General Expectations for Your Course Project

The greatest value in any course comes from applying the concepts, theories, and principles explored during class to real-life situations and issues. This term project gives you an opportunity to select an aspect of healthcare with which you are familiar, and identify an issue in which there is an element that is not meeting expectations. Then, drawing on the concepts and principles from readings, exercises, current events, and class discussions, write a term paper of 8 to 10 pages in which you:

* introduce the issue;
* define the problem;
* analyze the problem;
* evaluate possible solutions;
* develop an implementation plan; and
* justify why and how your solution will solve the identified problem.

Your paper must include, but is not limited to, the following sections.

* **BACKGROUND:** Describe the problem, organization, or situation you selected, identify the specific issues of interest or controversy, and present background and facts of the problem, organization, or situation that will enable the reader to clearly understand the issue. For example, most health insurance in the United States is tied to employment. Because of employers without benefits and unemployment, there are approximately 47 million uninsured.
* **DEFINE THE PROBLEM:** Identify and clearly state the problem or management issue in which an element of the identified problem or situation is not meeting expectations. Remember that what appears to be the problem may actually be just a symptom of a bigger problem. Dig deep to be sure you've identified the real problems. If there appears to be more than one problem or issue, decide if they are separate or related issues. State the problem in the form of a question. For example, if a work group is not performing sufficiently, an effective problem statement might be, "How can the staff shortage be improved," rather than simply, "Short staff problems." For the issue of uninsured people, this could be, “How can universal coverage be initiated?”
* **SUGGESTION:** Begin your literature survey by accessing Keller's online library located in Course Resources within Introduction & Resources.
* **PROBLEM ANALYSIS:** This section should provide a detailed analysis of the causes of the problem(s) or issue(s) you identified in Section II. A major objective is to clearly illustrate how you are using the healthcare course concepts, as well as your professional experiences and the results of your research, to better understand the causes of the problem(s) or issue(s). Show that you are applying course material! Approach the topic from a financial angle, because this is a finance course. (Note: Use subheadings to identify each factor you address.)
* **POSSIBLE SOLUTIONS:** Explore solutions that could be appropriate ways to solve the identified problem or issue, and document what you feel is the best alternative. Be sure that these solutions are logical based on your analysis and that they each would effectively treat the problem, not the symptoms. Also, discuss the anticipated outcomes (both positive and negative) of implementing each of the possible solutions you identified. Again, to use universal coverage as an example, how would it be funded? Just saying we need universal coverage may be an accurate statement, but programs need money. What taxes would you raise or what services would you cut to provide the funding? How much is it going to cost, and how will it affect hospitals and other providers?
* **SOLUTION IMPLEMENTATION:** State your solution clearly and specifically. Describe exactly what should be done and how it should be done, including by whom, with whom, and in what sequence. Here are some points to keep in mind as you write this section:
  1. Have I indicated an awareness of the problem of implementation (the how aspect)?
  2. Have I been specific enough?
  3. For example, a general solution might state: "The healthcare manager needs to realize that his or her style should match the situation."
  4. A specific solution would state what style is most appropriate for the situation, and how you will attempt to have the manager realize the appropriate style.
  5. What aspects of the problem remain unresolved by my solution?
  6. Does my recommended solution and implementation plan address the problem or issues and causes identified in the previous sections?
  7. Does my solution consider and resolve the identified pros and cons?
  8. How will I evaluate the effectiveness of the implemented recommended solution?
  9. What process checks or procedures will I put into place to institutionalize the improvement?
  10. Could my solution cause other problems or issues? What risks are inherent in the solution you recommend? What contingency plans do you recommend?
  11. Assess the realism of your proposed action plan. For example, is there adequate time, money, or other resources for your solution? In addition, does your solution place too much reliance on other people being reasonable (i.e., on what YOU think is reasonable)?
* **JUSTIFICATION:** Justify why your recommended solution and its implementation will solve the identified problem or issue in the organization or unit you selected. An important element of this section is to show very clearly how you applied course concepts to arrive at a workable solution and a successful implementation. Apply appropriate course material. Support your conclusions with appropriately referenced facts, quotes, and readings. Be sure your justification addresses identified pros and cons.
* **REFERENCES:** All citations in the paper must appear in the reference list, and all references must be cited in the text of the paper. Choose references judiciously and cite them accurately. To use the ideas or words of another without crediting the source is plagiarism. Plagiarism in its purest form involves the copying of entire passages either verbatim or nearly verbatim with no direct acknowledgment of the source. The most common (and unconscious) form of plagiarism is when a direct quotation is simply paraphrased. Paraphrasing does not relieve you of the obligation to provide proper identification of source data. The best way to avoid plagiarism is to make sure all quotes, ideas, or conclusions not your own are given proper acknowledgment in your text.