

eCommerce 2009/10



Module Guide

Level 6 (Final Year)

School of Computing, Information Systems
and Mathematics, Kingston University

Lead by Professor Jonathan Briggs with Dr
Jarek Francik

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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 6 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 well received and well attended with very high levels of participation in the regular activities. The PHP/MySQL session appeared to be less relevant than last year and needs to be reviewed. Sessions on Google, customer journeys and advertising were also very popular. There is considerable interest in the social computing aspects of ecommerce; so much so that this will be split off into a new second semester module.

The introduction of Shopify as a hosted ecommerce platform proved popular with several students opting to base their final year projects in this area. This allows students to start from a much higher base than working from pure code.

The examination produced a wide spread of marks but with a low overall average (53%). Some students who enjoy the module appear not to realise the additional preparation that needs to go into readying themselves for exams.

Changes in this module for 2009/10

- Extend the work with the Shopify hosted solution and introduce a second high level open source platform such as Magento.
- Increase the emphasis on Mashups and Web Services in the eCommerce marketplace.
- Change the examination to make it clearer what students should prepare but avoid falling back on bookwork or memory tasks.
- Raise the bar at the upper end to really stretch students who are likely to follow a career in this area.
- 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 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** before each session.

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

Indicative lecture topics

Introduction to ecommerce

Hosted ecommerce and SME case studies (Shopify)

Building your own hosted ecommerce solution

Complexities of real ecommerce: integration, payment, scalability

Ecommerce tools and frameworks (Magento)

Case Studies in Retail

Customer journeys, persona and wireframes

eCommerce business intelligence

Marketing and reputation

Mashups & Web services

Payment

Lessons from traditional business

Budgets and project plans for ecommerce projects

Trends in eCommerce

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 activity to feedback your ideas. I will then provide you with comments and answer questions as appropriate.

It is essential that you participate in all the online activity as these will prepare you for the examination.

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

Keep your receipts

After you have submitted an activity you will receive an emailed receipt (check your spam folder if you don't receive it and mark it as not spam). Keep these receipts in order to prove that you have completed the activities.

This year I am able to award up to 10% of the exam mark for your contribution to these activities (1% per activity). A quality check will be applied to make sure that you have submitted individual work and that it answers the questions raised.

Indicative activities

- | | |
|----------------------------------|---|
| 1. Building a Shopify Shop | 6. Analytics and intelligence |
| 2. Taking control of your store | 7. Marketing and PPC |
| 3. eCommerce retailer evaluation | 8. Using Mashups to build a store guide |
| 4. Brand detective | 9. Budgeting |
| 5. Designing customer journeys | 10. Preparing for exam |

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 15 multiple choice questions (worth 30%) to test your general understanding of eCommerce concepts plus 3 seen short answer questions (worth 60%) related to unseen case studies. 10% of your marks are awarded for participation in module activities.
- The seen questions together with a sample of the case studies will be published by the end of October

How to achieve high marks in your examination

1. Use the practice case studies to prepare for the exam
2. Try to relate every answer to the case being explored rather than the general
3. Draw clear labeled diagrams
4. Provide sufficient points in your answer to justify the number of marks available
5. Spread your time out across all the questions and don't leave any questions completely unanswered
6. 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)
7. 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

Design and Launch an eCommerce Business in a Week, Jason Rich, Entrepreneur Press, July 2008, ISBN 1599181835

Designing Web Navigation: Optimizing the User Experience, James Kalbach, Aaron Gustafson, O'Reilly Media, Aug 2007, ISBN: 0596528108

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

Web Analytics: An Hour a Day, Avinash Kaushik, John Wiley & So, ns, May 2007, ISBN 0470130652

Mashups: Strategies for the Modern Enterprise, J.Jeffrey Hanson, Addison Wesley, May 2009, ISBN 032159181X

Call to Action: Secret Formulas to Improve Online Results, Bryan Eisenberg, Jeffrey Eisenberg & Lisa T Davis, Nelson Books, Oct 2006, ISBN 078521965X

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

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

Contact details

Initially address questions and comments through the website www.jonathanbriggs.com or raise them at the end of each activity.

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

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.