

HAP 396: Strategic Healthcare Management and Planning

Spring 2026, Sections DL1 and DL2

COURSE INFORMATION

Instructor: Dr. Martin Cohen, PhD (mcohen13@gmu.edu, see below and in Canvas for more contact information and about my background)

Course format: This course has a full-semester, asynchronous online format. All work will be completed asynchronously via the course's Canvas site.

Course required before taking this one: HAP 301

COURSE DESCRIPTION

This course provides an introduction to how healthcare organizations identify, create, and market their services within the context of a long- term strategic (business) plan. The course will analyze the evolution of strategic management within the healthcare industry, how it has responded in the past and what changes may be required in the future. Students will be exposed to core components of the strategic management process, including situation analysis, formulation of a strategy, strategy implementation, and strategy control.

COURSE OBJECTIVES

Upon completion of this course, students will be able to:

1. Discuss factors that influence the overall supply and demand for health services.
2. Understand the evolution of strategic management within the healthcare industry.
3. Understand the influence of both the general and healthcare related external environments in strategic decision-making.
4. Identify organizational strengths and weaknesses and their relation to a competitive advantage.
5. Understand the role and purpose of creating an overall mission and vision for the organization.
6. Utilize adaptive, market entry, and positioning strategies to implement the strategic plan.
7. Discuss the role of marketing in the delivery of value to healthcare consumers.
8. Identify the role of finance, human resources, technology, operations, as well as culture, ethics management and leadership in implementing the strategic management plan.
9. Explain the variety and types of healthcare organizations within the continuum of care.
10. Utilize techniques for effective case study analysis and communication.
11. Utilize critical thinking and forward planning.

INSTRUCTOR INFORMATION

Dr. Martin Cohen, PhD

I joined the full-time HAP faculty in January 2025 after working in healthcare consulting for over 30 years. My bio is on the HAP department website: [Dr. Cohen's bio](#)

Email: mcohen13@gmu.edu

When emailing, you must use your GMU email account (not a personal account such as Gmail). Please include HAP396 in the subject line. I normally should be able to reply within 24 hours, except over a

weekend. Note there is another mcohen whose email address from the GMU global directory may show up first if you use auto-fill, so be sure you are sending to mcohen13.

Please also make sure your Canvas account is set to receive course notifications – either daily or immediately. My normal method of communicating with the class as a whole will be announcements in Canvas and these should show up in your GMU email if you are set up to receive Canvas notifications.

Office hours: By appointment; can be arranged as a Zoom session, a phone call, or in-person. I am very happy to meet to discuss any course-related questions or concerns that need more than an email exchange. Just send me an email with two or three times that work for you and I can usually make one of those work.

REQUIRED TEXTBOOK

STRATEGIC HEALTHCARE MANAGEMENT: Planning and Execution. Third Edition.
by Stephen L. Walston. Health Administration Press. ISBN: 978-1-64055-365-1.

This textbook is required, and you need the third edition because the assignment page numbers correspond to this version of the textbook and some of the cases we will read are not in the earlier editions. The mid-term and final exams will be open-textbook but will use the Honorlock online proctoring software in Canvas, which restricts internet use, **so if feasible it will be simpler if you get a physical copy of the textbook (purchased or rental) rather than a digital copy to avoid any problem using it during an exam. However, if you need or strongly prefer a digital version, please order the digital version that is available from the GMU bookstore website ([GMU bookstore website](#)) because I have tested that I have Honorlock configured successfully to allow access to the website hosting that digital version.** If you are getting a physical copy of the book, feel free to get it from the GMU bookstore, Amazon, or elsewhere; just be sure it's the third edition.

COMPUTER REQUIREMENTS

You will need access to a Windows or Macintosh laptop or desktop computer with at least 8 GB of RAM and a fast, reliable broadband Internet connection (e.g., cable, DSL). For optimum visibility of course material, the recommended computer monitor or laptop screen size is 13-inches or larger. You will need computer speakers or headphones to listen to any recorded content. You will need a webcam.

To protect against a computer crash, virus, or other loss, you are strongly encouraged to routinely save all your work files and related data, including drafts, on a cloud service such as OneDrive, Google, or Dropbox. This is an important habit, and loss of files/data due to a computer incident is not a good excuse for late or unsubmitted assignments.

Please make sure your computer's software is up-to-date and prepare yourself to use Canvas before the first day of class.

You can contact GMU Information Technology Support (ITS) for tech support: [GMU IT helpdesk site](#)

TEACHING METHODS

(X) Lecture () Group work (X) Independent research () Field work
(X) Short papers () Guest speakers () Student presentations (X) Case Studies
() Lab (X) Class discussion (X) Other: Exams, Quizzes

GRADING SCALE

The following table describes the grading scale for the course:

GRADE	PERCENTAGE
A	93 and above

A-	90 - 92
B+	87 - 89
B	84 - 86
B-	80 - 83
C+	77 - 79
C	73 - 76
C-	70 - 72
D	60 - 69
F	Less than 60

GRADED ACTIVITIES AND THEIR WEIGHT

The following table lists the types of graded activities in this course and each category's weight in the final course grade:

CATEGORY	% OF OVERALL COURSE GRADE
Cases, postings, quizzes, and other online assignments	50%
Mid-term exam	25%
Final exam	25%
Total	100%

There is no extra credit or make-up work in this course, so it is important to pay ongoing attention to the deadlines for assignments.

The course contains a variety of learning activities. All work must be submitted individually and must be your original work. Any work copied from peers/others, or generated by artificial intelligence (AI), and submitted as your own is a violation of George Mason's academic standards. See below for additional discussion on academic standards and also the course's AI policy.

COURSE SCHEDULE, TIMING OF THE MODULES AND ASSIGNMENTS

This course has an asynchronous online format but it is not self-paced. Each weekly module will normally be published in Canvas by noon ET Monday of that week, if not earlier (except Week 1 starts on a Tuesday). Most assignments will be due by the Sunday evening (11:59pm) that concludes that module. For all assignments students are expected to meet the specific due dates listed in Canvas and also in the Course Schedule document that is available in the Syllabus section of the course's Canvas site. If there is a conflict between the course schedule document and the due date specified directly in Canvas, please email me so I can clear up the discrepancy, but in the meantime follow the due date in Canvas.

LATE ASSIGNMENTS

Most of the assignments in this course are not lengthy, but you do have one or two due most weeks. Plan your time during the week so that you can turn in assignments early or at least no later than their deadline (usually by Sunday night 11:59pm). This is an important professional habit to develop, and you will usually have almost a week to complete your assignments.

Unless an extension has already been approved due to special circumstances, for weekly assignments I will deduct a 10% late penalty for each day late up to four days and an unsubmitted assignment will receive a zero after four days. I also reserve the right to modify this policy if lateness becomes a significant problem. **Note also that for the mid-term exam and final exam, unless an extension has been approved due to special circumstances, no late submissions will be allowed, even with a penalty.**

CHANGES TO THE SYLLABUS OR SCHEDULE

The instructor has the discretion to change elements of the syllabus or schedule during the course but will inform all students when any changes are made.

COURSE POLICY REGARDING ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE (AI)

We have many small writing assignments in this class, such as the case study analyses. Having to do your own thinking and writing for these assignments is a critical part of learning and professional development to support your career goals. Students must complete these tasks yourselves, rather than relying on a generative AI tool such as ChatGPT, Copilot, etc. **Misrepresenting the product of an AI tool as your own work is a violation of academic integrity.** You should also be aware that AI tools often provide incorrect, biased, or incomplete responses and also are notorious for making up citations for realistic-looking, but non-existent sources (e.g., journal articles or web pages that do not actually exist).

As further clarification regarding AI for this course:

- **Unless otherwise explicitly noted in the instructions for a specific assignment, your assignments for this course should not be written or substantively edited by a generative AI tool.** For example, do not submit a query to a generative AI tool to write a first draft of an assignment based on a prompt you give the tool. Similarly, do not submit a draft paper or discussion response you have written to a generative AI tool for the purpose of improving the substantive content.
- **However, running a spelling or grammar checker on a draft paper, such as the spelling/grammar tool in Microsoft Word (under Word's Review menu option), is acceptable and encouraged.** Correcting spelling or grammar mistakes is important but different than outsourcing the substantive thinking and writing to AI.
- **It is fine to use a search tool or AI tool for preliminary research or brainstorming on a topic,** and Google and many other search tools now have some degree of AI embedded in them even for basic searches.
- **Overall, for this course, AI should not be doing your thinking and writing (other than checking spelling and grammar).** It is important to wrestle with the issues in this course and what you want to say about them. It is also important to practice supporting any points you make, rather than outsourcing that hard work to AI. Our muscles for critical thinking and writing can only get stronger when we are forced to use them.

On a related note regarding sources cited, under APA style (which you should use in this course if there is a source you need to cite), citing a reference means you are saying you actually reviewed that source and relied on it to support whatever specific point has that in-text citation and its associated reference. Information on APA style is available at: [GMU's guide to APA style](#) and also at [APA's official website for APA style](#).

COMMON POLICIES AFFECTING ALL COURSES AT GEORGE MASON UNIVERSITY

The text below is current as of August 2025, but for the most current GMU policies on these topics see: [Stearns Center website for GMU's common policies for all courses](#)

Academic Standards

Academic Standards exist to promote authentic scholarship, support the institution's goal of maintaining high standards of academic excellence, and encourage continued ethical behavior of faculty and students to cultivate an educational community which values integrity and produces graduates who carry this commitment forward into professional practice.

As members of the George Mason University community, we are committed to fostering an environment of trust, respect, and scholarly excellence. Our academic standards are the foundation of this commitment, guiding our behavior and interactions within this academic community. The practices for implementing these standards adapt to modern practices, disciplinary contexts, and technological advancements. Our standards are embodied in our courses, policies, and scholarship, and are upheld in the following principles:

- **Honesty:** Providing accurate information in all academic endeavors, including communications, assignments, and examinations.
- **Acknowledgement:** Giving proper credit for all contributions to one's work. This involves the use of accurate citations and references for any ideas, words, or materials created by others in the style appropriate to the discipline. It also includes acknowledging shared authorship in group projects, co-authored pieces, and project reports.
- **Uniqueness of Work:** Ensuring that all submitted work is the result of one's own effort and is original, including free from self-plagiarism. This principle extends to written assignments, code, presentations, exams, and all other forms of academic work.

Violations of these standards including but not limited to plagiarism, fabrication, and cheating are taken seriously and will be addressed in accordance with university policies. The process for reporting, investigating, and adjudicating violations is outlined in the university's [academic standards procedures](#). Consequences of violations may include academic sanctions, disciplinary actions, and other measures necessary to uphold the integrity of our academic community.

The principles outlined in these academic standards reflect our collective commitment to upholding the highest standards of honesty, acknowledgement, and uniqueness of work. By adhering to these principles, we ensure the continued excellence and integrity of George Mason University's academic community.

Student responsibility: Students are responsible for understanding how these general expectations regarding academic standards apply to each course, assignment, or exam they participate in; students should ask their instructor for clarification on any aspect that is not clear to them.

Accommodations for Students with Disabilities

Disability Services at George Mason University is committed to upholding the letter and spirit of the laws that ensure equal treatment of people with disabilities. Under the administration of University Life, Disability Services implements and coordinates reasonable accommodations and disability-related services that afford equal access to university programs and activities. Students can begin the registration process with Disability Services at any time during their enrollment at George Mason University. If you are seeking accommodations, please visit the [Disability Services website](#) for detailed information about the Disability Services registration process. Disability Services is located in Student Union Building I (SUB I), Suite 2500. Email: ods@gmu.edu. Phone: (703) 993-2474.

Student responsibility: Students are responsible for registering with Disability Services and communicating about their approved accommodations with their instructor *in advance* of any relevant class meeting, assignment, or exam.

FERPA and Use of GMU Email Addresses for Course Communication

The [Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act \(FERPA\)](#) governs the disclosure of [education records for eligible students](#) and is an essential aspect of any course. **Students must use their GMU email account** to receive important University information, including communications related to this class. Instructors will not respond to messages sent from or send messages regarding course content to a non-GMU email address.

Student responsibility: Students are responsible for checking their GMU email regularly for course-related information, and/or ensuring that GMU email messages are forwarded to an account they do check.

Title IX Resources and Required Reporting

As a part of George Mason University's commitment to providing a safe and non-discriminatory learning, living, and working environment for all members of the University community, the University does not discriminate on the basis of sex or gender in any of its education or employment programs and activities. Accordingly, **all non-confidential employees, including your faculty member, have a legal requirement to report to the Title IX Coordinator, all relevant details obtained directly or indirectly about any incident of Prohibited Conduct** (such as sexual harassment, sexual assault, gender-based stalking, dating/domestic violence). Upon notifying the Title IX Coordinator of possible Prohibited Conduct, the Title IX Coordinator will assess the report and determine if outreach is required. If outreach is required, the individual the report is about (the "Complainant") will receive a communication, likely in the form of an email, offering that person the option to meet with a representative of the Title IX office.

For more information about non-confidential employees, resources, and Prohibited Conduct, please see [University Policy 1202: Sexual and Gender-Based Misconduct and Other Forms of Interpersonal Violence](#). Questions regarding Title IX can be directed to the Title IX Coordinator via email to TitleIX@gmu.edu, by phone at 703-993-8730, or in person on the Fairfax campus in Aquia 373.

Student opportunity: If you prefer to speak to someone **confidentially**, please contact one of Mason's confidential employees in [Student Support and Advocacy](#) (SSAC), [Counseling and Psychological Services](#) (CAPS), [Student Health Services](#) (SHS), and/or the [Office of the University Ombudsperson](#).

Finally, if you have a question on any of the policies mentioned in this syllabus, or on any other issues/concerns with the course, please ask me in advance. There are no dumb questions, and I am happy to discuss or clarify as needed.