LTR002 Accounting Class – Lecture 2

“Okay. Well thank you very much everybody for coming. Today is a special class we are going to be talking about accounting and career pathways, where will accounting take you. Through your career.”

“Let me introduce myself my name is Anthony Scarf I’m a professor practice in the department of accounting and I work in the business school. I teach in the master’s programs and also in undergraduate.”

“But my journey as an accountant started, I did a commerce degree majoring in finance. I then started at price water how coopers as a consultant. I worked there for 4 years, 5 years, and then I went to Australia post, one of Australia’s largest logistics providers. During that time, I did my charted, I did my CA my professional accreditation in industry. I’ve worked and been heavily involved in surf life-saving. Right now I work for Latrobe uni, part time as one of their lecturers, or one of their professors of practice and I work for a mid-size consulting firm.”

“Today we are going to be talking about three things: Why you should study accounting? What does a Latrobe University degree in accounting give you? And where will your accounting skills take you?”

“So why should you study accounting? Some people are terrified about the concept of accounting, terrified by the numbers but reality is accounting skills are life skills. They are going to be critical for you as you make your decisions. They are going to help you gain financial independence understanding what your spent looks like, managing credit cards. Buying a home, building your financial literacy, so you can read the papers, so you can listen to the news, so you can understand what the politicians are talking about.”

“It’s going to help you travel. Help you with your travelling, your savings targets, you might be wanting to start a business and it’s going to be key to starting a career and that’s going to be the focus today.”

“Accounting skills give you options, domestically and internationally, you can take your skills to almost any business in Australia or you can take them overseas as well. There are many pathways. Many different career segments or different ways you can take your accounting skills into business. You can go into the accounting and advisory firms and become a consultant. You can work in industry. You can work for large companies, multinationals, large domestic companies. You can work in the non-for-profit sector. You can go into government. Or you might want to move into academia and continue with research, and teaching.”

“Graduates with accounting and business skills will tell you; accounting skills gave me endless career pathways and options, a ticket to the world, and meaning, relevant, and interesting work from day one. The minute they started their job they’re given their first file. They’re out with their first client. They’re solving their first problem.”

“What does a Latrobe University degree in accounting give you? It gives you technical competency in the following areas. And this is just a few, this is just a bit of a snapshot. But accounting, if you study accounting you’ll study the key areas like, financial accounting and management accounting. You’ll look at taxation; you’ll look at finance. You’ll do a audit and assurance and corporate reporting, and then you’ll move into really interesting areas around business analytics. Consumer, customer insights, business insights. Entrepreneurship and sustainability. Latrobe University offers more than technical though.”

“When you come and do your university degree, you’ll get the technical skills. But I would be unimpressed if you left with just technical skills. I want you to leave, we want you to leave with soft skills. We want you to leave with skills around leadership and teamwork. We want you to have been able to solve some problems by yourself or with a group. We want you to gain some independence. Be able to take a problem by yourselves. Communication skills are going to be critical and university is where you are going to develop them. You are going to learn to communicate in the written form, face to face in group assignments. Critical thinking is probably the most important skill that you will take from university. And these are the skills that I am going to call graduate capabilities. In fact the university calls them graduate capabilities. They are the key skills that we look for in the employment arena. In industry we are looking for graduates with these skills.”

“And for those who want to make accounting their profession. Doing accounting at university gives you the prerequisites for a professional accreditation. Doing your CA and becoming a member of the charted accounts Australia New Zealand. Or doing your CPA or joining the charted institute of management accountants. These are post graduate courses; these are course that you will do in your career. In the first 3 to 5 years of your career you’ll start something like this. And you can only do something like this, once you have done the subjects at university. So that is why I suggest doing accounting at university.”

“Career pathways, let’s have a look at some career pathways. I said before accounting gives you options you can go in many different directions. Into the advisory, into the industry or into the academia. So let’s have look at who employs accountants. Right now when you get to the end of your degree you’re going to have to look for who’s going to employ me, where is my next job? It may be one of the big accounting firms, or big advisory firms like price water house coopers, KPMG, Deloitte or earnsten young. It might be one of the mid-tier firms. And these firms handle everybody start-ups, individuals, small to mid-size businesses. Some really exciting stuff and there is a lot of them. A lot of great advisors where you can join their graduate program. Or you might move into one of the specialised areas that deal with insolvency.”

“Who employs accountants? Not just the accounting firms but the larger consulting firms like Accenture, Boston consulting, Bain and co and McKinsey. You might have heard a few of these names. In industry this is where most of our graduates will go. Most people who study accounting will find their pathway into a big corporate. It might be a bank. Might be one of our domestic banks, which is a multinational. ANZ has a huge growth strategy up in Asian at the moment. Might be the NAB. It might be one of the international banks like HSBC, or the Royal Bank of Scotland. Or it might be into one of the investment banks. Macquarie bank, city bank. Accounts are employed in all part of federal government. There are grad programs in every single government department. And you’ll find accountants pulling jobs out of these areas. Be it at the federal level or the state level. The ATO is a huge employer of people with business degrees and accounting specialisation. You’ve got the mining firms, BHPbilition, Rio tino. And you got the big logistics players, just a few, just a few of the many companies who are going to be hiring. That’s when you finish university. You might go into a telco. One of our two big telco’s. Or you might move into a what we call a FMCG a fast moving consumer goods organisation. Coles and Woolworths, you’ve all heard of them. Yeah hands up. Yeah good work. Lots happening there. You might move into a tech company, an SAP or an IBM. You might move into a big automotive company that’s based in Australia. Or you might go and work for the likes of Quantas. The options are boundless.”

“I’ve got some stats for you. This is a publication put our every year that helps you decide where you are going to start your career. And I have pulled some stats from the Australia’s top 100. And it tells us that our accounting graduates people who finish with a business degree covering, finance, accounting, economics and business admin, which is what you will cover when you an accounting degree. Those who move in accounting and financial management segment or sector, 75% of them have an accounting degree. In the banking, financial segments and investment sector 66% have studied accounting. In consulting 42%, where consulting is a big pool, where you’ll have people specialising in engineering consulting and IT. That is still quite a significant portion. Let go to consumer goods 81% who study accounting make up a graduate pool in those employers. In IT technology and communications 37% of graduates have accounting. And in logistics we have 55% percent.”

“So there is a snapshot. Right, you come to uni to try make yourself a better person to learn a bit more, and to find a career. Well it’s a great way to land yourself your first job.”

“Where will accounting take you? Come look at this, as I have said the skies the limit. If you have a look in any financial statements of the big multinational companies you’ll find that almost every CFO has accounting, almost every CEO will have accounting. Businesses are filled with accounting people, why? Because accounting is the language of business. If you understand the numbers, you’ll understand how to run the business. If you don’t understand the numbers, your business is going to be at risk. We have got people like Simon who is right now the financial controller for Microsoft. He studied accounting, and went through and did his CA with the Institute of charted accountants Australia New Zealand. And their view and thoughts are with accounting you can drive business decisions for global companies and change the face of fashion you improve the fortunes of failing sports teams. Or you can go and start up your entrepreneurial flare and go and start up something really exciting.”

“Globally accounting skills are in demand. On this map I am showing you right now, where countries have their own specific, well they are members of what we call the global accounting alliance. They have strong representation. And in the red is everywhere where members of those organisations are also working. So you have member organisations CP Australia, Charted accountants Australia. And you can see where they are working, where there isn’t a member organisation already. So again you can take you skills wherever.”

“So I am going to wrap up. We started with accounting as a career. It gives you options, heaps of options. Then spoke to you about some of the places you might work like accounting firms, the large, the big firms, or some of the mid-size. You can move industry, you can work for government, you can work in the banks, you can work in the fast consumer goods industries. Doing accounting is a prerequisite for professional accreditation. You can become a management accounting expert; you can become a charted accountant or a member of the CPA. And the sky is the limit. So thank you that is my pitch. I would like to open for any questions if you have got some.”

**Q&A:**

Q: “So based on your experience, how hard is it to get a graduate job?”  
A: “Look right now, it’s a really tough market. There are lots of people entering the market, with great skills and great experience, so to your question yeah, it’s a really tough market right now.”

Q: “How can I start planning for a career in business?”

A: “Right, how can you start planning? I actually, I thought you might have asked that question so I thought about three things for you. Right now. I’d love for you to think about what interests you? Okay. I want you to start doing some research. I want you to have a look at what companies, what products, what things interest you. I want you to think about what’s going to make you special and what is going to make you different. When you go in front of an interview, you are going to need to be able to tell them what makes you different from the person beside you, what makes you special. What gives you some out of the box experience one I’ll call it. And the third thing is what makes you a strong candidate? For working in a big corporate. If you are going to come in as a graduate I need to make sure you are compatible, work well in a team, communicate well, right and I need you to start convincing yourself about that, I need you to start getting those experiences, getting involved in uni, in teams. Getting involved in what you can to demonstrate you are agile, you can work in different programs, in different projects with different people, in different environments. Okay. Good.”

Q: “What can I do now to give me the ------- doing a job?”   
**Could not understand what she says here: 14:22**  
A: “Yeah. Really great question. I want you to start building on your experiences. Okay. When you put your CV together, when you apply for your jobs, you are going to tell me you went to uni, and you are going to tell me the subjects you did. And that’s great but I want to know more about you. Right, so right now before you start uni, start building on your experiences. Start a part time job. Start getting involved in business. If you want a career in business start now. Start working, start understanding what it is like to deal with customers and suppliers, products. How to bring in revenue and the cost of a business. Maybe do some non-for-profit work, working for a charity on a part time basis. Be involved in clubs. Be involved in sporting clubs, social clubs, religious clubs, whatever it is you want to, that’s going to give you the opportunity, meet new people, build your skills, build your confidence, and to get a broader understanding of business. These are great things to put into your job applications. I’d like you to start exploring options. Right now a number of the big employers offer vacation work or internships. Things like you’ll go and work over the Christmas period. You might be doing anything from, helping the business with the filing, to being out of jobs providing some strategic advice. You never know what you might be able to do. This is a great way to start building some experience in your career and start being seen by employers. And the last one I’ll say is start managing your brand. Start building yourself a really great profile. It might be a linkedin profile. On the flip side be really cautious of social media. Be cautious about how you are projecting yourself in a social media setting now. Remembering when an employer is recruiting they might look and they might learn a whole lot about you that you didn’t want them to know. So start managing that right now. Thank you next question. Oh sorry any other questions?”

Q: “Yeah. I got a question. Can you please explain what a graduate program for an accounting graduate? When they are working for an accounting firm like say PWC or a major large corporation like PHP.”

A: “Sure. Well let me start off with the accounting firm, a graduate program looks like this: after you have been offered the position and you come in, you will work with them for 2 years. And through this program you will be rotating through various parts of the business. From day one they will get you out on a client site, if you work for a mining company you will be shipped out. And you go, and you will be able to visit the mine sites, you will be able to visit the operations. If you are working in a manufacturing you’ll be, on the manufacturing floor seeing the processes. If you are in an audit capacity, if you are working, if you pull a job in the audit function of an accounting firm. You’ll be out there working with stocktakes. You’ll be hands on, client facing from day one. And during those two years you’ll get incredible training and development. They will support you through the charted accounting program. They will help you with business skills, your professional skills, your presence, and they will also give you all the train required, and the mentoring required to do the job. And after those 2 years, you’ll generally move into the department that you are working with, or you’ll have the opportunity to move into other departments. Be that audit, tax, business consulting, personal advisory. Now that’s within an accounting firm. In a mining firm, let’s say BHPbilliton, you will join their grad program again their programs generally run for 2 years. And they will rotate you through all different departments. Might start in the finance department. You might do some time there doing month in reporting. You might move into the marketing department. And helping them start contracts with suppliers. Or looking at their marketing spend, and see what sort of return they are getting on their spend. You might move into an operational area and be out on the site. You might move into an asset control area and be helping them manage their trucks their mine sites, their facilities. Like I said it is open to whatever you are interested in doing. And these companies make sure that they get the best talent. So they will give you opportunity to see their business and while you are seeing their business it gives them the opportunity to see you and what you are interested in.”

Q: “You mentioned that accountants could work in companies such as Woolworths for example, could you tell me more about the roles that they would do?”

A: “Yeah sure, in Woolworths they employ accounts in all different areas, all different areas, so we’ll step beyond graduate program. They have accountants in their finance area of course, they have accountants in their product costing areas, they need to work out how much their products cost in order for them to sell them so they can make a profit. They have accountants in their marketing areas to help them to work out exactly who their target markets are. Are they marketing to the right people, are they, what should they be spending their money on to get a good return on their investment? You’ll see accountants through their corporate office. So advising investors, supporting people who want to invest in a listed company. You’ll see accounts through operations. Accountants exist throughout the entire business because they bring a number of things like we said before in graduate capabilities. They bring the ability to understand the numbers and communicate those numbers to people who don’t understand them. They can solve problems and they can think critically. And those are the core skills that make accountants valuable in multinational companies. Did that answer your question? … Good. Any other questions?”

Q: “Can you tell me how a career pathway would look like for an accounting graduate?”  
A: “You might start as a graduate in a business and then you might move into maybe a senior management area, senior management of finance. You might then move into a product area and become a product general manager. You might then move across into operations and bring your skills both understanding the numbers and understanding products and understanding the customers, to the operations area. You might then, with the ability to understand costs and your understanding of efficiency you might be able to help operations. You might then move into either a line manager role, where you are controlling a number of people, or a support function where you are helping people across the entire organisation. You might then progress up the ranks to general management. And you might find yourself one day as a CFO or a CEO of a major corporation. That’s one pathway. Another pathway is you move different organisations, you might start in an accounting firm, and you might learn, get all your skills, get your charted accounting qualification there. You might then start working on some really interesting clients. And find that hey, they’ve got some exciting things happening, you might go and work for them. Might go work at one of your clients for a while. And then you might go back into consulting again. With the skills that you learnt from your small to mid-size client about customers, and supply chain, and costing, and financial performance. You might take that back into consulting and consult again. And when you are consulting you might find another interesting client and go work for them. Again your ability to be agile with accounting is extraordinary. You can move in and be of value straight away. As I said it’s the language of business and every business needs a person who understands the numbers.”  
  
“Okay. Thank you. I think that’s all our questions. Thank you everybody and I look forward to our next session.”