

**Course Outline 2014**  
**MGMT 320: SPECIAL TOPIC**  
**Semester 1 and 2**

---

**Time & Place:** Arranged between student and supervisor  
**Coordinator:** TBA

### Course Prescription

Welcome to the Special Topic paper. This is a self-directed paper, exploring a research area of your choice, as negotiated with a chosen supervisor. The outcome of this paper is an in-depth essay in which you will be required to analyse a topic using the extant literature. There is an expectation that the student and the lecturer/supervisor will meet at regular intervals to discuss progress and for the lecturer to provide guidance. This is a self-directed project paper; students are responsible for ascertaining specific requirements, maintaining contact with their supervisor, and pursuing appropriate research on empirical and theoretical literatures, under supervision. Many students have used this paper as a basis for further research and/or their career development. This paper should normally be taken as the LAST paper in a degree or major.

The course timeline is negotiated between student and their supervisor, but normally follows a process of directed readings and development of a research paper on a particular course against a timeline:

|                    |   |
|--------------------|---|
| Weeks 1            | Research Proposal/overview (300-500 words)                                    |
| Weeks 2-3          | Literature Review   |
| Weeks 4-5          | First draft   |
| Week 6             | Completed final draft (word length as specified plus references and exhibits) |
| Examination period | Marking   |

Special Topic framework: 9000 word essay

| Points | Word length/limit | Points | Word length/limit |
|--------|-------------------|--------|-------------------|
| 10     | 6000              | 15     | 9000              |
| 20     | 12000             | 30     | 18000             |

### Grading Criteria:

Letter and numerical grades will be used for feedback on assignments. Higher grades are usually obtained by:

- critical and creative reflection on relevant literature. The emphasis is on identifying the strengths and weaknesses of the extant literature and then applying theoretical ideas to the evaluation of practice and behaviour;
- careful empirical research (eg reviewing and analysing primary and secondary data). Unsupported assertions are not acceptable in academic work;
- a well structured piece of work and logical flow to the argument;

- careful revision of a first draft to edit material and refine word choice. Asking a colleague or two to read and criticise it is usually valuable.

The following are the criteria that form the grading of performance in the assignments and examination essays:

**A range (A+ = 90+):** This shows excellence in the subject, fit to pass with high distinction. It shows understanding of the relevant literature well beyond basic reading requirements and/or shows perception of how theoretical debates or professional practice could be significantly advanced. The argument is highly compelling. It is very hard to argue against the positions taken in the essay or assignment. The assessment or essay is highly readable, enhancing the power of the ideas presented.

**B range (B+ = 75-79):** This range shows strength in the subject, fit to pass with some distinction. It shows the same faithful understanding of the key concepts and theories as the C grade performance but reviews ideas with greater critical faculty or shows evidence of more extensive knowledge. It also shows greater overall strength of argument than a C grade and is likely to demonstrate a more proficient approach than lower grades. There are some areas for improvement but the work shows the ability to perform beyond basic competence in the subject.

**C range (C+ 60-64):** This range shows basic competence in the subject, fit to pass. It shows an advanced understanding of the relevant literature is revealed. The major academic concepts and theories associated with the course are understood and appropriately applied to the business problem in question. However, performance would be improved through greater investment in literature review or by a more active approach to learning. Arguments are adequately defended with appropriate theory and empirical research, supporting the points of view espoused. However, deeper reflection on relevant theory or more vigorous engagement with the ideas of others would lead to improvements in certain aspects of the argument. Word choice is appropriate but writing style may be somewhat pedestrian.

**D range (D+ 45-49):** This range fails to show basic competence in the subject and is not fit to pass. Here major concepts and theories relevant to the work and course are overlooked, misunderstood or misapplied to practice. The argument is logically flawed and/or empirical sources have been misunderstood or completely omitted. Word choice is often inappropriate, compromising the effectiveness of communication.