MANAGEMENT OF INNOVATION
AND TECHNICAL CHANGE

GBAT9104

SUPERVISED OPEN-BOOK EXAMINATION

Time allowed: 2 hours
Plus reading time: 10 minutes

INSTRUCTIONS

1. This is a supervised open-book examination. Course study guide, reference books, self-
made notes, pens, pencils and erasers may be brought into the examination room.

2. You are allowed to use electronic devices for the purpose of referring to digital course
materials and notes only. These devices must not be connected to the internet, Wi-Fi
must be disabled and tablets must be in flight mode. They must not be used to type
your exam responses.

3. Your reading time before the examination is 10 minutes. Reading time is restricted to
the examination paper and case study only – no other resources may be consulted. No
writing may be undertaken during reading time.

4. The examination paper contains three (3) questions. ANSWER ALL THREE (3)
QUESTIONS. All questions relate to the case study attached, which has also been
emailed to you by MBT Student Services.

5. Question 1 is worth 50%, Questions 2 and 3 are worth 25% each.

6. Answers must be written in black or blue ink.

7. Ensure that you have written your name and other details on every exam booklet used
and any other documentation submitted.

8. This exam paper and copy of the case study must be returned with your answer
booklets at the conclusion of the examination. No documentation is to be retained by
candidates.

9. The exam contributes 25% towards your final grading in this course.
ANSWER ALL THREE (3) QUESTIONS

The following questions relate to the *Harvard Business Review* case ‘The National Geographic Society (abridged)’. All questions incorporate the case study, a copy of which has already been emailed to you. The case study is also provided in hard copy with this examination paper.


**Question 1 (50 marks)**

In GBAT9104 we focus our attention on understanding change because “most [organisations] change to achieve promised benefits” (course aims, p.9). But is this the right foundation for a course on managing innovation and change? After all, there is an old French expression “Plus ca change, plus c’est la meme chose”, roughly translated as “The more things change, the more things stay the same!” With all the changes occurring around us, especially in the technological domain, can’t we extrapolate from this that if change is constant, all we have to do is accept its presence, accommodate it, and then move on? This is the riddle of change: “if it is constant, why should organisations care about change?”

- Using ‘The National Geographic Society’ case, respond to the riddle. Is the statement accurate?

In answering this question you will need to integrate clearly both case evidence and course material (c.f. simply offer an opinion on what is occurring). Highlight both the positives and the constraints of the change constructs that you use with respect to the case.

*Be aware:* A good answer will apply constructs rather than summarise or outline them.

**Question 2 (25 marks)**

As the National Geographic case indicates, the company is facing significant problems, so much so that John Fahey is in a bind, and “is now considering radical change”. Impressed with your experience in how you handle similar such change encounters, he has asked for you to come up with a possible solution. Prepare a short report for Fahey in general and the Society in particular by developing a set of recommendations.

To do so you will need to: (1) *diagnose* what you view as the core change problem, (2) list and explain your *approach*, (3) observe why your recommendations are viable to *implement*, and (4) critically address the way to *consolidate* recommendations.

(Note: the key to this question is theoretical application and integration of the recommendation and not necessarily the recommendation itself.)

**Question 3 (25 marks)**

In his account of organisational traps, Chris Argyris (2010) argues that people almost uniformly deal with difficult situations by *not* dealing with them. That is, we find ways to pretend to engage and possibly even manage to avoid dealing with a problem. In doing so, he alludes to the *difficulty with implementing change*, particularly, (1) the roll-out of change and (2) the role of the change agent. Incorporating these two constructs (which were units in the course), what does National Geographic have to do in order to get its change right for the future of the Society?

(Suggestion: in answering this question, it may be easier if you develop or evaluate a change blueprint for the Society. Do not fall into the trap of debating Argyris, which is context.)

**END OF EXAM**