

Advanced Diploma Open Afternoon Transcript.

Emily Darling: This for anyone who isn't able to join, or you can have this afterwards, so, do take notes, but obviously you will have the recording. And I'm going to pass over to our amazing chief exec, Jen, who will formally welcome you to our very first, I will mention, open afternoon for the Advanced Diploma.

Jennifer Sproul: I like being introduced formally, as well as amazing. I'll take formally, amazing, obviously formally, I'm not quite sure, we'll work on that.

But as Emily said, so I'm Jen, and I'm the Chief Exec here over at IOIC, and as always, delighted to welcome you all to hear more about the wonderfulness that is the IOIC Advanced Diploma, with the amazing team and alumni that we've got on this call.

I'm assuming by now you've heard of IOIC, that's why you're here, so I'm going to take that as given. But as you know, so IOIC has been going, I think we're in our 76th or 77th year as an institute. And what we are here to do is, as the institute for that, or the professional association for that, is set standards, good practice, education, and also fundamentally, I think, in these times, professional skills.

At an assessed level, academically accredited level, with experts that are going to give you the standards that you can take forward into your career.

Our qualifications, as you hopefully are all aware, hence why you're all here, are academically accredited by Solent University, and they are the only qualifications for internal communication that are both a professional association and academically accredited. And it makes them really unique, and it makes them an absolute jewel in the crown of what we offer at IOIC.

For me, as IOIC chief exec, and this is a biased statement to me, the more people that hold our qualifications, that are assessed and have that substance and that credibility that runs through them, the better our profession will perform, the more investment our profession will get, and hopefully the better career protection and prospects you will get as well.

They are fundamental to our role. We're very proud of them. They have been... I think the advanced diploma has been a part of Solent's remit for 10... over 10 years now as well.

So, we make sure that what you study with us is of the top level. And as I say, the team here are amazing, and it's a brilliant program, and I think in the times that we're currently in, it's really important to keep that sense of standard, qualification, credibility. And that sort of license to practice that comes through qualifications.

So, that's my pitch. It's a mini pitch, but I'm sure the rest of the team will elevate it to make it much more meaningful about specifically this qualification, and what you'll get from it, and how it's part of it. But I'm super proud of it, and I'm super proud of the team that deliver it. So, on that note, shall I pass back to you, Emily?

Emily Darling: Thank you, Jen. That was a lovely, formal, and brilliant introduction, so thank you. So today, as you've seen from signing up, we will, look at the advanced diploma in a bit more

detail, I hope you'll really learn about what the course means, and what it means to study the course. You'll hear from a couple of amazing alum, or a very recent alum, I will mention haven't had their results yet, so you've got really fresh people here who haven't had a year to put it to bed. They are... it's very fresh in their minds.

And then it will be over to you. Any questions for any of us, we're really here just to answer those for you today. But before that, we'll go around the room, just introduce ourselves so you know who's here and who's speaking to you today.

So, I am Emily Darling, I'm Professional Development Manager at the IOIC, and I oversee the qualifications with the amazing support of Stella. So, I will pass it over to Stella to introduce herself.

IoIC: Hi, I'm Stella, I am the Professional Development Officer at the IOIC. So, I work with Emily, overseeing the qualification program, so that's the Foundation Diploma, the Advanced Diploma, of course, and the Masters. So, my role involves supporting students throughout their journey with us, from application all the way through to completion and certificates.

I work closely with the teaching team, with Chris, assessors, and our partners, Solent University, to make sure that everything runs smoothly.

Emily Darling: Thank you, Stella. And I will just say, Stella is absolutely incredible. I'm sure both Simon and Gemma are incredible, such an amazing support. You couldn't be in better hands if you do select this qualification. Chris, do you want to introduce yourself?

Chris Coburn: Yes, thank you. So, I'm Chris Coburn, and I'm the lead facilitator on the course. I've been kicking around the comms world for, actually almost 20 years now. I did the Masters with IYC in Solent, and I've been working on this course for the past four years, maybe? Love this course, but I'll hold that for my next bit. So, yeah, like, really excited to meet you all today. Looking forward to hearing your questions as well, and also thank you, Gemma and Simon, for giving up the time to share your, personal, very recent experiences of the course.

Emily Darling: Thank you. Simon, did you want to introduce yourself?

Simon McMurdo: Yeah, hello everyone, I'm Simon McMurdo, the Communications Manager at Specsavers, and as we've, referenced a few times, just finished, I think last week, we submitted our final, portfolio for the Advanced Diploma. So, as mentioned, it's very fresh in our mind.

And alongside Gemma, happy to take any questions that you have about it. Whilst it's still up here.

Emily Darling: Thanks, Simon. And Gemma.

Gemma Bailey: Hello, everybody. My name's Gemma Bailey, I am the Internal Communications Manager at the Institute for Occupational Safety and Health, and I had the pleasure of working with Simon on my group project, and as he has just said, very recently submitted, so it's still fresh in our minds for all those questions that you want to ask.

Emily Darling: Thank you very much. And now, over to you, Chris, for your next bit, as you said.

Chris Coburn: So, I'm going to tell you a little bit about the qualification, and you can use the chat to drop in questions, or just hold your questions till the end, or interrupt. I really don't mind, it's up to you, whatever suits you most.

So, it runs for about 9 months, and one of the things I love most about the Advanced Diploma, is it really flexes around, the topics you want to learn. So, if you want to develop your knowledge and skills in measurement, or strategy, or culture, or stakeholders, whatever, we help it fit around you. So, it starts...with me supporting you, doing a bit of a self-assessment to see where your strengths are and where your opportunities are, to develop in the context of the IOIC profession map, okay? So, it's linked back to the profession map, grounded in all, the work, that's done by our IOIC, in terms of, you know, the professional standards.

And then you get to sort of learn about those topics. Now, a lot of that will be self-learning, so we'll provide you with reading lists, or...Because I don't have much of a social life, I can point you in the direction of lots of sources. It's quite sad when I know them, off by heart. And you can go and explore those sources and learn more about that topic. But there are also four workshops we run, and they're with two outstanding, communication professionals.

So, we run a workshop around strategic communication, and we run one around measurement and then culture, and, stakeholder and audience mapping as well. So, they're broadly the four workshops. They are intense, like half-day workshops, but the access you get to information, and knowledge through those workshops is just phenomenal. So, they're sort of...A big part of this qualification.

We also, because we are in partnership with Solent University, you have access to the Solent University Library, and you can access that online, so you would be a student, so you get student discount as well, FYI. I know that's not a main benefit, but it's a side... side benefit, 10% Pizza Express and other things. And, you access Solent University, so you get complete access to University Library, and that's online. Or, if you fancy a trip to Southampton, you can actually go in person and go into the university, because you will be a student, while you're studying, and Dan... Scott? Scutt? Dan Scutt, I always say that wrong. Dan Scutt is the librarian there. The guy's phenomenal, super, super helpful.

So, once you've got your goals of what you want to learn in your personal development plan, and you're already in the mix of, learning about those, reading all those sources, engaging in the library, we then hit you with a group project, and you'll work with probably about 4 or 5 other people, and we'll set you a question for you to examine. So, last year's question was, what is the impact of emerging technology on the internal communication professional?

So, what happens is you produce a group project as a team, but you each have a chapter. So, you might choose a chapter on ethics, or training, or job security, or one of the many things that will impact... that's impacted our profession with emerging tech.

You study and write your chapter individually, but in the context of a group report, because you submit one group report. And that group report is 30% of your overall mark.

So, it's really important to work as a team, and without stealing Gemma or Simon's thunder, what usually happens is people make amazing connections and friendships and everything, and it's not... very rarely do you have anybody letting anyone else down. So, it's a really lovely little project.

And then your next submission is your personal portfolio. Now, that's based on the objectives you set in the beginning, and how that portfolio looks at 3,500 words, which sounds like a lot of words, but Gemma and Simon will tell you it is not a lot of words, you talk about your objectives, and then you talk about the theory, so all the things you've learned over the course of your studies.

What you did with that theory, so what you think of that theory, so challenging it, critiquing it, putting it into organisational context. So, just because this communication theory says you should also always communicate face-to-face if you've got difficult news, actually, we want to see you using your critical thinking skills to challenge that, and say, well, what if I'm in an international organization, or...what if that's not possible due to, different geographic or time, Time shift challenges.

Then you talk about how you put that theory into practice. So, like, your organization will benefit directly from this qualification.

And then you, talk about what you learn. And actually, in that part of what you learn, it's not just what went really well, it's also things that maybe didn't go so well, because, again, I'm sure Gemma and Simon will touch on this.

Not everything will go to plan in this 9 months, and it's about you demonstrating that you've had a learning experience.

And the personal portfolio is 70% of your overall marks, which, added to the 30%, I'd like to think we can all work out that that's your 100%, and that's your full mark.

And once you've done that, that goes off for marking.

And then, you get your qualification, or not, but probably you do get your qualification. As long as you put the work in, as long as you, like, are proactive in your studies, you engage in all the opportunities we provide with workshops, one-to-ones, there is so much support on this, on this course.

But actually, a key driver of it is if you are willing to, be proactive, and curious, and...ready to critique and really think about things in a much more critical way, rather than just accept what's in a book or, you know, on a paper. And then put it into practice, and then reflect on if it worked, if it didn't, why it did, why it didn't, what you would do differently.

So, I love this course because it flexes around you, and I see students come onto this course with sometimes, like, good experience, but maybe not a lot of confidence, and they leave this course with a lot of experience and a lot more confidence, because they discover a world of theories, of best practice, of support that they didn't know existed.

I worked in internal comms for John Lewis for 10 years, and I thought I was doing a pretty good job. I was doing a pretty good job. I did, qualifications of IOIC, and it opened my eyes to so much in terms of how much, actual academic and best practice, work there was out there.

And the amount of times I sat in classes going, oh, that's why that doesn't work, or that's why that happens. So although theory, you know, isn't for everyone. The theory we will go through on this course is it has a practical application.

So yeah, so that is, in a nutshell, the 9-month diploma, but Emily, if you want to add anything on top, because you... you've been, you've been on this game a lot longer than me, and you are the queen of it.

Emily Darling: queen of it. I didn't add that in my intro.

Chris Coburn: No.

Emily Darling: I should have. No, I would just echo... echo what Chris has said. I think I love this course. It is so unique in that you can set your own objectives, and they are around your individual needs and your business needs. So, as we all know, you know, if you're looking for support from your business, not always the easiest. This is directly applicable to what you're doing in the workplace. So yes, there's a lot of work.

But what you're doing, I always say, at the end of the day, it's great if you get that piece of paper, it's great if you get that qualification, but actually, what you have learned, what you've developed, how your practice has developed, and how you've hopefully supported and developed your organization, those are the things I think students go away with that are so tangible, and then the piece of paper is the bonus.

So that's why I really, really love this course. And the other reason is that collaborative group project. As Chris mentioned, you work on it together, but you do get individual grade.

So although you're working together, and how you work together, and all the collaboration is taken into account.

You get an individual grade at the end of the day. But the support students give each other through those groups, is incredible, and I think the kind of lifelong relationships... I know that can sound a bit of a cliché, and often people add on the end of any courses, oh, you're a lifelong network, but for this course, it genuinely, I think, is true.

And I think that's incredible. So, yeah, I love this course, and I think you do have to put in the work, and you have to want to do it, but the... what you get at the end of the day is incredible, and I love... well, Stella now works more directly with students, so I do, to be honest, I do miss that side. I do love working with students, but seeing a student, you know, I do the induction, on the induction, and then the development, and the impact almost immediately. Like Chris was saying, go to those workshops with those light bulbs going off, going, oh!

You know, WOW is, yeah, is incredible, so...

So, I think then, and then, Chris, do you have anything else to add at this point, over to maybe Simon, did you want to let people know your experiences of the course, because obviously we can tell you all theoretically, now Chris can tell you... sorry, Simon can tell you the reality.

Simon McMurdo: Be the honest.

Emily Darling: Oh my goodness.

Simon McMurdo: How it was. Yeah, so I, before this, I don't have any qualifications in communications. I studied English at university, and went on to work in communications for about 5 or 6 years. But the reason I took this, course was kind of for me to have the confidence, as Chris mentioned, to back up my own conviction, you learn a lot when you're, employed within internal communications, but a lot of it you kind of learn on the job, and it's a bit like, well, Simon thinks that's the right thing to do. I wanted to be able to go in and concretely say, this is best practice, this will work for us.

But also, thinking kind of selfishly about my own career as well, it's really great to have on your CV something that people can see. I have studied internal communications.

I've worked hard in this industry and learnt it really well. As Jen mentioned at the top of the call as well, that's only going to benefit our opportunities as internal comms professionals. So that's kind of how I came to the diploma.

And if I think back to about a year ago when we started this, I would say I was maybe a little... I don't want to say cocky, Chris, but I felt like I kind of knew how it was gonna go. I came up with my three objectives of what I was gonna work on, and I kind of thought, oh, this one, I'll deliver some training, and our team managers will be better communicators, that's the way it's gonna go. What I've really loved about this is...nothing's really gone the way I expected in a really great way. Not that it's failed, just...you research things that you think might be true, and actually find that there are better ways of doing things. You can challenge best practice. You can understand that something might be a really good practice, but it doesn't work so well for your organization. And that's been a really great learning as well.

What I've also really liked is that you can deliver those improvements straight away into your practice and into your organization. So, I appreciate... I'm really lucky that my company, that's the word, paid for me to do this course, but with that kind of comes maybe a little bit of pressure that I need to deliver something back to them. And I was able to almost immediately start introducing audits, introducing improvements, and measurable improvements to not only our communications, but our wider service as well that we deliver in my department.

It's kind of taught me to have critical conversations as well, and collaborate with other, internal communications professionals. I think, especially in our industry, we have a lot of lone workers. Almost everyone I've met has worked on their own, or is working on their own. I'm the only communications manager in our department.

And it's been a really great opportunities to work with people like Gemma and in our group, and I will say, I don't know if anyone still has bad experience from uni or school about group projects. I was a little bit apprehensive, I won't lie, but the group project was possibly the best thing that

we did on this whole course. The relationships that you build, the way that you support one another, the way that you can identify each other's strengths and pull from each other's experiences and learn from that has been really incredible.

So kind of my key takeaways to kind of close, is exactly that. It's having the group. I think we submitted, Chris and Emily, did we submit our project in January? I think it was?

Emily Darling: Yeah, I agree.

Simon McMurdo: project?

Chris Coburn: Feb, yeah, Feb.

Simon McMurdo: February. And even still, myself, Gemma, and our group still meet up every fortnight. We still have our calls, we still support each other, we've got a WhatsApp group to stay in touch and share sources with each other, share best practice, and kind of be a support to one another as well, which is really great.

And it's really helped my reputation at work as well. Being able to, implement these changes that have, like I say, measurable benefit has actually opened up opportunities to me already within the one year that I was doing the diploma. So, I can only speak positively of the experience.

Emily Darling: Thank you, Simon. Thank you very much. And Gemma...

Gemma Bailey: Wow, follow that.

I'll do my best. So, I decided to study this diploma because I had been working in IC for about 5 years, but before that, I'd worked exclusively in external marketing and communications roles, so I got to a point where I was like, I kind of feel like I know what I should be doing in terms of communicating, but it must be different internally to externally, right? So, I really wanted to get that sort of theoretical and best practice underpinning for the... what my gut instincts were telling me. Was that actually the right thing to be doing? So, that was one of the reasons, I wanted to do it.

I also, like Simon, wanted to meet other IC professionals, because it can be very lonely working on your own, and it's all very well when you know what you're doing, but when there comes that time where you're given a task, or a challenge or a project, and you're not really sure what to do, without that network of a professional body and fellow IC professionals, and knowing where to go for the right resources and the information, it can be quite tricky. So I wanted to learn from people like Simon and my other colleagues.

And also because I'd been given a challenge at work, just that I'd been asked to lead on internal communication for a big change at work, and I became very aware quite quickly. I didn't really know much about change management specifically, or specific change communications.

So again, for me, selfishly, it was like, okay, so I've got an opportunity to learn here, and that's gonna help me in my work. So that was sort of the three reasons why I wanted to do it.

I have to say, being out of the world of academia for a long time, I did find it a bit of a struggle to get back into the academic writing, researching, referencing, etc. But what it has done is given me a massive boost to my enthusiasm for learning. So, I'm now really excited about developing as an IC professional, and I don't see it as a chore, I see it as almost like the answer to the tricky things I'm trying to work out.

So that's really positive. And I've also say I've got a much more strategic lense to the way I do things. So before, as... I think...Chris said earlier, you know, you think you're a good professional, and I am a good professional, but you have your eyes opened to different ways of doing things, and I was perhaps very much delivery-focused, and I'm now very much more strategic alignment, strategic focus. What are the outcomes? What are we trying to achieve? How are we going to measure that? Rather than going, yes, I'll just deliver these communications for this stakeholder and get them out on time, and they'll look great, so...definitely more strategic.

And then I think Simon alluded to, you know, already it's really nice to be able to sit in meetings and not only say, I think we should do this, but say and this theorist says this, or this model we can lean on, and be able to back that up. And I've already had positive feedback from peers to say that I'm much more confident and, in giving those recommendations, because they're based on the theory.

I thought about what I'd learned. Probably the biggest thing I learned, and I wrote it down, was, when you make space for learning, work gets easier. So I was panicking about finding time to do it, but actually, because I'd got the objectives right at the beginning, and they were all things that my organization needed, and I was being asked to work on, it was almost like the theory and the best practice was helping me do my job, rather than it becoming an additional thing that I needed to do on top, so that would be my top tip. Think really carefully at the beginning, about what your objectives are and how you can make them fit.

And I think this has been said before, but, now when I see a gap in my knowledge, I don't fear it. I kind of know that I've got that toolkit, so I can go to the WhatsApp group, or go to fellow IC professionals, I know where to find stuff on the IOIC resources hub, I know how to, you know, what theorists might have written about that, and I can go and get back to those resources. So it almost feels like you've got this toolkit, so that when you do get to that point where you go, oh, I'm not really sure what to do here, you've got the knowledge to be able to go and answer your own questions.

And finally, as Simon said, it's also given me lots of opportunities, so people have already asked me to extend my remit from the current change project I'm working on, to work on a comms plan for our business transformation, so a suite of, different change initiatives, and helping create that strategic narrative around how they all fit together and how they're all driving that one goal.

So, again, I've already been asked to take on newer and bigger projects as a result of my learning. So, yeah, like Simon, I've got nothing bad to say, other than I perhaps underestimated how much work it was, but I'm really glad that I, after my wobble, carried on, pushed through, and actually, yeah.

It was brilliant to be able to get to the end.

So, yeah.

Emily Darling: Thank you, Gemma. You definitely followed Simon very well, that was lovely. And I've written down...

Gemma Bailey: Right?

Emily Darling: what was it you said? When you make space for learning, work gets easier. I've made... I've written that down.

Gemma Bailey: Absolutely, definitely.

Chris Coburn: Typing on a t-shirt.

Good luck.

Emily Darling: Oh, yeah, yeah. Yeah, new professional development department logo. So thank you so much.

So, it is now over to anyone else on the call. Do you have any questions? Feel free to jump on camera, put in the chat. It can be questions for someone specifically, or just a general question. We are here to answer anything, and that classic, no questions stupid, anything you want to ask us is open and over to you.

Who might you... Oh, Paul! Thank you, Paul!

Paul Kemp: Hello there, you're right. Important question, at 50 years old, I'm looking forward to getting a student card. When do I get that?

Secondly, I'll sort of echo what Gemma's saying, really. My organization, I work for a children's hospice in the Midlands. We've just been through that change management.

Which, perhaps, our managers admit wasn't done awfully well, and I'm coming on board as an internal specialist now to try and help stabilise and to bring people together again. So I'm hoping that this sort of, course will help me with the practical, and I'm sure it will, but the practical side of things in my journey going forward, and that whatever I'm learning, I can apply... I can apply here and now. Is that possible?

Emily Darling: Shall I just... I'll jump really quickly on the student card? I know it is a question, so I'll go... and then I'll pass to Chris. So, once you've been... once you're on the course, and you... yeah, Chris has got it up, and you're enrolled as a student at Solent University, you're a fully-fledged student, so you get a student ID, as a student, you can request a card, but you just need that ID. You can then sign up with, I think it used to be, it's called, like, TUC now, or something.

You can sign up with them and get a card, but you just... you get your student ID number, and you're a fully-fledged Solent student.

So, yeah. And then over to you, Chris, for the, the other question.

Chris Coburn: So not for the 25% off...

Emily Darling: Although, actually, I should have let Chris, because Chris is on it.

Chris Coburn: Cool.

Yeah, you get... you can sign up for that for, like, unidays and stuff like that. So, Paul, thank you, really, really good question. What happens is, as soon as... so let's say you have an objective around change, okay?

And we can look at different change models, so if you, off the top of my head, people like Kotter, who have an 8-step change model, and Lewin, who have a 3-step change model, and no one has the same number of steps, but actually, you'll have access to all those theories, and what you and I will talk about in one-to-ones is, well, okay, Paul, like, you've got all these theories, in the context of your organization.

Tell me, like, why they don't work, which one does work, and it's not even about which one works, because you might say, well, I like step one of Kotter, but step three of Lewin, and step five over there, and actually, and, you know, Gemma might be able to talk about this even more, because she was brilliant in this, it's about looking at all those theories and going, yeah, they're great on paper.

But actually, how do I put them into practice? And one of the things I love hearing from students is, they'll put things into practice straight away, so we encourage you to test it and put it into practice within your organization, you know, as quickly as possible, with the guidance of that one-to-one chat of, okay, Paul, so, like, actually, you know, if you've got no change theory.

Or no change structure in your organization.

Do you think it's practical to go from nothing to an 8-step model as your first step, or do you want to look at something a bit simpler? And we'll have that, you know, chit-chat, and you as the expert in terms of the culture and organisational context, ultimately get to make an informed decision based on theories, or a mix of theories, that we'll help you find some of them might not work, like, so... but... and that's part of it as well, like, actually, what worked, what didn't? Okay, let's shift it, let's move it, and stuff like that, but you can put the learning into practice from pretty much day one.

Emily Darling: Thank you. Gemma, did you want to pick up on anything, or do you think Chris has covered it?

Gemma Bailey: Yeah, I can just add, well, echo what Chris is saying, really, is I did look at all of... well, not all, but a number of the change models, and what I found was, as Chris said, I liked this bit of this, and this bit made sense to me, and this bit made sense within the context of the organization, so it's almost like you build your own little toolkit for how you're going to deal with change in your organization, but the great thing is, because you've looked at all the models, if you then moved to another organization, you can go back and go, okay, right, these are my base

models, how might they apply in this context? So, yeah, I'd say it's really helpful. Certainly, helped me in trying to plan the forthcoming change we've got coming.

Emily Darling: Thank you, Gemma. So, we've got a couple in the chat, and then I'll come to you, William, if that's okay. So, Ryan has asked for Simon and Gemma, you touched on it a little bit, but how did you manage to balance the time needed to fully benefit from the course, especially during busy periods in your full-time jobs?

This is a common concern and challenge, so, Gemma, you've just spoken, so Gemma, do you want to pick up on it first?

Gemma Bailey: Yeah, yeah.

Emily Darling: done.

Gemma Bailey: Yeah, the honest answer is I had to make time. So I sat with my boss, and I was very clear that I would need some time within my working week, as well as the time I was gonna devote in my personal life. So I was able to block out periods of time and say, right, I'm not available, I'm just working, working on my diploma. And that was easier for me to gain from my employer because, as I said, I was working on the theory and the practice and developing plans for the things that they wanted me to do at work. So it didn't really feel like I was having to argue for it. It was just like, yeah, if that's going to help me get that project done go ahead and do it. So I did that. I did have to give up a few social engagements, I won't lie, but one of the things I would say is, I've got a colleague who's doing a diploma with another professional body, and she's doing it in 18 months, and I was like, why the hell are we only allowed 9 months to do this?

But I actually think that's a benefit looking back, because I kind of did tell myself, you know, this is a very short period of time, and I need to focus for that time on this. So I did, like I say, drop a few social engagements. I did obviously have a balance, but it was about being focused and saying, this is a short period of time, if I want to commit to this, I need to commit time out of work, and I've got the time in work.

And then you just get it done, and then it doesn't last very long. Nine months later, and you're here.

Emily Darling: Thank you, Gemma. Simon.

Simon McMurdo: Yeah, just to echo what Gemma said, I think being disciplined is really important, because I think you mentioned the very good point about busy periods in your day job. I'm quite lucky that I can kind of pinpoint mostly where those were, so it was really important to me that on the quieter weeks, I was able to do a little bit more extra research and studying.

But being really honest, I think, you can correct me if I'm wrong, Emily, I think, is it 8 to 10 hours you recommend per week on this, I think it says on the course website. And that's probably about accurate. So I split that up, I would say, about 6 hours of my own time towards the start, and then a few hours that I could claw back during my day job. But what I will say also is that as I was starting to deliver benefits from the diploma, it was so much easier to kind of negotiate

more time within my working week, because they were able to see the benefit in real time of what the diploma was offering.

Emily Darling: Thank you, thank you. Nerys, I'm sorry if I'm pronouncing that incorrectly. So I've got two quite logistical questions, so...information on cost. So the course is £3,350, plus VAT. If you're not a member of the IOIC, you do need to join, but as student member, and that's just £32 plus VAT a year, and we offer payment plans, so we try... we appreciate, particularly if you're not being supported by your organization, it can be a struggle. So we try and be as flexible as possible, and you can split the... that cost across the duration of your studies, including monthly payment plans. But really, if you're looking at funding and you want to understand that, just come to us and we can work out a payment plan that kind of suits and fits around you.

When do you need to enroll and complete the course by? So, we have one intake a year, and so it'll be starting on the 7th of September this year, and technically, the kind of, cut-off date would be about mid-August, but if you let us know you're interested and we still have places left, we can be flexible. But if the places all go and we do have a maximum amount of people we can take per cohort, and that's about 18 to 20, so we keep it as small as possible, to ensure that everyone gets real value.

So if you... if we hit those max numbers, then obviously we close early. So we'd always recommend, if you're interested, kind of apply as early as possible.

And there is an application process, so you're required to complete an application form, and then you have an interview with Chris and myself. Very informal, I mean, you've now met us, so as you can imagine, and hopefully Simon and Gemma can tell you, it's really about ensuring that the course is right for you, you're right for the course, everyone understands everything, so that is part of the process. So again, we kind of recommend that you apply as soon as you're ready to.

And then William, you had your hand up, and then I'll jump back to the chat.

I don't know, so maybe it's been answered.

Chris Coburn: Just one other quick thing, Emily. No, no, no. We do also... most... most students who join, when they ask their business, the business... you know, not all of them, but the business pays some, or even pays towards it, so we can help you write that business case as well. Like, we have templates and stuff like that, so if you wanted to, you know, support in terms of securing funding from your business.

Then that's doable. And some businesses as well then make you, sort of, depend on your organization, sign up to, like, a, you know, a year or two years retainer if they're going to invest in you, but if you want help with any of that stuff, like, we can... it's not an official part of the service, but we do do that.

Emily Darling: Happy to help, definitely. So, and Nerys, maybe you've asked another one, but I'll jump back to William. William, did you have a question, or have you answered it?

William Simpson: What kind of answer that was just around, is the 8 hours a week estimation accurate? But I suppose, is it... is it peaks and troughs, or is it... is it a pretty steady...level of commitment all the way through the 9 months.

Emily Darling: I'd probably pass back to Gemma or Simon to ask them their opinion. Gemma, see you've gone off mute.

Gemma Bailey: I would say that is up to you, so it's... you can pace it yourself.

I mean, if I'm honest, and I don't know if the Simon's the same, I spent a lot more time on it towards the end when I was writing everything up and, trying to get within the word count and finish references and stuff, so there is a little bit of a busy period at the end. However, like I say, you can pace it, so if there's a week where you're really into something and you've got a bit more time, you can crack on and get stuff done.

And if there... and also, the other thing is being practical, so as Chris said, part of this course is about applying it, so it might be that you have to wait a week or two weeks to be able to deliver a meeting, or do some training, or for an event to take place that you then want to do some work on. So, it really is about, as Simon said, being disciplined and balancing it and going, okay, this objective needs to wait for a little bit now, this one I can pick up.

But my advice to any student would be start reading as soon as possible, because the more you read, the more resources you find. And even now, I've carried on reading about change, and I've learned a load more, and I want to go back and change my portfolio, but it's too late, and so... so just start reading early, because the more you read, when you then sit down to write your assignments, it's so much easier, because it's all in there, it just needs getting done on paper.

Simon, do you want to add anything to that?

Simon McMurdo: Yeah, just to say the way that the course is kind of built as well, Chris mentioned it in the chat, I think it'll still be the same, Emily, that the workshops are towards the first half, so a lot of the time, in your first half, you'll be attending workshops, reading a lot, studying, and like Gemma says, employing the things that you've learned. And then the second half is a lot more writing. So, it's... it is probably about accurate, I would say.

It's quite consistent across the course. But depending on what part... if you really love, like, the research, for example, you can... you can lose hours, right, Gemma? Just, reading and reading and reading towards the start. But yeah, I would say that 8-10 hours is quite consistent.

Emily Darling: Thank you. And yeah, as Chris mentioned, because we do give you those dates up front, so you know when the deadlines are, and obviously when you're doing a group project, you need to collaborate and work together, but, you know, 9 months is a long time. You're going to have a holiday, hopefully, fingers crossed, everyone's going to have some kind of break within those 9 months, so you can organise it, so you wouldn't be expected every single week, but you just need to make sure that you keep momentum up. I think that's what we'd say. I think, Chris, you'd agree, because, you know, there is self-directed.

And so you have the support of Chris. Chris is your facilitator, have one-to-one sessions, but it, you know, the course is... you take... you can take as much out of it, but you need to put something into it to sort of, to make the advantage. So don't kind of rest on your laurels and think, oh my gosh, my submission isn't for 9 months. Keep learning, keep doing it, keep that momentum up.

But because you can set your own times, be disciplined, but if you see, oh, in October I need a week, because I'm going, you know, somewhere amazing, you can take that week. So, that's what I'd say, and then just jumping back to you, Nerys, you have an IC diploma, from another professional body. Would you suggest doing this course, or jumping straight to the master's?

So, it depends on what... what you've already studied, it depends on your experience. My advice would be get in touch with us, maybe give us a bit more information, about where you are. We can have a conversation with you, and make sure that we kind of make, you know, find the most appropriate course for you. I know Chris, who did the Masters, did say, I know on this open afternoon, that he wished he'd done the advanced diploma, so, I think it's a... it's a fantastic call, but everyone's different. It is a kind of case-by-case basis.

So, yeah, get in touch with us after this, and we can maybe have a chat with you, understand where you're coming from, what you want to get out of a course, and then help you. But maybe attend the Masters one on Thursday, come with all the information, have a chat with us next week.

Chris Coburn: Yeah. I also teach on the Masters as well.

The Masters is a fabulous, fabulous qualification, I would say it is a lot heavier in terms of theory. It's still theory into practice, and it's still super, super useful, but it is a set agenda. So what you learn on the Masters until you get to the end, when you have a management report and you can kind of choose where you want to go, it's a set agenda, and that's probably the big... I mean, other than the modification difference, and there's a price difference. This, you set your agenda. The masters, the agenda is set.

This is the equivalent to a Level 6 qualification, so I don't... I can't tell from your chat if that diploma was... because we also have a diploma, which is a foundation diploma, so it depends on that, but the biggest difference for me is set agenda versus your agenda, but come along to the Masters Open Day on Thursday, I want to say.

And then, seriously, if you just want a one-to-one chat after to, like, talk it through, more than happy to do that for you to help you make the right decision.

Emily Darling: Lovely. Jennifer, has your question, do you feel that's been answered by the kind of conversation around, around study time and learning time, or do you still want anyone to pick up on that?

I don't know if you... you can add it to the chat, or you can... I don't know if you can come on, mic?

IoIC: Looks like she's put in the chat, yes, thank you.

Emily Darling: Oh, perfect. Oh, thank you, sorry. Brilliant, thanks, Jennifer. Have I missed any questions?

Have I missed any? I don't think so, but do... but yeah, has anyone got any other questions? Anything else they want to ask? Any of us? And it can be a practical question, anything anyone has... a burning question.

Paul Kemp: I just wanted to ask about the curriculum, really. I'm not sure if it's available on the website, or whether it's something that becomes available before just outlining, you know, the structure and what will happen.

Emily Darling: Oh.

Chris, do you want to jump on a little bit on the curriculum?

Chris Coburn: Yeah, I think there is... on the website, it talks about the program and delivery and the assessment, but it doesn't talk about the curriculum as such, and mainly because you almost decide, what it is, in terms of, you know, the different sort of topics that you... that you study. So, like I say, the four workshops are strategy, measurement, Culture, Stakeholder, and, audience mapping. But yeah, if you go... I'll put it in the chat, but if you click on program and delivery, it will... it will talk a little bit about it there, particularly with the, assessment as well, which I explained the sort of portfolio and group, group projects as well. But let me put the link in the chat.

Emily Darling: I think, Stella, correct me if I'm wrong, we have the schedule ready, don't we? So, yeah, so with the program and the schedule and the dates already available, so you can look at those that give you the kind of timeline, not the in-depth curriculum, but the timeline.

And something else we introduced a year or so ago for the course is what we call mini-workshops, which Chris delivers, and they are tailored to each cohort. So we don't necessarily decide on the topics before the cohort goes ahead.

Because, again, it's so personalized.

And some may be around, you know, learning cycle, or it might be around strategy, or... it depends on what the group needs, and so those will be added, and Chris delivers those, for students across the course.

Chris Coburn: Yeah, so this term was influence, so we did a little influencing workshop, and we also did a bonus, survey question design workshop, which Simon and Gemma know, I am disproportionately passionate slash angry about when I see bad question design. That was an added, added bonus, like, a free, a free added bonus for students, but again, we try and, like respond to what it is you need.

Emily Darling: Thank you. Let's just see if we've got something for... thank you. Isla?

You're keen to sign up, brilliant. Your organization has not said they'll be able to commit to the funding or not, the business case template would be helpful. Absolutely. So, what I'd say, Isla, is just contact us afterwards.

And just ask for some details, and we can help you with that. And, and in terms of the, you know, you can always apply, you can apply for the course, and we do find some students, will maybe share the costs with their employer. So even if your employer turns around and said, I can support you, but only with half, then again, in terms of payment flexibility, we try and be as flexible as possible, so it might be they say they can pay half the cost.

And then you can pay the rest over a payment plan. But yeah, just contact us afterwards, and we can send you some details for a business case, and kind of support you through that process as well.

Any other questions? And this is not your last chance to ask questions, by the way, obviously. This is just on the call. Yeah, feel free to drop Stella an email, and, and, you know, all of us can answer. So, often, when you finish this, you'll go, oh, I meant to ask that, I want to ask that, just follow up with us.

Or if you don't want to ask open on the call, then again, please just follow up with us, because we are really genuinely, want to help. So if there aren't any other questions at this moment...

Chris, I believe you had a little exercise, if we had a bit of spare time.

Chris Coburn: Oh, let me see if I can show...

Emily Darling: What it used to be called? The Brucey Bonus, the Christmas bonus?

Chris Coburn: bonus.

Emily Darling: But if any questions come, add them to the chat. We have got a little extra, because we have a bit of time.

Chris Coburn: Right, let me get this open. Right.

So, I'm going to share with you, one of the... one of the theories you might be exposed to, and just ignore the fact I have about 500 tabs open at the top. No one needs to look at that. That's fine. So, let's have a look. So, this is a communication, measurement framework, and this is, in a book by, I think it's Kevin Ruck, so he talks about how to measure communication, okay?

So there are different levels that you can measure your communication at. So, first of all, there's the outputs, which is the stuff.

What type of things do you think would be in this output, bucket? Bucket isn't the technical term, by the way. If you join the diploma, there'll be much more technical terms, I promise.

There won't, actually.

So what things might you find in here? Outputs?

Paul Kemp: Like, newsletters.

Chris Coburn: Brilliant. Newsletters, Paul. Yep, anything else?

Isla MacKenzie: Emails?

Chris Coburn: Emails, yes! Anything else? I didn't see who said that, but sorry, and...

Isla MacKenzie: It was Isla.

Chris Coburn: Thank you, Isla!

Hannah Harriman: Yeah, I suppose just literally anything that you've... you've...

Not physical or digital that you've produced as part of a campaign.

Chris Coburn: Yeah, right? Literally anything you've done, which is why, not the technical term, it's called stuff. I call it stuff, I'm sure it's not called stuff, properly. Okay, so then you've got outtakes, okay? So this is like, well, what have audiences done with your stuff?

And the way I think about this is, what are the takeaways? So, what are they thinking or feeling about this? Did they receive it? Did they pay attention? Did they understand it? And this is kind of measuring, I would challenge it, it's measuring engagement, but it's measuring engagement at a very, very basic level, as in, they engaged with the material, not they are engaged and willing to give more to your organization.

Then you've got outcomes. So, outcomes are what the, what your audiences did differently. So this is behavioral change, or attitudes, culture, and things like this. So this is, like, change, how you've changed someone, how you've got someone doing something different.

And then finally, you've got impact. So this is ultimately the difference you've made to the organization, okay? So this is, commercial, operational success, like, this is the real difference you've made to the organization.

Now, what tends to happen as communication professionals is we do lots and lots of outputs. We're quite busy people, happy to be challenged on that, but it never feels like there's a quiet day. Even Fridays, they're just not quiet anymore. I don't know what happened. We need to get reclaiming that somehow.

Then, so you might have sent emails, you might have published intranet articles, whatever, right? So these are outputs, and you can measure these in terms of how many of them you've done.

And then you've got outtakes, so you might then go and measure outtakes, so things like open rates, unique views, or testing, understanding what people have taken away from that organization, and, you know, that's interesting as well.

Then you've got outcomes, which is you measure the behavioral change that your communication, has had, or if you're doing it this way around, you might not link it to your communication, because it might just have been a behavioral change. And then you've got impact.

So...who here measures... sorry, I'm going to change that question. What do you think most organizations should be interested in, in terms of measuring, of these four... Buckets.

Buckets, not buckets.

Need a better word for buckets.

Where should they be?

Hannah Harriman: Me, it should be the impact, because that's the... so, like, with the IC... saving the IC cost, that's... The benefit to the business of that communication.

Chris Coburn: Right?

Hannah Harriman: Everything else is just... added extra.

Chris Coburn: Okay.

Anyone disagree?

Where do most IC professionals, and I'm not asking you to grasp yourself up here, measure their... what?

William Simpson: I would say people mostly measure outputs, and to maybe look for outcomes, that'll be my most important one.

Chris Coburn: Yes, I think that was William. Sorry, I'm trying to... I can only see three people at a time on the screen, and one of them's me, which is super unhelpful, but I think that's William. Yeah, William, we do, right? It's how many... how many, you know, how much work we've done, or perhaps, you know, how many times an email was opened, or all that. But actually, what does that really tell businesses? Not a lot. So, my proposal is that you...

Flip this over.

So, as communication professionals, if you start by understanding the impact, or the business problem, or the business opportunity, then you can think about, well, if that's the impact we want, then this is the outcome I need, this is the behaviour change I need people to do. And actually, to get people to change their behavior, I probably need them to feel something, or at least engage with my communication. And then at that point, then I can think about my outputs.

What do you think is the benefit of flipping it this way rather than the other way of doing stuff and then measuring it at the end?

Hannah Harriman: So, by doing it this way, you kind of... When, when you have your goal to start with, you're kind of then building your communications to meet that goal.

Rather than that, kind of, that throwing spaghetti at the wall and seeing what sticks.

Chris Coburn: I love that analogy, by the way, I'm stealing that along with the t-shirt from Gemma, but thank you, Hannah.

Absolutely, you are spot on. So the first one I showed, actually, that impact may or may not have been those emails you sent out.

And when you flip it like this, it allows you to think a bit more strategically, okay? Because you're thinking through, well, what is the best way to get that outcome? So you're starting with the end in mind.

Rather than, you know, just, like, channels and tactics and messaging and stuff like that.

What stops us doing this? What do you think would be some of the challenges people face in thinking this way?

Hannah Harriman: Sorry, can you... it broke up for me, I don't know if it broke up for anyone else, can you just repeat that, please?

Chris Coburn: Might have been me, Hannah, apologies. So, what stops people thinking about it in this way? What are the barriers that get in our way every day? Again, not looking to point fingers, but the reality, because in theory, this looks great, and it looks really easy, but what are some of the barriers?

Hannah Harriman: I think, yeah, for me, with my job, because I'm a team of one, it's time, the big one for me, because I've got 5,000 other projects to be doing at the same time. I'm... I'm definitely more reactive with my role, rather than the strategic.

Chris Coburn: Absolutely, so lack of resources in the comms team, because this takes a bit of time to think through, right? I can write an email and press send in about, well, a minute. Actually, considering that in this methodical way, takes more time, and there's other stuff I need to be doing. Thank you, Hannah. Anything else?

Paul Kemp: For me, I think it sometimes asks from other teams, there's a need to... to send out comms on something, that the ask comes through, but perhaps with... without much thought or consideration for what they're trying to achieve from it.

Chris Coburn: Excellent point, Paul. So, 99.9% of your organization doesn't think this way. They think the other way, right? So, actually, if you're changing culture and beliefs and how people work, that's really, really hard. Again, Gemma did lots on change, she can tell you how hard it is to change culture.

Okay, so it's really hard if people are thinking the other way, and not thinking this way. And actually, it's easier for us to just go find, okay, like, I'll make the email as less worse as possible, but yeah, thank you, Paul. Anything else?

There's two things I would add. I don't think anyone teaches us this, unless you do the advanced diploma. I don't think anyone teaches us this. You learn on the job, like Simon said.

I didn't think of this this way. I'd done 10 years in, like, an £1 billion organization that had a massive comms team, but it's only really when I started, like, learning and exploring theory that I was like, oh, this is better.

The other thing I might argue is that I'm not sure all businesses are really clear on their opportunities or their challenges, i.e. or their strategy. The amount of people I talk to now where I say, well, your communication strategy and plan should really align with your business strategy. And they don't have a business strategy, or they've got a five-year strategy that's just a word salad that makes no sense and doesn't list out explicit things. So, this is an example of what I talk about on the diploma, where you've got the theory, and the theory makes sense, and we'd all love to do it, but actually, what's the practical implications, and how can we implement this theory? Now, what that doesn't mean is you should look at this and go, great, that's really interesting, Chris, thanks for that, it's impossible to implement.

It's about finding how you can implement as much of it as possible within your organisational context. And even if you can just get your stakeholders and leaders thinking about impact rather than output, that will start to slowly nudge them and change the conversations.

And really, what I hear from advanced diploma students who complete this course is they have changed the conversations they have. They're not talking about, should the email go Tuesday or Wednesday? They're talking about what's the purpose, what we're trying to achieve, what's the impact.

That is a very mini lesson that I put together at, like, 6 o'clock this morning, so hopefully it made sense.

Emily Darling: That was brilliant. Thank you for that... what did I call it? Chrissy Bonus, or something?

Chris Coburn: It's fairness!

Emily Darling: That must be weird.

Chris Coburn: But yeah, fine.

Emily Darling: A little bit weird. I need more, I need more dying to come and think about it. I need the camera to write it for me, to be honest, I think. I hope it gives you a small, a small insight, and thank you for everyone getting involved with that.

So, thank you all for joining, and it's brilliant to see you here today. As I said, any questions after we finish this call, just get in touch. You've got Stella's email in the, in the

chat there. If you haven't had any other information, this is kind of the first time you've inquired about the course and you want more information, just get in touch. Obviously the recording will go out, to you probably tomorrow, at some point tomorrow. But yeah, we'd love to, we'd love to hear more. If you want to talk about your personal situation, your personal circumstances, get in touch with us. And yeah, we'd love to see you, on the diploma this year.

So, yeah.

Lovely to see you, thank you so much. Thank you.

Jennifer Sproul: Gemma and Simon as well. Thank you.

Emily Darling: Thank you so much, Simon and Gemma, that was brilliant.

Chris Coburn: see you both, looking a lot less stressed than last time I saw you.

Jennifer Sproul: Bye everyone!

Paul Kemp: Bye.

IoIC: Bye.

Chris Coburn: Bye, bye, take care.