COURSE OBJECTIVES

Over the last three decades businesses of all sizes have been totally transformed by the shift towards digital technology, including the use of personal computers, Enterprise Resource Planning (ERP) systems, electronic communication, the Internet, and so forth. These changes have inevitably, albeit sometimes laggardly, also fundamentally changed the way in which accountants and auditors practice, with such standbys as T-accounts, paper ledgers, inventory counts and accounting reports consigned to history. The role of Accounting Information Systems (AIS) research is to examine the consequences of this transformation in business and its effects on accounting.

There has been much theoretical debate in the research literature on the proper definition of Accounting Information Systems and where to draw the boundary between AIS and management and other information systems used in business. In practice, we can define AIS as the application of modern information technology to both the practice of account keeping, reporting and auditing and the research into these topics. In other words, in this course AIS encompasses the use of technology by both accounting practitioners and accounting researchers. While the former is clearly what most people think of when they hear AIS, less obvious is the fact that non-AIS researchers are increasingly turning to IT-based tools to conduct what would otherwise be considered “mainstream” research. For example, many papers have been published in the leading accounting journals recently using text mining techniques, and even voice analysis. In addition, capital market researchers are examining the market implications of the adoption of technologies such as ERP systems and XBRL. Simply put, technology is too important to disregard in either accounting practice or accounting research.