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Joseph M. Katz Graduate School of Business  
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# The Executive MBA (EMBA) Worldwide Program

## What is an Executive MBA?

**UNIVERSITY OF PITTSBURGH**



# “What is an Executive MBA?”

## “Is an Executive MBA right for me?”

These questions often are brought to my attention. While a Master of Business Administration (MBA) and an Executive MBA (EMBA) are the same degree, there are significant differences between the two. This guide can provide answers to some of your questions and offer insights as to the benefits of an EMBA degree for professionals who are interested in advancing their careers.

The EMBA program develops managers by combining practical skills with key theories in an environment where faculty and students can exchange ideas and challenge one another. The types of students who pursue an EMBA degree already possess a wealth of business experience from an array of backgrounds—an aspect that is unique to the EMBA program. Not only do EMBA students expand their knowledge and perspective, they also develop a broad business sense, with courses focusing on analysis, strategy, and leadership. The expertise EMBA students gain is immediately applicable in their respective organizations. They become astute decision makers, effective problem solvers, and well-prepared leaders able to take on increasing responsibility. Finally, one of the most valuable benefits of an EMBA degree is the network of colleagues students gain—both local and global—among their highly motivated and talented classmates.

The following pages contain information about the positive impact an EMBA degree can have on both individuals and their organizations. I am confident that you will see the advantages of an EMBA degree and what it can do for you. If you have further questions about the EMBA Worldwide program, we will be happy to discuss the program with you. Please see our contact information at the back of this guide, or visit [www.emba.pitt.edu](http://www.emba.pitt.edu) to learn more.



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## “What is an Executive MBA?”

The Executive MBA (EMBA) is a specific type of accredited MBA program. It is designed for working managers and professionals, usually with a minimum of seven years of work experience, often including prior management responsibility. The class schedule is formatted to allow students to continue working while they pursue their studies—in fact, the expectation is that they will remain employed in a position that allows them to apply what they are learning while they complete the program. Students also bring their current and prior experience into the classroom to enrich the learning experiences of their fellow students.

While it is difficult to generalize, EMBA programs differ from other kinds of MBA programs in the following ways:

- They are different from full-time programs because students continue to work while they study and are generally older and more experienced.
- They differ from most distance-learning programs because the direct personal interaction in the classroom and in study groups is considered critical to the learning experience, though distance-learning technologies are now often used to enhance this experience.
- They are different from other part-time programs because students generally enter as a group, or cohort, and learn together through the course of the program.
- In addition, EMBA programs usually offer additional support for students, including staff support, meals, and other amenities, so students with busy schedules can focus on learning.

**Fact:** The first EMBA for experienced business professionals was offered by the University of Chicago in 1943.

# “What are the benefits of an Executive MBA?”

In general, EMBA programs offer:

*Access to a business school's top faculty:* EMBA students are the most knowledgeable and demanding audience that a business school instructor will face in the classroom. Business schools select their best faculty to teach in these programs. Often the faculty members who teach in these programs will also have extensive consulting experience in the business world. Expect instructors to be adept at teaching you about their areas of expertise from an executive perspective and to be skilled at facilitating classroom interaction among experienced students.

*An outstanding peer group:* Interacting with other students in the classroom and in study groups is an important part of any EMBA program. You'll learn as much from the experience and insights of other students as you will from the instructors, and you'll be expected to contribute at the same level.

*Executive perspective:* Mid-career professionals look at the challenges of business with the benefit of experience. They may already have five or 10 years in management, so they need a different perspective on the subjects typically taught in MBA programs where the average student is in his or her mid-to-late 20s and is just starting a career. EMBA programs help students look at business problems and opportunities from a CEO's perspective. You'll become knowledgeable about the important concepts of the key business disciplines, but focus just as much on integrating this knowledge with your prior background and experience.

*Collaborative learning:* Students in top MBA programs often compete with each other in the classroom. But at the executive level, building partnerships, alliances, and other cooperative relationships becomes as important as competing with others. EMBA programs focus on collaboration rather than competition. In the classroom and in study groups, you'll test your team-building skills and learn to rely on others to help you succeed. Successful EMBA students learn how to share responsibilities with each other and take advantage of one another's experience and knowledge for mutual benefit—a skill directly transferable to their work.

*Immediate applicability:* Applying what you learn to challenges and opportunities in the business world is essential to the EMBA experience. For an EMBA student, the workplace becomes a laboratory in which you test what you've learned in the classroom. Often, you will have opportunities to design projects that allow you to solve real problems you face at work as you complete course requirements, sometimes with help from your fellow students. This not only enriches your education but also has a positive impact on your performance on the job.

*Increased confidence:* If you've developed your business skills and knowledge on the job, an EMBA program can help you fill in the gaps, learn the language of business, and give you a firm grounding in the fundamentals of its various disciplines. Beyond that, an EMBA program provides you with strategic perspective, allowing you to view your organization and its environment from the viewpoint of the CEO or chairman of the board. It will also help you develop leadership skills to support your career growth and prepare you for executive responsibilities.

**Fact:** There are now more than 240 accredited EMBA programs worldwide.

**Fact:** More than 80% of EMBA programs outside the United States and Canada started since 1990.

## “How can an Executive MBA help me achieve my goals?”

Your career goals evolve throughout your life. Someone entering the workforce today is likely to have five or six occupations during his or her lifetime. Those seeking an MBA at mid career typically seek the education and the credential as a springboard to a career transition. These are some typical transition scenarios for EMBA students:

*From functional manager to general manager or executive:* Most people who eventually move into top management start their careers by developing expertise in a specific field, relying on a knowledge base and skill sets that are narrow and deep. As their careers evolve, they may find themselves gravitating toward top management positions for which their prior education and experience have not prepared them. If you haven't already earned an MBA degree at mid career, an EMBA degree can help ground you in the fundamentals of business while building on the knowledge and experience you've accumulated to date.

*From manager to entrepreneur:* Nowadays, there is plenty of room for entrepreneurs both outside and inside the corporate environment. If you're an experienced manager with deep knowledge of a specific field or industry and the drive to start your own business, an EMBA degree could prepare you to launch that enterprise and make your dream a reality. On the other hand, the ability to innovate, to take a new idea or technology and build a successful business around it, is highly valued in the corporate environment today. Many EMBA graduates also become successful intrapreneurs within larger organizations.

*From one company or industry to another:* Broadening your knowledge and polishing your skills in an EMBA program could increase the range of career options available to you. An EMBA program offers broad exposure to the challenges faced by managers in many companies and industries—background that may prove useful in understanding your customers and your competition or in learning about opportunities with other employers. In addition, you'll build a new set of business contacts among your fellow students and the alumni of the program in which you're enrolled. Students and alumni typically keep each other informed about new career opportunities within their companies and industries.

**Fact:** The average length of an EMBA program is a little more than 20 months.

## “Who is a good candidate for an Executive MBA?”

*Educational background:* The educational background of successful EMBA candidates varies widely. Most, but not all, have earned a bachelor’s degree in some field. Some have earned graduate or professional degrees in fields other than business administration, such as engineering, computer science, law, or medicine. A small but significant number even have PhDs.

*Work experience:* Because the EMBA program relies heavily on the experience of students enrolled in it, prior work history is an important factor in the admissions process. Whatever your prior employment, a record of significant achievement is a good indicator of your ability to succeed in an EMBA program. Typical applicants have at least seven to 10 years of work experience, including positions with management responsibility.

*Current employment:* EMBA students benefit most if they’re in a position that allows them to apply the knowledge and skills they develop in the classroom. This is likely to be a position with significant management responsibility. Unless they’re self-employed, students most often require the support of an employer in one form or another. Support from a sponsor—typically a top manager or executive—is critical. EMBA students must arrange release time and may receive financial support from their employers. Sponsoring companies often use EMBA programs as part of their management development or succession planning programs.

*Career goals:* It’s important to define how you expect to use the knowledge and skills you’ll develop in an EMBA program to further your career goals. Are there specific job opportunities within your company or industry for which an EMBA degree would help you qualify? Do you plan to start your own business? Understanding how an EMBA degree will help you achieve your specific goals will give you confidence in committing to a rigorous program and position you as a successful candidate for admission.

*Motivation and temperament:* EMBA students possess energy, drive, and ambition that separate them from the pack. Typically, a high percentage of EMBA students are hard-driving, take-charge, “Type A” personalities who are challenged to share leadership responsibilities in study groups and team projects. However, people with creative and thoughtful “Type B” personalities also can succeed in these programs by drawing on their experience and distinctive strengths. Ultimately, you’ll find out if you have the motivation and temperament to succeed by talking with staff, students, and alumni.

**Fact:** The average age of an EMBA student is 36.

**Fact:** On average, there is one woman enrolled in an EMBA program for every three men.

## “How can I fit this program into my busy schedule?”

Though formats and features vary, most EMBA programs are designed to make it possible to allow students to remain productive and perform at a high level on the job. This is accomplished in several ways:

- The program staff assume responsibility for many of the routine and administrative tasks that normally fall to students, including registration and distribution of textbooks and other class materials.
- Meals and other amenities often are included as part of the program fees.
- Class schedules may be set to require some release time from the employer, but also weekend or evening hours from the student.
- Some course content and other services may be delivered online, to allow students to progress in their studies and interact with students and instructors at times that are most convenient to them.
- Projects and other assignments may be assigned to study groups, where the group can divide responsibilities and delegate tasks to individual members.

Nevertheless, a worthwhile EMBA program will demand a significant amount of time and effort from each student. Students—who already tend to put in more than 40 hours a week on the job—dedicate up to 20 hours a week to their studies, in addition to time in the classroom. Many report that the experience forces them to become highly efficient in managing their time, and that this is indeed an important skill they develop during the program.

If you enroll in an EMBA program, you will have to manage the impact on both your job and your personal life. You can manage the impact on your work by setting clear expectations about your schedule with your supervisor and colleagues and delegating some of your responsibilities. Managing the impact on your personal life often means routinely setting aside blocks of time for individual study and meetings (real or virtual) with your

study group. Because your employer will likely expect you to contribute at the same level on the job, most of the demand will be on your personal time. However, most students find that it's possible to maintain an active and satisfying family life while they're enrolled in an EMBA program.

**Fact:** More than half of all EMBA programs require an international study trip.

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## “What support will I need from my employer?”

Most EMBA programs require applicants to obtain an explicit statement of support from their employer as a condition of admission. This involves more than obtaining a letter recommending the applicant for the program, though that is part of the requirement. When you apply, your employer must agree to release time to allow you to participate in classes and (where necessary) travel to the location where classes are held.

Your employer may also be asked to commit to financial support to cover all or part of the cost of the program. The extent of the financial commitment, if any, is most often left to you and your employer. Sometimes students will tap existing tuition reimbursement plans or education allowances to cover the tuition. In other cases, employers will make special arrangements to cover all or some of the costs as part of your compensation package, professional development plan, or executive succession plan. In still other cases, students will assume responsibility for covering all of the costs on their own.

**Fact:** Three-quarters of students enrolled in EMBA programs in the United States receive some form of tuition reimbursement from their employer.

## “How much will it cost?”

The cost of tuition and fees for EMBA programs varies widely depending on the region where the program is offered, the features of the program, reputation, quality of the faculty, and other factors. While the cost of EMBA programs worldwide ranges from less than \$15,000 to more than \$130,000, the cost of a program in the United States and Canada averages between \$45,000 and \$55,000.

Often the price tag of an EMBA program will cover some meals, housing for all or part of the class sessions, and certain amenities. The student or an employer must cover other costs, including costs of optional features. In addition to tuition and fees, it's important to consider other costs such as travel as part of the total budget. When comparing the cost of EMBA programs, make sure you find out what's included in the basic fee for each program and what you or your employer must cover.

For people who pay all or part of the tuition and fees out of their own pocket, an EMBA program is a major investment. In the United States, most students are eligible for low-cost, government-subsidized loans and other financial aid programs. Many EMBA programs also offer a variety of payment plans. Ask the staff at the programs you're exploring what options are available for students.

**Fact:** The average number of EMBA students enrolled in an entering class, or cohort, is 43.

## “How competitive is the admission process?”

The competitiveness of the admission process also varies from program to program, but, in general, EMBA admissions staff make a concerted effort to advise prospective students and help them “self-select” before they apply for admission. Given that most programs will require a significant commitment of time and money, not only from you but also from your employer, it makes sense for program staff to help you assess whether or not you are prepared for the program and can expect to benefit from it at this point in your career.

In evaluating candidates, admissions committees consider many factors, most of which have been mentioned already: work experience, current employment, prior education, ability to benefit, and ability to contribute. You will most likely be asked to submit an application (including a short essay), academic transcripts, letters of recommendation, a statement of support from your employer, and standardized test scores. Many EMBA programs require that you submit scores from the Graduate Management Admissions Test (GMAT), but others do not require any standardized test scores.

If you’re exploring EMBA programs, take advantage of opportunities to talk with program staff, arrange informational interviews, or visit a classroom, and seek out students or alumni for their insights. Take time to investigate a program thoroughly, talk with those whose advice you value (including family members), and evaluate whether it’s a good fit for you at this stage in your career. If you’ve done your homework before you apply, you’re more likely to make a favorable impression on the program’s admissions committee.

**Fact:** The average EMBA student has 13 years of work experience, including eight years in management.

## “Where can I get more information about Executive MBA programs?”

For more information about the EMBA degree and a searchable directory of programs offered throughout the world, visit:

The Executive MBA Council  
[www.emba.org](http://www.emba.org)

For information on MBA programs in general and the GMAT, as well as a helpful comparison of the different types of programs, visit:

The Graduate Management Admissions Council  
[www.mba.com](http://www.mba.com)

A number of prominent business publications rank EMBA programs. Two of the most popular are:

*U.S. News & World Report*  
[www.usnews.com](http://www.usnews.com)

*BusinessWeek*  
[www.businessweek.com](http://www.businessweek.com)

**Fact:** Four out of five EMBA programs are accredited by The Association to Advance Collegiate Schools of Business (AACSB) International.

## EMBA Worldwide

Applications are being accepted for the EMBA Worldwide program at the University of Pittsburgh Joseph M. Katz Graduate School of Business. Aimed at managers and executives, the program is taught by high-quality, experienced professors, and upon completion, participants receive the AACSB-accredited MBA degree.

EMBA Worldwide students:

- Earn a fully accredited MBA—in just 19 months in the Pittsburgh program, where classes are taught Fridays and Saturdays of alternate weeks, and in 15 months in the Prague, Czech Republic and São Paulo, Brazil, programs, where classes are held for five days each month.
- Broaden their business background and strengthen their leadership, strategic, and analytical skills.
- Learn from professors with industry, research, and consulting experience.
- Gain access to a network of more than 30,000 Katz alumni worldwide, and create business opportunities with students, alumni, and industry professionals at regular events.
- Attend an EMBA program that is more than 35 years old—the second-oldest program in the United States.
- Participate in Global Executive Forums with students from Brazil, Europe, and the United States, strengthening friendships and building a worldwide network.

