Fall 2022

Capstone – instructions and assignments

The purpose of the Capstone course and its assignments is to help you to use and further develop the skills that you have acquired during your studies: managing a team, identifying and evaluating critical problems, and developing recommendations for action – all skills that you will need when you graduate.

In the course, you will be expected to work with a case company on a current, multidisciplinary business problem / task. The list of case companies consists of nine cases identified and confirmed by the faculty before the course starts. Together with your team, you will be independently responsible for all aspects of the project, including

1. **identifying** a critical task/problem in the case company
2. **defining** an appropriate approach/concept to work on the task/problem
3. **providing** a detailed and informative analysis of the situation
4. **delivering** conceptual and hands-on recommendations for the company
5. **planning and managing** a project
6. **presenting** your recommendations both orally and in writing to the case company and fellow students.

During the course, your team will deliver four progress reports to your group's Facilitator to help ensure that you are proceeding as expected; the due dates for these reports can be found below in the 'Important dates'–section. You will meet with the case company at the beginning of the course to discuss and agree how you will proceed with the project. Your Facilitator will join this meeting. You will also have a project planning seminar with Boston Consulting Group (tbc). Your team will have two more meetings with the case company. In addition, each team needs to participate in a facilitated *I like I wish* feedback session (tbc) and presentation coaching session before the final project presentation. **All team members need to attend all these sessions and meetings. In a force majeure case of non-attendance, you have to immediately inform your team members and all the parties involved.**

Important dates in Fall 2022

1. **September 21:** at 15.00 – 18.00: Course starts with an Opening session and the presentations of the case companies.
2. **September 22**: Submit your three most preferred cases (including short justifications - limited to 300 characters) through MyCourses.
3. **September 26**: You will be informed of the assigned team, case and your Faculty Facilitator.
4. **September 28:** at 15.15 – 17.00 or 16.15 – 18.00: Team kick-off meeting with facilitator. The exact time and room will be informed in the email sent by September 26. Please prepare your lifeline (template in MyCourses/Material) prior to the meeting and present it to your team members and facilitator in 5-7 minutes.
5. **September 28 - October 5:** (exact time to be agreed with client company and facilitator): Organize the first meeting with the case company and your facilitator, in which you discuss and define the scope of the project and agree how you will proceed with your investigation of the research problem and research questions finalized in this meeting. Right after the meeting, create Progress report 1 which includes the problem statement and research questions. Decide in advance who in your team will run the meeting. Email the case company representatives your questions in advance so they can prepare for the meeting. Contact your case company and facilitator well in advance to set up the meeting time; setting up the meeting is your responsibility.

6. **October 5:** at 15.15 – 16.45: Project management seminar with a consultant from Boston Consulting Group (tbc).
7. **October 5:** by midnight: Progress report 1 due; upload the report to MyCourses. The report is based on the first meeting with the case company. Submit also your team agreement (see template in MyCourses/ Material).
8. **October 12:** by midnight: Progress report 2 due; upload the report to MyCourses. The report should include the project plan and updates to Progress report 1, if needed)
9. **October 19 – 26:** (exact time to be agreed with the case company): Meet jointly with your case company to discuss your progress. Contact your case company well in advance to set up the meeting time; setting up the meeting is your responsibility. If you wish the facilitator to join this meeting, please let them know and ask for their availability in advance.
10. **November 2 – 9:** (exact time to be agreed with case company): Meet jointly with your case company to discuss your analysis and findings. Contact your case company well in advance to set up the meeting time; setting up the meeting is your responsibility. If you wish the facilitator to join this meeting, please let them know and ask for their availability in advance.
11. **November 9:** 15.15-17.30: Facilitated *I like I wish* team feedback session (tbc)
12. **November 9:** by midnight: Progress report 3 due; upload the report to MyCourses. The report should include your analysis and findings.
13. **November 16:** by midnight: Progress report 4 due; upload the report to MyCourses. The report should be the first draft of the final report.
14. **November 23:** at 15.00-16.00 or 16:00-17.00 (exact time to be agreed with your facilitator): Presentation coaching sessions. Each team has a separate one hour slot. Please agree a specific time and place with your faculty facilitator. Send the slides to your facilitator the day before.
15. **November 28:** by midnight: Deadline for uploading your team's written case report to the assignment submission box in MyCourses and send it to the case company.
16. **November 30:** 15.00-18.00: Closing session. Cases and recommendations are presented orally to case companies, Faculty Facilitators and fellow students. Upload your presentation deck and contribution table to MyCourses by midnight.
17. **December 4:** by midnight: Deadline for uploading your individual student portfolio to the assignment submission box in MyCourses.

Selection of case company

In the course, all student teams will work with a different case company on a multidisciplinary real-life case identified in the company. Student teams (4-6 members) will be formed based on the individual preferences and backgrounds; we will try to create as multidisciplinary teams as possible. This way we try to simulate a real work-life situation where team members come from different backgrounds, and it is your responsibility to consider the problem from your disciplinary perspective and then, together with the others, find a solution.

Important steps in the selection of a case company:

1. **In the opening session on Wednesday September 21, all selected case companies will give a short, max. 10 minute presentation of their company and the case.** After the session, decide on the most suitable case for you, and also list two other cases that would suit your expertise best. Note, however, that the final specification of the actual project will be done together by the team and the case company once the project has started.
2. **Latest on Thursday September 22, submit your three most preferred cases through MyCourses**, in the order of preference. Briefly add any information you would like to justify

your selection (space is limited to 300 characters)! You also get to indicate the least favorite case. If you have more than three preferences, please indicate them all on the justification of the third case. In addition, point out if you have a conflict of interest with some of the cases (e.g. you work for a competitor).

3. **Latest on Monday September 26 you will be informed of the team and case selected for you.** Note: it is likely that you will get one of your preferred cases, but not guaranteed. We will do our best to match the preferences and cases in the best possible way!

Assignment instructions

Assignment 1: Written team case report (50% of course grade)

This assignment has five deliverables:

a. Progress report 1; deadline October 5; format: PowerPoint report; upload to MyCourses.
b. Progress report 2; deadline October 12; format: PowerPoint report; upload to MyCourses.
c. Progress report 3; deadline November 9; format: PowerPoint report; upload to MyCourses.
d. Progress report 4; deadline November 16; format: Text / PowerPoint report; upload to MyCourses.
e. Final report; deadline December 4; format: Text / PowerPoint report; upload to MyCourses.

In order to pass the course, you need to hand in all of these deliverables by their deadlines. Late assignments and re-submissions of assignments will not be accepted. Only the final report is graded. The purpose of the progress reports is to make sure your project is progressing as planned and to get feedback from your faculty facilitator.

Below is a description of the requirements for each deliverable:

- Progress report 1

  The first progress report is based on insights from the first project meeting with the case company, and its purpose is to ensure that you have started working on your project. You should include at least the following items in your report:

  - problem statement
  - identification of the actual targets of the project
  - project scope
  - research questions
  - research to be conducted in order to answer to the research questions
  - team agreement (see separate template at MyCourses/Material)

  Create a Power Point report and upload it to MyCourses by the deadline.

- Progress report 2

  The second progress report consists of a detailed project plan. In addition, update the elements included in the Progress report 1 if needed. You should thus include at least the following items in your report:

  - problem statement (from Progress report 1, updated if needed)
  - identification of the actual targets of the project (from Progress report 1, updated if needed)
  - project scope (from Progress report 1, updated if needed)
  - research questions (from Progress report 1, updated if needed)
  - research to be conducted (from Progress report 1, updated if needed)

- detailed project plan (you are expected to read about project management to know how to put together a project plan)

Create a Power Point report and upload it to MyCourses by the deadline.

- Progress report 3

The third progress report is based on insights from the third project meeting with the case company, and its purpose is to illustrate the findings.

You should thus include at least the following items in your report:

- problem statement (from Progress report 2, updated if needed)
- identification of the actual targets of the project (from Progress report 2, updated if needed)
- project scope (from Progress report 2, updated if needed)
- research questions (from Progress report 2, updated if needed)
- research conducted in order to answer to the research questions (from Progress report 2, updated if needed)
- preliminary findings
- detailed project plan (updated)

Create a Power Point report and upload it to MyCourses by the deadline.

- Progress report 4

The purpose of the fourth progress report is to help the Faculty Facilitator give you feedback on your overall approach to the problem, analysis and recommendations. The more you have ready at this stage, the better the facilitator will be able to help you, so ideally, you have a draft of the full report put together. Please see the instructions of the final report.

Produce the first draft of your final report and upload it to MyCourses by the deadline. It does not have to be perfect yet but more you have ready at this point, the more your facilitator will be able to give you feedback.

- Final report (50% of course grade)

With your team, you are expected to write a business report where you present the problem, your analysis, and recommendations. Your recommendations should be supported by solid, compelling evidence (quantitative or qualitative) from relevant and respected sources. Although you are writing a business report, your academic expertise as soon-to-be MSc graduates should show! For example, be sure to make it clear how you conducted the study (research methods to some degree) and refer to theories, research reports and academic articles to back up your plan and implementation. However, your target audience is the case company, which is the fundamental criterion for you to critically evaluate the extent to which and how you use references.

In the final report, include a brief statement (one paragraph) to clarify how the work was divided and tasks allocated in your team, i.e. who contributed what data/knowledge/information and how you put the report together.

The report length should be approximately 5,000 words + appendices and references + executive summary (mandatory). There is also an option of completing the report in the format of a detailed PowerPoint deck. Separate instructions are available for this option. The report is evaluated on a 0-5 scale based on the **Business Writing** and **Capstone Rubrics** that are available in the course workspace in

MyCourses. Please **make sure you familiarize yourself with the rubrics** both before you start writing and before you hand in the report.

The deadline for the assignment is November 28, 2022, midnight. Please upload your team's report to the assignment submission box in MyCourses. Late assignments and re-submissions of assignments will not be accepted.

Assignment 2: Case presentation on November 30, 2022 (30% of course grade)

This assignment has three deliverables.

a. Presentation coaching session
b. Case presentation slides
c. Final case presentation

In the last Capstone session, all student teams will present their cases (problem, analysis, recommendations) to the case company, Faculty Facilitators and fellow students. Before this, each team will attend a one-hour presentation coaching session to get feedback on their presentation before the final session. The presentation **needs to be completed** (does not have to be perfect yet) for the coaching session so that the feedback will be meaningful. Your team is responsible for booking the presentation coaching session via MyCourses. The available time slots are:

- Wednesday November 23: 15.00-16.00 or 16.00-17.00 (To be agreed with the facilitator)

Your presentation should be engaging, credible and persuasive. To help you evaluate your presentation before the coaching session and the actual presentation day, please **check the Business Presentations Rubric** that is available in the course workspace in MyCourses. This rubric is also used to evaluate the final presentations on a 0-5 scale.

Your presentation should be **10-13 minutes long**. Rehearse your presentation as a team carefully to make sure that your presentation is neither too short nor too long. Points will be deducted from presentations that are too short or too long, and you will be asked to finish your presentation at 13 minutes, so careful rehearsing is critical. When preparing the presentation, remember to consider the entire audience; it will consist of case company representatives, your fellow students and Faculty Facilitators.

Each presentation will be followed by about 10 minutes of questions and feedback. Attendance is mandatory for students during the entire duration of the session.

After the presentation, upload the presentation slides to the MyCourses submission box (by midnight, November 30).

Assignment 3: Individual student portfolio (20% of course grade)

To help you explicate to yourself (and to others, such as prospective employers) what you have learned both in the Master's program and in the Capstone course, the last assignment is an individual student portfolio where you can look back and reflect on your learnings. The portfolio consists of two main parts: a) a reflection paper and b) a more creative presentation of your learnings. You can find more detailed instructions for both parts below. The assignment is evaluated on a 0-5 scale based on **the Business Writing Rubric** that is available in MyCourses. **The deadline for uploading the portfolio to the assignment return box in MyCourses is December 4, 2022 at midnight. Late submissions of assignments will be deducted one grade point.**

Part a) Reflection paper

The length of the paper should be approximately 2,500 words. The paper should have three main sections, and each section should address, for example, the following issues:

Section 1 – reflection on learnings in the Master's program

- What were your expectations when you entered the Master's program?
- Were these expectations met or exceeded? How? Or, if they were not met, why not?
- What were your most important and valuable learnings during your Master's studies? Reflect on the theories, knowledge and skills that you have learned, but also other aspects of your studies.
- What else would be important to learn? What would you further emphasize in the program studies?
- Have your career goals changed during the program and if so, how?
- Other topics relevant to you

Section 2 – reflection on learning in the Capstone course

- What were your expectations from the Capstone course?
- Were these expectations met or exceeded? How? Or, if they were not met, why not?
- What was your Capstone experience like overall?
- What were your most important and valuable learnings during the course?
- Did the project turn out the way you expected?
- In what ways did your project turn out differently from what you expected?
- If you could do the project again, what would you do differently?
- Did the project have an impact on your career goals, and if so, how and why?

Section 3 – reflection on the teamwork in the Capstone project

Using the **Teamwork Skills Rubric** available in MyCourses as a basis, reflect on both your own and your team members' teamwork skills during the project.

- What kind of leadership did you have during the project?
- How did your team succeed in teamwork (please refer back to your team agreement)? How did you contribute to the success of the team?
- Was it easy to divide the workload between the team members in the contribution table?
- What teamwork skills could have been stronger to help you in the project, and how?
- How did your teamwork skills develop during the course and the entire master program?
- What teamwork skills will you continue to develop in your career, and how?
- Did all team members contribute evenly to the project?

In writing the portfolio, please make sure you also consider the reader and make the document reader-friendly by e.g. using (your own) headings.

Part b) Creative presentation of key learnings and take-aways

In the second part of your portfolio, you have the opportunity to express your key learnings and take-aways from both the Master's program and the Capstone course in a more out-of-the-box way (in the Aalto spirit!). You can rather freely choose how, exactly, you want to express yourself. The main requirement is that your final “product” is focused on what you walk away with from the Master’s program and the Capstone course, helping you to define your professional profile in “ccc”, i.e. in a concise, creative and convincing manner. Here are some ideas to get you started – get creative and design your unique output!

For instance, you could consider developing:

- a visual representation or a model of your key learnings and take-aways
- a short, 2-minute video clip in which you present yourself and the key learnings and take-aways to prospective employers
- a song that you have composed in which the lyrics are about the key learnings and take-aways

Ethical issues

In accordance with the Aalto University values, its operations are founded on integrity, openness, and equality. The goal is that Aalto University students succeed in their studies and in the world of work while acting in compliance with the responsible conduct of research and good artistic practices and the professional practices of their field. We expect all parties involved in Capstone to follow good professional and ethical practices. Please contact your faculty facilitator and Iiris right away if these expectations are not met.

All processing of personal data must be done in accordance the demands set by the EU General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR), national data protection legislation and other legislation that relates to the processing of personal data.

Contact information

Regarding any questions concerning the course, please contact Perttu Kähäri by email (perttu.kahari@aalto.fi) or phone (040 774 8794).