

# Module Audit Project

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Academic Technology, IT Services

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Warwick Undergraduate Internship Programme

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## 1 Executive Summary

This report summarises the module audit project that aims to provide an overview of the online module provision of the University. The modules audited were undergraduate modules that are on SiteBuilder. It was carried out in August 2014. A total of 993 modules (58.4% of total modules) were sampled and a checklist of criteria was filled in for each module. The checklist consists of three main sections: minimum requirements, additional resources and navigation/layout. The results of the audit are as follows:

- Minimum requirements:
  - 68% of modules webpages provide lecture notes/lecture slides.
  - 68% of modules webpages provide staff contact (both staff name and staff email).
- Additional resources:
  - 14% of modules have forums.
  - 4.4% of modules have lecture recordings.
  - 2.6% of modules have other form of resources (exercises, quizzes, etc.).
- Navigation and layout
  - Department with highest average score was Statistics, with 3.90 out of 5.
  - 10 out of 20 departments scored a 3.00 or lower, with a 3.00 meaning information can be found with ease but could benefit from being more structured and organised.

This project finds that online module provision is inconsistent. A significant amount of modules do not have basic information. There is also very minimal use of online tools to aid studies. Navigation and layout can be confusing. It recommends that there should be emphasis on departmental initiative, as well as provision of support for academics. Departments should consider migrating from SiteBuilder to Moodle, as it would help make online module content more structured and organised.

## 2 Introduction

Working as part of the Academic Technology team of the IT Services department, I have been tasked to undertake a structured audit of the online presence of modules offered here in the University of Warwick. This project aims to provide a better idea of the extent of online module provision offered to the students. It has been an ongoing discussion among universities in the UK as of recent regarding the baseline of online module provision. With a better overview of where the University currently stands in terms of online module provision, better informed next-steps could then be implemented more effectively.

This project was carried out over the span of 8 weeks as per the length of my internship. It was done under the guidance of Amber Thomas, Service Owner of Academic Technology Support – who is also my line manager.

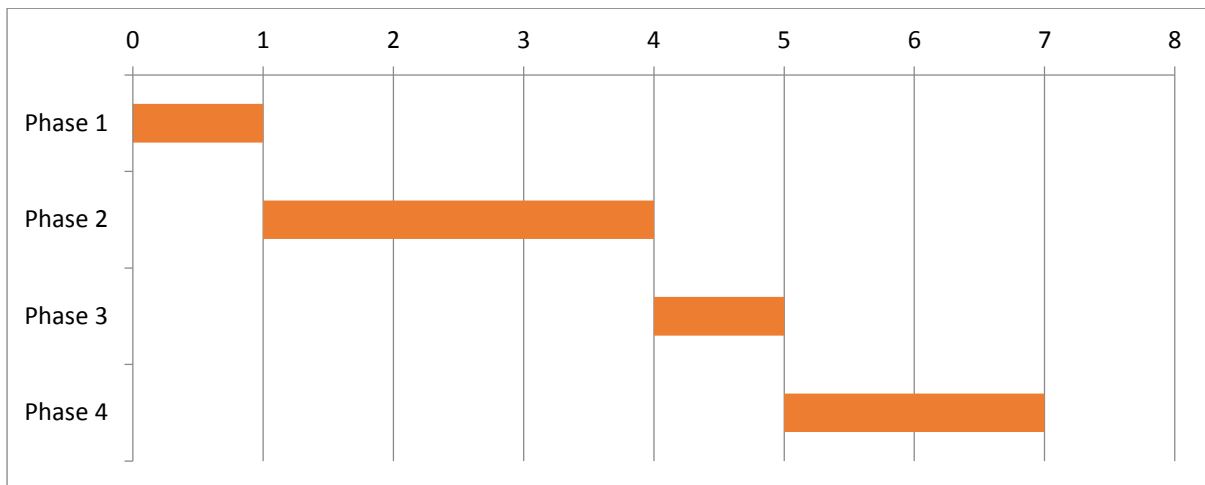
### 3 Scope of Audit

We decided that the audit was to be done on undergraduate modules only, due to time constraints. A list of 1699 undergraduate modules categorised as “In Use” and “Standard” was obtained from SITS. From that, we sampled a total of 993 modules (58.4%). Modules that were not audited were mostly modules that have already migrated to Moodle spaces, with some modules that are still on SiteBuilder but are only accessible to enrolled students. The latter modules could possibly have a more sophisticated online presence as the contents are unknown to us. The list of departments where the modules were audited is as follows:

- Faculty of Arts
  - French Studies
  - German Studies
  - English and Comparative Literary Studies
  - Classics and Ancient History
  - History
  - Theatre, Performance and Cultural Policy Studies
  - Hispanic Studies
  - Italian Studies
  - Film and Television Studies
- Faculty of Science
  - Statistics
  - School of Engineering
  - Computer Science
  - Physics
  - Mathematics Institute
- Faculty of Social Sciences
  - School of Law
  - International Studies and Politics
  - Philosophy
  - Economics
  - Sociology
  - Comparative American Studies

It is also important to note that the audit was carried out in August 2014, as there are continual changes being done to module webpages, hence the results may not reflect the module webpage’s current condition.

## 4 Methodology



*A Gantt chart showing the time allocated to complete each phase*

### 4.1 Phase 1 – Groundwork

Desk research was done to better understand the whole idea of online module provision as well as to help create a suitable checklist for the audit. It involved reading discussions by members of the Association of Learning Technology (ALT) and observing the practice of minimal standards of other universities.

I started looking at module webpages of different departments to have a general idea of how it is best navigated and to think of a suitable way to carry out my audit. At the same time, I have been scheduled appointments to talk to people from the other departments. These people include:

- Lynne Bayley, Director of Student Experience (Chemistry)
- Cara Smith, Assistant Registrar (Teaching Quality)
- Dr Letizia Gramaglia, Learning and Development Adviser
- Jessica Humphreys, Learning and Development Adviser
- Ray Irving, Director of WBS eLearning
- Christopher Evans, Manager of eLearning (WMG)

These were unstructured interviews done to better understand the issues concerning online module provision. For these interviews, I gathered that despite having no uniform standards or baselines for online module provision, whether external or internal, there is still a concern for providing sufficient course information and material to students. Departments that offer distant learning courses with more advanced online learning facilities will tend to implement different teaching and learning techniques using the online platform. There are also a lot of online facilities available that are not fully utilised, e.g. Talis Aspire and Echo360.

### 4.2 Phase 2 – Audit

I allocated 3 weeks to audit all 993 modules. I went to each module webpage and observed whether they had module description, assessment details, staff contact and the number of contact hours. I

also took note of the materials and resources available on the webpage, as well as the ease of navigation and the tidiness of the layout.

There were several issues with a few of the modules that had to be audited. Another 194 modules were not considered as part of the data. The reasons are as follows:

- Module will not be running in 2014/15 academic year
- Module not indexed on departmental website
- Could not find module webpage
- Shares webpage with another module

The remaining number of audited modules is now 799.

### 4.3 Phase 3 – Review

I organised the data I had into a spreadsheet that I could work with, removing the 194 modules that were not audited into another list. I also went through the notes that I wrote down, creating several more columns in the spreadsheet to show the availability of additional resources such as forums, recordings, quizzes and exercises, as well as a column to describe the activity of the forums available.

I also created a list of modules that were found on the departmental website but was not found on the list of modules from SITS.

### 4.4 Phase 4 – Analysis and Presentation

Here, I consolidated the data, creating tables and charts to better represent the findings I had. I then worked with Amber to prepare slides for the presentation made on the 16<sup>th</sup> of September. For the presentation, we brought together a number of people that were interested in the findings of this project. The lists of attendees are as follows: Amber Thomas, Amy Coleman, Cara Smith, Chris Coe, David Beck, David Lamburn, Emma King, Jessica Humphreys, Jim Judges, Kritz Yeoh, Lynne Bayley, Martin Mik, Mary Stott, Mia Khan, Richard Clay, Rory McIntyre, Russell Boyatt, Ruth Cooper, Samuel Moulem, Sara Lever and Steve Ranford. The discussions at that session have informed this report.

## 5 Classifications

After observing the discussions of minimum standards of online module provision as well as similar audits done in other universities, I have created a checklist of the audit. In this section, I'll discuss the criteria that I have chosen for my checklist in detail.

### 5.1 Module Description

I considered any form of introduction for the module to be a module description – aims, objectives, syllabus, or even a short paragraph that could answer “what is this module about?”. The reason for doing so is because the nature of each department is different and one form of description may not be suitable for another department.

### 5.2 Assessment Methods

For assessment methods, I searched the module webpage for details on how assessments are made, i.e. the percentage from examinations, the percentage from assessed coursework or midterm tests, as well as other assessment options. This is important for students as some courses have restrictions on the total amount of CATS obtained from assessed work rather than final examinations.

### 5.3 Staff Contact

Here I audited the module webpage for both staff name and staff email, as I realised after several observations that quite a few module webpages only have the name of the course leader, but not his/her email. Also, the email has to be either on the webpage itself or found on the staff home page linked from the module webpage. This means that if students have to search for the staff contact separately, then that module will not fulfil this criterion.

### 5.4 Commitment

Commitment would be the number of contact hours for a particular module. The module webpage has to state how many hours of lectures and seminars are there in a week as this helps the students to have a better idea of the amount of workload to be expected.

### 5.5 Materials

I looked at the module webpages for the presence of uploaded lecture notes or lecture slides. In some cases, seminar material would be considered as well as some modules consist of only seminars and no lectures. Although some lecturers do not believe in providing lecture notes, I still think it's useful to have a reference and sometimes circumstances may arise where students are unable to attend lectures.

### 5.6 Additional Materials

The classifications so far are generally considered to be minimal requirements for online module provision. For additional materials, I audited the module webpages for other resources that could aid studies. I noted them down initially then looked at the overall list to see which classifications would fit best. I decided to categorise these additional materials into forums, recordings and others.

#### 5.6.1 Forums

In addition to checking the module webpages for forums, I also added a column to differentiate the different levels of participation of the forums. I classified forums into the following 4 categories:

- More than 5 posts (active)
- Less than 5 posts (not active)

- Forum closed down
- Restricted access (for enrolled students only)

### 5.6.2 Recordings

I checked the module webpages for recordings done by the lecturer, whether is it on Echo360 or some other platform. Some recordings are not weekly lecture recordings, but just recordings of revision lecture done by the lecturer to aid revision. Some recordings are just audio whereas some are video recordings.

### 5.6.3 Others

Other additional resources include exercises, diagnostic tests, quizzes etc. The responses have to be collected for the lecturers' analysis of the student progress in general in order for the resources to fulfil this criterion. It doesn't necessarily have to be assessed.

## 5.7 Navigation and layout

A subjective impression of the navigation and layout of the module webpage is made and given a rating on a scale of 1 to 5. Due to the flexibility of SiteBuilder, each department has a different template and thus different forms of navigation and layout. There was a need to differentiate modules of similar amount of content but vastly different in terms of ease of navigation. A 3 generally meant that I could find the information and I'm looking for without much problem but the page layout still has a lot of room for improvement.



## 6 Results

Row Labels	Count of Department	Sum of Module description	Sum of Assessment methods	Sum of Staff name	Sum of Staff email	Sum of Commitment	Sum of Materials	Sum of Forums	Sum of Recordings	Sum of Others
<b>Arts</b>										
Classics and Ancient History	23	23	20	21	9	21	17	1	4	3
English and Comparative Literary Studies	52	50	44	47	32	30	18	4	5	2
Film and Television Studies	18	17	13	16	4	12	0	0	0	0
French Studies	35	35	34	21	9	18	20	1	5	2
German Studies	17	17	17	15	9	16	9	0	2	3
Hispanic Studies	9	9	9	9	0	9	0	0	0	0
History	45	45	43	44	44	37	22	5	1	0
Italian Studies	16	16	15	16	13	12	4	0	0	4
Theatre, Performance and Cultural Policy Studies	26	26	26	25	21	25	13	0	0	0
<b>Science</b>										
Computer Science	47	47	47	47	43	45	33	8	0	0
Mathematics Institute	93	93	93	87	83	88	73	1	0	1
Physics	64	64	61	64	33	60	52	12	1	3
School of Engineering	89	89	88	89	9	86	71	5	3	1
Statistics	40	40	38	39	32	37	34	6	0	1
<b>Social Science</b>										
Comparative American Studies	21	21	19	20	19	18	11	2	2	0
Economics	52	52	52	52	48	52	50	52	6	1
International Studies and Politics	34	33	32	34	31	31	21	0	2	0
Philosophy	46	46	46	39	40	46	38	1	0	0
School of Law	45	41	42	40	38	32	39	13	2	0
Sociology	27	27	25	26	25	22	15	1	2	0
<b>Grand Total</b>	<b>799</b>	<b>791</b>	<b>764</b>	<b>751</b>	<b>542</b>	<b>697</b>	<b>540</b>	<b>112</b>	<b>35</b>	<b>21</b>

*An overview of the audited data*

In this section, I shall cover the findings of the audit. In order to look at different aspects of this audit and to answer different questions regarding online module provision, there would be three parts to this finding: course information, additional materials, and navigation and layout.

## 6.1 Course Information

Department	Number of modules	Module description	Assessment methods	Staff name	Staff email	Commitment	Materials	Forums	Recordings	Others
French	35	100%	97%	60%	26%	51%	57%	3%	14%	6%
German	17	100%	100%	88%	53%	94%	53%	0%	12%	18%
English	52	96%	85%	90%	62%	58%	35%	8%	10%	4%
Classics	23	100%	87%	91%	39%	91%	74%	4%	17%	13%
History	45	100%	96%	98%	98%	82%	49%	11%	2%	0%
Theatre	26	100%	100%	96%	81%	96%	50%	0%	0%	0%
Hispanic	9	100%	100%	100%	0%	100%	0%	0%	0%	0%
Italian	16	100%	94%	100%	81%	75%	25%	0%	0%	25%
Film & TV	18	94%	72%	89%	22%	67%	0%	0%	0%	0%
Statistics	40	100%	95%	98%	80%	93%	85%	15%	0%	3%
Engineering	89	100%	99%	100%	10%	97%	80%	6%	3%	1%
CompSci	47	100%	100%	100%	91%	96%	70%	17%	0%	0%
Physics	64	100%	95%	100%	52%	94%	81%	19%	2%	5%
Maths	93	100%	100%	94%	89%	95%	78%	1%	0%	1%
Law	45	91%	93%	89%	84%	71%	87%	29%	4%	0%
Politics	34	97%	94%	100%	91%	91%	62%	0%	6%	0%
Philosophy	46	100%	100%	85%	87%	100%	83%	2%	0%	0%
Economics	52	100%	100%	100%	92%	100%	96%	100%	12%	2%
Sociology	27	100%	93%	96%	93%	81%	56%	4%	7%	0%
CAS	21	100%	90%	95%	90%	86%	52%	10%	10%	0%

*A table percentage of modules from a department that fulfil each criterion*

This section focusses more on the discussions of minimal online module presence. Modules from the Statistics, Philosophy and Economics department had average scores of 80% and above for criteria that are generally considered to be minimum requirements, i.e. module description up to materials. Modules from the Computer Science, Mathematics and Law department had average scores of 70% and above.

There is a visible difference between staff name and staff email, which is an unexpected result since one would expect to be able to find contact details if the module leader is known. There are instances where the link to the module leader home page is found on the module webpage, but there is still no email available.

Modules from the Arts faculty (French to Film & TV) do seem to have a lot less course materials available on their webpages. It could be the case that the nature of these modules does not require lecture notes or that lecture notes will be available later during the academic term.

Criteria with percentages between 40% - 60% show that course information provision is very inconsistent – why would half the module webpages have staff email whereas the other half do not? One possible explanation is that there lacks some form of a departmental initiative, for instance a checklist of information required to be on the module webpage to avoid missing out.

## 6.2 Additional Materials

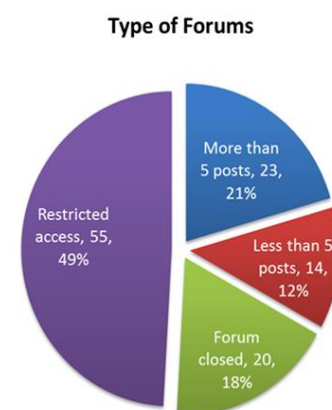
Department	Number of modules	Module description	Assessment methods	Staff name	Staff email	Commitment	Materials	Forums	Recordings	Others
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German	17	100%	100%	88%	53%	94%	53%	0%	12%	18%
English	52	96%	85%	90%	62%	58%	35%	8%	10%	4%
Classics	23	100%	87%	91%	39%	91%	74%	4%	17%	13%
History	45	100%	96%	98%	98%	82%	49%	11%	2%	0%
Theatre	26	100%	100%	96%	81%	96%	50%	0%	0%	0%
Hispanic	9	100%	100%	100%	0%	100%	0%	0%	0%	0%
Italian	16	100%	94%	100%	81%	75%	25%	0%	0%	25%
Film & TV	18	94%	72%	89%	22%	67%	0%	0%	0%	0%
Statistics	40	100%	95%	98%	80%	93%	85%	15%	0%	3%
Engineering	89	100%	99%	100%	10%	97%	80%	6%	3%	1%
CompSci	47	100%	100%	100%	91%	96%	70%	17%	0%	0%
Physics	64	100%	95%	100%	52%	94%	81%	19%	2%	5%
Maths	93	100%	100%	94%	89%	95%	78%	1%	0%	1%
Law	45	91%	93%	89%	84%	71%	87%	29%	4%	0%
Politics	34	97%	94%	100%	91%	91%	62%	0%	6%	0%
Philosophy	46	100%	100%	85%	87%	100%	83%	2%	0%	0%
Economics	52	100%	100%	100%	92%	100%	96%	100%	12%	2%
Sociology	27	100%	93%	96%	93%	81%	56%	4%	7%	0%
CAS	21	100%	90%	95%	90%	86%	52%	10%	10%	0%

The same table in the previous section but with different visuals

In this section, we will be looking beyond minimal standards and asking questions about the online learning aspect of modules offered in the University. This means we will be focussing on forums, recordings and other resources. In the table above, you could see that a few modules from the Arts faculty have more recordings and other resources than the rest.

Row Labels	Count of Faculty	Sum of Forums	Percentage
Arts	241	11	5%
Science	333	32	10%
Social Science	225	69	31%
<b>Grand Total</b>	<b>799</b>	<b>112</b>	<b>14%</b>

First, we shall look at forums. In the table above, we could see that only 14% of the modules have forums. However, it is worth noting that every module in the Economics department has a forum, which means almost half (46%) of the total number of forums are made up by forums from the Economics department.



I made more in depth observation into the forums available. Apart from half of the forums that were only accessible to enrolled students, only 21% of the forums seem to be active. In fact, 18% of the module webpages that instruct students to participate in the forum have forums that are already closed down. Another 12% of forums have very little participation, some even entirely empty,

although there might be a possibility that lecturers remove posts by the end of the academic term. However, we could not rule out the possibility that forums that I had no access to have high levels of participation.

Row Labels	Count of Faculty	Sum of Recordings	Sum of Others	Sum of Both	Recordings	Other	Both
Arts	241	17	14	31	7.1%	5.8%	12.9%
Science	333	4	6	10	1.2%	1.8%	3.0%
Social Science	225	14	1	15	6.2%	0.4%	6.7%
<b>Grand Total</b>	<b>799</b>	<b>35</b>	<b>21</b>	<b>56</b>	<b>4.4%</b>	<b>2.6%</b>	<b>7.0%</b>

In the case of recordings, only 4.4% of modules provide them. They are mainly from the Arts and Social Science faculty. Despite having facilities available in the University, it is surprising that only 35 modules offer such resources. Furthermore, some of them are revision lectures recorded personally by the lecturer, making the actual figure of lecture recordings even smaller.

2.6% of the modules have other resources such as exercises and quizzes with collected response, which amounts to 21 modules out of the total of 799.

### 6.3 Navigation and Layout

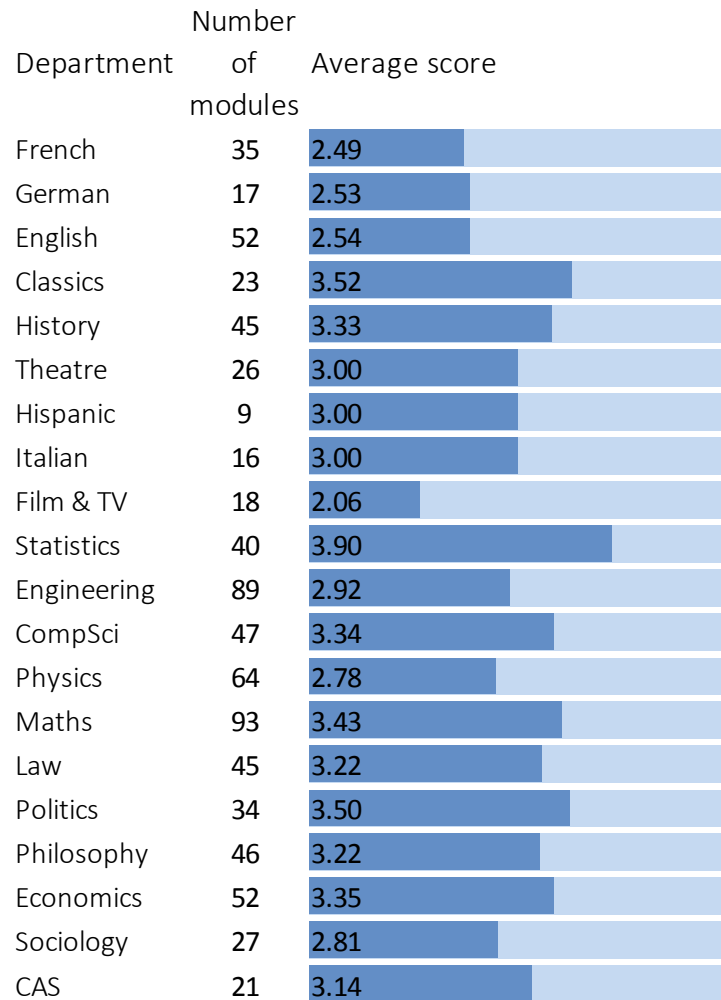
The three departments with the highest scores are Statistics, Classics and Politics. For these modules, there seem to be a visible form of template for the lecturer to share course information with the students. It is also an interesting observation that the three departments each come from a different faculty – Science, Arts and Social Science respectively. It goes to show that modules of different natures could all have organised and structured webpages.

However, with the highest score being below 4.00, there is a lot of room for improvement in my opinion.

10 out of the 20 departments that I've audited scored a 3.00 or below. This means that they range from being very confusing to navigate, to easy to navigate but could be more organised.

Although students will eventually get used to the navigation and layout of a particular module, especially those with modules of a single department, students could still benefit from having a more organised module webpage.

Some module webpages have a lot of useful materials but have navigation so confusing that makes it inaccessible. There are also countless of broken links that could easily be fixed.



## 7 Conclusions

This project has left me with the impression of a very inconsistent online module provision here in the University of Warwick. Although there are arguments that say that the online learning environment should be open and allowed to be creative, there should at the very least be a minimum standard of having the vital course information available to students. Furthermore, most lecturers do not seem to be interested in implementing more online learning aspects to their modules, as seen from the very minimal amount of additional materials available. If so, then having set structures and minimum requirements will not hinder any form of creative process. Having such requirements will not obstruct lecturers who wish to explore more in terms of online learning as well as they serve as a bottom limit, not an upper limit.

Further observation also makes the teaching methods here feel dated. Lecture recording has been around for some time and it seems that Warwick has not caught on yet. There seems to be a degree of scepticism and reluctance to offer such resources, afraid that it might affect student attendance. From a student's perspective, that shouldn't be the case. Instead, the question everyone should be asking is what's best for the students, as attendance does not affect the quality of the module being taught. Without the option of viewing recorded lectures, students who have no choice but to be absent from lectures due to other commitments will miss out. Furthermore, students that are interested in modules that have clashing timetables are forced to choose one and drop another. This shouldn't be the case.

I believe that departmental initiative and technical support is essential for online module provision to be consistent. Making online module provision consistent shouldn't be seen as a burden, but as a small task that will making the student experience much more fulfilling. Someone mentioned during the discussion that what matters is what's best for the students, since that is essentially the main focus of the University.