Individual Project Course

MBQC 808 / NMI 5001

2026

COURSE OUTLINE

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**Introduction**

The individual project course is an important component of your MBA education and an important milestone in earning your degree. The course provides you with the opportunity to apply the concepts that you have or will learn in the program to either create a new opportunity or help solve an existing issue. The course also provides you with an opportunity to customize your MBA experience.

For the individual project you may choose to either carry out a Management Consulting Project or a New Venture Project. Each type of Project is more fully described below.

Regardless of which type of Project you choose to undertake, you need to understand that the Project is an individual effort. You will be assigned a Project Advisor to provide you with guidance through the Project. The Project Advisor assigned to your Project will also be recommending the grade for the Project. The role of the Project Advisor is more fully described below.

***Management Consulting Project***

The Management Consulting Project (“**MCP**”) will require you to identify a managerial or operational problem or opportunity within an organization (which could be your current organization or an organization whose operations you find interesting) and devise a plan to solve the problem or exploit the opportunity.

***New Venture Project***

The New Ventures Project **(“NVP”)** will require you to prepare a comprehensive business plan for a new business venture. Preparing a business plan requires a range of knowledge comprising both the business functions (for example, marketing, operations, finance, or human resources) and the academic disciplines normally associated with the functions (for example, economics, mathematics, or psychology).

**Course Objectives**

The objectives of the Project Course are:

1. To create an opportunity for you to integrate what you are learning in the EMBA-A Program by applying MBA program concepts to a real business situation or opportunity.
2. To require you to think in cross-functional terms.
3. To develop your ability to think about a problem or opportunity and the effect that the plan to exploit it will have on the organization.
4. To create or add value to an organization.
5. To hone your writing skills.
6. To hone your presentation skills.

**Nature of the Project**

***Management Consulting Project***

The MCP selection criteria include:

1. The Project must be a real, substantive business problem, issue or opportunity within a defined organization. The Project must recommend a course of action for consideration and implementation by the organization.
2. The Project must have sufficient scope to challenge you to think beyond your own experiences.
3. The Project must demonstrate an understanding of the topic’s relevance within the Organization’s overall context (internal and external) and strategy.

***New Ventures Project***

The NVP selection criteria include:

1. The Project must be a real and substantive business opportunity.
2. Acceptable Projects include: a new business, a new venture within an existing business, or a new product.
3. The Project must have sufficient scope to challenge you to think beyond your own experiences.

***MCP and NVP***

Both the MCP and NVP Project must:

* Offer the potential to add value to or create value for an organization.
* Include the clear application of appropriate concepts learned in different MBA courses.
* Be a stretch challenge for you.

**The Project Process**

The Project process for both the **MCP** and **NVP** Projects includes four distinct steps: 1) the Proposal; 2) the Work Plan; 3) the Consulting report or Business Plan; and 4) the Pitch. Each step must be completed according to the guidelines and deadlines detailed below.

### Step One: The Proposal

The Proposal should be no more than 2 pages in length. The information required in the Proposal is laid out below for each type of Project.

### Management Consulting Project

The Proposal must describe the problem, opportunity or issue you have selected for the MCP as well as your current area of specialization. The Proposal should also include relevant information about the industry, organization, and decision context.

**New Ventures Project**

The Proposal must describe the opportunity that you have selected. A brief description of the organization, context, and/or industry should also be included.

**Applicable to Both MCP and NVP**

While the Proposal is not formally evaluated, it is mandatory. Late Proposals may not get the same opportunities in the assignment of an Advisor with knowledge specific to your Project area. You will be contacted if your Proposal requires additional work before it can be accepted. Advisors will be assigned on the basis of their availability, area of interest, and the relevance of their skills and experience for a given Project. **Feel free to note on your Proposal if you require an Advisor with a specialized area of knowledge or expertise**. Although no guarantee can be made, every effort will be made to assign an Advisor that meets your needs.

**Please note this is a self-directed course. There may be instances where a team of not more than two people can carry out a project. In situations where a two-person team works on a project the following will apply:**

1. **The project will require prior approval; and**
2. **The level of work and scope appropriate for 2 people must be demonstrated both in the proposal and in the final submission.**

**Note that full-time faculty members are excellent resources for your project; however, they will not be assigned the role of Advisor for the Project course.**

A guideline to help you prepare your Proposal will be posted on the course portal. Please contact the Assistant Director of Project Courses (Anne-Marie Leman [anne-marie.leman@queensu.ca](mailto:anne-marie.leman@queensu.ca) )if you have any questions or if you are uncertain about your topic during the period prior to the assignment of your Advisor.

The deadline for submitting Proposals is **November 25, 2024**. Proposals must be submitted electronically through the MBQC 808/ NMI 5001 course portal.

### Step Two: The Work Plan

You must next prepare and submit a Work Plan for your Project Advisor’s approval. This is the step in the process where the ‘contract’ between you and the Project Advisor is made. You should treat your Advisor as your client for the purposes of the course. Any deviations from the Work Plan will need to be mutually agreed to as you move forward in the course.

The Work Plan should be no longer than 8-10 pages and should address the following areas:

**For Both MCP and NVP**

1. Objectives – A list of the Project’s expected outcomes and deliverables with timelines for the submission of frameworks, sections, drafts, etc. You must include a proposed schedule for communicating with the Advisor, as well as specific milestones that will be met prior to completing the Final Submission.
2. Preliminary Framework/Table of Contents – A first draft of the report’s or Business Plan’s Framework/Table of Contents should be prepared to illustrate the Project’s methodology and assist the Advisor in evaluating your ongoing progress.
3. Added Value – a brief description of how the project can be expected to add or create value to the organization.
4. Application of MBA concepts – A list of the MBA concepts that are expected to be applied in the Project.
5. Scope – An explanation of the Project’s depth and breadth. Care should be taken to ensure that the scope is reasonable and balances the Project’s learning objectives with the time available and the Program’s other requirements while challenging you to think beyond your own experience.

Your Work Plan must be submitted electronically both to the MBQC 808/ NMI 500 course portal and directly to the Advisor. The Advisor will review the Work Plan and will discuss any required modifications with you.

**5% of your grade will be related to the quality of and adherence to the Work Plan and your general project management skills (including communication with the Advisor).** It is your responsibility to communicate with your Advisor if you anticipate any changes to the agreed-upon Work Plan.

The deadline for the Work Plan is **January 31, 2025.**

### Step Three: The Consulting Report/Business Plan

Both the MCP and NVP have a final submission that must be submitted for evaluation. In the case of the MCP you must submit a Consulting Report. The NVP requires a Business Plan.

The MCP Consulting Report/NVP Business Plan must be submitted to the course portal in electronic form and to your Advisor in both electronic form and hard copy. (If your Advisor agrees, it is acceptable to submit the Advisor’s copy in electronic form only.)

A final draft of the Consulting Report/Business Plan should be submitted to the Advisor for feedback by April 28, 2025. You are encouraged to discuss with your Advisor how you will submit the draft and how the feedback will be returned to you by the Advisor. Keep in mind that Advisors may have several Projects and between April 28th and June 2nd the Advisor must read the draft and get back to you - and then you will need to revise and prepare the Consulting Report/Business Plan. A good strategy is to agree to send completed chapters or sections to your Advisor as soon as they are ready.

The details of the format that you use for the Consulting Report/Business Plan are flexible, but you must include (at a minimum) a letter of transmittal, a cover page, a table of contents, an Executive Summary, the body of the report, and any necessary appendices. Remember that appendices should be optional reading: **anything you want to be sure is read must be placed in the body of the report**. Additional or explanatory material that merely provides interesting details or indicates the derivation of data used in the text (e.g., detailed financial statements) is better placed in an appendix.

The Executive Summary is a summary of the key facts of the analysis and the conclusions you draw from them. The Executive Summary is perhaps the most important part of any written report. The Executive Summary is the “hook” that is used to pique enough interest to convince a busy executive that it is worth reading the entire document. It is, however, not simply an introduction to the report.

If you have concerns about your report-writing skills, consider getting outside help in this regard. Remember that this assistance must be limited to the *presentation* aspects of the report. That is, editorial help is acceptable, but the content must be your own work.

You must clearly indicate where others have been involved in the Project. **Advisors cannot write your report nor edit your report as doing so would mean that the work is your advisors and not yours.**

Use of other materials or work that has been previously submitted for other courses must be explicitly declared. Evaluation will only be based on the original work attributable to you. Work previously submitted for another course will not be graded. Please note that if you submit a Consulting Report/Business Plan that contains no new original work (i.e. contains material submitted for other courses or contains someone else’s work) you will be given at the very least a failing grade for the project. In the above situation, you may also face penalties for breach of academic integrity.

Remember that analytical tools, such as SWOT and PEST analyses, are only tools and should not be included directly in the Consulting Report/Business Plan. Unlike the courses in which you learned the techniques and where the instructor wants to see you making explicit use of them, business reports do not ordinarily spell out the details of the analytical procedures on which they are based. (After all, the client doesn’t care what tools you use as long as you produce a good result. For purposes of completeness, you may wish to include the details of the analytic tools used and how they were used in an appendix.) You should simply apply the relevant findings in the context to which they apply. For example, your SWOT analysis may identify a weakness in the organization’s human resource practices or staffing or a particular strength in marketing. Rather than assigning all such findings to a separate section, you should refer to them in the discussion which will make a difference in decision-making. Explain their significance and what can be done to exploit or compensate for them.

Emphasis must be placed on developing a feasible Consulting Report/Business Plan. The objective of the course is to create either a set of recommendations that will address an organizational problem or create a new venture that will succeed in the marketplace or within the organization that you have chosen.

***Consulting Report / Business Plan***

Must include a Transmittal Letter, Executive Summary, and Table of Contents.

**The Consulting Report or Business Plan will be worth 75% of your grade**. Your final submission must be a well-written and grammatically correct document. Point-form recommendations, for example, are not acceptable.

A marking template will be posted at the MBQC 808/ NMI 5001 course portal well in advance of the submission due date.

The deadline for the Consulting Report / Business Plan is **June 2, 2025.**

Step Four: The Pitch

The final stage of the Project Course is the preparation and presentation of the Pitch. It is to be submitted (in the form of a slide presentation) to the course portal and to the new Advisor who will be appointed to hear your pitch (the “Pitch Evaluator”).

The Pitch will be presented in a delivery format agreed upon by the participant and the Pitch Evaluator, for example, over the telephone, Zoom, or in person. All Pitch Presentations must be completed on or before July 14, 2025. The specific date and time will be negotiated between the participant and the Pitch Evaluator.

By the time of the Pitch, your Consulting Report or Business Plan will have been evaluated and you will have received comments. Now it is time for you to make a compelling case as to why someone should support your recommendation or new venture. This means that you must demonstrate how the Project will benefit the organization, its customers, and the stakeholders as the case may be for your Project. The Pitch is about you being able to sell your idea! You are free to communicate with your original Advisor to prepare the Pitch and doing so is highly recommended. The Pitch Evaluator will not assist you in preparing for the Pitch.

Make sure that your presentation points are clear, comprehensive, concise, and appropriate to the audience (that is, don’t bore your audience by telling them things they already know). Your Pitch Evaluator will receive a copy of your executive summary prior to the pitch. The Pitch Evaluator will play a role that is required for your Consulting report/Business Plan. For example: a) for a NVP Pitch, the Pitch Evaluators may play the role of a banker; or b) in the case of an MCP Pitch, the Pitch Evaluators may play the role of the department head responsible for the area in which you are making recommendations for change. The Pitch should leave the listener in no doubt that your idea, whether it is a new venture or an organizational change is necessary and that they want to support the implementation of your idea.

The Pitch is to be prepared as a PowerPoint presentation. It is recommended that the presentation should be not more than 12 – 15 slides, no more than five points should be on each slide and the presentation must take no longer than 20 minutes (in many cases you will be lucky to get this much time with a potential investor or head of a department within your company to sell your idea).

The Pitch will be worth 20% of your grade for the Project Course.

A marking template will be posted at the MBQC 808/ NMI 5001 course portal well in advance of the submission due date.

### The Role of the Advisor

You will have a Project Advisor assigned to you. Advisors provide one-on-one guidance and coaching and will challenge you to produce the best possible analyses and maximize your learning opportunities. **The Advisor is not a personal consultant to you or your project!**

**Advisors cannot:**

1. **write;**
2. **edit; or**
3. **give you specific content to put into your report or business plan**

**Doing so would mean that the work is your Advisors and not yours.** It is not the job of Advisor to help you achieve any specific grade – it is your responsibility to carry out the appropriate research, apply course concepts properly, and write a professional report or business plan.

All Advisors have experience applying MBA concepts to business situations. All Advisors have signed the Smith School of Business confidentiality agreement. The Advisor recommends the grades for the Consulting report/Business Plan and Work Plan/Project Management for the course. The Pitch Evaluators will recommend the mark for the Pitch. The Pitch Evaluators will not assist you in preparing for the Pitch.

You and your Advisor should establish a plan for regular communications and agree on milestones to be achieved (see the section titled “Work Plan” above). Some items laid out in this course outline are non-negotiable. The non-negotiable items include the Project selection criteria and the evaluation guidelines. While guidelines are offered, Draft submission dates can be set and confirmed between you and your Advisor.

The deadlines for the Proposal and the Work Plan are designed to ensure that you are able to comfortably meet the final deadlines (see “Deadlines” below).

**Communications**

Generally, your questions and comments should be directed to your Advisor. The Advisor’s role is to **coach, challenge, and guide you** and to recommend the evaluation of the Project. It is up to you to establish communication with your Advisor and set up a communications plan that is mutually agreeable. Draft documents need only to be sent to your Advisor. While the Advisor will provide comments and feedback, the views will be solely based on the information provided and are not intended to reflect any type of endorsement or recommendation to outside stakeholders. **The Advisor also expects you to have read and understood the marking template and to prepare your final submission to ensure that the various components of the marking template are met.**

Prior to the assignment of the Advisor or if the Advisor is not available or unable to respond, questions or comments can be directed to the Assistant Director of Project Courses (Anne-Marie Leman, [anne-marie.leman@queensu.ca](mailto:anne-marie.leman@queensu.ca) ).

**The penalty for late submission of any graded deliverable (MCP – Consulting Report and Pitch; or NVP- Business Plan and Pitch) is 2% per day deducted from the graded deliverable that is submitted late. Note that it is possible to fail the MBQC 808/NMI 5001 course based on late penalties.**

**Deadlines**

**Please note that the deadlines for the Consulting Report/Business Plan (June 2, 2025) and the Pitch (July 14, 2025) will only be extended under extenuating circumstances and only by the Assistant Director or Academic Director.**

This course is a self-directed course and it is up to you to plan your time and work on your individual project while balancing:

a) other coursework and assignments in the program;

b) your employment obligations; and

c) your personal obligations.

Extenuating circumstances do not include such things as too many assignments in the program, exams, or normal work-related issues. Each person will face work and program-related issues and it is up to you to plan your time to complete the project on time. Please aim to complete the project prior to the due date so that you are not faced with last-minute demands on your time which prevent you from completing the project on time. **In other words, do not leave the project to the last minute.**

In granting any extensions for extenuating circumstances, factors such as communication with your Advisor and meeting your obligations under the Work Plan will be considered.

Extensions will not be granted if you have not been communicating with your Advisor or have not been meeting the obligations you established (as mutually amended by you and your Advisor) in the Work Plan. You will **NOT** receive an extension for any request made on or after assigned due dates.

**Grading for the Course**

For your information, below is a table that outlines the grade allocation for each section of the course.

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| Deliverable | Due Date | Percentage of Final Mark |
| Proposal | November 25, 2024 | Not graded – Submit to course portal |
| Work Plan | January 31, 2025 | Not graded – Submit to course portal and Advisor |
| Draft Consulting Report/ Business Plan | April 28, 2025 | Not graded – Submit to Advisor |
| \*Consulting Report /Business Plan | June 2, 2025 | 75% - Submit to course portal and Advisor |
| \*Pitch | July 14, 2025 | 20% -- Submit to course portal and Pitch Evaluators |
| Work Plan /Process/Communication | N/A | 5% |

\*NOTE: Not obtaining 50% or greater on the MCP: Consulting Report or NVP: Business Plan will result in a failing grade for the course. You will not be permitted to carry out the Pitch if you fail the Consulting Report or the Business Plan.

Course Evaluation

A completed course evaluation is required before your marks for any component of the Project course will be released to you or be sent to the registrar. You will be provided with the necessary documentation to complete the course evaluation. Please note that your mark will not be released for the course until the course evaluation is completed.

**Academic Integrity**

**Definition of Academic Integrity**

Any behaviour that compromises the fundamental scholarly values of honesty, trust, fairness, respect, and responsibility in the academic setting is considered a departure from academic integrity and is subject to remedies or sanctions as established by Smith School of Business and Queen's University.

These behaviours may include plagiarism, use of unauthorized materials, unauthorized collaboration, facilitation, forgery, and falsification among other actions. It is every student’s responsibility to become familiar with Smith School of Business policy regarding academic integrity and ensure that his or her actions do not depart, intentionally or unintentionally, from the standards described at: <https://smith.queensu.ca/about/academic_integrity/index.php>

Helpful FAQ’s about academic integrity are at: <http://business.queensu.ca/about/academic_integrity/faq.php>

To assist you in identifying the boundary between acceptable collaboration and a departure from academic integrity in this specific course, I provide the following guidelines for individual and group work. **If my expectations still are not clear to you, ask me!  The onus is on you to ensure that your actions do not violate standards of academic integrity.**

**ChatGPT**

**ChatGPT does not do a good job of satisfying the project course requirements.**

Students who rely heavily on ChatGPT to complete the NMI5001-MBQC808 course will struggle to meet the mandatory course requirements and risk failing.

For example:

* Appropriate data collection, analysis, and use of relevant primary research within the project
* Lacks real-time data
* Application of specific course concepts taught in the program
* Demonstrating critical thinking/analytical skills
  + Wasted opportunity to practice and improve analytical skills
  + ChatGPT suffers from a limited understanding of the project context
  + Lacks original thinking, which is a requirement of the project courses (provides responses based on what is already out there…)

A reminder that any use of ChatGPT must be cited; including, search terms utilized.  Not doing so, is an AI violation as the work is not your own. <https://apastyle.apa.org/blog/how-to-cite-chatgpt>