

## Capstone - course introduction and instructions

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 10 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. presenting your recommendations both orally and in writing to the case company and fellow students

During the course, your team will deliver two 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. Half way through the course, your team will also have one meeting where both your facilitator and the case company are present at the same time. In addition, each team needs to participate in a presentation consultation session before the final project presentation. All team members need to attend all these sessions and meetings.

### Important dates in Fall 2015

1. **September 16** at 15.00 – 18.00 (3.00–6.00 pm): Course starts with an introductory session and the presentations of the case companies.
2. **September 18** : email your team's three most preferred cases to [leena.louhiala-salminen@aalto.fi](mailto:leena.louhiala-salminen@aalto.fi)
3. **September 22**: your team will be informed of the assigned case and your faculty facilitator.
4. **September 22–25**: organize a kick-off meeting where you get organized as a project team and assign roles for team members.
5. **September 23 – October 2**: organize the first meeting with the case company, where you discuss, and identify the main challenges for the project work, and agree how you will proceed with your investigation of the problem areas finalized in this meeting. Right after the meeting, establish an action plan and schedule for the project.
6. **October 12**, by 16.00 (4.00 pm): Progress report 1 due; email the report to your group's faculty facilitator. The report is based on the first meeting with the case company and the action plan established after that.
7. **October 19-30**: You will meet your case company and faculty facilitator to discuss your progress and to get feedback. In the meeting, confirm shared understanding of the direction and expectations. Contact your case company and facilitator well in advance to set up the meeting time; setting up the meeting is your responsibility.
8. By **November 11**: Book a time for a presentation coaching session (held between Nov 23-30) with your team. Email Christa ([christa.uusi-rauva@aalto.fi](mailto:christa.uusi-rauva@aalto.fi)) to agree on the time for your team.
9. **November 12**, by 16.00 (4.00 pm): Progress report 2 due; email the report to your group's faculty facilitator.
10. **November 23-30**: Presentation coaching sessions
11. **December 2** at 15.00 – 18.00 (3.00–6.00 pm): Closing session. Cases and recommendations are presented orally to case companies, faculty facilitators and fellow students.

12. **December 4** at 16.00 (4 pm): Deadline for uploading your team's written case report to the assignment submission box in MyCourses.
13. **December 9** at 16.00 (4 pm): 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 problem area identified in the company.

### Important steps in the selection of a case company:

1. **In the kick-off session on Sept 16, all selected case companies will give a short, max. five-minute presentation of their company and the case.** This way, you will all get more information about the potential cases and can start thinking of the most suitable case for your team.
2. **Latest on Friday Sept 18, send Leena ([leena.louhiala-salminen@aalto.fi](mailto:leena.louhiala-salminen@aalto.fi)) an email** where you list your team's three most preferred cases, in the order of preference.
3. **Latest on Tuesday 22 Sept you will be informed of the case selected for your team.**

## Assignment instructions

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

This assignment has three deliverables:

- a. Progress report 1; deadline October 12, 4 pm; email to your faculty facilitator
- b. Progress report 2; deadline November 12, 4 pm; email to your faculty facilitator
- c. Final report; deadline December 4, 4 pm; 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. Below is a description of the requirements for each deliverable:

#### a. 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 a) started working on your project, and b) put together a project plan with your team. You should thus provide at least the following items to your facilitator:

- problem statement
- identification of the actual targets of the project
- project plan (you are expected to read about project management to know how to put together a project plan)

b. Progress report 2

The purpose of the second 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. In the second progress report, you should cover the following issues:

- problem statement (updated)
- project plan (updated)
- (preliminary) analysis
- (preliminary) recommendations

c. 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. You are expected to support your report with references to make it credible, and are encouraged to use a wide variety of sources to support your analysis and recommendations. These include but are not limited to textbooks, articles, newspapers and the Internet. However, remember that this is a business report, not an academic paper; your target audience is the case company. Therefore, you need to critically evaluate the extent to which and how you use references.

The report length should be approximately 5,000 words + appendices and references + executive summary (mandatory). 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 December 4, 2015, 4 pm. 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 December 2, 2015 (30% of course grade)**

This assignment has two deliverables.

- a. Presentation coaching session between November 23-30 (one hour per team)
- b. 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 ready for the coaching session so that the feedback will be meaningful. Your team is responsible for setting up the consultation session time; email Christa ([christa.uusi-rauva@aalto.fi](mailto:christa.uusi-rauva@aalto.fi)) to do this.

At this stage of your studies, you should already know how to put together an engaging, credible and persuasive business presentation, so you have rather free hands. 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.

The only requirement is that your presentation should be **12-15 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 15 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.

We will have two simultaneous sessions (five presentations each) and thus have 30 minutes time for each presentation, so each presentation will be followed by about 15 minutes of questions and feedback.

### **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 4 pm on Dec 9, 2015. Late assignments and re-submissions of assignments will not be accepted.**

#### **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 and/or exceeded? How? Or, if they were not met, why not?
- What were the most important issues that you learned during your Master's studies? Reflect on the theories, knowledge and skills that you have learned.
- 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 issues relevant to you

#### **Section 2 – reflection on learning in the Capstone course**

- What were your expectations from the Capstone course?
- Were these expectations met and/or exceeded? How? Or, if they were not met, why not?
- What was the Capstone experience like overall?
- What were the most important issues that you learned 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 teamwork skills were you / the others good at? How did this influence the project?
- 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 program?
- What teamwork skills will you continue to develop in your career, and how?

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 somewhat 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 / 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 / stakeholders
- a song that you have composed in which the lyrics are about the key learnings and take-aways
- any other suitable, creative means

### **Contact information**

In any questions concerning the course, please contact Leena Louhiala-Salminen by email (leena.louhiala-salminen@aalto.fi) or phone (040-353 8201).