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Lacking Balance? Assessing the Content and Coverage of Cyber Security Degrees

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Cyber security is now commonly encountered as a focal topic for academic degrees. However, the presence and level of representation of relevant sub-topics within such degrees can vary significantly, and as a consequence the resulting student experience and graduate perception of what cyber security is and what it involves can be similarly varied. This paper examines the situation, based upon a relevant sample of cyber security degree programmes from the UK, all of which share the common characteristic of being titled simply MSc Cyber Security. The review considers the level of coverage afforded to technical and non-technical aspects of cyber security, as well as any inclusion of non-cyber coverage within the programmes. The results reveal that candidates holding what is ostensibly the same degree (based on the title) can emerge with tangibly different knowledge and skills, with significant variation in underlying topics covered. Although this is not a problem in terms of the validity of the coverage, it can pose a issue for prospective students and employers in terms of differentiating between degrees and understanding what they are offered as a consequence.

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