

HEC? Study or fail!

Whether in Montreal or Lausanne, HEC (Hautes Etudes Commerciales) has its adepts. Business students who attend this university are rather proud to do so. But do they really know what happens once they enter the doors of a university?

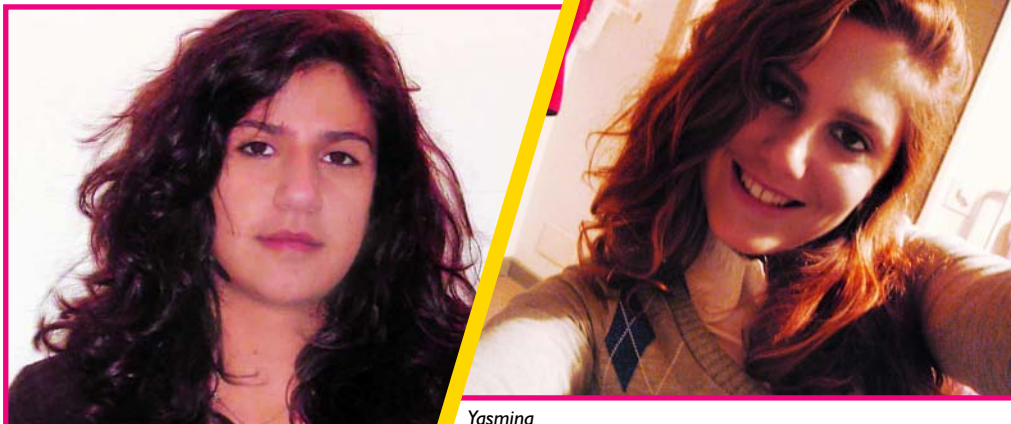
Yasmina Hidari is in her second year at HEC Lausanne, while Myriam Massarra is in her first year at HEC Montreal. Both shared their experiences as business students in different countries with *Academix*.

Yasmina and **Myriam** have been friends since the tender age of three. They used to spend a lot of time together until they went their separate ways in 2004. Going to the same school in Beirut, Lebanon, both were good students and had no preconceived plan to study business.

was psychology because I'm really interested in this field. I heard about human resources, and it held my interests because it's a combination of business and psychology. I applied to Concordia (John Molson School of Business), but I finally chose HEC Montreal after listening to my parents and friends, and for other reasons."

"First of all," she added, "HEC is a renowned university. After doing a bit of research I found that the classes are a maximum of 70 students. That is to say that both institutions have different systems.

"If I hesitated at first between Concordia and HEC, it's just because I felt that I needed the change and wanted to do my studies in English. Both are great universities, and both will take me where I want to go. To be honest, at first I had second thoughts because it's a really hard program and it requires a lot of hard work. I'm not used to studying that much! But now that I got used to it, I like it a lot. I don't



Myriam

Yasmina



"At first I didn't know what to do," Myriam says. "I wanted to study business because it opens so many doors, and then it

regret my choice; it's a great university and I am very happy now."



Yasmina's choice was more obvious. "I did apply to a university in Lebanon first, but the political situation left me no choice but to leave," she says. "Why Switzerland? Educational institutions here have a great reputation and also because I have relatives in Lausanne..."

As for choosing her major, Yasmina didn't hesitate. "When we were in high school in Lebanon, we began preparing our 'itinerary' in Grade 10. We had to report to the *Centre d'Information et d'Orientation* every now and then. We had group sessions on career guidance, professional presentations, etc. till we graduated. It was a three-year program designed to help us decide on our majors. The final decision was mine, and business school was where I wanted to go."

"I don't regret my decision, but I didn't expect it to be so hard," she adds. "Now I'm planning on applying for a masters in Actuarial Science here at Lausanne."



Asked about their studies and course loads, Myriam and Yasmina have the same answer: "Long hours studying at the library are required!"

"The key here is to be very responsible because absolutely no one is in charge of you or is going to check on your work," Yasmina exclaims. "The courses are very heavy; it requires a lot of hard work and organisation. We have to be really up to date in every course to keep up," Myriam says. "It's very different from (high) school; there's no one who's going to check on you and your work. I'm not used to studying a lot. At first it was hard for me to adapt, but I got used to it after a while."



Would they have liked to pursue other courses? Here again they both cry out for a break. "This year I have so many already! I'm not interested in all of them and sometimes I wish it could be different (more practical), but I'm quite satisfied with the courses I have," Yasmina says.



"Although I have many courses already," Myriam adds, "I would have liked to have a psychology course. It would have helped me a lot and I'm also really interested in this subject. I don't like accounting. I wish I didn't have it, but it's necessary and I don't have a choice."



Yasmina has some idea of her primary goals for the immediate

future. "My first goal is to graduate! Then I'm planning on an exchange program, maybe, and later I see myself working in a big company in Switzerland, or maybe Lebanon if the situation gets better. Doing what? I don't know yet but I'm sure I'll find my way through my studies."



But for Myriam, still in her first year, it's a bit too early to think about her future career. "My first goal, of course, is to graduate. I have so many things to do right now that I don't have much time to think about the future, but I'm sure I will find my way. There are so many jobs opportunities here in Canada that I'm not worried. Anyway, they keep telling us that since we are HEC students we don't have to search for jobs, they'll come to us. We'll see how true that proves to be."

As parting words of wisdom, both stress the amount of work involved and commitment necessary to study business. "All we can say is to follow your instincts," they offer, "stay realistic, don't underestimate yourself and be prepared to study really, really hard. Be organised and responsible. Choose your major based on what you like and not what your friends and family like, because you will be studying it, not anyone else." 🍀