Contemporary Issues in the Built Environment Case Study

Module Descriptor

Module Code:	CON6CSA
Version:	1.00
Status:	Final
Date:	28/02/2024

Summary Module Details

Module details

Module Title: Contemporary Issues in the Built Environment Case Study

Module Leader: Steve Ruddock

Module Mode: Supported online learning

Semester: Autumn (UK) and Spring (UK)

Level: 6

Credits: 20

Learning Hours: 200

Contact & Study Hours:

Directed Study Time: 50hrs (25%)

Self-Directed Study Time: 100hrs (50%)

Assessment Study Time: 50hrs (25%)

Assessment Type:

Coursework: 0%

Computer Based Assessment: 0%

Portfolio: 0%

Presentation: 40%

Project: 60%

Practical: 0%

Self-directed Research: 0%

Module Summary

The module will introduce you the latest developments and issues in the built environment sector to allow students to develop a deep understanding of current issues and arguments that dominate contemporary debates and policy making. Students will formulate their own line of enquiry and analysis, informed by the completion of their own critical analysis of related theoretical and empirical work through a review of literature and a presentation of the salient points.

Taken on which Programmes

BSc (Hons) Building Control (C for non-apprenticeship students only)

BSc (Hons) Building Surveying (C for non-apprenticeship students only)

BSc (Hons) Construction Management (C for non-apprenticeship students only)

BSc (Hons) Quantity Surveying (C for non-apprenticeship students only)

BSc (Hons) Real Estate Management (C for non-apprenticeship students only)

Core (C) or Elective (E)

Module Aims

This module aims to:

- Understand a range of current issues facing the built environment industry.
- Develop skills in organisational analysis and generate creative contextualised solutions to a current issue in the built environment.
- Encourage students to think reflectively about the contemporary issues concerning their studies and their professional and educational development.

Module Learning Outcomes

LO1. Critically appraise a substantive topical issue in the built environment studied on the module.

LO2. Perform a focused literature review into an area of the built environment which identifies and evaluates key developments at the frontiers in that area.

LO3. Critique the current practices of built environment professionals in terms of a contemporary issue in the built environment.

LO4. Communicate in a clear, logically structured way that synthesises arguments from a range of primary and secondary sources.

Indicative Module Content

Module topics

The module content is likely to be fluid to reflect the current issues emerging in the built environment. The following content gives an outline of topics that may be covered, although not all these topics will be covered in every delivery of the module to allow for other contemporary issues to be included.

- **'Net Zero' & Sustainability Issues**

  Construction accounts for around 40% of total UK carbon emissions. The UK Government's goal of 'net zero' by 2050 poses a huge challenge, and the construction sector needs to position itself as a big part of the solution. Companies will have to adapt to legislative changes surrounding sustainability, such as whole-life carbon assessments. Contractors will also need to learn new green skills and adopt new technology.

- **The Construction Skills Shortage**

  An additional 225,000 workers will be required to meet UK construction demand by 2027. Finding young talent to fill the labour shortage has proven to be a difficult task. A lack of young people interested in construction work means each experienced worker that retires leaves a significant skill gap. Sixty-one percent of the current construction workforce is set to leave the industry in the next decade.

- **Communication**

  Construction has the most pressure groups, specialist bodies and agencies than any other industry. Each has an influence over standards and methods of working. Regulation changes mid-project can cause delays, cancellations, and rework.

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Keeping up with the constant changes happening in the sector takes time and resources that smaller businesses often do not have. A lack of joined-up thinking is not solely at macro-level. Communication between teams on a project is a frequent reason for disputes and delays.

- **Technology Adoption**

  The construction industry is notoriously hesitant to adopt new methods and technologies. This often comes down to businesses not having the time or budget to teach staff new ways of working. The construction industry is the second least digitised sector in the world. Productivity levels are lower than the UK average, which could be remedied by adopting more efficient digital methods.

- **Cash Flow and Bad Debt**

  Bad debt in the construction industry is still a prevalent issue. There is £300 million in bad debt in the UK construction industry entering 2023, which could rise to £1 billion by 2024. Research predicts more than 100 firms in the construction sector could collapse each week in 2023, exacerbating supply chain issues.

- **Health & Safety Risks**

  In 2021, construction was ranked as the most dangerous industry to work in. Despite health and safety initiatives, working with heavy machinery or heights means injuries are more likely to happen. Accidents cause lawsuits and higher insurance premiums, which have a negative impact on a brand reputation and cash flow. Injuries also mean that there are less available employees, which can be detrimental given the current skills shortage.

- **Gender Diversity in the Workforce**

  The percentage of women in the construction workforce has risen to 15% over many years but the percentage within trades remains poor. To fill the labour shortage, a bigger interest in trade work is needed

- **Infrastructure**

  Infrastructure has a major impact on land and the built environment and is crucial in sustaining life and commerce. It is estimated that there will be a global underinvestment of $15 trillion in infrastructure by 2040. If needs remain unmet, real estate values and development will be impacted as underserved areas become less liveable.

- **Affordable Housing**

  There is a tremendous need for affordable housing throughout the UK and beyond, and there is a strong "Not in My Back Yard" or NIMBY agenda. The lack of affordable for-sale homes drives up rents and increases prices of multifamily investment properties. This has translated to half of all renter households being cost-burdened.

This content will be reviewed and updated regularly to reflect the legal, ethical, and financial changes in professional standards and practice.

Overview of Summative Assessment

Module learning outcomes	Assessment	Word count or equivalent	Weighting
LO1, LO2, LO3	**Assessment 1** Literature Review	3,000	60%
LO1, LO3, LO4	**Assessment 2** Presentation	2,000 word equivalent	40%

Module Pass Mark (as a weighted average of all assessments): 40%

Key Module Learning Resources

Core Sources and Texts

The core reading resources within each module will be provided via the specific Virtual Learning Environment (VLE) module pages and within the e-Library. Additional reference material and supplementary resources to support your studies are available through the UCEM e-Library.

Module tools

Students will also have access to online research support forums, regular online sessions on research methods (recorded for those who cannot attend), dedicated academic skills support and a suite on online resources on undertaking a research project. The module page on the VLE contains a clear schedule of work to support students to plan their time.

Professional online resources

The e-Library provides access to trusted, quality online resources, selected by subject specialists, to support students' study. This includes journals, industry publications, magazines, academic books, and a dissertation/work-based library. For a list of the key industry specific and education resources available please visit the VLE e-Library.

Other relevant resources

Access is also provided to further information sources that include the British Library and Open University UK catalogues, as well as providing a monthly current awareness service entitled, **Knowledge Foundations** - a compendium of news, research and resources relating to the educational sector and the Built Environment.

The module resource list is available on the module website and is updated regularly to ensure materials are relevant and current.