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Accounting Bissim: Steering students towards sustainability

Finalist: Driving change through education, training and academia award

What

Accounting Bissim is a flexible and realistic facilitated business simulation designed to support accounting and finance courses. Students play the role of company directors working to build a competitive business, with success measured by the business's long-term sustainability. Tutors act as facilitators during the simulation, actively supporting students' learning.

In the simulation, the students apply tools and concepts from their course, interpret financial information and make critical business decisions. Students steer the company's choices in business areas such as finance, production, marketing and – importantly – sustainability initiatives. The simulation generates financial statements, metrics, ratios, non-financial KPIs and other data that are the direct result of the students' decisions.

Sustainability is a core element of financial decision-making in the Accounting Bissim model. The simulation's holistic approach treats sustainability as a necessary component of strategy for a competitive and profitable business, though importantly this isn't emphasised to the students in the simulation briefing. The result is that students learn, in a hands-on way, both how to embed sustainability into business decisions and how vital it is to do so.

'The Accounting Bissim team are delighted to have been shortlisted for this prestigious award. Whilst the simulation was originally developed in order to improve engagement in accounting and finance learners, being shortlisted for the Finance for the Future Awards recognises Accounting Bissim's ability to promote a holistic and sustainable approach to accounting, finance and business management decisions.'

Darren Sparkes, Matt Davies, Lisa Weaver,
The developers of Accounting Bissim

Why

Accounting Bissim took an existing simulation tool, Bissim, and adapted it for accounting and finance learning. The co-creators wanted an educational tool that would be more effective and more engaging for students than a traditional classroom teaching environment. Although other generic business simulations were available, none had a focus on accounting and finance education – Accounting Bissim was designed to fill that gap.

Accounting Bissim is aligned with the values of the co-creators' institutions, which aim to add value to society by educating and inspiring learners. The co-creators envisage that Accounting Bissim will have real-world impact: through engaging students and shifting their mindset on the role of sustainability in finance, the lessons of Accounting Bissim can be taken forward into students' professional lives. Armed with a thorough understanding of how to manage a business for long-term sustainability rather than short-term financial gain, students can become agents of change.



'Accounting Bissim engages learners in an interactive and fun activity to increase sustainable decision-making in business. The way in which sustainability is a standard parameter embedded within R&D, marketing, HR, production and finance decisions encourages learners to build long-term sustainable businesses.'

Finance for the Future Awards judges



How

Accounting Bissim is designed to integrate environmental and social concerns into accounting and finance courses:

- > The simulation was **developed as a collaboration** between academics from three universities: De Montfort University, Aston University and the University of Warwick. Each institution has a business school with a large accounting and finance department.
- > The co-creators **adapted an existing tool**, working with the owner, to provide a simulation that specifically addresses the needs of accounting and finance programmes.
- > Accounting Bissim **covers a range of finance areas**. Students get the experience of applying financial accounting, management accounting and financial management in a simulated business environment.
- > The tool is **flexible**, and can be used on undergraduate, postgraduate, MBA and corporate programmes. It can also be tailored to suit the needs of specific courses.
- > The end goal is to **produce a sustainable business** – including, but not limited to, financial returns. To succeed, students must take a long-term, holistic approach to commercial finance.
- > The co-creators **embedded sustainability** as an integral component of business decisions. Students must make decisions on issues including environmental protection, energy efficiency, employee welfare and reputational risk.
- > Accounting Bissim is **updated regularly**. The simulation has been revised to use KPIs that are mapped against 10 of the UN's Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) so that students learn to make decisions aligned with the SDGs.
- > Accounting Bissim is **designed to be engaging** for students. With the simulation, students are active participants in learning and teachers facilitate that learning.
- > The simulation is a **facilitated training-room activity**. The co-creators believe that internet-based simulation can result in disengaged students and dysfunctional group dynamics. Tutors act as facilitators, introducing exercises, taking part in role plays, monitoring team dynamics and adjusting the simulation if needed.
- > The software **can penalise or reward students** based on the quality of their engagement with environmental, social and sustainability issues. Learners often begin with a focus on short-term profits, but seeing the real impact of sustainability on the business shifts their mindsets.
- > The co-creators are working to **encourage other institutions to adopt Accounting Bissim** as a teaching tool. They have presented the simulation at academic conferences. They also hope to introduce Accounting Bissim to new audiences and are talking to accounting bodies about how the simulation could be used in professional exams.

www.accountingbissim.com



DISCLAIMER

This case study presents **Accounting Bissim** entry for the Finance for the Future Awards 2019. The case study only includes information that was part of the organisation's 2019 entry. Some of this information may now be out of date. For a current view of the organisation's work, please visit their website at the link given above.



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