

IB9SD-15 Behavioural Public Policy

26/27

Department

Warwick Business School

Level

Taught Postgraduate Level

Module leader

Robert Stueber

Credit value

15

Module duration

10 weeks

Assessment

100% coursework

Study location

University of Warwick main campus, Coventry

Description

Introductory description

This module addresses growing interest among policymakers, social scientists, and organizations in leveraging behavioural insights to design effective, evidence-based policy interventions.

Module aims

The aim of this module is to equip students with the knowledge to incorporate insights from the behavioural sciences into policy. Using theoretical models and experimental evidence, the module provides a framework for measuring, understanding, and designing behavioural interventions and for modifying policies to address societal challenges such as inequality, unemployment, public health, education, and sustainability.

Outline syllabus

This is an indicative module outline only to give an indication of the sort of topics that may be covered. Actual sessions held may differ.

Week 2: Foundations of Behavioural Public Economics & Policy: Core findings from behavioural sciences and their general implications for public policy

Foundations of Behavioural Economics.

Key public policy questions of today's day and age.

Foundations of (field) experimental methodology.

Week 3: Behavioural Insights for Taxation: Why do behavioural insights matter for taxes?

Behavioural justification for taxes (sin taxes, time-inconsistent preferences).

Behavioural determinants of tax compliance (framing, salience, and social norms).

Behavioural approaches to improve tax collection.

Week 4: Behavioural Interventions for Social Policy: How can behavioural insights inform social policy?

Behavioural justifications for social policy.

Behavioural implications for pension systems (time-inconsistent preferences etc.).

Vaccine hesitancy and public health (mis)information.

Week 5: Behavioural Labour Economics: Why do behavioural insights matter for labour market policies?

Information and nudge interventions to increase retirement savings.

Workplace motivation and productivity (non-monetary incentives, fairness, social preference, intrinsic motivation and peer effects).

Discrimination (stereotypes, heterogeneity in preferences).

Week 6: Behavioural Insights for Education Policy: What do behavioural findings imply for education policy?

Encouraging participation and retention in education through behavioural insights (take up of on-the-job-training, overcoming present bias in educational investments).

Enhancing motivation and engagement (goal-setting, procrastination, grid).

Week 7: Inequality and Redistribution Policies: How can behavioural insights inform questions of redistribution?

Preferences for redistribution (individual differences, cross-country variation).

Public acceptance of welfare policies (stigma).

Behavioural insights to development aid (poverty traps, behavioural approaches to savings and credit access).

Week 8: Behavioural Policies in Governance: Why do behavioural insights matter for governance?

Improving civic engagement and voter turnout.

Bureaucratic efficiency in public administration.

The economics of corruption.

Week 9: Challenges for Behavioural Policy Implementation I

Paternalism and ethical considerations.

Acceptance of public policy.

Week 10: Challenges for Behavioural Policy implementation II

Resistance to interventions and experimentation.
Scalability of behavioural policies.
Metascience.

Learning outcomes

By the end of the module, students should be able to:

- Examine core behavioural economics principles and their implications for public policy, including deviations from traditional economic models.
- Analyse how behavioural insights can address policy challenges in areas such as taxation, public health, education, and governance.
- Develop critical thinking and abstract reasoning abilities.
- Critique traditional public economics models through the lense of behavioural insights.
- Critique the limitations and ethical considerations of behavioural interventions in public policy design.

Indicative reading list

[Reading lists can be found in Talis](#)

Interdisciplinary

The module is highly interdisciplinary. These interdisciplinary opportunities enrich the module, providing students with a holistic framework to address complex, real-world policy challenges. Among others, it draws from:

Economics (e.g., behavioural economics, experimental economics)

Psychology (cognitive and social psychology)

Sociology (e.g., role of culture and social norms)

Political Science (e.g., governance, civic engagement)

Ethics (e.g., paternalism)

Public Health (e.g., nudges to promote healthier behaviours)

Data Science (data science tools to model, predict, and evaluate the impacts of behavioural policies at scale)

Organisational Behaviour (e.g., effort incentivisation)

International

Many lectures of the module extensively discuss differences in behavioural drivers of public policy issues. These include:

Varying social norms across countries are investigated as a contributing factor for cross-country differences in tax compliance.

Heterogeneity in inequality perceptions and in preferences for redistribution are discussed as drivers of varying amounts of income redistribution.

Differences between countries in civic engagement are investigated when voter turnout are analysed.

One lecture explores behavioural approaches in international development settings, such as savings programs or overcoming poverty traps.

The research evidence is international: the module incorporates findings from experiments conducted in diverse regions.

One lecture discusses multinational policy frameworks: it examines how behavioural insights are integrated into policies by international organizations such as World Bank, OECD, and WHO.

One lecture investigates scalability: the lecture discusses the challenges of adapting successful behavioural interventions from one country to another.

Subject specific skills

Interpret findings from field experiments to inform large-scale policy recommendations.

Evaluate behavioural policies through the lens of behavioural science

Design innovative policy interventions informed by behavioural insights

Implement complex behavioural insights into theory to develop practical policy solutions for real-world challenges.

Execute analytical frameworks to evaluate and improve behavioural interventions across a range of policy contexts.

Transferable skills

Formulate policy recommendations effectively to diverse audiences, including policymakers and stakeholders.

Demonstrate teamwork and problem-solving abilities through collaborative projects/group work.

Communication skills when formulating reports, presenting findings, and structuring arguments.

Study

Study time

Type	Required
Lectures	9 sessions of 2 hours (12%)
Seminars	4 sessions of 2 hours (5%)
Private study	49 hours (33%)
Assessment	75 hours (50%)
Total	150 hours

Private study description

Private study to include preparation for lectures and own reading

Costs

No further costs have been identified for this module.

Assessment

You do not need to pass all assessment components to pass the module.

Assessment group A1

	Weighting	Study time	Eligible for self-certification
Assessment component			
2000 words - Essay on a topic related to behavioural public policy	50%	37 hours	Yes (extension)
Reassessment component is the same			
Assessment component			
Class test in last week covering all lecture material.	25%	19 hours	No
Reassessment component is the same			
Assessment component			
Group Work	25%	19 hours	No
Students will debate a controversial public policy issue in teams. Details of the format will be discussed in class. Assessment will be based on the quality of the arguments provided by each team.			
Reassessment component is the same			

Feedback on assessment

Feedback via my.wbs

Availability

There is currently no information about the courses for which this module is core or optional.