

MBA in the UK

With high quality programmes and a wide variety of up-to-date courses, the UK is a popular choice for international students wanting to study on an MBA course.

A Masters in Business Administration (MBA) is seen by many as a passport to success in a variety of career fields. Individual courses vary, but all provide students with a wide breadth of understanding in the major functions of the business world, and an MBA can be a vital qualification for some employment paths.

'[The] MBA degree is in fashion in Russia,' says Leon Kashnitski, Director of the University Council in Russia. 'Many adverts with job offers in Moscow put the MBA as a pre-requisite.' Yuan Fang, from the Jiangsu Provincial International Exchange Centre in China, agrees that MBA courses are seen by many students as essential for increasing their marketability when seeking employment. 'MBA [courses] are so popular in China because it means a higher society position and salary,' he says. 'Students choose the USA as their first option but [for] most of them it is not easy to get a visa, so the UK is the second option.'

Business schools offering MBA courses in the UK have been experiencing increased interest from international students in recent years, often from a number of specific markets. 'Growth markets have, in the main, been in India and China, although there is some interest now being generated in Russia,' says Pauline Seston, MBA Administrator at Brunel University in Middlesex. 'The ease of availability of information - through the British Council and the Internet - has made UK courses more accessible.'

Cranfield School of Management in Bedfordshire has seen increasing student numbers from China, Russia and South America, and John Mapes, Admissions Director at the school, believes that this is due, in part, to political changes within some of these markets. 'China and Russia have recently shown more interest in capitalist ventures and therefore it would be natural to expect that they would look to Western business schools to gain a deeper understanding,' he says.



PHOTOGRAPH: CRANFIELD SCHOOL OF MANAGEMENT

The reputation of MBA providers is a key factor for many students when deciding where to study (see right), and international students are drawn to UK institutions which are, as a whole, held in high regard overseas. 'The general feeling here still seems to place the UK above Australia and the USA as a first destination for studies at both undergraduate and postgraduate levels,' says Siân Davies, Director for Development and Strategy at the Malaysian British Educational Cooperation Services in Malaysia. Davies goes on to point out the UK is popular 'as it offers primarily one-year postgraduate programmes, thus making it a competitive option to Australia and the USA [where two year courses are more usual]'

Recent course developments among MBA providers in the UK reflect the changing needs of global business. Cranfield School of Management has recently introduced a new modular MBA programme to accompany its existing one-year full-time and two-years part-time courses. This modular programme combines modules of study on campus with distance and technology-based learning and, according to Lorraine Wood, Press and Public Relations Officer at the school, this has proved very popular with international students. 'More than half of the participants on the modular MBA programme are from overseas, and, despite September 11, the module that was planned for October 2001 was held on campus with full attendance,' she says.

MBA providers in the UK are also quick to adapt to world changes to ensure their courses remain relevant. 'We have a panel of external advisors to help on development [of our MBA courses] and our programme is updated every three to four years,' says Paul Gilliam, Director of Public Relations and Marketing at Oxford Brookes University in Oxford. ○

Assessing quality

The publication of league tables, which list the top business schools around the world, has greatly enhanced the prestige value attached to MBA qualifications gained from high ranking, predominantly US, institutions. Leon Kashnitski, Director of the University Council in Russia, says that league tables are very important for his students. 'Few students in Russia have an idea about accreditation systems in different countries. They hear about ratings and want to apply to the top ten,' he says.

However, Peter Calladine, Educational Services Manager of the Association of MBAs in the UK, warns students against relying on 'football-league style' tables when choosing where to study. 'The consumer should be wary of what is regarded by many in the business school community as a facile approach,' he says. 'Accreditation is a much more reliable method to check out a school's credibility. [It] guarantees the quality of the people you will be learning from and establishing contacts with for your future career.'

John Mapes, Admissions Director at Cranfield School of Management in Bedfordshire, believes that an integrated approach is best. 'The difficulty for individuals is to tell from a brochure or prospectus which [schools] are best - objective accreditation alongside league tables can help to separate those that are first division from the rest,' he says.

Selection of institutions providing MBA programmes in the UK

	Location	Use agents	No. MBA students	% os students
Brunel University	Middlesex		31	78
City University Business School	London		110	65
Cranfield School of Management	Bedfordshire		200	50
Doncaster College	Doncaster	✓	10	20
Manchester Metropolitan Business School (new course Sept 2003)	Manchester	✓	-	-
University of Greenwich	London	✓	55	60
Oxford Brookes University	Oxford	✓	65	85
Staffordshire University	Stoke-on-Trent	✓	20	80