

**Teaching Innovation Case Study**  
*Model United Nations*  
School of Social and Political Sciences

## Module Overview

*Model United Nations* is a Level 2 International Relations module which uses a simulation of the work and practices of the United Nations to introduce students to the operation of diplomacy and international law within international organisations. Students are assigned a country to represent for the duration of the module and work with their peers to identify international problems, and to propose and vote upon appropriate international policy responses. The module culminates with an assessed simulation of the United Nations General Assembly. Pedagogically, the module is grounded in co-production, collaborative learning, authentic learning, and simulation.

## Challenge

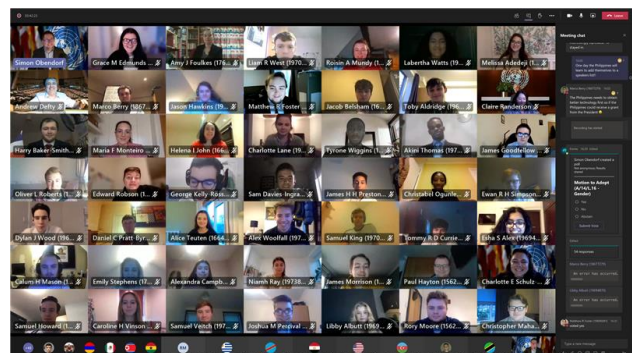
Prior to the covid-19 pandemic, the module was both innovative and challenging to deliver due to:

- the need for consistent student engagement, focus and participation
- the co-created nature of the module content
- collaboration as the foundation for teaching, learning and assessment practice
- the emphasis on oral presentation skills and formal speechmaking to peers and academic staff in the formal debating chamber of Lincolnshire County Council.

[Click here](#) to see the 2020 Model United Nations simulation to understand the nature of this core activity pre-pandemic.

The remote teaching and learning introduced by the imperatives of Covid-19 safety measures necessitated substantial adaptation of existing collaborative learning activities on the module. Specific challenges in the academic year 2020/21 included:

- the need to facilitate core aspects of the simulation in the digital space, including negotiation, caucusing, formal debate and deliberation
- the absence of a face-to-face interactive learning environment for small group work
- facilitating classroom-generated content in a digital setting
- adapting to the functional limitations of specific digital platforms
- significantly enhancing use of a range of digital learning tools
- lack of access to the Lincolnshire County Council chambers for formal simulation purposes
- need to scaffold student use of digital tools and to ensure equity of assessment opportunities.



## **Innovation**

Some of the adaptations made to this module in the academic year 2020/21 have resulted in innovative practices that have enhanced teaching and learning quality. In particular, the enhanced use of digital technologies in 2020/21 will be retained for future module delivery in a face to face setting, for example

- Use of Sharepoint, MS Teams and Padlet to assemble and disseminate student content
- Editing shared documents via MS Teams and Office 365 by students - generating content and enhancing live collaboration
- Live, online voting on General Assembly resolutions and amendments
- The use of videoconferencing as a tool of digital diplomacy

In the political sphere, digital diplomacy and online working are reducing costs associated with international embassies and diplomatic travel. Furthermore, during 2020, both the United Nations and the UK Parliament embraced online working and relocated formal debates and committee work to Zoom. As such, this module's adaptation to the use of digital technologies has enabled students to replicate, in real time, the real-world working adaptations associated with this topic of study. This has further enhanced authentic learning and skills development on the module.

## **Impact**

Students have become significantly more comfortable and confident in working online as a result of the pedagogic design of this module, specifically in the presentation of both formal and ad hoc speeches. Students have also benefitted from the development of transferable skills for working in emerging online environments.

Lincolnshire County Council (LCC) are hopeful that the module team and students will be back in the council's debating chamber in 2021/22. In previous years, LCC have keenly observed the methods of collaborative working employed by the staff and students on the Model United Nations module. It is hoped that the future use of digital tools in the chamber, as part of this module, may broaden the reach of these capabilities in the real-world setting, through the sharing of practice by students with Lincolnshire County councillors.

## **Student feedback**

*"obviously would be amazing to be able to do it in person but clearly this was not possible this year. However, how it was conducted this year was amazing."*

*"The participation and interaction in the live sessions. Very enjoyable and interesting discussions and debates."*