

The MBA, or Master of Business Administration, is a professional degree awarded by graduate schools of management or business that train students in the theory and practice of professional management. Professional management is the effective organization and direction of institutions and resources, including people, systems, finances, materials and information, used to achieve organizational objectives and goals.

Most MBA programs, over 1,000 worldwide, are designed to cover a broad spectrum of topics in the course of two years of full-time or three to four years of part-time study. (One-year programs are offered by some schools to serve the needs of experienced professionals.) The core MBA curriculum typically includes courses such as accounting, finance, managerial economics, marketing, organizational behavior, operations management and research, human resource management, information systems and business ethics. Electives, or even concentrations, in specialized areas are also encouraged and often required. Within the MBA program students can concentrate in a variety of areas. Examples of these include: entrepreneurship, accounting, finance, health care, human resources, information management, international business, marketing, environmental business, non-profit management and operations management.

Graduate work in management is substantially different from undergraduate studies. Rather than faculty lectures, graduate programs favor case discussions, student presentations and team projects. An accelerated, interactive classroom environment includes applied learning activities, management simulations, case competitions and field research. Rather than simply absorbing information, students take an active role in bringing business concepts to life. This is one reason why it is very useful to enter an MBA program after having at least a couple years of experience in the work force.

In addition to the MBA, graduate schools of management or business typically offer specialized master's programs to prepare students for careers in marketing, accounting, taxation, finance, real estate and other areas (e.g., master in accountancy and master of finance for non-business graduates). Many management schools also offer a doctoral program (either D.B.A. or Ph.D.) for those students preparing for careers in research and/or teaching. Students interested in management careers in health care, education or government can, as an alternative, pursue a professional master's program in schools of public health, education, public administration or public policy.

HOW TO PREPARE FOR AN MBA PROGRAM

MBA programs accept qualified students from all undergraduate majors. Programs are particularly interested in applicants with strong quantitative, writing and oral communication skills. Some schools require some background in college algebra or calculus, and introductory courses in statistics, economics, or accounting. Typically, students enrolling in MBA programs are expected to have experience using computers for word processing and spreadsheet operations.

A large majority of schools (including the more selective ones) specifically require applicants to have had **at least two years work or military experience after college graduation and prior to entering the MBA program**. Most schools consider such experience to be of great value since it can demonstrate an applicant's motivation and leadership qualities as well as exposure to the types of management problems which will become the focus of study and class discussion in MBA courses. Some MBA programs consider a combination of part-time work, summer jobs, active participation in and leadership of student organizations or government, internships and volunteer experience during undergraduate years to be equivalent to full-time work after the bachelor's degree. UCSD Extension offers classes and undergraduate certificates in business-related fields that may be of interest to students who wish to pursue the study of general business and management topics while undergraduates.

WHERE TO LEARN MORE ABOUT MBA PREPARATION, APPLICATION AND CAREERS

MBA.com is a great resource provided by the Graduate Management Council for students interested in learning more about MBA programs and careers in business. Explore www.MBA.com to find the following helpful information and tools in the following categories:

- [Assess Careers & The MBA](#) provides you with self-assessment tools to determine if an MBA is right for you, career and industry information, profiles of professionals in the field, and information to help you understand the relative value to investment ratio of an MBA in today's job market.
- [Find Your Program](#) offers a searchable database to help you choose schools. Enter your selection criteria and the database provides a list of schools that meet those specifications. There are also direct links to the websites of individual schools – the best source for information on the school's learning and physical environment, the programs the school offers, curriculum, faculty, student body and campus services.
- [Take the GMAT, Apply Effectively and Make Your Decision](#) Find GMAT preparation materials, application tips and financial aid information in these sections.

Peterson's Guide to MBA Programs is a comprehensive print directory of U.S., Canadian and select international business schools. Each listing includes a profile of the program including specific admissions information and application

requirements. This guide is on sale in bookstores and is available for reference in the Career Services Center. It can also be searched online at <http://www.petersons.com/mba>.

The Association to Advance Collegiate Schools of Business (AACSB) lists business schools worldwide with standardized information, links to school websites and information about AACSB accreditation. <http://www.bestbizschools.com/>

The UCSD Career Services Center offers many services to help you explore careers, gain experience through internships and jobs, prepare for the job search process and learn more about applying to graduate school. Utilize the services below to make the most of your time at UCSD and prepare for your future MBA.

- **Online Career Portfolio** – Keep track of your accomplishments, track your skill development and store resumes in this free online portfolio tool. (<http://career.ucsd.edu/L3/sa/Portfolio.shtml>)
- <http://career.ucsd.edu> – Your source to learn about opportunities to get career advising, and resume, cover letter and interviewing assistance as well as online career information on databases like VAULT. You can also learn about the available guidebooks, CDs and videos on careers in accounting, consulting, finance, management, and marketing available in the Career Library in the Career Services Center.
- **Business School Web Resources** – Links to schools, GMAT information, and career information can be found on the Career Services Center's website at <http://career.ucsd.edu/L3/sa/PBusiness.shtml>.
- **Port Triton** at <http://career.ucsd.edu> lists available full-time, part-time, and summer jobs as well as internship opportunities.
- **Advising Appointments** with graduate school advisors are available to discuss preparation, school selection, and application strategies. Career advisors can help with job search strategies.
- **Grad School and Job Fairs** – The Professional and Graduate School Fair, held each fall, is attended by representatives of some business schools. Annual MBA Forums featuring representatives from MBA programs from around the world are offered in five U.S. cities each year. Each quarter the Career Services Center hosts a Job and Internship Fair to provide you opportunities to make connections and find employers to gain experience with.

HOW TO APPLY

Applicants should visit the websites of schools they are interested in or contact the school to request a brochure and an application for admission and financial aid. Some schools offer online applications for admissions, either through their own sites or through links to other websites.

Application deadlines typically are in the late fall/early winter before fall entrance. Programs that allow students to begin in winter or spring typically have deadlines the previous summer.

Admissions committees seek to evaluate an applicant's ability to contribute to the success of the classroom and program. To accomplish this goal, committees consider undergraduate academic performance, scores on the Graduate Management Admissions Test, resume, letters of recommendation (typically three from employers, faculty, and others such as student leadership sponsors), the application essay or personal statement, demonstrated leadership and work experience and, sometimes, personal interviews. Admissions committees assess these criteria in combination, balancing strengths against weaknesses, and assessing potential, motivation and maturity.

The application essay or personal statement should present a clear picture of career goals, abilities and communication skills, and describe any events or experiences that have influenced decisions, motivation and interests. The essay should also address major concerns or inconsistencies (e.g., an entire quarter of "W"s) that would become apparent to the admissions committee. A handout titled "Professional School Personal Statement" is available in the Career Services Center and online at <http://career.ucsd.edu/L3/sa/Handouts/personalstmt.pdf>. Personal statements can be submitted to the Career Services Center for critique as well.

THE GRADUATE MANAGEMENT ADMISSIONS TEST (GMAT)

The GMAT, required by most MBA programs, is a computer-adaptive test that is available, year-round, at test centers throughout the world. There are several in San Diego County. The GMAT measures general verbal, mathematical, and analytical writing skills that are developed over a long period of time and are associated with success in the first year of MBA study.

Detailed preparation and registration information and sample questions are contained in the GMAT Information Bulletin, available in the Career Services Center and online at www.MBA.com. Free GMAT preparation software can also be downloaded from there. Additional GMAT preparation books and software can be ordered online or purchased at major bookstores. The GMAT should be taken no sooner than five years before applying and no later than it takes for the scores to be reported to meet the application deadline.