

ENTREP 1EN3

Entrepreneurial Discovery I

Fall 2026 Course Outline

Strategic Management Area
DeGroote School of Business
McMaster University

INSTRUCTOR CONTACT INFORMATION

Fridays 2:30 – 5:20 PM
Ryan Moran, MBA
Instructor
MoranRP@mcmaster.ca
Office: N/A – instructor will be on campus Fridays
Office Hours: Fridays 11:30 AM – 2:30 PM, by appointment
Class Location: TBA

COURSE ELEMENTS

Credit Value:	3	Leadership:	Yes	IT skills:	No	Global view:	Yes
A2L:	Yes	Ethics:	Yes	Numeracy:	Yes	Written skills:	Yes
Participation:	Yes	Innovation:	Yes	Group work:	Yes	Oral skills:	Yes
Evidence-based:	Yes	Experiential:	Yes	Final Exam:	No	Guest speaker(s):	Yes

COURSE INFORMATION

Lectures: 3hr x1/wk

Tutorials: N/A

Course Delivery Mode: In-person

Course Description: Students learn to spot problems worth solving through industry immersion, customer observation, and beginner's-mind inquiry. Core skills include opportunity framing, basic market sizing, and structured customer interviews. Short workshops introduce problem statements and simple experiment design. Students work individually or in teams and receive peer and mentor feedback. Deliverables include a validated problem statement, interview log, and insight briefs. Lectures, discussion (three hours).

Course Premise: Entrepreneurship begins long before a solution is developed; it begins with observation. This course develops students' ability to notice what others overlook and move from curiosity to evidence through observation, interviews, synthesis, and opportunity framing. The goal is not to launch a business. The goal is to learn how entrepreneurs discover opportunities worth pursuing.

MEETING DETAILS

ENTREP 1EN3 meets in person every Friday from 2:30 PM to 5:20 PM, beginning September 11 and ending December 4, 2026. There is no class during Fall Reading Week (October 12–18). Students should arrive ready to participate in discussion, field-based exercises, peer critique, and studio work. Office hours are available Fridays from 11:30 AM to 2:30 PM by appointment; the instructor will be on campus and can be reached at MoranRP@mcmaster.ca to arrange a meeting.

IMPORTANT LINKS

- Mosaic
- Avenue to Learn
- Student Accessibility Services – Accommodations
- McMaster University Library

COURSE LEARNING OUTCOMES

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

- Observe people, environments, and systems to identify meaningful problems, frictions, behaviours, and opportunity signals.
- Conduct structured qualitative discovery through observation and customer/stakeholder interviews.
- Synthesize field evidence into patterns, insights, stakeholder maps, and defensible problem or opportunity statements.
- Assess the significance of an opportunity using evidence, basic market sizing, existing alternatives, constraints, and stakeholder context.
- Distinguish observation from interpretation, identify assumptions and biases, and revise conclusions when evidence changes.
- Communicate and defend an evidence-based opportunity framing in written, visual, and oral formats.
- Collaborate effectively in teams to compare discoveries, challenge assumptions, and evaluate opportunity areas.

COURSE LEARNING GOALS

- Appreciate entrepreneurship as a disciplined practice of curiosity, attention, and discovery rather than simply the act of starting a business.
- Understand the value of beginner's-mind inquiry, human-centred research, and learning directly from people and contexts.
- Understand how uncertainty, bias, and motivated reasoning shape entrepreneurial judgment.
- Develop confidence in noticing and investigating opportunities embedded in everyday life, industries, organizations, and communities.
- Recognize that strong entrepreneurial action begins with evidence and a well-framed problem before solution development.

REQUIRED MATERIALS AND TEXTS

These items are an integral part of the lesson plan for the course, and not having these materials could have a negative impact on a student's learning outcomes for the course.

Required

Textbook Listing: <https://textbooks.mcmaster.ca>

Rob Walker, The Art of Noticing: 131 Ways to Spark Creativity, Find Inspiration, and Discover Joy in the Everyday — \$34.00. Second-hand copies are permitted.

HBR Coursepack — \$53.10.

IDEO.org, The Field Guide to Human-Centered Design — \$0.00, available online / through A2L.

Coursepack Readings: <https://hbsp.harvard.edu/import/1448378>

- Ethnographic Research: A Key to Strategy
- Understanding User Needs — Marco Iansiti, Ellen Stein
- Qualitative Customer Research — Claudia Rothke, Robert Wayne Gregory
- Know Your Customers' "Jobs to Be Done" — Clayton M. Christensen, Taddy Hall, Karen Dillon, David S. Duncan
- How To Get Better at Spotting Opportunities — Heidi Grant
- The Lemonade Principle — Jim Zuffoletti

- Identifying the Biases Behind Your Bad Decisions — John Beshears, Francesca Gino
- Motivated Reasoning, Leadership and Team Performance — Syed Salman Ahmad, Sheetanshu Mishra, Santosh Kumar
- Disciplined Entrepreneurship — Donald N. Sull

CLASS FORMAT

This is an in-person, three-hour experiential course held once per week. The semester is organized around the theme “Learn to See” and the progression Notice → Understand → Frame → Defend. Class time combines a Discovery Session and a Discovery Studio.

- Discovery Session: short lectures, readings, cases, demonstrations, practitioner conversations, and shared frameworks that introduce the week’s discovery challenge.
- Discovery Studio: applied observation, interview practice, evidence synthesis, critique, peer learning, opportunity framing, and portfolio development.

The semester-long Entrepreneurial Discovery Challenge (EDC) has two stages. In Phase One (Weeks 1–7), students work individually to conduct observations, interview stakeholders, identify patterns, and build evidence. In Phase Two (Weeks 8–12), students form Opportunity Teams around overlapping domains or opportunity areas and collaboratively compare findings, challenge assumptions, and prepare evidence-based recommendations. The course does not culminate in a solution pitch; students are assessed on the quality of their discovery and opportunity judgment.

COURSE EVALUATION

There is no final examination in this course. Evaluation is based on individual discovery work, field research, studio participation, and team-based opportunity assessment. Unless otherwise indicated, written work will be submitted through Avenue to Learn. Detailed rubrics and submission instructions will be provided on A2L.

COURSE DELIVERABLES

Studio Participation & Engagement — 15% (Individual)

Students are expected to contribute actively to the course as a working discovery studio. Assessment considers preparation, attendance, quality of participation in discussions and critique, completion of in-class exercises, willingness to test assumptions, and constructive contribution to peers' work. Participation is assessed on quality and consistency rather than simply frequency of speaking.

Timing: Weekly, Weeks 1–12.

Individual Discovery Portfolio — 25% (Individual)

Students maintain a discovery portfolio throughout Phase One of the course. The portfolio documents the development of entrepreneurial perception and serves as a record of how observations evolve into evidence and insight.

- Observation Logs
- Stakeholder Maps
- Interview Records
- Reflection Notes and selected Art of Noticing exercises

The portfolio is assessed holistically on depth of observation, quality of evidence, reflection, curiosity, and demonstrated development over time.

Due: Week 7 — October 30, 2026.

Interview Pack — 20% (Individual)

Students submit evidence of customer/stakeholder discovery completed during Phase One. The Interview Pack demonstrates the ability to prepare for, conduct, document, and synthesize qualitative interviews without leading participants toward a preferred answer or solution.

- Interview summaries and records
- Key themes and insights
- Contradictions or unresolved questions
- Supporting evidence and a brief reflection on what changed in the student's understanding

Due: Week 7 — October 30, 2026.

Team Opportunity Review — 20% (Team)

Beginning in Week 8, students form teams around related domains, discoveries, or opportunity areas. Teams prepare and defend an evidence-based opportunity review addressing the opportunity area, supporting evidence, relevant stakeholders, existing alternatives, assumptions, and unresolved questions. The review is conducted as an open review forum using poster boards or digital displays, roundtable discussion, and reviewer rotations rather than a conventional pitch presentation.

The focus is on the quality of discovery and reasoning. Teams are not expected to propose or pitch a final solution.

Due / Review Forum: Week 12 — December 4, 2026.

Final Opportunity Dossier — 20% (Team)

The final dossier is the team's comprehensive synthesis of the semester's discovery work. It integrates individual field evidence with the team's opportunity analysis and incorporates feedback received during the Opportunity Review Forum.

- Observations and field evidence

- Interview findings and synthesized insights
- Stakeholder and context analysis
- Opportunity framing and basic market/alternative analysis
- Key assumptions and uncertainties
- Recommended areas for future exploration

The dossier serves as a handoff to ENTREP 1EX3, where students can move from opportunity discovery toward ideation, solution development, experimentation, and validation.

Due: Final submission period — December 10, 2026.

Participation

Name cards and class pictures may be used to help give credit for participation. Students should display a name card with their full first and last name for each class. Since participation is an important component of the course, official McMaster student ID photographs may be used to ensure that students are assessed accurately and identified appropriately for grading and group work.

Final Exam

There is no final examination in this course.

LATE ASSIGNMENTS

In-class work cannot be submitted after the class is over. Students should upload or hand in any required in-class worksheets or exercises before leaving the classroom.

Late submissions of course assignments will be penalized 10% per day after the specified deadline, unless relief has been approved under McMaster's policies for missed academic work or an alternate arrangement has been approved by the instructor in advance.

COMMUNICATION AND FEEDBACK

Students who wish to correspond with the instructor directly by email must send messages that originate from their official McMaster University email account. This protects the confidentiality and sensitivity of information as well as confirms the identity of the student.

All students must receive feedback regarding their progress prior to the final date by which a student may cancel the course without failure by default.

- For Level 1 and Level 2 courses, this feedback must equal a minimum of 20% of the final grade.
- For Level 3 courses and above, this feedback must equal a minimum of 10% of the final grade.

The instructor may solicit feedback via an informal course review with students by Week 4 to allow time for modifications in curriculum delivery.

Students who have concerns about the course content, evaluation methods, or delivery should first reach out to the course instructor. If a concern remains unresolved after speaking with the instructor, students may then reach out to the relevant Area Chair for further consideration.

REQUESTING RELIEF FOR MISSED ACADEMIC WORK

In the event of an absence for medical or other reasons, students should review and follow the Academic Regulation in the Undergraduate Calendar "Requests for Relief for Missed Academic Term Work" and the DeGroote missed course work policy:

<http://ug.degroote.mcmaster.ca/forms-and-resources/missed-course-work-policy/>

COURSE MODIFICATION

From time to time there may be a need to remove/add topics or to change the schedule or the delivery format. If these are necessary, students will be given as much advance notice as possible.

GENERATIVE AI

Some Use Permitted

Students may use generative AI in this course in accordance with the guidelines outlined for each assessment, and so long as the use of generative AI is referenced and cited following citation instructions given in the syllabus. Use of generative AI outside assessment guidelines or without citation will constitute academic dishonesty. It is the student's responsibility to be clear on the limitations for use for each assessment and to be clear on the expectations for citation and reference and to do so appropriately.

In general, generative AI may be used to support brainstorming, outlining, editing, and supporting research. It may not be used to do the substantive discovery work for the student. Students may not use AI to fabricate observations, interviews, sources, evidence, or fieldwork; to generate analysis or conclusions presented as their own; or to replace the required process of observing, interviewing, synthesizing, and exercising judgment. Specific assessment instructions may further limit or clarify acceptable use.

ACADEMIC INTEGRITY

You are expected to exhibit honesty and use ethical behaviour in all aspects of the learning process. Academic credentials you earn are rooted in principles of honesty and academic integrity. It is your responsibility to understand what constitutes academic dishonesty.

Academic dishonesty is to knowingly act or fail to act in a way that results or could result in unearned academic credit or advantage. This behaviour can result in serious consequences, e.g., the grade of zero on an assignment, loss of credit with a notation on the transcript (notation reads: "Grade of F assigned for academic dishonesty"), and/or suspension or expulsion from the university. For information on the various types of academic dishonesty please refer to the Academic Integrity Policy.

The following illustrates only three forms of academic dishonesty:

- plagiarism, e.g., the submission of work that is not one's own or for which other credit has been obtained.
- improper collaboration in group work.
- copying or using unauthorized aids in tests and examinations.

AUTHENTICITY/PLAGIARISM DETECTION

Some courses may use a web-based service (Turnitin.com) to reveal authenticity and ownership of student submitted work. For courses using such software, students will be expected to submit their work electronically either directly to Turnitin.com or via an online learning platform (e.g., Avenue to Learn, etc.) using plagiarism detection so it can be checked for academic dishonesty.

Students who do not wish their work to be submitted through the plagiarism detection software must inform the Instructor before the assignment is due. No penalty will be assigned to a student who does not submit work to the plagiarism detection software. All submitted work is subject to normal verification that standards of academic integrity have been upheld. For more details about McMaster's use of Turnitin.com please go to www.mcmaster.ca/academicintegrity.

COURSES WITH AN ON-LINE ELEMENT

Some courses may use on-line elements (e.g., email, Avenue to Learn, web pages, or other learning platforms). Students should be aware that, when they access the electronic components of a course using these elements, private information such as first and last names, user names for McMaster email accounts, and program affiliation may become apparent to other students in the same course. Continuation in a course that uses on-line elements will be deemed consent to this disclosure. If you have questions or concerns, please discuss them with the instructor.

CONDUCT EXPECTATIONS

As a McMaster student, you have the right to experience, and the responsibility to demonstrate, respectful and dignified interactions within all of our living, learning and working communities. These expectations are described in

the Code of Student Rights & Responsibilities. All students share the responsibility of maintaining a positive environment for the academic and personal growth of all McMaster community members, whether in person or online.

It is essential that students be mindful of their interactions online, as the Code remains in effect in virtual learning environments. The Code applies to interactions that adversely affect, disrupt, or interfere with reasonable participation in University activities.

ACADEMIC ACCOMMODATION OF STUDENTS WITH DISABILITIES

Students with disabilities who require academic accommodation must contact Student Accessibility Services (SAS) at 905-525-9140 ext. 28652 or sas@mcmaster.ca to make arrangements with a Program Coordinator. For further information, consult McMaster University's Academic Accommodation of Students with Disabilities policy.

ACADEMIC ACCOMMODATION FOR RELIGIOUS, INDIGENOUS OR SPIRITUAL OBSERVANCES (RISO)

Students requiring academic accommodation based on religious, Indigenous or spiritual observances should follow the procedures set out in the RISO policy. Students should submit their request to their Faculty Office normally within 10 working days of the beginning of term in which they anticipate a need for accommodation or to the Registrar's Office prior to their examinations. Students should also contact their instructors as soon as possible to make alternative arrangements for classes, assignments, and tests.

COPYRIGHT AND RECORDING

Students are advised that lectures, demonstrations, performances, and any other course material provided by an instructor include copyright protected works. The Copyright Act and copyright law protect every original literary, dramatic, musical and artistic work, including lectures by University instructors.

The recording of lectures, tutorials, or other methods of instruction may occur during a course. Recording may be done by either the instructor for the purpose of authorized distribution, or by a student for the purpose of personal study. Students should be aware that their voice and/or image may be recorded by others during the class. Please speak with the instructor if this is a concern for you.

EXTREME CIRCUMSTANCES

The University reserves the right to change the dates and deadlines for any or all courses in extreme circumstances (e.g., severe weather, labour disruptions, etc.). Changes will be communicated through regular McMaster communication channels, such as McMaster Daily News, Avenue to Learn and/or McMaster email.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT OF COURSE POLICIES

Your enrolment in ENTREP 1EN3: Entrepreneurial Discovery I will be considered to be an implicit acknowledgement of the course policies outlined above, or of any other that may be announced during lecture and/or on A2L. It is your responsibility to read this course outline, to familiarize yourself with the course policies and to act accordingly.

Lack of awareness of the course policies cannot be invoked at any point during this course for failure to meet them. It is your responsibility to ask for clarification on any policies that you do not understand.

COURSE SCHEDULE

ENTREP 1EN3

Entrepreneurial Discovery I

Fall 2026 Course Schedule

Week	Date	Theme / Topic	Readings, Studio & Deliverables
1	Fri. Sept. 11	NOTICE — What Entrepreneurs Actually Do	Read: The Art of Noticing, Introduction + selected exercises. Topics: Entrepreneurship beyond startups; opportunity recognition; discovery versus invention. Studio: Curiosity mapping and domain selection.
2	Fri. Sept. 18	NOTICE — Observation & Entrepreneurial Curiosity	Read: Ethnographic Research: A Key to Strategy; The Art of Noticing, selected exercises. Topics: Learning to see; friction; observation methods. Studio: Observation exercises. Portfolio artifact: Observation Log.
3	Fri. Sept. 25	NOTICE — Systems & Stakeholders	Read: IDEO.org, The Field Guide to Human-Centered Design (selected sections). Topics: Stakeholders; systems thinking; context. Studio: Stakeholder mapping. Portfolio artifact: Stakeholder Map.
4	Fri. Oct. 2	UNDERSTAND — Customer Discovery	Read: Understanding User Needs — Marco Iansiti, Ellen Stein. Topics: Talking to users; discovery interviews; understanding needs. Studio: Interview planning.
5	Fri. Oct. 9	UNDERSTAND — Interview Craft	Read: Qualitative Customer Research — Claudia Rothke, Robert Wayne Gregory. Topics: Better questions; bias reduction; listening; qualitative evidence. Studio: Interview practice. Portfolio artifact: Interview Records.
—	Oct. 12–18	FALL READING WEEK	No class. Continue interviews, observation, and field work.
6	Fri. Oct. 23	UNDERSTAND — Finding Patterns	Read: The Art of Noticing, selected exercises. Topics: Insight generation; affinity mapping; contradictions; evidence vs. anecdote. Studio: Evidence synthesis.
7	Fri. Oct. 30	UNDERSTAND — Understanding Needs	Read: Know Your Customers' "Jobs to Be Done" — Christensen, Hall, Dillon & Duncan. Topics: Behaviours; motivations; existing workarounds; jobs to be done. Studio: Insight workshop. DUE: Individual Discovery Portfolio (25%) and Interview Pack (20%).
8	Fri. Nov. 6	FRAME — Opportunity Formation	Read: How To Get Better at Spotting Opportunities — Heidi Grant. Topics: Opportunity framing; problem statements; opportunity statements. Studio: Team formation and opportunity clustering.

Week	Date	Theme / Topic	Readings, Studio & Deliverables
9	Fri. Nov. 13	FRAME — Alternatives & Existing Solutions	Read: The Lemonade Principle — Jim Zuffoletti. Topics: Existing solutions; market landscapes; workarounds; uncertainty and surprise. Studio: Opportunity mapping and basic market sizing.
10	Fri. Nov. 20	FRAME — Assumptions & Judgment	Read: Identifying the Biases Behind Your Bad Decisions — John Beshears, Francesca Gino. Topics: Evidence vs. intuition; cognitive bias; entrepreneurial judgment; assumption testing. Studio: Team critique sessions.
11	Fri. Nov. 27	DEFEND — Building an Evidence-Based Argument	Read: Motivated Reasoning, Leadership and Team Performance — Ahmad, Mishra & Kumar; Disciplined Entrepreneurship — Donald N. Sull. Topics: Motivated reasoning; disciplined judgment; defending an opportunity. Studio: Mock review sessions and Opportunity Review preparation.
12	Fri. Dec. 4	DEFEND — Opportunity Review Forum	No new reading. Teams participate in an open review forum using poster/digital displays, roundtable discussion, and reviewer rotations. DUE: Team Opportunity Review (20%). No solution pitches; focus remains on observations, evidence, opportunity quality, assumptions, and unresolved questions.
Final	Thu. Dec. 10	FINAL SUBMISSION	DUE: Final Opportunity Dossier (20%). Team synthesis incorporating review feedback and serving as a handoff to ENTREP 1EX3.