

School rankings

Over the years, the media and MBA program brochures have elevated the significance of business school rankings as one of the most important benchmarks for choosing a school to attend. However, school rankings often depend on which publication you read and what research methodology was used. In some cases, information is subjective and may include results that are not checked for accuracy. Most importantly, rankings do not take into account the unique elements of certain programs and how these attributes might meet your individual needs. *Rankings tell you what schools are "best" but do not take into account "best fit."*

Admissions testing

Most MBA programs require at least one graduate admissions test score.

- www.mba.com Graduate Management Admissions Test (GMAT®)
- www.ets.org Graduate Record Examinations (GRE)

Consult the individual school website for requirements. Many graduating seniors complete their graduate school admissions test during their senior year when they are most comfortable with testing and have the flexibility to adequately prepare. Most applicants prepare on their own using one of the test-preparation publications available at most bookstores or on the test website.

Essays and personal statements

Most business schools require one or more essays in their application. Essay prompts may include a range of subjects such as leadership, long-term career goals, professional accomplishments, and community engagement. When preparing your essays, *make sure that together they tell one story*. You, as the candidate, are the story. Your essays should reflect different aspects of your character, accomplishments and aspirations that will allow the admissions committee to know you better.

- ***Write to express, not impress.*** Admissions professionals can tell when you're just writing what you think they want to read. If you've done your homework, you know why you want an MBA degree and how that fits into your overall career game plan.
- ***What will you bring to the classroom?*** Being part of a business school community is a give-and-take proposition. It's not only about what you can gain from business school, it's also about what you're willing to share. Candidates are often judged by what value they can bring to the classroom and the community experience, in addition to how well they match entrance requirements.
- ***Why this school?*** Much like applying for a job, know why you want to pursue an MBA at a particular school or program. Show that you are familiar with the given school and why you are a good fit.
- ***Reality check: Is this the right time for you?*** You're going to business school to advance your career, right? Your job success as an MBA graduate may rely to a large extent on what you did beforehand. Find out what MBA employers look for in candidates by talking to students, alumni and the school's career services office. If you don't have enough experience right now to benefit fully from an MBA, further define your goals and apply later.