Module Guide 2016

Module 1: Skills and Performance in the Workplace (30 credits)

Module Summary

This module focuses on the organisational level and explores the patterns and distribution of skills in the workplace within their sectoral context. It examines how workplace skills are shaped by different national systems of education and training and the broader institutional and regulatory environment. Drawing on a range of international case studies and the latest research, students explore the distribution and effectiveness of workplace training in a range of sectors, and critically assess the opportunities and challenges involved in initiatives designed to improve skill utilisation, develop career progression and introduce innovative forms of work organisation.

How the module will be delivered

The module is delivered primarily through an intensive five-day learning event held at the Institute for Adult Learning in Singapore. A programme of lectures, seminars and workshops is provided by Cardiff University faculty over three evenings (Wednesday to Friday) and two full days on Saturday and Sunday. This event is combined with innovative on-line and remote interactive learning which provides guided study, additional academic support and a range of resources for further development and for completing assessments.

These activities will include:
- Collaborative work with fellow programme participants;
- Individual video calls with faculty, webinars with faculty and programme participants.
- Self-directed tasks and activities.

Module content

The module will cover the following elements.

- An introduction to the central concepts and challenges in skills, workforce development and sustainable development
- Defining, conceptualising and measuring skill
- Theorising and comparing national skill systems
- Exploring the impact of sector dynamics on workforce development
- The distribution and effectiveness of workplace training
- Work organisation and skill utilisation
- Workplace innovation and the challenge of redesigning jobs
- Career progression and skill development.

On successful completion of the module you will be able to:

- Appreciate contrasting ways of defining and measuring skills.
- Demonstrate a systematic understanding of a range of disciplinary perspectives in relation to the links between skill and performance in the workplace;
- Demonstrate a critical understanding of the complex ways in which national systems of skill formation and institutional and regulatory environments shape skill formation and use in the workplace;
- Describe, evaluate and explain the role of key actors in skill formation and use in the workplace;
- Critically reflect upon and analyse internationally comparative differences in skill formation and use;
• Critically analyse and discuss the equality outcomes of different approaches to workforce development;
• Assess the potential of different workplace initiatives to encourage innovation in methods of work organisation and job design.

How the module will be assessed

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Module 2: Workforce Development Policy and Competitiveness (30 credits)

Module Summary

This module will focus on developing knowledge and understanding of the challenges for national skills policy in delivering economic performance. It explores a range of disciplinary perspectives in the study of skills policy, while applying them to a number of different national systems, including Singapore, the UK and Germany. Participants will examine dominant policy agendas around skills supply and seek to assess the challenges of interventions designed to raise the demand for skills and to develop more inclusive and sustainable approaches to economic development. The module will engage in debates around the notion of performance, the links to industrial and innovation policy, and the role of key actors in developing skills policy in different national contexts.

How the module will be delivered

The module will be delivered remotely with the use of the VLE platform at Cardiff University and IAL webinar facilities. The resources will be organised in a structured way that allows participants to progress through the module, with professional learning resources and relevant research to include:

• Pod casts from leading academics in the field on each area of the syllabus
• E-resources and guided reading, linked to on-line tasks and activities
• Supporting webinars conducted by Cardiff University faculty
• Discussion boards to facilitate group and individual learning and reflection

Module content

The module will cover the following elements.

• A critical assessment of the knowledge economy and the sustainable economy
• The skills policy agenda: comparing across countries
• Designing and managing an education and training system
• Industrial and innovation policy: performance and the role of workforce development
• Social and occupational mobility: challenges of low paid work
• Policy approaches to raising employers’ demand for skill
• The implications for workforce development of transitions to a green economy:
• Using supply chains as points of intervention
On successful completion of the module you will be able to:

- Demonstrate a systematic understanding of a range of disciplinary perspectives to the study of skills policy and the complex issues involved in implementation across differently organised and competing international systems;
- Demonstrate a critical understanding of the way education and training is organised and delivered within different contexts internationally, and its relationship with broader aspects of industrial policy;
- Describe, evaluate and explain the comparative role of key actors in the formation of skills policy;
- Critically reflect upon and analyse the sustainability of current patterns of growth and the challenges involved in engaging in developing green skills;
- Critically analyse and discuss competing approaches to the role of skills in enhancing social and occupational mobility;
- Assess the ability of policy to use the supply chain as a means to improve workforce development.

How the module will be assessed

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Module 3: Globalisation and the Future of Work (30 credits)

Module Summary

This module aims to develop a knowledge and critical understanding of trends and theories of globalisation, skills and the future of work in both emerging and developed economies. It examines the changing relationship between skills, jobs and incomes in a context of intense global competition for high skilled work. The module draws on state-of-the-art research from a wide range of sources, including research on Singapore, to examine why many of the assumptions that have shaped policy initiatives over recent decades may now be in need of revision. Participants will be challenged to think through some of the implications of the trends and theories discussed in this module for their own understanding of skills, training and workforce development at a local, national and global level.

How the module will be delivered

The module is delivered primarily through an intensive five-day learning event held at the Institute for Adult Learning in Singapore. A programme of lectures, seminars and workshops is provided by Cardiff University faculty over three evenings (Wednesday to Friday) and two full days on Saturday and Sunday. This event is combined with innovative on-line and remote interactive learning which provides guided study, additional academic support and a range of resources for further development and for completing assessments.

These activities will include:

- Collaborative work with fellow programme participants;
- Individual video calls with faculty, webinars with faculty and programme participants.
- Self-directed tasks and activities.
Module Content

The module will cover the following elements:

- Introduction to globalisation and the future of work.
- Neo-liberalism and economic globalisation
- The global auction and the competition for high skills
- Globalisation and the management of talent
- International labour migration: Brain Drain, Brain Gain or Brain Circulation?
- Digital Taylorism and the stratification of knowledge work
- Skills, opportunity, and social justice in the global labour market:
- States, skill formation and political economy.

On successful completion of the module you will be able to:

- Demonstrate a systematic understanding and a critical awareness of different approaches to the study of globalisation, skills and the labour market;
- Demonstrate a critical understanding of current debates on the changing relationship between skill, employment and incomes in a context of global competition;
- Describe and explain similarities and differences in the skill formation strategies of emerging and developed economies;
- Critically reflect upon and analyse internationally comparative differences through a focus on skills upgrading and economic development in Singapore;
- Critically analyse and discuss the impact of digital technologies on the future of skills and employment;
- Describe different policy initiatives aimed at improving the link between skills, opportunity and social mobility in the global labour market;
- Demonstrate a critical awareness of the major challenges confronting current models of skills and skill formation in both developed and emerging economies.

How the Module will be assessed:

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Module 4: Research Methods and Techniques in Context (30 Credits)

Module Summary

The final taught module develops the knowledge and rigorous techniques relevant to researching skills, labour markets and workforce development in a range of national and globalised contexts. It examines the way social science data are generated and used, critically evaluates different types of evidence, and examines the real quantitative and qualitative data that lies behind a selection of research outputs produced by the module team. It provides participants with the technical competence to carry out a masters-level dissertation and more broadly to critically consume, design and commission research in their own organisational contexts.
How the module will be delivered

The module is delivered by Cardiff University faculty primarily through an intensive five-day learning event held at the Institute for Adult Learning in Singapore. A programme of lectures, interactive computer lab classes and student-led workshops are spread over three evenings (Wednesday to Friday) and two full days on Saturday and Sunday. This event is combined with innovative on-line and remote interactive learning which provides guided study, additional academic support and a range of resources for further development and for completing assessments.

These activities will include:

- Collaborative work with fellow programme participants;
- Individual video calls with faculty, webinars with faculty and programme participants.
- Self-directed tasks and activities.

Module Content

The module will cover the following elements:

- Defining and developing a dissertation proposal
- Ethics and politics in social research
- Principles of sampling and research designs
- Principles of quantitative research
- Principles of qualitative research
- Reporting and presenting research findings
- Practical workshops in interviewing, survey design, data analysis (SPSS, NVivo), data exploration and data visualisation.

On successful completion of the module you will be able to:

- Evaluate the different epistemological paradigms in the social sciences;
- Design a clear and concise research question relevant to the context of skills and workforce development;
- Choose a research design and explain why it is suited to their research question;
- Explore the ethical issues inherent in working with human participants and their implications;
- Demonstrate a critical awareness of different sampling techniques and justify their own sampling approach;
- Evaluate the advantages and disadvantages of different methods of data collection;
- Conduct a basic analysis using qualitative or quantitative data analysis software (NVivo or SPSS);
- Present findings from qualitative and quantitative data analysis to a wide range of audiences.

How the Module will be assessed:

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Dissertation (60 credits)

Summary
The dissertation provides participants with the opportunity to undertake a small scale, but substantive, piece of independent research. Students are able to develop their interest in an area related to the programme and to put into practice the knowledge and skills acquired during the research methods module. Participants are encouraged to link their research to their own workplaces or to issues with particular relevance to their sector. By enabling a more grounded appreciation of the research process and the production of research, undertaking a dissertation will provide invaluable experience that will help in future an ability to evaluate existing research and to commission new research.

How the module will be delivered
This module will be taught primarily through the provision of one to one supervisory meetings with Cardiff University faculty. These will be mainly carried out online and through individual video calls. Supervisors will support students on the development, conduct and writing of their thesis.

In addition there will be a number of online resources, including recorded lectures, relating to literature searching, writing a literature review, referencing and avoiding plagiarism, and navigating the process of gaining ethical approval for the proposed research.

A module handbook will also be provided to students containing guidance on the process of developing, writing and submitting their dissertation.

On successful completion of the module a student will be able to:

- Collect, analyse, interpret and present social science data;
- Articulate and justify, in relation to identified research questions, the research strategy utilised in their project;
- Critically appraise relevant literature and embed their research within the wider debates in the literature;
- Demonstrate a critical awareness, and appropriate handling, of ethical issues arising from their research.

How the Module will be assessed:

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Indicative Reading


Brynjolfsson, E. and McAfee, A. (2012) ‘Race against the machine: How the digital revolution is accelerating innovation, driving productivity and irreversibly transforming employment and the economy’ MIT Centre for Digital Business Research Brief, MIT.


Note that modules and teaching methods are continually under-review. There may be some minor changes to topics, reading lists and teaching delivery.