
OIDD6800 Operations Strategy Practicum

Fall 2023

Tuesdays 3:30-6:30

COURSE SYLLABUS

Instructor: Sean Willems, willems@wharton.upenn.edu

Office hours: Sean holds office hours in JMMH 552 on Tuesdays 2:30-2:30 p.m. I also commit to meet anyone within 24 hours of a request. Never hesitate to reach out. Just send a note with two times that work for you and I will make one work.

Course Objective

The operations strategy practicum provides students with the opportunity to work on a real-world operations problem. Students work in teams tasked with addressing a business issue for a client using the tools and approaches of operations analytics. The team works with the client to define the problem, acquire & prepare data, convert data to information, organize & complete the analysis, develop insights & recommendations, and then communicate the results back to the client through a written report and an oral presentation.

Past projects have included forecasting demand at Intel, optimizing commodity purchasing at Google, increasing capacity available at the Greater Boston Food Bank, determining the cost to serve different markets at formlabs, optimizing product assortment at Craft, determining staffing requirements at Philips, and minimizing transportation costs at Nissan.

How A Practicum Differs From An Independent Study

Students taking an independent study can work in teams but there is little coordination across teams. A practicum provides structure for different teams to learn about all projects in the practicum. Students get the opportunity to see what is common and different across projects, both in their outcomes but also their intermediate process steps. It is the shared experience and workload of a practicum that provides the most value to students. The practicum is not M students assigned to N disjoint projects. The practicum is M students on N projects comparing and contrasting what is common across projects, what is different, what is working well, what is not working, and how all teams can improve as the semester progresses.

Roles and Responsibilities

The team will set times for standing weekly meetings with both the instructor and client. Tuesday class meetings will include a mixture of workshops, faculty facilitated inter-team learning sessions with deliverables, and formal team Report Outs. On Report Out dates, each team will have two team members give a brief presentation summarizing project status. Each team must schedule and deliver a formal graded milestone presentation with the client when approximately half to two-thirds of the project is complete. The final client presentations will be scheduled to occur before December 8, 2023. The team will also deliver a final Technical Report to the capstone partner.

OIDD6800 Operations Strategy Practicum – Course Outline

Day	Date	Topic
Tue	Aug. 29	Introduction and course overview
Tue	Sep. 5	CPG data set, converting information to knowledge
Tue	Sep. 12	Intel forecasting data set, converting information to knowledge
Tue	Sep. 19	Converting data to information, and defining the project
Tue	Sep. 26	Converting information to knowledge, and summarizing the problem with descriptive statistics
Tue	Oct. 3	Developing minimally sufficient example, technical report out from each team
Tue	Oct. 24	Applying analytics to the information, establishing base case and alternatives
Tue	Oct. 31	Simplify and accelerate
Tue	Nov. 7	Presentation strategies
Tue	Nov. 14	Preliminary recommendations, technical report out from each team
Tue	Nov. 21	No Class Today (Thursday Schedule)
Tue	Nov. 28	Converting knowledge to wisdom, documenting the work
Tue	Dec. 5	Course summary identifying common themes and learnings across teams

Grading and Assignments

The grading of OIDD6800 will be based on the following weights:

- 10% Case assignments: CPG and Intel data set analysis
- 10% Class participation
- 40% Company presentation and report
- 20% In-class report out presentations
- 20% Peer evaluations

Case assignments

The course begins with two cases that require students to convert data to information and information to knowledge. These assignments can be done individually or with other students.

Class participation

Because participation is a prerequisite to learning and attendance is a prerequisite to participation, class attendance is required. Please inform us if you know in advance that you will need to miss a class. Multiple absences will influence your grade.

Regularly engaging in discussion of cases and readings, asking questions that lead to better understanding of a concept by the class as a whole, clarifying concepts, and sharing professional experience about course topics constitute superior class participation and contribute to our collective learning. Some criteria that we will use to judge effective class participation include:

1. Is the participant a good listener?
2. Is the participant concise and articulate?
3. Are the points made relevant to the current discussion? Are they linked to the comments of others?
4. Do the comments show clear evidence of appropriate and insightful analysis of the case?
5. Is there a willingness to participate?

At the end of the semester, students are placed into one of four class participation categories. You do not need to worry that your class participation grade is being micromanaged. No one event will make, or break, your participation grade. Instead, think of your participation grade as the overall impression the quality and quantity of your participation makes on the entire course-learning experience.

Company presentation and report

The course is the practicum and the practicum is the course. Each project has a specific set of deliverables determined by the company in collaboration with the course instructor and students. The course is built around these requirements, with intermediate deliverables specified in the syllabus. The final deliverable will include a technical report not to exceed six pages, a 30-minute presentation to the company, and a workbook documenting the analysis performed.

In-class technical report out

Each team will formally report out to the class twice. These report outs will be 15 minutes, and every team member should present in at least one of the report outs.

Peer evaluations

Practicum teams will submit peer evaluations documenting each student's contribution to the project.

Academic Integrity

When preparing cases and assignments you should not receive input from anyone who has already participated in a faculty-led discussion of the same material, be it at Wharton or another school. When preparing any graded assignment you may *not* consult or use material not already included in the course packet or posted on the course webpage, unless this has been explicitly authorized by the instructor. In particular, using material from previous editions of this course or courses offered at other schools is strictly prohibited. Also, no individual may be listed as a co-author of a team assignment unless that person has contributed to the work submitted in a substantial manner. Each member of the team is fully responsible for ensuring that each submitted assignment is done according to the expected professional standards and the academic integrity policy.

The academic integrity policy of this course will be enforced, and any violators would expose themselves to the most serious consequences. In addition, you will be held personally responsible for confronting and reporting any violations that come to your attention. Finally, if at any point during the course you believe that you may be violating this academic integrity policy, or if its implications in your particular situation are not completely clear, you should immediately contact the instructor for clarification.