

# Contemporary business issue

Business



**ASSIGN  
BUSTER**

## **1. UNIT OVERVIEW**

This unit is intended to be multi-disciplinary. That is, it seeks to engage students in five broad subject areas of BU's Business School – economics, finance, marketing, management and human resource management. In consequence students are both expected and required to be willing to learn in subject areas which overlap and complement their own main areas of specialisation.

The approach to learning taken by this unit is one of “ guided research” through group-work. It does not follow the traditional model of a continuous programme of lectures and seminars. Instead, it seeks to provide support and encouragement for students to learn about business and to develop useful problem solving skills for themselves. The focus of delivery is thereby on providing support and guidance for a learning process conducted by students working in groups. The assignments students are expected to complete will require students to review the state of knowledge in a number of areas and apply this knowledge to the case of a particular firm.

The unit aims to address “ contemporary” issues, as viewed from a business prospective. This means that the issues to be covered are chosen to be ones of current relevance to business. However, you should not expect the unit to necessarily be able to address current “ headline” topics. Like any other form of post-graduate university education students are expected to adopt an academic approach. This includes knowledge of relevant theory and an analysis of available evidence. The topics selected are, therefore not chosen solely for current relevance, but also for having been a “ contemporary

issue” for a sufficient period of time for an adequate body of theory and evidence to have been established.

## 2. UNIT TOPICS FOR year

The unit involves the study of five topic areas: (I) effective and efficient regulation (II) Corporate Finance, (III) Consumer segmentation and loyalty, (IV) leadership in a changing business environment, and (V) Resources, Capabilities and Strategy Processes.

Between weeks 12 and 15, students will receive a two hour introductory lecture on each of these topics. Students will then be expected to conduct their own research into a select number of these topics and apply the knowledge that they gain to the case of a specified firm. This process will be carried out in groups and will be supported by tutors through the provision of seminars and presentations. All seminars and presentations will be run by lecturers from your own framework.

The topics and their subsidiary issues are:

Topics

Content

FRAMEWORK

1:

FINANCE

Topic 1: Effective and efficient regulation

The economic rationale for regulation

Can regulation improve the welfare of society?

Incomplete contracts and regulatory capture

Topic 2: Corporate Finance

The MAs' process  
 MA tactics  
 Valuation and performance measures  
 Are MAs always successful?  
 MAs' case studies

## FRAMEWORK 2: MANAGEMENT

Topic 3: Consumer segmentation and loyalty

Consumer segmentation and profiling

Building customer loyalty

Relationship marketing

Topic 4: Leadership in a changing business environment

The importance of leadership for organisations

Contemporary Leadership Concepts and Behaviours

Change Leadership

Topic 5: Resources, Capabilities and Strategy Processes

Resource-based View approach and its impact to organisations today;

Resource-Based View and the VRIO framework;

Resource-based View and strategic decision making

### 3. UNIT DELIVERY

Teaching is provided in three main phases – (a) introductory lecture, (b) core concept lectures, and (c) workshops and formative presentations. The following provides details of the contents of each stage.

Introductory lecture:

Will take place in Week 12 and is intended to provide an overall explanation of the approach of the unit and to inform students of the requirements of their research assignment.

Core concepts lectures:

These will be held from Week 13 to 15 inclusive and will cover the core concepts that you need to understand for each of the five areas of study. There will be five subject lectures, one for each subject area. Students are required to attend all lectures.

Seminars and presentations:

Students will have seminars in weeks 16, 20 and 21. Each seminar will consist of 4 to 6 groups and will provide an opportunity for students to ask questions and receive guidance from their tutor. The workshops will also provide an opportunity for your tutor to monitor the progress of each group and provide general guidance on issues such as literature searches, presentation style, and assignment structure.

The presentations will take place in Week 18. Each group will be required to present their work to date to their classmates and tutor. Each presentation will have a time limit of 10 minutes, and will be followed by a 5 minute questions and answers session. The aim of the presentation is to provide groups with formative feedback. It is intended that this will be used to aid students in the completion of their final written project. PowerPoint and other presentation aids will be available for use by students during their presentations. Students are recommended to keep the number of slides they use to five or less.

### **3. ASSESSMENT REQUIREMENTS**

#### Important deadlines

Students are required to make a presentation of their work to date in class during week 18. This presentation is mandatory, but will not contribute to the final mark.

Students are required to submit their final assignment digitally through Turnitin no later than 12 noon on the December 13th 2013. There is no requirement to submit a hardcopy.

Each student is required to complete their self and peer assessment survey online no later than December 13th 2013.

#### Assessment

Students shall be divided into groups of 4 or 5, with each group being assessed based on a single written assignment submitted at the end of term. The assignment requires each group to provide a review of the literature in two of the topic areas discussed in section 2, and to apply their knowledge to the case of a firm.

On the 13th of December 2013, each group will submit a single piece of written work online through Turnitin, which will account for 100% of their overall mark. The written assignment has a maximum word limit of 5, 000 words. Students will not be penalised if their word count is below the limit. However, work submitted which is in excess of the word limit will incur a penalty of 5 percentage marks. Each student will also have to complete a self and peer assessment form online by the same date.

See appendix 2 for assignment research questions and guidelines See appendix 3 for some guidelines on searching for literature and company information

#### **4. WORKING WITHIN A GROUP**

It is expected and required that each group member makes an equal contribution to the completion of both the group presentation and final written assignment. First and foremost, it is expected that group members are willing to act in a professional manner and resolve any problems that may arise within a group accordingly. Lecturers will be using the seminar classes to monitor the progress of each group and to assess group dynamics. As an added incentive for each student to conduct themselves in a professional manner within their assigned group, the contribution of each student will be self and peer assessed at the end of term. It is compulsory that each student rate their own contribution to the group and that of the other group members using an online survey.

For each group an average peer and self-assessment mark will be calculated based on the marks given by all group members to themselves and to their fellow group members. An average mark will then be calculated for each individual group member based on what assessment mark they gave themselves and received from the other group members. These two averages will then be compared to ascertain the percentage difference between the group average mark and the individual's average mark. The final mark received by each group member will be based on the mark given to the assignment by the tutor adjusted by this percentage difference. The

degree to which a student's mark can be adjusted in this way will be limited to a maximum of 5 per cent above or below the initial mark set by the tutor.

Therefore, those students who receive a poor assessment from their fellow group members may receive a mark below that assigned by the lecturers. On the other hand, those students who are seen to have made an exceptional contribution may receive a mark above that assigned by the lecturers. If all group members have made an equal contribution, then all group members shall receive an equal mark. The lecturers retain the right to make the final determination of any student's final mark. See Appendix 4 for a draft copy of the self and peer assessment form

### **How can we work effectively in our groups?**

The best thing is to get off to the right start and to have a plan:

As early as possible, draw up a list of contact details (mobile numbers and e-mail addresses) for all group members, and circulate the list to everyone in the group. Get started on the assignment as soon as groups have been established. It will take time for the group members to get to know each other's strengths and weaknesses and to figure out the best way to work together. This will not be achieved if your first meeting is just a few weeks before the deadline. Agree on a regular time and day(s) to meet. Make sure that everyone can make this time (allow for work commitments etc). Meet up even if you think you have nothing to discuss – you will! Agree group roles and decide whether they are fixed or not.

Keep a brief record of each meeting (i. e. meeting log), including who attended (get signatures), who apologised for absence, what actions were



agreed and by whom etc. Keep a record of any member(s) not turning up and/or not completing work as requested. Circulate this note (called ‘minutes’) after each meeting by e-mail or other means. Such records are vital if difficulties arise within the group, as difficulties brought to the attention of your tutor will need to be evidenced. Treat each other with respect and dignity. Criticise constructively and listen to each other’s opinion.

**What should I do if I’m having problems?**

Step 1: Part of the value of working in a group is taking part in the process of managing group relationships while achieving the group task. There will be times when group members feel that others are not playing their part. Equally, individuals may sometimes feel excluded from the process. The primary responsibility for resolving these difficulties lies with the group. Therefore, the first step in resolving any issue is to discuss it openly at one of your group meetings and to have the issue noted in your meeting records.

Step 2: If after discussing the difficulties within your group, the group feels that the issue still cannot be resolved, then the member(s) concerned should discuss the problem with their tutor. Groups meet with their tutor regularly for seminars, and these provide an opportune time to discuss difficulties within your group. Please remember that your tutor has a very busy workload and will have very limited time to meet groups outside of seminar times, therefore please ensure you discuss the problem in seminars wherever possible. Your tutor will ask to see evidence of the problem e. g. logs of group meetings.

Step 3: In the unlikely event that the problem remains unresolved at this stage, the group can arrange to meet the unit leader, Dermot McCarthy ([email protected]). Office hours for this unit are every Monday at 1-2pm in E401.

### **Can a student be removed from a group?**

No-one wants to get to the stage where a student is at risk of being excluded from a group, and your tutors will explore every avenue open to them in order to avoid this outcome. However, it is occasionally deemed necessary for the welfare of the group or individual involved.

One of the more common difficulties groups may have is where one student refuses to participate in their group, and the other group members wish to exclude that member. Firstly, the group should of course make all reasonable efforts to contact the student in question and to then notify their seminar tutor. The best way a group can help the tutor make the right decision is to demonstrate that serious efforts that have been made to include the student and to provide evidence of what has and has not been done by each group member (hence the importance of minutes, records etc). Inability to provide such proof will mean your tutor is unlikely to grant any request to exclude a member of the group.

Key things to remember!

1. Do not bury your head in the sand. If there is a problem, try to resolve it within the group. If this does not work, talk to your tutor.
2. Keep a record of meetings. If you complain about another student, or are the subject of a complaint yourself, the tutor will want evidence.
3. Any problems should be

brought to the attention of the tutor concerned at least three weeks before any hand-in date. Tutors will have little sympathy with students who mention problems only when assignments and marks have been returned.

## 5. READING AND OTHER SOURCE MATERIALS

It should be obvious from the nature of this unit that there can be no single recommended text for this unit. Suggested sources and resources for each topic and each subsidiary issue will be provided on MyBU. Please make use of these, but please do not limit your reading and research to those sources suggested on MyBU. This unit places considerable emphasis on helping you make use of your own initiative and this will be reflected in the marking of assessed work (see appendix 3). APPENDIX 1: UNIT SPECIFICATION

|                 |       |              |          |               |
|-----------------|-------|--------------|----------|---------------|
| Unit            | title | Contemporary | Business | Issues        |
| Level           |       | M            |          |               |
| Credit          |       | value        | 20       |               |
| ECTS credits 10 |       |              |          |               |
| PRE-REQUISITES  |       | AND          |          | CO-REQUISITES |

None.

### RATIONALE

This unit employs a self-directed research approach to learning. Students will be given access to a broad pool of expertise, and have the opportunity to choose and construct their own approach to contemporary business issues (deemed to include the disciplines of management, economics and organisational behaviour).

## AIMS

The overall aims of this unit are:

1 to ensure that students studying any particular pathway are aware of how their specialist discipline interacts in a real world environment with other related disciplines; 2 to ensure students have a broad awareness of current and topical business issues; 3 to motivate students to learn from self managed and group environments.

## **INTENDED LEARNING OUTCOMES**

Having completed this unit the student is expected to:

1 be able to critically access the specific expertise needed to solve a given strategic or policy problem, including the identification of relevant state of the art research; 2 have the ability to critically evaluate the major contexts within which organizations operate to enable action in the main disciplines relevant to their specialist pathway; 3 have developed sensitivity to contextual diversity, continuous change and ethical ambiguities, and an understanding of the strategic role of information and communications systems; 4 demonstrate transferable and key skills, for example being able to demonstrate critical analytical and evaluative skills to inform professional practice, together with the ability to communicate recommendations effectively.

## **LEARNING AND TEACHING METHODS**

In this unit students will be given a briefing and an infrastructure (through the VLA and designated tutors that form a pool of expertise). Learning then will be mainly self-managed and in groups, in a combination of interactive workshops, guest lectures, tutorial support and mentoring. Students will be

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expected to undertake independent research and collaborate within their group to collate their findings, to critique and evaluate contemporary issues and solutions. They will be expected to engage in debate and communicate appropriately to persuade others to support their particular solution.

### **ASSESSMENT**

Intended learning outcomes 1-4 will be assessed by coursework (100%).

### **INDICATIVE CONTENT**

Topics that may form the focus for any cohort may include the following:

Government Intervention  
 Regulation  
 The functioning of capital markets  
 Security pricing and valuation  
 Raising finance  
 Market Segmentation  
 Customer Profiling and positioning strategies  
 Customer Loyalty and relationship marketing  
 Learning organisation  
 Systems thinking  
 Resource-Based View approach and Management processes  
 Strategic decision making

### **INDICATIVE KEY LEARNING RESOURCES**

Subject specific resources will be made available by the tutorial team supporting selected issues each year.

Business School Assignment Brief

2013/14

Contemporary Business Issues

Level M

Coursework Brief

This assignment is worth 100% of the overall unit mark

Each student will be assigned to a research group (4 or 5 members per group) at the beginning of semester.

Each group will be provided with the names of two companies. The group will choose one of these firms to demonstrate their ability to apply the knowledge they have gained.

Below, each tutor has set a research assignment based on their topic. Each group is required to select two research assignments, one from Section A and one from Section B which they will examine in their final written report.

Section A

Assignment 1: Review the extant theoretical and empirical literature on the effectiveness and efficiency of economic regulation. Using this knowledge, identify and evaluate one case of regulation as it applies to the firm that you have chosen. Assignment 2: Review the extant theoretical and empirical literature on corporate mergers and acquisitions (MAs), by referring to specific documented M&As' cases. Using this knowledge, elaborate on the MA history of the firm that you have chosen.. Section B

Assignment 3: Investigate and summarise the latest thinking on the concept of customer segmentation. Investigate how your chosen organisation could

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use effective segmentation to improve their customer loyalty. Assignment 4: Critically evaluate the existing literature on the role of leadership and the impact of leadership behaviours on organisations in a changing business environment. Apply this knowledge to the context of a firm of your choice and critically examine its implications for the firm's future success.. Assignment 5: Identify and evaluate critically the existing literature on Resource-Based View and its potential for organisations today. Apply this knowledge to the context of a firm of your choice and examine its implications for the company's value added and competitive advantage.

### **SUBMISSION DETAILS**

Each group must provide a 10 minute presentation of their work to date in Week 18 of term. This presentation will be formative and will not contribute to the groups final mark. Each group must submit their final written assignment by 12 midday on 13th December 2013. Submissions must be made electronically through Turnitin (no hardcopy required). Word count on the assignment is 5, 000 words in total. 5 percentage marks will be deducted were an assignment is found to be in excess of 5, 000 words.

### **DEADLINE**

12 midday on 13th December 2013

Please note that this is the final time you can submit – not the time to submit! Late submission will receive 0%. Your feedback and mark for this assignment will be provided via hardcore.

### **HELP AND SUPPORT**

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Any questions arising from this assignment brief should be addressed to tutors during seminar sessions.

You must acknowledge your source every time you refer to others' work, using the Harvard Referencing system (Author Date Method). Failure to do so amounts to plagiarism which is against University regulations. Please refer to [www.bournemouth.ac.uk/library](http://www.bournemouth.ac.uk/library) for the University's guide to citation in the Harvard style. Students with Additional Learning Needs may contact Learning Support on [www.bournemouth.ac.uk/disability\\_support](http://www.bournemouth.ac.uk/disability_support). General academic support is available via the Academic Skills community on myBU. Additional support is provided by the School. Postgraduate students should contact Sue Barnes, to make an appointment. She is based in D169. If you have any valid mitigating circumstances that mean you cannot meet an assignment submission deadline and you wish to request an extension, you will need to complete and submit the Mitigating Circumstances Form for consideration to your Programme/Framework Administrator together with appropriate supporting evidence (e. g., GP note) normally before the coursework deadline. Further details on the procedure and the mitigating circumstances form can be found at [www.bournemouth.ac.uk/student/mitigating](http://www.bournemouth.ac.uk/student/mitigating). Please make sure you read these documents carefully before submitting anything for consideration.

Disclaimer: The information provided in this assignment brief is correct at time of publication. In the unlikely event that any changes are deemed necessary, they will be communicated clearly via e-mail and myBU and a new version of this assignment brief will be circulated. Version: 1

Some suggestions regarding assignment structure

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Given its limited word count (5, 000 words) it is important to have a well structured assignment. The following is an outline structure for an assignment. However, it is important to note that this is just a suggested outline and failure to adhere to it will not result in the loss of marks:

Section A: Introduction (200 words approx.):

Outlining what assignments that have been chosen,

Outline the firm that has been chosen and articulate a compelling rationale for the choice of case study firm.

Section B: First assignment question (2, 300 words approx.):

Provide a critical review of relevant theory (1, 500 words approx.) What have other people written

What is the main theoretical arguments

What have been the main empirical findings

Draw on relevant journals and books

Develop a clear line of argument.

Examine your chosen firm in light of this review (800 words approx.) Source information from annual reports, case studies, company websites, government/research reports, the library Remember the aim is to critically analyse, not a descriptive account of the firm. Use tables and graphs where relevant

Section C: Second assignment question (2, 300 words approx.)

Provide a critical review of relevant theory (1, 500 words approx.) What have other people written

What is the main theoretical arguments

What have been the main empirical findings

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Draw on relevant journals and books

Develop a clear line of argument.

Examine your chosen firm in light of this review (800 words approx.) Source information from annual reports, case studies, company websites, government/research reports, the library Remember the aim is to critically analyse, not a descriptive account of the firm. Use tables and graphs where relevant

Section E: Conclusion (200 words approx.)

What has been achieved

What is the significance of your findings and your discussion What do you recommend as a course of action following your conclusion

General guidelines for assignment completion

Word limit: 5,000 words

Referencing style:

Harvard Style (see the BU guide on citation in the Harvard style: [www.bournemouth.ac.uk/library/citing\\_references/docs/Citing\\_Refs.pdf](http://www.bournemouth.ac.uk/library/citing_references/docs/Citing_Refs.pdf)) Always address the issue that you have selected and not another that you would have preferred to have discussed. Very few marks are awarded for addressing a different issue. If, for example, when you select a specific firm to evaluate, try to ensure that you don't focus on telling us everything you know about Firm X but that you focus on those aspects of Firm X's experience that are relevant to the assignment. Make sure that you plan your paper and critically review the final piece to ensure that you provide a clear logical structure to it. Remember that you are trying to demonstrate to

the marker how well you understand and can make use of the relevant knowledge. This requires careful explanation on your part. Pay attention to communicating your knowledge and understanding of the subject and do not just assume that it will be obvious anyway. Read widely and undertake some of your own research.

Good work always show signs of extensive reading and some research. It is important to demonstrate both an understanding of core principles (theories) and their application to reality. A good bibliography is essential for the marker to provide suitable feedback to you. Papers without a bibliography will be penalised with a deduction of marks. You should avoid the inclusion of irrelevant material in your written work. Given that your paper is limited to 5,000 words any irrelevant material will mean that you are excluding something of relevance. For example, you should avoid an excessively long introduction or an unnecessary history of your chosen firm. Instead, you are required to review relevant theory and apply it to your chosen firm. Therefore you should only include that information which is deemed relevant for this task. Avoid plagiarism at all costs. Unattributed copying or paraphrasing of the work of published authors or of other students is a serious offence. Properly attributed quotations and references to others are, however, important for a good essay (details of the university's plagiarism regulations can be found in your student handbook or at [http://www.bournemouth.ac.uk/library/citing\\_references/plagiarism.html](http://www.bournemouth.ac.uk/library/citing_references/plagiarism.html)) Remember that the subject matter is not merely an abstract classroom exercise nor is it just a journalistic description of the real world. The literature on the subject at least attempts to address and provide explanations of real behaviour. You

work should reflect this and should analyse rather than describe real issues. You should ensure that your work provides a clear set of conclusions based on your analysis.

### Appendix 3: guidelines of searching for literature and company information

For assistance searching for literature, the Business School Librarian (Anne Davey) is available to take any questions and to meet with students. The Subject Librarian can be contacted by email on:[email protected]

How do I find relevant literature?

Sources of literature:

Recommended readings from lecture  
Library catalogue search

Bibliographies and references in key textbooks and journal articles Online databases e. g. Business Source Complete, Jstor, Emerald Search by keyword

Search by author

How to access relevant journal articles using online databases (e. g. Business Source Complete):

1. Locate online databases on Library website (<http://www.bournemouth.ac.uk/library/resources/ejournals.html>):
2. Click on ' A-Z of databases'
3. Search under " B" for " Business Source Complete"
4. Search for journal articles. In order to narrow your search it may be useful to do the following: a. Search for specific words in the title (useful if you <https://assignbuster.com/contemporary-business-issue/>

already know the title of the article you are looking for) b. Search for key authors in the area by selecting the ‘ author’ field c. Narrow your search to specific year of publication

d. Narrow your search to only peer reviewed articles

e. Narrow your search to articles that are available to download

Some points on reading literature:

Before you begin to read a book or article, make sure you written down the

full citation Take notes as you read on

What is its theoretical basis?

What definitions does it use?

What is its general methodological approach?

What methods are used?

What kinds of data does it use to back up its argument?

What conclusions does it come to?

How do I find information on my chosen firm?

For assistance in getting company information using the Library Databases you can contact Martin Foy by emailing:[email protected]

Some sources of information

1. Firm annual reports
2. Firm websites
3. Government reports
4. Previous research/case studies

Searching for information using the Library Resources: good starting point is to use 1) the catalogue search and 2) library databases of company information

1. You can do a simple library catalogue search to find relevant material
2. Library as a number of databases of firm information available. A good starting point is to use 'Hoover's Online':
  - a. On library home page, click on 'Subject resource':
  - b. Click on 'Company and Firm Information'
  - c. Click on 'Databases'
  - d. Many useful databases are given here, but a good starting point is to use 'Hoovers Online'

Appendix 4: Self and peer assessment form