Part-Time vs. Full-Time MBA

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Earning a Master of Business Administration (MBA) degree can enhance an individual's expertise, job prospects, and career options; it also has the potential to increase their earnings significantly. The nonprofit Graduate Management Admission Council's 2024 survey of more than 900 corporate recruiters worldwide found that the median annual starting salary for individuals with an MBA was $120,000, while for those with only a bachelor's degree it was $69,320.

The flexibility of many MBA programs is making it easier for individuals to earn their degree. For example, individuals now have the option of pursuing an MBA degree on a part-time or full-time basis.

People who have been considering enrolling in a part-time, professional MBA program or a full-time MBA program can benefit from exploring a part-time vs. full-

time MBA comparison and identifying the format that best fits their needs.

What Is a Part-Time MBA?

As with all types of MBA degree programs, both part-time and full-time MBA programs offer students the opportunity to gain advanced knowledge and skills in key business areas. In addition, programs in both formats prepare students for leadership roles in business and enable them to pursue concentrations or specializations in an area of business such as analytics, finance, sustainability, or business strategy.

But part-time MBA programs differ from full-time MBA programs in significant ways. Some of the unique features of part-time MBA programs are outlined below.

Geared Toward Working Professionals

Students in part-time MBA programs typically continue to work while they pursue their degree. For example, the part-time Professional MBA program at Tulane University's Freeman School of Business is tailored to meet the needs of early-to-mid-career professionals who have at least two years of work experience. Students in the program attend classes in the evenings.

Takes Relatively Longer to Complete

As one might expect, completing an MBA program on a part-time basis will take relatively longer than completing the program full time. Students in Tulane's part-time Professional MBA program, for instance, generally complete the program within two to three years, while those in its full-time MBA program complete the program in less than two years.

Curriculum and Career Outcomes Reflect a Focus on Working Professionals

The curricula of part-time MBA programs reflect their focus on working professional students who want to gain the skills and knowledge needed to pursue a promotion at their current employer or opportunities for a new role or in a new industry.

The curriculum of Tulane’s part-time Professional MBA program, for example, includes:

Required courses in subjects such as strategic management, managerial economics, and analysis for financial management

Elective courses in subjects such as analytics, energy, and venture capital

What Is a Full-Time MBA?

In contrast to part-time MBA programs, full-time MBA programs have features that capitalize on students’ ability to attend school full time. Examples of those program features are highlighted below.

Incorporates Experiential Learning

Students in full-time MBA programs have access to a variety of experiential learning opportunities. For example, students in Tulane University’s full-time MBA program complete:

- Two intensive immersion courses that allow students to strengthen their skills in negotiation and leadership
- A consulting practicum in which students create strategies and solutions to address a company’s business problem
- A capstone course that enables students to address issues that a local or regional organization faces

Incorporates Career Development

Through their curricula, full-time MBA programs offer students the chance to enhance their career development expertise. At Tulane, full-time MBA students take career development courses to help them in areas such as:

- Creating and managing a job search strategy
- Responding to employment offers
- Onboarding into a company
- Benefiting from mentoring

How to Choose Between a Part-Time and Full-Time MBA

In deciding whether to pursue a part-time or full-time MBA, individuals can consider several factors. For example, it can be helpful for prospective students to do the following.

Review Personal and Professional Commitments

Conducting a thorough review of their obligations outside of school can help individuals decide whether they have the time to attend school full time or whether a part-time, evening program aligns more closely with their commitments.

Become Familiar With Specific Program Requirements

The business school requirements may be different for part-time and full-time programs. For example, a part-time MBA program may require an individual to have a minimum number of years of experience, and an individual who does not satisfy that requirement may not be a qualified candidate for the program.

Refine Career Goals

Determining their specific career goals can help individuals decide which MBA program format can help them reach those goals. While individuals may find a part-time or full-time MBA program meets their needs, they may also determine that a dual MBA program is better suited to achieving their career goals.

Refine Educational Goals

Giving serious thought to which type of education an individual would benefit from the most is an important exercise. For example, if education aimed at working professionals parallels an individual’s goals, then a part-time MBA program could be a solid choice. But if an individual feels they could benefit significantly from experiential learning, then a full-time MBA program could be the best selection.

Communicate With Admission Advisors

Graduate school admissions advisors can offer prospective students helpful information about their part-time and full-time MBA programs, explain in detail how the program admission process works, and provide aspiring students with information regarding financial aid.

Completing a Part-Time or Full-Time MBA Program Can Lead to Career Advancement

Whether they earn a part-time or full-time MBA, individuals have the opportunity to gain critical business knowledge and skills through an MBA program that can spur their career success. With the availability of several types of program formats, prospective students can choose the one that enables them to meet their educational and professional goals.

Individuals who are interested in earning an MBA can explore Tulane's part-time Professional MBA program or Full-Time MBA program to learn how a Tulane MBA can help them reach their career goals. Providing students with the expertise they need to address business challenges in the real world, Tulane's MBA programs help professionals advance in their career.

Begin your journey toward gaining advanced business expertise today.

Sources:

- ETS, "7 Tips to Stay Organized During Your Grad School Search"
- Graduate Management Admission Council, "2024 Report Corporate Recruiters Survey"
- Indeed, "Why Get an MBA Degree? 11 Career Benefits to Know About"