MN4310 – SCENARIO THINKING

MODULE TYPE/SEMESTER: Senior Honours/Option (20 Credits)/Semester 2

PRE-REQUISITE(S): MN2001 and MN2002

MODULE CO-ORDINATOR: Dr Anna Brown

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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.

This module gives students the opportunity to use the scenario method and understand how organisations can engage with uncertain operating environments to develop creative and robust strategies. Throughout the module the scenario process is used to integrate a number of important organizational theories that help to provide future vision and adaptability. These include, organisational learning; creativity and imagination; narratives and ‘storying’; competencies and dynamic capabilities; and reflexive practices.

METHOD OF TEACHING & LEARNING:

The module is centred around intensive group work over the course of the module. Students will work in pre-assigned teams to complete a scenario building exercise, which includes identifying ‘strategic options’ for organisations operating in a fast paced, ambiguous and changing operating environment. The course includes extensive reading, 30 hours of integrated class lectures and workshops, and in depth research on key issues unfolding in the external operating environment.

Throughout the module there is an emphasis on participation, and students are expected to engage in an active learning process. Additional group working is required outside of lecture time.
LEARNING OUTCOMES:

**Knowledge and understanding:**

- Identify and explain key global trends influencing the external operating environment
- Demonstrate the ability to construct plausible scenario narratives
- Evaluate the potential implications of scenario narratives in the context of a specific organisation
- Understand the benefits and limitations of scenario planning as a strategic tool

**Skills:**

- Participate in and facilitate effective group working
- Collect, interpret, and synthesise qualitative and quantitative data sets
- Engage in critical reflexive thinking
- Communicate complex information in a captivating and engaging way through written and verbal presentation

INDICATIVE TOPIC OUTLINE:

Uncertain environments and predictable surprises  
The Scenario method  
Dynamic Capabilities and Organisational learning  
Reflexivity and the uncertainty matrix  
Imagination and Storytelling  
The strategic environment  
Scenarios-to-strategy  
Critical reflections on the scenario process

ASSESSMENT:

Group presentation = 20%  
Individual essay = 50%  
Individual research report = 30%

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.

*Students are encouraged to take laptops and tablets to lectures in order to conduct desk-based research.*