MANAGEMENT CONSULTING

Combine consultant skills with an academic mindset

The programme is about

Programme pitch

The MC programme gives students the consultant experiences, skills and theories that prepare them for a head start in their consulting career.

Area of interest

New technologies, internationalization and connected markets have sparked a wave of transformation in the world of organizations. Many organizations are looking for answers on big questions. What strategy should we follow? Which organizational form fits best in the new environment? How do we ensure our change efforts pay off? Consultants play a crucial role in helping organizations to find answers to these challenges. They design and guide solutions when solutions have been defined.

The MC programme challenges students to gain the knowledge, mindset and skills a 21st century consultant needs. In the courses they experience, they design and apply inductive and abductive approaches to find answers, and they are trained in methods to present their answers convincingly. Creative problem solving and rhetoric are a key in the program, as consultants have to be convincing. That is the only power they can exploit in interaction with their clients, when acquiring assignments, when developing solutions and during implementation.

Core methodology

By confronting students with open questions students are trained in abductive problem solving. It is solving practical problems with the aid of some theory, but it is mainly based on inductive research methods like interviews and case studies that are qualitative and explorative. Theory is used to make sense of findings, and to approach a question as informed as you can, but without believing your tentative hypothesis will equal the answer. To get familiar with abductive consultant approaches students do many interviews and they study complex and real-life cases in almost every course.

Target group

The target group for the Management Consulting programme is as broad as the world of management consulting itself. Consultants focus on giving advice on such diverse areas as technology, human resource, organization design, strategy, IT, finance, quality management and more. Therefore the programme is open to students with a BSc degree in all these areas. In the past students with backgrounds like the following have entered our programme: Business administration, Economics, Public management, Psychology, Sociology, Engineering. More important than the background is that students have to be ambitious and that they are willing and able to work with unstructured problems, and that they can imagine there might be different futures possible.

Challenge to distinguish

• Honours programme in MC. Students follow two extra courses in a related specialization and participate in an additional consulting project, which adds 26 ects to their study.
• Consulting assignment. During the programme students have to carry out a real life consulting project. In this assignment you will be challenged to work on complex problems, under time pressure, with limited information and a client you need to convince your solution is the right one.
• Internships. The programme offers the possibility to do an internship, where students can further develop their consulting skills.
• Article context. Each year students interview a consultant and write an article about that. The best article gets published in the Management Consulting Review, the leading industry magazine in the Netherlands.
• Industry articles. Based on their master theses or projects students have contributed to white papers and industry articles, leading to exposure in the business world.
• Early thesis writing. Students with academic ambitions next to their consultancy interests can participate in an early thesis writing trajectory, aiming at publication or preparation for a part-time PhD project.
• Academic assignments. In the past several students have published high level academic articles with department staff based on their work in the Master thesis. This has led to exposure in the academic field.

Master’s relevance

Aspirational job (far future)

For many participants in the program their consultant career will aim at becoming: partner, principal or senior consultant in a consultancy firm, senior consultant in internal consulting departments or large firms, policy analyst, or independent consultant.

However, consultant can also be only your first job. Based on your experience as consultant you find out much about other sectors, firms and professions. It often happens that consultants move over to their clients in a management role in order to become more actively involved. Or the seek a more reflective profession and the become researchers. Or they discover their entrepreneurial talents. As orientation on your future career being consultant is the best first job you can have.

Actual placement (near future)

The actual placement of students depends critically on the bachelor programme students have followed. A bachelor in business administration prepares for general consulting, a bachelor in IT, HR or strategy prepares for careers specialized consulting jobs.

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Actual placement (branches)</th>
<th>Actual placement (roles)</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Consulting firm</td>
<td>Junior consultant</td>
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<tr>
<td>Trained in company</td>
<td>Government</td>
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<tr>
<td>Staff department (incl. internal consultancy)</td>
<td>Policy analyst</td>
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The programme is unique because

Academic

There is no other programme at the nexus of practice and academia that teaches students to structure and analyze fuzzy problems. Moreover, in academia the field of consultant studies is quite nascent. That creates ample opportunities for students to contribute to academic research on consultants with their master’s thesis. Some of these studies have been published in top journals, and alumni also combine their consultant career with academic research, a combination valued by many consultants.

Professional

The MC programme prepares students for a perfect first job. Being consultant gives you the opportunity to discover the not-for-profit and business world while working for different clients. The program provides students with the research mindset that will enable them to become a thought leader in their field, and it develops their critical and analytical skills.

Citizen

We believe consultants can make a difference by co-creating with their clients, by helping organizations become more responsible, and by contributing to innovative business strategies and public policies. In the program professional ethics is an important theme that runs through several courses, as consultants are quite active in defining the norms to evaluate organizations or to benchmark them. What they suggest as relevant performance indicators will affect our society for many years.

Learning goals and how the programme is designed

Learning goals

1. Have the advanced and original academic and research skills to contribute to the body of knowledge
2. Have thorough knowledge of relevant theory and methods
3. Have an academic approach to solving complex (business/economics) problems
4. Have the professional social skills to interact with other professionals
5. Have an horizon beyond the professional area
6. Are self-reflective professionals

How the programme is designed

1. Students have to apply and develop theory about consultants as well as carry out empirical research to solve client problems. The Research Seminar provides a methodological background, the other courses a theoretical background.
2. The theoretical learning links in the programme provides students with theories about consulting relating to career issues, consultant roles, change, thought leadership, professional service firms, consulting business modelling and the key skills, norms and values of consultants. We offer six consulting courses. To deepen their knowledge, students can additionally choose from several electives that are strongly based on the fostering student’s ability to act in response to strategic and organizational challenges.
3. To broaden your horizon beyond the core of strategy and organization, you can also choose electives from other programmes such as International Management, Leadership & Change Management, Strategy & Organization, and Human Resource Management. Several interdisciplinary electives offer an additional opportunity to deepen your knowledge of a topical issue in business and management beyond the boundaries of the Management Consulting programme.
4. Each course offers unstructured assignments, just like actual clients could give them. Students have to solve them based on research and theory by applying abductive methods. Assignments include reviewing a consultancy report and developing a new business model for a real consultancy. A consultancy project will be carried out in period 3 and there are possibilities for doing an internship.
5. The learning on skills includes groupwork and presentation skills, exercises on solving unstructured problems, evaluation skills, and creative skills necessary to develop advice.
6. Students are sent out into the world and will experience the tensions between theory and practice, plans and implementation, reflection and action, what is good for a client company vs what is good for society. They will be challenged to define their own position in this.

Community

The Management Consulting programme offers many ways to network. Our alumni are member of our LinkedIn group and are always open to talk to students and to help them further in their careers. The programme also offers various opportunities to meet informally over drinks, during poster presentations or in extra-curricular activities. During the programme students will be exposed to practitioners, enabling them to learn and to network with consultancy organizations. Guest speakers from very diverse consultanties will help you to determine which type of consulting fits best for you.

Relevance performance indicators will affect our society for many years.