UC Davis, MSBA Program

BAX 463 - Spring 2023

Course name: Practicum Analysis & Implementation
Primary Instructor: John Carter
Co-Instructor: Carrie Beam
Days / Time / Location: (all times pacific):

All Students (in person):

Saturday, April 1	10:00am – 5:00pm	Hastings, Rooms LL01/LL02
Saturday May 27	2:00pm – 5:00 pm	Hastings, Room LL01/LL02

All Students (remote):
Wednesdays – April 19, May 3, May 17, May 24
●   Section 1a: 8:30am – 10:20am
●   Section 1b: 5:00 pm - 6:50 pm
●   Section 2a   10:40am – 12:30pm
●   Sections 2b: 12:50pm – 2:40pm

Practicum Huddles (remote via Zoom):
Weekly 30-minute sessions for each practicum team and instructor
Day/time   TBD

Note: syllabus is subject to updating by instructor at any time. Last updated 3/14/2023

What Is This Course About?

The BAX 46x course sequence (i.e., BAX 461, 462 and 463) enables students to learn key skills and competencies to successfully deliver analytical projects in a business environment. The learnings from BAX 46x are applied in the student assigned practicum projects.

The practicum is the most intensive unitary learning intervention in the MSBA. Its raison d'etre is to help students *master analytics delivery* by traversing the analytics consulting life-cycle: the complete path from project initiation to delivery.

Students begin their practicum journey by gaining knowledge and developing comprehension: framing and scoping the opportunity and its payoffs, familiarizing themselves with data, setting up an effective team structure and working protocols, and developing productive engagement with the sponsoring MSBA industry partner ("MIP".)
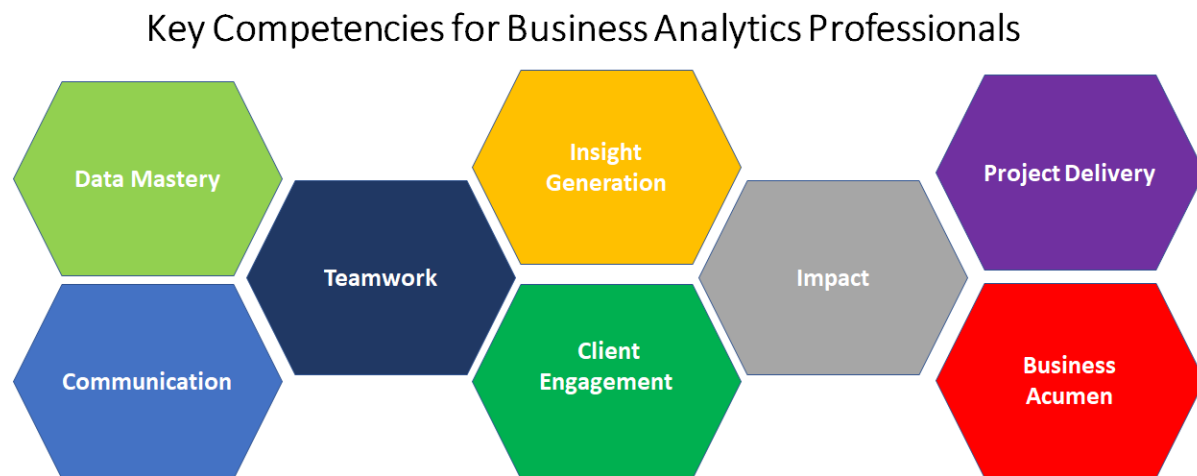
As each project unfolds, teams extract insights from the available information, convert data insights to business outcomes, persuade their MIP of the value of their work, and endeavor to

manifest that value through implementation. By the end of the MSBA, each team should secure substantive feedback from their MIP on the value of their consulting engagement.

What Are the Necessary Skills for Business Analytics Professionals?

The associated three course sequence - BAX 461, 462 and 463 - supports two key desired outcomes: for each team to provide value to the MIP, and in the process, for each student to learn the skills and competencies needed to flourish as a business analytics professional.

The BAX 46x course sequence focuses on the development of 8 key competencies:

Key Competencies for Business Analytics Professionals

Data Mastery

Insight Generation

Project Delivery

Teamwork

Impact

Communication

Client Engagement

Business Acumen

These competencies include the ability to:
1. Acquire, clean, integrate, and analyze disparate data sources *#data_mastery*
2. Communicate effectively, verbally and in writing *#communication*
3. Work productively as part of a project team *#teamwork*
4. Produce valuable business insight that combines analytical results with qualitative study and secondary research *#insight_generation*
5. Engage constructively with the client (in our case, the MIP) *#client_engagement*
6. Create measurable and sustainable business impact *#impact*
7. Plan and deliver a complete project from initiation to final deployment *#project_delivery*
8. Understand business situations (financial, organizational, culture, etc.) and take appropriate actions to create positive outcomes *#business_acumen*

How does BAX 46x Enable Professional Proficiency?

BAX 46x has two parts: a pre-quarter workshop ("Booster") and in-quarter seminars ('Sustainer").

The pre-quarter **Booster workshop** provides extensive skill-building prior to the continuation of the practicum team projects. This upfront training enables teams to hit the ground running on their practicum projects for the upcoming quarter.

Sustainer seminars continue to build skills and competencies *in the context of students' project work*. In other words, we draw out the experiential learnings of individual projects and connect them to broader analytics consulting skills. The smaller class size (i.e., 25-students per section) balances instructional scale and skill transfer.

BAX 463 Learning Goals

The learning goals of BAX 462 are to continue to develop the 8 key competencies that are needed to deliver successful practicum projects. In the spring quarter, project focus typically shifts to completing promised project deliverables, generating relevant insights for business stakeholders, integrating proposed solutions into partner workflows and organizations, and disseminating the findings and outcomes through presentations and publications.

As the final course of the sequence, the focus of BAX 463 is on strengthening skills that will lead to a successful conclusion to the practicum project as well as preparing the students for the next job opportunity.

#	Learning goal	Competencies
1	Communicate effectively, verbally and in writing, within the project team, in the classroom, with MIP staff, and with other MSBA stakeholders, incorporating the diversity of their interests and abilities	#communication #client_engagement
2	Achieve "customer success" resulting in a highly delighted MIP.	#client_engagement
3	Complete your practicum project in a professional manner delivering positive outcomes and identifying opportunities for future business impact	#impact #project_delivery

Pedagogy and Texts

BAX 46x instructors employ active learning[1]. While *short* lectures are delivered from time to time, discussion and group activities form the foundation of learning. Pre-class readings (typically recent relevant articles from research journals or the popular press) and/or pre-

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[1] A wonderful introduction is available at https://www.harvardmagazine.com/2012/03/twilight-of-the-lecture

recorded lectures are assigned via Canvas, before class. Students should expect to be assessed on pre-class reading through discussion, in-class exercises and quizzes.

There is no textbook for the course. Readings are typically accessed through the UC Davis library VPN. Occasionally, for instance, if we're analyzing a business case from Harvard Business Publishing, a purchase cost comparable to a cup of Starbucks coffee may need to be incurred.

The Role of Feedback

Peer feedback is the sine qua non of professional teamwork. Thus, in the "clinical", i.e., practice-oriented, setting of the practicum, peer-to-peer learning predominates. Lessons learned from each other's' mistakes, especially when observed fresh, can be instructive in a way that lectures or books cannot. Students are expected to attentively observe and respectfully critique the experiences of other teams during structured activities and class conversation. This expectation can initially create discomfort, sometimes from the belief that the professor is the only qualified teacher, or from apprehension about conflict or loss of reputation. With practice, the discomfort alleviates and learning occurs.

Grades & Assignments

Course grades are based on individual responses on quizzes and activities, written assignments, team presentations, and pre-huddle updates. There are no examinations. Canvas will contain raw scores for each scored element, which will be normalized when final grades are calculated.

Category	Weight
Practicum Progress Assessment	20%
Customer Success Plan	10%
MIP Presentation Rehearsal	10%
Project Story	20%
Individual Engagement	10%
Contribution to Team Achievement	10%
Class Exercises and Quizzes	20%

Each component of grading is briefly described below. Each assignment contains a rubric which specifies how the assignment will be graded. Due dates are provided in the section at the end of this syllabus; last-minute changes are disseminated via Slack and Canvas.

Individual Engagement: 10% (individual)

Learning occurs fully when students engage fully in class and practicum huddle activities, contribute fair share to team output, and deport themselves professionally. Failure to demonstrate full professional engagement by, e.g., not responding to requests for input in class or remaining passive during discussions, arriving late or leaving early, attending to laptop or phone at inopportune times, or low peer evaluation scores from team members, shall lead to points deducted from the default full score. (See the following section on Behavioral Norms for more detail.)

Contribution to Team Achievement: 10% (individual)

This score is based on a peer-reviewed score for each team member as well as input from instructors. It is expected that each team member contributes substantially to the work required to deliver a successful project.

Project Story (version 1): 5% (team)
Project Story (final): 15% (team)

By the end of the MSBA, each team is expected to document its project story in a detailed article, in a format decided by the team. Potential formats include, but are not limited to:

- HBS-style case study
- Peer-reviewed journal article on applied analytics
- White paper for the MIP's marketing department
- A mini "master's thesis"

There is considerable flexibility on the exact format, subject to the goal that the "project story" be significantly more substantive than a class report, and that it be, in some sense, available to a general audience.

The first (or 'beta') version of the project story is to be submitted early in the quarter. Following the submission deadline, each team will meet with an MSBA Writing Fellow - multiple times, if necessary - to assess and revise. The associated Canvas assignment will be assigned a score only after the meeting has occurred.

The final project story uploaded to Canvas **is expected to be accompanied by a written commentary from the MIP.** The commentary may be as short as a single paragraph. However, it should explicitly include the MIP's understanding of the scope of the paper—whether it may be submitted for external publication, adopted by the MIP's marketing team, limited to classroom discussion only, deployed for MSBA/GSM use, etc.

MIP presentation rehearsal: 10% (team)

Before making the final project presentation to its MIP, each team makes a rehearsal presentation in class. The actual MIP presentation, in most cases, is between 20 and 30 minutes in duration. Due to logistical constraints, the rehearsal can be no longer than fifteen minutes per team (with a little more time for questions) so it should cover the highlights rather than every detail. The final MIP presentation should minimally include the deliverables, their business value, recommendations for further work and a summary of the hand-off materials.

Customer Success Plan 10% (team)

In Spring Quarter, each team will select **a "customer success manager" (CSM).** This is a role different from the team's ongoing project manager.   The CSM primary focus is to ensure that the MIP is fully satisfied with the deliverables from the practicum project. They will track and assure all aspects of the handover: both nailing down and synchronizing delivery expectations with the project manager and MIP stakeholders. The CSM role is so critical that for most of the quarter, the named team member should expect to focus mainly, if not entirely, on handover-related matters. The CSM may be the same individual as the PM, but past experience suggests against such a dual-assignment.

For this assignment, each team will submit a short (not expected to be more than 1,000 word) customer success plan. This plan will describe the specific activities that need to be accomplished to ensure a highly successful delivery of the final practicum project. More details will be provided in the Canvas assignment.

Practicum Progress Assessment: 20% (team)

In consultation with the MIP and based on observed progress in huddles, assignments and MIP meetings, the instructor scores each team's progress and accomplishments relative to the project's potential for success.   The following areas are used as input to grading:

1. Well-defined project deliverables
2. Significant progress on deliverables
3. Ongoing project management
4. Consistent work effort
5. Strong working relationship with MIP

Class Exercises and Quizzes: 20% (individual and team)

Individual and team quizzes and exercises are assigned during class sessions including both the in-person Booster sessions and remote Sustainer sessions.

The exercises and quizzes are *administered at any point in the class meeting or as homework to be completed outside of class and submitted.* They are generally based on materials from lectures, and pre-readings and pre-recorded videos.

Making up missed class exercises and quizzes is at the discretion of the instructor. For excused absences, the student will either be required to complete a make-up assignment or they will be excused from that exercise/quiz. If they are excused from the exercise/quiz, their grade for this component will be based on the average score of the exercises and quizzes that they have taken. Students will receive zero points for unexcused absences.

Behavioral Norms

To enhance the seminar learning environment, students are expected to act in a professionalmanner. Professional behavior includes adhering to course requirements, being respectful ofother class participants, and *actively* contributing to course-related discussions and activities*inside and outside class*. Specifically:
1. Students are expected to abide by the University of California-Davis code of conductfound at http://sja.ucdavis.edu/cac.html.
2. Doubts or questions should be communicated directly to the instructor as soon as feasible, via Slack or Zoom chat. In addition to the course channel (#bax461-3), eachpracticum group will have a dedicated channel for project-related communications (e.g., #pr-afw). Students are expected to use good judgment to separate individual queries from team queries and class queries.
3. Participants in pre-scheduled web meetings are expected to join from a quiet locationusing video and audio, i.e., to be full and equal contributors.
4. Unless discussed with the instructor *before the due date*, there will be no exceptions to assignment deadlines. An assignment submitted up to 24 hours late will lose 25% ofthe maximum score. Assignments submitted more than 24 hours past the deadline will merit a zero score.

Practicum Huddles

A course instructor meets separately with each practicum team, on a pre-arranged schedule, as well as additional ad-hoc meetings as needed. Each team member is expected to attend their team's meeting. The agenda includes reviewing project progress, data analyses, presentations, client communications, project plans, etc.as well as other ad hoc issues that arise from time to time.

Office Hours

Professors Carter and Beam will have scheduled office hours. In addition, students may set up appointments with course instructors individually as their needs dictate.

Course Calendar

Key dates	Event	Note
4/1	Booster sessions	Some preparation required. See class announcements.
4/4 – 4/6	Weekly Practicum Huddles Resume	
4/19	First Sustainer seminar	Note: Sustainer sessions will be online
4/27	Project Story (version 1)	Uploaded to Canvas and submitted for "publication"
5/4	Customer Success Plan	Uploaded to Canvas
5/18	Project Story (final)	Uploaded to Canvas.
5/24	MIP Rehearsal Presentations	Upload presentation to Canvas before class
5/27	Last day of course	In person class. Retrospect and prospect