LSST LiFE
MAGAZINE

April 2023 Edition

In this edition
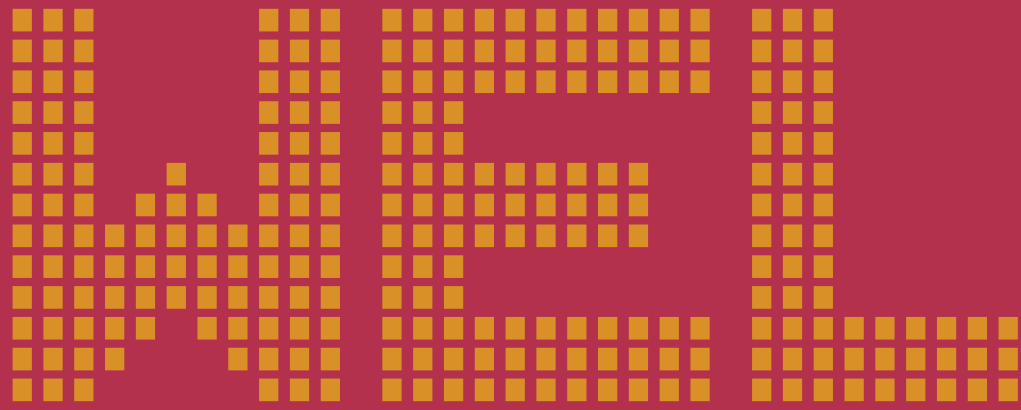
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L SST is making a positive impact. In our April 2023 issue, we commemorate the vital role our students, staff and alumni are playing in unlocking a fairer and bolder world for everyone.

Hear from our student and staff voices on whether or not the internet is working the way it is meant to (p.05), meet our amazing CNN and Tony Blair Institute writing competition winners (p.07) and learn more about vital academic writing skills (p.16). Also, we want to take this opportunity to thank all our students, staff and alumni who bring LSST Life magazine to life.

Lastly, remember that our Student Union is open to all students and we ensure that everyone can participate in social activities and democratic decision-making – no wonder why we received a whopping 95.65% overall student satisfaction rate for our current NSS (see p.12). Hope you enjoy reading this issue as much as we did.

Mr Ali Jafar Zaidi
Deputy CEO

I am very proud to welcome everyone to the inaugural edition of our beloved LSST Life Magazine! As the Principal of our institution, I am thrilled to share with you the many exciting achievements of our staff and students.

This magazine reflects the enthusiastic engagement and contributions of our community, and I encourage everyone to continue to share their thoughts, ideas, and experiences in future editions of this magazine.

I believe that the active participation and engagement of both staff and students are essential to the success and vitality of our institution. It is through hard work and dedication that we are able to provide an exceptional learning environment in LSST and continue to grow as an institution.

I would like to invite all members of our community to become writers for the magazine. Whether you are a student or staff member, your voice and perspective are valuable and important.

By sharing your thoughts and experiences, you will not only contribute to the magazine, but also to the overall community and dynamism of LSST.
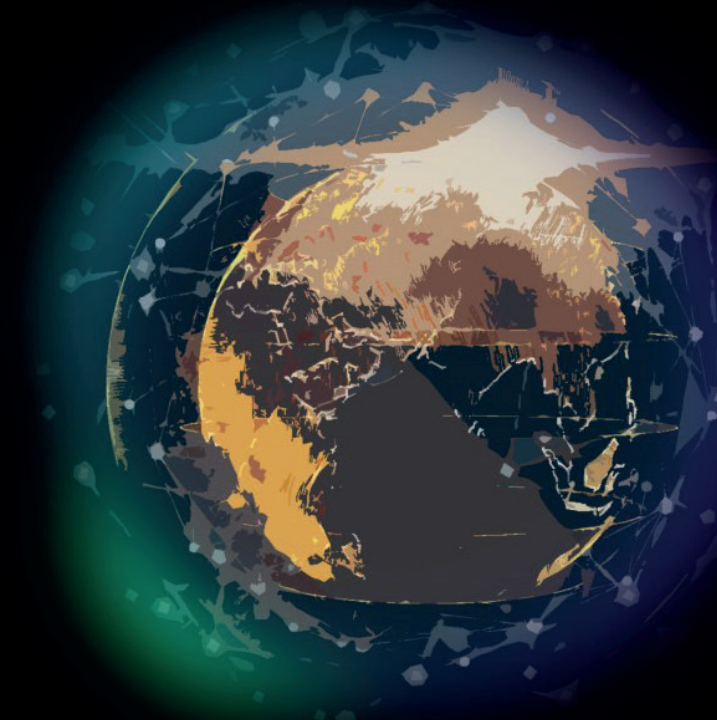
Thank you for your continued support and engagement.

I look forward to sharing your stories and achievements of our community though the Life magazine.

Dr George Panagiotou
Principal

IN THIS EDITION

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LSST Voices:
Is the internet working the way it is meant to?

BY KUNAL CHAN MEHTA

LSST'S PUBLIC RELATIONS MANAGER

The internet is one of the most important innovations of all time. But something is wrong – very wrong – when Tim Berners-Lee, the founding father of the internet – or whatever it has become today – says: 'What was once a rich selection of blogs and websites has been compressed under the powerful weight of a few dominant platforms making it possible to weaponise the web at scale.' Such stark observations question what the internet is evolving into. We assemble expert LSST voices to delve deeper into the 'broken internet'.

The internet reflects the world – its highs and lows – and is a complex global mesh that has completely reinvented the way we connect, communicate, create, contribute, consume – and, more recently, cancel. The increasing ease of internet access has predominantly crafted a continuously connected 'online world'. But do we need to be? And why are we all so internet-reliant?

The internet we have today may not be the one we like – but it sure is the one we deserve. Over the last several decades, we created it and revealed everything to it. We shook hands with internet giants when we used their platforms without charge. In turn, they presented us with targeted adverts, collected our information and, subsequently, gained considerable power and control.

'Despite its many advantages, the internet needs to create a better and fairer future and act as a democratic tool to champion legitimacy,' states Irina Barariu, LSST's Student Union President, who investigated the British Government's digital estate. 'Our shared online environment needs to be more helpful – not harmful – and embrace more inclusivity – not exclusivity.'

Indeed technology must serve humanity – not the other way around. The internet was always purposed to be open and accessible to everyone. However, the relatively youthful internet (est 1991) has migrated from a simple network of information (Web1) to a network of people or social media (Web2) to a complex network of things/computing devices (Web3). Staggeringly, as we still grapple with the issues of Web1, we fast sail into the unknown and undefined Web4 – perhaps the Internet of People (IoP) – especially as Facebook (now Meta), Google, Apple, Microsoft and Amazon compete for possession of the next internet stage.
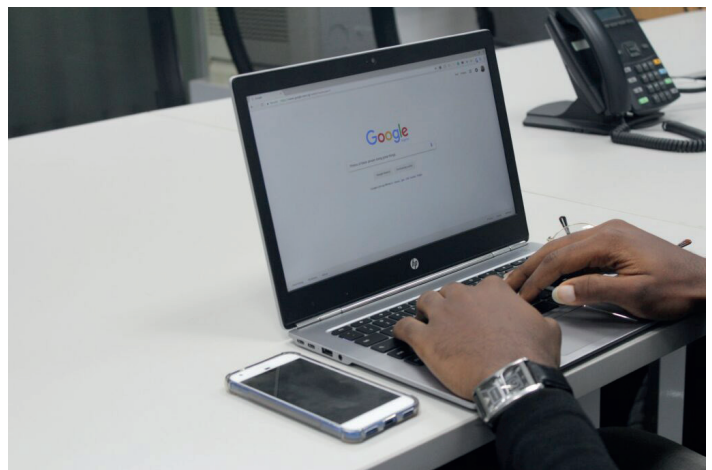
A better internet

The web has long battled to be a safe and empowering environment. Yet, in our wait to combat this, we have allowed the internet landscape to shift underneath us. 'The Internet of Things (IoT) is becoming the Internet of Threats,' states Lynnette Douglas, LSST Aston's Senior Welfare, Disability & Student Support Co-ordinator, probing the internet's soaring control and power. 'Whilst it is commonplace to live online there are many unanswered questions about domination, access, privacy and security.' Advocating an IoT detox, Amine Lallali, LSST's IT Manager, says: 'I genuinely believe everyone should at least once visit a secluded spot – such as a desert – and be free from the internet for a month. Hopefully, this will allow people to realise that the digital environment is subordinate to reality.'

'It is about balance. We need to make sure the internet does not completely take over our lives,' notes Chompa Rahman, a LSST Luton Business student – and an award-winning writer on how the pandemic has changed the world. When asked about the pandemic switching the world to an online-everything, Chompa replied: 'The pandemic has fast accelerated our evolution into a digital, online and mobile society that is everyone's necessity. It is an ingrained part of our culture and, worryingly, life is unimaginable without it. But we must seek ways to replace any over-reliance on the internet.'

'Paradoxically, the pandemic migrated much of the social and business world online and the internet proved to be a lifeline allowing us to carry on virtually when we could not physically,' added Samia Zaheer, a Business Management student at LSST's Luton campus. 'And that is something to be thankful for. But, in our pandemic isolation, we all spent a large amount of time in front of a screen and many of us have become accustomed to this without realising it.'

Even before the pandemic further normalised the virtual sphere, the internet had already reshaped much of the human world and allowed historical changes and advancements. Speaking about the prospects ahead, Mr Ali Jafar Zaidi, LSST's Deputy CEO, said: 'As with any transformation, there will be challenges. Nevertheless, as we are still repairing, rebuilding and reinventing there has appeared an opportunity to create better.' 'Yes, the pandemic catalysed change – but it is up to the best of humanity to shape a better online world by speaking up,' agreed Mohammad Haider, Dean of LSST's Wembley campus, discussing the internet's lost trajectory. 'We must not fail in utilising this moment to stand up for privacy, access and data concerns. We may never get such an opportunity again.'

Dr Sisi Wang, a Senior Lecturer in Business and Course Coordinator at LSST's Luton campus, affirms in 'moving away from inertia' and for 'standardisation and coherency' across user interfaces and governments. Wang added: 'Only through cooperation and governance can users, developers, leaders and changemakers overcome web3-era issues and move towards a better web-phase'.

Rewriting the narrative

As we move towards a world where the physical and digital concomitantly blend, additional regulations and conventions are needed to give people more control of their digital identities, ownership and – above all – what is happening to the data they create. Shan Wikoon, a reader in 3D printing technology and a Senior Lecturer in Business and Module Leader at LSST's Elephant and Castle campus, asserts: 'The internet is here to stay and it is up to us to make sure it stays in the right hands. Frankly, with every solution, there is a problem. This is intensified in the tech universe. For example, one moment 3D printing champions innovation and environmentally friendly solutions; the next, it is used to make weapons.'

'My biggest concern is who is policing the web. No one is really governing the internet. Overall, throughout Big Tech, it is a profit before people approach,' espouses Imran Termezy, LSST's Data and VLE Officer, expressing concern for the lack of internet jurisprudence. When asked about a possible solution, Imran replied: 'Increasing regulatory powers to safeguard user data and enhancing access control systems.'

Trust and scandals

The internet – or Berners-Lee's version of it – started well and once represented liberation. Today it could even come across as a tool of tyranny. 'I don't trust much of what I see online these days. The lines of what is real and fictional are heavily blurred,' posited Mircea Radu, a Business Management student at LSST's Luton campus, discussing the humble origins of the internet.

'The use of the internet seemed like a fair transaction to start with,' asserted Samia Zaheer, a Business Management student at LSST's Luton campus. 'But over time the internet user has become exploited in a very sophisticated way. There is an urgent need to resolve this crisis.'

'The Cambridge Analytica scandal and its dire consequences tell me everything I need to know about social media practices and the internet. Already the NFT, blockchain and cyber currency landscapes are nefarious and we need alternatives to unregulated practices,' adds Mohammed Miah, a Business Management student at LSST's Luton campus.

In contrast, concerning online privacy, some progress was made in 2018 – but there is still a long way to go. The General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR), introduced by the EU, aimed to enshrine privacy as a right. Unfortunately, it overlooked how it would manage organisations dealing with personal data. 'GDPR was not a one size fits all approach, but it had some strong consequences for social media giants,' commented Mohsin Riaz, Dean of LSST Birmingham.

Since data-sharing practices have become a peak priority for technology companies – as well as their consumers – legislators have also refined their attention on the use of data. 'Although Big Tech companies have taken good governance steps, it is worth remembering if you aren't paying for the product, then you are the product,' says Farwa Amin, a Lecturer in Health and Social Sciences at LSST's Elephant and Castle campus. Syed Rizvi, Associate Dean of LSST's Elephant and Castle campus and LSST's Dean of Teaching and Learning, added: 'This conversation is long overdue. Big Tech – or Big Brother – is fast buying up the future of the internet and gaining a larger percentage of your life. We have explicitly and happily let this happen.'

The future internet

We are seeing our digital identity ingrained into the physical world as the internet further encapsulates our lives as a utility that we expect to be available and always around us. Throughout the internet-verse, some things may move quickly and others will take time. Although the journey ahead appears long-sighted, it is now time to commit to delivering the internet we want, in a world we want and for the generations ahead.

Could we change the broken internet to restore and build back trusted relationships – the benchmark of healthy democracies and economies? From the outset, our aforesaid LSST Voices agreed that addressing the internet's position and power is one of the most deeply rooted problems of our time and would necessitate far more caution before we enter the next phase of the internet.

We need a bold new internet, built by a global cooperative of distinct, strategic thinkers – and creators. We need to discover a path to embed democratic values back into the core of the internet's realm to protect the future generations who will, in due course, use it – and depend on it. And most importantly, we need to revert to Berners-Lee's original internet model – and that is what will give users back control of their data.

LSST and LSST's Student Union will soon run a series of online webinars and debate sessions (register via kunal.mehta@lsst.ac):

Debate 1: In the wake of Web3 and Web4, should we be hopeful—or fearful— for our changing digital and online environments?

Debate 2: Do we really need to be constantly connected to the internet to live in the real world?

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LSST Writing Competition 2022 winners revealed by CNN and Tony Blair's Institute for Global Change

By Kunal Chan Mehta

The winners have been announced from an innovative writing competition set up by LSST with panellists from CNN and Tony Blair's Institute for Global Change in which students were invited to showcase writing skills for non-specialist audiences.

Chompa Rahman, a LSST Luton Business student, Bill Piper, a LSST Aston Business Management student and Irina Barariu, LSST's Student Union President, based at LSST Aston, have won LSST's Writing Competition 2022.

Rahman, wins £500 for her article on the outlook for a post-pandemic world. Piper wins £250 for his article on how governments can use technology to improve lives and Barariu wins £100 for her article on technological advancements in public and commercial sectors.

Rahman said she was 'honoured and moved' to the win first prize and shared her profound gratitude for the panellists, adding that 'CNN and Tony Blair's Institute were both pivotal and inspirational.' Barariu and Piper praised LSST for the generous prize funds from LSST's Senior Management and competition processes that included detailed writing guides and competition guides.

Ali Jafar, LSST's Deputy CEO, speaking about the winners, said: 'The scope of creative thinking in the entries was remarkable and there was a strong sense of research and originality. Without a doubt, the competition has boosted the confidence and will bolster the careers of the winners.'

The panellists praised the 'sheer skill and intensity of thought' of the winning entries and commended LSST students for making their writing 'accessible'.

Panellist Richard Greene, Director of Content at CNN in London, who invited the winners to a meeting at CNN London, said: 'It was a pleasure to have the contest winners visit CNN. Meeting them in person after reading the winning articles was a great way to put faces not only with a name but their exciting ideas.'

Panellist Brianna Miller, a Researcher - and writer - at The Tony Blair Institute for Global Change, added: 'Congratulations to all of the winners. Every submission I read was well-written and full of innovative and insightful ideas. It was a pleasure reading all the entries and working with LSST throughout this inspiring and well organised competition.'

Over 420 students across LSST's London, Luton and Birmingham campuses took part. The winning entries will soon be made available on LSST blogs and poster displays.

The student winners are currently working with Kunal Chan Mehta, LSST's PR Manager, on writing skill blogs, creative writing webinars and academic writing presentations. They will also be invited as sub-panellists for future LSST writing competitions.

'The scope of creative thinking in the entries was remarkable and there was a strong sense of research and originality. Without a doubt, the competition has boosted the confidence and will bolster the careers of the winners.'

Ali Jafar
Deputy CEO, LSST
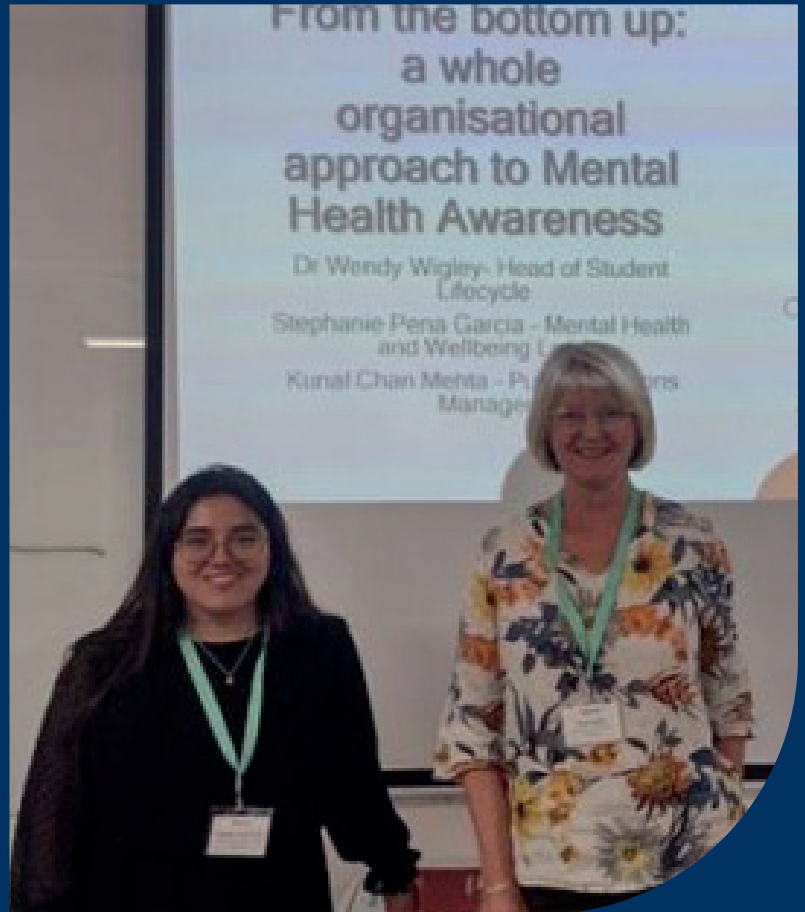
LSST hailed for mental health initiatives at AdvanceHE Teaching and Learning Conference 2022

By Kunal Chan Mehta

Dr Wendy Wigley, LSST's Head of Student Lifecycle and Partnerships Manager, and Stephanie Pena Garcia, LSST's Student Engagement & Mental Health Wellbeing Officer, presented on a whole organisation approach to mental health at the AdvanceHE conference held at Northumbria University.

Speaking on mental health awareness, Mr Ali Jafar, LSST's Deputy CEO, said: 'At LSST, the first step in mental health best practice is making a commitment to mental health. It is increasingly perceptible how important mental health and wellbeing are for student and staff success and I commend Dr Wendy Wigley and her team for their mental health lead at LSST.'

Dr Wendy Wigley commented: 'The conference focused on enhancing all aspects of teaching and learning to deliver an exceptional student experience at all levels of Higher Education taught provision. It seemed only right that sharing LSST's success in supporting student mental health was shared with the sector.'

'Nationally and globally as we tentatively adjust to the 'new normal' post pandemic, it is essential that the mental health needs of students continues to be central in every aspect of their learning journey. At LSST the mental health and wellbeing of our student population remains the primary focus of the student lifecycle team.'

Dr Wendy Wigley also commented on mental health support services: 'It was a pleasure to explore established and impactful examples from the sector and share good practice while reviewing possible challenges. This is why LSST collaborates and co-creates with students so that student mental health and wellbeing is grounded in all we do through our development and delivery.'

After the two-year pandemic hiatus, the HE sector is fast-developing 'whole institution approaches' to mental health and wellbeing to provide a holistic and positive experience, even during the most challenging of times.

The conference aimed to create a space for delegates to engage in creative thinking around teaching and learning towards continuous enhancement and innovation of the student experience.

Stephanie Pena Garcia, LSST's Student Engagement & Mental Health Wellbeing Officer, added: 'Following a long period of significant turmoil, and a rise in demand for mental health and wellbeing support, it is vital to share best practices and ask ourselves what direction student and staff mental health and wellbeing is going in.'

'We all have a key part to play as Higher Education staff and we must take into account the student voice and their specific needs to tailor the support which we are offering.'

Sports writing and academic success – is there a connection?

By Chompa Rahman

Business Student (Y2), LSST Luton campus, winner of LSST's Writing Competition 2022 with CNN and Tony Blair's Institute for Global Change

Writing a great sports article can be challenging but not if you know what writing skills you need. Some people believe that writing a sports article is about analysing sporting events, asking questions, and ranting about which teams have failed (we've all done it), but it's so much more! Sports is a significant aspect of British culture, and it is what brings people together, whether they are spectating, playing or even writing about it.

I am a huge lover of sports and my passion and desire for writing came from an early age, during my school days studying English. I knew this was something I enjoyed and now years later, I can convey my love for sports through writing while also providing the motivation to be able to make changes. It can't get any better than that, right?

Writing is an act of self-expression, and it can be very therapeutic. It can help reduce stress and keep you on your toes! Writing may be hard, and some might consider it 'boring', but it doesn't have to be lonely! Writing must be fluid, simple to read, and concise to succeed. The goal for a writer, no matter how difficult it may be, is to create something that engages, entertains, and stays with the readers for a long time.

Figures show in 2016 1.8% of sports articles were written by women. So much for change! I believe when women create content, the conversation around sports changes in a positive way and this can also be through writing. There is a saying, 'You need to either write something worth reading or do something worth writing.'

The following tips can help you to succeed when writing a sports article:

1 A strong understanding of the sports industry – I believe before writing about a certain sport or issue within sports, writers must have extensive industry knowledge of that sport or topic. Writers must be familiar with sports terminology as well as be up to date on industry news and trends.

2 Grammar skills – when writing a sports article, I believe having excellent grammar is a must! Attention to detail is very important and you need to ensure that the sports article is written correctly in terms of word usage, grammar and punctuation otherwise hardly anyone would want to read it!

3 Using plain language - A sports article, in my opinion, should be simple, concise, and communicate correctly. It must avoid jargon and express its content clearly so that the reader understands it as quickly as possible. Using headings, short sentences, using bullet points to highlight information, getting rid of sports clichés and using specific language are critical in achieving a good article.

4 Research skills - A good writer should be able to quickly gather all the real facts that go into a sports story. Doing good research beforehand will prove to be critical when outlining a sports article. You'll be able to become competent with what you need to write about by being organised and having effective research methods.

5 Creativity skills - Readers would like to learn about different points of view and different perspectives on the same subject. Sports can inspire competition and debate, which readers like. A writer must remain true to their point of view while still delivering the facts in a creative manner.

A superb sports article requires excellent writing abilities for storytelling

Good writing is clear thinking made visible. It will be impossible to thrive without exceptional writing skills, even if you have a great sports article. You'll need a key eye for detail, the ability to captivate readers, and a way with words to bring your stories to life. Continuous reading and creative thinking will also help to improve your written abilities, this is also important when writing for academic purposes.

In today's world, there are so many sportswriters that it can be difficult to stand out. Good writing is the most effective approach to separating yourself from the competition and this should be a priority which can lead to success.

Different styles of writing skills are critical for students at the London School of Science and Technology (LSST) to achieve and prosper in completing assignments and reaching their goals. A useful learning technique that encourages higher-order thinking is writing. Higher-order thinking is encouraged throughout the process as students must assess and analyse the information provided to communicate their opinions in a creative way and through writing. The abilities outlined above can help and everyone can relate this to academic studies, and we can all benefit from them throughout our lives as students and beyond.

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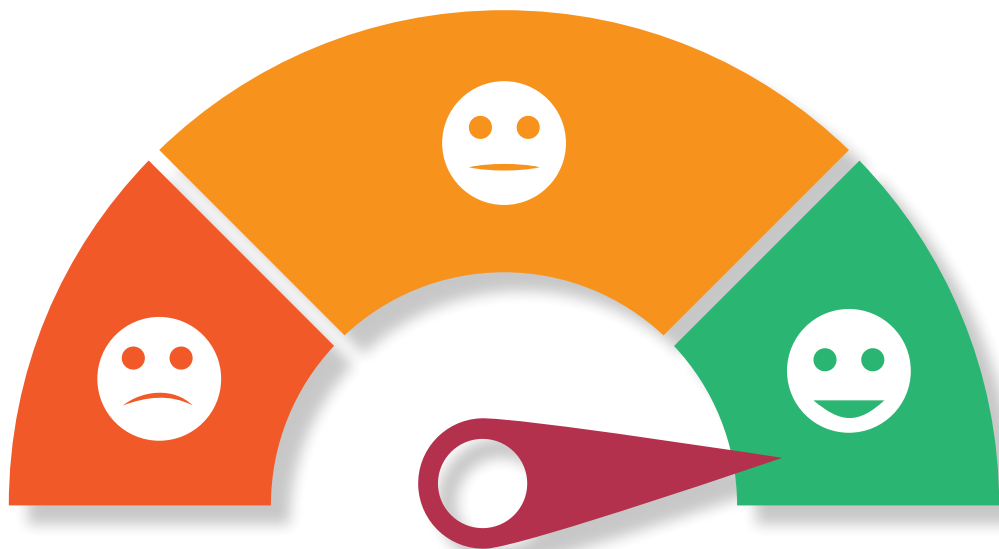
95.65%

overall satisfaction rate
from our students

LSST scores a landmark 95.65% overall student satisfaction rate for NSS 2022

By Kunal Chan Mehta

The National Student Survey 2022 (NSS), which offers final-year students a feedback opportunity about studying on their course, found that LSST has been ranked in 15th place out of 345 participating UK Higher Education providers.

A whopping 95.65% of LSST's final-year students are satisfied with their overall experience at LSST, according to the 2022 National Student Survey (NSS). This is above the 76.29% sector-wide average for overall satisfaction across the participants, and this has well exceeded the OfS benchmark set for LSST at 85.63%.

Mr Ali Jafar Zaidi, LSST's Deputy CEO, speaking about LSST's highest ever NSS scores, said: 'The excellent NSS results highlight that we all have much to be proud of and that our combined work to provide an excellent academic experience has paid off. As our students cope with the ongoing impact of the pandemic, the severe cost of living, and ongoing demanding circumstances, they were still able to appreciate the colossal support, energy and care from LSST staff who have invested so in them.'

Mr Ali added: 'I am grateful to those students who took part in the survey, and my thanks go to all staff who have devoted so much in every aspect of student life at LSST.'

Dr George Panagiotou, LSST's Principal, added: 'I am extremely proud of LSST's exceptional academic and professional services that have worked harmoniously, collectively, and effectively to support our students and achieve such an extraordinary result that ranks LSST as one of the top positions in the UK indicating the high quality of education and service that we provide to our students.'

As we look ahead to the next academic year, we look forward to maintaining momentum and seeing how we can make our students' academic experience even better. LSST thanks its students who shared their feedback with this year's National Student Survey. The feedback permits enhancement to be made for the benefit of current and prospective students and staff.

Inside Scotland Yard: Assistant Commissioner speaks with LSST students about provisions of an efficient and effective police service

By Kunal Chan Mehta

With a 30 year – and counting – police career, having received the Queen's Police Medal and the respect of thousands of frontline police staff, what's to say but a big thank you to Assistant Commissioner Nick Ephgrave – the individual with one of the biggest jobs in British frontline policing.

Although one of the safest buildings in the country, LSST students were understandably nervous as they entered Scotland Yard – the headquarters of the Metropolitan Police. Why? They were about to interview one of Britain's most senior and experienced police staff on a series of sensitive subjects on youth crime and violent crime.

As Mr Ephgrave enters the interview room the students stand up formally as a sign of reverence for someone they instinctively and confidently feel inspired by. 'He has a strong leadership presence and demonstrates focus, compassion and integrity,' said Zsofia Borbely, a Business Management student at LSST's Wembley campus. 'It is precisely this that allowed us to resonate so well with him during our interview.'

Mr Ephgrave, the third Assistant Commissioner LSST students have had an audience with over the last several years, dedicates himself to the highest values of policing professionalism and performance. He does this amid having a solid vision of taking policing into the future.

Discussing the insightful interview, Nicoleta Covaci, a Health and Social Sciences student at LSST's Elephant & Castle campus, said: 'We were all privileged to be able to ask a variety of questions about youth crime and violent crime. We all felt assured that the issues raised were taken seriously. Only through strong Scotland Yard leadership and civic support can the right changes be brought about.'

Police purpose and provisions

Much of the academic literature on UK policing is – and remains - beset by methodological difficulties. Nearly all inputs and outputs to measure police effectiveness, efficiency and legitimacy are problematic (see Higgins and Hales, 2016). This is because of the wide variety of police work and because crimes prevented are not wholly measurable in terms of what could have occurred next. You can only measure the measurable.

All of us are united in one purpose: We all want excellent policing that we can trust and have complete confidence in. We all want the provision of an efficient and effective Police Service. However, too often, the good and heroic work that our police officers accomplish goes wholly unrecognised and unnoticed.

Reference

Higgins, A. and G. Hales (2016). Police effectiveness in a changing world: Cutting crime in the 21st Century: Informed proactivity in the midst of social and organisational change. London, Police Foundation.

The Value of Summative Feedback

By Mrs Hazar Korkmazoglu
Lecturer in Business
LSST Elephant and Castle campus

The importance of feedback has been well established within the learning process (Heron, 2010). Within academia there are two types of feedback, one is formative and the second is summative feedback. At LSST, we use both formative and summative feedback to improve student learning standards. But what is the difference? In simple terms, formative feedback is provided while the assessment is in process, whereas summative feedback is provided once the assessment has been submitted (Dekker, 2018).

So, what is summative feedback, exactly?

Summative feedback is used to indicate the extent you have succeeded in meeting the module learning outcomes (QAA, 2018). It is the evaluation given to you once you have completed an assessment, which is usually at the end of the module.

Let us think of this in practice: for every module you take, you will be required to complete one or more assessments, whether this is a presentation, report, essay or exam. If you want to make sure you are on the right track when working on your assignment, you can send a draft to your lecturer for formative feedback. However, once you have submitted your assignment, the feedback provided will be summative.

Your final submission is assessed by your lecturer according to the assessment criteria and module learning outcomes, aiming to award you the deserved final grade. Along with your grade, your lecturer will provide you with comments. This summative feedback measures the skills you have gained over the entire module and determines whether or not you have met the module learning outcomes (Stanford University, n.d.). Think of this as your lecturer's justification for how you got your final grade.

Why summative feedback is important

We often just look at our final grade and do not read how or why we have achieved that grade. However, reading and reflecting on your summative feedback is very important as it allows you to:

1. Understand how far you have come in meeting the module learning outcomes

2. Understand what you have done well and what you could have done better

3. Develop your skills in how to read assessment briefs and marking criteria

4. Identify areas you need to develop before your other assessment deadlines

5. Enhance your knowledge and understanding of how you could have planned your work to meet module outcomes

Although summative feedback is final, it is very useful for you to decide what steps to take next to develop your academic journey and be more successful in your upcoming assignments. Sometimes learning from your mistakes is the best way to learn, which is why reading and understanding the summative feedback provided is essential for your development. If you would like to improve your grades, remember to make good use of the valuable resources you have here at LSST, which include your lecturers and Academic Support.

Remember, you are always recommended to send a draft to your lecturer while your assignment is still in progress, to receive formative feedback. You can find a short blog on the value of formative feedback here https://www.lsst.ac/blogs/the-value-of-formative-feedback/. The aim of formative feedback is to develop your work before your final submission, by meeting the module's learning outcomes and other elements you may have missed out on.

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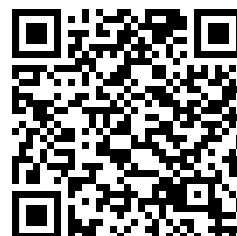
A Guide to Academic Writing:
The Main Structures and Styles

By Mrs Hazar Korkmazoglu
Lecturer in Business, LSST Elephant and Castle campus and
Fatma Hazal Sari
Lecturer in Health, LSST Elephant and Castle campus

Academic writing is a formal style of writing used in professional settings such as university and scholarly publications, which must be grammatically correct, clear and simple (Scribbr, n.d.; McMillan and Weyers, 2011). There are certain do's and don'ts in academic writing, learning these is a gradual process and a skill you will develop over practice.

It is important that you are careful and follow the professional advice, here are some introductory guidance:

DOs	DON'Ts
• Write formally	• Write in first person
• Clear paragraphs	• Write in long sentences
• Be unbiased	• Repeat yourself • Use informal words (such as won't, can't, but etc.)
• Focus on the question	
• Structure your content	• Use inappropriate fonts
• Use references	
• Be consistent	

Assignments at university challenge you to write in different forms (McMillan and Weyers, 2012). You are required to read books, journals, articles and other academic publications to complete your assignments which can be in the form of an essay, report, presentation, case study and dissertation. This blog focuses on the two main structures of academic writing that you will most frequently need to use throughout your academic journey.

What are the two different structures of academic writing?

1 - Essay

Essay writing is one of the most common forms of an assessment (Burns and Sinfield, 2016). It usually requires you to answer a question, discuss concepts and issues in depth. When writing an essay, you will be required to be analytical and think critically. Which gives you a flexibility in the way you produce arguments, using evidence, analysis and interpretation to support your argument.

A traditional essay has three basic components:

- **Introduction:** What is the essay going to be about? Provide the reader with some background information.

- **Main body:** Present the information, the argument or key points of your response in greater detail.

- **Conclusion:** What are the consequences of your findings? Sum up your answer, reinforce the position outlined in the introduction, and summarise your findings.

(Creme and Lea, 2008; McMillan and Weyers, 2012)

2 - Report

Report writing is commonly used within academia. During your academic journey, you may be required to write many different types of reports, such as business reports, lab reports, research reports or maybe other types. A report is a formally structured set of findings of an investigation that is set in a clear and logical way, which also communicates with the reader in a professional manner.

A report generally has three main functions:

- To explain why something was done

- To describe how it was done

- To summarise and conclude the outcome of a particular action, or set of actions

(Creme and Lea, 2008)

The content and structure of your report will be determined by the assessment brief and module learning outcomes, which will identify a set of instructions and requirements for your research process (Reid, 2018). At this stage, you should start planning how you will structure your report to meet the assessment requirements.

The structure of a report follows:

- **Executive summary:** A summary of the findings in your report to allow the reader to have an idea of what to expect.

- **Introduction:** An explanation of what you will discuss and any background information you think the reader must know.

- **Main body:** Explains all of your findings under a variety of headings and sub-headings. The main body makes up a majority of the report and may take up pages, whereas the introduction and conclusion may only be a few paragraphs.

- **Conclusion:** Where you bring together all the findings of your report and come to a definitive interpretation.

(Ellis, 2021)

The differences between reports and essays

It is important that you are able to distinguish the difference between an essay and a report, as you need to understand why you may need to write one and not the other.

REPORTS	ESSAYS
Purpose	
An account of an investigation	An answer to a question.
Need to focus on a brief or on the specific investigation set.	Often has a broader scope - needs to interpret and define the question.
Reports what you have done and what you have found.	Discusses an issue or a point of academic contention.
Makes recommendations supported by appropriate (referenced) evidence.	Makes a coherent argument supported by appropriate (referenced) evidence.
Audience	
Written for a specific audience established in the brief (a client, a manager, etc.), but your lecturer will also be your audience.	Not usually written for a specific audience (apart from your lecturer).
Format	
Formally structured, with headings, sub-headings and. Bullet points.	Continuous prose in paragraphs, but usually with no headings or bullet points.
May contain diagrams, tables and figures.	Does not usually contain diagrams, tables and figures.
Style	
Written in an appropriate style for each section (e.g. descriptive style for methods, analytical style for discussion).	Written in a single, discursive style throughout.

In summary, essays are more descriptive, subjective and evaluative, whereas, a report is descriptive, objective and analytical (Surbhi, 2020). Sadly, you cannot choose which structure you want to write your assessment in. This is decided by the awarding body, which is the university you are studying at. However, you need to develop strong writing skills within both structures, as both essays and reports will be mandatory within your academic and professional career.

The purpose of both structures is to give you the opportunity to demonstrate:

- Your knowledge and understanding
- Your ability to research a specific topic to meet the assessment criteria
- Your ability to use references and evidence to support your arguments/findings
- Your ability use the correct structure of academic writing

(McMillan and Weyers, 2012)

The Different Academic Writing Styles

Now that we've gone over the different structures of academic writing, let's dive into the different writing styles that you will need to use in your assignments.

Descriptive, analytical, critical/evaluative and reflective writing are the four essential elements of academic writing. What writing style you should mainly use will depend on the nature and context of each assignment. Assignment guidelines will typically define how to address a topic, and may specify the appropriate writing style. However, generally, there needs to a balanced use of the different writing styles. In a successful academic assignment, you will need to include a certain amount of description, but the majority of your writing will need to be analytical and critical.

In order to successfully meet the assessment criteria, it is very important that you know the key differences between the different writing styles and understand how to use them correctly.

Descriptive Writing:

Think of descriptions as the backbone of all academic assignments. Descriptions convey information about a subject, however, they do not engage in any kind of analysis or reasoning, nor do they make judgements or draw conclusions about the information they contain. When you write descriptively, you present background information that is necessary for the reader to understand what they are reading, and you support your arguments rather than develop new ideas.

Analytical Writing:

The main purpose of analysing is to compare and contrast. To be able to present the full picture of any chosen subject, you must try and find information from more than one source. By compiling results from previously published studies, you will be able to identify frequent patterns and contrasts, explore relationships, and potentially provide new responses to the subject in question.

How to choose the correct writing style

All academic writing styles serve a fundamental purpose, and must be used correctly according to assignment requirements. If you're unsure whether you have used the appropriate writing style or not, below are some questions you can ask to guide you to observe your writing to ensure it is in the right style, and if it is not, to transition your writing from one style to another.

Question	Prompts	Style
What? Where? Who? When?	What is the context/situation? What is the main point/topic? What is this about? Where does it take place? Who is this written/designed by? Who is involved? What happened? Who is affected? When did this occur?	Descriptive Writing
How?	How did this occur? How does it work in theory? In practice/context? How does one factor affect another? How do the parts fit into the whole?	Analytical Writing
Why?	Why did this occur? Why was that done? Why this argument/theory/suggestion/solution? Why not something else?	Analytical Writing
What if?	What if this were wrong? What are the alternatives? What if there was a problem? What if another factor were added or removed?	
So what?	What does this mean? Why is this significant? Is this convincing, why/why not? What are the implications? Is it successful? Why/why not? How does it meet criteria? What can I deduce from the information I have gathered? What did I notice or realise? What was most important?	Critical/Evaluative Writing
What next?	Is it transferable? How and where else can it be applied? What can be learnt for applying in the future? What needs doing now? What should I do differently or the same next time?	Reflective Writing

* Adapted from Critical Thinking, by Learning Development with Plymouth University, 2010

Critical Writing:

Throughout your studies, you will come across the term "critical" quite frequently, for example critical thinking, critical writing or critical review. Critical writing entails constructing a reasoned argument or point of view that is supported by credible evidence. In other words, you are not only gathering existing information, but you are also developing your own argument and incorporating your understanding of the subject at issue, therefore participating in academic literature.

Reflective Writing:

Reflection is a tool that encourages you to draw on prior experiences to improve your future performance. When you write a reflective account, you analyse "what, why and how" something happened, aiming to identify how you can achieve better outcomes in the future.

Although you have been advised not to write in the first person in academic assignments, this style of writing is more "personal", and frequently requires you to write in the first person. If you have been asked to write a reflection or personal narrative, you can use phrases like "I had the experience of …", "I learned …", "In my future encounters, I will pay more attention to …". However, please note that although you can use personal pronouns like "I" and "we" when discussing your opinions and feelings, you still need to use formal academic language in reflective writing.

For example, if you only rely on providing facts about a topic when you are asked to write a reflective account, you may get feedback from your lecturer informing you that your writing is too descriptive and not critical enough. In this case, try asking questions like "What did I notice or realise?", "How can I deduce from the information I have gathered?" to modify your writing to meet the assessment criteria. Likewise, when you are working on a literature review, if you find that your writing seems very opinionated and persuasive, you may want to ask questions such as "How do the parts fit into the whole?", "What is the main point?" to help you objectify your writing.

It would be a mistake to assume that a guidance on academic writing is irrelevant to you. Regardless of field of study, academic interests, or level, you'll be required to complete a variety of different assignments, such as reports, critical reviews, or reflective essays - which will all call for different structures and writing styles.

If you are interested in reading further about how to manage your studies and how you can improve your academic writing skills, you can find a range of resources here at LSST, such as library, one-on-one support from your lecturers, and academic support.

for references or
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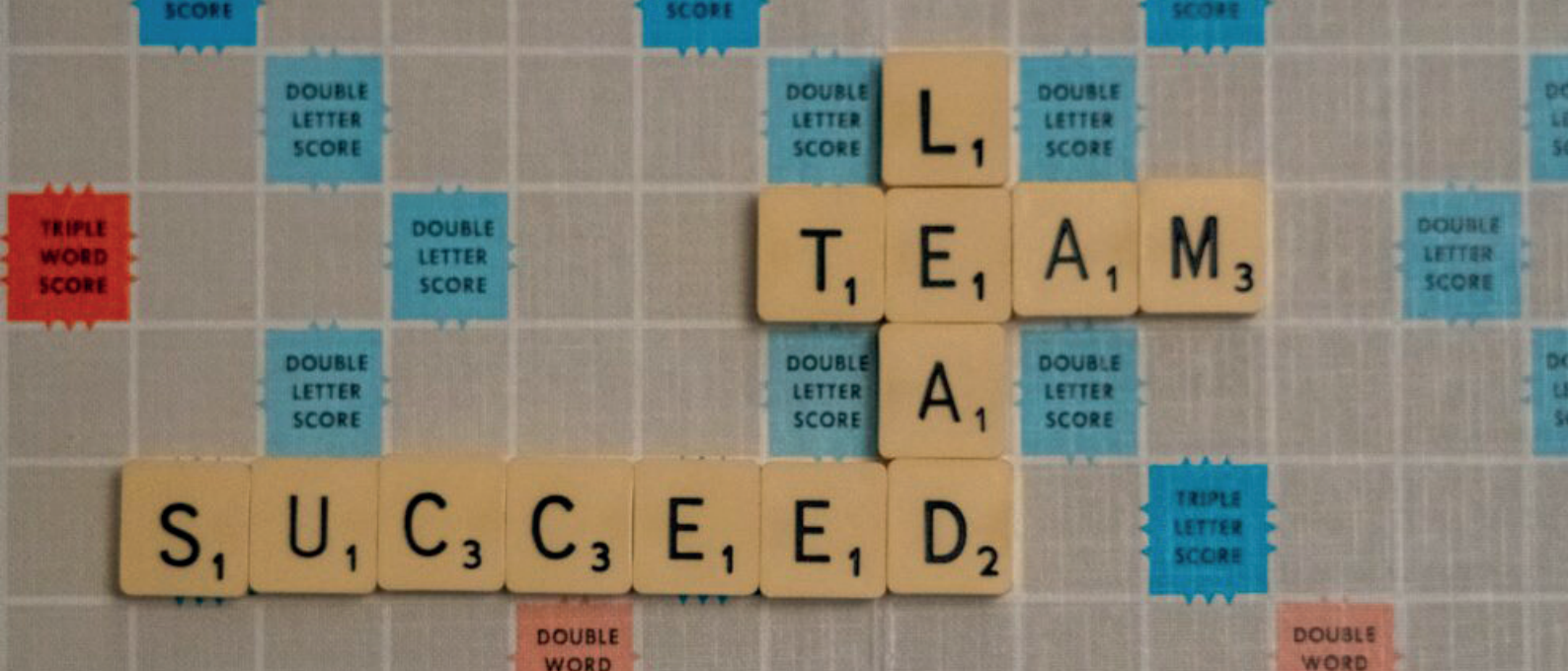
Are you a
Manager or a Leader?

By Dr George Panagiotou
Principal of LSST

The importance of Management

'I had rather excel others in the knowledge of what is excellent than the extent of my own powers and dominion'. Alexander the Great, 356BC-323BC

The essence of strategy, in a commercial context, is to outperform the competition to increase the company's wealth and shareholder value. This notion occurs in every strategic discussion.

However, central to the discussion is also the notion that contemporary organisations, given how much people's perceptions and beliefs about business practices have changed over time, can only be truly successful if they can satisfy the wider spectrum of their stakeholders rather than just indulge in their self-enrichment aims.

Good managers know that the two notions go together. Satisfied stakeholders support the organisation and satisfied customers return for more products and services, which, in turn, generate greater profits for the company.

Potentially, an organisation can well outlive its founders and remain strong over the centuries if it can remain strategically fit with its environment. Handy (1996) humorously states that businesses and other organisations have a privilege denied to ordinary mortals – they don't have to die – and he points out that the Matsui corporation and the Bologna University are both over 600 years old and are still going strong. Companies such as Reuters (1851), Standard Life (1825), Cadbury Schweppes (1783), Tate and Lyles's Golden Syrup brand (1885), and Lindt (1845) are some other examples that have defied time and are still leading competitors in their markets.

However, organisations are what their people make them be. Therefore, the raw material is people - people with diverse talents. Hence the life span and indeed the overall success of an organisation are dependent upon the commitment, creativity, skills, and enthusiasm of its most important asset – its people.

This is where the management of an organisation becomes critical for its survival, or demise. Organisations can only achieve their aims and objectives through the effective cooperation and coordination of their members. And this is the task of management because management is the platform that fuses all organisational aspects.

Therefore, good managers must not be remote and detached and must not solely concentrate their efforts on the financial performance of the firm. After all financial, or otherwise, organisational success is the aftermath of a collective human effort. Managers should be the definers of corporate purpose. And in the process, they should create such an inspirational corporate climate that its members can share a sense of purpose and pride.

Thus, a key ingredient in a successful organisation is the emotional commitment of its people and the management's ability to look deep inside the organisation to identify and promote talent to enable better capabilities.

Managers or Leaders?

Leadership and management are different notions, and sometimes the view that managers are also leaders is not true, since the two are not necessarily interconnected. A manager can be said, that discharges their administrative powers based on their prescribed role in the organisation to meet the brief and complete the task. A leader, on the other hand, is mostly concerned with people and involves interpersonal skills. A manager operates in the framework of the organisation's hierarchical chain of command whereas a leader may, or may not, be part of that structure. Individuals with leadership abilities can be found anywhere in the organisation and may not hold a position of authority. A manager can demand subordinates' obedience but not necessarily enjoy their respect. A leader, however, wins people's respect and has willing followers.

Managers administer and get things done. Leaders are corporate definers and create an inspirational context in which things can be done. Thus, the two need to possess different sets of skills. A manager needs to have good organisational and co-ordinational skills whereas a leader is required to be visionary and dynamic.

However, given the intricacies of modern-day management and the fact that an organisation's most important asset is its people, it is expected for managers to be charismatic with interpersonal skills and the ability to guide their subordinates rather than dictate them. From a strategic perspective this is even more important given the multidimensional nature of strategy development.

Therefore, it is imperative for all individuals in a professional context to equip themselves with leadership skills to improve individual and organisational performance. Anybody can become a leader if they are willing to develop themselves through training, personal thought and reflection and continuous cultivation of talents and sharpening of relevant qualities.

Some of such qualities are charisma, dynamism, determination, and consideration. Others are dedication, vision, ability to inspire others, good communication and negotiation skills, objectivity and fair judgement, consistency, integrity, and decisiveness.

A leader should also be described by foresight and initiative, drive and perseverance, enthusiasm, reliability, be committed to excellence, have refined interpersonal skills, be emotionally stable and be cooperative and synergetic. An important attribute is also the capacity to admit own weaknesses and mistakes and have the willingness to empower and support others.

However, there is a fine line between the qualities of a manager or a leader because an individual possesses both sets of skills to one extent or another and are thus difficult to be separated. In addition, given that managers manage activities through, and/or with others, there should be no need to separate the two roles because good managers should also strive to be good leaders.

The Functions of Management and the Role and the Qualities of the Manager

A manager, in any organisational context, has some responsibilities to observe and specific functions to carry out. Fayol (1916) stated that these functions are forecasting, planning, organising, communicating, coordinating, and controlling. Later, Brech (1975) argued the importance of motivation in the process of managing and its effect on the achievement of organisational goals. In similar lines, Drucker (1977) articulated that a manager's job is to set objectives, organise activities, motivate and communicate, measure performance, and develop people.

Even though the original theory of management was developed a century ago these ideas are still intact today, and over the years, only minor improvements have been suggested in the area. However, by consolidating on the many strengths of the wider literature, a fuller framework of managerial functions can be provided to convey a more contemporary set of guidelines to the modern-day manager and highlight best practices.

Conceptualising	To be insightful, progressive, and able to generate new ideas.
Forecasting	To have the ability to put new ideas and visions in a context to make it easy for others to make sense of vague and abstract information.
Planning	To decide the activities of the organisation, develop key operational guidelines and set performance criteria.
Organising	To allocate funds and human and non-human resources to the various activity areas.
Communicating	To articulate requirements using a suitable language and pace according to the individual, team or group dealing with to aid understanding.
Motivating	To provide inspiration and incentives to relevant members toraise and maintain morale, proactiveness and goodwill in the organisation.
Coordinating	To synchronise, harmonise and maintain organisational activities.
Controlling	To monitor activities and overall progress in relation to the objectives and the pre-set criteria to maintain direction and pace.
Measuring	To evaluate the achievement of targets with the use of diverse qualitative and quantitative techniques to determine the effectiveness of methods employed.
Taking Corrective Action	Modify the course of action according to emerging challenges and opportunities so that the desired performance against targets is achieved.
Transparency of Activities	To promote clear policies and procedures so that ambiguity and uncertainty are avoided.
Ethical Practices	To foster fairness, embed moral practices and ensure the good corporate citizenship of the organisation.

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These functions are relevant at every managerial level to one extent or another, and indeed, to any empowered employee without a formal managerial title. In fact, it makes good sense for any individual in any context to embrace these functions to improve their performance. Katz (1974) identified three specific attributes as essential to managers of different levels. At the top level of management conceptual skills are required more because of the need to formulate strategies. For middle managers better human and interpersonal skills are more important to manage organisational members effectively and complete tasks. At the supervisory level, there should be an emphasis on technical skills. However, regardless of this distinction, all managers in their roles need to have all these attributes because every level of responsibility requires such skills to be successful.

Mintzberg (1973) states that managers in their formal capacity potentially take up three broad types of roles that between them create ten associated roles. The first broad role is interpersonal and creates the need for a manager to act as a figurehead, a liaison, or a leader. The second broad role is decisional and creates the need to act as an entrepreneur, resource allocator, disturbance handler, or negotiator. The third broad role is informational and creates the need to act as a monitor or disseminator, or spokesperson. However, although a manager according to their level of responsibility may take up some roles more than others, or according to the situation, take up some roles more often than others all these are interrelated and are enacted concurrently rather than independent of each other.

Pedler et al (1994) add that successful managers possess three types of broad attributes and that each attribute involves some specific skills. The first broad attribute is basic knowledge and information and includes the manager's command of basic facts and relevant professional understanding. Then, are the skills and attributes that include continuing sensitivity to events, analytical, problem-solving, and decision/judgement-making skills, social skills, emotional resilience and proactivity. After, is the meta qualities that include creativity, mental agility, balanced learning habits and skills and self-knowledge.

Figure 1, here below, provides an all-in-one illustration of these aspects to articulate in a concise, yet holistic manner, all these managerial features.

Managerial Functions, Roles and Qualities
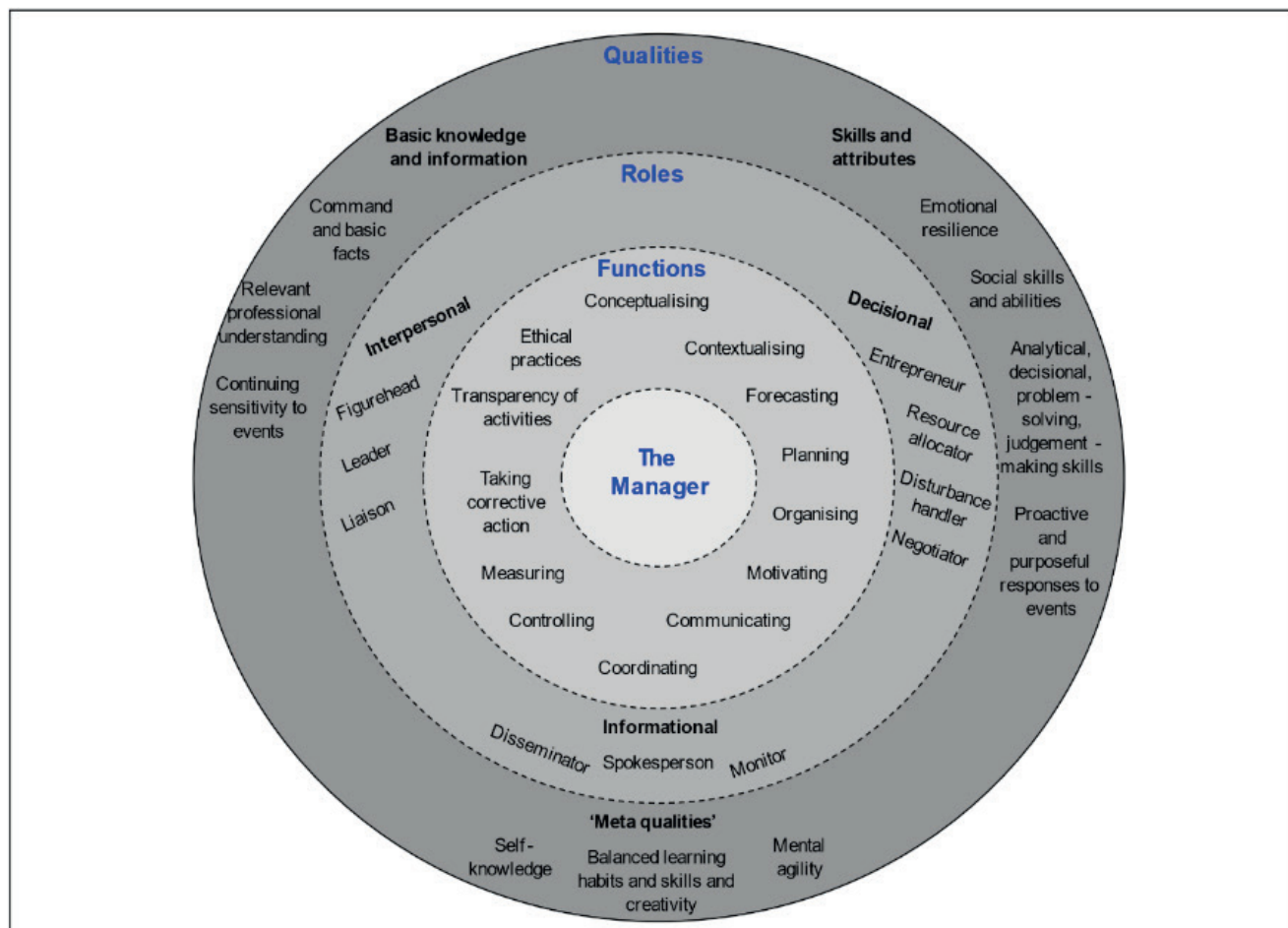
Conclusion

This brief article examined the key characteristics of successful managers and leaders and highlighted best practice methods that underpin superior performance to maintain direction and achieve organisational goals.

As time progressed, and as human know-how evolved to a much more complex and sophisticated level, so did peoples' perceptions about business environments and competitive terrains. In past times, where the world was arguably simpler and managers' views about business more monolithic, so were their thinking and behaviour towards life and business.

Some such examples include the earlier notions that the world was flat and that machines couldn't fly because they were heavier than air. Thomas Edison (1880), the inventor of the light bulb and the phonograph amongst others, at one time stated that the phonograph had no commercial value. Henry Warner (1927), of Warner Brothers, had doubts about cinema audiences that would like to hear actors talking. Ken Olsen (1977), a co-founder of the Digital Equipment Corporation, believed that there was no reason for an individual to have a computer at home.

Nowadays, however, things have changed, and managers are expected to have broad perceptions and be open to new ideas since the only constant characteristic in life, and consequently in business environments, is change.

Hence it is essential for a manager to be described by a more flexible and adaptable way of thinking and have the ability to satisfy the numerous demands of the varied stakeholder groups.

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Can we expect a better world after the pandemic?

By Chompa Rahman

Business Student (Y2), LSST Luton campus, winner of LSST's Writing Competition 2022 with CNN and Tony Blair's Institute for Global Change

In late December 2019, an unexplained pneumonia outbreak with fever and dry cough occurred and no one had the slightest inkling that this will turn into one of the most significant moments of all time. No one could have predicted how quickly the virus would spread and how much it would affect the world. Death tolls were rising, more people were being hospitalised, tensions became apparent in government and society - and no one knew when or if this would ever end.

Since the pandemic began, it has been a long, sad, and traumatic time for most. However, it appears there is a ray of hope at the end of this lengthy coronavirus tunnel.

One of the most frequently asked questions is how the world will emerge once the pandemic is over. This article will look at all the possibilities for what life might be like once we have recovered from the invisible virus that has claimed the lives of millions of people around the world.

Social Interaction, Mental Health and Health Awareness

Since this deadly virus has attacked thousands across the world, social interactions had a huge impact for the worse and people's mental health issues were soaring. It was a chaotic time for all, and it did come with many challenges not forgetting the main impact of the virus itself.

One of the positives is that people have become more aware of their health and how important it is to sanitise to keep themselves safe. For example, before the pandemic, thousands of people across the world did not know how important hygiene was in terms of washing your hands and what good hand sanitisers could do to protect us.

Not being able to work in the office had also impacted the mental health of employees as they were unable to establish a schedule that works for them, struggle to separate work and home life, or feel alienated, the transition to working from home may have had a detrimental influence on a person's mental health.

Working from home is here to stay

For many workers, homeworking was not a "typical" working practice prior to the lockdown. People have been expected to work from home whenever possible during lockdowns. The pandemic has reawakened demand for permanent flexible working alternatives, including working from home and hybrid office-home working. Increased flexibility in the workplace could improve job satisfaction and work-life balance for some employees, as well as promote more inclusive working environments for workers with certain disabilities.

Because of the widespread usage of videoconferencing during the pandemic, virtual meetings and other elements of work have gained new acceptance. This has enabled many people to continue working from home and earn a living and be more flexible.

There also comes some disadvantages too such as, working from home is not for everyone's personality or skill set. Some employees prefer seeing their managers face to face to help them achieve their goals and aspirations and others like to come out of the home to work with their colleagues in the office setting as there could be distractions at home for those who have children or pets. Other examples are, not all jobs suit home working, decreased staff morale, problems with staff development and staff feeling isolated.

Despite the disadvantages, working from home has been a big hit during the coronavirus outbreak. Some organisations are already preparing to convert to flexible workspaces, reducing overall space requirements and bringing fewer people into offices each day so there is a good chance that this will continue to shine throughout the workforce even after the pandemic is finished.

Online Shopping is Booming

Non-essential retailers were compelled to close during the peak of the pandemic, and individuals were advised to stay at home. A substantial percentage of consumers in the United Kingdom have reported changes in their internet buying habits over the past 1 year. In March 2020, around 40% of UK shoppers claimed they were purchasing online more than they were before the coronavirus epidemic. However, by February 2021, this ratio had increased to almost 75%.

People were forced to shop online for anything other than essential items, resulting in a major increase in online shopping. Companies like Amazon took advantage during the pandemic. Despite the reopening of retail outlets in April, which allowed customers to return to their favourite establishments in person, a large percentage of people still choose to purchase online today. Other tendencies in this shift toward digital consumption include online customers looking for the greatest deal, selecting more nutritious options, and purchasing locally whenever possible.

I believe that even after the pandemic, internet sales will continue to rise since consumers have grown acclimated to purchasing online, creating a higher need for retailers to meet.

Climate Revolution

Could our experiences with international lockdowns improve the environment, or would we simply go back to "business as normal" as soon as possible? Many city people have seen an improvement in their urban settings, with cleaner-smelling air, quieter, safer roadways, and more assertive wildlife, providing a glimpse of what life may be like in a greener world. Within just a few weeks, the COVID-19 epidemic and the resulting restrictions on travel and other economic sectors by countries all over the world substantially reduced air pollution and greenhouse gas emissions.

This abrupt shift provided scientists with an unprecedented glimpse of data that would have taken years to accomplish under normal circumstances. The COVID-19 pandemic will provide lessons and chances for environmental action in the long run. How we respond to this health crisis will determine how we respond to a climate disaster in the next few decades. Change can lead to the establishment of long-term, sustainable behaviours. Because humans would have experienced scarcity as a result of the outbreak, some practices that are inadvertently good to the ecosystem may survive. For example, reduced travel, personal consumption, and food waste.

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Is the cashless society going viral?

"Card only, please" is a statement you'll hear a lot these days in stores, cafes, and restaurants. At the start of the pandemic, central banks all around the world took the necessary precautions. Will the UK become permanently contactless? Surely, the trends are pointing in that direction. Cash was used for only 17 per cent of all payments in the UK in 2020, down from 56 per cent ten years ago, according to UK Finance, 13.7 million people did not use hard cash in 2020.

Paying via card is quite easy these days because it eliminates the need to go to a cash machine or carry heavy coins in your wallet or purse. However, as society grows more cashless, those who prefer to have a hoard of cash at home during a crisis may be concerned.

When coronavirus hit, we were advised to use our contactless cards as an extra precaution. Many cafes, restaurants, and supermarkets only accepted card payments, requiring customers to touch their cards when purchasing food or groceries. The contactless payment limit increased from £30 to £100 in October 2021, making it even more convenient for users.

On the other hand, using a credit card provides no privacy, and not everyone wants every payment traced. People can become trapped if they have no cash. If you rely on an app to pay, you may be left without a way to pay if your phone's battery dies or you lose signal. Paying back friends and relatives for little expenditures can often be tough. There are some occasions when possessing actual currency is safer, and certain people, such as the elderly and homeless, rely only on cash.

Overall, it is largely considered that no country was adequately prepared to deal with a pandemic, particularly one of COVID-19's magnitude. I feel that once the pandemic is over, people will become more health conscious, there will be more understanding of mental health, technology will boom, and people will become more confident in purchasing online because cash will be gone for good. When the pandemic is finally finished, the world will be a better place.

GET IN TOUCH

If you would like to participate or write a blog please contact Mr Kunal Mehta.

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