

Master's in Business Administration (MBA)



The MBA in the U.S. is traditionally a two-year (full-time) professional master's degree providing general training in business administration/ management for students who already have a first degree (such as a B.A.) which is not necessarily in business.

CURRICULUM

Core Subjects: The MBA consists of two components: the core and the elective courses. The core is made up of a group of courses designed to provide fundamental business skills. Most universities will have some compulsory subjects from the core courses. Usually in the second year an MBA program will offer concentration in one or a combination of the core subjects. The core can include or be a blend of the following subjects:

- Economics
- Human Resource management
- Microeconomics
- Information management and technology
- Finance/Accounting
- Marketing and marketing strategies
- Quantitative business analysis
- Organizational and operational management

Elective Subjects: Elective subjects complement the core courses and also vary greatly between MBA programs. Some electives are core subjects at a more advanced level. Among the elective courses you may see are the following:

- Distribution and logistics
- Leadership
- Manufacturing issues
- Taxation
- Multinational accounting
- Entrepreneurship

Some electives are related to specific areas of business like property management, health administration, and educational administration. Other electives are much broader, business-related subjects such as international law, environmental policies and computer studies.

ACCREDITATION

Unlike many other countries, the establishment and maintenance of educational standards in the US are not the responsibility of a federal education ministry. The US has a system of voluntary non-governmental evaluation called accreditation.

The main body concerned with the accreditation of US academic programs in business administration and management is the AACSB-*International Association for Management Education* (www.aacsb.edu).

LENGTH OF MBA PROGRAMS

Degree requirements and the length of the programs vary depending on the school and the design of the program. The traditional MBA program takes two academic years when done full-time. During the summer months students are encouraged to complete an internship.

One-year MBA programs are offered to business undergraduates who have already completed the basic business courses and have some work experience.

Part-time MBA programs are less accessible for international students because of visa regulations, which require students to be enrolled full-time. There is an exception, however, for spouses of F-1 visa holders, who can enroll part-time.

OTHER TYPES OF PROGRAMS

Open/Distance Learning programs are becoming more available and practical as advances in computer technology allow students to learn via the Internet and videoconferencing. Distance courses may also include seminar visits, weekend sessions and summer school.

On-line MBA programs vary with each university. The bulk of the degree is done via the Internet. If you choose to pursue an on-line MBA, you can expect to conduct your course independently, communicating with professors and fellow students via email and on-line discussion groups.

Executive MBA Programs are for individuals within the upper levels of management, who have considerable work experience. The curriculum differs from regular MBA programs in that the program provides peer group experience. The curricula are streamlined and often operate outside of normal business hours.

CHOOSING AN MBA SCHOOL

Rankings of business schools are available but should not be heavily relied upon as they are unofficial, subjective and can be misleading.

In choosing a program, prospective applicants may want to consider the following criteria:

- Selectivity (taking into account your own qualifications)
- Costs and availability of financial aid
- Teaching methods (case-study versus a quantitative and analytical approach)
- Employment placement services
- Size and make-up of classes

ADMISSION

Admission factors include your academic record, Graduate Management Admission Test (GMAT) scores, previous work experience, letters of recommendation and application form with essays.

Academic Record: Students from Germany should hold a degree equivalent to the U.S. bachelor's degree and have good grades. A leading business school is not likely to accept anything less than "B" average on all coursework taken (on a scale of A, B, C, D and F - this is generally equivalent to a 2.0 in the German system, on a scale of 1-6.) Until recently, business schools have been fairly flexible about degrees because they put almost equal weight on other factors. The undergraduate field of study is not stipulated (if you are doing a traditional, two-year MBA); nevertheless, business schools might require an understanding of the principles of economics, accountancy and mathematical competence up to calculus level.

GMAT Scores: The majority of business schools require results from the Graduate Management Admission Test (GMAT). Some schools require a minimum GMAT score, but many do not in order to attract a variety of applicants. Registration information for the test can be accessed on-line at <http://www.mba.com/mba/TaketheGMAT>.

Work Experience: Though not mandatory, many business schools look for candidates who have at least two to five years full-time work experience.

Letters of Recommendation: One or more letters of recommendation are generally required and if possible should be written by both previous or current employers and professors. The letters should be specific, stating precise skills and achievements.

Application Forms: The application forms are usually several pages in length. Many business schools provide lengthy forms and pay attention to the way in which the candidate presents him/herself. Self-evaluation is usually a component and a number of short essays will be required.

Essays: Application essays will usually ask you to explain your goals, analyze your work experience, describe significant achievements in your life or they may give you a business scenario to analyze.

FINANCING

Many business students are self-financing so it is worth taking into account that tuition costs differ widely between institutions and can be more than \$30,000 per year at the top schools. You must also consider living, books and personal costs. After personal resources, the other main types of financial aid include scholarships from independent foundations, financial aid awarded by the individual business schools and loans.

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

- *Business Week: Guide to the Best Business Schools.*
- *The Wall Street Journal Guide to the Best Business Schools.*
- *Getting the MBA Admissions Edge.* You can also check out the website from the same publishers at www.theMBA.com.
- *Guide to Graduate Management Programs in the USA*
- *How to Get Into the Top MBA Programs.*
- *Applying to a Top MBA Program.*

Adapted from "Master's in Business Administration", US Educational Advisory Service, London. <http://www.fulbright.co.uk/eas/studyus/subjects/mba.html>

Updated: Jan 2007

dai Deutsch-Amerikanisches Institut
Heidelberg. Das Haus der Kultur.

© German American Institute
* Sofienstr. 12 * 69115 Heidelberg *
Tel.: 06221-60 73 15
www.dai-heidelberg.de

Connect to your local center! There are 13 educationUSA centers in Germany and others throughout Europe: www.educationUSA.de