

MGTO 521 - MBA Residential Orientation Program

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ABSTRACT

*MGTO521, known as the **HKUST MBA Residential Program**, is a mandatory course held every year in August to mark the commencement of the MBA journey for each new MBA student. It is the first course to offer them an MBA learning opportunity in addition to a program orientation. It allows all beginning classmates to meet every student in their class (80 participants, over 20 nationalities for Full-time and 200 participants for Part-time with 60 from the Shenzhen MBA program). All students have some level of work experience and most are in management. They work collaboratively through the varied content in a five-day off-site residence (live in). The setting is a quality hotel which takes them away from home, school and work environments for the duration. Students work through class time and off time with group members throughout the five days and evenings. This allows them to re-focus on their objectives and goals for their MBA program, career and individual development. At the same time, they absorb new knowledge from management and leadership perspectives in an inspirational way, and experience the benefits of learning from group interaction and class discussion in a miniature version of the real world.*

The highlight of this course is the integration of multiple learning objectives using a combination of widely recognized delivery methods in stimulating learning situations for application in real-life managerial situations. In this essence – an integration of multiple learning objectives and tools from various perspectives - the context of this course is applicable to any prior level of education or personal development. In fact, the BBA in Global Business program, (GBUS), targeted at future business leaders, has started a simplified version of the MBA Residential Program.

This course is much more than lectures. In fact lectures make up only a small portion of it. The focus is on practical learning via multiple delivery methods. The course's key components are:

- A series of offsite experiential activities of increasingly difficulty and complexity, through which students apply the knowledge acquired in the three-day residential classes by driving themselves and one another out of the comfort zone to gain self-awareness of their weaknesses. This way they stretch their limits and reach the next level
- In-class experiential activities that challenge students' team and cultural interaction skills to make culturally diversified groups understand the cultural mix and how to observe, communicate and fit in.
- Case studies & practitioner's sharing with the core case, the Hong Kong Jockey Club Case and the presence of the ex-Chief Executive Larry Wong for an hour-long sharing session.
- Field learning exercises to choose two businesses in a similar industry and observe and analyze their constituents
- Detailed self assessments with discussion relating individual results to leadership and management
- Lectures on Decision Making, Problem Solving, from Scientific Management to Management Science, Cultural & Ethical Values, Code of Conduct, Leadership and Organizational Culture, etc

Keywords

Offsite residential program, experiential learning, integrated learning, multiple objectives, multiple delivery methods, orientation, team building, inspiring and stimulating learning

HEADINGS

- A series of offsite experiential activities of increasingly difficulty and complexity where students need to
 - Create their own organizational structure
 - Assume leadership roles and team roles
 - Use this structure, teamwork, and leadership to solve increasingly complex interdependent problems
 - Drive themselves and one another out of the comfort zone, bring out their potential, reveal weaknesses and improvement areas, and stretch their limits to next levels
- In-class experiential activities that challenge students' team and cultural interaction skills
 - Bafa Bafa is the FTRP cultural activity in which culturally diversified groups of students are made to understand the cultural mix and how to observe, communicate and fit in. Students are not allowed to speak in human language. They communicate through other culturally-specific symbolic languages, sign language and body language in order to complete a set of instructions
- Case studies & practitioner's sharing
 - There are several cases used in RP and the core case, new to this year's program, is the Hong Kong Jockey Club (HKJC) case
 - It's unique attributes are as follows:
 - HKJC's ex-Chief Executive Larry Wong is unique among leaders of non-profit organizations and also in his career before he joined HKJC
 - The HKJC case uses two scenarios which split the class into two groups, Case A and Case B. One studies Case A, "The Pre-Larry" case, and the other studies Case B, "The Post-Larry" case

- Larry Wong's presence at the end of student presentations comes as a pleasant surprise. Larry shares the factors behind his success, his experiences as a CEO and how he keeps up personally
- Field learning exercises
 - Students are required to go out to commercial outlets, choose two businesses in a similar industry, and observe and analyze them
 - Students are not limited to comparing their good or bad aspects. They can analyze how the businesses co-exist, highlight their unique sides and leave leading questions open to the class
- Group discussions and presentations with healthy internal competition
 - Teams compete healthily in presentations. They evaluate each other and then select the winning presentation
 - Immediate review, de-briefing, evaluation and feedback are conducted among peers with guidance from faculty
- Detailed self assessments (WBI & PDP) with discussion relating individual results to leadership and management skills
 - PDP is the Professional Dynametric Program with traits symbolized by PDP animals
 - WBI is the Work Behavioral Inventory newly introduced to the FT class to pilot the usefulness of the assessment
- Lectures on Decision Making, Problem Solving, from Scientific Management to Management Science, Cultural & Ethical Values, Code of Conduct, Leadership and Organizational Culture, etc

OUTCOMES

This course has an essential role in laying down fundamental knowledge and soft skills required for the entire MBA program. It kicks off the remainder of the HKUST MBA programs by establishing their quality and that of students' classmates with all participants. It does this through multiple and stimulating exercises which not only enhance leadership and management skills, but also bring benefits to students for the rest of their careers and lives.

Elements to Develop through MGTO 521:

Hard Factors – Knowledge, Techniques & Tools	
1. Decision Making Process	The Desert Survival Exercise is used to understand the differences between personal decisions and team decisions. This is an interesting situational exercise which puts students into the actual scenario and lets them come up with their own decisions and later a team decision through exchanges of thought.
2. Problem Solving	Various case studies are used to identify problems, understand problems and risks, frame the problems and then create and implement solutions. This element is learned and applied throughout the five days of activities.
3. Managing Diversity	The program has recognized and promoted the significance of learning through diversity by active acquainting, participation and anticipation. This diversity includes gender, education, work experience, industry, culture, nationalities and personalities. These nurture the attributes required to succeed in managing diversity in the real world. In FTRP, the Bafa Bafa exercise is used.
4. Leadership	This course provides alternate opportunities for students to lead and to be led so they utilize the techniques required for a successful leader through participation as a leader and team member. Leadership is a key element in our group work and outdoor experiential activities.
5. Organizational Ethics	This course touches on business ethics and how they can influence and impact organizations. It illustrates the essence of business ethics in an organization.
6. Corporate Culture	This course also highlights the beauty of corporate culture as a factor in determining the success of corporations and performance of employees.

Soft Factors – A Spectrum of Soft Skills	
7. Analytical Skills	This course requires students to apply their existing analytical skills and acquire new ones through new learning, observations, ideas, sharing and interactions using self assessment, team discussions & evaluation as well as peer observations.
8. People Skills	This course provides an opportunity through collaboration with a diversity of talent from different cultures, personalities, functions and industries. Friendships begin as well as working relationships with strangers. They tackle conflict resolution among peers and expectations of peers and work out how to create and maintain a positive learning and working atmosphere, how to learn individually and grow from interaction and managing diversity in team settings. In addition the course setting maximizes networking opportunities among peers, faculty, TAs, guest speaker and staff.

9. Teamwork	This course emphasizes team building through understanding the advantages and disadvantages of teamwork under different situations. The course setting reinforces the benefits of teamwork in order to gain from the team's diversity. The concept is wrapped up by ending with lessons from Geese illustrating the significance of teamwork.
10. Time Management	Time elements are tightly reinforced throughout the five days of activities. No individual is allowed to miss, start late or overrun any parts of the program in a team setting. This stresses the importance of time management as one of the key factors in determining the caliber of work.
11. Public Speaking Skills	Through the application of effective communications and presentation work, students enhance their public speaking skills in an environment consisting of 80 to 200 classmates. This encourages discussion and communication in a large group setting.
12. Self Awareness	This course requires students to carry out self assessment in order to understand their strengths and traits in different settings including natural styles, behavioral adjustments in normal and stressed circumstances, the situations that motivate or demotivate them, and even behavior shown in different types of jobs. The tools used in this subject matter are PDP – Personal Development Proscan and WBI – Work Behavioral Inventory.

REFERENCES

- Bafa Bafa details is available at <http://www.stsintl.com/schools-charities/bafa.html>
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