

Using SimVenture in Fashion and Textiles

Description: This case study is based on an interview with Jo Conlon, Senior Lecturer in the Department of Design, School of Art, design and Architecture at the University of Huddersfield on 10 June 2014.

Course/subject: Fashion and Textiles

Type of student: Undergraduate

Number of students: 27

Why use SimVenture?

The educator was looking for something that would fit with the finance aspect of the course and discovered SimVenture during a showcase at the University of Huddersfield Teaching and Learning Conference 2010.

How was SimVenture used with students?

It is implemented with second year students in Fashion and Textiles (Buying or Management), and has been running for three years on the course. The students are given the assignment and an introduction to SimVenture at the end of term one. This takes place in a computer lab with the educator as a facilitator. The class is split into groups of between two and four and students are then expected to get on with the activity in their groups; the assignment is handed in at the end of term two. Students within the groups are asked to take on one of the four quadrants that make up the main categories on the SimVenture dashboard.

Impact on students: Financial confidence has improved, soft skills are developed and business knowledge increased. Students are exposed to and develop an understanding of the financial aspects of fashion and textiles. The simulation helped students realise the difficulty of working life, such as time management, marketing of their product, and market research.

How was it assessed? The simulation is worth 50% of a 40 credit module.

Presentation: A group PowerPoint presentation demonstrating their progress through the game and the final net profit that the group earned. The presentation is in front of class for peer review and academic review at the end of the module.

Reflective log: The presentation is accompanied with a written log, in which each individual student has to include their decisions throughout the simulation, giving reasons for the options they have chosen. This also includes reflections of the team performance and evaluation of the software.



Student feedback: Students fed back that they preferred to be in pairs rather than groups of four because it was difficult to keep the entire team engaged around the PC due to only one keyboard per group. One student said:

“I think SimVenture is a very useful tool, it really helps to explain the stages you need to run a successful company and encourages users to think holistically about a business rather than just its profit and bank balance. I shall definitely take what I have learnt from this game and apply it to real life situations both in my internships and final year modules.”

Educator perspective: The educator presumed that the software would be easy to implement but underestimated how uncomfortable some students were to just jump into the simulation. The main SimVenture screen with the four quadrants showing how the four parts of the business fit together and understanding the ripple effect of making a decision in one quadrant is really, really important and students would not have got this in any other way than by using SimVenture.

There were some issues with the students leaving the simulation activity close to their assessment completion deadline. The students do see the benefit of having done the simulation when they come into their final year.

At the time of this case study, there were only 14 licenses for SimVenture available within the University and these were in a computer room so this limited student access to the game.

How was using SimVenture evaluated?

The educator is reviewing how the SimVenture activity is planned, how much it needs ‘scaffolding’ and how it fits with other modules on an on-going basis.

Lessons Learned:

- Keep groups small.
- Recommend a written log to document their learning experience including creating their personal glossary of financial terms that they could pick up when they came back into their final year after a year out.

Future work: Planning to recruit an accountancy lecturer to consult for technical terms, financial advice for students to understand terminology and financial maths within the simulation and the course. Considering incorporating a warm up sessions in the first year to get students used to the software in preparation for the second year where using SimVenture is an assessed activity. The aim is to relax the students and make them comfortable before it becomes a high stakes situation, in which they can be a bit frightened to explore the software to its full extent.

