

Experimenting with new forms of assessment: lessons from the Institute of Social Psychology

LSE Teaching Day
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PS438 - Challenges

- Mixed background of students
- Empirical course in a theoretical discipline
- New assessment policy implemented within the Institute of Social Psychology

PS438 objectives

- To provide an introduction to corporate communication, here understood as a set of activities undertaken by organisations in order to establish favourable corporate images and reputations with all of an organisation's stakeholder groups;
- To underline how a better understanding of key **social psychological concepts** can contribute to the overall management and effectiveness of organisations.

PS438 learning outcomes

- Outline the different activities covered by the area of corporate communication and demonstrate how they interact with each other.
- Describe the origins of corporate communication and explain their implications for how this discipline is currently practised.
- Identify some of corporate communication's connections with other disciplines, in particular social psychology.
- Design elements of corporate communication programmes.
- Differentiate between communicative action and strategic action.
- Apply these skills and knowledge to different organisational environments such as NGOs, third-sector organisations or business corporations.
- Critically assess contemporary thinking in corporate communication.

Eureka!

- New type of summative assignment combining a memo and an academic essay:
 - The **summative** assignment will include two parts. In the first part (no more than 1,000 words), you will be asked to prepare a memorandum to the CEO of an organisation (be it an NGO, a business corporation or a third sector enterprise) advising him/her about a specific aspect of their corporate communication. In the second part of the essay (no more than 2,000 words), you will justify the specific recommendations presented in the memorandum with reference to social psychological literature and concepts and giving relevant examples of corporate communication practice. The first part of the essay will count for 25% of your mark while 75% will come from the second part.

Format

- First section (memo):
 - Should begin with a small paragraph (7-8 lines) giving some information about the organisation you have chosen and why the specific aspect of CC you have chosen is relevant
 - Memo should be written as if you were a consultant/expert on corporate communication or the VP for corporate communication of that organisation (eg, 'Dear Sir' or 'Dear Madam', 'you' or 'your organisation')
- Second section
 - Academic essay with appropriate tone, referencing, criticality, areas for further research, etc.

Content

- Can deal with any aspect encompassed by corporate communication, even ones not covered in this course (eg, investor relations)
- Should focus on only one aspect of an organisation's corporate communication
- Theoretical concepts should come from social psychology as understood here at the ISP but could be others than the ones we have seen

How was it?

- Breath of fresh air both for students and for markers
- Some real gems
- More room for creativity but, possibly, at the expense of criticality (only 3000 words)
- Good preparation for MSc dissertation and for 'real world' + opportunity for more mature students to use their previous experience

Lessons

- Innovation takes time and much, much patience!
- Think about assessment criteria that will be used and communicate them clearly to students and to your marking team

Discussion

- Should we and how can we be more creative with our assignments?
- Should we think in terms of an array of assessments?
- Should we give more value to participation and presentation?
- Should assessment policies be conceived more explicitly at the level of programmes?

Innovation in PS400

- Formative assignment revisited:
 - Revisiting the book review
 - Aim: “to encourage you to begin to come full circle in your learning by integrating content from different courses so as to arrive at a multi-dimensional understanding of the core problematic of the programme.”
 - “The means for achieving this aim is to look again at your book review in the light of the subsequent teaching on the core course, the Flagship lectures and the half-units.”