

Course Outline

Course Code	RSM 459H1 F LEC0101
Course Name	Business Design
Term, Year	Fall 2025
Course Meets	Wednesdays 5:00pm – 8:00pm, OISE 4422
Web page URL	https://q.utoronto.ca

Instructor Details

Name	Email	Office Hours	Virtual Office Link
Brian Wong	byc.wong@utoronto.ca	By Appointment	MS Teams

Course Description

This course is a foundational introduction to the theories and methods of business design. In a learning-by-doing format, the course combines strategic analysis with the intensity of a business design case competition and will challenge you to think in new ways. You will learn, then apply industry leading methods to start, find, frame and solve a real industry challenge. This course combines instructor-led, peer-to-peer and team-based learning and industry sponsor knowledge exchange.

Learning Outcomes

Course Learning Objectives:

- Learn the fundamental principles and practices of Business Design: using design methods and techniques to find, frame and solve business problems.
- Learn how to work effectively in teams to conduct: ethnographic research, product and service design, business strategy and/or modelling on a real-world challenge.

Explore how empathy, creativity, prototyping and strategic thinking informs your thinking and practice.

Course Prerequisites

Prerequisite: Completion of 9.0 credits and RSM250H1

Exclusion: RSM412H1

Course Materials

Required Readings

All readings (articles as web links or PDFs) will be provided in the Modules folder.

Optional Textbook: **Business Design Thinking and Doing.**

The use of these materials complies with all University of Toronto policies which govern fees for course materials.

Electronic Course Materials

All readings (articles as web links or PDFs) will be provided in the Modules folder.

Optional Textbook: **Business Design Thinking and Doing.**

The use of these materials complies with all University of Toronto policies which govern fees for course materials.

Evaluation and Grades

Grades are a measure of the knowledge and skills developed by a student within individual courses. Each student will receive a grade on the basis of how well they have command of the course materials, skills and learning objectives of the course.

Work	Percentage of grade	Due Date
Participation & Discussions (Individual)	15%	Ongoing
Learning Journals (Individual)	10%	Ongoing
Reflection 1 (Individual)	10%	Week 2
Business Design Brief (Team)	15%	Week 3
Data Collection Worksheets (Individual)	10%	Week 6
Business Design Project (Team)	25%	Week 12
Reflection 2 (Individual)	15%	Week 12

Course Format and Expectations

- ***Individual Participation & Discussions (15%): Ongoing***

You are expected to attend every class and be actively engaged during the entire term, contributing to the overall learning experience of the class. Prepare thoroughly and make every effort to attend every class. As class participation is a graded component of the course, you will be evaluated on the following:

- Thoughtful responses
- Understanding and analysis of topic
- Idea generation
- Promoting further discussion
- Respectful active listening
- Attentiveness

- While attendance is necessary for you to participate in class discussions, attendance on its own will not result in a high participation grade. You must actively contribute and participate by exhibiting the components listed above.
- Rotman Commerce students are expected to make every effort to attend each class. Infrequently, students may miss term work, e.g., quizzes, assignments, etc., due to unplanned and extenuating circumstances and must follow the Request for Special Consideration process as outlined in their course outlines. However, Rotman Commerce will not approve any Request for Special

Consideration for participation marks for missed classes. Any such request will be denied.

- ***Learning Journal (1% x 10 = 10%): 10 out of 12 classes:***

You will be asked to complete ten (10) Learning Journals (1% x 10 = 10%), due by 4:59 PM on the day of class. Grades will be assigned as follows: (0 = not submitted, 0.5 = Submitted but did not meet requirements, 1 = Met requirements).

- ***Individual Reflection Assignments (10% + 15% = 25%)***

The reflection assignments are meant to assess key learning and personal discoveries throughout the course. You will reflect on the value and practice of design techniques on innovation and user centricity both personally and professionally. This grade will consist of two personal reflection blog posts. Due by 4:59 PM on the day of class.

- ***Team Business Design Brief (15%) and Team Business Design Project (25%): (Total 40%)***

You will complete a group project using the Business Design process. Teams will apply the tools and methods taught in class to a real-world challenge. The grade will consist of a project brief/plan and final project presentation. The BD brief and BD project will demonstrate your fluency with human-centred design thinking and associated tools or techniques through the quality of your process, output and adoption of feedback. Due by 4:59 PM on the day of class.

- ***Individual Data Collection Worksheet (10%)***

Individuals (within project teams) will complete and submit their data collection worksheet -- listing their observations and findings from their ethnographic and interview activities. A template will be provided in class and on Quercus. Due by 4:59 PM on the day of class.

Writing Assignments or Presentations

Reflections and Presentations are intended to help you develop your communication skills. How well you communicate your ideas, in writing or orally, will be considered in the evaluation of the assignment. In your written assignments, you should aim for clarity, strong organization, concision, professionalism, and correct grammar. Your presentations should reflect strong planning and organization, clarity of speech, and an engaging demeanour. Sources, whether in written or presentation assignments, should always be correctly attributed.

Support is available through the RC Centre for Professional Skills (CPS) for students who would like help or feedback on their writing or speaking (presentations). CPS offers both individual and group appointments with trained writing instructors and presentation coaches who are familiar with the RC program and common types of business assignments. You can also access your college Writing Centres for help with written assignments.

You can book an appointment with a writing or presentation coach through the RC Centre for Professional Skills Writing Centre. For more information about writing centres, student supports, and study resources, see the [Writing and Presentation Coaching academic support page](#).

Team or Group Assignments

The Business Design Brief and Final Project requires students to work in teams of 4-6. Learning to work together in teams is a crucial transferable skill you will use not only in your coursework,

but also in your future careers. Support is available if you encounter common teamwork challenges such as:

- Team members feeling left out of the team.
- Team members not responding in a timely manner to communication.
- Division or quality of work among team members being unequal or unfair.

Consult the [Centre for Professional Skills Teamwork Resources page](#) for tips, strategies, and best practices. You can also [book an appointment with a teamwork mentor](#) through the RC Centre for Professional Skills Writing Centre. Teamwork mentors can help you resolve or mitigate conflict, strategize on planning, or improve team communication.

If you are a student registered with Accessibility Services, and extensions are one of your academic accommodations, consult with your Accessibility Advisor about the teamwork in this course.

Missed Tests and Assignments

Students who miss a term test or assignment for reasons entirely beyond their control (e.g. illness) may request special consideration **within 2 business days** of the missed midterm/test/assignment due date.

In such cases, students must:

1. Complete the Request for Special Consideration form: <https://uoft.me/RSMConsideration>
2. Provide documentation to support the request, eg. Absence Declaration from [ACORN](#), [Verification of Illness Form](#) etc.

Please note: As of September 2023, students may use the Absence Declaration on ACORN ***one time per term*** to report an absence and request consideration. **Any subsequent absence will require a Verification of Illness form or other similar relevant documentation.**

Students who do not submit their requests and documentation within 2 days may receive a grade of 0 (zero) on the missed course deliverable.

Final Exams: If you miss the final exam in this course for a legitimate reason (illness, etc) you will need to contact your College Registrar to file a petition for a deferred exam. This deferred exam will be written at a later date as established by the Faculty of Arts & Science. Instructions can be found here: <https://www.artsci.utoronto.ca/current/faculty-registrar/petitions-appeals/preparing-petition>

Late Assignments

All assignments are due on the date and at the time specified in Quercus. Late submissions will normally be penalized by 5% if the assignment is not received on the specified date, at the specified time. A further penalty of 5% will be applied to each subsequent day to a maximum of 50%.

Statement on Equity, Diversity and Inclusion

The University of Toronto is committed to equity, human rights and respect for diversity. All members of the learning environment in this course should strive to create an atmosphere of mutual respect where all members of our community can express themselves, engage with each other, and respect one another's differences. U of T does not condone discrimination or harassment against any persons or communities.

Commitment to Accessibility

The University is committed to inclusivity and accessibility, and strives to provide support for, and facilitate the accommodation of, individuals with disabilities so that all may share the same level of access to opportunities and activities offered at the University.

If you require accommodations for a temporary or ongoing disability or health concern, or have any accessibility concerns about the course, the classroom or course materials, please [email Accessibility Services](#) or visit the [Accessibility Services website](#) for more information as soon as possible. Obtaining your accommodation letter may take up to several weeks, so get in touch with them as soon as possible. If you have general questions or concerns about the accessibility of this course, you are encouraged to reach out to your instructor, course coordinator, or Accessibility Services.

Plagiarism Detection

Normally, students will be required to submit their course essays to the University's plagiarism detection tool for a review of textual similarity and detection of possible plagiarism. In doing so, students will allow their essays to be included as source documents in the tool's reference database, where they will be used solely for the purpose of detecting plagiarism. The terms that apply to the University's use of this tool are described on the [University's Plagiarism Detection Tool FAQ](#) page from Centre for Teaching Support & Innovation.

Generative AI / ChatGPT

The use of generative artificial intelligence tools or apps for assignments in this course, including tools like ChatGPT and other AI writing or coding assistants, is prohibited unless specified.

Academic Integrity

Academic Integrity is a fundamental value essential to the pursuit of learning and scholarship at the University of Toronto. Participating honestly, respectfully, responsibly, and fairly in this academic community ensures that the U of T degree that you earn will continue to be valued and respected as a true signifier of a student's individual work and academic achievement. As a result, the University treats cases of academic misconduct very seriously.

[The University of Toronto's Code of Behaviour on Academic Matters](#) outlines the behaviours that constitute academic misconduct, the process for addressing academic offences and the

penalties that may be imposed. You are expected to be familiar with the contents of this document. Potential offences include, but are not limited to:

In papers and assignments

- Using someone else's ideas or words without appropriate acknowledgement.
- Submitting your own work in more than one course without the permission of the instructor.
- Making up sources or facts.
- Obtaining or providing unauthorized assistance on any assignment (this includes collaborating with others on assignments that are supposed to be completed individually).

On test and exams

- Using or possessing any unauthorized aid, including a cell phone.
- Looking at someone else's answers.
- Misrepresenting your identity.
- Submitting an altered test for re-grading.

Misrepresentation

- Falsifying institutional documents or grades.
- Falsifying or altering any documentation required by the University, including (but not limited to) medical notes.

All suspected cases of academic dishonesty will be investigated by the procedures outlined in the *Code of Behaviour on Academic Matters*. If you have any questions about what is or is not permitted in the course, please do not hesitate to contact the course instructor. If you have any questions about appropriate research and citation methods, you are expected to seek out additional information from the instructor or other U of T or RC resources such as the RC Centre for Professional Skills, the College Writing Centres or the Academic Success Centre.

Email

At times, the course instructor may decide to communicate important course information by email. As such, all U of T students are required to have a valid UTmail+ email address. You are responsible for ensuring that your Utmail+ email address is set up and properly entered on ACORN. For more information visit the [Information Commons Help Desk](#).

Forwarding your utoronto.ca email to a Gmail or other type of email account is not advisable. In some cases, messages from utoronto.ca addresses sent to Gmail accounts are filtered as junk mail, which means that important messages from your course instructor may end up in your spam or junk mail folder.

Recording Lectures

Lectures and course materials prepared by the instructor are considered by the University to be an instructor's intellectual property covered by the Canadian Copyright Act. Students wishing to record a lecture or other course material in any way are required to ask the instructor's explicit permission and may not do so unless permission is granted. Students who have been previously granted permission to record lectures as an accommodation for a disability are excepted. This includes tape recording, filming, photographing PowerPoint slides, Quercus materials, etc.

If permission for recording is granted by the instructor (or via Accessibility Services), it is intended for the individual student's own study purposes and does not include permission to "publish" them in any way. It is forbidden for a student to publish an instructor's notes to a website or sell them in any other form without formal permission.

Weekly Schedule (*EXAMPLE*)

Session	Theme	Topic And Deliverables	Readings:
Session 1 – Week 1 – Sept 3	Intro - Course Overview - Introduction To Business Design And Design Methods For Business Innovation	- Innovation Process - Business Design Process And Roles - Practice: Business Innovation At Your Desk	~
Session 2 – Week 2 – Sept 10	Start - Introduction To The Innovation Intent - Team Forming - Business Design Briefs - Industry-Sponsor Challenge Brief	Due: Reflection 1 Due: Learning Journal 1 - Innovation Intent In Business - Team Forming – Grouped Challenge Brief Areas - Business Design Briefs - Practice: Create The Business Design Brief	~
Session 3 – Week 3 – Sept 17	Start Business Design Brief Presentation	Due: Business Design Brief Due: Learning Journal 2 - Desk And Field Research Methods - Creating A Research Plan - Practice: Create The Research Plan	~
Session 4 – Week 4 – Sept 24	Find - Design Research Techniques - Observational Research And Ethnography - Fieldwork: Observational Research Activities	Due: Learning Journal 3 - Need Finding Framework - Field Research And Data Collection - Data Worksheet	~
Session 5 – Week 5 – Oct 1	Find - Need/Problem Finding (Sensing) - Probing Techniques - In-Field Data Collection Methods	Due: Learning Journal 4 - Interview Probing - Data Collection And Analysis - Practice: Interviewing And Interview Preparations	~
Session 6 – Week 6 – Oct 8	Frame Problem Framing (Sensemaking) <i>Data Analysis</i>	Due: Data Collection Worksheet Due: Learning Journal 5 - Data Sorting, Sifting And Ranking - Needs Alignment – User And Business	~
Oct 13	Thanksgiving - Oct 13		~

Session 7 – Week 7 – Oct 15	Frame • Problem Framing (Sensemaking) • Data Analysis	• Due: Learning Journal 6 • From Findings To Insights • Insight Statements • Research Learning Artifacts - Personas	~
Session 8 – Week 8 – Oct 22	Frame/Solve • Problem Framing (Sensemaking) • <i>How Might We Question + Ideation</i>	• Due: Learning Journal 7 • Hmw Question • Ideation • Practice: Ideation	~
Oct 27 - 31	Reading Week	Reading Week	~
Session 9 – Week 9 – Nov 5	Solve • Problem Solving (Changemaking) • Defining Solutions • <i>Prototyping And Testing</i>	• Due: Learning Journal 8 • Defining Solutions • Rapid Prototyping And Testing • Practice: Defining Solutions And Prototypes	~
Nov 11	Last day to <u>drop Fall (F) courses</u> without academic penalty		~
Nov 11	Remembrance Day - Nov 11		~
Session 10 – Week 10 – Nov 12	Solve • Problem Solving (Changemaking) • <i>Storytelling</i>	• Due: Learning Journal 9 • Storytelling Techniques • Practice: Metaphors And Analogies	~
Session 11 – Week 11 – Nov 19	Solve • Studio Working Class • Final Project Instructor And TAFEedback	• Due: Learning Journal 10 • Due: Team 360 Feedback	~
Session 12 – Week 12 – Nov 26	• Final Presentations	• Due: Business Design Project • Due: Reflection 2	~

Please note that the last day you can drop this course without academic penalty is Nov 11, 2025

Other Useful Links

- [Become a volunteer note taker](#)
- [Accessibility Services Note Taking Support](#)
- [Credit / No-Credit in RSM courses](#)
- [Rotman Commerce Academic Support](#)
- [Where to find teaching assistant opportunities](#)

URL links for print

- ACORN: <http://www.acorn.utoronto.ca/>
- Email Accessibility Services: accessibility.services@utoronto.ca
- Accessibility Services website: <http://studentlife.utoronto.ca/as>
- University's Plagiarism Detection Tool FAQ: <https://uoft.me/pdt-faq>
- The University of Toronto's Code of Behaviour on Academic Matters: <http://www.governingcouncil.utoronto.ca/policies/behaveac.htm>
- Information Commons Help Desk: <http://help.ic.utoronto.ca/category/3/utmail.html>
- Become a volunteer note taker: <https://studentlife.utoronto.ca/program/volunteer-note-taking/>
- Accessibility Services Note Taking Support: <https://studentlife.utoronto.ca/service/note-taking-support/>
- Credit / No-Credit in RSM courses: <https://rotmancommerce.utoronto.ca/current-students/degree-requirements/credit-no-credit-option/>
- Rotman Commerce Academic Support: <https://rotmancommerce.utoronto.ca/current-students/academic-support/>
- Book an appointment with a writing or presentation coach: <http://uoft.me/writingcentres>
- Writing and Presentation Coaching academic support page: <https://rotmancommerce.utoronto.ca/current-students/academic-support/writing-and-presentation-coaching/>
- Centre for Professional Skills Teamwork Resources page: <https://rotmancommerce.utoronto.ca/teamwork-resources>
- Book an appointment with a Teamwork Mentor: <http://uoft.me/writingcentres>