

26 March 2021

The director

NWU Business School

Prof Jan Van Romburgh

Thank you for the opportunity to provide written feedback to the business school regarding my experiences of the MBA programme.

Feedback

1) I want to state that for me personally the MBA programme was a fantastic experience as it exposed me to subject fields that were stimulating, sometimes challenging and new. I was also exposed to very insightful winter and summer schools that gave me an opportunity to meet other students from different contexts and jointly receive classes.

2) I definitely liked the group experiences and working together as a group proved to be a challenge for one's management skills from the start. My first group I joined in the beginning fell apart at the end of the first year as members failed to "join" and identify with the group. However, this was regarded as a situation found in reality as well and when we split up we all were received in different groups and completed our practical work in the new configuration. The second group I joined went through the process of second year very effectively and we developed an effective model of collaboration. As part of this collaboration we managed to achieve best performance in the company project as the fruits to our hard work as a group. Although some members were not as happy with the other members of the group, we jointly managed to keep members motivated and focused on the task at hand.

3) Subjects and teaching. Most of the modules were highly relevant and taught by a diversity of lecturers.

HR management was taught by an outside lecturer who had experience in the field. Personally, I did not have a problem with him or his teaching, although some of the fellow students were not happy in this module.

Corporate Governance: We all had positive experiences of Corporate governance and operations management and personally I did very well in both these subjects.

Economics was difficult but I still learnt a lot and although I did not do that well, I was satisfied having gained a lot.

Management accounting (MA) did not go well as I did not do maths subjects for a long time and it was a challenge to get into the calculus part. Having to write the papers by hand and do all calculations by hand was less than helpful, and mistakes were easily made. I had to re do MA and second time I was much more confident under Mr Manyapelolo. I learnt a lot about MA then, much more than the first round.

Financial management was very interesting, but foreign and easily confusing. Unfortunately, the lecturer Prof Wedze was technically good, but could not effectively draw us into the reality - the subject remained academic and could have been presented more practically. I wrote Fin Management second opportunity and passed it, and I now understand more of it. I am still not sure about his inconsistent manner of assessing us. My individual assignment was super good at 86% and the exam was terribly poor. I still do not understand his assessment methods.

Leadership remains a mystery. Prof Jackson is highly experienced but I felt he was super critical of my work, despite the fact that I had majored in psychology at university, worked in an industrial context and am a professor in Social work. His mark was therefore unrealistically critical and his way of assessing me in the exam does not leave me with much confidence in the validity of my final mark. I found his research to be outdated with most of his texts dating back to the nineties. He used very few if any new sources. The material was presented relatively interesting, although it was old thinking that was presented and somewhat boring.

I enjoyed **strategy management**. It was clean teaching by Prof Ronnie and straight forward. He was approachable and we could explain to him why we thought we needed a better mark in the group assignment and were granted a better mark as a result.

The **company project** as a subject was superb. We enjoyed it all very much. Under my leadership, our group developed a new instrument that we used in the project and this received very positive comment from Prof Tommy. I really enjoyed prof Tommy and the company project was highly relevant and practical in my view. Thumbs up!.

Marketing, Prof Christo – I really enjoyed this subject and his practical down to earth method really appealed to me. This was my best subject!

Entrepreneurship - prof Stephan is passionate about his subject. I think I could have gained more perhaps, I was hoping to hear more new things, but it was well presented and I enjoyed it.

The **Technology** subject was somewhat of a flop. The lecturer was from practice - personally I liked him and his style, but he did not go well with some people in the class, although I could relate to him and I think he had a lot of experience that made sense to me. But compared to what was presented in the Winter school about technology, the content just did not fit very well.

4) In general - I thought the theoretical content was mostly appropriate and as I said before, I learnt a lot from the different modules. The guest lecturers used for teaching in the various summer or winter schools were very good and up to date with the latest trends so, these schools were thoroughly enjoyed. I found Theo Venter's teachings very relevant, and most of the sessions during winter schools were highly enjoyable and insightful. The Potch lecturers have their own culture and way of doing things I think. It bothered me that some lecturers did not renew their offering or present to us the latest in trends. As indicated, in some subjects the literature was rather old and outdated.

Programme logistics

In a way the Business school has a culture that is very much similar to the NWU culture. I was hoping to see real business like communication and well organized activities, yet at times schedules and feedbacks for instance appeared not well organized. Some improvements can be made to scheduling of classes, communication, coordination and feedback. But, I would not evaluate this aspect totally negative. Mrs Antonett Visagie was very good in her communication to me in person and I appreciate her role throughout the programme. Personally I cannot complain about Anthea or any of the administrative personnel, they were very kind and positive towards me. I do know some of the class mates had complaints, especially about scheduling of classes.

In conclusion - I think the business school is a regionally relevant school and so is the programme it prepares you well for the local context. But I am not always sure if they project their students right there in the global context. Somehow, I thought I needed more exposure to the business environment, to help me integrate things more in the business environment. Based on my

experiences, I thought of a possible mechanism to bring about further integration with the business environment.

Proposal: What if students did a kind of “internship” at a company during their term of study? Each student could approach a company and ask to spend a certain amount of hours at that company, focusing on those departments that are relevant to their different subjects. Then the student can see from direct observation how the different subjects all come together in the business context. Students then have to make practical observations in that organization related to each module in the programme. The observations are captured as reflections in a portfolio of evidence that is submitted at the end of the study period and graded separately. Alternatively, if students visited some specific JSE companies where they could observe the business models and their financial share positions in a case study fashion and then followed up with a visit where they attended meetings with the CEO's for instance? Or visits to places where effective operational interventions were made?

Recommendations:

Some lecturers need to update their material and renew their own arsenal of materials. Working with outdated literature from the 80's and 90's is not really effective in light of the new trends that are available in a subject.

I think the teaching methods of some lecturers as well as their assessment practices need improvement, especially where lecturers are new.

Closing

Thank you to all the lecturers for making this an unforgettable experience!

I appreciate having being admitted to the programme! It was a great experience for me and I have certainly learnt a lot and was stimulated in new areas of study and research. I hope to take the fruits of this qualification into the business world and my career. My objective was to learn valuable skills that I can apply in building my own existing business and explore new opportunities.

I am supervising two MBA students this year and am willing to continue doing so in future. If there are opportunities for me to teach in the programme, I would like to do so.

Being in academia myself, I know what it means to remain competitive. It means as a lecturer you need to be constantly on the lookout for new materials and trends. The business school is no exception – academics need to constantly work on their teaching offering to stay relevant in the market and demonstrate that you are at the forefront of knowledge. I wish you all the best of luck in your programme and with reaching the aims and ideals of this programme!

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'WJH Roestenburg'. The signature is stylized with a large, sweeping 'W' and a long, trailing 'g'.

Prof WJH Roestenburg (MBA student 2019 cohort)