

Executive Summary: MBA Assurance of Learning Report (AY 2022-23 and 2023-24)

Introduction

This report summarizes the findings from the assessment of key MBA learning outcomes at the University of San Francisco’s School of Management for academic years 2022-23 and 2023-24. The assessments were conducted using the MBA Innovation Project, evaluated by members of the MBA Advisory Board. The findings provide insight into students’ strengths and areas for improvement, offering actionable recommendations to enhance learning outcomes.

PERCENTAGE MEETING/EXCEEDING EXPECTATIONS

LEARNING OBJECTIVE	0%	25%	50%	100%
Designing Business Strategy Across Functional Areas			81.25%	
Leadership Communication: Effectiveness & Persuasion			88.78%	
Ethical, Environmental, and Social Implications in Business			65.00%	
Challenging Assumptions & Appraising Competing Perspectives			75.25%	
Interpreting Ambiguous Information & Formulating Succinct Solutions			78.00%	

Key Findings and Recommendations

1. Designing Business Strategy Across Functional Areas

- **Findings:** Students struggled to integrate multiple functional areas effectively, often narrowing their focus to a single domain. Strategies tended to be fragmented, lacking cohesion across business functions.
- **Recommendations:** Emphasize cross-functional integration in coursework and project guidelines. Encourage students to develop holistic strategies reflecting interdependencies among business areas.
- **MBA Redesign Response:** In response to these challenges, the newly designed MBA program aims to reinforce the concept of integrated thinking starting at orientation by introducing the Magis Final Project requirement at this early stage. By doing so, students will be encouraged from the outset to view their learning through a cross-functional lens, ensuring that they engage with each course while considering its relevance to their culminating project. The anticipated outcome is that students will actively reflect on how each discipline contributes to a cohesive and comprehensive business strategy, addressing the previously identified struggles with integration across functional areas. This approach

is aligned with the program's recommendations to emphasize cross-functional integration in both coursework and project guidelines, fostering the development of holistic strategies that account for interdependencies among business areas.

2. Leadership Communication: Effectiveness & Persuasion

- **Findings:** While student efforts were solid, issues with tone consistency, organization, and executive summaries were noted. Disjointed narratives and weak transitions hindered clarity and persuasiveness.
- **Recommendations:** Strengthen communication skills through workshops on tone consistency and logical structuring. Provide additional guidance on crafting impactful executive summaries.
- **MBA Redesign Response:** To address these challenges, the newly designed MBA program has introduced more co-curricular workshops during the shared weekends with the EMBA cohort, fostering skill development in key areas of executive communication. This initiative was rolled out this Spring with the introduction of a workshop focused on executive communication strategies, equipping students with the tools to refine tone consistency, enhance organization, and craft more compelling executive summaries. Additionally, the new curriculum features an innovative course called *Storytelling with Data*, designed to help students effectively utilize data in their presentations, ensuring clarity and persuasiveness. These enhancements align with the program's recommendations to strengthen communication skills through structured workshops and targeted guidance, ultimately enabling students to present cohesive, well-structured narratives with stronger transitions and impact.

3. Ethical, Environmental, and Social Implications in Business

- **Findings:** Many students overlooked societal and environmental considerations in their analyses, focusing primarily on personal and team outcomes.
- **Recommendations:** Revise project prompts to explicitly require consideration of broader stakeholder impacts. Incorporate case studies and discussions on ethical and environmental implications.
- **MBA Redesign Response:** In response to the identified issues, the newly designed MBA program will reframe the final project as the *Magis Final Project* course, with the addition of the Magis reflection requirement. This change is intended to encourage students to be more thoughtful and discerning in reflecting on how their efforts in the Magis Final Project, as well as their entire MBA experience, can contribute to benefiting society, communities, the environment, and other broader stakeholder groups. In addition, the program will introduce the Horizon Core, which offers students a menu of courses focused on sustainability, further reinforcing the importance of considering societal and environmental impacts. These initiatives align with the program's recommendations to revise project prompts to explicitly require consideration of these broader impacts and incorporate case studies and discussions on ethical and environmental considerations, fostering a more holistic approach to business strategy.

4. Challenging Assumptions & Appraising Competing Perspectives

- **Findings:** Students demonstrated difficulty in identifying and critically evaluating assumptions within their work. The current Innovation Project structure may not sufficiently foster this competency.
- **Recommendations:** Integrate explicit instruction on assumption recognition and analysis. Consider redesigning project components to prompt deeper critical thinking.
- **MBA Redesign Response:** Work still in progress.

5. Interpreting Ambiguous Information & Formulating Succinct Solutions

- **Findings:** Students struggled to interpret ambiguity and develop concise, actionable solutions. The open-ended nature of the Innovation Project may contribute to these challenges.
- **Recommendations:** Provide structured frameworks for navigating ambiguity. Offer additional guidance through targeted exercises to improve students' ability to synthesize and respond to uncertain situations effectively.
- **MBA Redesign Response:** Work Still in Progress

Conclusion & Next Steps

The redesigned MBA program is addressing key challenges identified in student learning through a series of targeted interventions. To strengthen business strategy integration across functional areas, the Program will introduce the Magis Final Project requirement at PreTerm, ensuring students engage with each course through a cross-functional lens. To enhance leadership communication effectiveness, the curriculum will include more co-curricular workshops during shared weekends with the EMBA cohort. In addition, a new course, Storytelling with Data, designed to improve data-driven presentations will be introduced. To increase awareness of ethical, environmental, and social implications, the program is reframing the Magis Final Project course with a Magis reflection requirement and launching the Horizon Core, which will offer sustainability-focused courses.

Next Steps:

- Continue developing interventions for critical thinking and assumption evaluation, ensuring the Innovation Project structure fosters deeper analysis.
- Design structured frameworks and targeted exercises to help students interpret ambiguous information and formulate succinct solutions effectively.
- Assess the impact of implemented changes and gather student feedback to refine approaches in future cohorts.