

HEC Paris MBA Admissions Essay

Friday, 09 June 2006

Essay 1: Why are you applying to the HEC MBA Program now? What is the professional objective that will guide your career choice after your MBA, and how will the HEC MBA contribute to the achievement of these objectives?(30 lines)

My promotion at x company has seen me transition away from a predominantly technical focus, where accounting principles and the analysis of numbers were paramount, to strategy development, line management and project management. I have begun to recognise that these non-technical areas appeal to my interests and have engaged my strengths, from communications skills and leadership to problem-solving. Moreover I have demonstrated an ability to learn from and adapt to new situations and to take a pragmatic approach to the realities of a small organisation with limited resources. The HEC MBA will help me refine these existing skills and help me make a career change to a top-five consultancy, such as McKinsey, where I will be given the opportunity to make a real impact by analysing problems, framing hypotheses and making recommendations in areas that directly and positively affect the client firm.

This short-term goal to change the focus of my career is determined by my long term goal to be a politician, a member of parliament and ultimately a minister. More than political experience alone, I strongly believe that a solid grounding in business, leading large teams, analysing complex issues, developing long-term strategy, championing innovation and implementing change, will give me skills needed to run a government department.

As HEC attracts high calibre students, this peer group will challenge and stretch me. I feel that level of stimulation and growth is what makes the HEC MBA an excellent investment. I expect my professional, voluntary and political experience will let me make a valuable contribution to the course.

HEC's MBA provides the right balance of practical learning and theoretical analysis through interactive lectures and group projects. This suits my learning style as I engage best with real-world approaches. The company consulting project track (personalised phase) will have an immediate impact on my employment upon graduation by providing directly relevant knowledge and experience that I can draw on during client work. Whilst my knowledge of business and management techniques will undoubtedly improve, I also expect to make life-long friends and build a strong, international network to help both my business and political career and their careers.

Essay 2: What one achievement from any aspect of your life are you most proud of? (15 lines)

The 2005 terrorist bombings in London were a wake-up call for me. I was not directly affected by the bombings but they forced me to reconsider my involvement in the community around me. I came to the conclusion that I had to take action if I wanted to ensure that the point of view of mainstream Muslims was to be represented. It is this realisation that has driven me to become active in x voluntary organisation, to become active in local politics and to become active as an advocate of moderate politics on x Channel. This involvement has allowed me to see for myself the problems faced by socially-deprived communities of all races and faiths which in turn has given me a greater understanding of peoples motivations in life. I have also learnt about the basics of political campaigning and have had the opportunity to engage with politicians and civil servants. Whilst this maybe an unusual answer to the question, the conclusions I reached in 2005 have led me away from a hedonistic focus on myself to evaluating what I can do for the wider community. This I feel is my greatest achievement to date.

Essay 3: What distinguishes the HEC MBA from other programs? Have you applied to other MBA programs or business schools? If yes, which ones? (15 lines)

The highlight of the HEC MBA is its international focus. In particular the bilingual nature of the course and its emphasis on multicultural diversity through the class composition are key components in my decision to apply to HEC. My experiences at HEC, learning the French language and about the French culture will help to expand my horizons by allowing me to consider multi-cultural perspectives in my future career in international consultancy. The experience of working collaboratively with class-mates from all over the world will help me develop my understanding of different perspectives and how best to communicate my ideas and negotiate with people from all over the world.

Upon completion of MBA I intend to change my career path to consultancy. This career change will require support and I have been very impressed with the manner in which career development has been integrated in the HEC MBA. It is this proactive approach to careers development coupled with HEC's links with major multinational firms that will ensure that I will secure a good return on investment from the MBA.

I have also applied to Cass Business School and Vlerick Leuven Gent Management School.

Essay 4: Imagine a life entirely different from the one you now lead, what would it be (15 lines)?

I have had significant international exposure during through my personal, professional, political and voluntary life, working and dealing with people from all over the world. However, if I were able to travel back in time, I would not have joined the M company graduate scheme immediately after leaving university. Instead I would have joined the JET programme and taught English in Japan for at least a year. This would have allowed me to immerse myself in a totally new culture and learn a new language. I am certain that the experience of teaching English to Japanese children would have been personally satisfying but moreover the cultural experience, within one of the worlds major economies, would have given me a unique understanding of the way Japanese people think. This insight would have been of great value at M company when developing market entry strategies as they were typically develop in a parochial manner without input from people who understood cultural diversity. As a result of this I would have had greater opportunities to travel to other countries as part of my work and would have had an international remit in my job. I aim to address the level of “internationalism” of my career by embarking on the HEC MBA.

Essay 5: Please choose from one of the following essays (15 lines each):

- a) What monument or site would you advise a first-time visitor to your country or city to discover, and why?
- b) Certain books, movies or plays have had an international success that you believe to be undeserved. Choose an example and analyze it.
- c) What figure (You may choose from any field arts, literature, politics, business, etc.) do you most admire, and why.

a) I would take a first-time visitor to the UK to Stonehenge. Stonehenge is a pre-historic monument composed of rectangular rocks placed to form a circle. For me Stonehenge demonstrates the ingenuity of man. It is a site constructed by people who are considered primitive, yet they had the sophistication to move massive rocks over many miles so that they could be erected for a purpose. I believe it demonstrates that people are able to achieve great results if they are motivated and believe in the cause that they are working towards. Whilst it is unclear why Stonehenge was constructed what is clear that the leader of the people who built the site was able to inspire the people to achieve something that continues to amaze and endures as a monument to a vision, which inspired the people to achieve what would appear to be impossible. I believe there are management lessons to be learnt here on communicating a vision so as to inspire and motivate staff. The greater the motivation levels of staff, the more they are able to achieve.

Essay 6: Is there any additional information you would like to share with us? (limit to 1 page)

After the terrorist bombings in London in 2005 I felt that British Muslims were not being effectively represented, and it was my duty, as a young Muslim, to become more engaged in the world of politics. After meeting with party activists and the leader of my local council, I was invited to stand as a councillor at the next elections. I felt that being elected as a councillor would help me to represent my religious and ethnic communities as well as allowing me to fulfil my civic duty. Whilst I did not win a seat in the elections, I have made an impact within the party and was asked to stand in a Parliamentary by-election recently.

I am a volunteer at x voluntary organisation. X voluntary organisation is an umbrella organisation representing four hundred groups around the UK. My focus at x voluntary organisation has been on youth issues and I am the project leader of the Youth Unit. Initially the project team worked to understand the life experiences of young Muslims. The research culminated in a youth conference in Manchester. We are currently looking at methods of bolstering support services specifically aimed at young Muslims, with an emphasis on mechanisms for funding these services.

I am a regular contributor on x Channel as a political commentator on a live prime-time programme that digests the week's major stories. The second half of the show allows viewers to telephone with their questions and comments. This is always challenging and I am now better able to deal with quick-fire and unscripted questions and can provide solid rationale for my opinions. As the channel is viewed by a very mixed group of people I have to ensure that the language I use is both professional and understandable.

I believe my professional, voluntary and political experience will allow me to make a valuable contribution at HEC, I have experience of private and public sector enterprises as well as political organisations and the groups that lobby them. These multidimensional perspectives should allow me to provide a different perspective in class-room discussions and project work and I hope to be seen as someone who can provide refreshing and challenging input.

In a team setting I often take on the role of the coach who ensures that agreement and harmony are maintained in order to create a positive team atmosphere and reach a consensus. This has proved to be a valuable skill, especially during my voluntary work with x voluntary organisation where I am currently leading a project. As all of the team members are volunteers my seniority is notional and, whilst in a professional setting I can take an autocratic approach where appropriate, it is not an option in voluntary work so reaching a consensus is crucial.

I believe building consensus will be an important role to play in study groups which will be composed of people from

different professional and ethnic backgrounds. Key to this will be the ability to understand and address different perspectives and bridge-build where disputes occur – my political and voluntary experience should be invaluable here. Effective and joint project planning will help to ensure that fellow students have “bought-in” to the rationale behind decision making and the ethos of allowing experts responsibility should ensure a quality output.

I have an understanding of both Western and Eastern cultures. This has been valuable during my political campaigning. I stood for election in an ethnically diverse seat where up to 40% of voters are immigrants, many of which have escaped significant hardship in their home countries. I was able to address the worries of these potential voters more instinctively than my colleagues because I had a deeper understanding of the outlook of these groups. I was also able to deal with the needs of the indigenous population as I have grown up amongst them.

This ability to get along with and understand people of other cultures has also been of use with my voluntary work for x voluntary organisation. X voluntary organisation attempts to represent the British Muslim community, however this can be a difficult job as it is ethnically heterogeneous and there are sectarian divisions. My focus has been leading a youth focused project that is working towards addressing the need of young British Muslims, particularly the disenfranchised. Whilst anyone can lead a project, an understanding of the influences on these young people, as well as the ethnically diverse project team is a must. I have managed to address some of the issues these young people are facing by simply being able to ask and understand their point of view.