

**BUSADMIN D610**  
**Essential Business Skills: Effective Decision Making,**  
**Communication and Team Success**  
**Fall 2024 Course Outline**

**Deans' Office Course**  
**DeGroote School of Business, McMaster University**

***COURSE OBJECTIVE***

This course will help you develop essential business skills and competencies to facilitate success in your academic and career goals. These competencies will include critical thinking, communication skills, time management, dealing with ambiguity, leadership skills, collaboration and teamwork. The case analysis approach will be used to develop these competencies and integrate theories and approaches from various business disciplines to real-world situations/problems. You will compete in a case competition where you must demonstrate integrative thinking and application of these competencies.

***INSTRUCTOR AND TA INFORMATION***

Instructor:  
**Dr. Milena Head**  
Professor of Info. Systems  
Wayne C. Fox Chair in Business Innovation  
[headm@mcmaster.ca](mailto:headm@mcmaster.ca)  
Office hours by appointment: RJC 436  
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Teaching Assistants:  
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**Course Website:** <http://avenue.mcmaster.ca>

***COURSE ELEMENTS***

Credit Value: 3	Leadership: Y	IT skills: Y	Global view: Y
Avenue: Y	Ethics: Y	Numeracy: Y	Written skills: Y
Participation: Y	Innovation: Y	Group work: Y	Oral skills: Y
Evidence-based: Y	Experiential: Y	Final Exam: N	Guest speaker(s): Y

### ***COURSE DESCRIPTION***

The case method is an experiential learning method that brings realism to problem solving. Numerous scholars credit case analysis with developing effective decision-making and critical thinking skills. Cases allow students to directly apply and integrate theories from various business disciplines to real-world situations/problems. Students will be working in teams and will have the opportunity to develop effective presentation, team management and communication skills.

### ***LEARNING OUTCOMES***

Upon completion of this course, students will be able to complete the following key tasks:

- Accurately identify and articulate business questions or problems
- Appropriately apply quantitative and qualitative analytic tools
- Appropriately identify alternate courses of action
- Develop integrated and comprehensive business solutions
- Demonstrate effective presentation skills
- Build, foster and manage effective teams
- Demonstrate effective communication and conflict resolution skills

### ***REQUIRED COURSE MATERIALS AND READINGS***

Avenue registration for course content, materials and announcements

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

\$ FREE

BUSADMIN D610 Cases Course Pack, Fall 2024, Editor: M. Head

- Purchase a digital copy at the online Campus Store

\$ 15.95

**EVALUATION**

Learning in this course results primarily from in-class discussion and participation of business case analysis. For group work components, it is expected that each Learning Group (LG) member contributes fully and equally to the group assignment. LG members will share the same grade. **Late assignments will be penalized 20% for each day they are late.** Your final grade will be calculated as follows:

<b>Charter</b>	LG assignment	5%
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Due Wednesday Oct. 9<sup>th</sup>, 10 pm</li> </ul>		
<b>GRIT Week</b>	LG assignment	15%
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>October 15<sup>th</sup> - 18<sup>th</sup></li> </ul>	Individual assignment	5%
<b>Presentation Skills Reflection</b>	Individual assignment	10%
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Due Monday Nov. 11<sup>th</sup>, 8 am</li> </ul>		
<b>Case Competition</b>	LG case presentation	25%
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Due Wednesday Nov. 20<sup>th</sup>, 8 am</li> </ul>	Individual presentation skills	10%
	LG case report	15%
<b>Self and Team Reflection</b>	Individual assignment	15%
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Due Wednesday Dec. 4<sup>th</sup>, 10 pm</li> </ul>		
<b>TOTAL</b>		<b>100%</b>

Students are encouraged to deeply reflect on and uphold the following honour pledge:

***I understand and believe the main purpose of McMaster University and of my MBA program at the DeGroote School of Business to be the pursuit of knowledge and scholarship. This pursuit requires my academic integrity; I do not take credit that I have not earned. I believe that academic dishonesty, in whatever form, is ultimately destructive to the values of McMaster and DeGroote's MBA program, and unfair to those students who pursue their studies honestly. I pledge to complete my MBA program assessments following the guidelines of McMaster's academic integrity policy.***

### **GRADE CONVERSION**

At the end of the course your overall percentage grade will be converted to your letter grade in accordance with the following conversion scheme:

LETTER GRADE	PERCENT	POINTS
A+	90-100	12
A	85-89	11
A-	80-84	10
B+	75-79	9
B	70-74	8
B-	60-69	7
F	00-59	0

### **COURSE DELIVERABLES**

#### **Team Charter (5% group)**

Each LG will develop a team charter through a facilitated teamwork discussion. The team charter outlines the working principles of a team and acts as a compass to guide team members towards shared goals in a cohesive work environment. Team charters should include: team purpose; team goals; roles and responsibilities of each team member; expected behaviours and conflict-resolution processes. Your team charter as well as a brief description on how your team plans to use your charter must be submitted via Avenue to Learn by **Wednesday October 9th, 10 pm**. For this assignment, **generative AI may be used for editing only**.

#### **GRIT Week (15% group; 5% individual)**

Between October 15<sup>th</sup> – October 18<sup>th</sup>, all first year MBA students will participate in a highly immersive experience called GRIT week. GRIT stands for **Generating Resilient Integrative Thinkers**. A live case will unfold during GRIT week where 20% (15% team; 5% individual) of your D610 evaluation will be linked to deliverables for this live case. Details of this week and the associated D610 deliverables will be revealed during GRIT week.

### **Presentation Skills Reflection (10% individual)**

The November 6<sup>th</sup> Case Presentation Workshop will be recorded and shared with team members. In creating your case presentation for this workshop, **generative AI may be fully used for content creation**. Students will be required to watch their LG's recording and submit a self and team reflection by **Monday Nov. 11<sup>th</sup>, 8 am** via Avenue to Learn. This reflection should answer the following:

- What did I do particularly well during the presentation? What are my presentation strengths that I want to further develop?
- What did I not do as well during the presentation? What are specific opportunities for me to improve my presentation effectiveness?
- What were the strengths in how my team presented?
- What are specific opportunities that my team should consider to improve our overall presentation effectiveness?

### **Case Competition Presentation (25% group; 10% individual)**

Students, in their Learning Groups, will analyze and complete a verbal presentation of the case: "*The Lego Group: A Yellow-Brick Road Toward Sustainability?*". Your analysis should demonstrate application of the critical thinking skills and case method presented during the course. Your presentation should be authentic, compelling and persuasive, demonstrating application of presentation methods discussed. For this assignment, **generative AI may be used for editing only**.

**You must submit your PowerPoint presentation via Avenue to Learn by 8:00 a.m. on Wednesday November 20<sup>th</sup>**. One person will submit the PowerPoint presentation on behalf of the Learning Group. Please use the following format for your filename: LG#.ppt (e.g. LG4.ppt for Learning Group 4).

Presentations will be limited to 15 minutes per team, followed by a 5-minute Q&A period. Each team member must present. Time management is important as teams will be cut off when they reach their 15-minute limit. Please note that while it is not required that all team members answer a question in the Q&A, it is highly encouraged that questions are shared across the team.

Three finalist Learning Groups will be chosen to present in the final round to be held during the afternoon of Wednesday, November 20<sup>th</sup> in the Auditorium to their classmates and a group of judges made up of faculty and alumni. Please note that finalists will be presenting the same presentation as in the first round. PowerPoint presentations will be frozen between the first round and the finals. Presentation order in the final round will be randomly drawn. Attendance for the final round is mandatory for all students.

### **Case Competition Report (15% group)**

In addition to the 15-minute PowerPoint presentation, each LG must submit a 7-page case report (1.5 spacing), not including title page, bibliography and appendices. This report must be submitted via Avenue to Learn no later than **8:00 a.m. on Wednesday November 20<sup>th</sup>**. Reports are expected to be free of spelling and grammatical mistakes and should contain the following:

- Problem: What are the key issues of the case? Indicate the urgency and importance of the issues.
- Analysis: Qualitative and quantitative analyses, as appropriate. Given space limitations, only one qualitative tool should be used (pick one that is a good fit for the case!).
- Alternatives: As a rule of thumb, consider no less than three alternative courses of action. Evaluate your alternatives based on a decision matrix. Decision criteria should be justified and appropriately linked back to key issues.
- Recommendation and Implementation: Clearly justify why you selected the chosen alternative. Implementation is the action plan (what, when, who, where, how much) that puts the recommended strategy into effect. Aim to have approximately half of your report dedicated to the recommendation and implementation.

Please note that the case presentation may delve into more detail than the report (due to space limitations of the report). For example, more than one qualitative analysis tool may be presented while the report is limited to the description of only one such tool. For this assignment, **generative AI may be used for editing only**.

### **Self and Team Reflection (15% individual)**

The final deliverable of this course is an individual reflection on self as well as on your LG. This is due **Wednesday Dec. 4th, 10 pm**. For this assignment, **generative AI may be used for editing only**. There are two components to this reflection. This first is a reflection on your November 20<sup>th</sup> case competition. Considering your preparation and outcome (presentation and report), reflect on the following:

- What did you do particularly well?
- What did you not do as well? What are specific opportunities to improve for future case presentations and reports?
- What did your team do particularly well?

- What are specific opportunities your team should consider to improve for future case presentations and reports?

The second component of this reflection is a team charter check-in. For this component, reflect on the following:

- How would you assess the dynamics of your LG team throughout the term?
- Did your LG team experience conflict? Describe the conflict, what conflict styles were observed and how did your team overcome the conflict?
- How did your LG team use your team charter throughout the term?
- What updates would you make to your team charter to reflect your learnings to date?

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### ***IN-CLASS PARTICIPATION AND TEAMWORK GUIDELINES***

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Students are encouraged to engage actively in class discussions related to the material being presented by the instructor or guest experts, including the discussion of the sample case (Stack Brewing). Debate and challenge are important activities that help in the learning process and the willingness of individuals to engage in such activities with their classmates is appreciated.

A large component of the evaluation of this class will be based on teamwork. In order to achieve the full benefits expected from working in a team and to be fair to all team members, all members are expected to contribute equally to teamwork and to be fully informed of all aspects of their team assignments.

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### ***COMMUNICATION AND FEEDBACK***

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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.

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### ***ACADEMIC INTEGRITY***

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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, located at: [www.mcmaster.ca/academicintegrity](http://www.mcmaster.ca/academicintegrity)

Students are responsible for being aware of and demonstrating behaviour that is honest and ethical in their academic work. Such behaviour includes:

- following the expectations articulated by instructors for referencing sources of information and for group work;
- asking for clarification of expectations as necessary;
- identifying testing situations that may allow copying;
- preventing their work from being used by others (e.g., protecting access to computer files); and
- adhering to the principles of academic integrity when conducting and reporting research.

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### ***AUTHENTICITY/PLAGIARISM DETECTION***

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Some courses may use a web-based service (Turnitin.com) to reveal authenticity and ownership of student submitted work. For courses using such software, students will be expected to submit their work electronically either directly to Turnitin.com or via an online learning platform (e.g. A2L, etc.) using plagiarism detection (a service supported by Turnitin.com) so it can be checked for academic dishonesty.



Students who do not wish their work to be submitted through the plagiarism detection software must inform the Instructor before the assignment is due. No penalty will be assigned to a student who does not submit work to the plagiarism detection software.

All submitted work is subject to normal verification that standards of academic integrity have been upheld (e.g., on-line search, other software, etc.). For more details about McMaster's use of Turnitin.com please go to [www.mcmaster.ca/academicintegrity](http://www.mcmaster.ca/academicintegrity).

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### ***COURSES WITH AN ONLINE ELEMENT***

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**All courses** use some online elements (e.g. e-mail, Avenue to Learn (A2L), LearnLink, web pages, capa, Moodle, ThinkingCap, etc.). Students should be aware that, when they access the electronic components of a course using these elements, private information such as first and last names, user names for the McMaster e-mail accounts, and program affiliation may become apparent to all other students in the same course.

The available information is dependent on the technology used. Continuation in a course that uses online elements will be deemed consent to this disclosure. If you have any questions or concerns about such disclosure, please discuss this with the course instructor.

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### ***CONDUCT EXPECTATIONS***

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As a McMaster student, you have the right to experience, and the responsibility to demonstrate, respectful and dignified interactions within all of our living, learning and working communities. These expectations are described in the [Code of Student Rights & Responsibilities](#) (the "Code"). All students share the responsibility of maintaining a positive environment for the academic and personal growth of all McMaster community members, whether in person or online.

It is essential that students be mindful of their interactions online, as the Code remains in effect in virtual learning environments. The Code applies to any interactions that adversely affect, disrupt, or interfere with reasonable participation in University activities. Student disruptions or behaviours that interfere with university functions on online platforms (e.g. use of Avenue 2 Learn, WebEx, Teams, or Zoom for delivery), will be taken very seriously and will be investigated. Outcomes may include restriction or removal of the involved students' access to these platforms.

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## ***ATTENDANCE***

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Arriving late or missing class disrupts the learning experience for both you and your peers. Punctuality and attendance are crucial to maintaining a respectful, professional, and productive environment for everyone, including our faculty.

This course will be using Top Hat to capture attendance in classes. Attendance is recorded by submitting a unique 4-digit code displayed in your physical classroom using your personal device.

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## ***MISSED ACADEMIC WORK***

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Please do not use the online McMaster Student Absence Form (MSAF) as this is for Undergraduate students only. The MBA program will not accept an MSAF.

When students miss regularly scheduled term work which contributes 10% or more to the final grade, for legitimate reasons as determined by the Student Experience – Academic Office (SEAO (Student Experience Academic Office)), the activity necessary to compensate for the missed work will be determined by the course instructor. The compensatory activities assigned will vary with the nature of the course and the missed requirement. They include, but are not restricted to, an alternative assignment, a rescheduled midterm exam, or re-weighting the marks for the missed component to other mark components. Documentation explaining such missed work must be provided to the SEAO (Student Experience Academic Office) within five (5) working days of the scheduled date for completion of the work.

Acceptable reasons for missed work, along with the [Petition for Missed Term Work](#) and the [MBA Student McMaster University Student Health Certificate](#), can be found on the DeGroote MBA Student website ([mbastudent.degroote.mcmaster.ca](http://mbastudent.degroote.mcmaster.ca)). Please direct any questions about acceptable documentation to the MBA Academic Advisors ([askmba@mcmaster.ca](mailto:askmba@mcmaster.ca)).

University policy states that a student may submit a maximum of three (3) Petition for Missed Term Work per academic year, after which the student must meet with the Director of the program.

If term work is missed without an approved reason, students will receive a grade of zero (0) for that component.

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### ***ACADEMIC ACCOMMODATION FOR STUDENTS WITH DISABILITIES***

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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>

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### ***ACADEMIC ACCOMMODATION FOR RELIGIOUS, INDIGENOUS OR SPIRITUAL OBSERVANCES (RISO)***

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Students requiring academic accommodation based on religious, indigenous or spiritual observances should follow the procedures set out in the [RISO](#) policy. Students should submit their request to the SEAO (Student Experience Academic Office) **normally within 10 working days** of the beginning of term in which they anticipate a need for accommodation. Students should also contact their instructors as soon as possible to make alternative arrangements for classes, assignments, and tests.

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### ***COPYRIGHT AND RECORDING***

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Students are advised that lectures, demonstrations, performances, and any other course material provided by an instructor include copyright protected works. The Copyright Act and copyright law protect every original literary, dramatic, musical and artistic work, including lectures by University instructors.

The recording of lectures, tutorials, or other methods of instruction may occur during a course. Recording may be done by either the instructor for the purpose of authorized distribution, or by a student for the purpose of personal study. Students should be aware that their voice and/or image may be recorded by others during the class. Please speak with the instructor if this is a concern for you.

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### ***POTENTIAL MODIFICATION TO THE COURSE***

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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.

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### ***ACKNOWLEDGEMENT OF COURSE POLICIES***

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Your registration and continuous participation (e.g. on A2L, in the classroom, etc.) to the various learning activities of MBA D610 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.

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### ***ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE***

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Students may use generative AI in this course in accordance with the guidelines outlined for each assessment, and so long as the use of generative AI is appropriately referenced. Use of generative AI outside assessment guidelines or without reference will constitute academic dishonesty. It is the student's responsibility to be clear on the limitations for use for each assessment and to be clear on the expectations for reference and to do so appropriately.

**D610 COURSE SCHEDULE – FALL 2024**

Week	Date/times	Group	Topics/Activities/Deliverables
1	Sept 11 C1: 9:30-11 C2: 11:30-1 C3: 1:30-3	Cohort	<b>Topic:</b> What to expect in this course and the MBA <b>Topic:</b> Case Analysis & Case Comp Intro
2	Sept 18 1-3 pm	Plenary	<b>Activity:</b> guest expert on leveraging GenAI for professional success
3	Sept 25 11:30-2:30	Plenary	<b>Topic:</b> Key Issues <b>Topic:</b> Analysis Frameworks <b>Activity:</b> application of the Stack Brewing Case
4	Oct 2 C1: 9:30-11 C2: 11:30-1 C3: 1:30-3	Cohort	<b>Topic:</b> Inclusive & Effective Teams <b>Topic:</b> Alternatives & Decision Matrix <b>Activity:</b> Brainstorming <b>Activity:</b> application of the Stack Brewing Case
5	Oct 9 10-2	Plenary	<b>Topic:</b> Effective Presentation Skills <b>Deliverable (Wed. Oct. 9<sup>th</sup>, 10 pm):</b> Team Charter (5%)
6	Oct 16		GRIT Week <b>Activity:</b> to be revealed during GRIT Week <b>Deliverable:</b> Team (15%); Individual (5%)
7	Oct 23 C1: 9:30-11 C2: 11:30-1 C3: 1:30-3	Cohort	<b>Topic:</b> Implementation I
8	Oct 30 C1: 9:30-11 C2: 11:30-1 C3: 1:30-3	Cohort	<b>Topic:</b> Implementation II <b>Activity:</b> viewing and discussing completed case presentations <b>Activity:</b> application of the Stack Brewing Case
9	Nov 6 All day	LG	<b>Activity:</b> presentation practice and mentoring <b>Deliverable (Mon. Nov 11, 8 am):</b> Presentation Skills Reflection (10%)
10	Nov 13 All day	LG	<b>Activity:</b> Preparation for Case Presentation (each team has 15-minute time slots for feedback)
11	Nov 20 All day competition	LG	<b>Deliverable (Wed. Nov. 20<sup>th</sup>, 8 am):</b> LG Case Presentation (25% team; 10% individual) <b>Deliverable (Wed. Nov. 20<sup>th</sup>, 8 am):</b> LG Case Report (15%)
12	Nov 27	Optional	<b>Activity:</b> Open office hours for individuals or LGs (book a time to meet with Dr. Head for feedback)
13	Dec 4	No class	<b>Deliverable (Wed. Dec 4<sup>th</sup>, 10 pm):</b> Self and LG team reflection (15%)