

Wharton MGMT 8910 (Commercialization of Academic Science) Spring 2025

MGMT8910 SYLLABUS – Spring 2026

**Facilitated by The Mack Institute for Innovation Management
The Wharton School | University of Pennsylvania**

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Course Load	1 cu
Class Time and Format	See Course Schedule Virtual First Class – Wednesday, January 14, 6 pm
Office Hours	By appointment

Update:

The first session on January 14 will be held virtually. During this meeting, we will review the course structure, project assignments, expectations, and leave time for Q&A.

The second session will be held in person at SHDH (room TBD), where you will meet your project sponsors.

A. COURSE DESCRIPTION

This 1.0-credit experiential learning course provides MBA students with hands-on exposure to the process of commercializing scientific innovations emerging from Penn research labs.

Working in small teams, students are paired with early-stage technologies. Previous clients have included: Rehabilitation Robotics Lab, Computational Social Science Lab, Data Driven Discovery Initiative at SAS, and the Center for Innovation & Precision Dentistry.

Students will engage directly with faculty inventors to understand the scientific foundation of the technology and assess its market potential. Coursework combines instructor-led sessions on commercialization strategy and innovation frameworks with applied research and stakeholder interviews. Some projects may also involve industry partners who can offer additional context and commercialization pathways.

Ideal candidates have a strong interest or background in innovation, commercialization, or

entrepreneurship. The course is open to MBA and WEMBA students; graduate students from other Penn schools can be considered. **Participation is by application only.**

B. COURSE OBJECTIVES

- Understand the challenges and strategies of commercializing early-stage academic research.
- Apply innovation and entrepreneurship frameworks in a real-world context.
- Engage with university inventors and potential industry collaborators.
- Develop analytical and communication skills relevant to technology commercialization.

C. COURSE STRUCTURE AND EXPECTATIONS

The course involves a mix of lectures, team-based project work, and meetings with stakeholders. Key stages include:

1. Understanding the science and stakeholder objectives
2. Framing the commercialization challenge
3. Conducting customer discovery and market research
4. Developing and presenting recommendations for commercialization pathway

D. KEY DELIVERABLES

Deliverable	Timing
Mid-point Presentation	Weeks 8–9
Final Presentation	Weeks 15–16
Reflection (1000–1500 words)	Week 16
Peer Evaluations	Week 16

E. GRADING BREAKDOWN

Component	Weight
Class Participation & Attendance	10%
Mid-point Presentation / Analysis	10%
Final Presentation / Analysis	30%
Final Paper	10%
Sponsor Evaluation	30%
Peer Evaluations	15%

F. NOTES

Attendance: The first class, midpoint check and final check in will be **in-person**. The other classes will be virtual.

Course Readings: The faculty may recommend relevant reading material after the first meeting with teams to discuss their scope of work.

Submissions: All submissions due to the sponsor are to be sent via email to your sponsor contact with a copy to Mack Institute and the team's TA. Group assignments such as sponsor meeting and presentation invites are due on email/calendar. All other submissions are due on Canvas.

Submission Deadlines: Project sponsors are sometimes unavailable during the scheduled time, or may bring in other executives to hear what the students have to say. Dates for final presentations that are changed by the sponsor will have no bearing on due dates for course materials. Even if the sponsor delays the final presentation, the slide decks must be turned in on Canvas by the deadline noted.

Mack Institute and TA must be included in ALL communications and meetings with the sponsors.

Confidentiality: Some projects may need to be undertaken under Confidentiality and Non-Disclosure Agreements as a requirement by the sponsor, and all information received by the team from the sponsor is electronically stored on Canvas (unless otherwise determined with the sponsor and Mack Institute). While the Mack Institute team will support and advise each team, the students take ownership and primary responsibility for the successful delivery of the project.

References/Citation: All submissions to the sponsor and on Canvas should have appropriate references and sources cited. Students are required to follow Wharton's Reference/Citation policies.

Faculty/TA availability: The faculty and TA will hold office hours by appointment. Appointments with the faculty can be made by email or virtual sign-up link on Canvas. TAs are available by email.

COURSE SCHEDULE & ASSIGNMENTS SUMMARY

Week	Topic
1 (In Person, room TBD)	Intro to Commercialization of Academic IP <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Understand what academic commercialization involves• Learn expectations and workflow for the course• Build rapport with teammates and sponsors. Homework: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Meet your sponsors to learn about their technology.
2 (Virtual)	What Could Your Startup Do? (Vitamin vs. Painkiller) / Guest Speaker <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Frame the startup as a value creation engine

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Identify key pains and gains • Translate insights into early value propositions. <p>Homework:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Submit value creation hypothesis
3 (Virtual)	<p>Customer Discovery & Personas / Guest Speaker</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Understand discovery principles • Map buyers and stakeholders • Build a persona map <p>Homework:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Conduct 3 interviews
4 (Virtual)	<p>Market Research with AI / Guest Speaker</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Use AI for market sizing & segmentation • Extract competitive and demand insights • Build a structured research approach. <p>Homework:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Submit market research document.
5 (Virtual)	<p>Presenting Analysis to Clients / Guest Speaker</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Build a compelling narrative • Translate analysis into client-ready messaging • Create a consulting-style outline. <p>Homework:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Prepare outline for mid-point presentation
6 (Virtual)	<p>Prep for Midpoint (instead of lecture we will use class time for presentation prep)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Review outline and build narrative <p>Homework:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Build slides for Midpoint • Finalize time for presentation with client
7 (Virtual)	<p>Prep for Midpoint (instead of lecture we will use class time for presentation prep)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Review rough cut of presentation <p>Homework:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Finalize presentation • Finalize time for presentation with client

8 (In person)	<p>Midpoint Presentation (Held in-person in the Mack Conference Room)</p> <p>Homework:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Conduct self-assessment
9 (Virtual)	<p>Go to Market – Marketing / Guest Speaker</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Understand positioning & messaging • Learn competitive strategy • Think like a marketer – “the secret creative sauce” <p>Homework:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Competitive analysis
10 (Virtual)	<p>Go to Market – Sales, Pricing, Packaging / Guest Speaker</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Learn what sales does • Understand pricing/packaging • What a GTM strategy looks like <p>Homework:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • GTM Strategy
11 (Virtual)	<p>Go to Market – Partnerships / Guest Speaker</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Understand partnership models • Identify potential partners • Recognize partnership pitfalls. <p>Homework:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Build partnership ecosystem.
12 (Virtual)	<p>Go to Market - Licensing IP / Guest Speaker</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Learn licensing basics • Evaluate licensing vs direct commercialization • Understand when licensing is right. <p>Homework:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Conduct sell-direct vs license trade-off.
13 (Virtual)	<p>Prep for Final Presentation (instead of lecture we will use class time for presentation prep)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Review rough cut of presentation <p>Homework:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Finalize presentation • Finalize time for presentation
14 (In person)	Final Presentation (Held in-person in the Mack Conference Room)

	Homework:
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- Submit peer review
- Submit after action report