

Rethinking undergraduate induction week 2020: high engagement when fully online

Abstract

Traditional induction weeks have typically been built around face-to-face activities, with a heavy emphasis on formal presentations and social events. 2020 forced induction to be fully online, and in this paper provided an opportunity to re-orientate business management undergraduate induction towards both personal transition and greater academic understanding of higher education. This paper describes the design and implementation of a high-engagement induction week, based on active learning with daily challenges. There is a specific focus on the day 3 activity, based around the theme of responsible management using the UN's Sustainable Development Goals (SDG) framework.

Keywords: Relentlessly-welcoming; induction; active learning, (3)

INTRODUCTION

After induction for undergraduates in a large business school was completed in its traditional form in September 2019, the authors proposed the possibility of a different approach. This would involve moving away from the administrative and physical preoccupations of induction (with of course some important social aspects), towards a greater focus on:

- (a) high school to higher education transition
- (b) emphasis on academic/professional values, culture and style.

Another driver for these proposals related to how induction could be provided for students who had not yet physically arrived at the university in time for induction week. There was, however, little wider support to revisit a “tried and tested” format.

When lockdown began in late March 2020, the immediate preoccupation, as with other institutions, was the overnight move to emergency remote teaching, although the impact on undergraduates whose academic year was near completion, was less marked than for masters students. For the summer term 2020, teaching resources were focussed on migration from an emergency approach to one which was based on more established online learning principles, and online learning templates were produced for the business school as a whole, not by discipline, but collectively by learning method.

The authors proposed that induction 2020 also needed a template, but this was seen as more distant, and continued as a lower priority for attention. By June though, the initial template activity was completed, leaving some areas un-reviewed. One of these was induction, then expected to be largely if not fully online, and thus more problematic. There was also an emerging financial concern that, in a fully online context, an unappealing online induction might literally tip some new students into not coming to the school at all. So, a review of induction was agreed, but at the same time it was made clear that there were no additional human or financial resources available for design and implementation.

The co-authors proposed for the first year business management undergraduate BSc a customised online induction in two phases, which they would jointly design and lead, and this was designed in June-July, and implemented in two phases in August-September:

- (a) A four week lightly paced summer school, based on a MOOC approach in a weekly cycle, entirely voluntary, based on an excellent Open Educational Resource online textbook (OpenStax, 2020)

(b) A one week welcome week in late September based on active learning in a daily cycle, to complement and in part replace the largely centrally organised traditional induction. The week is technically not compulsory but is strongly recommended. A timeline of key dates was:

8th June - First working paper

10th July - Prototype technology platform working

13th August - Summer School live (four weeks to 18th September)

21st September - Welcome Week live, to 25th September

This paper examines the overall learning design and outcomes of the induction welcome week. It then explores in more depth one activity during that week; addressing the theme of responsible management, through a novel task designed for fully online working, but adaptable to other learning contexts and also beyond the undergraduate level. More detail is provided in attachments. The activity was singled out by students as the “best activity of the week”.

The Oceania conference session proposes a time-compressed version of the online experience, with content specifically adapted for the MOBTS audience.

THEORETICAL FOUNDATION/TEACHING IMPLICATIONS

Induction is not a conventional disciplinary-based module. In this context, we consider three perspectives: induction themes, pedagogy and technology.

Themes

Our first two themes had been at the heart of previous conventional inductions:

(a) Understanding (of the basic way a university operates)

(b) Well-being (physical and mental; friendships)

We additionally focussed on two overlapping transition themes.

(c) Supporting learners through life-changing educational and personal transitions. In this 2020 induction, a key role is played by preparation not just for knowledge acquisition, but readiness for a life of continual learning and especially unlearning.

(d) Preparing learners as new and lifelong members of an educational and research community, with a particular emphasis on underlying values which differ from high school and may be distinctive to the institution.

There is an extensive literature on transition and induction (Parkinson and Forrester, 2004; Harvey, Drew, and Smith, 2006; Whittaker, 2007; Gosling, 2009), with different academic disciplines evolving their configuration and deployment to suit their pedagogic and research needs. There is also a wealth of examples of innovation in induction, mostly but not always (OpenLearn Create, 2020) in a face-to-face context. The contemporary advice of Advance HE (Brown, Giles and Parkin, 2020) drew explicitly on pandemic-based experiences. The single most important influence was from Felten and Lambert (2020) who argue first year students need “relentless welcome”:

Students need to be interacting regularly with peers, faculty and staff who ask them “How are you?” and genuinely listen to and care about their answers.’

This concept developed pre-pandemic but became of even more profound significance in 2020.

Pedagogy of induction

The traditional approach taken in 2019 induction was heavily based on didactic information provision, apart from the many social activities. By contrast there was a desire for the 2020 business school experience to be based on active learning, along lines that had advocated for business undergraduates by Crosby et al (2011). The fact that induction was wholly online, even more emphasised the need for active learning. The second component of pedagogy was block teaching, which is almost universally used in business schools for executive education, and to some extent for MBA's, but relatively rarely for undergraduates. Heriot Watt (King and Craik, 2019) has a policy on block teaching, defined as teaching:

"provided in an intensive block, sometimes as short as 1 week and student learning is compressed, typically with students studying only one course at a time."

King and Craik are explicitly doubtful about the educational value of block teaching, and their university policy states specific conditions to be approved for each instance of block teaching. However, the welcome week is in a real sense already a block, though in our case not historically treated as such educationally. We were less sceptical about its value, not least as in executive education we had steadily been developing fully online executive education based on small tasks issued on a daily basis, up to and including CEO level.

Technology

Since students were unable to access the Virtual Learning Environment (Moodle) until they had completed registration, which for many of them was not until , it was necessary to adopt another platform for induction, and Microsoft Teams was the only feasible alternative, which, crucially, was fully supported by the IT department. The two authors both had previous experience with this platform and developed a prototype for the induction in just a few days. With only minor problems it worked reliably and was not a barrier to meeting any key goals.

With student numbers around 500, and our technology only allowing online meetings up to 300, the cohort were split into two parallel streams A and B, and each stream was divided into 11 teams (A1...B11).

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

The activity described below was designed:

- (a) To provide experience of higher education group work under significant time pressure
- (b) To introduce contemporary content on responsible management which is of increasing importance both to society and employers
- (c) To challenge participants to be imaginative and even playful, which has not always been a core aspect of secondary education
- (d) To emphasise that even first term undergraduates can be creators of new knowledge and teachers and mentors to others.

The welcome week historically has been a **mosaic** of separate activities. Our proposal was to create five high-tempo themed activities, one per day using a **pattern**, which would still leave time for ad hoc and personal topics to be covered from the generic induction.

The five themes and activities, visualised in Figure 1, were:

Monday	Getting started: community and collaboration
Tuesday	I, the professional
Wednesday	The Business School, the future, and Sustainable Development Goals
Thursday	Building a community
Friday	Making and displaying my own future

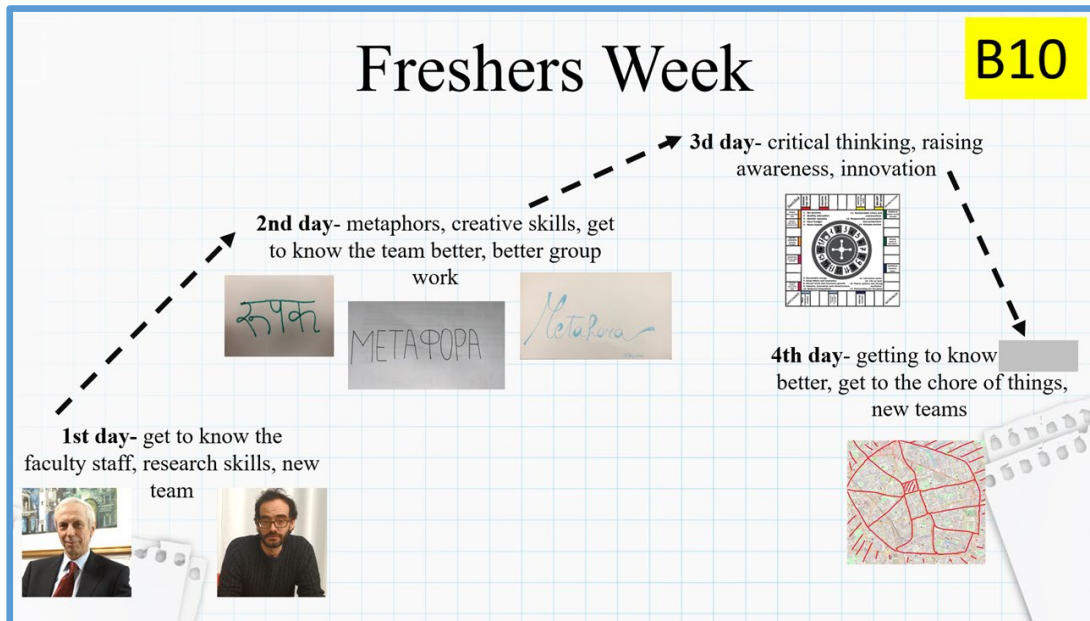


Figure 1: A student view of the welcome week; presented by Team B10 on final integrating day.

EXERCISE OVERVIEW

This paper focusses on the Day 3 activity, in part because it meets a need faced by almost all business schools relating to responsible management, where the UN PRME initiative (PRME, 2008), relating to the UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDG) is of wide relevance internationally. To highlight the importance of this initiative the Dean had agreed to lead a discussion on the future of the Business School, the inspire session, during the day. The slightly redacted detailed content of the challenge is contained in Appendix A.

The focus on one day also enables the explicit pedagogy **pattern** used every day to be articulated and illustrated, as shown in Figure 1.

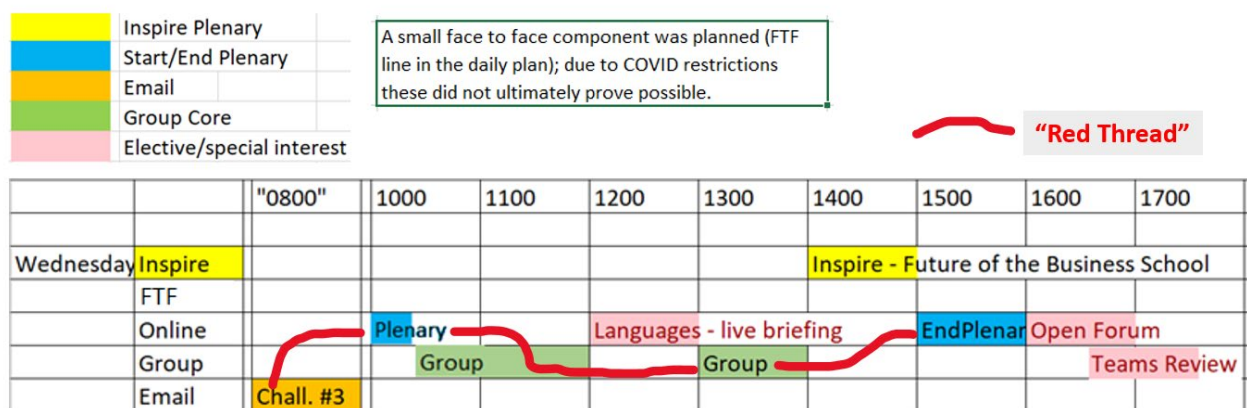


Figure 2: Unfolding Pattern of Welcome Week, Day 3

This is the actual format developed to explain how the "mosaic" and the "pattern" can be reconciled, and the colour coding is important so students are clear what type of activity is involved. One aim was to show how, when fully online and in a high-engagement environment, there is a need to be able to switch between different modes. Following the red thread of the daily academic pattern, the 0800 email (outlined in Appendix B) is asynchronous, while the 1000 plenary is synchronous with chat. The two phases of group work may mix synchronous with asynchronous and individual research. The Languages

briefing is primarily presentation, as is the Inspire session, but in the latter the Dean actively encouraged comment and concerns to be voiced. The 1500 plenary involved all teams presenting, then the two “electives” were aimed at being relatively small tutorial type synchronous sessions.

Table 1 summarises the design of day 3 in the Welcome Week 2020. Figure 2 displays one of the outputs from Day 3 presented at 1500.

Time	Activity -	Config	Mins	Materials	Participant Engagement
0800	Email: Challenge for Day	Indiv	30+	Email	
1000	Webinar 1: Briefing	Stream	60	Teams Meeting	Q&A
1100	Group Work	Group	120	Teams Conference Rooms	Intensive group activity
1300	Lunch		60		
1400	Inspirational Experts	Stream	60	Zoom Meeting	Q&A
1500	Webinar 2: Presentations	Stream/ Group	60	Teams Meeting	Present and Feedback
1600	Electives; non Business School "mosaic" events	Indiv	30- 120	Zoom, Teams	

Table 1: Welcome Week Day 3 Timetable

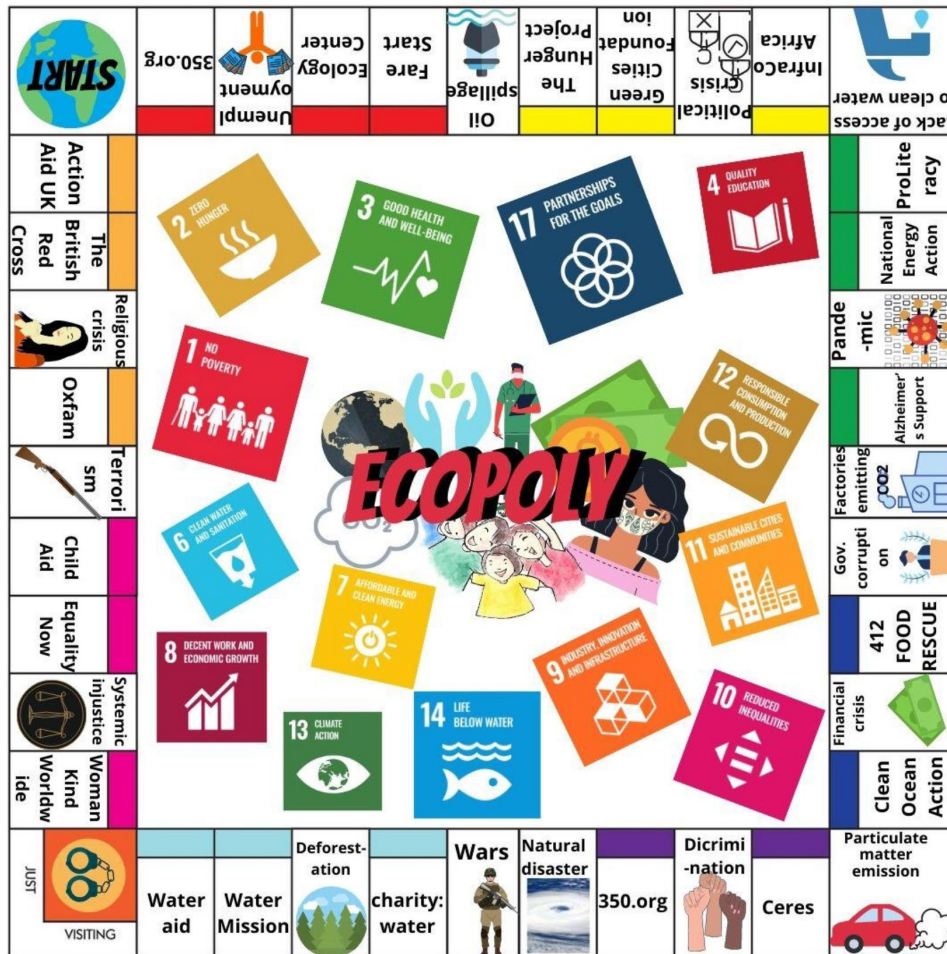


Figure 2: Example of Ecopoly Board Game from Team B09

EXERCISE OVERVIEW

If accepted for a 60 minute session, we propose facilitating a stylised and highly compressed version of the above process, with a group challenge that can be completed in no more than 30 minutes rather than one working day. We will encourage participants to adopt a “pecha kucha” mindset- the timescale is tight, if not unreasonable, but it is still feasible to cover the whole activity in a way that is meaningful to both presenters and audience.

ACTIVITY BRIEFING (FULLY ONLINE)	Minutes
<p>You will be briefed in a plenary online meeting, and be assigned to a team in an online breakout or conference room.</p>	
<p>Introduction: Appoint Chair, Timekeeper, SlideMaker, Rapporteur (3 minutes). The team does not have to work on every task as a whole team.</p>	3
<p>A Business School alumna who works in a United Nations office locally has been told that the UN wants to develop a game-based approach to promote the UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDG's) among first year undergraduates. based on the UN's 17 goals https://sdgs.un.org/goals which should be briefly reviewed.</p>	2
<p>The idea is for faculty to propose in outline a game or simulation. Deciding on the format is the single most important decision.</p> <p>A game or simulation can be VERY broadly defined; board games; war games; sports; TV quiz programs; games in fiction; soap operas.....there are 9 genres of video games, for example: https://www.idtech.com/blog/different-types-of-video-game-genres</p>	5
<p>Decide on 2, 3 or 4 competing perspectives; this could impact the physical shape of a board, or the clustering of roles, for example.</p>	2
<p>Brainstorm a range of options, but bear in mind the challenging assessment criteria, there is little point in evaluating banal options. Don't worry about risk if you really have something novel. (up to 10 minutes)</p>	5
<p>Work up the preferred option into a credible proposal to avoid a FAIL</p>	8

Summarise proposal in one PPT slide or handwritten sheet. The idea is more important than the graphics quality. The spoken word is more important than the picture. You will have one minute maximum to present. The slidemaker and rapporteur should be collaborating on this in draft from the first decision onwards. Share with group and refine. Upload.	5
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TABLE 2: Activity Briefing

The assessment criteria for the activity emphasises imagination (the Welcome Week activity did not have graded assessment of this type):

- Novel - GOLD
- Interesting – SILVER
- Obvious - BORDERLINE

Cliché, Banal, Boring – FAIL

SESSION DESCRIPTION

Activity – Dérive	Mins	Materials	Participant Engagement
Allocate to team rooms as arrive	-		Greet new colleagues (if time and feasible)
Briefing for Activity	10		Q&A via chat
Work as a group in online breakout or conference room	30		Intensive group activity
Report Back (1 minute per team, with one slide maximum, zero slides minimum)	10		Each group presents & also questions others
Tutor debrief on detailed lessons for faculty and for learners	5	Handout	Q&A
Group discussion of how to evolve and implement locally	5		Audience-interest driven

TABLE 3: Session Description

LESSONS LEARNED:

Thinking of using high engagement in your induction?

Based on our own experience and that of colleagues who have introduced non-standard learning methods, we developed some advice for those considering such methods:

1. Resourcing the design and delivery; change management; delicate negotiations with existing deliverers
2. Student participation in design – reps, student union, initial Qualtrics survey to identify individual concerns and priorities.
3. It is vital to explain the rationale for unfamiliar learning formats eg in the initial briefing, and in the debriefing to draw out the academic and professional importance of becoming fluent in diverse formats.
4. Design it to be useful for students with a variety of circumstances, including those with limited or no opportunity to participate actively eg for personal or technological reasons
5. Expect to have to put effort into managing who the participants are and communicating with every single one of them – in an induction week you may well not be certain exactly who is going to turn up. It may be someone else's task to do this; but what happens if they are absent ill that week?
6. Look for quality open educational resources such as the freely available online textbook to which we directed students

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APPENDICES

Appendix A Wednesday Daily Overview (emailed 0800 – simplified version)

Appendix B UN Activity Briefing Paper (original version with minor redactions)

APPENDIX A: DAY 3 ACTIVITY: DEVELOPING SUSTAINABLY

A Business School alumna who works in a United Nations office locally has been told that the UN wants to develop a game-based approach to promote the UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDG's) among 16-18 year olds. Universities are being approached to create prototypes, but they must be developed by undergraduates. The idea is to develop a board game, based on the UN's 17 goals <https://sdgs.un.org/goals> Transition to a computer game is then possible.

The UN has already developed a board game for 8-10 year olds. It is essential to examine this as a starting point. Please note the special graphics in this are copyright and should not be reproduced in detail today. You can though use the UN's standard graphics (downloadable icons etc): <https://www.un.org/sustainabledevelopment/news/communications-material/>

To support its bid to be selected by the UN, you are being asked today to come up with a broad approach to such a game, but not the exact detail of how it would work. 22 different teams will be working in parallel to maximise the diversity of proposals. But instead of competing, there will be free flow of information. [This has similarities to some methods of developing a Covid vaccine]. Meeting room doors will be left open and visitors are welcome to sit in any group to listen. There is also a duty quickly to share ideas (in your Stream Room chat) which:

- (a) look promising in relation to meeting UN objectives
- (b) help save resources in the design activity today:

The UN will evaluate the designs using a 2013 framework

<https://kaiherbertz.wordpress.com/2013/02/20/2-the-traits-of-great-board-games/>

- Simple rules
- Minimum downtime
- Meaningful decisions
- Player interaction
- No player elimination

You are not required to produce a physical or digital prototype, but you can do so if you want.

The design will involve a card-based game with a board. The 17 SDG goals should either

- (a) Be included on the board in some way
- (b) Be used as cards or similar

The 17 goals represent desired outcomes. The UN sees sustainable development as a journey, and suggest 4 dimensions which could help create both tension/conflict and also promote progress.

A Helps, improves the journey

B Blocks, slows down journey

C Clear End Point, destination to journey

D The path, or alternative paths for the journey

Possible Roles

These roles provide sources of information to structure the game, eg via a small pack of cards which provide quotations from different groups. If it is a form of war game, some of these could be like an "army".

You should aim for a basic source of conflict. For example, your board/card game might need to include (two) promoters of the SDGs and (three) detractors of the SDGs.

Overall process

There is 140 minutes maximum available. We suggest one person is a timekeeper. Minutes per section are just suggestions; more important is to self-organise your time.

- (a) Fact finding and research (40 mins)
- (b) Agree a clear central theme (25 mins)
- (c) Develop a proposal (45 mins)
- (d) Critically review and revise your own proposal (15 minutes)
- (e) Summarise proposal in one PPT slide and rehearse presentation (15 minutes)

Detailed process

(a) Fact finding and research (40 mins)

1. Assess the skills within the group which could be relevant to game design (5 mins)
2. List the areas for immediate research and create sub-groups
 - a. One sub group to examine the existing UN board game for 8-10 year olds as a starting point. What does your team like and not like?
 - b. How to design a great board game
 - c. What makes a good game
 - d. UN SDG;s and "propaganda"
 - e. Opposition to SDG – obvious
 - f. Opposition to SDG – hidden/secret
3. Carry out initial research (15 minutes)
4. Report back to whole group (10 minutes)
5. Decide who and how will visit other group rooms to listen in (1 minute)
6. Decide who and how will publish the lessons learned/good ideas in the Chat space for the Teams Stream Room (1 minute)

Agree a clear central theme (25 mins)

7. This is the heart of the whole process.
8. Develop 2-3 simple visions for your design. (5 minutes) This is just one example:

"Helps 15-18 year olds remember what the 17 goals are."
9. Use the 4 journey categories to explore the tensions you need to create

Develop a proposal (45 mins)

10. Make a decision on the approximate board layout
11. Relation between board, “cards”, tokens.
 - a. Different types of cards needed eg supporters and objectors;
 - b. Perhaps 17 objections/sources of resistance
 - c. A few main Rules
12. Write down or draw diagrams (or use images)

Critically review and revise your own proposal (15 minutes)

Summarise proposal in one PPT slide and rehearse presentation (15 minutes)

1. Rehearse spoken word (maximum 2 minutes to present in plenary)
2. You are limited to one slide/image. Make sure you have a visual aspect. Don't overload the slide with detail – highlight the 4/5 main points. Don't be afraid to use handwriting or hand drawing.

Timekeeping

Please finish the team work by 1345 so you can all set up for the 1400 meeting.

Email your one slide as a PPT slide or .jpg image as an **attachment** with the **correct name** by 1355 to your Room Leader. All slides in correct format will be included in the final presentation session at 1500. Those submitted late or in incorrect format will be shared with the whole class, but it may not be possible to present them.

Lessons learned from Days 1 and Days 2

Put your Team Name on the slide

The slide name must be

UNGame- [Team Name] eg

UNGame-B07.pptx

Make sure you actually have someone to present the slide in the webinar (it doesn't have to be the person who created it)

Submit by the deadline in the correct format with the correct name.

It is not essential to fill the slide with detail. Less can be more.

LATER TODAY

This activity has been designed in close collaboration with two Business School colleagues. Our Business School is running a survey in collaboration with another Business School, and it would be very much appreciated if you could spend 15 minutes on completing this survey after the Welcome Week activities have finished today.

APPENDIX B: BSc Business and Management Welcome Week

Daily Email: Wednesday 23rd September

For the third day of the Welcome Week for BSc Management we would like you to learn more about the University and Business School and about our commitment to the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals. Our belief in responsible and ethical management is related to our decision to move away from the former Business School name and indeed informs our plans for the future of the school as a whole.

		"0800"	1000	1100	1200	1300	1400	1500	1600	1700
Wednesday	Inspire						Inspire - Future of the Business School			
	FTF									
	Online		Plenary		Language - live briefing		EndPlenary	Open Forum		
	Group		Group		Group				Teams Review	
	Email	Chall. #3								

1000-1020 Plenary: Introduction to Sustainable Development Activity (Stream Rooms A and B)

Stream Room A	Join Microsoft Teams Meeting
Stream Room B	Join Microsoft Teams Meeting

1020-1200 Group work on activity in Team rooms (see list below)

1200-1300 Language courses introduction

1300-1345 Group work on activity in Team rooms – slide to be uploaded by 1355

1400-1500 The Future of the Business School

You are expected to attend this session on the future of the Business School with our Dean and with the Professor leading the name change. As part of this you will learn about our change of name, the reasoning and context behind this, what it means for you, and how you can get involved.

1500-1600 Plenary

For this you will be in two streams on Teams

Stream A (Dr M. to lead)

Stream B (Prof C. to lead)

1600-1630 Elective: Question and answer session (use Stream A room) – Dr. M

This will be a completely open session for you to ask questions about the course and what to expect

1630-1700 Elective: Effective Use of Microsoft Teams during Term 1 (uses Stream B room) – Prof C.

Team Rooms

Meet in your group rooms online:

Meet in your group rooms online:

Group Room A01	Join Microsoft Teams Meeting
Group Room A02	Join Microsoft Teams Meeting
Group Room A03	Join Microsoft Teams Meeting
Group Room A04	Join Microsoft Teams Meeting
Group Room A05	Join Microsoft Teams Meeting
Group Room A06	Join Microsoft Teams Meeting
Group Room A07	Join Microsoft Teams Meeting
Group Room A08	Join Microsoft Teams Meeting
Group Room A09	Join Microsoft Teams Meeting
Group Room A10	Join Microsoft Teams Meeting
Group Room A11	Join Microsoft Teams Meeting
Group Room B01	Join Microsoft Teams Meeting
Group Room B02	Join Microsoft Teams Meeting
Group Room B03	Join Microsoft Teams Meeting
Group Room B04	Join Microsoft Teams Meeting
Group Room B05	Join Microsoft Teams Meeting
Group Room B06	Join Microsoft Teams Meeting
Group Room B07	Join Microsoft Teams Meeting
Group Room B08	Join Microsoft Teams Meeting
Group Room B09	Join Microsoft Teams Meeting
Group Room B10	Join Microsoft Teams Meeting
Group Room B11	Join Microsoft Teams Meeting