

Overall Objectives

Why Study Business and Organizations?

Why is the study of business and organizations relevant to your degree? If you are doing a Business Computing degree, how does the “business” portion relate to the “computing” portion? If you are doing some other computing degree, why are you expected to learn about business and organizations?

Practical Side	Theoretical Side
<p>For planning, designing and implementing IT solutions for business agility and competitiveness ...</p> <p>... you need to know how business value and viability is measured;</p> <p>... you need to know how business systems generate economic and other forms of value.</p> <p>For planning, designing and implementing IT solutions for people in organizations ...</p> <p>... you need to know how people work in organizations.</p> <p>For planning, designing and implementing IT systems as management support tool ...</p> <p>... you need to know how management works in organizations.</p> <p>For running IT projects with people in organizations ...</p> <p>... you need to know how people work effectively in teams.</p>	<p>Applying general systems theory to the study of technical systems, social systems and sociotechnical systems.</p> <p>Appreciating the business value and human cost of IT systems.</p> <p>Understanding IT systems as an expression of a particular theory of management.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ❖ IT systems inherit management agenda ❖ Value of IT systems is only meaningful within a given management agenda. ❖ IT systems may inherit any political, social or ethical critique of the management agenda

What you will gain

The more effort you put into this course, the more you will get out. This is not merely reflected in the marks awarded for the course, but the knowledge and abilities you will gain that should be useful after you have completed the course. University-level study takes your knowledge and awareness forwards in two ways:

- ❖ help you to pay closer attention to business phenomena, and give you additional insight
- ❖ help you engage purposefully and reflectively with the business environment

Your Experience with Organizations

The course assumes that everyone has some experience of organizations already. You may be able to find examples of course concepts and theories from your own observations.

Types of Organization	Typical Role
Families	Participant / Observer
Schools & Colleges	Volunteer / Conscript
Religious Organizations & Charities	Insider / Outsider
Clubs & Unions	Manager / Managed
Political Parties & Governments	Team Member / Individual
Work: Offices, Shops & Factories	
Consumer: Banks, Shops, Internet	

Your Future with Organizations

During your degree, and in the years following your degree, you may have opportunities to work with a wide variety of organizations in many different ways. Your present studies of business and organizations should give you a basis for intelligent reflection and confident action in various future roles.

Types of Organization	Possible Role
Business: Commercial & Industrial	<i>no ranking implied</i>
Public Administration, Police, Armed Forces	Founder / Director / Entrepreneur
Not-For-Profit, Campaigning, Missionary	Manager / Employee
Arts & Sports	Elected / Appointed Official
Task Force, Team, Project, Programme	Team Leader
Joint Venture, Partnership	Consultant
	System Engineer
	Researcher / Reporter

Capabilities

This module is designed against the expectation that computing graduates should be able to contribute usefully to the following activities.

- Analyse the sociotechnical requirements of a business – specify the business process and organizational requirements as well as technical requirements
- Manage the participation/consultation of business in IT requirements planning and business system analysis.
- Formulate and present a business case for a technology project.

- Formulate and present a business plan for a technology venture. (A venture may be a standalone company, or it may be a strategic IT investment that delivers a “return” by a visible contribution to other projects.)
- Manage the implementation of an IT system into an organization.

The Business and Organization module contributes to the development of these capabilities in the following ways.

- **Appreciating the motivation and context for computing in terms of its expected effects on business.** Understanding what makes a business organization viable. Understanding the kinds of management action that may enhance the viability of a business organization. Understanding the possible role of computing technology in improving the viability of a business organization.
- **Appreciating the practical difficulties of delivering business benefit from computing.** Understanding positive and negative patterns of interaction between computing technology and business organizations.
- **Appreciating the complexity of sociotechnical systems.** Accepting the fact that there often isn't a single “right” way of making sense of organizations. Recognizing that different stakeholders often perceive business and organization issues differently, and understanding some of the reasons for this. Recognizing the danger of taking participants' statements at face value, and the need to keep a critical distance.
- **Appreciating the ethics of business and the implications for technology.** Recognizing that technical projects may not be value-neutral, but inherit a management agenda (in other words, a set of management values with ethical implications) from which they derive their purpose. Appreciating the business value and human cost of IT systems. Understanding IT systems as an expression of a particular theory of management.
- **Linking business theory with business practice.** Ability to make appropriate use of business literature. Recognizing the opinionated and superficial nature of a great deal of popular business material. Ability to engage constructively with business opinions and arguments,
- **Communicating with business and organization.**

You should be able to demonstrate your capabilities in the following ways:

- Ability to take a relevant news story from the quality press and establish a contrasting explanation for the events described.
- Ability to analyse a project plan involving a technological change to a business organization, to explain the behaviour of the sociotechnical system, to recommend management action to promote the success of the change, and to estimate the effect of such action. Ability to analyse a failed technological innovation, and to explain the failure in sociotechnical terms.
- Ability to analyse a case study involving interaction between conflicting stakeholder positions, to identify different stakeholder perspectives, and to explain system behaviour from multiple perspectives.
- Ability to identify the values and management agenda implicit in a given technological project.

- Ability to use business theory to explain and interpret practical issues, to make predictions, and to justify practical recommendations. Ability to use practical examples to illustrate and test theory.
- Ability to write clear analysis of a case study.
- Ability to deliver a formal presentation on a business/organization topic.

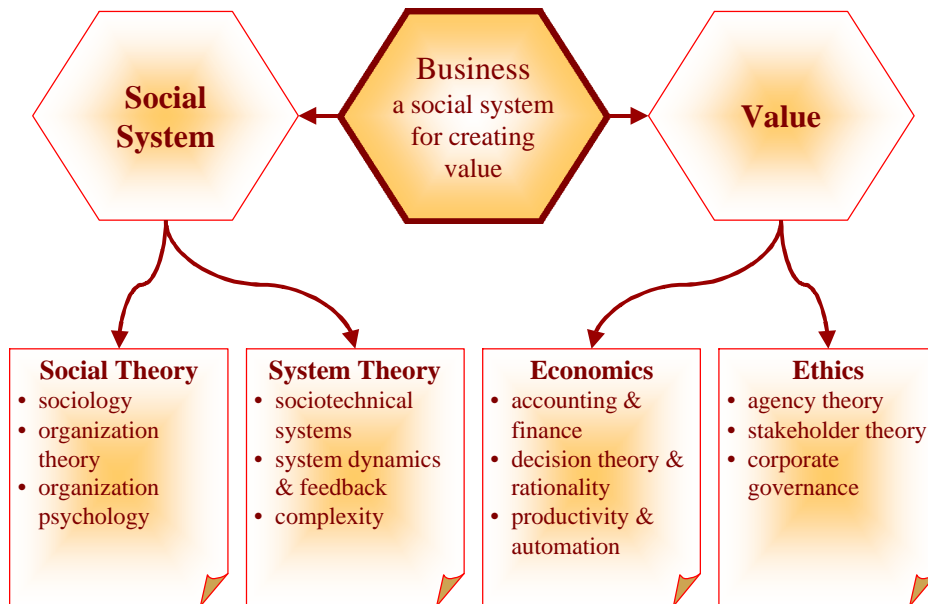
Course Overview

An interdisciplinary approach

Business can be regarded as a **social system** that creates **value**. This indicates four founding disciplines for business studies.

Sociology - the study of social phenomena	Systems theory - the general study of systems
Economics - the science of value	Ethics - the philosophy of value

During the course, we shall be exploring a range of important business topics from the perspective of each of these disciplines.



General Guidance – How to Study

Materials

A pack of materials has been prepared for students. This includes some background material, outline notes for each lecture, some case study material, and brief definitions of important notions.

In addition to these materials, each student should expect to do a considerable amount of reading. You must read and understand the set textbooks, and you are strongly recommended to read at least some of the supplementary texts.

Because we like to use topical examples wherever possible, some additional course materials may be prepared and distributed on a just-in-time basis. Materials will be posted on the course website. All essential materials will also be available on paper – but there will sometimes be a short delay before these are distributed.

Tutorials

The tutorials form an important component of the course. This is your opportunity to develop analytical skills and deepen your understanding of the course material, through interaction with your fellow-students and the course leaders.

Each tutorial starts with a case study, which explores some aspects of the material. To start with, the case studies are fairly simple and can be understood by focusing on a single area of the material. As the module progresses, the case studies get more complex, and you should look for opportunities to reference and integrate all four disciplines (social theory, systems theory, economics and ethics) in your analysis.

Students should note that success in the exam depends on an ability to perform the kind of analysis that is practised in the tutorials.

Sources of Information

In addition to the required reading, you should spend some time following business stories and analysis in the media. This includes newspapers (especially the Financial Times and other broadsheets), magazines (Economist), television and radio programmes (Channel Four News, Newsnight and the Radio 4 Today Programme, as well as occasional documentaries) and the Internet. Some newspapers and magazines offer cheap subscriptions for students. Many newspapers and magazines maintain a website where you can read business articles online.

There are thousands of business books published every year – many of them offering simple formulas for business success. There are also many articles published on the Internet. While these books and articles often contain interesting and entertaining examples, they are usually uncritical and lack depth.

When studying a particular company, you may find useful information on the company's own website. You may also find relevant information by conducting an Internet search for the company name. (However, this technique doesn't work for computer companies such as Microsoft – any information about Microsoft as a company will be swamped by vast amounts of technical information about Microsoft products, which is probably not relevant to this course.)

Some sources – including Private Eye as well as some web sources – contain detailed allegations against business organizations and other institutions, often suggesting serious malpractice or

incompetence. While these sources can provide a useful contrast to the bland and often misleading material provided by the companies themselves, it is usually safer to regard them as unfounded allegations rather than proven fact.

If you have family or friends in business or management positions, they may be willing to discuss some practical issues with you. You should always regard such discussion as private and confidential – if you use privately-sourced information about an organization in class or with your fellow students, you should not name the organization. Of course, information that is already in the public domain may be freely repeated.

Where such material is used in an assignment, you should state where you got it from. Where such material is used in an exam, this requirement is waived.

Course Injunction

Required for this module	Intellectual and social development
<p>You may have studied any of these topics previously (e.g. at A-level). You may recognize some of the buzz-words.</p> <p>Now you are at university, your understanding and use of these concepts should be</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ❖ <i>broader</i> ❖ <i>deeper</i> ❖ <i>more integrated</i> ❖ <i>more critical</i> 	<p>Independent study -- you are not always going to be told what to read, or what to think.</p> <p>Extend your ability to appreciate and balance different points of view.</p> <p>Make and justify your own judgements.</p> <p>Develop clearer powers of expression.</p>

Success Factors

Success in this course depends on acquiring both **knowledge** and **skills**. The knowledge is contained in the course material and reading, supplemented by other course activities. The skills outlined in this section are not only necessary for top performance on this course, but may also enhance your future job prospects, since they are often relevant to success at job interview and subsequent promotion. While you will have opportunities to develop and practise these skills within the course, you are encouraged to find additional opportunities for yourself – including participation in other university activities outside the formal curriculum.

Broad Awareness / Business Intelligence

As this is a business-oriented course within a business-oriented degree, you are expected to take a keen interest in business, and be willing to engage with the details of business organizations.

Interest in business doesn't necessarily mean you always have to be pro-business. You may take either side of the debate, but you need to have the data and arguments to support your position.

Connect Theory with Practice

“There is nothing so practical as a good theory.” Use theory to explain and interpret practical issues, to make predictions, and to justify practical recommendations. Use practical examples to illustrate and test theory.

To the extent that you have direct experience of organizations, you should be able to use the theory to reflect on your own experience. In any case, you should be able to use theory to reflect on case studies and other material.

If possible, you should also try to do the converse – to use the practical material to identify the limitations of a particular theory. Regard a theory as a tool, which may be useful in many situations but may not be applicable to all situations. “To the man with a hammer, everything looks like a nail.”

Critical Distance

You should always try to take a critical distance from your sources. Recognize that people within organizations have a unique insight into these organizations, but also that they may have strong attachment to certain positions and perspectives, so they often don't or can't reveal the “whole truth” about what's going on. Official statements and press releases, or one-sided statements about internal political disputes should never be taken at face value. Try to read between the lines, to make an intelligent guess at what's “really” going on. If you're doing an in-depth study, don't rely on a single source of data.

Presentation Skills

During the course, you will be required to present your analysis and conclusions in clear written and spoken form. You should pay attention to the structure of your presentations and essays, and to the logical flow. Your reasoning should be visible and coherent.

Independent Judgement

You should be able to arrive at your own judgements about business in general, and about particular organizations and management styles. The course does not require you to take any particular stance towards business. However, it does require you to be able to take a clear position, and support it coherently and robustly.

Course Etiquette

Relevant to this course	Not relevant to this course
The structure and performance of a given organization	General criticism of the mission or morality of a given organization
The style and effectiveness of its leadership	Insulting the intelligence or character of any public figure
Changes to organizations over time	Cultural criticism

While we welcome critical reflection on the management of well-known organizations, we must all be sensitive to the fact that some students have personal attachments to particular organizations – sometimes including family members employed by that organization. It goes without saying that discussion should always respect the opinions and sensitivities of other students.

Students who wish to develop political or moral arguments in relation to their studies are encouraged to do this, and to engage in vigorous intellectual debate with fellow students, since properly conducted debate of this kind will give further opportunity to develop the requisite intellectual skills. However, this should take place outside the formal boundaries of the course.

Reading

Primary Reading

Charles Handy, *Understanding Organizations* (Penguin)

Mary Jo Hatch, *Organization Theory* (Oxford)

Nano McCaughan & Barry Palmer, *Systems Thinking for Harrassed Managers* (Karnac)

Secondary Reading

Kenneth Arrow, *Individual Choice and Social Values*

Herbert Simon, *The Sciences of the Artificial*

E.F. Schumacher, *Small is Beautiful – A Study of Economics as if People Mattered*

Richard Veryard, *Component-Based Business* (Springer)

Aidan Ward & John Smith, *Trust and Mistrust* (Wiley)

Institute of Chartered Accountants (England & Wales), *New Reporting Models for Business*.
Download file free from ICA website. <http://www.icaew.co.uk>

Note: at time of printing this, the exact file location was
http://www.icaew.co.uk/viewer/index.cfm?AUB=TB21_59349