What Can You Do with a Finance Degree?

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From digital currencies to cross-border e-commerce, today's global financial system is more intricate than ever, as new markets, risks, and regulatory challenges emerge that did not exist even a decade ago. This means that expert financial professionals are in demand. The U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics (BLS) expects financial manager jobs, for example, to grow by 17 percent over the next decade, outpacing the average 4 percent job growth projected for all occupations.

For those who are looking to begin their finance career, start a business, or manage others' investments, enrolling in a Master of Finance degree program can unlock numerous opportunities. But what can you do with a finance degree?

Why Pursue a Master's Degree in Finance?

A Master of Finance degree can lead to a career in any of a wide range of fields. It can open doors to opportunities in industries that range from banking and health care to technology and government.

Master's programs focused on finance deeply explore specialized topics such as how to build detailed financial models to assess investment opportunities and manage risks, knowledge that is crucial in senior financial positions. This advanced training prepares professionals for high-stakes decision-making and gives them an edge in securing competitive roles.

Earning a master's degree in finance can significantly boost an individual's salary potential as well. In fact, professionals with a Master of Finance degree had a median salary that was more than $10,000 higher than that of those holding a bachelor's degree in finance, according to the compensation website Payscale.

What Will You Learn in a Finance Degree Program?

A Master of Finance program equips students with both the theoretical knowledge and practical skills needed to excel in various financial roles and settings.

A master's in finance program curriculum typically covers the following topics:

- **Corporate Finance**. Corporate finance courses focus on how corporations make key financial decisions, such as by analyzing the company's financial health, assessing its investment opportunities, and determining its optimal balance between debt and equity financing.
- **Investments and Asset Pricing**. Investments and asset pricing courses center on the valuation of financial assets and effective portfolio management. They cover techniques to assess the performance and potential of assets, which are essential for building and maintaining successful investment portfolios.
- **Equity Analysis and Valuation**. Equity analysis and valuation courses teach students how to evaluate financial statements and forecast future earnings. They also demonstrate how to develop models to estimate a company's stock value, which can provide insights that guide investment decisions.

- **Financial Communications**. Financial communications courses cover how to communicate complex financial information to stakeholders effectively. They include the development of skills in presenting financial reports, writing clear and persuasive analyses, and delivering impactful presentations.

Finance Degree Skills

Master of Finance students develop a range of valuable skills in areas that include:

- **Analytical Thinking**: The ability to break down complex data and identify key trends is at the heart of finance. When evaluating a company's performance or predicting market shifts, finance professionals need strong analytical skills.
- **Financial Modeling**: Being able to build detailed financial models is a critical technical skill needed by all financial professionals. These models help forecast performance, assess risks, and evaluate potential investments.
- **Problem-Solving**: From managing cash flow issues to uncovering opportunities in volatile markets, the ability to find innovative ways to solve problems is essential for success in finance.
- **Attention to Detail**: Precision is crucial in finance, where even minor errors can lead to big losses. Whether they are working on valuations or auditing financial reports, finance professionals must be able to pay close attention to the details to ensure the accuracy of their work.

Industry Credentials

As a member of the CFA Institute's University Affiliation Program (UAP), Tulane University's master's program in finance is designed to prepare students for the Chartered Financial Analyst (CFA) Exam. As a CFA Charterholder, you will possess one of the investment industry's preeminent credentials, qualifying you to work in senior and executive positions in investment management, risk management, asset management and more.

Finance Degree Careers

Now to the key question: What can you do with a finance degree? The short answer — just about anything in the finance world. Roles graduates often pursue include:

Financial Manager

Financial managers ensure the financial health of their organization. This may involve creating financial reports, overseeing investment activities, and collaborating with executives to set strategic financial goals. For instance, these professionals may help a rapidly growing e-commerce company allocate its resources for expansion or guide a multinational corporation through a merger to strengthen its market position.

Financial managers had a median annual salary of $156,100 as of May 2023, according to the BLS.

Risk Analyst

Risk analysts focus on identifying and minimizing their organization’s potential financial risks. They assess market trends and internal data to predict risks and help the organization navigate economic uncertainty. For example, a risk analyst may track global market changes and advise on strategies to protect their firm’s investments against market fluctuations.

Financial risk specialists had a median annual salary of $106,090 as of May 2023, according to the BLS.

Investment Banker

Investment bankers help companies and governments raise capital by facilitating the sale of investment products — such as stocks or bonds — to investors. They also assist with mergers and acquisitions, providing strategic advice. For instance, an investment banker may assist a renewable energy company in selling shares of the company to the public for the first time or guide a large retailer through the acquisition of a competitor.

Investment bankers had a median annual salary of around $120,200 as of September 2024, according to Payscale.

Controller

Financial controllers oversee their company’s accounting functions, ensuring that its financial reports are accurate and the company’s practices comply with legal and

industry standards. These professionals also ensure that the company's financial statements, such as its balance sheets and profit-and-loss statements, reflect the company's true financial health. A financial controller in a manufacturing company, for example, may oversee budgeting, track expenses, and ensure that the company's financial reports accurately reflect its overall performance.

Financial controllers had a median annual salary of around $94,600 as of October 2024, according to Payscale.

Take the Next Step in Your Finance Career

Earning a Master of Finance degree equips professionals with advanced skills and specialized knowledge, opening doors to a variety of high-demand and lucrative roles across many sectors. Professionals with a Master of Finance can pursue any of a number of career opportunities, whether they want to guide an organization through complex financial decisions, analyze market risks, or structure major deals.

Tulane University's Freeman School of Business offers a Master of Finance program that emphasizes experiential learning and industry-relevant skills. Students work on real-world financial challenges, gaining expertise in areas such as valuation, risk management, and strategic decision-making. With access to the school's extensive alumni network and partnerships with leading firms, graduates are well-prepared to advance their finance careers.

Explore how the Master of Finance program at Tulane University's Freeman School of Business prepares professionals with the tools they need to thrive in today's competitive world of finance.

Sources:

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