

**BUSINESS F701**  
**Alternative Investments and Portfolio Management**  
**Winter 2020 Course Outline**

**Finance and Business Economics Area**  
**DeGroote School of Business**  
**McMaster University**

**COURSE DESCRIPTION**

This course introduces students to a wide range of alternative investments, including hedge funds, commodities, infrastructure, and others. Students are also provided a deeper, cutting-edge treatment of modern hedge fund investment strategies as well as a rigorous analysis of the practical portfolio management process. This course is highly recommended for any student considering a career in investments, portfolio management, corporate finance, investment advisory, or the broader financial services.

**INSTRUCTOR AND CONTACT INFORMATION**

Class Timing: **Mondays at 2:30 PM**  
*All times referenced in this document are Eastern.*

**Adeel Mahmood**  
Instructor  
Tel: 905-525-9140 Ext 20559  
*Office Hours:* After class or by appointment

**COURSE ELEMENTS**

Credit Value: 3	Leadership: Yes	IT skills: Yes	Global view: Yes
Avenue: Yes	Ethics: No	Numeracy: Yes	Written skills: Yes
Participation: Yes	Innovation: Yes	Group Work: Yes	Oral skills: Yes

**COURSE PREREQUISITES AND COMPLEMENTS**

Students should have the academic credit of F600 or equivalent prior to the start of this course.

## COURSE OVERVIEW AND OBJECTIVE

During the past decade, there has been an explosive growth in the use of “alternative” investments in enhancing investment portfolios. Alternative investments include hedge funds, private equity, commodities, infrastructure, and others. This first part of this course provides an introduction to a wide range of alternative investments. In the second half, we gain a rigorous understanding of portfolio management using alternative assets.

A deeper, cutting-edge treatment of modern hedge fund investment strategies forms the fabric of the major part of the course – much of which is delivered in a financial trading lab. Students will be introduced to spreadsheet-based investment and portfolio analysis and will also get to work with a range of financial data sources (such as Bloomberg and Thomson Reuters).

This course covers several key investment topics in such professional finance exams as:

- *CFA Institute*: Chartered Financial Analyst (CFA) – all levels
- *CAIA Association*: Chartered Alternative Investment Analyst (CAIA) – all levels
- *Global Association of Risk Professionals*: Financial Risk Manager (FRM) exams

## LEARNING OUTCOMES

Upon completion of the first half of this course, students will be able to:

- Identify and distinguish between the traditional and alternative investments;
- Use investment analytics to examine each alternative asset class;
- Address the unique attributes of, and investments under, each alternative asset class, including hedge funds, commodities, infrastructure, and others;
- Conduct a deeper, cutting-edge analysis of modern hedge fund investment strategies, including long/short, event driven, managed futures, and others.

In the second half, students will develop a sound understanding of the following topics:

- Attributes and needs of institutional investors, including asset allocation;
- Equity and fixed-income portfolio management; and
- Evaluating portfolio performance.

## REQUIRED COURSE MATERIALS AND READINGS

Course content and class communication available on Avenue:

- <http://avenue.mcmaster.ca>

## OPTIONAL COURSE MATERIALS AND READINGS

(MTPM) Maginn, Tuttle, Pinto, McLeavey; Managing Investment Portfolios: A Dynamic Process (CFA Institute Investment Series); Third (3rd) Edition; Wiley, 2007:

- ISBN: 978-0470080146

Maginn, Tuttle, Pinto, McLeavey; Managing Investment Portfolios Workbook: A Dynamic Process (CFA Institute Investment Series); Third (3rd) Edition; Wiley, 2007:

- ISBN: 978-0470104934

Anson, Fabozzi, Jones; The Handbook of Traditional and Alternative Investment Vehicles: Investment Characteristics and Strategies; First (1<sup>st</sup>) Edition; Wiley, 2010:

- ISBN: 978-0470609736

## EVALUATION

Individual learning in this course results from in-class discussions, problem solving, and lab work. The balance of the individual learning results from lectures on specific topics, student research, and industry speakers. Team learning focus of this course is on an applied group project centred on hedge fund portfolio management.

The final grade will be calculated as follows:

### ***Components and Weights***

Class Participation	In-class/In-lab contribution (individual)	10%
Alternatives Assignment	Due after the 9 <sup>th</sup> class (group)	10%
Term Test 1	Written in the 6 <sup>th</sup> class (individual)	25%
Term Test 2	Written in the 12 <sup>th</sup> class (individual)	25%
Hedge Fund Portfolio Project	Due at the end of the term (group)	30%
<b>Total</b>		<b>100%</b>

## ***Class Participation***

Name cards are used to help give credit for class participation and contribution to in-class problem-solving. Students must have name cards with their full first and last names clearly written and displayed in front of them for every class. It is imperative that students prepare for every class. **Class participation marks are primarily based on the quality of contribution.** No class attendance results in zero mark.

Although class participation in this course will primarily be a function of solving the assigned problems and questions in class, participation in discussions and other class aspects will also be considered. **The determination of a student’s level of participation in a class will be in the Instructor’s sole discretion.** The students are, however, provided the guidelines below.

The grading for participation in each class generally follows a scheme on a scale of 0 to 3:

<i>Grade</i>	<i>Student Contribution</i>
<b>0</b>	Does not attend class
<b>1</b>	Attends class but makes no contribution during that class
<b>2</b>	Attends class and makes one average contribution during that class
<b>3</b>	Attends class and makes a <b>significant</b> contribution to the class by making important points with elements of originality or mastery of relevant issues or concepts – as demonstrated, during that class, by: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Making one or more excellent contributions;</li> <li>• Making two or more average contributions;</li> <li>• Solving one or more problems for the class in class; or</li> <li>• Providing other satisfactory evidence of significant contribution.</li> </ul>

Note that there is no partial (non-integer) participation grade awarded for a class.

Students may be asked to share their analysis with, or otherwise present their arguments to, the class in order for their contribution to be qualified as significant.

A student **missing a class** during the term, excluding a class where a test or an exam is held, is required to contact the ‘Student Experience – Academic (MBA) office’ and obtain an official approval of relief if he or she wishes to avoid getting a zero (0) participation grade for that class.

If the ‘Student Experience – Academic (MBA) office’ adjudicates that relief be provided, the student’s participation grade for the classes with relief requests will be re-assigned to the graded classes. See the section *Missed Academic Work* below for more details.

Notwithstanding the above, of the eight classes graded for participation, **students' participation will be based on the best six out of eight classes**. That is, each student will be assigned a total participation grade using the six highest (out of eight total) individual class participation scores. Note that these participation marks are normally reserved for class participation during the section of the class without any tests, quizzes, or presentations.

## ***Alternatives Assignment***

The ***Alternatives Assignment*** will be completed and submitted for marking online by students in groups. More details of the format, structure, and content coverage will be provided during the course of the term.

Students will form groups for this component. Each student group will also complete the ***Hedge Fund Portfolio Project*** as described further below. *The group members will be assigned individual grades relative to the group grade based on the peer assessments completed towards the end of the course.*

## ***Term Tests***

Two term tests – ***open-book, open-notes*** tests – will be written in the **6<sup>th</sup>** and **12<sup>th</sup>** ***classes*** of the term. More details of the format, structure, and content coverage will be provided during the course of the term.

A student ***missing a Term Test*** is required to contact the 'Student Experience – Academic (MBA) office' and obtain an official approval of relief if he or she wishes to avoid getting a zero (0) grade for the test. If the 'Student Experience – Academic (MBA) office' adjudicates that relief be provided, the student's grade for the test will be calculated based on the scheme outlined in the ***Missed Tests*** document available online.

## ***Hedge Fund Portfolio Project***

Students will form groups for this component. Each student group will also complete the ***Alternatives Assignment*** as described further below. *The group members will be assigned individual grades relative to the group grade based on the peer assessments completed towards the end of the course.*

Each group will complete the ***Hedge Fund Portfolio Project, due at the end of the term***. The project will entail analyzing and managing a hedge fund investment portfolio using available financial data and the concepts covered in the course.

More details of the format, structure, and length of the project will be provided during the course of the term.

## COMMUNICATION AND FEEDBACK

Students that are uncomfortable in directly approaching an instructor regarding a course concern may send a confidential and anonymous email to the respective Area Chair or Associate Dean:

<http://mbastudent.degroote.mcmaster.ca/contact/anonymous/>

Students who wish to correspond with instructors or TAs directly via email must send messages that originate from their official McMaster University email account. This protects the confidentiality and sensitivity of information as well as confirms the identity of the student. Emails regarding course issues should NOT be sent to the Administrative Assistant.

Instructors should conduct an informal course review with students to allow time for modifications in curriculum delivery. Instructors should provide evaluation feedback for at least 10% of the final grade to students prior to Week #8 in the term.

## ACADEMIC DISHONESTY

You are expected to exhibit honesty and use ethical behaviour in all aspects of the learning process. Academic credentials you earn are rooted in principles of honesty and academic integrity.

Academic dishonesty is to knowingly act or fail to act in a way that results or could result in unearned academic credit or advantage. This behaviour can result in serious consequences, e.g. the grade of zero on an assignment, loss of credit with a notation on the transcript (notation reads: "Grade of F assigned for academic dishonesty"), and/or suspension or expulsion from the university.

It is your responsibility to understand what constitutes academic dishonesty. For information on the various types of academic dishonesty please refer to the Academic Integrity Policy at: [www.mcmaster.ca/academicintegrity](http://www.mcmaster.ca/academicintegrity)

The following illustrates only three forms of academic dishonesty:

1. Plagiarism, e.g. the submission of work that is not one's own or for which other credit has been obtained.
2. Improper collaboration in group work.
3. Copying or using unauthorized aids in tests and examinations

**MISSED ACADEMIC WORK*****Missed Mid-Term Examinations / Tests / Class Participation***

Where students miss a regularly scheduled mid-term or class participation for legitimate reasons as determined by the Student Experience – Academic (MBA) office, the weight for that test/participation will be distributed across other evaluative components of the course at the discretion of the instructor. Documentation explaining such an absence must be provided to the Student Experience – Academic (MBA) office within five (5) working days upon returning to school.

To document absences for health related reasons, please provide to Student Experience – Academic (MBA) office the Petition for Relief for MBA Missed Term Work and the McMaster University Student Health Certificate which can be found on the DeGroot website at <http://mbastudent.degroot.mcmaster.ca/forms-and-applications/>. Please do not use the online McMaster Student Absence Form as this is for Undergraduate students only. University policy states that a student may submit a maximum of three (3) medical certificates per year after which the student must meet with the Director of the program.

To document absences for reasons other than health related, please provide Student Experience – Academic (MBA) office the Petition for Relief for MBA Missed Term Work and documentation supporting the reason for the absence.

Students unable to write a mid-term at the posted exam time due to the following reasons: religious; work-related (for part-time students only); representing university at an academic or varsity athletic event; conflicts between two overlapping scheduled mid-term exams; or other extenuating circumstances, have the option of applying for special exam arrangements. Such requests must be made to the Student Experience – Academic (MBA) office at least ten (10) working days before the scheduled exam along with acceptable documentation. Instructors cannot themselves allow students to unofficially write make-up exams/tests. Adjudication of the request must be handled by Student Experience – Academic (MBA).

If a mid-term exam is missed without a valid reason, students will receive a grade of zero (0) for that component.

***Missed Final Examinations***

A student who misses a final examination without good reason will receive a mark of 0 on the examination.

All applications for deferred and special examination arrangements must be made to the Student Experience – Academic (MBA) office. Failure to meet the stated deadlines may result in the denial of these arrangements. Deferred examination privileges, if granted, must be satisfied during the examination period at the end of the following term. There will be one common sitting for all deferred exams.

Failure to write an approved deferred examination at the pre-scheduled time will result in a failure for that examination, except in the case of exceptional circumstances where documentation has been provided and approved. Upon approval, no credit will be given for the course, and the notation N.C. (no credit) will be placed on the student's transcript. Students receiving no credit for a required course must repeat the course. Optional or elective courses for which no credit is given may be repeated or replaced with another course of equal credit value.

Requests for a second deferral or rescheduling of a deferred examination will not be considered.

Any student who is unable to write a final examination because of illness is required to submit the Application for Deferred MBA Final Examination and a statement from a doctor certifying illness on the date of the examination. The Application for Deferred MBA Final Examination and the McMaster University Student Health Certificate can be found on the DeGroot website at <http://mbastudent.degroot.mcmaster.ca/forms-and-applications/> Please do not use the online McMaster Student Absence Form as this is for Undergraduate students only. Students who write examinations while ill will not be given special consideration after the fact.

In such cases, the request for a deferred examination privilege must be made in writing to the Student Experience – Academic (MBA) office within five business days of the missed examination.

Special examination arrangements may be made for students unable to write at the posted exam time due to compelling reasons (for example religious, or for part-time students only, work-related reasons):

Students who have religious obligations which make it impossible to write examinations at the times posted are required to produce a letter from their religious leader stating that they are unable to be present owing to a religious obligation.

Part-time students who have business commitments which make it impossible to write examinations at the times posted are required to produce a letter on company letterhead from the student's immediate supervisor stating that they are unable to be present owing to a specific job commitment.

In such cases, applications must be made in writing to the Student Experience – Academic (MBA) office at least ten business days before the scheduled examination date and acceptable documentation must be supplied.

If a student is representing the University at an academic or athletic event and is available at an overlapping scheduled time of the test/examination, the student may write the test/examination at an approved location with an approved invigilator, as determined by the Student Experience – Academic (MBA) office.

In such cases, the request for a deferred examination privilege must be made in writing to the Student Experience – Academic (MBA) office within ten business days of the end of the examination period.



Note: A fee of \$50 will be charged for a deferred exam written on campus and a fee of \$100 for deferred exams written elsewhere. In cases where the student's standing is in doubt, the Graduate Admissions and Study Committee may require that the student with one or more deferred examination privileges refrain from re-registering until the examination(s) have been cleared.

## **STUDENT ACCESSIBILITY SERVICES**

Student Accessibility Services (SAS) offers various support services for students with disabilities. Students are required to inform SAS of accommodation needs for course work at the outset of term. Students must forward a copy of such SAS accommodation to the instructor normally, within the first three (3) weeks of classes by setting up an appointment with the instructor. If a student with a disability chooses NOT to take advantage of an SAS accommodation and chooses to sit for a regular exam, a petition for relief may not be filed after the examination is complete. The SAS website is:

<http://sas.mcmaster.ca>

## **ACKNOWLEDGEMENT OF COURSE POLICIES**

Your registration and continuous participation (e.g. on A2L, in the classroom, etc.) to the various learning activities of this course will be considered to be an implicit acknowledgement of the course policies outlined above, or of any other that may be announced during lecture and/or on A2L. **It is your responsibility to read this course outline, to familiarize yourself with the course policies and to act accordingly.**

Lack of awareness of the course policies **cannot be invoked** at any point during this course for failure to meet them. It is your responsibility to ask for clarification on any policies that you do not understand.

## **POTENTIAL MODIFICATIONS TO THE COURSE**

The instructor and university reserve the right to modify elements of the course during the term. The university may change the dates and deadlines for any or all courses in extreme circumstances. If either type of modification becomes necessary, reasonable notice and communication with the students will be given with explanation and the opportunity to comment on changes. It is the responsibility of the student to check their McMaster email and course websites weekly during the term and to note any changes.

<b>COURSE SCHEDULE</b>
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CL.	DATE	CONTENT	READINGS*
1	<i>Online</i>	<b>Introduction</b> Traditional vs. Alternative Investments, Intro to Hedge Funds	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Canada Hedge Fund Primer – AIMA Canada</li> </ul>
2	Mon, Jan 13	<b>Hedge Funds I</b> Long/Short Investing, Market-Neutral Investing, In-Class Problems	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Long/Short Equity Strategy – AIMA Canada</li> </ul>
3	Mon, Jan 20	<b>Hedge Funds II</b> Event-Driven Investing, In-Class Problems	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Introduction to Event-Driven Investing</li> </ul>
4	Mon, Jan 27	<b>Hedge Funds III</b> Commodities Investing, Managed Futures, In-Class Problems	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Managed Futures – CME Group</li> <li>• Mining &amp; Steel Primer – UBS</li> </ul>
5	Mon, Feb 3	<b>Hedge Funds IV</b> Global Macro Investing, In-Class Problems	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Systematic Global Macro – Graham Capital Management</li> </ul>
6	Mon, Feb 10	<i>Term Test 1 – To Be Written in Class</i>	
-	Feb 17 – Feb 21	<i>Midterm Recess – No Class</i>	
7	Mon, Feb 24	<b>Portfolio Management I</b> Fixed-Income and Equity Portfolio Management, In-Class Problems	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• MTPM – Fixed-Income Portfolio Management</li> <li>• MTPM – Equity Portfolio Management</li> </ul>
8	Mon, Mar 2	<b>Portfolio Management II</b> Evaluating Portfolio Performance, In-Class Problems	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• MTPM – Evaluating Portfolio Performance</li> </ul>
9	Mon, Mar 9	<b>Bloomberg Training</b> In-Lab Exercises  <i>Alternatives Assignment due online by 11.00 AM on the following Monday</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>(To Be Announced)</i></li> </ul>

CL.	DATE	CONTENT	READINGS*
10	Mon, Mar 16	<b>Algorithmic Trading</b> Developing Algorithms, High-Frequency Trading, Technical Analysis, In-Class Problems	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>(To Be Announced)</li> </ul>
11	Mon, Mar 23	<b>Structured Finance</b> Asset-Backed Securities, Structured Lending, In-Class Problems	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Secondary Real Estate Markets</li> </ul>
12	Mon, Mar 30	<i>Term Test 2 – To Be Written in Class</i>	
13	Mon, Apr 6	<b>Blockchains</b> Blockchain concepts, Cryptocurrencies	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>(To Be Announced)</li> </ul>
-	Tue. Apr 7	<b>Hedge Fund Portfolio Project – Strategy Submission Due Online by 11.00 AM</b>	
-	Mon. Apr 13	<b>Hedge Fund Portfolio Project – Due by 11.00 AM</b>	

\* Available on Avenue

## RESEARCH DATA

Any research data obtained by a student from publicly available sources for the purposes of completing term work (including data used in assignments, projects, and tests) can be used by the student, the instructor, and the university. All parties are free to use the research data subject to the original copyright of such data. Students hereby agree not to use in their term work any proprietary data or data subject to copyright protection without the prior written approvals of the instructor and the owner of any such copyright.