The Academics Calendar

**2011 - 12**

Dr Simon Brown

Enterprise Education and Employability Consultant



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| September | | | | | | |
| Sunday  However before you can think the resit boards are upon us and the call for marks and decisions on the stragglers from last year demand your attention  Back to work after what felt like the shortest holiday ever. The recruitment team are reporting that while numbers are ok for the University there are some worrying signs as far as a number on the "bread and butter" courses are concerned. There appear to be some courses with question marks over them and unless numbers improve they will have to be closed.  Your subject leader tries to talk to you about your work plan but it is hard to decide what it will be like given the fact that nobody knows what the first year or returning years student numbers will be in a few weeks time.  After this the impending new session looms large. You remember that you have two new units to deliver this year. You had promised your subject leader that you would prepare the unit handbook and assessment schedule over the summer – but where did the summer go? You frantically sit down over a weekend and get an outline together. You look at what you did last year on the old units and rework the material to fit the new unit spec. | Monday | Tuesday | Wednesday | Thursday | Friday | Saturday |
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| October | | | | | | |
| Sunday  You talk to a colleague over coffee and find out that the draft timetable is available on-line. You search for it and end up giving up. You assume that somebody will tell you where to go and what to teach.  Your subject leader tells you that courses will have to close unless the numbers improve next year. You feel as if they want you to do something but your chat is interrupted and you move on to your next class.  Induction week and the hoards of freshers make it impossible to find space in the coffee bar. They look lost and afraid. You decide to stop those looking most lost and offer to help. They ask for a room and you direct them there.  Your first class of the year – the room bulges with expectant faces. You are sure you recognise some but can't decide if they were in your class last year or were they the ones you helped find that room for their induction?  A timetable eventually appears and you find you have classes across the campus and even on the other campus – you contact the timetable team and ask who decided to spread your classes out this way? The harassed person on the other end of the phone explains that you didn't respond last year when they asked for availability and that the software has fitted your classes in to fit the optimum given the constraints known to it.  You decide to not argue and promise to respond to the timetable request next year. | Monday | Tuesday | Wednesday | Thursday | Friday | Saturday |
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| November | | | | | | |
| Sunday  Your subject group is asked to come up with five new course titles by the end of the week. You laugh and suggest that somebody does some marketing – you don't have time as you are far too busy.  You read in the Time Higher that new courses are dumbing down standards and that traditional subjects are making a come back. You suggest this to a colleague who offers his advice. You decide that he is probably right but you have more than enough to do teaching here and now to worry about developing new courses.  A cold snap causes you to have to cancel a number of classes. You cannot afford to lose the time especially as the assessments you have only just set for the units all expect you to cover a lot of new material. You decide to cut some lectures from the second semester – you will decide what to do with the missed material next year.  You are now having to spend most weekends and evenings developing materials for your new units. The thoughts you had for recycling old material have now all been used up and you have to get some new material developed. You find you can't work in your office as the constant moaning of your colleague about his work load and lack of support is driving you to distraction. | Monday | Tuesday | Wednesday | Thursday | Friday | Saturday |
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| December | | | | | | |
| Sunday  The first round of assessments start to trickle in. You didn't realise how many assignments were about to appear. There goes another few weekends.  You can't wait for Christmas and as you trudge off for the break your house fills with piles of reports and essays to mark. You close the study door and say – that's for next year!  Roll on Christmas. The weather is dull and the attendance at your classes has nose-dived! You advise the students at your classes to turn up every week – but this lot do – how do you get this message to the ones who are not there?  The subject group has been given a target – from the business plan - to develop three new degree programmes. You are invited to join a planning team. The business plan is circulated and you arrange to have a group meeting to discuss the proposals. When the day comes you find that while everybody important is there, there are some notable absences. After a while the discussion gets going and loads of great ideas begin to flow. You start to get excited. A few colleagues mention resources and work planning. Your subject leader answers the direct questions but you know that you can't do any more – so don't volunteer to join a working party. | Monday | Tuesday | Wednesday | Thursday | Friday | Saturday |
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| January 2012  Before you know it the second semester has started. The timetable is not too bad this semester. Your first class goes well and you see a full room – oh that it would stay like that.  You catch a cold – but can't take any time off because you have to get the material covered.  Colleagues talk about their teaching and the problems that they have had with the cohort. You mention that you had some problems but fail to mention that weekends devoted to developing the lectures and seminars or the worrying drop off in attendance.  The long gap between the end of teaching in December and starting again in January has resulted in the numbers in class being even lower than before  The cold and damp office looks slightly less festive in January than it did in December. The piles of marking did get done and the work now needs to be moderated. You get the materials together for your moderator – you leave them on his chair when he is not around hoping that he will know what to do with them!  The few end of semester 1 assessments result in a few brown bags of marking. These are easily completed over a weekend and a few early nights. The dark and cold of January makes marking at home a much more attractive option than trying to mark in your office. | | | | | | |
| Sunday | Monday | Tuesday | Wednesday | Thursday | Friday | Saturday |
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| February | | | | | | |
| Sunday  A planning meeting is called. You find that it has been called at a time when you can make it! You turn up and decide to be positive. You listen to the discussion and think you heard this last year in a similar meeting to decide on what new courses to develop. You mention that the “Times Higher” reported that traditional subjects were making a come back. You are asked to find out the statistics behind this. You cough but before you can reply the meeting has moved on. | Monday | Tuesday | Wednesday | Thursday  Attendance at your classes is dropping faster than before Christmas. You decide to act and send an email to all your students – you use the option on mycourse. It has a small impact. You decide to push on with the lectures and seminars you spend each weekend developing. | Friday | Saturday |
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| 7 | 8 | 9 | 10 | 11 | 12 | 13 |
| 14 | 15  You remember you decided to cut some sessions from the "master plan" to allow you to finish the syllabus you were given for the unit. You can't see how – but after looking at the remaining assessments you decide that there is a way to cover all the assessed material – it will however make it harder for the teaching team on the next year's units as the material you decide to cut is actually quite important for the final year's curriculum. You decide to leave telling anybody about it just now as you are far too busy. | 16 | 17 | 18 | 19 | 20 |
| 21 | 22 | 23 | 24 | 25 | 26  A circular email invites you to comment on a programme specification. You decide to ignore this as you are far too busy. | 27 |
| 28 | 29 | 30 | 31 |  |  |  |
| March | | | | | | |
| Sunday  Everybody is getting far too grumpy for their own good. Students are beginning to panic – they have not found a placement, they have a poor set of marks that wont allow them to get at 2:1, they have too many assessments left, their group work is being affected by a dead-leg member of their group and your colleagues are moaning about the demands for units for these new degrees.  Emails from the faculty managers extol the virtues of efficiency and working smarter not harder. You wish you could but with nobody else to share the teaching with and a growing number of lectures to cover you wonder who actually has the time to work smarter? You delete an email about your availability for next year's teaching as you are far too busy to think about that now.  You can't recall seeing anything about new degrees and don't offer to help as you are far too busy with your students. There appears to be a continual demand for help from student faces you can’t recall ever seeing and for information you are sure you gave out in class weeks ago. You meet several students offering them help and try as you might – you cannot find their names on any signing in sheets. | Monday | Tuesday | Wednesday | Thursday | Friday | Saturday |
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| 7 | 8 | 9 | 10 | 11 | 12 | 13 |
| 14 | 15 | 16 | 17 | 18 | 19 | 20 |
| 21 | 22 | 23 | 24 | 25  You are invited to present your findings on the “Times Higher” article. A quick search on Google has given you some "A" level data. You decide to go with this. You briefly explain that it has been virtually impossible to find any quality assured data – however the situation is clear. More students are taking certain subjects than ever before. You think that our subject group should consider the implications of the data and offer to share your findings. | 26 | 27 |
| 28 | 29 | 30 | 31 |  |  |  |
| April | | | | | | |
| Sunday | Monday | Tuesday | Wednesday | Thursday | Friday | Saturday |
| You hear that a team of colleagues has actually developed a new degree. It has been planned and is up for Validation just after Easter. You wonder what new material will be wanted, what will it be doing – unfortunately you are so busy you can't contemplate offering to help.  Easter comes and you spend two weeks at home marking the piles of reports and assignments. You wonder where the students got the information to answer the questions – you are sure they didn't get it from your lectures. You can't help but wonder if it came from the internet – so you cut and past a few paragraphs into Google and see what comes out. You are amazed that there are so many matches. Have the students been plagiarising or cheating or is that just poor referencing. You decide to ignore it as the marks are coming out quite good. You recall reading that modules with first time pass rates of 88% wont get looked at. At the moment your pass rate is 90%. You decide to not think about it.  The longer days mean the trip home is now in the light – not much longer and the evenings will be light too and then you can think about the summer. You still spend most weekends preparing but at least the end is in sight!  You begin to feel that you will complete the curriculum as planned. The lost material probably won’t be that significant. You decide to not tell anybody.  Easter is approaching and with it the piles of marking are building up again. You decide to stack the marking under your desk and think that Easter will be a good time to clear them all. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 |
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| May | | | | | | |
| Sunday | Monday | Tuesday | Wednesday | Thursday | Friday | Saturday |
| Well the revision class went well. Almost half of the class turned up. You dropped mega hints and the hand out of key learning points should help. | 1 | 2  You spend several days listening to student presentations. What a great bunch of students you have. They are smart and well prepared. You feel quietly confident that yet again you will have opened up a number of young minds. You begin to relax. | 3 | 4  The exam season starts and for once your diary begins to have gaps. You wonder what to do. | 5 | 6 |
| 7 | 8 | 9 | 10 | 11 | 12 | 13 |
| 14  Before you know it the exam's brown paper bags appear and your are thrown back into that state of purdah called marking. You find the study brighter and lighter than in the winter and the marking only takes three or four days. Fortunately the bank holidays provide at least three of these days! | 15 | 16 | 17  The end is in sight. You bundle up materials for the moderators and pull together various documents for the unit files. There are a few sections of the file that you can't complete – but with such good overall pass marks you feel confident that nobody will worry that you have not managed to get any student feedback. | 18 | 19 | 20 |
| 21 | 22 | 23  **ROLL ON SUMMER!!** | 24 | 25 | 26 | 27 |
| 28 | 29 | 30 | 31 |  |  |  |
| June | | | | | | |
| Sunday | Monday | Tuesday | Wednesday | Thursday | Friday | Saturday |
| Exams and assessment activity gradually drifts away. You send off your marks for the final time to the admin team. The call to the boards appears and you go through the motions once again. You recall how you used to get excited by the though of a good discussion at the boards of old. How they used to go on. We used to change marks and argue about all sorts of things. The board this year was over in 45 mins. How much better it is now? | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4  Your subject leader has asked to meet to discuss work planning. You ask around and find that everybody is wondering what will happen next year. The new course was validated – surely they won’t risk recruiting to it this summer – with no marketing? | 5 | 6 |
| 7 | 8 | 9 | 10 | 11 | 12 | 13 |
| 14 | 15  You look at your teaching and decide that you should be Ok for another year – the modules are still well subscribed – a couple of your second year units have seen their numbers drop to around 15 but you have a couple of first and final year units with over 100 on so you think that it should not be a problem to get your class contact time to 16 hours a week – average... | 16 | 17 | 18 | 19 | 20 |
| 21 | 22 | 23 | 24  An email goes round – there are to be two colleagues retiring this session. When did old – "thingumy" and "tweedle dee" decide to retire? Who is going to cover their teaching and why didn't you know? | 25 | 26 | 27 |
| 28 | 29 | 30 | 31 |  |  |  |
| July | | | | | | |
| Sunday | Monday | Tuesday | Wednesday | Thursday | Friday | Saturday |
| The new units now look decidedly old – you promise yourself that you will actually get round to developing the new material next year – but for now – the wool has been pulled over the eyes again and you managed to make it through another year. One more closer to that longed for retirement!  You wonder what happened to that "Scholarly activity" you were promised – how could you have missed it?  Now where is that sun screen!  You have your work planning meeting. Your subject leader thinks that you should be able to pick up some of old "Thingumy's" teaching. You point out that you are working with a full load. You are asked to see if you could reduce the contact time on your units to allow you to pick up some of the new stuff. You say you will think about it – but actually refuse to consider it – you remember a friend that cut down his contact time and look what happened to him!  Anyway it doesn't matter your holidays are just around the corner. Only a few more days and then its off to the Costa Del Sol! | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 |
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| August | | | | | | |
| Sunday | Monday | Tuesday | Wednesday | Thursday | Friday | Saturday |
| Isn't it great when you can't remember whether it is Friday, Monday or Thursday. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4  Damn its "A" level week and you have to be in to help out. | 5 | 6 |
| 7 | 8 | 9 | 10  You volunteer to help out on the faculty clearing desk. They did decide to recruit to that new course – your lack of any understanding of the course doesn't stop you recruiting to it with enthusiasm. | 11 | 12 | 13 |
| 14  You were asked to visit a school to help students with concerns.  You drive off to a school and sit in a room for what appears to be hours. Eventually a young face peeps around the door. You find out that they have not done as well as they had hoped. You make encouraging sounds and phone the University that they wanted to go to. After a couple of minutes they are on to a course tutor who reassures them that that while the course they applied to is now not an option – that there is a course that they are qualified for. They hang up the phone and leave your room smiling. This happens a few more times before the supply of anxious faces dries up. You say your goodbyes and leave the school. There are gaggles of young people all animated and excited by the school gates | 15 | 16 | 17 | 18 | 19 | 20 |
| 21 | 22 | 23 | 24 | 25  Your summer is now a distant memory as the resit papers and the brown paper envelopes appear again. The new session beckons and that unit rewrite will have to wait for another year. You have just too much to do.... | 26 | 27 |
| 28 | 29 | 30 | 31 |  |  |  |