AHSC 434 - Capstone course

Course Manual

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Course objectives

Students will develop their skills and knowledge in the following areas:

- Understanding of role, strengths and areas of growth in intervention implementation with a client;
- Moving through the stages of effective group-based interventions: design, planning, implementation and evaluation;
- Gaining a practical understanding of the interplay between Team dynamics, leadership, facilitation of client group dynamics and intervention.
- Practicing leadership and collaboration in organization, teams, group facilitation, event planning and implementation, and client relation.
- To practice self-assessment and understanding of role in teams.

AHSC 434 Course features

- This course must be taken in the final year;
- This is an opportunity for students to integrate the skills and techniques studied throughout their concentration and the program;
- It involves practices of relationship building, needs assessment, intervention design, facilitation and evaluation with a client group;
- The course includes classroom sessions, tutorials, team coordination and planning and a field-based group project;
- Prerequisite or corequisite: One course among AHSC 400 Advanced Facilitation and Ethics, AHSC 425 Organization Development II or AHSC 445 Community Development II.

Format of the course

- Clients are stable organizations able to handle and support large group activities run by beginning professional-students.
- Teams are constituted of 3 to 5 Students
- Teams have choices of pre-set mandates (contracts) prospected by a course coordinator with one client;
- Teams benefit from the guidance and supervision of an instructor and a teaching assistant.
- The main aspects of the mandate and ethics are part of the pre-set contract.
- Any adaptations to the mandate are to be discussed between the team, the client and the instructor.
- The Team members are expected to make themselves available for team work and work in close collaboration with the client, both in class and outside of class time.
- Team functioning and maintenance (including naming and dealing with conflicts) are part of the experience.

Format of the project

Examples of potential projects (see more specific examples at the end of this document):

- new community or organization vision,
- capacity building workshop(s),
- Design of a new service,
- Stakeholder consultations,
- Team effectiveness intervention;
- Creating a new resource, using qualitative research methods (ex: onboarding manual, volunteer training guide, etc.)

Students' role

1) Validate the initial need and deliverables with the client;

2) Gather additional information on the context of the project;

3) Create a workplan for an intervention;

4) Deliver the activities;

5) Evaluate the process with the client;

5) Report on the activities (final deliverable);

6) Manage team dynamics and process;
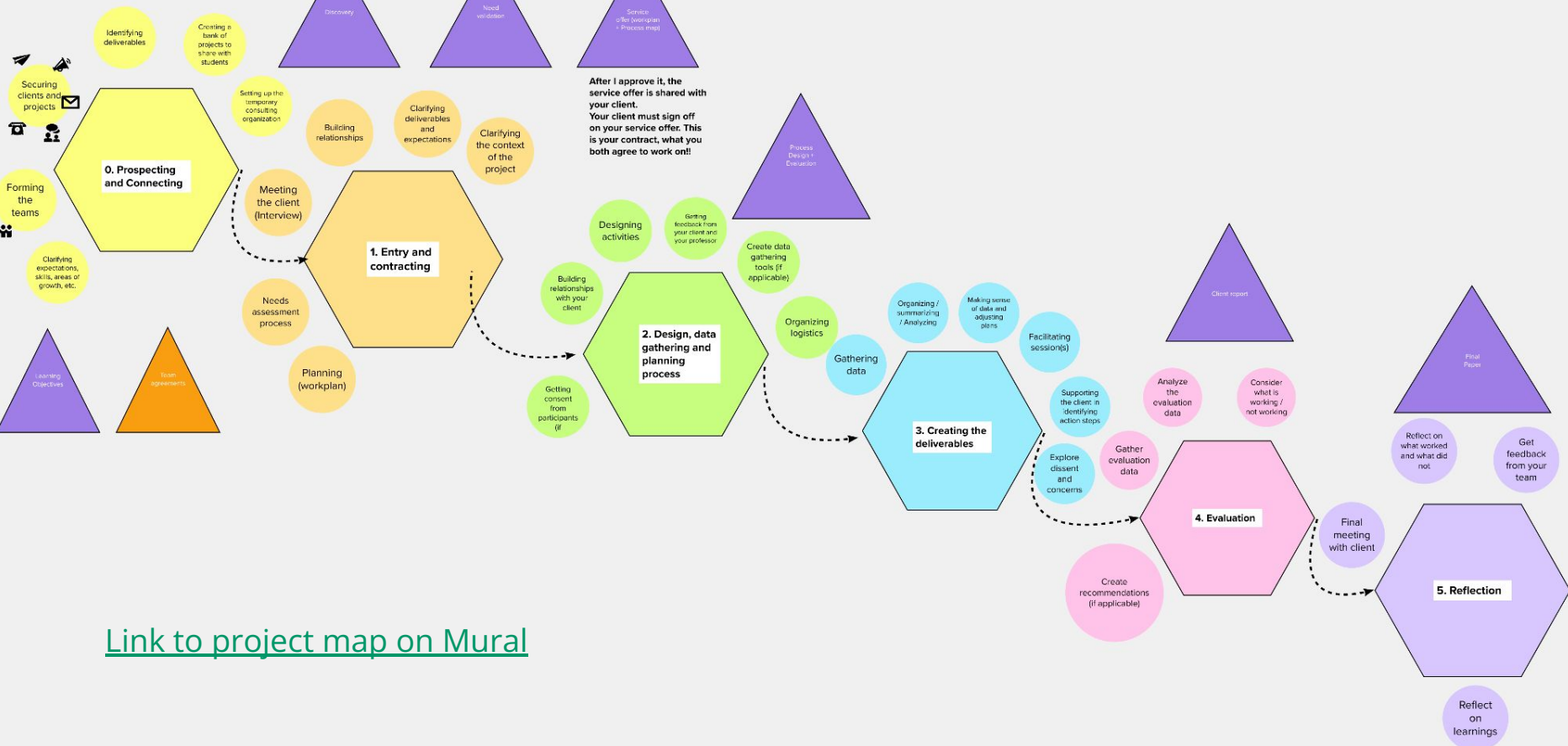
7) Reflect on the whole project.

Instructor role

- Connect with clients in the weeks leading to the course
- Oversee the formation of student teams
- Introduce the teams of students to their clients
- Guide and coach the student teams in the development, design and planning of their capstone projects
- Ensure that the contract with the client is honored
- If needed, will adapt or guide the mandate adaptation with the clients taking into account the students' skills and capacity
- Evaluate students

TA Role

- Guide and coach the student teams in the development, design and planning of their capstone projects
- Ensure that the contract with the client is honored
- Collaborate with the instructor to identify teams' needs and provide helpful resources
- Provide feedback to teams
- Help improve the course design

AHSC 434 Project Map

0. Prospecting and Connecting
- Identifying deliverables
- Creating a bank of projects to share with students
- Securing clients and projects
- Forming the teams
- Clarifying expectations, skills, areas of growth, etc.
- Learning Objectives
- Team agreements

1. Entry and contracting
- Setting up the temporary consulting organization
- Building relationships
- Clarifying deliverables and expectations
- Clarifying the context of the project
- Meeting the client (Interview)
- Needs assessment process
- Planning (workplan)

Discovery

Need validation

Service offer (workplan + Process map)

After I approve it, the service offer is shared with your client.
Your client must sign off on your service offer. This is your contract, what you both agree to work on!!

2. Design, data gathering and planning process
- Designing activities
- Getting feedback from your client and your professor
- Create data gathering tools (if applicable)
- Building relationships with your client
- Organizing logistics
- Gathering data
- Getting consent from participants (if

Process Design + Evaluation

3. Creating the deliverables
- Organizing / summarizing / Analyzing
- Making sense of data and adjusting plans
- Facilitating session(s)
- Supporting the client in identifying action steps
- Explore dissent and concerns
- Gather evaluation data

Client report

4. Evaluation
- Analyze the evaluation data
- Consider what is working / not working
- Create recommendations (if applicable)
- Final meeting with client

Final Paper

5. Reflection
- Reflect on what worked and what did not
- Get feedback from your team
- Reflect on learnings

Link to project map on Mural

Getting ready for your capstone experience

Spend some time reflecting on the following questions

1. What strengths and skills you have built during your time in AHSC?
2. What other skills and strengths do you bring into this project? (ex: graphic design, social media outreach, coordination, project management, etc)
3. What are you hoping to learn and practice during this experience?
4. What kinds of projects are you interested in?
5. Are there students in your section that you might want to work with? Consider setting up a group chat or facebook group for the section

Getting ready for your capstone experience

Look through your past course materials:

1. What tools and methodologies from past courses can you apply to this experience? (ex: from your OD courses, or your CD courses, your facilitation classes, etc.)
2. What experiences (projects, case studies, workshops) could be useful?
3. What did you forget you had learned?

Some examples of past capstone projects

Intergenerational community care infrastructure (CD)

The client - a community organization looking to develop their intergenerational programming, involving more seniors in their activity, stimulating intergenerational and intercultural exchanges and reducing isolation.

The project
Creating and facilitating a light participatory research project to gather insights into what could be done to involve seniors in the creation of a community care infrastructure in Montreal's Park-Extension neighborhood: what would interest them? What experiences would be valuable? How would they like to participate in the community?
From these insights, the students, in collaboration with the client, helped identify what actions made the most sense, and the steps that could be put in place.

Strategic clarity (OD)

Working with the board of a small non profit community arts organization to come to agreement on strategic priorities for the upcoming year.

Photo by Joel Fulgencio on Unsplash

Future directions (OD)

Creating a common vision for the future of a community summer camp, involving new and past employees.

Photo by Etienne Boulanger on Unsplash

Program design (CD / Facilitation)

Create a program for mothers who were post-partum and on maternity leave with their baby/toddler.

The program brought mothers together on a weekly basis, providing various activities that allowed both mothers and babies to participate.

The goal was to alleviate the sense of isolation experienced during maternity leave and offered a safe space for sharing and socializing.

Volunteer training program (OD)

The program pre-existed and the students helped by enhancing the existing content, designing new activities and facilitating the whole or parts (with the appropriate team member). They also assisted in the development of a user-friendly resource website for the volunteers: deciding what information to include, how to best organize it, etc.

Through this project, they contributed to:
- Improved volunteer engagement
- Improved coherence and quality of the services delivered to stakeholders by the volunteers;
- Improved collaboration and relationships between team and volunteers;
- Improved access to resources by volunteers

Building capacity for organizational accountability (OD)

The client was an horizontal organization that wanted to put processes in place to perform staff evaluations, and improve accountability and 'supervision' processes. In the last few years there had been a lack of formal evaluations and daily feedback practices which limited the growth of individuals in the organization as well as our their capacity to do their best work. The organization was looking to put processes in place that allow both for freedom, flexibility and accountability.

In order to help with this, the students did:
- research on feedback frameworks that would work in the context of horizontal organizations
- conduct interviews about past experiences with feedback
- design and facilitate an experiential, engaging workshop or training focused on good feedback practices that members of the organization can explore in their daily interactions with others.

Volunteers team building (OD / group facilitation)

Design and facilitate a series of workshops to help student volunteers build relationships and learn how to communicate and conduct themselves professionally in work settings.

Project evaluation (OD / CD Intervention)

The client organization was in the 3rd year of a mentorship program. The team wanted to gain insights from the learnings which occurred over the first few years of activity. The intention was to document the changes that occurred and to enhance the program's responsiveness to the evolving needs and aspirations of the youth they serve.

The students were able to help by:
- Consulting the different stakeholders involved in the program (mentors, mentees, etc.)
- Creating a few simple research questions, co-designed with the organization's team (to ensure that evaluation data gathered was useful and relevant)
- Gathering insights from facilitated conversations with the members (interviews, focus groups, etc.)
- Designing and hosting 1-2 workshops with the team to work with the data harvested and reflect on next steps and shifts for the mentorship project.
- Putting together a report from the process, with a summary of insights and possible next steps.

Redesigning a staff training manual (OD)

The client wanted to redesign their 300 page summer staff training manual that is the core of their our staff training for approximately 350 people each spring. A challenge they were facing was ensuring their staff was properly trained and prepared for their summer role. Improving the manual would be a huge help to their overall summer operations and staff training.

The students were able to support this project by evaluating the content, improving the accessibility of the document and looking to make the presentation more engaging for the reader. They explored some questions: are all of the policies still relevant and needed? Are there any new policies or adaptations that could benefit the staff and participants? How can they make sure staff are fully reading and understanding this extremely important content?

At the end of the process, the team produced a report that included suggestions for improvements to the manual.

Creating a vulnerable persons registry - CD

The client organization wanted to better understand how jurisdictions in Canada are using Vulnerable Person Registries: Who manages the information? How is the project funded? What types of event trigger release of information and who does the information go to? Privacy / legislative issues? Who does the maintenance and registration? What are some of the challenges and recommendations when creating something like this?

To support this work, the students conducted research with jurisdictions in Canada who have Vulnerable Person Registries. They conducted interviews and produced a report supported by an infographic, outlining what they heard.

Implementing Living Learning Communities (CD)

The client (a student residence) was interested in implementing Living Learning communities for their residents - providing opportunities to bring together residents with the same interests or goals in order to help enhance a student's social and academic experience while in residence.

The students supported this project by doing some participatory research with residents and staff, that led led to creating a report, community development plan, and a needs assessment to assess the potential for implementing learning living communities.

Student housing initiative - CD / Facilitation

The Student Housing Initiative project create a process to engage students who struggle to find and keep affordable housing with informed actors in Montreal rental housing policy and development:
- Encouraging students in need of housing to take part in decisions that affect them and to advocate for improved rental housing.
- Helping students to develop an understanding of each other's experiences with Quebec's affordable housing crisis.

The team supported this project by creating a participatory process to gain insights on what the current rental housing landscape looks like for Concordia students, and to engage students in the larger discussion for raising the standards for rental housing. The team facilitated a focus group with students to discuss their needs related to housing, and a community discussion or town
hall with local community organizations to introduce students to various organizations and resources.

EDI Program design (Facilitation)

Our client wanted to expand and restructure their Brand, and needed to create some resources to better explain who they are and the key elements of their approach. Their work is trauma-informed and centers equity, diversity and inclusion principles. The deliverables for this project needed to reflect that focus.

The team supported this project by creating a set of resources that can be used by the client in order to facilitate volunteer and staff onboarding experiences (ex: workshops), using a trauma-informed approach and a diversity, equity and inclusion focus. These workshops could also be delivered to external organizations looking to work with them.

Board engagement (OD intervention)

The client needed the support of team of students to explore ways to keep board & members engaged and transitioning to virtual world.

The students conducted some participatory research activities in order to discover ways to
- Engage board and members
- maintain a relevant, vibrant chapter.
- Adapt during these times of transition

Following this, they created a report and some recommendations to the current coordinator of the organization
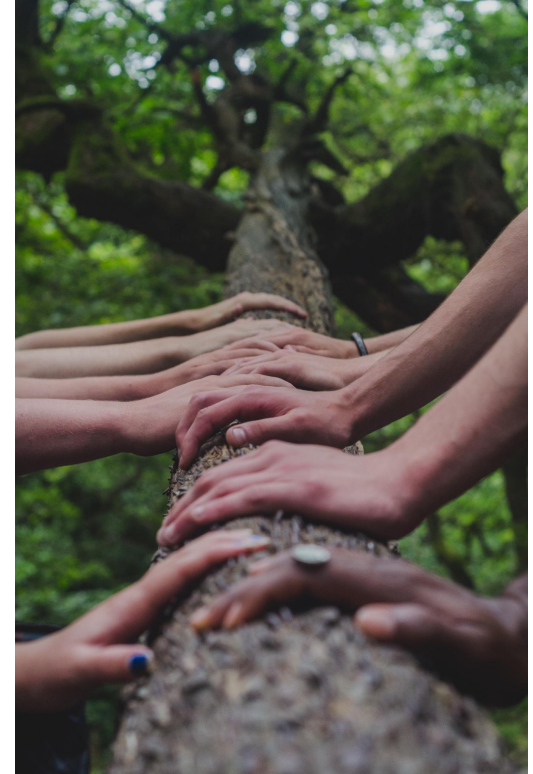
Questions?

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