Managing Agile Organisations
GBAT9121

Course Overview
Summer Term 2015
Important Notice

The material contained in this study guide is in the nature of general comment only and is not advice on any particular matter. No one should act on the basis of anything contained in this guide without taking appropriate professional advice upon the particular circumstances. The Publisher, the Editors, and the Authors do not accept responsibility for the consequences of any action taken or omitted to be taken by any person, whether a subscriber to this guide or not, as a consequence of anything contained in or omitted from this guide.
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## Summer Term 2015 course schedule

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<th>Date</th>
<th>Unit</th>
<th>Topic</th>
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<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>24 November</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>A context and foundation</td>
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<td></td>
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<td>2</td>
<td>Organisations and organising</td>
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<td>2</td>
<td>1 December</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>Metaphors and the art of organisational analysis</td>
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<td>4</td>
<td>Managing change</td>
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<td>3</td>
<td>8 December</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>Managing commitment</td>
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<td></td>
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<td>6</td>
<td>Understanding the political rules</td>
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<td>7</td>
<td>Managing interaction</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>8</td>
<td>Inter-organisational alliances: creating value and anticipating risk</td>
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<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>12 January</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>Inter-organisational alliances: management and performance control</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>10</td>
<td>Scenario planning in today’s agile organisation</td>
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<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>19 January</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>Towards connected leadership</td>
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<td>12</td>
<td>Towards greater agility and beyond</td>
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<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>26 January*</td>
<td></td>
<td>Independent reflective learning and review</td>
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<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>2 February</td>
<td></td>
<td>Examination week</td>
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*Monday 26 January is a Public Holiday*
Course staff

Course Coordinator

Each course has a Course Coordinator who is responsible for the academic leadership and overall academic integrity of the course. The Course Coordinator selects content and sets assessment tasks, and takes responsibility for specific academic and administrative issues related to the course when it is being offered. Course Coordinators oversee Class Facilitators and ensure that the ongoing standard of facilitation in the course is consistent with the quality requirements of the program.

The Course Coordinator is:

Dr Ian Benton

e-mail: i.benton@unsw.edu.au

Dr Benton teaches in the MBT Programs Principles of Marketing (POM) and Development of New Products and Services (DNPS), but he is especially interested in a sound and practical understanding of Managing Agile Organisations. An IT company he started in 1992 with three partners and about 30 staff to develop and supply specialist government treasury software systems delivers to governments all over the world, and is now the largest such software supplier globally. The company is based in London and co-owned with IBM, and his role as Director of Global Market Strategy provides insights into the importance of managing an organisation for agility in circumstances that often change quickly. The recent global financial crisis is an example.

Dr Benton encourages students to understand the framework provided by established management theory thoroughly, analyse real-life situations and formulate practical, strategic and successful responses. The Course structure and assignments directly reflect these priorities.
Class Facilitator

The role of your Class Facilitator is to support the learning process by encouraging interaction among participants, providing direction in understanding the course content, assessing participant progress through the course and providing feedback on work submitted. MBT Class Facilitators comprise both academics and industry practitioners with relevant backgrounds.

You will be notified of your Class Facilitator’s name and contact details in your class confirmation email sent by MBT Student Services. Details will also be available in the gallery section of your online class for both face-to-face and distance classes.

Course authors

Several writers were involved in constructing this course in Managing Agile Organisations. We take this opportunity to especially acknowledge and thank Professor Wai Fong Chua for her valuable input writing much of study Units 1–3 and Dr Ian Benton for giving the practitioner’s perspective in writing Units 4–12. These units are refreshed to remain current every three years.
Aims

The primary aim of this course is to make you a more perceptive, better informed and effective manager in today’s organisations.

If the 20th century was seen as closely associated with the development and success of the modern industrial corporation, then the 21st century is likely to be seen as similarly associated with a new industrial order in which agile, service-oriented organisations have become the centrepiece.

Agile organisations are focused on value creation through the enrichment and retention of individual customers – they are virtual sites for value creation through effective resource mobilisation. Because of the diverse and shifting nature of customer needs and the value to be gained by anticipating such needs, the structures, work processes and cultures of service-oriented organisations take on the quality of agility: responsiveness, flexibility, proactivity and innovation become conditions for success.

In the new industrial order, organisations are less likely to be known in terms of their structure and hierarchy, but rather in terms of their identity and core competencies within a fluid set of alliances and arrangements for mobilising resources and creating value. Much of what managers did in hierarchical structures will be replaced by a more empowered workforce, so that the work that managers will do and how this will be performed become issues of importance.

Using current and latest concepts about managers and managing as a platform, this course seeks to reframe managerial imperatives and assist you to become a more informed and reflective manager in contemporary workplaces where oftentimes change is your only certainty.

Structure

Unit 1, A context and foundation. In this Unit, we review key literature on the nature of managerial work. We see the evolution of our view of managers and management guided by many leading researchers, but especially the notable works of Mintzberg, Kanter and Giddens, before commencing to dissect what it might mean to manage necessarily agile organisations today.

Unit 2, Organisations and organising. Adopting the same analytical approach in this Unit, we contrast understanding organisations as objects (nouns), versus processes (verbs), and argue that a process-based approach is particularly valuable.
Unit 3, *Metaphors and the art of organisational analysis*. In Unit 3, we elaborate on different ways to conceptualise organisations and managing. Specifically, we introduce a number of theoretical lenses, including different metaphors and world views through which organisations can be understood and analysed, thus enabling us to better conceptualise and manage their many facets and complexities.

Unit 4, *Managing change*. In this Unit, we gain familiarity with the various management theories introduced over time to advance analysis on the process of introducing and successfully implementing change. Those theories can provide useful frameworks for use in conjunction with our advanced organisational analysis tools gained in earlier units here. It’s the combination that heightens perceptions and increases likelihood of change implementation success.

Unit 5, *Managing commitment*. Here, we point out that securing commitment in contemporary organisations is particularly challenging as there are new-age employees with different needs and desires. Also, organisations are increasingly project-driven. We outline different aspects of commitment and canvass a range of managerial options for the management of commitment.

Unit 6, *Understanding the political rules*. In this Unit, we discuss various sources of power, and critically evaluate the move towards empowered and team-based organisations.

Unit 7, *Managing interaction*. In this Unit, we consider the management of interaction within the political context and within an agile organisation as might apply between managers with their staff or between managers with other stakeholders, such as alliance partners, in better achieving the organisation’s objectives.

Unit 8, *Inter-organisational alliances: creating value and anticipating risk*. This Unit is the first of two on the increasing importance to agile organisations of managing inter-organisational alliances to more efficiently and effectively achieve the overall objectives. In this Unit, we focus on determining how to ascertain and enhance value from these relationships and how to ascertain and mitigate risk in forming and continuing these relationships.

Unit 9, *Inter-organisational alliances: management and performance control*. Having established in Unit 8 how best to determine and manage value and risk to the agile organisation of the inter-organisational alliance, we now focus in this Unit on how we might manage and control that relationship to maximise outcome. In this, game theory can play a critical part.

Unit 10, *Scenario planning in today’s agile organisation*, is a powerful tool enabling those managing agile organisations to ‘go with the punches’, being ready with strong alternative actions to meet changing circumstances.
Unit 11, *Towards connected leadership*. Here, we highlight the difference between ‘leading’ and ‘managing’, and advocate that we consider leadership as opposed to leaders. Present-day leadership might facilitate better corporate connectedness.

Unit 12, *Towards greater agility and beyond*, is our chance at reflection across our learning and to gather our thoughts before considering how to achieve increased agility across the organisation.

**Learning outcomes**

When you have completed this course you should be able to:

- differentiate between more traditional management practices and those more recently evolved theories, concepts and frameworks from notable researchers to meet modern-day business challenges requiring enhanced organisational agility
- critically evaluate your organisation to determine areas requiring enhanced agility to improve competitiveness
- comprehend and apply those theories, concepts and frameworks necessary to address identified need for increased agility, particularly in relation to managing change, commitment, politics and leadership
- negotiate and implement different inter-organisational alliance constructs for varied business purposes in enhancing organisational agility and competitiveness
- apply scenario planning to more flexibly manage forecasting and planning for anticipated and less-predictable business-environment change
- synthesise latest principles of organisational resilience with our learning on improving organisational agility to enhance recovery from shock variance in our business environment, such as the global financial crisis
- construct, apply and manage holistic organisational agility frameworks as prescribed for your business circumstances.

**Skills and experience you will need**

- Analytical and conceptual skills to enable you to analyse your organisational experience.
- Critical, evaluative skills that enable you to test arguments put forward by diverse writers.
- Good writing and communication skills.
Please refer to the AGSM Learning Guide (available in Moodle) for information you will find very useful in pursuing your studies.

Resources

Recommended reading

Books


Journals

*Harvard Business Review*

*Sloan Management Review*

Relationship to other courses in the MBT program

This course is designated as an integrated course in the MBT Program and as such should not be taken early in your studies. The course looks at developing your competencies in managing people and organisations by focusing on the managerial perspectives and competencies required for the post-industrial economy.

It will build on your fundamental people and organisational management skills, and so it would be better taken after GBAT9125 *Fundamentals of People Management* if you are taking that course in your program.
Assessment

There are two assignments and an examination for GBAT9121 Managing Agile Organisations. Note that assignments must be received by 9.30am Sydney time on the due dates.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Participation</th>
<th>Throughout the semester</th>
<th>15%</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Assignment 1</td>
<td>9.30am, Monday 15 December 2014 (Mid-term recess)</td>
<td>15%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Assignment 2</td>
<td>9.30am, Friday 23 January 2015 (Week 6)</td>
<td>30%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Examination*</td>
<td>Tuesday 3 February 2015 (2pm if sitting on campus)</td>
<td>40%</td>
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*Examination is 2 hours; open book

Extensions to assignment deadlines will be granted only in exceptional circumstances, and where adequate supporting documentation can be provided. Please note that work commitments do not constitute grounds for an extension. Your Class Facilitator may approve an extension of up to two days, after which requests must be made through the special consideration process. For details about this process, see: https://student.unsw.edu.au/special-consideration

In the case of late lodgement without an approved extension, 10% of the assignment weighting will be deducted for each day late.

Please note the examination date and mark it in your diary. If you will not be available to sit the exam on the specified date then you must choose another course. Supplementary exams will only be permitted in exceptional and unforeseen circumstances, and after submission of the requisite documentation for special consideration, see: https://student.unsw.edu.au/special-consideration
Continual course improvement

MBT courses are revised each time they run, with updated course overviews and assessment tasks. All courses are reviewed and revised every three years and significant course updates are carried out in line with industry developments, and also when new editions of prescribed textbooks are published.

The MBT surveys students via the UNSW CATEI system each time a course is offered. The data collected provides anonymous feedback from students on the quality of course content and materials, class facilitation, student support services and the MBT Program in general. This student feedback is taken into account in all course revisions.

The UNSW Business School also monitors the quality of students’ learning experiences in all its programs. A random selection of completed assessment tasks may be used for quality-assurance purposes. This information will be aggregated and used:

- to determine the extent to which program learning goals are being achieved for accreditation purposes
- to improve the quality of UNSW Business School programs.

All material used will be treated as confidential and these processes will have no bearing on course grades.

Student evaluations from the last presentation of the course

As known, we collect and value student feedback at the end of each semester so that we might maintain our continuous improvement objectives. There’s always a range of comments and improvement advice that we appreciate and can act upon.

In response to ‘The best features of this course were…’:
- The content and relevance to real world scenarios.
- Applied business experience of the facilitator.
- Warm online environment and facilitator enthusiasm for the subject.
- The practical work-based assignments allowed me to apply and practically understand the course materials.
- Quality feedback from which to improve these valuable skills.

In response to ‘This course could be improved by…’:
- More peer-to-peer interaction.
- Fewer class questions.
Coordinator’s response

With regard to specific comments and suggestions made after the last delivery of this course:

- Whilst we cannot guarantee fewer class questions because occasionally the opposite criticism is made, a balance is attempted in each class to gradually further extend all members’ participation.
- More peer-to-peer interaction is encouraged for both the collective learning environment that it supports and for the positive participation grading achieved.

Every three years the course is refreshed with new concepts, supplementary readings, and case material. This information is gratefully received to additionally inform that process.