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# Personal and Academic Development Core Modules in NBS

*“Personalisation delivered at scale may seem contradictory but NBS has found small yet significant ways to ensure a core module is inclusive and accessible”.*

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## Area of Focus

A school-wide overhaul to design a core first-year module around a personalisation approach to learning and teaching.

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## Context

The Business School have made sweeping changes to their core Personal and Professional Development module as credit-bearing (20%) for the first time. In previous years this module was pass/fail only and saw low levels of engagement and attendance from across the student cohort but particularly students from disadvantaged backgrounds. The module has been made credit-bearing and embedded deeper into the overall degree experience: students from across the cohorts will value its content, and levels of engagement and attainment will increase.

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## Approach

The School's Head of Accreditations and Quality commissioned a school-wide review consultation to review and reflect on the areas working well on the module and the areas not working so well. All staff who teach on the module were invited to give their thoughts, as were students from the different course cohorts who undertake the module. The findings of this review process found that three main interventions were needed, focusing on content, assessment, and language.

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## Interventions

### *Content*

- Module content will now have a more personalised and tailored approach for each student cohort. Content will reflect the degree content much more appropriately, giving students a sense of belonging as an economist, an accountant, a marketing professional, etc. The school will still be able to keep a sense of belonging amongst all the level four students by embedding an over-arching theme of 'sustainable clothing' across the module to ensure all students are working towards a common goal from their own academic standpoints.

### *Assessments*

- Assessments for the module have been revised: rather than simply collecting CPD (continuing professional development) hours instrumentally for the assessment in first term, assessments now occur at different points of the year to allow students time for reflection on their personal and professional development.

### *Language*

- Language was a cause for confusion amongst the staff and students on this module. A careful analysis of the use of jargon and higher education terminology allowed the staff to see where simpler language can be used to ensure all students—but particularly those less familiar with UK higher education—can engage more accessibly with the module. For example, the phrase 'Continuing Professional Development' itself was identified as too technical and too advanced for a first-year student who may not be continuing any professional development but rather beginning it now.

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## Initial Outcomes

The outcomes of these interventions will not be clear until the next cohort of students undertake this module with the changes in place. However, staff involved in this review feel reassured by these interventions and more confident delivering this module. The move away from unnecessary jargon has already been deemed a simple but a huge improvement by the teaching teams.

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## Challenges and next steps

The module will be reviewed again in 2020 to ascertain the effect of these changes. The biggest challenge for personalisation will be the restrictions of timetabling and limitations of space. However, after this review, School colleagues are more aware of these limitations and their impact on students' experiences, and are working to address these issues.

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## Contact details

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