SPRING 2019

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 11 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. In a force majeure case of non-attendance, you have to immediately inform your team members and all the parties involved.**

Important dates in Spring 2019

1. **February 27** at 15.15 – 18.00: Course starts with an introductory session and the presentations of the case companies.
2. **March 1**: submit your team's three most preferred cases (including justifications) through MyCourses
3. **March 4**: your team will be informed of the assigned case and your Faculty Facilitator.
4. **March 5 – March 14:** arrange a kick-off meeting where you get organized as a project team and assign roles for team members; invite your Faculty Facilitator to this meeting; try to find a time that suits you all
5. **March 5 – March 14**: 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. **March 20**, by midnight: Progress report 1 due; upload the report to MyCourses. The report is based on the first meeting with the case company and the action plan established after that.
7. **March 21-April 1**: meet with 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. **April 29**, by midnight: Progress report 2 due; upload the report to MyCourses
9. **May 8-10:** Presentation coaching sessions. Each team has a separate one hour slot. Detailed instructions for booking below.

10. **May 15**, 15.00-18.00: Closing session. Cases and recommendations are presented orally to case companies, Faculty Facilitators and fellow students. Upload your presentation deck on MyCourses by midnight.
11. **May 20** by midnight: Deadline for uploading your team's written case report to the assignment submission box in MyCourses.
12. **May 22** 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 (4-5 members) have been formed before the course starts; we made efforts 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 kick-off session on Feb 27, all selected case companies will give a short, max. five-minute presentation of their company and the case.** After the session, in your team decide on the most suitable case for you, and also list two other cases that would fit your team's 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 Friday March 1, submit through MyCourses your team's three most preferred cases**, in the order of preference. Add any information you would like to justify your selection! Also, point out if anyone in your team has a conflict of interest with some of the cases (e.g. you work for a competitor); if this happens your team will not get that particular case or you will be moved to another team.
3. **Latest on Monday March 4 you will be informed of the case selected for your team.** Note: it is likely that you will get one of your preferred cases, but not guaranteed. We will do our best to match the teams and cases in the best possible way!

Assignment instructions

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

This assignment has three deliverables:

a. Progress report 1; deadline March 20; format: Power Point report; upload to MyCourses.
b. Progress report 2; deadline April 29; format: Power Point report OR text report; upload to MyCourses.
c. Final report; deadline May 20; format: text 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. 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 include at least the following items in your report:

- 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)

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

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

You can choose to work on with your Power Point report OR produce the first draft of your written, final report. Upload the report to MyCourses by the deadline.

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. 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 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). 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 May 20, 2019, 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 May 15, 2019 (30% of course grade)

This assignment has three deliverables.

a. Presentation coaching session on May 8-10 (one hour per team)
b. Final case presentation
c. Case presentation slides

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. The session will not be held if the presentation is not completed. Your team is responsible for setting up the presentation coaching session by emailing Christa Uusi-Rauva (christa.uusi-rauva@aalto.fi). The times are allocated on a "first come, first served" basis. The available time slots are:

- Wednesday May 8: 8-9, 9-10, 10-11, 11-12
- Thursday May 9: 8-9, 9-10, 10-11
- Friday May 10: 8-9, 9-10, 10-11, 11-12

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 parallel sessions and thus have 30 minutes time for each presentation, so each presentation will be followed by about 15 minutes of questions and feedback. Attendance is mandatory for students during the entire duration of the session. Teams in each parallel session will be confirmed later and posted on MyCourses.

After the presentation, upload the presentation slides to the MyCourses submission box (by midnight, May 15).

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 on May 22, 2019 at midnight. Late assignments and re-submissions of assignments will not be accepted.**

<u>Part a) Reflection paper</u>

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.

- One of the group discussion topics at the kick-off session was leadership style. What kind of leadership did you plan to have? How did this work during the project?
- How did your team succeed in teamwork? How did you contribute to the success of the team?
- 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?

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.

<u>Part b) Creative presentation of key learnings and take-aways</u>

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

Contact information

In any questions concerning the course, please contact Iiris Saittakari by email (iiris.saittakari@aalto.fi) or phone (045 673 4631).