

Sustainability Consulting
MSUS 401
Winter 2016

DRAFT VERSION as of 2015 03 17

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Prerequisites: MGPO 440 (Strategies for Sustainability)

Course Description: This course is for students looking to gain experience in the practical application of theories, tools and approaches used by management consultants as they plan, implement and successfully deliver projects that move organizations towards the societal ideal of sustainable development. It provides opportunities to integrate concepts of sustainability with organizational analysis to meet real-world challenges which may range from operational to strategic.

As one of the capstone experiential learning options for students in the BCom Major (Managing for Sustainability), the course is designed around a *pro bono* consulting engagement. It includes preparatory classes, on-going academic oversight and post-project debriefing to maximize learning from the experience.

The course is relevant to students interested in careers in sustainability consulting or management consulting more broadly as well as to students interested in advancing sustainability projects inside organizations in the private, government or not-for-profit sectors. The frameworks, tools and techniques used in the course, as well as the skills developed, are transferable so the class experience provides the foundation for a range of career paths.

Providing students with opportunities to develop and hone their analytical skills, critical thinking, problem-solving skills, communications skills, leadership skills, the ability to effectively collaborate with one other, and client relationship management skills are all part of the course objectives. Topics covered will include: consulting as a profession and an industry; different types of sustainability consulting; implementing change in organizations; and project management.

Learning Outcomes:

The course will provide students with the opportunity to:

- ✓ Apply and integrate academic knowledge gained in a range of Management and non-Management courses to real-world challenges
- ✓ Translate the abstract concept of “sustainable development” into specific organizational issues that pose opportunities and/or threats to particular organizations
- ✓ Identify the economic/business, environmental, social and organizational issues relevant to specific sustainability projects
- ✓ Develop and hone their analytical skills, problem-solving skills, critical thinking and project management skills.
- ✓ Understand consulting as a profession and industry, as well as the place of different types of sustainability consulting therein
- ✓ Understand how sustainability consulting can assist an organization to move towards accomplishing its mission while reducing its negative environmental and social impacts
- ✓ Learn directly from industry professionals acting as guest speakers and/or project team mentors
- ✓ Understand the essentials for successful sustainability consulting – driving innovation and change
- ✓ Appreciate and empathize with the perspectives and demands of different stakeholders brought together around sustainable development issues
- ✓ Work more effectively in a team
- ✓ Communicate more effectively in oral and written forms when researching, discussing and making recommendations to address organizational challenges relating to sustainability
- ✓ Demonstrate professional behaviour in a real-world setting
- ✓ Appreciate the importance for managers to develop a tolerance for uncertainty and ambiguity.

Workload: This course is assigned 3 credits and is considered equal to a regular 3 hour per week course over a 13 week semester, including the expected out of class work commitment that such a course entails. Each student registering for the course must be prepared to commit the required time.

Course Format: The course will begin with several classroom sessions dedicated to training and project launches. Student groups will be formed and matched to specific client projects that have been pre-scoped by the course instructor. The work of each group will be overseen by the course instructor (or an experienced mentor designated by the instructor), who will schedule 2-4 progress review meetings. Each group will make a final presentation at the end of the term. The remainder of the time is spent undertaking the consulting engagement for the client.

Readings: A readings package will be made available for purchase through the usual channels. Additional materials will be handed out in class or posted on myCourses.

Evaluation:

Component	Weight
Attendance, Participation and Professionalism (including on-time submission of a thoughtful summary of your Personal Performance Objectives (1 page)	15%
Group Project Letter of Proposal	10%
Interim Personal Reflection Paper (2 – 4 pages)	10%
Final Personal Reflection Paper (5 – 8 pages)	15%
Group Project Final Report	40%
Post-Project Group Oral Presentation	10%

Attendance, Participation and Professionalism

Students are professionals and will be expected to conduct themselves accordingly. Attendance is required at all training workshops, progress review meetings, and presentations. Active participation is expected for all components of the course. All stakeholders (peers, clients, professors, mentors) will be asked to provide input on participants’ professionalism.

Personal Performance Objectives (1 page)

Before undertaking the project, you must submit your personal performance objectives for the project, meaning what you expect to learn and achieve throughout the course. This can be done in point form. We want to know what you would like or expect to get from this learning experience that will enhance both your professional and personal life. (*Due: week 3*)

Group Project Letter of Proposal

Each team must submit the Letter of Proposal which was agreed upon with the client and scopes out in adequate detail the project to be performed. (*Due: week 4*)

Interim Personal Reflection Paper (2 – 4 pages)

As the project unfolds, you must submit an interim reflection paper of your experience. This reflection paper should address your learning experiences and be linked to the objectives that you set forth for yourself in the Personal Performance Objectives paper. This can include but is not limited to: your role or input into the project; reflections on your interactions with project colleagues and clients; your perception of consulting work. (*Due: week 7*)

Final Personal Reflection Paper (6 – 8 pages)

Once the project is completed, you will submit a final reflection paper. This is meant to allow you to synthesize your experience and give you an overall picture of what you gained from it, e.g., the things that went particularly well, things you would do differently, how the experience could be improved upon in future years, etc. (*Due: one week after last week of classes*).

Group Project Final Report

The deliverable provided to the client will be submitted and graded (*Due: final week of classes*).

Post-Project Group Oral Presentation

Upon completion of the project, each team will be required to make a presentation on their project and personal learning experiences (*Due: final week of classes*).

Potential Group Projects

To ensure that each group finds a project of suitable scope and challenge in a timely manner, the course instructor will work with personnel from the Marcel Desautels Institute for Integrated Management to pre-scope potential projects and facilitate connections between students and potential clients as well as consulting mentors. Student groups will however be ultimately responsible for completing project scoping in adequate detail and documenting this in their Letter of Proposal. A range of different types of project engagements will be deemed acceptable. Groups will opt for one of the following sustainability consulting engagements:

- To a unit within McGill University (with mentoring from a consulting professional and assistance from McGill's Office of Sustainability)
- To a not-for-profit organization (with mentoring from a consulting professional and assistance from a liaison person in the not-for-profit organization)
- To a consulting firm (with mentoring and assistance from a professional consultant working in the firm)
- To a private or public organization, which might be an existing client of a consulting firm (with mentoring from a consulting professional and assistance from a liaison person in the organization)
- Other types of engagements may be acceptable, with the permission of the instructor

McGill University values academic integrity. Therefore all students must understand the meaning and consequences of cheating, plagiarism and other academic offences under the Code of Student Conduct and Disciplinary Procedures (see <http://www.mcgill.ca/integrity> for more information).

In accord with McGill University's Charter of Students' Rights, students in this course have the right to submit in English or in French any written work that is to be graded.

In the event of extraordinary circumstances beyond the University's control, the content and/or evaluation scheme in this course is subject to change.