

BS3362 – COMPETITION POLICY AND ECONOMIC REGULATION

Module Number:	BS3362
Module Title:	Competition Policy and Economic Regulation
Number of Aston Credits:	20
Total Number of ECTS Credits: (European Credit Transfer)	10

Staff Members Responsible for the Module and Lectures:

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https://wass.aston.ac.uk/wass/pages/viewcalendar.page.php?makeapp=1&cal_id=158

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Pre-Requisite(s) for the Module:

BS2243 Industrial Organisation and Strategy
BS2242 Principles of Microeconomics
BS2220 Introduction to Econometrics

Module Learning Outcomes:

This module presents the theory of competition and regulation policy and applies this theory to particular industrial policies adopted by governments internationally. It therefore considers government regulation of firms from a practical and theoretical perspective. The aim is to provide students intending careers in business, consultancy and government with a thorough understanding of the economic impact of competition policy and regulation and develop views about their limitations.

Upon successful completion of the module students will be able to:

- evaluate policy decisions using the relevant economic theory
- discuss, compare and assess competition policies and regulatory activity as practised by governments world-wide
- analyse competition policy and regulatory choices and their impacts on the economy.

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Module Content:

The Lecture Programme will be completed in 8 two hour lectures to be scheduled during weeks 1-7 and week 14, and 12 one hour lectures to be scheduled during weeks 8-11 and 15-22.

One hour long student presentation sessions will be scheduled during weeks 8-11 and 15-22 with two sessions in week 23.

Part I: Economic Regulation (J.Wilkinson)

<i>Weeks</i>	<i>Lecture Topic</i>
1	Introduction to the course. The rationale for regulation and competition policy
2	Nationalisation, privatisation and deregulation: reasons for state ownership and the case for privatisation, history and practice of privatisation in the UK
3	Introducing competition in former natural monopolies: costs and benefits
4-5	Rate of return regulation: problems and solutions. Price-cap regulation in the privatised utilities: theory, goals and outcomes
6-7	Measuring efficiency – benchmarking, yardstick competition and performance

Part II: Competition Policy (M.Olczak)

<i>Weeks</i>	<i>Lecture Topic</i>
8-10	An introduction to competition policy
11	Market definition
14-16	Abuse of dominance
17-18	Vertical agreements
19-20	Horizontal agreements
21-22	Merger policy
24	Revision session on Economic Regulation and Competition Policy

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International Dimensions:

The module content aims to compare and contrast different international approaches to competition policy and regulation. Theoretical issues are illustrated with a range of international case studies which reflect different governments' approaches to competition and regulation enforcement, with particular focus on the US and European systems.

Corporate Connections:

In order to assess the effect of government policy on corporate activity the students are asked to carry out, as part of their coursework, an in-depth analysis of recent antitrust and regulation inquiries (e.g. US Vs Microsoft, the Competition Commission's investigation into UK grocery retailing, Ofwat's price caps).

Links to Research:

The module outcomes closely relate to our research agendas and frequent examples from their research will be employed in the module.

Learning and Teaching Rationale and Methods:

a) Method of Teaching - The lecture programme in this module introduces students to key concepts, and indicates the appropriate areas for further study. The seminar programme provides an opportunity for students to research and present specific case studies in competition policy and economic regulation and critically evaluate the decisions made.

b) Duration

Contact and directed learning

Lectures and Revision Sessions	31 hours
Class presentation and discussion of cases	13 hours
Examination	2 hours

Indirect learning

Preparation of Group Presentation	28 hours
Preparation of Assignment	26 hours
Exam Preparation	30 hours
Reading & Private Study	70 hours

Total **200 hours**

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Ethical Approval:

This module does not require any primary research and no ethical approval will be necessary.

Assessment and Feedback Rationale and Methods:

Assessment is via:

- a **group presentation** (10%), including a PowerPoint presentation submitted directly to the course tutor
- **attendance/participation** (5%) at the 13 scheduled student seminar sessions – students will be permitted to miss one session without penalty
- an **individual coursework essay** (35%) to be submitted to the Coursework Office by 12pm on Friday 27th April (week 24)
- a **two-hour examination** (50%) during the final examination period at the end of the academic year.

The groups will be decided and topics allocated during the first lecture in week 1. Two weeks in advance of each group presentation the tutor will be available to meet to discuss the research undertaken, the key features of the case and the structure of the presentation. After the presentation feedback will be provided within one week.

The essay should be no more than 3000 words in length. While the individual essay must be on a topic related to the group presentation case, the essay must also be entirely your own work. The essay does not need to comprehensively examine all aspects of the case presented, and can be focused on a single relevant sub-topic within the broader topic area. **Before fixing on an essay topic the agreement of the course tutor should be sought.**

Plagiarism and improper citation will not be tolerated. Poorly written and structured essays will be penalized as appropriate.

Further information on the group presentation and individual essay requirements will be made available on Blackboard.

A failure to complete the individual coursework on time, or to make the group presentation at the scheduled time, will render a student liable to the late submission penalty applied in the Business School.