IS6602 - Information Systems Consulting - Revision

Wk	Title	Details
1	Introduction	1. **Definitions of Consulting**. 2. **Core Responsibilities of a Consultant** (problem investigation, employ different tools, techniques and theories that support their investigations, stakeholder engagement, communication, recommendation). 3. **Types of Consulting** (by service area: management/strategy, operations, IT, HR, finance; by workplace: in-house, internal, external; by focus: expert knowledge, process). 4. ERP (**Enterprise** Resource Planning) system – provides a basic structure and functional components (departments) of an organization. ERP together with a basic organization chart can help consultants understand what service area they are dealing with, and how it may interact with other functional components (departments). 5. **Consultant Independence.:** e.g. work independently, unbiased, and do their own analysis. 6. **Consultant Attitudes and Aptitudes** (work ethics, teamwork, adaptability, emotional control, client focus). 7. **Symbolic Convergence & Divergence** in Consulting (cross-cultural/ organisational communication, mutual understanding, value alignment) 8. **Essential Consulting Skills** (communication, problem-solving, analytical thinking, persuasion, technical/ product knowledge, attention to detail) 9. **Systematic Tools & Methods**: Tools for: a) communication (data collection), b) problem analysis tools (modelling tools, instrumental theories, research methods), c) plan for change (Action-oriented theories or methods designed to enact change). 10. **Research Methods for Consulting**: one research method suitable for practicing consultants is Action Research (AR), it serves as a framework: from problem identification to final solution) 11. Consulting **in this course**: IS & Digital Transformation Consulting.
2	Consulting Ethics and Legal Issues	1. **Foundational of Ethics**: Defines ethics as behavior-shaping principles/values, notes ethics apply to situations with potential harm, and highlights the personal, subjective nature of ethics due to differing individual values/beliefs. 2. **Consultants' Ethical Obligation**: Consultants must fully understand a client's organizational context, industry practices, and cultural/linguistic norms to provide valid advice, framing this understanding as a core ethical duty. 3. **Five Ethical Principles for Consultants**.: • Confidentiality, • Faithfulness,

		• Beneficence • Nonmaleficence, • Benefits & Compensation, • Legality. 4. **NDA and Negotiations**: Confidentiality for Consultants. Details the requirement to protect all client information unless authorized to disclose; notes NDAs as a legal safeguard. 5. **Ethics Planning**, **respect** and **ethics requirements**: Example of CityU research ethical form.
3	Methods I: Action Research	**Introduction to Action Research** (AR): AR is a research and organisational change method adopted by consultants, offering a structured approach aligned with proprietary consulting firm methods. **Origins of AR**: a three-stage Unfreezing-Changing-Refreezing process for mindset and organisational change. **Lewin's AR and Consulting Practice**: collaborating with clients to define problems (rationalization), designing targeted change processes, and ensuring client acceptance of new mindsets (institutionalization), with client experience as the foundation of consulting success. **Later AR Model Developments**: expanded Lewin's 3-stage model to a cyclical 5-stage model (Diagnosis-Action Planning-Action Taking-Evaluation-Reflection) and introduced the requirement for a formal consultant-client agreement. **AR Characteristics**: Iterative, Rigorous, Collaborative. **Theories**: They are used to describe and explain how things actually work. They guide and structure the design of a project. **Principles of** AR (2004 Model): five principles and 31 criteria. Five principles: 1. Consultant-Client Agreement 2. Cyclical Process Model 3. Role of Theory 4. Change through Action 5. Specification of Learning **Two different types of theory** (2012 AR Model).: **instrumental and focal**. (What are they and Which to be selected)

		Instrumental theories are particularly valuable for diagnosis and planning. • Balanced Scorecard • Value Shop, Value Chain, • Business Process Models • Porter's Five Forces Analysis • SWOT and PEST • Work Systems Theory **Focal Theory provides the basis for action-oriented change**. • Theory of Planned Behaviour • Technology Adoption Model • Punctuated Equilibrium Theory • Transactive Memory Theory **Indigenous Theory**: You may need to develop your own theory, perhaps after the intervention is completed.
4	Methods II: Preparing for Diagnosis	AR **Framework Limitations**: AR provides a broad consulting framework but lacks detailed work processes. **Diagnostic Phase Introduction**: Outlines that diagnosis is often the longest AR phase (timeline dependent on scope, client cooperation, problem complexity, etc.) and that accurate diagnosis is critical for effective subsequent actions—yet challenging due to hidden underlying causes, employee fear, and conflicting stakeholder opinions. **Aspects of Diagnosis**: • Preparation for diagnosis • Communication with the project champion • Recognising the needs of different stakeholders • Identifying gaps and targets • Identifying requirements • Keeping an open mind at all times **Blended Consultant Roles**: Diagnosis + Education: Explores how consultants may take on educational roles and raises questions about consultant responsibilities (e.g., educator, counsellor) and the need for multi-talented skills.

		Building Trust and Confidence in Consultant-Client Relationships: Emphasizes trust as a foundation for consulting (critical for access to people/ places/documents) and confidence (breeds client confidence); poses questions about how to build trust and demonstrate confidence as a consultant. **Consultant as Detective**: requires detective-like skills to answer who, what, where, when, why, how about organizational issues. **Multi-Dimensional Problem Solving**: organizational problems rarely involve only IT—they cross departments/people and may have social, political, or educational dimensions; explores consultant responsibilities to address non-IT issues and be knowledgeable across multiple topics. **Gaps, Goals, and Dynamic Needs Analysis**: Defines needs analysis as identifying the gap between an organization's current state and desired future state (requiring evaluation, goal-setting, and progress measurement); notes needs are dynamic (change over time, require multiple iterations) and depend on diverse circumstances. **A Balanced Diagnosis**: needs to talk to a wide range of people, aim to satisfy <u>all</u> their needs. **Barriers and Arguments for Employee Interviews**: Identifies a key barrier to needs assessment and outlines the benefits.
5	Methods III: Tools, Techniques and Theories • Data collection, • Situation Analysis • Requirements Analysis	**Effective Question Design for Requirements Analysis**: Guidelines for creating questions (avoid yes/no answers, pre-test for clarity, focus on single topics, maintain neutrality, limit to essential queries). **Representative Sampling in Data Gathering**: The importance of surveying a diverse group of stakeholders (not just managers) to gain a broad, accurate perspective of organizational problems. **Six key techniques for gathering data for problem** diagnosis.: • surveys/questionnaires, • interviews, • focus groups, • documents, • observations, • narratives **Situation & Requirements Analysis Tools**: A suite of modelling and analytical tools for organizational problem analysis, including • Balanced Scorecard (BSC), • Business Process Modelling (BPM), • Work Systems Analysis (WSA),

		• SWOT Analysis.
6	Methods IV: The Work Systems Method	**The Importance of Precision**: the Work Systems Model (WSM) is introduced as a tool to achieve this precision. **Work Systems Model/Method (WSM)** – describes organizational work, required technologies, and value creation. Its purpose is to identify flaws in organizational systems (processes, tech, people) and guide design improvements. **Seven Key Technology Temptations**: Outlines common false assumptions about technology in organizations T1: tech as a "magic bullet, T2: tech being the entire system, neglecting managerial oversight of tech. T3: People believe that technology is responsible for itself! T4: Mangers avoid measuring anything T5: When analysis is done, it tends to be superficial. T6: People assume that systems operate in a vacuum (A system has users, values etc) T7: People imagine that systems implement themselves (hiring, training, persuading etc) Overcoming Temptations: Provides actionable strategies to avoid the seven tech temptations: • Focus on the real, business issues • Focus on how work is done • Don't let the schedule run the project • Don't let politicians run the project • Think of systems as work systems, supported by IT, not as IT systems. **Key Commonalities of All Work Systems**: Identifies universal traits of work systems: • reliance on people, info, and tech; • multiple success metrics; • presence of problems/opportunities; • critical role of human communication;

		• operation within a social environment; • production of goods/services for customers) and • stresses that IT is only one component of the broader system. **Work System Framework**:Presents a visual framework of the core components that define any work system: Participants, Information, Technologies, Work Practices, Products & Services, Customers, Infrastructure, Environment, and Strategy—these components form the basis for analyzing and improving work systems. **Work Systems Snapshot**: Provides Work Systems Snapshot templates that capture the core framework components in action, serving as a practical tool for data collection and system analysis via interviews/observations. **How WSM Operates** – Core Functionality: Explains WSM's purpose for business professionals and consultants (structured system exploration), key attributes (flexible, rigorous, business problem-focused), and its alignment with standard systems analysis steps: define the problem, gather/analyze data, identify alternatives, select a preferred solution. **WSM's Three Phases of Analysis**: Breaks WSM into three sequential phases for system improvement: SO (Identify Systems and Opportunities) (define the problem), AP (Analyze the System and Identify Possibilities) (understand current issues/improvement potential), and RJ (Recommend and Justify Changes) (propose and validate solutions). **WSM's 3-Level Analytical Structure**: Details a hierarchical 3-level structure for WSM's three phases: Level 1 (high-level phase headings), Level 2 (24 critical guiding questions—4 for SO, 10 for AP, 10 for RJ), and Level 3 (topics/guidelines to deepen thinking for each Level 2 question). **WSM's Broad Organizational Role & Limitations**: WSM as a customizable starting point for organizational system analysis, its focus on single work systems (not inter-system interactions—an additional consideration for consultants), and its ability to be applied at varying levels of detail (Level 2 = minimum, Level 3 = deep analysis)
7	Initial Coursework Presentations	(1) Present your work and (2) listen to and learn from other team's project work.
8	Planning Actions: Creating a Proposal for the Client	**From Diagnosis to Action Planning**

		The diagnostic stage of consulting is often lengthy (involving stakeholder interviews and reconciling perspectives), and action planning is the second key step that must be directly tied to diagnostic results. Consultants must create a detailed, professionally crafted (organized, persuasive) plan for the client. **Outline Structure of the Consulting Plan**: A structured plan includes two core sections: (I) consultant background (experience, bios/CVs) and clear, measurable, feasible objectives/scope ; (II) sequential actionable steps (tied to needs assessment, with stakeholder roles, data collection plans, flexible timetables/milestones) and transparent cost breakdowns (fees, expenses). **Six Core Principles for Preparing a Consulting Proposal** • Principle 1: Client Communication • Principle 2: Perfection in Proposal Crafting • Principle 3: Fulfill Client Requests (and Navigate Add-Ons) • Principle 4: Translate Needs into Measurable Objectives & Targets • Principle 5: Be specific in Interventions & Responsibilities • Principle 6: Pre-Planned Outcome Evaluation **Cost Estimation for Consulting Projects** (Time; Resources; Money).: Time estimates for work, e.g. preparation, problem-solving, and follow-up. Resources: Human cost (hourly rates for the each team member), Resources: tools, e.g. hardware & software, Money: Expenses (tax, travel, insurance). Pricing also depends on client history (goodwill low-cost work), team expertise/qualifications, and unique skill premiums. **Professional Appearance for Consultants:** Consultants must dress in line with client expectations (casual for tech/Silicon Valley, formal for banks/law firms; avoid over-formality for informal clients like farming communities), hide unprofessional piercings/tattoos when needed, and project confidence, authority, honesty, and credibility—expert-like appearance earns respect and more work. **Proposal Delivery**: Written Document and Formal Presentation: a detailed written document (with market research and full plan details) and a team-based formal presentation to the client (including managers, CIOs, technical staff).
`9	Implementing Interventions	**Translating Plans into Actions**: converting a plan into a detailed, technical working plan with timelines, clear team responsibilities, and project management tools (PERT, Gantt Charts). Emphasizes early communication with employees and ensuring they benefit to prevent future resistance, as employee buy-in is foundational to success.

		Effective Change Implementation Speed & Phased Approach: Guidance on pacing change (slow, incremental start is ideal to avoid failure; quick change has high risk) and a phased methodology: re-engineer work processes first, identify reorganizable specific processes via a Work Systems Snapshot, train employees, and only then introduce new technology. **Adapting to Clients' Changing Needs & Interruptions**: Recognition that client requirements/scope will evolve over long-term projects (needing revisions, close client contact via weekly meetings, and cost impact assessments) and that unplanned interruptions (cancelled meetings) are common. Advises consultants to protect their interests, enforce client compensation for incurred costs (flights, hotels), and review legal/contractual implications of major client changes/ project abandonment. **The Role of Theories in Actions**: Explains that Action Research requires theory to underpin problem diagnosis and implementation actions, guide data collection for impact assessment, and that theoretical concepts must be translated into client-friendly, practical solutions. Details application of three key theories with real-world/China-specific considerations: - TAM (Technology Adoption Model): Focuses on ease of use/usefulness for tech adoption. - TMT (Transactive Memory Theory): Highlights network strength (who you know) for productivity. - PET (Punctuated Equilibrium Theory): Enables radical change in stable organizations via a change agent. **Proof of Concept (PoC) for Implementation**: The importance of testing solutions on a small scale to validate feasibility, build client trust, and fine-tune before large-scale rollout. Emphasizes selecting a high-chance-of-success context (enthusiastic employees/teams) and warns that PoC failure can make organizational implementation toxic and unfeasible. **Employee Resistance**: employee resistance as an inevitable consulting challenge . Identifies inertia as a key cause (people avoid change unless innovations dramatically improve their work). **Strategies for Dealing with Resistance**.: The primary approach: prevent resistance from developing by maintaining constant, close contact with employees, and build better relationship with employees which helps get better insight of the situation and the solutions that are acceptable to them, and involving them in the entire Action Research (AR) cycle (diagnosis, planning, intervention, testing) to ensure their needs and feedback are integrated into the process. **Intervention Evaluation & Impact Assessment**: Outlines the final two AR cycle stages (evaluation and learning): comparing pre- and post-intervention states to measure tangible improvements and gauge employee sentiment. Notes that interventions may only partially address the target problem and that a second intervention attempt (with more diagnosis/planning) may be necessary.

		Post-Implementation Reporting & Lessons Learned: Defines the consultant's reporting duties: a client-facing report summarizing actions, successes, and outstanding work; and an internal, honest report for the consulting team to inform future projects. **Ethical Issues in Implementation Interventions**: Identifies four core ethical considerations that guide consulting practice during implementation: participation (of employees/stakeholders), competence (of the consulting team), persistence (in driving meaningful change), and protecting the rights and duties of all involved parties.
10	Velox – A Case Study of Consulting in China **(TBC)**	**Course revision**
11	Guest Speaker: Wilson Xu, Associate Director of Advisory, Management Consulting with KPMG; Student Q&A Project consultation	
12	Guest Speaker: Fred Leung, formerly IT Department head of two Digital Banks; Student Q&A Project consultation	
13	Final Coursework Presentations: (1) Present your work and (2) listen to and learn from other team's project work.	
Exam Date: To be confirmed		