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DIGITAL COMMUNICATION COMPETENCIES AND UNDERGRADUATE BUSINESS EDUCATION STUDENTS' EMPLOYMENT READINESS AT THE UNIVERSITY OF UYO, AKWA IBOM STATE, NIGERIA

BY

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Abstract

This study investigated digital communication competencies and undergraduate Business Education students' employment readiness at the University of Uyo, Akwa Ibom State, Nigeria. The study was necessitated by the widening workplace competency gap between university training and the actual digital expectations of the modern corporate environment. The descriptive survey research design was adopted for the study. The population comprised 99 final-year Business Education students in the Department of Business Education at the University of Uyo. Purposive sampling technique was used. Data were collected via a validated "Digital Communication Competencies and Employment Readiness Questionnaire (DCCERQ), with Cronbach's alpha reliability co-efficient value of 0.82. Simple linear regression was used to answer research questions one and two, and to test null hypotheses one and two, while multiple regression was used to answer research question three and to test null hypothesis three at .05 level of significance. The findings indicated that proficiency in computer-mediated communication platforms; virtual team collaboration suites, digital professional writing (digital workflows), and online presentation and digital pitching competencies significantly predicted graduates' employment readiness for the contemporary corporate workforce. While foundational writing skills are stable, critical gaps persist in active team collaboration platforms. The study concluded that standardizing digital workplace competency is vital for global employability. It was recommended, among others, the Department of Business Education, University of Uyo, should mandate the adoption of cloud-based project management and communication tools such as Slack Microsoft Team and Google Workspace for group assignments and continuous assessment to build virtual team collaboration, professional email writing etiquettes, and technical pitching competencies, thereby directly enhancing the economic value and work productivity of the institution's graduates.

Keywords: Business Education Curriculum, Computer-Mediated Communication, Graduate Employability Skills, University of Uyo

Introduction

The modern workplace has changed dramatically, and the days of relying completely on physical paperwork and face-to-face meetings are long gone. Today, businesses, irrespective of size operate on digital tools, remote team platforms, and instant online communication. Due to this unprecedented technological disruption, corporate firms no longer just look for standard certificates; they need a new breed of technologically competent employees who can immediately manage digital information systems. Business Education, as a specialised professional discipline, bears the core mandate of bridging this gap by training students to become competent, job-ready professionals who possess the theoretical and practical workplace skills (Bassey & Ebieme, 2026; Ebieme *et al.,* 2024). However, as noted by Abraham-Ibe (2021) the rapid pace of digital innovation means that the exact communication competencies required to secure and sustain employment are constantly changing. In Nigeria, graduate unemployment remains a major socio-economic challenge, with industry experts frequently pointing to a humongous digital skills gap as a core driver of the crisis. Nwafor (2021) opined that a significant number of post-secondary graduates require intensive external training interventions before they can successfully fit into the modern corporate frameworks. While students are often taught foundational business and pedagogical theories, they frequently struggle with the specific digital communication competencies that modern corporate managers take for granted.

According to Adesanya et al. (2020) the quality of an employee's performance in the office is heavily influenced by their technical proficiency. Knowing how to seamlessly collaborate on cloud software, write

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professional corporate email copy, or deliver a clear business proposal over a video call has become the new baseline for landing an office role. For Business Education graduates, these digital communication competencies are no longer just optional career bonuses; they are basic necessities that directly dictate their competitiveness, global relevance, and immediate readiness for the labour market (Ebieme *et al.*, 2026). As a leading federal institution in Akwa Ibom State, the University of Uyo serves as a vital training hub for the next generation of business and vocational education professionals. However, there is still a critical need to empirically examine how well these students are being prepared for the digital demands of today's employers. By shifting focus away from general broad frameworks and looking closely at specific sub-dimensions such as virtual team collaboration, professional online writing, online presentation, and digital pitching competencies, academic departments can better measure true employment or career readiness. Research by Ukata & Amini (2022) revealed that when Universities fail to focus on these specific digital competencies, graduates underperform during corporate recruitment, and selection processes.

The high number of unemployed Business Education graduates from the University of Uyo points to a serious disconnect between classroom training and current labour market demands. Regular University courses in the institution still focus heavily on traditional office and clerical skills. However, modern corporate employers in the South-South region expect mastery of advanced digital communication competencies, like managing collaborative cloud software, and handling digital client relations. This widening competency gap directly damages the employment readiness of University of Uyo Business Education graduates, leaving many young professionals struggling to secure jobs after graduation. Human Capital Theory by Becker (1964) posited that higher education should directly boost an individual's market productivity and make one nore valuable. Regrettably, current training methods within the Department of Business Education, University of Uyo show limitations in building the essential marketplace value required by contemporary employers. While existing studies focused broadly about general computer literacy across Nigeria. localised data on how specific digital communication competencies affect job placement for graduates of this specific institution are clearly missing. This study, therefore, seeks to address this problem by investigating how these digital communication metrics affect graduate employment readiness at the University of Uyo, with the aim of helping the Department of Business Education update its curriculum to match actual 21st century workplace realities. In light of these challenges within Business Education graduates, it becomes critical to conceptualise digital communication competencies and Business Education graduate employment readiness.

Digital communication competencies are conceptualized as the ability to use professional collaboration, information sharing, and interpersonal interaction in virtual environments. These competencies, often viewed as key components of digital literacy and competency frameworks, involve the effective management of online tools for communication and the navigation of digital etiquette. Oberlander et al. (2020) viewed DDC specifically within business environment as the capacity to utilise appropriate digital channels to communicate with colleagues, supervisors, and external business partners using context-appropriate form and language. It could be described as the structured set of knowledge, skills, attitudes, and strategies required to use digital media to communicate, manage information, collaborate, and share content effectively and ethically (Ferrari, 2013). Handke et al. (2022) conceptualized digital communication competency as the operational ability of organisational members to articulate expectations, manage relationships, and offer timely feedback across virtual business platforms. It is viewed as the specific conceptual understanding and operational skills that allow professionals to interact online, execute professional tasks, and adapt to evolving digital environment (Spante *et al.,* 2018). Alcala et al. (2020) characterized digital communication competencies as the technical and educational capacity to create, exchange, and evaluate media messages transmitted across corporate digital interfaces. It is described as the processing ability to transmit and receive operational information dynamically across specicalised electronic systems and digital interfaces (Grewal et al., 2022).

In the context of Business Education, digital communication competencies may be viewed as the practical abilities and technical proficiencies required by graduates to systematically create, process, share and manage business data and corporate information using modern electronic tools and virtual platforms. Rather than simply using technology for personal interaction, these competencies within business pedagogy represent a hybrid core competency. They require combining foundational management principles (such as business

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ethics, office management, and executive correspondence) with technical mastery of enterprise collaboration software, professional digital media platforms, and remote workspace applications. Furthermore, in this field, digital communication competencies are viewed as the primary vehicle for digital literacy. They serve as the critical baseline that directly transform theoretical academic knowledge into immediate operational value, task efficiency, and competitive employment readiness in a technology-driven corporate environment.

Unpacking this overarching problem also requires a precise understanding of Business Education graduate employment readiness. This may be described as the degree of professional maturity, technical sagacity, and structural preparedness that graduates possess to transit smoothly into the modern workspace. In business pedagogy, this readiness goes beyond bagging a college degree. It symbolizes a combination of three core strengths:

- Core competencies: mastering modern business management principles and office operations (Ebieme & Bassey, 2026).
- Soft skills: possessing the capacity to adapt to fast-paced corporate environments, communicate clearly and consistently, and smartly address workspace problems (Imagha & Ebieme, 2024)
- Immediate value: having the practical competencies required to handle daily routine tasks with little or no extra training from the employer.

Furthermore, employment readiness means a graduate is well equipped to excel during aptitude tests, add value to an employer's workflow from day one, and maintain a successful career in an ever dynamic technology driven business environment.

This conceptual interplay between digital communication competencies and undergraduate Business Education students' employment readiness is theoretically anchored on the Human Capital Theory advanced by Theodore Schultz (1961) and Gary Becker (1964). The theory posited that education, training and skill acquisitions are deliberate investments that increase an individual's intellectual and economic productivity, thereby enhancing their value in the labour market. In the context of this study, final-year Business Education Students at the University of Uyo are viewed as developing human capital. Their mastery of digital communication competencies; specifically, virtual team collaboration, digital professional writing, and online presentation and pitching competencies represent a vital upgrade to their human capital stock. The theory assumed that a higher acquisition of these contemporary digital communication competencies directly translates to greater market productivity, thereby determining the overall extent of their employment readiness upon graduation. Empirically substantiating this theoretical stance, several recent investigations have evaluated the real-world influence of digital communication competencies on Business Education graduate employment readiness in Nigeria and globally.

Okoli & Umeoka (2026) investigated digital communication skills required of Office Technology and Management Graduates for effective performance in tertiary institutions in Ebonyi State. The study adopted descriptive survey research design with a population of 302 administrative heads from six public tertiary institutions in Ebonyi State. A validated structured questionnaire was used for data collection. Mean and standard deviation were used to answer the research questions, while the null hypotheses were tested using ANOVA. Findings of the study revealed among others that digital communication skills are highly required for effective performance of Office Technology Management graduates in tertiary institutions in Ebonyi State. This work is relevant to the present study on the basis of digital communication skills variables. Also, both the old and current study adopted the same research design, but different population. Koko et al. (2025) carried out a study on digital competency integration and postgraduate Business Education Students' readiness for employability in Rivers State Universities. The study adopted correlational design. The population of the study comprised 225 Postgraduate Business Education Students in Rivers State Universities. Digital competency integration (DCIQ) and Postgraduate Business Education Students Readiness for Employability (PBESREQ) were used for data collection. Pearson product moment correlation co-efficient was used to analyse the two sets of data. The findings of the study revealed that there is a positive relationship between digital competency variables and Postgraduate Business Education Students readiness for employability in Rivers State

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Universities. This study relates relates to the present study on the basis of digital skills, although the research design, population and state are different.

Oko & Wagbara (2022) explored digital skills needed by Business Education graduates for global competitiveness in Entrepreneurship in Ebonyi State. Descriptive survey research design was employed. Population consisted of 150 graduates of Business Education from three higher institutions in Ebonyi State. A structured questionnaire was used for data collection. Mean and standard deviation were used for data analysis. The Findings of the study revealed that Business Education graduates needed all the digital skills in accounting and communication as listed in order to excel in entrepreneurship globally. This work relates to the present study on the basis of digital communication variables, and the research design used. The fundamental gap identified in the existing literature is that previous studies treated technology as a single, generic block (e.g, broad "ICT literacy") rather than separating it into specific communication tools required in modern hybrid workspaces, such as isolating virtual team collaboration platforms from asynchronous digital writing and online pitching competencies. Furthermore, must local researchers relied on basic descriptive statistics (frequencies and means scores) that merely stated current skill levels without employing predictive quantitative models like regression analysis to prove a mathematical cause-and-effect relationship regarding employability. Contextually, there is an acute paucity of localized empirical data focused explicitly on the Department of Business Education at the University of Uyo, Akwa Ibom State, Nigeria leaving a critical blind spot for regional curriculum planners who need to align local Business Education curriculum with the immediate demands of the Nigerian labour market.

Purpose of the Study

The main objective of this study is to determine the extent to which digital communication competencies influence final-year Business Education students' employment readiness at the University of Uyo, Akwa Ibom State, Nigeria. Specific objectives are to:

1. Assess the extent to which virtual team collaboration competency influences final-year Business Education Students' employment readiness at the University of Uyo.
2. Evaluate the extent to which digital professional writing competency influences final-year Business Education Students' employment readiness at the University of Uyo.
3. Determine the extent to which online presentation and digital pitching competency influences final-year Business Education Students' employment readiness of the University of Uyo.

Research Questions

1. To what extent does virtual team collaboration competency influence final-year Business Education students' employment readiness at the University of Uyo?
2. To what extent does digital professional writing competency influence final-year Business Education students' employment readiness at the University of Uyo?
3. To what extent does online presentation and digital pitching competency influence final-year Business Education students' employment readiness at the University of Uyo?

Research Hypotheses

Ho_1: Virtual ream collaboration competency does not significantly influence final-year Business Education students' employment readiness at the University of Uyo.

$Ho_{2:}$ Digital professional writing competency does not significantly influence final-year Business Education students' employment readiness at the University of Uyo.

Ho_3: Online presentation and digital pitching competency does not significantly influence final-year Business Education students' employment readiness at the University of Uyo.

Methodology

This study adopted a descriptive survey research design because, as Nworgu (2015) posited, it is highly suitable for gathering data on current digital communication competencies and employment readiness without changing or manipulating the existing university environment. The population of the study comprised 99 final-year undergraduate Business Education Students of the 2025/2026 session at the University of Uyo. Final-year

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(400 level) students were used because they have completed the full curriculum and are on the verge of seeking employment in both public and private sector organisations. Due to the relatively small number, the entire population was used as the sample. This is in line with Osuala (2005) cited in Ebieme & Udida (2026) who posited that the entire population should be studied when the population is relatively small. A census approach was adopted to optimize statistical precision. The instrument used for data collection was a structured questionnaire titled "Digital Communication Competencies and Employment Readiness Questionnaire" (DCCERQ), validated by two experts in Business Education and one in measurement and evaluation. Reliability was confirmed through a pilot test on ten (10) final-year Business Education students of the 2025/2026 session, outside the main pool, yielding a cronbach's alpha co-efficient value of 0.82. This was deemed high enough for the study and was supported by Nunnally & Bernstein (2010), who asserted that a reliability co-efficient of .05 should be accepted particularly at the early state of the research. The research instrument was administered by the researcher and two trained research assistants to final-year students immediately after lectures. In the copies of the questionnaire, the respondents responded by indicating the extent to which each statement influenced final-year student's employment readiness by ticking along the column provided. Scoring of the instrument was graded as follows: Very High Extent (VHE) – 4, High Extent (HE)-3, undecided (UN)-0, Low Extent (LE)-2, Very Low Extent (VLE)-1. 91 copies of the questionnaire out of 99 administered, representing 91.9% were returned in useable form.

Descriptive and inferential statistics were used for data analysis. Simple linear regression was used to answer research questions one and two and to test null hypotheses one and two, while multiple regression was used to answer research question three and test null hypothesis three, formulated at .05 level of significance. In order to take decision as regard research questions, any r-value that fell between 0.10-0.39 was regarded as low, 0.40-0.59 moderate, 0.60-0.79 high and 0.80-0.99 very high. In terms of the hypotheses, whenever the p-value was less than .05 level of significance, the null hypotheses were rejected and also whenever the p-value is greater than the .05 level of significance, the null hypotheses were accepted.

Results

Research Question One: To what extent does virtual team collaboration competency influence final-year Business Education students' employment readiness at the University of Uyo?

Table 1: Result of Simple Linear Regression of the Extent to which Virtual Team Collaboration Competency Influence Final-Year Business Education Students' Employment Readiness at the University of Uyo (N=91)

Variables	R	R^2	Adjusted R^2	Remarks
Virtual collaboration competency Employment readiness	0.861	0.741	0.738	Very High Extent

The result presented in Table 1 revealed an R-value of .861, indicating the strength of the relationship between virtual collaboration competency and final-year Business Education students' employment readiness at the University of Uyo. The R^2 value of .741, as shown in Table 1, indicates that 74.1% of the variation in final-year Business Education students' employment readiness is explained or predicted by their virtual team collaboration competency. This implies that virtual team collaboration competency influences final-year Business Education students' employment readiness at the University of Uyo to a very high extent.

Research Question Two: To what extent does digital professional writing competency influence final-year Business Education students' employment readiness at the University of Uyo?

Table 2: Result of Simple Linear Regression of the Extent to which Digital Professional Writing Competency Influence Final-Year Business Education Students' Employment Readiness at the University of Uyo (N=91)

Variables	R	R^2	Adjusted R^2	Remarks
Digital professional writing	0.793	0.628	0.624	High Extent

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competency
Employment readiness

The result presented in Table 2 revealed an R-value of .793, indicating the strength of the relationship between digital professional writing competency of final-year Business Education students' employment readiness at the University of Uyo. The R^2 value of .628, as shown in Table 2, indicates that 62.8% of the variation in final-year Business Education students' employment readiness is explained or predicted by digital professional writing competency. This implies that professional writing competency influences final-year Business Education students' employment readiness at the University of Uyo to a high extent.

Research Question Three: To what extent does online presentation and digital pitching competencies influence final-year Business Education students' employment readiness at the University of Uyo?

Table 3: Result of Multiple Linear Regression of the Extent to which Online Presentation and Digital Pitching Competencies Influence Final-Year Business Education Students' Employment Readiness at the University of Uyo (N=91)

Variables	R	R^2	Adjusted R^2	Remarks
Online Presentation and Digital Pitching Competencies	0.720	0.519	0.508	High Extent
Employment readiness				

The result presented in Table 3 revealed an R-value of .720, indicating the strength of the relationship between online presentation and digital pitching competencies and final-year Business Education students' employment readiness at the University of Uyo. The R^2 value of .519, as shown in Table 3, indicates that 51.9% of the variation in final-year Business Education students' employment readiness is explained or predicted by online presentation and digital pitching competencies. This implies that online presentation and digital pitching competencies influenced final-year Business Education students' employment readiness at the University of Uyo to a high extent.

Hypothesis One: Virtual team collaboration competency does not significantly influence final-year Business Education students' employment readiness at the University of Uyo.

Table 4: Result of Simple Linear Regression of the iinfluence of virtual team collaboration competency on final-year Business Education students' employment readiness at the University of Uyo (N=91)

Model		Sum of Squares	Df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1	Regression	489.82	1	489.82	95.89	.00[b]
	Residual	454.62	89	5.11		
	Total	944.44	90			

Model		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.
		B	Std. Error	Beta		
1	(Constant)	21.01	.58		36.34	.00
	Virtual_collaboration_competency	.61	.04	.86	15.96	.00

The result in Table 4 shows an F-ratio of 95.89 with the corresponding probability level of significance of .00 at 1 and 89 degrees of freedom. This level of significance is less than .05, on which the decision was based. With this result, the null hypothesis was rejected. The result in Table 4 also shows an unstandardized coefficient (B) of .61, which indicates that for every one-unit increase in virtual team collaboration competency, final-year Business Education students' employment readiness at the University of Uyo increases by .61 units. Furthermore, the t-value of 15.96 with a corresponding significance level of .00, which is also less than .05, reinforces that virtual team collaboration competency significantly influenced final-year Business Education students' employment readiness at the University of Uyo.

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Hypothesis Two: Digital Professional writing competency does not significantly influence final-year Business Education students' employment readiness at the University of Uyo.

Table 5: Result of Simple Linear Regression of the influence of digital professional writing competency on final-year Business Education students' employment readiness at the University of Uyo (N=91)

Model		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1	Regression	443.20	1	443.20	78.69	.00[b]
	Residual	501.24	89	5.63		
	Total	944.44	90			

Model		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.
		B	Std. Error	Beta		
1	(Constant)	20.66	.77		26.69	.00
	Professional_writing_competency	.66	.05	.79	12.26	.00

The result in Table 5 shows an F-ratio of 78.69 with the corresponding probability level of significance of .00 at 1 and 89 degrees of freedom. This level of significance is less than .05, on which the decision was based. With this result, the null hypothesis was rejected. The result in Table 5 also shows an unstandardized coefficient (B) of .66, which indicates that for every one-unit increase in digital professional writing competency, final-year Business Education students' employment readiness at the University of Uyo increases by .66 units. Furthermore, the t-value of 12.26 with a corresponding significance level of .00, which is also less than .05, reinforces that digital professional writing competency significantly influenced final-year Business Education students' employment readiness at the University of Uyo.

Hypothesis Three: Online presentation and digital pitching competency does not significantly influence final-year Business Education students' employment readiness at the University of Uyo

Table 6: Result of Multiple Linear Regression of the influence of online presentation and digital pitching competency on final-year Business Education students' employment readiness at the University of Uyo (N=91)

Model		Sum of Squares	Df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1	Regression	490.05	2	245.03	47.45	.00[b]
	Residual	454.39	88	5.16		
	Total	944.44	90			

Model		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	T	Sig.
		B	Std. Error	Beta		
1	(Constant)	19.15	1.32		14.50	.00
	Online_presentation_and	.54	.06	.67	9.04	.00
	digital pitching competencies	.18	.07	.20	2.66	.01

The result in Table 6 shows an F-ratio of 47.45 with a corresponding significance level of .00 at 2 and 88 degrees of freedom. Since the significance level is less than .05, the null hypothesis was rejected. The table further shows an unstandardized coefficient (B) of .54 for online presentation competency, indicating that a one-unit increase in online presentation competency increases final-year students' employment readiness by .54 units. Similarly, the unstandardized coefficient (B) of .18 indicates that a one-unit increase in digital pitching competency increases their employment readiness by .18 units. Furthermore, the t-value of 9.04 with a corresponding significance level of .00 indicates that online presentation competency significantly influences final-year Business Education students' employment readiness at the University of Uyo. Likewise, the t-value of 2.66 with a corresponding significance level of .01 indicates that digital pitching competency also significantly influences their employment readiness. Overall, the findings imply that both online presentation competency and digital pitching competency significantly influenced final-year Business Education students' employment readiness at the University of Uyo.

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Discussion of the Findings

The first research question of the study was; to what extent does virtual team collaboration competency influence final-year Business Education students' employment readiness at the University of Uyo, Akwa Ibom State, Nigeria? The result answering research question one and testing hypothesis one revealed a significant posie influence of virtual team collaboration competency on final-year Business Education students' employment readiness. The finding supports a study by Okoli & Umeoka (2026) who found that digital communications skills are highly required for effective job performance in the corporate workspace. This implies that Business Education graduates who possess digital communication competencies, especially virtual team collaboration competency are likely to be more employable than those without the competency.

The second research question of the study was; to what extent does digital professional writing competency influence final-year Business Education students' employment readiness at the University of Uyo? The result of answering research question two and testing hypothesis two revealed a significant positive influence of digital professional writing competency on final-year Business Education students' employment readiness. The finding of the study supports the work of Oko & Wagbara (2022) who found that graduates of Business Education needed all the digital skills in accounting and communication as listed in order to excel in entrepreneurship globally. This implies that Business Education graduates who possess the competency will not only succeed in corporate environment in Nigeria but also globally.

The third research question of the study was; to what extent does online presentation and digital pitching competency influence final-year Business Education students' employment readiness at the University of Uyo, Akwa Ibom State, Nigeria? The result of answering research question three and testing hypothesis three revealed a joint significant positive influence of online presentation and digital pitching competency on final-year Business Education students' employment readiness at the University of Uyo. The finding of the study supports the work of Okoli & Umeoka (2026) who found that digital communication skills are highly required for effective and efficient job performance in both public and private sector organisations. The finding also underpins the work of Koko et al. (2025) who found that there is a positive relationship between digital competency variables and postgraduate Business Education readiness for employability. This implies that Business Education students who possess all round digital communication competencies will always have added advantage during corporates recruitment, selection and placement processes. Consequently, these industry realities of high demand for digital communication competencies necessitate a critical review of Business Education curriculum to move beyond traditional office and clerical skills, and integrate contemporary digital communication training, ensuring that graduates are both pedagogically and technologically equipped to navigate the ever evolving technology in the corporate world.

Conclusion

Based on the findings of the study, it was concluded that virtual team collaboration, digital professional writing and online presentation and digital pitching competencies exert significant positive influence on undergraduate Business Education students' employment readiness at the University of Uyo, making the structured integration of these technical capabilities into the curriculum essential for meeting the demands of the modern work environment.

Recommendations

Based on the findings and conclusion of the study, the following recommendations are made:

1. The Department of Business Education, University of Uyo should mandate the adoption of cloud-based project management and communication tools, such as Slack, Microsoft Teams, and Google Workspace for group assignment and continuous assessment to build practical virtual team collaboration competencies among students.
2. The Department of Business Education, University of Uyo should introduce dedicated workshops focusing on modern asynchronous communication formats, including professional email etiquette, digital reporting templates, and corporate instant-messaging norms, ensuring students can write clearly and professionally in a digital office environment.

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3. The Department of Business Education, University of Uyo should set up micro-teaching presentation setups equipped with video conferencing tools, requiring final-year students to present their business plans and project reports to master digital presentation and technical pitching competencies.

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