There’s nothing as practical as a good theory: using the Kolb cycle in developing a first year course

John Pal and Sarah Featherstone

HEA Teaching and Learning in Social Sciences Conference

The Studio, Manchester 3rd/4th December 2015
What governed the design?

KNIHT
What’s the course about?

By the end of the course students should be able to:

Collect, analyse and interpret business data.

Apply, critically, tools and techniques to analyse a business situation.

Develop and justify recommendations based on appropriate research.

Work independently and collectively to ensure the delivery of business-focused outputs.

Communicate findings orally and in writing.
This is how one major company is using an assessment centre. Key features:

1. Short presentation
2. Company-based
3. No technical aids
4. Background research is essential
What learning approach do business/management students prefer?

- ‘Accommodators’ – like hands-on experience
- Interested in actions and results
- Prefer trial and error

How was engagement achieved?

- Individual and independent preparation
- Collaboration
- Participation
- Small groups
- Use of formative exercises
How is the Case course organised?

- Lectures: 2 * 2 hours
- In class polling
- Blackboard and Link 2Lists
How is the Case course organised?

2 * 2 hours
Lectures → In class polling

1 * 5 hours
Facilitated Workshop 1 → Unseen case → Oral feedback → Prepared scenario → Written feedback + film
Features of Workshop 1

Group presentation of 12 minutes; using no more than 3 pieces of flip chart paper. Filmed for reflection purposes.
How is the Case course organised?

- **Lectures**: 2 * 2 hours
  - In class polling

**Facilitated Workshop 1**: 1 * 5 hours
  - Unseen case
  - Oral feedback
  - Prepared scenario
  - Written feedback + film

**Facilitated Workshop 2**: 1 * 5 hours
  - Prepared scenario
  - Written feedback + film
Features of Workshop 2

Group presentation of 20 minutes; using no more than 5 pieces of flip chart paper. Filmed for moderation purposes.
How is the Case course organised?

2 * 2 hours
Lectures → In class polling

1 * 5 hours
Facilitated Workshop 1 → Unseen case → Oral feedback → Prepared scenario → Written feedback + film

1 * 5 hours
Facilitated Workshop 2 → Prepared scenario → Written feedback + film

2 * 2 hours
Lectures → Experts’ panel (Q&A) → In class polling → Exam (90 mins)
How did we get almost 100% attendance?

- Late for either workshop: 10 marks deducted from final coursework mark (after 30 minutes counts as a missed workshop)

- Miss Workshop 1: 20 marks deducted from final coursework mark

- Miss Workshop 2: zero (and come back in summer for a re-sit workshop)

- Come un-prepared for either workshop – excluded from Workshop
Behind every academic...
This shows how you have used knowledge/skills from Semester 1

This allows you to rate the contribution of your group members

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Student IDs</th>
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<table>
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<tr>
<th>TUTOR NAME:</th>
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<tr>
<th>Criteria</th>
<th>1</th>
<th>2</th>
<th>3</th>
<th>4</th>
<th>5</th>
<th>Comments</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Collection, analysis and interpretation of business data.</td>
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<td>Critical application of tools and techniques to analyse a business problem</td>
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<td>Development, recommend, research</td>
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<td>Evidence of work, focus</td>
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<td>Communication, writing</td>
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<td>Evidence of innovation in terms of content and / or delivery</td>
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Overall mark

This grid [where 1 is excellent; 5 very poor] is aimed to show you the relative strengths and weaknesses of your work and cannot be summed.

This is how you will be assessed by your Workshop Tutor
## Student feedback
### Unit (School) [1-5 scale]

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Feedback</th>
<th>2012/13</th>
<th>2013/14</th>
<th>2014/15</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>The feedback that I received on my work was helpful</td>
<td>3.67</td>
<td>4.07</td>
<td>3.80</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(3.89)</td>
<td>(3.96)</td>
<td>(3.81)</td>
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<tr>
<td>The course unit provided opportunities for participation and discussion</td>
<td>4.36</td>
<td>4.35</td>
<td>4.27</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(4.03)</td>
<td>(4.15)</td>
<td>(4.18)</td>
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<tr>
<td>The course provided opportunities to enhance skills that will be useful</td>
<td>4.37</td>
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<tr>
<td>to me in the future</td>
<td>(4.21)</td>
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<td>New questions added last year</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>This course enabled me to connect academic concepts with real world</td>
<td>4.47</td>
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<td>examples.</td>
<td>(4.32)</td>
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What did we learn from all this?

- Admin support is imperative – we changed the timetable so we could run 9 simultaneous workshops every week for six weeks.

- Student feedback is generally favourable, but there are things they don’t like – it’s a question of how far to we go to ‘satisfy’ them?
Q&A

(The remaining slides are verbatim comments from students over 3 years)

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What did the students like / enjoy /value about the course?

- Immediacy of the task.
- Real world issues
- Valuable experience for working under time constraints.
- Enjoyed the teamwork and the presentation
- Opportunity to apply the knowledge that I had learned in other modules to real business cases.
- Everything as I plan to take this subject next year as well
- Directly applicable to situations we may find ourselves in in the workplace
- (Pre-workshop) research really aided in broadening my portfolio of skills and knowledge of databases.
- This module gives us a peek into real world case studies and helped me apply the theoretical knowledge.
- The workshops were highly engaging and participative. It was valuable to be introduced to online databases
What did the students like / enjoy / value about the course?

• Case studies are maybe the best way to see and learn how the academic tools can or cannot work in real life.
• All the exercises were very challenging and exciting.
• Connected the subjects and courses learned to the real world and see the connections between the theories taught and actual business cases
• How academic concepts from the 1st semester are used and applied in the real world through the case studies. 65% coursework which is good. Good preparation for workshop 2 in workshop 1.
• I enjoyed the opportunity to work with other students
• I really have liked having a more practical and applied based subject. I really enjoyed carrying out my own research and then applying this to a business strategy and presenting it.
• It helps to build on your presentation skills
• It was interesting. A combination of all previous modules within Case studies, felt like it was the real deal.
What did the students like / enjoy / value about the course?

- Loved the concept of all day workshop and high coursework aspect of the course.
- Opportunity to really improve presentation skills. Finding out that I have access to various data bases.
- The final case study assessment was a very valuable experience - enjoyed it very much.
- The group presentations were very valuable. They helped develop communication and presentation skills vastly.
- The workshops were conducted professionally. The teaching assistant helped provide a realistic team working environment.
- This unit was the most interesting course of this year. I really enjoyed working on the presentations and also researching before. It felt like a more complex and practical way of using everything we previously studied.
What did the students say that they didn’t like / could be improved?

- I would like to see consideration given to using an approach other than recording presentations for moderation purposes.
- I would have liked to be provided with more information about the presentation assessment criteria.
- The feedback which we were given in the first workshop didn't provide me with an idea of how well our group did as it was just qualitative.
- Odd course structure, with the exam counting for very little and being awfully similar to the presentation, adding negligible value.
- I feel that the peer review system at the end of the workshops should be adjusted so it does not have to balance to zero.
- I think one more workshop could be arranged.
- There was minimal guidance and feedback on our presentations.
- Free-loaders in the presentations
- Don’t like having an exam
What did the students say that they didn’t like / could be improved?

- Having something like this every week in less hours would be less exhausting we share the same opinion that most students were either unclear of the work we were to prepare, or completely.

- I didn't value the fact that I had a weak group to work with for my main presentation, the amount of stress I went through because members would not participate, it was physically and mentally draining, and the effect of this was on my grade for the presentation. I felt as though it could have been much higher if some group members pulled their socks up and actually took part.

- I feel that groups should be assigned before assessment so that students can brainstorm as a group more effectively. The current approach only allows the most expressive student to express his ideas while the rest blindly follows. As a result, what the group presented might not be in consensus. Furthermore, due to time constraint, some students will not argue that certain ideas were wrong.
What did the students say that they didn’t like / could be improved?

- I think that this course needs to have content that can actually be learnt. I feel as though this course is only to do with the application of common sense and that I haven't actually learnt anything
- It would have been useful to know what grade we were given for the practise presentation, as my final grade for the overall presentation was lower than I expected given the amount of work I had put into it.
- More direction on the first seminar, as we were all unsure of how much work was required in order to give a good presentation.
- Seminar to exam weighting should be 50%-50%
- Speed of feedback/marks
- The six-hour-seminar was too stressful
- Honestly, I did not learn anything through this module.
- IT GAVE ME STRESS AND NOTHING HELPED ME.
Select bibliography