From hospitality classrooms to successful careers: An appraisal of Australian hospitality higher education

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Statement of original authorship

This work has not previously been submitted for a degree or diploma in any university. To the best of my knowledge and belief, the thesis contains no material previously published or written by another person except where due reference is made in the thesis itself.

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Abstract

The higher education sector continues to struggle to ensure students' learning outcomes are relevant to the requirements of workplaces (Bisoux, 2015; Mourshed, Farrell, & Barton, 2013; Playfoot & Hall, 2009). Moreover, hospitality education institutions particularly, continue to be criticised by employers for not meeting their employment needs (Finch, Peacock, Levallet, & Foster, 2016; Tsai, Goh, Huffman, & Wu, 2006). Therefore, it is important that hospitality education institutions begin to close the gap between the skills that students graduate with, compared to what the industry requires (Dopson & Tas, 2004; Min, Swanger, & Gursoy, 2016; Swanger & Gursoy, 2007).

This thesis examines the curriculum and pedagogic requirements that contribute to beneficial graduate outcomes for Australian hotel management students. Specifically, the study seeks to identify the necessary competencies that make hotel management graduates more employable and achieve successful careers in the contemporary Australian hotel industry. Additionally, the study investigates how work integrated learning (WIL) experiences can assist graduates in obtaining the desired hotel industry competencies and further examines how WIL experiences can be best organised and enacted to enhance overall hotel management graduate outcomes.

Purposefully a range of hotel managers are used as research participants, this endeavour provides for a phenomenological, employers' and graduates' perspective. The study adopts a mixed methods approach to data collection, which enables triangulation of various data. Conceptually, the study's outcomes appraise, advance and potentially reposition the hotel management curriculum as embracing Australian international hotels, and enactment of students' experiences more comprehensively. The study's outcomes determine key currently required hospitality management competencies, and highlight these as being mostly soft skills. Furthermore, the findings identify the importance of experiential learning, and WIL in developing these essential soft skills, and thus, contributing to beneficial graduate outcomes for hotel management students. Additionally, the study potentially shapes how work integrated learning should progress in hotel management education, to the benefit of all stakeholders.

The outcomes from this study offer both theoretical and practical implications. Theoretically, this study adds to literature and the body of knowledge by developing a contemporary hotel management specific competencies framework, and also by informing existing employability models. Practically, the outcomes from this research have identified a range of key required competencies and learning approaches, which could be further incorporated within the curriculum to benefit hotel management tertiary institutions, employers, and graduate employability outcomes.

Keywords

Hotel management education, competencies, competency based frameworks, employability, formal and informal learning environments, work integrated learning, experiential learning, hotel Operations Manager's proficiencies, mixed methods research

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List of abbreviations

ACEN	Australian Collaborative Education Network
CAE	College of Advanced Education
HEIs	Higher Education Institutions
ILO	International Labour Organisation
MOOCs	Massive Open Online Courses
NIACE	National Institute of Adult Continuing Education
WIL	Work Integrated Learning

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1

Developing hospitality management competencies for graduates

1.1 Sustaining the employability of hospitality graduates

The hospitality industry is a vibrant and progressive sector that is highly competitive and essentially customer orientated. Thus, the quality of staff employed in hotels is crucial in achieving positive outcomes, in terms of both customer satisfaction and overall profitability. As a key provider of future hotel management personnel, hospitality higher education institutions are tasked with graduating suitably qualified students. This study, therefore, seeks to better understand the key requirements for effective hotel management performance, and to ascertain how these capabilities can be best acquired by students. The outcomes from this research may help shape how hospitality management education can better meet both graduates' and the hotel industry's employability needs. The study seeks to appraise, advance and potentially reposition Australian hospitality tertiary education by more comprehensively aligning contemporary hospitality industry practices and the enactment of graduates' educational and Work Integrated Learning (WIL) experiences.

This initial chapter provides a background to the study and a rationale for undertaking this research. Additionally, the research context and contributions from this study are outlined, the specific research questions guiding this study are presented, and the methodology for undertaking the research is explained. This chapter concludes by summarising the key findings, deductions and contributions from the study. The following section begins to outline the foundation of the study.

1.2 Background to the study

Hospitality higher education providers are important facilitators helping to develop the next generation of hotel leaders. Higher education institutions aiming to meet this objective would benefit by including in their curriculum the specific attributes and competencies the hospitality industry requires. Aligning graduate outcomes with specific industry requirements reflects positively on education providers and also enhances graduates' employability (Cheung, Law, & He, 2010). Indeed, employability is an important

consideration for both universities and students; most students undertake tertiary education in the hope of gaining fitting employment soon after graduation (Connolly & McGing, 2006); and universities know that their success is often measured by the employment outcomes of their graduates (Feldmann, 2016). Moreover, in a service-orientated industry such as hospitality, the success of an organisation is often dependent upon the quality and capabilities of their staff (Attaalla, 2017; Walker, 2016). Therefore, graduates who possess relevant sought-after industry competencies will be more employable, benefitting all stakeholders; graduates, education providers, governments, and the hotel industry.

Aiming to better align educational outcomes with industry requirements presents an opportunity for hospitality education providers to determine the desired industry-required attributes and competencies. Educators can then incorporate these into their curriculum, thereby giving graduates a better chance to meet the hotel industry's needs. The ever-changing nature of the hospitality industry means this endeavour should be ongoing (Min, Swanger, & Gursoy, 2016). This study aims to provide new insights to inform the intended curriculum within hospitality management education in Australia.

This multi-level study involves various stages of data collection from a selection of hospitality management education institutions and a range of international hotels across Australia. The outcomes of this study also inform how work integrated learning (WIL) within hospitality management higher education can be best utilised to benefit key stakeholders. In support of further analysing WIL within the tertiary curriculum, an Australian Collaborative Education Network (ACEN) roundtable in late 2010 (Smith, Ferns, & Russell, 2014), and more recently, Rowe and Zegwaard (2017) identified as a priority, the need for further work examining and measuring the impact of WIL on students' work readiness. Although there have been several previous studies undertaken surrounding WIL within tertiary education, few have included the hospitality industry in their research.

This study focuses on assisting hospitality graduates to have a successful transition into the hotel industry and beyond, and to provide important insights informing hospitality management education. For effective education practice, it is worthwhile gaining such input from the hotel industry (Jiang & Alexakis, 2017), because these organisations offer initial employment to graduates and are responsible for furthering careers. Therefore, it is

pertinent to understand which specific competencies the hospitality industry is seeking in graduates, and to determine how well universities are preparing students to have these competencies when they graduate. These are important questions to ask; however, past research into graduates' competencies has focused largely on the views of academia, rather than on the views of industry (Hodges & Burchell, 2003).

This study investigates both the hotel industry's current and future requirements. It is important for the study to be future orientated; because, it takes time for changes to be implemented within the university curriculum (Biggs & Tang, 2011), and for students to complete their degrees and transition into the industry. Furthermore, graduates currently feel they are being taught how things were, not how things are (Anson, as cited in Chlopicki, 2017, p. 1). Significant changes occurring in both the education and hospitality business environments further support this inquiry. The changes within higher education include greater competition, rising costs (Newman & Wanless, 2016), increased regulation, declining public funding and greater transparency of graduate employment outcomes (Dredge, Airey, & Gross, 2014). Meanwhile, the hospitality industry is currently experiencing mounting profit pressures, technology advances, rising customer expectations and increased diversity of both employees and customers (Walker, 2016). Accordingly, these advances suggest the need for further insights to guide the hospitality management curriculum.

It is an opportune time to undertake this research now, because a widening skills gap currently exists between what the hospitality industry is seeking in graduates and what education providers are currently delivering (Attaalla, 2017; Barron & Ali-Knight, 2017; Chlopicki, 2017; Jiang & Alexakis, 2017; Min et al., 2016). Further investigation to narrow this skills gap will have positive inferences for all stakeholders, particularly higher education providers and their graduates. The following section expands on the challenges currently facing higher education and summarises the intentions of this study.

1.3 The research problem

Chapter 2 proposes that in addition to educating the next generation of managers, higher education in Australia also makes a contribution to the economic, social and cultural development of the country (Precision Consultancy, 2007). However, this responsibility is becoming increasingly challenging as economic pressures on businesses increase and constant advances in technology and social structures dramatically change modern

workforce requirements. Consequently, many graduates are finding themselves inadequately prepared for the job market (Chlopicki, 2017) and employers across the board are grappling to find suitably qualified staff (King, Marshall, & Zaharchuk, 2015). At the same time, the availability of free, contemporary and convenient massive open online courses (MOOCs) are rising. As a result of these factors, students may start to question the benefit of undertaking a higher education degree (King et al., 2015). These elements place mounting pressure on universities to ensure their curriculum and graduate outcomes remain current and workplace relevant.

The strains on higher education world-wide are becoming increasingly evident. Highlighting these challenges, an extensive study undertaken by Mourshed, Farrell, and Barton (2013), of 4,500 young people, 2,700 employers and 900 educators across nine countries revealed what they describe as a twin crisis; a shortage of graduate skills and a shortage of jobs. They add that youth today are three times more likely to be out of work compared to their parents. The higher education sector around the world needs to take some responsibility for this situation, because, according to these researchers, half of the unemployed youth are currently not convinced that their higher education improved their chances of finding a job.

These are concerning claims. As important stakeholders in youth development and graduate employability, universities have an important role to play in preparing young people for initial and long-term employment, and to become productive participants in the global economy. However, regarding the issue of graduate employability, the higher education sector seems to hold different opinions from other key stakeholders about the work readiness of their graduates. Mourshed et al. (2013) identified a disturbing mismatch in perceptions between key stakeholders. Of the 2,700 employers involved in their study, only 42% agreed that graduates were adequately prepared by their education for the workforce, and from the 4,500 youth surveyed, only 45% agreed they were adequately prepared by education for entry into their chosen field of study. In contrast, 72% of the 900 educators believed that graduates were adequately prepared for work in their professions. From these findings, it seems there is consistency between the employers' and the graduates' views. However, educators perceive employability outcomes more positively.

Another recent world-wide report on employability is also informative here. A study undertaken with 5,700 academics and industry professionals from 122 countries, Bisoux (2015) presented findings indicating 96% of senior academics believed they were appropriately preparing students for work, whereas, only 33% of industry executives believed this to be the case. The outcomes from both the Mourshed et al. (2013) and Bisoux (2015) studies are consistent with a third study undertaken by King et al. (2015) that also reported less than 50% of industry representatives believe higher education is preparing students with the necessary workplace skills. Therefore, there are mismatches between employers' perceptions of the suitability of graduates, and the preparedness of university graduates for work.

Another large study undertaken by Playfoot and Hall (2009) across 25 countries, was also critical of the global higher education system. These researchers found a significant disconnection between the education outcomes and the needs of the 21st century employers. They also highlighted a mismatch in perceptions, revealing only 30% of students reported that they developed work-ready capabilities, indicating that their graduate qualification did not prepare them sufficiently for employment. These ongoing reflections on higher education place increased pressures on universities to better address the employability agenda.

What such critiques may need to accommodate is the disparity between the traditional role of tertiary education, to prepare graduates to meet the broader needs of industry and society (as expressed in curriculum documents and industry standards), and the current specific needs of workplaces seeking to employ graduates. If the focus is on the latter, then some of the expectations of higher education may need to change, or the intended purposes of higher education may need revising. Indeed, the issues surrounding transferability of skills, work-readiness and employability of graduates have implications for all stakeholders; including governments, who are increasingly being judged on graduate employment outcomes and overall unemployment rates. However, specifically in Australia, recent graduate employment outcomes have not been encouraging. In 2015 job prospects for new graduates were the worst they have been since the 1980s (Trounson, 2015), with only 68% of new bachelor graduates achieving full-time work within four months of finishing their degrees (Graduate Careers Australia, 2015a). These figures do not reflect well on

Australian universities, as most industry and academic leaders view graduate job outcomes as the best measure of higher education effectiveness (King et al., 2015). This situation raises further questions about mass higher education and the kinds of expectations associated with it, especially from students, who are right to expect some form of return on their investment.

Notably, the overall cost of higher education today is becoming increasingly expensive. According to Newman and Wanless (2016), over 177,000 students who studied Business Management at Australian universities, are estimated to leave university with a debt of up to \$100,000. Newman (2016) asserts that with education carrying such a hefty price tag, graduates should leave university work-ready; with the rising cost of education, universities will come under increasing pressure to justify the relevance of their offerings. This pressure is challenging universities to graduate students with not only sound generic skills but also occupation-specific knowledge, skills and understandings (Peach & Gamble, 2011). The hospitality industry especially desires universities to educate their potential employees with the necessary skills and competencies required to succeed in their job soon after graduation (Solnet, Kralj, Moncarz, & Kay, 2010), thereby emphasising a workplace-distinct basis for these judgements. Indeed, having already developed required workplace skills can assist graduates' transition to work, and may also improve graduates' initial productivity, which also has cost benefits to organisations. To facilitate a successful transition from university to work, the hospitality curriculum would benefit by being prioritised according to the perceived importance by industry practitioners (Gursoy, Rahman, & Swanger, 2012; Min et al., 2016). This alignment would increase the chances for graduates to gain employment and meet the contemporary requirements of hospitality organisations.

The points raised thus far suggest it is vital to increase the overall worth of degree programs, particularly in terms of workplace relevant content, to ensure the integrity of degrees. Overall, employers are becoming increasingly sceptical of the validity of graduates' university qualifications (Playfoot & Hall, 2009). This predicament suggests that universities should further engage with employers to ascertain the specific attributes they are seeking in graduates, and importantly also try to determine their future requirements. This endeavour

is particularly important for the hospitality sector, with its rapidly changing operating environment and enterprise-specific requirements (Walker, 2016).

1.4 Curriculum challenges for hospitality higher education

Competing demands create challenges for hospitality educators who are trying to incorporate into their curriculum ever-changing requirements to meet the expectations of all stakeholders (Dopson & Tas, 2004), which is the case made in Chapter 2. Even among scholars there are differing opinions on the ideal hospitality curriculum. Some view the curriculum as being too practical or vocational (Airey & Johnson, 1999; Pavesic, 1993; Riegel, 1990), while others see it as being too broad and theoretical (Hawkins, Ruddy, & Ardah, 2012; Kay & Russette, 2000; Woods, 2003). Indeed, in evaluating the hospitality curriculum, scholars have debated the assimilation of theoretical and practical elements for some time (Breakey, Robinson, & Brenner, 2014). This debate is on-going and, although challenging, can be seen as healthy for advancing the curriculum. Accordingly, across the world, calls have been made for a paradigm shift in the hospitality higher education curriculum, and for increased focus on the balance of vocational skills development and higher order critical thinking (Dredge et al., 2014). However, if the call to shift from one paradigm to another is interpreted too narrowly, it has the potential to limit the scope of what higher education can deliver (Dredge et al., 2014); because the interests of one key stakeholder may be too heavily served. Therefore, investing in both the vocational and the higher order academic aspects of the required hospitality management curriculum is advocated.

Certainly, hospitality management education has evolved to an extent that the industry and employers on one hand, and the academy on the other can both influence the curriculum (Dredge et al., 2014). Lashley (2009) suggests that ongoing dialogue is needed between the parties to help determine how the interests of students and the goals of education can best be served. He adds that regular disagreement and debate among the various stakeholders (including governments and employers) occurs and is often financial and political in nature; contributing to a context that has resulted in employers having what has been described by Gleeson and Keep (2004, p. 50), as ‘a voice without responsibility’. Though it should be acknowledged that, in any curriculum planning, it is advisable to consult industry stakeholders, due to the employability implications (Cooper, Shepherd, & Westlake, 1994; Dittman, 1994). However, Ritchie (1988) cautions, it is important that the curriculum is

industry sensitive, not industry dominated. Although it is recognised that, while education providers are accountable to all stakeholders, not just to employers, there is no denying the power held by these employers, because they provide the graduate jobs and future careers that parents, students, governments and education providers all desire.

Accordingly, the environment in which employers, governments and education providers operate, results in power relationships that are generally asymmetric (Avis, Bloomer, Esland, Gleeson, & Hodkinson, 1996; Gleeson & Keep, 2004) with employers often holding the balance of power over universities (Gleeson & Keep, 2004). Currently this power is increasing as more graduates enter the job market. Gleeson and Keep (2004) find a fuller employment market is advantageous to employers, as this can increase the number of suitably qualified job applicants. Furthermore, they suggest that, in terms of apportioning the cost of education and training, employers will, if unchallenged, look to transfer as much of the responsibility and cost of skills acquisition onto the individual, the education provider or the State. This alleviates the need for organisations to invest in their own costly in-house training programs, which many are already reluctant to do (Collins, 2002; Lashley, 2009). One viable alternative for graduate skills development is for workplaces to partner with universities in structured WIL programs; this is cost effective, and offers workplace-relevant learning outcomes for students. However, currently in Australia the opportunities to undertake WIL within hospitality education programs are reducing, rather than increasing (Wardle, 2014) (see further in Chapter 3).

From an education perspective, employer demand for occupational relevance and skills acquisition may best be achieved through reciprocation and partnerships between education providers and employers (Gleeson & Keep, 2004). If this exchange is not forthcoming, the education system is left trying to do too much to meet varying stakeholder expectations (Gleeson & Keep, 2004). Therefore, according to Gleeson and Keep (2004), employers need to take some responsibility; if they continue to retain 'voice' without responsibility, education will continue to be locked in a deficit discourse. Thus, there needs to be an increase in more genuine partnerships between employers and education providers (Hawkins et al., 2012). Indeed, more structured collaborations and WIL opportunities are needed; an environment should be encouraged where employers are not only the customers of the education system, but are also active participants in it (Gleeson & Keep, 2004). Such partnerships can also benefit the hospitality industry through facilitating the development and acquisition of staff with

enterprise-specific knowledge, skills and attributes. Furthermore, by hiring already experienced staff, hospitality organisations can achieve better outcomes, in terms of both customer satisfaction and overall financial performance (Chi & Gursoy, 2009).

A further advantage of established partnerships between educators and employers is that these relationships can also help identify workplace-specific requirements. These competencies can then be embedded into the curriculum, resulting in more relevant teaching and better overall outcomes for all stakeholders (Gursoy et al., 2012). Moreover, when students in hospitality programs receive relevant industry content throughout the curriculum, workplace retention may also benefit (Nelson & Dopson, 2001), because students are more aware of specific industry expectations. Indeed, staff retention remains an issue for the hospitality industry; currently in Australia, the average tenure for an under 25 year old employee is only 1.7 years (Miles cited in Brown, 2016, p. 1). Accordingly, Miles (cited in Brown, 2016, p.1) suggests, that workplaces are feeling the pressure to get the most from their new recruits in the shortest possible time. This places increased pressure on new staff to perform, which is made more difficult if they do not already possess an industry understanding and the sought-after capabilities. Nelson and Dopson (2001) who concur that under-prepared employees experience more pressure, advocate that developing an industry-relevant curriculum should be a top strategic priority of hospitality education providers.

Consequently, there is a growing need to encourage industry input into hospitality management curricula to ensure the content is current, relevant and applicable (Ravichandran & Arendt, 2008). Therefore, further research is needed to guide higher education institutions in the provision of industry-relevant curricula and outcomes that result in successful initial employment and longer term careers (Finch et al., 2016). The importance of this study stems from the need to better understand the gap between hotel management education, and the requirements of the hotel industry for the benefit of all stakeholders.

In summary, the hospitality curriculum should facilitate the development of the necessary industry required skills needed to manage hospitality businesses (Donina & Luka, 2014; Dopson & Tas, 2004); and according to Rowe (1993), employers are often best equipped to inform the specific skills needed. As discussed, opinions exist that hospitality educators should not be overly reactive to industry demands (Breakey, Robinson, Craig-Smith, & Szambowski, 2011); they should instead focus more on a holistic, liberal kind of

education (Airey & Tribe, 2000; Inui, Wheeler, & Lankford, 2006; Lashley, 2007). However, Lum (2009) does not see the educational curriculum being as clearly categorised into the two distinct classifications of vocational and liberal. Alternatively, Lum (2009) suggests adopting more of a professional capability discourse, which represents a merging of both the vocational and liberal aspects of learning. The adoption of a professional capability curriculum has been gaining increasing attention in a range of disciplines, including tourism and hospitality (Dredge et al., 2012). Consequently, the orientation of this research assumes more a professional capabilities discourse that aims to inform hospitality management education in Australia to the benefit of all stakeholders. Importantly, this study recognises the essential and prevailing influence employers have on graduate employability. Hence, employers' views are seen as essential and are emphasised. The next section further informs the research agenda and introduces the key research questions guiding this study.

1.5 Research questions

The study has one main research objective, informed by four research questions, as presented in this section.

1.5.1 Research objective

How can educational provisions for hotel management graduates be best organised to enhance the development of required operational managerial competencies?

The outcomes addressing this guiding research aim are presented in Chapters 8 and 9.

1.5.2 Research questions

- 1 What types of management related competencies are required of competent international hotel operational department managers (Food and Beverage and Rooms Division)? (RQ1)
- 2 What are the curriculum and pedagogic considerations that will enhance competency development and employability of hotel management graduates? (RQ2)
- 3 What is the role of Work Integrated Learning (WIL) in contributing to hotel management graduates' employability (RQ3)

4 How should WIL experiences be best organised and enacted to enhance hotel management students' graduate outcomes? (RQ4)

These four research questions are addressed in Chapter 8. To inform the research questions, an appropriate sample is needed. Accordingly, the following section introduces the context in which the study is undertaken and outlines the study's participants.

1.6 Research context and rationale

Across the world the variety of hospitality providers is immense; however, despite the recent rapid growth of large international hotel developments, small businesses dominate the industry (Gross & Lashley, 2014). Given the various skill requirements necessary for these varied businesses, it would be difficult to formulate one ideal hospitality curriculum that could meet the expectations of all hospitality providers. Therefore, for the purposes of this study, only Australian four- and five-star hotels and managers within these properties have been used for analysis; thus the outcomes from this study aim to inform practices that most relate to this specific group.

The research for the study, undertaken Australia-wide, uses hotel Operations, and Human Resources Managers as informants. In this context, the term 'Operations Managers' refers to managers from the two key operating departments within international hotels; Food and Beverage, and Rooms Division. Operations Managers were specifically selected because they are currently performing these roles, and therefore, know the required capabilities needed for their jobs. In addition, these managers have insights into industry developments, and knowledge of expected future managerial requirements (Campion et al., 2011). Human Resources Managers have also been included because of their influences on recruitment and employability orientations (Stone, 2013). Furthermore, the Food and Beverage and Rooms Division departments are selected because they employ the most staff in hotels (Walker, 2016) and are therefore where the majority of hotel management graduates are likely to obtain positions. Operations departments are also selected because these departments are the most likely path to more senior management positions (Walker, 2016). In addition, they also involve direct customer contact. Indeed, customer service is the foundation on which the hospitality industry is based, so maintaining quality customer service in hotels is essential for success (Kandampully, 2007). The following section overviews the guiding research framework and specific research methods adopted.

1.7 Research method and procedures

The empirical foundations for this study (see Chapters 4 and 5) draw upon Tyler's (1949) principles of curriculum and instruction. His four fundamental questions, to be answered when developing any curriculum or plan of instruction, are outlined here, along with their alignment to this study's research questions.

- 1 What educational purposes should the education provider seek to attain? (relates to RQ1 & RQ2)
- 2 What educational experiences can be provided, that are likely to attain these purposes? (RQs 2-4)
- 3 How can these educational experiences be effectively organised? (RQ2 & RQ4)
- 4 How can we determine whether these purposes are being attained? (Key research aim)

Tyler (1949) suggests that a range of views are needed to inform the curriculum. This includes gaining input from workplaces regarding the necessary curriculum, and ascertaining a teaching program's effectiveness through an evaluation undertaken with employers.

Accordingly, this study adopts a strong employability focus, with the objectives of the various data collection phases used within this study combining to determine the specific competencies needed for effective hotel Operations Managers. That is; if education institutions do not know what knowledge, skills and attributes are required by workplaces employing their graduates, then how can these institutions know which specific capabilities they should develop in graduates? Once the required work capabilities and attitudes are identified, educational institutions can look at how these characteristics can be best developed, and ultimately acquired by graduates.

This form of employer feedback links educational outcomes to both employability and actual job requirements (Resnick, 1987). Chapman and Lovell (2006) support this undertaking, suggesting that more analysis of job skills, knowledge and competencies needs to be undertaken by education providers. This process involves a form of reverse transfer (Fallows & Steven, 2000), working back from industry into education. Wolf (1989) further endorses this approach suggesting, that we cannot educate effectively to the required standards, if we do not know what these standards are, and we cannot measure the associated knowledge and understanding without first knowing the required knowledge, skills and behaviours.

Accordingly, the approach adopted for this study is based on analysing the hotel Operations Managers' actual job tasks and also the frequency in which these tasks are undertaken, a technique described by Boyatzis (1982) as job element analysis. This method, developed from concepts of job analysis, has been used in many organisations to inform staff recruitment and selection. According to Tyler (1949), undertaking job analysis first occurred during the First World War; many people had to be trained in a very short period of time, so job analysis was widely used to support the specific training programs needed to prepare new soldiers. From an educational perspective, and as a method for education to best prepare their graduates, Tyler (1949, p. 54) describes job analysis as 'a method of analysing the activities carried out by a worker in a particular field that a training program can be focused upon those critical activities performed by this worker'. This explanation supports this study's agenda and the overall methodology undertaken within this inquiry.

Furthermore, from an organisational and human resources standpoint, the process of job analysis involves the investigation of a position to determine the essential tasks and responsibilities, ultimately identifying the key characteristics of a job, which include both the professional and personal attributes required for someone to successfully perform in the role (Colman, 2015). A key point highlighted by Colman, is, to successfully perform in a job requires a combination of both the technical skills and personal elements, where these personal attributes are especially pertinent in the service orientated hospitality industry. More broadly, Singh (2008) suggests, that job analysis sits at the heart of all organisational human resources practices, making it a critically important activity in all successful recruitment.

There are two other terms used to describe the same or similar process of job analysis: competency profiling (Watkins & Cseh, 2009) and competency modelling (Mohan, 2013). However, Sanchez and Levine (2009) find no professional consensus regarding the difference between these various terms. Though they suggest that competency modelling is growing in popularity and is now replacing traditional job analysis in a range of human resource applications. Campion et al. (2011) propose that, because company executives pay more attention to competency modelling, adopting this term is beneficial in getting job analysis into the mainstream of management. Therefore, competency modelling, according to Campion et al. (2011) is considered the 'Trojan Horse' for job analysis. Essentially, this study adopts a competency modelling framework (see Chapter 4), that is used to inform

impending educational processes. The various approaches to data collection will be elaborated on in the following section.

1.7.1 Methods of data collection

Gathering the required data to address the research questions requires a mixed method approach to data collection and analysis (see further, Chapter 5). This approach involves combining both qualitative and quantitative data measures. The logic behind undertaking mixed method research, according to Hesse-Biber and Leavy (2006), is that the whole is greater than the sum of its parts. Greene and Caracelli (1997) agree that adopting different methods and the paradigms they represent promotes more comprehensive, insightful and logical results than either paradigm could obtain alone. Overall, the combination of the two different methods can create synergies, and can provide much fuller analysis and understanding (Hesse-Biber & Leavy, 2006; Tashakkori & Teddlie, 1998).

The mixed method approach undertaken is sequentially exploratory in design. This implies collecting and analysing qualitative and then quantitative data in consecutive phases within one study (Creswell, Plano Clark, Gutmann, & Hanson, 2003). The data collection methods used includes a combination of document analysis, field observations, questionnaires and interviews. The various approaches and stages of data collection have been designed to inform, confirm and expand on the preceding phases of the study, to best address the study's objectives.

The overview provided in Figure 1.1 of the research process adopted for this study illustrates the three main stages of data collection, the processes undertaken within each stage, and the relevant research questions addressed within each phase (see further, Chapter 5). Section 1.8 describes the study's key findings, deductions and contributions.

Figure 1.1: Overview of research process

1.8 Research findings, deductions and contributions

The objectives of this study help inform education practice within Australian hotel management higher education, and also highlight the most important competencies required of competent international hotel Operations Managers. These outcomes, aimed at benefiting the employability of hotel management graduates should have positive implications for graduates, universities, governments and the hotel industry.

To achieve the research aims, Chapter 6 quantitatively assesses the importance of a range of 48 pre-determined hospitality competencies, and identifies leadership, people skills and customer service as essential hospitality capabilities. This chapter also highlights the high transferability of required skills between different hotel operations departments and classifications. Chapter 7 confirms and qualitatively explores the findings and reinforces the necessity of well-developed 'soft skills' within hospitality work settings. Additionally, Chapter 7 highlights the significance of WIL within hotel management education. Chapter 8 consolidates findings that address the four research questions, and presents both experiential and workplace learning as especially important practices to help develop these required 'soft skills'. Further, Chapter 8 evaluates the role and positioning of WIL within hospitality higher education, and compares the study's overall findings to other related research. Finally, Chapter 9 resolves the research objective and considers the contribution that the study makes to theory, hotel management education and graduate employability.

Essentially, this study advises on strategies related to how both higher education providers and students can best develop capabilities in the key required hospitality management competencies. Moreover, this inquiry makes an explicit theoretical contribution, by developing a new hotel management specific competencies model (see Chapter 4), and also by advancing applicable literature and employability frameworks. To contribute to the research outcomes various empirical processes are incorporated and varying hospitality management views considered. The next section summarises this chapter and introduces Chapter 2.

1.9 Chapter summary

Hotel management higher education institutions have the responsibility for educating the next generation of industry professionals. Two main stakeholders involved in this process are the students and the hotel industry employing those graduates. To meet both these key

stakeholders' needs, it is important to incorporate the specific competencies required for organisational success into the university curriculum. This study is designed to obtain insights from a range of hotel managers about the essential competencies required for hotel management success. The outcomes from this analysis are intended to inform educational practice, and potentially to contribute to beneficial employability outcomes for hotel management graduates.

To obtain the necessary data to inform this study, several research procedures are utilised and a sequential mixed method approach to data collection is adopted. This research process consists of a combination of document analysis, field observation, questionnaire and interview techniques. From the various data collected, key findings, deductions and contributions are drawn; these are presented in the final four chapters (Chapters 6–9). Chapter 2 provides a context for the study, and further highlights the need for a closer alignment between the capacities required for effective hospitality work and their provision through educational programs.

2

Education systems responding to changing work requirements: The case of hospitality

2.1 Advancing workplace and educational structures

The previous chapter provided an overview of the dissertation. The content of this chapter is based on a review of literature that further informs the study. Specifically, the chapter focuses on how educational systems respond to changing work requirements. This process begins by providing an overview of the tourism and hospitality industries and supporting hospitality higher education institutions. The chapter highlights some of the advances currently taking place within the hospitality industry in Australia. This progress includes an increasing focus on leadership capabilities, as well as on rising customer service and profit expectations. This shifting workplace dynamic creates a need for the hospitality management curriculum to be continually evolving to meet the ever-changing needs of employers, and therefore, of graduates.

2.2 Overview of tourism and hospitality

To provide a context to evolving hospitality work requirements, the following section presents an overview of the tourism and hospitality industries, and also highlights some of the important features of these vibrant industries. This insight enables a better understanding of the sector and its requirements.

The collective tourism sector, which is dynamic and progressive, is identified as the world's largest industry (Ricci, 2010; Walker, 2016); due to its associated economic impacts, governments, business, educators and the wider community appreciate the industry's significance (Inui et al., 2006). The tourism industry involves numerous stakeholders and many complex interrelationships; its multifaceted nature makes it difficult to define (Weaver & Lawton, 2014). Weaver and Lawton (2014, p. 2), propose that it comprises 'the sum of the processes, activities, and outcomes arising from the relationships and interactions amongst tourists, tourism suppliers, host governments, host communities, and surrounding environments that are involved in attracting, transporting, hosting and managing tourists'. As implied within this description, the hospitality industry is closely intertwined with that of travel and tourism (Chon & Maier, 2010). Accordingly, these fields

are frequently discussed and studied together (Baker, Caldicott, & Spowart, 2011), although for the purposes of this study, the focus is specifically on the hospitality sector.

The concept of hospitality has a long history; one that is claimed to be as old as civilisation itself, originating from the ancient custom of breaking bread and sharing with others (Walker, 2016). The actual term 'hospitality' is derived from the word, 'hospice', traditionally a house of rest for travellers (Barrows, Powers, & Reynolds, 2012). Hospitality is also closely related to the term 'hospital' (Barrows et al., 2012); they both provide accommodation and meals, although for different purposes. This implies care of individuals and responding to their needs is central to the discipline, and therefore, to this study.

As an industry, hospitality includes hotels, restaurants and other kinds of institutions that offer shelter, food, or both to people away from their homes (Barrows et al., 2012). Another view of hospitably, offered by Lashley (2000), is as a cluster of service sector activities associated with the provision of food, drink, and accommodation. More broadly, hospitality also includes clubs, attractions, casinos and other entertainment facilities (Barrows et al., 2012), which collectively contribute to the industry's complexity. Notably, the hospitality industry provides an essential service for people travelling away from their homes; offering accommodation, food, and beverages, with an emphasis on personalised customer service.

Therefore, the service orientation of the hospitality industry and the social domain of hospitality activities highlight the importance for staff to have well developed social capacities (Lashley, 2000). Certainly, due to the increasingly competitive environment within the hospitality industry, and the resulting increased emphasis on service as a key point of difference, there is now a greater focus on employees' customer service skills (Hudson & Hudson, 2017). Therefore, the personal skills of staff are increasingly valued, because, many hotels today offer very similar locations, price, products and facilities (Walker, 2016). Indeed, from the industry's beginnings, catering for the individual needs of guests has remained paramount.

2.3 The formation of the hospitality industry

To provide further insights into the hospitality industry, and to clarify the specific requirements needed to work in this sector, a background to the industry is given, beginning with how the industry was formed. The hospitality industry started from very humble

beginnings, where basic accommodation and meals were provided to travellers in people's own homes or in small inns (Chon & Maier, 2010). The need for the sector grew from the noble traveller within Europe who required a place to rest (Nailon, 1982). It was not until the late 1800s and early 1900s that the industry truly started to evolve. This progressive period began the era of the grand luxe hotels, which included the opening of Raffles in Singapore (1887), the Savoy in London (1889) and the Waldorf-Astoria in New York (1893) (Walker, 2016). Notably, the founding General Manager of the Savoy hotel was César Ritz (today the Ritz-Carlton hotel group still bears his name), and the Chef de Cuisine was August Escoffier, regarded as the father of modern cuisine (Walker, 2016). These two together revolutionised the hospitality industry by increasing the standards of service and they remain world renowned today (Walker, 2016).

Another significant figure of this development period was Ellsworth Milton (E.M.) Statler, who built his first hotel in New York in 1907, the first major hotel to provide a private bath or shower in each room (Miller, 1968). It was also Statler who identified the importance of the customer, as a focus in an increasingly competitive market (Miller, 1968). Even after E.M Statler's death in 1928, the Statler Hotel Group continued to grow, going on to build several additional hotels (Miller, 1968). In 1954, the Statler Hotel Company was purchased by Conrad Hilton for \$111 million, at the time, the largest real estate transaction in history (Miller, 1968). Since then, Hilton hotels have continued to expand; today they remain one of the world's largest hotel groups and they retain their focus on guest satisfaction (Hilton Hotels, 2016).

After World War II, as people began to travel and socialise more, because of greater wealth, there was a rapid expansion of hotels and restaurants, including fast food (Walker, 2016). Another significant development during the 1950s and 1960s was the growth of air transportation. With the introduction of jet aircraft, flights were faster and becoming more common; as a result, hotel and restaurant chains rapidly emerged to cater to the increasing market and to the growing needs of both business and leisure travellers (Walker, 2016).

As the hospitality industry continued to expand, so did the need for more staff, leading to increased levels of recruitment over time. Due to the service orientation of the industry, as customer numbers grew, so too did the need for more service workers. This ongoing growth of the industry also created the need for additional education and training,

to cater for the rising industry expectations (Walker, 2016). Indeed, as the demands of hospitality work change and become more complex, educational provisions need to be updated to reflect these changes.

2.4 The development and shifts in hospitality management education

Working and managing in hospitality, and thus associated education, is not a new phenomenon. In fact, short courses in hospitality have been established for nearly one hundred years; originally providing training for staff in specific roles, such as in kitchens and restaurants (Morgan, 2004). However, as the industry continued to mature, the need for more specialised training became apparent. The initial short courses offered were further developed, which led to the establishment of technical and vocational schools (Ring, Dickinger & Wöber, 2009). These vocational schools went on to develop hospitality apprenticeship and then management programs, because, due to the growing workforce, the requirements of managing in the industry were becoming more complex (Nailon, 1982). Continuing today, apprenticeships remain an integral part of the hospitality industry, and hospitality management education programs around the world continue to flourish.

Regarding hospitality management education, the first designated management program was established in Lausanne, Switzerland in 1893 (Wood, 2013). Subsequently, the first university hospitality degree was developed in conjunction with hotelier E.M Statler, and the American Hotel Association began at Cornell University in 1922 (Goodman & Sprague, 1991). Cornell University's hospitality degree program remains one of the world's most regarded hospitality management degree programs (Williams, 2005). At the time of these developments, as a relatively new field of study, the knowledge about hospitality management pedagogy was strongly informed by the industry, rather than from theoretical frameworks of other related fields of inquiry (Airey & Tribe, 2000). The vocational orientation of hospitality provided clear boundaries, which during the program development gave a helpful framework within which the discipline could develop and justify its existence (Airey & Tribe, 2000). Indeed, Connolly and McGing (2006) suggest that hospitality education aligns more with the vocational domain, being more applied and less theoretical (Wheelahan, 2015), than with the liberal continuum, as most students undertake a hospitality degree to develop specific skills to enhance their career prospects, rather than for its educational worth alone (Connolly & McGing, 2006).

Despite having a strong occupational focus, hospitality management programs took some time to establish their place, because traditionally, like nursing, the skills needed within hospitality were mostly acquired on the job (Nailon, 1982). This more formalised educational approach to training was opposed to the traditional way to learn the hospitality business. However, as the hospitality industry was growing and the work became more complex, there was an increasing need to go beyond workplace training alone, because the skills that accompany the various operational and specific craft related positions, are not the same as the broader leadership skills needed by managers (Barrows et al., 2012). This recognition of advancing and varied skill requirements fuelled the growth of degree programs geared specifically for preparing students to be future leaders in the hospitality industry (Barrows, 1999). Moreover, Barrows et al. (2012) suggest that, due to increasing commercial demands, knowledge beyond the workplace is now crucial for success as a leader, so undertaking formal study is a necessary part of the overall preparation for a career as a hospitality manager in today's knowledge economy. Furthermore, most stakeholders agree that the hospitality industry today is a large fragmented industry with its own unique set of challenges; as such, the development of industry-specific leadership capacities is needed in addition to precise occupational training (Barrows, 1999). Thus, there remains an increasing need for the explicit provision of hotel management education.

2.5 The orientation towards developing business skills

The specific challenges within the hospitality industry are growing, therefore having managers formally educated to work effectively in this highly competitive industry is becoming increasingly expected and advantageous (Barrows, 1999). Additionally, having strong business skills is particularly beneficial, due to the challenging economic environment in which the industry is currently operating (Walker, 2016). Barrows et al. (2012) suggest that the business domain offers a logical route to hospitality management preparation, which is evident by the majority of hospitality degree programs being housed within business schools. However, some authors question the appropriateness of a business foundation for hospitality management education. Sasser, Olsen, and Wyckoff (1978) suggest that formal business management education has too frequently focused on tools, techniques, and concepts that are more appropriate for manufacturing firms, rather than for service firms. Furthermore, Brotherton (1999) raises an interesting consideration; should

hospitality be conceived as a product, a process, an experience, or all three? Given the tangible and intangible natures of the hospitality industry, this combination would suggest a mix of all three. Therefore, hospitality education should ideally allow for the intellectual pursuit of business and economic understandings alongside the social dimensions (Lashley, Lynch, & Morrison, 2007). However, these ideas may not yet be fully understood.

Additionally, a more recent trend within hospitality education programs has been towards offering more generic business courses, and less specialised practical and socially orientated courses (Robinson, Breakey, & Craig-Smith, 2008). Indeed, this trend is evident, with the recent disbandment of many training restaurants within Australian hospitality higher education. However, in the past, this aspect of practical orientation to hospitality education was seen as an important component in degree programs, and was often combined with a significant period of industry placement, or WIL (Airey & Tribe, 2000). Traditionally, this period of industry work placement within hospitality programs was substantial, usually between 18 and 48 weeks (Airey & Tribe, 2000). Certainly, these practical elements were seen as essential and defining, differentiating the discipline of hospitality from other more generic business management degrees (Airey & Tribe, 2000). This suggests that what constitutes the competence required of hospitality managers, and thus, of educational intents, is still not fully assumed.

Currently within hospitality education there is no recognition of the essentialness of occupational application, and the present move towards more generalist business degrees in hospitality management education is rising. This trend is being fuelled by a number of factors. These include universities' strategic positioning considerations, which comprise the need for research-intensive universities to differentiate themselves from vocational education providers (TAFEs and other private providers), in addition to the financial consequences of continuing to offer expensive practical courses (Robinson et al., 2008). Accordingly, this issue questions whether the university's reputation and ranking are necessarily congruent with the hospitality industry expectations and their graduates' industry preparedness. Indeed, as this field of study has become more integrated within traditional university educational structures, there has been an obvious move away from the original occupational orientation. This shift, according to Robinson et al. (2008), comprises a transformation from 'operationalisation' to 'intellectualisation' within many

hospitality management programs. Consequently, there are now fewer opportunities for occupationally orientated skills to be developed within hotel management programs in Australia. This realisation has created a need to reassess the hospitality management curriculum, and to look at ways of best developing students' occupational and social capacities. It is this process of re-assessing Australian hospitality management education that inspires and motivates this study.

2.6 Hospitality management education in Australia

As the hospitality industry in Australia has continued to develop and mature, so too has hospitality management tertiary education. However, compared to Europe and North America, Australia's hospitality management education sector is still quite immature, despite its rapid expansion. It is just over forty years since the first hospitality management degree programs were introduced in Australia (Breakey & Craig-Smith, 2008). Initially, two hospitality degree programs began in Australia in 1974. One was offered in Victoria by the Footscray Institute of Technology (now Victoria University); the other by the Queensland Agricultural College at Gatton (now part of the University of Queensland) (Breakey & Craig-Smith, 2008). Both these programs started from earlier sub-degree programs offered as part of the College of Advanced Education (CAEs), which at the time focused on occupationally applied degree programs (Breakey & Craig-Smith, 2008). However, as a result of tertiary education reforms driven by the Dawkins Report in 1988, both these CAEs merged with the university sector, ending the binary system of higher education that had previously existed in Australia (Robinson et al., 2008).

Since its establishment, hospitality degree education in Australia has continued to evolve; due to government pressure, industry demands, and the maturing of hospitality management education (Craig-Smith, Davidson, & French, 1994). However, with its strong occupational roots, the hospitality discipline has taken some time to establish itself within the Australian university sector (Craig-Smith et al., 1994). Nevertheless, one of the most enduring factors of hospitality education within Australia has been the continued high demand and the growth in student numbers, both domestically and more recently internationally. Hence, strong interest in these programs from students remains.

Accordingly, since their establishment, the number of hospitality management courses offered around the world has risen dramatically, with the major growth periods being the

1980s and 1990s (Lee, Olds, & Chang, 2010). Within Australia, the number of hospitality courses offered by universities has proliferated from just the initial two offered in the mid-1970s, to over one hundred now being offered (Roberts, 2009). This rapid growth of programs has presented challenges; with the overall expansion of hospitality programs being criticised for not being uniform or systematic, but more a reactive response to growth and resulting increased industry and student demand (Ricci, 2010). Moreover, some hospitality programs have been criticised for being developed too quickly, with limited input from industry (McKercher, 2002). Consequently, Roberts (2009) suggests that hospitality management programs in Australia are still coming to terms with how to best connect and to meet the specific needs of their various stakeholders. Central here is determining which capacities or competencies hotel managers need; this agenda is a key focus of this study.

One of the biggest challenges that hospitality educators face is to determine clear curriculum objectives that meet the ever-changing needs of the industry (Chi & Gursoy, 2009; Swanger & Gursoy, 2007). Of particular significance here is an Australian study, undertaken by Hart in 2002 (cited in Chapman and Lovell, 2006. p. 81), that indicated 90% of hospitality employers were dissatisfied with graduates. Recent indications suggest this has not improved (Deloitte Access Economics, 2017). Goodman and Sprague (1991) and Kang, Wu and Gould (2005) assert that industry dissatisfaction often results from teaching material that is not industry-relevant or is outdated. Furthermore, the variety in curricula and the varied outcomes also remain issues of contention among some hospitality educators (Ricci, 2010). Indeed, it is important for educators to evaluate if the results of their pedagogy are positively impacting on the industry and the success of graduates (Solnet et al., 2010). Moreover, as technology, the workforce, hospitality products and customers are constantly changing; the competency range needed by graduates also evolves (Millar, Mao, & Moreo, 2010). Consequently, the changing hotel environment and the expansion of hospitality management education suggest that communication between the industry and educational institutions regarding curriculum development should be increased. Overall, the more that educators and employers work together in curriculum design, the better the likely outcomes will be for graduates and other stakeholders. However, reaching a consensus on a suitable curriculum is not an easy task, because various stakeholders are often motivated by their own interests and imperatives. Accordingly, curriculum theorists, such as Tyler (1949), recognise that there is a need to reconcile such differences.

2.7 Challenges for the hospitality management curriculum

Indeed, developing and delivering a curriculum that meets the expectations of all stakeholders is challenging. However, building stronger relationships and better communication between education providers and the hospitality industry may help to formulate an appropriate curriculum, and therefore, better develop the key skills employers require from graduates (Cooper, Orrell, & Bowden, Orrell & Bowden, 2010; Millar et al., 2010). Accordingly, academic institutions should initiate this communication process, as hospitality employers are often reluctant to engage with educators (Solnet, Robinson, & Cooper, 2007). Furthermore, education providers' reputations are at stake, as it is their responsibility to ensure that the required skills for success are identified and developed in graduates (Ladki, 1993; Moncarz & Kay, 2005). Indeed, Raybould and Wilkins (2005) state that hospitality degrees should satisfy an industry need for specifically skilled future managers. However, they add, there is also a need to ensure that the curriculum meets both the educational and the student's expectations. Additionally, educators should explore the prospects for curricula that allow students to prepare for continuous learning, which helps shape their careers and personal lives, and also contributes positively to society (Attaalla, 2017; Haywood, 1989). Therefore, the aim of the curriculum should be to promote a balance between satisfying industry demands and satisfying those of students and other stakeholders, including the wider society (Ring et al., 2009). Accordingly, this broad educational agenda presents challenges for universities, and the intention of this research is to contribute to the discussion by advancing key required competencies and appropriate learning approaches.

Certainly, a balance must be sought between what the industry requires, and what universities can realistically deliver. Moreover, according to Tribe (2014), adding to the challenges in tourism and hospitality curriculum are the many competing knowledges about the discipline. These include managerial knowledge, social science knowledge, disciplinary knowledge, interdisciplinary knowledge and extra-disciplinary knowledge (Tribe, 2014). So, according to Tribe (2014), the question arises about which aspects of the complexity of knowing should be incorporated into the curriculum. These points only add to the difficulties in developing a curriculum for hospitality education that meets the varying expectations of stakeholders (Tribe, 2014) and therefore the need for further empirically informed accounts.

As introduced in Chapter 1, a particular challenge surrounding the hospitality curriculum relates to the balance between the higher order knowledge provided by liberal education, and the industry-required skills, provided by vocational education (Dredge et al., 2012). Debate often centres on general education and academic learning versus careerism and employability (Speight, Lackovic, & Cooker, 2013), although there is consensus among most stakeholders that the curriculum should include a balance of both aspects (Pavesic, 1991; Wisch, 1991). Certainly, Speight et al. (2013, p. 115) advocate a holistic double-duty curriculum model which includes both these elements; ‘the model is not academic learning, and learning for employability, but learning for employability through the academic discipline, which ensures the continuing central significance of the discipline and avoids setting the two in opposition’. This approach is consistent with Tribe’s (2002) Philosophic Practitioner syllabus; the philosophic practitioner curriculum comprises vocational, professional, and social science knowledge and skills that foster a balance between satisfying business interests and satisfying those of wider society and the world (Dredge et al., 2012; Tribe, 2002). The Philosophic Practitioner form of education integrates broad occupational knowledge that encourages occupational competence, balanced by ethical considerations (Tribe, 2002). The underpinning value of this practice of curriculum is to improve not only graduate outcomes and business performance, but also the wider world it affects (Tribe, 2002). Yet, as discussed, it is necessary to try and achieve some balance amongst the various interests.

Certainly, the wider tourism and hospitality industries have impact of different kinds, including generating employment, wealth, and impacting on social relationships (Tribe, 2002). Thus, a special burden is placed on tourism and hospitality education, because as economic prosperity and customer satisfaction are generated from the industry, changes to people and place also occur (Tribe, 2002). This wider society, world view involves not only guests and associated businesses, but also the many other individuals including staff, communities, governments, and physical environments that they directly impact (Tribe, 2002). This consequence requires tourism and hospitality educators to consider wider social and developmental constructs when developing their curriculum. This type of education aims to graduate what Tribe (2002) describes as, philosophic practitioners. Ideally, this type of graduate has the knowledge and skills to meet the demands of both business, and the wider society.

Therefore, given the challenges in developing an inclusive curriculum, incorporating both vocational and liberal considerations is an important consideration. Additionally, it is advantageous to ascertain if the results of education are meeting the expectations of various stakeholders. However, as indicated in Chapter 1, employers in particular have been given a significant voice throughout this study, due to the employability focus of the research. Furthermore, consistent with Berdrow and Evers (2011), the aim of this study is not to advocate specifically for the 'job market' to determine the curriculum, but to give due recognition to the prerequisites required for effective employability. A key outcome of this study is the identification of required competencies needed for contemporary hospitality management practice.

Accordingly, over 50 related studies have been consulted to help determine the required competencies that inform hospitality education, and to build on the literature to guide this study. A list of these studies is presented in Appendix A. The following summary of these studies offers a base for what constitutes the capacities that are required for effective hotel management work.

2.8 Overview of previous studies

Understanding previous studies in the field of hospitality helps to better appreciate the challenges faced by educators in meeting the various stakeholders' needs. In the past, numerous studies have been undertaken in an attempt to address the hospitality management curriculum and to identify the key competencies required of graduates. These types of studies originated in the 1920s, when educators first began to establish hospitality programs by seeking the hotel industry's advice and feedback regarding the essential competencies that hospitality graduates needed for success (Kay & Russette, 2000). Empirical research around this topic increased during the late 1970s and early 1980s. The first comprehensive study investigating hospitality competencies and curricula was undertaken by Buergermeister in 1983 (Johanson, Ghiselli, Shea, & Roberts, 2010). During the 1980s, there was significant growth in hospitality education; since then, a steady flow of research aimed at identifying key hospitality competencies has continued.

Summarising the numerous hospitality management education studies undertaken over the past thirty plus years (see Appendix A) reveals a strong reliance on the requirements for leadership capabilities and customer service ('soft skills'). Additionally,

several consistencies are identified regarding the fundamental skills required in hospitality. It seems that the basic 'how to' requirements of hospitality operations have not changed significantly over this period; this assessment is validated by Johanson et al. (2010). This consistency in required skills is understandable, given that the basic duties undertaken within hospitality, such as the physical service of food and beverages, the checking in and out of guests, the servicing of guests' rooms, and the delivery of luggage, have remained basically unchanged over time. However, what has changed has been several environmental factors that serve as indicators of changing industry needs (Johanson et al., 2010). This changing landscape includes globalisation, accelerated competition, technology advances, continued diversity in both customers and staff, a growing emphasis on sustainability, mounting service expectations and increasing profit expectations (Barrows, Powers, & Reynolds, 2008; Walker, 2016). The previous studies reported in Appendix A indicate that the task of understanding what the required hospitality competencies are is ongoing; and analysis of these publications identify the need for continuing research in Australia, where there are limited prior studies.

2.9 Evolving hospitality requirements

As a result of on-going advances, managers entering the hospitality industry will need to ensure their skills are contemporary and industry relevant. In the future, there will be an increased reliance on interpersonal and relational skills, whereas in the past hospitality managers relied more on technical and specific craft skills (Walker, 2016). Indeed, the required competencies in hospitality have shifted over time, from being more technical to more personally-orientated. This has been consistent with the way the industry has evolved through increased diversity, competition and rising customer expectations (Hudson & Hudson, 2017; Raybould & Wilkins, 2006). However, the opportunities to develop these service capacities are limited in the current Hospitality Management curriculum. A key objective of this study is to determine if this trend towards the more personal and attitudinal orientated capabilities ('soft skills') is likely to continue, or is a shift towards another domain imminent?

In further reviewing these previous hospitality management studies, it is noted that only three were undertaken in Australia. These include Dimmock, Breen, and Walo (2003); Walo (2001), both of which captured only students' views; and that of Raybould

and Wilkins (2006), that captured input from both students and hotel managers. A thorough review of literature indicates that since 2006 there have been no further significant studies of this specific nature undertaken in Australia. Therefore, given the ten-year lapse and the pace of change during this period, a more current study into Australian hotel management education and the required hotel management operational competencies is warranted.

Overall, this study uses the views of hotel industry managers (who are also mostly graduates) to evaluate hospitality higher education, and to shed new light on the current competencies required by graduates entering the Australian hospitality industry, now and into the future. This objective will be enhanced by also gaining a better understanding of the contribution that work integrated learning has on increasing graduate capabilities and employability. This section has provided an overview of previous similar studies and a summary of their outcomes.

2.10 Chapter summary

This chapter has overviewed the tourism and hospitality industries, and an explanation of the hospitality industry's development provided. The origins of hospitality management education and the development of this field of study within Australia were presented, along with the identification of some of the changes and challenges impacting the hospitality management curriculum. Finally, an overview of previous related studies was included. The chapter highlights that hospitality management competencies require clear educational intents, and that developing hospitality management work has a particular range of requirements that are contextualised and need to be empirically appraised. Additionally, there are contemporary accounts of these capacities required to organise and provide effective hospitality education programs.

This chapter provides a basis to evaluate the success that hospitality higher education has in addressing graduate outcomes and employability. These aspects will be further explored in the next chapter.

3

Employability and learning in higher education programs

3.1 The employability agenda

Chapter 2 provided a context to the study by introducing the tourism and hospitality industries and hospitality management higher education, and also reviewed other studies that have considered hospitality education, required industry competencies and employability. This chapter further advances the research by focusing on employability and by highlighting the rising importance of this educational agenda. Certainly, employability has now become a key concern for higher education, and successfully addressing it has positive implications for all stakeholders. This chapter discusses how employability skills are developed, and highlights how both the educational and workplace environments are essential in developing critical employability skills. Additionally, the chapter addresses the role of workplace learning, and identifies work integrated learning as being especially beneficial in contributing to hospitality management graduates' employability.

3.2 The concept of employability

Securing initial employment and facilitating successful long-term careers for graduates are increasingly important considerations for higher education institutions, their students and governments. In the current era of technological advances, growing skills shortages and an aging workforce in particular, the development of work-ready and productive graduates is seen as critical for Australia's economic and social future (Bennett, Richardson, & MacKinnon, 2016). This situation, which is impacting on both society and organisations, has seen both the concept of employability and the outcomes of graduates from higher education become increasingly important. Consequently, there is now growing pressure on universities to produce employable, work-ready graduates who are equipped with the necessary skills to cope in the contemporary and rapidly changing work environment (Leong & Kavanagh, 2013; Mason, Williams, & Cranmer, 2009). This places increased pressure on the university curriculum to remain relevant to changing workplace requirements, which is a key outcome of this study.

The concept of employability is not new. Discussions around this topic can be traced back at least a century (McQuaid & Lindsay, 2005). However, over the past decade, there

has been a growing interest in university graduate employability in particular (Lowden, Hall, Elliot, & Lewin, 2011). The term employability is complex, ambiguous and often difficult to articulate and define (Andrews & Higson, 2008). On one hand, the term describes graduates' professional and academic skills that can render them employable; on the other hand it can also refer to a graduate's specific employment outcomes, for example, whether students have gained actual employment upon, or soon after, graduation (Andrews & Higson, 2008). Furthermore, within the growing number of studies on employability, a multitude of terms are now used, that stem mainly from an individual's developed knowledge, skills and attributes. Themes discussed within this discourse include core skills, key skills, common skills, transferable skills, generic skills, essential skills, graduate skills, workplace skills and skills for life (Lowden et al., 2011). Hence, it is helpful to be clear about how this term is used within this dissertation. For the purposes of this research, employability relates to the development of key required competencies that make graduates more employable, productive and successful, in both their short- and long-term careers.

From the perspective of employers, employability often refers to work readiness. That is, graduates' possession of the relevant skills, knowledge, attributes and commercial awareness that enable them to make a positive contribution to the organisation, soon after commencing employment (Mason et al., 2009). When considering employability more broadly, the National Institute of Adult Continuing Education (NIACE) (cited in Lowden et al., 2011, p.4) suggests that, in addition to looking at employability from the individual and organisational perspectives, employability should also be considered within a wider social construct and should also include government and community interests. This varied dialogue regarding employability only adds to the complexity surrounding the term.

3.2.1 Further defining employability

In an effort to further summarise employability, Yorke (2006, p. 8) describes employability as 'a set of achievements, skills, understandings and personal attributes that makes graduates more likely to gain employment and be successful in their chosen occupations, which benefits themselves, the workforce, the community and the economy'. Yorke's definition emphasises that employability is much more than just securing employment; his explanation is more encompassing, as it highlights that a combination of knowledge, skills and personal characteristics are needed for longer term career, personal, organisational and

community success. Employability is, therefore, a broad term, and to develop attributes to secure a job and progress a career, individual learning is also a key requirement.

Accordingly, Harvey (2003) asserts that the emphasis should be less on 'employ' and more on 'ability'. Harvey's view on employability implies that outcomes from learning and life-long learning play a key role in securing long-term career success that extends beyond immediate university graduation. Dacre Pool and Sewell (2007, p. 208) also place an emphasis on the individual and on career alignment when describing employability; they define employability as 'a set of skills, knowledge, understanding and personal attributes that make a person more likely to choose and secure occupations in which they can be satisfied and successful'.

Pegg, Waldock, Hendy-Isaac, and Lawton (2012) also make the distinction between employment and employability, introducing the concept of pedagogy for employability. This relates to the teaching and learning of a range of knowledge, skills and attributes that contribute to job outcomes and also support on-going learning and life-long career development. Essentially, it is these particular aspects which motivate this study. Furthermore, in recognising the current work environment, where people are working longer and having varied jobs throughout their careers, Bennett (2016, p. 34) defines employability as 'the ability to find, create and sustain meaningful work across lengthening working lives and multiple work settings'. It is clear that the increasing complexity of work and the shifting employment patterns are currently redefining the concept of employability.

Given the current advances in society, business and educational environments, a focus on employability is now more important than ever. This increased focus aims to ensure that graduates leave universities with the required knowledge and skills crucial for organisations operating in the highly competitive, innovation-driven 21st century economy (National Network of Business and Industry Associations, 2015). Hence, the employability agenda needs an ongoing commitment from all stakeholders, especially universities, where it is important that they keep up to date with industry expectations and a multitude of advances. Therefore, a key outcome from this research is to help inform this objective, for the benefit of higher education institutions, their graduates and employers.

3.3 The changing domain of graduate employability

Employability is rapidly changing and increasingly important, and this recognition is placing extra pressure on higher education institutions (HEIs) to effectively transition graduates into the workplace and society (Pukelis, Pileickiene, Allan, & Dailidienė, 2007). There are several reasons for this increased attention. These include supply and demand, both in the increasing number of students undertaking university degrees, and in the decreasing number of available graduate positions. As a result of these changing market conditions, many Australian universities are now explicitly addressing employability and have created specific units and new senior management positions to address employability; signifying the importance now being placed on it (Universities Australia, 2015). Accordingly, this increased focus places more pressure on universities to ensure their students graduate with the required industry skills and capabilities.

At one Australian university, Lizzio (2015) has developed an employability framework that helps to guide the university strategy, the staff, and the student practice. The model incorporates fundamental aspects of the university student lifecycle, focusing on four key student transitions: i) Transition In (coming into university), ii) Transition Through (moving through university), iii) Transition Out (graduation and initial employment), and iv) Transition Up (advancing careers). This recently developed framework sees the employability agenda integrated into students' pre, during, and post-university activities, and demonstrates one approach to contributing to a broader understanding of student engagement and potential success.

In the past, employability was not such a major concern of HEIs' management, due to smaller student numbers, however; proponents of employability currently suggest that universities can no longer afford to overlook it (Grotkowska, Wincenciak, & Gajderowicz, 2015). Over the past few decades, Australia has seen a significant rise in higher education student numbers. The number of full-time students in higher education in Australia in 1989 was just under 300 000; this number is expected to rise to over 700 000 in 2017 (Dewar, 2015). This increase in student numbers has accelerated over time, with the growth between 2007 and 2013 alone amounting to an extra 200 000 students (Dewar, 2015). This growth has seen an increase in the percentage of Australians undertaking tertiary education.

Davis (cited in Dewar, 2015, p. 5) estimates that in 1966, only one in 140 Australians attended university; in 2013, this figure was one in 25. A contributing factor to this growth is that over the past decade Australian universities have become far more inclusive, especially in terms of encouraging first-in-family, indigenous, disadvantaged and lower socioeconomic status students. Specifically, in terms of first-in-family students, these students now account for more than half of all Australian university students (Spiegler & Bednarek, 2013). Moreover, in terms of demographics, there are now more females than males currently attending university in Australia (Dewar, 2015). With the growing numbers of students comes the need to provide transferable skills and relevant experiences to secure employability.

Another contributing factor to the increasing student numbers in Australian universities is the dramatic rise in international students. Australia is now the third largest international student destination in the world, behind the United Kingdom and the United States (Australian Government, 2015a). The total number of international students enrolled in universities within Australia in 2015 was over 263,000 (Australian Government, 2015a), which makes international education Australia's fourth largest export industry, and the largest service industry export (Gribble, 2015). In fact, the international student sector contributed \$22 billion to the Australian economy in the 2016-17 financial year, an increase of 18.5% on the previous year (Riordan, 2017). These factors make the international student segment a very important contributor to the Australian economy. However, at the same time, this also potentially places more students into the domestic graduate employment market, and increases those seeking employment outcomes in specific occupations.

Further impacting on employability, and contributing to the increased number of international graduates, is the availability of post-study work visas. From November 2011, the Post Study Temporary Visa (subclass 485) enabled international students to remain in Australia and work for up to four years post-graduation (Australian Government, 2015b). Undergraduate and Masters Coursework students may continue to stay in Australia and work for an additional two years, and Doctoral Degree students for a further four years (Australian Government, 2015b). This increasing supply of qualified graduates places additional pressure on an already stretched Australian job market, which further increases the focus on graduate outcomes and employability.

Given this overall increase in university graduate numbers and the financial significance of the sector, Australian higher education providers must progressively address employability (Gribble, 2015). However, graduate employment remains challenging, and currently unemployment in Australia is also rising, especially among young people. Currently, job prospects for new university graduates are the worst they have been since the 1980s (Trounson, 2015). In a recent report, Mckenna (2016) stated that approximately 181,388 students graduated from Australian universities in 2016. However, only 5,016 graduate positions are being advertised from over 370 sources across Australia. This challenging employment environment is making employability an increasingly important issue for higher education and their graduates. Understandably, employability features more prominently in higher education when unemployment rises and the economy falters (Oliver, 2015), albeit making the market even more competitive.

With the increasingly competitive job market, students and their families will focus more on the employment outcomes of universities, and will expect a degree to deliver a job and career in addition to an education (Oliver, 2015). These expectations will require universities to place even more emphasis on employability, especially as university student graduate outcomes become more transparent, and as student fees and loans continue to increase, forming a more central base for university funding (Pegg et al., 2012). Accordingly, Bennett et al. (2016) suggest employability is now a critical concern of universities and should be addressed as a matter of urgency. Further adding to the necessity, graduates indicate the lack or underdevelopment of employability skills to be one of the most critical disadvantages experienced by them when transitioning into work (Bennett et al., 2016). This discrepancy is concerning, because, in the current competitive job market, it is important for graduates to demonstrate not only their academic, but also their employability skills (Pitan, 2016).

Therefore, in the evolving work and educational environments there will be an increased need for universities to focus more on the pedagogy of employability and to embed work related and employability skills throughout the whole curriculum. Career and professional development learning will become a critical part of the overall student experience (Dey & Gruzverara, 2014), rather than being a resource students seek when they are nearing graduation. Ideally, employability should be embedded using a scaffolding approach that commences from the very beginning of a degree and continues throughout (Lizzio, 2015). This

constant embedding of employability then becomes part of a graduates' personal capital, which entails the integration of academic abilities with personal, interpersonal and behavioural attributes (Tomlinson, 2012). These attributes collectively can contribute to positive employment outcomes, especially in the customer-orientated hospitality industry.

Accordingly, in the current economic and employment climate, if universities do not address employability early within students' degrees, and do not encourage students to think about their careers early, these students and their universities will be at a distinct disadvantage upon graduation. Pegg et al. (2012) support progressive learning and development around employability. They suggest teaching and learning a wide range of career knowledge, skills and attributes that incorporate a strategic approach to employability, focusing on not only initial employability but also on students' long term careers. This approach is particularly beneficial for part-time students, who are already in employment and looking to change or advance their careers (Pegg et al., 2012). In summary, employability is an increasingly important consideration for higher education and the associated stakeholders. Thus, universities must continue to focus on the outcomes of their education, and investigate ways to more effectively imbed the development of employability into their curricula.

3.4 Developing students' employability

Developing students' employability is challenging, given the diversity of students within the Australian higher education sector. An on-going goal is to enhance the employability potential for all students. As discussed, these students include many international students who come from a range of countries and cultures where requirements for employability can differ considerably (Pegg et al., 2012). However, their interests must also be considered, because these students are important stakeholders of Australian higher education, and one of their key motivations for studying here is to increase their employability and job prospects (Huang, 2013). Therefore, to meet diverse student expectations, employability must feature high on university's agendas. This focus is necessary, to meet the claims of producing better graduate employment outcomes for all students (Archer & Davison, 2008; Lowden et al., 2011). There are a variety of ways HEIs can develop students' employability skills and attributes: for example, advice and direction in career decision making and job search, awareness and development of specific industry related attributes, WIL placements, and both personal and professional

development planning and opportunities (Lowden et al., 2011). Furthermore, over time, several scholars have developed models that offer education providers with guidance on enhancing employability. One notable model on employability is CareerEDGE developed by Dacre Pool and Sewell in 2007. This model was formulated to incorporate and expand on earlier work by researchers in this field (e.g., Harvey, Locke, & Morey, 2002; Hillage & Pollard, 1998; Knight & Yorke, 2004), thus aiming to establish a single comprehensive and coherent model for education providers (Dacre Pool, Qualter, & Sewell, 2014). The CareerEDGE model has received praise because it is primarily student-focused, and is easily understood by a range of stakeholders, including students, parents, educators, employers and government (Dacre Pool et al., 2014).

Figure 3.1 illustrates the essential components of the CareerEDGE employability model and also suggests the direction and relationship between the various elements, which can be used as a guide for educators in better developing students' employability. This model is particularly pertinent for use in this research, because it specifically highlights aspects of work experience and emotional intelligence that are particularly important considerations within the hospitality management curriculum (Sturman, Corgel, & Verma, 2011).

Source: Dacre Pool and Sewell (2007, p. 280)

Figure 3.1 CareerEDGE model

3.5 CareerEDGE model and components

The CareerEDGE model provides a useful tool for educators by outlining important considerations in developing students' employability. This model reflects an assertion that each element within the framework is absolutely essential and any one missing component could considerably impact on a graduate's employability (Dacre Pool & Sewell, 2007). However, the authors acknowledged that there is a degree of overlap between some of the components of the model. The overlap is evident, with some employability attributes able to be developed within various aspects of the model. The following section provides a brief overview of the various components of the model and their specific relationship to hospitality higher education and the hospitality industry. This model has been included due to its ability to incorporate the various aspects of employability into a comprehensive, yet succinct format.

Degree subject knowledge, understanding and skills

Students undertaking degrees to improve their job prospects study specific disciplines in depth (Dacre Pool & Sewell, 2007), and on graduation it is anticipated they have developed specific knowledge and understanding in their particular area of study. Moreover, when employing graduates, employers would also expect these graduates to have acquired industry-specific knowledge and skills. Indeed, aspects of the hospitality industry are unique; for example, gaining knowledge of hotel operations and of the extensive range of food and beverages needs time to develop; also, hospitality accounting is specific and somewhat different to general accounting (Guilding, 2014). Therefore, gaining this specialised knowledge through a specific degree remains an important component of hospitality education, and thus, employability. In addition to specific knowledge and skills, the attainment of a range of generic skills is also considered important.

Generic skills

In undertaking a degree, all stakeholders would expect students to graduate with some so-called key generic skills already developed; from previous schooling, extra-curricular activities and a student's upbringing. However, throughout a degree, generic skills should be continually identified and developed. Within the hospitality industry, key generic skills such as communication, personal presentation, teamwork, attention to detail, ability to work under pressure, technology, time management and being adaptable, are especially desirable

skills (Walker, 2016). Therefore, these key generic skills, which should be emphasised throughout hospitality tertiary studies to aid in employability, are in addition to emotional intelligence skills.

Emotional intelligence

Emotional intelligence refers to a range of human skills, such as, confidence, harmony, collaboration, persuasion and influence (Goleman 2014). Goleman (2005) also highlights that emotional intelligence is not acquired genetically (i.e., inherited from parents), and does not develop in childhood; therefore, it is something that has to be learned later in life. These facets represent an ideal opportunity for higher education to develop these specific skills in graduates (Dacre Pool & Sewell, 2007). In the customer-centric and team-orientated hospitality industry, which centres on human interaction, emotional intelligence has particular importance. Thus, for graduates seeking a career in hospitality, the development of these particular skills is vital. Accordingly, these skills belong in an employability model suitable for the hospitality industry, and therefore for hospitality management education. Additionally, once a range of generic and human skills are developed, they then need to be demonstrated and communicated effectively to prospective employers, and this is assisted by career development learning.

Career development learning

Career development learning includes a range of self-understanding and career management skills (Watts, 2006). These skills have emerged as important in improving the transition from education into employment (Diamante, 2014). Therefore, for students to improve their chances of gaining suitable employment upon graduation, it is essential that they receive some guidance in career development learning (Dacre Pool & Sewell, 2007). Career development learning involves researching job markets, making informed decisions about careers, and learning how to present effectively to prospective employers (Dacre Pool & Sewell, 2007). The content of career development learning in essence represents learning about self and learning about the world of work (McMahon, Patton, & Tatham, 2003). This process also involves guidance to students on how to convey their capabilities and achievements to prospective employers throughout the recruitment process and beyond (Dacre Pool & Sewell, 2007). Moreover, as part of the career development learning agenda, the aspect of 'personal-organisational fit' is also an important consideration, as students

should be aware of specific industry expectations and requirements. For example, the service and people orientation of the hospitality industry requires employees to have the right attitudes and behaviours towards others (guests and other staff).

Career development learning is therefore, an important link in the employability agenda. For graduates to prove they are capable in a position, they must first demonstrate suitability for the position. This prerequisite makes career development learning an important consideration for hospitality higher education providers, because, as previously mentioned, they are increasingly being judged on their graduate employment outcomes. In further aiding employability, both workplace, and broader life experiences are also beneficial.

Experience, work and life

Continuing studies indicate that relevant work experience is something that prospective employers value greatly in graduates (Dacre Pool & Sewell, 2007). The hospitality industry particularly values the skills that practical experience generates (Schoffstall & Arendt, 2016; Solnet, Kralj, Kay, & DeVeau, 2009). Furthermore, one of the biggest obstacles for graduate employment is the perceived lack of work experience (Bennetts, 2011). Accordingly, with the increasingly competitive job market, and the benefits of work experience being evident, prospective students may value universities that offer WIL opportunities. Therefore, in terms of graduate employability, offering WIL as a key aspect of hospitality education should be seen as an important element of higher education provisions. It is also important to consider the wider life experiences that students bring into higher education. Importantly here; universities might provide opportunities for these experiences to be integrated into the curriculum to enhance all students' levels of employability (Dacre Pool & Sewell, 2007). This can be done through a range of in-class activities and enhanced further as part of encouraged extra-curricular activities. Indeed, once this range of experiences has been acquired through reflection and evaluation, learning may be better consolidated.

Reflection and evaluation

In addition to providing opportunities to acquire the knowledge, skills and attributes necessary for learning to occur, it is important that students have opportunities to reflect on their experiences (Schön, 1987). Without the opportunities for reflection, students may not realise what learning has occurred, or may not fully appreciate its significance. Billett and

Choy (2013) concur, adding that it is important for students to take the opportunities provided to make explicit links to, and reconciliations between the various knowledge they have acquired. Without these opportunities to reflect, students are unlikely to realise how far they have developed in terms of their skills and employability, and what remains to be done to develop them further (Dacre Pool & Sewell, 2007). Therefore, opportunities for reflection could be an important part of the hospitality curriculum, and once students' learning has been consolidated, their self-confidence may also grow.

Self-efficacy/self-confidence/self-esteem

Service-related industries, such as hospitality, require workers to be personally confident and able to engage with other staff and customers. According to Dacre Pool and Sewell (2007), the three closely linked S's of self-efficacy, self-confidence and self-esteem provide a critical link between knowledge, understanding, skills, experience, personal attributes and employability. It is claimed that graduates who have the self-belief that they can do whatever is necessary are more likely to gain a position and be successful in their careers, compared to others who do not have the same self-belief (Dacre Pool & Sewell, 2007). Lawrence (1996) supports the inclusion of the three S's within an employability model, and refers to a vast body of evidence that demonstrates the positive correlation between self-belief and achievement.

These three Ss provide an important influence on how people feel and consequently act (Bandura, 1995), and within the hospitality industry this self-assurance is an important characteristic to possess, due to the direct and constant nature of customer service. Goleman (2005) refers to this characteristic as having a 'presence', which is a noticeable part of confident people's presentation. In hospitality, it is important to have belief in one's ability and to project this belief, because staff often conduct their work in public circumstances. However, Dacre Pool and Sewell (2007) recommend graduates be realistic about their achievements and actions, and also be committed to lifelong learning. Indeed, confidence is a positive trait; however, over-confidence should be avoided (Trought, 2012).

In summary, the CareerEDGE model, which is well-regarded, provides a useful framework for incorporating employability within higher educational programs. The model also clearly represents the specific requirements of the hospitality industry. The framework provides clarity about what needs to be considered and included surrounding employability

in higher education. The CareerEDGE model identifies a range of attributes, environments and considerations that contribute positively to employability. The model also highlights the important role the student plays in determining their own learning and development and subsequent careers. Further, the model draws connections between employability and effective learning and development initiatives, which can be used to help guide educational practice.

The model was especially appropriate to adopt because of its comprehensiveness and due to the employability focus of this study. Furthermore, using graduate employment rates alone as a measure of a university's employability success is fallacious, and according to Knight (2001) broader measures are needed. More useful measures of employability are tools that enable both universities and students to engage with wider concepts of employability and to reflect on their strengths and weaknesses in relation to required skills, understandings and attributes (Dacre Pool, Qualter, & Sewell, 2014). Accordingly, the CareerEDGE model provides opportunities for reflection and thus, is an appropriate mechanism to use when assessing employability.

3.6 Students' learning and development

When a model for considering employability has been established as an artefact for curriculum, it is important to assess how students develop employability skills. Indeed, having a curriculum and educational environment that promotes employability is only one aspect of success. For students to acquire the necessary knowledge, skills and attributes to successfully transition into employment and progress their careers, a process of learning must also occur. A generally accepted description of learning is 'the acquisition of knowledge, skills and values' (Van Gyn & Grove-White, 2004, p. 27), where learning happens through a variety of experiences that produce relatively permanent changes in understanding, actions and behaviours (Van Gyn & Grove-White, 2004). According to Goleman (1998) students' learning associated with cognitive capacities is borne largely from the neurotransmitters within the brain. Goleman (1998) asserts that there are two key sections of the brain that develop the essential technical and emotional skills needed for work. First, is the neocortex that governs analytical ability and grasps concepts and logic. Second is the limbic system that governs emotional responses such as feelings, impulses and motivations. Goleman (1998) suggests that different approaches are needed to develop

each of these distinct areas, and states. Unfortunately, the educational process seems to mostly adopt a neocortical approach to overall learning. This approach limits the development of students' emotional capabilities, which are highly valued within the hospitality industry. Thus, to attain the best learning outcomes for hospitality students, a varied approach to students' learning and a variety of learning environments, including workplaces, are recommended. It is also important that students enthusiastically pursue all learning opportunities.

An important consideration in learning is the role that the student plays in the learning process. Billett (2016) suggests that the majority of learning required for occupational preparation is achieved through individuals' agency and personal mediation of experiences. Accordingly, there is a need to acknowledge the central role that the individual's active learning plays in both educational and work settings; because what the student does is often more important to learning than what the teacher does (Biggs & Tang, 2011). Central to learners' personal epistemologies, according to Biggs and Tang (2011), are two main theories; constructivism and phenomenography. Constructivism emphasises how learners construct knowledge with their own activities, and interpret concepts and principles in terms of the 'schemata' that they have already developed. Acquiring knowledge, therefore, is not a process of transferring, but of engaging students in active learning and extending their knowledge based on what they already understand (Biggs & Tang, 2011). Phenomenography in the learning context refers to how the learner's perspective shapes what is learnt, more than what others intend should be learned (Biggs & Tang, 2011). Both theories emphasise that meaning is created by learners, and reiterate the important role the learner plays in knowledge and skills acquisition. Importantly, learners must be exposed to a range of learning opportunities and embrace the many learning affordances.

Notably, Biggs and Tang (2011) highlight that acquiring information itself does not bring about change, but how learners structure that information and think about it does. Thus, learning results from procedural change, not just from acquiring information (Biggs & Tang, 2011). These points highlight the need for a student-centred approach to teaching and learning, and further support having WIL and a range of learning opportunities for students to undertake in both formal and informal learning environments, to achieve optimal graduate employability outcomes.

3.7 Formal and informal learning environments

To better appreciate where students acquire knowledge throughout their degrees, it is helpful to understand the different environments where learning can be acquired as part of tertiary education. Importantly, within the various definitions of learning, there is generally no stipulation on where learning can occur. Indeed, learning can be evident every day and through ongoing daily activities, where people learn continually from various encounters and experiences. However, Malcolm, Hodgkinson and Colley (2003) suggest there are two principle environments within the educational domain where learning occurs, one being formal, the other being informal. Formal education environments, described by Coombs and Ahmed (1974, p. 8) as being 'institutionalised, chronologically graded and hierarchically structured' are normally situated within classroom settings. Additionally, Eraut (2000) describes the characteristics of formal education as having: i) a prescribed learning framework, ii) an organised learning event or package, iii) the presence of a designated teacher or trainer, iv) the award of a qualification or credit and, v) the specification of academic outcomes. In contrast, informal education is described by Coombs and Ahmed (1974, p. 8) as 'a lifelong process by which every person acquires and accumulates knowledge, skills, attitudes and insights from daily experiences and exposure to the environment'. This form of education is usually undertaken outside the classroom setting, such as experiences in workplaces (La Belle, 1982). Hence, there are clear distinctions between the two settings and the experiences they afford learners.

Within the workplace, informal education can be deliberately encouraged or can occur unintentionally (Ellstrom, 2011; Marsick & Watkins, 1990), for example as a by-product of another activity, such as an interpersonal interaction or assessing an industry's or organisation's culture (Marsick & Watkins, 1997). These social and perceptual aspects of informal education are an important consideration within the hospitality workplace, because the industry is essentially a 'people' industry with an innate service culture. Likewise, Ellstrom (2011) suggests, learning at work results from the many individual actions and interactions involved with dealing with different people, tasks and situations. Similarly, within the service orientated work environment, Webster-Wright (2010) suggests that employees also learn continually from customers and colleagues, and from what works and what does not. Furthermore, Webster-Wright (2010) adds, rich learning outcomes can be

achieved in the workplace, especially for staff working in the 'caring' professions, including hospitality, because these staff are generally more motivated to learn, due to their commitment to 'making a difference' to the lives of the people they look after.

However, some authors, such as Colley, Hodkinson, and Malcolm (2003), suggest learning is more prominently intended within the formal educational context, and that there can be some clear distinctions made between the learning acquired in the formal education setting and that of informal settings. However, other scholars do not see these distinctions as being so clearly defined. In particular, Billett (2004) sees the workplace as a learning environment that can be inherently pedagogical, and that learning within the informal environment should not be underestimated. Colley, Hodkinson, and Malcolm (2003) seem to undervalue the learning undertaken within the workplace environment, suggesting that more valued and comprehensive learning is achieved in the formal educational setting. Their view seems to discount the role of the workplace as a legitimate place of learning. However, it is not helpful to privilege processes and learning outcomes that take place in educational institutions, as this does little to provide an informed view about the different kinds of settings for learning, such as workplaces (Billett, 2013).

This bias for preferring formal education is not surprising, given the traditions, steeped in relatively recent history, of learning within the educational and university environments. This kind of learning continues to be constructed around the conduct of formal academic programs in conventional classroom settings, largely reflecting and maintaining the longstanding traditional educational practices and expectations (Jamieson, 2009). Given the societal emphasis and required expenditure of schooled societies (Billett, 2014a), it is not surprising that these institutions have discourses, orthodoxies and assumptions that promote the intrinsic value and privilege status of 'schooling' as being the more legitimate practice for realising learning. Accordingly, there is perhaps an over-reliance on formal education and the provision of traditional classroom-based education (Linehan & Sheridan, 2009). This dependence undervalues the opportunities for workplace learning and implies that universities may orientate more to students building their specific occupational capabilities post-university, rather than during experiences while in education.

However, it is beneficial for students to extend their learning experiences beyond the classroom and to further develop their occupational capabilities and careers whilst at

university. These experiences can progressively develop work-related capacities, which can make students more employable upon graduation and beyond (Freudenberg, Brimble, Cameron, & English, 2011). An appropriate way to facilitate learning in both university and workplace settings is through work integrated learning. Essentially, WIL provides a mix of both formal and informal educational experiences simultaneously, and can facilitate integration of learning and occupational preparation (Billett, 2009b). Indeed, these themes are emphasised throughout this study. Given the importance of the kinds of knowledge that need to be learnt through the different learning environments, it is also worth giving consideration to those forms of knowledge so that judgements can be made about how best they might be acquired.

3.8 Kinds of knowledge required for effective work practice

Drawing upon bodies of literature that informs the nature of the knowledge required for work performance, Billett (2009b, 2015) highlights three kinds of domain-specific knowledge that are beneficial for occupational performance. First is conceptual knowledge – the ‘knowing that’, which includes, facts, concepts and propositions, that can be declared. For example, in international hotel terms, this would be the understanding that hotels deal primarily in the provision of accommodation and food and beverages, so if these are not utilised or consumed, a hotel’s revenue and profit will be reduced. Second is procedural knowledge – the ‘knowing how’, which individuals use to achieve goals through thinking and acting, specifically in hotel terms. This would include, for example, how a hotel can best occupy its rooms and what are the most efficient procedures to service guests. Third is dispositional knowledge – ‘knowing for’. This knowledge comprises attitudes, values, interests, and intentions that guide an individual’s thinking and acting. For example, in hotels, this involves understanding individual guests’ needs and how you can best cater for them. Ultimately, it is this combination of domain-specific conceptual, procedural and dispositional knowledge that results in effective occupational performance (Billett, 2015).

Further analysis of these three knowledge forms sees conceptual knowledge as more ‘theoretical’, whilst procedural and dispositional knowledge can be seen as being more operational and practical. It is implied from this proposition that, within the hospitality context, conceptual knowledge may be better acquired within the formal educational setting, whereas procedural and dispositional knowledge may be better developed within

informal workplace settings. However, this is not to say that all forms of knowledge to a degree cannot be developed in both workplace and educational settings. Accordingly, Franz (2008) highlights the workplace as an ideal environment to extend and consolidate all forms of knowledge which may have been previously developed. This deduction is logical, given it is the workplace where operational procedures take place, and where concepts are applied and dispositions enacted.

Importantly here, in curriculum terms there is a need to understand what constitutes these forms of knowledge as the canons of the occupation. That is, what are the kinds of knowledge that anybody who is performing hospitality management tasks would be expected to have acquired? Then, there would also be the situational accounts of this specific knowledge that is required in particular hospitality settings. In many ways, the canonical knowledge is that which is captured through curriculum documents and often used to organise courses preparing students for specific occupations (Billett, 2009b). Accordingly, to achieve sound educational outcomes, there are various forms of knowledge and affordances which need to be considered as curriculum intentions.

In further building on knowledge acquisition, Gibbons (1994) introduces two additional approaches to gaining knowledge, Mode 1 and Mode 2. Mode 1 knowledge is described as homogeneous, academic, fixed and hierarchical, and this is often learned in the university setting. Mode 2 knowledge, referred to as professional practice knowledge, is more heterogeneous, transient, social reflexive and localised, that is mainly acquired in the context of actual application (Gibbons, 1994). Therefore, from the analysis presented, it appears that the academic and workplace settings offer different kinds of experiences to students; consequently each provides potential for student learning. Hence, to develop hospitality competencies, both learning environments are considered important.

Appreciating the diverse outcomes from these varied learning experiences, higher education institutions should be increasingly expected to organise their curriculum around experiences in both academic and workplace settings. This expectation of broad learning outcomes is held by government, industry, professional bodies and students themselves, all of whom have much invested in education (Billett, 2011b). Moreover, due to the current competitive nature of higher education, universities should be keen to highlight their range of approaches to learning, and should outline how their degree courses add value by

enhancing students' learning and subsequent employability (Keating, 2006). This value proposition is becoming increasingly important, due to the growing transparency of university graduate employment outcomes. Furthermore, as the workplace is being more recognised as a legitimate place of learning, there is growing interest in providing students with learning experiences within work settings and these opportunities should be seen as an increasingly important part of the university curriculum (Billett, 2011b; Freudenberg et al., 2011). Indeed, there is a range of knowledge required for successful work performance and also a variety of environments where knowledge can be gained. The workplace especially offers an increasingly important environment where the necessary knowledge required for hospitality work can be developed.

3.9 The workplace as a learning environment

Incorporating the workplace as a learning environment for students has the potential to develop a range of work-related skills, including some key hospitality skills that are difficult to develop in formal education settings alone. Thus, learning in the work setting can complement traditional forms of classroom learning (Savage, 2005). Specifically, the inclusion of work-based learning as part of the university's intended curriculum provides a way in which students can learn how knowledge is developed, critiqued, deployed and adapted within the actual context of work (Savage, 2005). Certainly, as workplaces offer an actual experience of practice, learning in the workplace is considered a form of authentic learning, shaped by real situations and activities that directly support learning (Billett, 2013). Such opportunities for authentic learning cannot be offered in the same way by classroom-based instruction (Franz, 2008). Chappell (2003) adds that required operational knowledge is rarely codified in text books or formal education settings and is most successfully developed within the context and environment of the workplace. Indeed, as Whitehead, an early advocate of learning from experience wrote, 'mere passive observation is not sufficient. First-hand knowledge is the ultimate basis of intellectual life. To a large extent, book-learning conveys second hand information, as such; it can never rise to the importance of immediate practice' (Whitehead, 1957, p. 51).

Additionally, work-based learning provides a unique opportunity for students to integrate the theory they have learnt in education, and to apply this to relevant workplace situations. This method of application can reinforce and consolidate university based

classroom learning experiences (Hunt, 2006). Furthermore, due to the many social interactions taking place between staff and customers within the hospitality workplace, students' 'soft skills' and dispositional knowledge develops (Billett, 2009b; Lolli, 2013; Moore, 2004). As discussed, these personal capabilities are seen as being particularly important to hospitality employers because of increased competition and both customer and workplace diversity (Weber, Finley, Crawford, & Rivera, 2009). Moreover, Weber et al. (2009) also suggest that the hospitality industry is now becoming less concerned with the 'hard' or technical skills, that are often more specific, as organisations will train staff according to their own particular requirements. This insight is revealing for hospitality higher education institutions, as the development of technical and conceptual skills remain their main focus (Jeyaraj, 2010), while there is generally insufficient importance placed on the development of 'soft skills' and dispositional knowledge in tertiary education (Rainsbury, Hodges, Burchell, & Lay, 2002).

The development of student's 'soft skills' and dispositional knowledge is important. According to employers, students often lack these skills when they enter the workforce (Deloitte Access Economics, 2017; Spowart, 2011). This shortcoming emphasises the need for hospitality education providers to ensure that students are exposed to the development of these interpersonal capacities, as a key part of the curriculum. However, within education institutions, there are only limited opportunities to develop these kinds of capabilities (Spowart, 2011). Thus, not only is WIL very important and appealing, but it should be seen as an essential part of the hospitality curriculum.

Accordingly, the ever-changing workplace should be increasingly seen as an important site for learning (Billett, 2013; Keating, 2006; Le Clus, 2011). Indeed, due to the interactive nature of the hospitality workplace, learning can be achieved throughout the many interactions and situations that occur (Moore, 2004). This aspect of learning in everyday settings is referred to by Lave and Wenger (1991) as situated learning. Situated learning identifies the everyday work environment as offering unique opportunities for learning. Billett (1998) elaborates that it is not the learning itself that is situated, but rather, the situation provides the environment for learning to occur. Simply put, just being present is not enough, but active participation in and around the actual situation is where the actual learning takes place. Lave and Wenger (1991, p.31) have coined this process 'legitimate

peripheral participation', in that this practice shifts the focus away from the individual as learner, to learning through participation in the social context of the work environment.

Certainly, within the hospitality workplace, situated learning is achieved through the many interactive relationships that occur constantly between individuals, customers and co-workers (Le Clus, 2011). In summary, workplaces offer dynamic and unique learning environments, where a range of essential hospitality attributes can be acquired through the experience of everyday work activities. All of this is important to better understand the processes of experiential learning.

3.9.1 Experiential learning

To further emphasise the types of learning that can be utilised, it is helpful to explore some additional processes undertaken for learning to occur. Experiential learning builds on situated learning, by involving the learner 'in action' (Burnard, 1996), and is seen as more formalised and analytical, where knowledge is created through the transformation of experience (Kolb & Kolb, 2008). Here, it is important to distinguish between learning from experience and experiential learning. Experiential learning is described as 'something from which knowledge can be derived through abstraction' (Usher & Solomon, 1999, p. 161). In other words, experiential learning does not simply identify a pre-existing reality, but re-constructs the process of learning from experience to a pedagogical discourse (Usher & Solomon, 1999). Knowledge then results from the combination of grasping and transforming experience (Kolb, 1984). Accordingly, learning results from the central role experience plays in the learning process (Kolb, Boyatzis, & Mainemelis, 2001).

Furthermore, experiential learning offers a theoretical base, modelled on a learning cycle driven by the resolution of the dual dialectics of action/reflection and experience/abstraction (Kolb & Kolb, 2008). Specifically, this model portrays two dialectically related modes of grasping experience, concrete experience and abstract conceptualisation, and two dialectically related modes of transferring experience, reflective observation and active experimentation (Kolb & Kolb, 2008). Within these frameworks lies a space where learning transactions take place between the individual and the environment, and where the pedagogical process can be guided with an emphasis on a learner's participation, activity and discovery (Kolb & Kolb, 2008; Usher & Solomon, 1999). In contrast to the traditional didactic classroom style of instruction, where learners are mostly passive

and non-participative, the pedagogy of experiential learning can be both liberating and empowering, where students are immersed in the learning activity and become key stakeholders in their learning (Usher & Solomon, 1999). This participative involvement provides a powerful learning opportunity, where learners are exposed to experiencing, reflecting, thinking and acting, throughout the whole learning situation and what is being learned (Kolb & Kolb, 2008). Experiential learning, and workplaces specifically, therefore, afford many rich learning opportunities. However, it is also important that the learner is open to learning and embraces the unique prospects that this learning process and environment offer.

Overall, experiential learning activities are quality inclusions, that can take on many forms and that can be adopted in a variety of settings. In essence, it is about students gaining authentic experiences that help to develop job-ready graduates (Wang, Ayres, & Huyton, 2009). Experiential learning also provides an ideal medium for students to acquire currency of skills, which are required in ever-changing workplace environments. Ultimately, the worth of experiential learning should not be underestimated, nor should it be viewed only as an instrument for novices to learn basic skills. Rather, it should be seen as an active learning tool for the varied tasks and relationships which are required in the contemporary world of work (Savage, 2005). Indeed, in terms of developing essential hospitality 'soft skills', experiential learning represents an invaluable mechanism (Beard, Schwieger, & Surendran, 2008; Burnard, 1996).

In summary, experiential learning provides an opportunity for deep learning. The workplace should be embraced as a legitimate place for experiential learning to occur, in addition to the experiential learning opportunities undertaken within the classroom. However, it should be acknowledged that individuals' agency to learn is paramount, and that learning objectives for workplaces are far from their core business. Hence, achieving positive learning outcomes within the workplace is not without its challenges.

3.9.2 Considerations and challenges for workplace learning

There continues to be a growing interest in recognising the potential of workplaces as legitimate places for learning (Radcliffe, 2002; Unwin et al., 2005). This attention is sound, as the work environment represents the prime source of the knowledge required for the work (Billett, 2004), and also because learning by doing is considered one of the most effective

ways to learn (Lombardi, 2007). Overall, the position of workplaces as learning environments is strengthening, as they offer legitimate pedagogical processes, especially in terms of observation, instruction, coaching and mentoring, as they can provide direct and instant feedback to learners (Unwin et al., 2007). Furthermore, because of the potential for work-related skills development, learning in workplaces is central to an individual's employability (Billett, 2014a). Therefore, students will continue to have a growing interest in workplace learning, as they are increasingly concerned about their careers, motivated to learn in the workplace, keen to solve real-world problems, and are also expressing a preference for doing rather than just listening (Lombardi, 2007; Reeders, 2000).

However, the growing interest in workplace learning presents some challenges for educators and workplaces. This is because teaching and learning is far from an organisation's core business, and the majority of workplaces are not specifically designed for learning (Keating, 2006). The main and intentional function of business is the production of goods and services, thereby achieving organisation goals (Unwin et al., 2005); it is not to facilitate learning. Yet, as discussed, this is not to suggest that rich learning does not occur through these experiences. Accordingly, learning in the workplace tends to be more ad-hoc, less structured, and generally involves no formal lesson-plan or specific learning outcomes, such as might be emphasised within formal education settings (Unwin et al., 2005). Furthermore, some staff may be more willing than others to offer instruction, which may also impact on learning outcomes. Moreover, the level of staff engagement in instruction can also be influenced by the traditions of the sector and the company's overall commitment to supporting learning in the workplace (Keating, 2006). For example, in sectors such as health-care, teaching, engineering and some specific trade vocations, organisations and staff may be more committed to the instruction process. This is because their work culture better supports it, as most staff have gone through the process themselves, and appreciate the role and importance of workplace learning (Ashton, 2004).

In contrast, generally in the hospitality industry (the exception being chef apprenticeship training), instruction and learning are not as highly recognised or regarded (Tracey & Tews, 1995). Indeed, training is sometimes met with negativity, seen as something that distracts busy hospitality staff away from their key role and responsibilities (Tracey & Tews, 1995). Consequently, this lack of enthusiasm for developing others impacts

on the training outcomes, as the trainer's attitude to and participation in the learning process is one of the keys to learning success (Unwin et al., 2007). Hence, for the best learning outcomes to be achieved, a commitment from both trainer and trainee is important; so too is the knowledge of the trainer and their skills in instruction (Unwin et al., 2007). Individuals having the skills and abilities are one thing; they also need the capabilities to pass that knowledge on to others. A lack of ability to train can be a further challenge to effective workplace learning, because, many employees may not be instructed in how to train in hospitality workplaces.

This lack of ability to train may explain why some employees are not as engaged in training; it could be that they simply do not know how. Moreover, some staff may also be intimidated by the training process itself, as they may not be entirely confident in their own knowledge and skills. This insecurity could be further exacerbated if they are expected to train university students, especially if they have not have been to university themselves. Certain industry-specific challenges can also impact on the learning culture and training effectiveness. Areas such as sales can be more problematic; sales staff are often reluctant to pass on their best practice or particular sales tips to others, because they value this as their competitive advantage (Unwin et al., 2007).

Overall, within the workplace context, three main factors need to be considered to achieve successful learning outcomes: top-down support, an environment conducive to learning, and the commitment of both learner and instructor. Billett (2001) terms this collaboration 'co-participation' and elaborates that learning in the workplace can be dependent upon multiple affordances. Hence, there are complex issues at play for effective learning to take place within the workplace. In this way, workplaces have important roles in providing access and support for instructors and learners to engage in productive learning activities (Billett, 2002). However, a supportive workplace environment is only one factor in effective learning. As discussed, students' role as active learners in the overall learning process is vital, because having an encouraging environment and the best of instruction is misplaced if the individual is not committed to learning.

Learners, ultimately, decide if they wish to engage and make the most of the opportunities presented to them. However, Billett (2004) suggests there could also be certain environmental considerations and perceptions of identity that influence learning

decisions. Students within the formal education setting can see a purpose in engaging more deliberately in knowledge acquisition. However, in the workforce, their learning intentions may not be as apparent. This situation is unfortunate, because as has been proposed here, experiences in workplaces have some distinct learning advantages over those in educational settings; as the learning opportunities are likely to be spread across a broader range of contexts and interpersonal activities (Unwin et al., 2007). Consequently, students should realise that their learning can be equally, if not more advantageously, acquired within workplace settings and they should fully embrace these opportunities. Students may need guidance to secure this objective. As indicated, the experience of just working in itself is not enough to produce good learning outcomes; learner understanding and engagement are essential considerations (Britzman, 2003).

Consequently, educators have important roles to play in making students more aware of the requirements for optimal learning and graduate employability outcomes. They also have responsibilities to instruct students on how to draw meaning from their workplace experience and better reconcile their learning experiences. This kind of support is particularly important, because students are more inclined to learn in the workplace if they appreciate the benefits, connections and meaning in it (Illeris, 2003). One of the most effective ways to draw meaning from workplace experience is through reflective practice (Orrell, 2004). This practice should be encouraged, because it helps students to reconcile their learning experiences.

In summary, it is apparent there are many variables and stakeholders involved in the process of producing effective workplace learning outcomes for hotel management graduates. It is also important that all stakeholders recognise the broader learning opportunities and the need for commitment to effective learning from all involved. This section has identified that workplaces provide an important avenue for learning and development, and that tertiary education providers should ensure there are opportunities available for students to gain first-hand workplace experience, as part of their hotel management degrees. Work-integrated learning provides an ideal mechanism for facilitating this collaboration, because it uniquely combines both educational and workplace learning opportunities. It is also important that students embrace all learning opportunities and are able to identify and apply the learning that has accrued in both the educational and workplace settings. This approach is necessary for employability, because graduates are

continually being judged on their ability to apply within the workplace the knowledge they have learnt throughout their entire education (Billett, 2011b).

Overall, higher education environments present opportunities for learning that are not available in the workplace, and the workplace presents learning opportunities that are not afforded in the educational setting (Davis, Franz, & Plakalovic, 2009). Therefore, incorporating WIL into degree programs, offers students learning from within both these settings. Additionally, WIL supports a more participative, learner-centred approach which places an emphasis on direct engagement, rich learning opportunities and the direct construction of meaning by learners (Peach & Gamble, 2011). Consequently, WIL is an important mechanism in both workplace learning and overall hospitality education outcomes. As a consequence, the contribution of WIL is central to this study and is further discussed in the following section.

3.10 Work integrated learning

An overview of work-integrated learning and its benefits is presented to enable a better understanding, and to further appreciate the significance WIL has on students' learning outcomes and subsequent employability.

Education based in practice is not a new phenomenon. The history of WIL can be traced back to the late 19th century (Whitehead, 1957). Ryder (1987) suggests that the concept of WIL first began to take shape in 1894 in Oregon, USA, orchestrated by Schneider, who was working in the engineering sector and was recruiting students for a railroad project. During this project, he noticed two things about the students being employed. Firstly, many of the students he employed were not studying in the engineering field; secondly, he noticed that students had difficulties applying their classroom skills in the field (Ryder, 1987). These discoveries highlighted the importance of more closely linking education to applicable practice, where both the students and the profession can benefit (Grosjean, 2003).

From these initial developments, WIL within the engineering fields became more formalised. According to Pruett (1979), WIL was first set as a requirement for engineering students at the University of Cincinnati in 1906. Then in 1909, Northeastern University in Boston incorporated WIL into their engineering program, which they based on the University of Cincinnati model (Grosjean, 2003). Not long after, in 1917, the University of Cincinnati extended their WIL program from engineering to business. By the end of 1921,

eleven universities in the United States were offering this new combined educational model across disciplines (Grosjean, 2003; Ryder, 1987). During the following decades, WIL programs continued to expand in universities across the United States, and in the 1950s WIL began expanding to overseas universities (Grosjean, 2003).

WIL has continued to progress in higher education; more recently there has been a growing interest in learning in practice and the WIL agenda. This attention has been influenced by a number of factors, including both the market-driven economy and an increasing desire for universities to graduate job-ready students (Cooper et al., 2010). These forces have stimulated the need for universities to be more purposeful in their approach to WIL, and particularly in their collaboration with industry, all in an effort to create more work-integrated learning opportunities for students (Cooper et al., 2010). An important consideration for this agenda is the increased communication with industry, establishing relationships and consistent dialogue.

Currently, there are many and varied definitions of WIL provided within the relevant literature. Patrick et al. (2008, p. 9) refer to WIL as ‘an umbrella term for a range of approaches and strategies that integrate theory with the practice of work within a purposefully designed curriculum’. Table 3.1 highlights the range of different terminologies used to describe WIL experiences, as identified by Patrick et al. (2008) in their WIL Report. This table presents, in rank order, the numerous WIL terms that are adopted and their frequencies of use across multiple academic disciplines within Australia.

Table 3.1: WIL terminology and frequency of use

Rank	Term/s (Frequency)	Rank	Term/s (Frequency)
1	practicum (35)	13	work experience (3)
2	professional practice (32)	14	clinical practice, clinical education, doctoral supervision with industry partners, work based learning (2)
3	internship, workplace learning, work integrated learning (31)	15	academic service learning, adult learning, andragogy, clinical attachments, clinical experience, competency assessment, corporate business management, employment experience, engaged learning, experiential placements, faculty internships, field placements, industrial experience, industry experience, industry links, industry placement, learning in the workplace, operational performance, practical projects, practical training, practice based education, practice-based learning, problem-based learning, professional experience, professional learning, sandwich, site visits structured workplace learning, student employability, volunteering (1)
4	industry-based learning (25)		
5	project-based learning (24)		
6	cooperative education, fieldwork education (20)		
7	service learning (12)		
8	real world learning (9)		
9	university engaged learning (7)		
10	placements (6)		
11	experiential learning (5)		
12	clinical placements, professional placement (4)		

Source: Taken from the WIL Report (Patrick et al., 2008).

These extensive and varied descriptions of WIL highlight the diversity and inconsistencies that often surround WIL, and also the lack of consensus concerning WIL that is increasingly evident within literature concerning this concept (Connor & MacFarlane, 2007; Patrick et al., 2008). Accordingly, these inconsistencies have implications for both the industry and the students, who often have difficulty understanding and identifying with what exactly WIL is.

3.10.1 Enacting WIL in higher education

Commonly, WIL refers to both on-campus and workplace learning activities and experiences which integrate theory with practice within academic programs (Jackson, 2013). Assessment of students is an important part of WIL that is seen as ‘an educational approach that uses relevant work-based experience that forms an integrated and assessed part of an academic program of study’ (The Asia-Pacific Journal of Cooperative Education, 2016, p. 1).

Additionally, Billett (2011a, p. 2) provides a more comprehensive definition of WIL: ‘the process whereby students come to learn through experiences in educational and practice settings and reconcile and integrate the contributions of those experiences to develop the

understandings, procedures and dispositions, including the criticality and reflexivity required for effective professional practice'. These various descriptions of WIL highlight the educational worth of integrating practice-based experiences into the hospitality management curriculum. Indeed, a key outcome of this study is to build on this literature by specifically identifying the impact WIL has on the learning and employability of hotel management graduates.

In further expanding the various definitions of WIL, Cooper et al. (2010) identified the opportunities WIL provides, and proposed the following five key objectives for students to:

- identify, develop and use theory to interpret, explain and intervene in the real world;
- affirm personal career choices and develop intrapersonal awareness;
- assume roles in which they must function as responsible members of society, contributing to their community;
- develop interpersonal communication capabilities;
- learn the particular competencies and cultures of specific professions, industries and community contexts.

These objectives for WIL have significance for hospitality management and for this study, because they highlight potential development of key competencies, especially those relating to personal capacities.

While there are different interpretations, terms and opportunities provided for WIL, essentially WIL involves a positive partnership arrangement among students, educational institutions and industry host organisations that gives students an opportunity to apply in the actual workplace, the knowledge and theories learnt in the classroom (Leong & Kavanagh, 2013). Furthermore, it is also beneficial when these workplace experiences are brought back into the classroom after placement for sharing and comparison within the student cohort (Billett, 2009b). Certainly, this sharing is where the actual integration of learning takes place. In this regard, Smith (2012) makes an important distinction between WIL and work experience, and notes work experience alone does not necessarily require students to specifically learn, apply or integrate disciplinary knowledge. However, this does not imply learning fails to occur in workplaces if it is not integrated directly back into the curricula; but only that optimal learning occurs when this integration occurs.

Indeed, as presented, WIL placements can afford students many learning opportunities, as they are able to work alongside more experienced employees and to engage in authentic work practices (Ferns, Campbell, & Zegwaard, 2014). Because of these opportunities and the associated learning, WIL is becoming increasingly well-regarded by educational stakeholders (Cooper et al., 2010). Furthermore, Peach and Gamble (2011) conclude that students who have participated in WIL programs as part of a higher education degree are more likely to view their university experience positively and go on to secure employment within their chosen field than students without a WIL experience. Bates (2003) also highlights positive experiences from students as a result of undertaking WIL placements. There are several other notable cases reporting the benefits of WIL; one such example is the University of Surrey in the United Kingdom. This university has been at the forefront of WIL for over 50 years, through a curriculum model that requires programs in all disciplines to offer a year-long work placement that provides opportunities for students to develop key professional capabilities (Jackson, 2010). This type of WIL program has proved to be very successful in terms of enabling students to secure employment on completion of their degree. Notably, between 1996 and 2007, the University of Surrey had an average unemployment rate, at six months after graduation, of only 2.2%, compared to the national university average of 6.2% (Jackson, 2010). These impressive statistics further support the importance employers place on students having relevant WIL experiences and having already developed professional capabilities gained during their higher education.

The opportunities for WIL are designed to provide industry-relevant experience to students. This is particularly important for the hospitality industry, as it is a very practical industry, with a strong emphasis placed on customer service, and consequently on interpersonal and social skills. WIL opportunities play an important role in exposing students to the many social interactions of work. Within the workplace, students can learn industry specific expectations, are afforded the opportunity to interact with others, and can develop a range of capabilities, including interpersonal skills. Understandably, hospitality organisations value their potential staff having already developed interpersonal skills and especially strong relationship skills, as these are seen as vital in today's diverse workplaces and increasingly competitive hospitality environments (Weber et al., 2009). Indeed, the quality of personal service and customer relationships is perhaps more important to hospitality than to any other industry (Department of National Heritage, 1996). Largely, the

fundamental resources of any hospitality organisation are its people, who collectively are the organisation. Therefore, within the hospitality industry, the quality of the staff and their personal interactions represent the overall quality of the organisation (Leslie & Richardson, 2000). Chen, Hu, Wang, and Chen (2011) also report the many benefits of WIL placements, and support the notion that students' social and interpersonal skills develop through WIL. Overall, these positive accounts about WIL, if enacted, are encouraging for hospitality management specific educational outcomes.

Furthermore, in an effort to legitimise WIL programs, education practitioners should ensure there is a well-structured program and a pedagogically sound work placement linked to the process (Eames & Cates, 2004). Specifically, to ensure optimal student learning, it is important for educators that learning opportunities through work experience are clearly understood and that appropriate curricula and assessment is implemented to generate the best possible outcomes for all stakeholders (Eames & Cates, 2004). Consequently, many universities in Australia are currently making a concerted effort to implement WIL and to embed WIL across disciplines. In doing so, they are exposing students to a spectrum of learning opportunities that has direct workplace relevance. Thus, this agenda is now being reflected in a number of university strategic plans (Peach & Gamble, 2011).

Additionally, in an increasingly competitive job market, having relevant WIL experience is becoming more important for graduates. Employers today are keen to employ students with a balanced portfolio of knowledge, skills and attributes, including a range of well-developed specific workplace skills (Nathan & Taylor, 2003; Patiar, Ma, Kensbock, & Cox, 2017; Pitan, 2016). Ultimately, employers want graduates to be work-ready and to be able to meet the specific requirements of their industry, and they believe that through WIL, this can be achieved (Hodges & Burchell, 2003). Employers can also benefit from WIL by being able to employ graduates who are already familiar with their organisation and culture. Such graduates have previously gained organisation-specific experience and have already proved themselves capable. Overall, the industry regard for WIL recognises its significance and the important role it plays in both student learning and employability. Indeed, WIL provides invaluable learning for students, and is particularly effective in developing graduates' work-related skills, which assists in both their short- and long-term career success.

3.11 Chapter summary

This chapter has explored the topic of employability relating to the successful transition from university into work, and to longer-term career success. Additionally, the chapter has considered a range of factors which contribute to graduate employability. Amongst others, these factors include both sound career advice, and quality on-campus and integrated workplace experiences. Essentially, there are a number of considerations which contribute to positive graduate outcomes for students. These include diverse learning environments and the associated learning affordances available to students as part of their overall higher education. If these various learning opportunities are embraced by educators, students and the workplace, positive outcomes for all stakeholders can result. This chapter has specifically focused on 'how' and 'where' the relevant skills for employability and hospitality work can be acquired. The next chapter develops this outcome further by considering the 'what' (the required competencies) needed for successful hospitality work. To realise this objective, an appropriate theoretical framework and competency model has been developed and utilised. This framework is now introduced and explained.

4

Developing a theoretical framework to determine hospitality-specific managerial requirements

4.1 Determining hospitality competencies

The previous chapter considered employability, learning, and the different learning environments and approaches that can contribute to positive educational outcomes for hospitality graduates. This chapter focuses on the specific knowledge, skills and attributes needed for successful hospitality work and then introduces the concept of competency and competency models. Further, this chapter explains why a competency-based approach has been selected as an appropriate framework for this inquiry. Additionally, the chapter describes the specific framework that has been developed for this study, and indicates how this framework has been built on previous structures. Accordingly, a key outcome from this project has been the development of a specific hospitality management competency framework. Finally, this chapter provides a justification to support the development and adoption of this particular framework.

4.2 The notion of competence

To better understand the necessary capabilities and processes required for work, it is helpful to place work requirements into a framework in which they can be determined. Accordingly, within Australian tertiary education, a competency-based approach to determine and group work-related capabilities is strongly advocated (Collins, 1993). A key characteristic of competency based instruction is its emphasis on the specification and assessment of outcomes, referred to as the competencies (Bowden & Masters, 1993). Bowden and Masters (1993) indicate that an emphasis on outcomes rather than on inputs is a defining characteristic of competency based instruction. This structure places primary emphasis on what a person can do (the outcome) rather than the means by which the competencies are obtained (the input) (Bowden & Masters, 1993). According to White (1959) the term 'competencies' is used to describe aspects such as capability, capacity, efficiency, proficiency and skills, and was first introduced in 1959. Although White (1959) provided a useful context around the term, there continues to be inconsistencies

surrounding the meaning of the term; competencies continue to be defined from several different points of view (Harris & Hodge, 2009; Hoffmann, 1999; Short, 1984). Likewise, there also remains ambiguity and debate surrounding the application of the term (Grzeda, 2005; Jackson & Chapman, 2012).

In an extensive review of the literature on competency, Draganidis and Mentzas (2006, p. 53) define competency as 'a combination of tacit and explicit knowledge, behaviours and skills, that gives someone the potential for effectiveness in task performance'. In a further attempt to define the range of competency applications, Hoffmann (1999) suggests that the term 'competency' is often used to refer to the meaning expressed as behaviours or abilities, and the degree to which a task is undertaken, but the term 'competencies', is often used to refer to meanings expressed as standards (Hoffmann, 1999). However, within the workplace context, human resource practitioners often view both these terms as technical instruments to inform the organisation's strategic direction, through human resources planning, recruitment, assessment, selection, training, performance, reward and promotion (Burgoyne, 1993).

Specifically, when applied to workplaces, 'competency' usually means the knowledge, skills, performance, abilities and motives required to perform a job effectively and efficiently (Dimmock et al., 2003). However, being 'competent', generally refers to having the ability, being capable, possessing certain skills, and the knowledge to do what is required in a job (Siu, 1998). Therefore, just being competent alone is not sufficient. More important than the possession of knowledge required for job performance, is the willingness and ability to apply and personally express that knowledge. This is significant for the hospitality industry, due to its personal and outcome orientations. These factors make the recruitment process challenging for the hospitality industry, because of the range of skills required for success, and because the so called 'soft skills' are often difficult to determine during the job selection process, compared to other ability measuring (Sorcher & Brant, 2002). Accordingly, this has seen the rise in behavioural and group-orientated job interviewing (Stone, 2013).

Indeed, McClelland (1973), one of the first to utilise competency frameworks, questioned the validity of intelligence and aptitude tests alone, as suitable tools to select applicants for jobs, and to predict job performance. He suggested that in addition to intelligence or task specific outcomes, it is desirable to also consider wider social skills and

personality traits. According to McClelland (1973), it is only when both the task and social aspects are combined that the required job competencies are achieved. Considering both the task and social aspects of an occupation is beneficial; when these two aspects are shared, they form both the 'what' and the 'how' of an occupation's requirements (Andrews & Higson, 2008). Given both the tangible and intangible natures of the hospitality industry, the combination of both these aspects has particular significance.

In support of McClelland's (1973) views of a broad-based approach to job competencies, Spencer and Spencer (1993, p. 9) further related competencies to the work environment by providing a useful application of competency; which they describe as 'an underlying characteristic of an individual that is causally related to criterion-referenced effective and/or superior performance in a job or situation'. Here, the 'underlying characteristic' suggests that competency is a fairly deep and enduring part of an individual's personality and can predict behaviour. For Spencer and Spencer (1993), 'causally related' means that competency causes or predicts behaviour and performance, while 'criterion-referenced' means that the competency actually predicts who does something well or poorly, as measured by a specific criterion or standard. These are all important considerations in trying to determine optimum job performance factors.

Spencer and Spencer (1993) specifically outline five types of competency characteristics: i) Motives – the things a person wants that cause action; motives that drive, direct and select behaviour toward certain actions or goals; ii) Traits – physical characteristics and consistent responses to situations or information; iii) Self-Concept – a person's attitudes, values and self-image; iv) Technical Knowledge – information a person has in a specific content area; and v) Skills – the ability to perform certain physical or mental tasks. Spencer and Spencer (1993) suggest that technical knowledge and skill competencies tend to be more visible, as relatively surface characteristics of people. Self-concept, traits and motive competencies are more hidden, being deeper and central to personality. They also suggest that developing technical surface knowledge and skills is relatively easy, while core trait and motives are more difficult to develop and self-concept competencies lie somewhere in between (see Figure 4.1).

Figure 4.1: Central and surface competencies taken from Spencer and Spencer (1993, p. 11)

What makes things challenging, for the hospitality industry, is that many of the roles require a mix of both surface and core competencies to be used in the job simultaneously, and these take time to develop. Moreover, Spencer and Spencer (1993) note that it is not technical knowledge that distinguishes superior job performance. Instead, it is individuals' motivations, interpersonal skills and their understanding of the internal organisational environment. According to Spencer and Spencer (1993), motive, trait and self-concept competencies are the most important, as these competencies predict skill behaviour actions, which, in turn, predict job performance outcomes and contribute to organisational success. These specific motive, trait and self-concept competencies are especially important in the hospitality industry, as they relate to service specific behaviours, which in turn influence customer satisfaction (Testa & Sipe, 2012). The involvement of these personal skills, attitudes and qualities are crucial in delivering quality customer service (Worth-Butler, Murphy, & Fraser, 1994); indeed, as Southgate (1994) suggests, a person may 'know how' but may not actually choose to do it. Additionally, there also need to be opportunities available to perform tasks to develop and demonstrate these 'soft' skills.

Thus, a model begins to unfold where competence includes the mastery of various requirements for effective performance in and interactions within hospitality organisations. It involves not only observable actions, but also unobservable attributes including attitudes, values, judgements and personal dispositions (Worth-Butler et al., 1994). In support of this inclusive approach to competency standards, Hager and Gonczi (1996) add that when the

full requirements of workplace competencies are integrated, this captures the holistic richness of professional practice in ways that more narrow approaches cannot. Moreover, once all the required competencies are identified, this in turn aids in successful recruitment and helps to identify the most effective approach to the learning and development of these specific capabilities (Hager & Gonczi, 1996).

In further validation of a multi-dimensional approach to workplace competencies, Delamare-Le Deist and Winterton (2005) have developed a typology of competence that they propose is useful for understanding the combination of knowledge, skills and social competences that are necessary for occupations, such as hospitality. In an effort to articulate the various range of workplace competencies, Delamare-Le Deist and Winterton (2005) suggest the competencies required of an occupation include both conceptual (i.e., cognitive, knowledge and understanding) and operational (i.e., functional, psycho-motor and applied skill) competencies. Moreover, the competencies more associated with personal effectiveness are also both conceptual (i.e., meta-competence, including the ability to learn) and operational (i.e., social competence, including behaviours and attitudes). The relationship between these four dimensions of competence is outlined in Figure 4.2, which describes a typology of competence, developed by Delamare-Le Deist and Winterton (2005).

Source: Delamare-Le Deist and Winterton (2005, p. 39).

Figure 4.2: Typology of competence

In Figure 4.2, the three dimensions of cognitive, functional and social competencies are consistent with the traditional KSAs (i.e., knowledge, skills and attributes) approach

often referred to within human resources literature. Where knowledge (and understanding) is captured by cognitive competence, skills are captured by functional competence, and attitudinal and behavioural dimensions are captured by social competence. Meta-competence is distinctly different from the other three dimensions, as it is concerned with facilitating the acquisition and application of the other three substantive competencies (Delamare-Le Deist & Winterton, 2005).

As implied from the two models presented, the notion of competencies is multifaceted and can appear complex (Girod, 1993). However, for the purpose of this study, the term 'competence' and a competency based framework are adopted in preference to others, because this construct is most commonly referred to within hospitality literature and is more clearly understood by industry personnel (Evers, Rush, & Berdrow, 1998), a key respondent group. Within this study, the term 'competence' is viewed as an overarching capability, comprising the hospitality specific knowledge, skills, abilities, attitudes, values, traits and motivations which influence graduates' ability to transition successfully into work and perform appropriately within the workplace (Grzeda, 2005; Jackson & Chapman, 2012; Spencer & Spencer, 1993). Importantly, the hospitality industry requires staff to have a range of competencies. Accordingly, a key purpose of this study is to ascertain which competencies the hospitality industry values most. To gain the necessary data to inform this outcome, the development of a suitable competency model to group this information is required. Given the particular range of requirements of hospitality work, which include a range of knowledge, skills and social attributes, a competency-based approach and model to determine these aspects is considered most appropriate.

4.3 Competency models

Competency models allow for the collection of knowledge, skills and other social characteristics that are needed for effective job performance (Campion et al., 2011). According to Berdrow and Evers (2011), these models have for some time been found beneficial in understanding the need for and the process of identifying skills for effective employability and workplace performance. Moreover, a competency-based approach, listing required workplace capabilities, is also an effective tool for developing educational programs and to prepare students for practice (Lester, 2014). Chung-Herrera, Enz, and Lankau (2003) add that competency models are also useful as a descriptive tool to identify,

categorise and summarise competencies that are relevant to perform a specific job in an organisation. Draganidis and Mentzas (2006, p. 55) concur, describing a competency model as 'a narrative description of the competencies for a targeted job category, occupation group, division, department or other unit of analysis'. Because of these specific factors, and the perceived benefits of adopting competency models, as well as the alignment of these benefits with the hospitality industry and with the study's research objectives of determining the required competencies of a specific occupational group; a competency-based framework is considered the most effective approach to adopt within this study. Therefore, a suitable model has to be adopted or developed afresh.

To develop an appropriate competency model to test for the required competencies needed specifically by hotel Operations Managers, several previously adopted competency models were considered. Katz (1955) was one of the first to investigate and develop a competency model which incorporated the skills required to be an effective manager. His model consisted of three fundamental managerial skill areas, Technical, Human and Conceptual. However, further research into management requirements undertaken by Mintzberg (1973), found that managers were now engaging in a broader range of activities than was originally thought (Sandwith, 1993). According to Sandwith (1993), an evolving area during this time, particularly for businesses, was leadership. Leadership involves influencing, coaching, collaborating, negotiating, facilitating and inspiring a shared vision (Walker, 2016). These leadership traits go beyond the traditional aspects of management, which mostly include planning, organising, directing and controlling (Walker, 2016). Leadership today remains an important consideration. Allen (cited in Woodard, 2016, p. 1) suggests that while aspects of traditional management are still important, the movement towards a more collaborative approach and the use of more participatory styles of decision making, mean that traditional management skills alone are no longer sufficient. Allen believes that being able to demonstrate flexible and adaptive leadership, and being skilled when it comes to the more relationship orientated behaviours associated with leadership, are now considered critical.

Likewise, researchers (eg., Sandwith, 1993), who were forward thinking in their time, also believed that job requirements of managers could no longer be confined to the three dimensions of Technical, Human and Conceptual, earlier identified by Katz. Sandwith (1993)

built on Katz's (1955) original Hierarchy of Skills Model, to develop the Competency-Domain Model, but expanded Katz's three fundamental skill areas to five. The two additional categories included leadership and interpersonal skills, because interpersonal skills were by then increasingly considered to be an important characteristic of effective leadership (Lolli, 2013). Sandwith (1993) claimed the updated Competency-Domain Model gave clearer delineation of managerial capabilities. His five elements were: Conceptual/creative, Leadership, Interpersonal, Administrative and Technical. Since its development, Sandwith's Competency-Domain Model has been more widely applied to specific hospitality management studies (e.g. by Tas, LaBrecque, & Clayton, 1996; Kay and Russette, 2000).

Two other hospitality competency models consulted when seeking an appropriate model to adopt for this study included those of Tas (1988), and Getty, Tas, and Getty (1990). In both of these studies, a list of 36 individual hospitality competency items was adopted. Another previous model reviewed was that used by Chung-Herrera et al. (2003), who studied hospitality leadership competencies. They developed a list of 99 specific hospitality competencies, classified into 28 dimensions and eight overarching factors. Their model of eight key hospitality overarching factors includes: Self-management, Strategic Positioning, Implementation, Critical Thinking, Communication, Interpersonal, Leadership and Industry Knowledge.

An additional study reviewed, was that of Raybould and Wilkins (2006), the most recent significant study undertaken in Australia specifically on hospitality managerial requirements. Their adopted model included nine key dimensions, a similar number to that of Chung-Herrera et al. and with four more indicators than in Sandwich's model. Raybould and Wilkins (2006) highlighting the overlaps seen in many similar models, emphasised that their model included aspects of self- management and further learning, as they saw these aspects to be important, given the evolving nature of the hospitality industry. Their framework included Oral Communication, Written Communication, Problem Solving, Conceptual and Analytical, Information Management, Teamwork and Leadership, Interpersonal Skills, Adaptability and Learning, and Self-management.

One final study, that of Evers and Rush (1996), was also reviewed. This study focused on management competencies and specifically students' transition from university to work. This significant employability project led to the development of their Basis of Competency

model. This model included 17 attributes, classified into four base competencies; Mobilising Innovation and Change, Managing People and Tasks, Communication, and Managing Self. The Basis of Competency model developed by Evers and Rush in 1996 was informed by evolving literature and earlier work undertaken by Rush and Evers (1986a, 1986b), in a project entitled 'Making the Match Between University Graduates and Corporate Employers'. Since its conception, the Basis of Competency model has been widely utilised and presented in a number of additional and more recent studies and publications (see Berdrow & Evers, 2010, 2011; Evers, 2005, 2011, 2013, 2014; Evers et al., 1998). Moreover, the Basis of Competency model focuses specifically on key skills needed by employers and also highlights the specific type of competencies that higher education graduates need for employment (Evers & Rush, 1996).

After a comprehensive review of these studies and models, the Basis of Competency Model was chosen as a base model to utilise for this project. The decision to adopt this model resulted from its specific employability and business orientation. However, to advance the Basis of Competency Model, and make it more contemporary and specific to the hospitality industry, a further review of hospitality literature was conducted. Furthermore, the initial stages of data collection undertaken within this study specifically concentrated on determining hospitality competencies needed to be included within the adopted model and the subsequent Operation Managers' survey. Gursoy et al. (2012) support this instructive approach to undertaking hospitality research, and suggest that the nature of hospitality implies specific work-related skills and, therefore, explicit data collection tools are required.

As a result of the extended review of literature and the initial stages of data collection, the Basis of Competency Model was extended from the original 17 competencies to 48 and from the original four overarching capabilities to six. The two additional overarching capability areas of Administration and Technical Skills were added, and various aspects of other competency models identified within literature were considered and incorporated, where applicable, within the 48 hospitality specific competencies. The final competency model adopted for this study includes six overarching categories: Innovation and Change, Managing People and Tasks, Communication, Managing Self, Technical/information literacy, and Administration. After an extensive evaluation process, these six base competencies

were deemed the most suitable mechanism to group the 48 specific hotel Operation Managers' job requirements determined.

Developing the new six-base competencies model meant that several observations and considerations were made when reviewing the other models. These are outlined below.

Sandwith's (1993) five base competencies model is held to be missing aspects of self-management related to on-going learning, motivation, ethics and product knowledge. This model was also deemed to be lacking in the key area of customer service and did not have an emphasis on broader aspects of communication skills.

Evers and Rush's (1996) Basis of Competency Model, which contained four base competencies, was seen as a solid foundation; however, it was limited in both technology and administrative aspects. Given the reliance on technology in the hospitality industry today, and the many administrative responsibilities of hotel Operations Managers, these two dimensions were hence included in the model for this study.

Chung-Herra et al's (2003) eight key competencies model utilising 99 attributes was considered to have too many to include in a survey, given time concerns. In addition, it was considered that some of their eight base competencies could have been combined, such as Strategic Positioning and Leadership, Communication and Interpersonal, and Self-Management and Industry Knowledge.

Finally, when reviewing Raybould and Wilkin's (2006) model, which included nine key areas, it was noted that this model could have emphasised administrative requirements, and that the various aspects of communication within their model could have also been grouped together.

The other two studies referred to in this section, those of Tas (1998) and Getty, Tas, and Getty (1990), were not considered useful as a model, because the number of competencies (36) was restrictive and the individual competencies were not grouped under any categories, which was seen as important for classification.

A summary of these key base competency frameworks is presented in Table 4.1 which lists the other considered frameworks and their components, compared with the newly developed framework (indicated on the far right).

Table 4.1: Summary of key managerial frameworks analysed

Sandwith (1993), also used by Tas et al (1996) and Kay and Russette (2000)	Evers and Rush (1996)	Chung-Herrera (2003)	Raybould and Wilkins (2006)	Developed framework
Conceptual/creative	Mobilising innovation and change	Self-management	Oral communication	Innovation and change
Leadership	Managing people and tasks	Strategic positioning	Written communication	Managing people and tasks
Interpersonal	Communication	Implementation	Problem solving	Communication
Administrative	Managing self	Critical thinking	Conceptual and analytical	Managing self
Technical		Communication	Information management	Technical/ Information literacy
		Interpersonal	Teamwork and leadership	Administration
		Leadership	Interpersonal skills	
		Industry knowledge	Adaptability and learning	
			Self-Management	

4.4 Overview of adopted model

As indicated, the final developed competency model was designed to inform the survey instrument. The model and various competencies incorporated within the model were developed for this study from the review of previous studies, other models, and initial qualitative research undertaken. This initial qualitative research undertaken (see Chapter 5, Sections 5.81 – 5.87) included document analysis, participant observation, and preliminary interviews. From analysis of this data the six base competencies model was developed to accommodate the range of hotel Operations Managers' key capabilities determined. Furthermore, the six base competencies were also deemed the most suitable to integrate these 48 hospitality-specific Operations Managers' capabilities.

A brief description of the six base competencies incorporated within the adopted framework is provided below.

- 1 *Innovation and change*: Conceptualising, as well as setting in motion ways of initiating and managing change that involves significant departures from the current mode
- 2 *Managing people and tasks*: Working towards organisational goals and accomplishing tasks by planning, leading, organising, coordinating and controlling both the organisation's resources and its people
- 3 *Communicating*: Interacting effectively with a variety of individuals and groups to facilitate the gathering, integrating and conveying of appropriate information in a variety of forms
- 4 *Managing self*: Constantly developing knowledge and refining practices; internalising, reflecting and adapting to maximise one's ability to perform appropriately in a variety of situations and business contexts
- 5 *Technical*: Comprising the use and understanding of relevant information technology and software that supports the department, including managers' ability to operate this technology efficiently
- 6 *Administration*: Involving undertaking various administrative functions and the knowledge and application of relevant documentation required of effective Operations Managers

Table 4.2 provides an overview of the adopted model, listing the six base competencies (top) and incorporating the 48 specific hotel Operations Managers' capabilities (grouped underneath each category). The key themes emerging from the initial data highlighted the growing importance of management skills, both internal/personal and external. From this initial data, the growing need for 'soft skills' was apparent. This outcome strongly impacted on the development of the framework and this is evident within Table 4.2, where the majority of attributes are listed in the base competencies of Managing People and Tasks and Managing Self. Conversely, the number of attributes identified within the category of Technical Skills is limited. The entire framework (derived from the analysis of initial qualitative research undertaken), including all its components and descriptions is presented for reference in Appendix B.

It is acknowledged that some of the individual competencies could fit within other base competency areas; however, the decision to include the individual attributes under a particular base competency was made on the basis that it was the most appropriate category.

Table 4.2: Adopted model including the six base competencies and 48 capabilities

Innovation and change	Managing people and tasks	Communicating	Managing self	Technical	Administration
Ability to conceptualise or form opinions	Decision making/decisiveness	Oral communication	Intellectual curiosity and on-going learning	Understanding of generic business technology, Microsoft Office (Word, Excel), email and smart phones	Financial understanding, yield management, budgeting, profit and loss, metrics
Creativity/innovation	Leadership and influence	Ability to speak an additional language	Personal organisation and time management	Understanding of Hotel - specific Property Management Systems (PMS), software systems knowledge	Human resources activities: recruitment, orientation and performance management
Visioning and strategic thinking	Relationship building and knowing your staff	Written communication	Personal presentation and grooming	Understanding and utilisation of industry related social media applications	Rostering and payroll management
Risk taking	Collaboration and teamwork	Interpersonal communication	Customer and people orientation, service commitment and positivity	Understanding of third - party computer interfaces (loyalty programs, booking agents, guest reporting)	Purchasing and stock control
Adaption to change	Negotiation and conflict resolution		Product knowledge and industry awareness		Analytical and research skills
	Planning, coordinating and organising		Ethics, values and integrity		Developing reports and procedures
	Managing diversity and cultural awareness		Passion for the industry, self-motivation, flexibility and commitment		Sustainability practices
	Being noticeable		Career orientated		Legislative and regulatory understanding and compliance
	Delegation and follow-up		Attention to detail and adherence to standards		
	Facilitation and participation in meetings		Initiative and enterprise		
	Mentoring, coaching and encouraging staff development		Problem solving		
			Critical thinking Confidence and assertiveness Possessing the ability to undertake key roles Willingness to undertake operational roles, as required Drive to improve service, products, team performance and business results		

4.5 Incorporation of research objectives

The adopted competencies model was developed to address RQ1 and identify the type of management-related competencies required of competent international hotel Operations Managers. The 48 Operations Managers' capabilities incorporated here are included in the managers' survey. During the survey, the managers were asked to rate both the level of importance and the frequency of each of these attributes, to determine the most significant capabilities. Specific aspects of the managers' survey are discussed in Chapters 5 and 6.

4.6 Chapter summary

This chapter has provided an overview of competencies and competency models. The process undertaken to develop an appropriate framework to use in this study was also discussed. Other previously used models were consulted, incorporated and built upon to form the contemporary new hospitality-specific framework utilised within this study. The adopted framework has been presented and justified. Finally, how the framework addresses the study's research objectives has been explained. The following chapter discusses the incorporation of this model and outlines the overall methodology adopted for this study.

5

Understanding and delineating hotel operations managers' core competencies

5.1 Procedural orientations of the study

This chapter describes the methodological, contextual and procedural underpinnings of the study. It commences by introducing different research paradigms and describes the appropriateness and justification for selecting a mixed method approach to data collection and analysis for this inquiry. It then continues by explaining the research context and describing the participants and outlines the various stages of data collection undertaken. The different stages of data collection are sequential and the outcomes from each stage are intended to inform the following stage, where when the analysis is completed sound conclusions can be drawn. These conclusions delineate the key competencies required by effective hotel Operations Managers and identify how these capacities, which have implications for hotel management higher education institutions and graduate employability, may be best developed. Within this chapter, issues associated with validity, reliability and ethics are discussed and the specific approaches to data analysis are elaborated and justified. Finally, the limitations associated with this study are outlined. To begin this chapter, an overview of the author's personal epistemologies and research paradigms more generally are provided.

5.2 Research approaches

The author's background consists of both hotel industry management experiences and also hotel management university teaching experience. These insights provide informed perspectives from both these sources and also an understanding of the realities of both these worlds. Accordingly, these ranges of experiences have some influence the research paradigms associated with this study.

Undertaking empirical research has a progressive history. However, during the latter part of the twentieth century, many of the traditional assumptions that saw social sciences fall within the scientific paradigm began to be questioned (O'Leary, 2010). This suggestion prompted a shift from the sole reliance that followed positivist rules of scientific

measurement to also include post-positivist approaches that can be more participative and exploratory (O'Leary, 2010). Consequently, there is now a wider choice of legitimate research approaches available; depending on the discipline, research questions and personal preferences, researchers may choose from various research options (Creswell, 2015). However, individual allegiances and personal preferences should not be significant factors in determining a research methodology (Shavelson & Towne, 2002). Instead, the choices among different research orientations should be determined based on the kind of research and the questions that the study is trying to address (Shavelson & Towne, 2002).

This position, which involves putting outcomes ahead of any particular paradigm, premises neither the quantitative nor qualitative traditions. It simply advocates adopting the best strategies to gain the most credible data needed to best answer the research question or questions (O'Leary, 2010). Accordingly, pragmatic research philosophy places the research question as the most important determinant (Dudovskiy, 2016). This focus on achieving sound research outcomes has led to growing acceptance of mixed method research that combines both quantitative and qualitative approaches. Consequently, undertaking mixed methods research is growing in popularity, with some researchers now referring to this paradigm as the third legitimate methodological movement (Grey, 2014). Overall, when determining a research method, the most appropriate approach is selecting one that best addresses the research objectives. Thus, the underlying principles for this study and the epistemological perspectives of the author follow a pragmatic research paradigm, and post-positivist principles, because, these approaches best address the research questions. This justification is elaborated in the following section that more comprehensively discusses mixed methods research and its suitability to the research reported here.

5.3 Mixed methods research and its advantages

The rationale behind undertaking mixed methods research, is that the whole is greater than the sum of its parts (Hesse-Biber & Leavy, 2006). Greene and Caracelli (1997) agree that adopting different methods and the paradigms they represent promotes more comprehensive, insightful and logical results than either paradigm could obtain alone. The combination of the two different methods can create synergies; together they provide a much fuller analysis and understanding (Hesse-Biber & Leavy, 2006; Johnson, Onwuegbuzie,

& Turner, 2007; Onwuegbuzie, Dickinson, Leech, & Zoran, 2009; Tashakkori & Teddlie, 1998). Hesse-Biber and Leavy (2006) provide five distinct benefits from adopting mixed methods research: i) *Triangulation*, where using more than one method to study the same research question enables convergence of research findings, therefore enhancing credibility; ii) *Complementary*, whereby the researcher seeks to gain a fuller understanding of the problem or to clarify a result; iii) *Development*, whereby results from one method help develop or inform the other method; iv) *Initiation*, where findings raise questions or concerns that require clarification; and v) *Expansion*, which can extend the breadth and depth of the study. For this study, development, complementary, and expansion considerations were deemed to be most relevant and beneficial in addressing the research objectives. Development considerations were important, in the initial stages of qualitative data collection, to develop the questionnaire; complementary and expansion elements were applied to the post-survey interviews, where their purpose was to confirm and expand upon the survey findings.

When utilising a mixed method approach, it is important that the methods chosen enhance each other, and they are adopted in a manner that considers each other's strengths and weaknesses (DeCuir-Gunby, 2008). The main benefits of using mixed methods are the ability to address complex research questions and the explicit opportunities to corroborate findings. However, a general weakness of using mixed methods is that knowledge is needed of these multiple procedures and, overall, it is more time consuming (DeCuir-Gunby, 2008). In this study the potential benefits far outweigh these limitations, and a mixed method approach was selected, because it more comprehensively addresses the research objectives and because this combined data collection method has proven beneficial in a number of similar studies (Cheung et al., 2010; Jeou-Shyan, Hsuan, Chih-Hsing, Lin, & Chang-Yen, 2011; Kamau & Waudu, 2012; Nolan, Conway, Farrell, & Monks, 2010). However, it is noted that the vast majority of previous studies that have assessed hospitality management competencies have used only quantitative measures, which may have been due to convenience and time benefits. This study uses mixed methods to provide deeper and confirmative insights. Yang, Partlow, Anand, and Shukla (2014) recommend this approach for this specific type of study because contemporary research into hospitality management competencies benefits from both quantitative and qualitative insights.

When undertaking mixed methods research, there are more factors to consider, and many decisions that need to be made regarding the design and implementation (Morgan, cited in Hesse-Biber & Leavy, 2006, p. 321). For example, which is the primary research method and what is the secondary or complementary method? Which method will come first and which next? Other authors such as Creswell (2009) note that it is also possible for mixed methods designs to be run concurrently and to be placed on equal footing, without distinguishing between a primary and a secondary method. The adoption of particular approaches to research depends upon the research objectives and circumstances.

The approach adopted for this mixed method study was to begin with qualitative document analysis, participant observation, and informative interviews, then follow with a quantitative survey, and conclude with qualitative interviews. Such an approach, described by Ivankova, Creswell, and Stick (2006) as sequentially exploratory, suggests collecting and analysing qualitative and then quantitative data in consecutive phases within one study (Creswell et al., 2003). Within such designs the priority is often given to the qualitative phase, as this comes first in sequence, and often represents a significant part of the mixed methods data collection process (Ivankova et al., 2006). Joyner, Rouse, and Glatthorn (2013) describe this approach as qualitative primary, qualitative first. However, depending upon the research questions and desired outcomes, the subsequent quantitative phase can be given equal or even higher priority, if the desired outcome warrants (Ivankova et al., 2006). Within this study, the initial range of qualitative phases were designed to inform the quantitative survey and the final qualitative interviews were intended to confirm and elaborate on the quantitative survey findings.

In further evaluating mixed methods research, DeCuir-Gunby (2008) suggests there are two different mixing approaches, intra-method and inter-method. Intra-method involves using a single instrument that is both qualitative and quantitative, such as a survey that has both closed questions (Likert scale) and open-ended questions included within it. Inter-method involves mixing two or more procedures, such as using a Likert scale questionnaire and an additional interview (DeCuir-Gunby, 2008). The approach adopted within this study involves both intra-method and inter-method, as it uses a Likert scale and open-ended question survey, and also has pre- and post-survey semi-structured interviews.

There are advantages in undertaking mixed methods research, although it is more involved and time-consuming. Different stages can be used to inform and extend on others, thereby producing more valid and comprehensive outcomes overall. This is why a mixed methods approach has been adopted here. The initial qualitative data and analysis phase was necessary to inform the survey instrument, and the survey data was subsequently required to inform the following interviews. Further specific justifications for undertaking a mixed methods approach are explored in the following section.

5.4 Justification of adopting mixed methods

As outlined, a mixed method approach to data collection has been undertaken for this study. Adopting either a qualitative or quantitative approach alone would not have been sufficient to address the range of research questions, due to the depth of anticipated information required (i.e., wanting to know both the 'what' and the 'how' of competency development), and the sequential requirements of the study (e.g., initial document analysis, participant observations, and interviews were used to inform the survey instrument. Then, the survey findings were used to inform the final interview questions). Furthermore, McClelland (1998) asserts that when endeavouring to identify managerial competencies, as is the case within this study, utilising quantitative tests alone to measure managerial competencies does not provide the depth needed. He upholds that, because interviews provide much greater depth and have been widely endorsed as a method in assessing managerial competencies, a mixed method approach to this type of inquiry, particularly with interviews as a method of assessing competencies, is a sound approach. In summary, mixed methods research provides for more depth of analysis and is uniquely suited to the particular requirements of this study. The following section describes the application of the research and introduces the context in which the study is undertaken.

5.5 Research context

A key aim of this study is to identify competencies required of effective hotel operation managers in Australian hotels. For the purposes of this study, Australian four- and five-star hotels only were selected. This deliberate restriction was because the job requirements of managers from these standards of hotels are similar (O'Fallon & Rutherford, 2011), while the requirements of managers from lesser standards of hotels may differ. The term

'Operation Managers', specifically includes managers from within Food and Beverage and Rooms Division departments of hotels, in which these two departments are considered the two key hotel operational departments (Walker, 2016). Additionally, these two departments are the most likely departments where hotel management graduates will obtain work, due to their larger size and the range of employment opportunities they offer. The following section further describes the range of research participants.

5.6 Research participants

To obtain the necessary quantitative data required for informing this study, three key participant groups from within Australian international hotels were selected. These groups include managers from within: i) Human Resources; ii) Food and Beverage; and iii) Rooms Division. Additionally, some Executive Managers with broader responsibilities were also included, because these managers have additional responsibility for the operational departments (Walker, 2016). Human Resources Managers were included in the study, as their views are considered important, as they are often involved in the initial screening of graduates when they are seeking employment, and they also have a strong influence in recruitment decisions (Stone, 2013). The views of Operation Managers' (Food and Beverage and Rooms Division) are especially important, because they are currently undertaking these operational jobs and, therefore, know the specific requirements of these positions. Moreover, these managers are ultimately responsible for hiring decisions and become accountable for staff once they commence employment. Combining these various groups of managers as informants provides a broad-based perspective on the required operational managerial competencies.

It is critically important to initially establish such research agendas, as these help to determine the investigative sample (Silverman, 2013). Sampling refers to the points of data collection or cases to be included within a research project (Gibson & Brown, 2009). Further sampling considerations for this study are discussed in the next section.

5.7 Sampling considerations

In broad research terms, a sample is a portion of a population (Etikan, Musa, & Alkassim, 2016). According to Marshall (1996), the selection of an appropriate sample to examine should largely depend upon the aim of the study and the research questions being

examined. There are two main types of samples, probability sampling (representative samples) and nonprobability (non-representative, purposive samples) (Dudovskiy, 2016). Probability sampling is characterised by a unit of the population having a known, nonzero chance of being selected, and where every participant has an equal chance of being selected through the use of random selection procedures (Etikan et al., 2016). However, nonprobability sampling is more discerning; the samples are gathered in a process that does not give all units of a population an equal chance of being selected (Etikan et al., 2016). In nonprobability sampling the researcher has an agenda in mind and only participants who suit the purpose of the study are included (Etikan et al., 2016). As such, the research participants are selected purposively due to their unique qualities. Furthermore, nonprobability/purposive sampling, also known as judgment or selective sampling, is a sampling technique in which researchers rely on their own judgment when choosing participants (Dudovskiy, 2016). Participants are selected because they are proficient and well-informed about the research theme and they possess a particular set of knowledge or experience (Etikan et al., 2016) that makes them worthy informants. According to Dudovskiy (2016), purposive sampling is particularly effective when the nature of the research design determines that there are only limited numbers of people who can serve as informants, such as a specific group of senior managers, as is the case within this study. Moreover, according to Etikan et al. (2016), when a study focuses on a particular subgroup in which all the sample members are similar, as within a specific occupation or level within an organisation, this is then referred to as homogeneous purposive sampling.

Therefore, homogeneous purposive sampling is adopted here as the specified senior hotel managers possess the required specific insights that could not be gained from any other sources. The following section describes the specific processes and procedures undertaken to gather the necessary data required for this study.

5.8 Research processes and procedures

The following section outlines the various stages of data collection undertaken and the various procedures used to collect the necessary data for the study and to analyse them. This study has two principal aims: i) to confirm an existing list and identify additional required competencies for effective hotel operation managers; and ii) to determine how these competencies are best acquired by hotel management graduates, in an attempt to

inform the curriculum and educational practice to enhance graduates' employability. These aims inform the four key research questions guiding this study. To achieve this objective, several research procedures were adopted. As depicted in Figure 1.1, Chapter 1, this project consisted of three main stages and eleven phases of data collection. Each of these eleven phases is described and discussed below.

5.8.1 Phase One – Desk research: Review of related literature

This section outlines the preliminary stage of desk research undertaken which informed the study. To identify an initial problem, help with the development of a conceptual framework and determine a research agenda, an initial review of applicable literature was undertaken. According to Veal (2011), this is an important preliminary stage in the research process. Undertaking desk research for this study involved reviewing approximately 60 similar studies; the aim was to review the theoretical frameworks and methodologies and also to determine any gaps in the literature, thereby justifying the need for this study. This initial phase assisted in determining the research agenda and the specific research questions for the study. Notably, this phase identified limited previous Australian research, with most recent comprehensive study in this country being published in 2006 (see Raybould & Wilkins, 2006). This study, therefore, provides contemporary insights in this field. Building on this initial research, several forms of document analysis then followed, commencing with a review of Australian hospitality management universities' course outlines.

5.8.2 Phase Two – Document analysis: Review of university course outlines

A review was undertaken of the course outlines for both Food and Beverage Management and Rooms Division Management courses from five key Australian universities where Hospitality Management is taught. The aim of analysing these documents was to assess the key learning outcomes, towards identifying the required competencies needed in the Food and Beverage and Rooms Division departments of Australian international hotels. A total of ten course outlines were reviewed; five for each Food and Beverage and Rooms Division courses. This process of reviewing documents in qualitative research, known as document analysis, is the systematic procedure for reviewing documents in either print or electronic form (Bowen, 2009). This process is often used in combination with other qualitative research methods, as is the case here (Bowen, 2009). A process of summative content

analysis was undertaken with the ten course outlines to summarise the various key learning outcomes. Summative content analysis involves the interpretation of subject matter by identifying and quantifying certain words or content in text with the purpose of understanding the contextual use of the words or content (Hsieh & Shannon, 2005). This analysis informed both the theoretical framework and the subsequent survey instrument for the study. This process worked on the assumption that what is currently being taught in these courses is somewhat representative of the key competencies required within these specific hotel areas. This initial data collection phase informs Research Questions 1 and 2 (RQ1 identifies key required competencies of hotel Operations Managers; RQ2 helps identify curriculum and pedagogic considerations to enhance graduate employability). Following the process of course outline reviews, further documents were analysed.

5.8.3 Phase Three – Document analysis: Review of online job advertisements

A further phase of document analysis comprised analysing current online job advertisements for both Food and Beverage and Rooms Division management positions. This analysis was undertaken to determine the key competencies needed in these roles, which builds on the previous stage of document analysis, further informing both the theoretical framework and the survey instrument for the study. The review of vacant jobs was undertaken on Australia's largest online job site Seek (Seek.com.au, 2014). In addition to reviewing vacant jobs on Seek, various Australian hotels' own websites were also accessed to review their vacant Food and Beverage and Rooms Division management positions. This process was to ensure that no currently vacant positions were missed. Through this combined process, a total of 43 job advertisements were reviewed (20 for Food and Beverage; 23 for Rooms Division). Summative content analysis was again undertaken on the various job requirements and key selection criteria, to identify the positions' key competencies. These positions were advertised in both four- and five-star hotel properties across Australia.

When seeking to determine specific job requirements, the process of reviewing job advertisements is recommended, Park, Lu, and Marion (2009) suggest that this method has been previously used successfully in a number of studies assessing the specific skills and competencies required in jobs. Moreover, according to Park et al. (2009), the procedure of evaluating job advertisements is also considered an established approach to monitor

changing requirements of occupations, which will also be useful for this study, ensuring currency of skills. This phase is designed to further build on the analysis contributing to the development of the theoretical framework and survey instrument. Following this phase, further document analysis was undertaken. This following phase, which addresses Research Questions 1 and 2, involves reviewing hotel operational management job descriptions.

5.8.4 Phase Four – Document analysis: Review of operation managers' job descriptions

The third phase of document analysis involved reviewing hotel industry job descriptions for both Food and Beverage managers and Rooms Division managers. Throughout this process, the aim was to consider the essential competencies needed for success in these key operational management roles. During this process, job descriptions were analysed from four different Australian hotel companies; a total of eight job descriptions were evaluated, four for Food and Beverage managers and four for Rooms Division managers. Once more, summative content analysis was undertaken on these documents to analyse the range of job responsibilities and requirements for each of the positions. This analysis provided additional data informing the theoretical framework and survey instrument, designed to further inform RQ1 and RQ2. Following the various stages of document analysis, a process of participant (hotel Operations Managers) observations and shadowing was then undertaken.

5.8.5 Phase Five – Observation and shadowing of Operations Managers

Phase five of the data collection process involved field observations of four hotel Operations Managers, two from within Food and Beverage and two from Rooms Division. The main aim of these observations was to better understand the working environment and to record the managers' key responsibilities and various competencies needed. (This endeavour further contributes to the theoretical framework and survey instrument, and again informs RQ1 and RQ2). These observations were undertaken at two different international hotels in south east Queensland, one five-star and one four-star. One half-day was spent with each of these four managers, observing them as they performed their normal day's work. Additionally, at both these two hotels, the researcher was able to attend the Executive Managers' morning meetings that all key hotel Department Managers attend. This opportunity was particularly

beneficial in gaining a better overall understanding of the hotel's operations and of the various relationships and interactions taking place.

Mulhall (2003) concurs that field observations are particularly effective in determining the social structures that exist within workplaces, especially in the ways people interact and go about their work. Another benefit of field observations, according to Mulhall (2003), is the opportunity to confirm if something that is indicated, or said to be done, is actually being done. This confirmation is an important consideration within this study, because job descriptions do not always accurately represent what a person actually does in their job (Stone, 2013). Therefore, undertaking the field observations provided an opportunity to confirm and elaborate on what had already been discovered in previous data collection in Phases Three (i.e., review of vacant positions) and Four (i.e., job description review) of the study.

During these observations, field notes (see Appendix C and D) were taken at the two hotels and clarifications made with managers throughout the shadowing process and directly following. Mulhall (2003) recommends when taking field notes, that the following four key points should be noted: i) the structural and organisational features (i.e. what the physical environment and buildings look like); ii) people (i.e., how they interact, behave and dress); iii) the daily process of activities; and iv) any distinct events, such as team meetings. These points were duly noted during the field observations. Furthermore, following the observation process, the content of field notes was analysed. This analysis contributed to determining the key competencies needed in these management roles, which further informed the theoretical framework and survey instrument. Directly following the managers' shadowing, a semi-structured interview was held with the four managers, to gain some additional insights. An overview of these interviews is provided in the following section.

5.8.6 Phase Six – Interviews with Operations Managers

Upon completion of the field observations, each of the four Operation Managers was interviewed (see Appendix E for the interview questions). The aim of these interviews was to reinforce what was discovered during the observations and to help further determine the required competencies needed for the managers to successfully undertake their roles. As with the previous data collection phases, this stage helped inform the theoretical

framework and the survey instrument. In addition, the interviews also aimed at obtaining some further insights into graduate employability (continuing to contribute to RQ1 and RQ2). A further associated benefit of these four initial interviews was that it enabled the researcher to practice in preparation for the more extensive upcoming interviews.

Interviews, as a data collection tool are the most commonly used method in qualitative research (King & Horrocks, 2010; Lichtman, 2013). Silverman (2013) describes the interview process as engaging in dialogue or conversation with a research participant. Although it is a conversation, it is usually orchestrated by the researcher, and as such can be considered a conversation with a purpose (Silverman, 2013). However, while having a conversation with someone may appear on the surface to be a simple and straightforward task, interview research is more complex and challenging (Kvale & Brinkmann, 2009). Indeed, Kvale (2007) describes the interview process as a specialised form of communication, where specific knowledge is acquired through the efficient interaction between interviewer and interviewee. In a research-orientated interview, the researcher asks about, and listens to, what people themselves tell about their lived world (Kvale & Brinkmann, 2009). Therefore, the interview attempts to understand the world from the subject's point of view and to unfold meaning from their experiences (King & Horrocks, 2010). These various factors made interviewing an appropriate strategy to adopt for this study, due to the specific and detailed insights provided. Gillham (2000) agrees that the overpowering positive feature of the interview is the richness and vividness of the material uncovered.

In terms of organising interviews, there are generally three interview subtypes: i) structured; ii) unstructured; and iii) semi-structured (Thomas, 2013). The most common type of interviewing is semi-structured, because it provides an identified list of questions but also allows the freedom to elaborate and follow up points as necessary (Thomas, 2013). For example, respondents were asked to describe a typical working day, to identify their key tasks and responsibilities. These semi-structured interviews provided further insights and gathered more in-depth descriptive information. Participants were given the interview questions in advance. According to Kvale (2007), this practice is recommended, as it allows the participants sufficient time to think and prepare their answers in advance. Furthermore, with the permission of participants, all interviews were recorded and later transcribed.

Upon completion of the transcription, the data was manually coded. Given there were only four interviews, manual coding was considered appropriate.

Undertaking both shadowing and interviews while on-site at the hotels, provided some important insights and contributed to a solid foundation for the next stages of data collection. The combined data collection in Phases 1–6 (described above) had an intentional goal of informing the development of the study's theoretical framework and survey instrument. A specific framework and survey instrument developed for this study were informed from the data analysis undertaken thus far. The process of developing the theoretical framework and survey instrument is further explained in the following section.

5.8.7 Phase Seven – Finalisation of theoretical framework and development of the survey instrument

After the evaluation of the previous data collection in Phases 1–6, the aim of this stage was to finalise the theoretical framework for the study, and develop the survey instrument required for the upcoming quantitative data collection. As outlined in Chapter 4, the evaluation of several alternative frameworks found that no existing one was found entirely suitable to accommodate the various newly determined hotel management competencies. Therefore, it was important to develop a new framework. As explained in Chapter 4, after considering various options, the Basis of Competence Model, developed by Evers and Rush (1996) and further refined by Berdrow and Evers (2010), was adopted as a framework. This framework was chosen over others as it best provides the necessary structures to incorporate the various identified hospitality management competencies. In addition, this original framework was also specifically designed to determine job requirements to aid graduates' transition from university into the workplace; thus, it was deemed appropriate, because it matched the intentions of this study.

Following Phases 1–6, the original model was extended from four to six base competencies, to appropriately accommodate the range of additional hospitality competencies identified. Furthermore, the number of individual competency items also increased, from the original 17 to 48. The two additional base competencies were needed to help accommodate the additional 31 hospitality-specific competencies (i.e., the original competency framework was generic and not hospitality specific). This newly developed competencies framework now consists of a well-informed, contemporary and, importantly,

hotel operational management-specific framework, which then facilitated the development of the survey instrument.

An anonymous survey instrument that incorporated the determined 48 competency items was developed using the online survey software Qualtrics. The survey, to be sent to a range of hotel managers Australia-wide, was designed to take no more than 20 minutes to complete. Adopting a survey is an appropriate tool to use to engage a larger group of respondents. Over time, surveys have grown in popularity and are now the most widely used data gathering technique in the social sciences and related research fields (Neuman, 2006). Moreover, surveys provide a unique insight and are especially appropriate for measuring subjective states; that is, characteristics that are internalised within a person and cannot be observed, such as perception (Groves, 2004). Hence, researchers such as McCall Jr and McCauley (2014); DeRue and Wellman (2009) and Kolb (1984) support the survey approach through employees reflecting on actual experience. Indeed, for this study, utilising a survey was a particularly appropriate strategy, because the study was seeking managers' opinions. Another benefit of using surveys is that they can include a combination of both quantitative and qualitative components. This aspect was beneficial for this study, because both quantitative and qualitative data is required.

As indicated, the survey was administered online. When collecting survey data, one of the considerations for researchers is whether to use an electronic online survey or a mail survey. Currently, online surveys are increasing in popularity, due to the many benefits they offer, such as yielding results in a much shorter time, and saving effort and resources through not having to print, mail and undertake data entry (Menachemi, 2011). They are also environmentally friendly and can be easily customised. Additionally, several researchers (Andrews, Nonnecke, & Preece, 2003; Evans & Mathur, 2005; Ilieva, Baron, & Healey, 2002; Van Selm & Jankowski, 2006) recommend the use of online surveys as a means of quantitative data collection, due to their functionality. Qualtrics is an appropriate online survey tool to use; because the survey is hosted in the 'cloud' on the Qualtrics server and a simple hyperlink is provided to the survey, with no need for specialised software or browser plugins (Barnhoorn, Haasnoot, Bocanegra, & Van Steenbergen, 2015). Moreover, in contemporary technology-enabled workplaces, the ease with which online surveys can be undertaken makes their use very appealing. As informants for this study are situated

Australia-wide, and all have access to computers and the internet at work, the process of undertaking a Qualtrics online survey was determined to be the most appropriate.

In terms of the structure and layout of the survey, it was divided into three main sections. The first section commenced with standard demographic information (i.e., gender, age, education). Following, informants were then requested to indicate the star rating of their hotel, whether the hotel was corporate or leisure, the amount of their experience, and which specific department they worked. As indicated, the targeted group of survey respondents were key department managers within Australian four- and five-star international hotels. The second section of the survey included a range of closed-ended Likert scale questions that presented the 48 individual competencies developed within the framework. Given that the informants (Hotel Managers) are often very busy (Benckendorff et al., 2012), utilising mainly closed-ended questions was considered the most appropriate way to gather the necessary data (Veal, 2011).

Within the closed-ended Likert questions, the respondents were asked to rate both the importance of the skills necessary for Operations Managers to successfully undertake their roles and the frequency with which these competencies are undertaken. This approach was designed to elicit information about the skills needed in the managers' roles, and also to investigate how often each particular skill or attribute was undertaken. Combining these two aspects enabled triangulation between the two sets of data, and helped to identify consistencies between the two measures and to draw conclusions. This approach to competency identification is recommended by Boyatzis (1982), who suggests that in addition to just considering the importance of a job attribute, the actual job demands should also be taken into consideration. The range of the Likert scales used in the two aspects of competency measurement was from 1 to 5 (i.e. 1 low and 5 high). In assessing the level of importance of the various competencies, 1 represented 'not at all important' and 5 represented 'extremely important'; in assessing the frequency in which the competencies were undertaken, 1 represented 'never' and 5 represented 'daily'. Following the range of quantitative questions, the third section of the survey included some additional open-ended qualitative questions that were incorporated to confirm and extend on the quantitative findings.

In summary, based on analyses of data obtained from Phases 1-6, no existing framework was found suitable to incorporate the recently established list of hospitality competencies. Therefore, a new framework and survey instrument were developed for pilot testing.

5.8.8 Phase Eight – Pilot testing of online survey

With the theoretical framework and survey instrument now finalised, the aim of the next phase was to refine the survey instrument to enable appropriate data collection. To aid in this process, the survey instrument was pilot tested by eight different people; two hotel Food and Beverage Managers, two hotel Rooms Division Managers, and two Human Resources Managers (these groups represent the main group of respondents). In addition, two Hotel Management academic staff also reviewed the survey and provided feedback. During this review process, the survey was checked for comprehension, any duplication between competencies, and validity. Ruane (2005) supports the use of a pilot study for surveys, because it helps to identify any potential problems with survey design and completion issues. Undertaking pilot studies also assists the researcher to refine question wording, which helps to reduce bias and possible errors (Balnaves & Caputi, 2001). As a result of the pilot testing, some changes to document layout and wording were made. Also, to reduce the time taken to complete, in an aim to increase completion rates, the survey was shortened in length, with some open-ended questions removed and incorporated into the later interviews. Prior to these changes, the survey took on average 26 minutes to complete. Considering the busy nature of participants, this was considered too long, and may impact on completion rates. Once the survey instrument was initially tested and refined, it was re-checked again by two Hotel Management academic staff; no additional changes were suggested, and the completion time was reduced now to approximately 20 minutes, which was considered acceptable. The survey instrument was finalised and initiated.

5.8.9 Phase Nine – Initiating the online survey

This phase of the study aims to ascertain the most important tasks of a hotel Operations Manager's role, and to determine the amount of time taken to complete these tasks. In

addition, some further qualitative insights around these themes are also established, including some justifications (thereby, addressing RQ1 and RQ2).

Administering the online survey comprised identifying applicable four- and five-star Australian hotels and then contacting these hotels' Human Resources Managers by phone. Human Resources Managers were chosen as a point of contact, due to the employability focus of the study, and also because these managers have a central role within hotel hierarchies (Walker, 2016). During the phone contact, each of the Human Resources Managers was provided with a short overview of the study, and asked if they would be willing to assist in the study. Human Resources Managers were also asked if they would be willing themselves to undertake the survey, and also forward the survey on to appropriate Operations Managers in both Food and Beverage and Rooms Division departments. Due to ethics considerations, individual Operation Managers were not able to be contacted directly.

Collectively, 145 four- and five-star hotels were identified in Australia and were initially contacted by phone; these hotels were located in a combination of both city and regional areas. From the 145 hotels contacted, 107 hotel Human Resource Managers agreed to assist in the study. This acceptance rate represented 74% of the hotels contacted, which was a positive result, and the researcher was appreciative of the various Human Resources Managers' time and support.

With regards to the administration of the survey, as mentioned, Operations Managers' individual email addresses could not be disclosed for ethical reasons. Therefore, each of the Human Resources Managers was sent a link via email to the online survey and requested to internally forward this link to their various Operations Managers. An introduction to the study and forwarding instructions were provided (refer to Appendix F). A copy of the Qualtrics online survey was also included (see Appendix G). As an incentive to encourage participation in the survey, respondents were offered the opportunity to win one of three \$100.00 pre-paid Visa cards. An additional anonymous link to this incentive was included at the end of the survey, and participants were given the option to enter. This notion of offering a prize draw within an online survey as a means to increase response rates is recommended by Cobanoglu and Cobanoglu (2003).

After two reminder requests to the various Human Resources Managers, a total of 127 online surveys were attempted by the various managers via the Qualtrics link. From the 127 surveys attempted, 96 usable surveys resulted. Once the surveys were finalised, the data were then imported into SPSS version 22 for analysis.

The 96 usable surveys represent a 76% completion rate from the surveys attempted, which is a viable level. The overall completion percentage rate could not be determined, because it was unknown how many individual links to the surveys were sent out by the various Human Resources Managers to their range of Operations Managers. Achieving an appropriate amount of survey responses was going to be challenging, because hotel Operation Managers in Australia are renowned for having extremely busy schedules and for producing low yielding survey results (Benckendorff et al., 2012). This awareness prompted the use of the incentive prize and, considering this challenge, the intention was to also undertake additional post-survey interviews to support and extend on the survey findings. Ultimately, the 96 usable surveys achieved were encouraging, given the specific nature of the informants and their busy managers' work schedules. Moreover, this study also yielded a higher number of survey responses compared to several other published studies, where Hotel Managers have been used as respondents (see Appendix H, which identifies 22 similar studies where the survey response rates are lower than 96).

Appendix H summarises the challenge of utilising Hotel Managers as informants in surveys, and also suggests that the number of 96 usable surveys in this study is a reasonable achievement. Overall, this survey phase of the study attempted to identify the most important aspects of a hotel operations manager's role and to provide some additional insights around this agenda (consequently, addressing RQ1 and RQ2). The findings from the surveys are presented in Chapter 6 potentially inform future hotel management educational practice. In summary, due to the benefits outlined, an online survey within this study was an appropriate data collection tool; once completed the findings also contributed to the formation of the final interview questions necessary for this study. The next two sections overview the process undertaken for the post-survey interviews.

5.8.10 Phase ten – Pilot testing for hotel managers' follow-up interviews

Following the findings from the survey, the final Operations Managers' interview questions were then developed. Before the interviews were undertaken, a final pilot testing phase

was incorporated to check the interview questions for clarity and comprehension. The interview questions were pilot tested with one hotel industry operations manager and one hotel management academic. All interview questions were reviewed; based on feedback, minor adjustments were made to question wording and the final interview questions were established. As previously discussed, undertaking a pilot study is an important part of the research process of reducing any potential problems with the interviews. Following pilot testing, potential participants were sourced, and arrangements made to undertake the interviews (A copy of the interview questions is provided as Appendix I).

5.8.11 Phase Eleven – Final interviews with Operations Managers

The aim of the post-survey final interviews was to consolidate and build on the research findings from all the previous phases, which, when combined, address all four research questions, RQ1 – RQ4. The detailed insights obtained from these interviews were especially important to inform Research Questions 2–4, where these qualitative interviews provided necessary deeper insights.

To arrange the interviews, various hotel Operations Managers in four- and five-star hotels within south east Queensland were contacted by phone, the study explained, and a request made for an interview. Most of the managers contacted were willing to participate in the study; interview times were then arranged and confirmed. A total of 20 semi-structured interviews were then completed with the various hotel Operations Managers. Eleven managers were from Food and Beverage and nine of the managers were from Rooms Division. With the permission of participants, the interviews were recorded and later transcribed verbatim. The qualitative interview data was then imported into, and analysed using NVivo 10 for Windows. The findings from these interviews are presented in Chapter 7. Overall, these final interviews were an important and necessary part of the research project, as they provide the required depth of information needed to better inform Research Questions 2-4.

In summary, the data collection process for this study consisted of eleven phases, including a combination of both qualitative (e.g., document analysis, interviews, participant observation) and quantitative (e.g., questionnaire) research strategies. This broad approach to data collection is consistent with Sogunro's (1997) study into leadership development, where similar formats of mixed method approaches to data collection were undertaken.

Sogunro (1997) highlights the benefits of adopting such rigorous and varied investigative approaches to achieve positive research outcomes for this specific type of study, where managerial capabilities are being determined. The next section discusses the key ethical considerations which were applied to this study.

5.9 Ethical considerations

Prior to any data collection being undertaken, appropriate ethical considerations should be taken into account. Within this study, the principles of ethical conduct derived from the National Statement on Ethical Conduct in Human Research (2007), were applied. These four principles include: i) Merit and Integrity (i.e., using appropriate methods); ii) Respect for Persons (i.e., ensuring appropriate instructional information and respecting participants time); iii) Beneficence (i.e., considering the welfare of all participants); and (iv) Justice (i.e., ensuring confidentiality and limiting risks) (Australian Government, 2013). Informed consent was gained in advance for all aspects of data collection, from all participants and organisations, in accordance with the ethical approval guidelines provided by Griffith University. Furthermore, confidentiality of data was and will be maintained throughout the project and beyond, as required.

Prior to any data collection taking place, the study was granted ethics approval by Griffith University Human Research Ethics Committee (approval number: EDN/11/14/HREC). Throughout all aspects of data collection, all participants were supplied with information sheets and consent forms (see Appendices J–N); these documents included the contact details for all members of the research team, in addition to Griffith University's Human Research Ethics department's contact details. Consequently, the research was conducted in accordance with applicable Australian Government and academic practices of ethical conduct. Indeed, ensuring proper ethical conduct is an important part of any research project (Creswell, 2012). Building on this theme, the next section overviews the study's validity and reliability considerations.

5.10 Research validity and reliability

In undertaking research, it is important that the conclusions drawn are seen as valid and reliable (Drew, Hardman, & Weaver-Hart, 1996). Therefore, addressing issues of validity and trustworthiness is essential in conducting any research (DeCuir-Gunby, 2008). Validity in

quantitative research is determined by the extent to which the measures do, in fact, measure the constructs of interest to the research (Balnaves & Caputi, 2001). Balnaves and Caputi (2001) note three specific kinds of validity: Construct Validity, Internal Validity and External Validity. Construct Validity is the extent to which the constructs successfully operationalise and represent the phenomenon being studied (Balnaves & Caputi, 2001), and this is evident through, truth value, applicability, consistency and neutrality (DeCuir-Gunby, 2008). Internal Validity refers to the extent to which the research design allows the researcher to draw conclusions about the relationships between the variables; finally, External Validity, refers to the extent to which the sample is genuinely representative of the population that it is drawn from (Balnaves & Caputi, 2001).

Within this study, validity was assisted by basing the survey instrument on scales that had been previously used before (see Berdrow & Evers, 2010, 2011; Evers, 2005, 2011, 2013, 2014; Evers et al., 1998; Evers & Rush, 1996), and utilising items on an already proven survey can increase validity (Osborne, 2008). Furthermore, the original Bases of Competency Model (e.g., Evers & Rush, 1996) from which the redeveloped survey instrument was formed, had a Cronbach alpha rating for the scales used of above 0.8 (Evers & Rush, 1996). Alpha is a measurement developed by Cronbach (1951) to provide a measure of internal consistency of a scale (Tavakol & Dennick, 2011). Alpha ranges from 0 to 1.0; according to Babbie, Halley, and Zaino (2007) and Nunnally and Bernstein (1994) an alpha of 0.70 or greater indicates an acceptable level of internal consistency. Once the original survey instrument was revised and redeveloped for use in this study, the scales were again tested for internal consistency. The Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) version 22 was used to calculate the Cronbach alpha coefficient of reliability for the newly developed scales.

For the quantitative study, the survey scales were tested for two key factors, firstly, the importance of various competencies, and secondly, the frequency in which these competencies were undertaken. The Cronbach alpha ratings for the items determining the level of importance was 0.935, and for the items rating the level of frequency, the alpha was 0.910; both indicate a high level of internal consistency for the scales being used. According to Hair, Wolfinbarger, Money, Samouel, and Page (2011), an alpha coefficient of above 0.90 is considered an excellent level of internal consistency. Hence, the internal consistency of

the newly developed quantitative survey instrument is considered both acceptable and reliable.

Furthermore, as the original survey instrument developed by Evers and Rush (1996) was redeveloped and expanded, undertaking an additional pilot study is also recommended for testing the new model (Ruane, 2005). Moreover, as previously indicated, undertaking a pilot study also assists the researcher to refine question wording, improve reader understanding, reduce possible errors, and results in increased validity (Balnaves & Caputi, 2001). As discussed, a pilot study was undertaken prior to administering the newly developed online survey, and this measure assisted with both face and content validity. Face validity ensures that the survey is easy to understand and undertake, while content validity ensures that the various scales represent the objectives of the survey instrument (Ary, Jacobs, & Razavieh, 2002). Further aiding the validity and trustworthiness of the survey was the emphasis on obtaining Operations Managers' direct input. This cohort are directly performing their roles; therefore they are in the best position to appraise the actual jobs requirements. Additionally, the validity of research outcomes is further strengthened by the combination of data collection methods, and particularly by the follow-up interviews being undertaken with the equivalent managerial cohort. As presented, a range of Operations Managers from within both Food and Beverage and Rooms Division, as well as Human Resources Managers, were used as informants for the survey, and Food and Beverage and Rooms Division Managers were again used for the follow-up interviews.

This procedure of using multiple participants and confirmatory research approaches is recommended by Yin (2012), who endorses checking and rechecking the consistency of the findings from different as well as the same sources. Yin (2012) suggests that the most desired convergence occurs when three or more sources are involved, as was the case within the surveys. Overall, by having the three main groups of managers undertaking the survey, followed by the interviews being undertaken again with both Food and Beverage and Rooms Division Managers, enabled more comprehensive data collection and analysis. Ultimately, the aim of research is to reach sound conclusions, and an important consideration is to ensure that the final outcome provides legitimate reasons for belief (Sapsford, 2007). Therefore, given the various validity measures undertaken within this

study, the overall conclusions drawn from the analysis should be considered sound. The following section now presents the various data analysis approaches undertaken.

5.11 Data analysis

Data collected needs to be analysed, and there are a number of options available to researchers. This process brings order, structure and interpretation to the range of collected data (Marshall & Rossman, 2015). Furthermore, quantitative analysis is a little easier to conceptualise than qualitative analysis, due mainly to the specific statistical tests available (Gibson & Brown, 2009). Indeed, qualitative analysis is often more involved, time consuming and creative, with its main aim of searching for general statements about relationships among categories of data, identifying content for ethnographies and searching for participant truths (Marshall & Rossman, 2015). An introduction to the various data analysis techniques used within this study is presented in the following sections.

5.11.1 Quantitative data analysis

In analysing the data from the managers' surveys, all data were first imported into the Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) version 22. Initially, a range of descriptive analyses were undertaken to examine the various demographic and career-related information provided by the participants. Additionally, for the open-ended survey questions, this data was imported into NVivo 10 for Windows software, and content analysis undertaken to determine themes.

The next area of the survey involved a range of closed-questions using a five-point Likert scale. These Likert questions were used to determine both the importance and frequency of the range of pre-determined competencies that were incorporated within the revised survey instrument. Once the quantitative data was collated and analysed via SPSS, it was ranked in mean order for both perceived importance and frequency. In addition to reporting the mean results, applicable standard deviations were also determined. Standard deviations (SD) were used in preference to the standard error of mean, because according to Barde and Barde (2012), knowing the variability within the sample and not the proximity of the mean to the population mean is considered more appropriate. Additionally, both the sets of importance and frequency of competencies data were combined to produce an aggregate result. (A full explanation of this process is presented in Chapter 6).

When considering comparisons for the importance of competencies between the four different groups of managers (Human Resources, Food and Beverage, Rooms Division, and an additional category of 'Other') an analysis of variance (ANOVA) test was used to assess the variation between the mean results between these different managerial groups. Furthermore, to ascertain if there were any differences between competency requirements between four- and five-star hotel properties, and also between corporate and leisure hotels, an independent-samples t-test was used to determine if there were any significant differences. When considering the differences in findings between these various groups, the significance threshold was set at .05 (Field, 2013). A summary of the various quantitative data analyses undertaken with this study has been outlined within this current section. Chapter 6 presents the findings from this quantitative data. The next section introduces the qualitative data analysis undertaken.

5.11.2 Qualitative data analysis

The aim of the final managers' interviews is to confirm and expand upon the findings from the surveys. Following the analysis of the survey data, the interview questions were finalised and interviews undertaken. Upon completion of the 20 interviews, the interview data was transcribed and imported into NVivo 10 software; where a constant comparative method was used to align data with the interview questions, identify themes (Boeije, 2002). The outcomes from the qualitative findings are presented in Chapter 7.

Once analysed, the qualitative data findings were compared to the quantitative findings to address the four research questions, RQ1 – RQ4, that together inform the overall research aim to determine how educational provisions for hotel management graduates can best be organised to enhance the development of required operational managerial competencies. The overall outcomes from both the quantitative and qualitative analyses are presented in the forthcoming discussion (Chapter 8). The following section outlines some limitations impacting the study.

5.12 Limitations

The analysis and subsequent findings from this study provide some key insights into hotel management education and graduate employability. However, there are some limitations within this study that need to be acknowledged. Firstly, all participants within this study

were current Hotel Managers. Therefore, there may be some bias in their assessments. Potentially, these managers could be more concerned with what is best for their businesses, rather than what may be best or achievable for higher education providers and or graduates. However, it is acknowledged that, due to their influence on graduate recruitment and further employability, their opinions must be given due consideration. Importantly, it is these managers who initially hire, and then influence the progression of graduates' careers.

Additionally, due to the demanding nature of their work, Hotel Managers are especially renowned for producing small sample sizes (Benckendorff et al., 2012). Although the sample size for this study is larger than several other published studies within the discipline, it is overall considered modest. Contributing to the size of the sample was ethical constraints, as it was not possible to individually invite or prompt various Hotel Managers to undertake the online survey. Therefore, the hotel survey process had to be administered internally (within the hotel), via the hotel's Human Resources department, where further individual prompting remained outside the researcher's control.

Furthermore, all surveys were undertaken Australia-wide; however, due to logistical reasons, the pre-survey investigations and post-survey interviews were undertaken only in south east Queensland. Although these were undertaken in both a large regional area (containing mainly leisure orientated hotels) and an Australian capital city (mostly corporate orientated), undertaking the interviews in other destinations within Australian would have been beneficial in obtaining broader views. However, the sample is likely to be representative of other geographic locations. This section has outlined some key limitations impacting this study. The following section provides an overall summary to this chapter.

5.13 Chapter summary

This chapter provides a description and justification of the selected method and procedures adopted within this study. It has further highlighted the suitability of utilising a mixed method approach to data collection. The various phases of data gathering have been explained, and it is emphasised that the range of initial qualitative data obtained was integral to informing the theoretical framework and quantitative survey instrument. Additionally, once the survey findings were determined, outcomes were then instrumental in generating the final interview questions. This combined process enables triangulation of the data which contributes to the validity of the overall results. An overview of validity,

ethical, and analysis considerations has also been presented in this chapter. The upcoming two chapters report on the research findings. Chapter 6 presents the quantitative findings; Chapter 7 outlines the qualitative findings.

6

Investigating key required hotel management competencies

6.1 Identifying hospitality competencies

As foreshadowed in Chapter 1, this study examines how educational provisions for hotel management students can best be organised to enhance the development of required operational managerial competencies. To gather the necessary data to inform this objective, a mixed methods investigation was undertaken. The reporting of the outcomes for each of the quantitative and qualitative stages of the study will be undertaken in two separate chapters (i.e., 6 and 7). Within this chapter, the findings from the quantitative survey are presented, while the next chapter (Chapter 7) presents findings from the final qualitative interviews. Chapter 8 then incorporates and discusses the findings from both the quantitative study (Chapter 6) and the qualitative study (Chapter 7).

The survey instrument comprised mainly closed-ended Likert-style questions, although, some open-ended questions were included. These additional open-ended questions were incorporated to provide qualitative data to support and augment the quantitative findings, to inform the overall research objective. This chapter presents analyses of both sets of data. The chapter aims to highlight the important competencies identified by hotel managers as being required for successful hotel management work. The outcomes emphasise the importance of 'Leadership', 'People', 'Personal-Presentation', and 'Customer Service Skills', and also highlight the need for managers to act ethically. These attributes can potentially be incorporated into the hotel management curriculum, thereby benefiting graduate outcomes.

This chapter presents the findings in the order that the questions appeared on the survey document (see Appendix G for the questionnaire). A profile of participants is outlined first, followed by responses on motivation to work in the hospitality industry. An analysis of the quantitative data is then presented. Finally, insights from the last three open-ended questions, which support and build on the quantitative data, are outlined.

6.2 Participants

As stated in Chapter 5, the survey was forwarded to 107 hotels Australia-wide. The respondents consisted of three primary groups of Hotel Managers from within i) Food and

Beverage; ii) Rooms Division; and iii) Human Resources departments of these hotels. An additional departmental category of 'Other' was also provided to include managers with broader operational management responsibilities who did not fit specifically into the three primary departments. The total number of valid survey responses received from the range of managers was ninety-six (n=96). The survey commenced with a range of items designed to provide demographic data of the population into measurable, quantifiable statistical categories (Department of Communities Child Safety and Disability Services, 2017). These items began with a question about gender. The gender distribution of the respondents was 42% (n=40) male and 58% (n=56) female. A further discussion on participants' gender is undertaken in Chapter 8.

The next question captured the respondents' age group. Age groups were gathered to provide an indication of the managers' ages and to highlight the career progression opportunities available. The mode age category was the 30–39 age group; 52% of the respondents. This majority age group may be considered young for managers in other fields. However, because of the transient nature of the hospitality industry, promotion can be rapid (Walker, 2016); therefore, hotel managers are often relatively young. The second highest age group was in the 40–49 age category, representing 23% of respondents. Participants were given the option not to indicate their age; one person elected not to provide an age category. Table 6.1 outlines the distribution of ages of the survey participants. The table presents the age category, from lowest to highest, the frequencies, and the corresponding percentages for each category. Apparent within the table is the relatively young age of the managers, and this aspect is further discussed in Chapter 8.

Table 6.1: Respondents' age ranges

Age	Frequency	%
20-29	10	10
30-39	50	52
40-49	22	23
50-59	13	14
Prefer not to answer	1	1
Total	96	100

The next section of the survey assessed the respondents' level of education. This question helps identify the expectation of tertiary qualifications within the hospitality

industry. The majority, 44% (n=42), held a Bachelor's degree; 28% (n=27) held a Diploma, and 12% (n=11) had gained a post-graduate qualification. Overall, 95% of the respondents held a tertiary qualification. Table 6.2 presents the participants' highest level of education. The table describes in rank order, the participants' highest level of qualifications, the frequencies, and percentages for each category. Identified within the table is the high number of participants (95%) holding tertiary qualifications, with a majority being a Bachelor's degree. This possibly represents increased frequencies and expectations of higher education outcomes in the community, emphasising the growing importance of tertiary education.

Table 6.2: Respondents' highest level of education

Level of education	Frequency	%
Bachelor Degree	42	44
Diploma	27	28
Postgraduate Degree	11	12
Vocational Certificate	9	9
Secondary School	5	5
Associate Diploma	2	2
Total	96	100

Additionally, participants were requested to indicate how important they believed it was for Operations Managers to hold tertiary qualifications. This question was included to identify the managers' expectations of higher education qualifications. Fifty-three (55%) of the respondents indicated that tertiary qualifications were neither important nor unimportant; 37% (n=35) indicated that these qualifications were very important, and only 3% indicated that tertiary qualifications are extremely important. These findings are revealing, given that 95% of the respondents themselves held a tertiary qualification. A further discussion on the importance of qualifications and a comparison of these outcomes with other studies is reported in Chapter 8. Table 6.3 presents the perceived level of importance of tertiary qualifications. The table outlines, in order of ranking, the respondents' perceived level of importance of qualifications, the frequencies and percentages. Following this table, the next section overviews the range of hospitality workplaces represented within the study.

Table 6.3: Importance of tertiary qualifications

Importance of tertiary qualifications	Frequency	%
Neither important nor unimportant	53	55
Very important	35	37
Very unimportant	3	3
Extremely important	3	3
Not at all important	2	2
Total	96	100

6.2.1 Workplaces

To understanding their workplace requirements, it is helpful to know what type of hotels informants are employed in. Consequently, the following two sections of the survey assessed participants' hotel's star rating and primary market (whether their hotel's core market was corporate or leisure). These questions were included to identify any differences in required managerial competencies between these different hotel orientations. As previously indicated only managers in four- and five-star hotels were selected for this study. The findings indicate that exactly 50% (n=48) of each 4- and 5-star hotels are represented. With reference to the hotels' key market orientation, 62% (n=60) of hotels are corporate and 38% (n=36) of the hotels are leisure focused. More detailed analyses, presented later in this chapter, draw comparisons in the required competencies, between the four and five star hotels, and between the corporate and leisure hotels. Respondents' attraction to the hospitality industry is now outlined.

6.2.2 Motivations

It is also informative to understand participants' attraction to the hospitality industry as a career, to help identify the motivations for students wanting to work and study in the hospitality industry. An open-ended question asked respondents to indicate what attracted them to a career in the hospitality industry. The qualitative findings were imported into NVivo 10 for Windows software and content analysis conducted to delineate themes. Comprehensively, the most stated reason for pursuing a career in the hospitality industry was the people or relationship orientation. Of the 130 reasons given for pursuing a career in hospitality, 52 (40%) indicated the appeal of connecting with people. Other reasons given by informants included the variety of challenges offered within the industry, the opportunities for travel, career advancement prospects, and hotels being a dynamic industry. Figure 6.1 graphically depicts all the reasons given for seeking a career in the hospitality industry and

the number of times each was mentioned by participants. Figure 6.2 provides a ‘word cloud’ representation of the responses. Both these figures highlight the strong appeal of ‘people’ within the hospitality industry. Moreover, this finding clearly emphasises that the hospitality industry is for people who like people. This finding implies that the development of ‘people skills’ (as previously identified from literature reviewed within this study) continues to be an essential hospitality industry requirement.

Figure 6.1: Graphical representation of main reasons for pursuing a career in the hospitality industry

Figure 6.2: Word cloud representation of main reasons for pursuing a career in the hospitality industry

6.2.3 Work background

It is also important to capture the work history of informants, to identify whether factors here shaped their responses. The next section of the survey asked participants to indicate how long they had worked in the hospitality industry. This question captured the length of service of participants, which then substantiates their views. Across the 96 respondents, the

average length of time spent in the industry was 17 years, which was considered significant, given the transient nature of the hospitality industry (Hinkin & Tracey, 2000). The shortest time spent in the industry was one year; the longest was 42 years. Overall, the respondents were experienced enough to make the kinds of evaluations required here. The next survey item assessed which department respondents worked in.

As noted, the three primary hotel departments involved in this study are i) Food and Beverage; ii) Rooms Division; and iii) Human Resources. The category 'Other' was added to accommodate managers with broader operational management responsibilities. As noted, this question was incorporated to enable comparisons to be made between the perceived managerial requirements needed within each of these departments. Twenty managers (21%) were from food and beverage, 18 (19%) were from rooms division, 43 were from human resources (44%), and 15 managers (16%), indicated 'Other'. The majority of the 'other managers' were Executive Assistant Managers and Operations Managers (Managers with broader leadership responsibilities); there were also two General Managers. Therefore, including the 'Other' group, a total of 56% of managers held operational management responsibilities, and 44% were from human resources. Thus, respondents represent a selection of both operational and non-operational hotel areas, which enables further comparisons to be drawn between these departments. For example, do Human Resources Managers value the same competencies as Operations Managers? Such outcomes can have implications for successful recruitment (Riley, 1996). These comparisons will be reported later in this chapter. Table 6.4 provides an overview of the respondents' departments. It outlines the specific department, the number of participants from each department, and the applicable percentages of respondents. The table shows the varied representation of departments, and highlights the mix of both operational and non-operational departments.

Table 6.4: Respondents' departments

Department	Frequency	%
Food and beverage	20	21
Rooms division	18	19
Human resources	43	44
Other	15	16
Total	96	100

The next survey item was used to identify participants' positions within the organisation; Assistant Manager, Head of Department or Other. Responses to this question enable a deeper participant understanding. The majority of the respondents, 51 (53%), were Heads of Departments, 12 (13%) were Assistant Managers and 33 (34%) of the participants indicated 'Other', which mainly represented managers with more extensive responsibilities, as previously outlined. The findings indicate that the majority of respondents are in senior management roles, thereby further validating the data, due to the managers' seniority and level of experience. The next two questions identified how long the managers had been in their current roles, and their years of management experience. These questions further build on the respondents' standing. The findings indicate that the average time the managers had been in their current roles is three and a half years, and the average amount of management experience of the managers is just over 10 years. These findings highlight the depth of experience and informed accounts of the participants.

In sum, this section provided an analysis of the respondents' profiles. The findings indicate an even mix of male and female participants, and the majority of whom held tertiary qualifications, although they did not necessarily value these in graduates. The main reason participants were attracted to the hospitality industry as a career was the people orientation of the industry. The outcomes further revealed survey participants work in a combination of operational and non-operational roles that provides broader viewpoints and enables additional comparisons. Furthermore, the respondents have a significant amount of hospitality industry experience, combined with a depth of management and current role experience, which together, strengthen the overall validity of responses.

The following section explores the quantitative findings of the study. This section begins by assessing the importance of the various pre-determined hotel management competencies which inform Research Question 1 (What types of management related competencies are required of competent international hotel operational department managers?).

6.3 Importance of managerial competencies

A key goal for this study is to identify the competencies required for management roles in hospitality. As discussed in Chapter 4, a specific analytical framework was developed for this purpose. This framework comprises a list of 48 hospitality operational management

competencies that were aligned with six overarching capability categories. The purpose of the framework was to incorporate the 48 competencies that were identified through the initial stages of qualitative research. Within this section of the questionnaire, these competencies were rated according to their perceived level of importance. Specifically, respondents were asked to rate their perceptions of the 'level of importance' of the 48 pre-determined competencies needed for them (or Operations Managers) to successfully undertake their roles. A five-point Likert scale quantitative (closed-question) format was used for respondents to rate these questions. The measurements used for these questions were: 1=not at all important, 2=very unimportant, 3=neither important nor unimportant, 4=very important and 5= extremely important.

The responses highlight the competencies reported to be most important for Operations Managers to successfully undertake their roles. The purpose of this question was to identify the importance of the range of competencies through a ranking process. Outcomes here can help inform both educational practice and the efforts made to identify how these most important competencies can be best acquired. Table 6.5 presents the ranking of the combined managers' perceived levels of importance of the range of 48 competencies, in mean order of importance (i.e. from highest to lowest 1– 48) and the standard deviation for each competency is also included. In Table 6.5 the competencies identified through the review are ranked in two columns, depending on the frequencies they were reported by the informants.

The preliminary qualitative stages of research undertaken for this study established a list of 48 competencies. Table 6.5 serves as a confirmatory measure, highlighting that the range of competencies within the framework are considered important. The table reveals that, of the 48 competencies, all but one are rated 4 and above out of 5. That is, they are all perceived as being somewhat important.

Table 6.5: Respondents' rank order of perceived level of importance of competencies

Rank	Competency item	Mean	SD	Rank	Competency item	Mean	SD
1	Leadership and influence	4.90	.307	25	Being noticeable	4.52	.542
2	Decision making/decisiveness	4.85	.383	26	Rostering and payroll management	4.51	.615
3	Customer and people orientation, service commitment and positivity	4.83	.375	27	Product knowledge and industry awareness	4.49	.580
4	Oral communication	4.75	.435	28	Human resources activities - recruitment, orientation and performance management	4.48	.523
5	Ethics, values and integrity	4.73	.447	29	Critical thinking	4.48	.542
6	Personal presentation and grooming	4.72	.452	30	Possessing the ability to undertake key roles within the department	4.46	.724
7	Collaboration and teamwork	4.71	.457	31	Initiative and enterprise	4.42	.536
8	Passion for the industry, self-motivation, flexibility and commitment	4.70	.462	32	Written communication	4.42	.627
9	Problem solving	4.70	.462	33	Managing diversity and cultural awareness	4.35	.580
10	Interpersonal communication	4.70	.462	34	Understanding of generic business technology. eg. Microsoft Office, email and smart phones	4.33	.574
11	Drive to improve service, products, team performance and business results	4.69	.488	35	Ability to conceptualise or form opinions	4.29	.541
12	Mentoring, coaching and encouraging staff development	4.68	.470	36	Developing reports and procedures	4.28	.556
13	Relationship building and knowing your staff	4.68	.470	37	Understanding and utilisation of industry related social media applications	4.27	.607
14	Attention to detail and adherence to standards	4.67	.496	38	Creativity/Innovation	4.26	.548
15	Personal organisation and time management	4.67	.496	39	Intellectual curiosity and on-going learning	4.25	.616
16	Planning, coordinating and organising	4.63	.508	40	Understanding of hotel specific software: Property Management Systems knowledge	4.23	.718
17	Adaption to change	4.63	.528	41	Facilitation and participation in meetings	4.19	.549
18	Negotiation and conflict resolution	4.60	.492	42	Purchasing and stock control	4.18	.665
19	Financial understanding, yield management, budgeting, profit and loss, industry benchmarking and metrics	4.58	.516	43	Risk taking	4.18	.562
20	Delegation and follow-up	4.55	.521	44	Career orientated	4.15	.649
21	Willingness to undertake operational roles, as required	4.54	.597	45	Analytical and research skills	4.14	.705
22	Legislative and regulatory understanding and compliance	4.53	.561	46	Sustainability practices	4.07	.603
23	Confidence and assertiveness	4.53	.561	47	Understanding of third party computer interfaces (loyalty programs, booking agents and guest satisfaction reporting)	4.04	.664
24	Visioning and strategic thinking	4.52	.615	48	Ability to speak an additional language	3.00	.768

As presented in Chapter 4, the 48 competencies were grouped into six overarching capabilities. A summary of the mean findings representing the overarching capability within the framework is presented in Table 6.6 and Figure 6.3; which both present the overarching capability and the mean rating for each of the six capabilities. The data presented in the table suggests that managing both people and self are perceived as being the most important aspects for hotel Operations Managers.

Table 6.6: Perceived level of importance within the overarching capability domain

Overarching capability	Mean
Managing people and tasks	4.61
Managing self	4.56
Technical	4.38
Innovation and change	4.35
Communication	4.22
Administration	4.22

Noteworthy here is that the mean result for the overarching capability group 'Communication' was impacted by the mean score for the competency item 'Ability to Speak an Additional Language'; this item produced a mean result of only 3 out of 5. If this individual competency item was removed from the 'Communication' category, the mean result for this overarching capability area would then have been 4.62, and would therefore have been the highest rated category of the six. This consequence suggests communication skills are very important for effective hotel Operations Managers and are also considered essential in successfully managing people (Robbins, Judge, Millett, & Boyle, 2017). Table 6.6 also suggests that skills in administration are recognised as less important, compared to abilities in managing people (e.g., staff and customers), and organising tasks within the organisation. With all six overarching capabilities rating above 4 out of 5, and with an overall variance of only 0.39 between the groups, this indicates the relative importance of all these areas.

Figure 6.3: Perceived level of importance within the overarching capability domain

This section has presented the respondents' perceptions of the importance of a range of competencies required for Operations Managers to successfully undertake their roles. However, when determining required managerial competencies, Koenigsfeld, Perdue, Youn and Woods (2011) and Perdue, Ninemeier and Woods (2000) suggest that, in addition to considering the perceived importance of an attribute, it is also advisable to consider the frequency the task is undertaken. Perdue et al. (2000, p. 82) state that 'considering both importance and frequency scales presents a conceptual approach for understanding not only what competencies are important within service industries, but which are actually in use'. Within this study, both the perceived importance of the attributes and their frequency undertaken are considered. The following section outlines the respondents' ratings of the frequency in which the various competencies are perceived to be undertaken within their roles.

6.4 Frequency of competencies

This section provides an overview of the participants' ratings of the 48 pre-determined competencies in terms of the frequency in which these tasks or attributes are undertaken. Respondents were requested to select from a five-point scale Likert quantitative (closed-question) rating system to indicate the frequency in which the task or attribute was undertaken. The scale of measurement used was, 1 = never, 2 = less than monthly, 3 = monthly, 4 = weekly and 5 = daily. Table 6.7, presents the various competencies listed in two

columns, in order of ranking from 1 to 48 in mean order, and also includes the standard deviation for the list of most frequently undertaken attributes. The data presented in the table highlights the key tasks or attributes where Operations Managers spend most of their time. These findings will later be combined with the important competencies determined, to provide an aggregate of overall required operational managerial competencies (Koenigsfeld et al., 2011; Perdue et al., 2000).

Table 6.7 highlights the strong involvement that Operations Managers have with customers, their commitment to service, and the importance placed on their personal appearance. The table also reveals that the managers regularly use both oral and interpersonal communication skills, and that their personal organisational skills play an important part in their daily undertakings. It is implied from these findings that Operations Managers are actively involved in the daily operations of the business, where they work closely with both customers and staff, and that communication and a range of leadership skills are considered important for success in their roles.

Table 6.7: Rank order of frequency of competencies

Rank	Competency item	Mean	SD	Rank	Competency item	Mean	SD
1	Customer and people orientation, service commitment and positivity	4.97	.175	25	Negotiation and conflict resolution	4.51	.665
2	Personal presentation and grooming	4.97	.227	26	Mentoring, coaching and encouraging staff development	4.50	.768
3	Oral communication	4.94	.243	27	Product knowledge and industry awareness	4.49	.665
4	Personal organisation and time management	4.92	.313	28	Understanding and utilisation of industry related social media applications, eg. Trip Advisor	4.46	.724
5	Interpersonal communication	4.91	.358	29	Understanding of hotel specific software: Property Management Systems knowledge	4.42	.970
6	Attention to detail and adherence to standards	4.90	.340	30	Possessing the ability to undertake key roles within the department	4.38	.886
7	Relationship building and knowing your staff	4.89	.352	31	Adaption to change	4.38	.743
8	Leadership and influence	4.89	.432	32	Rostering and payroll management	4.38	.837
9	Decision making/decisiveness	4.89	.352	33	Managing diversity and cultural awareness	4.34	.844
10	Collaboration and teamwork	4.88	.332	34	Facilitation and participation in meetings	4.32	.624
11	Confidence and assertiveness	4.83	.427	35	Willingness to undertake operational roles, as required	4.28	.914
12	Problem solving	4.83	.375	36	Creativity/Innovation	4.25	.781
13	Ethics, values and integrity	4.81	.488	37	Human resources activities - recruitment, orientation and performance management	4.23	.788
14	Written communication	4.79	.614	38	Legislative and regulatory understanding and compliance	4.19	.955
15	Delegation and follow-up	4.78	.527	39	Understanding of third party computer interfaces (loyalty programs, booking agents, eg. Wotif, and guest satisfaction reporting	4.14	1.022
16	Passion for the industry, self-motivation, flexibility and commitment	4.78	.507	40	Visioning and strategic thinking	4.04	.780
17	Being noticeable	4.77	.552	41	Risk taking	4.00	.951
18	Planning, coordinating and organising	4.77	.447	42	Intellectual curiosity and on-going learning	3.95	.944
19	Understanding of generic business technology. eg. Microsoft Office (word, excel), email and smart phones	4.73	.640	43	Purchasing and stock control	3.92	.948
20	Drive to improve service, products, team performance and business results	4.68	.571	44	Analytical and research skills	3.81	.944
21	Critical thinking	4.57	.611	45	Developing reports and procedures	3.74	.965
22	Financial understanding, yield management, budgeting, profit and loss, industry benchmarking and metrics	4.57	.692	46	Career orientated	3.70	1.067
23	Ability to conceptualise or form opinions	4.55	.709	47	Sustainability practices	3.54	.994
24	Initiative and enterprise	4.51	.598	48	Ability to speak an additional language	2.26	1.347

As with the previous ranked competencies, the rankings of these forty-eight attributes were also grouped into the six overarching capabilities framework to achieve a summative outcome. A representation of the mean findings, in order of frequency from one to six within the overall capability framework, is presented in Table 6.8 and Figure 6.4 below. Table 6.8 presents the overarching capability category, listed in ranked order by mean and progressing in importance from 1 to 6.

Table 6.8: Perceived level of task frequency within the overarching capability domain

Overarching capability	Mean
Managing people and tasks	4.68
Managing self	4.60
Technical	4.44
Innovation and Change	4.24
Communication	4.23
Administration	4.05

The mean result for the overarching capability group ‘Communication’ was again impacted by the mean score for the competency item ‘Ability to Speak an Additional Language’, which produced a mean score of only 2.26 out of 5. If this competency item was removed from the ‘Communication’ category, the mean for this overarching capability area would have been 4.89 and, therefore, been the highest rated category. This reassessment further emphasises the importance of communication skills. Moreover, Table 6.8 highlights that ‘Managing People and Daily Tasks’, and ‘Managing Self’ (which includes aspects of internalising, reflecting, refining practices and acting) form a significant part of a hotel Operations Manager’s role. The table also indicates that administration skills are required to be undertaken, but not to the same extent as more operational requirements. However, as with the perceived level of importance of the overarching capabilities, all the groups rated above 4 out of 5, indicating the high degree of frequency of all the groups.

Figure 6.4: Managers' perceived level of task frequency within the overarching capability domain

This section has outlined the respondents' perceptions of the frequency for the range of competencies undertaken by Operations Managers. This analysis of the frequency of the tasks or attributes will be combined with the perceived level of importance, to provide a collective measure. This amalgamation is beneficial in determining the overall required managerial competencies (Koenigsfeld et al., 2011; Perdue et al., 2000). The following section presents the combined analysis.

6.5 Combined analysis of required competencies

Having considered the importance and frequency of the various competencies separately, it is also beneficial to aggregate them. Within this section the findings are presented as a combination of the respondents' perceived level of importance of the competencies and the frequency in which these tasks are undertaken. Collectively, this provides for a more thorough representation of the competencies required of these Operations Managers (Koenigsfeld et al., 2011; Perdue et al., 2000).

Table 6.9, provides an analysis of the combined importance and frequency of the range of competencies. The table indicates both the mean and standard deviation, and lists the key required competencies in ranked order by mean, from 1 to 48. The data within this table was formed by combining and taking an average of the mean results for each of the perceived importance of the competencies, and also the frequency in which these tasks or

attributes are undertaken. For example, the competency item 'Customer and People Orientation, Service Commitment and Positivity' rated third in perceived importance with a mean result of 4.83, and rated first in terms of its frequency undertaken, with a mean of 4.97. Consequently, as presented in Table 6.9, this competency rated first overall, with an average mean result of 4.90. This table presents the combined analyses of the required competencies in two columns and lists the competencies in ranking order of importance (1–48) in mean order, and also includes the standard deviation for each item.

Table 6.9 also presents the combined importance and frequency findings for the range of 48 competencies. The table reveals that 44 of the 48 competencies have rated 4 or above out of 5, further validating the importance of the range of competencies included within the framework. The data highlights that 'Customer Service and People Orientation' is considered to be the most important overall attribute. Furthermore, a range of 'Leadership' and 'Communication Skills' have also been identified as being notably important, with these aspects rating predominantly in the top 10 attributes. Discussion in Chapter 8 will further classify and discuss these findings when specifically addressing Research Question 1.

Table 6.9: Combined importance and frequency analysis of required competencies

Rank	Competency item	Mean	SD	Rank	Competency item	Mean	SD
1	Customer and people orientation, service commitment and positivity	4.90	.275	25	Adaption to change	4.50	.636
2	Leadership and influence	4.89	.370	26	Product knowledge and industry awareness	4.49	.623
3	Decision making/decisiveness	4.87	.368	27	Human resources activities - recruitment, orientation and performance management	4.48	.523
4	Oral communication	4.85	.339	28	Initiative and enterprise	4.46	.567
5	Personal presentation and grooming	4.84	.339	29	Rostering and payroll management	4.45	.726
6	Interpersonal communication	4.80	.410	30	Ability to conceptualise or form opinions	4.42	.625
7	Collaboration and teamwork	4.79	.394	31	Possessing the ability to undertake key roles within the department	4.42	.805
8	Personal organisation and time management	4.79	.404	32	Willingness to undertake operational roles, as required	4.41	.755
9	Relationship building and knowing your staff	4.78	.411	33	Understanding and utilisation of industry related social media applications	4.37	.665
10	Attention to detail and adherence to standards	4.78	.418	34	Legislative and regulatory understanding and compliance	4.36	.758
11	Ethics, values and integrity	4.77	.467	35	Managing diversity and cultural awareness	4.35	.712
12	Problem solving	4.76	.418	36	Understanding of hotel specific software: Property Management Systems knowledge	4.32	.844
13	Passion for the industry, self-motivation, flexibility and commitment	4.74	.484	37	Visioning and strategic thinking	4.28	.698
14	Planning, coordinating and organising	4.70	.477	38	Creativity/Innovation	4.26	.664
15	Drive to improve service, products, team performance and business results	4.68	.530	39	Facilitation and participation in meetings	4.25	.586
16	Confidence and assertiveness	4.68	.494	40	Intellectual curiosity and on-going learning	4.10	.780
17	Delegation and follow-up	4.67	.524	41	Understanding of third party computer interfaces (loyalty programs, booking agents and guest satisfaction reporting)	4.09	.843
18	Being noticeable	4.65	.547	42	Risk taking	4.09	.756
19	Written communication	4.60	.620	43	Purchasing and stock control	4.05	.806
20	Mentoring, coaching and encouraging staff development	4.59	.619	44	Developing reports and procedures	4.01	.761
21	Financial understanding, yield management, budgeting, profit and loss, industry benchmarking and metrics	4.58	.604	45	Analytical and research skills	3.97	.825
22	Negotiation and conflict resolution	4.56	.578	46	Career orientated	3.92	.858
23	Understanding of generic business technology. eg. Microsoft Office, email and smart phones	4.53	.607	47	Sustainability practices	3.81	.798
24	Critical thinking	4.52	.577	48	Ability to speak an additional language	2.63	1.057

The combined analyses for the 48 competency items were again clustered into the six overarching categories framework. Representations of the mean results within the framework for the combined analysis are presented in Table 6.10 and Figure 6.5. These representations indicate, in mean order, the highest to lowest rated overarching capabilities.

Table 6.10: Combined importance and frequency of required competencies within the overarching capability framework

Overarching capability	Mean
Managing people and tasks	4.65
Managing self	4.58
Technology	4.33
Innovation and Change	4.31
Communication	4.27
Administration	4.20

When determining the rankings for the combined overarching capabilities, the capability category ‘Communication’ was once more significantly impacted by the mean score for the competency item ‘Ability to Speak an Additional Language’, this item produced an aggregated mean score of only 2.63. If this individual competency item had been removed from the ‘Communication’ category, the overall mean result for this overarching capability would have been 4.75, and again would have rated the highest. This consequence indicates that, although the overarching capability category of ‘Communication’ is not represented as being high, this attribute is still considered very important, together with ‘Managing People and Tasks’ and ‘Managing Self’. Furthermore, skills in administration, although a necessary part of a hotel Operations Manager’s role, are not considered as important, compared to skills directly relating to operational requirements of hotels.

Figure 6.5: Combined overview of required competencies within the overarching capability domain

This section has represented a combined depiction of the managerial requirements of hotel Operational Managers by incorporating the mean results for the perceived level of importance of the various competencies and the frequency in which these competencies or tasks are undertaken. The findings indicate hotel managerial competencies considered to be the most important. The next section identifies any significant differences in the perceived level of importance of the range of competencies between the different hotel departments, and also outlines the main competencies deemed to be important by the respondents from within the four surveyed departments (Food and Beverage, Rooms Division, Human Resources and 'Other').

6.6 Perceptions of important competencies

To advance a set of industry-wide competencies it is helpful to understand how key capacities are valued across different hotel departments. The findings from the three different hotel departments and the extra category of 'Other' are now summarised, in terms of their perceived level of importance among the various competencies. The frequency of competencies undertaken will not be considered here, as the intention is only to compare the differences in perceived importance of the competencies between the different departments. This analysis can help to identify any key differences in the various competencies required between the different hotel departments. This outcome has implications for hospitality recruitment and selection, especially as Human Resources

Managers are actively involved in the recruitment of new staff, including graduates. Therefore, it is helpful to see if these managers perceive the same competencies as being required, compared to managers from the other operating departments (i.e., Food and Beverage and Rooms Division).

To identify if there were any significant differences in perceptions of important competencies between the four different hotel departments, an analysis of variance (ANOVA) test was administered through SPSS version 22. From the 48 different competency items, a significant difference between the four key department groups (Food and Beverage, Rooms Division, Human Resources, and Other) was found in only 5 of the 48 competencies (the significance threshold Alpha was set at 0.05). Therefore, this analysis indicates there is a 90% agreement among the different hotel departments about the perceived importance of the range of 48 competencies. This finding suggests that key required hospitality managerial skills are deemed to be generally consistent across various hotel departments. Table 6.11 lists the five competencies where significant differences were found, identifies the degree of significance p value, and provides a test statistic F value for the five particular competencies where a significant difference was found.

Table 6.11: Significant differences found in competencies between departments

Competency	p value	F value
Ability to conceptualise or form opinions	<.001	7.305
Visioning and strategic thinking	<.01	4.364
Possessing the ability to undertake key roles within the department	<.05	3.488
Willingness to undertake operational roles, as required	<.05	3.463
Analytical and research skills	<.05	3.436

To further distinguish variations amongst the different departments, a breakdown of the mean and standard deviations for each of the five competencies, where a significant difference was found, is presented separately in Tables 6.12a–6.12e. Table 6.12a displays both the mean and standard deviation findings for each hotel department relating to the competency item, ‘Ability to Conceptualise and Form Opinions’.

Table 6.12a: Analysis of competency importance between departments for Ability to Conceptualise or Form Opinions

Hotel department	Mean	SD
Food and Beverage (n=20)	4.0	.563
Rooms Division (n=18)	4.11	.323
Human Resources (n=43)	4.35	.529
Other (n=15)	4.73	.458

Table 6.12a indicates that for the competency item, ‘Ability to Conceptualise and Form Opinions’, the level of perceived importance remains consistent between the three departments of Food and Beverage, Rooms Division and Human Resources. However, the ‘Other’ group, which included the range of Executive Managers, rated this competency item higher. The analysis suggests that the Executive Managers value this attribute more than the other groups of managers do, maybe because of their more strategic outlook and expectations. So, whilst there are consistencies across most groups, there are also specific emphases relating to this competency.

Table 6.12b presents both the mean and standard deviation for the data from each hotel department for the competency item, Visioning and Strategic Thinking.

Table 6.12b: Analysis of competency importance between departments for Visioning and Strategic Thinking

Hotel department	Mean	SD
Food and Beverage (n=20)	4.30	.470
Rooms Division (n=18)	4.22	.878
Human Resources (n=43)	4.65	.489
Other (n=15)	4.80	.414

For the competency of ‘Visioning and Strategic Thinking’, the two key operating departments (Food and Beverage and Rooms Division) were consistent in their rating of this item, but the ratings from HR and the ‘Other’ group of managers rated this item higher. The findings here imply that the operating managers (Food and Beverage and Rooms Division) are focused more on the daily operations, and have less time to devote to strategic thinking. This suggestion is consistent with the previous findings that indicated that Operations Managers spend a significant amount of time managing the daily activities within their hotel departments.

Table 6.12c presents both the mean and standard deviation findings for each hotel department for the competency item, ‘Possessing the Ability to Undertake Key Roles within the Department’.

Table 6.12c: Analysis of competency importance between departments for Possessing the Ability to Undertake Key Roles within the Department

Hotel department	Mean	SD
Food and Beverage (n=20)	4.75	.444
Rooms Division (n=18)	4.61	.608
Human Resources (n=43)	4.21	.861
Other (n=15)	4.60	.507

Regarding the competency item of ‘Possessing the Ability to Undertake Key Roles within the Department’, it appears that Human Resources Managers value this competency less, than the other three groups of managers do. This finding suggests that Operations Managers value possessing the key skills to undertake daily tasks more than Human Resources Managers do, which may be due to their different performance requirements.

Table 6.12d presents both the mean and standard deviation findings for each hotel department for the competency item, ‘Willingness to Undertake Operational Roles, as required’.

Table 6.12d: Analysis of competency importance between departments for Willingness to Undertake Operational Roles, as required

Hotel department	Mean	SD
Food and Beverage (n=20)	4.60	.503
Rooms Division (n=18)	4.83	.383
Human Resources (n=43)	4.35	.686
Other (n=15)	4.67	.488

For the competency, ‘Willingness to Undertake Operational Roles as required’, again, the Human Resources department has valued the importance of this attribute to a lesser degree, compared to the other three groups of managers. Once more, this could be due to their different and non-operational performance requirements and also because Human Resources Managers may not fully understand the operational priorities required (Lee-Ross, 1993).

Table 6.12e presents both the mean and standard deviation findings for each hotel department for the competency item, ‘Analytical and Research Skills’.

Table 6.12e: Analysis of competency importance between departments for Analytical and Research Skills

Hotel department	Mean	SD
Food and Beverage (n=20)	3.75	.851
Rooms Division (n=18)	4.06	.725
Human Resources (n=43)	4.26	.581
Other (n=15)	4.40	.632

The competency of ‘Analytical and Research Skills’ was rated highly by the ‘Other’ group of Executive Managers. In contrast, the Food and Beverage group of managers valued this competency to be of much lesser importance. These findings suggest that the Executive Managers may again be focusing more on strategic objectives, and the Food and Beverage Managers are concentrating more directly on daily operations.

To build on these findings and to further highlight the key differences in perceptions of importance of the various competencies between the different hotel departments, the following tables 6.13–6.16 provide a summary of the importance ratings of the top twenty competencies for each of the four different departments. The importance of the competencies was rated from 1 to 5, with 5 being the most important.

Table 6.13 provides the top twenty rated competencies identified by the Food and Beverage department. The table outlines the ranking of importance by mean, from 1 to 20. The competency items are listed with both their mean and standard deviations.

This table ranks the top twenty competencies deemed to be important by Food and Beverage Managers. As all these attributes have a mean rating of above 4.5 out of 5, they are all considered essential, according to the competency rating scale of Tas (1988). When previously evaluating hotel management competencies, Tas (1988) devised a scale that identified competencies receiving a mean rating of 4.5 and above out of 5 as ‘Essential’. Furthermore, competencies that rated between 3.5 and 4.49 were deemed ‘Considerably Important’, and competencies which rated between 2.5 and 3.49 were of ‘Moderate Importance’.

Table 6.13: Top ranked competencies identified by the Food and Beverage Department

Rank	Competency	Mean	SD
1	Leadership and influence	4.9	.308
2	Personal presentation and grooming	4.9	.308
3	Decision making/decisiveness	4.85	.366
4	Customer and people orientation, service commitment and positivity	4.85	.366
5	Collaboration and teamwork	4.8	.41
6	Personal organisation and time management	4.8	.41
7	Passion for the industry, self-motivation, flexibility and commitment	4.8	.41
8	Possessing the ability to undertake key roles within the department	4.75	.444
9	Relationship building and knowing your staff	4.7	.47
10	Ethics, values and integrity	4.7	.47
11	Attention to detail and adherence to standards	4.7	.47
12	Financial understanding, yield management, budgeting, profit and loss, industry benchmarking and metrics	4.7	.47
13	Planning, coordinating and organising	4.65	.489
14	Mentoring, coaching and encouraging staff development	4.65	.489
15	Oral communication	4.65	.489
16	Drive to improve service, products, team performance and business results	4.65	.489
17	Interpersonal communication	4.6	.53
18	Problem solving	4.6	.53
19	Willingness to undertake operational roles, as required	4.6	.53
20	Rostering and payroll management	4.6	.53

In further analysing the top rating competencies, ‘Leadership and Influence’ and ‘Decision-making’ rated one and three respectively, indicating that these leadership aspects are considered vital for Food and Beverage Managers. Moreover, ‘Personal Presentation and Grooming’ rated equal highest, implying that a high standard of personal presentation is paramount within the Food and Beverage department. ‘Customer Service, People Orientation and Positivity’, and ‘Collaboration and Teamwork’ also rated very high. These combined elements suggest that being ‘other’ and team orientated are also very important requirements within food and beverage. These established top twenty findings highlight the operational qualities required of a manager within Food and Beverage. The important competencies identified by the Rooms Division department are now similarly outlined.

Table 6.14 ranks the top twenty rated competencies identified by the Rooms Division department. The competency item is listed, and both the mean and standard deviations for each competency are presented.

Table 6.14: Top ranked competencies identified by the Rooms Division Department

Rank	Competency	Mean	SD
1	Leadership and influence	4.89	.323
2	Mentoring, coaching and encouraging staff development	4.89	.323
3	Attention to detail and adherence to standards	4.89	.323
4	Willingness to undertake operational roles, as required	4.83	.383
5	Decision making/decisiveness	4.78	.548
6	Customer and people orientation, service commitment and positivity	4.78	.428
7	Ethics, values and integrity	4.78	.428
8	Confidence and assertiveness	4.78	.428
9	Relationship building and knowing your staff	4.75	.461
10	Problem solving	4.72	.461
11	Drive to improve service, products, team performance and business results	4.72	.428
12	Rostering and payroll management	4.72	.575
13	Planning, coordinating and organising	4.67	.485
14	Delegation and follow-up	4.67	.485
15	Personal presentation and grooming	4.67	.485
16	Passion for the industry, self-motivation, flexibility and commitment	4.67	.485
17	Collaboration and teamwork	4.61	.502
18	Being noticeable	4.61	.502
19	Oral communication	4.61	.502
20	Interpersonal communication	4.61	.502
20	Personal organisation and time management	4.61	.608
20	Initiative and enterprise	4.61	.502
20	Possessing the ability to undertake key roles within the department	4.61	.608

Table 6.14 ranks the top twenty competencies perceived to be the most important by the Rooms Division department. All twenty competencies rated at 4.5 and above therefore, according to Tas (1988), all these attributes are deemed to be essentially required within the Rooms Division department. Three items were rated equally as being the most important; ‘Leadership and Influence’, ‘Mentoring and Coaching’, and ‘Attention to Detail and Adherence to Standards’. As with Food and Beverage, ‘Leadership and Influence’ rated at the top, further highlighting the importance of this attribute for hotel Operations Managers. The competency of ‘Willingness to Undertake Operational Roles’ was the fourth highest ranked item, and when combined with ‘Mentoring and Coaching’, which rated equal first, suggests that managers within Rooms Division work very closely along-side their staff and are required to be supportive during daily operations.

The high ranking of ‘Attention to Detail and Adherence to Standards’ implies that maintaining hotel standards and accuracy within guest’s information and accounts is considered very important within Rooms Division. As with the Food and Beverage

department, the highly ranked competencies within Rooms Division are very operational and strongly leadership orientated. This realisation implies the importance of these managers being actively involved in the operations and 'leading by example'. The following section reports the top twenty important competencies identified by the Human Resources Managers.

Table 6.15 provides the top 20 rated competencies, as identified by the Human Resources department. The table outlines the ranking of importance by mean, from 1 to 20. Each individual competency item is shown with both its mean and standard deviations.

Table 6.15: Top ranked competencies identified by the Human Resources Department

Rank	Competency	Mean	SD
1	Leadership and influence	4.86	.351
2	Decision making/decisiveness	4.84	.374
3	Customer and people orientation, service commitment and positivity	4.84	.374
4	Oral communication	4.79	.412
5	Interpersonal communication	4.79	.441
6	Ethics, values and integrity	4.72	.454
7	Collaboration and teamwork	4.7	.465
8	Personal presentation and grooming	4.7	.465
9	Visioning and strategic thinking	4.65	.489
10	Relationship building and knowing your staff	4.65	.482
11	Problem solving	4.65	.482
12	Adaption to change	4.63	.489
13	Personal organisation and time management	4.63	.489
14	Passion for the industry, self-motivation, flexibility and commitment	4.63	.489
15	Negotiation and conflict resolution	4.6	.495
16	Mentoring, coaching and encouraging staff development	4.6	.495
17	Attention to detail and adherence to standards	4.6	.541
18	Drive to improve service, products, team performance and business results	4.6	.541
19	Legislative and regulatory understanding and compliance	4.58	.499
20	Planning, coordinating and organising	4.56	.548
20	Being noticeable	4.56	.548
20	Delegation and follow-up	4.56	.548
20	Human resources activities - recruitment, orientation and performance management	4.56	.502

Table 6.15 ranks the top twenty competencies identified by the Human Resources department as being most important. Once more, all the top twenty competency items rated above 4.5 are therefore considered by managers in Human Resources to be essential for hotel Operations Managers (Tas, 1988). 'Leadership and Influence' was again the most

important identified competency and 'Decision-making' rated second. These findings further emphasise the importance of leadership capabilities. Moreover, this group of managers rated 'Customer Service and People Orientation' equal second. This aspect was followed by 'Oral Communication' and 'Interpersonal Skills'. These outcomes suggest that Human Resources Managers see quality customer relations as an integral part of an Operations Manager's role. Consequently, this outcome implies graduates should be emphasising their customer service abilities and orientations during initial interviews with Human Resources Managers. The next section outlines the top twenty identified competencies of the 'Other' group of managers.

Table 6.16 ranks the top twenty competencies identified by the 'Other' group of managers. The competency item is listed, and both the mean and standard deviations for each competency is presented.

Table 6.16: Top ranked competencies identified by the 'Other' Department

Rank	Competency	Mean	SD
1	Leadership and influence	5	.000
2	Decision making/decisiveness	5	.000
3	Oral communication	4.93	.258
4	Problem solving	4.93	.258
5	Drive to improve service, products, team performance and business results	4.93	.258
6	Adaption to change	4.87	.352
7	Customer and people orientation, service commitment and positivity	4.87	.352
8	Visioning and strategic thinking	4.80	.414
9	Interpersonal communication	4.80	.414
10	Passion for the industry, self-motivation, flexibility and commitment	4.80	.414
11	Ability to conceptualise or form opinions	4.73	.458
12	Collaboration and teamwork	4.73	.458
13	Negotiation and conflict resolution	4.73	.458
14	Planning, coordinating and organising	4.73	.594
15	Ethics, values and integrity	4.73	.458
16	Relationship building and knowing your staff	4.67	.488
17	Mentoring, coaching and encouraging staff development	4.67	.488
18	Personal organisation and time management	4.67	.488
19	Critical thinking	4.67	.488
20	Willingness to undertake operational roles, as required	4.67	.488
20	Financial understanding, yield management, budgeting, profit and loss, industry benchmarking and metrics	4.67	.488

Table 6.16 ranks the twenty competencies considered to be most important by the 'Other' group of managers. All twenty competencies rated above 4.5 therefore, all are

considered to be essential (Baum, 1990, 1991; Tas, 1988). 'Leadership and Influence' and 'Decision-making' were equally the highest ranked items and 'Problem Solving' was rated equal second. Furthermore, 'Adaption to Change', 'Drive to Improve Standards', and 'Strategic Thinking' also rated very highly. Collectively, these findings highlight the value placed on leadership capabilities by the 'Other' group of Executive Managers, which given their more senior positions, is understandable. Moreover, 'Oral Communication', 'Customer and People Orientation', and 'Interpersonal Skills' also rated highly. This outcome suggests that the executive group of managers value quality customer service and 'soft skills', which further highlights the strategic importance of these attributes.

Analyses of responses from the four different departments shows, 'Leadership and Influence' was rated the most important competency across all four departments. Other closely related leadership attributes were also consistently rated highly. These findings imply that leadership skills are the most important requirement for effective hotel Operations Managers. For the remaining highest ranked important competencies, consistencies and some variances were found between the different departments. Both the Food and Beverage and Rooms Division Managers highly valued a range of operational related competencies, which consisted of capabilities in customer service, teamwork and mentoring. However, the Food and Beverage department more highly valued 'Personal Presentation', and the Rooms Division department valued 'Attention to Detail' and the 'Ability to Maintain Standards' higher. Finally, the 'Other' group of Executive Managers appreciated more strategic capabilities, including skills in 'Decision-Making', 'Problem Solving' and 'Adaption to Change', which is understandable, given their more strategic standing within the organisations.

As foreshadowed at the beginning of this section, overall, there was a 90% agreement between the four different hotel departments about the perceived importance of the range of competencies required of effective hotel Operations Managers. This finding is a strong validation of the identified initial list of 48 competencies that were developed within the established framework. This outcome is also reassuring for the development of hospitality competencies, in that the various hotel managers value a very similar range of attributes.

In summary, this section has identified consistencies and some differences in the perceived level of importance of a range of competencies recognised by different hotel

departments. The findings can help identify specific competencies required across different hotel departments. These outcomes contribute to Research Questions 1 and 2 of this study; the findings may also help to provide insights for education practice in specific hotel management degree courses, such as Food and Beverage Management and Rooms Division Management. In addition, outcomes here may also inform recruitment practices, that are related to the specific requirements needed in particular hotel operational departments. Finally, these findings may also benefit hotel management graduates seeking employment in Australian hotels, through better understanding of the industry's key requirements.

The following section builds on this analysis and provides further insights into the competencies identified as being important. A comparison of identified important competencies will be made between both four- and five-star standard hotels and also between corporate and leisure orientated hotels. The intention here is to provide deeper insights and to ascertain if the same or different competencies are required between the different standards and varying market orientations of hotels.

6.7 Important competencies identified for four- and five-star hotels

Within this study both four- and five-star hotels, along with a combination of corporate and leisure hotels, were used for analysis. This section presents the findings and highlights the key differences in the competencies identified as important between the four and five-star hotels and also between the corporate and leisure hotels. These outcomes will help to identify if there are any key differences in the competencies needed by managers between the four- and five star-hotels, and also those needed by managers within the corporate and leisure hotels. These findings further address Research Questions 1 and 2.

6.7.1 Analysis of required competencies between four- and five-star hotels

To identify any significant differences in the perceptions of important competencies between four- and five-star hotels, an independent samples t-test was run in SPSS version 22, to compare the mean results for the range of competencies between these hotel levels. The significance level (Alpha) was again set at 0.05.

The findings revealed that between these hotel levels, only four competencies had a significant difference in their perceived importance: i) 'Facilitation and Participation in Meetings', ii) 'Interpersonal Communication', iii) 'Willingness to Undertake Operational

Roles as Required’, and (4) ‘Analytical and Research Skills’. This outcome indicates that 92% of the competencies are seen as being equally important in these hotels. Table 6.17 lists the competency item, and identifies the difference in means and standard deviations. The degree of significance *p* value and the test statistic *F* value for the four competencies are also provided for each.

Table 6.17: Summary of significant differences in competencies between four- and five-star hotels

Competency	4-star hotel Mean (n=48)	4-star hotel SD	5-star hotel Mean (n=48)	5-star hotel SD	p value	F value
Facilitation and participation in meetings	4.15	.461	4.23	.627	<.01	7.786
Interpersonal communication	4.63	.489	4.77	.425	<.01	9.424
Willingness to undertake operational roles as required	4.71	.504	4.38	.640	<.01	7.303
Analytical and research skills	4.04	.617	4.23	.778	<.01	7.038

The data presented in Table 6.17 suggests that ‘Facilitation and Participation in Meetings’, ‘Interpersonal Communication’, and ‘Analytical and Research Skills’ are more highly valued in five-star hotels than in four-star hotels. Furthermore, ‘Willingness to Undertake Operational Roles’ was reported to be more important in 4-star hotels, compared to five-star. These findings suggest there is more reliance on interpersonal skills in five-star hotels, which could be due to the higher service-level expectations (Al-Rousan & Mohamed, 2010). These outcomes also imply more internal meetings and deeper analysis are undertaken in five-star hotels. These increased requirements could be due to more hierarchy levels, as there are often more departments and facilities in five-star hotels than in four-star (Walker, 2016). In contrast, having a willingness to undertake operational roles is seen as a more important requirement in four-star hotels. This outcome is understandable, given there is less hierarchy in these hotels, compared to five-star properties (Walker, 2016).

To provide further insights into the perceived importance of the range of competencies between four- and five-star hotels, Table 6.18 provides a side-by-side comparison of the top twenty ranked competencies for each of these standards of hotels. The following table lists the ranking, the various competency items, the mean ratings and the standard deviations for the twenty top rating competencies. In the left-hand column the competencies are ranked for four-star hotels, and in the right-hand column, for the five-star hotels.

Table 6.18: Comparison of top ranked competencies between four- and five-star hotels

4-star hotels (n=48)				5-star hotels (n=48)			
Rank	Competency	Mean	SD	Rank	Competency	Mean	SD
1	Leadership and influence	4.90	.309	1	Leadership and influence	4.90	.309
2	Customer and people orientation, service commitment and positivity	4.83	.337	2	Decision making/decisiveness	4.88	.393
3	Decision making/decisiveness	4.83	.337	3	Customer and people orientation, service commitment and positivity	4.83	.377
4	Ethics, values and integrity	4.77	.425	4	Interpersonal communication	4.77	.425
5	Drive to improve service, products, team performance and business results	4.73	.449	5	Oral communication	4.77	.425
6	Oral communication	4.73	.449	6	Personal presentation and grooming	4.77	.425
7	Attention to detail and adherence to standards	4.71	.459	7	Collaboration and teamwork	4.73	.449
8	Problem solving	4.71	.459	8	Passion for the industry, self-motivation, flexibility and commitment	4.71	.459
9	Willingness to undertake operational roles, as required	4.71	.504	9	Relationship building and knowing your staff	4.69	.468
10	Personal organisation and time management	4.69	.512	10	Ethics, values and integrity	4.69	.468
11	Collaboration and teamwork	4.69	.468	11	Problem solving	4.69	.468
12	Mentoring, coaching and encouraging staff development	4.69	.468	12	Adaption to change	4.67	.519
13	Passion for the industry, self-motivation, flexibility and commitment	4.69	.468	13	Mentoring, coaching and encouraging staff development	4.67	.476
14	Planning, coordinating and organising	4.67	.476	14	Financial understanding, yield management, budgeting, profit and loss, industry benchmarking	4.67	.476
15	Relationship building and knowing your staff	4.67	.476	15	Negotiation and conflict resolution	4.65	.483
16	Personal presentation and grooming	4.67	.476	16	Personal organisation and time management	4.65	.483
17	Interpersonal communication	4.63	.489	17	Drive to improve service, products, team performance and business results	4.65	.526
18	Adaption to change	4.58	.539	18	Attention to detail and adherence to standards	4.63	.531
19	Delegation and follow-up	4.56	.542	19	Planning, coordinating and organising	4.58	.539
20	Willingness to undertake operational roles, as required	4.56	.542	20	Confidence and assertiveness	4.58	.613
20	Legislative and regulatory understanding and compliance	4.56	.580				
20	Negotiation/conflict resolution	4.56	.501				

Table 6.18 indicates a high level of consistency reported by respondents from the four- and five-star hotels, in terms of the perceived importance of the range of competencies. As indicated at the beginning of this section, the consistency in required competencies between the different standards of hotels (4 and 5 star) is 92%, and there are only four competencies where a significant difference ($p < .05$) was identified. Additionally, 'Leadership', 'Decision-Making', and 'Customer Service/People Orientation' feature in the top three attributes in both standards of hotels, suggesting that these three aspects are vital across the two standards of hotels. Furthermore, all competencies within the top 20 for both standards of hotels rated above 4.5 out of 5, indicating they are all considered essential (Baum, 1990, 1991; Tas, 1988). In the next section, a comparison of the perceived importance of the forty eight competencies will be undertaken between corporate and leisure orientated hotels.

6.7.2 Analysis of required competencies between corporate and leisure hotels

To appraise required competencies industry-wide, this section identifies differences found in the perceptions of important competencies between corporate and leisure hotels, and also provides a comparison of the twenty top rated competencies for each of these types of hotels. An independent samples t-test was again undertaken in SPSS version 22 to compare the mean results for the forty-eight competencies between corporate and leisure hotels (Alpha was set at 0.05).

Following analyses of the data, four competencies were identified that showed a significant difference in perceived importance between the two different market orientations of hotels. These four competency items were i) 'Creativity and Innovation', ii) 'Relationship Building and Knowing Your Staff', iii) 'Facilitation and Participation in Meetings', and (4) 'Interpersonal Communication'. Table 6.19 lists the four competencies, identifies the difference in means and standard deviations, and also provides both the p value and test statistic F value for the competencies, where a significant difference was found.

Table 6.19: Significant differences in competencies between corporate and leisure hotels

Competency	Corporate hotel Mean (n=60)	Corporate hotel SD	Leisure hotel Mean (n=36)	Leisure hotel SD	p value	F Value
Creativity and innovation	4.33	.572	4.14	.487	<.01	8.286
Relationship building and knowing your staff	4.73	.446	4.58	.500	<.05	6.821
Facilitation and participation in meetings	4.30	.530	4.00	.535	<.01	7.016
Interpersonal communication	4.77	.427	4.58	.500	<.01	10.57

The data in Table 6.19 indicates that, for all four competencies in which a significant difference was found, these items were deemed to be more important in corporate hotels compared to leisure. The highly competitive nature of corporate hotels could be a reason for these four specific attributes being more highly valued (Kotler, Bowen, & Makens, 2014). Potentially, there could also be more meetings held in corporate hotels, with greater emphasis placed on communication and building relationships, due to their commercial clientele (Kotler et al., 2014). However, the overall findings indicate that for 92% of the competency items, there is agreement in the perceived level of importance between corporate and leisure hotels. This agreement suggests a greater transferability of skills between these different hotel types.

Further elaboration regarding the perceived importance of the range of competencies between corporate and leisure hotels (presented in Table 6.20), provides a comparison of the twenty top rating competencies for each of these different market orientated hotels. Corporate hotels are listed on the left, and leisure hotels indicated on the right. The table lists the identified important competencies ranked in mean order of importance and includes their standard deviations.

In sum, Table 6.20 indicates a strong level of consistency in the perceived importance of the range of competencies required in both leisure and corporate hotels. As indicated, there is a very high (92%) level of consistency in the required competencies between the two different orientations of hotels. Furthermore, there were only four competencies for which a significant difference ($p < .05$) was found.

Table 6.20: Comparison of top rated competencies between corporate and leisure hotels

Corporate hotels (n=60)				Leisure hotels (n=36)			
Rank	Competency	Mean	SD	Rank	Competency	Mean	SD
1	Leadership and influence	4.92	.279	1	Decision making/decisiveness	4.89	.319
2	Decision making/decisiveness	4.83	.418	2	Leadership and influence	4.86	.351
3	Customer and people orientation, service commitment and positivity	4.83	.376	3	Customer and people orientation, service commitment and positivity	4.83	.378
4	Interpersonal communication	4.77	.427	4	Oral communication	4.72	.454
5	Oral communication	4.77	.427	5	Personal presentation and grooming	4.69	.467
6	Ethics, values and integrity	4.75	.437	6	Ethics, values and integrity	4.69	.467
7	Personal presentation and grooming	4.73	.446	7	Adaption to change	4.67	.478
8	Collaboration and teamwork	4.73	.446	8	Collaboration and teamwork	4.67	.478
9	Relationship building and knowing your staff	4.73	.446	9	Personal organisation and time management	4.64	.487
10	Passion for the industry, self-motivation, flexibility and commitment	4.73	.446	10	Drive to improve service, products, team performance and business results	4.64	.487
11	Problem solving	4.73	.446	11	Mentoring, coaching and encouraging staff development	4.64	.487
12	Drive to improve service, products, team performance and business results	4.72	.490	12	Passion for the industry, self-motivation, flexibility and commitment	4.64	.487
13	Mentoring, coaching and encouraging staff development	4.70	.462	13	Attention to detail and adherence to standards	4.64	.543
14	Attention to detail and adherence to standards	4.68	.469	14	Problem solving	4.64	.487
15	Personal organisation and time management	4.68	.504	15	Relationship building and knowing your staff	4.58	.500
16	Planning, coordinating and organising	4.65	.515	16	Negotiation and conflict resolution	4.58	.500
17	Negotiation and conflict resolution	4.62	.490	17	Planning, coordinating and organising	4.58	.500
18	Financial understanding, yield management, budgeting, profit and loss, industry benchmarking and metrics	4.62	.490	18	Interpersonal communication	4.58	.500
19	Delegation and follow-up	4.62	.490	19	Legislative and regulatory understanding and compliance	4.53	.506
20	Visioning and strategic thinking	4.60	.558	20	Confidence and assertiveness	4.53	.609
20	Adaption to change	4.60	.558	20	Financial understanding, yield management, budgeting, profit and loss, industry benchmarking and metrics	4.53	.560

This outcome suggests that the vast majority of competencies are equally important in both corporate and leisure hotels. 'Leadership', 'Decision-Making', and 'Customer Service/People Orientation' remain the prominent required competencies in both classifications of hotels. This finding further highlights the importance of these particular competencies. Moreover, all twenty of the most frequently reported highly ranked competencies, in both types of hotels, had a mean rating of above 4.5 out of 5, suggesting that these attributes are deemed essential in both groups of hotels (Baum, 1990, 1991; Tas, 1988).

Thus far, this section has reported quantitative findings. The final four items in the questionnaire are designed to triangulate the data found in the preceding data collection processes and to further address RQ1, which identifies the key required managerial competencies. The analyses of these questions are presented in the following sections.

6.8 Perceived importance of the overarching capabilities

To enable verification of quantitative findings identifying the importance of the overarching capability domains (groupings of the 48 individual competencies), question 23 of the questionnaire requested informants to rate (in order from 1 to 6) the level of importance for the six overarching capabilities. These findings were then compared to what had previously been identified within the quantitative analysis undertaken thus far. To delineate the most important overarching capability area, a frequency analysis was administered within SPSS to ascertain the respondents' rating order of importance for all six of the overarching capabilities. To determine the highest rated overall capability area, when the capability area was ranked as number one (the most important), it received a weighting of 6; the second rated area received a weighting of 5; the third received 4; the fourth received 3; the fifth received 2; and the last/lowest rated area received a weighting of 1. This weighting was then multiplied by the frequency to calculate a cumulative total. Table 6.21 and Figure 6.6 outline the overall rating order of perceived importance for the six overarching capabilities. Table 6.21 ranks the order, the overarching capability, the cumulative totals and the percentages for each capability category.

Table 6.21: Overarching capabilities ranked order of importance

Ranking	Overarching capability	Cumulative total	%
1	Managing people and tasks	510	26
2	Communication	465	24
3	Managing self	372	19
4	Innovation and change	284	14
5	Technical	202	10
6	Administration	144	7
	Total	1977	100

Table 6.21 shows that ‘Managing People and Tasks’ and ‘Communication’ are deemed to be the two most important capability areas for hotel Operations Managers. These findings are consistent with the previously identified quantitative findings (when communication was reassessed), and reconfirm the vital importance of ‘Leadership’ and ‘Communication Skills’, which enable Operations Managers to effectively engage with both their staff and their customers. Furthermore, these outcomes highlight the necessity for managers to have skills in managing and motivating their staff, and in overseeing operational outcomes. ‘Managing Self’ was also seen as an important consideration. This particular element involves furthering knowledge, refining practices, internalising, reflecting and adapting, to deal with various situations. Evident from this analysis is that ‘Innovation and Change’ remain somewhat important; however, the ‘Technical’ and ‘Administrative’ aspects of the job are not seen as important, compared to the skills required to manage staff, to communicate, and to oversee daily hotel operations.

Figure 6.6 depicts these findings, demonstrating both the capability area (at base of figure) and the cumulative totals for each (at left).

Figure 6.6: Summary of perceived importance of overarching capabilities

The preceding sections of this chapter have presented the quantitative findings from the hotel managers' online survey. The final three qualitative open-ended survey questions remain to be analysed. These open-ended questions were incorporated to further address RQ1 (What types of management related competencies are required of competent international hotel Operations Managers?) The first of the three open-end questions requested respondents to provide a justification for why they rated the overarching capabilities in the order that they did. The analyses of the findings are presented next.

6.8.1 Justifications for overarching capability rating

To enable further insights, after participants had rated their order for the overarching capabilities, they answered the first open-ended question, justifying qualitatively why they ranked the six capability categories in the order that they did (i.e., in importance from 1 to 6). Their responses were imported into NVivo software for content analysis. The responses were then coded to the overarching capability, and frequencies calculated. This analysis also provided additional justifications for the importance of these capabilities. Table 6.22 presents the overarching capability listed in rank order (left-hand first column), provides the capability's description (second column), indicates the frequency (third column), and provides some illustrative examples to support the findings (fourth column).

Table 6.22 overviews participants' comments and provides some justifications for why they ranked the six overarching capabilities as they did. Numerous comments (257) were made and many examples given regarding the importance of 'Managing People and Tasks', 'Communication', and 'Managing Self'. However, lesser justifications were made on the other three capability areas. Comments received reflected the importance of people being the heart of a hotel, and further highlighted the significance of customer service and teamwork. 'Communication skills' were also highlighted as especially necessary in the fast-paced ever-changing hospitality industry. Additionally, self-awareness, being a role model, and possessing the right attitude were identified as being especially important personal traits.

'Technical' and 'Administration skills' were reconfirmed as being of lesser importance, compared to the other more operational requirements. This assessment was emphasised by Participant 60, who commented, 'Paperwork is the last thing you do before you go home'. Overall, respondents confirmed the importance of all six capability categories for Operations Managers to successfully undertake their roles. However, there were some clear distinctions in terms of the level of importance of the six capability categories, where operational and self-management aspects dominated.

Section 6.9 summarises the qualitative comments made on the final two open-ended survey questions, which elaborate on the essential managerial skills needed (6.9.1) and the amount of time spent on these tasks by the managers (6.9.2). These outcomes are then further discussed in Chapter 8.

Table 6.22: Justifications for rating the importance of the overarching capabilities

Overarching capability	Description	Frequency	Illustrative examples (respondents' quotes)
Managing people and tasks (rated 1 st)	Working towards organisational goals and accomplishing tasks by planning, leading, organising, coordinating and controlling both the organisation's resources and its people	70	<i>People are the most important asset in the hospitality industry. Without people the building is just an empty shell without the heart and soul in delivering excellent customer services and delivering exceptional memories for our guests. Being able to manage our teams is the most important aspect of hospitality - especially as it is such a human-to-human contact industry.</i>
Managing self (rated 3 rd)	Constantly developing knowledge and refining practices. Internalising, reflecting and adapting to maximise one's ability to deal appropriately in a variety of situations and business contexts	63	<i>Self-improvement and awareness is the key in having the right attitude - it all begins with 'me'. When you are able to be the role model, you then are able to lead a team of people. Being organised is vitally important in hospitality, as you are not only dealing with all your staff, but hundreds of guests and the expectations of the company, owners and all stakeholders.</i>
Communication (rated 2 nd)	Interacting effectively with a variety of individuals and groups to facilitate the gathering, integrating and conveying of appropriate information in a variety of forms	57	<i>Communication is the key to any successful Ops manager, earning respect from the team through transparency and open communication. Communication - particularly oral and interpersonal is very important, hotel operations are fast paced and ever-changing so communication needs to be effective. Communication is key for the other 5 topics, if the person is unable to effectively communicate the message to others. The rest will fall over.</i>
Innovation and change (rated 4 th)	Conceptualising, as well as setting in motion ways of initiating and managing change that involves significant departures from the current mode	27	<i>The environment we work in is constantly changing, Ops Managers need to be able to keep up with this and initiate and manage change with their team so that the business continues to operate effectively and meet the needs and expectations of our guests. Innovation is at the heart of any F&B operations, trends move quickly and hotels can often be slow to change - staying on trend and current is the key.</i>
Technical (rated 5 th)	Comprises the use and understanding of relevant information technology and software that supports the department, includes the manager's ability to operate this technology efficiently	20	<i>With the ever changing evolution of technology, leaders must keep abreast of the latest information technology. Technology is everywhere today, and it's important to keep up. Technical literacy is starting to become a huge part of what we do, but should never overtake our people.</i>
Administration (rated 6 th)	Involves undertaking various administration functions and the knowledge and application of relevant documentation required of effective Operations Managers	20	<i>To function effectively, leaders and managers need to effectively manage administrative functions and documentations. Administrative skills are important at a management level. Paperwork is the last thing that you do before you go home.</i>
Total		257	

6.9 Key skills needed by hotel Operations Managers and time spent on tasks

To more comprehensively address RQ1, two final qualitative open-ended questions were included within the questionnaire. The first qualitative question enabled participants to identify in their own words the important skills required by Operations Managers, and the second question aimed to identify which aspects these roles occupied the most time. These two questions were used to compare the previously identified quantitative survey findings, and to identify any important skills or tasks not previously revealed. An analysis of the first question, which identified important skills, is presented first.

6.9.1 Most important skills needed by Hotel Operations Managers

This section highlights the participants' responses to qualitatively identifying the most important skills required for Operations Managers to successfully undertake their roles. These responses were imported into NVivo software, a process of content analysis undertaken, and a preliminary code book developed which included a list of 249 items. This list was further refined to establish a group of 30 competencies/skill areas identified by the respondents' as being most important. Table 6.23 presents the 30 most frequently identified skills, listed in ranked order, including the frequencies and percentages for the most highly rated areas.

When comparing these qualitative findings with the previously identified quantitative findings, which also identified key required skills, it is evident that there is a high degree of consistency in the most important perceived competencies. In particular, 'Leadership' was identified as the number one key skill identified in both the quantitative and qualitative questions. This outcome further emphasises the importance of this capability. 'Communication Skills', 'People Skills', and 'Customer Service Orientation' also rated in the top six, in both the quantitative and qualitative questions, further highlighting the importance of these elements. However, two additional areas identified in the top five of the qualitative question, were not identified as highly in the quantitative findings. These were 'Financial Understanding and Achievement', and 'Emotional Intelligence'. This finding places an additional emphasis on these two attributes. A more detailed discussion of these aspects is undertaken in Chapter 8. The following section presents the qualitative data for the final survey question, which asked participants to indicate which tasks Operations Managers spent the most time on over the past twelve months.

Table 6.23: Hotel Operations Managers most required skills

Most important managerial skills identified by respondents	Frequency	%
Leadership	67	27.0
Communication skills	42	17.0
People skills	34	14.0
Financial understanding and achievement	24	10.0
Emotional intelligence	11	4.5
Customer service	9	3.5
Flexibility – adaptability	9	3.5
Time management	5	2.0
Change management	5	2.0
Practical job knowledge	5	2.0
Strategic thinking	4	-
Being hands-on	4	-
Technical proficiency	3	-
Ability to think on feet	3	-
Organisational skills	3	-
Problem solving	2	-
Teamwork	2	-
Ability to handle pressure	2	-
Innovative	2	-
Negotiation skills	2	-
Self-development	2	-
Competitor analysis	1	-
Compliance – OH&S	1	-
Conflict resolution	1	-
Honesty	1	-
Marketing Skills	1	-
Passion	1	-
Personal drive	1	-
Sense of humour	1	-
Work ethic	1	-
Total	249	100

6.9.2 Tasks occupying hotel Operations Managers' time

To enable further verification of the quantitative findings, the final qualitative responses indicated which tasks occupied most of the managers' time over the past twelve months. The qualitative responses from the survey for this question were imported into NVivo, the data was scrutinised and content analysis undertaken. Once more an initial code book was developed, which revealed a list of 328 responsibilities. This list was further refined to establish a group of 16 key tasks and responsibility areas that the respondents had identified as where most of their time was spent. Table 6.24 presents the 16 identified

categories in the list on the left, in the order of the amount of time consumed; their frequencies and the percentage of time indicated appear in the two columns on the right of the table.

Table 6.24: Tasks and responsibility occupying the most time of hotel Operations Managers

Tasks occupying Operations Managers' time	Frequency	%
Staff management – leadership	66	20
Human Resource functions (recruitment, training, performance management)	43	13
Managing daily operations	43	13
Customer service and management	39	12
Fiscal management	37	11
Administration and reporting	34	10
Communicating	19	6
Strategic planning	19	6
Problem solving	7	-
Attending meetings	6	-
Project management	4	-
Marketing	3	-
Product and process review	3	-
External relationship management	2	-
Self-Development	2	-
Being ethical	1	-
Total	328	100

Table 6.24 provides a list of the tasks and responsibilities that occupy most of Operations Managers' time. When comparing these qualitative findings with the quantitative findings, once more there is a high degree of consistency in the top-ranked areas. Aspects of 'Staff Management and Leadership' rated as the number one area where managers spent most of their time. The second most frequent area was 'Human Resources Functions', and the third was 'Managing Daily Operations'. When combined, these three areas, relating to overall leadership and organisational capabilities, collectively occupy a significant amount of time.

In addition to these findings, 'Leadership' was also previously identified within the quantitative results, as being in the top ten most frequent tasks, further confirming the significance of this characteristic. There was also a strong overlap within both the qualitative and quantitative questions in the area of 'Customer Service'. This item ranked fourth in the qualitative question and first in the quantitative, in terms of time occupied. This suggests

Operation Managers spend a lot of their time relating to customers. Furthermore, the area of 'Financial/Fiscal Management' rated very highly in this qualitative question, ranking as the fifth most significant area, but ranked only number 22 out of 48 within the quantitative question. This outcome suggests that when managers have more time to consider where they spend their time, they indicate that a significant amount of their time is spent on financial matters. Further discussion relating to these findings will be undertaken in Chapter 8.

6.10 Chapter summary

The data presented in this chapter were generated from a questionnaire sent to 107 Australian international hotels. It comprised both quantitative and qualitative items. This approach to data collection was designed to allow for triangulation, using an overview of the overall findings from the questionnaires to address Research Question 1, which aims to identify 'What types of management related competencies are required of competent international hotel Operations Managers'. The findings here highlight the importance for Operations Managers to possess a range of leadership and people skills, communication skills, customer service capabilities, and an awareness of financial aspects. The findings also reveal the importance for managers to act ethically, and to maintain a high standard of personal presentation. There seems to be much in common regarding required competencies across various hotel departments, although some differences are revealed between higher level managers and lower level managers, in terms of what they privilege. This distinction may indicate that at various levels within hotel organisations, varying expectations exist and different kinds of capacities are valued.

There were also consistencies in the majority of required competencies across different types of hotel properties. This consistency highlights the high transferability of management skills between different international hotels in Australia. However, there were some minor variations. These included more expectations to undertake operational roles in four-star hotels, compared to five-star, which is understandable. Additionally, there were some competencies deemed to be more important in corporate, compared to leisure hotels, which could be due to the geographically concentrated and competitive nature of these properties.

Chapter 7 reports on the findings from the post-survey semi-structured interviews. These findings are used, in conjunction with the analysis presented within this chapter, to specifically inform Research Questions 1 and 2. These collective outcomes will also, importantly, be used to address how the identified key competencies can be best developed. Additionally, the upcoming interview findings inform the remaining Research Questions 3 and 4, which investigate the role and organisation of WIL. Once the findings from the interviews are outlined in Chapter 7, the quantitative and qualitative findings are combined in Chapter 8 to present the overall findings addressing the four research questions informing this study.

7

Effective learning to enhance graduates' employability

7.1 Generating positive graduate outcomes

As discussed in Chapter 6, the analysis of data is presented in two separate chapters. Chapter 6 presented data from within the hotel managers' questionnaires; this chapter now builds on that data by presenting findings from the post-questionnaire semi-structured interviews. As outlined in Chapter 5, the interview questions (see Appendix I) were developed after the initial analysis of the survey data to enable the development of targeted interview questions that would build on the survey findings.

The interview schedule is divided into three segments. The first gathers participants' demographic information, second is designed i) to verify and build on the survey findings in relation to RQ1 (What types of management-related competencies are required of competent international hotel Operations Managers?), and ii) to inform RQ2 (What are the curriculum and pedagogic considerations that enhance competency development for the employability of hotel management graduates?).

The third segment is designed to further inform RQ2, and to address the two remaining research questions: RQ3, which investigates the role of Work Integrated Learning (WIL) in contributing to hotel management students' employability, and RQ4, which focuses on how WIL experiences should best be organised and enacted to enhance the graduate outcomes of hotel management students.

This chapter first presents findings about participants' profiles, and demonstrates the depth and appropriateness of the respondents' knowledge of hospitality. Section two of the data from the interview questions is then presented and discussed. This section further outlines key required hospitality competencies and considers important evolving managerial requirements. This section also presents data, and makes recommendations on how key required hospitality competencies can be best acquired, thereby informing what needs to be incorporated into the curriculum to enhance hotel management learning and graduate employability.

Following the evaluation of key required competencies, the findings from the third section of the interview schedule are outlined. This includes the importance of WIL within

hotel management programs and assesses the ideal duration and positioning of WIL within the hotel management curriculum. Finally, some additional insights are offered that aim at further informing hotel management graduate employability. The findings from both quantitative and qualitative sources are then assimilated; key deductions made and further deliberated in Chapter 8.

7.2 Profile of interview participants

The post-survey semi-structured interviews (n=20) were undertaken with a range of hotel Operations Managers within four- and five-star hotels in south east Queensland, Australia. None of the twenty interview respondents participated in the previous survey; thereby enabling both additional and confirmative insights. With the agreement of participants, all interviews were recorded and later transcribed verbatim. Once the transcription was completed, the interview data was imported into NVivo 10 software and systematically coded and content analysed. This process of content analysis assists with the organisation of data, corroborates evidence and aids in the overall trustworthiness of results (Elo & Kyngäs, 2008).

As noted, the first section outlines the profile of participants. The findings from these initial demographic questions were collated, entered into Microsoft Excel and then imported into SPSS, where descriptive statistics were run to generate frequency reports; these reports were used to establish a profile of participants.

The first interview item was to delineate the gender of participants. Of the twenty interview participants, 15 were male and five were female (The variance in gender is further discussed in Chapter 8). To obtain an additional understanding of respondents, the next item assessed the participants' age group. Table 7.1 presents the age categories of the participants, in age order, and provides their frequencies.

Table 7.1: Interview participants' age ranges

Age	Frequency
20-29	5
30-39	8
40-49	4
50-59	2
60-69	1
Total	20

Table 7.1 highlights consistencies with the age groups represented within the previous survey findings (Chapter 6), where once more most of the participants are in the 30-39 age group. Similar to the survey findings, this data further highlights the relatively young age of hotel Operations Managers, with the majority (13 out of 20) of interview participants being aged between 20 and 39.

The participants' highest level of education was analysed next. Nineteen of the 20 interview participants held a tertiary qualification and 10 of the qualifications were a Bachelor's Degree. This data indicates that interview participants' profiles are consistent with survey respondents, where again, 95% held tertiary qualifications. Table 7.2 provides the participants' level of education and their frequencies.

Table 7.2: Participants' highest level of education

Level of education	Frequency
Secondary school	1
Associate Diploma	1
Diploma	5
Bachelor degree	10
Postgraduate degree	3
Total	20

Table 7.2 indicates that a Bachelor degree was the most common qualification held by the interviewees, and a Diploma was the second most popular qualification. The next two items discussed in which type of hotel property participants worked (i.e. four- or five-star; corporate or leisure). From the 20 hotels represented, 9 were four-star and 11 were rated in the five-star category, indicating a comparatively even mix of hotel categories. The various hotels' market orientations were also relatively evenly distributed, with 9 hotels being corporate and 11 being leisure. These findings indicate an appropriate mix of hotel properties being represented. The breakdown of the hotels utilised for the interviews remains consistent with the range of hotels used in the previous survey.

Participants were then asked how many years they had worked in the hospitality industry, and also how many years of management experience they had. These questions were used to gauge the depth of experience of the managers. Respondents' time working in the hospitality industry varied from five to 40 years, with the average years of work

experience being 19 years. The period of management experience held by the participants ranged from three years to 39, with the average being 12 years. The depth of participants' remains consistent with the previous stage of quantitative data collection and highlights participants' informed qualities. Tables, 7.3 and 7.4 present the respondents' years of industry experience (Table 7.3), and period of management experience (Table 7.4), and frequencies.

Table 7.3: Years of industry experience

Years of industry experience	Frequency
1-5	1
6-10	4
11-15	4
16-20	7
21-25	1
26-30	1
31-35	0
36-40	2
Total	20

Table 7.4: Years of management experience

Years of management experience	Frequency
1-5	7
6-10	6
11-15	3
16-20	1
21-25	0
26-30	2
31-35	0
36-40	1
Total	20

The interview schedule also secured information on the operations department participants worked, and their current positions. Eleven informants worked within the Food and Beverage department and nine worked within the Rooms Division department. The relatively even mix of the two departments provides balanced insights from each of these two key operating hotel departments. Furthermore, the majority of participants, (15 of the 20) held the position of Department Head, four were Assistant Managers or Outlet

Managers and there was one Resident Manager among the participants. The range of managers represented highlights the high standing of participants and strengthens the validity of data. The following two tables present the number of participants in each hotel department (Table 7.5), and their positions held (Table 7.6).

Table 7.5: Participants' department

Participants' department	Frequency
Food and Beverage	11
Rooms Division	9
Total	20

Table 7.6: Participants' position

Participants' position	Frequency
Department Head	15
Assistant Manager	4
Resident Manager	1
Total	20

This section has provided an overview of the interview participants, which included a synopsis of the informants' hotel, department and position. The data indicates that the majority of interview participants are male, most are aged 30-39, all but one have tertiary qualifications, and the majority of qualifications held are a Bachelor's Degree. The findings further indicate an appropriate mix of both four- and five-star and corporate and leisure hotels represented within the interviews. Furthermore, although the participant managers are relatively young, which is not uncommon in the hospitality industry (Walker, 2016), they have a good depth of managerial experience and maintain senior positions within international hotels. Overall, the respondents' knowledge and experience indicates they are well-placed to provide data.

Having presented the participants' demographics and organisational standing, the following section outlines findings from the interview questions designed to confirm and build on the previous quantitative findings, thereby, more comprehensively addressing RQ1 and RQ2.

7.3 Hotel Operations Managers' essential competencies

As presented in Chapter 6, the top five competencies identified as being the most important for hotel Operations Managers to successfully undertake their roles, were i) 'Leadership and Influence', ii) 'Decision Making/Decisiveness', iii) 'Customer and People Orientation, Service Commitment and Positivity', iv) 'Oral Communication', and v) 'Ethics, Values and Integrity'. To validate and elaborate on the survey findings, interview participants were asked if they agreed that these top five attributes were essential for Operations Managers, and if so, why. All 20 of the interview participants agreed that these five competencies were essential for Operations Managers to successfully undertake their roles. Samples of the informants' supporting quotes are given below:

I think it's a very accurate list. For me, it covers the key basis of what I need to practice and what I believe in. I've got nothing to add to that (Respondent # 3).

If any one of those skills was missing, you would probably be at a fair disadvantage in regards to doing your role effectively (Respondent # 1).

I definitely agree with all of them, I would even say they are the top five (Respondent # 19).

Absolutely, I would say that these are five key things for being a successful Operations Manager (Respondent # 5).

I think if you can't lead and make decisions and have that customer relationship, then I think managing in the hospitality industry will be quite difficult (Respondent # 12).

These quotes are illustrative of the responses and demonstrate strong endorsement of the five most important attributes previously identified within the survey as being essentially important for hotel Operations Managers. Moreover, none of the 20 participants indicated that any of these five attributes should not be included within the top five required competencies, thereby further endorsing their importance.

Participants were also asked if they would include any additional competencies in their top five most important competencies. This question was designed to draw-out any additional competencies deemed to be equally important. Furthermore, this question was particularly relevant because, as previously presented, none of the twenty interview participants had participated in the previous survey. Following content analysis and coding, an additional 43 competencies were identified, which were classified into 26 competency

groups deemed essential. Table 7.7 presents the top ranked seven additional important competencies identified and their frequencies (note that only competencies which were identified two or more times have been included in the table). There were a further 19 competencies identified only once and therefore, not included. Notably, these items were mostly personally and behaviourally orientated (the total number of responses reflected in the table also incorporates the 19 individually mentioned competencies).

Table 7.7: Additional essential skills or competencies identified

Additional essential competencies identified by interview participants	Frequency
Financial acumen and driving for results	6
Strategic focus	5
Not just oral communication, but communication in general, non-verbal communication (individualised communication)	4
Collaboration and teamwork	3
Innovation	2
Technology and digital communication	2
Resilience and self-care	2
Total	43

Examples of some of the respondents' illustrative quotes and justifications relating to these additional essential competencies are included below:

(Financial acumen) There was nothing in here about really driving for results. I suppose in how we approach things now, we're very aware of what our performance expectations are, and where we need to get to. We are now very results driven and need to be continually stretching to reach our goals (Respondent # 11).

(Strategic focus) I would probably look for something like being able to; you've got to have that vision of moving forward constantly. It's all going well with everything operating as-is, but to progress the business forward or to progress your team forward, you always need to be looking ahead and be pushing to the next level (Respondent # 18).

(General communication) I think definitely oral, because I've had leaders who aren't very good at communicating orally, but, I think it comes down to good communication in general. Being able to adapt your style to different people. I find with my team, I have a really diverse range of age, race, and backgrounds.

Notice boards work for some, communicating orally works for others, text or email work for others and a Facebook page works for another group, so I think it really depends (Respondent # 14).

(Collaboration and Teamwork) I would add ... teamwork, an ability to work in a team, this is really important in hotels (Respondent # 19).

The analysis further supports a strong reliance on overall leadership skills, emphasising strategic imperatives. These findings also highlight the importance of not only oral, but comprehensive and individualised communication skills. It is these capacities that are increasingly required in international hotels, due to the growing diversity in both staff and customers (Hudson & Hudson, 2017). Moreover, as found in the open-ended question from the preceding survey, 'Financial Acumen' has again been specifically identified as an important additional managerial requirement, further highlighting the growing importance of this attribute. As Respondent 11 commented, 'we are now very results driven'. Furthermore, collaboration and teamwork were also identified as essential capabilities. Considering that this attribute also rated seventh out of forty-eight, within the previous survey, it further emphasises the importance of this requirement. From this additional analysis, a key list of required competencies for hotel Operations Managers, which includes aspects associated with 'Leadership', 'Financial Acumen', 'Communication', 'Teamwork', and 'Customer Service' has begun to materialise. Further discussions are presented in Chapter 8, where these outcomes collectively address RQ1.

In addition to assessing currently required competencies, it is also pertinent to try and identify future competencies required of hotel Operations Managers, given the time it takes for students to graduate from university (Biggs & Tang, 2011). Therefore, respondents were asked to indicate which particular skills or competencies they believed would be most needed by hotel Operations Managers within the next three to five years. The next section reports and discusses these findings. The outcomes highlight evolving managerial requirements and allow a comparison between current and future required hospitality competencies.

7.4 Key skills needed by future hotel Operations Managers

It is also necessary to assess the particular skills or attributes needed for effective hotel Operations Managers in the future. Knowing future managerial requirements is valuable,

and could be useful in informing impending educational practice and benefiting graduate outcomes. After initial content analysis, a list of 70 future required managerial attributes were identified. Following further content analysis, these 70 items were classified into eight principal categories, comprising i) 'Leadership/Staff Management', ii) 'Guest/Customer Orientation', iii) 'Technology', iv) 'Financial', v) 'Innovation', vi) 'Competitive Analysis', vii) 'Self-management/Development', and viii) 'Communication'.

Table 7.8 lists these eight categories in their frequency order, and gives some illustrative examples of the respondents' supporting comments. It is noted that 'Leadership/Staff Management', and 'Customer Orientation' are recognised as being especially significant attributes required for the future. Together, these two attributes contributed to half of all responses. It is also evident from the supporting comments that the changing demographics of both staff and customers will be increasingly important aspects for hotel managers in the future.

In addition to 'Leadership and Staff Management' currently being essentially required attributes, data in Table 7.8 highlights that these elements are also considered important attributes for the future. Specifically, individualised management of staff and finding ways to better engage with the younger generation of hospitality workers are identified as two key requirements for the future. Furthermore, individualising service, connecting emotionally, and building relationships with customers are key themes identified from within participants' illustrative examples as being important for the future, especially with increasing competition. Innovation, specifically in better connections with customers, is also identified as being increasingly required. Additionally, 'Financial Understanding' and 'Competitive Analysis' are recognised as important considerations for the future. This fiscal trend is growing and understandable, given the ever increasing profit expectations of hotels (Walker, 2016).

The findings also indicate that keeping up with developing technologies will be increasingly important, as will be the need to continue to develop professionally and to maintain effective communication. In sum, the majority of attributes needed for the future remain mostly consistent with current managerial requirements. However, there are some evolving requirements, such as technological and competitive considerations, and these dimensions, and their implications that inform RQ2, are further discussed in Chapter 8.

Table 7.8: Principal categories of attributes identified as being important for the future

Principal category	Frequency	Illustrative examples (respondents' quotes)
Leadership/staff management	18	<p>What's going to continue being a shift is no one wants to come in and be counted as a number. You need to engage with your team, you need to treat people differently; you need to understand that all your team is looking for different things.</p> <p>The people that we've got working here, the new breed of employees that we've got. Being able to connect and engage with that younger generation is something that we need to be very focused on.</p>
Guest/customer orientation	17	<p>People's emotions. If you connect with people emotionally, whether that's guests or whether that's your team members, you've got them for life. It's all about the emotional connections you have. That's going to be a huge, huge, huge thing in the future for anyone who wants to be a brand.</p> <p>We talk about the generational gap. You've got your baby boomers, the Gen Xs, the Gen Ys, and now we hear about millennials. We need to prepare ourselves for this change in guests. A new wave of guests is about to come and join our hotel, so we need to make sure we're ready for that.</p> <p>It is really going back to individualised and personalised service.</p>
Technology	9	<p>Is being technologically savvy. I am a bit of a dinosaur when it comes to social media and a little bit resistant to that, but finding now that I need to be very well versed in social media and how it impacts on our guest's lives and the hotel's reputation.</p> <p>Are we making sure that we've certainly got all of the modern conveniences that guests like, a lot more WiFi access, a lot more digital communication, a lot more being able to check-in wirelessly and remotely, that type of thing.</p>
Financial	8	<p>It's definitely being driven into finance skills or business acumen. That is critical. If you don't understand your P & L, your budgets and if you're not looking at numbers, you're in the wrong game.</p> <p>The financial acumen definitely. Being able to read, obviously, reports and then process that information into real action.</p>
Innovation	8	<p>There's a new brand standard coming into (xxx competitor hotel brand) where you don't have reception desks, where you check people in sitting on couches. If that's the direction that hotels are moving in, you cannot remain in the past, you have to move forward. One day the reception desk will be a thing of the past.</p> <p>If you don't have a concierge service using Uber, you're not moving with the times. It's recognising and adapting to current trends and how people like to be communicated with.</p>
Competitive analysis	6	<p>Of course, from a commercial point of view you have to always be ready for the worst because you know at the moment Airbnb are out there, your competitors are coming from nowhere, you have a big chunk taken out of you, you don't even realise what's happening there.</p> <p>Knowing one of your biggest challenges is competition.</p>
Self-management/development	3	<p>Companies are changing and they're evolving. I'm a very brand loyal person because I've been with this company for five years, but I just think that you have to be dedicated to your role. I don't think you can come in and just do 8 hours anymore to be honest, I don't think that cuts it. If you want to be a Rooms Operations Manager you have to continue to develop and be dedicated to your department (Front Office Assistant Manager).</p> <p>In terms of skills, ... a wide skill set. More and more expectations now, for me looking to be a General Manager, the expectation is you understand every element of your business far more intrinsically than you would have in the past.</p>
Communication	1	<p>If anything, people are going to expect more from their business, and that's going to be more and more so. Really, with that, well, all communications is part of that skill.</p>
Total	70	

The next section addresses the pedagogic considerations to enhance the employability of hotel management graduates.

7.5 How key required competencies are acquired

In addition to determining current and future key required competencies, it is also important to ascertain how these capacities can be developed. Interview participants were presented with the list of the most important five competencies identified from within the preceding questionnaire (analysed in Chapter 6). To restate, these five important attributes were: i) 'Leadership and Influence', ii) 'Decision Making/Decisiveness', iii) 'Customer and People Orientation and Service Commitment', iv) 'Oral Communication', and iv) 'Ethics, Values and Integrity'. Participants were asked to describe how they believe these attributes can be best learnt. The following sections overview how each of the five key competencies can be best learnt. A summary of learning hospitality-related competencies is also added. A more comprehensive discussion on learning required hospitality competencies is presented in Chapter 8.

7.5.1 Learning leadership skills

The competency of 'Leadership and Influence' was identified as the most important attribute. For the purposes of this study, this competency defined as 'the ability to give direction and guidance to others in a manner which motivates them to achieve their best, and inspires employees to work collaboratively towards achieving organisation goals' (Evers & Rush, 1996, p. 280).

Three key themes emerged from the findings on how 'Leadership and Influence' can be learned: i) they are innate and part of a person's character, ii) they are best learnt through having a mentor, and iii) you learn on-the-job, by doing, through reflection and by watching others. The outcomes for each of the three themes are presented in turn with some examples of respondent's supporting comments.

For the first aspect, being part of a person's character illustrative examples included:

There's a foundational characteristic within a person that shows that they wish to be a leader rather than a follower (Respondent # 1).

There are certain elements you can say train in somebody but I do definitely believe that mainly you're born a leader. You have to have that internal drive more than anything (Respondent # 18).

Some of those skills will be skills that come naturally to people. A lot of times, if you are a natural leader, you do enjoy communicating and presenting (Respondent # 10).

These comments show that some participants believe leadership ability is mostly inherent; implying that leaders may be born, not made. This presumption suggests one is either a natural leader or not (Cherry, 2017).

The second aspect, Mentorship, was mentioned by several participants:

For leadership and influence, like role models and mentoring. I'm in a mentor program at the moment which I'm finding absolutely invaluable with the General Manager here (Respondent # 7).

Definitely, leadership develops through being mentored and coached (Respondent # 10).

You always look for mentors everywhere you go; you look at the mentors you have had and you pick up the best things about each one (Respondent # 15).

These quotes relating to learning leadership through mentoring imply that participants have benefited personally from their mentoring experiences. It seems that the opportunity to work alongside and be mentored by more experienced staff within the workplace is beneficial in developing leadership capabilities. This view is shared by Billett (2014b), who provides evidence of the development of socially-derived knowledge, through workplace mentorships with more informed partners.

The third theme that emerged about learning leadership was learning on the job, by doing, through reflection and watching others. Some of the illustrative examples include:

I've become better at leadership through experience, through learning from mistakes. A lot of them. Also, through exceptional leaders that I've learned from as well and through conversations (Respondent # 5).

Leadership and influence is definitely down to positive role model behaviour. You actually need to walk in the space and learn from others. Leaders lead, they don't just tell people what to do. That's old school hotel management (Respondent # 2).

It's key to finding yourself and who you are as a leader by learning and taking little bits from everyone. You don't want to be a chameleon and change shape but you absolutely, if you like what that person does, take it and piece it all together as a whole (Respondent # 4).

For leadership and influence. I've seen good leaders around me. I was always keen to work on those things personally. I always was observing the leaders around me, what they used to do and how they interacted, how they communicated, what they're trying to drive, what were their messages? (Respondent # 8)

Participants' illustrative examples on leadership development provide a strong indication that these skills are generated through an on-going process throughout a person's career, as people learn through their own experiences and mistakes, and from watching other leaders within workplaces. In summary, amongst the various comments received about learning leadership, notably, no participant commented about learning leadership in higher education settings. This inference was reinforced by Respondent 15's comment below, when appraising their hotel management higher education.

I did my hotel training at a university in Europe. I learned skills and I learned how you do things properly but I never learned how to become a leader, I think you develop that over time, and I think a lot of my career, I have classed myself as being self-taught. No one has ever said to me, "This is how you lead someone. This is how you do this". I think you develop it with time, watching people and developing yourself.

This manager's reflection supports the previous comments that leadership skills are best developed over time, within the workplace, by being astute, and through watching and being supported by others. In all, it seems likely the educational setting can assist in the principles associated with leadership theory. However, the development of leadership

capacities, according to participants is optimally developed progressively within the workplace and throughout careers. This finding suggests exposure to the workplace may be best to develop essential leadership capabilities; which has been increasingly reinforced in the data. Such a proposition supports the inclusion of WIL within higher education programs, where students have an opportunity to commence developing important leadership capabilities in the workplace, as part of their higher education programs. However, recognising that leadership development would be limited during such placements, and these skills should be further enhanced within the workplace after graduation, for example with further mentoring and professional development.

The following section reports on Decision-making, and describes how respondents consider this attribute is learnt.

7.5.2 Learning decision-making

‘Decision-making/Decisiveness’ was defined as ‘having significant influence on results and the willingness and aptitude to make timely and definite decisions’ (Evers & Rush, 1996, p. 280). One main theme emerged from the findings. This theme centred on decision-making being best learned by experience, by arriving at decisions and reflecting on the outcomes, which then develops competence. One related comment suggested that this aspect can be learned by watching other, ‘more experienced staff’ and seeing what they do. Overall, according to informants, it seems their confidence and abilities around decision-making have been mostly developed in the workplace. This suggests the workplace provides an optimal learning environment to develop decision-making capabilities.

For learning decision-making through experience, some of the responses included:

For decision making, the key part there is to listen, gather the information, you need to understand the risks and benefits, then decide and support the decision entirely and the key part of a good manager is someone who’s open to change if they’re incorrect. It just comes with experience and confidence (Respondent # 2).

From learning from mistakes. Particularly with decisiveness ... you can make a decision about something and realise it was the wrong decision coming back and thinking, ‘Oh how did that play out? Why was the guest’s reaction not a good one?’ That’s a way to develop decisiveness (Respondent # 3).

Decision making, ... knowledge of your product and what you're selling and what you do, which just comes from working in the industry for a long time
(Respondent # 19).

These illustrative comments on learning decision-making imply that it is an involved process that develops through increases in an individual's product knowledge, and by learning from mistakes. Learning this capability is reported mostly as occurring over a period of time, and through on-going experience. In reference to the second identified theme, decision-making being learnt by watching other more experienced staff, the following comment was made by Respondent 8.

My mindset was always like when my seniors used to make a decision, why are they doing that? I always asked a question.

This comment reinforces the workplace as an ideal environment to learn decision-making, especially if the individual is astute and willing to learn from more experienced staff. Accordingly, to develop these capacities, exposure to workplace learning should be emphasised in the hotel management curriculum.

The next important competency was identified as 'Customer and People Orientation and Service Commitment'. The findings on how this attribute is best learnt are presented next.

7.5.3 Learning customer service and people orientation

The attribute of 'Customer Service and People Orientation' is defined within this study as being customer and quality service focused and portraying a positive outlook and attitude towards others. A consistent theme identified from the findings proposed it as a trainable behaviour that is mostly learnt through on-the-job practice and experience. Once more, the workplace and indeed, Work Integrated Learning (WIL) provisions, provide an ideal, if not an essential environment for graduates to develop these vital hospitality skills. Some respondents' comments suggested that being customer-orientated is part of individuals' personality, and one informant proposed that one needs to have a passion for it, suggesting that being customer-orientated is also influenced by personal preferences. Selected illustrative examples about learning customer service are presented:

When it comes to customer service and people orientation, this is a trainable behaviour. No one pops out of the womb and knows how to appease someone service-wise (Respondent # 1).

It's more experiential with the guest, more individualised, more personal. Not always possible, but if you have that as a goal, understand hospitality, understand the customer journey and walk in their footsteps, you learn. You just learn this through experience (Respondent # 2).

What works what doesn't, again, learning from other people, listening to other people, and being the customer and seeing how people give me customer service as well, and I'll go 'oh yeah' I might do that like that (Respondent # 20).

If you're more of an outgoing kind of person, you're going to do a lot better and you're probably going to enjoy your job a lot more. If you've got an outgoing caring personality and care about say the guest experience and you also care about your own work and you reflect on that which grows you as a person ... (Respondent # 18).

Customer people orientated and service commitment, you have to have a passion for this (Respondent # 8).

These comments again suggest that this attribute is best learnt, through workplace experience, by aligning to the culture of the organisation, through empathy, and by having passion and a service-oriented approach. The findings suggest customer service capabilities are best developed by working directly with customers, and by having a genuine desire to want to please others. These findings emphasise the people orientation of the hospitality industry, and again highlight the importance of the workplace as an essential environment to develop important service-related capabilities. Furthermore, having effective oral communication and listening skills are important qualities in delivering quality customer service (Timm, 2014). Accordingly, the next section addresses how learning occurs for the third most important managerial competency, 'Oral Communication'.

7.5.4 Learning oral communication skills

Oral communication is defined as 'the ability to present information verbally to others in an effective manner, either one-on-one or in groups' (Evers & Rush, 1996, p. 281). The majority

of responses to how this capability is learnt suggest that it develops over time and through experience, as illustrated below:

Oral communication is learned and is developed through experience, over time (Respondent # 1).

Oral communication can be developed. There are obviously a lot of people without English as their first language. We've got staff here, and these skills can evolve with time, and can be polished (Respondent # 3).

Well, presenting to people, did I learn that when I had to present things at university, or was I naturally good and that helped hone my skill? (Respondent # 13).

Respondents indicated learning 'Oral Communication' skills can be facilitated throughout various lived experiences. Moreover, the honing of 'Oral Communication' skills may be assisted if students gain instruction and experience in a range of both educational and workplace settings. The final important identified competency, building on graduates' knowledge acquisition, 'Ethics, Values and Integrity', will be overviewed next.

7.5.5 Learning ethics, values and integrity

Within the study, these personal features are defined as having strong values, working with integrity and a high degree of ethics. Two key themes were identified surrounding how people learn these attributes. The findings suggest that this aspect is part of a person's character and is influenced by experiences across their lives, including those within education settings. Some illustrative quotes about learning these aspects are given below:

The ethics, values, and integrity, I think this is more of a one that comes from a family stability base which has stuck with that person from a young age, which would normally be cemented well and truly before they get to employment years of their life (Respondent # 1).

It can be something very difficult to discover in the interview process. It's just a part of the person's being (Respondent # 3).

Ethics ... it's part of your internal makeup. You can try and learn an ethical approach, but at the end of the day, if it doesn't fit with who you are, you're not going to follow it (Respondent # 4).

Ethics, I think that comes back to probably my school and my education. Treat all fairly, respectfully (Respondent # 2).

These four quotes on acquiring ethical behaviours suggest that an individual's character, upbringing and education have an influence on developing these characteristics. Accordingly, having an empathetic upbringing and a focus on appropriate ethical behaviours within education may provide the best platform for graduates to develop these important business and societal aptitudes.

In summary, these five subsections offer an overview of how, according to interview respondents, these identified most important competencies can be learned. The findings suggest that the workplace provides an essential environment for developing 'Leadership', 'Decision-Making', 'Customer Service' and 'Oral Communication' skills. Furthermore, the education environment was seen as important for the development of both 'Oral Communication', and especially, 'Ethics and Integrity'. Thus, a combination of both workplace and educational experiences is deemed necessary to develop graduates' capabilities in these key required hospitality competencies. To build on these analyses, and to conclude the section, some general comments about learning hospitality competencies, offered by some informants, are provided in the following section.

7.5.6 Summarising how key hospitality competencies are acquired

Some additional comments offered about learning hospitality competencies centred on the importance of self-motivation, encouraging and accepting feedback, and being coachable. These comments highlight the important role the learner plays in knowledge acquisition. Indeed, an individual's personal epistemologies and engagement in the learning process are vital to learning (Billett, 2016).

Furthermore, it is noted that from all of the responses received around learning hospitality competencies, only two mentioned the benefits of undertaking internal company organised training programs. This may indicate that informants do not significantly value these in-house training programs. Consequently, hotel organisations may need to further investigate the effectiveness and perceptions of their current internal training courses, to see if these are beneficial in developing required managerial competencies.

This section concludes the second segment of the interview schedule. The next section of this chapter, which presents the third and final stage of the interview schedule, begins by focusing on specific graduate capabilities and employability, and also assesses the hotel industry's current level of satisfaction with hotel management graduates. These final interview questions were designed to further inform Research Question 2, and to begin to address Research Questions 3 and 4, which focus on the educational influences and the coordination of Work Integrated Learning (WIL).

The following section focuses on assessing the current level of satisfaction the hotel industry has with graduates.

7.6 Current level of satisfaction with graduates

To gain some further curriculum and employability insights, and to assess if graduates are currently meeting employers' needs, participants were asked to indicate their satisfaction with the quality of current hotel management graduates. Of the 20 respondents, 10 affirmed being currently satisfied with graduates, five informants were undecided, and five indicated some degree of dissatisfaction. Informants' positive comments focused on graduates being eager to learn, showing more of a commitment to the industry, and being career orientated. Furthermore, some respondents indicated they were pleased when graduates had undertaken a WIL placement as part of their education, and also when they had been working casually in hotels during their studies.

Perceived dissatisfaction with graduates mainly resulted from graduates' lack of practical experience and inappropriate attitudes. Comments concerning levels of practical experience were provided as follows by respondent 15:

The individual has to make the effort, especially with work experience. I do believe more hands-on experience is necessary, especially beyond reading.

Respondent 18 offered the following statement:

It just all comes down to experience.

These statements emphasise the importance of previous work experience and of exposing students to WIL opportunities as part of their degrees. For some respondents, the more work experience graduates have, the higher their likely satisfaction. Therefore, both hospitality educators and students should endeavour to ensure a depth of practical

experience is undertaken prior to graduation. This can be achieved through organised WIL programs; if not, students should be encouraged to gain this experience independently.

Of the respondents who were ambivalent about their satisfaction with graduates, two suggested that it depends on the person:

It's always a little bit of a mixed bag. They've got really good skills I can see on their resume, and yet, they haven't got the personality to go with it (Respondent # 13).

Overall it is okay, but I think it's very hit and miss. It really does depend on the individual candidate and their attitude (Respondent # 2).

These comments confirm the importance of having an appropriate service-orientated attitude and personality. These attributes are largely dependent upon the individual, their motivation, and their suitability to work in the hospitality industry. Essentially, the hospitality industry is one for 'people who like people' (Barrows & Powers, 2009). Therefore, graduates should ensure they are motivated and have the right attitude when seeking employment and long-term careers in the service-orientated hospitality industry. It is further suggested that exposing students to the hospitality workplace before graduation can help identify industry expectations, and also can assist in developing required service-related capacities (Franz, 2008).

Some additional concerns, raised by three informants, related to students' job expectations upon graduation. These respondents suggested that graduates' job expectations were too high and unrealistic:

My perception would be, I think the graduates come out with mixed expectations. Some expectations are very high when they've graduated, and therefore they feel entitled to have a significant role within an organisation. I don't always agree with that, because I think you've still got to learn the basics, and you do that from coming from the floor (Respondent # 16).

Unfortunately, what the student and I don't know is how well they are prepared. Sometimes they need to start lower than their potential is (Respondent # 17).

Difficult to answer. Most graduates have what we want, nothing wrong with this, but they want to succeed in a very short period of time (Respondent # 6).

In summary, informants were generally satisfied with the current quality of hospitality graduates, although some concerns were raised, both about graduates' lack of practical readiness and attitude, and also about some graduates' job expectations upon graduation being unrealistic. The next section outlines specific skills and attributes respondents indicated were currently lacking in graduates.

7.7 Skills or attributes currently lacking in hotel management graduates

To help ascertain any graduate shortfalls and to elaborate on the previous theme, skills that graduates currently lack were identified. The purpose of this question was that, once any deficiencies were identified, educational institutions and students may then work on further developing these capacities. Additionally, this question further informs RQ2. Following a process of content analysis and coding, 25 attributes were identified, then grouped into six key themes on where respondents feel graduates are most lacking in skills or attributes. Table 7.9 lists these findings, identifying the attributes lacking, their frequency, and also providing some illustrative examples to support.

The data in Table 7.9 indicates participants are very critical of the lack of practical experience hotel management students have on graduation; the vast majority of negative responses related to this aspect. Specifically, respondents indicated that knowledge of the operation only comes from working in the operation. Indeed, these authentic experiences in practice are important in developing capacities required for effective occupational performance (Billett, 2016). In the area of dealing with customers and difficult guests, it is suggested that this ability is best learnt through experiences associated with these events.

Table 7.9: Identified skills or attributes currently lacking in graduates

Skills or attributes lacking	Frequency	Illustrative examples (participants' quotes)
Practical on-the-job experience	15	<p>I want to say detail in the operation, and that's what I suppose comes with experience. Theoretically you can't learn this, but coming in and seeing the bar operation and looking at it saying 'Well, I can see a few things that are wrong there right now. Let's sort that out'. Detail in the operation and experience leads to expertise.</p> <p>Experience. What sort of value can you put on experience? You can talk about the theory of dealing with a difficult guest, but you can't learn until you've copped it yourself. You'll learn more lessons in here than you will theorising, that's the reality of life.</p> <p>They're not getting the hands-on experience of working in an operation, especially if they come into Food & Beverage. It doesn't help you if you don't know how to carry three plates. That's something that prevents me from hiring a number of graduates, and at the same time, it also makes them feel uncomfortable on the job if they don't already have these basic skills.</p>
Unrealistic job expectations	4	<p>I think everybody these days is probably looking for more money, less hours and the short way to the top. Hospitality is not one of those areas. I think the people who wise up to that fast are the ones that actually get it.</p> <p>Many are impatient to climb the corporate ladder. Sometimes I think they feel like there's maybe a bit of a glass ceiling.</p>
Empathy/people skills	2	<p>I think just having that little bit of empathy. Just being able to really read people, not so much read people, but just being able to read their body language, the tone of voice, that sort of thing, just to really be able to address a situation correctly.</p> <p>They lack that social interaction to a certain degree. That natural, you know? The people who do it, they stand out. Technology and social media, helps to keep us up to date and everything, but also takes it away from the human interaction.</p>
Technical skills/Property Management Systems - (PMS) software knowledge	2	<p>I think a lot of them are well polished but probably need some more computer skills (hotel PMS system) that's probably one area of weakness.</p> <p>I would say technical PMS skills. That's missing from some of the graduates that I've seen. Is that a huge concern for me? Not really because I can teach that in the space of three weeks, four weeks.</p>
Attitude	1	<p>Attitude. Truly attitude. Sometimes I feel like they think that they're doing me a favour by coming to work every day. They are, because I do need them, but I'm also willing to provide for them as well. I feel like a lot of the time it's not the right attitude, truly. You can't teach that, it's hard to teach attitude at university.</p>
Motivation and lack of career direction	1	<p>Sometimes I think maybe the motivation to set their sights on where they're going and having that clear direction on their development plan on where they want to be and what steps they're going to take to get there.</p>
Total	25	

Additionally, one participant from Food and Beverage indicated he would not hire an applicant if they did not possess basic skills, such as the ability to carry three plates. It was further stressed that these practical skills are best acquired whilst working, which then also develops the individual's confidence to more effectively undertake their role. In answering this question, it was again suggested some graduates have unrealistic job expectations. It was repeatedly said that graduates should be realistic in the types of positions they apply for upon graduation, and not aim too high. Traditionally, hospitality is an industry where one has to start from the bottom and work their way up (Walker, 2016), irrespective of whether one holds a degree or not. This is important for graduates to understand.

Another area of concern identified graduates as having a lack of empathy and 'people skills'. In particular, being able to read people and having social interaction skills were seen to be lacking in some graduates. The reliance today on mobile technology/texting and social media was identified as a contributing factor to this deficit, because this limits direct human contact. Finally, a lack of hospitality-specific software knowledge, having the right attitude and career motivation were also identified as being deficient in some graduates. Overall, it is suggested that engaging in learning in the workplace will assist graduates to develop capacities in many of these areas. The following section reports the strengths and qualities graduates possess. Combined with previous findings, these details will be further deliberated in Chapter 8, to address RQ2.

7.8 Assessing the strengths and qualities of hotel management graduates

This section reviews respondents' perceptions of graduates' strengths and qualities. The purpose is to highlight perceived qualities of graduates that, once identified, may be enhanced to aid in employability. Thirty three strengths were identified and grouped into 15 key themes. Table 7.10 lists the 15 themes on graduates' strengths (left column) their frequencies mentioned (middle column), and some illustrative examples (right column).

Table 7.10: Strengths and qualities identified in graduates

Graduates' strengths and qualities	Frequency	Illustrative examples (participants' quotes)
Completing tasks and working to deadlines	5	<p>Uni students are obviously always working towards deadlines with assignments and tests. There's always a time where this is the day. This is the strength. I can assign a task, give them clear guidance and deadline. I feel confident that it's going to get accomplished.</p> <p>Possibly when given an assigned task working to that assigned task until it's complete.</p> <p>They understand the context of like a deadline for example. They know something needs to be done by this date or this time. It needs to be done. Speaking from personal experience as well.</p>
Initiative and fresh ideas	5	<p>They always come with a refreshed new vision as to what's going on in the market. One of the best things about being at university studying is that you're always fed new information, things that are really fresh, and you get that, and that's amazing, seeing the new view of things, especially the younger generation of students coming through.</p> <p>What I love about their skills is they've got fresh ideas, they've got no fear, they've got no pre-conceptions, so from that part it's very exciting. That's where the initiative comes. I love it.</p>
Career orientated	4	<p>A drive, a want to do it, like it's a career. They're studying hotel management, they want a career in it, they don't just want it for a job, they actually have the willingness to learn to go on, to ask questions and to succeed.</p> <p>More career orientated, because they're looking at it as a career, not necessarily just a job.</p>
Written communication	4	<p>I think they're more capable of maybe the process side of writing standard operating procedures and having a little bit more structure, or a little bit more formality, to their written work.</p> <p>Just that little polish of professionalism on the end that you can see somebody has been taught the correct way to say write an email or report.</p>
Critical thinking	2	<p>I think they question 'How can I improve this experience and offer insights to me, what if we do this, or I heard that someone else does this at this place, how about we try that?' I think definitely they've got that confidence behind them and they've got that little bit of previous knowledge and striving to improve.</p>
Financial understanding	2	<p>The best thing is students have a financial knowledge.</p>
Oral communication	2	<p>They speak well, they know how to interact with guests and they can talk to people from different backgrounds, different demographics.</p>
Self-confidence	2	<p>There's more confidence compared to somebody who has not studied. More of a self-assurance I suppose.</p>
Connection to the digital space and social media	1	<p>Connection to the digital space. Obviously what we're seeing right now is the value in having high ratings on Trip Advisor and strong ratings through all of social media, and active participation in the social media. Graduates have this, whereas it's a learned skill for some hoteliers.</p>
Generic computer skills	1	<p>Definitely computer skills. I often get one who can do me up a flier.</p>
Group presentation skills	1	<p>The way they put presentations together, the way they present things comes with a bit more polish than someone who hasn't had that training.</p>
Industry knowledge	1	<p>I think they bring a better understanding about the industry.</p>
Motivated to learn	1	<p>They've got the passion to learn, that's a good thing. When you have the passion you can learn any skills here. Any skills can be taught when you want to learn it.</p>
Project management skills	1	<p>Project management skills having exposure to things that they wouldn't have otherwise. That's a strength, that level of exposure at uni.</p>
Social orientation	1	<p>I think they enjoy the social aspect. Which is great, it is great for your team building and morale and everything.</p>
Total	33	

Four key capacities of strength arose from the findings: i) in the areas of graduates' ability to complete tasks on time, ii) their initiative, iii) their career orientation and, iv) their written communication skills. Participants particularly reported that graduates developed the ability to work to deadlines while at university and were also positive about the university environment for encouraging the development of fresh ideas. For example, when referring to initiative, Respondent 16 'loved that graduates had no fear or pre-conceptions'. Informants were also pleased, overall, that hospitality graduates were entering the industry for a career and not just a job. Finally, 'written and oral communication skills', 'critical thinking', 'greater financial understanding' and an 'increase in self-confidence' were also seen as positive outcomes in graduates from higher education. These findings will be compared to previous related findings from within this chapter and Chapter 6, and will be further discussed in Chapter 8, to address RQ2. The next section deepens the investigation and builds on the findings thus far, additionally informing RQ2. Section 7.9 assesses the specific skills or attributes that employers most value when seeking to recruit graduates.

7.9 Skills and attributes that contribute to initial employment of graduates

To aid in the employability outcomes from this study, the following section considers the specific skills and attributes that employers most value when recruiting graduates. The findings can assist both education providers and graduates in identifying key initial employability requirements. There were 51 items identified and 14 key themes established from these findings. Table 7.11 outlines the range of attributes employers most value when recruiting graduates (left column), the frequencies (middle column) and some illustrative examples (right column).

Table 7.11: Key skills and attributes employers most seek when recruiting graduates

Attributes employers are seeking in graduates	Frequency	Illustrative examples (participants' quotes)
Attitude/personality	12	We're in the hospitality industry, so the first impression's a critical one. We will hire on attitude more so than current skill set, because I'm very confident with the culture that we've got at the hotel here. Personality, because you can't teach the personality, that's the most important thing. The attitude and the ability to create that emotional connection with customers. Attitude would be the number one thing I would be looking for. I don't necessarily look at a GPA, that's just as something on the side.
Previous work experience	9	That the person has experience in the area that I am trying to fill. I don't necessarily go for the one that has got the high distinctions etcetera. I go for the one that I think best fits. I would also be looking for any previous customer service experience. I like to see that people have had the practical experience, not just the theoretical knowledge.
Passion	8	They need to have a passion for it. If there's no apparent passion for the field, they will fail very very quickly. How positive a person is, how enthusiastic the person appears to be? What passion do they display for what they're doing? Must have a passion for the industry.
Ambition/career direction and orientated	5	If you ask a graduate, especially because they come from an intellectual level, where you have higher expectations, if you ask them, where do you see yourself in five years, and they give you a blank stare, it's not a very good sign. You really want to be quite comfortable that that person is looking at a career in, certainly, your area of expertise or within the property and you're not spinning the wheels and time wasting. I look for people that know what they want. I prioritise the people that know what they want in their career.
People/customer service skills	4	I think the thing that obviously I'm looking for, especially here, and especially given the nature of our business and what we're trying to do in regards to connecting with guests, is the actual warmth of someone being able to connect with customers. The actual unlearned, untrained behaviour of someone. I am looking for how they engage with people.
Leadership skills	2	Do they see themselves as a leader or more of a follower? I think you want to look for those leadership qualities definitely. You don't want to hire somebody into a potential management position who is a natural follower.
Oral communication	2	I'll be looking for a well-spoken candidate, who communicates well.
Teamwork	2	The things that I am looking for are can they work in a team and if so whether they see themselves in that team environment.
Worth ethic	2	A willingness to work extremely hard.
Adaptability	1	Their adaptability needs to be there. It's extremely challenging, especially in hospitality. That adaptability and flexibility challenges some people.
Confidence	1	Being able to walk into a room and make an impression in regards to they're not going to sink into the wall. They're got to be confident.
Financial acumen	1	Some financial acumen.
Personal presentation	1	Number one has to be personal presentation. Straight up.
Realistic job expectations	1	Really just that willingness to do the basics before stepping up. You will have to know the basics before you roll into a team leader, supervisor or management role.
Total	51	

Three dominant characteristics are sought in graduates: i) 'Attitude/Personality', ii) 'Previous Experience', and iii) 'Passion'. Essentially, having the 'right attitude' was seen as the most important attribute required when recruiting graduates. It was strongly implied that having the 'right attitude' and personality are imperative, due to the team- and service-orientation of the industry, and because, according to participants, these personal attributes are difficult to train. Additionally, these personal elements were also seen as being more important than graduates' university grades. Furthermore, previous work experience was again highlighted as being important for graduates, as was having passion, ambition and being customer-orientated. These personal motivations have been continually highlighted as being especially desirable in graduates; therefore, their importance should be continually emphasised to both hospitality educators and students. Section 7.10 outlines how participants suggest that these desired employability skills can be best developed in graduates.

7.10 How employability skills and capabilities can be best developed in graduates

This section discusses how participants suggest employability skills or attributes can be best learnt by students. This question further addresses RQ2. A sample of respondents' illustrative examples of how some of these employability skills are developed is presented below.

In terms of how attitude and personality traits are acquired, some respondents noted:

You're either made for hospitality, for front of house or you're not. Personality, you have to get out of your comfort zone. The more you do it the more confidence you have. Everybody has it; they just need to let it out. With experience, personalities to a degree can be moulded (Respondent # 15).

How do we teach good attitude? I think it's the 'Do the right thing, go the extra mile'. Over deliver, and under promise, and not the other way around. If I can't get people to deliver and go the extra bit, to me they haven't got the attitude that I need. If they're open to feedback, if they can embrace feedback and not take it as a personal attack, which it's not, it's professional feedback and it's coaching (Respondent # 17).

These comments suggest that a customer-orientated attitude is important, particularly in areas involving constant and direct customer contact. It was also suggested that more experience and increased interactions can, to a degree, develop the desired customer orientated attitude (Salanova, Agut & Peiró, 2005). Furthermore, it was also proposed that if employees are open to feedback, and are willing to adjust their behaviours, a service-related attitude towards customer service can also evolve. When identifying specifically how passion or interests can be developed in graduates, the following comment was made by Respondent 14.

Some people are just really suited to be in hospitality. For me, I feed off other people's energy and that's something that just comes naturally. I guess when I first started in the industry; I wasn't as passionate as what I am now. I think understanding what hospitality has done for me; it's given me so many opportunities I guess over time it just created this monster of passion in me. I don't think there's anything that can develop passion, it's more internal. I think people need to, when they get into the industry, they need to go, 'You know what, this isn't for me.' Get out. Rather than trying to stay and becoming negative about it. There's no magic wand, unfortunately.

This quote about developing a passion for, or interest in the hospitality industry, suggests that this develops in the workplace over time and through association with work colleagues. Accordingly, a form of practical wisdom or *phronesis* develops (Birmingham, 2004). This suggestion is consistent with the work of Billett and Pavlova (2005), who advocate that an individual's interests and intentionalities are intertwined with their work and working life. This respondent further suggests that having a passion for hospitality develops as a result of an internal drive and a genuine alignment to the hospitality industry and a service orientated culture. Indeed, according to Malle, Moses, and Baldwin (2001) it is an individual's beliefs, desires, and awareness that ultimately drive their intentions and actions.

The next question assessed how ambition and career orientation can be developed. A sample of the respondents' illustrative examples for this question included:

Working in every kind of area of hospitality to find out what suits them. I think you find the best managers out there have done housekeeping, have done front office, and have done food and beverage. Get experience from a range of

different areas to help sort of build that understanding and knowledge base
(Respondent # 19)

Through sport team development. I think that's one of my key drivers as well. If somebody has been committed to a sport, they've achieved at, gotten to State, National level. Similar with academic challenges. If you can see it's not just about achieving top results. It's necessarily, have they applied themselves not only at the university but within groups in the university. Have they represented the university in something. Or are they getting involved in the community? These extra curricula things on a resume are important, so important (Respondent # 2).

If you've got someone who can mentor you to develop those skills, nothing beats it (Respondent # 4).

These comments suggest that gaining broad industry experience assists in defining career direction, and that extra-curricular activities are strongly encouraged. Furthermore, mentorship was again identified as an important factor in developing an individual's potential. Importantly, these broad relational mechanisms, which relate to various connections with other people, including mentors, can be beneficial in extending existing knowledge and improving job performance (Grant, 2008). These additional illustrative examples continue to highlight the employability benefits of work-based experience prior to graduation.

When determining how people and customer service skills can be developed, some of respondents' comments included:

On-the-job experience helps. I think particularly problem handling and guest handling, you don't get confident until you've done it a hundred times before. Until you've had someone spit in your face. I would say that you can do all the theory in the world and it helps you, but it's 10% theory and the rest is all practice (Respondent # 5).

This comes with experience. Also, if you care, if you do it with your heart, then it's easier. You have to love people (Respondent # 15).

My confidence level with being able to proficiently deal with people, especially in a five-star environment, has definitely been boosted by the fact that when you're working in a customer-facing role, you're working under pressure, you've got other things going on. On-the-job is the best environment to actually learn that sort of behaviour (Respondent # 1).

Customer service, they need to get a job, you can't learn customer service unless you have a job. I don't think going through uni and never working is good for anybody. Uni and working teaches you work life balance and it teaches you to prioritise. That is how you learn these skills, by doing them (Respondent # 10).

There is a strong inference in these quotes that, customer service abilities are developed through experience and practice, through working with customers and developing the necessary skills and confidence over time. It is suggested that these skills, especially dealing with difficult customers, are developed by engaging in activities where learners are exposed to them.

Building on this analysis and addressing how leadership can be developed, Respondent 18 suggested:

It's a natural thing, to a degree it can be learnt, definitely, but to be a driven, successful leader, you do need to have passion behind it. You do need to have that ownership of the role and you need to really care about what it is that you're supposed to be leading. I think you learn it through experience and by being around other good leaders. Everyday being in a hotel something is going to go wrong as much as we really like it not to. There's always that opportunity to learn a new skill to better yourself as a leader if you want to.

This quote implies that when developing leadership capabilities, this attribute is developed by assuming responsibility, having to deal with issues as they arise, and learning through experience and from others.

In terms of oral communication skills development, Respondent 13 provided the following suggestion:

University is a great spot for that one. If I never started off getting up in front of a class and verbally presenting things, I would not be as good at it. I went to [XXX

uni] it wasn't a huge university by any means in the late '90s, but being able to present something in front of the whole lecture theatre. I have leaders here who struggle to talk in front of 20 people. I'm someone who's happy to get up in front of 2,000 employees with no qualms and talk to them about anything.

This quote suggests, again, that the university environment provides an important foundation for developing abilities and confidence in this area. Furthermore, when considering how personal presentation skills are developed, Respondent 9 suggests:

You do workshops at university, but really I feel it's best done through work experience working with different people in different areas, you will pick these things up.

This quote suggests that the university environment may assist in developing personal presentation skills through workshops. However, according to this informant, such awareness is best developed through workplace experience, by viewing others and following the expected workplace standards that are evident through authentic instances of practice. All of this emphasises that the contributions from both settings are important, but that the alignment of these experiences with the development of occupational competence is important.

Finally, when considering previous experience and how practical skills are developed, predictably, all participants suggested these skills are best developed through work experience and while learning on the job.

In sum, this section has provided a sample of the respondents' comments on how a range of sought-after employability skills and capabilities can be best developed by hospitality graduates. The workplace is rated as an essential environment where many of these key employability skills are developed. Furthermore, several of the required hospitality employability skills relate to personal attributes such as attitude, ambition and having a passion for the hospitality industry and customer service. According to respondents, such personal characteristics are optimally developed through working with others, and through direct workplace experience. Yet, other capacities can best be developed in educational settings. The outcomes identified in this section will be combined with previous related findings to inform Research Question 2 in Chapter 8. This concludes the investigation into hotel management graduate capabilities and employability. The next

section addresses Research Questions 3 and 4, which focus on Work Integrated Learning (WIL) and its influences on hotel management education and graduate outcomes.

7.11 Evaluating the balance of theory and practice in hotel management degrees

This section begins to assess the role of WIL in the hotel management curriculum and the influences WIL has on developing graduate capabilities, and on benefiting employability. The first part of this section ascertains if respondents feel hotel management degrees in Australia have the right balance of theory and practice.

7.11.1 Assessing the provisions of theory and practice

Students graduate hotel management universities with varying combinations of understandings and experiences. This section ascertains if hotel management degrees have the right balance between theory and practice. The outcomes may be used to inform educational practice. Table 7.12 reports on these findings, indicating the frequency the concept terms are mentioned.

Table 7.12: Assessing the balance of theory and practice in hotel management degrees

Balance of theory and practice	Frequency
Yes, correct mix	3
No, needs more practice	12
No, needs more theory	0
Cannot answer	5
Total	20

Overall, 15 of the 20 participants were confident to answer this question, with the majority of informants (n=12) indicating they would like to see more practice opportunities or WIL incorporated into hotel management programs. Three participants indicated that currently there is the right mix of theory and practice. However, no respondent indicated a need for more theory. Examples of participants' supporting comments are provided; the first three are from respondents who agreed there is the right balance. Each provided suggestions, indicating that practical application of theory is also an important consideration.

When agreeing there is currently the right balance of theory and practice, Respondent 14 noted:

I think so. I know there's a lot more where we're partnering to try and get students through and I think that's really critical, but I think what it needs to be is probably a longer period so it's not just come to the property and spend a day, it needs to be much longer, you work in that role for the week and you work almost, I know it sounds silly, but the worst of the shifts.

Respondent 18 agreed, and commented:

I reckon so. I definitely think there needs to be a good balance there. At the end of the day I am a very hands-on kind of learner. I definitely think if they can get as much real world experience as possible during their degrees that can give them not only the experience but also that learning again that you can't learn from a textbook, I think that would definitely be a massive advantage for those people.

Respondent 1 also suggested:

Based on my experience, I feel that it is the right balance. Although, its common they know all this theory, but sometimes they can't make the connection to make it practical, if that makes sense. Knowing something and being able to apply this information in a practical environment, there is sometimes a gap.

In sum, these quotations show general agreement regarding the right balance of theory and practice in current degree programs, while indicating that practical experiences should be extended because of the importance of learning particularly the practical/operational components in the workplace.

Building on this analysis are some of the illustrative examples made by those respondents who suggested there needed to be more practical or operational elements included in the hotel management curriculum:

No. It's probably more theory at the moment than practice, which sometimes I think, 'Well, I don't know. Well, I would like to see a little bit more industry practice. A lot of the time, you need the frontline skills in order to get in (Respondent # 13).

From what I've seen so far it's definitely not as hands-on as it probably should be. Because I do think that's really important in hotel management, even things

like when I was at Polytech serving, we had to go through fine dining service. Walking away from that just with the knowledge on how to do it is so helpful (Respondent # 19).

It's an issue. I think probably a little bit more practical is important, because it also gives them an opportunity to identify which way they want to go instead of waiting until the end and then they go 'oh dear', I am not really good at that. Get them in early and get them to start thinking about the direction that they want to go and then they don't stand there and go, 'I want a job in a hotel but I am not sure whether I should do this or that or that' (Respondent # 12).

There needs to be a little bit more in actual work experience. There needs to be more open opportunities for people to be able to experience the hotel (Respondent # 2).

In these quotes, informants indicated the need for more opportunities to engage in authentic practices in workplaces as part of degree programs, because this is beneficial in aiding graduates' initial employment, building industry understanding and confidence, and defining career directions. Overall, to develop essential hospitality capabilities, it was recommended that more exposure to the practical orientations of the industry should be made available to students.

Finally, two illustrative examples are provided from respondents who answered with reservations.

I say, depending on the institution because, for instance, [xxx university] students, we take three every six months, and when they graduate they come back with having six months of experience. I will readily rehire them, because they've got that experience, especially specific experience in our hotel. That being said, it all comes down to the candidate as well and their attitude to learning (Respondent # 4).

The people that I see are people doing a [xxx university] degree as well as working in the hotel, and with that balance they become great people for us to pick up moving forward. But, hard to say as I only see the ones in this hotel (Respondent # 11).

Although these two respondents could not determine if there was the right mix of theory and practice opportunities in hotel management programs, both perceived work experience positively, and also agreed that practical experience increases graduates' employment prospects. This occurs particularly in instances where students have undertaken a WIL placement in their hotel. Therefore, these comments further support students' undertaking of work experience and particularly WIL.

This section has evaluated the balance of theory and practice in hotel management programs. The findings indicate that the majority of respondents would welcome more practice opportunities in the hotel management curriculum. The next section discusses the importance placed on previous work experience when hiring hotel management graduates.

7.12 Importance placed on prior work experience when hiring graduates

Prior work experience was found to be an important factor in developing successful graduates. This section now builds on this premise and assesses how much emphasis is placed on previous work experience when hiring graduates. This discussion informs Research Question 3, addressing the role of WIL in contributing to graduate employability. Of the 20 respondents, 15 indicated that previous work experience was a very important consideration when hiring graduates; five participants suggested that previous work experience was not that critical. These five respondents implied that they would hire graduates more on attitude and personality, rather than on specific experience. Some informants also indicated that it would depend upon positions for which they were hiring. These respondents were more willing to accept lesser experience in lower level entry positions, but candidates must have the right attitude. However, they still implied that previous work experience was essential for more senior positions.

Some statements to support these findings are provided below, beginning with comments from participants who encourage previous work experience.

I absolutely welcome previous experience. I love seeing that and 100%. I would always put someone with an international hotel background over, or a large hotel background, over a small boutique property, particularly when we're talking large branded properties (Respondent # 5).

... it's very important. I think you need to understand the basics about service culture. It doesn't matter what aspect of the business you're working in, whether it's rooms division, sales and marketing, engineering, maintenance, food and beverage, you'll need to understand the basics of service culture (Respondent # 16).

I would be very worried if someone finished their hotel management degree and didn't do any work in hospitality. To me it would show they're probably not that committed to their career. I think, yeah, prior work history is important. It doesn't matter what level line work, the more the better (Respondent # 19).

I've probably made pretty clear that prior hotel experience is very favourably looked upon. I guess a lot of it comes from candidates that I've seen who have succeeded, and those who haven't succeeded. What type of experience do you look for? You look for people who have started working young (Respondent # 3).

It's extremely important. I really do, because people have got to understand and know what they're really getting into (Respondent # 6).

These examples illustrate that previous industry experience is seen as beneficial for developing capacities required in customer service and overall hospitality work. In sum, these respondents recommended the more work experience in hospitality prior to graduation the better.

A smaller number of respondents (five out of the 20), however, were more open to employing graduates with lesser hospitality work experience:

It's not really that important, it's just more who they are, it's their ability to learn, and how they come across and how they get on in the interview and so on.

Because, end of the day, if they're just a graduate, you can't expect them to have a huge amount of experience, and it's more the person we're looking for. If we can find the right person, you can then train all the rest of it (Respondent # 20).

The people that have experience can be very set in their ways. They may not have the people skills that we need, as opposed to those that are, say very green. We can train them if their people skills are amazing and they are bubbly. They want to learn. We know we can train them in the skills like making coffees,

putting the orders through, that sort of thing. We can train them in all that, but it's the things, those personal attributes that you can't train, that's what I look for a bit more (Respondent # 18).

Sometimes if you get someone who has all the experience in the world, but it's hard to change habits. Sometimes if you get someone who has the right personality, it is then very easy to mould them to what you need. If you don't have the experience it doesn't mean that you cannot get a certain job. Yes, for a level that is a bit higher, yes. You need to work your way up to that level. But, we can start you off food running, and then you can work your way up (Respondent # 15).

These respondents indicated willingness to employ graduates with lesser experience, if they were eager to learn and demonstrated service-related attitudes and personality. Positive factors identified included being more adaptable and able to be trained to specific hotel requirements and standards. Informant 13 was also willing to consider graduates with lesser experience, but conceded: 'When you're looking at a hundred resumes and you need to get it down to 20, industry experience is going to play a big part still, because that's how it's played out in the final cull'. In summary, although some participants are willing to employ graduates with less experience, in a competitive job market, having previous work has advantages.

Building on the importance of previous work experience, and to further inform Research Questions 2 – 4, respondents were also asked if previous work experience necessarily needed to be undertaken in international hotels. From the findings, opinions were mixed, with some respondents more valuing direct international hotel experience than others. Informant 14 indicated that perception may also play a part: 'Because they worked for a well-known 5 star hotel brand doesn't mean they're any better. But all of a sudden I've got this brand on a resume that says, we can work to standards and we've been trained properly'. This quote suggests that having experience in an established international brand hotel implies a level of professionalism on a resume that may be beneficial in initial recruitment.

However, Respondent 16 welcomed broader hospitality experience and appreciated the transferability of skills and more valued 'people skills':

Do they need to have previous international hotel experience? No, I don't believe so. The industry's very diverse, you can come from a whole range of different aspects if you've developed those people skills and the basic skill sets, I think you can apply it to an international hotel or to other parts of the industry. I don't think they're limited.

It seems from these samples that whether employers value previous experience in international hotels or not, may depend upon their own personal preferences as well as the ability of graduates to demonstrate the 'right attitude' and their transferable skills. Overall, it is evident that previous work experience is highly valued and is perceived positively on graduates' resumes; particularly if undertaken in a five-star hotel brand.

In sum, this section has evaluated the importance and context of previous work experience when recruiting hotel management graduates. Section 7.13 investigates Work Integrated Learning (WIL), and assesses whether it should be a mandatory requirement in hotel management programs in Australia, as it is in nursing, engineering and teaching.

7.13 The role of WIL in hotel management education in Australia

This section further informs the study by building on the previous section through a more specific focus on the role of WIL within the hotel management curriculum. This segment aims to further inform Research Question 3 (the role of WIL in contributing to hotel management students' employability) and Research Question 4 (how WIL should be best organised and enacted). Initially, this section reports whether the interview respondents think work experience or WIL should be made a mandatory requirement within hotel management programs in Australia, and if so, how many hours would be optimal.

When asked if work experience should be a mandatory requirement within hotel management programs in Australia, all 20 participants indicated in the affirmative. Following content analysis, six key themes emerged from the informants' responses: i) it provides a realistic expectation of the industry and to appreciate how difficult the industry actually is, ii) it reconfirms the student's career decision and direction, iii) it gives employers a good way to trial future employees, iv) it assists students in gaining employment, given the importance placed on previous work experience, v) it ensures a foundation of experience for students to build on, and vi) it increases the overall quality of graduates

entering the industry, which also benefits the hotel industry in the future. These six themes provide an overview of the many benefits associated with incorporating WIL within higher education programs. Some of the respondents' illustrative examples to support the mandatory inclusion of WIL in hotel management programs in Australia included:

I do, because I don't feel that during the course of the degree that a lot of people understand how hard the work is within the hotel industry. I think that by taking that component away, it would be setting graduates up for maybe false expectations (Respondent # 1).

It's absolutely critical because otherwise people start to ... you know, they did the theory and then they come into the industry and go, 'Oh my god, this isn't for me. I just wasted all this time (Respondent # 14).

This is really important, so yes, I do. This is also a good way for us as employers to see what sort of graduates are coming through and then recruit them later on (Respondent # 10).

Look, I believe it should be mandatory. I think it's going to definitely increase the overall quality of graduates. When they graduate they've got that great depth of experience to make it even stronger, not just for them, but for the future of the industry as well (Respondent # 9).

In sum, these quotes present WIL as essential to accurately represent the demands of the industry, confirm students' career choices, facilitate necessary practical experience, and offer a means for the hospitality industry to appraise future employees.

Following this question, respondents were asked to recommend how many hours of work experience or WIL should be included within hotel management degrees. Several of the respondents suggested between three and six months of full-time work experience be incorporated within Hotel Management degrees. Furthermore, 17 of the informants indicated an actual amount of hours, and this number totalled 12,531 hours, which averaged out to be 737 hours of recommended work hours (just over 19 weeks of full-time equivalent work, or just under five months). This amount would equal approximately 14% of the duration of a three-year degree. Some illustrative examples surrounding the amount of WIL hours included:

I would say a placement over a six-month period would be good, but preferably I would like to see that person working in hotels throughout the course of their study (Respondent # 9).

At least three months plus full-time should be spent in an experience position (Respondent # 4).

I would say 300-400 hours would give them a fairly good indication if not anything, a real expectation about the work load that's involved and how hard the managers work (Respondent # 1).

How much, I don't know. I think the more the better, because it is a people industry, and you learn that from dealing with people, being able to talk to a variety of people, developing knowledge and engaging in suggestive selling. You need to be able to deal with people from all walks of life, and be able to relate to them (Respondent # 16).

In sum, respondents were encouraged by previous WIL experience, with more hours being considered better than less. Approximately five months of full-time work experience was suggested as being beneficial within hotel management degrees. Overall, WIL was seen as necessary, both to expose students to the personal orientation of the hospitality industry, and to begin to develop key service related capacities. WIL was also considered valuable for helping to develop product knowledge, which aids in suggestive selling, and therefore, increases hotel revenues (Brown & Hepner, 2008).

To enable a deeper understanding of participants' expectations about WIL, they were further requested to indicate a preferred model of both how and where WIL should be offered within hotel management programs in Australia. Respondents selected from three options that are commonly used among the various hotel management universities in Australia. The following section introduces the three different options for undertaking WIL and outlines the findings from the analysis.

7.14 The positioning of WIL within Hotel Management degrees

Universities can provide students with opportunities to undertake WIL placements in various formats, throughout the different stages in degree programs. Three popular options for undertaking WIL within Hotel Management programs in Australia include: i) the sandwich approach (i.e., work experience undertaken full-time in the middle of a degree), ii)

work experience undertaken full-time during the final semester of a degree, and iii) work experience casually undertaken progressively throughout the degree. This section also includes the preferred approach to where within Hotel Management degrees WIL should be undertaken.

Seventeen of the 20 respondents (three were undecided) indicated a preferred approach to delivering WIL within Hotel Management degrees. Eight of the informants selected (option i), the sandwich program; and the other nine participants chose (option iii), WIL to be delivered progressively throughout the course of the degree. Suggestions on how best to offer WIL were fairly evenly split between the first and third options. Notably, none of the respondents recommended WIL should be offered full-time during the final semester of a degree (option ii).

Concerns raised about offering WIL during the final semester of a degree was that it is too late for students to get exposure to the industry. What if they did not like the work, and they had already spent two and a half years studying it? Respondent 7 specifically stated, 'what if students felt oh, that's definitely not for me, oh no, I don't want to do it, it's totally different to what I had in my head'. Respondent 12 agreed, 'I think it is probably too late to expose them to what is going to happen after they have finished their studies'.

As indicated, there were mixed views about the best positioning of WIL. Respondent 18 raised concerns about the sandwich option for WIL after reflecting on his own experience, suggesting that this option may impact on students' willingness to want to finish their degrees:

I did part of my degree and then I took some time off to do work and do some travelling and I didn't want to come back. It was hard. It was really hard. There could be an issue with that one, will students come back? Definitely, especially if they've gone out and say for example they've been really successful in their work placement and that manager has gone, 'I want to keep you on full time.'

They may not want to go back to uni afterward and finish.

However, other participants were more supportive of the sandwich option. Respondent 8 commented:

I think I can just talk about the one I have done myself. It helped me a lot.

You did the sandwich one?

Yeah, I had never worked in the industry. I had no idea about the industry, but I loved the sophistication and the eloquence of the whole industry and the luxury element of it. After completing my first year at uni, I went on work placement for nine months. I worked, I think more than 1200 hours for those nine months. I don't know, I was working more than 50 hours a week. What it did for me was really made me understand what is required in the industry, and you go on finishing your degree and graduate from there, with all this experience and knowledge behind you.

Respondent 20, who also undertook a Hotel Management degree with the sandwich option, was supportive of this offering, suggesting:

Well I did A, and I really liked that, because we did a year of classroom theory, then we all went off for a year, worked in hotels, did internships, worked all the different departments of the hotels for three months each, came back and then put that theory into practice, plus learnt the rest of it. I thought that was a great way of doing it, it sort of gave you a taste of what it's like to do it full-time. And it also encouraged people to know if they actually wanted to do that or not in the future.

These examples mainly indicate support for the sandwich approach to undertaking WIL. This method was seen as advantageous, providing varied experiences, offering the opportunity to link theory to practice, and confirming career choices. One concern raised was its potential to inhibit students continuing their degrees.

Other participants were more supportive of WIL being undertaken progressively throughout degrees. Respondent 9 preferred this option, noting:

Doing it progressively throughout the degree. One, two days a week casual during full time study. I believe that definitely gives the students a really broad spectrum of different times of the year, different months, and the different business trends. I think it definitely gives them a broad understanding, it is to their advantage, and we have quite a few work experience students at this property. I think it's very beneficial for them doing the job, being in the job, but

also, we always make the time to sit with them and if they've got questions about whatever they're doing we can give them that feedback. I think it broadens their skills. It gives them the opportunity to ask people who are in the industry doing the job.

Respondent 5, also supportive of progressively undertaking WIL, commented:

The best model it's that on-going ad-hoc way of on-the-job experience that's outside of university. What I'm really looking for there is a sense of seeing the industry. I also think it's very, very hard to learn a hotel role in the space of three months, as any job. No matter how intense that learning is, I think if you're doing an ad-hoc couple of days after uni or a couple of days through uni for the period of three years; one, you're getting a really good understanding of how hotels change in that process and how the customer mix changes. Also, for me as well it shows that you've given it a try and you still like it at the end of three years.

In sum, the main benefit offered for progressively undertaking WIL is that students get to experience a variety of different work patterns and customers over a longer period of time. Hence, this approach offers broader experience opportunities. Furthermore, this option enables the student to show more of a commitment to the industry, demonstrated over a longer period of time. The benefit of having students working alongside more experienced staff for longer periods means they are able to receive on-going support and feedback, which is beneficial for their continuous learning and development.

Based on these findings, it seems there is no consensus on the single best method of offering WIL within the hotel management curriculum. Two delivery options for WIL are preferred, the sandwich, and progressive approaches. It is clear that offering WIL full-time in the final semester of a degree is not recommended. The opinions expressed are varied, but what is apparent is that work experience in any form is beneficial and encouraged.

This concludes the section assessing WIL, which contributes to Research Questions 3 and 4. A deeper discussion about the implications of these findings and comparisons with other studies is presented in Chapter 8. The next section concludes the qualitative stage of this study and therefore the last stage of the interview questions. These final questions,

designed to gain further insights, aim to assist in the employability of hotel management graduates.

7.15 Increasing the employability of hotel management graduates

In addressing aspects of employability in more detail, this section reports on the second-last interview question and provides some additional insights from participants which further inform Research Question 2, and that may also aid in the employability of hotel management graduates. Following content analysis and coding, 27 suggestions and nine key themes emerged. These are presented in Table 7.13, which lists the key themes suggested to assist employability, the frequencies and a sample of the respondents' supportive comments.

Three main pieces of advice were evident, i) emphasising the importance of prior work experience, ii) ensuring graduates have clear career goals, and iii) setting realistic job expectations. Almost half of the suggestions emphasised the importance of previous work experience. The advice offered to assist graduates' initial employment strongly encouraged students to gain related work experience throughout their degrees. Work experience was seen as especially beneficial in confirming career choices and building work related capabilities. This additional support of prior work experience continues to highlight the benefits and significance of WIL, and work related experience more generally. Indeed, the requirement for work experience is a theme repeated throughout this study.

Furthermore, respondents again emphasised the importance of having clear career goals and realistic initial job expectations. Employers were eager to see graduates with an established career goal, and an understanding that it takes time to build a career. Informants also emphasised the importance of 'people skills', networking, self-awareness, extra-curricular activities and enthusiasm. This range of personal attributes was seen as beneficial in developing social capacities, which were deemed to be especially important. Moreover, in a competitive job market, having an error free, and well-structured resume was also seen as advantageous. These findings will be combined with previous findings and further discussed in Chapter 8. The next section progresses to insights gained from respondents on how the hotel management faculties within Australian universities may enhance graduate employability.

Table 7.13: Advice to assist graduates' employability

Advice to assist employability	Frequency	Illustrative examples (respondents' quotes)
Gain previous work experience	12	<p>If you're graduating from uni, you should have some work experience. Anything really, but a uni graduate with no work experience is no good to me.</p> <p>I tell them to get a job. Doesn't matter what the job is. Get a job casually as a banquet server, and get your foot in the door. Get your head in the space, because it's a love or hate scenario. A Degree is very expensive, so you want to make sure you're doing the right one, so work while you're doing it.</p> <p>Have you used enough initiative to get some practical experience as you've worked your way through the degree? When they've got that balance, to me that makes them reasonably attractive.</p>
Have clear career goals	4	<p>The first question I would ask is, what is your goal? Where do you want to be in 5 years? Once you get a clear picture of, okay, I want to be a Front Office Manager. What current experience do you have in particular roles? What are you doing now towards reaching your goals?</p> <p>I guess telling them that if they were handing out a CV and they were job hunting it's to really know, why they want to work in the industry, what they want to do, and to have a really clear idea of who you want to work for, because you don't want to bounce around jobs and things.</p>
Have realistic job expectations	3	<p>So the key that I would say is, build on a solid foundation, don't be too anxious to climb the ladder, that will come, I think you can do damage to yourself if you climb too quickly, or you can limit how far you can actually climb if you go too fast, too early. Obviously everyone's different, but I believe in being just a little bit more patient, and building on that foundation, to build up that flexibility, that self-confidence, ability to cope under pressure, ability to get along with people, the ability to accept responsibility, the ability to coach and direct people. I think at the end of the day, you're then worth more to an employer and you can command a better salary if you've got that foundation. I think it takes a while to build a foundation.</p>
Have people skills	2	<p>Just because you have a high GPA does not mean you're employable to me. It is important, but it's not key. The thing is you can be book smart, you can be really book smart and get a high distinction, but that means you could maybe have no people skills. I'm in a hotel so people skills are more important to me, than how good you are at processing information.</p>
Networking	2	<p>I think getting out and involved and using connections to recruitment and hiring managers and even Front Office Managers such as myself. I very rarely see a graduate who comes in and asks to have a chat or talk about a role. I think there's maybe a lack of understanding of how networking works and how that may benefit them in the long term.</p>
Appropriate and error free resumes	1	<p>Make sure your resume is well presented. Please make sure it's error free, that you have got good punctuation in there. Makes them more employable. People who have relevant interests, people who've won awards. Make sure these things are highlighted in your resume.</p>
Get involved and undertake extra-curricular activities	1	<p>Attend every single activity you can, put your hand up for any sort of extra-curricular volunteer work through the school, attend any sort of training sessions, even if it's not in the field that you think you're going to go into within the hotel industry, do it, upskill in every single area you can, and just talk with your lecturers and tutors. Really, I mean, that's the biggest one that helped me. Don't be an observer. Because it's not an observing industry.</p>
Have enthusiasm/passion	1	<p>It's about enthusiasm. Have enthusiasm for that job. When you're in front of somebody, it's about selling yourself. It's about body language, and it's just about selling yourself. I'm going to bring enthusiasm. I'm bringing youth. I know I'll get experience if I get the opportunity there. Whoever employs me will not be disappointed. I will not let anybody down. I will be reliable. That's important.</p>
Be self-aware	1	<p>Think about what your strengths are, what you want to do, be clear in your mind. I would also probably recommend that once they decide that is the industry for them, they do it a lot earlier than before they graduate.</p>
Total	27	

7.16 Suggestions offered to universities to assist graduates' employability

The final question of the interview schedule, informing Research Question 2 asks participants if they were in charge of a Hotel Management department of an Australian university, what they would do to increase graduates' employability. Thirty five suggestions were recognised and 12 key themes identified. These findings are summarised in Table 7.14, which lists the recommendations, their frequencies, and provides some illustrative examples.

Table 7.14 highlights how hotel management university faculty may improve the employability of their graduates. Four prominent themes emerged: i) ensure graduates have relevant work experience, ii) adopt into the curriculum industry applied projects and case studies, iii) build and foster relationships with industry, and iv) involve industry guest speakers.

It is evident that, at every opportunity where informants had a chance to comment on employability related aspects, previous work experience features prominently. Once more, ensuring graduate work experience was the number one recommendation. Relevant work experience was considered a 'must'. The requirement for work experience emphasises the importance of WIL in hotel management degrees. Participants also recommended that more applied projects, case studies and role-plays be incorporated within the curriculum. Further engagement with industry was also seen as advantageous, through WIL partnerships, guest speakers in classes, and also through organised networking events. Furthermore, it was again recommended to faculty to ensure that graduates have realistic job expectations, and to provide further assistance to students in the job seeking process. Participants also encouraged students to travel to broaden their tourism industry understandings, and to also undertake additional industry-related courses, such as Barista and RSA (Responsible Service of Alcohol) courses. Finally, it was suggested that currency of the syllabus was important, as was ensuring teaching staff have relevant practical knowledge and a thorough understanding of the hospitality industry. Indeed, it is through these aspects that an authentic curriculum can be delivered.

Table 7.14: Advice to hotel management universities to assist graduates' employability

Advice to universities to aid graduates' employability	Frequency	Illustrative examples (respondents' quotes)
Ensure graduates have previous work experience	10	To put it in a nutshell, just as far as making sure that they're prepared and the best way to do that is through, I suppose, some industry hours, making sure that they go into the right places of employment to get that exposure. I think the work experience is a definite must, a definite. Yeah, so it's real-world experience, which is why I would say get them out.
Incorporate industry applied projects and case studies	5	Project-based learning where a lot of the actual case-studies are presented. They're not just procedural; I know how to check someone in, I know how to lift luggage. It's about these students being creative thinkers. Every hotel has different requirements; giving people a perception of those, and to do real case studies. I think would be interesting. Training courses where you look at the profitability of a restaurant, propose a new business model for this restaurant. That sort of thing; it's very theoretical but yet it's practical, because it's real, it's a real restaurant, it's a real P&L.
Build industry relationships and partnerships	5	I'd look at partnering with some of the hotels, international hotels. That's one way that can increase employability is that partnership. You can partnership work experience with those hotels as well. Developing a close relationship with a particular brand or a particular umbrella company such as [xxx hotel company], and then establishing an interning program.
Use industry guest speakers and alumni within teaching	4	What you could do is get people like myself, get people like other graduates to come in and tell their story. 'I did my study' blah blah blah. I would be inviting past graduates back in who've gone on to be success stories. That's what they want to hear. They want to sit there in the class and go, 'I want to be like you.' Bring in different managers to discuss different operations of a hotel.
Ensure realistic job expectations	2	Prepare them to do the hard yards. You're not going to become a front office manager when you come out of uni. They need to realise that studying hotel management is part of getting to where you need to be. That's the theory, and then ultimately you're going to need to prove yourself, and you will rise through. The cream rises to the top. It always does. But they need to have patience.
Provide recruitment advice/support	2	I would suggest that you should spend a little bit of time on preparing the person for interviews. In actually preparing them and talking to them about presentation, body language, enthusiasm. Now, they're not things you actually learn in a book, but they're things that people look at and what have you. I've interviewed people for graduate management positions and they're late for the interview, and you just go, they're dead. They think it is okay, but today we are all busy.
Arrange industry networking events	2	Networking is critical. I think that's where you go a long way towards bridging that gap between universities and the industry. It would certainly benefit the students, and I think the industry would gain a lot out of it too.
Encourage students to travel	1	Encourage travel. Travel, you see different cultures, different kinds of food, different kinds of methods of working in whatever department. You then have a couple of countries on your CV.
Ensure current syllabus	1	It's to make sure that the syllabus and what we're teaching students here is current to where we're at today. The industry is changing very, very fast. Hotels need to change fast to attract new guests and to continue to achieve good results. Similarly, I think universities need to change syllabus, they need to change training materials to be able to keep up-to-date with current trends. Silver Service has left us.
Ensure faculty have industry experience	1	I think the faculty needs to have a really good in-depth practical knowledge. Very practical background to paint that picture in the classrooms in there.
Encourage related courses, i.e. RSA, bar, barista	1	I think it's pretty good, especially if you can see on a CV where they've done some barista courses, and they've done some basic courses, some bar work courses and things like that. That always shows that they're willing to learn, I know that's something they should go out and do by themselves, but often it doesn't hurt to give them a push.
Use role-plays	1	Role play at uni is so important. Bring people out of their comfort zone. Some people don't like speaking in front of their colleagues. Just get them to do it, and get them to do things like how to handle difficult guests and how to present in front of a group of people. Give them all those scenarios that they will face in their real life, so when they actually do it, they are more comfortable with it.
Total	35	

These considerations will in Chapter 8 be further appraised and combined with other related findings to address RQ2. The next section provides a summary of this chapter and introduces Chapter 8.

7.17 Chapter summary

This chapter presents the qualitative findings of the inquiry. The analysis has centred on the semi-structured interviews undertaken with 20 hotel Operations Managers in south east Queensland. The interview schedule contained three key sections, designed to support and elaborate on the previous quantitative phase of data collection, subsequently addressing all Research Questions 1 – 4. This chapter has reiterated important competencies required of hotel Operations Managers now and into the future, and has offered suggestions on how these capabilities can be best acquired. Specifically, leadership and customer service remain critical dimensions for hotel managers now, and into the future, and the workplace has been identified as an essential learning environment to develop these specific capabilities. In determining the development of additional required hospitality competencies, both the university setting and the workplace are recognised as important learning environments. However, it seems the majority of required hospitality competencies are most optimally acquired within the workplace. This outcome highlights the significance of the workplace as an essential learning environment for developing required hospitality management competencies.

The chapter also assessed the hotel industry's current level of satisfaction with graduates. This investigation revealed that respondents were adequately satisfied. Specifically, participants were encouraged by graduates' ability to work to deadlines and their levels of innovation; although some informants were critical of graduates' job expectations and their lack of industry experience. Indeed, these criticisms should be further considered by both hotel management students and faculty. Additionally, the chapter summarised the role and positioning of WIL within hotel management programs. Finally, some suggestions were offered on how hotel management educational institutions can improve graduate employability. Notably, the importance of workplace experience and offering WIL opportunities in the curriculum has been identified as being especially important.

The discussion in Chapter 8 combines the quantitative and qualitative findings to explicitly address all four Research Questions 1 to 4, and further compares and contrasts the overall research findings with other related studies.

8

Developing required hotel management competencies

8.1 Informing hospitality management education

This chapter consolidates the two previous chapters (6 and 7) and integrates the quantitative and qualitative findings to address the four research questions guiding this study. The four questions are:

RQ1 - What type of management related competencies are required of competent hotel Operational Managers (Food and Beverage and Rooms Division?)

RQ2 - What are the curriculum and pedagogic considerations to enhance competency development and employability of hotel management graduates?

RQ3 – What is the role of Work Integrated Learning (WIL) in contributing to hotel management graduates' employability?

RQ4 - How should WIL experiences be best organised and enacted to enhance hotel management students' graduate outcomes?

Interpretation, synthesis and discussion of the findings addressing each of these four research questions in sequence from RQ1 to RQ4 are given in this chapter. Throughout this chapter the key findings are compared to previous studies reported in the literature to highlight the contributions of this study.

The key findings of this study indicate a list of 15 required essential hospitality management competencies. The majority of these required competencies relate to 'soft skills' (RQ1). Suggestions are made about how the development of these competencies can be best realised (RQ2). Also explored are considerations around employability and the role of WIL (RQ3) and its organisation and contributions to positive graduate outcomes for hotel management students (RQ4).

The following four sections (8.1, 8.2, 8.3, 8.4) address each of the four research questions. Throughout key findings are outlined and discussed.

8.2 Competencies required of effective hotel Operations Managers (RQ1)

Understanding the competencies required of effective hotel Operations Managers (RQ1) provides a rationale for including these into the hotel management curriculum. To identify the required competencies, several sources of data were considered. The process commenced with desk research and document analysis. This involved reviewing previous studies to evaluate their competency frameworks and findings. The curriculum currently being taught in hotel management higher education institutions was appraised by reviewing several current course outlines. Relevant job advertisements and job descriptions were also reviewed. This process began to generate a list of required competencies needed by hotel Operations Managers. To advance this list of competencies, participant observations and same day interviews were also undertaken with a sample of hotel Operations Managers.

Following the content analysis, findings were considered along with previous similar studies' frameworks, to establish a new framework to identify required hospitality management competencies. This newly developed framework was importantly hotel-management specific, in contrast to several earlier frameworks that were generic and predominantly core-business orientated. A survey instrument was then developed to facilitate further data collection. The questionnaire generated mostly quantitative data, but included some open-ended questions to gather additional information. The aim of the survey was to confirm and advance the list of required hospitality management competencies. As a final measure to address RQ1, once the analysis of the survey data was undertaken, the results were confirmed and extended through some post-survey semi-structured interviews.

Accordingly, Research Question 1 is informed by both the surveys and interviews; and the outcomes will be reported separately. Firstly, data from the surveys will be presented, followed by data from the interviews. Finally, both sets of findings are combined, and overall outcomes addressing RQ1 presented.

8.2.1 Overview of survey participants

Prior to the survey findings being discussed, a brief overview of participants is provided. The survey phase of data collection resulted in ninety-six (n=96) valid responses being received. This is a modest sample size, given the respondents and their busy work schedules.

The survey participants' personal details are now compared to other similar studies, including the most recent Australian study undertaken by Raybould and Wilkins in 2006. The purpose of these comparisons is to review any key demographic changes in hotel managers over time. Firstly, regarding gender, the gender distribution of participants in both Australian studies are similar. For this study, 42% were male and 58% were female. In the Raybould and Wilkins 2006 study, 55% were male and 45% were female. Collectively this distribution is representative of the current hospitality industry (Santero-Sanchez, Segovia-Pérez, Castro-Nuñez, Figueroa-Domecq, & Talón-Ballesterro, 2015). Although a small increase in female managers was evident. The age groups between the two studies are also very similar. Within this study, the dominate age category was the 30 to 39 age group; in the Raybould and Wilkins Australian 2006 study, the mean age of their hotel management participants was 34.8. The average years of industry experience in this study was 17, in the previous Australian study; this was 13.7, also relatively similar. However, a key difference in the profile of participants between the two studies was in the level of tertiary qualifications. In this study, 95% held tertiary qualifications; conversely, in the Raybould and Wilkins 2006 study, only 36% of their respondents (Hotel Managers) held a tertiary qualification. This comparison suggests more hotel managers now hold tertiary qualifications, compared to ten years ago. This is a general trend with an increasing number of Australians now holding degree qualifications (Australian Bureau of Statistics, 2016).

Another revealing outcome from this study, relating to qualifications, was that, although 95% of the participants held tertiary qualifications, 55% indicated that tertiary qualifications were neither important or unimportant, and only 3% indicated that tertiary qualifications were extremely important. This finding suggests that although the majority of participants held tertiary qualifications, they may not necessarily value these qualifications in others. However, this finding is in contrast with a study undertaken in New Zealand by Kim (2008), who found 82% of hospitality employers valued degrees. From these comparisons, it could be inferred that tertiary qualifications are more valued by the hotel industry in New Zealand, compared to Australia, although these variations could also reflect changing times; that is, with more people now possessing degrees, their perceived value may be diminished.

The growing number of people now possessing degrees places increased pressure on graduates to demonstrate capabilities beyond their qualifications, and to have relevant workplace experience, because work experience aids in both initial and long term employability (Patiar et al., 2017; Schoffstall & Arendt, 2016). Indeed, the requirement for prior work experience is intensifying, as has been emphasised from data captured in this study. From the analysis presented in this section, it is suggested that, in the current competitive graduate job market, possessing a degree remains important but having relevant workplace experience offers graduates a successful pathway towards initial employment and subsequent careers.

8.2.2 Career choice

A key finding from this study, which was not reported in the previous Raybould and Wilkins 2006 study, was the reason for pursuing a career in the hospitality industry. As presented in Chapter 6, 40% of respondents were attracted by the 'people' orientation of the industry. Notably, this motivation for entering the hospitality industry has remained consistent over time (Barron, Maxwell, Broadbridge, & Ogden, 2007; Chuang & Dellmann-Jenkins, 2010). Other key reasons given for pursuing a career in hospitality relate to the challenging nature of the industry, and the career and travel opportunities the industry offers. This section has provided a background to survey participants; the following section now builds on these findings to specifically address RQ1.

8.2.3 Survey findings addressing Research Question 1

Research Question 1 aimed to determine which management-related competencies are required for effective hotel Operations Managers. Accordingly, survey participants were requested to respond to both the perceived level of importance and the level of frequency undertaken of a list of pre-determined competencies. Once the outcomes were analysed, the mean results for the two sets of data were combined, and an average taken. From there, a combined list of required competencies was formed. As noted in Chapter 6, this combined approach to determining required managerial competencies is recommended by Koenigsfeld, Perdue, Youn, and Woods (2011) and by Perdue et al. (2000). The following sections outline the findings.

Two tables are used when presenting and discussing the survey findings related to RQ1; one ranking the order of importance, the other combining the outcomes from both the importance and the frequency. Tables 8.1 and 8.2 present findings that collectively address RQ1. To further highlight the relative importance of each competency item, Tables 8.1 and 8.2 both incorporate a scale that classifies the level of importance of each individual competency. As previously noted, this scale, developed by Tas (1988) and adopted by Baum (1990, 1991), identifies hospitality competencies as either being 'Essential', or of 'Considerable Importance', or of 'Moderate Importance'. Essential competencies are considered where a mean rating of 4.5 and above out of 5 is achieved. Considerably important competencies have a mean rating of between 3.50 and 4.49, and moderately important competencies are considered where a mean result achieved is between 2.5 and 3.49 (Tas, 1988).

In Tables 8.1 and 8.2, the ranking scale used was from 1 (not at all important) to 5 (extremely important). Both tables rank the competencies in order of perceived importance from 1 to 48, and provide the mean and standard deviations for each item. The various competencies are presented, in rank order, in two columns and are given Tas's (1988) classification as being either essential, of considerable importance, or moderately important. These quantitative findings are later combined with the qualitative data, and the overall outcomes are further discussed, to comprehensively address RQ1. Conclusions from this analysis are later compared to findings from other similar studies, and a discussion is undertaken identifying the specific competencies where notable differences are found between the perceived importance and the level of frequency of the individual attributes. This analysis is undertaken to highlight specific competencies where inconsistencies occur between their perceived importance and their frequency undertaken.

Tables 8.1 and 8.2 present the frequencies of the various competencies; the majority being identified as essential, and none of the competencies rated below 2.5, indicating that all the 48 competencies in both tables were identified as being at least moderately important (Tas, 1988). Consequently, the outcomes presented in the combined competencies Table 8.2, provide a comprehensive list of required hospitality operational management competencies. This reclassified/combined list of required hospitality competencies (Table 8.2) can now also serve as a future point of reference for the benefit of hospitality education providers, researchers and hotel industry personnel.

Table 8.1: Classified rank order of perceived level of importance of competencies

Rank	Competency item	Mean	SD	Rank	Competency item	Mean	SD
<u>Essential competencies</u>				25	Being noticeable	4.52	.542
1	Leadership and influence	4.90	.307	26	Rostering and payroll management	4.51	.615
2	Decision-making/decisiveness	4.85	.383	<u>Considerably important</u>			
3	Customer and people orientation, service commitment and positivity	4.83	.375	27	Product knowledge and industry awareness	4.49	.580
4	Oral communication	4.75	.435	28	Human resources activities - recruitment, orientation and performance management	4.48	.523
5	Ethics, values and integrity	4.73	.447	29	Critical thinking	4.48	.542
6	Personal presentation and grooming	4.72	.452	30	Possessing the ability to undertake key roles within the department	4.46	.724
7	Collaboration and teamwork	4.71	.457	31	Initiative and enterprise	4.42	.536
8	Passion for the industry, self-motivation, flexibility and commitment	4.70	.462	32	Written communication	4.42	.627
9	Problem solving	4.70	.462	33	Managing diversity and cultural awareness	4.35	.580
10	Interpersonal communication	4.70	.462	34	Understanding of generic business technology. eg. Microsoft Office, email and smart phones	4.33	.574
11	Drive to improve service, products, team performance and business results	4.69	.488	35	Ability to conceptualise or form opinions	4.29	.541
12	Mentoring, coaching and encouraging staff development	4.68	.470	36	Developing reports and procedures	4.28	.556
13	Relationship building and knowing your staff	4.68	.470	37	Understanding and utilisation of industry related social media applications	4.27	.607
14	Attention to detail and adherence to standards	4.67	.496	38	Creativity/Innovation	4.26	.548
15	Personal organisation and time management	4.67	.496	39	Intellectual curiosity and on-going learning	4.25	.616
16	Planning, coordinating and organising	4.63	.508	40	Understanding of hotel specific software: Property Management Systems knowledge	4.23	.718
17	Adaption to change	4.63	.528	41	Facilitation and participation in meetings	4.19	.549
18	Negotiation and conflict resolution	4.60	.492	42	Purchasing and stock control	4.18	.665
19	Financial understanding, yield management, budgeting, profit and loss, industry benchmarking and metrics	4.58	.516	43	Risk taking	4.18	.562
20	Delegation and follow-up	4.55	.521	44	Career orientated	4.15	.649
21	Willingness to undertake operational roles, as required	4.54	.597	45	Analytical and research skills	4.14	.705
22	Legislative and regulatory understanding and compliance	4.53	.561	46	Sustainability practices	4.07	.603
23	Confidence and assertiveness	4.53	.561	47	Understanding of third party computer interfaces (loyalty programs, booking agents and guest satisfaction reporting)	4.04	.664
24	Visioning and strategic thinking	4.52	.615	<u>Moderately important</u>			
				48	Ability to speak an additional language	3.00	.768

Table 8.2: Classified ranked order of combined importance and frequency of required competencies

Rank	Competency item	Mean	SD	Rank	Competency item	Mean	SD
<u>Essential competencies</u>				25	Adaption to change	4.50	.636
1	Customer and people orientation, service commitment and positivity	4.90	.275	<u>Considerably important</u>			
2	Leadership and influence	4.89	.370	26	Product knowledge and industry awareness	4.49	.623
3	Decision-making/decisiveness	4.87	.368	27	Human resources activities - recruitment, orientation and performance management	4.48	.523
4	Oral communication	4.85	.339	28	Initiative and enterprise	4.46	.567
5	Personal presentation and grooming	4.84	.339	29	Rostering and payroll management	4.45	.726
6	Interpersonal communication	4.80	.410	30	Ability to conceptualise or form opinions	4.42	.625
7	Collaboration and teamwork	4.79	.394	31	Possessing the ability to undertake key roles within the department	4.42	.805
8	Personal organisation and time management	4.79	.404	32	Willingness to undertake operational roles, as required	4.41	.755
9	Relationship building and knowing your staff	4.78	.411	33	Understanding and utilisation of industry related social media applications	4.37	.665
10	Attention to detail and adherence to standards	4.78	.418	34	Legislative and regulatory understanding and compliance	4.36	.758
11	Ethics, values and integrity	4.77	.467	35	Managing diversity and cultural awareness	4.35	.712
12	Problem solving	4.76	.418	36	Understanding of hotel specific software: Property Management Systems knowledge	4.32	.844
13	Passion for the industry, self-motivation, flexibility and commitment	4.74	.484	37	Visioning and strategic thinking	4.28	.698
14	Planning, coordinating and organising	4.70	.477	38	Creativity/Innovation	4.26	.664
15	Drive to improve service, products, team performance and business results	4.68	.530	39	Facilitation and participation in meetings	4.25	.586
16	Confidence and assertiveness	4.68	.494	40	Intellectual curiosity and on-going learning	4.10	.780
17	Delegation and follow-up	4.67	.524	41	Understanding of third party computer interfaces (loyalty programs, booking agents and guest satisfaction reporting)	4.09	.843
18	Being noticeable	4.65	.547	42	Risk taking	4.09	.756
19	Written communication	4.60	.620	43	Purchasing and stock control	4.05	.806
20	Mentoring, coaching and encouraging staff development	4.59	.619	44	Developing reports and procedures	4.01	.761
21	Financial understanding, yield management, budgeting, profit and loss, industry benchmarking and metrics	4.58	.604	45	Analytical and research skills	3.97	.825
22	Negotiation and conflict resolution	4.56	.578	46	Career orientated	3.92	.858
23	Understanding of generic business technology. eg. Microsoft Office, email and smart phones	4.53	.607	47	Sustainability practices	3.81	.798
24	Critical thinking	4.52	.577	<u>Moderately important</u>			
				48	Ability to speak an additional language	2.63	1.057

Furthermore, the high rating received on the various competencies within both these tables (8.1 and 8.2) also confirms the appropriateness of the range of pre-determined competencies in the developed framework. This is reassuring and anticipated, given the depth of process (i.e., literature review, document analysis, participant observations and initial interviews) undertaken to develop the list of competencies, that were adapted within the framework and subsequent survey instrument.

An additional discussion on the highest ranking competencies determined within Tables 8.1 and 8.2, and comparisons of the key findings, both between the tables and with other studies, build on the outcomes from this study. This further analysis highlights individual competencies where key differences are evident between their perceived importance and their frequency undertaken.

In analysing and comparing the ratings of specific competencies within these two tables, some key deductions can be made. For example, 'Ethics, Values and Integrity' rated as the fifth most important competency, however, because this attribute was rated as thirteenth, in terms of its frequency undertaken, it was removed from the top ten competencies in the combined list (Table 8.2). This outcome suggests that, although ethics is considered very important, it may not be practiced to the same extent, which could be problematic. Furthermore, the competency of 'Passion for the Industry, Self-motivation, Flexibility and Commitment' rated eighth in importance; however, because its frequency rated only sixteenth, this item too was not in the top ten combined competencies overall. This outcome suggests that, although passion for the job is considered extremely important, it may not be demonstrated to the same degree. 'Problem-Solving' also rated ninth in importance, but ranked twelfth in frequency; thus, this attribute also fell just short of the top ten in the combined list. However, there was still a relatively close alignment between its importance and frequency, suggesting it remains an important consideration.

Furthermore, the competency of 'Personal Organisation and Time Management', rated fourth in terms of its frequency, although rated only fifteenth in level of importance; thus it still rated eighth overall. This result may indicate that 'Organisation and Time Management' is undertaken more than expected. Similarly, the competency of 'Attention to Detail and Adherence to Standards', this attribute rated sixth in frequency, but fourteenth in terms of importance and thus was elevated to the top-ten list overall, rating tenth. This

outcome highlights the time taken to constantly adhere to standards, which is an important consideration for international hotels (Browning, So, & Sparks, 2013). Moreover, the competency of 'Relationship Building and Knowing Your Staff' rated seventh in terms of frequency, but thirteenth in perceived importance. As a result of the high frequency, this competency was also raised into the top ten overall (rating ninth), suggesting a significant amount of time is allocated to staff relations. Finally, for the competency of 'Customer and People Orientation, Service Commitment and Positivity', because this attribute rated highly (4.97/5), and as number one in terms of its frequency, this characteristic moved into the number one position overall, even though it was rated as third in perceived importance. Overall, this finding emphasises the significance of, and the amount of time devoted to customer service within international hotels, which is understandable, given service levels are often competitive points of difference (Akbaba, 2006; Hudson & Hudson, 2017).

In summary, there is a high degree of consistency between the perceived level of importance of the range of competencies, and their frequencies undertaken. This alignment suggests that the majority of perceived important hospitality competencies are also practiced to a similar high degree, although there were some attributes where there was some variation. The following section considers these findings further, comparing the outcomes from the different hotel departments.

8.2.4 Comparing required competencies between different hotel departments

In identifying the essential competencies across the four different hotel departments, there was notably a high degree of consistency in the perceived importance of the range of 48 competencies. Data from managers of the four different hotel departments informing this study (Food and Beverage; Rooms Division; Human Resources; and 'Other'- Executive Managers) indicated a 90% agreement regarding the importance of the range of competencies.

This consistency in the hospitality competencies perceived to be important across different hotel departments, is an encouraging outcome from this study. It has an impact particularly on human resources practices, as it is reassuring for positive recruitment outcomes that human resources personnel are, for the most part, identifying the same required competencies necessary for success in hotel operations departments. It has not been uncommon for Human Resources Managers to hold different hiring assessments,

compared to Operational Line Managers (Stone, 2013). The following section now reviews the required competencies identified by four- and five-star hotels

8.2.5 Comparing required competencies between different standards of hotels

Further evaluation of required hotel competencies included comparisons between four- and five-star hotels. Again, there was a very high consistency (92%) in required competencies identified within the different standards of hotels.

Overall, the vast majority of required competencies are considered equally important in both four- and five-star hotels. This suggests a very high transferability of skills between these two standards of hotels. Identifying the specific transferability of skills between these different properties gives information that can be used by hotel managers to inform transfer and promotion processes between these different hotels. The next section further evaluates the findings, comparing the competencies required between corporate and leisure hotels.

8.2.6 Comparing required competencies between different hotel market orientations

Building on the analysis is the comparison between competencies needed in corporate and leisure hotels. Here also there was a very high (92%) level of consistency in the required competencies identified within the different market orientated hotels. As outlined in Chapter 6, only four competencies showed a significant difference. In each case, these attributes were more desired in corporate hotels than in leisure hotels. However, the findings suggest managerial competencies are mostly similar across corporate and leisure hotels, implying a high degree of transferability of required managerial skills between these different categories of hotels. These outcomes comparing requirements across different hotels are now compared to the findings of other studies.

8.2.7 Comparing competency findings with other studies

To enable research comparisons, the findings from this study are compared to other studies. In terms of comparing the required managerial competencies between different hotel departments, different hotel standards, and different market orientations of hotels, it appears very few other studies have considered differing required competencies between these elements. Therefore, this study extends the current knowledge by making these distinct comparisons. An exception includes a Hong Kong study (see Chan & Coleman, 2004). This study reviewed essential hotel management skills, and compared high tariff hotels with

medium tariff hotels, where they found a 63% consistency in the required managerial skills between these two different standards of hotels. Although this outcome is still relatively high, it is less than the 92% consistency found within this study. Thus, these findings may suggest greater consistencies of skills are evident between different standards of hotels in Australia, compared to Hong Kong.

Furthermore, a study undertaken by Sisson and Adams (2013) in the USA, also compared required hotel management competencies between three different hotel departments (Food and Beverage, Rooms Division, Meetings and Events). These researchers found a 76% consistency in required competencies between these three different hotel departments. Although this result is high, it is less than the 90% consistency found between the different hotel departments in this study. The findings may suggest there is more consistency in perceived required skills across different hotel departments in Australia, than in the United States. (no additional studies were found that compared competencies required between corporate and leisure hotels). Overall, the outcomes from this study imply, irrespective of the type of hotel (4- or 5-star; corporate or leisure), or which specific operating department, that similar key competencies are required for effective hotel management job performance in Australia. These findings can potentially be used to inform hotel management education, as well as the recruitment and management transfer practices across various hotel departments, categories and market orientations in Australia.

Further building on the analysis, the 48 different competency items were also incorporated within six overarching capability domains, as indicated in Chapter 6. Survey participants (n=96) also rated their perceived importance of the overarching capability areas in order from 1 to 6. This enabled triangulation of data with the preceding quantitative findings. The outcome indicates strong consistencies, with 'Managing People and Tasks', and 'Communication' skills being identified as the most important capabilities. Table 8.3 restates the findings in key required competency domains, displaying the overarching capability, the rating order, and relative percentages for the six domains.

Table 8.3: Overarching capabilities ranked in order of importance

Rating	Overarching capability	%
1	Managing people and tasks	26
2	Communication	24
3	Managing self	19
4	Innovation and change	14
5	Technical	10
6	Administration	7
Total		100

There can be no direct comparisons drawn when reviewing the outcomes from Table 8.3, and comparing these findings with other studies, because the overarching capability framework for this study was developed specifically for use in this project. Some comparisons could be undertaken with aspects of the framework because, as explained in Chapter 4, the framework for this study was extended from an existing competencies framework (see Evers & Rush, 1996). However, these comparisons were not undertaken, because the original framework was expanded from four to six domains, and the original framework, which was not hospitality specific, had been utilised across various industry sectors (Evers & Rush, 1996). Therefore, there would be little relevance.

Furthermore, in the earlier Australian study, as outlined in Chapter 4, Raybould and Wilkins (2006) had used a Generic Skills Framework that was considerably different, consisting of nine domains. Therefore, no direct comparisons can be made, because only six domains are incorporated in this study. However, between the two Australian studies there are some consistencies. What is evident from the two sets of findings is that two competencies relate; both successful leading and interacting with others, and self-management remain important hospitality industry capabilities, compared to more technical and administrative functions. These outcomes further highlight the people, customer, and operational orientations of the hotel industry in Australia.

The outcomes from the analysis in this section, which have identified key required hospitality competencies and their overarching domains, can potentially be used in the future, for comparison, should other researchers wish to adopt this specific framework, with its 48 incorporated competencies. To extend the discussion, additional qualitative findings from the survey that also inform RQ1 are now explained.

8.2.8 Triangulation of findings identifying required competencies

To further build on the analysis, survey participants were requested to indicate qualitatively which specific skills they identified as being the most important for Operations Managers in successfully undertaking their roles. This question was included to enable triangulation and elaboration on the quantitative findings, and importantly to uncover any additional competencies not incorporated within the 48 pre-determined competencies. Table 8.4 (taken from Table 6.23, Chapter 6) provides the top ten findings for this additional qualitative survey question, listing only the top ten important skills identified, their frequencies mentioned, and their relative percentages.

Table 8.4: Survey qualitative outcomes identifying the most important competencies

Rank	Most important skills identified	Frequency	%
1	Leadership – staff management	67	27
2	Communication skills	42	17
3	People skills	34	14
4	Financial understanding and achievement	24	10
5	Emotional intelligence	11	4.5
6	Customer service	9	3.5
7	Flexibility – adaptability	9	3.5
8	Time management	5	2
9	Change management	5	2
10	Practical job knowledge	5	2
	Total	249	

Note: the total is from the full list of attributes (refer Chapter 6, Table 6.23)

Table 8.4 provides a strong endorsement of the previously stated important competencies identified quantitatively. There is a significant overlap evident in the most important competencies. In particular, ‘Leadership’ was identified as the most important competency in both the quantitative and qualitative survey questions. ‘Communication Skills’, ‘People Skills’, and ‘Customer Service Orientation’ also rated in the top six in both the quantitative and qualitative survey responses. This outcome confirms the importance of these four particular personal attributes for Hotel Operations Managers.

However, ‘Financial Understanding and Achievement’ rated highly in the qualitative findings; rating forth, although this competency only rated nineteenth in the quantitative results. Furthermore, ‘Emotional Intelligence’ was identified as the fifth most important within the qualitative section, and although not specifically included within the 48 competencies, the fact it was specifically mentioned so frequently within the qualitative

accounts makes it an important consideration. These deductions and the overall findings from Table 8.4 are combined with other findings in a final analysis that collectively address RQ1. This concludes the discussion of the findings from the survey. To elaborate on the outcomes the interview findings relating to RQ1 are now overviewed.

8.2.9 Subsequent interview findings addressing Research Question 1

Undertaking additional interviews was essential to build on the quantitative data. As presented in Chapter 5, sequential semi-structured interviews were undertaken with an additional group of hotel Operations Managers (n=20) following the analysis of the survey data. This process was designed to confirm and expand on the various findings attained thus far. Of the 20 interview participants, 15 were male and 5 were female; the higher proportion of males is expected, given food and beverage management roles are typically held by men (Nebel, Braunlich, & Zhang, 1994).

Consistent with survey participants, the majority of the interviewees were in the 30-39 age category. Similarly, the vast majority (19) of the interview participants held tertiary qualifications, and notably, 15 from the 19 participant's qualifications were in the hospitality or hotel management disciplines. Consequently, interview participants were also able to offer some important hospitality specific graduates' insights. Moreover, in the interviews, to more comprehensively understand specific operational management requirements, only hotel Operations Managers were involved. This group included 11 managers from within Food and Beverage and nine from Rooms Division. The average amount of hotel industry experience among the group was 19 years, which is considered significant and enables sound industry insights. There were also a variety of different hotel properties represented, including nine four-star, 11 five-star, nine corporate, and 11 leisure hotels, representing a relatively even mix of targeted hotel properties.

Some initial questions were asked during the interviews to confirm and build on the survey data. For example, the results from the survey revealed the top five identified important competencies: i) 'Leadership and Influence', ii) 'Decision-Making/Decisiveness', iii) 'Customer and People Orientation, Service Commitment and Positivity', iv) 'Oral Communication' and, v) 'Ethics, Values and Integrity'. In the interviews, participants were asked to confirm if they agreed that these five aspects were indeed essential for Operations Managers to undertake their roles. All 20 interview participants agreed that these five

competencies were essential. Informants were also asked if they would include any additional necessary competencies. There were 43 additional attributes identified (presented in Chapter 7, Table 7.7) beyond the original top five. Table 8.5, lists only the top seven ranked competencies, in order of frequency mentioned.

Table 8.5: Highest rating additional essential competencies identified within the interviews

Additional important competencies identified by interview participants	Frequency
Financial acumen and driving for results	6
Strategic focus	5
Not just oral communication, but communication in general, non-verbal and interpersonal communication (individualised communication)	4
Collaboration and teamwork	3
Innovation	2
Technology and digital communication	2
Resilience and self-care	2
Total	43

Note: Only the top seven listed competencies with two or more comments are presented, the total represents the combined number of responses.

Table 8.5 highlights the importance of financial capabilities and also confirms the significance of leadership skills, by specifically indicating the need to be strategically focused. Similarly, communication skills are further highlighted, including non-verbal and interpersonal aspects. The importance of teamwork is also emphasised, as are innovation, technology, and resilience and self-care considerations.

The findings presented in Table 8.5, together with the previous outcomes outlined within this chapter and those presented earlier (in Chapters 6 and 7), provide a solid basis to address RQ1. The following section draws together the combined outcomes; then compares these findings to other related research.

8.2.10 Combined quantitative and qualitative outcomes informing RQ1

To comprehensively address RQ1, this section combines the findings, draws conclusions and compares and contrasts the final outcomes with other studies. To begin this process, an overview of key findings obtained that ultimately inform RQ1, are presented in Table 8.6. This table presents the accumulated findings, listing the highest rated important competencies identified from the four applicable stages of quantitative and qualitative data collection. This table outlines four key elements: i) the survey's top 15 quantitative identified important attributes (presented first), ii) the survey's top 15 quantitative

combined important and frequency attributes (presented second), iii) the survey's qualitative top 10 identified important competencies (presented third), and iv) the interview's additional top seven important capabilities, recognised beyond the survey's quantitative top five (presented fourth). The table also includes the rankings for each of the items, listed in order of importance.

Table 8.6 serves as a final point of reference to address RQ1 (regarding key required hotel operational management competencies). It presents the various key required competencies identified from within the various stages of data collection.

Evident in the four different points of data collection presented in Table 8.6 is the high degree of consistency in the identified important managerial competencies. The consistencies evident within the various quantitative and qualitative data collection processes serve as a confirmation of the importance of the various competencies presented. Some notable exceptions are apparent; these include the importance of 'Financial Acumen and Achievement' and also 'People Skills' and 'Emotional Intelligence', these were highlighted more specifically within the qualitative accounts. Another area which was also identified prominently within the interviews was the importance of 'Resilience and Self-care'. Several comments were received (specifically and implied) about the demanding qualities of hospitality work, and the need to be resilient and to take care of your personal welfare.

In sum, when participants had the opportunity and more time available to consider their responses, the three aspects, 'Financial Acumen and Achievement', 'People Skills and Emotional Intelligence', and 'Resilience and Self-care', were more strongly emphasised qualitatively, compared to quantitatively, which consequently raises their significance (Creswell, 2013). The following section now consolidates the findings to address RQ1.

Table 8.6: Combined quantitative and qualitative outcomes to determine key required hospitality competencies

Rank	i) Survey's top quantitative important attributes	Rank	ii) Survey's top quantitative combined important and frequency attributes	Rank	iii) Survey's qualitative important attributes identified	Rank	iv) Interviewees' additional important attributes beyond the survey's quantitative top 5
1	Leadership and influence	1	Customer and people orientation, service commitment and positivity	1	Leadership - staff management	1	Financial acumen and driving for results
2	Decision making/decisiveness	2	Leadership and influence	2	Communication skills	2	Strategic focus
3	Customer and people orientation, service commitment and positivity	3	Decision making/decisiveness	3	People skills	3	Communication, not just oral but all
4	Oral communication	4	Oral communication	4	Financial understanding and achievement	4	Collaboration and teamwork
5	Ethics, values and integrity	5	Personal presentation and grooming	5	Emotional intelligence	5	Innovation
6	Personal presentation and grooming	6	Interpersonal communication	6	Customer service	6	Technology and digital communication
7	Collaboration and teamwork	7	Collaboration and teamwork	7	Flexibility - adaptability	7	Resilience and self-care
8	Passion for the industry, self-motivation, flexibility and commitment	8	Personal organisation and time management	8	Time management		
9	Problem solving	9	Relationship building and knowing your staff	9	Change management		
10	Interpersonal communication	10	Attention to detail and adherence to standards	10	Practical job knowledge		
11	Drive to improve service, products, team performance and business results	11	Ethics, values and integrity				
12	Mentoring, coaching and encouraging staff development	12	Problem solving				
13	Relationship building and knowing your staff	13	Passion for the industry, self-motivation, flexibility and commitment				
14	Attention to detail and adherence to standards	14	Planning, coordinating and organising				
15	Personal organisation and time management	15	Drive to improve service, products, team performance and business results				

8.2.11 Determining key required hospitality competencies (RQ1)

In defining key required hospitality competencies, several findings have been presented within this chapter, and through various data collection formats these competencies have been evaluated to determine their importance. As previously indicated, all of the 48 competencies included within the developed framework have been identified as being at least of moderate importance, with the majority being determined as either essential, or of considerable importance (Tas, 1988). From the various findings presented (within Table 8.6), some conclusions can now be drawn to determine the most essential hotel management competencies. Following synthesis of the various findings (taken from Table 8.6), an inclusive list is established which identifies the most important competencies required from competent hotel Operations Managers. These outcomes, presented in Table 8.7, directly respond to RQ1. This table identifies the 15 most important competencies determined, which will later be compared to other studies.

Table 8.7: Project outcomes identifying hotel Operations Managers' most important competencies

Most important hotel management competencies or attributes
Leadership/staff management and relations
Communication skills, oral and interpersonal
Customer service commitment and positivity
Decision-making/decisiveness
People skills and emotional intelligence
Financial management and results orientation
Collaboration and teamwork
Passion, self-motivation and commitment
Ethics, values and integrity
Visioning, strategic thinking and innovation
Problem solving
Personal presentation and grooming
Flexibility, adaptability and change management
Personal organisation and time management
Resilience and self-care

The conclusions drawn from Table 8.7 emphasise the prominence of leadership capabilities. Several attributes identified within this list, such as decision-making, collaboration, strategic thinking and change management have leadership orientations. Furthermore, communication and 'people skills', which include elements of customer service and teamwork, also feature prominently. Additionally, within this final list, a number

of the attributes emphasise a strong personal and behavioural orientation, which suggests that a person's motivation and positive attitude are also important considerations. Collectively, many of the competencies within Table 8.7 are colloquially referred to as 'soft skills' (Robles, 2012). These skills are the interpersonal qualities/people skills, and other personal attributes that one possesses (Robles, 2012). Additionally, when further analysing the outcomes from Table 8.7, it is noted that, from the 15 essential competencies or attributes identified, most also incorporate aspects of dispositional knowledge. This type of knowledge comprises attitudes, values, interests, and intentions, and it is these features that guide an individual's conscious thinking and acting (Billett, 2015). Hence, this knowledge influences an individual's behaviour and actions. Considering the relationship orientation of the hospitality industry, the development of this knowledge is deemed important.

According to Billett (2015, p. 369) the dispositions associated with the requirements for work have three dimensions: i) Social – the accepted patterns and norms associated with human interaction (e.g., the collegial behaviours shown both to customers and to other staff), ii) Occupational Specific – the values, norms, and practices expected of those practicing in the profession (e.g., positivity and a willingness to serve others), and iii) Personal – actions, conceptions and individual preferences, how individuals direct their efforts in using and further developing knowledge. Therefore, individuals' positive approach and motivation to undertake their job, and to continue to develop professionally, are highly desired attributes in the hospitality industry. Importantly, when staff are motivated, and happy in their jobs, this reflects positively to customers (Swift, 2016; Wagner, 2017), which is important for success in the competitive service-oriented hospitality industries (Rao, 2015; Reiman, 2014). In sum, the findings suggest that for managerial and organisational success in hospitality, well developed 'soft skills' and dispositional knowledge are essential. The following section elaborates further on these required capacities.

8.2.12 Importance of personal and behavioural orientations

It is apparent that the development of 'soft skills' and dispositional knowledge is more desired in the hospitality industry, compared to other forms of knowledge and skills. Indeed, within the 15 most important attributes identified (see Table 8.7); there are only three that are aligned to technical skills: 'Financial Management and Results Orientation', 'Problem-

Solving', and 'Personal Organisation and Time Management'. These findings reinforce that it is the 'soft skills', a person's attitudes, values, interests, and intentions (i.e., dispositional knowledge) (Billett, 2015), rather than their technical skills and capabilities (i.e., conceptual and procedural knowledge) (Billett, 2015) which are better predictors of hospitality management job performance. This outcome is consistent with Cox (2015), who also identified the importance of 'soft skills', and Wardle (2014), who found that having the 'right attitude' was the single most important attribute for hospitality career progression. Moreover, Huang, Lalopa, and Adler (2016) also determined that these intrinsic characteristics, such as attitude and motivation, were considered the most important in the hospitality industry, compared to job-specific technical skills. Building on this notion, Murphy (2012) found that over 80% of a worker's success is based on attitude, rather than skills.

Further reinforcing the importance of attitude, Rao (2015) suggests skills can be more easily trained; however, he implies that it is much harder to change an individual's attitude. This proposition further highlights the significance of hospitality graduates possessing the right people/customer-orientated attitude. Where a positive attitude forms part of a person's 'personal brand' (Trought, 2012), it has important employability considerations. Hence, having the 'right attitude' becomes an essential hospitality commodity, in terms of organisational success, initial employability and long-term career attainment. Indeed, in the hospitality industry, it is often implied, 'hire for attitude, and train for skills' (Rao, 2015), and this study's outcomes strongly reinforce this premise.

Adding to the significance of these personal factors, both Wardle (2014) and Petkovski (2012) have established that other related 'soft skills', such as emotional intelligence and work ethic, are also considered essential characteristics for hospitality staff to possess. These two characteristics strongly rely on attitude, values, interests, and intentions, and closely resemble the key findings determined from this study. The importance placed on attitude in the hospitality industry is also reinforced by the President of the American Hospitality Academy, who states, 'it's your attitude, not your aptitude that will determine your altitude' (Reiman, 2014, p. 4). In sum, it is emphasised from the outcomes presented within this section, that the development of 'soft skills' and related dispositional knowledge, which includes having the right people and customer service orientated attitude is essential

within the hospitality industry. Accordingly, within Section 8.3, considerations of how these ‘soft skills’ can be developed are further discussed. To enable additional analysis, key outcomes from RQ1 are now further compared to other similar studies.

8.2.13 Comparing key competency findings with other related studies

Findings drawn from addressing RQ1 (What types of management related competencies are required of competent hotel operational managers?) are now compared to other studies. Firstly, key findings are compared to the previous similar Australian Raybould and Wilkins 2006 study, which highlighted ten most important skill requirements identified by Hotel Managers. Table 8.8 presents their findings.

Table 8.8: Raybould and Wilkins: Most important identified skills

Raybould and Wilkins (2006, p. 184) Hotel Managers’ ten most important skills
Deal effectively with customers’ problems
Maintain professional and ethical standards in the workplace
Operate effectively and calmly in crisis situations
Demonstrate empathy in dealing with customers and staff
Demonstrate listening skills
Anticipate client needs
Demonstrate time management skills
Demonstrate cultural awareness in dealing with staff and guests
Communicate appropriately with other members of a work group
Work without close supervision

In comparing the Raybould and Wilkins findings from 2006 with the outcomes from this study, it is apparent that hotel management leadership skills are identified as being more desirable now in Australia compared to ten years ago. In the 2006 study, there was no specific identification of leadership, or of staff management skills, within their top ten most important skills required. However, there was some reference to generic leadership traits within their top ten items. In contrast, within this study, leadership was rated as the most important required competency, and was also implied within several of the other important attributes identified. This outcome suggests the growing importance of leadership capabilities in Australian hotels now, compared to a decade ago. The findings from this study are also compatible with several other world-wide studies, where leadership capabilities have specifically been identified as essential hospitality management requirements (see Breiter & Dements, 1996; Buergermeister, 1983; Chung-Herrera et al.,

2003; Enz, Renaghan, & Geller, 1993; Huang & Lin, 2010; Kwok, Adams, & Price, 2011; Nelson & Dopson, 2001; Okeiyi, Finley, & Postell, 1994; Oktadiana & Chon, 2017; Suh, West, & Shin, 2012; Tas, 1988; Tas et al., 1996; Weber, Crawford, Lee, & Dennison, 2013).

Another area that this study identified as being important was 'Financial Management and Results Orientation'; in the comparative 2006 Raybould and Wilkins Australian study, there was no identification of any financial capabilities within their top ten required attributes. A plausible explanation for the variances, in both leadership and financial aspects, could be the increasing performance and financial expectations now being experienced within international hotels (Walker, 2016). However, the findings from this current study, emphasising the importance of financial capabilities, are consistent with previous hospitality management research findings (see Agut, Grau, & Peiro, 2003; Ashley et al., 1995; Baum, 1990, 1991; Jauhari, 2006; Johanson, Ghiselli, Shea, & Roberts, 2011; Lin, 2002; Mayo & Thomas-Haysbert, 2005; Su, Miller, & Shanklin, 1997).

Some further elements identified as being important within this study, that were not recognised as being important by Raybould and Wilkins in 2006, include characteristics associated with personal presentation and self-management. Similarly, other previous hospitality studies have also found these characteristics to be especially important (see Baum, 1990, 1991; Christou & Eaton, 1997; Nickson, Warhurst, & Dutton, 2005; Oktadiana & Chon, 2017; Petkovski, 2012; Tas, 1988; Tesone & Ricci, 2009; Tesone & Ricci, 2012; Tsai, Goh, Huffman, & Wu, 2006; Yang et al., 2014). Indeed, given the corporate- and customer-orientated emphasis of the international hotel industry, and the demanding aspects of hospitality work, these personal elements are considered especially important, and have been particularly reinforced throughout the qualitative accounts.

Further comparison of the current findings with Raybould and Wilkins's 2006 study, notes that the aspect of 'Cultural Awareness' was identified as their eighth most important capability, where, in the present study, this attribute rated in the bottom fifty percent, of the 48 competency items. This finding is revealing, given the continued rise in various international visitors to Australia over the past decade (Tourism Australia, 2017). Notably, with this continued rise in international visitors, presumably better skills in cultural awareness, rather than poorer, would be expected. Consequently, a deficit in these skills could have both perceptual and business implications for Australian tourism and

international hotels in general; therefore, this area may need some additional consideration.

However, there were five distinct areas where consistencies occurred between the current and the previous Australian 2006 study. These areas related to customer service, ethics, teamwork, communication, and 'people skills' (including interpersonal considerations). These particular elements have consistently remained important requirements of effective hotel managers in Australia over the past decade and, indeed, throughout the world over many years (Chung-Herrera et al., 2003; Dawson, Madera, Neal, & Chen, 2014; Enz et al., 1993; Gross, Benckendorff, Mair, & Whitelaw, 2017; Huang et al., 2016; Raybould & Wilkins, 2006; Tas, 1988; Tesone & Ricci, 2012).

It is noted within the Raybould and Wilkins study, that nine of their top ten requirements were also directly related to individuals' attitudes, rather than to skills. This finding, too, mirrors the outcomes presented here. The only descriptor in the Raybould and Wilkins's top ten required competencies that could be considered skill orientated, is 'Time Management'. Another noteworthy alignment in findings between the current study and the Raybould and Wilkins study is, that none of the most important identified competencies relate specifically to knowledge. This finding also remains consistent with previous related research presented within this thesis, where within hospitality management; more reliance is placed on personal capabilities than on knowledge and skills (Cox, 2015; Reiman, 2014). Indeed, this deduction has been continually reinforced within this study's findings and in the literature reviewed. Notably, the reliance on 'soft skills' within the hospitality industry, emphasised in Chapters 1 and 2, continues to be increasingly required now.

In summary, the various quantitative and qualitative findings have been consolidated within this section to comprehensively address RQ1. From the analysis presented, a range of important hospitality management competencies have been identified and ranked in terms of their perceived importance. A final list of 15 essential hotel Operations Manager's competencies that has been determined, highlights the importance of various leadership, personal, attitudinal and behavioural attributes ('soft skills'). Moreover, the identified important competencies have been further compared to those in the most recent Australian study of this kind undertaken, and also to other related research within the wider hospitality

fields. The following section addresses RQ2 (determining the curriculum and pedagogic considerations to enhance the employability of hotel management graduates).

8.3 Curriculum and pedagogic considerations enhancing hotel management graduates' employability (RQ2)

To further inform the overall research aim, the following section advances the requirements deemed to be needed by hotel Operations Managers in the future. Subsequently, an exploration of how key required hospitality management competencies are developed is undertaken. Finally, this section outlines the hotel industry's current level of satisfaction with hotel management graduates. Together these endeavours are designed to inform curriculum and pedagogic practices which may potentially improve hotel management educational outcomes and graduate employability.

8.3.1 Future competencies required of hotel Operations Managers

To enhance employability outcomes, it is helpful to consider future industry requirements. Most undergraduate students in Australia graduate from university after a period of three years. Given this time period, the current pace of change, and the time taken to implement curriculum reform, as well as considering the current hospitality industry management requirements, it is also beneficial to ascertain the likely future managerial requirements (Newman, Couturier, & Scurry, 2004; Rikowski, 2001). This information can then potentially be used to inform impending educational practice, contributing to a contemporary industry relevant curriculum. This section discusses findings that indicate evolving hotel management requirements; determining these factors may benefit hotel management graduate employability.

As outlined in Chapter 7, the interview findings established a list of eight key competencies (refer Table 7.8) that were identified as being the most needed by hotel Operations Managers within the next three to five years. From the list of eight future competencies; 'Leadership/Staff Management', and 'Guest/Customer Orientation', were most prominently identified, and together contributed to half of all responses. Therefore, it is suggested that the two specific elements of 'Leadership' and 'Customer Service' should be more emphasised within the hotel management curriculum in the future. This prominence could be achieved by adopting more case studies, along with other applied and experiential

learning practices. The finding that leadership and customer service are best developed within the workplace, emphasises the importance of WIL within the curriculum. Additionally, from the list of eight future required capabilities, six were seen as being currently required; this represents a 75% consistency between current and future required hospitality competencies. The two additional items, identified as being important for future, but not indicated as being as important now, were 'Technology', and 'Competitive Analysis'. This recognition raises the significance of these two areas; it is suggested they too should be more emphasised within the curriculum.

Technology skills seem particularly relevant in the areas of social and digital media, and the advancing technologies that are impacting on guest services, such as smart-phone check-in and check-out, as these will be increasingly more important into the future. These findings are consistent with Kramer (2017), who suggests that technology-driven workplace changes will continue to spread and accelerate into the near future. In terms of Competitive Analysis, findings indicate that competitors are coming from nowhere, such as Airbnb. Social media accessibility and positioning, and increasing localised competition, are also forcing hotels to revisit their marketing agendas and competitive positions.

Thus, the findings suggest that both technology, such as digital and social media, and a deeper focus on competitive forces, should be incorporated into the hospitality curriculum. Perhaps these aspects could be emphasised more in existing marketing-related or even newly developed specific courses orientated to these areas. Indeed, the benefits of understanding the future advances impacting the hotel industry are that these can be incorporated more into the hotel management curriculum. Educational institutions can then be at the forefront of these developments, exposing students to pertinent evolving learning opportunities. Consequently, students will graduate with more awareness and contemporary understanding of the impending needs of the hotel industry, which will likely benefit both their short- and long-term employability.

Furthermore, from a review of the relevant literature, little previous research has been identified that has specifically addressed either the future requirements of hotel managers or the implications of this on the hotel management curriculum. This study has endeavoured to advance this knowledge.

One prior study identified (see Suh et al., 2012), recognised 'Tolerance for Change' as an important hospitality future requirement. However, this specific attribute was not identified as being important for future hotel managers within this study. A possible reason for this inconsistency could be that 'change management' has already been receiving an increasing focus in business education and in businesses over the past five years (Pugh, 2016). The following section builds on this discussion addressing how some of the currently most important and future hotel management competencies identified can be best acquired by students.

8.3.2 Developing hotel management competencies

In addition to identifying important competencies, it is also important for sound educational outcomes to consider how these capabilities are learnt. As previously indicated, all interview participants were current hotel Operations Managers, from both Food and Beverage and Rooms Division. Nineteen of these managers held tertiary qualifications, and fifteen of these qualifications were in hotel or hospitality management. Both these factors enabled participants to reflect appropriately on how they acquired the competencies required for them to undertake their roles. Consequently, participants were able to give both a current manager's, and a graduate's perspective on how specific capabilities are developed.

During the interviews, respondents were asked to indicate how they developed skills in the top five most important competencies previously identified from the survey supporting this research. Due to time considerations, only the top five traits (leadership; decision-making; customer service; oral communication; and ethics, values and integrity) were chosen to investigate in the interviews. The following section focuses on how each of these particular capabilities is developed, further informing RQ2. The first attribute discussed is leadership.

8.3.3 Learning leadership

From the analysis presented in Chapter 7, three key themes emerged about how leadership is best developed. Respondents indicated that they mostly developed leadership capabilities through three circumstances, i) finding it innate, existing already within their own character, ii) having it developed through a mentor and, iii) learning on the job, by doing, through reflection and by watching others.

Key comments made about leadership being innate, related to being a born leader, and wishing to be a leader rather than a follower. Informants who expressed these views most likely attest to the 'Great Man' theory of leadership, which suggests leaders are born and not made (Borgatta, Bales, & Couch, 1954). However, there are broader views on how leadership skills are developed; many suggest that a combination of factors, including many childhood and adult learning experiences, contribute to developing leadership capacity (Gaither, 2004; Van Velsor, McCauley, & Ruderman, 2010). Therefore, it is enlightening that some participants suggested they possessed their leadership characteristics innately.

The second prominent way expressed to learn leadership, was through being mentored; one participant (respondent #7), who is currently being mentored by the hotel General Manager, stated: 'I'm finding it invaluable'. Indeed, mentorship has been previously recognised as particularly beneficial in developing leadership capabilities (Day, 2001; Jackson, 2016). Additionally, other participants suggested that learning leadership has been an on-going process, learnt on the job, by doing, reflecting, and by watching others. This was summed up fittingly by Participant #5, who commented, 'I've become better at leadership through experience, through learning from mistakes, a lot of them. Also, through exceptional leaders that I've learned from as well'. Certainly, the workplace provides an ideal environment to develop leadership capacity, especially when employees are in developmental roles, and are placed in situations where they are 'stretched' (Day, 2001). These considerations about leadership highlight the benefits of workplace learning, emphasising the importance of WIL as an essential part of the hotel management curriculum, and as an appropriate pedagogical approach to begin developing students' leadership capacities.

Notably, none of the informants' comments relating to learning leadership indicated that this capacity was developed within higher education. This is a revealing outcome, considering 19 of the 20 interview participants held tertiary qualifications. Accordingly, respondent #15 reflected that 'I gained knowledge from university, but I never learned to be a leader'. The consensus from this study about leadership suggests that it is best learned through experience, on the job, via mentors and trial and error, and not in the classroom. This outcome is consistent with Kerfoot (1998), who advocates that leadership is best, and probably only learned through experience. Similarly, Dotlich and Noel (1998) and Newman

et al. (2004) add that classroom-based learning is only partially effective in preparing leaders, because there is often too much focus on content delivery, with a lack of depth and application. The views expressed by these scholars support the findings from this study on how leadership skills are developed; that these capabilities are mostly developed outside the classroom and within the workplace. However, this finding also suggests that more emphasis on exposing students to leadership development opportunities within curriculum should be undertaken, and this is recommended.

Indeed, if all current and potential leaders believed leadership could be developed only outside the classroom, there would be diminished demand for expensive MBA programs. However, currently, the popularity of these programs is increasing, as organisations search for more qualified leaders and the employment market becomes more competitive (Gellman, 2015). Certainly, Elmuti, Minnis, and Abebe (2005) suggest that education can play a role in leadership development by exposing students to more leadership opportunities; however, Elmuti et al. (2005) also acknowledge that education alone cannot make a leader, which is evidenced by many successful leaders who are not highly educated. In sum, it seems that on-going learning in the workplace and mentorships are the most effective ways to develop essential leadership capabilities. Additionally, education can do more in developing leadership capabilities by providing more opportunities for students to apply leadership theory to practice. This could be achieved by developing more industry partnerships, resulting in more WIL opportunities, and also through including more problem-based and group-learning activities (Burnard, 1996). The following section outlines how decision-making can be learned.

8.3.4 Learning decision-making

How can the second identified important competency, 'Decision-Making', be learned? The findings revealed that this attribute is best learnt by 'doing' (by making decisions, and then reflecting on the outcomes). One suggestion indicated that this attribute can be developed in the workplace, by watching more experienced others. These approaches to learning decision-making are supported by Eraut (2004), who suggests the workplace provides an ideal environment for learning this attribute, mainly through reflection. Moreover, some participants implied that making decisions and learning from the outcomes increases their confidence in making future decisions. Similarly, it was suggested that with more experience

in the workplace, product knowledge develops, which as a result, also raises confidence, and therefore decision-making capabilities. Once more, the education setting was not identified as an environment where this attribute can be developed. The workplace was again recognised as the optimal location to develop decision-making capabilities, indicating the importance of situational accounts. Overall, this outcome is understandable, given the many opportunities available in the work-environment for decisions to be made, and where the consequences are apparent. These findings further strengthen the case for the workplace as an essential learning environment to develop key hospitality capabilities. The next stage in this analysis explores how customer service is best learned.

8.3.5 Learning customer service capabilities

The third key important competency identified is that of 'Guest/Customer Service Orientation'. This competency, as depicted within the literature reviewed for this thesis, is one of the most enduring features of the hospitality industry, and is often where success or failure of a hospitality business is determined (Hudson & Hudson, 2017; Olorunniwo, Hsu, & Udo, 2006). Therefore, it is not surprising that this attribute was rated so highly in importance. In terms of how capabilities are developed in customer service, the findings indicate that this attribute is mostly learned through practice and workplace experience. It is implicit from the findings that the workplace provides an essential environment where these social and 'other orientated' skills are developed.

This proposition is supported by Stewart, Wall, and Marciniiec (2016); Matthing, Sandén, and Edvardsson (2004); and Timm (2014), who all suggest that, to facilitate proactive learning about customer service, direct customer involvement in real action is required. Suggestions were also made that individuals develop a passion for customer service over time, which requires exposure to customers within the workplace. Moreover, as with learning leadership and decision-making, there was no mention of this attribute being acquired in the education setting. This outcome is not surprising, given the limited opportunities for customer interaction at university, and the reduction of practice-based training facilities within Australian hospitality higher education institutions (Robinson, Breakey, & Craig-Smith, 2010).

Consequently, there now remains limited opportunity to develop these highly desirable customer-orientated capabilities within higher education settings alone. This

realisation raises questions of how hospitality management students can develop vital customer service capabilities. Essentially, if students currently have no opportunity to be exposed to customers, and other practical components within higher education environments, then these skills must be exclusively acquired externally, optimally in the workplace. This proposition places an increased emphasis on WIL and on external work experience opportunities to fill this important void. Determining how students learn oral communication skills is now considered.

8.3.6 Learning oral communication skills

How can the fourth identified important competency, 'Oral Communication' be learnt? The findings relating to how this attribute is acquired remain for the most part, consistent with the three capabilities already considered. These skills are developed over time, through practice and mostly via workplace experience. However, some reference was made to the education setting in developing oral communication skills, specifically through undertaking in-class presentations at university. Developing oral communication skills, it seems, can be enhanced in both the educational and workplace settings (Crosling & Ward, 2002).

Therefore, it is recommended that students continue to receive opportunities to develop these skills in both the educational and workplace environments. Overall, the findings indicate that communication skills can be learned and enhanced over time, both within education and throughout working life. This premise is supported by Kurtz, Silverman, and Draper (2004), who suggest that communication skills are not part of a person's personality, but are a series of learned skills that develop progressively. How students learn ethics and associated values will now be examined.

8.3.7 Learning ethics, values and integrity

Two main themes emerge about how to approach learning the fifth and final important identified attribute; 'Ethics, Values and Integrity'. Firstly, they are considered to be part of a person's character and influenced by a person's upbringing; secondly, these skills are thought to develop through education. It was implied that a person's family influences are important in instilling good ethical behaviours, which are then evident through a person's character. In essence, it was suggested that a sense of right and wrong is mostly developed through family values. Additionally, the education setting was noted as a key environment

where ethical behaviours are formed, a suggestion supported by Hindo (2002). Indeed, it seems education has an important role to play in ethics education; where Elmuti et al. (2005) propose that the need for thorough ethics education has never been greater. Furthermore, a revealing outcome from this study is that there was no reference to the workplace as an environment where ethical behaviours are developed; this is surprising, given the on-going scrutiny surrounding corporate governance. Moreover, this outcome was enlightening given the previous identification of the significance of workplace mentors, and given the higher moral and ethical standards imposed on leaders today (Elmuti et al., 2005). Accordingly, one might expect these ideals to be instilled into others within the workplace.

In summary, this section has highlighted that learning the top five key identified competencies; 'Leadership', 'Decision-Making', 'Customer Service', 'Oral Communication', and 'Ethics Values and Integrity', are mainly achieved as an on-going process, through practice and optimally via workplace experience. It is evident that the workplace provides an essential environment where key required hospitality management competencies are acquired. Furthermore, it was identified that the educational setting assists with the development of key communication skills, and provides a necessary setting to develop ethical behaviours. It was further suggested that within the education setting, more applied learning principles could be incorporated, especially to develop leadership capacities. Consequently, it seems both the workplace and the education settings have important roles to play in developing essential required hospitality competencies. This suggestion further strengthens the appeal of WIL, where students as part of their education can begin to develop essential capabilities in both educational and workplace settings simultaneously.

This section has highlighted that essential hospitality competencies are mostly personally and behaviourally orientated ('soft skills'). A key further consideration then for hospitality management educators is to help determine how these 'soft skills' can be best developed.

8.3.8 Learning essential soft skills

Various findings presented within these chapters have identified important hospitality management competencies as being mostly 'soft skills'. It is therefore worthwhile to consider how this range of skills can best be developed. As introduced in Chapter 3, this range of soft skills includes various non-technical capabilities (Beard et al., 2008; Onisk,

2011) comprising mainly an individual's personal attributes and interpersonal qualities (Robles, 2012). Shakir (2009) refers to these skills generally as 'people skills', and concurs that these skills are increasingly required in today's workplaces.

The increasing importance of soft skills within organisations has arisen due to the social transformation which has occurred with the deterioration in manufacturing seen in many parts of the world (Drucker, 1994). This decline in manufacturing has resulted in the rise of the service economy, and thus, an increasing need for the 'knowledge worker' (Drucker, 1994). Indeed, currently in Australia, according to Murphy (2016), making things is officially over; we are now a country whose economy is about helping people and doing things. Consequently, leaders in the current era, and especially in the service industries, now require more social and interpersonal skills, rather than technical ones (Davis & Muir, 2004; Walker, 2016).

Adding to the challenges within modern workplaces is change. Transformation is constant within service organisations today, and is often disruptive (Bunker & Wakefield, 2004). Therefore, leaders now and into the future will increasingly require effective soft skills to articulate and implement a vision for change, to encourage others in possibilities, and to communicate the appropriate standards, values and expectations (Davis & Muir, 2004). Accordingly, with the importance of soft skills development apparent, the challenge now is to find how best to develop these required capabilities in higher education graduates. This challenge is compounded because there is currently insufficient importance placed on the development of soft skills in higher education (Andrews & Higson, 2008; Rainsbury et al., 2002). Moreover, developing students' soft skills while in education is made more difficult because these outcomes are less measurable, and vary in individuals according to their character and background (Shakir, 2009). Although challenging, this predicament calls for a review in strategy and an increased focus within hospitality tertiary education on developing students' soft skills.

As introduced in Chapter 3, experiential learning represents an opportunity to develop and demonstrate students' soft skills (Beard et al., 2008; Burnard, 1996). Thus, it is suggested that this approach to learning be further emphasised within hospitality management education. A requirement for Experiential Learning and the subsequent development of soft skills, is an individual's willingness to recognise learning opportunities,

engage with these affordances and possess a desire to further develop or change (Schulz, 2008). Therefore, providing opportunities for students to actively learn, and encouraging them to participate fully, and reflect on their associated learning, is an essential consideration. Another important step in developing students' soft skills is to raise their awareness about the importance of these skills (Schulz, 2008), and also the consequences of shortcomings. Indeed, students must be encouraged to realise the importance of enhancing their soft skills to compete in the hospitality graduate job market and beyond (Shakir, 2009). However, developing these soft skills is more difficult than developing technical or hard skills (Bronson, 2007; Robles, 2012). Therefore, the following section offers some further suggestions.

8.3.9 Education strategies to develop soft skills

Determining how to teach and develop soft skills is often challenging for educators (Zehr, 1998). However, Experiential Learning and related instructional strategies and methods can be incorporated into the classroom to enhance students' interpersonal outcomes (Robles, 2012). Certainly, soft skills development can be integrated into the curriculum and classroom activities via an array of activities including case studies, undertaking applied projects, group work, videotaping and reviewing, and oral presentations (Beard et al., 2008; Lolli, 2013).

In developing soft skills within the classroom, the teaching style is important; it must be student- and learner-centred, where the teacher adopts more the role of facilitator (Shakir, 2009). Moreover, when these classroom-based active learning approaches are used in combination with workplace learning, and especially where learning outcomes from within both settings are integrated, together they provide an excellent platform to develop desired soft skills (Billett, 2009b). Thus, the workplace also becomes an important learning environment. Certainly, the physical and social circumstances in which workplace activities occur play a key role in the cognitive process that comprises thinking, acting, and learning (Billett, 2014b). Indeed, having close guidance from workplace colleagues, and engaging in direct interpersonal interactions with knowledge that is unlikely to be learnt by discovery alone, may well be essential (Billett, 2014b). Therefore, students should be continually encouraged to undertake all possible work opportunities, especially in roles that require interactions with others. Ideally, then following these workplace interactions comes an

opportunity to reflect, and to facilitate the sharing and drawing out of students' various interpersonal experiences, which should also be incorporated back into the classroom (Billett, 2009b).

Thus, a framework for developing soft skills within higher education is suggested. This approach places a focus on two key factors: i) appropriate learning strategies on the part of the student (i.e., students' active learning and engagement) and, ii) appropriate teaching and learning strategies and environments (i.e., classroom and workplace) on the part of the education provider and teacher (Billett, 2009b; Boyce, Williams, Kelly, & Yee, 2001).

Together, these two elements can help generate desired soft skills and thus, positive employability outcomes for hospitality graduates. Further building on this theme, the following section discusses employability requirements more specifically.

8.3.10 Key employability skills hotel employers value in graduates

To build on the discussion surrounding employability, and to further address RQ2, the key skills which employers most seek when employing hotel management graduates will now be deliberated. The findings from this study indicate that employers seek five main attributes when employing hospitality graduates: i) 'Attitude/Personality', ii) 'Previous Work Experience', iii) 'Passion', iv) 'Ambition/Career Direction and Orientation', and v) 'People/Customer Service Skills'. Of particular significance, once more, is that the majority of these initial employability attributes identified relate to soft skills and are attitudinal, with little inference to technical skills or knowledge. These findings are consistent with Kim (2008), who also found that specific knowledge and skills were not considered important hospitality employability aspects. Similarly, Cox (2015), Wardle (2014), and Kim (2008) all determined that attitude/personality, and work experiences were especially important attributes required in hotel management graduates.

It is acknowledged that key hospitality employability characteristics such as 'Attitude', 'Work Experience' and 'Customer Service Orientation' are implied consistently within research presented throughout this thesis. However, the explicit personal aspects of 'Passion' and 'Ambition' have rarely been identified within past hospitality research as being key required employability attributes. Although these aspects could be somewhat related to a person's attitude, their importance was specifically identified within this study. Additionally, with reference to Raybould and Wilkins's (2006) findings, while self-

management skills were identified as being important, there was no specific identification of 'Passion' or 'Ambition' as being important. Thus, it is suggested, the specific attributes of 'Passion' and 'Ambition' is rising in significance within the hotel industry in Australia. Importantly, this study highlights these two particular elements as being increasingly relevant, and therefore, important considerations for both hospitality educators and graduates, in terms of enhancing employability. Consequently, hospitality educators and university career counsellors should be making students aware of the significance of displaying 'Passion' and 'Ambition'. Accordingly, the further use of industry guest speakers is also suggested, where students could be informed of these expectations directly from employers. To build on this discussion, the next section overviews how key hospitality employability skills are developed.

8.3.11 Learning key employability skills

In addition to identifying key hospitality employability requirements, to further inform RQ2, it is also desirable to ascertain how these key required employability attributes are learned. Because the majority of the key hospitality employability attributes relate to 'soft skills' and are attitudinal, a key to learning these elements rests with individuals themselves (Jackson, 2016; Kidd, 1973). Importantly, individuals must first be willing and motivated to learn. As succinctly put by interview informant #17, 'to be coachable is to have a good attitude'; thus emphasising individuals must embrace professional on-going feedback. Interview respondent #15 suggested that, hospitality personalities can be developed 'when you get out of your comfort zone, and with on-the-job experience, personalities to a degree, can be moulded'. These comments suggest that, with increased responsibility and experience within the particular workplace culture of a service organisation, a more suitable hospitality personality, can to a degree, be formed. This proposition further emphasises experiential learning principles, and sees the workplace as an essential hospitality learning environment. Additionally, students could also benefit from a personality assessment to ascertain if their personality is congruent with the hospitality industry's expectations.

Further building on an individual's motivation, and on how these personal orientations are developed, interview informant #14, when discussing how passion is acquired, stated, 'I don't think there is anything that can develop passion, it's more internal. Some people are just really suited to be in hospitality'. This participant also acknowledged feeding off other

people's energy, further implying that others and the internal organisational culture may also play a part in developing a person's work related attitude and passion (Armstrong & Taylor, 2014; Mausolf, 2013). Moreover, when determining how ambition is formed, interview participant #19 suggested; 'get experience in a range of different areas to build an understanding and knowledge base'. Furthermore, extra-curricular activities were also recommended to help shape ambition. Mentorship was also suggested as a mechanism for developing ambition, where admired and respected workplace mentors were seen as being positive role models in encouraging ambition in others.

These comments on developing employability skills suggest that broadening students' experience base within education, in the workplace and in the wider community, assists in fostering ambition. Additionally, when ascertaining how customer service skills are developed, all participants suggested that these abilities are developed through on-the-job experience, with interview respondent #15 adding, 'If you care, if you do it with your heart, then it is easier. You have to love people'. This reinforces the importance of having the right attitude towards others, especially customers. These collective findings imply that having the right service-orientated attitude, and being exposed to workplace and other external learning environments, are critical in developing essential hospitality employability characteristics.

Finally, participants made some generic comments on how learning key hospitality employability skills are achieved. The majority of these comments reinforced the importance of learning on the job; that is, learning from observation, from doing, and learning through time and experience. Consistently, the themes emerging from this discussion relate to the workplace as being an essential learning environment to enhance both initial and sustainable employability, and also emphasise the importance of an individual's motivation to learn; which are both consistent with the work of Billett (2014a).

This section has discussed how learning key hospitality employability attributes can be best achieved. In further building on this analysis, the following section ascertains the hospitality industry's current level of satisfaction with graduates and outlines the key strengths and weaknesses perceived in graduates.

8.4 Hotel management employability considerations

To further address RQ2, this section overviews the hotel industry's current level of satisfaction with hotel management graduates. This analysis outlines currently perceived qualities in graduates and identifies deficiencies. The benefit of this analysis is that it can help identify graduates' competitive advantages and highlight any key areas where further development may be required. The findings reveal that 10 of the 20 interview participants indicated they were currently satisfied with the quality of hotel management graduates. From the 10 who were not satisfied, the majority of their dissatisfaction resulted from graduates' lack of practical experience, which was a similar concern of Australian hospitality employers identified by Wardle (2014). It is evident that during initial graduate recruitment, hospitality employers strongly value previous work experience. Therefore, the benefits of having prior work experience should be made clear to students; during their degrees hospitality students should be reminded that their career has already started, and does not commence upon graduation. This realisation further emphasises the importance of WIL, and strengthens its inclusion in hospitality higher education programs.

Some additional comments received from dissatisfied hospitality employers related to graduates' unrealistic job expectations upon graduation, which was also a finding mirrored by Wardle (2014) and Lefever and Withiam (1998). It seems some graduates are overly optimistic in their graduate position selections, where perceptually, their ambition does not match their capabilities. Consequently, university staff should be continually emphasising to students the importance of having realistic job expectations upon graduation, and this emphasis could be assisted by presenting appropriate positions suitable for graduates (Richardson, 2009). Indeed, if job expectations are not realistic, the time taken for graduates to secure employment will most likely be prolonged. Additionally, a lack of empathy/people skills, and having the wrong attitude, were also mentioned by some participants as unfavourable graduate attributes. These two aspects of empathy and attitude were also identified by Stewart et al. (2016) as being graduate shortfalls. Thus, these findings further emphasise the importance of soft skill development. Certainly, to benefit graduate employability outcomes, both hospitality educators and students should endeavour to ensure these personal capabilities are well developed and evident prior to graduation.

In sum, it seems hospitality employers are relatively satisfied with the quality of current graduates. However, some key considerations, highlighted in this section, indicate some areas for improvement. These areas include a lack of work experience, having unrealistic job expectations, an absence of empathy, and not having the right service-orientated attitude. If these deficiencies can be addressed by both educators and students, the initial employability of hotel management graduates is likely to be enhanced. Consequently, these aspects should be highlighted and reinforced to students through increased communication, industry guest lecturers, active classroom activities, and increased work experience opportunities. Such social interactions and work experience will increase industry understanding, and will further develop important personal orientations and soft skills (Eraut, 2004).

In addition to assessing the concerns raised by employers of graduates, this study also identified some perceived strengths and qualities graduates possess. By identifying these perceived strengths, both education institutions and graduates can be more aware of their competitive advantage in recruitment. Overall, the findings identified four main qualities evident in hotel management graduates. These perceived strengths were in the areas of i) 'Working to Deadlines', ii) 'Having Fresh and Innovative Ideas', iii) 'Being More Career Orientated', and iv) 'The Quality of Written Work'. These assessments were mostly made as a comparison to other staff who did not possess tertiary qualifications. It is implied from these findings that the university environment is beneficial in developing some key transferable skills. The ability to work to deadlines, and developing fresh and innovative ideas, were jointly identified as the most developed attributes generated from tertiary education. Additionally, being more career orientated, and the quality of written work, were equally identified as the second most developed attributes in graduates.

These findings are largely consistent with Alhelalat (2015), who also found Hotel Managers believe graduates have more advanced skills in time and self-management, communication, and also increased innovative capacities. However, being more career orientated was not identified as being a strength in graduates from the Alhelalat (2015) study. Though, it seems this item was neither assessed nor included within their purely quantitative survey. Additionally, other aspects such as 'Critical Thinking' and 'Knowledge of Technology', were also seen in both this, and the Alhelalat (2015) study, as skills being

somewhat more advanced in graduates, compared to non-graduates. From this analysis, it is evident respondents perceive that higher education has the capacity to develop some key hospitality required capabilities, and that graduates have some more advanced skills compared to non-graduates; these, if emphasised and further developed, may be used as a competitive advantage in initial employability.

This section has outlined that informants (hotel managers/employers) are adequately satisfied with current hotel management graduates. The findings highlight three main areas of concern managers have with current graduates. These concerns are: i) lacking work experience, ii) having unrealistic job expectations (mostly anticipating positions beyond their capabilities), and iii) relating to 'attitude'. The findings also revealed some perceived strengths observed in graduates: i) the ability to work to deadlines, ii) having fresh and innovative ideas, iii) being more career orientated, and iv) the quality of written work.

The outcomes from this analysis can potentially be used to inform curriculum practice and pedagogy and highlight for hotel management students the perceived strengths they could emphasise to gain a competitive employability advantage, both on graduation and beyond. Additionally, by being aware of their perceived weaknesses, both educators and students can put mechanisms in place to potentially address these issues. For example, the greatest weakness perceived in current hotel management graduates is a lack of practical work experience. Therefore, developing more industry partnerships and facilitating more WIL opportunities is recommended. Furthermore, what makes the workplace even more appealing is that it has also been identified as an ideal environment to develop many of the desired hotel management capabilities, including various essential soft skills. These outcomes therefore further support the incorporation of WIL within the hotel management curriculum.

This section has addressed RQ2, which aimed at informing curriculum and pedagogic considerations to enhance hotel management graduate employability. To inform this question, eight key areas have been identified as the most needed capabilities of hotel Operations Managers within the next three to five years (see Chapter 7, Table 7.8). From this list of eight items, more than half of the suggestions related to two main areas; 'Leadership and Staff Management', and 'Customer Service Orientation'. These two areas are the most significant required capabilities of hotel Operations Managers in the near

future. Important also was that the majority of both currently required and future hospitality capabilities related to soft skills. Therefore, the development of these soft skills should be more emphasised within the hotel management curriculum, and should be further developed through increased in-class experiential learning activities and associated integrated workplace experience.

Two areas were identified as being important into the future, but were not identified as being currently important. These two areas were 'Technology', and 'Competitive Analysis'. Technology mainly related to better understanding marketing advances in social media and smart phone capabilities, while competitive analysis was identified as important due to the on-going threats from non-traditional competitors, such as Airbnb. From these outcomes it is suggested that the two areas of 'Technology' (mainly relating to software) and 'Competitive Analysis', should be more emphasised within the hotel management curriculum.

This section has also highlighted the significance of the education setting in developing both Communication and Ethics skills. Therefore, it is further recommended that teaching these elements be continued and emphasised within the hotel management curriculum. Furthermore, another key outcome from this section is the identification of a range of personal attributes which have been considered most important when seeking to employ graduates. These attributes relate to 'Personality', 'Attitude', 'Passion' and 'Ambition', and also highlight the importance of having previous work experience. Consequently, to enhance graduates' employability, efforts should be made to further develop these dimensions, and their importance must be continually emphasised within the curriculum, pedagogy and directly to students. Importantly, students must also be fully committed to developing capacities in these areas.

Another important outcome from this section was the identification of some graduate deficits. Attributes seen to be lacking in graduates include; a service-related attitude, having unrealistic job expectations, and the amount of work experience. Accordingly, these points should be continually addressed and reinforced to students. Additionally, this section noted four key perceived strengths and qualities that graduates possess: i) 'Working to Deadlines', ii) 'Having Fresh and Innovative ideas', iii) 'Being More Career Orientated', and iv) 'The Quality of Written Work'. Identifying both the perceived strengths and the weakness of

graduates means this knowledge can then be reinforced to both educators and students; attention to these areas should assist graduates in both initial and long-term employability.

This section has addressed RQ2 highlighting key curriculum and pedagogic considerations which, if adopted, could potentially improve the employability of hotel management graduates for the benefit of all stakeholders. It is evident from within this section that the education and workplace settings are both important learning environments for the development of essential hospitality management capabilities, and where WIL, and the integration of work related experiences back into the classroom, have an important role to play in this outcome. In further informing the overall research aim and addressing RQ3, the following section explores the role of WIL in enhancing graduate employability.

8.5 The role of WIL in contributing to hotel management graduate employability (RQ3)

This section builds on the previous one and discusses findings which report on the contribution WIL makes in benefiting hotel management graduates' employability. Consequently, this section directly informs Research Question 3. As determined within the chapter thus far, it is highly desirable for graduates to possess previous work experience, both to aid in initial employability, and to develop key required hospitality capabilities. Indeed, extensive literature reviewed within this thesis and findings outlined within this chapter specifically point to the many benefits of incorporating WIL within hotel management degrees. Moreover, the importance of WIL has been further validated by participants when they were asked if WIL should be made mandatory within hotel management degrees in Australia. As presented in Chapter 7, all 20 interview respondents agreed that it should. This very strong support from the hotel industry for the inclusion of WIL in hotel management programs is consistent with Cox's (2015) and Wardle's (2014) findings. Certainly, due to its employability benefits (Dacre Pool & Sewell, 2007); WIL in hospitality education has always been viewed favourably by the industry, and has been a key component of hospitality education since its conception (Airey & Tribe, 2000).

Regarding employability, WIL continues to be seen as advantageous by the hotel industry; the findings revealed that 15 of the 20 interview participants indicated that previous WIL experiences are important considerations when hiring graduates. This finding is consistent with Bowes and Harvey (1999), Ring et al. (2009), Wilton (2012), Smith, Ferns,

and Russell (2014), Wang and Tsai (2014) and Wardle (2014), who all found employers in agreement that WIL participation contributes positively to employability. Another notable finding relating to employability, came from the five participants who indicated WIL was not a very important consideration when hiring graduates. The majority of these five respondents suggested they preferred to hire based on attitude and personality, rather than on specific experience. This finding highlights the importance of attitude and builds a strong case that a combination of established soft skills and quality WIL experiences together may be the best contributor to enhance hotel management graduate employability. This proposition is consistent with Wardle's (2014) findings that attitude and work experience were regarded as the two most desirable hospitality employability considerations by hotel managers. Furthermore, as noted, the argument for the inclusion of WIL is made more compelling by the workplace being found to be the best environment to help develop many of these essential soft/attitudinal skills (Billett, 2009b; Spowart, 2011; Su et al., 1997).

In further reinforcing the inclusion of WIL, the majority of interview respondents (12/20) indicated that they would like to see more practice opportunities incorporated into the hotel management curriculum. Conversely, no participant indicated that there should be more theory incorporated into hotel management degrees. Together, these findings suggest the hotel industry currently views WIL as essential, it aids graduates' employability and provides an essential learning environment, and that WIL should be incorporated into the hospitality curriculum.

Moreover, with regards to the specific benefits of WIL, the findings revealed six key areas where WIL benefits hotel management graduate outcomes. These supportive themes include: i) providing a realistic expectation of the industry and appreciating how challenging the industry actually is, ii) reconfirming the student's career decision and direction, iii) providing a good way for employers to trial future employees, iv) assisting students in gaining initial employment, given the importance placed on previous work experience, v) ensuring a foundation of experience for students to later build on, and vi) increasing the overall quality of graduates entering the industry, which will also benefit the industry in the future. These six benefits of WIL identified within this study support the literature (see Chapter 3, Section 3.10) that highlighted a range of WIL benefits. Three notable consistencies between previously presented literature and this study's findings are: WIL

provides the opportunity to affirm career choices, to learn specific competencies and cultures of particular professions, and to experience a realistic overview of the occupation.

A further contribution from this study is that WIL is especially seen by hotel managers as providing an opportunity to trial future employees, and to improve graduate skill outcomes. In addition to these direct employer benefits, WIL also encourages students to reflect on their own learning (Jackson, 2013); the workplace also provides the ideal environment for students to connect theory to practice (Billett, 2009b; Smith et al., 2014; Walo, 2001). Importantly, this connection can occur before, during and after WIL placements (Billett, 2009b), and also in subsequent employment, which then enables graduates to continue to consolidate their university learning. Overall, incorporating WIL into hotel management programs offers many associated benefits for graduates that will assist in both their short- and long-term employability. Indeed, WIL should continue to form a significant part of any overall graduate employability agenda (Dacre Pool & Sewell, 2007; Jackson, 2015; Reddan, 2017).

However, an important consideration when undertaking WIL is that students need to appreciate and embrace the many learning opportunities available. It is essential that students adopt a positive attitude towards their placements, and ensure they fully engage with the many opportunities provided, to maximise their learning (Billett, 2009a) and their subsequent graduate employment opportunities.

In summary, in addressing RQ3, this section has highlighted that WIL provides many employability benefits, including developing specific workplace skills and desirable personal attributes. Furthermore, previous work experience is seen as beneficial in assisting initial employability, and participants have recommended that more practice-based experiences be incorporated into the hotel management curriculum. It was finally noted that students' motivation towards learning is also an important consideration in ensuring optimal learning outcomes. The following section builds on this analysis and overviews some specific strategies that can assist in the organisation of WIL within hotel management programs, where this may also help to achieve sound employability outcomes for graduates.

8.6 The organisation of WIL to enhance hotel management graduate outcomes (RQ4)

As presented, there are many benefits associated with WIL. This section, which considers how WIL experiences can be best organised to provide optimum outcomes for hotel

management graduates and other stakeholders, directly addresses Research Question 4 (How should WIL experiences be best organised and enacted to enhance hotel management students' employability?). To help inform this question, interview respondents were requested to indicate how many hours of WIL experience should be incorporated within hotel management degrees. Most respondents recommended that between three and six months of full-time equivalent work experience be undertaken as part of a hotel management degree. The average amount of work experience recommended is just under five months. Overall, participants commented that more experience is better than less. This suggestion is consistent with similar studies, where Cooper and Shephard (1997) found employers valued up to one year's WIL experience; Blasko, Brennan, Little, and Shah (2002) determined periods of up to nine months experience was recommended, and Simmons (2006) suggested internships should be up to 20 weeks. Furthermore, Jackson (2013) highlights that the amount of time spent on placement also contributes to the extent of skills developed. Therefore, to enhance students' learning and increase graduates' employability, more substantial periods of work placements are recommended. However, in contrast, there is currently a decline in the amount of hospitality management WIL hours offered across Australian higher education institutions (Wardle, 2014), which is seen as a shortcoming.

In building on the analysis, this study endeavours to ascertain how WIL should be best structured within hotel management education, and specifically where WIL experiences should be undertaken within hotel management degree programs. To achieve this outcome, interview participants were asked to provide feedback on three different variations of WIL offerings. These three approaches include, i) a sandwich form of WIL (six to twelve months of full-time work placement in the middle of the degree), ii) full-time work placement in the final semester of the degree, or iii) work experience undertaken progressively throughout the degree, alongside study.

From the analysis undertaken, no consensus was reached on the one best model of WIL delivery. These findings remain consistent with Wardle (2014); a single best-practice model for WIL still remains elusive. Respondents were fairly evenly split in their preferences. They favoured either the sandwich form of WIL (option i), or WIL being undertaken progressively throughout degrees (option iii). None of the respondents indicated that WIL is

best offered in the final semester of a degree; some of the concerns given about offering WIL in the final semester of study, related to it being too late, because ‘what if students did not like the industry after already spending two and a half years studying it’ (Respondent #7). This finding mirrored Wardle’s (2014) outcome, which also recommended WIL should be provided earlier in degrees, rather than later, to confirm industry compatibility.

Furthermore, in support of the sandwich model, positive comments related to the benefits of being able to apply what was learnt in practice into the final stages of the degree. However, there were also some concerns raised about the sandwich model; for example, what if the student enjoyed the work, and if the employer valued them? They may be tempted to stay on, and not to go back to finish their studies. Consequently, this outcome would not be beneficial for either the university or possibly, the students in the long term. Additionally, some positive comments were made about progressively undertaking WIL; these comments centred on the benefits of being able to build on experiences over a longer period of time, and to be exposed to different work periods and seasons, and also to experience different business trends. It is clear that there are differing opinions on the best form of WIL delivery, and that there are perceived strengths and weaknesses in the varying approaches.

There are obviously positives and negatives within all WIL delivery scenarios; while there has been no consensus reached on the one single best practice model for WIL, what is evident is that the sandwich form of WIL, or undertaking WIL progressively as part of a degree, are the preferred options. However, it is apparent within this section, throughout this chapter, and overall within the thesis, that industry work experience is invaluable. This argument is summed up by informant #20, ‘either way, as long as they’re getting the practical experience’.

This section has highlighted that hotel industry employers (respondents) recommend that graduates undertake five months, or more, of full-time equivalent work experience as part of their hotel management degree programs. A preferred method of undertaking WIL is through either a sandwich approach, or by progressively undertaking work experience during degrees. Again, throughout this section, the inclusion of WIL within hotel management programs has been validated. Consequently, WIL should form an essential part of hotel management degrees in Australia, where students are afforded a significant

amount of time to integrate theory to practice and, preferably, practice back to theory, which aids in the development of vital employability characteristics. The following section concludes the chapter.

8.7 Chapter summary

This chapter has informed the four key research questions, and findings for each of these questions have been discussed. These outcomes have, i) identified key required hospitality management competencies, ii) considered important curriculum and pedagogic considerations to enhance graduate employability, iii) investigated the role of WIL in assisting in graduate employability, and finally, iv) determined how WIL should be best organised, as part of hotel management degrees. Specifically, findings from this study reveal a high degree of consistency in required managerial skills between different hotel departments and properties. Additionally, the outcomes from the various stages of data collection highlight important competencies of 'Leadership', 'Communication', 'Customer Service', 'Emotional Intelligence', 'Financial', 'Teamwork', 'Ethics' and also some additional personal attributes, such as 'Grooming and Presentation', and 'Resilience'. The findings also emphasise the continued importance of soft skills (attitudinal/personal/behavioural capabilities) over knowledge and technical skills. This study has also identified leadership and customer service as being key skills required of hotel Operations Managers in the future, and that having an increased knowledge of technology and competitive awareness will also be progressively important.

Moreover, the workplace has been identified as being an important learning environment for many of the required hotel management competencies, and learning within higher education and possessing a degree are seen as advantageous to aid employability. The chapter also highlights the importance of an individual's willingness and motivation to learn. Finally, this chapter emphasises that WIL experiences are highly valued by the hotel industry and these experiences offer significant employability benefits. Some suggestions are also made on how and where WIL should be organised and offered in hotel management degree programs.

Chapter 9 addresses the overarching research objective, and considers the contribution this study makes to theory, hotel management education, and graduate

employability. This final chapter also provides some specific recommendations from the research, and concludes the thesis.

9

Study conclusion and recommendations

9.1 Achieving sound educational outcomes

With the four guiding research questions addressed in the previous chapter, this final chapter consolidates the findings and informs the overall research objective. This objective determines how sound educational outcomes for hotel management graduates can be best achieved. Furthermore, within this chapter, the contributions of the study and their implications to advancing theoretical frameworks, educational practice, and employability are presented. Future research opportunities and recommendations resulting from this inquiry are also identified. Finally, a conclusion to the study is provided, summarising the key outcomes. The next section outlines the study's key findings.

9.2 Key findings

With an increasing gap in desired graduate capabilities highlighted in Chapter 1, the following sections report on how educational provisions for hotel management graduates can be better organised to develop required hospitality managerial competencies. Accordingly, the key findings from this investigation have identified the importance of a range of essential hospitality management competencies. These required competencies centre on the importance of 'Leadership', 'Communication', 'Customer Service', 'Emotional Intelligence', 'Teamwork', 'Passion', 'Ethics', and 'Financial Understanding', and further highlight the essentialness of having 'Resilience', appropriate 'Grooming', and the right 'Attitude'. Indeed, the requirement for graduates to possess the right service-related attitude and well developed soft skills are reinforced throughout this study, and remain consistent with the literature presented within this thesis. Furthermore, WIL, workplace learning, and experiential learning are identified as being crucial within hotel management higher education. The workplace is specifically identified as an environment where many of the essential determined competencies are best developed. From the outcomes presented in this study, an opportunity exists for hospitality higher education institutions to consider the recommendations outlined later in the chapter. The adoption of these considerations may assist in contributing to better overall graduate outcomes, thus benefiting all

stakeholders. The following section builds on the outcomes from this inquiry, highlighting the study's key contributions.

9.3 Contributions of this study

This study builds on literature and makes contributions to eight areas: i) a new theoretical framework is developed to determine key hotel operational management competencies, ii) the study provides current insights from Australian Hotel Managers concerning required competencies to inform impending educational practice, thereby benefiting student learning and employability, iii) advises on graduate employability by confirming the appropriateness and hospitality applicability of key foundational pillars of the CareerEDGE model developed by Dacre Pool and Sewell (2007), iv) offers some further advice concerning the implementation of the CareerEDGE model within hospitality higher education, v) verifies existing accounts of essential hotel management competencies identified in earlier research, vi) identifies the ongoing need in hospitality management for well-developed soft skills, vii) verifies the contributions and value of work experience and WIL, in developing key required hospitality management competencies, and finally, viii) highlights how through experiential learning approaches these required 'soft skills' can be developed, both within educational environments, and in workplaces.

The following sections summarise these eight key contributions into three categories. These three key contributions include: i) theoretical contributions, ii) contribution to hospitality management education, and iii) contribution to graduate employability. Firstly, the theoretical contributions pertaining to this study are presented.

9.3.1 Theoretical contributions

This study makes contributions to literature by developing a contemporary framework to specifically determine key hotel management competencies. In contrast, several other similar studies undertaken in the hospitality fields have utilised more generic business models. Through an intensive process of investigation, as outlined in Chapters 4 and 5, the adopted framework was developed to explicitly test for key hospitality management competencies. A confirmation of the appropriateness of this model is evident in the high ratings of the various competency items contained within the framework, where many of the competencies were confirmed by respondents as being essential. Additionally, the

establishment of this model facilitates the use of the framework by other hospitality researchers in the future, where it will then be possible to provide for further comparisons, both domestically and internationally.

Previous hospitality management competency studies have utilised only quantitative measures. This study adopted a mixed methods approach in which qualitative processes were used to inform the questionnaires and follow-up interviews were used to confirm and expand on the survey findings. This was especially pertinent because the interviews provided additional themes, highlighting the importance of key personal elements such as 'Attitude', 'Emotional Intelligence', and 'Resilience and Self-care'. Furthermore, the importance of offering WIL opportunities and having a significant period of previous work experience prior to graduation was also emphasised in the qualitative data.

As this study was undertaken Australia-wide, it provides for a whole-of-country perspective for required hospitality management competencies. The study also involved a combination of both four- and five-star, corporate and leisure hotels. Overall, the study provides a sound representation of the international hotel industry in Australia. Finally, this study contributes to contemporary knowledge in the field of hotel management research in Australia, where the most recent comprehensive study of this kind undertaken in Australia was in 2006. Given the time lapse and the rapid pace of change in the industry during this period, a new study was timely. This section has highlighted some key theoretical contributions of the study. The following section outlines the contribution this study makes to hotel management education.

9.3.2 Contribution to hotel management education

This study contributes to how higher education institutions and educators developing hotel management programs in Australia might progress. In particular, how the curriculum meets both graduates' needs, and the current and future needs of the hotel industry in Australia. Importantly, participants in this study were all current Hotel Managers and most were also university graduates. Therefore, informants provided both a current managers' and graduates' perspective. Participants were not only able to highlight important required competencies, but could also reflect on how these competencies are best acquired; thus reflecting on both their workplace and formal education. The outcomes from this study can make an important contribution to hospitality management curriculum design, especially in

the areas of Food and Beverage and Rooms Division Management courses. From this study, a list of 48 hotel operational managerial competencies have been identified and rated in order of perceived importance by a range of hotel industry managers. Following this quantitative analysis, further qualitative research was undertaken. The outcomes from this combined investigation determined 15 currently perceived most important required hospitality operational management competencies (presented in Chapter 8, Table 8.7). This range of attributes (which are mostly soft skills) can now potentially be used to focus curriculum and educational endeavours, and in that way can strive to ensure graduates' educational outcomes are contemporary and hotel-industry relevant.

Additionally, this study identified five important competencies required for the future. These themes include: i) the need for increased awareness of evolving technologies, ii) more emphasis on personalised customer service, iii) the need to have an increased financial understanding, iv) the need to continually innovate, and, v) the need to be increasingly aware of competitors and evolving target markets. These themes too should be more emphasised within the hotel management curriculum, to ensure the relevance and future applicability of course content and outcomes. A significant insight from this study is confirming the on-going necessity for hotel Operations Managers to have well developed soft skills. Notably, it is also suggested that these soft skills are best acquired through experiential learning approaches, which can be facilitated through both workplace and more interactive and applied classroom learning activities. Importantly, now that the required competencies are identified, and the best approaches to developing these attributes determined, these aspects can be further emphasised and advanced in the hotel management curriculum and pedagogy.

Furthermore, the research outcomes consistently highlight the importance for students having work experience prior to graduation. At every opportunity, participants emphasised the importance of work experience. Accordingly, the workplace is also deemed to be an essential environment where many key required hospitality management competencies (mostly 'soft skills') are developed. This realisation, and the expectation of work experience prior to graduation must be fully appreciated, and all endeavours made to ensure students are exposed to the hospitality workplace prior to graduation. This study also reviewed the positioning of WIL placements in the hotel management curriculum. The

outcomes here suggest there is no single best practice model for delivering WIL. However, the findings offer recommendations on how WIL should be offered, and equally importantly, how it should not. It seems WIL in hotel management degrees is best offered progressively throughout the program, or in the middle of the degree, as part of a block, or 'sandwich' approach. It is clear that WIL offered full-time only towards the end of the degree is not recommended. These outcomes contribute to a more informed understanding about how and where WIL in the hotel management curriculum should be positioned and enacted.

In addition to work-based experience, exposure to industry-related applied projects, case studies and the involvement of guest lecturers is also identified as a means to equip students with contemporary industry knowledge, expectations and transferable skills. Therefore, it is recommended that these applied learning principles be an integral element of hotel management education. Overall, this study has provided hotel management higher education institutions with important considerations, which can be incorporated to improve educational offerings, and benefit graduates' employability. The contributions of this study to advance graduate employability are now presented.

9.3.3 Contribution to graduate employability

This study has identified a number of competencies which have been identified as being essentially important for hotel Operations Managers. Additionally, for the most important identified competencies (these being mostly soft skills), suggestions are offered on how capabilities in these areas can be developed. The workplace particularly is identified as an essential learning environment for many of the required hospitality attributes, and prior work experience was highlighted as being an essential requirement for initial employability. Importantly, so too was students' positive attitude and willingness to actively engage with all learning opportunities. Therefore, these outcomes can be considered by both educational institutions and students in an effort to best highlight and develop graduates' transferable capabilities in key required areas. In doing so, hotel management students may be able to graduate with the skills required, and transferable within the hotel industry in Australia, this may aid in both initial and long-term employability.

In a competitive employment market, possessing a degree now is also seen as increasingly important. Additionally, extra-curricular activities should be encouraged and

undertaken, because these experiences, too, can develop many transferable social and work related capabilities (Kumarasinghe & Udesika, 2015; Nghia, 2017).

Moreover, this study highlights the importance of many personal factors which can impact positively on employability. In particular, having clear career goals and realistic job expectations upon graduation are seen as critical. It is apparent that graduates should not be too optimistic in their initial career choices. Additionally, in the service industries, having 'people skills' and a positive attitude towards customers and others (peers and managers) has been identified as being particularly important for employability. Indeed, the hospitality industry is one for 'people who like people' and the right attitude surrounding this objective must be appreciated by graduates to maximise their hospitality careers.

Finally, this study serves to confirm the applicability of some of the foundational employability components of the CareerEDGE model (as presented in Chapter 3, Figure 3.1) developed by Dacre Pool and Sewell (2007). To recap, the five pillars of the CareerEDGE model are, i) Career Development Learning, ii) Experience (work and life), iii) Degree Subject Knowledge, Skills and Understanding, iv) Generic Skills, and v) Emotional Intelligence. Throughout this study these five pillars have all been found to be somewhat applicable in benefiting hotel management employability. However, the two components of Experience and Emotional Intelligence are identified as most pertinent to hotel management education, and benefiting hospitality graduates' employability. Principally, this study serves to confirm the importance of Experience and Emotional Intelligence for employability and especially within hospitality management contexts. In contrast, areas such as technical knowledge and skills are found to be of lesser importance. These findings remain consistent with literature presented throughout this thesis, where within the hospitality industry, there is more emphasis placed on work-related experience, and soft skills, compared to established technical or hard skills.

In further advising on graduate employability and employability models, it is suggested that care around self-efficacy, self-confidence and self-esteem should be shown by graduates. This advice is offered, because over-confidence may generate unrealistic graduate job expectations (Dacre Pool & Sewell, 2007), as highlighted in the findings of this study. Indeed, if graduates aim too high in their initial job applications, this may defer

suitable employment, which is where a foundation for further learning and employability is developed.

The overall outcomes from this study suggest that it is a combination of applied and participative university-based learning, workplace learning, and students' own agency towards knowledge acquisition that can generate optimal educational outcomes and positive initial employment for hotel management graduates.

In summary, this section has outlined the key contributions from this research. The study has contributed to new knowledge in three distinct areas: firstly, by making a theoretical contribution, the development of a new model to test for hotel management specific competencies; secondly, by further informing hotel management curriculum, by identifying current and future hotel management competencies, and by suggesting how capacities in these areas can be best realised; thirdly, by offering timely advice to universities and students surrounding employability which, if adopted, may increase graduates' employability outcomes.

Furthermore, the outcomes from this research can have broader implications. Summarised versions of the findings from this study can be disseminated to relevant professional bodies, such as the Australian Hotels Association, and also be presented and published in education and professional conferences, journals and forums. Additionally, the findings can also contribute to professional development workshops on teaching and learning for hotel management academics, and also have implications for future hotel management practice. The following section offers recommendations which can specifically benefit universities, graduates and other key stakeholders.

9.4 Recommendations

This study determined a conclusive list of 15 most important competencies required of effective hotel Operations Managers, which were identified as being mostly 'soft skills'. This list can now be used to inform educational practice. Incorporating these identified attributes into the hotel management curriculum, and providing opportunities for students to develop capacities in these areas, may benefit both short- and long-term hotel management graduate employability. Importantly, experiential learning was identified as a key mechanism for developing soft skills and these principles should be further adopted, both in hospitality management classrooms and externally in workplaces and the wider community.

Indeed, the necessity for work-related experience, and learning in the workplace prior to graduation, is emphasised throughout this study. Moreover, participants overwhelmingly supported making WIL mandatory in hotel management degree programs in Australia. However, in doing so, the hotel industry would have to be willing to accept greater numbers of students undertaking WIL placements.

To assist in developing the next generation of hotel leaders, international hotels must play their part. Hotels need to increasingly work with education providers in offering professional development and on-going employment opportunities to students and graduates. Accordingly, a greater number international hotel companies could offer graduate management programs, or take additional graduates into these programs. Therefore, there is an opportunity for the Australian Hotels Association (the Australian hotel industry's professional body) to play a more significant role in influencing the hotel industry, by encouraging closer relationships and more collaboration with higher education providers. Thus creating more partnerships and working towards compulsory WIL in hotel management programs. Given the specific occupational requirements of the hospitality industry, this requirement is recommended, and is not without precedent in other disciplines within Australia, such as nursing, teaching and engineering.

There could also be an option for Industry Advisory Boards within hospitality higher education institutions to have greater influence over the curriculum. Currently the effectiveness of these boards is variable (Kilcrease, 2011; Zahra, Newey, & Shaver, 2011). These industry representatives could also lobby for greater inclusion of WIL, and soft skills development, and overall, they could provide a stronger industry voice in hospitality tertiary education. Furthermore, academics are encouraged to work more closely with the hotel industry to ensure relevance of the curriculum, develop relationships and foster partnerships. These partnerships could also assist in facilitating more WIL placements and other related collaborations. This initiative would, however, require an increased commitment from both parties. Yet, through these partnerships, there is also an opportunity to incorporate more authentic assessment tasks, including actual industry case studies, projects and related content into the curriculum. These initiatives would assist in portraying a more accurate representation of the hotel industry, and could lead students to have more realistic job expectations upon graduation. Indeed, this was seen by some

respondents as being dubious. Overall, it is suggested that educators and the hotel industry work closely together, and that the hotel industry play a more prominent role in higher education in Australia, to achieve positive graduate outcomes, benefiting all stakeholders.

Additionally, given the identified importance of soft skills and the various personal, behavioural, and attitudinal requirements, greater emphasis should be placed on developing these attributes in hospitality education. To enable this, an increased use of experiential and active-learning techniques should be incorporated, and these applied and participative learning principles should be introduced early in degree programs, and further scaffolded.

Finally, to complete the recommendations, it is suggested that higher education institutions provide additional recruitment advice and support to students. With the current competitive job market in Australia, graduates cannot afford to be ill prepared for the recruitment process. Further advice in identifying realistic graduate positions and assistance in resume writing and interview preparation is recommended, to improve initial graduate employment outcomes. Indeed, Career Development Learning should continue to form a significant part of university employability agendas. It is a key pillar of the CareerEDGE employability model developed by Dacre Pool and Sewell (2007); and its prominence is reinforced by the outcomes from this study.

This section has reflected on the research findings to suggest a number of recommendations that could be considered by the various stakeholders. If adopted can potentially benefit hotel management graduate employability. The following section outlines some opportunities for further research that stem from the outcomes derived from this study.

9.5 Opportunities for future research

This study was undertaken only in Australia. An opportunity exists to utilise the newly developed framework/competencies model, and test for required hotel management competencies in hotels in other countries, thereby enabling comparisons. Furthermore, this study utilised both four- and five-star hotels and found many consistencies in required competencies. A future study could be extended to include three-star hotels, and to compare the findings between the three different standards of hotels to ascertain if there are consistencies in managerial requirements across all three standards of hotels. Moreover,

this study specifically assessed hotel operational departments (Food and Beverage and Rooms Division). A further study could be undertaken to incorporate other non-operational areas of international hotels, such as Sales and Marketing, Human Resources and Finance. Consequently, a further comparison could then be undertaken to consider differences in required competencies between operational and non-operational hotel departments.

Furthermore, findings from this research highlight Leadership and Financial Capabilities, and Personal Considerations (such as grooming, resilience and self-care) as being required of managers in Australian hotels now; compared to in 2006 (see Raybould & Wilkins, 2006). A further study could be undertaken to determine why these particular elements have grown in significance in Australian hotels over this ten-year period. Additionally, this study specifically identified 'attitude' as a key hospitality management attribute. This term is somewhat ambiguous, and could mean different things to different people. A potential further study could aim to identify exactly what contributes to the required hospitality attitude, and which specific personal elements are required to form this attribute. Another opportunity to advance this study could be to undertake a longitudinal investigation with graduates, tracing their hotel career achievements and the application of their knowledge, skills and personal attributes gained from higher education over a longer period of time, thereby, further evaluating their career success and specific educational outcomes. Interesting outcomes here could be to determine if hotel management graduates' careers are progressing more than those of other discipline degree holders, and also non-graduates, and if so, why?

Finally, it is suggested that the hotel industry would encourage compulsory WIL within hotel management degrees in Australia. However, this endeavour is optimistic, and therefore, presents an opportunity to investigate further the logistics of this undertaking. If it is viable, will the hospitality industry support the numerous on-going internships required, and how can the organisational processes within both higher education and workplaces be best realised and managed to support this agenda? These would be important questions to ask.

In sum, this section has identified opportunities for additional research that have evolved from the outcomes of this study. The following section finalises the thesis and provides an overall summary and conclusion to the research.

9.6 Thesis conclusion

This study determines how educational provisions for hotel management graduates can be best organised to enhance the development of required managerial competencies. To achieve this objective, it is important to firstly identify the specific competencies required. An extensive investigation was undertaken to determine these required competencies, where a sequential mixed methods procedure to data collection was undertaken. This procedure comprised document analysis, participant observation, initial interviews, surveys, and subsequent interviews. From this process a list of 48 required competencies were initially identified. These competencies were then rated by participants in order of perceived importance and frequency, and then further categorised and assimilated with additional data. Finally, a list of 15 most essential competencies was established. This list consists mostly of soft skills and includes 'Leadership', 'Communication', 'Customer Service', 'Emotional Intelligence', 'Passion', 'Attitude', 'Financial Acumen', 'Ethics' and some key personal elements, such as 'Grooming' and 'Resilience'. This range of attributes has been presented as especially important for effective hotel Operations Managers. Suggestions were made about how some of these key competencies can be best developed. Motivating this inquiry is, if educational institutions can better develop these required competencies in their graduates, more positive graduate outcomes can be achieved, benefiting all stakeholders.

Experiential Learning and Work Integrated Learning (WIL) are identified as being especially beneficial. Certainly, the workplace in particular is determined to provide a key environment to develop many identified required hospitality management competencies. A final conclusion is also made on how WIL experiences should be best organised and enacted. The findings here suggest that a period of up to six months of work experience should be included in hotel management degree programs. Importantly, this experience should preferably be undertaken as part of a sandwich program, or progressively throughout the degree, and ideally, this work experience should be made compulsory. However, it is recognised that making WIL compulsory is not without its challenges. This objective would require an extensive commitment from all parties, and further viability and logistical investigations.

Overall, this study provides contemporary and additional insights into required hotel management competencies and graduate employability. The outcomes contribute to a new hotel management competency framework, hotel management literature, the processes surrounding hotel management curriculum and pedagogy, and particularly WIL in Australian hospitality management higher education. The contributions from this study can benefit all relevant stakeholders, including the next generation of hotel managers.

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Appendixes

Appendix A: Summary of previous hospitality management studies

Researcher/s – Respondents	Researcher/s – Respondents	Researcher/s – Respondents	Researcher/s – Respondents
Sapienza (1978) – <i>Casino managers</i>	J. F. Hsu and Gregory (1995) - <i>Hotel managers</i>	Agut, Grau, and Peiro (2003) – <i>Hotel and restaurant managers</i>	Jeou-Shyan, Hsuan, Chih-Hsing, Lin, and Chang-Yen (2011) - <i>Hotel managers</i>
Mariampolski, Spears, and Vaden (1980) – <i>Restaurant managers</i>	Breiter and Dements (1996) - <i>Hotel managers</i>	Chung-Herrera, Enz, and Lankau (2003) – <i>Hotel managers</i>	Johanson, Ghiselli, Shea, and Roberts (2011) - <i>Review of studies</i>
Buergermeister (1983) – <i>Hospitality managers, academics and students</i>	Tas et al. (1996) - <i>Hotel managers</i>	Dimmock, Breen, and Walo (2003) – <i>Students (Australian)</i>	Koenigsfeld, Perdue, Youn, and Woods (2011) – <i>Club managers</i>
Tas (1988) - <i>Hotel managers</i>	Su, Miller, and Shanklin (1997) – <i>Hotel managers and academics</i>	Chan and Coleman (2004) - <i>Hotel managers</i>	Spowart (2011) - <i>Students</i>
Umbreit and Pederson (1989) - <i>Academics</i>	DiMicelli Jr (1998) – <i>Students and academics</i>	Kay and Moncarz (2004) - <i>Hotel managers</i>	Tesone and Ricci (2012)– <i>Hotel managers</i>
Baum (1990) – <i>Hotel managers</i>	Siu (1998) - <i>Hotel managers</i>	Tesone and Ricci (2005a) - <i>Hotel managers</i>	Testa and Sipe (2012) – <i>Industry managers</i>
Partlow (1990) – <i>Hotel managers and academics</i>	Christou (1999) - <i>Hotel managers</i>	Tesone and Ricci (2005b) – <i>Hotel managers</i>	Gursoy, Rahman, and Swanger (2012) – <i>Range of hospitality manages</i>
Getty, Tas, and Getty (1990) – <i>Hotel and restaurant managers</i>	Kay and Russette (2000) - <i>Hotel managers</i>	Annaraud (2006) - <i>Hotel managers, academics and students</i>	Suh, West, and Shin (2012) - <i>Hotel managers and students</i>
Jonker and Jonker (1990) – <i>Hotel managers</i>	Christou and Eaton (2000) - <i>Hotel managers</i>	Jauhari (2006) - <i>Hospitality managers and academics</i>	Sisson and Adams (2013) – <i>Hospitality and Event managers</i>
Baum (1991) – <i>Hotel managers</i>	Chung (2000) – <i>Graduates</i>	Hornig and Lu (2006) - <i>Students</i>	Wang (2013) – <i>Hotel managers</i>
Knutson and Patton (1992) – <i>Graduates</i>	Kriegl (2000) – <i>Hotel managers</i>	Raybould and Wilkins (2006) – <i>Hotel managers and students (Australian)</i>	Yang, Cheung, and Fang (2015) – <i>Entry level hotel staff</i>
C. Hsu, Gilmore, and Walsh (1992) - <i>Hotel managers</i>	Walo (2001) – <i>Students (Australian)</i>	Tsai, Goh, Huffman, and Wu (2006) – <i>Hotel managers and academics</i>	Alhelalat (2015) – <i>Mid level hotel managers</i>
Umbreit (1992) - <i>Hotel managers</i>	Reynolds (2000) – <i>Restaurant managers</i>	Cheung, Law, and He (2010) - <i>Hotel managers and students</i>	Min, Swanger, and Gursoy (2016) – <i>Range of hospitality managers</i>
Enz, Renaghan, and Geller (1993) – <i>Students, graduates and managers</i>	Nelson and Dopson (2001) – <i>Hotel managers</i>	Y. L. Huang and Lin (2010) – <i>Hotel managers and academics</i>	Y. Huang, Lalopa, and Adler (2016) – <i>Hotel recruiters and students</i>
Okeiyi, Finley, and Postell (1994) - <i>Students, graduates and managers</i>	Perdue, Ninemeier, and Woods (2002) – <i>Club Managers</i>	Li and Wang (2010) – <i>Hotel managers and students</i>	Jiang and Alexakis (2017) – <i>Students and industry managers</i>
Ashley et al. (1995) – <i>hospitality managers</i>	Lin (2002) – <i>Hotel managers</i>	Millar et al. (2010) - <i>Hotel managers and academics</i>	
C. Hsu (1995) – <i>Hotel managers</i>	Christou (2002) - <i>Hotel managers</i>	Ricci (2010) – <i>Hotel managers</i>	

Appendix B: Adopted six base competencies and skills inventory:

A. Innovation and change

1. Ability to conceptualise or form opinions
2. Creativity/innovation
3. Visioning and strategic thinking
4. Risk taking
5. Adaption to change

B. Managing people and tasks

6. Decision making/decisiveness
7. Leadership and influence
8. Relationship building and knowing your staff
9. Collaboration and teamwork
10. Negotiation and conflict resolution
11. Planning, coordinating and organising
12. Managing diversity and cultural awareness
13. Being noticeable
14. Delegation and follow-up
15. Facilitation and participation in meetings
16. Mentoring, coaching and encouraging staff development

C. Communicating

17. Oral communication
18. Ability to speak an additional language
19. Written communication
20. Interpersonal communication

D. Managing Self

21. Intellectual curiosity and on-going learning
22. Personal organisation and time management
23. Personal presentation and grooming
24. Customer and people orientation, service commitment and positivity
25. Product knowledge and industry awareness
26. Ethics, values and integrity
27. Passion for the industry, self-motivation, flexibility and commitment
28. Career orientated
29. Attention to detail and adherence to standards
30. Initiative and enterprise
31. Problem solving
32. Critical thinking
33. Confidence and assertiveness
34. Possessing the ability to undertake key roles within the department
35. Willingness to undertake operational roles, as required
36. Drive to improve service, products, team performance and business results

E. Technical

37. Understanding of generic business technology, Microsoft Office (word, excel), email and smart phones
38. Understanding of Hotel specific Property Management Systems (PMS), software systems knowledge
39. Understanding and utilisation of industry related social media applications, eg. Trip Advisor
40. Understanding of third party computer interfaces (loyalty programs, booking agents, eg. Wotif, and guest satisfaction reporting

F. Administration

41. Financial understanding, yield management, budgeting, profit and loss, industry benchmarking and metrics
42. Human resources activities: recruitment, orientation and performance management
43. Rostering and payroll management
44. Purchasing and stock control
45. Analytical and research skills
46. Developing reports and procedures
47. Sustainability practices
48. Legislative and regulatory understanding and compliance

Descriptions of the six base competencies and skills

A. Innovation and change: Conceptualising, as well as setting in motion ways of initiating and managing change that involves significant departures from the current mode.

1. ***Ability to conceptualise or form opinions:*** involves the ability to combine relevant information from a number of sources, to integrate information into more general contexts, and to apply information to new or broader contexts.

2. ***Creativity/innovation:*** involves the ability to adopt creative solutions to initiate change, and provide novel solutions to problems. Also involves the ability to reconceptualise roles in response to changing demands related to organisational success.

3. ***Visioning and strategic thinking:*** involves the ability to foresee and plan for the future, within the broader business environment and also inside the organisation. Includes providing appropriate paths to follow to strengthen the company's long term competitive position.

4. ***Risk taking:*** involves taking reasonable work-related risks by recognising alternative or different ways of achieving objectives, while at the same time recognising potential consequences and monitoring progress toward set objectives.

5. ***Adaption to change:*** involves the ability to accept and adapt positively to change within various work situations and external business environments.

B. Managing people and tasks: Working towards organisational goals and accomplishing tasks by planning, leading, organising, coordinating and controlling both the organisation's resources and its people.

6. *Decision making/decisiveness:* involves having significant influence on results and the willingness and aptitude to make timely and confident decisions.

7. *Leadership and influence:* involves the ability to give direction and guidance to others in a manner which motivates them to achieve their best, and inspires employees to work collaboratively towards achieving organisational goals.

8. *Relationship building and knowing your staff:* involves ability to form positive internal and external working relationships and understanding and appreciating employees' individual attributes.

9. *Collaboration and teamwork:* involves working with others in a collegial and productive manner in order to achieve organisational goals.

10. *Negotiation and conflict resolution:* involves having the ability to negotiate and reach compromise with others through being open and respectful, and having the ability to diffuse potential conflict situations.

11. *Planning, coordinating and organising:* involves being able to determine the tasks to be carried out toward meeting organisational objectives, developing strategies and coordinating resources to carry out desired tasks.

12. *Managing diversity and cultural awareness:* involves awareness of different cultural perspectives and demonstrating and supporting inclusiveness, both with staff and customers.

13. *Being noticeable:* involves being seen, accessible and approachable within the work environment, to both staff and customers.

14. *Delegation and follow-up:* involves the willingness and ability to delegate tasks to appropriate others, monitor progress and ensure timely follow-up to instil accountability.

15. *Facilitation and participation in meetings:* involves being prepared for, and the ability to chair productive meetings and also personally ensuring full and active participation in meetings.

16. *Mentoring, coaching and encouraging staff development:* involves taking a genuine and active interest in employees' career development. Includes mentoring, coaching, supporting, and encouraging staff to reach their full potential.

C. Communicating: Interacting effectively with a variety of individuals and groups to facilitate the gathering, integrating and conveying of appropriate information in a variety of forms.

17. Oral communication: involves the ability to present information verbally to others in an effective manner, either one-to-one or in groups.

18. Ability to speak an additional language: having the ability to speak proficiently and being able to understand a language, other than English.

19. Written communication: involves the effective transfer and comprehension of written information within a variety of business contexts.

20. Interpersonal communication: involves the ability to effectively communicate ideas, thoughts and feelings to others, whilst also listening attentively and being sympathetic to the needs of others.

D. Managing self: Constantly developing knowledge and refining practices. Internalising, reflecting and adapting to maximise one's ability to deal appropriately in a variety of situations and business contexts.

21. Intellectual curiosity and on-going learning: involves the personal motivation to continually gain knowledge and keep abreast of contemporary developments in their field.

22. Personal organisation and time management: involves managing multiple tasks, being able to set priorities and allocate time efficiently in order to meet deadlines and achieve results.

23. Personal presentation and grooming: involves taking pride in one's appearance, ensuring good personal hygiene and maintaining appropriate attire within business contexts.

24. Customer and people orientation, service commitment and positivity: involves being customer and quality service focused whilst portraying a positive disposition and compassion towards others.

25. Product knowledge and industry awareness: being aware of industry relevant products and awareness of competitors' offerings and market positioning.

26. Ethics, values and integrity: involves having strong personal values, working with integrity and a high degree of professional ethics.

27. Passion for the industry, self-motivation, flexibility and commitment: passionately undertaking duties, being self-motivated and demonstrating a high degree of flexibility, commitment and drive, whilst enthusiastically undertaking the job.

28. **Career orientated:** involves being strategically career focused, career planning and future orientated towards career success.
29. **Attention to detail and adherence to standards:** the ability to be thorough, having a high attention to detail, and ensuring compliance to set standards.
30. **Initiative and enterprise:** involves using good judgement and taking acceptable risks without having to be prompted.
31. **Problem solving:** consists of identifying, prioritising and solving problems, individually or in groups.
32. **Critical thinking:** disciplined thinking that is clear, rational, open-minded, and well informed.
33. **Confidence and assertiveness:** demonstrating a confident disposition, being self-assured and having the ability to interact with confidence.
34. **Possessing the ability to undertake key roles within the department:** involves being aware of the requirements of various positions within the department and possessing the ability to perform these duties, if required.
35. **Willingness to undertake operational roles, as required:** involves the willingness to assist in operational roles, if, and when the need arises.
36. **Drive to improve service, products, team performance and business results:** involves the constant and comprehensive effort to continually improve all aspects of the business.

E. Technical: Comprises the use and understanding of relevant information technology and software that supports the department, includes the manager's ability to operate this technology efficiently.

37. **Understanding of generic business technology, Microsoft Office (word, excel), email and smart phones:** involves the ability to understand and use commonly available technology effectively to achieve proficient work practices.
38. **Understanding of hotel specific Property Management Systems (PMS), software systems knowledge:** involves the knowledge and working understanding of industry relevant PMS software.
39. **Understanding and utilisation of industry related social media applications, eg. Trip Advisor:** involves the knowledge and application of various industry applicable social media platforms and the ability to best utilise these resources for the organisation's benefit.
40. **Understanding of third party computer interfaces (loyalty programs, booking agents, eg. Wotif, and guest satisfaction reporting:** understanding and appreciation of various

external interfaces and booking mechanisms, which also provide data to managers, to assist with decision making.

E. Administration: Involves undertaking various administration functions and the knowledge and application of relevant documentation required of effective operations managers

41. Financial understanding, yield management, budgeting, profit and loss, industry benchmarking and metrics: includes the financial knowledge, understanding, and the ability to interpret and develop a variety of industry related financial measures.

42. Human resources activities: recruitment, orientation and performance management: involves the knowledge of various administrative and procedural requirements around employee appointment, orientation, and on-going employee performance management.

43. Rostering and payroll management: involves effective creation and monitoring of staff rosters, adjusting as required, reviewing payroll expenses and dealing with pay related enquires from staff.

44. Purchasing and stock control: undertaking purchasing requirements for the department and ensuring appropriate stock management and control.

45. Analytical and research skills: includes the ability to gather and analyse relevant information to inform policies, business practices and organisational improvement.

46. Developing reports and procedures: involves producing reports and procedures in order to provide effective dissemination of information and to aid in improved working environments.

47. Sustainability practices: involves being sustainably aware and implementing practices that benefit the environment, and also both the economic and social prosperity of the organisation.

48. Legislative and regulatory understanding and compliance: involves understanding relevant legislation and ensuring compliance within a range of legislative areas, such as, duty of care, HACAP, OH&S, industrial relations, workplace agreements and awards.

Appendix C: Observation – Field notes. Hotel 1 – 5 Star – Friday, 27 June 2014

AM – Food and Beverage Manager shadowing

- Being prepared for morning meeting, having already reviewed the daily report in advance. (figures and guest satisfaction) – Started at 7.00am. Meeting at 8.30am.
- Had a list of daily tasks – in order of what to do and when, reconfirmed this through the morning.
- Attended managers daily morning meeting. All managers offered input. High focus on guest satisfaction. Discussed key events being held on this day.
- Walked around and met with other key F&B staff. Checked on outlet managers. Checked on standards. ie. Newspapers in order, straightened chair and picked up a tea spoon left on ground (observant and high attention to detail).
- Went to office, went through some figures. Used Microsoft Outlook and also Excel, had several spreadsheets that he had developed to monitor revenue, costs and guest satisfaction.
- Photo shoot was underway in the fine dining restaurant for the new menu. New concept starting soon. Shared Plate concept. Using new types of menu, very modern, dry ice, smoke domes etc. (innovative). New decor also being developed in this restaurant. New concept, them and signage, soft refurb. Getting new kitchen equipment also. Was very aware of local restaurants, what they were offering, prices etc. Tried to pitch this new concept, because no other restaurant in this area is adopting this concept.
- Was developing a new wine list for this new restaurant concept. They brought a new young chef in from another of their chain of hotels. New menu, new plates concept etc..
- Need to adhere to brand standards and select a certain number of wines. Good food and good wine knowledge needed.
- Discussed this photo shoot with the Director of Sales and Marketing. Re how it was going, type of table cloth, amount of smoke coming out.
- Meet with Exec Chef, discussion about day and conference lunch. Chef was with the HACCP auditor, checking on their compliance. Discussed this. Discussed food costs etc.
- Meet with Banquet Mgr, checked on function lunch 190 pax for 2 course lunch this day.
- Checked on room set up, numbers were confirmed at 170, but client said it could go closer to 190? Needed to set for 190, just in case. Discussed this with Banquet Chef to ensure enough food is available.
- Talked again with Exec Chef. Seemed to have a good rapport with the Chef.
- Had lunch together in the staff lunch room, sat with other F&B staff. Good informal conversation taking place. Non work related. Staff seemed to enjoy having lunch with manager in the staff room.
- Checked on Restaurant, getting re-set ready for lunch. Discussed new coffee machine. Coffee knowledge needed. Had coffee, also made one for the Chef. Talked again with the Chef re new menu concept and also banquet lunch that was soon to happen.
- Helped with plate-up at lunch. Both F&B Mgr and myself. Enabled opportunity to check on standards of meals. Hand-on approach. Good banter going on during service of food, but also a sense of urgency to get the meals out. Standard of food was good. Good general hygiene, ie. All wearing disposable gloves. HACCP procedure followed.

- New chemical company products just gone in. New products and pricing structure.
- Brand standards very important. Trying to offer a point of difference for customers and staff (ie. all staff both in front of house and behind house say Bonjour to each other).
- Grooming important, all staff in jacket and tie. All female staff members' hair in bun on top.
- Said that he tries to instil a sense of ownership into each of the outlet managers. Each dept gets their own P&L and guest satisfaction report and is monitored on this. The financial performance and guest satisfaction score is combined, to give an overall rating for each F&B dept. Green, yellow and red. Green good, red bad etc. Completed by F&B Mgr and given weekly to all F&B outlet Mgrs.
- When entering and exiting lifts, always let me and guests enter first and out first. Sets good standard for others to follow.

PM – Rooms Division

- Manager was well prepared for 8.30am managers' meeting. Had daily report with occupancy etc to report.
- Trip advisor comments were read out at the morning meeting. GM's comment was to concentrate on the actionable remarks. ie. Things within their control that can be addressed.
- Was also interviewing that morning with HR a candidate for a new receptionist position. GM commented during meeting to encourage more diversity and welcomed another language, in the new candidate.
- Grooming important, all staff looked well groomed. Brand standards, very important to comply. FOM developed a summary folder for all the FO standards that need to be followed. All staff receives a copy. Important for all FO staff to know and follow these standards.
- PMS knowledge needed. Opera, FOM has to set up staff access etc for all FO staff.
- Guest communication important, need to follow up guest comments, via email, and phone.
- Verbal communication skills important need to talk to customers, staff and also other HOD's.
- Very bright personality, big smile. Positive person. Positive role model.
- Need to handle difficult guests. Must get used to this as FOM. Also deal with difficult situations, such as paying for parking and internet, which some other hotels do not do, which makes some guests not happy. Need to then try and sell these guests on the other benefits of the hotel.
- Witnessed discussions with financial controller about new loyalty program soon to be started. Had to work on systems to implement. ie. Correct codes in Opera (PMS) and procedures for staff to follow.
- Seemed to be approachable and have a good sense of humour. Banter with other managers and communicated openly with other staff walking past.
- Both F&B and FOM had Hotel Mgt degrees. F&B mgr had been at hotel for 18 months, started in this role, came to hotel from their own business. FOM had been at hotel for 10 years and started as a casual on reception, moved up through the ranks, now FOM.

General comments:

- Overall, hotel very well maintained.
- Very high attention to detail noticed throughout.
- Seemed to be very guest focused and very attentive towards guests.

Appendix D: Observation field notes – Hotel 2 – 4 Star – Tuesday, 15 July 2014

AM – Food and Beverage Manager shadowing

- First impression, general lobby and appearance not as nice as other 5 star hotel. Uniforms not as smart or formal. Managers no ties, just open neck shirts, with jackets.
- Had morning managers' briefing, all managers went around table. Referred to occupancy, current business and guest satisfaction levels.
- F&B Mgrs normal day 7-7 Mon-Fri.
- After meeting did F&B walk around and talked to outlet managers and Exec Chef, checked on day's business and general preparation.
- Each F&B outlet has its own manager. Tries to have them run these as their own businesses.
- Went to general staff meeting. Held monthly, each dept gets to host and does PPT presentation. General staff discussion. Had a relaxed feel about it, not as formal as other 5 star hotel feel.
- Went through computer, property uses Micros and Opera. Also use Gmail for emails.
- Very matrix driven for customer service. Three different customer service computer systems used. 1. Hotel own, most important, also includes % of satisfaction after an issue. Reported daily. 2. Trip Advisor, 3. Generic report of guest satisfaction, from Wotif, bookings .com and others. Seems customer service taken very seriously at the hotel, several reporting mechanisms for this.
- Financial understanding also important. Daily financial reports and also outlet P&L via excel, inc daily labour charges and costings.
- From discussions, customer satisfaction and profit were seen as very important.
- F&B Mgr also mentioned that F&B marketing is important. How to position and market your F&B facilities. He noted more so needed in F&B than in Rooms Div. Try different menu options, trading days etc.
- F&B Mgr had lunch in restaurant with me, rather than in staff canteen. He mentioned that this was not normal; he said he normally dines in the staff canteen. I think he did this to treat me.
- Hotel seem to have a great intranet (internal staff only access database).
- NB: This was the manager's first F&B Mgrs role, he had previously come from Rooms Div, but had been at the hotel company for a number of years.

PM – Rooms Division Manager

- FOM seemed very engaged and enthusiastic with high energy levels. Was youngish.
- Seemed to be very self-aware of his strengths and weaknesses and keen to progress, ambitious.
- Seemed to be more hands-on.
- Seemed to also be very approachable, several staff came in to ask questions, which he did not seem to mind.
- Currently, they are without a DM, which means the FOM is required to be more hands-on. He didn't seem to mind and just got on with it.
- Seemed to be focused on where he can improve. Keen to develop his leadership skills.

- Like F&B was very focused on guest satisfaction, and recognition of hotel's Loyalty Program guests.
- Seemed to also be focused on brand standards, although, not as much as the other 5 star hotel.
- Behind the office had a lot of % measures, ie. current level of guest satisfaction is, month to date etc. General feeling from Mgr, below 8 out of 10 is considered needing improvement. Also general feeling that what was achieved last year will be increased by 1. ie. If last year the achieved level of guest satisfaction was 8.2, this year's requirement will be 8.3 to achieve. So therefore always looking to strive to improve.
- External reviewers (brand audit) comes in 2 times per year to review the hotel.
- Sat in on FO AM to PM shift hand over. Went over issues, ie. Problem external homeless person, using hotel bath rooms, advised if seen again to call police. Also mentioned in-house functions, guest arrivals/departures, occupancy levels.
- FOM also passed on all general info received from staff meeting, held on that day. Also told others to congratulate XXX porter, who received staff member of the month award. (He received this award due to going over and above to satisfy a guest) ie. jump-starting his car, in car park, after already being out of uniform and finished for the day. Discussed also in hand-over light rail repair work noise.
- FOM was also asked by one employee to see him that afternoon.
- Overall this dept seemed to have a good feel about it, good sense of teamwork and morale seemed high, with a good respect for the manager.

General comments:

- There is a lot of monitoring going on. Very guest satisfaction orientated.
- Budget for guests satisfaction is 8.2/10, currently running at 8.5/10. Below 8 is considered not good.
- Compared to other 5 star hotel it was % of 9 and 10's received. They want 80% of 9s & 10s.
- There are external reviews, mystery shoppers, and brand audits, staff engagement surveys, done two times a year.
- Problem resolution is also a KPI. 60%+ of problems should be resolved to the customer's satisfaction.
- Hotel could do with some renovations, looking a little tired in some parts, I understand this is planned.

Appendix E: Managers on-site interview questions

Q1. What does a normal day look like for you? Could you describe the key tasks undertaken during a normal days' work?

Q2. Could you please tell me the knowledge and skills you feel are most needed to effectively undertake your job?

Q3. Why would you consider the above described attributes to be most important?

Q4. Considering your overall role, (say over a 12 month period) could you describe the top four (4) areas within your role where the most time is spent, and approximately what percentage of time is spent on these four (4) main tasks?

Q5. Given these four main tasks, as you just described within your role, how do you feel skills in these areas are best learnt?

Q6. Given your experience, how would you describe the level of preparedness of Hotel Management graduates, when they enter your organisation for the first time from university?

Q7. In what areas do you consider these graduates to be most competent?

Q8. In what areas do you consider these graduates to be most deficient?

Q9. What are the top three (3) skills you feel are most needed of graduates when they first commence work in international hotels.

Q10. Would you have any recommendations on how universities could better prepare graduates for entry and advancement in the hospitality industry?

Many thanks for your time

Barry Fraser

Appendix F: Email survey introduction and instructions

Dear Human Resources Manager/Director

As part of an employability research project at Griffith University on the Gold Coast, I am seeking your support with conducting a short on-line survey of hotel managers (Executive Managers, Human Resources and Hotel Operations Managers (Food and Beverage and Rooms Division)).

The purpose of the study is to identify the specific competencies deemed to be required of effective hotel Operations Managers. Additionally, the study will appraise how hotel management tertiary education can improve competency development in graduates, and therefore better meet the needs of the hotel industry.

I am writing to ask for your assistance in undertaking the survey and also to forward the below online survey link to your managers, also inviting them to participate in this study. The target group of employees are, Hotel Executive Management, Human Resources Managers and Assistants, and a range of Operations Managers in both Food and Beverage and Rooms Divisions. This group includes Rooms Division Managers, Front Office Managers and Assistants, Revenue Managers, Housekeepers, and in Food and Beverage; F&B Managers, Assistants and Department/Outlet Managers. Basically anyone in F&B or Rooms Division, with management responsibilities, and also including Human Resources managers.

As an incentive for the managers to participate, they can select to go into a draw to win one of three (3) \$100.00 pre-paid visa cards.

Participation in the survey is voluntary, all responses are anonymous and the information obtained will be kept confidential. No participant, or hotel will be identified or linked to the survey, and no contact information will be passed onto any other third party.

This study meets the university's ethics protocols and I have attached a copy of the relevant ethics information. If necessary, please also discuss this project in advance with the hotel General Manager or other senior management.

I have included some text below that can be copied into an email for you to send to your staff. Also, If you would like to receive a copy of the results of this study, please let me know.

Many thanks for your support and if you have any questions, please feel free to give me a call during office hours on 07 555 XXXXX, or mobile, XXXX XXX XXX.

Thanks and regards

Barry Fraser

Dear Staff,

We have been contacted by a research team from Griffith University who would like you to complete a short online survey. The survey should only take 15-20 minutes to complete.

As an incentive, you could win one of three (3) \$100.00 pre-paid visa cards, which will be drawn mid to late April 2016.

All responses are anonymous and all information will be kept confidential. No participant or hotel will be identified or linked to the survey responses. By undertaking the survey you agree to participate in the study.

The survey is about the types of competencies needed of hotel Operations Managers, and the outcomes will be used to inform educational practice at universities. Your participation is crucial to the research objectives and your time is very much appreciated.

The survey is best undertaken on a computer, rather than a phone or tablet, due to the format of some questions.

Please click on the below link to commence the survey.

<http://griffithctssi.az1.qualtrics.com>

Many thanks for your assistance

Barry Fraser - Griffith University, Gold Coast Campus.

Appendix G: Hotel Managers' survey

Q1 Thank you for your willingness to undertake this survey, your opinions are highly valued and much appreciated. Without your input this study would not be possible.

Firstly, you will be asked to complete some background demographic information, secondly, you will be requested to rate a number of key competencies, through a selection of multiple choice options, and finally, you will be asked to complete three short answer questions.

The survey should take approximately 15-20 minutes to complete. Please click the blue forward arrow button on the bottom right of the page to advance.

At the end of the survey you will be invited to enter your details to go into the prize draw to win one of three \$100.00 pre-paid visa cards.

Q2 What is your gender?

- ☐ Male
- ☐ Female

Q3 What is your age group?

- ☐ 20-29
- ☐ 30-39
- ☐ 40-49
- ☐ 50-59
- ☐ 60-69
- ☐ 70+
- ☐ Prefer not to answer

Q4 What is your highest level of education?

- ☐ Secondary School
- ☐ Vocational Certificate
- ☐ Associate Diploma
- ☐ Diploma
- ☐ Bachelor's Degree
- ☐ Postgraduate Degree

Q5 How important do you feel it is today, for hotel Operations Managers to have tertiary qualifications?

- ☐ Not at all Important
- ☐ Very Unimportant
- ☐ Neither Important nor Unimportant
- ☐ Very Important
- ☐ Extremely Important

Q6 What is the star rating of the hotel where you currently work?

- ☐ 4 star
- ☐ 5 star

Q7 What is the primary market for your hotel?

- ☐ Corporate
- ☐ Leisure

Q8 Briefly describe below what attracted you to a career in Hospitality Management?

Q9 How many years have you worked in the hospitality or related industries?

Q10 Which department within the hotel do you currently work?

- ☐ Food and Beverage
- ☐ Rooms Division
- ☐ Human Resources
- ☐ Other _____

Q11 What is the level of your current position?

- ☐ Assistant Manager or Outlet Manager
- ☐ Department Head
- ☐ Other _____

Q12 How many years have you been in your current position?

Q13 How many years of management experience do you have in the hospitality industry?

Q14 That concludes the first section of the survey. The following section will include a range of skills or attributes.

You will be asked to firstly rate the level of importance of these skills or attributes, in terms of their importance for Operations Managers to successfully undertake their roles.

You will then be asked to rate how frequently you feel these skills or attributes are used.

Q15 This section includes a range of skills or attributes (indicated on the left hand side). You should firstly rate the level of importance of this skill or attribute,

in terms of its importance for operations managers to successfully undertake their roles. You should then rate how frequently you feel these skills or attributes are used.

If you are from Human Resources or other executive area, you should answer from what you feel is important for Operations Managers. If you are from Food and Beverage, or Rooms Division, you should answer from your own perspective.

Q16 Hotel manager's skills

	How would you rate the level of importance of this skill or attribute, for you (or Operations Managers), to successfully undertake their roles?					How frequently would you (or Operations Managers) use this skill or attribute in their roles?				
	Not at all important	Very unimportant	Neither important nor unimportant	Very important	Extremely important	Never	Less than monthly	Monthly	Weekly	Daily
Ability to conceptualise or form opinions: (involves the ability to combine relevant information and integrate into general contexts)	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Creativity/Innovation: (involves the ability to adopt creative solutions to initiate change, and provide novel solutions to problems)	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Visioning and strategic thinking: (involves the ability to foresee and effectively plan for the future)	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Risk taking: (involves taking reasonable risks, considering alternatives, and recognising	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

potential consequences)										
Adaption to change: (involves the ability to accept and adapt positively to change)	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Decision making/decisive ness: (involves the willingness and aptitude to make timely and confident decisions)	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Leadership and influence: (involves the ability to give direction to others in a manner which motivates and inspires them to work towards achieving organisational goals)	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

Q17 Hotel manager's skills continued ...

	How would you rate the level of importance of this skill or attribute, for you (or Operations Managers), to successfully undertake thier roles?					How frequently would you (or Operations Managers) use this skill or attribute in their roles?				
	Not at all important	Very unimportant	Neither important nor unimportant	Very important	Extremely important	Never	Less than monthly	Monthly	Weekly	Daily
Relation-ship building and knowing your staff: (involves the ability to form positive working relation-ships, and understanding and appreciating individual employee attributes)	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Collaboration and teamwork (involves working with others in a collegial and productive manner in order to achieve organisational goals)	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Negotiation and conflict resolution: (involves having the ability to negotiate and reach compromise with others and having the ability to	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

diffuse potential conflict situations)										
Planning, coordinating and organising: (involves being able to determine the tasks to be carried out, developing strategies and coordinating resources to achieve desired tasks)	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Managing diversity and cultural awareness: (involves the awareness of different cultures and demonstrating and supporting inclusiveness with staff, peers and customers)	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Being noticeable: (involves being seen, assessable and approachable within the work environment, to both staff and customers)	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Delegation and follow-up: (involves the willingness and ability to delegate tasks to appropriate others, monitor progress and ensure timely follow-up to instill accountability)	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

Q18 Hotel manager's skills continued ...

	How would you rate the level of importance of this skill or attribute, for you (or Operations Managers), to successfully undertake their roles?					How frequently would you (or Operations Managers) use this skill or attribute in their roles?				
	Not at all important	Very unimportant	Neither important nor unimportant	Very important	Extremely important	Never	Less than monthly	Monthly	Weekly	Daily
Facilitation and participation in meetings: (involves being prepared for, and the ability to chair productive meetings, and also personally ensuring active	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

<p>participation in meetings)</p> <p>Mentoring, coaching and encouraging staff development: (involves taking a genuine and active interest in employees' career development. Mentoring, coaching and supporting staff to reach their full potential)</p> <p>Oral communication (involves the ability to present information verbally to others in an effective manner, either one-to-one or in groups)</p> <p>Ability to speak an additional language: (having the ability to speak proficiently and being able to understand a language, other than English)</p> <p>Written communication (involves the effective transfer and comprehension of written information within a variety of business contexts)</p> <p>Interpersonal communication (involves the ability to effectively communicate ideas, thoughts and feelings to others, whilst also listening attentively)</p> <p>Intellectual curiosity and ongoing learning: (involves the personal motivation to continually gain knowledge and keep abreast of contemporary developments in the field)</p>	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

Q19 Hotel manager's skills continued ...

	How would you rate the level of importance of this skill or attribute, for you (or Operations Managers), to successfully undertake thier roles?					How frequently would you (or Operations Managers) use this skill or attribute in their roles?				
	Not at all important	very unimportant	Neither important nor unimportant	Very important	Extremely important	Never	Less than monthly	Monthly	Weekly	Daily
Personal organisation and time management: <i>(involves being organised, able to set priorities and allocate time efficiently in order to meet deadlines and achieve results)</i>	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Personal presentation and grooming: <i>(involves taking pride in one's appearance and maintaining appropriate attire within business contexts)</i>	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Customer and people orientation, service commitment and positivity: <i>(involves being customer and quality service focused whilst portraying a positive disposition and compassion towards others)</i>	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Product knowledge and industry awareness: <i>(involves being aware of industry relevant products and awareness of competitors' offerings and market positioning)</i>	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Ethics, values and integrity: <i>(involves having strong personal values, working with integrity and a high degree of professional ethics)</i>	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Passion for the industry, self-motivation, flexibility and commitment: <i>(involves passionately undertaking duties, being self-motivated and demonstrating a high degree of</i>	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

<i>flexibility and commitment)</i> Career orientated: <i>(involves being strategically career focused, career planning and future orientated towards career success)</i>	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
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Q20 Hotel manager's skills continued ...

	How would you rate the level of importance of this skill or attribute, for you (or Operations Managers), to successfully undertake their roles?					How frequently would you (or Operations Managers) use this skill or attribute in their roles?				
	Not at all important	very unimportant	Neither important nor unimportant	Very important	Extremely important	Never	Less than monthly	Monthly	Weekly	Daily
Attention to detail and adherence to standards: <i>(the ability to be thorough, having a high attention to detail, and ensuring compliance to set standards)</i>	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Initiative and enterprise: <i>(involves using good judgement and taking acceptable risks without having to be prompted)</i>	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Problem solving: <i>(consists of identifying, prioritising and solving problems, individually or in groups)</i>	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Critical thinking: <i>(disciplined thinking that is clear, rational, open-minded, and well informed)</i>	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Confidence and assertiveness: <i>(demonstrating a confident disposition, being self-assured and having the ability to interact with confidence)</i>	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Possessing the ability to undertake key roles within the department: <i>(involves being aware of the requirements of various positions and having the ability to perform these duties, if required)</i>	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Willingness to undertake operational roles,	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

as required: (involves the willingness to assist in operational roles, if, and when required)										
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Q21 Hotel manager's skills continued ...

	How would you rate the level of importance of this skill or attribute, for you (or Operations Managers), to successfully undertake their roles?					How frequently would you (or Operations Managers) use this skill or attribute in their roles?				
	Not at all important	very unimportant	Neither important nor unimportant	Very important	Extremely important	Never	Less than monthly	Monthly	Weekly	Daily
Drive to improve service, products, team performance and business results: (involves the constant and comprehensive effort to continually improve all aspects of the business)	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Understanding of generic business technology. eg. Microsoft Office (word, excel), email and smart phones: (involves the ability to understand and use commonly available technology effectively to achieve proficient work practices)	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Understanding of hotel specific software: Property Management Systems knowledge: (involves the knowledge and working understanding of industry relevant PMS software)	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Understanding and utilisation of industry related social media applications, eg. Trip Advisor: (involves the knowledge and application of various social media platforms and the ability to best utilise these resources for the organisation's benefit)	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Understanding of third party computer interfaces (loyalty programs, booking agents), eg. Wotif, and guest satisfaction reporting:	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

<p>(understanding and appreciation of various external interfaces and booking mechanisms, which also provide data to managers)</p> <p>Financial understanding, yield management, budgeting, profit and loss, industry benchmarking and metrics: (includes the financial knowledge, understanding, and the ability to interpret and develop a variety of industry related financial measures)</p> <p>Human resources activities - recruitment, orientation and performance management: (involves the knowledge of various administrative requirements around employee appointment, orientation and performance management)</p>	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

Q22 Hotel manager's skills continued ...

	How would you rate the level of importance of this skill or attribute, for you (or Operations Managers), to successfully undertake their roles?					How frequently would you (or Operations Managers) use this skill or attribute in their current roles?				
	Not at all important	very unimportant	Neither important nor unimportant	Very important	Extremely important	Never	Less than monthly	Monthly	Weekly	Daily
<p>Rostering and payroll management: (involves effective creation and monitoring of staff rosters, reviewing payroll expenses and dealing with pay related enquires from staff)</p> <p>Purchasing and stock control: (undertaking purchasing requirements for the department and ensuring appropriate stock management and control)</p> <p>Analytical and research skills: (includes the ability to gather and analyse relevant</p>	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

information to inform policies, business practices and organisational improvement)										
Developing reports and procedures: (involves producing reports and procedures in order to provide effective dissemination of information)	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Sustainability practices: (involves being sustainably aware and implementing practices that benefit the environment, and also both the economic and social prosperity of the organisation)	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Legislative and regulatory understanding and compliance: (involves understanding relevant legislation and ensuring compliance in areas such as, Duty of Care, OH&S, RSA, HACCP, workplace agreements and awards)	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

Q23 From the below six (6) key areas, please ‘click and drag’ to rate in preference, which skill set you feel is the most important for you

(or Operations Managers), to effectively undertake their roles. Indicating 1 at the top, for the most important attribute, through to 6 at the bottom, for the least important.

_____ Innovation and Change: Conceptualising as well as setting in motion ways of initiating and managing change that involve significant departures from the current mode.

_____ Managing people and tasks: Working towards organisational goals and accomplishing tasks by planning, leading, organising, coordinating and controlling both the organisation’s resources and people.

_____ Communication: Interacting effectively with a variety of individuals and groups to facilitate the gathering, integrating and conveying of appropriate information in a variety of forms.

_____ Managing self: Constantly developing knowledge and refining practices. Internalising, reflecting and adapting to maximize one’s ability to deal appropriately with a variety of people, in a variety of situations and business contexts.

_____ Technical/Information literacy: Involves the knowledge and use of relevant information technology and software that supports the department’s and managers’ ability to operate efficiently.

_____ Administrative: Involves undertaking various administration functions and the knowledge and understanding of relevant documentation, required for operations managers to function effectively and appropriately.

Q24 Could you briefly describe below, why you rated these attributes in the order that you did?

Q25 Below are the final two questions.

Q26 In your opinion, what are the most important skills hotel Operations Managers should possess?

Q27 In order, please list the top four (4) aspects of your role, or for Operations Managers, what aspects of their job over the past 12 months occupied the most time.

Q28 Please continue to the next page to finalise your survey. You will then be redirected to enter your details to go into the prize draw.

Many thanks for taking the time to complete the survey.

Barry Fraser

Appendix H: Related published studies and various survey response rates

Number of survey responses	Authors and year of study
85	(Nelson & Dopson, 2001)
80	(Buergermeister, 1983)
80	(Agut, Grau, & Peiro, 2003)
75	(Tas, 1988)
71	(Benckendorff et al., 2012)
62	(Chand, 2008)
60	(Getty, Tas, & Getty, 1990)
56	(Wilson, Murray, & Black, 2000)
51	(Kriegl, 2000)
48	(Dopson & Nelson, 2003)
47	(Tsai, Goh, Huffman, & Wu, 2006)
44	(Chan & Coleman, 2004)
41	(Nolan, Conway, Farrell, & Monks, 2010)
41	(Alhelalat, 2015)
40	(Y. L. Huang & Lin, 2010)
40	(Y. Huang, Lalopa, & Adler, 2016)
38	(Cheung, Law, & He, 2010)
26	(LeBruto & Murray, 1994)
20	(Lefever & Withiam, 1998)
20	(Okeiyi, Finley, & Postell, 1994)
12	(Jeou-Shyan, Hsuan, Chih-Hsing, Lin, & Chang-Yen, 2011)
11	(Weber, Finley, Crawford, & Rivera, 2009)

Appendix I: Hotel Management learning and employability research project – Hotel Managers' interview

Section 1: Background information

Please print this document and complete the first page prior to the interview, if possible)

Q1. What is your gender?

☐ Male

☐ Female

Q2. What is your age group?

☐ 20-29 ☐ 30-39 ☐ 40-49 ☐ 50-59 ☐ 60-69 ☐ 70+ ☐ Prefer not to answer

Q3. What is your highest level of education?

☐ Secondary School ☐ Vocational Certificate ☐ Associate Diploma

☐ Diploma ☐ Bachelor Degree ☐ Postgraduate Degree

Q4. What is the star rating of your hotel?

☐ 4 star

☐ 5 star

Q5. What is the primary market for your hotel?

☐ Corporate

☐ Leisure

Q6. How many years have you worked in the hospitality industry? _____

Q7. Which department within the hotel do you currently work?

☐ Food and Beverage ☐ Rooms Division ☐ Human Resources ☐ Other _____

Q8. What is the level of your current position?

☐ Assistant Manager or Outlet Manager ☐ Department Head ☐ Other _____

Q9. How many years of management experience do you have in the hospitality industry? _____

In the sections that follow, your responses will be audio-recorded at the time of the interview and the data will be later transcribed. You do not need to pre-write any answers. All information remains confidential to the research team.

Section 2: Hotel Operation Managers' Capabilities

Q10. In a recent survey, hotel Operation Managers identified the below attributes as being the five most important skills for them to successfully undertake their roles.

- 1. Leadership and influence
 - 2. Decision making/decisiveness
 - 3. Customer, people orientation and service commitment
 - 4. Oral communication
 - 5. Ethics, values and integrity
- a) Do you agree that the above 5 attributes are essential skills needed for hotel Operations Managers, and if so, why?
- b) Are there any additional attributes that are not included within this top five that you feel should be?
- c) In summarising the above five attributes, can you please indicate how you feel these capabilities are best learned or developed? (please also indicate for any additional attributes identified)

Q11. Looking to the future, what do you think will be the most needed skills required by hotel Operation Managers in the next 3-5 years, and what is influencing this direction?

Section 3: Hotel Management Graduates' Capabilities

Q12. Overall, how satisfied are you with the current quality of Australian hotel management university graduates? – can you please give some examples to support your answer.

Q13. Are there any specific skills or attributes you feel are particularly lacking in hotel management graduates?

Q14. Are there any specific strengths or qualities you feel current hotel management graduates bring to the workplace?

Q15. When you are employing hotel management graduates, what skills or attributes are you most looking for, and why?

Q16. Following on: How do you feel these specified skills or attributes you described are best developed in graduates? (How are they best learned/acquired?)

Q17. Do you feel hotel management degrees in Australia currently have the right balance of theory and practice? Please elaborate.

Q18. How important is prior industry work experience, when you are hiring hotel management graduates, and why? Also, what type of experience are you most looking for? (Does previous experience necessarily need to be in international hotels?)

Q19. Do you feel industry work experience should be a mandatory requirement in Australian hotel management degrees? If so, how much work experience is ideal, (how many hours or months)?

Q20. Following on from the previous question, at what stage during a student's degree do you feel students' work experience is best undertaken?

- ☐ Work experience undertaken full-time in the middle of the degree (Sandwich program, working while away from full-time study)
- ☐ Work experience undertaken full-time during the final semester of a degree (Working while away from full-time study)
- ☐ Work experience undertaken progressively throughout the degree (one-two days a week casual, during full-time study)

Q21. Is there any advice you would give to hotel management students that could make them more employable upon graduation?

Q22. If you were in charge of a Hotel Management department in an Australian university, what suggestions would you have to increase the employability of graduates?

Do you have any further comments you would like to make?

Many thanks for your contribution and time, it is much appreciated.

Should you have any questions in advance, please do not hesitate to contact me.

Barry Fraser – (PH) XXXX XXX XXX

Appendix J: Job description request

Dear Sir/Madam (Hotel Human Resources Manager)

I am writing to request your assistance with my doctoral research project. A key aim of my doctoral study is to identify the specific competencies deemed to be required of effective operations managers (Food and Beverage and Rooms Division) within deluxe standard (4-5 star) Australian hotels. As part of this project, I initially plan to undertake some document analysis of existing job descriptions for a number of managerial positions within both Food and Beverage and Rooms Division.

The purpose this email is to request your assistance, by forwarding to me copies by return email of your job descriptions for the following positions.

Food and Beverage: **Food and Beverage Manager**

Rooms Division: **Rooms Division Manager and/or Front Office Manager**

To ensure the success of this project, your participation is both very important and greatly appreciated.

Confidentiality

All information gathered is completely confidential, and will be analysed and reported in summary format only. You and your organisation will remain completely anonymous at all times. Names of hotels, personnel and all information within the job descriptions will not be provided to any other parties. If you require any further information, please do not hesitate to contact me at email@griffith. the Project Supervisor, Professor Stephen Billett at email@griffith.

Could you please read the information sheet provided and if you are willing to participate in this research, in addition to providing the various job descriptions, please also sign the attached consent form on page 4 and return to me via fax, email, or post to Barry Fraser – Department of Tourism, Sport and Hotel Management.....

Thank you very much for your time and assistance with this project.

Yours sincerely,

Barry Fraser, Doctoral Candidate

Email: email@griffith.....

Ph: 07 555 XXXX

Fax: 07 555 XXXX

Supervisors: Professor Stephen Billett and Dr Sarojni Choy
Griffith University

Information sheet (job description request)

Who is conducting the research? This study is being conducted by:

Professor Stephen Billett

Dr Sarojni Choy

Mr Barry Fraser

Principal Supervisor

Associate Supervisor

Doctoral Candidate

Griffith University

Griffith University

Griffith University

Why the research is being conducted: The proposed study aims to identify the specific competencies deemed to be required of effective operations managers within deluxe standard (4-5 star) Australian hotels. Additionally, the study will appraise how hospitality tertiary education institutions can improve competency development in graduates. Furthermore, the study will address the role work integrated learning plays in increasing learning outcomes for hospitality management tertiary students.

What you will be asked to do: Participation is voluntary. If you wish to participate, you are requested to send via return email a copy of various both Food and Beverage and Rooms Division Course job descriptions from your organisation. This should take less than 10 minutes.

The expected benefits of the research: The proposed study aims to inform educational practice by, i) identifying the specific competencies the hospitality industry are currently seeking, ii) establish how students best learn and acquire these competencies, and iii) suggest ways education institutions can enhance the levels of preparedness of hospitality management graduates.

Risks to you: There are no anticipated risks associated with you or your organisation through participating in this research.

Your confidentiality: The data that you provide to the researcher will be anonymous and the analysis from the documents will be used for academic purpose only.

Your participation is voluntary: Your participation in this research is completely voluntary; you are free to not provide any information without comment or penalty.

Questions/further information: If you have any questions or require further information about this project, please contact the researcher listed at the top of this information sheet.

The ethical conduct of this research: Griffith University conducts research in accordance with the *National Statement on Ethical Conduct in Human Research*. If you have any concerns or complaints about the ethical conduct of the project, please contact the Manager, Research Ethics on 3XXX XXXX email@griffith ...

Your feedback: The findings of the research will be available to all participants, if desired. You may opt to receive an emailed copy of summarised findings by emailing email@griffith ...

Consent: In signing the attached consent form, you have consented to partake in this research. Please feel at liberty to print out this information and consent form for your records.

Consent form (Industry job descriptions request)

Who is conducting the research? This study is being conducted by:

Professor Stephen Billett	Dr Sarojni Choy	Mr Barry Fraser
Principal Supervisor	Associate Supervisor	Doctoral Student
Griffith University	Griffith University	Griffith University

By signing below, I confirm that I have read and understood the information sheet and in particular have noted that:

- I understand that my involvement in this research will include; providing a range of job descriptions for both food and beverage and rooms division departments;
- I have had any questions answered to my satisfaction;
- I understand the risks involved;
- I understand that there will be no direct benefit to me from my participation in this research;
- I understand that my participation in this research is voluntary;
- I understand that if I have any additional questions, I can contact the research team;
- I understand that I am free to withdraw at any time, without explanation or penalty;
- I understand that I can contact the Manager, Research Ethics, at Griffith University Human Research Ethics Committee on 3XXX XXXX email@griffith ... If have any concerns about the ethical conduct of the project; and
- I agree to participate in the project.

The documents will be used for research purposes only. The results may be presented as part of a thesis document and presented in international referred journal and conferences, other than for these requirements, the information will not be shared with any other third party.

Name and hotel company	
Title	
Signature	
Date	

Appendix K: Course Profile request

Dear University Head/Deputy Head of Department,

I am writing to request your permission to use your university's course profiles from both Rooms Division and Food and Beverage courses to assist with my doctoral research project. One of the aims of my doctoral study is to identify the specific competencies deemed to be required of effective operations managers within deluxe standard (4-5 star) Australian hotels. As part of this project, I initially plan to undertake document analysis of existing university course profiles.

The purpose this email is to gain your consent to use your course profiles for Food and Beverage and Rooms Division Management courses, to assist in my research project.

To ensure the success of this project, your participation is both very important and greatly appreciated.

Confidentiality

All information gathered is completely confidential, and will be analysed and reported in summary format. You and your university will remain completely anonymous at all times. Names or organisational information will not be provided to any other parties. If you require any further information, please do not hesitate to contact me at email@griffith ...or the Project Supervisor, Professor Stephen Billett at email@griffith ...

Could you please read the information sheet provided and sign page three of the attached consent form and return to me via fax, email, or post to Barry Fraser – Department of Tourism, Sport and Hotel Management

Thank you very much for your time and assistance with this project, it is much appreciated.

Yours sincerely,

Barry Fraser, Doctoral Candidate

Email: email@griffith ...

Ph: 07 555 XXXX

Fax: 07 555 XXXX

Supervisors: Professor Stephen Billett and Dr Sarojni Choy

Information sheet (University Course Profile request)

Who is conducting the research? This study is being conducted by:

Professor Stephen Billett	Dr Sarojni Choy	Mr Barry Fraser
Principal Supervisor	Associate Supervisor	Doctoral Student
Griffith University	Griffith University	Griffith University

Why the research is being conducted: The proposed study aims to identify the specific competencies deemed to be required of effective operations managers within deluxe standard (4-5 star) Australian hotels. Additionally, the study will appraise how hospitality tertiary education institutions can improve competency development in graduates. Furthermore, the study will address the role work integrated learning plays in increasing learning outcomes for hospitality management tertiary students.

What you will be asked to do: Participation is voluntary. If you agree to participate, you are requested to sign the attached consent form and return it to me via fax, email or post. This should take less than 5 minutes. I will then openly access these documents or contact the convenor concerned.

The expected benefits of the research: The proposed study aims to inform educational practice by, i) identifying the specific competencies the hospitality industry are currently seeking, ii) establish how students best learn and acquire these competencies, and iii) suggest ways education institutions can enhance the levels of preparedness of hospitality management graduates.

Risks to you: There are no anticipated risks associated with you or your organisation through participating in this research.

Your confidentiality: The data that you provide to the researcher will be anonymous and the analysis from the documents will be used for research and academic purpose only.

Your participation is voluntary: Your participation in this research is completely voluntary; you are free to not to allow permission without comment or penalty.

Questions/Further information: If you have any questions or require further information about this project, please contact the researchers listed at the top of this information sheet.

The ethical conduct of this research: Griffith University conducts research in accordance with the *National Statement on Ethical Conduct in Human Research*. If you have any concerns or complaints about the ethical conduct of the project, please contact the Manager, Research Ethics on 3XX XXXX email@griffith ...

Your feedback: The findings of the research will be available to all participants, if desired. You may opt to receive an emailed copy of summarised findings by emailing email@griffith ...

Consent: In signing the attached consent form, you have agreed for me to utilise your university's course profiles and partake in this research. Please feel at liberty to print out this information and consent form for your records.

Consent form (University Course Profile request)

Who is conducting the research? This study is being conducted by:

Professor Stephen Billett

Dr Sarojni Choy

Mr Barry Fraser

Principal Supervisor

Associate Supervisor

Doctoral Student

Griffith University

Griffith University

Griffith University

By signing below, I confirm that I have read and understood the information sheet and in particular have noted that:

- I understand that my involvement in this research will include; authorising me access to both food and beverage and rooms division course profiles from your university;
- I have had any questions answered to my satisfaction;
- I understand the risks involved;
- I understand that there will be no direct benefit to me from my participation in this research;
- I understand that my participation in this research is voluntary;
- I understand that if I have any additional questions, I can contact the research team;
- I understand that I am free to withdraw at any time, without explanation or penalty;
- I understand that I can contact the Manager, Research Ethics, at Griffith University Human Research Ethics Committee on 3XX XXXX email@griffith ... If you have any concerns about the ethical conduct of the project; and
- I agree to participate in the project.

The documents will be used for research purposes only. The results may be presented as part of a thesis document and presented in international referred journals and conferences, other than for these requirements; the information will not be shared with any other third party.

Name and Institution	
Title	
Signature	
Date	

Appendix L: Field observation request

Dear (Human Resources Manager),

I am writing to request your permission to gain access your organisation and to observe and interview your Food and Beverage and Front Office managers. One of the aims of my doctoral study is to identify the specific competencies deemed to be required of effective operations managers within deluxe standard (4-5 star) Australian hotels.

The purpose of this letter is to request your consent to allow me on-site to observe and interview your managers.

To ensure the success of this project, your participation is both very important and greatly appreciated.

Confidentiality

All information gathered is completely confidential, and will be analysed and reported in summary format. Your organisation and its employees will remain completely anonymous at all times. All information obtained will not be provided to any other parties and will be used only for this specific research project.

Insurance

Griffith University will provide the required workplace insurance for me while I am undertaking this research on your premises; therefore there is no perceived risk to your organisation.

If you require any further information, please do not hesitate to contact me at email@griffith ... or the Project Supervisor, Professor Stephen Billett at email@griffith ...

Could you please read the information sheet provided and sign the attached consent form, agreeing to allow me on-site to observe and interview your managers.

Thank you very much for your time and assistance with this project.

Yours sincerely,

Barry Fraser – Doctoral Candidate

Email: email@griffith ...

Ph: 07 555 XXXX

Fax: 07 555 XXXX

Supervisors: Professor Stephen Billett and Dr Sarojni Choy

Information sheet (On-site Employee observation and interview request)

Who is conducting the research? This study is being conducted by:

Professor Stephen Billett

Dr Sarojni Choy

Mr Barry Fraser

Principal Supervisor

Associate Supervisor

Doctoral Student

Griffith University

Griffith University

Griffith University

Why the research is being conducted: The proposed study aims to identify the specific competencies deemed to be required of effective operations managers within deluxe standard (4-5 star) Australian hotels.

Additionally, the study will appraise how hospitality tertiary education institutions can improve competency development in graduates. Furthermore, the study will address the role work integrated learning plays in increasing learning outcomes for hospitality management tertiary students.

What you will be asked to do: Participation is voluntary. If you agree to provide access to your organisation and employees you are requested to sign the attached consent form.

The expected benefits of the research: The proposed study aims to inform educational practice by, i) identifying the specific competencies the hospitality industry are currently seeking, ii) establish how students best learn and acquire these competencies, and iii) suggest ways education institutions can enhance the levels of preparedness of hospitality management graduates.

Risks to you: There are no anticipated risks associated with you or your organisation through participating in this research. Griffith University will cover me for insurance whilst on your premises.

Privacy statement: The conduct of this research involves the collection, access and/or use of your organisations identified personal information. The information collected is confidential and will not be disclosed to third parties without your consent, except to meet government, legal or other regulatory authority requirements. A de-identified copy of this data will be used for research purposes. However, your employees' anonymity will at all times be safeguarded. For further information consult the University's Privacy Plan at www.... or telephone (07) 3XX XXXX.

Your participation is voluntary: Your participation in this research is completely voluntary; you are free to not allow me access or not provide any information, without comment or penalty.

Questions/further information: If you have any questions or require further information about this project, please contact the researchers listed at the top of this information sheet.

The ethical conduct of this research: Griffith University conducts research in accordance with the *National Statement on Ethical Conduct in Human Research*. If you have any concerns or complaints about the ethical conduct of the project, please contact the Manager, Research Ethics on 3XX XXXX email@griffith ...

Your feedback: The findings of the research will be available to all participants, if desired. You may opt to receive an emailed copy of summarised findings by emailing email@griffith ...

Consent: In signing the below consent form you have consented to partake in this research. Please feel at liberty to print out this information and consent form for your records.

Consent form (On-site Employee observation and interview request)

Who is conducting the research? This study is being conducted by:

Professor Stephen Billett

Dr Sarojni Choy

Mr Barry Fraser

Principal Supervisor

Associate Supervisor

Doctoral Student

Griffith University

Griffith University

Griffith University

By signing below, I confirm that I have read and understood the information sheet and in particular have noted that:

- I understand that my involvement in this research will include; allowing me access to your organisation for the purposes of observing both food and beverage and rooms division managers and also interviewing these managers.
- I have had any questions answered to my satisfaction;
- I understand the risks involved;
- I understand that there will be no direct benefit to me from my participation in this research;
- I understand that your organisations participation in this research is voluntary;
- I understand that if I have any additional questions, I can contact the research team;
- I understand that I am free to withdraw at any time, without explanation or penalty;
- I understand that I can contact the Manager, Research Ethics, at Griffith University Human Research Ethics Committee on 3XX XXXX) email@griffith ... if I have any concerns about the ethical conduct of the project; and
- I agree to participate in the project.

All information obtained will be used for research purposes only. The results may be presented as part of a thesis document and presented in international referred journal and conferences, other than for these requirements, the information will not be shared with any other third party.

Your name and hotel	
Title	Human Resources Manager
Signature	
Date	

Appendix M: Department Manager interview request

Dear Sir/Madam (Hotel Department Manager),

Your contact details (name, business phone and email only) have been provided to me by your employer for the purposes of a research project. You are welcome to contact your employer, should you have any questions or concerns about me accessing your contact details.

I am writing to request your assistance with my doctoral research project. One of the aims of my doctoral study is to identify the specific competencies deemed to be required of effective operations managers within deluxe standard (4-5 star) Australian hotels. As part of this project, I plan to undertake some overt observations with managers whilst they are undertaking their jobs. I would anticipate being on-site for a period of one day, observing both Food and Beverage and Front Office managers during their normal days work.

Following these observations, I further request your permission to undertake a brief interview with you, for approximately 20 minutes.

The purpose of both the observation and interview is to help to determine the key competencies required of hotel operations managers to effectively undertake their jobs.

To ensure the success of this project, your participation is both very important and greatly appreciated.

Confidentiality

All information gathered is completely confidential, and will be analysed and reported in summary format. The various participants and your organisation will remain completely anonymous at all times. Names or information will not be provided to any other parties. If you require any further information, please do not hesitate to contact me at email@griffith ... or the Project Supervisor, Professor Stephen Billett at email@griffith ...

Insurance

Griffith University will provide the required workplace insurance for me whilst I am undertaking this research on your premises; therefore there is no perceived risk to your organisation.

Thank you very much for your time and assistance with this project.

Yours sincerely,

Barry Fraser, Doctoral Candidate

Supervisors: Professor Stephen Billett and Dr Sarojni Choy

Information sheet (interview request)

Who is conducting the research? This study is being conducted by:

Professor Stephen Billett	Dr Sarojni Choy	Mr Barry Fraser
Principal Supervisor	Associate Supervisor	Doctoral Student
Griffith University	Griffith University	Griffith University

Why the research is being conducted: The proposed study aims to identify the specific competencies deemed to be required of effective operations managers within deluxe standard (4-5 star) Australian hotels.

Additionally, the study will appraise how hospitality tertiary education institutions can improve competency development in graduates. Furthermore, the study will address the role work integrated learning plays in increasing learning outcomes for hospitality management tertiary students.

What you will be asked to do: Participation is voluntary. If you wish to participate, you will take part in a one-on-one interview in which you will engage in a discussion about the required competencies to successfully undertake your position. Completion of the interview should take approximately 20-25 minutes.

The expected benefits of the research: The proposed study aims to inform educational practice by, i) identifying the specific competencies the hospitality industry are currently seeking, ii) establish how students best learn and acquire these competencies, and iii) suggest ways education institutions can enhance the levels of preparedness of hospitality management graduates.

Risks to you: There are no anticipated risks associated with you or your organisation through participating in this research.

Privacy statement: The conduct of this research involves the collection, access and / or use of your identified personal information. The information collected is confidential and will not be disclosed to third parties without your consent, except to meet government, legal or other regulatory authority requirements. A de-identified copy of this data will be used for research purposes. However, your anonymity will at all times be safeguarded. For further information consult the University's Privacy Plan at [www ...](#) or telephone (07) 3XXX XXXX.

Your participation is voluntary: Your participation in this research is completely voluntary; you are free to not provide any information without comment or penalty.

Questions/further information: If you have any questions or require further information about this project, please contact the researcher listed at the top of this information sheet.

The ethical conduct of this research: Griffith University conducts research in accordance with the *National Statement on Ethical Conduct in Human Research*. If you have any concerns or complaints about the ethical conduct of the project, please contact the Manager, Research Ethics on 3XX XXXX.

Your feedback: The findings of the research will be available to all participants, if desired. You may opt to receive an emailed copy of summarised findings by emailing [email@griffith ...](#)

Consent: In signing the attached consent form, you have consented to partake in this research. Please feel at liberty to print out this information and consent form for your records.

Consent form (Industry department manager interview)

Who is conducting the research? This study is being conducted by:

Professor Stephen Billett

Dr Sarojni Choy

Mr Barry Fraser

Principal Supervisor

Associate Supervisor

Doctoral Student

Griffith University

Griffith University

Griffith University

By signing below, I confirm that I have read and understood the information sheet and in particular have noted that:

- I understand that my involvement in this research will include; being interviewed and discussing the perceived competencies needed to undertake your job.
- I have had any questions answered to my satisfaction;
- I understand the risks involved;
- I understand that there will be no direct benefit to me from my participation in this research;
- I understand that my participation in this research is voluntary;
- I understand that if I have any additional questions, I can contact the research team;
- I understand that I am free to withdraw at any time, without explanation or penalty;
- I understand that I can contact the Manager, Research Ethics, at Griffith University Human Research Ethics Committee on 3XXX XXXX email@griffith ... if I have any concerns about the ethical conduct of the project; and
- I agree to participate in the project.

This information will be used for research purposes. The information you provide will remain anonymous, the analysis may be presented as part of a thesis document and presented in international referred journals and conferences, other than for these requirements, the information will not be shared with any other third party.

Your name and hotel	
Title	
Signature	
Date	

Information sheet (observation request)

Who is conducting the research? This study is being conducted by:

Professor Stephen Billett

Dr Sarojni Choy

Mr Barry Fraser

Principal Supervisor

Associate Supervisor

Doctoral Student

Griffith University

Griffith University

Griffith University

Why the research is being conducted: The proposed study aims to identify the specific competencies deemed to be required of effective operations managers within deluxe standard (4-5 star) Australian hotels. Additionally, the study will appraise how hospitality tertiary education institutions can improve competency development in graduates. Furthermore, the study will address the role work integrated learning plays in increasing learning outcomes for hospitality management tertiary students.

What you will be asked to do: Participation is voluntary. If you wish to participate, you will be willing to be overtly observed whilst undertaking your duties at work. It is anticipated that you will be observed during various periods of work over a period of one or two days not necessarily for the duration of your shift. During this period of observation you are requested to undertake your job as you would normally. You will not be judged in any way on your performance, only the requirements of your job are under review, not your personal ability to undertake any tasks. You will also be requested to inform any others directly involved in interactions of the research being undertaken, and gain their verbal consent to also participate. The research will discontinue if any person, at any time does not wish to be involved.

The expected benefits of the research: The proposed study aims to inform educational practice by, i) identifying the specific competencies the hospitality industry are currently seeking, ii) establish how students best learn and acquire these competencies, and iii) suggest ways education institutions can enhance the levels of preparedness of hospitality management graduates.

Risks to you: There are no anticipated risks associated with you or your organisation through participating in this research.

Privacy statement: The conduct of this research involves the collection, access and / or use of your identified personal information. The information collected is confidential and will not be disclosed to third parties without your consent, except to meet government, legal or

other regulatory authority requirements. A de-identified copy of this data will be used for research purposes. However, your anonymity will at all times be safeguarded. For further information consult the University's Privacy Plan at www..... or telephone (07) 3XXX XXXX.

Your participation is voluntary: Your participation in this research is completely voluntary; you are free to withdrawal at any time without comment or penalty. You are also advised that you can request to not be observed during any particular period. Furthermore, should any other individual be directly involved whilst you undertake your duties, their verbal consent to observation will also be sought, and if requested the observation will discontinue.

Questions/further information: If you have any questions or require further information about this project, please contact the researcher listed at the top of this information sheet.

The ethical conduct of this research: Griffith University conducts research in accordance with the *National Statement on Ethical Conduct in Human Research*. If you have any concerns or complaints about the ethical conduct of the project, please contact the Manager, Research Ethics on 3XX XXXX email@griffith ...

Your feedback: The findings of the research will be available to all participants, if desired. You may opt to receive an emailed copy of summarised findings by emailing email@griffith ...

Consent: In signing the below consent form you have consented to partake in this research. Please feel at liberty to print out this information and consent form for your records.

Consent form (Industry manager observation)

Who is conducting the research? This study is being conducted by:

Professor Stephen Billett	Dr Sarojni Choy	Mr Barry Fraser
Principal Supervisor	Associate Supervisor	Doctoral Student
Griffith University	Griffith University	Griffith University

By signing below, I confirm that I have read and understood the information sheet and in particular have noted that:

- I understand that my involvement in this research will include; being willing to be overtly observed whilst you are undertaking your normal job duties.
- I have had any questions answered to my satisfaction;
- I understand the risks involved;
- I understand that there will be no direct benefit to me from my participation in this research;
- I understand that my participation in this research is voluntary;
- I understand that if I have any additional questions, I can contact the research team;
- I understand that I am free to withdraw at any time, without explanation or penalty;
- I understand that I can contact the Manager, Research Ethics, at Griffith University Human Research Ethics Committee on 3XX XXXX email@griffith ... if I have any concerns about the ethical conduct of the project; and
- I agree to participate in the project.

The information obtained will be used for research purposes. The information obtained will remain anonymous; the analysis may be presented as part of a thesis document and presented in international referred journals and conferences, other than for these requirements, the information will not be shared with any other third party.

Your name and hotel	
Title	
Signature	
Date	

Appendix N: Managers' final interview request

Information sheet (interview request)

Who is conducting the research?

This study is being conducted by:

Professor Stephen Billett

Dr Sarojni Choy

Mr Barry Fraser

Principal Supervisor

Associate Supervisor

Doctoral Student

Griffith University

Griffith University

Griffith University

Why the research is being conducted: The proposed study aims to identify the specific competencies deemed to be required of effective operations managers within deluxe standard (4-5 star) Australian hotels. Additionally, the study will appraise how hospitality tertiary education institutions can improve competency development in graduates. Furthermore, the study will address the role work integrated learning plays in increasing learning outcomes for hospitality management tertiary students.

What you will be asked to do: Participation is voluntary. If you wish to participate, you will take part in a one-on-one interview in which you will engage in a discussion about employability and the required competencies to successfully undertake your position. Completion of the interview should take approximately 25-30 minutes.

The expected benefits of the research: The proposed study aims to inform educational practice by, i) identifying the specific competencies the hospitality industry are currently seeking, ii) establish how students best learn and acquire these competencies, and iii) suggest ways education institutions can enhance the levels of preparedness of hospitality management graduates.

Risks to you: There are no anticipated risks associated with you or your organisation through participating in this research.

Privacy statement: The conduct of this research involves the collection, access and / or use of your identified personal information. The information collected is confidential and will not be disclosed to third parties without your consent, except to meet government, legal or other regulatory authority requirements. A de-identified copy of this data will be used for research purposes. However, your anonymity will at all times be safeguarded. For further information consult the University's Privacy Plan at www..... or telephone (07) 3XX XXXX.

Your participation is voluntary: Your participation in this research is completely voluntary; you are free to not provide any information without comment or penalty.

Questions/Further information: If you have any questions or require further information about this project, please contact the researcher listed at the top of this information sheet.

The ethical conduct of this research: Griffith University conducts research in accordance with the *National Statement on Ethical Conduct in Human Research*. If you have any concerns or complaints about the ethical conduct of the project, please contact the Manager, Research Ethics on 3XX XXXX email@griffith ...

Your feedback: The findings of the research will be available to all participants, if desired. You may opt to receive an emailed copy of summarised findings by emailing email@griffith ...

Consent: In signing the attached consent form, you have consented to partake in this research. Please feel at liberty to print out this information and consent form for your records.

Consent form (Industry manager's interview)

Who is conducting the research? This study is being conducted by:

Professor Stephen Billett	Dr Sarojni Choy	Mr Barry Fraser
Principal Supervisor	Associate Supervisor	Doctoral Student
Griffith University	Griffith University	Griffith University

By signing below, I confirm that I have read and understood the information sheet and in particular have noted that:

- I understand that my involvement in this research will include; being interviewed and discussing employability and the perceived competencies needed to undertake your role.
- I have had any questions answered to my satisfaction;
- I understand the risks involved;
- I understand that there will be no direct benefit to me from my participation in this research;
- I understand that my participation in this research is voluntary;
- I understand that if I have any additional questions, I can contact the research team;
- I understand that I am free to withdraw at any time, without explanation or penalty;
- I understand that I can contact the Manager, Research Ethics, at Griffith University Human Research Ethics Committee on 3XX XXXX email@griffith ...if I have any concerns about the ethical conduct of the project; and
- I agree to participate in the project.

This information will be used for research purposes. The information you provide will remain anonymous, the analysis may be presented as part of a thesis document and presented in international referred journals and conferences, other than for these requirements, the information will not be shared with any other third party.

Your name and hotel	
Title	
Signature	
Date	