UNIT OVERVIEW

Introduction

This unit is concerned with organisational problem solving. A number of ‘soft’, human-centered approaches to organisational problem solving will be contrasted with ‘hard’ scientific approaches. These ‘soft’ approaches will then be examined as ways to improve problem situations in organisations that are comprised of the elements of people, organisational structures and strategies, business processes and information technology. Practical guidance on the use of these methodologies will be given.

The unit will also introduce students to information analysis and systems analysis.

The unit is suitable for those who are hoping to build skills in management, information systems, management consultancy or IT consultancy

Prerequisites

None

Unit Weight

12.5% of one academic year

Teaching Pattern

The Unit consists of 27 hours of lectures and workshops beginning in Week 4 of Semester 2

Lecture: 1 hour per week
Workshops: 2 hours per week

Unit Content

The lectures and workshops will cover the following topics:
Understanding the business environment

Understanding the nature of contemporary organisations and their management

The nature of problems in organisations, the organisational context of business and information analysis

The nature of systems, and systems thinking for organisational problem solving

Problem solving paradigms. Positivism and Interpretivism as problem solving paradigms.

Hard versus soft approaches to intervening in organisational problem contexts

Soft management science/operational research (MS/OR) approaches, and their relevance to business and information analysis.

Soft Systems Methodology (SSM), Strategic Options Development Analysis (SODA)/Cognitive Mapping and the Strategic Choice Methodology as organisational problem solving approaches.

Sociotechnical theory and its relevance to business and information analysis

Issues and challenges in business and information analysis, and the criticality of these initial phases to system success

Information as social/cultural/political symbol & signal, concept of myth and metaphor in business and information analysis, and systems development and acquisition

Techniques & approaches for business and information analysis

Interpersonal issues & communication difficulties between and amongst business analysts & clients

For more information see the section titled 'Content' on the unit website.

Prior Knowledge and/or Skills

There are no particular knowledge pre-requisites for this unit.

However the unit will be much better appreciated by those students who can think abstractly.

A previous course in management will be an advantage to students taking this unit.

Learning Outcomes

On successful completion of this unit, you will be able to:

1. Identify the nature and characteristics of organisational problems
2. Identify and focus on the primary causes of organisational problems rather than the secondary symptoms and tertiary effects
3. Understand, appreciate and apply the major ‘soft’ management science/operational research (MS/OR) problem solving methodologies including SSM, SODA/Cognitive Mapping, and Strategic Choice.
4. Identify and appreciate contemporary issues and problems associated with information requirements analysis in an organisational context
5. Critically search, interpret and evaluate a range of written materials on organisational problem solving and ‘soft’ MS/OR including journal articles, books, web sites and so on, and understand their relevance and significance to contemporary organisational problem solving practice

Generic graduate attributes

The university has defined a set of generic graduate attributes expected in its graduates. [http://www.utas.edu.au/policy/subject.html#graduates] Your course is designed to enable you to develop generic skills that are valued in, and expected of, graduates. These are skills that you will need to develop over time. Hence you are encouraged to look for opportunities, as you study each unit, to reflect on and improve these skills.

Successful completion of this unit will contribute to the development of the following aspects of the Generic Graduate Attributes, as identified by the University. The example in brackets will indicate where in the Unit the attribute is developed and/or assessed.

1. Graduates will have an in-depth knowledge in their chosen field of study and the ability to apply that knowledge in practice. They will be prepared for life-long learning in pursuit of personal and professional development
   o Apply appropriate analysis skills (workshops);
   o Use a wide range of academic skills, including analysis and synthesis (in the examination);
   o Identify, evaluate and implement personal learning strategies (individual learning in reviewing and presenting the literature);
   o Learn new skills and apply learning to new situations (workshops, lectures).
2. Graduates will be able to communicate effectively across a range of contexts
   o Demonstrate oral and written communication (assignments and workshops);
   o Develop skills in formal report writing (assignments)
o Present well-reasoned arguments (assignments, during group discussion during workshops and in the examination);
o Access, organise and present information (most assessment activities);
o Listen to and evaluate the views of others (during discussion in the workshops).
3. Graduates will be effective problem-solvers, capable of applying logical, critical and creative thinking to a range of problems. They will have developed competencies in information literacy
  o Identify critical issues (lectures, workshops and assignments);
o Conceptualise problems and formulate a range of solutions (lectures, workshops and assignments)
o Work effectively with others (workshop activities);
o Find, acquire, evaluate, manage and use relevant information in a range of media (most assessment activities, readings).
4. Graduates will act ethically, with integrity and social responsibility
  o Acknowledge the social and ethical implications of their actions (in referencing in some assessment tasks);
o Appreciate the impact of social change (workshops).

UNIT ASSESSMENT

Assessment Pattern

Internal (45%), Examination (55%)

Assessment Summary

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Component</th>
<th>Weight</th>
<th>Due Date</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Formal Examination</td>
<td>55%</td>
<td>University Examination Period</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Executive Report</td>
<td>15%</td>
<td>3.00pm Wednesday 9th September</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Essay</td>
<td>30%</td>
<td>3.00pm Wednesday 30th September, 2009</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Assessment Items

Item 1
Title: Formal Examination
Type: Formal Examination
Task Length: 3 hours
Weighting: 55%
Links to Learning Outcomes: 1,2,3,4
Due: University Examination Period
Description: Closed book examination: No books or papers of any kind may be taken into the examination.

Item 2
Title: Executive Report
Type: In-Semester - individual assignment
Task Length: 3 A4 pages in 12 point font plus bibliography
Weighting: 15%
Links to Learning Outcomes: 1,2,3,4,5
Due: 3.00pm Wednesday 9th September
Description: Executive Report on SODA/Cognitive Mapping Methodology for Strategy Formulation and Organisational Problem Solving

Item 3
Title: Essay
Type: In-Semester - individual assignment
Task Length: 3,000 to 4,000 words
Weighting: 30%
Links to Learning Outcomes: 1,2,3,4,5
Due: 3.00pm Wednesday 30th September, 2009
Description: Essay on the topic of Soft Systems Methodology (SSM) for Organisational Problem Solving

See the ‘Assessment’ section in unit website for more detailed information about assessment items.

How your Final Grade will be determined

Overall assessment will be based on the student's performance throughout the semester as well as in a formal examination. In order to achieve a pass (or better) result, a student must obtain:

1. at least 45% of the total mark for in-semester assessment items
2. at least 45% of the mark for the formal examination
3. at least 50% of the overall mark

UNIT RESOURCES

Unit Web Site

This unit is Web Dependent: content & communication. This means that you will need to use the Web for this unit. The unit website contains unit information and resources.
The unit website is accessed from http://www.utas.edu.au/coursesonline/. You will need to use your university email
pop account username and password to log on to the MyLO system. Once authenticated by the system your
personalised MyLO Learning Online area will be displayed. It contains links to the websites that you have permission
to access - including the website for this unit.
If you are not able to access the unit website, please contact the University IT help desk:
   Entrance Level, Morris Miller Library, Sandy Bay Campus;
   Entrance Level, Launceston Campus Library, Newnham Campus.
   Telephone: 6226 1818 and 1300 304 903.
   The 1300 number is a local call from within Tas, with the exception of mobiles.
   Email: servicedesk@utas.edu.au
   Website: http://www.utas.edu.au/servicedesk/student/index.html

Prescribed Text
Rational Analysis for a Problematic World Revisited: Problem Structuring Methods for Complexity, Uncertainty and
Conflict
Edited by Jonathan Rosenhead and John Mingers
John Wiley and Sons, 2001

Readings

Software
The software that you will need to access the unit website and to study this unit, including general purpose software
such as word processors, is provided on the computers in the School's computing labs. If you intend to use software
on other computers please check that the versions are compatible.

GENERAL RESOURCES

School Website
School of Computing and Information Systems - Faculty of Science, Engineering, and Technology.
http://www.cis.utas.edu.au

Faculty Website
Information and Resources for Faculty of Science, Engineering and Technology students are available on the faculty
website at: http://www.utas.edu.au/scieng

University Website
Information and Resources for 'Current Students' are available on the university website at:
http://www.utas.edu.au/students/

School Help Desk
Contact the School Help Desk if you have any queries or problems with accessing, using, or printing from the
computers in the School of Computing and Information Systems labs.

In Hobart the Help Desk is located on level 3 in the Centenary building, and is open from 10:00am-12:00pm, and
2:00pm-4:00pm Monday-Friday. The phone number is 6226 2929.

In Launceston the Help Desk is located near the entrance to the computing labs and is open from 10:00am-12:00pm,
and 2:00pm-4:00pm Monday-Friday. The phone number is 6324 3447.

Both help desks will accept queries over the phone outside the standard opening hours.
The computer labs at the Cradle Coast Campus are maintained by ITR - please contact the University Help Desk for assistance with these computers.

Computing Facilities

The School has PC labs (running Windows XP), Mac labs (running Mac OS X 10.5), and special purpose Networking labs at the Newnham and Sandy Bay campuses. All students are provided with logins for Windows, Macintosh and Unix environments. If you have not used these facilities before please contact the School Help Desk to collect your account details. If you would like to access these facilities after hours please contact the School Help Desk.

In Hobart, there are 3 PC labs, 2 Mac Labs, and 1 Networks lab in the Centenary building, and 3 PC labs in the CIS building. In Launceston, there are 2 PC labs, 1 Mac Lab, 1 Networks lab, and one multipurpose lab in Building V.

Use of Facilities

Use of computing facilities provided by the School is subject to the School's Ethics Guidelines, details of which are posted at [http://www.cis.utas.edu.au/cisview/ethics.jsp](http://www.cis.utas.edu.au/cisview/ethics.jsp). Copies of the guidelines are also available in all School labs. The School's facilities may only be used for study-related purposes, and may not be used for personal gain. Anti-social behaviour in labs such as game playing, viewing pornography, loud discussion, audio without the use of head-phones, etc is strictly prohibited in all labs at all times. Eating, drinking, and smoking is not permitted in the labs. Before being granted access to the School's facilities, you will be required to sign a declaration that you have read and understand these guidelines, and that you will abide by them. Disciplinary action may be taken against students who violate the guidelines.

Learning Strategies

If you need assistance in preparing for study please refer to your tutor or lecturer. For additional information refer to the Learning Development website: [http://www.utas.edu.au/learndev/](http://www.utas.edu.au/learndev/)

If you will be using MyLO for the first time and would like some information on how to use MyLO refer to the following website: [http://www.utas.edu.au/coursesonline/mylo-support.htm](http://www.utas.edu.au/coursesonline/mylo-support.htm)

Some of the units you will study use videoconferencing to deliver lectures and tutorials. To enable you to get the best out of a videoconference please refer to the following guide: [http://www.its.utas.edu.au/videoconf/vcstudentguide.pdf](http://www.its.utas.edu.au/videoconf/vcstudentguide.pdf)

Help resolving concerns about this unit

In the first instance you should contact your lecturer. If the matter is not resolved then you should contact the Head of School. If the matter is still unresolved and you would like to know who to contact or the procedures for resolving your concern refer to the following website: [http://acserv.admin.utas.edu.au/complaints_info.html](http://acserv.admin.utas.edu.au/complaints_info.html)

The Hobart based Tasmanian University Union (TUU) or the Launceston/Burnie based Student Association (SA) may also be able to assist.

The School reserves the right to alter the details contained in this Unit Outline. Students will be advised of changes to the outline via their University email account and it remains the responsibility of the student to check their email for such changes.

Occupational Health and Safety

The university is committed to providing a safe and secure teaching and learning environment. For more information see [http://www.admin.utas.edu.au/hr/ohs/pol_proc/](http://www.admin.utas.edu.au/hr/ohs/pol_proc/)

University Services and Support

If you are experiencing difficulties with your studies or assignments, have personal or life planning issues, disability or illness which may affect your course of study, you are advised to raise these with your lecturer in the first instance.

The University has staff available to assist you, such as the:

- Learning Development Advisor
- Student Counselor
- Careers Advisor
- Disability Officer

For more information and contact details see the Services and Support section on the University 'Current Students' web page: [http://www.utas.edu.au/students/](http://www.utas.edu.au/students/)

**GENERAL ASSESSMENT**

Approach to Learning

The University is committed to high standards of professional conduct in all activities, and holds its commitment and responsibilities to its students as being of paramount importance. Likewise, it holds expectations about the responsibilities students have as they pursue their studies within the special environment the University offers.
The University’s Code of Conduct for Teaching and Learning states:

Students are expected to participate actively and positively in the teaching/learning environment. They must attend classes when and as required, strive to maintain steady progress within the subject or unit framework, comply with workload expectations, and submit required work on time.

You are expected to spend about 130 hrs studying in this unit - this includes attendance at scheduled teaching sessions. (For a 13 week semester this is, on average, 10 hr/wk.) This is the amount of study time that the 'typical' student will need to reach the level of competence and understanding required to fulfil the unit objectives. You are expected to:

- attend all scheduled teaching sessions, unless otherwise notified by the unit coordinator
- prepare for, and actively participate in all scheduled teaching sessions
- complete the assigned learning tasks
- review what has been learnt
- complete assessment items and submit them on time
- access and be familiar with the information and resources available on the unit website
- seek help from teaching staff if you have any questions or difficulties in studying this unit

You are encouraged to read the university’s Code of Conduct for Teaching and Learning. Part A describes the 'Responsibility of the University to Students' and part B describes the 'Responsibilities of Students to the University'.


It is expected that students will familiarise themselves with access and use of the MyLO system operated by the University for the electronic delivery of course materials, and for various forms of communication.

It is expected that students will consult email sent to their University email address at least twice a week for notices relating to the administration of the unit, and for notification of the results of assignments.

It is expected that students will read the background material specified in the course curriculum, will actively attend and participate in tutorials, and be prepared to discuss relevant issues arising with tutors, lecturers and fellow students.

**Student Expectations of the Unit**

Students enrolled in this Unit may reasonably expect the following:

1. To be able to contact a lecturer or tutor by electronic mail, to raise issues arising in the unit, either relating to content or student performance within the unit.
2. Subject to availability, to be able to discuss such issues in person with the lecturer or tutor.
3. That assignments will be marked and the marks will normally be returned within 3 weeks of due dates.
4. That all relevant notices regarding the administration of the unit, including any necessary changes, will be communicated to all students enrolled in the unit via email.

*These expectations are in addition to those specified in relevant University regulations.*

**Plagiarism**

Unless specifically stated in the specification of the assessment item provided on the unit website, it is required that:

- work submitted by a student is the work of that student alone OR
- where the assessment item is to be completed by a group of students, the work submitted by the group of students is the work of that group of students alone.

While students are encouraged to discuss the assignments in this unit and to engage in active learning from each other, it is important that they are also aware of the University's policy on plagiarism. Plagiarism is taking and using someone else's thoughts, writings or inventions and representing them as your own; for example downloading an essay wholly or in part from the internet, copying another student's work or using an author's words or ideas without citing the source.

*Plagiarism is a form of cheating. It is taking and using someone else's thoughts, writings or inventions and representing them as your own; for example, using an author's words without putting them in quotation marks and citing the source, using an author's ideas without proper acknowledgment and citation, copying another student's work.*

If you have any doubts about how to refer to the work of others in your assignments, please consult your lecturer or tutor for relevant referencing guidelines, and the academic integrity resources on the web at http://www.academicintegrity.utas.edu.au.

The intentional copying of someone else's work as one's own is a serious offence punishable by penalties that may range from a fine or deduction/cancellation of marks and, in the most serious of cases, to exclusion from a unit, a course or the University. Details of penalties that can be imposed are available in the Ordinance of Student Discipline – Part 3 Academic Misconduct, see http://www.utas.edu.au/universitycouncil/legislation/.
The University and any persons authorised by the University may submit your assessable works to a plagiarism checking service, to obtain a report on possible instances of plagiarism. Assessable works may also be included in a reference database. It is a condition of this arrangement that the original author’s permission is required before a work within the database can be viewed.”

It is important that you understand this statement on plagiarism. Should you require clarification please see your unit coordinator or lecturer. Useful resources on academic integrity, including what it is and how to maintain it, are also available at: http://www.academicintegrity.utas.edu.au

Referencing

The preferred text referencing systems for the School is the Harvard system (also referred to as the author-date system). In your written work you will need to support your ideas by referring to scholarly literature, works of art and/or inventions. For information on presentation of assignments, including referencing styles: http://utas.libguides.com/referencing

It is important that you understand how to correctly refer to the work of others and maintain academic integrity. Failure to appropriately acknowledge the ideas of others constitutes academic dishonesty (plagiarism), a matter considered by the University of Tasmania as a serious offence. The university document on plagiarism contains information about referencing the work or ideas of others (see http://www.utas.edu.au/plagiarism/).

Submissions

The details of the submission method (paper, electronic or other) for each assignment will be supplied in a separate assignment specification sheet. All in-semester assignment submissions (including electronic submissions) are to include an Assignment Cover Sheet which includes a statement confirming that the submission is your own work. The Assignment Cover Sheet is available from the School Help Desk in Launceston and Hobart, and on the School’s web site: http://www.cis.utas.edu.au/cisview/resources.jsp.

Students must take responsibility for the correct submission of their assignments. Students are expected to adhere to the following procedure for submission:

- Submitted files MUST be checked by the student to ensure that correct submission of the file has been undertaken.
- Students are expected to notify the Lecturer WITHIN TWO HOURS of submission if their files have not been submitted correctly.
- Students must take responsibility for safely backing up of their own files during the academic year to ensure that no files are permanently lost.

Extensions

Assessment items will not be accepted after the due date except under the conditions stated in the School policy on late assessment. http://www.cis.utas.edu.au/downloads/ExtensionPolicy.pdf (PDF - 100KB).

Review of Assessment and Appeals

1. It is expected that students will adhere to the following policy for review of any piece of continuous assessment.
   a. Within 5 days of the release of the assessment result, the student should request an appointment with the Lecturer. The student should be prepared to discuss specifically which section of the marking criteria they are disputing and why they consider the mark is inappropriate.
   b. Following this discussion, students may request a formal remark of the original submission (in accordance with Rule of Academic Assessment 111, clause 22.1). This remark will be undertaken, where practicable, by an alternative assessor.

2. Students may also request a review of the final result in a unit. The request and payment must be made within 10 days from the date of the result notification. Students are referred to Rule of Academic Assessment 111, clause 23 at http://www.utas.edu.au/universitycouncil/legislation/rule111.pdf and http://www.admin.utas.edu.au/ac_serv/flowchart_review_assesment.pdf.

Complaints Procedure

It is expected that students will adhere to the following policy for making any complaint or grievance directly related to a Unit:

a. In the first instance, students are to approach the Lecturer or Unit Coordinator concerned and arrange a time to speak with them about their concern.

b. If an issue remains unresolved, the student should approach the Head of School and arrange a time to speak with them about their concern.

If the School’s internal policy of complaints is unable to resolve an issue, students should consult Ordinance 8 Student Complaints for further direction, see http://acserv.admin.utas.edu.au/complaints_info.html

Formal Examination
The formal examination is conducted by the University Registrar. The 'Current Students' section on the university website contains information about the conduct of, and timetable for, formal examinations.

**Final Grade**

Passing grades will be awarded based on the AVCC guidelines:

- PP at least 50% of the overall mark but less than 60%
- CR at least 60% of the overall mark but less than 70%
- DN at least 70% of the overall mark but less than 80%
- HD at least 80% of the overall mark

In order to comply with the benchmarks set by the Faculty of Science, Engineering & Technology for distribution of grades in units, both the in-semester and examination marks that students obtain may be adjusted either upwards or downwards. See [http://fcms.its.utas.edu.au/scieng/scieng/policies.asp](http://fcms.its.utas.edu.au/scieng/scieng/policies.asp) for details of the Faculty Assessment Guidelines.