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The Alignment of Accounting Curriculum with Market Requirements: The Iraqi Case

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Abstract

This research investigates the alignment between Iraqi university accounting courses and industry demands to enhance the standard and relevance of accounting education. The primary research method was a questionnaire, aiming to understand how well accounting courses at Iraqi institutions meet market requirements. The study's methodology comprised two parts: examining the current accounting curriculum and conducting a follow-up survey using diverse sources and analytical techniques. A total of 350 surveys were distributed to academics and employers, yielding 87 responses from academic staff and 102 valid responses from employers. The study analyzed the latest accounting curriculum, demographic data, relevance ratings for courses, and assessments of essential work skills using SPSS software. Results revealed diverse demographics, with significant responses from academics (58%) and employers (51%). Findings indicate both convergence and divergence in the perceived importance of specific accounting courses, suggesting gaps between theoretical concepts and practical applications. The report underscores the need to align Iraq's

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accounting curriculum with business needs. Recommendations include systematic curriculum assessments, increased industry-academia collaboration, continual professional development for educators, and a broader focus on skills. This study provides evidence-based suggestions for improving accounting education in Iraq to meet evolving market demands.

Keywords: Accounting Education, Accounting Courses, Curriculum Alignment, Market Requirements, Skills Gap, Iraq

Introduction

Education is generally recognized as a catalyst for economic growth, and development as worker skills, and competencies directly affect an economy's productivity, and competitiveness (Ozturk, 2001; Sahlberg, 2006). Giving students the knowledge, and abilities they need to thrive in the accounting sector is the particular aim of accounting education (Kassim, 2014). To do this, universities, and colleges need to design curricula that satisfy the expectations, and demands of the job market (Anastasiu, et al., 2017).

The curriculum serves as a guide, for providing educational programs, and outlines the format, and content of the courses. However, there is an ongoing debate among many stakeholders over the extent to which accounting graduates should possess a broader variety of skills beyond technical accounting knowledge (Kavanagh & Drennan, 2008). (Venter, 2001) asserts that, in addition to providing students with a solid theoretical foundation in company management, accounting curricula should provide them with the abilities, and knowledge necessary to manage small businesses.

In today's dynamic business world, characterized by globalization, and advancements in digital technology, the role of accountants has become increasingly complex (Aldredge, Rogers, & Smith, 2020). Accountants are expected to possess a wide range of skills these days, including adaptability to technology, problem-solving, communication, and analytical thinking (Howcroft, 2017). Accounting education must evolve, and provide curricula that enable graduates to successfully adapt to the altering needs of the market in order to ensure that graduates are sufficiently prepared to satisfy these dynamic expectations (Mandilas, Kourtidis, & Petasakis, 2014).

Accounting curricula must be in step with market demands in order to generate graduates who can meet employer's expectations and are prepared for the workforce. Inadequate alignment can lead to issues with workforce development, and employability by creating a significant skills gap between what employers require, and what graduates can offer (Webb & Chaffer, 2016; Jackling & Lange, 2009). Employers bear the blame for this discrepancy, as

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graduates might have to invest more time, and resources in training, and development in order to meet the demands of the desired positions.

Moreover, the advent of technological advancements such as Industry 4.0 and big data has underscored the need for accountants to acquire additional skills. As conventional accounting tasks become automated, accountants must focus on increasingly complicated analytical and interpretative work (Zhang, Abigail, Dai, Vasarhelyi, & Miklos A, 2018). If these technological advancements and the skill sets that accompany them are not incorporated into accounting curricula, the graduate's ability to contribute to the workforce in an effective manner may be compromised, thereby increasing the distance between accounting education, and practice (Cheng, 2019; Liang & Zhao, 2022).

The needs of the labor market must be reflected in accounting curricula for Iraq's economy to grow. Iraq needs accountants with the skills, and experience necessary to oversee complex financial systems, uphold regulatory compliance, and foster sustained economic development. The business climate in Iraq is dynamic and ever-changing. Nonetheless, it is critical to assess how well Iraqi university's current accounting curricula meet industrial needs.

The aim of this study is to examine how closely accounting courses at Iraqi colleges align with market demands. The study specifically looks for disparities or inconsistencies between the skills. and competencies that are taught in the curriculum, and the qualities that employers value. The researchers distributed survey questions to several groups. Accounting educators, accounting graduates, professionals with accounting degrees from Iraqi Association for Certified Public Accountants (IACPA) institutes, and employers who hire accounting graduates from Iraqi universities are among those who teach accounting in Iraqi universities. The research obtained valuable insights into the perspectives, and anticipations of key stakeholders in the accounting school ecosystem by distributing questionnaires to employers, graduates, and instructors.

The study's conclusions will contribute to raising the standard and relevance of accounting education in Iraq by offering evidence-based recommendations for curricular improvement. By aligning the accounting curriculum with industry expectations, universities can better equip graduates with the knowledge, and abilities they need to increase their employability and contribute significantly to the economy.

Accounting Education in Iraq

Undergraduate accounting degree programs are offered by more than 60 public, and private colleges, including those in the Kurdistan area. Prospective students can also pursue higher accounting studies through master's, and doctorate degree programs at a considerable number of these universities.

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Thus, accounting education may be found all around Iraq. The formal application procedure, which is based on the student's cumulative average high school achievements, is centrally coordinated, and overseen by the Central Admission Office of the Iraqi Ministry of Higher Education and Scientific Research.

The country's modern higher education system began roughly a century ago with the founding of the Baghdad College of Law in 1908. Following this accomplishment, several other universities, and institutes were founded in the 1920s and 1950s. In 1958, an attempt was made to organize the university system by gathering all of these institutions under one roof in Baghdad, naming it Baghdad University, and drafting a charter for it. As a result, the largest university in the nation was established. Following the founding of the University of Baghdad, the field of higher education flourished throughout the 1960s and the early 1970s. Several universities were officially established as modern institutions of higher learning, including Al-Mustafaniriya University in 1963, Basra University in 1964, and Mosul University in 1967. All of these institutions were placed under the Ministry of Higher Education and Scientific Research in an effort to organize and oversee the field of higher education. (Bedan, 2022). The first accounting department in Iraq opened its doors in 1985 at Basra University, and the University of Baghdad followed suit in 1986. Today, there are over 60 public and private universities in the country that offer accounting degrees. The University of Baghdad introduced accounting education to universities in 1974 and offered degrees in business administration with an emphasis on accounting (Jabbar & Shnawa, 2021).

Literature Review

For accounting education to be successful, and relevant, curriculum alignment with market demands is essential. It is essential that accounting education stay up with these advancements as the field of accounting continues to change, and adapt to shifting corporate, and economic environments (Carvalho & Almeida, 2022; Cunha, Martins, Carvalho, & Carmo, 2022; Stanciu, Pugna, & Gheorghe, 2020). According to (Mohamed & Lashine, 2003; Jackling & Lange, 2009; Howieson, 2003). Accounting education can better prepare students for the demands of the labor market, and enable them to make valuable contributions to the accounting profession by ensuring that the curriculum and market requirements are in line.

Several research works have revealed a discrepancy between the competencies offered by accounting programs, and the demands of businesses. This underscores the need to match educational programs with market demands. According to (Gray & Collison, 2002), in order for accounting to remain a recognized profession, satisfy public interest requirements, and tackle sustainability issues, there has to be a clearer link between education,

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and training. To successfully close this gap, the authors suggested a significant overhaul of accounting degrees as well as the creation of a specialized graduate profession. (Pan & Perera, 2012) examined the relevance of university accounting programs to the business sector. Their goal was to ascertain if recent accounting graduates had the abilities, and knowledge demanded by employers. Potential disparities in curriculum structure and emphasis were identified by the study, pointing to a disconnect between accounting education, and industry standards. Additionally, the authors (Carr, Chua, & Perera, 2006) discuss how accounting education is not keeping up with the demands of the industry. According to the report, significant stakeholders may not have had their expectations fully met by the way accounting programs are designed. The curricula focus on specific topics, like auditing, is disproportionate to the weight assigned to other topics, such as professionalism, a global view, and social, and environmental concerns.

In the fast-paced world of global business, accounting education faces issues notwithstanding the disconnect between market need, and curriculum. The discrepancy between market demands, and accounting education was studied by (Mohamed & Lashine, 2003), especially in light of the changing international corporate environment. The study found that accounting education has difficulties in providing students with information. and abilities that employers are looking for. It highlights the necessity of raising accountant's proficiency levels in order to meet the evolving needs of the global business community. In a similar vein, (Douglas & Gammie, 2019) discuss the disparity between accounting education and the skills required by the ever-changing corporate world. The report highlights how accounting degree programs fall short of developing non-technical abilities. Because they believe that graduates from non-accounting disciplines have more developed non-technical abilities, businesses actively seek out graduates from these fields. The results show that accounting degree providers favor some non-technical abilities above others due to accreditation criteria that demand high amounts of technical material. The research promotes a balanced emphasis on both technical and non-technical abilities, highlighting the significance of matching accounting education with industry demands.

Accounting graduates who receive their education through traditional techniques that primarily rely on lecture-based instruction sometimes lack critical job skills. The discrepancy between accounting education, and industry expectations is brought to light by (Lightweis, 2014). Due to traditional training techniques that emphasize lecture-based learning, accounting graduates frequently lack the skills essential for their employment. According to the findings, including simulations in the curriculum encourages students to succeed in their careers by helping them make the connection between their theoretical knowledge and actual accounting scenarios. In the

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same way, (Rajeevan, 2020). Emphasized the significance of introducing accounting students to industry-specific training, and experience learning from an early age in order to mirror modern accounting processes. Working together, academic institutions and professional associations may create a curriculum that turns forth highly qualified accounting professionals. Additionally, it was shown that accounting instructors and final-year accounting students had some degree of agreement about the necessity of vocational skills beyond technical, and cognitive talents, (Alshbili & Elamer, 2020).

The market requires a wide range of skills and competencies, many of which are underemphasized in university accounting curricula, according to existing literature.

For accountants to be effective, they must possess technical skills such as knowledge of technical accounting, problem-solving abilities, critical thinking, data analytics, and information technology skills (Hussein, 2017; Andiola, Masters, & Norman, 2020; Dzuranin, Jones, & Olvera, 2018; Ballou, Heitger, & Stoel, 2018; Hussin, et al., 2023). According to (Tan & Laswad, 2018; Barisic, Novak, & Sever Malis, 2021; Ghani & Suryani, 2020) employers place a high value on interpersonal, and personal skills like collaboration, communication, teamwork, and a positive attitude. These authors attribute this to the fact that employers highlight the importance of these skills as they contribute to the overall effectiveness and adaptability of accountants in the workplace.

Professionals in accounting need to possess analytical, and critical thinking abilities (Awayiga, Onumah, & Tsamenyi, 2010; Kavanagh & Drennan, 2008; Sin, Jones, & Wang, 2015). Additionally, to negotiate a complicated global corporate world, business graduates including accountants need soft relationship skills in addition to technical talents (Villiers, 2010; Asonito & Hassall, 2019; Dolce, Emanuel, Cisi, & Ghislieri, 2020). An undergraduate accounting degree is essential for developing transferable and management abilities (Gammie, Gammie, & Cargill, 2002). Communication Skills. It is critical for accountants to possess strong communication skills since good communication is essential for delivering financial facts and insights to a variety of audiences (Webb & Chaffer, 2016; Gray & Murray, 2011).

A small number of pertinent studies have been conducted in Iraq, but they have not focused enough on matching the country's accounting curriculum with industry needs. Nonetheless, by evaluating Iraq's adherence to International Accounting Standards (IES2), (Al-anbagi1, Al-azzawi, & Al-obaidi, 2018) explore the alignment. As Iraq advances toward switching to IFRS and IPSASs, the research attempts to ascertain how closely the nation adheres to these international standards. They compared accounting programs

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in Iraqi universities with others throughout the world using an archival research approach, and a questionnaire, paying special attention to IES. Although there are notable disparities in values, ethics, and understanding of the workplace, corporate governance, financial markets, organizational behavior, and information technology, the results show that 55% of respondents comply with IES2. The research highlights the need for harmonizing accounting programs to prepare aspiring accountants for global norms and satisfy corporate requirements. (Salih & Ahmed, 2018) highlights how crucial it is to match accounting education to the needs of the job economy, and the accounting profession. It uses both a quantitative descriptive technique, and an analytical theoretical approach to evaluate accounting education, and the labor market in the Duhok Governorate. The research highlights the need for skilled accountants, and services that satisfy market expectations by exposing gaps between accounting education, and industry requirements. The study's drawback, though, is that it only surveyed professional, and academic accountants, ignoring the opinions of employers, and recent accounting grads. Employer's and graduate's viewpoints would be added to the study's results, and practical consequences, giving rise to a more thorough grasp of market demands.

This study distinguishes itself from other studies by using a multimodal method to look at the demands of the market. It explores the viewpoints of employers, professional accountants, recent graduates, and academic personnel. Through a comparison of perspectives from academic staff members, and practitioners, the study evaluates the importance of different courses in the accounting curriculum provided by universities in Iraq. Additionally, it looks at the perceived significance of particular competencies, and abilities that Iraqi accounting graduates are expected to possess and assesses whether the current curriculum effectively equips students with these crucial qualities.

Research Methodology

The major research technique utilized by the authors was a questionnaire, with the aim of achieving a more nuanced understanding of the alignment between accounting courses at Iraqi institutions, and the capabilities required by the market. The study's methodology had two main parts: an examination of Iraqi institution's current accounting curriculum, and a follow-up questionnaire survey that made use of a wide range of sources, and analytical techniques.

Deeper insights into the study subject were to be gained, and important components to include in the questionnaire survey were to be identified with the first research instrument. The Ministry of Higher Education in Iraq is the main authority on the organization of accounting curricula in Iraqi institutions.

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It establishes minimum credit hours and defines knowledge domains. At this stage, a thorough examination of the Ministry's criteria was conducted, delving into accounting curricula to identify courses that should be included in the questionnaire survey.

Of the sixty public, and private colleges in Iraq, the authors concentrated on those that were fully accredited, and offered an accounting bachelor's degree, even though accounting diploma programs were available. A thorough analysis of the study plans for the 2023–2024 school year revealed courses that are important from the perspectives of employers, and accounting teachers.

The carefully designed questionnaire used for the survey was divided into three sections: the first collected respondent's demographic information, the second rated the relevance of accounting courses and topics, and the third evaluated the relevance of 29 key competencies and skills in the workplace. The responses were scored using a Likert-style scale ranging from 1 to 5.

A total of 350 surveys were distributed, targeting both academics and employers. Out of 150 distributed surveys to academic staff members in accounting departments, specifically lecturers and professors, 87 were returned, and used in the study. Employers were given 200 questionnaires at random to complete, and 102 valid responses from both foreign and domestic businesses operating in Iraq were analyzed.

The statistical analysis of the data obtained from the questionnaires was conducted using SPSS software. The validity of the questionnaire was confirmed by a reliability study. Each skill's ranking average was determined, revealing respondent's opinions on the significance of these abilities.

Findings

This study provides insightful information by conducting a thorough investigation of how accounting programs at Iraqi institutions correspond with the changing needs of the industry. The research draws on perspectives from both the academic, and professional communities.

Table 1. Total Institutions Contacted and Corresponding Responses

Profession	No. Contacted	No. Responds	% of Responds
Academics	150	87	58%
Employers	200	102	51%

As can be seen in Table 1. above, the authors engaged 150 Academics, and 200 Employers throughout the first part of our inquiry, which produced a notable response rate. With 87 responses, academics demonstrated a strong level of participation, yielding a 58% response rate. Employers also actively engaged, accounting for 102 out of 200 organizations and 51% of responses.

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Table 2. Academics and Professional Profile

Profile	N	%
Gender		
Male	59	67.8 %
Female	28	32.2 %
Age		
18-25 Years	9	10.3 %
26-35 Years	43	49.4 %
36-45 Years	28	32.3 %
46-55 Years	5	5.7 %
55 and above	2	2.3 %
Academic Title		
Professor	4	4.6 %
Assistance Professor	4	4.6 %
Senior Lecturer	5	5.7 %
Lecturer	12	13.8 %
Assistance Lecturer	9	10.4 %
Profession		
Iraqi Certified Public Accountant	53	60.9 %
Education		
Ph. D	7	8.0 %
Master Degree	26	30.0 %
Bachelor	47	54.0 %
ICPA	7	8.0 %
Years of Experience		
Less than 1 Year	6	6.9 %
1-5 Years	23	26.4 %
6-10 Years	25	28.7 %
11-15 Years	17	19.5 %
More than 15 Years	16	18.5 %

Examining the profession, and demographic landscape Table 2: Gender Dynamics showed that men made up 67.8% of the representation, while women made up 32.2%. The dataset was enhanced by the age distribution, which demonstrated variety. Academic titles also varied, with Lecturers leading the way at 32.2%, and Assistance Professors following closely at 29%.

Iraqi Certified Public Accountants were added to the professional spectrum, with Lecturers making up the majority of this category at 13.8%. A wide range of educational backgrounds was represented among the respondents: 54% had a bachelor's degree, 29% had a master's degree, and 8% had a doctorate. The distribution of experience levels was balanced, with a sizable fraction claiming professional experience spanning 6–10 years (28.7%) and 11–15 years (19.5%).

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Table 3. Employer's Profile

Profile	**N**	**%**
Industry Sector:		
Manufacturing	20	19.6 %
Financial Services.	38	37.2 %
Retail	16	15.7 %
Healthcare	11	10.8 %
Information Technology	10	9.8 %
Others	7	6.9 %
Company Size:		
Small (1-50 employees)	29	28.4%
Medium (51-250 employees)	46	45.1 %
Large (251+ employees)	27	26.5 %
Years of Operation:		
Less than 5 years	25	24.5 %
5-10 years	29	28.5 %
11-20 years	34	33.3 %
More than 20 years	14	13.7 %

Turning attention to the employer's perspective Table 3 illustrates the varied environment that developed across industrial sectors, business sizes, and years of operation. Financial Services was the most prevalent industry, accounting for 37.2% of the total. The percentage of small, medium, and large businesses was found to vary: 28.4%, 45.1%, and 26.5%, respectively. Operational lifetime differed across the firms; 33.3 % claimed to have been in operation for 11–20 years, while 13.7% had been in operation for more than 20 years.

These study results highlight the active participation of academics, especially lecturers, and assistant professors, in the complex web that constitutes the accounting field at Iraqi institutions. Financial services take center stage on the employer side, where businesses of all sizes actively participate. The variety of respondent's experience levels and educational backgrounds adds to the depth of viewpoints captured in these survey results.

Table 4. Assessing the Significance of Accounting Courses

Accounting Course	Academics		Employer	
	Mean	Rank	Mean	Rank
Principles of Accounting	4.0	1	3.8	7
Intermediate Accounting	3.8	2	3.7	9
Governmental Accounting	3.7	8	3.5	15
Accounting Software	3.6	12	3.8	6
Accounting for Non-Profit Organization	3.5	19	2.5	23
Cost Accounting	3.8	3	3.5	16
Advanced Financial Accounting	3.7	6	3.7	8
Unified Accounting System	3.6	15	3.6	11
Unified Accounting System for Banking and Insurance Industry	3.5	18	3.6	10

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Taxation Accounting	3.7	5	3.6	14
Ethic in Accounting Profession	3.7	7	3.6	13
Agriculture Accounting	3.2	24	2.5	24
Accounting for Oil and Gas	3.5	20	2.9	22
Financial Statement Analysis	3.6	10	3.8	5
Accounting Information System	3.4	22	3.8	4
Advanced Cost Accounting	3.6	11	3.2	20
Managerial Accounting	3.6	14	3.9	3
Accounting Theory	3.5	20	3.3	18
Auditing	3.6	9	4.0	1
International Accounting	3.4	23	3.1	21
International Accounting Standard	3.5	17	3.4	17
Accounting for Hotel and Hospital	3.6	16	3.3	18
Accounting Application in Excel	3.7	4	4.0	2
Accounting for Companies (Partnership + Corporation)	3.6	13	3.6	12

A variety of viewpoints became apparent when we found the wider range of accounting courses, demonstrating the similarities, and differences between employers, and academics. Table 4. Presents a multidimensional environment that shapes the conversation about the alignment of accounting curriculum with market requirements in the Iraqi context. It highlights areas of agreement as well as those that require further development. Employers rate cost accounting 16th (mean 3.5), but academics rank it third (mean 3.8). Cost accounting has a crucial place. This disparity indicates that academic programs in cost accounting may need to be adjusted to better correlate theoretical ideas with real-world applications.

Although both groups favor advanced financial accounting, there are subtle differences. Employers rate it 8th (mean 3.7), while academics rank it 6th (mean 3.7), indicating a slight difference in emphasis, however a common understanding of its significance.

Employers (ranking 11th and 10th, mean 3.6), and academics (15th and 18th, mean 3.6) place different emphases on the Unified Accounting System, and the Unified Accounting System for Banking and Insurance Industry. This implies that there may be a need to harmonize viewpoints about the particular uses of Unified Accounting Systems in the workplace, and in academia.

Both parties find significance in taxation accounting, but slightly differently. Employers rate it 14th (mean 3.6), whereas academics rank it 5th (mean 3.7). This suggests that subtle improvements are needed to better match academic courses in taxation accounting with industry expectations.

Employers and academics alike put ethics in the top ten areas, demonstrating the clear convergence on the significance of ethics in the accounting profession.

Accounting for Oil and Gas and Agriculture appear to be two areas where academic emphasis may need to be adjusted further to align with

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industrial standards. The difference in placement between companies (24th and 22nd), and academics (24th and 20th) suggests that there may be a need to improve the alignment of these courses with industry requirements.

Even though Financial Statement Analysis ranks in the top ten for employers (5th, mean 3.8), and academics (10th, mean 3.6), it has a subtle concentration. This implies a common understanding of its significance but with minor differences in the degree of emphasis.

Accounting Information System is ranked highly by employers, and academics (22nd and 4th, respectively), although the disparity in focus points to certain areas where academic instruction should be improved to better align with business standards.

Employers rate Advanced Cost Accounting 20th (mean 3.2), while academics rank it 11th (mean 3.6). This suggests that greater cooperation may be required to match theoretical ideas with real-world applications.

Even while both groups prioritize Managerial Accounting, there are subtle differences. While employers place it third (mean 3.9), academics put it fourteenth (mean 3.6), suggesting that there is a slight difference in the focus despite a common understanding of its significance.

Employers and academics both put auditing among the top ten disciplines, demonstrating clear congruence in their understanding of the field's significance.

Despite its importance, International Accounting and International Accounting Standard show little differences in focus between employers (ranked 21st and 17th), and academics (ranked 23rd and 20th). This raises the possibility of improving academic material to better align with industrial norms and worldwide accounting standards.

For both groups, accounting for Hotels and Hospitals is ranked in the middle, indicating a mutual understanding of its significance without clear differences in priority.

One area where businesses and academics agree is on the importance of accounting applications in Excel, which is highlighted in the top rankings.

Lastly, Accounting for Companies (Partnership + Corporation) illustrates a subtle distinction, although being important for employers, and scholars alike. Employers place it 12th (mean 3.6), while academics put it 13th (mean 3.6), indicating that there is a slight difference in emphasis, but a common understanding of its significance.

To sum up, the thorough examination of these accounting courses offers a nuanced picture of the subtle distinctions and shared interests between companies, and academics. These observations provide insightful advice on how to improve academic programs so that they are in harmony with the ever-changing demands of the accounting industry in Iraq.

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Table 5. Assessing the Significance of Non-Accounting Courses

Non-Accounting Course	Academics		Employer	
	Mean	Rank	Mean	Rank
Principles of Management	3.0	9	3.6	5
General English Language	3.4	2	3.9	3
English for Accounting	3.8	1	3.6	6
Principles of Economics	2.9	11	3.3	10
Kurdology+ Human Right	2.4	16	2.5	16
Financial Mathematics	2.9	12	2.9	12
Computer Skills	3.2	6	4.0	1
Principles of Statistics	2.8	15	2.8	15
Academic Debate	2.9	13	2.9	14
Commercial Law	3.1	7	3.4	8
Operation Research	3.0	10	2.9	13
Research Methods	3.0	8	3.1	11
Production and Operation Management	2.9	14	3.3	9
Marketing	3.2	4	3.8	4
Financial Management	3.2	4	3.9	2
E-Commerce	3.0	3	3.5	7

Table 5. Presents a range of viewpoints from employers, and academics, highlighting common interests, and subtle distinctions. The answers go beyond the specifics of accounting classes and offer insightful information on how wider academic programs might be tailored to meet market demands in the Iraqi setting. One area of agreement is shown in the top ten rankings, where employers and academics alike acknowledge the importance of Principles of Management.

While both groups rank highly in the general English Language, there are subtle differences. Employers place it third (mean 3.9), while academics put it second (mean 3.4), suggesting that both groups recognize its significance, but with slightly different weights.

Academics and companies alike emphasize the importance of English for Accounting, making it stand out as a shared priority among the top ranks.

Principles of Economics exhibits a minor discrepancy in focus despite being valued by employers, and academics alike. Employers rate it 10th (mean 3.3), while academics rank it 11th (mean 2.9), indicating a shared understanding with a little focus difference.

Financial Mathematics, Kurdology, and Human Rights stand out as subjects where further adjustment of the academic focus may be necessary to align with industrial standards. The differences in placement between companies (16th and 12th) and academics (16th and 16th) suggest that there may be a need to improve the alignment of these courses with industry requirements.

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There is general agreement that Computer Skills are highly valued by employers, and academics, indicating their central place in the professional environment.

Principles of Statistics is important to both groups, indicating that there are no clear differences in how important they think it is.

Employers and academics alike value Academic Debate and Commercial Law, which is shown in their joint positions among the top ten.

While it is important for both groups, Operation Research reveals a subtle distinction. It is ranked 13th (mean 2.9) by employers, and 10th (mean 3.0) by academics, indicating areas where academic courses should be improved to better align with industry standards.

Despite being regarded by both groups, Research Methodology reveals a subtle distinction. Employers place it 11th (mean 3.1), whereas academics put it eighth (mean 3.0), suggesting that while employers and academics agree on its significance, their emphasis is slightly different.

Employers and academics alike enthusiastically endorse Production and Operation Management, Marketing, and Financial Management, demonstrating their shared understanding of the course's importance among the best.

Academics and employers alike emphasize the importance of E-commerce, making it stand out as a common priority in the top ranks.

All things considered, non-accounting courses offer a comprehensive awareness of common goals, and minute distinctions in focus between companies, and academics. Beyond the confines of accounting-specific education, these findings provide invaluable direction for improving academic curriculum to achieve a harmonic alignment with the evolving needs of the Iraqi professional world.

Table 6. Proficiency and Ranking of Skills

Skills	Academics		Employer	
	Mean	Rank	Mean	Rank
Computer Proficiency	3.1	5	4.0	2
Language competency	3.1	12	3.1	24
Critical Thinking	3.0	22	2.9	29
Problem-Solving skills	3.2	3	3.8	6
Flexibility and Adaptability	3.1	8	3.8	8
Creativity and Innovation	2.9	27	3.6	11
Time Management	3.1	8	4.1	1
Public Speaking	3.0	24	3.1	23
Written Communication	2.9	28	3.4	17
Verbal Communication	2.9	29	2.9	28
Documentation skills	3.0	20	3.4	14
Information Analysis	3.0	20	3.3	21
Information Gathering	3.1	12	3.2	22

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Regulatory Compliance	3.0	26	3.4	15
Concentration and Focus	3.2	2	3.3	19
Capability to work Independently	3.1	11	3.3	20
Cultural Assimilation	3.2	1	3.1	26
Alignment with Values	3.0	25	3.4	17
Applied Knowledge	3.1	12	3.1	25
Organizational Understanding	3.1	12	3.1	27
Teamwork	3.1	5	3.8	4
Leadership	3.1	18	3.8	5
Negotiation Skills	3.1	12	3.4	15
Motivational Abilities	3.1	12	3.9	3
Dedication to Job	3.1	8	3.6	12
Continuous Learning	3.2	4	3.8	6
Knowledge Sharing	3.0	23	3.6	13
Strategic Planning	3.0	19	3.7	9
Performing under Pressure	3.1	7	3.7	10

Employer's and academic's perceptions of the complex tapestry of abilities show subtle differences as well as harmonic intersections. When looking for a common ground, Computer Proficiency comes up as a crucial agreement point. Employers, with a mean of 4.0, and a rating of 2, emphasize its critical relevance, in line with academics, who have a mean of 3.1, and a rank of 5.

However, there is a subtle difference when it comes to Language Competency. Employers rank it at 24th (mean 3.1), while academics rank it at 12th (mean 3.1). This suggests that academic focus may be improved to better align with industrial standards.

A little distinction becomes apparent when the focus turns to Critical Thinking. Employers rate it 29th (mean 2.9) while academics rank it 22nd (mean 3.0), indicating a chance for academic courses to go further into developing this critical ability.

The Problem-Solving skills landscape shows that employers (mean 3.8, rank 6), and academics (mean 3.2, rank 3) all regard Problem-Solving skills as highly important, indicating a consensus on their critical importance.

Employers rank creativity, and innovation at 11th (mean 3.6), whereas academics rank it at 27th (mean 2.9). This indicates that there is a need for academic improvement in order to keep up with industrial standards.

The ability that demands a careful balance between academic attention, and practice is Public Speaking. Employers rate it 23rd (mean 3.1), but academics rank it 24th (mean 3.0), suggesting room for improvement in academic instruction.

There are similarities between Written and Verbal Communication, however, there are also little differences. Employers rank these abilities 17th

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and 28th, respectively, but academics rank them 28th and 29th, indicating possible areas for academic improvement.

A subtle distinction is revealed by regulatory compliance. It is ranked 26th (mean 3.0) by academics, and 15th (mean 3.4) by employers, indicating that there is a need, for academic improvement to match industrial standards.

Applied Knowledge, Organizational Understanding, Teamwork, Leadership, Negotiation Skills, Motivational Abilities, Dedication to the work, Continuous Learning, Knowledge Sharing, Strategic Planning, and Performing under Pressure are all echoed by unified priorities that include Concentration and Focus, Ability to Work Independently, Cultural Assimilation, Alignment with Values, and Teamwork.

In summary, this examination of talents demonstrates the diversity, and unity of viewpoints held by businesses, and academics. These observations offer a compass for academic programs to more accurately match the complex requirements of Iraq's professional environment, producing graduates with a well-rounded skill set that melds smoothly with industry standards.

Conclusion

In summary, this study highlights how crucial it is to match accounting curricula to the changing demands of the industry, especially in the context of Iraq. The results emphasize how important it is to have an accounting curriculum that is well-structured and meets the many needs of the working world. A wide range of stakeholders, including academics, employers, and professionals, were included in the research in order to thoroughly evaluate the degree to which academic offers and industry expectations correspond.

The examination of accounting curricula identified both places where employer expectations and academic viewpoints diverged, and overlapped. Important classes like Advanced Financial Accounting and Cost Accounting brought to light any theoretical, and practical shortcomings, indicating that the curriculum at academic institutions needs to be improved. The survey also noted the value of particular courses, such as Managerial Accounting and Auditing, which were underlined by employers and academics alike.

The study included non-accounting courses in addition to accounting courses, offering a more comprehensive view of how academic curricula correspond. Courses like Principles of Economics and Financial Mathematics showed subtle differences in focus, whereas Principles of Management and General English Language emerged as common priorities.

In addition, the examination of critical abilities exposed a complex web of common interests and minute distinctions. Employers and academics agreed that Problem-Solving and Computer Proficiency were essential abilities. Variations were seen, meanwhile, in areas like language competency

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and creativity and innovation, indicating areas where academics may improve to better match industrial standards.

The study's conclusions offer insightful recommendations for raising the caliber and applicability of accounting education in Iraq. It is suggested that particular course alignments be improved, that a more thorough comprehension of fundamental abilities be fostered, and that curricula be regularly modified to meet the changing demands of the workforce. Universities in Iraq can better prepare graduates, increasing their employability and enabling them to make significant contributions to the economy, by bridging the gap between academics, and industry. The organized approach of the study and the involvement of many stakeholders resulted in evidence-based suggestions for curriculum enhancement, providing the groundwork for an increasingly adaptable, and successful accounting education system in Iraq.

Recommendations

Many suggestions are made for a thorough improvement of the system in light of the results showing the discrepancies between accounting education in Iraqi institutions, and the demands of businesses.

First and foremost, there is a pressing need for an organized, and regular evaluation of the accounting curriculum, one that involves working with employers, alumni, and industry experts. The curriculum will stay dynamic and in line with the changing needs of the labor market thanks to this iterative approach. Furthermore, it is essential to incorporate real-world case studies, and practical applications into accounting courses in order to close the knowledge gap between theory and practice.

Another important suggestion is to strengthen the connections between academics, and business through guest lectures, seminars, and internships. Students will be exposed to real-world situations through this cooperative project, which will deepen their comprehension of industry dynamics, and provide networking chances with possible employers.

Furthermore, chances for ongoing professional development are crucial for accounting instructors to stay current with technology innovations, market trends, and regulatory changes. This will improve their ability to provide pupils with current and pertinent material.

A wider range of abilities, such as critical thinking, communication, creativity, and flexibility, should be prioritized in the curriculum to match the changing nature of the accounting industry. This will improve the graduate's general employability, and readiness to face a variety of issues in the workplace.

Given the worldwide character of corporate processes, special emphasis should be paid to implementing a particular focus on international accounting

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standards. This integration can be facilitated by cooperation with international accounting organizations, and entities.

It is also essential to modify the curriculum to incorporate new technologies like big data analytics and Industry 4.0 tools. Graduates will have the abilities required for the increasingly technologically-driven corporate world thanks to this.

The relevance of the curriculum can be increased by providing industry-driven optional courses that are developed after frequent talks with experts, and employers. It is essential to maintain ongoing stakeholder involvement through surveys and focus groups in order to get insights into the evolving demands of the business and make appropriate curriculum revisions.

Developing soft skills through workshops, seminars, and extracurricular activities should be prioritized. These abilities include teamwork, leadership, and effective communication. With this all-encompassing approach, graduates will not only be highly skilled technically but also in interpersonal and leadership domains.

Graduates will be prepared for worldwide employment prospects by incorporating a global perspective into the curriculum through exposure to varied accounting methods, and foreign case studies.

Last but not least, putting in place a methodical procedure for tracking accounting graduate's professional results, including performance indicators, and employer input, would offer insightful information about how well the curriculum is working.

Iraqi colleges may improve the caliber, and applicability of their accounting programs by putting these suggestions into practice, turning out graduates who are prepared to take on the ever-changing needs of the workforce.

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Appendix

Please provide ratings for the following courses based on their level of importance, using a scale from 1 (Not Important) 2 (Somewhat Important), 3 (Moderately Important), 4 (Important), 5 (Very Important).

Accounting Courses	**1**	**2**	**3**	**4**	**5**
Principles of Accounting					
Intermediate Accounting					
Governmental Accounting					
Accounting Software					
Accounting for Non-Profit Organization.					
Cost Accounting					
Advanced Financial Accounting					
Unified Accounting System					
Unified Accounting System for Banking and Insurance Industry					
Taxation Accounting					
Ethic in Accounting Profession					
Agriculture Accounting					
Accounting for Oil and Gas					
Financial Statement Analysis					
Accounting Information System					
Advanced Cost Accounting					
Managerial Accounting					
Accounting Theory					
Auditing					
Internatinal Accounting					
International Accounting Standard					
Accounting for Hotel and Hospital					
Accounting Application in Excel					
Accounting for Companies (Partnership + Corporation)					
Nonaccounting Courses	**1**	**2**	**3**	**4**	**5**
Principles of Management					
General English Language					
English for Accounting					
Principles of Economic					
Kurdology + Human Rights					
Financial Mathematic					
Computer Skills					
Principles of Statistics					
Academic Debate					
Commercial Law					
Operation Research					
Research Method					
Production and Operation Management					
Marketing					
Financial Management					
E-Commerce					

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Do you believe that the education and training of employees should include these skills, as indicated on a rating scale? 1 (Not Important) 2 (Somewhat Important), 3 (Moderately Important), 4 (Important), 5 (Very Important).

Skills	1	2	3	4	5
Proficiency in fundamental computer tools such as internet browsing and office software.					
Language competency					
Critical thinking proficiencies					
Problem-solving skills					
Flexibility and adaptability to navigate new circumstances					
Demonstrating creativity and innovative thinking					
Efficient time management skills					
Proficiency in public speaking					
Strong written communication skills					
Effective verbal communication aptitude					
Documentation skills for capturing ideas and making decisions					
Proficiency in analyzing and interpreting information					
Competence in gathering and organizing information					
Compliance with rules and regulations					
Ability to concentrate and focus effectively					
Capability to work independently					
Ability to assimilate and integrate into a company's culture					
Alignment with the company's image and values					
Ability to apply theoretical knowledge in practical contexts					
Understanding of organizational frameworks and structures					
Effective teamwork and collaboration skills					
Leadership capabilities and qualities					
Proficiency in negotiation and conflict resolution					
Motivational abilities to inspire and encourage others					
Demonstrating personal dedication and commitment to the job					
Dedication to continuous learning and growth					
Willingness to share knowledge and resources with others					
Strategic planning, coordination, and organizational skills					
Performing effectively under pressure					