

MSc in General Management: The Capstone Project

General aims

The overall aim is to conduct a project in cooperation with an organization of your choice. During the course of this project, you are expected to analyze a situation, define an issue, propose a solution, and implement the solution (to the extent possible given the specific conditions). The general idea is that you choose an organization and an area related to your personal interests. In dialogue with your chosen organization you then refine the formulation of the problem so that it has high relevancy to the organization as well as provides learning opportunities for you. In conducting this project you will have the opportunity to apply knowledge from various discipline areas and bring them together in working on a concrete problem. Integration of theory and practice is thus a key aspect of your project work.

Intended learning outcomes

The project provides you with an opportunity to improve your abilities to:

1. carry out an extended piece of work with both practical and theoretical focus in cooperation with an organization;
2. define, describe, diagnose and analyze a specific problem of relevance to an organization;
3. propose and ground a solution with the organization;
4. give and receive constructive feedback; and
5. reflect on a given project from three perspectives:
 - a. practical perspective, i.e. evaluation of effects in the organization;
 - b. theoretical perspective, i.e. how the use of different theories and models have helped deepen your understanding of the project and the organization; and
 - c. personal perspective, i.e. personal reflections and lessons learned from the project.

Format

You will work in freely chosen teams of two. Your project team will meet with and discuss the progress of your work in a larger group consisting of in total 6-7 project teams.

Your work with the project will start on a smaller scale in September, as you find the organizations that you will be working with and formulate tentative problem descriptions. From the middle of November until April you will be working essentially full time with your project. Your work will follow three main phases:

Preparatory Phase (September-October 2010)

In the Preparatory phase you will first be introduced to “the Capstone Project”. You will form teams and select the organization in which you will conduct your project. Together with representatives of the organization you will pinpoint the topic that your team will be focusing on. Finally, you will prepare your first project submission.

Phase I (October – December 2010)

In Phase I you will successively define, describe, and analyze a specific problem that on the one hand is relevant to your organization, on the other hand provides an intriguing learning opportunity for you and your fellow students.

Every second or third week during Phase I, you will meet in the larger groups described above (consisting of 6-7 teams). The aim of these so-called Process Days is to:

- provide suitable models and conceptual tools,
- offer feedback and support; and
- offer opportunities to learn from other projects.

A Process Day typically has the following format:

1. Two days before the Process Day, your team submits a progress report to the supervisor and the other teams in the group.
2. Your team is named designated contributor to another project team.
3. During the Process Day, each project is discussed. The designated contributor initiates the feedback discussion.
4. When all projects have been discussed general learning points are addressed.

At the end of Phase I, your team will submit and present a mid-term report providing an analysis of the problem and a plan for the remaining project activities.

Phase II (January-April 2011)

In Phase II you will develop and ground a solution with your partner organization and evaluate the effects of this process. In this context “grounding a solution” means implementing the solution to the extent possible, given the specific conditions. As mentioned above, the overall purpose of the project is to move beyond “just” proposing a solution to your organization.

During Phase II you will continue to meet with other teams every second or third week. We will follow the same format as in Phase I.

At the end of Phase II you will submit a final project report. Here you will present and discuss your project team’s interaction with your partner organization and evaluate the effects of this process.

Finally, you will present the results of your efforts on the Project Conference Day.

Mini-modules

As mentioned above, some models and conceptual tools will be presented during the Process Days. In order to further support your work in the projects, additional themes will be addressed in the form of mini-modules dispersed during the fall and spring terms. At present, the following mini-modules have been planned:

- Different perspectives on “driving change” (throughout the preparatory phase)
- Method (one week, beginning on October 18, 2010)
- People in organizations (one week, beginning on January 10, 2011)

Further themes may be added to the schedule later on.

Literature

Foundational literature on project processes will be read by all project teams. In addition, each team will search for and build on literature of particular interest given the project content.

Examination

The examination consists of the following components:

1. Active participation during the entire process, in particular during the Process Days (main focus on ILO 1 and ILO 4).
2. A mid-term report providing an analysis of the problem and a plan for the remaining project activities (main focus on ILO 2 and ILO 3).
3. A final report and, when appropriate, artifacts (for example products from the project) (main focus on ILO 2, ILO 3, ILO 5).
4. A final presentation of the project, including reflections and learning points (main focus on ILO 4 and ILO 5).

Faculty

Pernilla Bolander, Course Director for the Capstone Project and supervisor in one of the Capstone Project groups