COMP S838
Enterprise Systems and Information Security Management

M886
POSTGRADUATE ICT AND COMPUTING

Information security management

Course Guide

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1 Introduction to M886

This *Course Guide* provides an overview of the course and some important practical advice. Your time will be well spent if you read through it carefully now.

This course is one of the modules in the Open University's Postgraduate Computing Programme. Your study of the course will take up to 150 hours over the six-month study period. The course can contribute to postgraduate qualifications in:

- Computing for Commerce and Industry
- Information Systems
- Software Development
- Management of Software Projects
- Networks and Distributed Systems

It may also be studied as part of qualifications in Technology Management or Information Systems, or as a stand-alone course in its own right.

You can find full details of all the courses and qualifications available on the Open University (OU) website at http://www.open.ac.uk/courses.

1.1 Overview of the course

Information security underpins the commercial viability and profitability of enterprises of all sizes and the effectiveness of public-sector organisations. As Nigel Turnbull, former Secretary to the UK Cabinet, has written:

> In today's high technology environment, organizations are becoming more and more dependent on their information systems. The public is increasingly concerned about the proper use of information, particularly personal data. The threats to information systems from criminals and terrorists are increasing. Many organizations will identify information as an area of their operation that needs to be protected as part of their system of internal control.
>
> (Nigel Turnbull, 2003, p.xi)

M886 sets out from these assumptions and explains how to develop and run a practical information security management system, in accordance with the current British and International Standards for information security management.

1.2 Prerequisite skills and knowledge

You can take this as a stand-alone course and it requires no formal qualifications for entry. However, it is a postgraduate course, and you will be expected to have appropriate skills at this level, which might be developed from previous study or from professional or commercial experience. In particular, you will need report-writing skills. You will need some background knowledge of networking, hardware and software.

You will need to have had some experience of working in an environment where information security is an issue. Throughout the course, you will need to be able to relate the course concepts to an organisation with which you are familiar, so you will

need to have a suitable example organisation (or part of an organisation) that you can use. Your tutor will be able to advise you on the choice of a suitable organisation.

Some of the background knowledge and skills needed to study this course could have been gained by studying some of the OU's other postgraduate computing courses such as:

- M873 *User interface design and evaluation* and M865 *Project management*, both of which would have helped you to develop report-writing skills as well as the ability to apply knowledge in a real situation;
- T823 *Multi-service networks: controls*, which has a unit that looks at the more technical aspects of security;
- M879 *Distributed applications and ecommerce*.

1.3 What you will need

More details of Open University PC requirements are given at http://www.open.ac.uk/personal-computing.

You are expected to have easy access to a personal computer with word-processing software, and access to the internet. Although the Open University normally specifies a Windows PC for its courses, there are no such requirements for this course, which may be studied using a computer running other operating systems.

Internet access is needed for:

- access to the course website;
- downloading some of the course materials;
- submitting TMAs electronically;
- participating in course forums.

The University Library, and especially its collection of online journals and other publications, will also be of particular importance in preparing for your examination, as well as for background reading and research during the course.

If you are a new student, you will be sent your OU computer username (OUCU) and password through the post, by the Learning and Teaching Solutions (LTS) department. You will be told how to access your StudentHome page, where you will find all the online services that you need for study of the course.

2 Aims and learning outcomes

In common with most Open University courses, M886 includes detailed aims and learning outcomes, as described below. In addition, each unit includes a list of the aims specific to that unit.

2.1 Aims

M886 aims to provide the skills and knowledge necessary to develop and run a practical information security management system, in accordance with the current British and International Standards.

In particular it aims to:

- provide you with an understanding of current issues in information security and its management;
- teach you a variety of techniques for information security management, including risk assessment and management, and to provide practice in their use;
- provide you with sufficient knowledge to be able to choose between different development techniques, tools and process models for a given information security context;
- make you aware of the policy and technology trade-offs involved in developing information security management systems of sufficient quality;
- give you an understanding of the importance to information security management of risk assessment and management, impact assessment, human factors, and legal and ethical issues.

2.2 Learning outcomes

Learning outcomes applicable to M886 can be grouped into the following overlapping categories.

- Knowledge and understanding – demonstrating a critical awareness of current problems, key concepts and terminology, and techniques in the discipline of information security management. In particular, developing an understanding of:
  - the principles for designing and evaluating an information security management system;
  - the design of countermeasures to protect information assets against threats;
  - the strengths and weaknesses of different types of authentication and access control mechanisms;
  - the key concepts and principles of firewalls, malicious software, database security and intrusion detection;
  - management roles in defining, enforcing and validating information security.
- Cognitive skills – evaluating critically current research in the discipline of information security management, making informed judgements in the absence of

complete data, and demonstrating self-direction in tackling and solving problems. In particular, being able to:

- evaluate critically the information security management systems of an organisation;
- integrate knowledge and skills from a range of approaches to information security management.

- Key skills – communicating conclusions clearly in written work, contributing to the electronic conference system, interpreting and evaluating information from a variety of sources, and selecting appropriate techniques to solve problems in the discipline of information security management.
- Practical and professional skills – demonstrating independent learning ability. In particular, being able to:
  - apply the principles, concepts and techniques of the course in the workplace, solving problems within the discipline of information security management;
  - support management roles in defining, enforcing and validating information security.

3 Structure of the course

The course materials are provided partly in print and partly online via the course website. Some items are provided in both media. The printed materials will be sent to you in one mailing.

This section contains a brief summary of each item of the materials and describes how they fit into the course structure.

3.1 Starting M886

Starting M886 is a short document included in your mailing of materials that you should read right at the beginning of the course. It guides you to the important first steps you should take:

- what to read first;
- where to find what you need to study the course;
- how to find the course website;
- some basic information about OU study.

It includes the *Study Calendar* and advice on whom to contact at the Open University if you have a query.

3.2 Course Guide

This *Course Guide* gives you an overview of the course and its contents, together with details of how your work will be assessed. It directs you to other documents for further details. It contains some notes on how you should study the course materials and how to use the course website, and also gives an outline of the contents of the units.

The *Course Guide* is provided in print and online in searchable pdf format.

3.3 Study Calendar

The *Study Calendar* gives a timetable for study of the main components of the course, the dates by which you must submit your assignments (known as cut-off dates) and the approximate examination date. It is important that you try to keep up with this timetable in order to complete and submit your assignments by the cut-off dates and to leave sufficient time at the end of the course for revision.

The *Study Calendar* is provided in print (in *Starting M886*) and online.

3.4 Set Book

The course is structured as three units of teaching text written to support and extend the Set Book *International IT Governance: An Executive Guide to ISO 17799/ISO 27001* by Alan Calder and Steve Watkins (published by Kogan Page in 2006).

The Set Book is provided in print only.

The course units guide your study of the Set Book, which is used in two ways in the course:

1 as a means of learning about the current British and International Standards on Information Security Management;

2 as detailed source material for performing information security risk assessment and management.

You will often skim read a part of the book, only to read it in more detail later. This skimming then reading is an excellent way to understand the complex material in the Set Book.

3.5 British and International Standards

A copy of each part of the Standard is available to you, as an M886 student, from the British Standards Online password-protected database. Full instructions on how to download your copies are given on the course website.

Both the Set Book and the course units refer extensively to the current standards on information security management. The original standards developed by the British Standards Institution for Information Security Management were in two companion parts: a code of practice and the requirements of an information security management system. These were known respectively as British Standards BS7799–1:1999 and BS7799–2:1999. These standards have been revised as International Standards and readopted in the UK. At the time of writing, the latest version of the code of practice that we will use throughout this course is BS ISO/IEC27002:2005, BS7799–1:2005. The latest version of the ISMS Requirements standard is BS ISO/IEC27001:2005, BS7799–2:2005. We refer to these two documents collectively as the Standard on Information Security Management, or as the Standard for short. Individually, we shall refer to these as ISO27002 (Part 1 of the Standard) and ISO27001 (Part 2 of the Standard), respectively.

3.6 Course units

Each unit is provided in print and online in searchable pdf format.

Unit 1 An Introduction to information security

This unit begins by explaining why information security and its management are important for any modern organisation. The unit continues by examining the value that can be placed on information as an organisational asset. The protection of information assets is the subject of the Standard on Information Security Management, and the unit goes on to explain how an information security management system should be planned, documented, implemented and improved, according to the Standard.

Unit 2 Information security risk assessment

This unit places in context the issues involved in information security risk assessment, as required by the Standard, by examining the risks in all relevant aspects of an organisation's operations, including human factors, ecommerce, web services, and systems development. The unit explains how to conduct a systematic risk assessment for an organisation that leads to a prioritised list of information security risks and the options for their treatment. The unit ends by asking you to perform the groundwork for a risk assessment for your chosen organisation, based on the information contained in the Standard and the Set Book.

Unit 3 Information security risk management

This unit discusses the management of information security risks, thus completing the examination of the process of developing a fit-for-purpose information security management system that is consistent with the Standard. The unit explains how to be

systematic in the choice of controls that treat specific risks, and shows how documentation to comply with the Standard can be produced. There is a full discussion of the technologies that underpin the controls. The unit finishes on the topic of planning for when things go wrong.

3.7 Assignment Book

The *Assignment Book* gives the details of the three tutor-marked assignments (TMAs) which you will need to complete and submit to your tutor during the course. It also provides guidance on how to complete and submit your TMAs.

The *Assignment Book* is provided only online in pdf format.

3.8 Examination Guide

The *Examination Guide* provides guidance on preparation for the end-of-course examination, and includes a *Specimen Examination Paper* (SEP). The SEP gives you a preview of the structure and style of the real examination paper. The paper includes, in Part 2, a question for which you need to prepare by researching and writing an essay on a theme related to information security management.

The *Examination Guide* is provided only online in pdf format.

Many students practise for the examination by taking the SEP under exam conditions with similar constraints on the time and materials available. The *Solutions to the SEP* gives guidance on the style and standard expected of good answers and guidance on how best to tackle the research element of the examination. You can use these answers to find those areas where you need to do further revision.

3.9 Technical Appendix

The course provides, as added value, a technical appendix in which you will find accessible descriptions of technologies associated with information security. The guide underpins the teaching of the course, and will make the course more accessible to those without a detailed technological background.

The *Technical Appendix* is provided only online in pdf format.

3.10 Course website

The course website, provided on the Open University's Virtual Learning Environment, is an important resource for you. You will be able to access the website from your Open University StudentHome page (http://www.open.ac.uk/students) once you have received your Open University Computer Username (OUCU) and password from our Learning and Teaching Solutions department. The course website will become available in advance of the course start date. The website contains the following items:

The course website will be first available in the week preceding the course start date. At that point you will be able to access it from your StudentHome page at http://www.open.ac.uk/students.

- *News* from the course team;
- the *Study Calendar*;
- *Course Resources*: pdfs of the *Course Guide*, *Technical Appendix* and *Starting M886*;
- a *Resources* section for each course unit, containing a pdf of that unit and links to relevant web resources;
- details of any errata reported in the course materials;
- access to British Standards Online database for downloading the Standard on Information Security Management;

- an *Assessment* section including your *Assignment Book* and *Examination Guide*;
- a *Who to Ask* section, with details of whom to contact at the Open University about queries relating to your study of M886;
- access to the online course forums and other Open University resources such as the electronic TMA submission system and the Library.

The course team uses the website regularly to post news items for students, and you should get into the habit of checking it once a week. If we post an important piece of information on the website, for example a change to a TMA, we will also notify all students by email.

3.11 Online course forums

There are lively discussions on the University's online forums, which are widely used by students on the postgraduate programme. All M886 students and tutors are registered on the system, and we recommend that you make use of it. The M886 course forum is moderated by a tutor and is regularly read by the course team and the tutors.

The University's Online Applications CD-ROM is included in your course mailing. This CD-ROM contains client software for the forums, the StarOffice suite and other items. For electronic TMA submission please note that it is also essential for you to have both zipping software and anti-virus software on your PC.

4 How to study the course

You should expect to take about 150 hours to study this course. This equates to about six hours study each week during the study period, which runs for nearly six months. This time includes an allowance for completing your assignments and for preparation for the examination. The estimated time required for each unit is set out in the *Study Calendar.*

If you have never studied an Open University course before, please take particular note of the material in this section.

Before you begin to study the course units, you should make sure that you have read through this *Course Guide* and the *Assignment Book*. You should find both documents useful in guiding your studies.

4.1 Using the teaching materials

The three course units, together with the Set Book, provide the main teaching on this course. The units are designed to provide interactive learning, which is achieved through the use of examples and activities (which include readings from the Set Book and the Standard), together with suggestions for further reading. Specific guidance on when to refer to the Set Book or the Standard is given in the units. The units are designed to be studied in order, as shown on the *Study Calendar*.

Since this is a postgraduate course, as part of the teaching you will be expected to read material of an advanced nature, as appears in the research literature, for instance. As well as informing your study, this will keep your knowledge of the literature up to date.

Activities

Activities are designed to enable you to apply the concepts that have been taught or to explore issues that extend your knowledge and skills. These frequently involve reading parts of the Set Book, the Standard or other documents. Each is accompanied by some guidance, which should help you when you attempt the activity, and/or a discussion, which will provide either a sample answer or some indication of what one would look like. You should read the guidance before you attempt an activity and the discussion after you have attempted it. Tackling the activities will help you to get the best out of the course – so don't be tempted to skip them. Many of them will contribute to your TMA answers.

References and further reading

A list of books and papers referred to in the text appears at the end of each unit. Suggestions for further reading also appear in margin notes in the units and links are provided to them on the course website. Access to many items is via the Open University Library, which subscribes to large numbers of electronic journals and conference proceedings. The books and papers cited do not form an essential part of the course, but some 'reading around' will complement the learning provided by M886, will add to the depth of your knowledge, and will make you more flexible in your response to problems.

If you are thinking of taking an MSc using M886 as one of your Diploma courses, and choosing a security topic for your project, some of these websites might make a useful starting point in considering your project proposal.

You may wish to develop your own collection of addresses for websites that you have found particularly useful as you study, to use as reference once you have completed the course and have time for further reading.

4.2 Using the course website

Most of the documents you need for the course can be downloaded in pdf format from the course website. You are unlikely to want to download and print those items sent to you in printed form. However, we do recommend that you download and print the *Assignment Book* and the *Examination Guide*, and you may like to print the *Technical Appendix.* The two parts of the Standard are lengthy documents, so you may prefer just to download them to your own PC for easy reference, and print specific pages if you need to.

Items on these external websites will not be assessed unless they form an essential part of the course.

Occasionally, a unit will refer you to material on an external website. Links to such websites are embedded in the pdfs of the course units. Where the material forms an essential part of the course, a link to the website is also available in the Resources section of the course website relating to the relevant unit.

4.3 Keeping your own notes

As part of studying this course, we recommend that you take notes as you study. Keeping your own notes is generally good practice which we strongly encourage, both for studying this course and for your normal work activities.

As you study, apply the concepts of the course to situations you find in your working life – and write about them.

You will find additional advice about note taking and other study skills such as report writing in the introductory materials for new students on the Postgraduate ICT and Computing Programme (MD500). This includes *The Good Study Guide* and a website available to all students.

The University has also developed a range of guidance on study skills which you will find on the 'Learning with the OU' website. You will find a link to this website on the M886 website.

5 Tutorial support

Shortly before the course starts (usually about a week before) you will be assigned a course tutor by our Postgraduate Technology and Computing (PTC) Office in Nottingham. The name of your tutor, and how to contact them, will be provided on StudentHome.

Your main contact with your tutor will be by telephone or email and through the detailed comments that they will make on your tutor-marked assignment (TMA) scripts via the electronic TMA system. The feedback you receive from your tutor will provide valuable help and advice on your progress through the course.

Depending on the number of students studying the course there may occasionally be an introductory tutorial or introductory online event. Information about such opportunities is available through the Tutorial Finder on StudentHome. The course forums also provide a good opportunity to interact with other students.

Towards the end of the course, an optional two-day residential revision school may be offered and information would be available from the PTC Office. There is a fee for this school, which is not included in the course fee, and again, it cannot be offered unless it is viable on the basis of student numbers. The school provides preparation for the examination in a series of intensive tutorial sessions. A general session on preparing for examinations is included which may be especially useful if you have not taken an examination for a while. There is also an opportunity to learn more about M801 *Research project and dissertation*, a course which may be helpful if you are approaching the end of your postgraduate diploma study or if you are planning ahead.

Both the introductory tutorial day and the residential school are organised by the PTC Office. Information about the introductory tutorial, if offered, is available to you on StudentHome. The PTC Office will send you details of any revision school separately from your course materials.

5.1 Other sources of support

As you work through the course, there may be occasions when you need help with a problem before you can proceed with your study. In these circumstances you should normally contact your course tutor. If you have other queries, or if your tutor is not available within a reasonable time, contact the appropriate person from the list given in *Starting M886*, or the *Who to Ask* section on the course website. If you are unsure who the appropriate person is, please contact the PTC office.

We would also encourage you to look at the M886 online forum, and join in the discussions if you wish; they are monitored by one of the M886 tutors. This is a useful way to meet other students and share comments about the course itself, and discuss wider issues related to the topic of the course. Make sure that you are familiar with the netiquette rules before adding your contributions. For example, posting solutions to the course assignments is strictly forbidden.

6 Assessment and course results

Assessment on M886 has both formative and summative components.

Formative assessment recognises that you can 'learn by doing' and by receiving feedback. Most of M886's formative assessment appears as activities in the course units. Each activity is generally followed by feedback in the form of a brief discussion of important points. In addition, your tutor will use the TMAs to offer formative feedback on your learning, as well as a score for each TMA question.

See Section 2.

Summative assessment enables the Examination and Assessment Board to measure your achievement of the course aims and learning outcomes. The summative assessment determines the grade you will be awarded at the end of the course. It has two components:

- three tutor-marked assignments (TMAs);
- a final three-hour examination.

Both the TMAs and the examination are compulsory. To guarantee a pass grade for the course you must pass both of them, i.e. when all the calculations have been done, you must end up with a score of at least 40 per cent for your overall continuous assessment and at least 40 per cent for your examinable component. Your result is **not** determined by averaging the two components.

At the end of the course you are given a final overall course result, which may be Distinction, Merit, Pass, Fail with resit permitted, or Fail. Details about course assessment and how your final course result is calculated are provided in the *Assessment Handbook for Taught Higher Degrees*. This handbook is available online on the course website.

6.1 Tutor-marked assignments

All three TMAs count towards your final grade. The three TMAs are equally weighted. Any assignment not submitted is given a zero score.

TMA 01 relates to *Unit 1*, TMA 02 to *Unit 2* and TMA 03 to *Unit 3.*

All three TMAs are essay based and require you to relate the teaching in the course to the information security management issues in the organisation you work for, or part of it, or in another organisation that you know well.

The *Assignment Book* contains the three TMAs; it also provides guidance on analysis and argument and on how to structure and organise your TMA answers, together with advice on citations, references and plagiarism. You may also find the 'Learning with the OU' website, mentioned at the end of Section 4 of this *Course Guide*, useful when attempting the TMAs.

Submission of assignments

On this course we strongly recommend that you submit your TMAs to your tutor via the University's electronic TMA system. Your tutor downloads your TMA from the University's eTMA website, marks it electronically and returns it to the website for you to collect. In emergencies your tutor may allow you to submit a TMA by post or by

email but permission must be obtained in advance. If you are based overseas, you must use the electronic system.

You will find the eTMA system straightforward to use; it enables you to submit your work very close to the deadline, without any postal delays.

Full details of how to submit your TMAs are provided in the *Assignment Book* and in *Using the Electronic TMA system – A Guide for Students*, a booklet which you will be sent.

The dates by which you should send your assignments to your tutor are important. These cut-off dates are clearly shown on the front cover of the *Assignment Book* and also on the *Study Calendar*. In special circumstances (for example, for medical reasons or because of unforeseen business travel) you can obtain an extension of up to three weeks on the cut-off date for the first two TMAs. Normally no extension can be granted on the cut-off date of the last TMA. Please contact your tutor as soon as you know you may have difficulty in meeting a cut-off date, and ask for an extension. Your tutor is not obliged to mark assignments that are late, without prior approval.

6.2 Examination

The final component of the course is a three-hour written examination which is taken at the end of your study period.

The best way to prepare for the examination is to read the *Examination Guide*, which contains the *Specimen Examination Paper* (SEP), and the *Solutions to the SEP*. You may wish to attempt the SEP under exam conditions yourself shortly before your examination. For part of your examination you will need to carry out some research into a current issue in information security, by reading and analysing recent research publications and preparing an essay on your research.

You will be informed by the Examinations Office of the date of your examination and your local examination centre. You will also receive full details of examination regulations.

7 What to do next

- Read *Starting M886*.
- Make sure you have received your OU computer username (OUCU).
- Once the course website is available, you should download and read the *Assignment Book*, and also the Standards that you need for the course.
- Then explore the course website, and familiarise yourself with its structure.

Then you will be ready to start studying the first unit.

You will receive an introductory letter from your tutor near the course start date. It is helpful to get in touch with your tutor at an early stage, particularly to discuss the choice of an organisation on which you can base your TMA answers.

We hope that you enjoy your study of M886 and that you will have the opportunity to use the knowledge and skills you will gain both during your studies and after you have completed the course. We also hope that, having experienced Open University study, you will be enthusiastic about studying more courses on the Postgraduate ICT and Computing Programme, to gain a postgraduate diploma or MSc, or about following one of the OU's other programmes of study.

References

Calder, A. and Watkins, S. (2006) *International IT Governance: An Executive Guide to ISO 17799/ISO 27001*, Kogan Page (Set Book).

Turnbull, N. (2003) 'Foreword' in Calder, A. and Watkins, S. *IT Governance: A Manager's Guide to Data Security & BS 7799/ISO 17799* (2nd edn), Kogan Page.