

School of Information
MARA 295: Organization Consulting Project (6 credits) Handbook
August 2014

Introduction

The Organizational Consulting Project is the means by which a student in the MARA degree program partially satisfies the University's requirements for a "culminating experience." The goal of the Organizational Consulting Project is to provide an integrative opportunity for the student to apply at a high level the knowledge and skills developed in the program.

Eligibility

Only students in good standing may take MARA 295, the two-semester, 6-unit culminating course. To be in good standing:

- ✓ all Incompletes of record must be removed prior to submission deadline;
- ✓ your GPA must be 3.00 or higher;
- ✓ you must have a letter of recommendation from at least one MARA instructor;
- ✓ and you must have approval of the MARA advisor.

Students will receive a CR for the first semester of MARA 295 for successful completion of the first phase of the project. Students will receive a CR for the second semester of MARA 295 for successful completion of the Organizational Consulting Project.

Registration

Students will be registered for MARA 295: MARA Organizational Consulting Project if they petition the MARA program coordinator and provide proof of eligibility as indicated above. The six credits for these courses count toward the total of 42 units required for the MARA degree.

If your address changes during the semester, please notify the San Jose office.

General Information and Process

Coordination

The Organizational Consulting Project (OCP) is coordinated by the Instructor of Record. Responsibilities include maintaining the course handbook, maintaining the content of the course site, posting grades, assigning second readers where necessary, and convening a faculty review committee for any proposed disqualification.

The MARA Instructor of Record assesses the Organizational Consulting Project and provides feedback to the student.

Overview

The scope of the Organizational Consulting Project is substantive such that the client would normally pay a substantial consulting fee for the level of work. (However, because this is a learning experience it is not expected that the student will be paid.)

The client will typically be the student's current employer or another selected organization.

The major deliverables are:

- ✓ Approval of the SJSU ethical review as appropriate;
- ✓ Proposal and presentation to the client;
- ✓ The final Organizational Consulting Project report;
- ✓ The presentation of the report to the client.

Orientation

An orientation session will be held in preceding the semester in which the course will be started.

Students are expected to work independently on the project, interfacing with the employees of the client site as necessary.

The Organizational Consulting Project comprises 6 credits taken over two semesters; as such, students should expect to devote a minimum of 320 hours (the equivalent of eight weeks of full-time work) to the project.

The client may expect a confidentiality agreement. Regardless, no project will be used as a model by the School without the express consent of both the student and the client. A form for this purpose will be included in the completed report, right after the signature page attesting to the completion of the report.

The project will represent the student's problem-solving and analytical abilities as well as project management and self-management skills.

Successful Completion – Phase 1

Organizational Consulting Project Proposal

- ✓ Sign off form for the client, consultant (student), instructor
- ✓ Introduction
- ✓ Client situation and problem definition
 - Description of the organization
 - Concerns, issues, problems that require action
- ✓ Project purpose and scope
- ✓ Approach and methodology
 - Research approach and data gathering initiatives to be undertaken to accomplish the project
- ✓ Project schedule and milestone dates with specific deliverables for the end of phase 1, first semester and phase 2, second semester.
- ✓ Project organization
 - Information required from the client
- ✓ Timing and costs
- ✓ Estimate of hours and expenses
- ✓ Anticipated outcomes and benefits
- ✓ Summary of project deliverables
- ✓ Consultant's (student's) credentials and contact information

Successful Completion – Phase 2

Completed Organizational Consulting Project and Final Report

Key elements will include a cover letter addressed to the client and this content:

- ✓ Cover (with sign-off of student, client, advisor);
- ✓ Acknowledgements;
- ✓ Contents;
- ✓ Executive summary;
- ✓ Introduction
 - organization/sector
 - present situation and problem definition (concerns, issues, problems that require action)
 - project objectives
 - organization of the report
- ✓ Research methodology and data gathering steps;
 - Description of findings from best practices research (literature review)
- ✓ Situation Analysis;
 - Factors that gave rise to problem
- ✓ Research findings on organization;
 - and discussion of findings with conclusions
- ✓ Recommendations for improvement/change and Plan for action/implementation;
 - Short and long term
 - implication of each recommendation
- ✓ References;

- Annotated bibliography; APA format required
- ✓ Appendices.

The student will include a schedule and time log for the Organizational Consulting Project. Major time elements will include initial consultation with the client, client-based information collection (e.g., factual through document analysis, subjective through interviews and focus groups), research review on best practice(s), data validation/confirmation, development of report outline and preliminary drafting, finalization and submission. The time log is submitted to the instructor as a separate document.

The final report will be 60-100 pages plus appendices. Preferred format is Times Roman 12-point font, one and a half spacing. The report must be created in Word and submitted in digital format.

The Organizational Consulting Project is due on same day as the final scheduled day of classes.

Timeline for 2 terms

Phase 1 (term 1)

Weeks 1-5

- Develop project idea and problem definition
- Approach potential client and obtain informal support
- Prepare Project Description form
- Complete ethical review forms for institutional review board as appropriate
- Complete Organizational Consulting Project Proposal
- Present proposal to OCP coordinator and team during scheduled review appointment
- Submit formal proposal to client for approval
- Begin project

Monthly

- Monthly Status Reports

End of First semester

- Submit Progress report

Phase 2 (term 2)

Monthly

- Monthly Status Reports

End of Second semester

- Submit final report to MARA Instructor
- Include signature page in front of final report signed and dated by the client attesting to the completion of the projects agreed upon.
- Include form signed by client and student stating whether the OCP can be used as an exemplar for future students.
- Present final report to client

Criteria for Assessment

Basic: Approval Signatures and dates; Appropriate Length; Appendices

Style: Structure and Presentation; Grammar and Spelling

Contents: Key Elements Included; Value-Added Component to Client

Supplementary Materials: Original Proposal; Diary (time log; correspondence; record of conversations, meetings; time sheets; hours); Presentation of Proposal and of Report (e.g., PowerPoint slides)

Right to Appeal

Students may appeal disqualification from the MARA program under the SJSU Academic Senate Policy F-96-11 II-C. Please also read the Student Rights and Responsibilities section in the San Jose State University Catalog. The first step is to direct a letter to the University's Admissions and Standards Committee c/o Associate Dean, College of Applied Sciences and Arts with a copy also sent to the Director of SLIS. The appeal letter must provide the facts to be taken into account in evaluating your request. The Ombudsman screens cases for the Student Fairness Committee; the Student Fairness Committee hears the complaints of violations of student rights.

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**MARA Degree Program
Organizational Consulting Project Description**

Preliminary Project Description for MARA 295

Name:

Client Name:

Client Information:

Project purpose and objectives:

Anticipated outcomes and benefits:

For Office Use Only:
Comments and response from MARA coordinator:

Date proposal approved by coordinator:

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**MARA Degree Program
Organizational Consulting Project Proposal**

Consultant (Student) Name:

Client Name:

Project purpose and objectives:

Anticipated outcomes and benefits:

Deliverables for Phase 1 (Fall MARA 295):

Deliverables for Phase 2 (Spring MARA 295):

This is to certify that the undersigned agree to the Organizational Project Proposal planned for the Fall and Spring of years _____ and _____.

| | |
|--------------------|-------|
| Student | |
| Signature: | Date: |
| Client | |
| Signature | Date: |
| OCP Advisor | |
| Signature: | Date: |

A copy of this signed document will be retained by the MARA coordinator.

For Office Use Only:
Comments and response from MARA coordinator:

Date proposal approved by coordinator:

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**MARA Degree Program
Organizational Consulting Project**

Status Report

General Information

Student Name:

Time Period Covered by this Report:

Project Progress:

- Accomplishments this period
- Not accomplished this period
- Suggested remedies
- Timeframe for major deliverables
- Timeframe for milestones

Ongoing issues and challenges:

- List ongoing issues and challenges

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**MARA Program
Organizational Consulting Project**

Phase 1: Progress Report

Sign-Off Form for Client, Consultant (student), and MARA advisor

This is to certify that phase 1 of the Organizational Consulting Project in progress by the undersigned student has been completed to the satisfaction of the client and in accordance with the project proposal approved by both the client and the MARA advisor.

| | |
|---------------------|-------|
| Student | |
| Signature: | Date: |
| Client | |
| Signature | Date: |
| MARA Advisor | |
| Signature: | Date: |

A copy of this signed document will be retained by the MARA coordinator.

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**MARA Program
Organizational Consulting Project**

Phase 2: Final Report

Sign-Off Form for Client, Consultant (student), and MARA advisor

This is to certify that the Organizational Consulting Project completed by the undersigned student has been completed to the satisfaction of the client and in accordance with the project proposal approved by both the client and the MARA advisor.

| | |
|--------------------|-------|
| Student | |
| Signature: | Date: |
| Client | |
| Signature | Date: |
| OCP Advisor | |
| Signature: | Date: |

Once this project has been signed off by all three parties, a final copy of the report will be presented to the OCP client for their reference.

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**MARA Program
Organizational Consulting Project**

Sign-Off Form for Use of Project/Report as Exemplar

This is to indicate that the Organizational Consulting Project completed by the undersigned student can or cannot be used as a model for future OCP students. Additional space is provided in the event that the OCP client must obtain additional permission to share this project/report.

| Party | Approve | | Signature | Date |
|-------------------------------|---------|----|-----------|------|
| | Yes | No | | |
| Consultant (student) | | | | |
| OCP client | | | | |
| Additional OCP site signature | | | | |
| Additional OCP site signature | | | | |

This Organizational Consulting project/report