APPLIES TO ACADEMIC YEAR 2012/2013

GRA 8170 The Management of Projects

Programme
Executive Master of Business Administration (EMBA) Program

Responsible for the course
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Department
Department of Leadership and Organizational Behaviour

Term
According to study plan

ECTS Credits
2

Language of instruction
English

Introduction

In most sectors, the vast majority of improvement and innovation endeavors are carried out in projects. As a consequence, the ability to manage projects is critical for competitiveness and growth. This course will go beyond the standard and straightforward project management approaches but will deal with managing complexities that exist when you work in projects that are constrained in terms of time, budget, people and technologies.

Projects differ in two respects: complexity (magnitude of the effort, number of groups and organizations that need to be coordinated, and diversity in skills or expertise needed) and uncertainty (predictability of the final outcome in terms of time, cost and technical performance). Many concepts, models, methods and techniques have been developed and applied to manage projects with respect to the main elements of these dimensions. In addition, most projects need to be managed simultaneously and in connection to each other.

The ability to make a sound contribution to project management presupposes in-depth knowledge and understanding of the theoretical and empirical bases of both aspects of project management. In this course, students will be challenged to examine the appropriateness, usefulness and academic status of project management principles and methods that are generally applied in the field of process and product innovation.

In this course, we deal with a variety of projects, ranging from quite predictable one-of-a-kind engineer to order projects, to incremental product innovation projects and radical product innovation projects. Uncertainty may exist at various levels. First it may be uncertain what processes need to be carried out to complete the project. Second it may be uncertain whether a given process leads to a certain desired outcome. Third, it may be uncertain how much resource and time is needed to perform the process.

In the course we discuss management concepts for projects with uncertainty in process execution. Furthermore we discuss the methods and techniques to control projects with uncertainty in processes such as: overlapping of development tasks early stage solution testing, design iterations and prototyping, and frequent review meetings.

Empirical research regarding the results obtained with the use of these techniques for the control of various types of projects is also discussed.

Learning outcome

After taking the course students are able to:
- understand the theoretical and empirical basis of project management;
- understand contemporary approaches to the management of projects;
- unravel the complex relationships within a project's constraints and within an multi-project organization;
- know the drivers of project success, and especially how to control, organize and evaluate for project success.

Prerequisites
Granted admission to the EMBA programme.

Compulsory reading

Articles:
Berggren, C., J. Järkvik & J. Söderlund. 2008. Lagomizing, organic integration, and systems emergency wards: Innovative practices in managing complex systems development projects. Project Management Journal. Vol. 39, No. 2. 111-122. 111-122
Dahlgren, J. & J. Söderlund. 2010. Modes and mechanisms of control in multi-project organizations: the R&D case. International Journal of Technology Management. Vol. 50, No. 1: 22
Eisenhardt, K.M., & Tabrizi, B.N. 1995. Accelerating adaptive processes: Product innovation in the global computer industry. Administrative Science Quarterly. Vol. 40. 84-110
Lyneis, J.M., & Ford, D.N.. 2007. System dynamics applied to project management: a survey, assessment, and directions for future research. System Dynamics Review. Vol. 23. 157-189
Perlow, L.A., & Okhuysen, G.A., Repenning, N.P.. 2002. The speed trap: Exploring the relationship between decision making and temporal context. Academy of Management Journal. Vol. 45. 931-955
Repenning, N.P., & Sterman, J.D. 2001. Nobody ever gets credit for fixing problems that never happened: creating and sustaining process improvement. California Management Review. Vol. 43. 64-88
Rudolph, J.W., & Repenning, N.P. 2002. Disaster dynamics: Understanding the role of quantity in organizational collapse. Administrative Science Quarterly. Vol. 47. 1-30

Recommended reading

Course outline
- The current state of research into the management of projects?
- The current state of the practice of the management of projects?
- What are complexities and uncertainties in projects?
- How to unravel project complexities?
- The Project Management Game, Casual Loop Diagramming
- Boiled Frog Case

Computer-based tools
It's Learning

Learning process and workload
1 ECTS credit corresponds to a workload of 26-30 hours.

The course is conducted as a teaching module divided into two days each. Students will have classes all day for two days, a total of 16 hours

Attendance to all sessions in the course is compulsory. If you have to miss part(s) of the course you must ask in advance for leave of absence. More than 20% absence in a course will require retaking the entire course. It's the student's own responsibility to obtain any information provided in class that is not included on the course homepage/ It's learning or other course materials

Examination
The course evaluation will be based on:
50 % - classroom contribution (oral, individual)
50 % - Written assignment (written report, group)

This is a course with continuous assessment (several exam elements) and one final exam code. Each exam element will be graded using points on a scale (e.g. 0-100). The elements will be weighted together according to the information in the course description in order to calculate the final letter grade for the course.

Specific information regarding student evaluation beyond the information given in the course description will be provided in class. This information may be relevant for requirements for term papers or other hand-ins, and/or where class participation can be one of several elements of the overall evaluation

Examination code(s)
GRA 81701 - Continuous assessment; accounts for 100 % to pass the course GRA 8170, 2 ECTS credits

The course is a part of a full Executive Master of Business Administration Program and all evaluations must be passed to obtain a certificate for the degree.

Examination support materials

Re-sit examination
Re-takes are only possible at the next time a course will be held. When course evaluation consists of class participation or continuous assessment, the whole course must be re-evaluated when a student wants to retake a exam. Retake examinations entail an extra examination fee.

Additional information