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FSB FOCUS

MAGAZINE

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Message from
the **CEO**



Dear Readers,

Welcome to the latest edition of FSB Focus - a publication created to illuminate ideas and explore the evolving landscape of higher education.

At its heart, FSB Focus is about perspective. Our campuses are not merely places where qualifications are obtained. They are academic arenas where intellect is ignited and student ambition is refined into capability.

In this issue, we explore The Psychology of Clicks (p 5), the journey from Proposal to Dissertation (p 13), and the Mayor of Croydon visit to FSB Croydon (p 17). We also share an inspiring student journey at FSB Sheffield (p 23).

Our academic features continue with The Silent Curriculum (p 31), Inside the Criminal Mind (p 37), and conclude with The Student Voice Within (p 43), reflecting on artificial intelligence and the evolving nature of wisdom.

Together, these outstanding stories capture the intellectual diversity that defines the FSB experience.

Warmest regards,

Mohammed Zaidi
CEO of FSB



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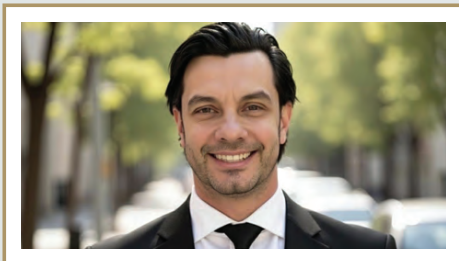
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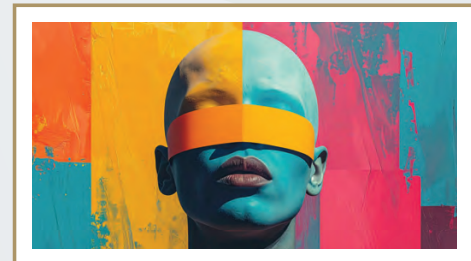
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THE PSYCHOLOGY OF CLICKS: WHAT HAPPENS IN THE BRAIN WHEN WE ENGAGE ONLINE

By **Miracle Eze**, Lecturer in Digital Marketing at FSB Sheffield



There are times when we are totally oblivious and not even aware of what we are doing online and just scrolling, tapping, liking, or sharing. A light alert or a sound notification, a news story in the corner of our eyes, and we have already clicked unconsciously. Nevertheless, behind that very effortless click lies a sophisticated interaction of chemical reactions in the brain, emotional states, and cognitive bias. Understanding the motives of users to click is not only a matter of curiosity anymore but rather a barometer of digital marketers' skill in a highly competitive environment. Neuroscience captures those moments of milliseconds when the attention shifts, and the action is taken.

We are going to explore what goes on in our brains while having online interactions with others.

1. Dopamine: The Click's Reward Circuit

The click brings about a pleasurable feeling as it stimulates the basic motivation and reward system of the brain. Dopamine, the neurotransmitter that plays the most important role in this process, is secreted every time a user clicks a link, reads a message, or receives a “like” on their social media activity (Costa and Schoenbaum, 2022). It signals to you to react since the good outcome “might” happen.

This “might” is of great importance. The unpredictability of rewards is one of the features of variable rewards in social media feeds as identified by Lindström et al., (2021). It is a case of the next post or the next comment creating an expectation that will keep you scrolling even when you are not sure if it will be interesting or not. The mechanism here is similar to that of casinos: the possibility of obtaining something rewarding gets the brain's same part – the nucleus accumbens – activated, hence every scroll becomes a small bet. Platform designers and marketers employ strategies such as push notifications and endless scrolling to maintain this dopamine release constantly.

2. Attention: The Brain's Currency

The first and most restricted resource consumed in the digital sphere is attention. The brain of a human being is always on the lookout for the new thing and the most important thing. The reticular activating system (RAS) (Soisoonthorn and Unger, 2025), a part of the brainstem, is responsible for filtering the incoming signals and deciding what is going to be sensed.

In a digital noise-filled world, only the content of emotions or personal experiences get through. The words “urgent,” “free,” or “new” attract the RAS because they are associated with possible gain or loss. Therefore, it can be said that ad headlines and subject lines compete with each other for microseconds of attention. These messages with the strongest power create an atmosphere of emotions or stimulate innate curiosity. For instance:

- “You won’t believe what happened next” arouses curiosity.
- “Limited offer” signals scarcity.
- “People like you are saving money this way” gives social proof.

All the above-mentioned effective messages are dependent upon the neural shortcuts, or heuristics (Hoyos, 2023), that the brain employs for making rapid, low-effort decisions.

3. Emotion: Why We Click First, Think Later

Your limbic system, which controls emotions, is the first to react to the content even before the rational part of your brain has had the opportunity to assess it. The amygdala conveys the emotional relevance in a matter of milliseconds. Thus, information that is emotionally charged — joy, anger, awe, or fear — passes through the Internet faster than any other kind of information. Posts that provoke strong emotions are more likely to be clicked or shared (Abbas et al., 2021; Paletz et al., 2023).

Emotions and decision-making are connected when the brain texts the strong feelings to the ventromedial prefrontal cortex. Hence, the statement that we click because it seems right. This turning of events has a significant impact on the marketers’ writing: Emotions attract, but the truths are revealed. Breda (2022) agrees that the brain is prepared to act in response to an attractive web page, emotionally charged pictures, and stories that the viewer can identify with.

4. Cognitive Biases: Mental Shortcuts

Cognitive biases are used by our brains, which are mental shortcuts, to save energy and make the process of decision-making easier. These biases have a significant effect on digital engagement. The online behaviour is mainly characterised by:

- **Curiosity gap:** We click to end an ideational journey (You won’t believe what...).
- **Social proof:** Watching others engage (likes, reviews) plays on our very basic social need to conform, which is associated with the release of oxytocin.

- **Loss aversion:** More than the pleasure of winning, we loathe losing. The neural difference here is taken advantage of by the use of words like “Last chance”.
- **Authority bias:** The brain tends to trust more what it thinks the experts say, thus stimulating the trust circuits of the prefrontal cortex.
- **Visual bias:** Imagery is understood by the brain 60,000 times faster than text (Barker, 2024), hence the great images and emojis often have more audience and engagement.

5. The Role of Anticipation and FOMO

Anticipation—a sensation that an enjoyable event is just about to happen—is a major factor that affects clicks. It is like the brain’s mesolimbic dopamine pathway is on fire and it is almost impossible not to act (Li et al., 2015). One way marketers create anticipation is through “Coming soon” teasers or subject lines in emails like “Your exclusive invite is waiting.”

This is amplified by FOMO (Fear of Missing Out). The brain interprets being left out socially as a real danger, which leads to the activation of the anterior cingulate cortex—the area which processes physical discomfort (Chester and Riva, 2016). The use of terms such as “Only 3 spots left” plays on our basic need to belong and to be in-the-know, which is the reason they are so effective.

6. The Habit Loop: Rewiring for Repetition

Repeating the same actions leads to the creation of neural pathways, making the corresponding action easier to perform and more automatic. The habit loop gets deeper the more we go online:

For example:

- **Cue:** A notification icon appears.
- **Action:** You tap on it.
- **Reward:** A friend has sent you a message or liked your post.

This cycle becomes automatic in due course. The control is transferred from the part of the brain that deals with self-control and decision making (the prefrontal cortex) to the part that handles routine behaviours (the basal ganglia). Consistent branding and tone are attractive because they allow a brand to be embedded in a user's mental habit loop, which in turn, increases engagement naturally.



THE HABIT LOOP: CUE → ACTION → REWARD

Designed by Author

Image: designed by the author using Google Gemini.

7. Ethical Limits: The Dark Side of Clicks

Manipulation is possible using the same neuroscience that makes marketing successful. Brands run the risk of taking advantage of psychological triggers when they overuse them, especially when it comes to fear, scarcity, or addictive loops.

The reward system may become desensitised after prolonged exposure to these digital dopamine cycles, ultimately reducing motivation and focus (Youvan, 2024) and leading to mental exhaustion (Mehta, 2025). Distraction, exhaustion, and compulsive engagement are the outcomes. Instead of stealing the user experience, ethical marketers should use neuroscience to enhance it. Knowing how people think and using that knowledge against them are at opposite ends of the ethical spectrum. The goals of ethical neuromarketing are transparency, value, and clarity.

8. Practical Neuromarketing for Engagement

Making your digital strategy brain-friendly doesn't require a background in neuroscience. Here are some useful strategies for putting these realisations into practice

- **Encourage curiosity:**
Make use of captivating headlines that convey genuine value (Breda, 2022).
- **Less complex design:**
Cut down on pointless options to save the user's mental energy (Paletz et al., 2023).
- **Try to evoke emotion:**
Make use of narratives and pictures that evoke strong feelings in people.
- **Create expectations in an ethical manner:**
Give countdowns and surprises genuine value.
- **Establish trustworthy feedback loops:**
To boost participation, give the mind the "you did it" confirmation by using brief animations or encouraging phrases (Abbas et al., 2021).
- **Show consideration:**
Don't overburden users with pop-ups, auto-play videos, or phoney urgency.

Conclusion

A mouse click is a tiny choice with biological, emotional, and habitual underpinnings. It is not arbitrary; rather, it is motivated by a brain structure that has evolved through evolution and senses reward, relevance, and anticipation.

Digital marketers can turn intuition into strategy by comprehending these processes. The objective is meaningful engagement, not just more clicks; it's about offering experiences that value human involvement and foster enduring trust. You can communicate your point most effectively if you have a thorough understanding of the human brain.

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From Proposal to Dissertation: Transforming Ideas into Research Reality

By Dr Abolaji Azeez, Course Coordinator and CODESRIA African Diaspora Visiting Scholar,
Lecturer, FSB Dighbeth Campus



Image: Created by Kunal Chan Mehta, FSB's PR Manager, on Adobe and Adobe Firefly.. Image licensed to FSB.

At FSB, research is not merely an academic requirement but a transformative journey of discovery and self-development. Across all disciplines, students are encouraged to question assumptions, explore innovative solutions, and contribute to the body of knowledge that shapes their fields. The transition from proposal to dissertation represents one of the most challenging (Terrell, 2022) yet rewarding stages in this journey – a bridge between conceptual thinking and empirical reality. Drawing on experience from FSB's Research Centre and supporting students through diverse programmes, here are concise, practical strategies to turn your proposal into a dissertation.

1. Revisit and Refine Your Proposal

The proposal serves as a roadmap (Krishna, 2024). After approval, critical reflection becomes crucial for students to develop credible research. Honest reflection enables students to refine their arguments and remain intellectually agile. To achieve scientific feasibility, students must prioritise a clear research focus which improves manageability. This may involve deepening theoretical discussion to ensure the topic remains practical and achievable. For example, a student exploring organisational performance could refine a broad topic like *'Business Efficiency'* to *'Digital Innovation Strategies in Small Enterprises'*. Once the proposal is refined, the next step is to situate the research within existing scholarship through an expanded literature review.

2. Expand the Literature Review

At the proposal stage, the literature review is typically brief and focused on identifying a gap (Christou et al., 2025). In the dissertation, this section should evolve into a detailed analysis of theories, concepts, and previous studies. From the preliminary literature review in the proposal, students review existing empirical contributions, such as peer-reviewed articles and credible reports, to develop sound arguments. Such analytical discourse engenders exploration of the gap in knowledge. Students should organise key debates clearly, engage critically with diverse sources. Such engagement demonstrates their ability to situate their research within academic discourse. Also, a robust literature review reveals students' understanding of the field, highlights gaps, and justifies your research direction.

3. Strengthen Methodology

A dissertation demands a full account of how the research was conducted, written in the past tense (Thompson, 2025). Explain why particular methods were chosen, how data was gathered, and what limitations were encountered. Students should ensure methods fit their questions. Also, the students should reflect on epistemological and ontological considerations. Importantly, include a section on research ethics, such as informed consent, confidentiality, beneficence, non-maleficence and data protection. Transparency about ethics and methods enhances credibility and allows others to replicate or build on the dissertation.

4. Analyse and Interpret Data

The capacity to critically interpret data demonstrates understanding and intellectual maturity to transform difficult information into relatable information to policy users. This stage brings the research process into analytical focus. Students focus on presenting clear descriptive and inferential findings which are linked to objectives. Besides, students interpret data patterns critically and create a logical nexus between empirical findings and theoretical frameworks. Regardless of level, organise students' analysis around research questions rather than simply reporting results. For instance, instead of saying 'Most participants agreed that...', students should go further to say, for example: 'This finding supports the theory that perceived control reduces workplace stress.'

5. Draw Meaningful Conclusions

With a critical interpretation of your findings, the conclusion should consolidate these insights into a coherent contribution. A strong conclusion presents logical judgment and demonstrates how the study contributes to knowledge or solves problems (Thompson, 2025). Students might emphasise practical implications and discuss theoretical or policy contributions. Also, the acknowledgement of study limitations and suggestions about future research directions are crucial to completing a dissertation. Students are expected to demonstrate brevity to show how research findings reconnect to the initial proposal's aims. At FSB Digbeth, we've seen students transform innovative ideas into award-winning dissertations. Our students' contributions were

evidenced here: [FSB's Second Annual Research Conference Bridges the Gap Between Academia and Practice – Fairfield School of Business.](#)

6. Analyse and Interpret Data

In academic writing, consistency is a prerequisite for a successful delivery of a dissertation; hence, students are expected to adhere to the following:

- Align with FSB's guidelines on structure, referencing, and tone.
- Engage appropriate tense throughout, usually past tense when reporting completed work.
- Maintain effective time management and regular dialogue with supervisors to keep the dissertation on track.
- Ensure academic discipline to demonstrate professionalism and scholarly rigour.

At FSB, academic discipline reflects our ethos of professionalism, reflective scholarship, and commitment to lifelong learning. For us, the dissertation journey symbolises intellectual maturity and personal growth. It transforms students into independent thinkers who are capable of contributing new insights to the scientific space. By engaging critically and reflecting deeply, each student turns research into a pathway for both academic and professional advancement. Remember, your dissertation is not just an academic task; it's your opportunity to add your voice to your field. At FSB, we believe every student has a unique contribution to make.

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Elected Mayor of Croydon Celebrates FSB as a Catalyst for Opportunity

By Kunal Chan Mehta, FSB's Public Relations Manager and Editor of FSB Focus.



Mayor Jason Perry and FSB Croydon students and staff celebrate a shared civic ambition. Photo: FSB.

FSB Croydon welcomed the Elected Mayor of Croydon, Jason Perry, who formally recognised FSB's role in creating a "Croydon of Opportunity". With the Mayor presenting an official Certificate of Contribution to FSB's senior leadership team – and with FSB students articulating their aspirations and achievements – the visit became far more than a ceremonial engagement. It emerged as a compelling showcase of ambition, talent and a shared civic vision.

Speaking at the event, Mayor Perry said

"It gives me great pleasure to recognise the significant contribution that Fairfield School of Business makes to Croydon."



(l-r) Giedrius Zilionis, Vice Principal of FSB, and Mr Mohammed Zaidi, FSB's CEO, receive an official Certificate of Contribution from Mayor Perry. Photo: FSB.

FSB Students at the Centre

The event's spotlight fell not only on the institution but on the students themselves. Learners across FSB's courses – from Business Management to Health and Social Care to Criminology – presented directly to the Mayor. They shared the transformative power of FSB's courses, highlighting how local learning, flexible timetables, a supportive Foundation Year, and small personalised classes had enabled them to balance study with their work, family and life's challenges.



Mayor Perry with FSB Croydon students (l-r): Anderson Barreto Cajamarca, BA (Hons) Business and Management with Foundation Year, Darina Yovcheva, BSc (Hons) Business Management with Foundation Year, Rashid Fundikira, BA (Hons) Business and Management with Foundation Year, Victoria Jack, BA (Hons) Counselling, Mental Health and Wellbeing with Foundation Year and Felly Yusifu, BA (Hons) Business and Management with Foundation Year. Photo: FSB.

“Mayor Perry’s visit was a remarkable and energising experience,”

said Mohammed Zaidi, FSB’s CEO.

“It highlighted not only the incredible talent and ambition of Croydon’s people, but also the potential and promise that lie within the community. At FSB, we are proud to show how education can serve as a bridge to opportunity, opening doors and transforming lives across Croydon.”



Mayor Perry and Mr Mohammed Zaidi, FSB’s CEO, tour FSB Croydon campus facilities and services. Photo: FSB.

Giedrius Zilionis, FSB's Vice Principal, added,

“Our students are living proof that access and opportunity, when paired with high-quality education, can reshape lives – and, by extension, the borough of Croydon itself.”

Felly Yusifu, a Bath Spa University accredited BA (Hons) Business and Management student, said:

“The Mayor really inspired us. Students and staff left feeling acknowledged, empowered and really motivated. This reminded us of the vital role we play in shaping Croydon’s future. Every course, every achievement and every learner contributes to a growing story of opportunity and impact across the borough.”

Civic Partnership in Action

The Mayor’s visit also reinforced FSB’s strategic role in Croydon’s broader regeneration. Under the 2022–2026 Business Plan, Croydon aims to create a borough where economic growth, youth opportunity, and social mobility are intertwined. Institutions like FSB, Mayor Perry emphasised, are “critical partners in that mission”.

“Every graduate, every skill gained here, is a brick in the foundation of a stronger and fairer Croydon,”

added Dr Ben Abudawood, Academic Dean of FSB Croydon.

“We want FSB not just to be aligned with the Mayor’s civic plan – but be central to it.”

While the commendation awarded to FSB is symbolic, it is also a marker of tangible contribution to Croydon. Students leaving FSB are entering the workforce, launching businesses and reinvesting their skills locally. FSB’s vocationally aligned courses directly feed the borough’s regeneration, bridging education with employability, enterprise and community development.

Creating a Croydon of Opportunity

For the Mayor, FSB embodies the practical, people-centred approach needed to create opportunity at scale. For FSB's leadership, the visit validates its mission: to ensure that education is inclusive, flexible, and relevant, opening doors to learners who might otherwise fall through the cracks.

“Our work is inseparable from Croydon's story,”

added Dr Ben Abudawood, Academic Dean of FSB Croydon.

“Every student and every staff member who succeeds here contributes to the vitality, confidence and prosperity of the borough of Croydon.”



Behind the scenes: Mr Mohammed Zaidi, FSB's CEO, thanks Mr Ali Ahsan (l) in Operations and Anthony Ajala in Security (r) for their outstanding attention to detail and support during the Mayor's visit.

Finding FSB: From Foundation Year Student to Student Union Coordinator at Sheffield Campus

By **Gabriela Güvenel**, Foundation Year Graduate and Student Union Coordinator, FSB Sheffield



“I didn’t arrive at FSB by following a neat, sensible plan with bullet points and milestones. I arrived here the way many of us arrive, where we’re meant to be: by listening, adjusting, letting go, and occasionally having the rug pulled from under our feet just enough times to learn how to walk differently.”

For a long time, I knew one thing about myself with clarity: I wanted to build a holistic coaching and guidance practice. Supporting people, listening deeply, and helping them make sense of their inner worlds always felt natural to me. But life experience taught me something equally important: purpose alone is not enough to keep something alive.

Throughout my life, I have been involved in a couple of businesses. Each one eventually had to be shut down. One fell to the economic recession around 2008. Another couldn't survive the pandemic. At the time, I internalised these closures as personal failures. Not the most generous interpretation, but a very human one. With time and reflection, I began to see the pattern more clearly. The problem wasn't vision or passion... it was sustainability.

I knew I wanted to create a company, but I didn't want it to share the fate of the previous ones. I didn't want it to survive only until the first serious problem appeared. I wanted it to grow, adapt, and thrive even when challenges inevitably came. So, I made a deliberate decision: before opening my next business, I would learn how to run one properly. Studying [Business Management](#) at FSB was my way of protecting the business, and not a step away from my purpose. I wanted to understand not only how to start something meaningful, but how to keep it resilient, sustainable, and alive when things don't go according to plan.

That decision changed everything.

In March 2025, I began studying Business Management at FSB Sheffield. From the first semester, I immersed myself fully in the course. I was present, engaged, and vocal.

Returning to education as a mature student carried its own quiet weight. There's a particular vulnerability in walking back into classrooms with a lifetime already lived behind you, successes, mistakes, responsibilities, and the occasional existential crisis neatly packed into your rucksack. But what I found at FSB was not judgement or distance, but relevance. My lived experience didn't sit awkwardly alongside the curriculum; it enriched it. Learning became about refining, understanding, and finally trusting the knowledge I had been gathering all along.

As I became more involved in campus life and more active in supporting my peers, I realised I wanted to do more than simply participate. I wanted to represent students, contribute meaningfully, and help shape the student experience. That clarity led me to put myself forward for the role of Student Union Coordinator at FSB Sheffield.

I accepted the role with genuine enthusiasm. For the first time since moving to England, my work shifted away from physically demanding, blue-collar roles into a position where I could finally use my mind fully. It was a relief I hadn't realised I needed. To be able to think, organise, support, and problem-solve without suppressing that part of myself felt like exhaling after holding my breath for years.

What followed exceeded my expectations. My manager made me feel truly seen and consistently acknowledged the value of the work I was doing. Support from superiors and peers created an environment where effort was recognised, not just required. I felt trusted, appreciated, and encouraged to grow. In return, I gave my best. Supporting students, collaborating with departments, contributing to staff initiatives... I genuinely believe I've made a positive difference, and that belief is reinforced by the feedback I've received. There's something quietly powerful about knowing your work matters.

Alongside this, my collaboration with the Marketing Department led to another opportunity: becoming a Student Ambassador. It felt like a natural extension of what I was already doing, representing a university I had come to genuinely love. I am proud of the work I do at FSB, and I hope to continue collaborating with the university for a long time. I have big ambitions, including studying for a Master's degree with FSB in the future, but for now, I've just completed my foundation year, and I'm allowing myself to fully appreciate that milestone.

What this journey has shown me is that FSB gets something many institutions don't: mature students don't need to be squeezed into a box. They need their lives and experiences to count. At FSB, what

you already know is part of how you learn. That makes education feel real and useful, not distant or theoretical. It also means that if your life is busy, messy, or unconventional, you don't have to leave it at the door to belong or succeed.

I strongly recommend FSB to mature students across England whose educational journeys may have been non-linear or unconventional. FSB is a higher education provider with clear academic standards, strong learning materials and expectations that encourage students to engage fully and develop with confidence.

My path into higher education was not linear, but that is precisely why it worked. Returning to education at FSB felt purposeful rather than performative because the university balances real standards with recognition of the value students bring from their lives. That balance is rare, and it is what makes learning both challenging and deeply rewarding.

If my story has a moral, it's this: purpose needs structure to survive. Returning to education isn't about starting over, but about refining what you already know. When lived experience is met with learning, confidence grows. And so does the ability to build something meaningful that can adapt, endure, and last.

Induction Week at FSB Sheffield Campus: Celebrating success as new Counselling and Business Management students begin their journey

By Tanhim Shamit, Marketing Coordinator, FSB Sheffield



New students cohort enjoy a tour of the campus and surrounding areas, accompanied by FSB staff members. Photo: FSB Sheffield.

Sheffield campus celebrated its newest cohort of Counselling and Business Management students last week for an engaging and purposeful induction programme. More than a series of events, the week marked the beginning of a transformative journey for new students, while also reflecting FSB Sheffield's growing commitment to accessible, supportive and high-quality higher education for learners across Sheffield and the wider region.



Counselling cohort focus in as staff and student ambassadors conduct induction process. Photo: FSB

This milestone moment was further strengthened by the launch of the **BA (Hons) Counselling, Mental Health and Wellbeing with Foundation Year**, alongside the continued delivery of the **BSc (Hons) Business Management with Foundation Year**, in partnership with **Birmingham Newman University**.

The induction week provided students with a strong foundation in their chosen subjects, helping them to understand their study pathways and the opportunities ahead. Students were also introduced to the university's full range of resources, including dedicated academic and student support services, campus teams, library provision and the virtual learning environment. The induction highlighted a range of co-curricular opportunities, such as marketing events including Shark Tank, semester

celebrations and Handshake employment opportunities, designed to give students real-world experience and support their professional development. A guided workshop of the Sheffield campus and its historic surroundings further helped students feel settled, supported and connected to both their studies and life in the Steel City.

Students engaged enthusiastically throughout the induction, asking thoughtful questions and showing genuine excitement about their programmes, helping to create a positive, inspiring start to their academic journey.

Katarzyna Czech, Associate Dean of Sheffield, reflected on the week;

"Induction is an important first step as students begin to find their place within our university community. Our focus is on helping them feel welcomed, connected and supported, while putting the right academic and personal structures in place for them to succeed. We know that starting higher education can feel daunting, and these early days are about building confidence and showing students that FSB is here to support them every step of the way."

The Sheffield campus also marked the launch of a new Digital Marketing module, further expanding its academic offer and strengthening its focus on industry-relevant learning. With a growing range of modules now available, students at the Sheffield campus can choose programmes that align closely with their interests, career aspirations and the evolving demands of today's job market.

The next intake for new students will take place in **March**, with the following undergraduate courses available:



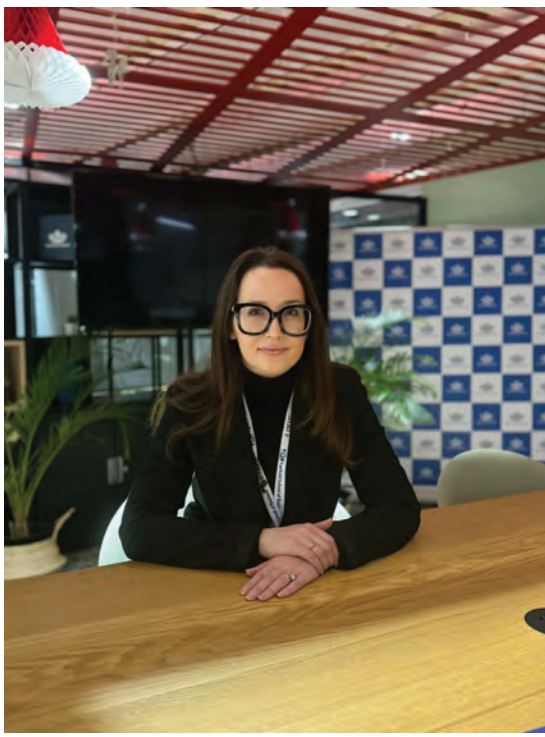
New students cohort enjoy a tour of the campus and surrounding areas, accompanied by FSB staff members. Photo: FSB Sheffield.

- **BSc (Hons) Business Management with Foundation Year**
Study options: Monday & Tuesday or Saturday & Sunday
(two class options available)
- **BSc (Hons) Digital Marketing with Foundation Year**
Study option: Wednesday & Thursday

Prospective students who are considering starting their degree in March and would like to learn more about course content, entry requirements or the application process are encouraged to contact the Admissions team at admissions@fairfield.ac for further information and guidance.

The Silent Curriculum: Reclaiming the Role of Literature in Higher Education

By Mrs Ana-Maria Buta, Course Coordinator L3-L4 – Business, Module Leader, FSB Croydon



At Fairfield School of Business, our classrooms are full of future entrepreneurs, health practitioners, criminologists, managers, and digital innovators. Students across all disciplines learn to analyse information, evaluate evidence, and build informed strategies. But behind every professional decision lies a story and behind every story, a human being.

That's where literature comes in.

In a world driven by data, deadlines, and assessments, literature reminds us of the *why* behind the *what*. Whether students encounter academic literature, biographies, case studies, narrative-driven research, or professionally published non-fiction,

these texts develop empathy, imagination, and critical reflection qualities that help FSB students not only understand systems, policies, and organisations, but also the people within them.

FSB students engage with this intellectual landscape through a rich constellation of e-books, scholarly databases, open-access archives, and multimedia sources such as documentaries, podcasts, and practitioner testimonies. These resources provide far more than information: they immerse students in textured narratives of real-world practice, confronting them with lived experiences, competing perspectives, and ethically intricate dilemmas. In doing so, they cultivate a reflective disposition—one that enables students to analyse human motivations, appreciate contextual nuance, and recognise the moral dimensions underpinning professional judgement.

Literature in this broader sense becomes the *silent curriculum* of higher education, shaping how we think, relate, and lead across business, health, criminology, and beyond.

Reading as Thinking: Literature and the Analytical Mind

At FSB, students in [business management](#) and [entrepreneurship](#) learn to make decisions using evidence, logic, and strategy. These are the same intellectual habits cultivated by literary study.

When reading a novel like George Orwell's *1984*, we interpret motives, analyse power structures, and consider ethical consequences, the same skills used in leadership and organisational analysis.

As Brookfield (2017) emphasises, authentic critical reflection arises when learners interrogate their own assumptions and confront the boundaries of their understanding. Literature cultivates precisely this fertile space of intellectual discomfort and inquisitiveness. By engaging with complex narratives, contested viewpoints, and richly contextualised scenarios, students are trained to think autonomously, evaluate competing perspectives, and synthesise reasoned, evidence-informed judgements – skills indispensable to navigating the intricate landscapes of business, policy, and management (Facione, 2020).

Empathy and Emotional Intelligence in the Classroom

FSB students often study teamwork, leadership, and customer relations areas where emotional intelligence is key. But emotional intelligence is not built through PowerPoint slides alone; it grows through human connection and imagination.

Reading authors such as Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie, Zadie Smith, or Khaled Hosseini allows students to experience diverse cultures and struggles. Goleman (2018) identifies empathy as a core leadership competency; literature develops it naturally.

Nussbaum (2010) calls this *narrative imagination* the ability to understand others' emotions through story. For FSB students preparing to work in global business environments, this skill is more valuable than ever. Literature doesn't just teach us how to write; it teaches us how to understand.

Storytelling: The Hidden Skill Behind Business Success

At FSB, communication is one of the most emphasised employability skills. Whether pitching a business idea or presenting a marketing plan, students must persuade, inspire, and engage and storytelling is central to this. Research shows that narrative competence is a key communication tool for leaders because it helps them motivate others, shape organisational culture, and influence decision-making (Gill, 2011; Denning, 2011).

Every entrepreneur tells a story. Every business report, every brand, and every strategy is, at its heart, a narrative. Green and Brock (2000) demonstrate that stories persuade more effectively than facts alone because they engage audiences emotionally and intellectually. Dahlstrom (2014) also argues that storytelling transforms complex ideas into clear, relatable messages, making it an essential skill in business communication.

Literature strengthens these abilities by teaching students how narrative rhythm, structure, and emotional tone work. Engaging with fiction enhances narrative reasoning and empathy key foundations of impactful communication (Nussbaum, 2010; Oatley, 2016). By studying stories, FSB students learn to craft compelling narratives about their companies, their communities, and themselves, becoming communicators who can lead with clarity and influence.

Finding a Voice: Literature as Personal and Professional Growth

Education at FSB is not only about passing modules; it's about developing identity and confidence. Hooks (1994) describes education as “the practice of freedom” a process of finding one's voice.

When FSB students engage deeply with literature, they encounter profound moral questions that illuminate and shape their emerging professional values. Immersion in narratives of resilience, as exemplified by Maya Angelou, or of justice, as portrayed by Harper Lee, invites learners to interrogate their own ethical compass, clarify their ambitions, and refine their distinctive leadership style. In this way, literature becomes both a mirror and a guide, building introspection that is as intellectually rigorous as it is personally transformative.

Yorke (2006) reminds us that employability is more than technical ability; it's also self-awareness, integrity, and reflection. Literature encourages all three. It gives students the courage to think differently and the language to express it. It does this by exposing learners to diverse viewpoints, complex moral situations, and characters who challenge assumptions. Through analysing narrative choices, debating interpretations, and reflecting on ethical dilemmas, students practise articulating ideas clearly and defending their reasoning. This process helps them build confidence in expressing their own perspectives while becoming more open to the viewpoints of others.

Why FSB Students Should Reclaim Literature

At FSB, literature is more than an academic subject; it is a tool for developing empathy, critical thinking, and communication skills that turn managers into leaders. Through dedicated modules, guided reading, and experiential learning activities, students learn *what* literature offers (new perspectives, ethical dilemmas, and human experiences) and *how* to apply these insights to real-world business challenges.

Through the careful analysis of characters, conflicts, and contexts, students hone their judgment and refine the art of decision-making. Engaging in group discussions and reflective exercises, they practise the delicate balance of articulating ideas with clarity while listening with genuine attention—core communication and collaboration skills that underpin success in business and beyond. Literature provokes learners to confront and interrogate values such as integrity, fairness, and responsibility, serving as a crucible in which their professional identity is forged.

At FSB, literature is never peripheral; it is a catalyst for both personal insight and professional evolution. It equips students with the discernment, ethical grounding, and empathetic understanding necessary to navigate complexity and lead with thoughtfulness in increasingly diverse workplaces and communities. So, if literature can shape the leaders of tomorrow, what stories will shape you?

Inside the Criminal Mind: Behavioural Patterns in Modern Crime

By Eduardo Napoli, Lecturer in Criminology and Business at FSB Croydon



As a lawyer and criminology lecturer, I am deeply engaged in the field, and understanding what is happening in the criminal's mind helps provide the best defence in each case. Understanding crime from the offender's perspective involves integrating theories from criminology, psychology, and neuroscience to explain why individuals commit unlawful acts (Humphrey & Schmallegger, 2019). Researchers can identify common precursors to criminal behaviour by examining thought patterns, emotions, and decision-making processes. The complexity of this interplay means that patterns can vary across offences, contexts, and developmental stages. However, some common cognitive themes remain identifiable. For example, certain offenders tend to process information

in a biased manner, favouring immediate rewards over long-term consequences, which can result in impulsive behaviour. Offender narratives often include cognitive distortions, like rationalising harmful behaviours or minimising responsibility, which can impede accountability. Analysing these patterns is enhanced by combining qualitative insights from offender interviews with quantitative crime data, providing a thorough and detailed understanding.

In modern criminology, behavioural patterns are often linked to decision-making models that emphasise risk assessment, potential punishment, and perceived options (Rossmo & Summers, 2022). Dual-process theories, which distinguish between intuitive (fast) and analytical (slow) thinking, help explain how a decision to offend can occur rapidly under pressure (Evans & Stanovich, 2013).



Figure 1: A dark and moody scene inside a criminal mastermind's hideout. AI-generated image created using ChatGPT (Napoli, 2026).

When situational pressures are high or peer-group norms are coercive, offenders tend to rely more on heuristics, leading to predictable mistakes and increased risk-taking. These patterns vary across populations, as factors such as socio-economic constraints, exposure to violence, and educational background shape the development of cognitive processes in criminal contexts. Researchers emphasise the need for culturally sensitive analyses that account for varied offender backgrounds (Nguyen & Patel, 2019).

Recognising patterns in crime data often involves identifying behavioural micromarkers, subtle cues that reflect underlying cognitive states. For instance, a pattern of rising risk controls, such as careful planning followed by rapid execution, may suggest a transition from contemplation to action. Integrating criminological theory with psychological measurement enhances the capacity to categorise offences along key dimensions such as impulsivity, coercion, and instrumental goal orientation.

Nonetheless, researchers warn against reducing offenders to a single “criminal mind” or assuming uniformity, recognising that minds are varied and shaped by context. Valuable predictive insights arise when observed patterns are linked to probabilistic models of future behaviour, supporting risk assessment, prevention, and intervention efforts (Joshi et al., 2021).

The following research question aims to clarify this study:

How do behavioural patterns and cognitive processes within the offender's mind illuminate contemporary crime and inform fair, effective responses in criminology and law?

Presenting the following research question to guide this article, the text that follows articulates the central question that aims to answer, drawing on the interconnected strands of criminology, psychology, and law to understand how offender cognition shapes both the offence and the response. Predictive analytics identify high-risk trajectories by analysing prior history, cognitive signals, and environmental factors, enabling targeted interventions. However, ethical issues such as privacy, data bias, and stigma risks must guide the deployment of these tools to prevent harm and ensure fairness (Farayola et al., 2023).

Critics warn that relying too heavily on algorithms might reduce recognition of personal agency and ignore social factors that shape opportunities and risks. Meanwhile, supporters argue that carefully designed models can support human decision-making and better allocate resources to avoid negative consequences. A crucial implication of studying behavioural patterns is the potential to inform intervention design, from cognitive-behavioural approaches to community-based supports that address root causes (Smith et al., 2024).

When cognitive distortions are identified early, tailored interventions can challenge maladaptive beliefs and promote prosocial coping strategies and problem-solving skills as alternatives to criminal activity. Programmes that involve restorative justice principles, family engagement, and education have shown promise in reshaping the decision-making environment that contributes to offending (Mpofu et al., 2024).

Researchers highlight the importance of monitoring and assessing outcomes to identify which intervention components most effectively modify cognitive patterns and decrease recidivism (Rose et al., 2020). Overall, criminology that tracks behavioural patterns from cognition to action can explain why individuals offend and guide society in responding effectively, minimising harm while respecting rights and dignity.



Figure 2: Dark cinematic portrait of a young man in a moody interior setting. AI-generated image created using ChatGPT (Napoli, 2026).

Future research on the criminal mind can benefit from interdisciplinary collaboration, integrating neuroscience insights with extensive criminological data. This approach can yield more comprehensive theories of development, adaptation, and change throughout a person's life. Advances in neuroimaging and psychophysiology may reveal how factors such as stress, threat perception, and emotion regulation shape key moments in offending behaviour. Additionally, large datasets can be used to assess whether these patterns hold across different settings (Anderson et al., 2017).

As the field evolves, scholars must balance the allure of predictive power with a commitment to ethical practice, ensuring that insights into the criminal mind translate into fair and effective policy and practice (Almasoud & Idowu, 2024). After conducting my investigation and analysing the literature, the following answers became clear for the proposed research question:

“Behavioural patterns and cognitive processes within the offender’s mind illuminate contemporary crime by revealing how cognition-to-action pathways operate across varying social and environmental contexts, and by demonstrating how ethically designed interventions can mitigate risk while upholding rights and due process.

The evidence suggests that intersectional factors shape offending trajectories, yet patterns such as biased information processing, cognitive distortions, and heuristic-driven decision-making consistently emerge across settings, informing both legal practice and criminological theory.

Accordingly, fair and effective responses require a combination of risk-informed intervention, careful consideration of individual agency, and ongoing evaluation of outcomes to reduce harm without compromising justice.”

Conclusion

In this article, I examined the cognitive and behavioural patterns that underlie criminal activity, drawing on insights from criminology, psychology and neuroscience. By examining offenders' thought processes, decision-making pathways and post-offence rationalisations, the article aimed to clarify how cognition-to-action sequences operate across diverse social and environmental contexts.

This analysis shows that certain patterns, such as biased information processing, heuristic-driven decision-making, and cognitive distortions, consistently emerge, even as intersectional factors such as socioeconomic status, exposure to violence, and education shape individual trajectories. It also emphasised the importance of culturally sensitive approaches, demonstrating that understanding offenders' backgrounds is crucial for both interpretation and intervention.

Consider how these insights can inform legal and criminological practice, particularly in the design of fair and effective interventions. From cognitive-behavioural programmes to restorative justice and community-based supports, ethically guided, evidence-based approaches can mitigate risk while respecting agency and human dignity. It reflected on the promise and limitations of predictive analytics, noting that their use must be carefully balanced with attention to privacy, fairness and the avoidance of stigma.

From my perspective as both a lawyer and a criminology lecturer, studying behavioural patterns is not only a tool for understanding crime but also a means to improve responses within the justice system. The research question, how behavioural patterns and cognitive processes illuminate contemporary crime and inform fair, effective responses, has guided this work. The conclusion is that ethically informed, evidence-based interventions, combined with ongoing monitoring and evaluation, are essential to reduce harm while upholding justice.

Further research in this field should focus on greater interdisciplinary collaboration, integrating neuroscience, psychology and criminology, and on the use of longitudinal and large-scale data. Such studies can enhance understanding of how cognitive processes develop and change across the lifespan, identify high-risk trajectories more accurately, and evaluate which interventions are most effective across diverse populations while maintaining ethical safeguards.

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The Student Voice Within: Artificial Intelligence and the Recalibration of Wisdom

By Kunal Chan Mehta, PR Manager and Editor of FSB Focus

There was once a pause in academic thought – a moment between question and conclusion where uncertainty was endured. It was here that our intellect was strengthened. Arguments were not downloaded – they were developed. Conviction was not generated – it was earned. Today, generative artificial intelligence is compressing that space.

AI has entered academia with extraordinary velocity, reshaping not simply how students access information but how thought itself unfolds. Where earlier generations grappled with ambiguity, contemporary students can, in mere seconds, summon specific structure, synthesis, and rhetorical fluency.



Amid the post-AI recalibration of cognition, a positive narrative about discipline is emerging across FSB. Image: Created by the author using Adobe Creative tools and Adobe Firefly. Image licensed to FSB.

The question is therefore no longer whether students use AI. They do. The more consequential question is *what becomes of intellectual identity when analysis and articulation feel instantly accessible*. If such synthesis can be summoned in seconds, where does judgement reside?

This is no abstract philosophical debate. It is now a lived academic reality – including within FSB – and our students themselves are among its most perceptive commentators (you will see FSB student voices later in this article).

Every technological epoch has reshaped the architecture of thought. Think about it. Calculators altered mental arithmetic. Search engines transformed information retrieval. Generative AI, however, operates at a different level. It does not merely retrieve information; it organises, synthesises and concludes, producing fluent arguments with remarkable ease.

The result is a form of cognitive acceleration – an environment where reasoning can appear complete before reflection has fully matured.

The Illusion of Certainty

“We have already entered an era in which artificial certainty can masquerade as wisdom,” says Georgiana Duma, SU President at FSB. “But AI has

also given students a new kind of confidence – the algorithm as adviser, analyst and even confidant. The critical distinction is knowing how to use AI and not surrender to it.”

Her observation captures a defining paradox. Academic authority, once accumulated gradually through reading, revision and disciplined effort, can now be modelled almost instantly.

Asiya Majid, a Business Management with Foundation Year student at FSB Sheffield, sharpens the insight: “The risk is not necessarily that AI is wrong – but that it feels right too quickly. Speed can simulate certainty. Fluency can mimic truth.”

Human cognition instinctively associates clarity with correctness and confidence with competence (Kosmyna et al., 2025). Generative systems replicate these signals effortlessly. The challenge, therefore, is rarely identifying obvious errors. It is recognising when articulation subtly reshapes original thinking.

Students I interviewed describe beginning with a tentative interpretation, only to have it recalibrated after encountering AI-generated language. The shift is often almost invisible. Tone alters, emphasis changes and the architecture of thought can quietly migrate away from its point of origin.

Authorship Anxiety

For many students, AI is neither oracle nor adversary. It is an instrument – formidable, efficient and morally neutral – whose impact depends entirely upon the intentionality of its user.

Shirlaine Osam, a Business Management student at FSB Croydon, captures this psychological nuance: “I sometimes wonder whether I’m making decisions or if the AI is making them for me. It’s efficient, yes – but if you’re not careful, your instincts can fade. Our lecturers emphasise real research and real understanding, especially in verbal presentations where your thinking must stand alone.”

Laurentiu Olaru, a Business Management student at FSB Digbeth, adds: “For me, AI is about balance. The line between academic and personal use is blurred. It’s only going to become more powerful – ignoring it isn’t realistic. But used thoughtfully, it’s enhanced my academic creativity and productivity. Often, it’s about asking the right question – or prompt.”

In this sense, AI does not eliminate intellectual labour, it relocates it. The quality of the prompt increasingly reflects the quality of the thinker behind it.

Yet every era sustains its illusions. Ours may be the belief that fluent output signals genuine mastery. Doubt, however, has always been an intellectual

virtue. Through doubt, originality emerges – and through revision, rigour is refined.

Iulia Chelaru, studying Business Management at FSB Sheffield, says: “I usually begin with my own perspective, but AI can reshape it. If something feels structured and convincing, it’s easy to rethink or replace your original view – and that’s astonishing. But fortunately, FSB lecturers have given me great advice on taking control of my own academic narratives.”

“AI does not know in the human sense; it predicts,” said **Liviu-George Cercel**, a Business Management student at FSB Leicester. “It recognises patterns, synthesises probability and reflects language to us with remarkable coherence. In that sense, it’s a mirror reflecting reality rather than creating it.”

AI reflects dominant narratives, recurring assumptions and statistical likelihoods. If those patterns remain unexamined, they may simply be amplified. The danger is not that AI will outthink humanity, but that it will overrepresent it – rehearsing familiar ideas with persuasive authority.

Yet students also emphasise the stabilising role of institutional culture: “AI isn’t replacing student intuition,” says **Miryana Yaneva**, a Business Management student at FSB Croydon. “With strong support from FSB staff, it’s become something that

strengthens understanding and builds confidence. It helps us think more deeply while preserving our judgement.”

Iulia reinforces this distinction: “If AI disappeared tomorrow, I’d miss the speed of information more than the reassurance of being correct. My course has taught me that confidence still comes from personal judgement and verification.”

An Inflection Point

For academics and researchers, this moment demands philosophical clarity rather than panic. If early ideation is routinely outsourced, argumentation may attenuate. If structure is habitually generated externally, intellectual stamina may diminish.

These outcomes are not inevitable. But they are plausible. Nevertheless, at FSB, this shift is being addressed through an emphasis on critical reasoning, verbal defence of ideas and responsible AI engagement.

History reminds us that every cognitive tool expands capacity while reshaping capability. The printing press multiplied access to thought while reducing reliance on memorisation. The internet democratised information while fragmenting attention. AI may expand creative potential while compressing cognitive endurance.

The decisive variable will not be the sophistication of the system, but the discipline of the scholar.

Strengthening the Inner Voice

Preserving intellectual autonomy in an age of algorithmic fluency requires deliberate friction: pausing before prompting, interrogating before accepting and reflecting before finalising. Such habits restore ownership of thought.

Occasionally, drafting an argument before consulting AI, or defending a position aloud before refining it on screen, can re-establish the cognitive endurance that scholarship has always required.

What FSB students reveal is not a disappearing inner voice but a defended one – not diminished instinct but disciplined intuition. They are neither naive adopters nor anxious abstainers. Instead, they are negotiators: alert to both promise and peril – and AI-efficiency and erosion.

If intelligence is becoming instantly accessible, intellectual identity is not erased but repositioned – shifting from the possession of information to a posture toward it; from accumulating answers to interrogating them.

“The real danger is not that AI will become human,” adds **Liviu-George Cercel**. “It is that humanity may forget how to think slowly, err gracefully and dwell meaningfully in doubt.”

The task before us, then, is not resistance but responsibility. In an era saturated with synthetic articulation, human judgement must remain deliberate, disciplined and demonstrably earned.

The future of intelligence will undoubtedly be augmented. Whether wisdom keeps pace will depend less on the architecture of our algorithms and more on the integrity of those who use them. In the end, the voice within does not vanish. It must simply be defended and disciplined – deliberately.

FSB continues to encourage responsible engagement with AI, emphasising critical evaluation, academic integrity and the development of independent reasoning.

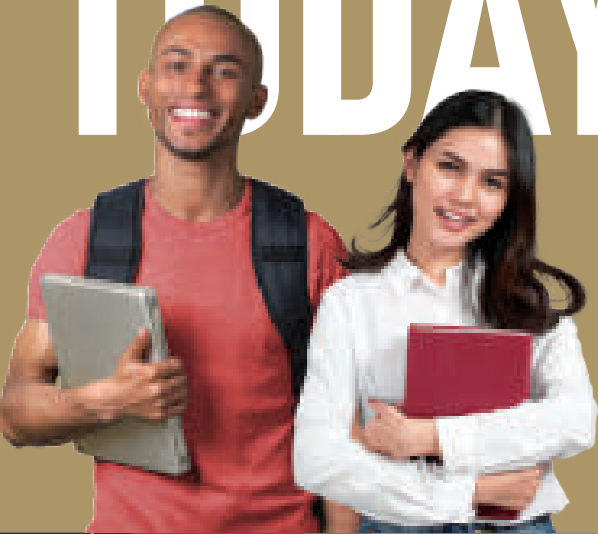
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