

Top MBA Programs Ease Admissions Requirements As Students Defer Enrollment due to COVID-19

As the coronavirus pandemic continues, MBA programs all over the globe are changing their admissions policies.

NEW YORK, NY, UNITED STATES, August 12, 2020 /EINPresswire.com/ -- As the coronavirus pandemic continues to impact hundreds of countries, MBA programs all over the globe are coming to grips with a stark new reality: Schools need students' tuition to remain open, and those students want to be in a physical classroom. But how can universities reconcile this when just one case of Covid-19 could shut down the entire campus?



COVID-19 has dramatically impacted the admissions process for MBA programs.

The MBA Problem during Covid-19

Business schools need to retain their enrolled students and maintain the flow of tuition. But MBA students are famously picky and demanding. A typical MBA applicant often has an established career with clearly defined expectations. They carefully weigh opportunity costs when considering what schools to apply to. Above all, this means attending in-person classes and forming relationships with peers.

However, attending classes and meeting peers has now become an increasingly difficult task and even liability in the age of Covid-19. What should business schools do when faced with lockdowns, health concerns, and legal actions?

Futures Made of Virtual Learning

Business programs have been scrambling to find an answer to this problem. The solution appears to be online classes, or "virtual learning," which has taken on a variety of forms. UPenn's Wharton Business School and Georgetown's McDonough School of Business have announced they will only be offering online classes, while Harvard Business School elected to reverse course

from online-only classes in favor of a hybrid model. From top business programs to budget schools, online learning is positioned to become a mainstay at all universities for the foreseeable future.

To Defer or Not Defer?

As expected, many students have not responded well to the idea of paying full tuition for a "virtual" experience. Faced with the high likelihood that post-graduation job recruitment will be limited during Covid-19, applicants are seriously considering deferment. Long avoided as an option by top business schools, deferment has actually become an enticing trade-off of sorts between students and universities; students can avoid online classes in hopes of re-matriculating in 2021, whereas business schools can keep the students' tuition.

Deferment has become extremely attractive for international applicants whose schools have [switched to online-only classes](#). Faced with the possibility of losing their student visas, many international applicants have decided to defer, inadvertently freeing up admissions spots for on-the-fence applicants. However, for international students whose MBA programs are not allowing deferment, there are several options available to maintain their student visas.

A Surprise to be Sure, but a Welcome One

The result of business schools shifting towards virtual learning and students deciding to defer is an unexpected recent [increase in MBA applications](#) due to a perception among applicants that their chances at admission are higher at top-tier schools.

Higher education is a counter-cyclical industry in which applications are known to skyrocket during recessions, as having an MBA is seen as an advantage during a lagging job market. Faced with uncertain futures, even experienced workers feel pressure to gain a safety net or change career paths entirely. Moreover, the CARES Act has provided interest and payment relief to students, further encouraging those on the fence to apply for an MBA.

Bruce DelMonico, an assistant dean of admissions at Yale School of Management, stated that applications are up 10% after a plateau in the spring. Furthermore, the overall number of MBA programs has contracted, as many schools outside of the Top 30 have decided to close entirely, further limiting the scope of MBA applicants to a select number of schools.

Farewell Admissions Testing, We Hardly Knew Thee

There is some good news for undecided MBA applicants: many business schools across the U.S. are waiving entrance test requirements. Wharton will accept the at-home version of the GMAT, whereas Stanford has greenlit students to apply without a GMAT score. Michigan's Ross School has even done away with letter grades completely in favor of a pass/fail system. Many business schools already regularly waive testing requirements for online-only program applicants and those with extensive work experience.

In sum, business schools see an opportunity during the pandemic to attract students who would

not otherwise be interested in getting an MBA. Combined with the contracting job market and eased admissions standards, the outlook among MBA communities online includes everything from uncertainty to excitement.

Getting to Know You, Getting to Know All About You

By easing admissions standards, widening recruitment to non-traditional applicants, and allowing deferrals for international students, business schools worldwide are learning to cope with the challenges of Covid-19. However, admission to a top-ranked MBA program will not be any less competitive. Instead, the competition has shifted to [writing the MBA admissions essay](#).

The admissions essay or personal statement has now become the most important aspect of the MBA application process, especially since the GMAT has been waived by some MBA programs. International applicants who do not have the advantage of a U.S. degree are doubly affected by the removal of the GMAT and are now even more reliant upon their admissions essay.

Adding to this, MBA applicants are often much older and have a wide variety of life experiences. Business schools want to know about these unique personal experiences. Top programs such as Stanford's state that essays should be compelling and translate one's values, passions, and objectives. As a response, MBA applicants both traditional and non-traditional are increasingly turning to professional admissions essay editing services to gain a competitive advantage.

Despite fears that MBA enrollment will decrease and business schools will close during the pandemic, applications for 2021 are up, with more non-traditional students filling in the gaps. How exactly the MBA industry will be altered and for how long is anybody's guess. But one certainty is that online is fundamentally changing the MBA admissions landscape.

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