MANAGING AGILE ORGANISATIONS

Semester 2, 2015

Course Overview
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.
# Course schedule

## Semester 2, 2015

### Managing Agile Organisations

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Week no</th>
<th>Week begins</th>
<th>Unit</th>
<th>Assessment due (% weighting)</th>
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<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>27 July</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>Participation is assessed throughout the semester (15%)</td>
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<td>2</td>
<td>3 August</td>
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<td>3</td>
<td>10 August</td>
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<td>4</td>
<td>17 August</td>
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<td>5</td>
<td>24 August</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>Assignment 1 due on Monday 24 August by 9.30am Sydney time – report (15%)</td>
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<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>31 August</td>
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<td>7</td>
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<td>14 September</td>
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<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>21 September</td>
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Mid-term recess: Saturday 26 September – Monday 5 October*

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<tr>
<th>Week no</th>
<th>Week begins</th>
<th>Unit</th>
<th>Assessment due (% weighting)</th>
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<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>6 October*</td>
<td>10</td>
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<tr>
<td>11</td>
<td>12 October</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>Assignment 2 due on Monday 12 October by 9.30am Sydney time – report (30%)</td>
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<td>12</td>
<td>19 October</td>
<td>12</td>
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<tr>
<td>13</td>
<td>26 October</td>
<td>Independent reflective learning and review</td>
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<tr>
<td>14</td>
<td>2 November</td>
<td>Examination week</td>
<td>Examination** – Wednesday 4 November – 2pm if sitting on campus (40%)</td>
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* Monday 5 October is a public holiday in NSW
** Examination is 2 hours, open book
Course information

Course-level aims and learning goals

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, proactiveness 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.

In order to complete this course, 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.

This course is designated as an integrated course in your degree 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 Fundamentals of People Management if you are taking that course in your program.
Course learning outcomes

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

1. 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
2. critically evaluate your organisation to determine areas requiring enhanced agility to improve competitiveness
3. 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
4. negotiate and implement different inter-organisational alliance constructs for varied business purposes in enhancing organisational agility and competitiveness
5. apply scenario planning to more flexibly manage forecasting and planning for anticipated and less-predictable business-environment change
6. 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
7. construct, apply and manage holistic organisational agility frameworks as prescribed for your business circumstances
8. develop an appreciation for ethical practices and social responsibility in the workplace.
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.
A number of international standards are embedded in the program to ensure the courses you study are high quality. At present this includes specific design to meet AACSB accreditation standards (through measurement of students’ program-level learning outcomes), and the United Nations Principles for Responsible Management Education (UNPRME). EQUIS accreditation is also held by UNSW Business School.

Program-level learning goals and outcomes assessed for AACSB accreditation

The Course Learning Outcomes are what you should be able to do by the end of this course if you participate fully in learning activities and successfully complete the assessment items.

The Course Learning Outcomes will also help you to achieve at least some of the overall Program Learning Goals that are set for all postgraduate coursework students in AGSM programs.

However, course-level learning outcomes are not sufficient to fully describe a student’s skills as they complete the qualification, and so we add an additional set of Program Learning Goals. These specify what we want you to have achieved by the time you successfully complete your degree. As an example, for the Teamwork learning goal we specify: ‘Our graduates will be effective team participants’.

You demonstrate that you have met these Program Learning Goals by achieving specific Program Learning Outcomes that are directly related to each goal. These indicate what you are able to do by the end of your degree. In the case of the Teamwork goal, the related outcome includes: ‘participate collaboratively and responsibly in teams’. Note that the ability to meet these program-level learning goals and outcomes will be measured in each capstone course for your degree program.

The Program Learning Goals (and related outcomes) used at the AGSM for the MBAX and MBT programs are as follows.

1. Knowledge:
   - Our graduates will have current disciplinary or interdisciplinary knowledge applicable in local and global contexts.
   - Learning outcome: Students should be able to identify and apply current knowledge disciplinary or interdisciplinary theory and professional practice to business in local and global environments.

2. Critical thinking and problem-solving:
   - Our graduates will have critical thinking and problem-solving skills applicable to business and management practice or issues.
   - Learning outcome: Students should be able to identify, research and analyse complex issues and problems in business and/or management, and propose appropriate and well-justified solutions.
3. Communication:
Our graduates will be effective communicators in professional contexts.
Learning outcome for 3a – Written Communication: Students should be able to produce written documents that communicate complex disciplinary ideas and information effectively for the intended audience and purpose.
Learning outcome for 3b – Oral Communication: Students should be able to produce oral presentations that communicate complex disciplinary ideas and information effectively for the intended audience and purpose.

4. Teamwork:
Our graduates will be effective team participants.
Learning outcome: Students should be able to participate collaboratively and responsibly in teams, and to reflect on their own teamwork, and on the team's processes and ability to achieve outcomes.

5. Ethical, social and environmental responsibility:
Our graduates will be aware of ethical, social, cultural and environmental implications of business issues and practice.
Learning outcome for 5a – Ethical, social and environmental responsibility: Students should be able to identify and assess ethical, environmental and/or sustainability considerations in business decision-making and practice.
Learning outcome for 5b – Social and cultural awareness: Students should be able to consider social and cultural implications of business.

6. Leadership:
Our graduates will have an understanding of effective leadership.
Learning outcome: Students should be able to reflect upon their own personal leadership style and on the leadership needs of business and of team.

Associated governing bodies
AACSB: http://www.aacsb.edu
EQUIS: https://www.efmd.org/accreditation-main/equis
UNPRME: http://www.unprme.org
Resources

Learning resources

You have four major resources to help you learn:

1. The course materials, comprising the weekly study units with readings, references, insights and commentary. You will do much of your learning outside the classroom by working through the course materials, and by completing the exercises as they arise.

2. Your online or face-to-face classes with your facilitator. The facilitator's job is to guide your learning by conducting class discussion, answering questions that might arise after you have done the week's work, providing insights from his or her practical experience and understanding of theory, providing you with feedback on your assignments, and directing discussions and debates that will occur between you and your co-participants in the classroom.

3. Your co-participants. Your colleagues in the classroom are an invaluable potential source of learning for you. Their work and life, and their willingness to question and argue with the course materials, the facilitator and your views, represent a great learning opportunity. They bring much valuable insight to the learning experience.

4. In addition to course-based resources, please also refer to the AGSM Learning Guide (available in Moodle) for tutorials and guides that will help you learn more about effective study practices and techniques.

Course materials

The course materials comprise this Course Overview, the Assessment Details and 12 Units. Each Unit has a number of associated readings.

Readings

Specific readings are prescribed throughout the Units and are available via active hyperlinks or URLs. Please note that you may be required to enter your UNSW zID and zPass in order to access these hyperlinked readings.

If you experience any problems in accessing the readings, please try the following:

- Search directly for the article on the UNSW Library home page (https://library.unsw.edu.au/) by placing the name of the article in the Search box.
- Search directly for the book excerpt on the UNSW Library home page (https://library.unsw.edu.au/) by placing your course code into the Search box. When you do this all the course readings that are excerpts from books will appear.
Recommended reading

Books

Journals
*Harvard Business Review*
*Sloan Management Review*

eLearning
To access Moodle, go to: https://www.business.unsw.edu.au/agsm/students/mbt-students/online-classes and select Login to Moodle.
Login with your student zID (username) and zPass (password).

Moodle eLearning support
Should you have any difficulties accessing your course online, please contact the eLearning support below:
For *login* issues:

UNSW IT Service Centre
Hours: Monday to Friday: 8am – 8pm
Saturday and Sunday: 11am – 2pm
Email: ITServiceCentre@unsw.edu.au
Phone: Internal: x51333
External: 02 9385 1333
International: +61 2 9385 1333
For help with technical issues and problems:

**External TELT Support**

**Hours:**  Monday to Friday: 7.30am – 9.30pm  
Saturdays and Sundays: 8.30am – 4.30pm

**Email:**  [extrnalteiltsuppor@unsw.edu.au](mailto:extrnalteiltsuppor@unsw.edu.au)

**Phone:**  
Internal:  x53331
External:  02 9385 3331
International:  +61 2 9385 3331

**Administrative and eLearning support**

**Student Experience**
If you have administrative queries, they should be addressed to Student Experience.

Student Experience  
AGSM MBA Programs  
UNSW Business School  
SYDNEY NSW 2052  
Phone:  +61 2 9931 9400  
Email:  studentexperience@agsm.edu.au

**Additional student resources and support**

The University and the UNSW Business School provide a wide range of support services for students, including:  
[https://www.business.unsw.edu.au/students/resources/learning-support](https://www.business.unsw.edu.au/students/resources/learning-support)

- **Business School Education Development Unit (EDU)**  
The EDU provides academic writing, study skills and maths support specifically for Business students. Services include workshops, online resources, and individual consultations.  
EDU Office:  Level 1, Room 1033, Quadrangle Building.  
Phone:  +61 2 9385 5584; Email:  [edu@unsw.edu.au](mailto:edu@unsw.edu.au)

- **UNSW Learning Centre**  
[www.lc.unsw.edu.au](http://www.lc.unsw.edu.au)  
Provides academic skills support services, including workshops and resources, for all UNSW students. See website for details.

- **Library training and search support services**  
[http://info.library.unsw.edu.au/web/services/services.html](http://info.library.unsw.edu.au/web/services/services.html)
• **UNSW Counselling and Psychological Services**  
  Provides support and services if you need help with your personal life, getting your academic life back on track or just want to know how to stay safe, including free, confidential counselling.  
  Office: Level 2, East Wing, Quadrangle Building;  
  Phone: +61 2 9385 5418.

• **Student Equity & Disabilities Unit**  
  [http://www.studentequity.unsw.edu.au](http://www.studentequity.unsw.edu.au)  
  Provides advice regarding equity and diversity issues, and support for students who have a disability or disadvantage that interferes with their learning.  
  Office: Ground Floor, John Goodsell Building;  
  Phone: +61 2 9385 4734; Email: seadu@unsw.edu.au
Continual course improvement

Our 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.

The AGSM 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 program in general. This student feedback is taken into account in all course revisions.

Student evaluations from the last presentation of the course

In response to 'The best features of this course were...':

- Good course contents, reference materials and structure of the discussion forums.
- Cross-over between soft skills required for the manager, including change management, as well as understanding motivation and political powers in the workplace. Very applicable themes.
- Relevant for practical use in day-to-day business.
- Good appreciation on how to further develop agility in my organisation and at future employers.
- Facilitator's guidance with constructive feedback.
- Constructive approach made the course intriguing.

In response to 'This course could be improved by...':

- Perhaps some interactive webinars.
- Greater emphasis on connected leadership.
Coordinator’s response

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

• We are very encouraged by the positive comments with respect to the interest, relevance and application of our course to our students’ workplace. That is precisely our intention.

• The use of webinars in a course such as this to open discussion with and between students is a good use of such technology. Webinars will be activated in this course delivery.

• Whilst leadership is covered more broadly and more deeply in another course specifically on leadership in the program, there is merit in more emphasis here on connected leadership as facilitates greater organisational agility. Increased emphasis on connected leadership will be provided in this course delivery.

This course is regularly refreshed with new concepts, supplementary readings, and case material. This information as above from our students is gratefully received to additionally inform that process.
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
Email: i.benton@unsw.edu.au

Dr Benton 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 one of the largest such software suppliers 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.

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. 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 AGSM Student Experience. 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. We take this opportunity to especially acknowledge and thank Professor Wai Fong Chua for her valuable input writing much of study Units 1 to 3 and Dr Ian Benton for giving the practitioner’s perspective in writing Units 4 to 12.