



THE LITTLE THINGS THAT MAKE A DIFFERENCE: ORGANISATION AND MANAGEMENT IN HN ACCOUNTING

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PROFILE

Sarah Sutherland is the programme leader for the HNC and HND Accounting and is based at Inverness College UHI. The programme scored 100% for student satisfaction in NSS 2015 and 2016

I like to constantly update my teaching practice, and try out new things in the classroom, but I do feel that getting some of the basic things right with admin and organisation can really help make the students' experience an excellent one.

CONTEXT

The HN accounting programmes are run face to face at various academic partners. At Inverness College UHI students spend on average 16 hours in class per week over three days. All staff involved in delivering on the course are also Personal Academic Tutors (PATs).

1. BE APPROACHABLE

Students can always talk to staff if they are struggling. We try and fit this around the students' needs, so it can be by email, or face to face; whatever works best for them. Because all of our PATs are also teaching staff it is quite easy for students to approach them; they already know them from classes. Personally, I try and always be approachable and stay around after class if students want to chat; I want students to feel that they will never be turned away, or be told off for not understanding something. All the staff on our programmes genuinely care about their students and their achievements and I think this is the best foundation for delivering outstanding student support.

2. VALUE YOUR STUDENTS' VIEWS

I am always asking for feedback from my students. I encourage them to shout out in class if they don't understand something. Those who don't feel comfortable doing this might send me an email later on. Although there are channels such as surveys for more formal feedback at the end of a unit, I find that asking students regularly might reveal a small issue that can be easily fixed there and then.

3. MAKE INFORMATION ACCESSIBLE

Everything is on the VLE: no notes are provided prior to or during the classes so students quickly learn that the VLE is the place for everything. I use a consistent structure so that all module spaces look the same. I know this seems like a little thing, but students find the VLE quite a struggle to get to grips with, so having all notes in the same place just relieves the stress a bit; they can put their hand on the information that they need quickly. I made these changes in response to

an email from a student saying that she found it all too confusing. This highlights the importance of asking for feedback; I would have had no idea about this had the student not mentioned it.

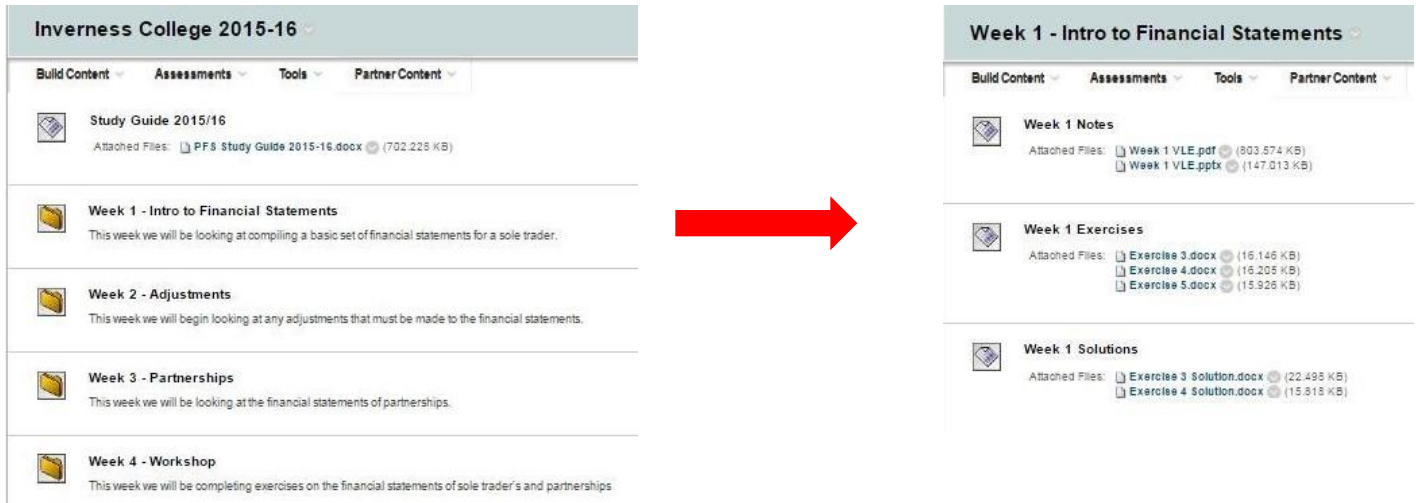


Figure 1: Screenshots from the Blackboard VLE showing the file and folder structure used to organise learning materials

4. ASSESS EARLY

The way that the HN is structured means that the first assessment happens three weeks in. I think that this is a good thing; passing is a boost for under-confident students, and failure focusses the attention of those doing less well. In some cases failing the first assessment has led to students withdrawing from the course. We give students every encouragement to keep going, but sometimes failure is an early indication of their unsuitability for the course, and this might save them a lot of heartache in the long run.

5. CREATE A COMMUNITY

I focus on getting the groups of students to come together; there can be no cliques. Because of our large numbers we teach our HNC and first year HND students separately even though the curriculum is the same, so we make an effort to get the students to communicate wherever possible. We have three class reps (HNC, HND year 1, HND year2) and a Facebook group that the reps administer so that students can chat to each other, and raise any issues through there. We also have a face to face induction every year which is for all students, not just those starting on the programme. This way, any HNC students who have stayed on for HND can meet their classmates before the first lesson. Students like meeting their peers in this informal setting as the group begins to gel before you have even entered the classroom.

If you wish to submit your own case study, or have any questions about this resource please contact:

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