

1. Title of case study

Hybrid learning: Using continuous assessment, team competition and digital badging to drive student engagement, develop good study practices and early professional and employability skills.

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6. Name of course and module (if applicable) case study took place within.

Accounting & Finance BA (Hons): ACFI151 Business and Management

7. Please briefly describe the activity undertaken for the case study

ACFI151 Business and Management is an undergraduate, first-year, second-semester module on the Accounting and Finance programme, building on the theme of professional skills development developed in the first semester. The Management School has a range of listed graduate outcomes and the ultimate goal of this module is to put students on the path to being able to achieve and demonstrate these skills by graduation.

The module takes a 'flipped classroom' approach to teaching and learning, which is a form of pedagogy to which students are already accustomed from other modules on the Accounting and Finance programme. Although the 'flipped classroom' approach does not necessarily result in improved measurable outcomes (Smallhorn, 2017), it has been found to lead to other beneficial effects such as opportunities to develop a responsible and self-managed approach to learning. To ensure that students are able to benefit from this, particularly where more of the active work takes place away from the formal classroom, an ongoing concern has been to design activities that foster and maintain student engagement.

To support student engagement, we devised 'mini-tasks' to run throughout the module that students undertake within teams. Their achievement and contribution to team output is recorded, with a team leader-board presented in live teaching to encourage friendly competition. At the end of the module there is an award ceremony, where winning teams are congratulated, and digital badges are awarded to all students who have shown sustained effort throughout all activities, and in recognition of the skills that students have developed.

Digital badges have been shown to have a variety of positive impacts on student engagement (Roy and Clark, 2019) and offer an opportunity for skill recognition and transferability. These two benefits align strongly to the aim of the module to enhance the students' professional skills, whilst also providing an early opportunity to showcase skills which can enhance their employability and lead to improved employment opportunities. (Graduate outcomes and HEAR transcripts are not typically recognised until degree awarding, too late to help secure placements or summer internships).

8. How was the activity implemented?

With a comprehensive learning design for the module laid out week by week, at the start of term students were asked to form teams. Each team had to choose a business to follow during the module that would be used to apply the module content. Mini-tasks were used during each session that steered the students towards a deeper understanding of the module content.

Tasks ranged from knowledge acquisition tests using Kahoot quizzes, to presentation and research tasks where groups would link technical content covered during the weekly, asynchronous lectures to their chosen business. This allowed students to link real world and theory, as well as develop a deeper knowledge of the module content and enhance their soft skills. Students were required to write up their research findings using an online wiki, to facilitate intergroup learning. The wiki is not currently a summative assessment, (maybe an opportunity for the future), hence student engagement was crucial to the success of the students uploading their findings each week.

Each group was awarded points for tasks completed which fed into the overall competition. Points were also awarded to each group for engagement at each session. The 'Awards Ceremony' provided a fun closure to the module, and digital badges were awarded through *Credly* (a commercial awarding platform), based on a spreadsheet of group performance. Digital badges were designed by a graphics designer, and awarded for: Commercial awareness – awarded to members of each team that scored the highest mark in the company research wiki activity throughout the module; Team player – awarded to the team that scored the highest overall mark on the flipped classroom active learning activities. Each awarded badge had a personalised testimony as to why the student had received the given badge. Through the badging platform we were able to run analytics of how students had used badges and large attendance at the awards ceremony highlighted the student levels of engagement and benefits that the digital badges can bring.

9. Has this activity improved programme provision and student experience, if so how?

There was a noticeable increase in engagement from students within face-to-face seminars, in participation for Q&A and Kahoot elements, and good team engagement with the active blended learning activities throughout the module.

The feedback from students on the module evaluation form was positive towards the use of Digital Badges. Students were keen to have an opportunity to continue to build upon these digital badges, and it was encouraging to see them share their success on LinkedIn, indicating that they have recognised digital badges as an employability tool.

Given the success of the project and in recognition of the value that professional skill development brings to our graduates at UG level, a similar approach will be trialled across further programmes at the Management School. In this way the project has made an impact upon school teaching strategy.

10. Did you experience any challenges in implementation, if so how did you overcome these?

Devising the schedule of learning activities took time and attention, where we as tutors could plan out the weeks of the module against topics and themes, thinking carefully about student progression, phased learner support, and factoring in other important considerations such as room availability etc. These mapped across pretty well into the VITAL (virtual learning environment) structure with links to associated learning technologies.

A major challenge was implementing the digital badges as this was a new area for the school and University. An 'Achievements' tool existed within VITAL, however this was limited by badges not being shareable by students outside of the VLE. Instead, through the support of learning technologists in the school and the successful bid for faculty beacon funding, we explored the use of a commercial platform 'Credly' that allowed the external sharing of digital badges through LinkedIn, and administration via a spreadsheet that we created of group activity and achievements.

With the move to *Canvas* we are hopeful for new opportunities for awarding badges - the Canvas-integrated free platform 'Badgr' offers considerable savings in administrative load and reinforces the link directly within coursespaces between outcomes and achievement.

11. Which Liverpool University Hallmarks and Attributes does this case study relate to (please indicate all that apply)

- a) Research-Connected Teaching**
- b) Active Learning**
- d) Digital Fluency**
- f) Confidence**

12. How does this case study relate to the Hallmarks and Attributes you have selected?

Research-Connected Teaching

For one of the key tasks of the module find students carrying out research in groups on a company of their choice.

As the course proceeds groups revisit the research task and examine it through new research lenses acquired through the technical content of the course.

Active learning

Students are encouraged to take on more active roles within their learning, such as contributing or leading in group work tasks towards a shared goal. The module employs aspects of game-based learning including the awarding of digital badges, which can be a strong driver for engagement. The use of research activities enabled the students to reflect upon the theory and its links to the real world.

Confidence

Through the phased activities that make up the course, which students can build up experience of groupwork, and multiple submission points provides times throughout the module where groups can feel a sense of achievement and success, and in this way it can lead to feelings of confidence in group working.

Digital fluency

Students are encouraged to undertake learning activities that use a range of digital technologies. They were also introduced to the concept of digital badges and micro-credentials, which presents a new way to think about their learning. Digital badges also serve as an opportunity for students to reflect on and build on their online profiles with links to Careers Service and KnowHow.

13. How could this case study be transferred to other disciplines?

The use of digital badges can be used on any module to incentivise learning and is being used by business and learning platforms to recognise learning (IBM, Open Learn, Edx). In transferring the use of digital badges to other disciplines thought needs to be given to the criteria for the awarding of a digital badge and what achievement the digital badge is recognising.

14. If someone else were to implement the activity within your case study what advice would you give them?

- Think about how you can instil the competitive element to encourage student engagement in activities – think about the wording and promotion of activities.
- Ensure that students that do not score well in the early sessions are still encouraged to engage with subsequent activities - make it clear how students can engage even if they missed earlier opportunities and maybe consider a 'trial-run' or a second opportunity to 'top-up' their score.
- Think about the ordering and placement of activities to not only take in account of where students are currently academically but also socially within groups or the stage of development of digital literacies.

If you are looking to use digital badges:

- Promote these to students from the outset and stress their affordances (skills development and employability) and the specific reasoning behind awarding them.
- Use this as an opportunity to highlight the additional activities that students can undertake to improve their employability.
- Continue to highlight throughout the module that they are being used and update the scores on a weekly basis to allow students to chart their progress.
- Digital badges may hold more weight for students in the first and second years as they are so much further away from degree awarding (and so badges can hold be a valuable currency in demonstrating a student's credentials).

15. Additional resources (please list up to 5 resources which we can link to from your case study):

Barlow, C., Mallanaphy, C., & Moindrot, W. (2019, May 14-15). [Badging the ULMS Graduate](#) [Poster presentation]. Chartered Association of Business Schools: Learning, Teaching and Student Experience conference 2019, Manchester UK.

Roy, S. and Clark, D. (2019) 'Digital badges, do they live up to the hype?', British Journal of Educational Technology, (5), p. 2619. doi: 10.1111/bjet.12709.

Smallhorn, M. (2017). The flipped classroom: A learning model to increase student engagement not academic achievement. Student Success, 8(2), 43-53. doi: 10.5204/ssj.v8i2.381



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