

School of Management

MGMT 401 MANAGERIAL DECISION PROCESSES

Trimester 1, 2016

COURSE OUTLINE

Prescription

An examination of alternative models of managerial decision-making processes, including strategic decision-making; a study of the role and impact of modelling in decision-making; and of factors such as risk, judgement, ambiguity etc.

Course Content

This course examines alternative models of managerial decision-making, including strategic decision-making methods. Often decisions are made in a fragmented way, without regard to the effects on other parts of the organisation, resulting in impaired performance. The focus of this course is on the role and impact of modelling in decision making, including analysing the impact of risk, judgment and ambiguity. We will explore a range of descriptive and prescriptive decision-making methods and systems modelling approaches to help you critique and improve your own decision-making processes.

Course Learning Objectives

The Course Learning Objectives and related Programme Learning Goals are shown below:

Objective	By the end of this course, students should be able to:	Addressed via
CLO1	Apply frameworks of a qualitative and quantitative nature to managerial, operational and strategic decision situations – to develop an understanding of such situations and to develop improved decision making competencies;	Assignment 1, 2 & 3, Lectures
CLO 2	Develop an ability to clearly communicate reason, argue and give recommendations on decision and policy formation within a holistic systems framework in both written, schematic and oral work;	Assignment 1, 2 & 3, Lectures
CLO 3	Critically analyse and evaluate decision models and frameworks for use in problem structuring, decision making, and strategy and policy analysis;	Assignment 1, 2 & 3, Lectures
CLO 4	Critically analyse and accommodate seemingly divergent perspectives of decision making embedded within different models and frameworks	Assignment 1, 2 & 3, Lectures

Programme Learning Goals for MCom/BCom (Hons) in Management

PLG 1	Directly access, comprehend, critically assess and draw on the published international scholarly research in their discipline.
PLG 2	Display insight in adapting and applying a theoretical framework(s) to real world situations.
PLG 3	Design and implement a research project or demonstrate advanced analytical skills
PLG 4	Explain, discuss and use a range of concepts, theories, and/or techniques in their discipline
PLG 5	Convey key discipline-specific concepts concisely in an appropriate written format.
PLG 6	Display articulate oral communication skills.
PLG 7	Provide direction and/or present new ideas persuasively.

Course Content

Session content will vary and will interweave discussion of theoretical and conceptual issues, related research and case analyses. The material will be explored using lecture format, class discussions, exercises, group activities, computer demonstrations and software use. A schedule of topics considered in the course is attached and includes the dates on which they will be covered in class.

Trimester Dates

From Monday 29th February to Monday 13th June 2016

Withdrawal from Course

1. Your fees will be refunded if you withdraw from this course on or before Friday 11th March 2016.
2. The standard last date for withdrawal from this course is Friday 13th May 2016. After this date, students forced to withdraw by circumstances beyond their control must apply for permission on an 'Application for Associate Dean's Permission to Withdraw Late' including supporting documentation. The application form is available from either of the Faculty's Student Customer Service Desks or [online](#).

Names and Contact Details

COURSE COORDINATOR

Professor Vicky Mabin

Room: RH 920, Rutherford House

Phone: 463 5140

Email: vicky.mabin@vuw.ac.nz

Office hours will vary, so please call by my office, or email for an appointment.

ADMINISTRATOR

Misa Ito

Room: RH1022, 10th floor reception,

Phone: 463 5397

Email: misa.ito@vuw.ac.nz

Class Times and Room Numbers

Thursdays 10:30-1:20 in RWW 129. These fall in 3 blocks as follows:

Weeks 1-3: 3-17 March

Weeks 4-7: 31 March – 21 April

Weeks 8-12: 5 May – 2 June.

Course Delivery

We expect you to attend all lectures and labs offered. Class sessions are run weekly during term time; most of these will take place in the nominated classroom but some will be held in a computer lab when advised.

Readings

A list of key texts or readings will be provided as the course progresses.

Mandatory course requirements

In addition to achieving an overall pass mark of at least 50%, students must:

- a. Submit all assignments in hard copy within the allowable timeframes (see under **Penalties and General University Policies and Statutes** below) to ensure all course learning objectives are covered; and
- b. Participate in your group's presentation to the class.

If you believe that exceptional circumstances may prevent you from meeting the mandatory course requirements, contact the Course Coordinator for advice as soon as possible.

If you cannot complete an assignment, refer to www.victoria.ac.nz/home/study/exams-and-assessments/aegrotat

Expected Workload

A total of 150 hours of work is expected from students in this course. That consists of 36 hours of classes plus 8 hours per week outside classes over the trimester (including mid-term breaks and study week) spent reading, preparing for classes, writing up notes and practising decision-making exercises after lectures, working in your groups and writing assignments. There is no examination in this course.

Assessment

The Assessment Handbook will apply to all VUW courses: see

<http://www.victoria.ac.nz/documents/policy/staff-policy/assessment-handbook.pdf>.

The assessment for this course comprises written assignments together with a group presentation, as follows:

2	Assignment 1: Framing a Decision	30 marks
	<i>Due Noon Monday 4 April</i>	
	Assignment 2: Crafting a solution using TOC's Logical Thinking Process	40 marks
	<i>Individual interview analysis</i>	<i>Due Noon Monday 2 May 10 marks</i>
	<i>TOC group presentation in class Week 9 (May 12)</i>	<i>(Mandatory course requirement)</i>
	<i>TOC group project diagrams</i>	<i>Due Noon Friday 13 May 15 marks</i>
	<i>Individual reports on group project</i>	<i>Due Noon Monday 23 May 15 marks</i>
	Assignment 3: Multi-criteria decision making/Multi-framing	30 marks
	<i>Due Noon Monday 13 June</i>	

For these Assignments, you will be asked to present a report setting out your description of a problematic situation, and how it might be approached using the methods described above, exploring how use of such method(s) may lead to appropriate intervention. These assignments require demonstration of insight developed from the application of decision making processes under consideration, and the practical benefits and drawbacks of using a structured approach. Assignment 3 will include an opportunity to reflect on integration across topics.

Assignment 1 is generally around 10 pages, and Assignment 3 about 10-15 pages. Assignment 2 has a spread of deliverables, to enable progressive feedback/learning cycles.

Full instructions and marking guidelines will be made available in class when the assignment is given, and on Blackboard.

The Assignments contribute to Course Learning Objectives 1, 2, 3, 4.

Assignment 1 takes an individual decision and analyses the frame used before proposing an alternative frame. Assignment 2 is based around a group project, focussing on applying the TOC logical thinking process to an issue, organisation, operation or process of your choice; though there are individual components as well. The final project is solely an individual assignment, applying a Multi-criteria/multi-framing approach to a decision situation of your choice.

The group TOC assignment will involve working in a small group of 3-4 students. This assignment will involve undertaking a thinking processes analysis to assist with the examination of a relevant problematic, managerial or policy issue. This project will involve an individual critique of a conflict (using the TOC 'Evaporating Cloud'), development of the TOC diagrams as a group, a group presentation to the class in Week 9, and an individual management report incorporating the group-developed diagrams.

All members of the group are expected to contribute to the group project and the group deliverables. Group work is assessed based on the group-developed diagrams submitted, and the in-class presentation. Marking guides for each of the different hand-ins will be provided on Blackboard.

For guidance and feedback on the group presentation please see the Oral presentation rubric available at: <http://www.victoria.ac.nz/vbs/teaching/publications/Rubric-for-Presentation-Skills.pdf>

Academic and business report writing and referencing

Victoria Business School (VBS) has developed a series of writing guides to provide guidance on academic and business report writing, including guidance on referencing.

A writing guide for all VBS students and the VBS Business report writing guides may be found at:

http://www.victoria.ac.nz/st_services/slss/downloads/VBSWritingBooklet2014.pdf

<http://www.victoria.ac.nz/vbs/teaching/publications/VBS-report-writing-guide-2013-Final.pdf>

VBS uses APA (American Psychological Association) referencing style as the common standard. The Commerce and Central Libraries hold the latest 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>

Handing in assignments

Assignments should be placed, in hard copy form, in the **MGMT 401 box (no. 28)** on level one Railway West Wing by the due time on the due date. Assignments should be handed in **by the due date as specified above and on the assignment brief**. Assignments received after the due date will be deemed to be late. 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.

Late assignments

The mandatory course requirement requires that a hard copy be submitted within the approved time frame.

Late assignments are to be emailed to the Course Coordinator and a hard copy delivered to the School Reception desk on Level 10 by the next business day. The assignment will be considered 'Submitted' when the emailed copy is received by the Course Coordinator or when the hard copy is be handed to the Course, Administrator, Misa Ito (or the Duty Receptionist in her absence) in RH 1022, Level 10 Reception – whichever is sooner.

Assignments left on the Reception Counter or slid under the door of the Administrator's office may incur penalties from the time and date they are recovered. Note that there is no provision to accept assignments on weekends or public holidays. Late assignment must be handed into Misa while the Level 10 Reception area is open. The desk opens at 9am and closes at 5pm Monday to Friday during term time.

Penalties – for Lateness

- (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 40 and the assignment receives 50% then one day late means the mark will be out of 16 and the student will receive 50% of 16). **Saturdays, Sundays and public holidays** will be included when counting the number of days late.
- (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, e.g. 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.

School of Management's Policy on Remarking

Every attempt is made to ensure that the marking is fair for all concerned.

Students may ask for their written work to be remarked. A different marker will do the remarking and provide comments. The original marking sheet is removed to ensure the process is independent.

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 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.

Group Work

The second assignment is a group project. You are expected to work in small groups of 3 to 4 students on this assignment, which means working together to decide on an organisation to study, developing an understanding of the system under study, and developing the analysis. This is way more than using a stapler to combine your individual efforts, so don't even think you can just assign different sections to individuals to do independently! You will need to divide the work evenly and also work together as a group. Your diagrams should be discussed and agreed on by the group and will be submitted as a group, though you can choose one person to make them look uniform. To ensure logical connections between the parts of the assignment will require that you work together on the various parts: you will need to allow at least 30 hours for group meetings outside class.

Resources are available at <http://www.victoria.ac.nz/vbs/teaching/group-work> to support you in working in groups, to overcome the issues that can arise if not managed. We encourage you to make use of them, to improve your performance when working as a group – teamwork is a skill that is usually required in the workplace and effective team members are valued highly.

Student groups are expected to update the lecturer regularly on progress, and any issues arise with group collaboration, these can be raised with her.

While we encourage working and studying together in groups, all other assessment items are strictly individual. Collaboration on **individual** assessment items should be limited to general discussion as to how one might interpret the nature of the assigned question, and testing out ideas with each other. You should not work together to formulate a common response, nor share your individual assignments with others.

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.

PowerPoint slides will be available on Blackboard, but these are not sufficient to pass the course. You need to come to class to annotate the slides and make your own notes. Bring pens and paper to all sessions, as there will be practical in-class exercises to help you understand the concepts covered, linking theory and practice.

Depending on the organisation you choose to study for your projects, you may need to travel to visit them on site. Please bear that in mind when you choose your organisation.

Student feedback

This course has been changed significantly from recent offerings, with changes of teaching staff, style and emphasis. However, many aspects from other previous versions which were well received, including the applied nature of the course, will be continued.

Student feedback on University courses may be found at www.cad.vuw.ac.nz/feedback/feedback_display.php.

Class Representative

A class representative will be elected in the first class, and that person's name and contact details made available to VUWSA, the course coordinator and the class. The class representative provides a communication channel to liaise with the course coordinator on behalf of students.

Communication of Additional Information

Additional information or information on changes will be conveyed to students, in class, and via Blackboard. You must ensure that your email address is up-to-date and that you check Blackboard regularly (eg at least once per week).

Link to general information

For general information about course-related matters, go to <http://www.victoria.ac.nz/vbs/studenthelp/general-course-information>

Note to Students

Your assessed work may also be used for quality assurance purposes, such as to assess the level of achievement of learning objectives as required for accreditation and academic audit. The findings may be used to inform changes aimed at improving the quality of VBS programmes. All material used for such processes will be treated as confidential, and the outcome will not affect your grade for the course.

COURSE SCHEDULE 2016

Week	Date	Topic	Assignments
1	3 Mar	Introduction to course Decision Making Biases and Heuristics	
2	10 Mar	Framing decisions	
3	17 Mar	Framing and reframing using Russo and Schoemaker's Framing analysis approach	
Easter break – 1 Week			
4	31 Mar	Planning major change using the TOC logical thinking process: Goals and Constraints	Assignment 1 (Framing) due Noon Monday 4 April
5	7 Apr	Problem structuring: What to change	
6	14 Apr	Designing solutions: What to change to	
7	21 Apr	Implementing change: How to cause the change	
Second break – 1 Week			
8	5 May	Further TOC applications TOC as a research method	Individual interview analysis due Noon Monday 2 May
9	12 May	Group presentations in class	Group Presentation 12 May Group diagrams due Noon Friday 13 May
10	19 May	Multi-Criteria Decision Making using VISA	Assignment 2 (Final individual report) due Noon Monday 23 May
11	26 May	Multi-criteria decision making Cont'd Other DM approaches	
12	2 June	Integration – multi-framing	Assignment 3 Due Noon Monday 13 June