

Teaching Excellence Case Study

Let's fly to Dubai: Enhancing students' industrial experience through a project-based module

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Module: 315SE Aerospace Industry Studies

Course: BEng Aerospace Engineering



LINKS TO EDUCATION STRATEGY PILLARS

- Embedded employability
- Intercultural and international engagement
- Creativity and enterprise

AIMS

The course team wanted to increase opportunities for students to develop and demonstrate their professional **behaviours** and theoretical understanding in an industrial context. A module (315SE Aerospace Industry Studies) was created with a specific focus on preparing the students for the workplace.

ACTIONS

Students are set a **challenge to project manage** the launch of a new product to market, and, in so doing, set up a business in the UK and Dubai. To support this work, students employ a variety of **software tools** used in the industry (e.g. MS Project, Excel, Draw). They also create a **video presentation** to express their plans to investors, as they would do in a Skype conference in a real-life scenario. All of this contributes to the enhancement of their business and project management skills, and digital literacy.

Students are given **guest lectures by external speakers** (including CU alumni), allowing them to network and to understand how different businesses work. Students also spend a **week in Dubai** to gain insights into the international context. The trip includes a visit to the Emirates Engines Maintenance site; a talk from a guest speaker (Head of Procurement at Emirates); plus networking with students at CU's partner institution (Emirates Aviation University (EAU)) who are also completing the module.

IMPACT

As a result of this module, students are able to apply **business and project management skills** to a complex project as an integral part of their engineering degree.



Image: CU students in Dubai (Charlotte Collins)

Students also gain **networking opportunities**. Interactions with alumni are especially useful: students can discuss employment opportunities with guest speakers who they can easily relate to. They also have the chance to learn from and collaborate with their peers. Meanwhile, some students have been able to gain the **Association of Project Management (APM)** Project Fundamentals Certificate.

The course team have plans to expand the initiative so that it runs **twice a year**, with a view to developing students through employment cycles for graduate roles.

STUDENT FEEDBACK

- "The **guest lecturers** [...] are good and informative, hearing from the experiences of **previous students**."
- "Multiple sessions with people from industry in a range of subjects [...] deepens our **understanding and prospects**."
- "[The] field trip to our partner university in Dubai [...] offered opportunities for us to discuss topics with our partner students and **leading people** within the aerospace industry."

TOP TIPS

- **Professional networks** are invaluable: the activities are possible thanks to the faculty's strong links with EAU, and the course team's contacts with alumni (e.g. through LinkedIn).
- **Advance planning** is key when organising guest speakers, and to ensuring that the course team can dedicate time to supporting the trip to Dubai.
- Setting up the module in the first place was **labour intensive**, but it has been repeated several times, which made the initial investment worthwhile.
- The **taught material** is consistent and can be updated each year. Guest speakers, and indeed assignments, can then be tailored to any product or market, in accordance with students' interests and changing market trends.
- Keep an eye on **current job adverts within the industry**, so that the software and professional practices which students develop in the module can be updated in line with these.