

Analysing the Work Setting Module Overview (part of the postgraduate professional studies suite)

Analysing the work setting is a fully online module designed to enable individuals in the workplace to explore their work role, their organisation and their sector in considerable detail.

The module comes in two halves:

1. First, the module facilitates participants to:
 - Investigate their work practice (what is their role, what skills are needed and to which organisational functions are they connected);
 - Consider the influences upon their practice (through external analysis);
 - Explore the (recent) historic events in their sector (what has shaped their practice);
 - Future-gaze to locate likely future issues as influences upon practice (these may be legislative, training deficits, demographic changes, economic changes).
2. Second, the module looks at the themes of sustainable and responsible practice. Within this area, participants critically explore the notion of sustainability *per se* and that they consider what the concept means for their own work setting. They go on to research examples of responsible or sustainable practice from outside of their own work place, perhaps at another organisation, so as to inform practice. Through a series of steps case studies are produced (as an assessment product). The case studies are intended to inform the participants own practice but also to be produced in such a format so as to make them useful to others in the workplace.

Who is the module for?

The module is for practitioners in a range of industries (food, agriculture, rural business, education, land based development charities for example) who seek to explore the current issues and challenges of their work practice using a structured framework whilst gaining academic credit. Often modules are associated with changes in career paths, but this module mainly exists to enable individuals to develop their own practice and their own understanding of issues in their sector and organisation. Individuals may join the module, or employers or other sponsoring organisations may adopt the module as 'their own' for customisation.

It is a module suitable for individuals getting oriented in a new role, perhaps for graduate development or for established practitioners who are seeking a way of 'taking stock' of the many variables in their operating context.

How does it work?

The module is supported by a number of learning areas (virtual spaces) all house together in a virtual learning environment. These are thematic and include:

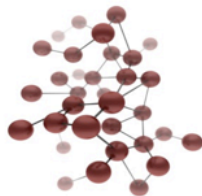
- Introduction to online work-based learning
- Working practice and its relationship with the external analysis
- Past present and future
- Sustainable and responsible practice

Each learning area provides a series of steps including work-based investigation activities, directed reading, recall and reflection activities, use of online tools, discussion suggestions and suggestions for personal investigation. There are also some online readings scanned in to a virtual Cybrary space, taken from Harper Adams own library.

Screen shots of the online area are hereafter provided to offer a flavour of the module in its current location.

The gateway from the virtual learning environment to the learning areas:

2 Learning area: Working practice and its relationship with the external environment



This area is specifically designed to facilitate you to meet the learning outcomes:

Identify current work-role activities and analyse how these relate to academic disciplines and to the wider economy and society (LO1)
Synthesise a range of information sources to articulate their current work-role requirements (LO6).

In this area you will explore your job role asking such questions as what are the roles that I undertake? What skills do I require? and how does my role relate to a range of external influences?

Through this journey of exploration you will produce two pieces of work for your portfolio. You are encouraged to share your work, or aspects of it, at intervals for peer feedback.

Please follow the calendar to keep track of key discussions and as a guide to the pace of your investigations.

 [Enter 'Learning area: Introduction to online work-based learning' file](#)

 ****NEW**** [Louisa Jones, mini-lecture, External Environmental Analysis](#)

A visual of one of the learning areas (topics or steps on the left hand menu)

Sections	<h2>Learning area: The impact of past, present and future issues on working practice</h2> <p>This area is specifically designed to facilitate you to meet the learning outcomes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Assess how past events and sector traditions have influenced their area of practice (LO2). • Determine how current sector issues and predicted future trends are influencing, or may influence, their organisation and their role (LO3). <p>The activities set and products produced within the previous sections will provide foundation and background knowledge to inform your analysis here.</p> <p>After working through this area you should have produced products to demonstrate that you have met the learning outcomes 2 & 3. By following the activities set out within this section you can achieve this through production of:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A timeline of past events influencing your sector, organisation and self. Supporting analysis,
Introduction	
Past events and sector traditions	
Timeline tools	
Patch 3	
Current and future issues	
Mindmapping	
Futuregazing resources	
Implications	
Patch 4	
Return to module homepage in Moodle	

Some of the generic resources to complement individual investigation

- **Brainer, D.** 2010. Now What? *Leadership Excellence*. May. 27 (5) pg 17. Available from: <http://proquest.umi.com/pqdweb?did=2042649571&sid=4&Fmt=4&clientId=44821&RQT=309&VName=PQD>
 - Article discusses the need for organisations to take a scenario planning approach to meeting the new economic reality.
- **Czinkota, M. and Ronkainen, I.** 2009. Trends & Indications in International Business: Topics for Future Research. *Management International Review*. 49 (2) pg249.
 - Available from: <http://proquest.umi.com/pqdweb?did=1742976731&sid=1&Fmt=4&clientId=44821&RQT=309&VName=PQD>


Article gathers a consensus of opinion from business experts across the globe regarding the wider issues facing international business; terrorism; corruption issues; globalisation; cultural adjustment; information; location and source of growth; environment, conservation and sustain ability; demographics and global corporations. (Above resources are accessible via the ABI database, login in using your Athens user name and password)
- **Johnson, G., Scholes, K., & Whittington, R.** 2008. Exploring corporate strategy: Text and Cases. Pearson Education.
 - This resource can be found in Harper Adams' e-books.

Scanned texts from the Harper (physical) library made virtual

Cybrary



Selected readings from the Harper Adams library can be scanned into this area. More will be added as we proceed.

 Yin, R. K. 2009. [Case study research](#). London: Sage

 Gray, D. 2009. [Doing research in the real world](#). 2nd ed. London: Sage

'Feeds' of information from the Sustainability journal offering current articles as they appear for access by participants (RSS technology).

Sustainable Business Design

[Add/Edit Feeds](#)

The New Weapon Against "Greenwashers" and Their Carbon Footprints

Would the "Green-ness" of a Company's Supply Chain Influence Your Purchasing Decisions?

Bio-Inspired Design in Action

S.E.C Adds Climate Risk to Disclosure List

Kraft Sheds 150 Million Pounds of Packaging

MDPI Publishing

[Add/Edit Feeds](#)


IJMS, Vol. 11, Pages 4771-4784: Identification of

Video tutor input

Assessment is designed to enable you to demonstrate that you have met the

- Assessment comes in two parts.
- Each part has equal weighting.

Lydia on assessment:



You are encouraged to read this outline of the assessment approach and to e questions in to the forum

Assessment

The assessment for the module comes in two parts, one for investigating practice and one for sustainable practice.

For part 1

The module is a journey of investigation; participants form products to show their learning along the way. These products together comprise the assessment via a portfolio. Artefacts in the portfolio should be useful in the workplace setting as well as demonstrating learning for assessment purposes, therefore would encourage participants to think about the media and genre choices they make. To consolidate the learning from the parts, the final piece of the portfolio is a reflective commentary focussing on what has been learnt.

For part 2

The module asks participants to chart what sustainability means in their context. Such a widely used term may be in need of 'pinning down' to become as useful as possible for the practitioner to work with. The assessment requires a consideration of what is sustainable practice in context. Following on from this (and informed by supporting steps) learners form a case study to exemplify responsible or sustainable practice; this may involve looking at 'other businesses' directly or may involve secondary research as appropriate. The case study should be produced concisely and in a form that will be useful to the individual or their organisation (e.g. booklet, poster, article for internal publication).

All of the assessment is supported by small steps (learning activities) and signposting - making it easier to 'dip in' and 'dip out' of the module as suits an individual's workload.

An example of the guidance for an assessment piece (patch or part of the portfolio)

Patch 4

Produce an overview of your investigations into current and future issues.

Frame the product as a presentation to management and/or other strategic decision makers or stakeholders within your organisation (e.g. business partners).

You should identify the **KEY** current and future issues facing your role, organisation and your sector, and provide recommendations regarding your/ your organisations response to these issues. You should attempt to recognise (and consider solutions to) any barriers or likely resistance to change. Provide supporting explanation and justification as appropriate.

This overview may take the form of an audio or video presentation; PowerPoint presentation slides; written report; a webcast; a web page insert etc. What is important is that you and your organisation maximise its value i.e. that it is fit for purpose. Please feel welcome to discuss suitability of your choice regarding the mode of delivery with your online tutors through the forum.

It may be that your choice of presentation does not fully comply with the requirements of the assessment marking criteria. If this is the case you may need to provide supplementary information to meet these requirements, for example provision of a 'references' document to accompany your video presentation.

Draw upon your analysis of work completed throughout this module: job role; organisational priorities, strengths, limitations and learning accrued through past experiences; PESTEL analysis; sphere of influence inquiries and mind map exercise to inform your overview and justify your recommendations.

- Ensure that you identify the steps undertaken to gather information.
- Provide justification for key issues identified and recommendations made.
- Remain objective in the delivery of your account.
- Consider both the positives and negatives in your overview and recommendations.
- Use your online discussions to inform your decisions. Ensure that your discussions visibly feed into your overview.
- Show that your account is informed by primary sources, experience and professional engagement.
- Use your learning journal to inform your decisions.
- Ensure that any data presented does not compromise your professional standing.
- Use diagrams, images and tables where appropriate.
- Ensure you cross reference different aspects of your studies (i.e. through use of signposts, hyperlinks etc as appropriate) that support your presentation and that this cross referencing is consistent.

Your account should be no more than a total of 1000 words or equivalent.

Guidance on excellence is provided for each task (i.e. what should be included)

An excellent submission may comprise the following:

A clear, systematic and thorough analysis showing how current sector issues and predicted future trends are influencing, or may influence, the students' organisation and their role has been undertaken. A comprehensive overview of investigations for presentation to management and other strategic decision makers within the organisation is provided. Key current and future issues facing the role, organisation and sector are critically assessed leading to logical and fully justified recommendations regarding the students'/the organisations response to these issues. Thorough consideration of barriers and resistance to change is evident, and solutions proposed. A range of sources are used to inform the analysis including, literature, web-based resources and experience. Models used within the analysis are treated critically. Use of models from outside the course material may be made. The value of the analysis is articulated and a range of lessons to inform practice or the organisation are drawn out. A range of referenced information sources relating to sector specific issues have been independently located and used effectively. A high degree of autonomy is evident. The overview is accurate, concise, ethically conscious and in presentation, the account utilises appropriate tables, graphics or other media to convey original or complex ideas. The overview shows awareness of the limitations of the inquiry. Online discussion has been used extensively to advance the inquiry.

Critically, a forum feature allows peer-to-peer interaction.

Customising the module for your own organisation.

This module is ready made. It has a set of steps and resources that are available to individuals investigating their practice; this is particularly useful when learners wish to study as individuals rather than as part of a group from a particular employment setting.

The module is also available to be used by companies or organisations for cohorts. In such a case employers (or sponsors, such as a professional body) may wish to adapt and/or add to the existing module resources and guidance. This may be done through two primary means:

1. The area can be branded in specific colours and with particular logos and/or it may be migrated into a different online space. At the moment the module is hosted in Moodle (Harper Adams virtual learning environment) but equally it may sit mainly (with the exception of library scans) in other online spaces e.g. within an intranet.
2. Perhaps more significantly, resources may be built up or the core guidance edited, to provide a particular 'flavour' in the content. For example the module may be customised by adding resources that are specific to the food processing industries, to beef farmers or for individuals focussed upon *marketing activities*. Such a customisation of the resources could include additions of:
 - E-books (purchasable through Harper Adams library)
 - Specific sector journal references
 - RSS feeds to industry focussed websites
 - Specific examples or case studies worked up by appointed experts
 - Company specific case studies
 - Hotseats (online 'Question and Answer' sessions with nominated experts).

The degree of customisation required over and above the generic path through the module is entirely down to client choice. Likewise the shape of the assessment may be developed in the light of industry or employer specific requirements. Support for customisation may be technical, academic or both.

A pilot group of individuals undertaking the generic module have offered informal interim feedback on their experience:

- I learnt more about the vast range of tasks I undertake and realised the magnitude of my role realised how much I have added to the job and built up my role to meet the organisation's needs.
- With the changing economy this course has allowed me to take stock of the impact of current and potential events upon the organisation. Through having a vehicle to stand back and analyse the influences upon my work I am able to make better choices about business activity.

- Researching case studies of practice is helpful because it brings something back to the business
 - new ways of doing things and projects that we may now try out.

This module forms part of the Postgraduate Certificate in Professional Studies (and the MSc in Professional Studies), it may be also integrated in to negotiate studies programmes or it can form part of a bespoke programme for employers, professional bodies or charitable organisations (as a complement to other provision).

The module is neatly combined with some of our other online options comprising the Professional Studies (online) suite, which utilise similar approaches to assessment:

- Action research
 - Through the recognised research approach of action research individuals can design, implement and evaluate a development in their practice. This module is designed to offer a framework for the improvement in personal practice via a recognised research approach. The module allows participants to learn about systematic developing practice whilst developing specialist knowledge in the area selected for improvement whilst impacting practice itself. Examples of possible projects might include developing systems for reducing plastics based waste, developing a training analysis approach or improving graduate support for new entrants at company ABC.
- Professional Development
 - A module enabling participants to design, undertake and complete, appraise and articulate learning from personal and professional development and CPD. Within this module participants may also appraise the role of CPD and PDP in their organisation as a factor for enabling change.
- Leadership and Organisational Change
 - Participants learn 'about' leadership and organisational change; they use their own developing understanding as a backdrop to review both their own approaches to leadership and those associated with their sector. Participants consider the role of leadership in bringing about change in their sector by reviewing case studies and real life situations and as a result make recommendations for practice.

To discuss the potential of this module please contact Lydia Arnold, larnold@harper-adams.ac.uk or call 01952 815277.