

# eCommerce 2008/9



## **Module Guide**

Level 6 (Final Year)

School of Computing, Information Systems  
and Mathematics, Kingston University

Lead by Professor Jonathan Briggs with Dr  
Jarek Francik

13 September 2008 (version 1.08)

# Goals of the Module

- To provide students with an overview of the impact of and trends in electronic commerce in differing business, retail and leisure environments.
- To introduce students to issues from across the industry in companies large and small, traditional businesses and start-ups
- To provide opportunities for students to prototype ecommerce sites, explore analytics and business intelligence techniques
- To discuss how the IT industry is changing and the roles for information systems designers and computer scientists in the ecommerce industries
- To explore the link between business strategy and electronic commerce and the importance of customer service
- To examine the emerging business models in e-business in terms of efficiency, effectiveness and innovation.

## By the end of the module each student should be able to

- Describe current trends in the ecommerce marketplace
- Describe designing and building of ecommerce solutions
- Discuss some the technical options for implementing and running web based ecommerce
- Discuss the importance of online marketing, customer relationships and search engine optimisation
- Identify key business, legal and regulatory issues which may impact on electronic business.
- Relate the development and implementation of electronic business systems (including training, Intranet, customer service, monitoring and entertainment systems) to wider social and business trends.
- Critically assess how the technical and non-technical aspects can best be managed to ensure the successful implementation of electronic business systems.
- Develop a case to justify the expenditure on electronic commerce in terms of business benefits.
- Apply appropriate tools and techniques to identify opportunities for implementing e-business

## Lessons from last year

I have run this module for the past 5 years but it changes every year as the eCommerce marketplace changes. Here are some of the lessons from last year and some of the changes I have made as a result:

The module was extremely well received and well attended with very high levels of participation in the regular activities. Jarek's OS Commerce session remains popular, with students applying what they had learned to their projects as well as within the module. Sessions on Google, customer journeys and advertising were also very popular.

The examination produced a wide spread of marks but once again there was a mismatch between student effort in case study preparation and their ability to answer exam questions. Some produced very scrappy answers resulting in low marks. Only a few students produced really well thought through exam answers despite generally good case study preparation.

I continue to be disappointed by some of the eCommerce work presented as part of final year projects and am determined to try to improve the overall quality of these projects. A student in our Faculty should not be able to spend 14 weeks struggling to connect a PHP web server to a MySQL database.

## Changes in this module for 2008/9

- Introduce prototyping using hosted ecommerce tools
- Emphasise the growing importance of Mashups and Web Services in the eCommerce marketplace
- Replace the case study with an Increased number of module activities and then base the examination on the work done in these activities
- Provide more revision questions to help the students plan for the examination
- Encourage less technical students to do some of the activities in my new First Year Toolbox Module that runs alongside eCommerce

## Teaching and learning approach

### Lectures

The module will be run as a series of lectures with accompanying online activities.

For this course I will be using [www.jonathanbriggs.com](http://www.jonathanbriggs.com) to disseminate information and support discussion.

I prefer this to Blackboard but would welcome comments and feedback.

All lecture notes will be posted to [www.jonathanbriggs.com](http://www.jonathanbriggs.com) before each session.

Please ask questions by commenting on the appropriate document or lecture.

### Indicative lecture topics

Introduction to ecommerce

Running an eCommerce store

Making money: business models

Inside an e-business

Designing effective e-commerce

Technologies to support e-commerce

Building an ecommerce store using Open Source components

Web services

Web pages versus web applications

Designing customer journeys

Payment

Lessons from traditional business

Reflections on ecommerce

Search engine optimisation, analytics and web marketing

eCommerce in a Mashed Up world

## Online activities

Each week you will be presented with an activity that will allow you to get involved with ideas explored in the lectures.

At the end of each activity you must complete an online survey form to feedback your ideas. I will then provide you with comments and answers questions as appropriate.

It is essential that you participate in all the online activity. In previous years a few students have felt they are following the course only to be disappointed by their exam results.

Many have clearly misunderstood key concepts.

The online components of this course should allow us to test this understanding earlier and help each student improve their performance.

This year I am able to award up to 10% of the exam mark for your contribution to these activities.

### Indicative activities

- |  |  |
|--|--|
| 1. Register and summarise your eCommerce experience so far | 5. Improving the customer experience     |
| 2. Building a Shopify Shop                                 | 6. Designing customer journeys           |
| 3. Evaluation of competitors in a marketplace              | 7. eCommerce detectives                  |
| 4. Exploring Open Source eCommerce software                | 8. Exploring implementation technologies |
|  | 9. Google Power                          |
|  | 10. Mashups                              |

# Assessment

- The module will be assessed by examination only (single 2 hour exam). The exam will consist of two parts: one multiple-choice paper plus one short answer paper.
- The short answer paper will be based on the activities that you must complete during the semester.
- You will NOT be expected to memorise large numbers of facts but to apply what you have learned in particular situations

## The examination

- The examination consists of 20 multiple choice questions (worth 40%) to test your general understanding of eCommerce concepts plus short answer questions (worth 50%). 10% of your marks are awarded for participation in module activities.

## How to achieve high marks in your examination

1. Read all the questions before you start to make sure that the answer you are writing is not expected later in the paper
2. Answer the questions written rather than the questions you would like to be there
3. Justify suggestions and recommendations you make in your proposals
4. Draw clear labeled diagrams
5. Provide sufficient points in your answer to justify the number of marks available
6. Spread your time out across all the questions and don't leave any questions completely unanswered
7. Write rough notes at the start of each question and put a single line through it if you do not want it to be marked (we may still give you some marks for these notes)
8. Remember that the first few marks for any question are much easier to achieve than the last few

## Example questions for revision

These are more general than those asked in the actual examination but if you can answer all of these you will be well prepared for the exam.

1. Looking at a particular store homepage what is the biggest fault you can identify with a particular site, in what way does it damage the site and how would you recommend fixing it?
2. Describe the 3 major changes you would make to navigation of a site and explain why these are important
3. Describe other companies, B2B partners and other organisations who are likely to be involved behind the scenes in implementing the site for a particular business
4. Discuss why landing pages could be developed for a particular client and describe how these might affect traffic to the site
5. Describe 3 decision support tools that might be incorporated into a site to help customers choose particular products
6. Explain why the visitor journey through the checkout process for the site can affect the conversion rates of an ecommerce site
7. Design a PPC advertising campaign for a particular client and explain why it is likely to be successful
8. Estimate in high level terms the work that is likely to be involved in re-implementing an ecommerce site
9. Discuss suitable technologies for implementing an ecommerce site for a small retailer
10. Describe likely future changes in the eCommerce marketplace that you would want to take into consideration in making recommendations to an ecommerce client.

## Examination dates

Dates will be advised. I do not have control over the dates as these are set centrally. There are likely to be early in the January exam period.

## Indicative reading

The focus of this module is on the ecommerce business marketplace. You should try and read some of the following books

**Search Engine Marketing Inc.**, Mike Moran and Bill Hunt, IBM Press (2006), ISBN: 013185292-2

**The Perfect Store: inside eBay**, Adam Cohen, Piatkus (2002), ISBN: 0749924039

**Why we buy, the science of shopping**, Paco Underhill, Texere Publishing (2000), ISBN 158799044X

Right Side Up, Alan Mitchell, Harper Collins Business (2001), ISBN: 0002571528

**Dot Con**, John Cassidy, Allen Lane Publishing (2002), ISBN: 071399598X

**Amazon.com: Get Big Fast**, Robert Spector, Random House (2000), ISBN: 0712669671

**Futurize Your Enterprise: Business Strategy in the Age of the E-customer**, David Seigal, Hardcover - 318 pages (September 1999) John Wiley & Sons; ISBN: 0471357634

**Net Success : 24 Leaders in Web Commerce Show You How to Put the Web to Work for Your Business**, Ford, Haylock, Len Muscarella, Hardcover - 320 pages (April 1999) Adams Media Corporation; ISBN: 1580621147

**The E-Commerce Book: Building the E-Empire**, Steffano Korper, Juanita Ellis Hardcover - 284 pages (15 August, 1999) Academic Press Inc; ISBN: 0124211607

**Customers.com**, Patricia Seybold, Hardcover - 380 pages (November 1998), Business (Century/Arrow); ISBN: 0712680713

# Contact details

Initially address questions and comments through the website [www.jonathanbriggs.com](http://www.jonathanbriggs.com).

I prefer to be contacted by phone than to receive email:

Tel/SMS: 07802 43 08 43 (always leave contact email or phone number)

Email: [j.briggs@king.ac.uk](mailto:j.briggs@king.ac.uk)

Please make sure that ALL of your emails have telephone contact details and a proper subject line. Emails **without a subject line** are likely to be rejected by my spam filters.