

# E-Commerce 2004/2005: Coursework

The coursework assignment is an integral part of this module and counts for 20% of the overall mark for this module. You can work either individually or in groups of 2-3 people but you cannot change mode during the course of the project. And this applies to all stages/parts of the project.

The assignment has three main parts: these are explained in Sections 1-3 below. Section 4 of this document gives you an example of how to structure the report you have to submit at the end of the project. Section 5 summaries the deadline and Section 6 explains the procedure for late submissions. Section 7 gives details on the submission of electronic material, and Section 8 explains how the College deals with plagiarism.

## **1. Identify and analyse the benefits of a business in becoming e-business**

For this part of the coursework you are allowed to work in groups if you like. You can analyse a business of your choice and identify the main elements of its business strategy. Then identify the benefits for this business in getting involved in e-commerce. If you are working in groups you should agree on a company to work with. It might be a real company that you are familiar with or a fictional one. If you decide to go for a fictional company you are responsible to make your description consistent and realistic. In either case, it should be active in a business area that at least one (or more) of you understands well.

You should describe the company, i.e. number of employees, turnover, geographical area where it is active, what are its products, what is its market (size, customer profile). Describe the business targets for the next few years and identify the benefits that your selected company will have after getting involved in e-commerce.

To help you with your work, these are some things you should take into account:

- *Broad Benefits:* Strategic planning and the right approach can modernise or re-launch company image; Increase efficiency and cut costs; Attract and retain customers; Improve communication with suppliers and reduce time to market; Cut transaction costs
- *Measurable Gains:* Reduce cost of transactions; Better customer information and low cost of capture; Targeting of special offers and promotions; Target 80%/20% - specials for key customers; Reordering facilities promote loyalty; 7/24 global service; Shorter time to market
- *Virtual Commerce Benefits:* Virtual expansion less costly than physical; Easier publishing of detailed product information (GM food information, health and diet tips, menu planning, special nutritional support); Opportunity to diversify (Tesco sells CD, videos, books DVDs); Partnership opportunities; Organic foods, shop at work; Cash flow gains

## **2. Explore the current status of e-business in the selected business sector**

You can explore the current status of e-business in the selected sector by looking at relevant technical, organisational, societal and individual issues. Remember that in e-business the main technical concern for the company is to be able to guarantee the overall functionality of its web services, and ensure that this functionality matches with customer needs and the particular characteristics of the sector, e.g. competition, local infrastructure and so on. You can consider technical issues such as interoperability, system integration, security authentication, scalability.

At the organisational level, the adoption of appropriate e-business models is closely related to the ways single business firms or value networks of collaborating firms conduct business. The e-business model has also an impact on the performance of the organization and it is affected by the structure of the particular sector. Although in general successful e-business adoption requires structural changes in the company, it is acknowledged that not all businesses face the same changes. One way to analyse this is to look at how much internet usage influences the product sales within the sector (e.g. digital content such as software, audio, and video is easily distributed via Internet); how much the format of the product facilitates distribution, and how much the customers profiles (tastes and habits) affect the sales performance (e.g. MP3 files and P2P networks). With regards to customer profiles, you should take into account that these depend on the market environment and they evolve in the time as the industrial structures, the markets and the consumer orientations change.

Of course changes in business practices and structures affect individuals and groups. For example, the adoption of Internet has changed working practices, customer relationships, product delivery mechanisms, staff skills, staff training etc. As new e-business models lead to new business practices these affect the behaviour of individuals, and the society as a whole. These changes are expected to influence peoples' everyday life as much as they affect work and employment. Thus in this part you should provide insight on these issues. Lastly, you should also explore the influence of individual differences. Literature suggests that individual differences have an impact on the success of e-business within a sector, as the mental and the decision making processes of customers differ along several dimensions, e.g. culture, gender, life style etc.

### **3. Design and implement an e-shop**

In this part of the coursework you are asked to develop a small electronic shop, where you can work either individually or in groups of 2-3 people. You can use any tool(s) you prefer for your implementation, e.g. Microsoft Site Server 3.0, Shop Creator (there will be three sessions on how to use this tool- <http://www.shopcreator.com/>) etc. The e-shop should mimic an actual company and contain a number of products.

### **4. Assignment outline**

Your work will be presented in a report (about 4000-6000 words). It is important your report is properly structured. Sections like the ones shown below should be included in your report.

#### **1. Introduction (20% of the marks)**

- 1.1 The case context (sector overview): Brief description of the business sector selected.
- 1.2 Describe the company: Include a brief overview of the company (what it does, how large it is, etc. – and its web presence – e.g., what functions are available to the customers, overall structure, what are its products, what is its market, what are its business targets for the next few years)
- 1.3 Identify the benefits that your selected company will have after getting involved in e-commerce
- 1.4 Overview of the technologies/tools involved in your own implementation of the e-shop.

#### **2. Current status of e-business in the case (30% of the marks)**

- 2.1 Current (or potential) involvement in electronic commerce: Which companies, of those you investigated, performed 'better'? What did they do better? How could the rest of the companies improve their sites? (what might be the next steps to follow?) Why do you think some of the companies performed better than others? (try to find more information on the companies – e.g., do the best developed sites belong to larger companies? Did you find differences in what companies from different countries do?)
- 2.2 e-business model(s) adopted (or proposed): start your search with your textbook and the resources described in the study guide. Identify E-business applications

- and roles of actors involved in the organization. Present and analyse e-factors: which factors (either technical or organizational or individual or industrial or societal) can be identified in the case and how are they manifested; Impact (positive or negative) of relevant factors on the e-business strategy of the organization, and e-business planning in particular. How the impact of this factor is managed (which business process deal with this factor and which actors are involved, what policies are in place etc.)
- 2.3 Summary: which factors contribute (currently and which in the future) to the success of e-business in the case.
3. Developing an electronic shop (30% of the marks)
- 3.1 Brief description of the e-shop (with reference to the business sector it is developed in) and the capabilities of the current application.
  - 3.2 Present your progress in the implementation of your e-shop and explain all of the technologies involved in your implementation. Particular emphasis should be given to the following features: product management, payment management, advertising policies, order management, sales analysis. Include screenshots where necessary.
  - 3.3 Explain the critical success factors for this e-shop to work in practice
  - 3.4 Given the current form of the e-shop, identify areas for improvement and discuss their business impact
  - 3.5 Define marketing strategies for the e-shop (from a business, rather than an implementation perspective) and discuss why certain marketing strategies are likely to be more successful
4. Conclusions (10% of the marks)
- 4.1 Provide an overview/summary of the overall project and your findings.
  - 4.2 Evaluate your e-shop.
  - 4.3 Identify areas for improvement in the sector you investigated.
5. Bibliography (10% of the marks)
- Provide a list of the bibliographical/ web sources you used. Include publication details and all information necessary to access the online resources.

## 5. Deadlines

- (i) Follow the School's standard procedure for coursework submissions. Submit the Introductory section of the essay (see Section 4 above) for approval by **November 19, 2004**. Your submission MUST include a separate cover page with the following information: title of your report; author (individual submission) or author names (group submission); emails of all authors.
- (ii) Hand in the completed assignment by **January 6, 2005**.

**Each piece of submitted work MUST have an "Academic Declaration" form signed by the student(s) which certifies that the students have read and understood the sections of plagiarism in the School Handbook and confirm that the work is their own, with the work of others fully acknowledged. Submissions must also be accompanied by a declaration giving us permission to submit coursework to a plagiarism testing database that the College is subscribed.**

## 6. Late coursework

It is our policy to accept and mark late items of coursework. You do not need to negotiate new deadlines and there is no need to obtain prior consent of the module leader. We will not give an 'extension'. You cannot negotiate new deadlines, and you do not need to get agreement about handing in your work late from the module leader. There is, as you can see, no such thing as 'an extension'.

**We will accept and mark late items of coursework up to and including six working days after the start of the next term.** Term start days are as follows:

Autumn: Mon 4 October 2004 – Fri 17 December 2004

Spring: Thurs 6 January 2005 – Wed 23 March 2005

Summer: Mon 25 April 2005 – Fri 8 July 2005

Therefore the last day the School will accept a late submission for this module is **January 14, 2005**.

The penalties applied on late submission depend on the extent of the delay. That is, the number of days when you *could* have submitted the coursework, but did not do so. The following table shows you the maximum mark that you can obtain for the coursework depending on how many days late you submit it:

|                                      |                                    |
|--------------------------------------|------------------------------------|
| If you hand in 1 day late            | Maximum mark will be 85% (grade A) |
| If you hand in 2 days late           | Maximum mark will be 70% (grade A) |
| If you hand in 3 days late           | Maximum mark will be 60% (grade B) |
| If you hand in 4 days late           | Maximum mark will be 50% (grade C) |
| If you hand in 5 (or more) days late | Maximum mark will be 40% (grade D) |

If you believe you have good cause to be excused the penalty for late submission of your coursework, you must make a written request and attach any evidence. Your letter should be handed in to the Course Director as soon as possible. This letter does not need to be submitted at the same time as you submit the coursework itself. However, **you must submit your letter by the end of one week after the day of your coursework submission.**

Even if the personal circumstances that prevented you from handing in the coursework by the last day are extreme, **the School will not accept coursework after this date**. We will, naturally, be very sympathetic, and the Course Directory will be able only too happy to discuss ways in which you can proceed with your studies, but please do not ask us to accept coursework after this date; we will not be able to.

As soon as you know that you will not be able to meet the deadline, it will likely be useful for you to discuss this with the module leader. They will be able to advise you on how best to proceed. Given that many items of coursework involve working in groups, a discussion will help you to work out how best you might handle this aspect of your work. Another person to speak to, particularly if the problem is serious, is the Undergraduate Director. You will then have the opportunity to discuss various options as to how best to continue your studies; this might involve taking some time out or some other ways designed to help you to effectively manage your studies.

Further details concerning the rules and regulations with regard to all matters concerning assessment (which naturally includes coursework), you should consult what is known as [College Regulations for Internal Students and Regulations for Degrees](#) and [Examination Regulations](#). You can find this online at the College's website (under Registry) <http://www.bbk.ac.uk/reg/>.

## 7. Submission of electronic material

All electronic submissions must also be clearly identified as your work. On any 3.5 disk or CD submitted for assessment, there should also be an ASCII file called README.TXT with the following identifying items as the first three lines (only spaces should appear as separators).

Name (if there are several authors, each one must be listed)

Emails (if there are several authors, each one should give an email)

Registration number (if there are several authors, each one must be listed)

Module title: E-commerce

Title of project

The same information should be present as the first comment at the start of any source code or other readable file which is submitted for assessment. You should note that all original material is retained by the School for reference by internal and external examiners when

moderating and standardising the overall marks after the end of the course. You should make sure that all material/software/tools necessary to run your application is included on the disk/CD, and provide detailed instructions.

**Each piece of submitted work MUST have an “Academic Declaration” form signed by the student(s) which certifies that the students have read and understood the sections of plagiarism in the School Handbook and confirm that the work is their own, with the work of others fully acknowledged. Submissions must also be accompanied by a declaration giving us permission to submit coursework to a plagiarism testing database that the College is subscribed.**

## **8. Plagiarism**

The College defines plagiarism as “copying a whole or substantial parts of a paper from a source text (e.g. a web site, journal article, book or encyclopedia), without proper acknowledgement; paraphrasing of another’s piece of work closely, with minor changes but with the essential meaning, form and/or progression of ideas maintained; piecing together sections of the work of others into a new whole; procuring a paper from a company or essay bank (including Internet sites); submitting another student’s work, with or without that student’s knowledge; submitting a paper written by someone else (e.g. a peer or relative), and passing it off as one’s own; representing a piece of joint or group work as one’s own”.

The College considers plagiarism a serious offence, and as such it warrants disciplinary action. This is particularly important in assessed pieces of work where the plagiarism goes so far as to dishonestly claim credit for ideas that have been taken from someone else. According to paragraph 3.2 of the College’s [Procedures for Dealing with Plagiarism by Students on Taught Programmes of Study](#): “A student who knowingly assists another student to plagiarise (for example by willingly giving them their own work to copy from) is committing an examination offence.”

**Each piece of submitted work MUST have an “Academic Declaration” form signed by the student(s) which certifies that the students have read and understood the sections of plagiarism in the School Handbook and confirm that the work is their own, with the work of others fully acknowledged. Submissions must be also accompanied by a declaration giving us permission to submit coursework to a plagiarism testing database that the College is subscribed.**

If you are not sure about your understanding of plagiarism then you can try the online test of the University of Essex at <http://www.essex.ac.uk/plagiarism/Test.htm#question%201>

**If you submit work without acknowledgement or reference of other students (or other people), then this is one of the most serious forms of plagiarism.** When you wish to include material that is not the result of your own efforts alone, **you should make a reference to their contribution, just as if that were a published piece of work.** You should put a clear acknowledgement (either in the text itself, or as a footnote) identifying the students that you have worked with, and the contribution that they have made to your submission.