



November 2009

Securing the Prize

How safe are your organisation's information assets? Unless you've actually identified all the assets, assessed the risks to them, and planned the measures needed to protect them, the answer is.... probably not very safe! The Open University course 'Information Security Management' (M886) is a practical course which helps its students understand and manage the security of information, both strategically and operationally and also covers IT governance issues and various approaches for handling risk. Students will be equipped to help an organisation attain ISO27001, the international information security standard.

The most recent course presentation produced two top performing students; Ian Knight and Sally Anderson. They were awarded the Commissum prize and had the opportunity to lunch with the Managing Director of Commissum, Martin Finch, Course Team Chair, Jon Hall and Course Manager, Emma Lawrence, on a sunny autumn day in London.

Commissum have generously sponsored the course prize for two years and specialise in delivering world class information security solutions, the focus of which is closely aligned with the M886 course content.

One deserving winner, Ian Knight (featured far right), recently graduated with a BA/BSc Open Degree and the Information Security Management course was the last step in his degree journey. Ian currently works for British Telecom and is responsible for information assurance on a large government contract. Ian said 'The course materials were some of the best that I have encountered in the OU and in other study, I found the course to be of immediate practical use in my work almost from the start of the first unit.'



Sally Anderson is Head of Web and IT in the Careers Division at Manchester University. She also commented on the practical nature of M886 stating, 'The course helped me appreciate the importance of establishing an Information Security Management System and took me through the practical steps to achieve this. I have directly applied this new knowledge and skills to my work already and have the confidence to advise and manage information security on behalf of my organization, in accordance with ISO27001'.



Mr Martin Finch, Mr Ian Knight, Dr Jon Hall

Dr Jon Hall (senior lecturer in computing) said that the course team learn a lot by listening to feedback from the students about their course experiences. He said 'the Open University's model attracts some of the most experienced, talented and motivated students. Add to that their rich life context and one has a heady combination for learning. Ian and Sally are excellent students and show the fantastic results that can be achieved with the right teaching.'

For more information on the M886 - Information Security Management course and Commissum's Information Security services go to;

<http://www3.open.ac.uk/study/postgraduate/course/m886.htm>
<http://www.commissum.com/>

Author: E. Lawrence

INSIDE THIS ISSUE:

Securing the Prize	1
TD866 Environmental Responsibility	2
Technology Management	3
The Virtual MPhil	4
Systems Thinking in Practice	5
Student Numbers	6

TD866 Environmental responsibility: ethics, policy & action



Environmental responsibility is intimately connected to questions of social justice. Mark J. Smith, Senior Lecturer in Politics & International Studies, outlines how our new course on the environment puts responsibility at the centre of all we do.

While environmental justice without social justice is ecotopian, social justice without environmental justice is barren and self-defeating

TD866 Environmental Responsibility: Ethics, Policy and Action is a timely and exciting cross-Faculty course addressing some of the fundamental issues of our times. OU academics in technology, development and social science have found a new way to address one of the vexing issues in contemporary society and politics. While we are used to hearing about rights and entitlements, debates about responsibility have, until recently, have received short shrift. Responsibility is now one of the key buzzwords of the early twenty first century. Barack Obama has called for:

‘a new era of responsibility – a recognition that we have duties to ourselves, our nation, and the world, duties that we do not grudgingly accept but rather seize gladly’.

Responsibilities, obligations and duties are commitments which we are now more willing to embrace rather than reluctantly accept. Similarly, the idea of responsibility infuses media discussions of the credit crunch, the regulation of banks and the investigation of the Iraq War. At a personal level, citizens are increasingly seen as having personal or private responsibilities to recycle their household waste, maintain a healthy lifestyle and avoid behaviour that is harmful or just annoying for their neighbours.

This is different from how personal responsibility was understood in the Thatcher and Reagan era when neo-liberal ideas framed policy. In the 1980s and 1990s personal responsibility for housing, finding a job or educational success was seen as private issue rather than a matter for government intervention. As a result ‘social problems’ such as homelessness, squalor, educational failure and poverty were no longer matters that politicians were obliged to automatically address (in short they were privatized as personal difficulties). However, the new responsibilities for citizens such as sifting and sorting waste, buying fair trade products, limiting carbon use or contributing to conservation through local voluntary work, involve activities that contribute to society rather than suggest society does not exist. There are still dangers that states will try to pass responsibilities to their citizens but it is widely accepted that the most effective outcomes are delivered by partnerships between political authorities and local communities, citizens, NGOs (Non Governmental Organisations), environmental movements and private corporations. All of these actors are explored in TD866.

These kinds of partnerships serve as the focus of TD866 Environmental Responsibility and explore how we cannot only care for the environment but also be accountable for the effects of our decisions as politicians, company executives, campaigners and citizens. In TD866, you will explore how leaders in politics or business encourage responsibility in an effective way and how individual citizens can make a contribution. While the course provides a working knowledge of the main ethical traditions - utilitarianism, deontology and virtue ethics – these are explored through their implications rather than an armchair exercise in environmental philosophy. As a result, you will develop the tools to identify these kinds of ethical approaches in policy documents and media debates as well as academic sources. The course provides opportunities to explore a range of practical issues such as corporate responsibility, the global supply chain, ecotourism, and urban sustainability. TD866 also links environmental and social justice concerns in both developed and undeveloped societies.

The course is divided into four parts. *Part 1 Understanding Environmental Responsibility* outlines the meanings of responsibility and relationship between rights and entitlements on the one hand and duties

continued

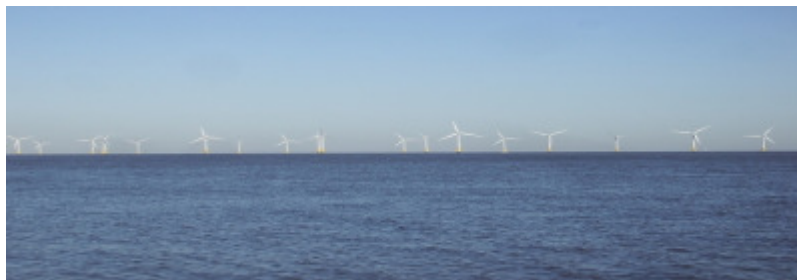
and obligations on the other. Using ethical traditions it considers who we have obligations to (such as future generations) and what those obligations could entail.

Part 2 Nature Matters focuses on caring for nature and our accountability for our activities as well as considering policies such as carbon trading as well as green consumerism and citizens participation. Using analytic tools from systems approaches and linguistics, Part 2 also explores how our conversation about and with the environment are framed, with a focus on climate change policies.

Part 3 Individual and Collective Responsibility explores the knowledge conditions for environmental responsibility and how they are connected to the concepts of rights and autonomy, with examples such as carbon allowances and community initiatives such as transition towns. It explores how citizens can cooperate and examines whether contracts can provide a solution before applying these ideas to multi-level governance and corporate responsibility.

Part 4 Environment and Justice considers whether responsibility can be promoted through different forms of civic engagement and emerging new ideas of citizenship. Using local movements as case studies (such as the Modbury plastic bag campaign and what really happened at Love Canal), this part of the course builds on previous parts to explore the debate on environmental and ecological citizenship. There is also a focus on social inequalities and gender differences. Evidence is explored in developing and developed societies to show how it is possible to find a balance between social justice and environmental protection with positive benefits for all concerned (i.e. 'just sustainabilities'). In addition, this part considers how responsibility can lead to citizenship in business and politics through stake-holding processes.

The course materials include a Course Reader, study guides, audio-visual and internet resources. The whole course is packed with concrete examples, supported by multi-media resources, and focuses on practical solutions for pressing environmental problems. There is no examination. The course concludes with a project on ecotourism where you can demonstrate your skills in analysis, evaluation, advocacy, and make recommendations for stakeholders.



Author: Mark J. Smith

Calling all Technology Management Students

Those of us who run the technology management awards at the OU have an important issue that we need to address over the coming winter - what is the role and importance of technology management out in the real world as we approach the second decade of the millennium?

Clearly many current TM students are at the sharp end of technology management in many different organisational settings. So, if any of you would be prepared to participate in an exercise to start to address this question (initially this may be via focus groups and/or F2F interviews where relevant) then we'd be very happy to hear from you. The findings of this research will be used to re-design our TM curriculum and, where appropriate, inform course design.

Anyone interested in helping us with this exercise should please email us direct on: i.j.horrocks@open.ac.uk or a.bettley@open.ac.uk or on FirstClass.

Thanks in anticipation.

Author: Alison Bettley (Programme Director, PG Technologies)

If you would like to comment or contribute on any issue for the next Newsletter, please send your input to: Sharon Meeks, PTC Office, The Open University in the East Midlands, Clarendon Park, Clumber Avenue, Sherwood Rise, Nottingham, NG5 1AH. Email: R05-Postgrad@open.ac.uk



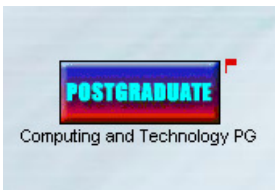
The Virtual MPhil is a new MPhil offered by the Computing Department from October 2009. It is a Masters level research degree: it is not taught; instead it provides an opportunity for students to develop their own research and problem solving skills, tackling research problems of their choosing, under the supervision and guidance of experienced researchers. A distinguishing feature of the Virtual MPhil is that research and supervision are conducted at a distance, with all student-supervisor communication and interaction mediated by a wide range of innovative technologies, from Skype to Elluminate Live!, to Second Life. We have created a virtual space where students and supervisors can come together for serious business and fun, both aspects essential to the development of a vibrant research community.

The virtual MPhil allows you to pursue your degree and benefit from academic interaction and supervision, while still retaining your job, and importantly, through the Virtual MPhil you will benefit from the access to a research community around your area of interest. This is a truly distributed research community: it comprises not only your supervisors and peer students working closely to your research area, but also a global network of researchers and academics with a shared interest in the subject matter. You may, for example, from the comfort of your home, attend a distributed meeting in Elluminate Live!, where you present your novel ideas and have them discussed not only by your immediate colleagues, but also by some leading experts who your supervisor may have invited to attend. This will give you not only an excellent experience of academic research and practice, but also invaluable skills in problem solving and working in distributed teams that you can bring to your organisation, practice and market place.

Find out more about the Virtual MPhil and the 2009 pilot at <http://virtualmphil.open.ac.uk/>

Authors: Lucia Rapanotti and Leonor Barroca, Computing Department, The Open University

All change – FirstClass to VLE



The May 2010 presentation will see one of the biggest visible changes to the PTC on-line presence for more than a decade. FirstClass, as a set of forums for both course and programme based discussion, will disappear and will be replaced by a completely web based forum system linked to the VLE. FirstClass will remain as email (for those without an alternative, preferred e-mail box) for a short while but that too will disappear fairly soon. The intention of the VLE forums will be to offer

a seamless connection to the course website but here is the concern for the PTC area. VLE forums are essentially course based and the PTC courses have had, uniquely, sets of programme wide forums which have enabled students and tutors to drop in to any course, not just the one being studied or tutored. The intention of this has been to foster a sense of community and, although this is difficult to assess, I maintain that this has been achieved. The PTC office, with Kay Bromley taking the lead, has been in discussion for the past year or so with LTS (Learning & Teaching Solutions) to try to replicate the functions that we have enjoyed with FirstClass in the new system. Although this has not been without its hitches, we hope to have a fully functioning version in time for the May 2010 start. This will have a link both from the course website and StudentHome and will facilitate, as before, programme wide discussion.

On a personal note I will be very sorry to see FirstClass disappear as I was around when it replaced the previous system in the mid 1990's. If you use the FirstClass client, as opposed to web access, then you will see the most change. Some courses already have VLE forums so the transition for them will be slightly more straightforward.

As with most changes there will be some disadvantages and some advantages. I am currently using a VLE forum on an undergraduate course that I am tutoring and, for me, the biggest disadvantages are that I cannot customise the view and the threading seems more clumsy. The advantage is that I can subscribe to the forum and hence, get the messages relayed to my mailbox.

Time will be the judge of the overall effectiveness of this change but I'll leave you with this quote from Georg C. Lichtenberg:

“I cannot say whether things will get better if we change; what I can say is they must change if they are to get better.”

Author: Dr David Butts (PTC Staff Tutor and Editor)

Systems Thinking in Practice: New postgraduate awards for an age of uncertainty

Following the announcement of a new set of Awards associated with Systems Practice in the November 2008 issue of PTC Office Newsletter, I can confirm that from 2010 The Open University is presenting a new postgraduate programme in what is now officially entitled **Systems Thinking in Practice**. This programme will include postgraduate awards at certificate, diploma and masters levels. Each of the awards attracts a variety of choice in subjects ranging from business management to environmental decision making and international development.

The first of the core courses for these awards will be available from May 2010. TU811 is a 30 point course entitled Thinking Strategically: systems tools for managing change. For those who are particularly interested in continuing professional development the 30 point course U810 'Continuing professional development in practice' is suggested as an excellent starting point for the certificate. Otherwise there are a range of optional courses that can be studied to enable you to develop your business and management knowledge or your professional area technical knowledge. Two books, written specifically for TU811, and co published by Springer provide the core subject matter; *Systems Approaches to Managing Change: a practical guide* (Reynolds and Holwell), and *Systems Thinkers* (Ramage and Shipp).

Systems Approaches to Managing Change provides concise practical outlines of five systems approaches drawn from three philosophical traditions underpinning systems thinking. The systems approaches chosen are: System Dynamics and the Viable Systems Model from the cybernetics tradition (primarily dealing with feedback interrelationships and interdependencies); Soft Systems Methodology and Strategic Options Development/Cognitive Mapping from the interpretivist tradition (dealing with multiple perspectives); and Critical Systems Heuristics from the tradition of critical social theory (dealing with ethics and politics). These five cover the fundamental concepts of systems thinking and the essential elements of the different perspectives across the main theoretical strands of systems thinking. The submissions in the Reader are authored by original authors and/or experienced practitioners.

Systems Thinkers by Magnus Ramage and Karen Shipp of the Open University is the product of more than seven years of research which presents a biographical history of the field of systems thinking, by examining the life and work of thirty of its major thinkers. It discusses each thinker's key contributions, the way this contribution was expressed in practice and the relationship between their life and ideas. This discussion is supported by an extract from the thinker's own writing, to give a flavour of their work and to give readers a sense of which thinkers are most relevant to their own interests. Systems thinking is necessarily interdisciplinary, so that the thinkers selected come from a wide range of areas – biology, management, physiology, anthropology, chemistry, public policy, sociology and environmental studies among others. Some are core innovators in systems ideas; some have been primarily practitioners who also advanced and popularised systems ideas; others are well-known figures who drew heavily upon systems thinking although it was not their primary discipline. A significant aim of the book is to broaden and deepen the reader's interest in systems writers, providing an appetising 'taster' for each of the 30 thinkers, so that the reader is encouraged to go on to study the published works of the thinkers themselves.

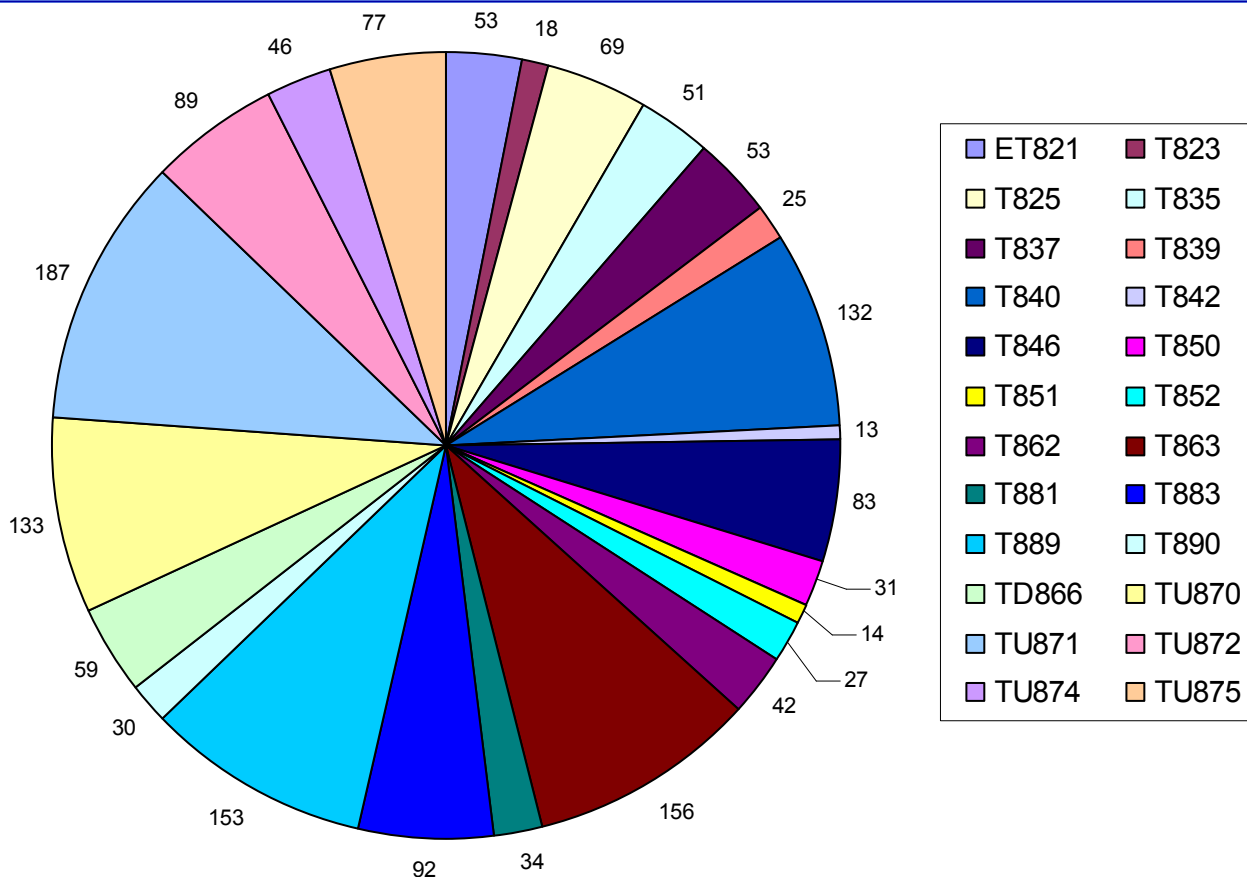
The Postgraduate Diploma in Systems Thinking in Practice involves study up to the Postgraduate Certificate (60 points) which comprises TU811 plus one optional 30 point course. This is followed by TU812 Managing systemic change: inquiry, action, and interaction (30 points) and a further 30 point postgraduate option course supporting your professional or management practice (amounting to 120 points). Like TU811, two books written specifically for TU812 and co-published by Springer, provide the core subject matter; *Systems Practice: how to act in a climate-change world* (authored by Ray Ison), and *Social Learning Systems and Communities of Practice* (authored by Chris Blackmore). Both books are due for publication in early 2010. TU812 will have its first presentation in November 2010.

A Masters in Systems Thinking in Practice involves 90 points from TU811 Thinking Strategically: systems tools for managing change, TU812 Managing Systemic Change: inquiry, action, and interaction, and a project based course such as T842 The Technology Management Project, along with 90 points from a wide range of optional courses, amounting to 180 points.

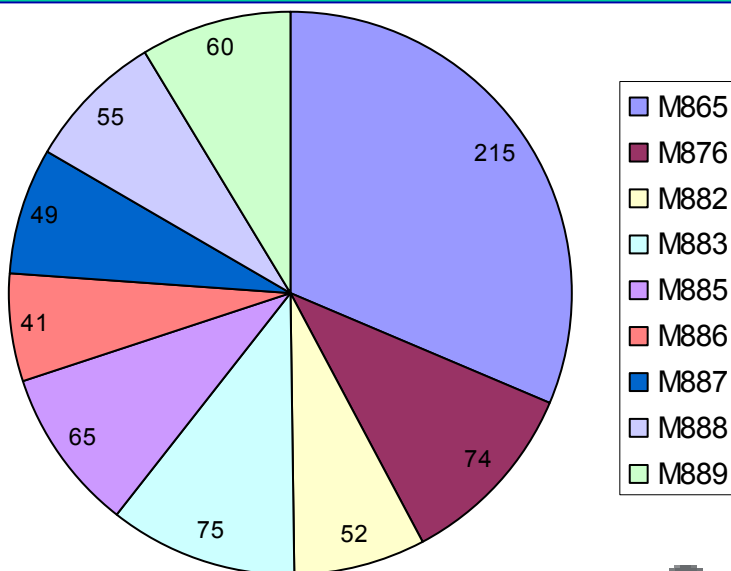
Communication and Systems Department
The Open University
Walton Hall
Milton Keynes MK7 6AA

Website: <http://sites.google.com/site/jjntest1/Home/people/martin-reynolds-1>

Technology Student Numbers 09K



Computing Student Numbers 09K



Note: If you are printing this document in black and white, the courses are shown clockwise from top centre on the pie charts.

Contributors to this Issue

Dr David Butts	Editor
Emma Lawrence	Course Manager
Mark J. Smith	Senior Lecturer
Alison Bettley	Programme Director
Lucia Rapanotti	Senior Lecturer
Leonor Barroca	Senior Lecturer
Martin Reynolds	Lecturer
Marilyn Ridsdale	Course Manager

