University of Arkansas

Master of Science of Operations Management (MSOM)

Areas of Concentration

Certificates

Course GNEG 5801/5811 (16-week semester)

and

Course OMGT 577V (8-week session)

Updated January 7, 2015

Guidelines and Procedures

All MSOM students may enroll in OMGT 577V for very specific, limited reasons. Prior to enrollment, the student must submit a proposal following these guidelines to an instructor approved by the program for the specific topic selected. Once the instructor is satisfied, he or she submits the proposal to the special problems committee. OMGT 577V is required for each focus area (phase out Fall 2015), areas of concentration (phase in Fall of 2015) or certificate programs (phase in Fall 2015). OMGT 577V may be used, in rare cases, with department approval for other purposes.

OMGT 577V

While research is a component of the final deliverable for OMGT 577V, the primary focus is to demonstrate proficiency in specific course objectives, program goals, or certificate/area of concentration goals. All OMGT 577V special problems students must meet the following requirements.

1. Must complete at least eight graduate courses (may include up to two transferred courses.)
2. Only one Special Problem (577V) is allowed in the program.
3. Write a proposal that includes a complete description of how proficiency in the objectives of a course will be demonstrated (use online form provided by advisor). The proposal shall include a clear way to map to each of the objectives or goals or certificate/focus area.
4. Submit an instructor-signed proposal to special problems committee (or routed electronically), one month before the start of the term. Actual ISIS

enrollment cannot be made by the student. Only the Director, Associate Director or Assistant Director will enroll students in OMGT 577V.

5. Obtain proposal approval from the instructor AND departmental reviewers.
6. Meet with the instructor at least weekly to review assignments and target deliverable dates.
7. Submit a draft approximately halfway through the course for instructor review.
8. While there is no minimum page requirement, it is unlikely for this course to be met with any few than 35 pages, double spaced, exclusive of title pages, abstract, appendices, etc.
9. Paper must integrate concepts, methods, and tools acquired in OMGT courses.
10. Must be in APA format.
11. Must submit SafeAssign report.

Faculty will use the online rubric for grading OMGT 577V (or GNEG course).

General Expectations and Guidance

1. Proposal form is designed to demonstrate to both the instructor and program administration that the student:
    A. Chose a serious and worthwhile project
    B. Thought through steps to complete the project
    C. Committed to a substantial deliverable
    D. Know what research source student will use

2. Objective
    A. Clear statement of problem student will address and commit to solve which are mapped to program goals or course objectives.
    B. Clear statement of what a student's efforts are intended to accomplish
3. Procedure
    A. Steps to complete the project
        1. Data-gathering
        2. Analysis
        3. Testing
        4. Implementing best solution
4. Submission of proposal
    A. Proposal that is approved and signed by instructor must be submitted preferably at least two weeks before the start of the term for enrollment in OMGT 577V. Students cannot self-enroll in the course through ISIS
    B. Proposal will be reviewed by the special problems committee for approval and signature
    C. Committee-approved and signed proposal will be forwarded to instructor and student (copy site coordinator.)

Expectations of Deliverables

1. Research paper
    A. At least 35+ pages submitted through SafeAssign (this page number is not a guarantee of acceptable rigor to complete the course)

B. Scholarly paper, showing good research and excellent command of the English language in APA format

C. Integrate concepts, methods, and tools acquired in courses

D. Must represent work required of any three credit-hour course, approx. 100-150 hours

2. Other accompanying deliverables

A. PowerPoint presentation

B. Computer programs

C. Survey results

D. Webpage

E. Any supporting data

3. Student must submit a copy of their deliverables to instructor who will provide it to the program office for review by the committee.

This class is offered in an individual instruction format, with "V" representing "variable hours." Under the direct supervision of a faculty member, the student typically performs a library, on-the-job, or web-based research project or a computer project. Instead of meeting in regular classes, the student meets with the instructor periodically during the session.

The instructor and program committee will pay close attention to the deliverables specified in the proposal, ensuring that these constitute concrete, measurable, and gradable outputs (e.g., papers, computer programs, data tables, etc.) The "Objectives" section of the proposal should state a specific research question(s) or goal that the student plans to pursue. The "Procedures" section should include the methods, tools and specific approaches the

student will employ to complete his/her project. The "Resources" section should specify relevant coursework from our program, as well as sources of information that go beyond program material. A Special Problems project should draw extensively on the coursework and learning the student received in our program. While selecting an original work problem for analysis and solution is an excellent beginning for a Special Problems topic, the student should be sure he/she is applying concepts, tools and methods learned in the Operations Management program to solve the work problem.

Because the Special Problems class will utilize principles or techniques learned in other classes it should be scheduled at or near the end of a student's program of study. The written proposal becomes a part of the student's formal academic record and care should be taken in its preparation. Proposals will be reviewed and if necessary, returned (within a week) for revision by the special problems committee to ensure a high standard of quality in Special Problems projects.

Proposal Guidelines

The following features characterize an academically acceptable Special Problems proposal:

1. Clear, grammatically correct presentation of organized ideas, including a statement of the specific problem to be solved, methods and resources to be used, and specific project deliverables that can be evaluated and graded.
2. Obvious relevance to the student's area of concentration, as reflected by the project title and problem statement. For example, if the student is pursuing an Industrial Management Certificate, one would not expect the project to be a business plan for starting up an internet auction site. While some flexibility as to the type of operation selected is appropriate, Industrial Management projects should generally focus on the analysis,

design, execution and/or optimization of work processes in existing production or service organizations. Business Management projects, however, can legitimately examine start-up issues in any type of business.

3. Professional execution: the proposal should be typed and spell-checked. In addition, it should be proofed for the presence of words that are properly spelled, but whose meanings differ from those intended (e.g., "their" vs. "there");
4. Evidence that the student will research a specific question, whether by survey, industrial experiment, development (as in a computer software project), or by library/internet research. If the research is of the library/internet type, the output should show evidence that the student has gleaned, analyzed and integrated information from a variety of sources, and has provided his/her own interpretation of findings, rather than having simply copied or rewritten the work of another researcher. Care should also be taken to avoid basing findings on "internet lore" vs. legitimate, fully attributed, and verifiable sources of information that reside on the internet.
5. A project schedule that shows that the student has done some planning for completing the project. There is no problem with changing the schedule as the project proceeds, but an initial plan should be in place. There is no general objection to a schedule that recognizes from the outset that a project may extend past a single eight-week term. If the instructor desires to set a time limit on the work, it is the instructor's prerogative to do so, but the program office has no objection to extended Special Projects. In such cases the instructor may award a grade of "I" (incomplete), which will extend the completion date for an additional 8 weeks. In all cases, the instructor must forward the deliverables (before

grading) to the special problems committee for review no later than one week prior to the end of the second consecutive session.

The Proposal Process and Course Features

The expectations for OMGT 577V—Special Problems are set by the faculty and are communicated to the student prior to proposal preparation. A completed proposal document should be submitted to the faculty member for review prior to the student's enrollment in this class. When the faculty member is satisfied with the content of the proposal document, s/he electronically submits it using the most current electronic form. If any changes are required to bring the proposal into conformance with the above guidelines, the latter will be communicated to the faculty member for incorporation into the project proposal. Faculty should notify the student of the changes needed and re-submit the proposal once it has been revised. *Students should be cautioned not to begin work on their Special Problems project until the committee has approved their proposal*.

The project deliverable is a scholarly paper, displaying solid research and an excellent command of the English language. Original work is expected in any academic paper or other type of project deliverable presented to fulfill the academic requirements of the Master of Science degree in Operations Management. It is academically acceptable to draw upon the works of others in the production of a project paper or report, but each instance of the use of such borrowed material must be properly documented to show clearly what parts of the finished product represent the work of others and what parts are original. In all cases, work-related Special Problems should be projects the student initiates and not merely recapitulates. Instructors should be alert to the potential for unattributed borrowing from pre-existing

manuals or projects at a student's workplace. Instructors will also run completed projects through the university's anti-plagiarism software "SafeAssign."

Project Selection/Design Issues

1. Project with no Outcome – A poor statement of objective (A.3 above) can lead to a project that is limited to gathering and listing or re-stating general information without providing any critical analysis or otherwise adding value. Examine the following project objectives: "Discuss different leadership styles and theories" vs. "Establish a range of effective leadership styles and approaches for the business environment of XYZ Company." Only the second formulation suggests that the student is taking a specific stand on an issue and will argue for a particular point of view. In general, "book reports" are to be avoided. A project that proposes to "review OSHA rules in the XYZ industry," for example, implies that a pre-existing set of published regulations will simply be summarized by the student. Summaries without analysis, integration or other original contribution by the student are not acceptable. An exception to this rule is the "literature review" project which is a legitimate undertaking, but only if the student reviews a relatively large volume of *recent, original* sources on the subject that have not previously been collected or discussed by others and renders a well-justified opinion on the current state/direction of the given field.
2. The Slam Dunk Project -- Project topics that ask questions with obvious answers are not likely to lead to a solid piece of scholarship. A recent proposal suggested examining how hazardous materials could be harmful if proper handling procedures were not followed. Belaboring the obvious is not a legitimate project topic. A sub-set

of the "slam dunk" is the transparently self-serving project. For example, a frequently encountered project objective is to investigate the pay structure of a given (usually the student's own) job. One expects that the project will become a 15-page argument for why one should get a raise. There are more subtle variations on this type of project topic (e.g., establish a career path for XYZ position – which happens to be the student's own, etc.), but in all cases the instructor should be sensitive to the agenda driving the selection of project topic. If it is to analyze, understand, quantify, and/or solve a problem of importance to the field (or to one's employer), it is likely to be a worthwhile project.

3. The Start-Up Project – Occasionally students wish to use the special problems exercise for purely entrepreneurial ends. This is perfectly acceptable, as long as the product is a full dress business plan, complete with pro forma financials. The student should be cautioned that the instructor will cast himself in the role of investor or loan officer when grading the project. This type of project will still require complete literature reviews, research and forecasting to demonstrate the likelihood of success.
4. The Canned Project – Sometimes students select a project that already exists in multiple pre-packaged versions in cyberspace. For example: "Perform a SWOT analysis of XYZ Corporation" or "Develop an EEO Train the Trainer program." SWOTs for well-publicized corporate disasters are readily available on the Internet, as are U.S. Government guides for preparing company personnel to present classes on various common policies/regulations. On the other hand, a detailed SWOT of the student's own company or department that draws on personally secured knowledge of his/her own employer, competitors and industry would, of course, be acceptable, as

would a training program unique to that employer. Instructors should be careful to check obvious sources for pre-existing materials before approving project topics of this sort.

5. The Survey Project - Sometimes students elect to conduct surveys and write up their findings. This can be an excellent project to undertake; however, there are some special conditions that apply here. First, all information-gathering from human subjects undertaken in the name of the University of Arkansas must be submitted to the University's Institutional Review Board. There are various levels of approval required, depending upon the nature of the research being done. In the case of the least invasive types of research it is necessary only to submit a completed form to our departmental representative and obtain his approval before proceeding with data collection. In the case of more controversial research the IRB will have to discuss and approve the content of the study at their next scheduled meeting. The approval process can take several weeks, so students need to be aware that a survey research project could take longer to complete than other types of projects.