How Long Is an MBA Program?

August 7, 2026



Earning a master’s degree can be instrumental in achieving career success. The Council of Graduate Schools notes that people who complete a master’s degree program earn higher salaries and enjoy more stable employment than those who do not, and the degree often qualifies them to advance into positions of leadership.

Enrolling in a Master of Business Administration (MBA) program is a great way for aspiring and current business leaders to enhance their business expertise. However, they likely have some questions they need answered first. For example, what kinds of MBA program formats are available, and how long is an MBA program?

How Much Time Does It Take to Earn an MBA?

Investing the time it takes to earn an MBA can prepare individuals to enter or advance in any of a wide range of MBA careers, and the flexibility available in today's MBA program formats makes getting an MBA a realistic option for many people.

Different MBA program format options offer students different ways to pursue the degree while still fulfilling their other commitments. For example, the Freeman School of Business at Tulane University offers:

- **Full-Time MBA.** The Full-Time MBA program is a 21-month program for students who have the time to attend school on a full-time basis and who can do so in person. It offers an intensive learning experience in which students gain the expertise to address real-world business challenges.
- **Executive MBA.** The Executive MBA program is a 17-month program designed for executive and senior-level business professionals. Students in this program meet every other weekend, alternating between in-person and online learning. This program is geared toward experienced executives who aspire to strengthen their business leadership skills as they continue to work.
- **Professional MBA.** The Professional MBA program can be completed in two to four years and offers students the opportunity to attend school part-time while continuing to work full-time. It enables students to acquire graduate-level business expertise through in-person or online classes held in the evenings.
- **Online MBA.** The Online MBA program can be completed in two to four years and is delivered entirely through remote learning. This program offers individuals a highly convenient and flexible way to gain graduate-level business knowledge and skills.

How to Choose an MBA Program Format

The particular MBA program format a student selects affects how long it will take them to earn an MBA, but students also need to consider which format aligns well with their career stage and other commitments in their lives.

Full-Time MBA

People who are in the beginning stages of their careers often find that a full-time MBA program can be a good choice. Full-time programs can prepare students for career advancement, and earning an MBA through this format can be great preparation for working in any of a number of full-time MBA roles such as marketing manager or product manager.

Full-time MBA programs enable students to pursue a concentration in a particular area of study. For example, the Full-Time MBA program at Tulane offers concentrations in business analytics, finance, marketing, strategy and innovation, and energy and sustainability.

Executive MBA

An executive MBA program can be a good fit for a seasoned executive who wants to strengthen their skills in areas such as leadership and strategy. These types of MBA programs prepare students for high-level executive MBA roles such as chief executive officer or chief financial officer.

The flexibility of executive MBA programs enables executives to continue working while they acquire greater expertise. Students in executive MBA programs can apply what they learn immediately in their current positions.

Executive MBA programs also offer students the chance to pursue a concentration. Tulane's Executive MBA program enables students to choose a global strategy, finance, or management and innovation concentration.

Professional MBA Program

Some people in the early stages of their careers may not be able to devote the time it takes to earn an MBA on a full-time basis, but they are not yet ready for an executive MBA program. These individuals may find that a professional MBA program best meets their needs. The part-time nature of a professional MBA program provides students with a way to continue working and earning an income

while building the skills they need to progress into higher levels of management.

Students in the Professional MBA program at Tulane can pursue a concentration in analytics, energy, finance, marketing, or strategic management and innovation.

Online MBA Program

For students who need to balance multiple commitments at work, at home, and at school, an online MBA program could be the best choice. Students in online MBA programs do not have to relocate to earn their degree, and they can gain advanced business knowledge and skills remotely from any location.

Online MBA programs offer concentrations that enable students to focus part of their education on a particular area. For example, concentrations in business analytics, finance, marketing, and strategic leadership are available in Tulane's Online MBA program.

MBA Requirements: How to Prepare

Just as the durations of MBA programs can vary by format, their requirements also can vary.

For example, the requirements for each of Tulane's MBA programs are as follows:

- **Full-Time MBA program requirements** include submitting an application, a resume, an essay, a letter of recommendation, and undergraduate transcripts. At least two years of professional work experience or a strong internship experience is preferred. Scores from the Graduate Management Admission Test (GMAT) or Graduate Record Examination (GRE) are not required, but they could strengthen an application.
- **Executive MBA program requirements** include submitting an application, a resume, a personal statement, two letters of recommendation, and undergraduate transcripts. Applicants are also required to participate in a personal interview. Additionally, applicants need to have a minimum of seven years of full-time postgraduate work experience, and five of those years must be in a position with significant management responsibility. GMAT or GRE scores are not required.

- **Professional MBA program requirements** include submitting an application, a resume, a personal statement, two letters of recommendation, and undergraduate transcripts. At least two years of professional work experience is preferred. GMAT or GRE scores are not required, but they could strengthen an application.
- **Online MBA program requirements** include submitting an application, a resume, a personal statement, two letters of recommendation, and undergraduate transcripts. At least three years of professional work experience is preferred. GMAT or GRE scores are not required.

Earn an MBA and Make an Investment in Your Future

Taking the time to complete an MBA program enables individuals to gain the advanced business expertise required to progress in their careers, enhance their credentials, and demonstrate their commitment to their careers. With a variety of MBA program formats available to choose from, prospective students can select a format tailored to meet their unique needs.

Explore the MBA degree programs that the Freeman School of Business at Tulane University offers to learn how one of these programs can help you reach your goals. With full-time, executive, professional, and online MBA options, Tulane is dedicated to helping students prepare for success, whether that means ascending the career ladder, building key leadership skills, or even pursuing entrepreneurship.

Sources:

- Council of Graduate Schools, “Communicating the Importance of the Master’s Degree”
- Indeed, “What Is an MBA? (Plus Benefits, Types and Courses)”
- Kaplan, “How to Choose the Right MBA Program for Your Career Goals”
- Magoosh, “Everything You Need to Know About Getting an MBA”