

MBA REFLECTION

24 MARCH 2021

NEGATIVE EXPERIENCES

- **Research Methodology module:**

The Research Methodology module failed in preparing students for the actual dissertation.

A lot of syndicate group members were lost group due to the Research module being challenging and presented inadequately.

Concern with Company Project which was timeous and challenging. Request to consider doing it during the first part of the year.

- **Leadership module**

Students requested that the Leadership module been shifted to the first year.

The feedback was not on time and lack detail.

Revise the content of the module.

Students made alternate arrangements to receive assistance from outsider with cost.

- **Financial Management module**

Students requested a more continuous assessment as done in Management Accounting. Suggested the use of McGraw-Hill Connect as platform for assistance.

The module is too theoretical, need much more application.

Students made alternate arrangements to receive assistance from outsider with cost.

- **Communication and administration**

Students indicated that the overall administration and communication of the Business School needs to improve.

Concern with communication between students and supervisors.

Feedback from lecturers inadequate. Support not sufficient.

Waiting period to receive feedback from supervisor delays the research project.

- **General**

The lecturers need to be more familiar with the eFundi site and be more hands on in the administration thereof.

Practicality of some of the modules were challenging.

Challenges experienced with switch to virtual and online class experiences.

Some of the execution of the virtual sessions were very poor.

Links were forwarded on a very short time with a lot of poor connectivity.

Technical challenges and the fact that lecturers were not familiar with the platforms reflected an unprofessional image.

Ethical process may prove to be bureaucratic.

POSITIVE EXPERIENCES

- Received positive experiences from some supervisors in the dissertation process who supported students further in completing the dissertation.
- Students are not just a number and valued as individuals. When assistance is needed, management is on the side of their clients.
- Corporate Governance was recent, to the point with the actual relevant content.
- Working in groups forced students to collaborate and the diversity in groups were experienced very well.
- Networking sessions during study schools, like the braais provides valuable interaction between students and lecturers. Relationship building.
- The speakers and actual topics during the study schools were received well.
- Company project provided students with well desired exposure.

SUGGESTIONS / WAY FORWARD

- Distribute the research module more equally between years.
- More emphasis need to be on the service industries.
- Include Alumni more in decision making.
- Suggest a dedicated person need to be available.
- Suggest a workshop where everybody has the similar research topics and work together. Brainstorm ideas and have a workable document.
- Send some lecturers for training to CTL.
- Give more attention to the scheduling of assignments to prevent bottlenecks.

Below is the report received from the external panel member, Prof. Logan Ramsamy WITS Business School.

REPORT ON REVIEW SESSION WITH STUDENTS WHO COMPLETED THE MBA PROGRAMME AT NWU (24 MARCH 2021)

1. INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 The Director of the Business School of NWU hosted a review session with students who completed the MBA programme during 2020.
- 1.2 The session was directed at ascertaining the graduate's view of the MBA, in terms of both content and overall experience with the programme.
- 1.3 I was invited as an external observer at the session. This report documents my observations and impression of the student experience with the MBA programme.

2. GENERAL COMMENTS

- 2.1 The session which chaired by Prof Jan van Romburgh (Head of the Business School) who ensured that all the participants were given an opportunity to express their views. The students freely exchanged views and were very constructive in their comments about their experience with the MBA programme.
- 2.2 The major concerns raised by the students related to:
 - 2.2.1 The *research component* of the MBA programme presented some challenges to the students. In general, the constraints here related to:
 - 2.2.1.1 the content and timing of the research methodology course. This was compounded by the fact that many students were encountering a module with a research output and a pure business management focus for the first time.
 - 2.2.1.2 Writing skills: some students do not have the skillset to cope with the research component of the course
 - 2.2.1.3 Supervisor assistance was variable with some adopting an "arm's length" approach and others a more focussed interest in the research being done by their students. It is evident that some supervisors are going the extra mile in supervising their students
 - 2.2.1.4 timelines: the time between deadlines and feedback on the research was lengthy and inadequate in some instances
 - 2.2.2 *Feedback*: publication of assessments and feedback on assessments was not always timely.
 - 2.2.3 *Administration*: the switchover to on-line programmes presented some problems. These problems related to inter alia, on-line links, start of the sessions, audio related problems and other issues related to notification of sessions.
 - 2.2.4 *Communication*: clear and timely communication was not always evident. Response to queries was also not always timely. In some instance it required the intervention of the Head of the business school to get a response.
- 2.3 The major benefits and good characteristics of the programme included:
 - 2.3.1 *Focus on current developments* in some courses highlighted the relevance of these courses.
 - 2.3.2 *Syndicate project*: improved teamwork in solving problems

- 2.3.3 *Network session*: was crucial in establishing beneficial relationships.
- 2.3.4 *speakers and discussions* improved the understanding and relevance of the course content.
- 2.3.5 *lectures and lecturers*: in general, the lectures and lecturers were good. The course content was deemed relevant, and lecturers were generally approachable and willing to assist when required

3. RECOMMENDATIONS

- 3.1 Attention should be given to the *research process and content*. A greater focus on methodology and writing skills will be beneficial to students. It may be worthwhile hosting research symposiums where students can present their work. This could include two sessions, one at the beginning of the process where students present their intentions and another towards the end of the process. Comments from peers and academics will be very beneficial in providing guidance on the content of the research as well as allowing students to benchmark their progress to those of their peers.
- 3.2 Explicit attention should be given to *clear and timeous responses* to queries. Developing appropriate benchmarks and guidelines would be beneficial, e.g., 48-hour turnaround to all email queries.
- 3.3 *Timeous feedback on assessments* should be non-negotiable. Timelines should be established at the beginning of each course and these should be strictly adhered to.
- 3.3.1 Improve the student's *e-lecture experience*. This would require attention being given to issues related to logistics, mode of delivery and content being delivered

4. CONCLUSION

- 4.1 From the discussion it was evident that the students were happy with the content and their general experience with the MBA programme.
- 4.2 The MBA programme has a strong foundation which augurs well for the future of the business school. Due attention being given to some of the issues highlighted above will improve the student experience and further enhance the reputation of the business school.



Academic Director

WBS

27 March 2021