

**MASTER SYLLABUS**  
**Department of Business Administration, Sonoma State University**  
**BUS 453, Small Business Analysis (4)**

**I. Catalogue description:** This course focuses on decision making in functional areas of marketing, production, and finance. Students, working in teams with faculty and professional supervision, consult with businesses to solve managerial problems. .

**II. Prerequisite:**  
BUS 360 or consent of the instructor.

Justification: This is an elective course that potentially draws upon all of the DBA core courses and stresses complex and interdisciplinary applications of the combined theories and experiences of these basic courses. This course requires extensive client case write-ups and presentations to clients that draw upon multifunctional approaches to assessing the problems of and challenges facing small businesses creatively.

**III. Course learning outcomes:**  
The primary objective of this course is to learn the art of consultation by putting participants in a situation that gives them the opportunity to think and act as a professional consultant. A related objective is to provide practical application of functional business skills to the small business environment. Participants will learn of the practical difficulties of organizing and working in consulting teams, of collecting valid and useful data and of their interpretation and ultimate use. We will also focus on the political aspects of consulting and planning for the use of unanticipated results. How can we avoid relying too heavily on results that reinforce the manager/owner's preconceptions? How do we prepare the owner of a small business to understand and use the results of consultations effectively? We will also raise and discuss some ethical issues concerning the consultation process. During the semester, participants will prepare a formal letter of engagement, sign a confidentiality agreement, meet with clients and conduct research as needed, and deliver both oral and written reports to their small business client.

After taking this course, students should have:

- A. Demonstrated their ability to integrate the concepts of management, marketing, finance, accounting, economics and information systems to analyze a small business management situation.
- B. Engaged in a consulting project for a client within a dynamic business environment.
- C. Reviewed current social, legal and ethical issues that confront consultants to as well as owners of small businesses.
- D. Applied analytical, decision-making, and communication skills to problems of managing a small business.
- E. Demonstrated their ability to function as an effective member of a consulting team.

- IV. Course materials:** A textbook in consulting, cases, related readings in small business management issues, and/or previous consulting team client case projects.
- V. Teaching methods:** Lectures, discussions, case analyses, client meetings, group projects, quizzes on the text and readings, and selected guest speakers who are founders of new ventures or service providers to same. Case studies and/or business plans for students to evaluate are required to effectively teach this course.
- VI. Evaluation tools:** Letter of engagement and scope of work, weekly progress reports, presentations, results of client consultations, quizzes on lecture material and readings, and peer evaluations and feedback.

**VII. Course content:**

**A. Course topics:**

1. Definition and scope of what business consultants do
2. Contracting
3. Diagnosis
4. Prescription & feedback
5. Data collection
6. Creating the venture team; leading v. managing
7. Industry and competitive analysis
8. Market forecasting, pricing and margin analyses
9. Financial ratio analysis; *pro forma* financial models
10. Ethics, confidentiality and responsibilities of consultants
11. Preparing written client case reports
12. Preparing oral client case reports

**B. Interdisciplinary content:**

| Topic*                  | Minimum Number of Class Hours Devoted to Topic | Required Graded Work Other Than Exams? |
|-------------------------|--|--|
| International/Global    | 1  | Yes                                    |
| Ethical issues          | 3  | Yes                                    |
| Social issues           | 3  | Yes                                    |
| Political issues        | 3  | Yes                                    |
| Legal/regulatory issues | 3  | Yes                                    |
| Environmental issues    | 2  | Yes                                    |
| Technology issues       | 2  | Yes                                    |
| Demographic diversity   | 1  | Yes                                    |

\*All of these issues may be brought to bear in preparing and completing a client case analysis project.

**C. Interdisciplinary skills:**

| Skill†                | Required Graded Work Other Than Exams? |
|-----------------------|--|
| Oral communication    | Yes                                    |
| Written communication | Yes                                    |
| Critical thinking     | Yes                                    |
| Working in teams      | Yes                                    |

† Each of these skills will be demonstrated in client case preparation, case presentation, and classroom discussions.