleary & Weaver, 2008)
- Relating to this, Pestel (1989, as cited in Payne et al., 2003, p 337) recommends that guest lecturers cover the following points:
 - 1. the job what activities are performed on the job, the perks, benefits, and drawbacks of the job;
 - 2. the academic and professional preparation needed to be considered for the job
 - 3. predictions for employment in that profession in the future; (...)
- Alumni as guest lecturers are often seen as role models for current student (Craig et al., 2020).





Guest Lectures and the Curriculum

Constructive alignment is important

- Guest lectures should not happen in an educational vacuum but should be linked to the module's learning outcomes and assessment (constructive alignment) (Craig et al., 2020; Van Hoek, et al., 2011). As such there needs to be some form of continuity between the lectures in a module (Merle & Craig, 2017).
- For example, this can be achieved through the guest lecturer sharing "professional tips" that are linked to the module objectives (McCleary & Weaver, 2008). There needs to be a clear connection between the guest lecturer and the content for students to see value in the guest lecture (Craig et al., 2020)
- The type of guest lectures might also vary with regards to the level of study, i.e. undergraduate vs postgraduate (Metrejean et al., 2002; Van Hoek et al., 2011)
- O While guest lectures need to be interesting, they also need to contribute to the learning outcomes. McCleary and Weaver (2008, p 406) summarise this well: "There needs to be a balance between telling 'war stories' and actually teaching something". It is important (yet sometimes also difficult) to keep guest lecturers focussed on the module's learning outcomes (Van Hoek, 2011).





Guest Lectures and Students

Students have varying perceptions of guest lectures

- Students are not a homogenous group and as such different students will react differently to guest lectures (Leor, 2015).
- Students with different learning styles also have different preferences when it comes to guest lectures. Students who have a more sequential or visual learning style tend to have a more negative attitude towards guest lecturers. For "sequential" students this might be a result of the lack of structure and relation to the curriculum (Morrison et al., 2003). This requires more emphasis on preparing students for guest lectures.
- O The perception of guest lectures also depends on the cultural background of the students. Clarke and Flaherty (2002) found differences in the perception of guest lecturers by MBA students dependent on their country of residence. While students in the United States had a higher perception of how guest lecturers contributed to their learning, for students from China, this perception was significantly lower. Craig et al. (2020) also found differences between Hispanic and Caucasian students with regards to the perceived benefits of guest lectures.
- Furthermore, Craig et al. (2020) identified that female students saw guest lectures as more beneficial than male students.





How to find Guest Lecturers

There are different approaches to recruit guest lecturers

- Guest lectures are sometimes difficult to find. A major issue in this respect is often time and distance (Leor, 2015).
- Before the recruitment of guest lectures, it is important to consider their qualifications and "the value they will bring to the class". (Merle & Craig, 2017, p. 43). Guest lecturers need to bring a meaningful experience to the lecture room (Payne at al., 2003).
- A good starting point are existing contacts. Particularly for new members of staff this is more difficult. This can be overcome by sharing contacts among the faculty (Rowland & Algie, 2007; Van Hoek, 2011).
- The alumni network, conferences and professional bodies can be sources for guest lecturers (Van Hoek, et al., 2011).
- With regards to the types of guest lecturers, Craig et al. (2020) identified that industry professionals and alumni were particularly preferred by students. It needs to be borne in mind though that the position and experience of a guest lecturers does not necessarily make them a "good" guest lecturer (Van Hoek, et al., 2011).
- A different approach is for students to invite guest lecturers. This will drive student motivation to engage during the interaction with the guest lecturer (Eveleth and Baker-Eveleth, 2009).

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Preparation is key

- Payne et al. (2003, p. 338f) suggest that the following stages must be considered for an effective guest lecture:
 - **O** Preparing the guest speaker
 - Prepare the class
 - The presentation itself
 - Showing appreciation to the guest speaker (e.g. certificate)
 - Tying the guest speakers into course material





Preparing the guest speakers...

- It is necessary to have clear strategy when using guest lecturers. The aims of the session need to be communicated to the guest lecturer (What is the purpose of the guest lecture?) (McCleary & Weaver, 2008). With regards to preparing the guest lecturer, Ormord (2004) recommends to provide a list of topics that have been covered on the course to the guest lecturer. It is also important to make the guest lecturers aware of the impact they can have on students and the expectations of the students and university (McCleary & Weaver, 2008)
- As "*universities have become more sensitive to issues relating to gender, ethnicity, and respect for the individual*" it is important to include this in the preparation of the guest lecturer (McCleary & Weaver, 2008, 409).
- Preparation also includes administrative issues, e.g. transport, accommodation (Leor, 2015) as well as agreeing any potential payments.





... and the students

- To prepare students it is useful to get a **biography** of the guest lecturer so that students can familiarise themselves with the guest lecturer's background (Ormrod, 2004).
- It is recommended to get students to read up on the guest lecturer's company and ask them to prepare questions in advance of the lecture (Dalakas, 2016; McCleary & Weaver 2009)
- Before the guest lecture, students should be made aware of what is expected of them both during and after the lecture. Payne et al. (2003, p. 340) recommend that students should address the following questions following the guest lecture:
 - 1. In what ways did the presentation reinforce ideas students already believed to be true?
 - 2. What comments challenged students' belief systems?
 - 3. How has course content (e.g., readings and lecture) related to ideas considered by the guest speaker?
 - 4. What dynamics in the speaker's life seemed to influence his or her perspectives about the issues discussed?





Different Approaches to Guest Lectures

Beyond face-to-face lectures

- Although guest lectures are often associated with face-to-face delivery, this does not have to be the case. Even before the Covid-19 pandemic there are ample of examples where guest lecturers have also been used in online delivery; both synchronous and asynchronous. (Bell, 2003; Ostorga & Farruggio, 2013).
- Asynchronous applications can include online discussion boards where students and guest lecturers have an online dialogue (Eveleth & Baker-Eveleth, 2009; Ostorga & Farruggio, 2013).
- Another approach to guest lectures than a traditional lecture can be through a "Question and Answer" format. For example students could interview the guest speaker during the lecture. Through this approach, students play a more active role (Li & Guo, 2015).
- Guest lectures could also be through a more "conversational" format (Craig et al., 2020).





Closing the loop

- The interaction with the guest lecturer does not stop when the lecture has been delivered. To ensure a good, ongoing relationship with the guest lecturer many universities offer certificates of appreciation (Payne et al., 2003; Rowland & Algie, 2007).
- Where university rules allow, guest lecturers can also be provided with gifts of appreciation, lunches or dinners (Rowland & Algie, 2007).
- It is also important to share student feedback with the guest lecturer following the delivery. However, this "needs to be provided diplomatically", given the relationship with the guest lecturer and their company (McCleary & Weaver, 2009, p. 410)
- **Payments** for the guest lecture, transport and accommodation (where applicable) will need to be sorted swiftly after the lecture.





Areas of Considerations

Guest lectures need careful planning

- Not all guest lecturers are "engaging and enthusiastic (...), familiar with the course content and learning objectives and versed in effective pedagogy".
 Poorly planned guest lectures will have a negative impact on the learning experience (Fawcett and Fawcett, 2011, p. 288). As mentioned before a clear strategy is necessary when using guest lecturers
- Guest lecturers are sometimes misused, e.g. to fill a gap in the timetable. They are often seen as an isolated occurrence by students (Jacob et al., 2002; McCleary & Weaver, 2009). Guest lecturers also need to do more than to just entertain the class (McCleary & Weaver, 2008). There needs to be a clear purpose for the use of guest lecturers.
- Students often find guest lectures as not very challenging and requiring little effort (but also one of the most enjoyable learning activity!) (Karns, 2005).
- Although there should be an alignment between guest lectures and the module assessment (Van Hoek et al., 2011), content of guest lectures are often not assessed (Jacob et al., 2002).





Overview of Guest Lectures at Cranfield University

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Surveys

- To get a better understanding of the experience with guest lectures, surveys have been sent to academic staff and students at the end of the 2020/2021 academic year. The following responses have been received:
 - 69 academic staff responses
 - 107 student responses (number of respondents varied by question though)
 - The majority of respondents study or work in the schools offering engineering degrees ("Technical Schools")
- Some questions are based on a previous study by Metrejean et al. (2002).





Guest lectures are an intrinsic part of Cranfield modules

... particularly in Engineering

- O Guest lectures are an important part of delivering engineering content
- O In some cases, guest lectures are the "norm" rather than exception
 - e.g. 5 module leaders reported that more than 50% of their lectures were delivered by guest lecturers
 - Of those staff that have worked at other universities before, 16 state that their modules at Cranfield contain more guest lectures (vs. 5 who state they contained fewer and 12 who state they contain about the same number of guest lectures)
- O This also is reflected in the student exposure to guest lectures:
 - 88% of students responded that they experienced guest lectures

Did any of your modules for which you are a module leader include guest lectures?





Who are the Guest Lecturers?

Professional Background of Guest Speakers

- The majority of guest speakers come from the private sector
- In the technical schools, the share of guest speakers from other universities, government and NGOs/Charities is higher than in the School of Management





Who students would like to see?

Professional Background of Guest Speakers

- Although, guest lecturers from industry/the private sector form already the largest group, nearly 60% of students in the technical schools would like to see more guest lecturers from this background.
- Contrarily, students seem to be content with the number of guest speakers from other universities. This is important to notice particularly in the engineering discipline, where a larger number of guest lecturers falls into this category.

While studying at Cranfield University, would you have liked to have more or fewer guest lectures from employees working for



* Only those students who have experienced guest lectures in the academic year 2020/2021



Who are the Guest Lecturers?

Seniority of Guest Speakers

- The majority of guest speakers are at Mid- to Senior-level managers/Directors
- In the technical schools, senior academics (Professors, Readers, Senior Lecturers) also often act as guest lecturers

What was the seniority of the guest lecturers on your modules?





Who students would like to see?

Seniority of Guest Speakers

- Students would like to see more guest lectures from senior leaders. While many guest lectures are held by Mid- and Senior managers, particularly guest lectures by C-level executives are less common and students would like to see more of those.
- The wish for more C-level executives is however lower among students in the technical schools than in the School of Management.



While studying at Cranfield University, would you have liked to have more or fewer guest lectures from

* Only those students who have experienced guest lectures in the academic year 2020/2021



Alumni as Guest Lecturers

Alumni play an important role when it comes to guest lectures

- Nearly 60% of student respondents who had experienced guest lectures, have had alumni as guest lecturers.
- It needs to be noted though that many students (32 of 88) were unsure if any of their guest lecturers were alumni. More communication and preparation in this respect is necessary.
- Also, about half of the student respondents who have had guest lectures, would like to see more alumni as guest lecturers.





Guest lectures & Student Learning at Cranfield University

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What is important to students and staff when it comes to guest lectures?

Little difference between student and staff expectations

- What is important to students and staff tends to vary little between the two groups.
- Both groups rate "New content that has not been covered in other lectures" as the most important reason for guest lectures.
- However, it can be noticed, that from a students perspective "Career guidance/Job opportunities for students" is notably more important than for staff.
- O Other reasons, namely,
 - O Variety of teaching
 - Applying content that has previously been covered in lectures
 - Networking opportunity for students
 - The profile and standing of the guest lecturer

are of similar importance to both students and staff.







What is important to students when it comes to guest lectures?

Engineering Students

- While overall, there is little difference between students in Cranfield's technical schools and the School of Management, there are some distinctions.
- Students in the technical schools differentiate more between what is important to them when it comes to guest lectures.
- Networking opportunity for students and the profile and standing of the guest lecturer are of lower importance to students in the technical schools, while for students in the School of Management these are notably of more important.







Guest Lectures vs other learning activities

Students agree that guest lectures help them in their learning

- Many different approaches to teaching and learning help students in their learning. Not all students are exposed to all learning approaches though (e.g. only 8 students experienced field trips – which is not surprising given that the survey was conducted during the Covid-19 pandemic).
- For 6 activities: Field trips; lectures by Cranfield lecturers; seminar groups; case studies; laboratories; and guest lectures over 90% of respondents who had experienced these approaches agree that these approaches have helped in their learning.
- Guest lectures achieved a mean of 4.37 (on a 5-point Likert scale where 5 = strongly agree to 1 = strongly disagree), which was the fourth highest average of 11 approaches to teaching and learning.
- Guest lectures therefore are a good approach to complement the teaching and learning mix.





Guest Lectures vs other learning methods



Numbers in bars represent the number of respondents. Only respondents who had experienced a particular learning method, have been asked to rate that learning method *Means of 5-point responses on a Likert scale: 5 = strongly agree to 1 = strongly disagree


How guest lectures help students in their learning

Guest lectures help students to understand the industry/sector they are studying

- Those students, who experience guest lectures, see them generally as positive with 64 of 78 students agreeing that they were overall satisfied with guest lectures.
- With a mean of 4.36 (on a 5-point Likert scale where 5 = strongly agree), students most strongly agree that *guest lectures improved their understanding of the industry/sector* they are studying.
- O Other highly rated outcomes of guest lectures are
 - The content of guest lectures has helped them in their academic learning (4.24)
 - **O** Guest lectures provided new ideas and perspectives (4.19)
 - Guest lectures inspired them to learn more about a particular subject (4.12)





More focus on integration of assessments, defining the purpose and preparation

- O The lowest rating with a mean of 3.36 (on a 5-point Likert scale where 5 = strongly agree to 1 = strongly disagree), relates to the agreement that *guest lectures helped students to complete the modules' assessment*. This shows that guest lectures do not always seem to be well integrated in the module assessment. Only 38 (of 78 students) agreed that the guest lectures helped them to complete the modules' assessment.
- Other relatively lowly-rated feedback on guest lectures are
 - O Students felt well prepared for the guest lectures (3.53)
 - Just over half of the respondents agree that they felt prepared for the guest lectures)
 - The purpose of the guest lectures was always clear to students (3.65)
 - These two points seem to be interrelated. This requires action before the guest lecture happens.





Guest Lectures and Student Learning



To what extent do you agree or disagree with the following statements (student respondents)?

The content of guest lectures has helped me in my academic learning Guest lectures provided new ideas and perspectives Overall, I was satisfied with the guest lectures Guest lectures inspired me to learn more about a particular subject Guest lectures were thought provoking I was able to relate theory learnt in previous lectures to the content of guest lectures The guest lectures were well integrated into the module During guest lectures, my attention in class improved The purpose of the guest lectures was always clear to me I felt well prepared for the guest lectures Guest lectures helped me to complete the modules' assessment

Strongly agree

Somewhat agree

■ Neither agree nor disagree Somewhat disagree Strongly disagree *Means of 5-point responses on a Likert scale: 5 = strongly agree to 1 = strongly disagree



Guest Lectures and Careers

Students seek career guidance and job opportunities, but this is not always reflected in guest lectures

- As mentioned previously, unlike staff respondents, students place relatively high importance on career advice and job opportunities when it comes to guest lectures.
- However, only about half of the students agree that they are more aware of career opportunities and that they are more confident in their career decision following guest lectures.
- Only 23 of 77 student respondents agree that they feel better prepared following job interviews.
- While students overall feel satisfied with guest lectures, more content around career guidance and job opportunities should be included. This includes guest lecturers talking about their career paths.





To what extent do you agree or disagree, that as a result of the information presented by guest lecturers...





Organising Guest Lectures – Experiences from Cranfield University

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Barriers to Guest Lectures

Main reasons for not including (more) guest lectures in the academic year 2020/2021

- Covid-19 was given as the most common reason (19 staff respondents) for not including (more) guest lecturers in the academic year 2020/2021. While this might not seem surprising, only 6 respondents claim geographic reasons and 6 respondents cite technical issues as reasons. With much of the teaching in 2020/2021 moving online as a result of Covid-19, location would seem to be less of an issue.
- The other two main reasons (18 respondents each), are
 - Too much administrative burden, and
 - **Timing** limitations (where guest lecturers were not available).
- Other barriers include the **lack of funding/costs** associated with guest lecturers and the **difficulty in finding the right person** for a guest lecture.
- Only 3 respondents cite the lack of educational value for not including (more) guest lectures in their modules.



Reasons for not including (more) guest lectures in the academic year 2020/2021





Organising Guest Lectures

Overcoming administrative hurdles

- As previously mentioned, the administrative burden of organising guest lectures is seen by many staff as a barrier to include (more) guest lectures
- Only just over half of the respondents find it easy to organise guest lectures. This is also reflected in that many feel there is not sufficient administrative support to arrange guest lectures.
- The majority of respondents also feel that there is insufficient guidance available on how to arrange guest lectures.
- Therefore clear guidance is necessary and needs to be accessible to staff in order to improve the organisation of guest lectures. This should reduce the administrative burden and increase the number of guest lectures.

To what extent do you agree or disagree with the following statements

It is easy to organise quest lectures There is sufficient administrative support to arrange guest lectures There is sufficient guidance available on how to arrange guest lectures 0% 20% 40% 60% 80% 100% Staff Respondents Somewhat agree Strongly agree ■ Neither agree nor disagree Somewhat disagree Strongly disagree



Guest Lectures: Take-aways

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Staff, Students, Guest Lecturers

- Both, the literature review and the survey show that preparation is important to all stakeholders.
- O Module leaders need to have a strategy when using guest lecturers rather than include them in the curriculum to "fill a gap". Module leaders need to consider how guest lectures align with the learning outcomes and also link them to the assessment.
- Many module leaders feel there is little guidance when it comes to guest lectures. The development of a clear guidance document for guest lectures would help staff to prepare for guest lectures.
- Students should be prepared for the guest lecture. The survey has shown that only about half of the student respondents agree that the felt prepared for the guest lecture.
- The guest lecturers need to be prepared with regards to the content that needs to be covered, the type of students attending and the expected behaviour.





Content and Guest Lecturers

What students would like to see

O It is important to students, that guest lecturers bring

○ New content

- O Variety
- Career insights and advice
- Insights into the private sector
- O While students generally would like to see (more) C-Level and senior level guest lecturers, for students in engineering subjects the profile and standing of the guest lecturer is of less importance in comparison to the above mentioned reasons. Alumni also play an important role from the students' perspective.
- Overall students enjoy guest lectures and seem to be satisfied with them. Like many teaching approaches, they help them in their learning. However, from the students perspective, more focus on career development through guest lectures would be useful.





Academia and Industry Collaboration

Links beyond guest lectures

- Guest lectures are an important approach to connect industry and academia. Students, staff, guest lecturers, companies and communities can benefit from this collaboration.
- Guest lectures can often result in "spin off" benefits such as internships for students and research projects.
- Guest lectures create great opportunities, particularly in the engineering discipline to show students practical applications and solutions.





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