Beyond Profit:

Responsibility & Sustainability in Business

MODULE

HANDBOOK

(2021-22)

Contents

I.   Module Summary

In the current work environment, it is just as important for business owners and managers to have ethical knowledge as it is for them to have economic knowledge. Businesses are under increasing pressure to demonstrate that they are meeting their ethical duties, at a time when the complexity and changeability of the modern world makes a complete awareness of these duties highly difficult. This specialist module equips students with the knowledge and methods required to confidently analyse some of the most pressing social and ethical issues facing businesses today.

In the first half of the course, students will be introduced to a range of ethical theories and methods, which will enable them to understand and analyse a range of ethical situations. In the second half of the course, students will apply these ethical tools to a range of pressing issues facing contemporary businesses. These might include: the responsible use of AI, data collection, and other emerging technologies; how to avoid exploitative labour situations in modern global businesses; diversity and discrimination in the workplace; and sustainable supply-lines and the environmental obligations of modern businesses.

II.   Learning Outcomes and Audience

This module is designed **for 2nd Year UG students** who have no previous knowledge of business and/or professional ethics.

On successful completion of this module students will be able to:

- Demonstrate a clear understanding of the key ethical concepts, theories, and methods relevant to business ethics;
- Critically analyse complex real-world situations by applying a range of theoretical and ethical tools;
- Present ethical arguments in a clear and rigorous way – both orally and in writing;
- Reflect upon their own assumptions about the social responsibility of businesses and managers;
- Demonstrate the capacity to engage in independent learning, research, and analysis

III.   Module Overview

Topics

The course is split into two parts. In the first half of the course, students will be introduced to a range of ethical theories, methods, and approaches. In the second half of the course, students will apply these analytical tools to a range of pressing issues facing modern business.

- **Part A: Ethical Tools**
    1. Introduction: Sustainability, Globalization, and Ethics
    2. Responsibility and Stakeholder Theory
    3. Ethical Theories: Duty and Utility
    4. Ethical Theories: Virtue and Culture

- **Part B: Ethical Issues**
    5. Work: Rights, Justice, and Exploitation
    6. Emerging Technologies: Privacy, Surveillance, and AI
    7. Environment: Sustainability, Future Generations, and Climate Change
    8. Marketing: Manipulation, Desire, and Persuasion
    9. Diversity and Discrimination in the Workplace
    10. Globalization and Political Influence of Business

Each week students will have a **1-hour lecture (online)** and a **2-hour seminar.** These two forms of teaching have different aims. The aim of *lectures* is to provide students with a foundation or basic framework for the topics being studied. Lectures will be interactive, so feel free to raise your hand and ask questions! A *seminar* is a smaller group which meets regularly to discuss a selected topic or theme. The seminars are not an alternative form of lecture, but an opportunity for you to ask questions, discuss readings, enter discussions with the tutor and your classmates, and apply what you have learnt to real-world examples.

Each seminar, we will spend about one hour discussing the topic and set reading, and then the second hour analysing an ethical case study.

You will be expected to take active part in seminars, so you must come adequately prepared. The minimum preparation expected is having done the set reading. The more prepared you are for seminars, the more you will get out of them.

What should you expect from this module?

- Access to a Virtual Learning page including a statement of learning outcomes, a reading list, clearly defined assessments, marking criteria, and other necessary information;
- You will receive prompt and constructive feedback on your submitted assignments, within two-three weeks of your submitting the assessment.
- You will receive personalised learning support, including:
  - Module tutors who will be available for consultation;
  - The programme convenor, who will oversee your overall intellectual development;
  - Tutorials covering assessment guidance
- You should receive timely responses to your e-mail correspondence (usually not later than 48-hours during weekdays in term time).

What does the module expect from you?

Because learning at university level is collaborative, there are certain expectations placed on students, including obligations to:

- Read and observe the programme regulations, especially regarding academic integrity, coursework, and deadlines;
- Attend all teaching sessions;
- Prepare for all teaching sessions, studying and taking notes on all obligatory readings identified by your tutor;
- Check your university email account on daily basis during term-time;
- Develop an independent work routine which includes regular visits to the university library;
- Work independently on essays, presentations, and other assignments
- Work respectfully and collaboratively with others in seminars and in group assignments

IV.   Module Structure

For further information about topics, extended and recommended reading lists, and other useful information, check the module virtual learning environment.

You will find summaries, comprehension and discussion questions for each set reading on the Moodle page.

Week	Lecture and Seminar Topic	Description	Seminar Reading	Ethical Case Study
1	Introduction: Sustainability, Globalization, and Ethics	In this first week, students will be introduced to the structure of the course, as well as some of the basic questions and concepts which we will explore throughout. What is 'ethics', and why is it so important for modern businesses? Why is it not sufficient for businesses to simply follow the law? What are some of the pressing social and political issues which demand ethical awareness from modern managers and business owners?	John W. Collins 'Is Business Ethics an Oxymoron?'	The Ford Pinto Case-Study
2	Responsibility and Stakeholder Theory	In the second week, we'll look at what it is for businesses to take *responsibility* for their actions. Can a business have social responsibilities and duties, like individual people can? What kinds of responsibilities might a business have? And to *who* should business owners and managers be responsible - to the direct *shareholders* of a business who stand to make a profit? Or to a wider network of *stakeholders* who are impacted by a business's actions?	Friedman (1970) 'The Social Responsibility of Business is to Increase Profits' and Freeman (2008) 'Managing for Stakeholders'.	The Walmart Case-Study
3	Ethical Theories: Duty and Utility	For the next two weeks, students will be introduced to some ethical *theories*. We should think of these theories like *tools* - they will help students understand an ethical situation, evaluate it, and start to think about what the ethical responsibilities of a business are. In this first week, we'll look at *duty-based* accounts of ethics - which focus on the intentions and duties which businesses have to their stakeholders - and on *consequentialist* accounts of ethics - which focus on maximizing good outcomes for those stakeholders.	Bowie: 'A Kantian Approach to Business Ethics', and Snoeyenbos and Humber: 'Utilitarianism and Business Ethics'	The Alberta Pipeline Case-Study

4	Ethical Theories: Virtue and Culture	This week students will study *character* based theories of ethics - which focus on who *people* should be within a business context. What kinds of character traits does an ethical manager or business owner have? How does someone cultivate and develop those characters? And what kinds of *organizational culture* should we build, to encourage employees and managers to act ethically?	Solomon, Robert C. (1992) 'Corporate Roles, Personal Virtues: An Aristotelian Approach to Business Ethics' Trevino, Linda and Nelson, Katherine (2011) exerts from *Managing Business Ethics*, 5th Edition	The Enron Case-Study
5	Work: Rights, Justice, and Exploitation	This week, students begin to look at some of the key ethical challenges which face modern businesses. First, we'll consider employee rights - what are 'rights', exactly? What rights to employees have, and what corresponding obligations to employers have to meet them? We'll then consider in close detail the notion of *exploitation,* and ask when are employees *exploited* and how do we avoid this? Finally, we'll consider the notion of *whistleblowing,* and ask when are employees obliged blow the whistle?	Mayer, Robert. (2007) 'What's Wrong with Exploitation?' and De George, Richard T. (2010) 'Whistle-blowing'	The Migrant Workers Case-Study
6	Emerging Technologies: Privacy, Surveillance, and AI	This week students will explore the ethical features of new technologies within modern business. In particular, we'll discuss privacy and surveillance in the workplace, data collection, and whether it is right to automate our workforce. We'll also explore some of the ethical problems which emerge from using machine learning algorithms and AI programmes.	West, Johathan P. and Bowan, James S. (2016) 'Electronic Surveillance at Work: An Ethical Analysis'	The Amazon Case-Study
7	Environment: Sustainability, Future Generations, and Climate Change	This week, we'll consider one of the most pressing ethical issues of our time: the environment. What responsibilities to *businesses* have to protect or improve the environment? What - if anything - do we owe to future generations? And how do we alter our business model to become more sustainable?	Bowie - 'Morality, Money, and Motor Cars' and Hoffman 'Business and Environmental Ethics'	The Coca-Cola Case-Study

8	Marketing: Manipulation, Desire, and Persuasion	This week, we focus on consumers as stakeholders. We ask what kinds of marketing communication is justified, and what kinds are ethically dubious? Is it possible to market a product without being manipulative? Can you shape a customer's desires through marketing, and - if so - is this an unethical act? Does advertising prevent customers from being fully autonomous? We'll consider these and further questions in this session.	Brenkert, George 'Marketing and the Vulnerable'	The Direct-to-Consumer Pharmaceutical Marketing Case-study
9	Diversity and Discrimination in the Workplace	Of course, discrimination and harassment - in the workplace and elsewhere - is wrong. But what, exactly, *counts* as discrimination or harassment? How do we combat discrimination, and when do the policies we adopt - such as affirmative action - themselves threaten the rights of some employees? In this session, we'll explore some of the key concepts and arguments which will allow you to get a grasp on these complex topics.	May, Larry (1998) 'Sexual Harassment and Solidarity'	The Google Case-Study
10	Globalization and Political Influence of Business	In our final week, we'll consider the *political* side of modern business. As we've seen at several points in this course, businesses can have serious impacts on the social and political environment they are a part of. In this session, we'll ask what obligations businesses might have to improve the global environment, what legitimate roles modern businesses can play within a democracy, and whether businesses should respect the cultural norms and laws of the places in which they do business.	Ast, F. (2017) 'The Moral Dilemmas of Global Business'	The Uber Case-Study

V.   Assessment

Assessment Overview

Students will be asked to produce two pieces of coursework – a reflective journal, and case study analysis.

1. Reflective Journal (3 x 500 words) - 40%

Each week, students will be asked to respond to one reflection prompt as a formative exercise. Students will be encouraged to write 500-words in response to these reflective prompts and bring them to seminars to discuss with their peers and tutors.

In **week 5, week 8, and week 11,** students will submit and receive feedback on **one** of these 500-word prompts as part of their summative assessment. At the end of the course, these **three** submissions will be worth 40% of the student's overall grade (1500 words total).

2. Case Study Analysis (2500 words) - 60%

In the lectures and seminars, students will be asked to apply theoretical knowledge developed in the course to real-world case-studies. In seminars, students will be asked to reflect on these and may be asked to present short informal group presentations on these case-studies. The second piece of coursework [60%] will be an extended ethical analysis of a case-study or set of case-studies (2500 words). Students can research their own case-studies or explore the case-studies analysed in class. Students who wish to write a more formal philosophical essay instead of this case-study will be able to.

Assessment	Weight	Submission method	Due date
Reflective Journal (Practice)	0%	Seminar discussion	Weekly, in seminars
Reflective Journal (Summative)	40%	Written - Turnitin Submission	Week 5, 8, and 11
Ethical Case-Study (Practice)	0%	Seminar Exercise	Weekly, in seminars
Ethical Case-Study (Plan)	0%	Submit 500 words online	Week 9
Ethical Case-Study Analysis (Summative)	60 %	Written - Turnitin Submission	Week 13

Assessment Component: Reflective Journal (40%)

For this component, you are required to write **three** journal entries, each one being 500-words, to be submitted at various points of the semester: week 5, week 8, and week 11.

- Write 500-words on **one** of the reflection prompts below **(#1-4).** [Due week 5]

Reflection Prompt #1: To what extent is ethics important to the role of managers, in your opinion?

Reflection Prompt #2: Who should a business manager consider themselves responsible to, in your opinion?

Reflection Prompt #3: Of the ethical theories and tools that we have looked at on the course so far, which do you think is the most useful in a business context and why?

Reflection Prompt #4: What kinds of *virtues* or *good character traits* do you think a business manager should have? Or: what kinds of *vices* or *bad character traits* do you think a business manager should *not* have?

- Write 500-words on **one** of the reflection prompts below **(#5-7).** [Due week 8]

Reflective Prompt #5: What responsibilities do businesses have to be sustainable? Would these responsibilities ever conflict with the business making profit, and if so – which should be chosen?

Reflection Prompt #6: How bad do you think a work situation would need to be for you to consider blowing the whistle? When do you think whistleblowing is justified or obligatory?

Reflection Prompt #7: When do you think employee surveillance is justified, and when is it an unwarranted invasion of privacy? What contexts would *you* consider monitoring employees in, and in what contexts would you feel comfortable being monitored?

- Write 500-words on **one** of the reflection prompts below **(#8-10).** [Due week 11]

Reflective Prompt #8: Why, in your opinion, should businesses aim to make the workplace more diverse and inclusive?

Reflective Prompt #9: When – if ever – do you think that it is ethically justified to market directly to children? Would you place limits on the kind of marketing techniques you employed towards this group, or on the kinds of products you would market?

Reflective Prompt #10: Do you think it would be a good idea if all barriers to trade were removed from the world and people could freely export and import without customs duties or any other problems? What impact would such a change have?

To receive a high grade in your summative refection responses, your 500-word reflections should:

- Be **relevant** to the question being answered;
- Demonstrate a good **understanding** of the relevant materials;
- Be **written** in clear and accessible prose;
- Apply ethical concepts to your own **experience** – either in a professional context, or your experience studying this course;
- **Critically reflect** on your experience by analysing it in light of concepts, theories, or methods explored on the course.

Your summative reflective responses will be marked according to the **marking criteria** detailed in the **assessment guidance** document on the Moodle page. Make sure you familiarize yourself with it.

Assessment Component: Ethical Case-Study Analysis (60%)

Formative Work – Weekly

Each week, in preparation for the seminar, students will be asked to read and reflect upon a **case-study** which is related to that week's topic. Time will be dedicated in each seminar to analysing and discussing these case-studies.

The aim of this formative work is to:

- Encourage students to apply the key concepts and theories to real world case-studies;
- Enable students to evaluate their own and each others' work in seminars, and;
- To allow students to repeatedly practice the skills of ethical analysis in preparation for the summative assessment.

If you would more feedback on your analysis of a case-study, help finding a case-study of your own, or guidance on what ethical analysis entails, please attend the tutor's **feedback and guidance** hours.

Students are encouraged to submit a **case study plan** as a formative piece of work. Your plan should be no longer than 500 words, and should cover the following information:

- The key features of the chosen case study
- The ethical theories and concepts relevant to the analysis
- The basic structure of your analysis
- The key argument or central thesis of the analysis

Please email this to the tutor by the **10th of December** if you would like to receive feedback on your plan.

Summative Work – [2,500 words – 60%]

At the end of the course, students will be asked to submit to Turnitin a formal write-up of an ethical analysis.

To receive a high grade in your ethical case-study analysis, you should:

- **Present** the relevant facts of the case clearly
- **Analyse** the case study using ethical concepts and theories explored on the course
- Demonstrate a good **understanding** of the relevant materials and concepts
- Draw from **independent** thought and research relevant to the topic
- Present a clear **argument** and **conclusion** regarding the case – what should be done/should not have been done.
- **Write** in clear and accessible language

Your summative reflective responses will be marked according to the **marking criteria** detailed below. Make sure you familiarise yourself with it.

Ethical Analysis: Structure

There is no necessary structure which you must follow. You can present the analysis as a report, essay, or other structure of your choice – as long as it performs the key features of the analysis as discussed above.

However, if you would like to follow a structure, you might use the following headings:

1. **Introduction** – Introduce the key features of the case study which makes it ethical interesting and tell the reader what you are going to argue for. What will your conclusion be, and how are you going to get there?
2. **Presentation of Case Study** – Present the relevant facts about the case study which will enable you to analyse the case ethically
3. **Concepts and Theories** – introduce the key concepts and theories with which you will analyse the case study – defining your terms avoids confusion later
4. **Stakeholder Analysis** – examine who the major stakeholders in this case are – identify not only the groups who are affected, but also their interests.
5. **Theory Application** – The main bulk of the analysis will be applying concepts and theories to the case study to reveal the ethical features of it.
6. **Ethical Conclusion** – reach a conclusion about what is right and wrong in this case, and present your reasons clearly. Perhaps offer some guidance here – what should be done about the case? What could avoid future problems?