

### **44128 Introduction to Tourism Educational rationale for change**

The following document provides a critical overview of the class 44128 Introduction to Tourism. It explores and critically evaluates current practice in the teaching, learning and assessment modes currently employed for this class, and uses these, as a rationale for change, to suggest ways in which the student experience can be enhanced and improved, with particular reference to a more student centred approach to learning and assessment. The role of new technologies in supporting this new approach is explored.

#### **1. Description of the class and current Assessment techniques**

- This is a large, first year class which runs over two semesters. Over the past three years, student numbers have increased from 80 to over 200. In 2006/2007, 230 students are registered for the class. Although the class text was changed in 2005, the format of classes has otherwise remained the same for several years.
- 44128 is the only first year tourism class currently in the curriculum and is designed to provide an overview, in little depth, of the scope of tourism studies, exploring key issues and themes. Thus the emphasis of the class is on breadth, rather than depth of knowledge. Topics are touched on in the class, which are explored in further detail across the second and third years of the degree programme. A full list of class aims and learning outcomes is attached as Appendix 1.
- Staff involved in teaching the class are Mr Rory MacLellan (RM), Senior Lecturer in Tourism and Dr Karen Thompson (KT), Lecturer in Tourism. Mr MacLellan is class coordinator. These staff between them currently deliver two one-hour lectures per week across both semesters. In addition, students are timetabled to have four one-hour tutorials per semester. These tutorials are normally staffed by five or six research students from within the Department of Hospitality and Tourism Management and are administered by Graduate Teaching Assistant, Miss Clare Speed. Attendance at tutorials is compulsory and students are assessed on their preparation for these sessions. Attendance at lectures is currently optional.
- The class is assessed by a mixture of tutorial input, short answer tests (SATs), essay and examination. The essay has typically been very traditional in nature, asking the students to explore a topic of their choice in further depth, but providing them with little more than a reading list as guidance. The SAT tests have been a mixture of multiple choice, true or false and short paragraph answers. These tests have been administered during class in the lecture theatre, under what are clearly not ideal conditions.

- It is possible for students to be exempt from the examination by performing well in the other pieces of assessment. Feedback to students on SATs is given in tutorials, but this is mainly to provide the student with their marks. There is little opportunity for students to explore their performance in these tests. Written feedback is provided for essays, but this is fairly brief and general. Since this is often the first essay that students have undertaken at university, or perhaps ever, students may have difficulty interpreting the assignment brief and often have little concept of the goal/standard expected and how their performance measures against this. Moreover, no model answers are provided and there is no opportunity for students to close the feedback loop.
- Attendance at tutorials is good but lecture attendance is poor and tends to tail off towards the end of the first semester. This is aggravated by an unfortunate timetable slot. There is a desire to modernise the class, making the student experience more enjoyable and entertaining for students who are mainly rather young and do need to be motivated. However, there is also a strong wish to instil in the students a greater sense of responsibility for their own learning and to achieve a deeper level of learning through new forms of assessment. In addition, as students taking the class are entering the university with different entry criteria, it is desirable that ways be found to support weaker students who typically struggle with the traditional forms of assessment currently used.

## 2. Current use of Educational Technologies

- The class has made reasonable use of the virtual learning environment (WebCT) for the past two years and most students log on to the class site very regularly. However, WebCT is being used merely as a repository for information (transmission model) which the students are already provided with in other formats (class handbook, lecture slides etc.). A WebCT import file is provided by the publisher of the core textbook, which constitutes an electronic copy of the core text plus additional learning and self-test materials that students can obtain access to, via a password, if they have purchased the core text. To date, no structured use of these materials has been attempted by the teaching team.

## 3. Practical and pedagogical drivers for change:

- **Timetable slot** is poor (3-4 on a Monday and Friday) and is highly restricted by one group of students (HHM) who have laboratory classes from 9-2.30 pm three days a week. By halving the number of contact hours and splitting the class in two, it would be possible to removing these students from the timetabling equation and find a more appealing second timetable slot than the current 3-4 on a Friday afternoon.
- **Size of group** is large and there are few lecture theatres which can accommodate the group. This adds to the timetabling restrictions, but could be resolved by splitting the group in two.

- Currently lectures are based on a core text book and posted on webct, which calls into question the usefulness of the lecture platform. It is felt that **staff time** could be better used by making more inventive use of the virtual learning environment. However, although staff are relatively competent WebCT users, there is no web development expertise within the department.
- No '**WebCT standard**' has been achieved between staff involved in the class in terms of who does what, for example with regard to answering questions on the noticeboard within a certain timeframe or posting lecture slides by a certain deadline before the lectures.
- As the previous point suggests, there is currently **repetition** within the course and too much **duplication** between the textbook, what is available on WebCT and the lectures.
- As a result, there is a **lack of motivation** among students to attend lectures, since they do not see their value.
- The class is arguably **less dynamic** and/or entertaining than some of the other first year classes within the business school and LASS, with which we are competing for student numbers.
- There is a **poor conversion rate** from first to second year tourism principle subject, which may be improved if the students enjoyed the class more.
- There appears to be a **lack of engagement** with the subject/discipline in comparison to other subjects.
- The class **administration** is currently rather unwieldy and could be streamlined through greater automation and use of learning technologies.
- The class is arguably **over taught** and **over.assessed**.
- Students see **assessment** as an unpleasant surprise/interruption to their studies, rather than something to work towards. Administering SAT tests to 230 students creates logistical problems. The assessment is disjointed and little feedback is provided, considering the amount of assessment which is undertaken.
  
- Summary of drivers for change:
  - Increase attendance;
  - Improve student experience;
  - Decrease contact hours and increase private study time, perhaps supported by peer assessment;
  - Improve group cohesion;
  - Increase interactivity of lecture slots (on-demand teaching);
  - Greater use of diagnostic testing to assess student progress;
  - Allow/facilitate student assessment of own knowledge;
  - Increase enjoyment of subject;
  - Assist weaker students;
  - Improve feedback to students, including feedback from peers;
  - Make better use of educational technologies;
  - Ensure greater alignment of teaching and assessment.

#### **4. Proposed transformation of teaching and assessment**

- Changes to the nature of assessment are proposed, to be piloted in the second semester of the 2006/2007 academic year. It is firstly proposed to reduce the number of lecture hours to one hour per week and to split the class in half. Thus there would still be two lectures per week, but these would be identical and attended by different groups. In place of the second lecture slot, a more student centred activity would be undertaken via webct. We wish to move towards use of secondary and tertiary courseware on WebCT, but would require assistance in creating this. One possibility that is being pursued is the use of podcasts (audio or video) as a possible alternative to the traditional lectures. Where supplied with links to additional materials and the capability for student interaction, these encourage students to undertake more independent learning around the topics. A colleague is involved in the Spoken Word project (details at <http://www.spokenword.ac.uk/>) and has advised that podcasts could be commissioned from the project team, which would include the research necessary to put this together using BBC audio and video files etc. This option is being pursued, but requires funding.
- Use of personal response systems (PRS) has also been considered within lecture slots to increase feedback and self-assessment possibilities for students and to encourage dialogue between students. This is important both from a pedagogical perspective, but also to help create some sense of cohesion within what is currently a very disparate group of students. By splitting the group in two, it would be possible to use the departmental lecture theatre and to set it up for use with PRS systems. These would need to be ordered and put in place in time for the start of semester two. KT is committed to learning the technology behind these systems, and experimenting with their use for 'on demand teaching' but would require technical assistance from someone more experienced in their usage. Such activities are beyond the capabilities of the current departmental technician.
- Changes to the assessment of students in semester two have been planned and are already built in to this year's course booklet. Instead of a summative assessment of students knowledge by short answer test in week 10 of the semester, as has been the norm, we plan to use more frequent tests which will be administered online and will allow the students to test their knowledge on a more regular basis, towards a more formative learning experience. Moreover, it is planned to set up these tests with built in feedback, so that students will receive immediate feedback on their achievements.
- In addition, we plan to adapt a model already successfully trialled by the psychology department as part of the REAP project. Students are required to produce a group presentation at the end of the second semester. It is planned to incorporate some intermediate online activities between students and the tutorial leaders (PG students) which will feed into the students presentations. The exact details of this exercise are yet to be finalised and we would welcome advice from CAPLE on how this can be achieved successfully. We envisage the use of the discussion board and the groups function in WebCT, perhaps even requiring student groups to construct their presentations through WebCT, as architecture

students do in their end of year projects. This would facilitate administration and ensure a permanent record of the learning process and its outcomes, also useful for external examiners. The use of PG tutors ensures that the staff/student ratio will be manageable for interactive online activities. RM and KT will take a supervisory role.

#### **5. Anticipated cost and financing of changes**

- PRS systems for 100 students (cost unknown)
- 4 Podcasts @ £1000 per podcast (includes research and additional audio and video resources)
- Technical assistance with webdevelopment (specifically assistance is required with html, WebCT expertise, online testing, PRS systems etc.). (not sure whether this expertise could be accessed for free from within CAPLE?)
- It is possible that some matched funding could come from the LTSN budget held by the department of HTM.

## **Appendix 1 Class Aims and Learning Outcomes:**

### **Class Aims**

- (i) To introduce students to key concepts, principles, practices and issues in tourism and the links with related areas of leisure, travel, recreation and hospitality.
- (ii) To provide a basis for understanding the structure, development and significance of tourism to economies, societies, cultures and natural environments world-wide.

### **Learning Outcomes**

#### **Subject specific knowledge and skills**

The class will enable students:

- (i) To be aware of the key issues in the measurement of tourism trends and the collection of tourism statistics.
- (ii) To acquire an overview of the main contributing factors and stages in the historical development of tourism.
- (iii) To be familiar with the determinants of tourism demand and motivations for travel.
- (iv) To understand the wider impacts of tourism development on economies, society, cultures and the natural environment.
- (v) To be aware of the nature, characteristics and significance of the tourism industry.
- (vi) To be familiar with the links and integrated nature of the component sectors of the travel and tourism industry.
- (vii) To appreciate the variety of career opportunities available in the travel, tourism, recreation, leisure and hospitality sectors.

#### **Cognitive Abilities and Non-subject-Specific skills**

The class will enable students to:

- (i) develop an understanding of tourism as an activity and an industry and how it is studied through a variety of disciplines;
- (ii) analyse and interpret tourism statistics in the knowledge of their complexity and

- limitations;
- (iii) recognise and understand the main contributing factors in the development of leisure and tourism;
  - (iv) appreciate the role of tourism and holiday taking in modern societies; and
  - (v) make considered choices in the selection of further tourism options with knowledge of their key components.