

THE DEVELOPMENT AND EVOLUTION OF THE BUILT ENVIRONMENT MODULAR SCHEME (BEMOS) AT LEEDS METROPOLITAN UNIVERSITY

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THE BACKGROUND

In 1996 the School of the Built Environment at Leeds Metropolitan University ran undergraduate courses in the following subject areas:

Qualification / Study Time	Accrediting Body	Subject Area	Att Mode	
			FT	PT
First Degree (3 yrs FT, 4 yrs SW, 5 yrs PT)	RICS	Quantity Surveying	√	√
		Building Surveying	√	√
		Planning	√	
		Project Management (Construction)	√	
	ICE	Civil Engineering	√	√
	ICES	Civil Engineering Commercial Management	√	√
	CIOB	Construction Management	√	√
Diploma (2 yrs FT)	ICE	Civil Engineering	√	
	ICES	Civil Engineering Surveying	√	
		Civil Engineering Quantity Surveying	√	
		Building Studies	√	
Certificate (2 yrs PT)	ICE	Civil Engineering		√
		Building Studies		√

The total number of Modules in these courses numbered nearly 200, and all cohorts were taught individually. Many of the courses had less than 20 students per level and dedicated electives at levels 2 and 3.

In recent years the UK government has expanded the UK Higher Education sector without a corresponding increase in the level of funding. *“A generation ago only about 10% of young people attended university, now 40% of young people aged between 18 and 30 participate in higher education courses. The Government hopes to increase this proportion to 50%. This increase in student numbers has been accompanied by 38% fall in resources per student over the last 12 years on top of a 20% fall in the previous 13 years”.* (Guardian Newspaper) Additionally the traditional UK policy of paying a students course fees and providing a maintenance grant to cover living expenses is no

longer operational. Students now have to pay a proportion of tuition fees and provide their own living expenses.

The decrease in the unit of funding has forced the University to look at ways of reducing costs. After looking at the course programme within the School of the Built Environment it was obvious that many courses were effectively running the same modules but with different titles. By examining the content of similar modules delivered to each cohort within the school it was very often possible to replace 3 or 4 with a single common module. Elective modules chosen by just 2 or 3 students were deemed to be uneconomical and discontinued. Through this rationalisation process the original 200 modules were reduced to 83 without any corresponding reduction in the number of accredited courses.

The result of this rationalising and restructuring is the Built Environment Modular Scheme (BEMOS)

The BEMOS scheme is designed around a two semester year. Each semester is made up of 4 modules and to minimise costs the maximum amount of commonality is achieved.

From a financial point of view this works well, allowing courses to be run that would not be financially viable if the cohort was taught by itself. It also facilitates student movement around BEMOS courses in the early part of level 1. Unfortunately courses tend to lose their individual identity and this can be unsettling for new students, i.e. Quantity Surveying students cannot understand why they are being taught alongside Civil Engineering students.

Two influential reports were published in the UK in the 1990's, (*Constructing The Team, Latham 1994 and Rethinking Construction, Egan 1998*) highlighting several perceived deficiencies within the skills base of the construction related industries. The main ones being:

- Communication skills
- Team building skills
- IT skills

The BEMOS scheme attempts to address these deficiencies by placing great emphasis on the development of Inter – disciplinary working and transferable skills. Each of the 3 levels has a specific module that requires students to work closely with those on other courses.

These modules are designed to make students aware of common objectives, develop an appreciation and understanding of the different roles played by people working within the Built Environment, and encouraging communication and team building skills. Within these modules we are specifically attempting to develop the following transferable skills:

- Social and Environmental awareness
- Professional Awareness, Standards and Ethics
- Collaboration in problem solving
- Leadership
- Organisation of groups
- Co-ordination of expertise
- Self analysis
- Peer analysis

The remaining transferable skills are developed within the other modules:

- Creativity and Application
- Information Technology
- Personal Skills
- Study skills / Research

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