

Policy for evaluating student contributions and professionalism in HEC Montreal's MBA program

1. Objectives and background

This policy has three objectives:

- To establish a congruent approach to evaluating the contributions, professionalism and participation in class discussions by our MBA students. It entails the use of a common, coherent approach to evaluating this aspect of student performance. In this way, we ensure that evaluations are faithful and valid images of student performance and of the differences among them.
- To move from the notion of “participation” to that of “contribution and professionalism.” This shift places the emphasis on individual and collective learning and on student contributions to this learning, rather than only on the expression of an opinion during a discussion. The notion of professionalism used here refers to the “quality of an individual who exercises his or her profession in a competent, rigorous and serious manner” (De Villers, Marie-Éva, *Multi-Dictionnaire de la langue française*, Québec Amérique, Montréal (QC), 2009).
- To respond to student comments and criticisms. Several comments have been made about the lack of criteria or major differences between evaluations by professors.

In order to create the richest and most effective learning environment possible, this policy also takes into account three basic principles, or success factors, for students in our MBA program:

- Presence. It is important to note that an absence is a missed learning opportunity for students as well as a missed opportunity to contribute to the group's learning.
- Punctuality. Lateness interferes with the group's concentration and thus to learning. It is also a matter of professionalism and respect for the group, as much in class as with regard to group projects.
- Preparation. Without preparation, students can only hope for limited learning and can thus only offer a limited contribution to the group's learning.

Our policy is consistent with the logic underlying the *Code of Conduct for HEC Montreal Students* (See Appendix 1).

2. Criteria for evaluating contributions and professionalism

Three criteria are used to evaluate contributions and professionalism: presence and punctuality, preparation, and pertinence.

- **Presence and punctuality:** Students attend every class, arrive on time, are active in the class dynamic and contribute to a positive atmosphere within the group.
- **Preparation:** Students demonstrate that they have done the readings, have completed their assignments and are ready to answer questions and participate in class discussions.
- **Pertinence:** Comments by students contribute in a pertinent manner to the learning activities of the other students.

In-class contributions are not limited to making a simple comment during a group discussion. The idea of “comment” needs to be expanded to include, among other things, answering questions asked, offering new light on issues discussed, requests for clarification, sharing experiences, and making links among comments and/or with the readings.

The use of these criteria is based on a clarification of expectations with regard to student contributions and attendance:

- Students are not expected to have the right answers in every case or to dominate the discussion in every class. However, they are asked to be prepared and to regularly participate in class discussions. The evaluation system encourages contributions and takes both their quality and their quantity into account.
- The quality of class discussions depends on how well students are prepared and their willingness to share their analysis with the class. The frequency of in-class contributions is not enough to ensure a good mark for participation. In addition, attendance alone without contributions to discussions cannot lead to a better-than-passing mark for participation.
- The issue of unjustified absences is an important one. Frequent unjustified absences (i.e., more than a third of the classes) can lead to a failing grade for the course.
- By the same token, unjustified lateness will lower the participation grade. The mark for contributions will be reduced by an increment for the first instance of lateness, two increments for the second, and so on until the minimum passing grade is reached.
- Lastly, the mark for contributions and professionalism must represent a significant percentage of the final grade. As such, it represents a relevant evaluation component. In light of HEC Montreal’s standards and customs, this percentage can range from 10% to 25%, depending on the kind of course and its teaching approach.

Appendix 1

Code of Conduct for HEC Montreal Students

Article 1. General provisions

As a general rule, all students are obliged to conduct themselves so as not to interfere with the pursuit of studies or work under safe conditions and must observe normal courtesies in a university environment.

HEC Montréal students are subject to this Code even if they are participating in a foreign exchange or training program or working as interns.

Article 2. Rules of conduct during learning activities

HEC Montréal seeks to offer students a quality learning environment. Instructors and students must collaborate to maintain a climate that favors optimal learning.

The onus is on each student to adopt behaviours and attitudes conducive to proper conduct of courses and examinations, notably:

- a) arrive on time for classes and return promptly after the break, and leave the classroom at the end of the period;
- b) actively participate in learning activities proposed by the instructor;
- c) listen attentively when the instructor provides explanations or when other students speak or give presentations;
- d) eliminate sources of distraction by turning off cellular phones and using computers only for the academic purposes foreseen by the instructor;
- e) remain silent during examinations; and
- f) more generally, avoid any behaviour that could compromise learning and the conduct of examinations.

Source :

http://www.hec.ca/direction_services/secretariat_general/juridique/reglements_politiques/documents/code_of_conduct_2014.pdf