

Victoria Management School

**MMMS 511: MANAGERIAL DECISION PROCESSES**

Trimester 1, 2009

**COURSE OUTLINE**

---

**CONTACT DETAILS**

**COURSE COORDINATOR**

**A/Prof Bob Cavana**

Room: RH 904, Rutherford House

Phone: 463 5137

Email: [bob.cavana@vuw.ac.nz](mailto:bob.cavana@vuw.ac.nz)

Website: [www.vuw.ac.nz/vms](http://www.vuw.ac.nz/vms)

**ADMINISTRATOR**

**Ms Luisa Acheson**

Room: RH 912, Rutherford House

Phone: 463 5381

Email: [luisa.acheson@vuw.ac.nz](mailto:luisa.acheson@vuw.ac.nz)

**Trimester Dates:** Monday 2<sup>nd</sup> March to Wednesday 1<sup>st</sup> July 2009.

**Class Times and Room Numbers**

**Start Date:** Wednesday, 4 March 2009

**Lecture Times:** Wednesday, 2.40 – 5.30 pm.

**Location:** Railway Building: RWW 128

**Format:** One three-hour session each week.

**Withdrawal dates:** Information available via

<http://www.victoria.ac.nz/home/admisenrol/payments/withdrawalsrefunds.aspx>

**INTRODUCTION**

Making decisions is a fundamental managerial task. To become a good decision maker you need to examine the process of decision-making systematically, decide on better processes, and practise those improved methods. This course critically examines alternative models of managerial decision-making, including strategic decision making. This course will emphasise the systems thinking approach to managerial decision making. The focus of the course is on the role and impact of modeling in decision making, including analyzing the impact of risk, judgment and ambiguity. We will explore a range of decision and systems models to help you better understand, and improve, your own decision-making processes.

## The MMMS Programme Learning Objectives

- Display innovative thinking through creative solutions and insights on management-related problems and methods.
- Combine existing and original research into a research project that adds to knowledge.
- Convey key management concepts concisely in an appropriate written format.
- Display articulate oral communication skills.
- Co-operate in teams to effectively present management information and analysis.
- Demonstrate their knowledge of local and national organisational environments and construct strategies from a global perspective.

## Overall Course Objectives

Specifically, the course has several objectives:

- Understand the variety of ways in which decisions are and can be made
- Understand the roles of intuition and analysis in decision making
- Exploring ways of approaching a range of typical business decision problems
- Improving your competence in structuring decision problems using models
- Developing analytical skills in data handling and interpretation
- Understand the role and impact of risk, uncertainty, ambiguity, preferences, judgement
- Developing familiarity with typical decision trade-offs and evaluation techniques
- Understanding different approaches to making operational and strategic decisions
- Familiarising you with the use of computer-aided methods in decision making
- Developing your own ability to devise robust strategies under different scenarios and make balanced decisions.

## Course-related Student Learning Objectives

This course will provide students opportunity:

- to develop oral, written, visual and IT-related **communication skills**

- Summarise complex information in writing and/or orally;
- Interpret an author's position as expressed in their writing, and explain that position;
- Present an extended argument coherently and with clear and accurate expression;
- Concisely present key ideas, conveying the meaning clearly to a reader, viewer or listener; and
- Establish and maintain audience interest.

- through active participation in class discussion

- through the development and presentation of oral and written reports, using narrative, rhetoric, logic-based, diagrammatic, and other schema as forms of presentation

- to develop **creative and critical thinking skills**

- Analyse and evaluate information, claims, ideas, problems or questions;
- Summarise an argument, the assumptions it makes, and determine to what extent that argument and its assumptions are valid in a given context;
- Develop an argument in response to a problem or question;
- Synthesise information from different sources in a way which identifies similarities and differences.
- Argument and its assumptions are valid in a given context;

- through exposure to methods designed specifically to improve creative thinking skills, and exercises and assignments designed to practise these skills

- through exercises and assignments that require analysis, evaluation, interpretation and synthesis

- through exercises and assignments requiring the generation of creative ideas to solve problems
- through debate and classroom discussion
- through case studies based on real situations where these skills can be applied

➤ to develop **leadership** skills:

- Work well with others;
- Engage in constructive discourse, both within and without the academic environment;
- Understand and accept social and civic responsibilities;
- Manage time effectively;
- Be a good listener and ask open-ended questions to clarify others' ideas; and

➤ Show initiative and responsibility in the learning environment.

- through structuring independent study, choosing own examples for assignments
- through facilitation of and participation in group discussions or activities
- through development of skills in several DM techniques to more carefully diagnose problematic situations, analyse causes and develop action plans to help lead and implement change.

The assessment for this course comprises an individual decision modelling case analysis and report, a group strategic decision modelling assignment and class presentation, and a final examination. Each piece of assessment involves a combination of each objective outlined above.

### Course Content

Session content will vary, including discussion of problematic situations and how they may be approached, using lectures, class discussions, exercises, group activities, computer demonstrations and computer workshops. A schedule of topics considered in the course is attached and includes the dates on which they will be covered in class. Computer workshops will be arranged as appropriate.

### Expected Workload

This course will require approximately 12-16 hours per week during term time and 48 hours outside of term. This is what we expect you to devote to classes, readings, worked examples and assignments. However this is only a guide: the readings and assignments usually take longer than expected, and unexpected problems may occur, so you are advised to start applying the methods early to enable the on-time completion of assignments.

### Group Work

While the course has a component of group work, there are important elements in the assessment process that are strictly individual. You will be expected and encouraged to work in groups on in-class exercises and on the group project; however other reports must be your own work.

### Readings

The textbooks for the course are:

Teale M, Dispenza V, Flynn J & Currie D (2003). *Management Decision Making: Towards an Integrative Approach*. FT Prentice Hall, Harlow England.

Maani KE & Cavana RY (2007). *Systems Thinking, System Dynamics: Managing Change and Complexity*, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. Pearson Education, Auckland.

(available from VUW BookCentre)

Other research methods textbooks are available in the FCA library on the 2<sup>nd</sup> floor of the Railway Building. Additional readings, articles, chapters, and workshop exercises will be distributed in class or posted on Blackboard.

### Course Schedule for MMMS 511

WEEK	LECTURE	TOPIC	READINGS (1, 2 & 3)
1	4 Mar	Course overview Intro to decision making Review of systems thinking concepts	Teale Ch 1 ST, SD Ch 1-2 Butler et al (1993) Ch 2 Dearlove (1998) Ch 6 Garvin & Roberto (2001) Gore et al (1992) Churchman (1979)
2	11 Mar	Problem structuring approaches Multi-methodological issues	Teale Ch 3; ST, SD Case 3 Lane (1994); Cavana (2004) Elias et al (2002) Checkland (1988) Hodgson (1994) Ch 18 Randers (1980) Ch 6 Mingers & Brocklesby (1997) Mingers (2003)
3	18 Mar	Causal loop modelling Systems archetypes	ST, SD Ch 3, Cases 1 & 3 Sterman (2000); Senge (2000) Cavana et al (2006) Wolstenholme & Coyle (1983) Coyle & Alexander (1997) Mabin et al (2006)
4 & 5	25 Mar & 1 Apr	Dealing with risk & uncertainty Review of probability concepts Decision analysis	Teale Ch 2 Bazerman (2002) Ch 3 Noorderhaven (1995) Ch 4 Golub (1997) App C Ragsdale (2008) Ch 15 Target (1996) Ch 3
6	8 Apr	Simulation & forecasting Review of statistical concepts Resource allocation models <b>[Asst 1 due – Essay]</b>	Teale Ch 7 & 9 Cavana et al (2001) App A Reagan-Cirincione et al (1991)
		<i>MID-TRIMESTER BREAK (4)</i>	
7	29 Apr	Systems thinking, complexity & chaos	Teale Ch 4 Woog et al (2006)
8	6 May	Dynamic decision modelling Introduction to <i>ithink</i> & Vensim Supply chain modelling Validation issues <b>[Asst 2 due – Decision modelling case]</b>	ST, SD Ch 4 & Case 4 Richardson Ch 7 Flood & Jackson (1991) Ch 4 Coyle (1983) Forrester & Senge (1980) Sterman (1991)
9	13 May	Policy analysis & strategy development Management flight simulators	ST, SD Case 5 Forrester (1992) Morecroft (1984) & (1991) Hall & Menzies (1990) Ch 12 Cavana & Tobias (2008) Fowler (2003)
10	20 May	Scenario planning for decision making	ST, SD Ch 5 & Case 5 Becker (1983) Kirkwood (1997) App B Goodwin & Wright (1998) Ch 14
11	27 May	Implementation issues	Teale Ch 11-14 ST, SD Ch 7 Senge & Sterman (1994) Ch 8
12	3 Jun	Course review <b>[Asst 3 – Group strategic modelling presentations]</b>	

- (1) 'Teale' refers to the textbook *Management Decision Making* by Teale, Dispenza, Flynn & Currie (2003).
- (2) 'ST, SD' refers to the textbook *Systems Thinking, System Dynamics* by KE Maani & RY Cavana (2007).
- (3) Additional readings each week will be distributed in class or put on Blackboard.

## Materials and Equipment

Access to a computer is expected, as all assignments should be typed, printed and bound/stapled, and some set work will need you to use spreadsheet or specialist computer software which will be available on SCS computers and/or for download onto PCs.

## Assessment Requirements

The course will be assessed as follows:

### Max Marks   Due Date

1.	Essay	20%	4pm, Friday 10 April
2.	Decision modelling case	25%	4pm, Friday 8 May
3.	Group strategic modelling presentation	15%	in class, Wednesday, 3 June
4.	Final Examination [3 hour, closed book]	40%	12 June – 1 July 2009

---

**Total** **100%**

## Assignments

Assignments should be type-written or prepared on a Word processor. The **assignments** are briefly described as follows. Further details will be provided during the course:

### 1. Essay

Due: 4pm, Friday 10 April

Word limit: 2,000 words

This assignment will involve preparing an essay critically evaluating the qualitative methods used in managerial decision making, or a published article using a specific qualitative method. Further details will be provided in class and on Blackboard.

### 2. Decision modelling case

Due: 4pm, Friday 8 May

This assignment will involve analysing a decision modelling case using an Excel spreadsheet. This should be written up as a management report. Further details will be provided in class and on Blackboard.

### 3. Group strategic modelling presentation

Group presentation due: in class, Wednesday, 3 June

This will involve working in a small group of 2 to 4 students. This assignment will involve analysing strategic decisions using an appropriate computer simulation package (eg *ithink*, Vensim or Simul8 ). You will present the results as in class (as a group) on Wednesday 3 June [a 20 minute presentation followed by up to 10 minutes of questions and answers]. Further details will be provided in class and on Blackboard.

Note, all members of the group are expected to contribute to the group oral presentation. Paper and electronic versions of the group presentations should be submitted on the due date to the course coordinator. On the first page, the members of the group should be identified and a statement made that either all members have on balance contributed equally, or the relative contributions of the members stated. All members of the group will receive the same mark unless their contributions are unequal, in which case the lecturer will make an equitable adjustment.

If it becomes clear that the group dynamics will preclude the group from submitting an effective group presentation, group members should discuss the matter immediately with the lecturer. If necessary to ensure that no student is unfairly disadvantaged, the lecturer will permit some or all members of the group to submit an individual presentation of a defined subset of the project.

#### **4. Final Examination**

This will be a 3 hour closed book examination covering all aspects of the course, to be held in the examination period from 12 June to 1 July 2009 (inclusive). Students who enrol in courses with examinations are obliged to attend an examination at the University at any time during the formal examination period. Further details will be provided later in the course.

#### **Handing in Assignments**

Your assignments should be handed in either in class or put into the course **Assignment Box 23** on the Mezzanine floor, Rutherford House by 4 pm on the due date. Late assignments are to be handed in to the Victoria Management School Management Group Administrator, Ms Luisa Acheson in Room RH 912 on Level 9, Rutherford House and the time handed in will be noted.

All Hand-Ins should have: a Cover Sheet stating your name, the course name, assignment name and number, a word count and due date, with a signed declaration regarding freedom from plagiarism (See Annex's A & B). Please put page numbers on each page, and use in-text referencing and include a list of references at the end.

Students must prepare two copies of each hand-in and keep the second copy for their own reference. Students must also keep an electronic copy of their work archived in case the original assignment goes missing. Failure to do so will jeopardise any claim by you that your work was submitted in the rare cases where your work goes astray.

All assignments will be marked for writing - that is, correctness, clarity, organisation, referencing - as well as for meeting the specific assignment objectives.

#### **Mandatory Course Requirements**

To meet Mandatory Course Requirements, you must

- a. Submit all assignments by their due dates or within approved extensions;
- b. Obtain at least 30% on each assignment;
- c. Attend at least 9/12 classes; and
- d. To obtain at least 40 per cent (i.e. 16 marks out of 40) of the final examination marks available.

The overall pass mark is 50% of the total marks available.

Students who fail to satisfy the mandatory requirements for this course but who obtain 50% or more overall, will be awarded a "K" grade.

Standard fail grades (D or E) will be awarded when the student's overall course mark falls below the minimum pass mark, regardless of whether the mandatory course requirements have been satisfied or not.

Notice of Failure to meet Mandatory Course Requirements will be posted on Blackboard or on the Mezzanine Floor Notice-board.

## Penalties - for Lateness & Excessive Length of Assignments

- (i) In fairness to other students, work submitted after any deadline will incur a penalty for lateness. **The penalty is 2 of the marks available (marks available means what the assignment is worth i.e. 20% or 20 marks) for an assignment submitted after the due time on the due date for each part day or day late.** (For example, if an assignment is out of 20 and the assignment receives 50% then one day late means the mark will be out of 18 and the student will receive 50% of 18). **Saturdays, Sundays and public holidays** will be included when counting the number of days late. Assignments received **more than 7 days after the due date** will not be accepted and the student will **automatically fail the Mandatory Course Requirements**.
- (ii) Course Outlines provide a signal to students of forthcoming workload, dates of submission etc, and thus student study plans should take account of course requirements across all courses. Consequently, workload issues related to other courses and employment will not be accepted as reason for dispensation from mandatory requirements or waiver of penalties. **Extensions** to submission deadlines for any assigned work will only be granted in **exceptional circumstances**.
- (iii) Students who are unable to comply with any of the mandatory requirements should make a written application for an extension to the due date for submission of assigned work or for waiver of a penalty, **in advance**, to the **Course Coordinator**, providing documentary evidence of the reasons of their circumstances.

All such applications must be made **before** the deadline and be accompanied by documentary evidence, eg a medical certificate, or counsellor's report clearly stating the degree of impairment, and the dates the illness or event prevented you from undertaking your academic studies. This can be applied retrospectively.

- (iv) In the event of unusual or unforeseeable circumstances (e.g. serious illness, family bereavement or other exceptional events), that precludes an application in advance, students should make contact with the **Course Coordinator** as soon as possible, and make application for waiver of a penalty as soon as practicable.
- (v) Word limits should be adhered to, especially so when they provide a guide to limiting the student's coverage of a topic. Word limits do not include the references. **The penalty will be 2.5% of the grade for an assignment which is 5% over the word limit.** Since a style of writing suitable for professional reports is required, significant departures from an economical style or inattention to spelling, grammar, punctuation can also result in a lower grade.

## Grading Guidelines

The following broad indicative characterisations of grade will apply in grading assignments and the exam:

A+	excellent performance in all respects at this level
A	excellent performance in almost all respects at this level
A-	excellent performance in many respects at this level
B+	very good, some aspects excellent
B, B-	good but not excellent performance at this level
C+, C	work satisfactory overall but inadequate in some respects
D	poor performance overall, some aspects adequate
E	well below the required standard
K	failure to achieve mandatory course requirements and have achieved at least an average "C" over all the assessment. Note this is a failing grade.

## Policy on Remarking

Application for remarks must be made within 5 days after the marks are available. To apply for a remark, complete the request for re-examination of assessed work form (Annex B) stating which sections (criteria listed in the mark sheet) you wish re-examined. Write on why you think the mark does not, in your view, fairly reflect the quality of your work. Hand this with your assignment into the following place:-

- Pipitea Campus – the Reception Desk on Level 10 Rutherford House where your assignment will have the **time, date and signature** noted on the front cover by the person receiving it.

Allow up to 5 days for remarks to be completed.

### Referencing

There are many different styles of referencing and the Faculty of Commerce & Administration at VUW has decided to make APA (American Psychological Association) referencing style the common standard across the Faculty. The Commerce and Central Libraries hold the APA Style Guide. You can also access the information from the online VUW library site (<http://www.vuw.ac.nz/library/research/reference/referencingguides.aspx>).

### Communication

An e-mail list of all students will be created in the first class and will be used to communicate changes, updates, and information to all class members. Please inform the course coordinator of any changes to your email.

### Email Contact

Students wishing to contact staff by email should adhere to the following instructions:

Include the **Course Code**, your **Name**, your **Student ID** and the **Topic** in the subject area of the email, eg  
MGMT 417\_Smith\_Pauline\_3000223344\_Ass1 Query

All students must use their VUW SCS email account and ID. Otherwise, email will be classified as Spam and will be dumped without being read. All emails with attachments will be dumped, unless requested by staff.

### Faculty of Commerce and Administration Offices

#### Railway West Wing (RWW) - FCA Student and Academic Services Office

The Faculty's Student and Academic Services Office is located on the ground and first floors of the Railway West Wing. The ground floor counter is the first point of contact for general enquiries and FCA forms. Student Administration Advisers are available to discuss course status and give further advice about FCA qualifications. To check for opening hours call the Student and Academic Services Office on (04) 463 5376.

#### Easterfield (EA) - FCA/Education/Law Kelburn Office

The Kelburn Campus Office for the Faculties of Commerce and Administration, Education and Law is situated in the Easterfield Building on the ground floor (EA005). This counter is the first point of contact for:

- Duty tutors for student contact and advice.
- Information concerning administrative and academic matters.
- Forms for FCA Student and Academic Services (e.g. application for academic transcripts, requests for degree audit, COP requests).
- Examinations-related information during the examination period.

To check for opening hours call the Student and Academic Services Office on (04) 463 5376.

### General University Policies and Statutes

Students should familiarise themselves with the University's policies and statutes, particularly the Assessment Statute, the Personal Courses of Study Statute, the Statute on Student Conduct and any statutes relating to the particular qualifications being studied; see the Victoria University Calendar or go to [www.victoria.ac.nz/home/about/policy/students.aspx](http://www.victoria.ac.nz/home/about/policy/students.aspx)

For information on the following topics, go to the Faculty's website [www.victoria.ac.nz/fca](http://www.victoria.ac.nz/fca) under Important Information for Students:

- Academic Grievances
- Student and Staff Conduct



- Meeting the Needs of Students with Impairments
- Student Support

### **Academic Integrity and Plagiarism**

Academic integrity is about honesty – put simply it means *no cheating*. All members of the University community are responsible for upholding academic integrity, which means staff and students are expected to behave honestly, fairly and with respect for others at all times.

Plagiarism is a form of cheating which undermines academic integrity. The University defines plagiarism as follows:

*The presentation of the work of another person or other persons as if it were one's own, whether intended or not. This includes published or unpublished work, material on the Internet and the work of other students or staff.*

It is still plagiarism even if you re-structure the material or present it in your own style or words.

*Note: including the work of others will not be considered plagiarism as long as the work is acknowledged by appropriate referencing.*

Plagiarism is prohibited at Victoria and is not worth the risk. Any enrolled student found guilty of plagiarism will be subject to disciplinary procedures under the Statute on Student Conduct and may be penalised severely. Consequences of being found guilty of plagiarism can include:

- an oral or written warning
- cancellation of your mark for an assessment or a fail grade for the course
- suspension from the course or the University.

Find out more about plagiarism, and how to avoid it, on the University's website:

[www.victoria.ac.nz/home/studying/plagiarism.html](http://www.victoria.ac.nz/home/studying/plagiarism.html)

### **Notice of Turnitin use to prevent plagiarism**

Student work provided for assessment in this course may be checked for academic integrity by the electronic search engine <<http://www.turnitin.com>>. Turnitin is an on-line plagiarism prevention tool which identifies material that may have been copied from other sources including the Internet, books, journals, periodicals or the work of other students. Turnitin is used to assist academic staff in detecting mis-referencing, misquotation, and the inclusion of unattributed material, which may be forms of cheating or plagiarism. *At the discretion of the Head of School, handwritten work may be copy-typed by the School and subject to checking by Turnitin.* You are strongly advised to check with your course coordinator if you are uncertain about how to use and cite material from other sources. Turnitin will retain a copy of submitted materials on behalf of the University for detection of future plagiarism, but access to the full text of submissions will not be made available to any other party.

### **Manaaki Pihipihinga Programme**

Manaaki Pihipihinga is an academic mentoring programme for undergraduate Māori and Pacific students in the Faculties of Commerce and Administration, and Humanities and Social Sciences. Sessions are held at the Kelburn and Pipitea Campuses in the Mentoring Rooms, 14 Kelburn Parade (back courtyard), Room 109D, and Room 210, Level 2, Railway West Wing. There is also a Pacific Support Coordinator who assists Pacific students by linking them to the services and support they need while studying at Victoria. Another feature of the programme is a support network for Postgraduate students with links to Postgraduate workshops and activities around Campus.

For further information, or to register with the programme, email [manaaki-pihipihinga-programme@vuw.ac.nz](mailto:manaaki-pihipihinga-programme@vuw.ac.nz) or phone (04) 463 6015. To contact the Pacific Support Coordinator, email [pacific-support-coord@vuw.ac.nz](mailto:pacific-support-coord@vuw.ac.nz) or phone (04) 463 5842.

ANNEX A MMMS 511 GROUP Assignment Cover Sheet



Victoria Management School

Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Student ID: \_\_\_\_\_

Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Student ID: \_\_\_\_\_

Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Student ID: \_\_\_\_\_

Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Student ID: \_\_\_\_\_

Lecturer's Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Date Due: \_\_\_\_\_

Date Submitted: \_\_\_\_\_

*We, the undersigned, have read and understood the university policy on Academic Integrity and Plagiarism. I declare this assignment is free from plagiarism.*

Signed: \_\_\_\_\_

Signed: \_\_\_\_\_

Signed: \_\_\_\_\_

Signed: \_\_\_\_\_

**We agree to an equal share of the marks awarded Yes / No (Please circle)**

If No, please attach a letter detailing your preferred split of marks, **signed by all group members.**

**If an extension has been granted, please attach a copy of the note authorising your extension.**

*Date extension applied for:* \_\_\_\_\_

*Extension granted until:* \_\_\_\_\_

*Extension granted by:* \_\_\_\_\_

**ANNEX B MMMS 511 Individual Assignment Cover Sheet**



**Victoria Management School**

Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Student ID: \_\_\_\_\_

Lecturer's Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Date Due: \_\_\_\_\_

Date Submitted: \_\_\_\_\_

*I have read and understood the university policy on Academic Integrity and Plagiarism.  
I declare this assignment is free from plagiarism.*

Signed: \_\_\_\_\_

Extension of the due date (*if applicable*)

**Please attach a copy of the note authorising your extension.**

Date extension applied for: \_\_\_\_\_

Extension granted until: \_\_\_\_\_

Extension granted by: \_\_\_\_\_