

PASS Case Study 14: MSc Business with Management: a programme-focussed integrative module

Summary

Variety of PFA	Using a module to address programme outcomes and develop integration of learning across the programme
Module	Managing for Sustainable Competitive Advantage, 40 credits, Level 7
Course	MSc Business with Management
Faculty and institution	Newcastle Business School, Northumbria University
Type/duration	Masters Degree, full-time over 3 semesters
Timing	The integrative module was first introduced in 2005/6 The business game element of the assessment was first introduced in 2007/8

Overview

Managing for Sustainable Competitive Advantage module

This module is one of the first that students undertake on the MSc Business with Management programme, delivered in Semester One over 12 weeks. All modules on the programme have assessment criteria that are referenced to programme learning outcomes. However, the MSCA module is the one where this is made explicit to students and where the module learning, teaching and assessment strategy is designed to actively engage students in integrating learning and to adopt this as a way of working in the programme. The first lecture addresses module purpose, process, learning methods and assessment so that students are informed of the intentions.

The module is integrative in that it addresses all four functional business areas addressed by the programme and taught by means of lectures throughout this module. To enable the module to fulfil its functions, it is a larger size, 40 credits in comparison with other taught modules which are 10 or 20 credits. The module actively engages students in drawing together the four areas (Financial, Operations, HR and Marketing Management) through:

- Student presentations and seminar discussion.
- Participation in a business game undertaken in groups. This is a simulation based on the European car industry which requires the application of learning from all

functional areas. Some 'seminars' take the form of a shareholder meeting to reinforce integration and authenticity.

- Class tests

Staff from the different functional areas teach into this module which also helps to develop integration. All staff who teach on the module have played the business game so that they have direct experience of the game from the student perspective.

Assessment

Summative assessment is in the form of:

- two assignments based on the business game
 - group report (20%)
 - Individual report (60%)
- closed book exam (20%)

The assessment criteria require students to draw on all areas of the programme and to develop academic/employability skills. For example, in the business game individual assignment, critical reflection is required. Students are required to demonstrate "how you used the learning for each of the four functional areas". Students also have to evaluate the effectiveness of their team and their personal contribution to their team.

Main objectives

- Addressing programme learning outcomes, bringing together understanding, knowledge and skills across the programme.
- Enabling the assessment of slowly learnt capabilities (e.g. critical thinking, leadership capability) to begin in a staged way throughout the programme.
- Delivering a module which draws upon subject matter from across the programme to avoid the compartmentalisation which is a danger of modular structures.

PFA format

- Summative assessment in all modules is referenced to programme learning goals and objectives.
- The purpose-designed integrative module, Managing for Sustainable Competitive Advantage, is delivered in Semester 1. Module content and approach is designed to promote integration of knowledge and skills across the programme and students are required to demonstrate this in summative assessment.

Key assessment framework/regulations

Newcastle Business School has a framework of programmes designed to :

- provide integrative learning and assessment to students.
- provide practical experience of working and being assessed in teams.
- assess student achievement of programme goals directly.

This can be done within the modular framework used within the University (Details may be found at: <http://www.northumbria.ac.uk/arna>)

Main impact on staff

- Staff teaching in different areas of the module try to orient the content of their teaching towards the business game with the common theme of enhancing competitive advantage.
- The integrative assignment based on the business game is marked by all staff teaching on the module, promoting ownership and sharing out the workload.
- Staff workload on the game used to be very high; the recently developed online version of the game has reduced the workload considerably, allowing staff to focus much more on the use of the game as a learning and assessment tool.

Main Impact on students

- The fact that cross programme topics are addressed should avoid the 'tick and go' mentality. Students know that they will be returning to topics/subjects addressed in this module.
- The game in particular appears to be more authentic to students.
- The effort put in by the students is remarkable, driven by the wish to perform well in front of their team mates.
- There is a strong view from staff that students playing the game are becoming actively engaged in learning without it feeling like hard work.

Further details

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Further information	