

MBA Students' Understanding of Key Functions of Business Enterprise

MBA – College of Business and Economics

Step 1: Student Learning Outcome

Students will be able to demonstrate an understanding of key functions of business enterprises

Step 2: Methods and Measures

Direct: Midterm exam in BUAD 591 Capstone in Strategic Management. Knowledge of business functions was measured via three items that captured (a) breadth of knowledge of business functions; (b) depth of knowledge of business functions, and (c) association between business functions and competitive advantage. A rubric developed by faculty was calibrated and used to score the exam on a 4-point scale; Inadequate (1) / Emerging (2) / Developing (3) / Mastering (4).

Indirect: All students graduating in the MBA program are asked to complete an Exit survey, assessing their level of satisfaction with the specific knowledge they have acquired in the program on a 5-point scale; Extremely Satisfied (5) / Very Satisfied (4) / Satisfied (3) / Somewhat Satisfied (2) / Least Satisfied (1).

Step 3: Criteria for Success

Direct: 70% of students earn Developing / Mastering in two out of three answer items aligned to the outcome.

Indirect: At least 70% of students are Satisfied (3 out of 5) with their acquisition of cross-functional knowledge.

Step 4: Results

Direct: In spring 2021, three sections of BUAD 591 participated, with all enrolled students (n=60) completing a written-essay midterm exam with four open questions on the Harvard Business Case "Trader Joe's." Two of the four questions were designed to assess knowledge of business functions measured via three items that captured (a) breadth of knowledge of business functions; (b) depth of knowledge of business functions, and (c) association between business functions and competitive advantage. Overall, 75% of students earned "Developing" or "Mastering" in two of the areas. Although the threshold for success was met, the overall score in all three items was slightly below "Developing". Results revealed that students demonstrated strongest knowledge in "breadth of knowledge of business functions", while they performed lowest in "depth of business functions". Although there was some variance in results across classes, in general, results were considered consistent. In addition, a random sample of 30% of tests were rescored to confirm inter-rater reliability.

Indirect:

A total of 55 students participated in the survey at the end of spring 2021. One of the questions directly asked students' perspectives on whether they acquired cross-functional knowledge, which is directly relevant to the outcome. A majority of respondents (88%) scored their cross-functional knowledge

acquisition as Satisfied (48%), Very Satisfied (29%), and Extremely Satisfied (11%). Overall, only a small fraction of students reported low levels of satisfaction (8% Somewhat Satisfied, 4% Least Satisfied).

Step 5: Improvement Actions

The depth of functional knowledge is the area in need of most improvement. Results will be presented to the graduate committee for a reflection on the opportunity to reinforce students' capacity to delve in detail into the business functions to understand their role in business. Some changes in the curriculum or marginal changes in the course outlines for the core business functions may be recommended. The program will also investigate the gap between direct and indirect measures, as most students reported being "Satisfied" or "Highly Satisfied" with the acquisition of cross-functional knowledge, with only a few students reporting low levels of satisfaction. However, there is not a large constituency of students who reported "Extremely Satisfied", despite demonstrating good knowledge with the direct measures. The results will be shared with all MBA faculty and the goal will be assessed again in spring 2023.