

PREFACE

Management accounting may be seen as a practical tool aimed at solving the day-to-day financial management problems facing decision makers in the private and public sectors. We feel, however, that this is too narrow a view of the potential of the subject. Accordingly, we have gone beyond this view. In this book, while we have looked at the practical techniques that can help managers and students solve management accounting problems, we have tried to approach the subject in a way which ensures coverage of technical financial topics in an accessible style while making appropriate reference to research. In addition, the book goes beyond techniques to recognise qualitative issues by attempting to identify analytical and critical issues of relevance to decision makers at all levels in a variety of organisations in both the private and public sectors.

While chapters contain exhibits and examples, we have introduced case studies from the end of Chapter 2. These can be approached on many levels such that students from a wide range of backgrounds and experience can benefit from working through them either in whole or in part. The case studies are intended to be underpinned by reference to the research literature to gain maximum benefit. We introduce some of this research literature in the practical context of each chapter in order to encourage further reading. Readers can thus contextualise the issues which they are studying within the wider environment of the research literature and through the case studies before continuing their studies in more depth. Indeed, the case studies are based on our own consultancy and research areas, although the names have been changed to protect the 'guilty'.

The case studies in this book represent the development of teaching approaches at the University of Glamorgan and are one of a number of innovative approaches used in the delivery of accounting modules in the Business School at the University. They contributed to the HEFCW/QAA 'excellent' rating received by the accounting teaching team. The cases have been well received by students and managers both locally and internationally (see Coombs *et al.*, 2000) and are aimed at developing the 'graduateness' skills of critical and analytical appraisal in decision-making situations. We are grateful to the University of Glamorgan and colleagues for the encouragement we have received to develop and expand this approach.

In today's competitive world, managers from whatever background need an understanding of the tools of management accounting when making financial decisions, yet

they must also be aware of the qualitative issues affecting such decisions. Furthermore, they need to be aware of what is happening through research into their competitors. In this context we believe managers and students will find this book of value.

Hugh Coombs
Dave Hobbs
Ellis Jenkins
March 2005