

MNO2705E LEADERSHIP AND DECISION MAKING UNDER UNCERTAINTY

Semester 1, AY 2023-2024

Instructor:

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1. Course Description

The decisions you make every day will shape your life. In an organization, the decisions you make will impact outcomes for you, your team, and your organization and will cumulatively affect the trajectory of your career. This course aims to help you navigate the pathways of decision making in organizations. We will adopt an evidence-based approach, tapping several streams of research – including behavioural psychology and economics, and intuitive judgment – to give a rigorous account of what separates good decisions from the rest. These conceptual tools will empower you to make good decisions in an uncertain world, to influence, and to lead.

This course addresses the foundations for decision making in modern organizations, where leadership requires speed and agility to navigate a VUCA-environment, with increasing market demands, such as sustainability and fulfilment of ESG (environmental, social, and governance). This also includes avoiding quick decisions which may lead to unethical business consequences.

The foundations for this course are drawn from established frameworks for decision making from the fields of behavioural economics, social psychology and management. Working with those concepts, we give focused attention to the challenges of decision making within the context of Singapore and Asia.

2. Course Objectives

The key objectives of this course are:

- to better understand how individual and collective decisions are made in organizations;
- to develop an understanding of the effects of cognitive biases, heuristics, emotions and social dynamics on decision processes and outcomes; and
- to be able to suggest practical ways for leaders to become more effective in making decisions and implementing them.

3. Course Materials

The assigned readings are available through the online NUS library portal, as well as through CANVAS. Always refer back the Course Outline to see the references to the readings for the course.

4. Modes of Teaching and Learning:

Materials will be presented by the instructor and there will be student presentations, exercises, simulations, assignments, etc. In all of these, student participation is key. Students will also learn independently and study the assigned readings.

The success of this course relies heavily on everyone in creating a supportive and safe online learning environment. Therefore, you are encouraged to listen carefully to each other and to articulate your own perspectives in a civil and respectful manner. Your active participation and open sharing is essential. You will learn through interaction with your classmates during lessons and while working on projects in teams with members coming from different backgrounds.

We strive for a *culture* that maximizes collective learning by stimulating participation, creativity, and spontaneity. Be open and use experiences for learning. Be appreciative, active, and questioning in order to maximize your own and others' learning.

Learner responsibilities

To benefit the most from each session, you should:

- Prepare for lesson by completing the assigned readings and exercises;
- Participate actively in class;
- Dive deep: question, think critically and learn from others.

Group exercises are central to the learning process - take your responsibility to your group seriously by being prepared for the exercise and playing your part.

Our main modes of communication are through e-mail and Canvas. Check your NUS mailbox and Canvas regularly for announcements, updates and materials uploaded.

The role of the instructor is to facilitate learning. The instructor structures processes, facilitates discussions and gives feedback. Lesson time is used for exchanging ideas and generating new learning.

5. Evaluation

Overall course grades are based on evaluations of both individual and collaborative work.

Individual-based Coursework

CA1 Class Participation	20%
CA2 Individual Assessment	30%

Collaborative Coursework

CA3 Team Project	50%
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5.1 Class Participation (20%)

We expect students to participate actively in the sessions by asking thoughtful questions, making insightful comments, challenging assumptions, providing examples, and building on others' ideas.

Assessments of class participation will reflect the quality and consistency of your contribution to learning throughout the semester. The following criteria will be used to evaluate class participation:

<i>Level of Performance</i>	<i>Criteria</i>
Need Improvement	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Absent ▪ Does not respond or participate in discussions and activities ▪ Demonstrates passive or very infrequent involvement

Fair	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Prepares for lessons and shows understanding of topic ▪ Contributes general comments, rephrases what has been shared, participates in class discussions and activities ▪ Demonstrates some level of involvement
Good	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Prepares well for lessons: provides thoughtful comments with relevant points ▪ Frequently participates in discussions and activities ▪ Demonstrates value-added and consistent involvement
Excellent	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Prepares fully for lessons: offers insightful perspectives, experiences, or reflections ▪ Always participates in discussions and activities ▪ Asks thoughtful questions ▪ Demonstrates significantly impactful and very active involvement

5.2. Individual Assessment (30%)

The individual assessment provides you an opportunity to demonstrate your understanding of and ability to work with course concepts and frameworks. It covers the subject-matter from class and assigned readings.

The Individual Assessment will be held in **Week 9**. Your instructor will provide you further details nearer the date of the assessment.

5.3. Team Project (50%)

The team project is divided into four components:

- (i) Written Project Proposal (5%)
- (ii) Team Project Presentation (35%)
- (iii) Executive Summary (10%)

Written Project Proposal (5%)

Your team will prepare a one-page formal project proposal that describes the case study that your team will work on, explaining why it is interesting and important, and the methods or resources you will use in your analyses.

By methods or resources, this refers to primary research (interviews) or secondary research (newspaper articles, journal articles, etc.) Wikipedia and blogs are not regarded as credible sources for the project.

In Week 6, your team will upload the project proposal to the Canvas folder by **6:00 pm, Friday, 22 September**.

Your written project proposal will be assessed based on:

- (i) Content
- (ii) Structure
- (iii) Professionalism in writing

Team Project Presentation (35%)

Team presentations will be scheduled for **Weeks 10 and 11**. Each team will have **20** minutes of presentation time, and there will be up to 10 minutes for Q&A. **ALL** teams must upload their **presentation slides** to the CANVAS folder by **5:00 pm, 22nd October (Sunday)**.

In the team presentations, you should:

- (a) briefly explain how the situation came about, as has been introduced in your proposal. Break down the decision making points (beginning, middle, end) and analyze what happened at these time points, integrating concepts you learnt from this course.
- (b) identify the key players involved and analyze the situation from the standpoint of the different stakeholders for effective leadership and decision making.
- (c) make suggestions to improve the leadership and decision making processes in your particular case study, using concepts that you learnt in class.

You can use technology (e.g. slides) to aid in the delivery of your content, and you can incorporate creative elements to increase audience engagement.

The presentation should not exceed 20 minutes per group. All group members must present.

Assessment criteria

Team presentations are evaluated on the following five criteria that are weighed equally:

- 1) depth of understanding of the decision challenge
- 2) clarity and depth of the analyses
- 3) practical wisdom and recommendations drawn from the case study
- 4) overall quality and professionalism of the presentation
- 5) quality of answers during the Q&A segment.

Executive Summary (10%)

You are to prepare an executive summary of your team presentation, not exceeding 2 pages. Please note that you are expected to write professionally and in an academic style. Therefore, it should not be a script of your presentation. Spoken language in your presentation should adopt a more conversational tone, whereas written language adopts a more formal tone, with a larger vocabulary.

The executive summary will be assessed based on:

- (i) Content
- (ii) Structure
- (iii) Professionalism in writing

The Executive Summary is due at the same time as the Presentation Slides on CANVAS: 5:00 pm, 22nd October (Sunday).

Formatting

For written assignments, you are to use Times New Roman or Arial, font size 12, single-spacing. The page limit prescribed does not include the cover page, references, or appendices.

6. Criteria for Evaluating Written Work

Managers and professionals have to communicate in a way that is clear, precise, and informative. They have to organize their thoughts clearly and make their points with logic and supporting rationale. We look for similar elements when evaluating your written work:

- **Discipline:** Make sure your written work is organized and easy to follow. Convey main points clearly to readers and in a logical manner. Don't gloss over the foundations—spell words correctly and adhere to rules for grammar and usage.
- **Justified Arguments:** Support your assertions with evidence from relevant sources (e.g., text, reading, interviews). Be sure to acknowledge sources.
- **Specificity and Accuracy:** Make specific rather than vague assertions. You will have greater difficulty in justifying general observations/statements. Also, note that accuracy in the use of technical terminology is critical. It is better to use an everyday word that you understand than to use a nice-sounding technical term inappropriately.
- **Wisdom:** Think through the implications of your recommendations (well beyond the obvious). Recognize potential unintended consequences and inherent trade-offs that must be considered.
- **Originality:** The quality of your ideas is important. Show creative, independent thinking as much as possible. Other things being equal, we reward attempts at creativity and thinking “outside-the-box.”
- **Academic Integrity:** Academic integrity and honesty is essential for the pursuit and acquisition of knowledge. The University and School expect every student to uphold these values at all times. Academic dishonesty is any misrepresentation with the intent to deceive, failure to acknowledge the source, falsification of information, inaccuracy of statements, cheating on the test or inappropriate use of resources.

Plagiarism is ‘the practice of taking someone else's work or ideas and passing them off as one's own’ (The New Oxford Dictionary of English). The University and School do not condone plagiarism. You have the obligation to make clear to the assessor which work is your own, and which is the work of others. Otherwise, your assessor is entitled to assume that everything being presented for assessment is entirely your own work. This is the minimum standard. In case of any doubt, please consult your instructor.

NUS Policy on AI

The following are always improper uses of AI tools:

- Generating an output and presenting it as your own work or idea.
- Generating an output, paraphrasing it, and then presenting the output as your own work or idea.
- Processing an original source not created by yourself to plagiarize it (e.g., using an AI paraphrasing tool to disguise someone else's original work, or even the output of an AI tool, and then presenting the final output as your own work or idea).

All of the above violate NUS policies on academic honesty and anyone found to have done any of them will be dealt with accordingly. Keep in mind that even though AI tools are not authors and thus cannot be harmed by someone stealing an idea from them, it is still wrong to represent yourself as having produced something when you did not do so.

If you completed any work with the aid of an AI tool, assuming a setting in which the instructor gave permission for such tools to be used, you should always acknowledge the use. **Using the outputs of an AI tool without proper acknowledgement is equivalent to lifting or paraphrasing a paragraph from a source without citation and attracts the same sanctions.**