MN5501 - Scenario Thinking and Strategy

Module Type/Semester: Option (20 credits), Semester 1

Module Co-ordinator: Professor Brad Mackay

Contact Details: rbm2@st-andrews.ac.uk

AIM: Scenario thinking allows strategy to be developed in a robust way, by considering the irreducible complexity, dynamism and ambiguity of the contextual environment. Through the exploration of alternative narratives of the future, individuals and their organizations can develop reflexive, adaptive capabilities to deal with unpredictability in their operating environment(s). Scenario thinking does not take the place of formal, analytical models in the process of generating strategy, but adds an important element of creativity that formal analysis cannot provide.

To use the scenario process to understand how individuals can engage with uncertainty in operating environments in order to develop creative and robust strategies. In addition, to use the scenario process to integrate a number of important organizational development concepts that help to provide organizations with future vision and adaptability: imagination; action learning; narratives and ‘storying’; competencies and dynamic capabilities; reflexive practices.

Method of Teaching & Learning:
Extensive reading, 24 hours of integrated class lectures and workshops, electronic based research on key issues. If students have laptops/tablets, they are encouraged to bring them to class with them for use in group work.

Learning Outcomes:

Relevant Knowledge and Understanding:
Managing scenario exercises
Developing resources to support group processes
Producing outline strategic consulting reports
Understanding of strategic management concepts

Skills:
Leading and facilitating team processes
Synthesising information and developing arguments
Presentation
Consulting and strategy development
Analytical and persuasive writing

INDICATIVE TOPIC OUTLINE: Session topics
Strategic Environment
The Scenario Process
Scenario Narrating and Strategy
Scenarios-to-Strategy
Scenario Presentations
De-brief/Critical Reflections
Tutorial

ASSESSMENT:
Formative - Workshop participation and weekly seminars
Summative - Four items of classwork, as specified below.

Group report = 20% of the final grade
Group presentation = 10% of the final grade
Reflexive learning journal = 20% of the final grade
Individual essay = 50% of the final grade

CORE READING LIST:
Students will be guided in engaging with articles and other resources during the first workshop. Extensive reading will be required during the module, but you are requested NOT to undertake any pre-reading before the module commences.