

# **Business Administration Students' Ability to Analyze Ethical Issues and Identify Appropriate Courses of Action**

## **College of Business and Economics – Business Administration BA**

### **Step 1: Student Learning Outcome**

Students will identify ethical issues and dilemmas in business and recommend potential responses.

### **Step 2: Methods and Measures**

Direct: A take-home Case Analysis assignment with four written essay questions was used to assess students enrolled in the Seminar in Strategic Management (MGMT 449), which is the most appropriate course to assess the acquisition of knowledge about ethical issues because it comes at the end of their four-year academic career. Case Analysis questions were taken from an MBA-level Harvard Business School Case: Nike. The questions were specifically designed to test how the students can analyze ethical issues and identify appropriate courses of action. The professor responsible for the assessment performed thorough research online for rubrics utilized by colleges for the assessment of ethics. The assessment committee helped identify a rubric with widespread use in academic contexts. The rubric consisted of five items assessing the different aspects of ethics and ethical thinking.

- ITEM 1 – Student identifies ethical dilemma
- ITEM 2 – Student identifies the interests of the affected parties (stakeholders)
- ITEM 3 – Student identifies the facts in favor and against the arguments proposed by the affected parties
- ITEM 4 – Student identifies the consequences of each possible action in response to ethical dilemmas
- ITEM 5 – Student decides on proper ethical action.

Indirect: Exit survey from MGMT 449 is used to generate indirect assessment outcomes.

### **Step 3: Criteria for Success**

Direct: At least 70% of students will score 3 (Developing) or higher on a 4-point rubric scale for every rubric criteria.

Indirect: At least 70% of students will self-report a score of 3 (Good) or higher on a 4-point Likert scale for the survey item.

## Step 4: Results

Direct: A sample of 260 students (N = 654, 40%) across 8 sections (N = 23, 34%) of MGMT 449 in Fall 2023 were assessed. Four open essay questions were used to assess the five items. Essays were scored by two independent raters that were strongly familiar with the case, had taught the course, and underwent rubric calibration. Moreover, both raters also scored the essays in prior assessment in 2021.

Raters scored each of the essays following a 4-point scale: 1 = Inadequate, 2 = Emerging, 3 = Developing, 4 = Mastering

Students demonstrated the acquisition of knowledge to analyze, discuss, and reflect on ethical issues with 84% overall rated as 3 or above. Score distribution across the five items reveals that the standard target (70% at 3 or above) performance was met with four of five items related to ethics and ethical thinking.

- Item 1: 82.2%
- Item 2: 88.4%
- Item 3: 93%
- Item 4: 89.5%
- Item 5: 68.3%

The criteria for success were met for all items except Item 5. For three items (1,2,4) performance surpassed expectations, and for Item 3, a considerable portion of students (93%) performed at least “developing.”

Results improved in 2023, as compared to 2021, in all questions. The more remarkable improvements can be observed with Item 5 (57.6% at 3 or above in 2021 compared to 68.3% at 3 or above in 2023). Although Item 5 remains below the target for this reporting cycle, it is not substantially so.

### Indirect:

A total of 961 students responded to the Exit Survey and provided their self-assessment for the achievement of the ethics learning goal. They were provided with a question to be answered on a 4-point scale (Excellent = 4, Good = 3, Fair = 2, Poor = 1).

Ratings	Count	%
Excellent	110	22.40%
Good	283	57.64%
Fair	90	18.33%

Poor	8	1.63%
<b>Total (n)</b>	491	100%

80.04% of students perceived their ability to identify ethical issues and dilemmas in the business environment and recommend potential responses to be “excellent – good”. Barely 1% of students report having acquired poor ability to identify ethical dilemmas and recommend potential responses. This result is perfectly aligned with the results in 2021. 18% of students report fair ability to identify ethical dilemmas and recommend potential responses, compared to 17% in 2021. Over half of the respondents (57%) report good ability to identify ethical dilemmas and recommend potential responses, compared to 52% in 2021. 22% of respondents report excellent ability to identify ethical dilemmas and recommend potential responses, compared to 29% in 2021. In general, findings show that a vast portion of students is satisfied with the knowledge acquired in regard to ethical issues. Findings also show relative consistency across years.

### Step 5: Improvement Actions

**Action Item 1:** Instrument improvement - Break down Question 4 to better assess Items 4 and 5 and rephrase the question.

**Rationale:** One of the possible reasons why students perform below threshold in Item 5 is that Item 5 does not have its own question. Item 5 is the second part of Question 4. It is possible that students do not put enough effort into comprehensively completing the question. The recommendation is to split Question 4 into two questions. The first will assess Item 4, and the second will assess Item 5. The question for Item 5 will then need to be rephrased to increase students’ understanding as well as readers’ understanding.

**Action Item 2:** Evaluation of the curriculum map

**Rationale:** We are developing a new approach to analyzing our curriculum map. The assessment committee will be able to identify precisely which courses and how they discuss ethics. We will be able to see where professors provide feedback on ethical issues and where ethical issues find practical applications. This becomes important for us to identify our opportunities for improvement.