

BNM807 LEARNING SKILLS & CAREER DEVELOPMENT

Academic Year 2013/14

Number of Aston Credits: 30

Number of ECTS Credits: 15

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Pre-requisites for the Module:

This module is exclusively for students on the MSc/Diploma in Information Systems and Business Analysis, and is a compulsory element of the programme.

Mode of Study:

This module runs alongside the other aspects of the MSc ISBA, and is designed to build up your learning and skills as the programme progresses. In order to complete the module it is necessary to attend lectures, practical workshops and tutorials on campus at various points throughout the programme. For part-time students this module spans the duration of your studies: Your attendance at the on-campus sessions will depend on the part-time route you are taking and can be tailored to suit your circumstances. Full-time students follow the same timetable which is given at the start of term 1.

Module Objectives and Learning Outcomes:

The Learning, Skills and Career Development module act as both a foundation and a bridge for the MSc in Information Systems and Business Analysis. The purpose is to equip yourself with the necessary skills to maximise your performance on the MSc programme, and to develop your ability to reflect upon and improve your studying and learning practice. The module also enables you to articulate how your learning on the MSc programme contributes to your career development, and to communicate your competences to potential employers.

The learning outcomes for this module fall into two areas:

1. Learning skills
 - a. To develop yourself as a reflective learner, and to improve your own practice through reflection and the ability to see the connections between your modules
 - b. To develop communication skills – particularly in academic writing and presentation skills – and to put these skills into practice
 - c. To develop skills in researching and using data and information in academic work
 - d. To develop skills in project management and to put these skills into practice
 - e. To develop your ability to work in groups, and to communicate effectively and work collaboratively across cultures

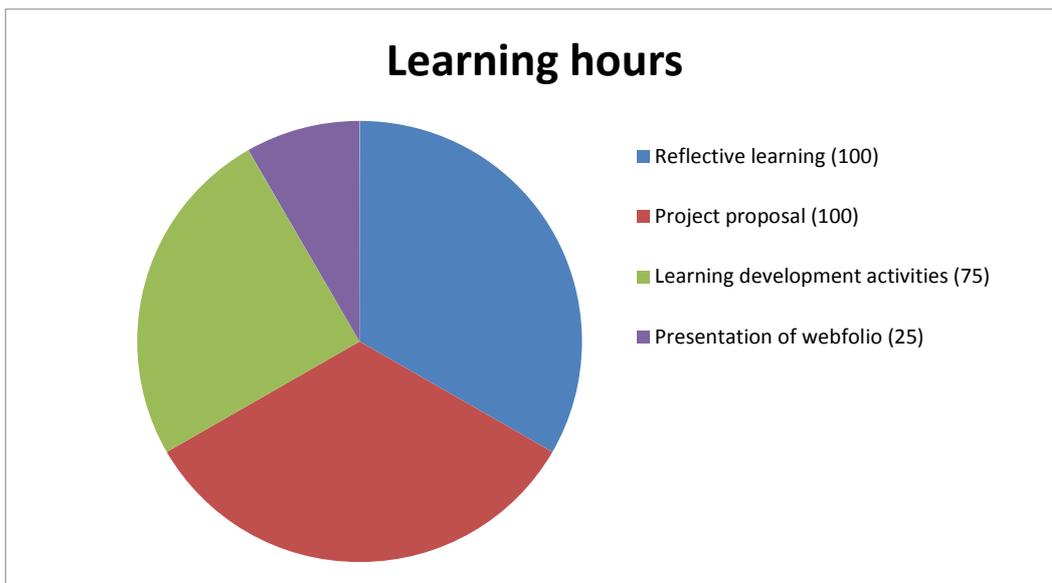
2. Career development: Links between your learning on the programme and your employability
 - a. To develop an understanding of skills and competences sought by employers, and to reflect upon how you demonstrate these skills and competences
 - b. To learn how to communicate your competences and experience, and how to engage effectively with employers through CVs, cover letters, assessment centres and interview skills

Module Content, including Methods of Teaching and Learning, Methods of Assessment and Feedback, and Learning Hours:

The feedback and assessment for this module is through a webfolio submitted on the PebblePad gateway for the MSc Information Systems and Business Analysis. Your webfolio is a written document of your personal development on this MSc, and the evidence that you have engaged with the learning activities prescribed in this Learning Skills and Career Development module.

As well as a strong reflective element to this module, your learning is gained through active participation in lectures and workshops, and active engagement in individual and group-based learning activities. These learning development activities enable you to learn more about yourself and how you work, and to identify strategies for improvement.

There are 30 credits on this module, which are divided up into different learning hours and assessment components. 1 credit should represent 10 hours of study, whether in direct contact with the tutors in lectures and tutorials, working in groups and group activities, or working individually, reading, reflecting and preparing your webfolio. The learning hours for the module are shown in the chart below. As a 30 credit module, there are 300 hours study for this module, divided as follows:



There is no pre-reading required for this module.

The final date for the submission of your webfolio comes at the end of your programme of study. This is to give you time after you have submitted your project to reflect upon your learning on the programme as a whole. In the following sections there is an explanation for how the learning hours are comprised, what you have to submit in your final webfolio and how it is assessed.

Learning development activities (175 hours, including the Project Proposal)

The timetabled sessions for this programme are related to different learning development activities which you are required to engage with throughout the year. These activities are designed to fulfil different combinations of learning outcomes for this module. The table below details the learning development activities, which learning outcomes they address and the learning hours associated with each activity. The learning hours include time spent revising these activities as a result of feedback from your tutors.

The learning development activities are designed to develop your core skills in academic study, and the accompanying group-based or individual exercises give you the opportunity to put these skills into practice. The learning development activities are also a vehicle for reflection: By engaging with the activities and gaining feedback, you are able to reflect upon what went well or not, and develop strategies for improvement. In your webfolio you have to provide the evidence that you have engaged with the learning development activities by uploading the activities specified in the table below. You can then reflect upon these activities and draw reference to them within the reflective learning component of your webfolio.

NB: LO = learning outcomes

	Learning activity	Content	LO	Hours
1	Learning styles and reflective learning	3 hour workshop on reflective learning and learning styles. Individual exercise on completing a self-diagnostic of your learning style, published in your webfolio	1 a) 1 b)	5 hours
2	Academic writing skills	3 hour workshop on academic writing skills. Individual exercise on your approach to academic writing, published in your webfolio	1 a) 1 b)	5 hours
3	Collaborative working in intercultural groups	3 x 3 hour workshops on competences and skills for collaborative working in intercultural groups. 2 hour session for group presentations on intercultural working in your group, and presentation slides published to your webfoli	1 a) 1 b) 1 c) 1 e)	20 hours



4	Career management and employability	3 x 2 hour workshops on career development tools, skills and employability competences. Completion of self-diagnostic 'Profiling For Success'. Written evidence of competences. CV. Cover letter. Interview preparation. All exercises are individual and should be published to your webfolio	1 a) 2 a) 2 b)	30 hours
5	Information and research skills	2 x 3 hour workshops on searching and using information in academic research. Group information consultancy report, published to your webfolio	1 b) 1 c) 1 e)	15 hours
6	Project proposal and presentation	Provides a bridge between the taught part of the programme and the Masters project. Major opportunity to put into practice to learning outcomes 1 a-d. 3 x 3 hour project workshops (including research skills and methodology). 4 hour session on proposal presentations. 3 hour library workshop. Project proposal and presentation slides published to your webfolio	1 a) 1 b) 1 c) 1 d)	100 hours

Reflective learning (100 hours)

The first and principal learning outcome for this module is to develop yourself as a reflective learner and to improve your own practice through reflection. This is fundamental in terms of how the MSc enables you to develop on the programme and how the programme contributes to your career plans.

This means developing the ability to critically reflect upon your practice in the MSc programme as a whole, to identify ways of improving your performance, and to demonstrate to others – particularly tutors, employers and peers – that you are competent in the core skills and competences which this MSc programme aims to achieve.

You should aim to include the following elements of reflection in your webfolio, although these should not necessarily form section headings. As long as these reflective elements are included, how you choose to structure your webfolio is up to you.

1. Critical reflection on how your learning has developed over the course of the MSc programme and how you have developed as a 'reflective practitioner.' Your webfolio needs to contain an initial statement (outlining your personal development goals at the outset), and a final statement (reflecting back on the extent to which you have achieved your goals by the end). You need to show the progression of your learning during the MSc, with evidence of reflection at key decision points and critical incidents along the way.
2. Critical reflection on the acquisition and development of skills and tools for effectiveness on the programme, whether working individually or in collaborative groups. It is up to you to define which skills etc. to address, and which critical incidents have facilitated your learning.
3. Critical reflection on your career planning and development of employability competences. You should reflect on the career planning process, as well as development of your competences. You need to discuss what are employability competences, and show understanding of employers' needs. It is up to you to define which competences to include.
4. Critical reflection on how the programme has enabled you to meet the aims of the MSc in Information Systems and Business Analysis. Critical reflection on the Learning Skills and Career Development module and the use of PebblePad.

The majority of the 100 hours for the reflective learning component are comprised of individual study – mainly reading, reflecting and compiling your webfolio. The workshops for the learning development activities all deliver content which is relevant to the reflective learning component. Additional contact hours are 2 x 3 hour workshops in induction week, and individual sessions with tutors during office hours throughout the year (some scheduled, and others according to your individual needs).

In addition there are guest speakers organised by the careers service and company visits. Although not assessed or included in the learning hours for this module, you are encouraged to attend these additional sessions as they contribute to your career development, and are good opportunities for critical reflection.

Presentation of the webfolio (25 hours)



It is up to you how to structure and present your webfolio. The 25 hours allocated to this aspect of the module include 2 x 3 hour sessions on PebblePad and webfolios. The presentational aspects of your webfolio are assessed according to the following criteria:

- > Completeness of the webfolio
- > Structure of the webfolio
- > Attractiveness of presentation

Corporate Connections:

The module promotes strong links with employers through guest lectures and company visits.

International Dimensions:

The postgraduate programme in Information Systems and Business Analysis prepares students for a range of international careers in associated professions. This module enables you to develop and demonstrate the competences which contribute to international employability.

Contribution of Research:

Staff contributing to this module draw upon expertise gained from research into the role of higher education, employability, knowledge and information management, reflective learning and intercultural competence.

Ethics, Responsibility & Sustainability:

Your MSc programme places strong emphasis on the need to behave ethically, responsibly and sustainably, both while at Aston and in your future career. This module requires that you take responsibility for your learning at the individual level and in activities throughout your MSc programme requiring you to work collaboratively in groups. Ethics are particularly important when it comes to planning and conducting your Masters project. As part of the project proposal you are required to consider the ethical issues relating to your project and to gain ethical approval for your project from your supervisor.

The following readings are subject to change. Students should not therefore purchase textbooks prior to commencing their course. If students wish to undertake background reading before starting the course, many of the chapters/readings are available in electronic form via on-line library catalogues and other resources

Pre-reading:

There is no pre-reading required for this module.

Indicative Bibliography:

COTTRELL, S. (2008). *Skills for success: The personal development planning handbook* (3rd ed.) Palgrave Macmillan.

GALLAGHER, K. (2010). *Skills development for business and management students*. Oxford: OUP.

HIND, D., and MOSS, S. (2005). *Employability skills*. Sunderland: Business Education Publishers.

MOON, J. (2004). *A handbook of reflective and experiential learning*. London: Routledge.

MOON, J. (2006). *Learning journals: A handbook for reflective practice and professional development*. London: Routledge.

MOON, J. (2008). *Critical thinking: An exploration of theory and practice*. London: Routledge.