

The Full-time MBA Program Admissions Chat August 8, 2017

Chat with Berkeley-Haas

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Andrea_Moderator: Welcome to the Berkeley MBA Admissions chat. My name is Andrea Brougher, Admissions Manager, and I will be moderating the chat today. Joining us are Angela Fleekop, Associate Director of Admissions; Talin Abrahamian, Associate Director of Admissions; Brooke Baranzano, Associate Director of Admissions; Sandra Cruz-Lezama, Admissions Manager; and Jamie Hayden, Assistant Director of Financial Aid. Please send us your questions!

Talin_Berkeley: Hi everyone! Looking forward to chatting with you today.

Brooke_Berkeley: Hello! Can't wait to answer some of your admissions questions!

Angela_Berkeley: Hello Everyone! Thanks for joining us.

Sandra_Berkeley: Good Morning! I am Sandra Cruz-Lezama, an Admissions Manager. I look forward to chatting with you all today.

Jamie_Berkeley: Welcome! As an Assistant Director of Financial Aid, I'm happy to answer any of your financial aid questions!

Vedang: Hi. I wanted to know **what do you look for in a candidate when it comes to work experience? Is the number of years of work an important factor?** I am planning to apply with a 2 year work ex.

Sandra_Berkeley: We have a holistic review process for when it comes to reviewing applications. We review each applicant's professional experience, academic aptitude, GMAT or GRE examination results, TOEFL or IELTS examination results (if applicable), and letters of recommendation. Although work experience is not a formal requirement, many of our students have an average of 5 years of professional work experience since the completion of their bachelor's degree. We encourage you to review the profile of our students at <http://mba.haas.berkeley.edu/community/classprofile.html>. This will give you a good reference point for measuring your qualifications in comparison.

Scott: For a second recommendation after an immediate supervisor, would you see it as more beneficial to have a previous supervisor (2 years out) or a current colleague?

Brooke_Berkeley: Hi, Scott! Thanks for your question. I'd suggest a previous supervisor, as we look for letters of rec from managers if possible.

Scott: Generally, do you recommend using the optional essay?

Talin_Berkeley: Hi! The optional essay should be used to explain one of the following: explanation of grade aberrations or employments gaps, quantitative abilities (if not clear in other parts of the applications), or for re-applicants, to show improvements to your candidacy.

Hilary: I live in DC. Are interviews only conducted on campus?

Angela_Berkeley: Hi Hilary. Great question. We conduct interviews on or off campus and we do not have a preference for either. We can set you up for an interview with one of our alums in DC if you can't make it to campus.

Emasangcay: From your experience, would you recommend applying Round 1 over Round 2? Does either round accept more students than another?

Brooke_Berkeley: Great question! The strength of the pool changes every year, and we don't publish numbers of acceptances by round. I'd recommend applying as soon as you have your best application possible.

Aanchal: I had a couple of questions for MBA at Haas. Firstly, the website mentions that Haas accepts applicants with 4-year undergraduate degree or a minimum of 2 years Master's degree. However, I have a 3-year undergraduate degree in Bachelor of Science Mathematics Honors from the University of Delhi. Am I eligible to apply for MBA at Haas?

Sandra_Berkeley: Hello Aanchal, this is a great question. With a three-year Bachelor's degree, you are welcome to apply to the program. However, your application might not be as competitive as individuals who have completed a four-year Bachelor's degree. We usually suggest for applicants in a similar situation to complete a one-year Master's degree or certificate program to have the same number of study as the majority of the applicants.

Scott: Do you take in to account Verbal vs. Quant scores from the GMAT, or is the total score the most important? i.e. - Would there be a negative impact if my quant score was significantly higher than my verbal score or vice versa.

Brooke_Berkeley: Good question. We do look at both the quant and verbal scores on the GMAT, but we take the highest overall score into account. We also look at your application holistically, so if one score is much higher than the other we'd look to other aspects of your application for evidence of proficiency.

Hilary: **What is the purpose/reason for asking if we're applying to other MBA programs?**

Talin_Berkeley: Hi Hilary. Thanks for your question. We gather that information to understand the market better. Your response to that question has no bearing on your application decision. Hope that helps.

Ryan: **I had a question about admission deferral.** Working for a startup, there are some opportunities that come along that seem too good to pass up. **What is Berkeley's stance on these types of situations?**

Angela_Berkeley: Hi Ryan, deferrals are granted on a case-by-case basis, usually only in extenuating circumstances. You will have to weigh the opportunities available to you at work with the best time for you to go to business school.

Safwan: Hello. I have a question regarding the essay. **On Essay #2, We are asked to describe an obstacle, cultivating diversity, or leadership experience. Are you specifically looking for something work related, or a life event?**

Talin_Berkeley: You may use either a professional experience or a personal one. Up to you!

Atl: **The Haas Employment section asks about direct reports. If we have multiple projects at work and some have direct reports and not others - what do we put for that answer?**

Brooke_Berkeley: I'd suggest including any direct reports that you create goals with, complete reviews on, and are in charge of year-round. You must be their direct manager.

Nao: Good morning. Thank you for hosting this. I have a question regarding the recommendation letter from a direct supervisor. **I was recently promoted to Manager within my organization. As such, would it be appropriate to have another Manager within my group, who has supervised me for 5 out of 6 years of my professional career, write a recommendation letter? In this instance, would I need to include an explanation as to why I have selected him/her to be my recommender?**

Talin_Berkeley: Hi Nao. If that person has supervised you, there is no need to explain why you chose them. That person would be a great choice!

Karen: **The Round 1 deadline is before the Consortium deadline - will that be an issue? As in, will I still be considered for Round 1?**

Brooke_Berkeley: If you apply through the Consortium, we understand that deadlines are different than ours. You must submit by the Consortium deadline 1 and you'll be in our Round 1.

Emasangcay: **Can you talk about student housing? What percentage of students live on-campus vs off-campus? What housing options are offered by Haas?**

Angela_Berkeley: Most students live off campus, in the area surrounding campus, but there are many housing options. There is also graduate student housing on campus, and some students commute from other parts of the Bay Area. You can find more housing resources at <http://mba.haas.berkeley.edu/place/relocating.html>.

Tyler: Hi, my name is Tyler. Thank you all for your time today. **Do you believe Berkeley's small class size has a negative impact on recruiting? Do students feel that the recruiting process is more competitive because of the small class size?**

Brooke_Berkeley: Hi, Tyler! What I've heard about recruiting is, honestly, all good things. The small class size actually makes for far less competition because our career management group has the capacity to focus on each student and help them recruit to their best potential.

Angela_Berkeley: Hi Tyler. Actually, our students tend to feel like it has the opposite effect. Because we are so small, students get the one on one support they need from our Career Management Group to succeed. We also have Peer Advisors who are second year students who have been through the recruiting process and advise first years on best practices for interviewing, case prep, etc. This is a great example of our collaborative culture in action!

S_g: **Do you look at the best overall GMAT scores or take into consideration past scores as well?**

Brooke_Berkeley: We can see all the scores you submit, but we focus on the best overall GMAT score.

Ryan: **If admitted, what are some of the financing options students go through? Is there any grant-based aid** (similar to some of the aid given in some of the private undergraduate institutions)?

Jamie_Berkeley: Hi Ryan! Haas offers a variety of scholarships to students entering the Full-time MBA Program. You can see a comprehensive list here: <http://www.haas.berkeley.edu/finaid/MBA/entering-students.html>

Karen: **Is there anything in particular I should address as an "older" applicant** (10 years work experience, graduated undergrad in 2006)?

Talin_Berkeley: Hi Karen. Age is not something we look at when evaluating your application file. The quality of your work experience is more important than the number of years. That said, our career goals essay (essay #3) is a good place for you to really delve deeply into what it is you are interested in pursuing now at this time in your career and how your past experiences have motivated and prepped you to pursue these goals.

Safwan: **Do you favor the GRE or the GMAT more for an application?**
Brooke_Berkeley: Here at Haas, we prefer the GMAT. However, we do accept the GRE as well.

S_g: Hello, **are applicants with less (<5 years) expected to have a comparatively higher GMAT Score?**
Brooke_Berkeley: Hi there! We do read applications holistically, and we are looking more at impact and quality of work rather than quantity. We also take into account many other factors like cultural fit, letters of rec, and scores.

S_g: **What if a person was the direct manager for 6 months but still did all the activities such as performance reviews, etc.?**
Talin_Berkeley: That is something you should point out somewhere on the application (on the app itself, in an essay in which it would apply, on the resume, etc.). Up to you where you choose to disclose that leadership experience but it would be a good idea to include that somewhere.

Grace: **I have two sets of current GRE scores, and I've heard that different schools weigh this data differently. Do you all look at the highest scores overall (could be verbal on the first, quant on the second), or just compare the difference between the first test and second?**
Brooke_Berkeley: We consider the highest score overall, not by section.

Karen: I haven't seen it listed on your website, but **are there any scholarships (or other financial incentives) for Peace Corps and/or AmeriCorps alumni?**
Jamie_Berkeley: Haas does not offer any scholarships specific to Peace Corps or AmeriCorps alumni. We do have a comprehensive list of all of our entering student opportunities listed here: <http://www.haas.berkeley.edu/finaid/MBA/entering-students.html>

Ryan: Building on a question posted by Atl, **if you do not have any direct reports, how does this affect your application?**
Talin_Berkeley: You do not need to have direct reports to display leadership potential/experience. You can highlight those experiences via your extracurricular activities, particular projects you've worked on at work that you've taken initiative on, etc...at times, leadership potential even comes out in letters of rec. We don't expect all applicants to have a managerial role in order to display leadership. Hope that helps.

Hilary: **Is there a word limit for the optional essay?**

Sandra_Berkeley: Hello Hilary, thank you for your questions. There are no word limits for the optional essays and supplemental information sections. However, you want to be mindful of the length of your essay, and how well you can express your thoughts, points, and ideas concisely and effectively.

Isha: **What's the best way for me to evaluate my fit at Berkeley?**

Angela_Berkeley: There are a few ways to get a feel for your fit on campus. One is to visit us and/or talk to current students and alumni. This will give you a feel for how you might fit within our community.

Mary: Hi everyone! **I have a question regarding extracurriculars. Do you prefer that we prioritize current activities over ones we participated in during college?**

Brooke_Berkeley: Great question. I'd prioritize the activities that you're the most passionate about and have spent the most time on, regardless of when you've participated.

Scott: **What are the qualifications to receive financial aid?**

Jamie_Berkeley: US Citizens and permanent residents are eligible for federal loans and private loans. International students are eligible for private loans with a US Citizen cosigner or our international loans. Haas scholarships are open to all students. Information on those opportunities may be found here:
<http://www.haas.berkeley.edu/finaid/MBA/entering-students.html>
Information on loans may be found here:
<http://www.haas.berkeley.edu/finaid/MBA/loan-options.html>

Aanchal: **How much weight is given to the IR section in GMAT while considering the applications?**

Brooke_Berkeley: We look for outliers in the IR section - either very high or very low.

Sallyannzhou610: **If my rec is from my former direct supervisor for 3 years, who (due to a op model change at my firm) I had to switch from 2 months ago, does this require explanation in the optional essay?** Thanks in advance for answering my question!

Talin_Berkeley: Hi Sally. Please submit one bullet point explaining that the person was your direct supervisor up until two months ago. That should do!

Borja: Good morning! **What's your view on doing internships during the course besides the usual summer internship? Is that possible for an international student?** Thanks for your help.

Talin_Berkeley: Yes, we allow students (international or not) to complete internships while in school.

Tyler: Second question: **it appears that there was a sizable increase in the number of applicants from the Class of 2017 (~3,600) to the Class of 2018 (~4,000). Do you believe that jump is attributable to specific changes to the program, external factors (e.g. economy), or something else?**

Angela_Berkeley: It's hard to say! There are many factors at play that can influence the number of applications in a given year and numbers tend to ebb and flow.

Grace: **I am curious about financial aid options - specifically any scholarships, grants, or repayment options for people coming from the nonprofit sector who will be returning to the nonprofit sector after degree completion.** Thanks for taking the time to talk with us today!

Jamie_Berkeley: Hi Grace! Haas offers a variety of scholarship opportunities. One specifically that may benefit someone coming from the nonprofit sector is our Berkeley MBA Grant. Info on this opportunity and more can be found here: <http://www.haas.berkeley.edu/finaid/MBA/entering-students.html>.

Haas also has a Loan Repayment Assistance Program, which reimburses students for their minimum monthly payments in six month cycles while in repayment. Info on this is here: <http://www.haas.berkeley.edu/finaid/MBA/loan-repayment-assistance.html>.

Atl: Also, **can you let us know the reasoning behind asking for the number of times the tests were taken?**

Brooke_Berkeley: We use it to gather data on the applicant pool. It doesn't have any weight on your review.

S_g: **What is your take on an applicant who has been working on his/her family business instead of a big brand name employer?**

Angela_Berkeley: We are looking for the impact you've had at your organization, regardless of the size. We often see applicants who have had wonderful work experience at a family business.

Richa: Hello, Admissions Team! Thank you for your time! **I am an international applicant with a Non-Profit concentration and would like to know if a student at Haas is eligible to receive both Merit Based Scholarship and IBSI Coordinated Fellowship simultaneously or can receive only one mode of financial aid at a time?**

Jamie_Berkeley: Hello Richa! It is possible to receive more than one scholarship.

Gloria: Hello, thank you so much for taking the time to chat with us. **Do you have a sense of when the class profile will be updated on the website to reflect the entering class of this year?**

Brooke_Berkeley: Probably in a couple of weeks - before September!

Melissa: **If my undergrad GPA was decent but fluctuated a little over 4 years, would you recommend that I still address it in the optional essay?**
Especially given that I will have have chalked up 7 years of work experience come Fall 2018.

Brooke_Berkeley: If you feel that you should address it, you really can feel free to. That's a common reason to use the optional essay space.

Mhharary: Hello members of the admissions team! On the Haas website, it states that all applicants should have completed, at a minimum, a college-level math or statistics course. **Will candidates still be considered if they did not take a college level math/stats class, but performed well on the quant section of the GMAT, and have worked in analytical roles during their time working post undergrad?**

Talin_Berkeley: Hi Mhharary. Yes, if you can demonstrate quantitative abilities via GMAT or work experience that should be fine. The first year contains many quant-heavy core courses, so we look to see that you demonstrate quantitative abilities to ensure that you will do well in your courses.

Phuong: Good morning. I would like to ask a question regarding admission criteria. **I know Haas is well-known for tech and entrepreneurship career. If someone is from non-tech background and looks for consulting jobs post-MBA, will he have fewer advantages than other candidates?**

Brooke_Berkeley: Absolutely not! Consultants are beloved at Haas, and we have phenomenal recruiting on and off-campus for consultants.

Aanchal: Thanks Brooke for your answer about the IR scores. Also, **I want to understand what do you consider a low IR score? I have a total of 720 in GMAT (Q48, V41, AWA 5.5 and IR 3) Will the IR scores work against me? Do you suggest I justify this in my application?**

Brooke_Berkeley: You could complete a short couple of sentences in your optional essay to address this. I'd focus on the percentiles that are posted. I can't give you any specific percentiles we're looking for, as we read each app holistically.

- Scott:** Thanks much! Following up on your response. **For highlighting quantitative abilities in the optional essay, how would you recommend going about this?**
- Sandra_Berkeley:** Dear Scott, thank you for your question. We have a holistic review process when it comes to reviewing applications. With our holistic overview, we will review your academic aptitude and GMAT or GRE examination results. However if you feel that there is more information that you would like to elaborate on, feel free to use the optional essay as you wish.
- Safwan:** **I am applying for the MBA/MPH degree looking for a career change. Is this a good program for those who want to make a transition into a different field?**
- Talin_Berkeley:** If your desired field has to do with healthcare, then this could be a good program. However, you will have to demonstrate commitment to the field for this program specifically because the MBA Admissions Committee as well as the MPH Admissions Committee will review your qualifications for both programs and come to a final decision together. Your career switch should be an intentional and well thought out one.
- Emasangcay:** **Can you talk about study abroad opportunities while at Haas? Is this something that many students take advantage of?**
- Angela_Berkeley:** There are many opportunities to study abroad at Haas, whether it's for a few weeks as part of our International Business Development Course, or for an entire semester through the Global Network for Advanced Management. You can learn more about global opportunities at Haas here: <http://mba.haas.berkeley.edu/academics/global.html>
- Eloy:** **Some Business Schools suggest that resumes focus on specific accomplishments rather than daily responsibilities. What is your view?**
- Thank you
- Talin_Berkeley:** Yes, your resume should highlight achievements rather than your job description. Thanks for asking!
- Varun:** **Hi, How favorable is Haas towards reapplicants? I applied in R1 in 2015 and am planning to apply again this year. Will I be considered a reapplicant?**
- Brooke_Berkeley:** We see reapplicants very positively here at Haas. Yes, you would be considered a reapplicant, as you are applying again!

Atl: **If our undergrad transcript is digital, is it okay to submit with scans of the back pages?**

Sandra_Berkeley: Hello Atl, on our FT MBA application you will be able to upload a copy of your official transcript. The scan should have the front and back page of your academic documents. If you have any issues with the upload, feel free to contact our office and we are more than happy to assist you.

Safwan: Thank you. I am currently in a Master's program. **Which degree will be weighted more on the application, the Master's or the Bachelor's?**

Talin_Berkeley: Hi Safwan. We will look at all of your degrees. However, we require the bachelor's degree, so the emphasis is placed on that.

Christined: Hi, **what should I do to help a 3.0 GPA in chemical engineering from a top school? Aside from getting a top GMAT score?**

Brooke_Berkeley: There are a few things you could do, depending on the strength of the rest of your application. You could opt to take a class in an area you don't feel you shine in, you can focus on impact inside or outside of work, make sure your letters of rec are stellar, etc.

Joe P: Hello Admissions Team! **I'm planning on submitting my application during the Round 1 cycle. If I were to take the GMAT and score higher well before the Round 2 deadline, would admissions consider my score at point of submission or my latest score when evaluating my application?**

Sandra_Berkeley: Hello Joe P, thank you for your question. In order for your application to be reviewed for Round 1, all tests need to be taken on or before our application deadline. If you retake a test after the application deadline, we will not be able to update your test score. The only way we will update a score is if an applicant is waitlisted.

S_g: **Do MOOCs impact the strength of the application?**

Angela_Berkeley: We will look at all of your coursework, and MOOCs can show us your strengths in a particular area, if you feel that is lacking elsewhere in your application.

Christined: **If I do take classes to help my application, does it matter if I take those classes at a community college or should it be a big university similar to that of Berkeley?**

Angela_Berkeley: It's totally up to you, as you will have to consider fit with your schedule, etc.

Tim: Thanks for offering your time to this hosting this session. **I'm not sure if I want to pursue a full-time MBA or continue working and enter the Evening and Weekend program. Am I allowed to apply to both?**

Sandra_Berkeley: Dear Tim, the University of California Berkeley will only allow for you to submit one graduate application. Feel free to review our website where we compare our different MBA programs: <http://haas.berkeley.edu/the-berkeley-mba/>. This could be helpful as you decide which program is the best fit for you.

Tyler: In your experience, **what is the best way for prospective students to speak to current students and/or alumni about their experiences at Haas?**

Sandra_Berkeley: Hello Tyler, this is a great question. I would suggest that you reach out to our Haas Student Ambassadors. Our Haas Student Ambassadors are current students in our program who will be able to provide you the best insights about our program. You can reach out to them directly at hsa@haas.berkeley.edu. We encourage you to review the Haas Student Ambassador page at: <http://mba.haas.berkeley.edu/admissions/hsateam.html>.

Eloy: **Do you take into account that grade systems may differ among different countries?** In Spain, for instance, certain engineering degrees or dual programs are very demanding and it's almost impossible to obtain more than the equivalent 3.0 GPA.

Angela_Berkeley: We read by country of education and do not convert grades from other countries to the US scale. So, rest assured we are very familiar with your grading system and will evaluate your application accordingly.

Raj_2: **Can I apply for the EWMBA separately? Or can one application be considered for both programs?** I have 10 years of work experience, would prefer full-time, but open to EWMBA too.

Sandra_Berkeley: Hello Raj_2, thank you for your question. University of California Berkeley will only allow for you to submit one graduate application.

Edward: **If we have done personality/conative/etc. assessments (such as Kolbe A or MBTI), is Adcom interested in seeing those show up on our application, say in the optional section?** The logic being that it would give you an additional layer to assess potential candidates. Thank you.

Angela_Berkeley: Personality test scores are not necessary. We will look for your personality to come through in your application essays!

Andrea_Moderator: Hi everyone! Thank you for joining us. We'll be wrapping up in the next 10 minutes. Please send us your final questions!

Raj_2: **What are things in an essay which are absolutely a no, and might impact the candidacy negatively?**

Angela_Berkeley: Some common pitfalls are not answering the question asked, or telling us what you think we want to hear, rather than being true to yourself. There is no right or wrong essay answer. The right answer is your answer!

Yuemeng: Hi everyone, **I was wondering, when you review applications, if you group applicants based on the geographic location where they went to college? And then by industry?** Thanks

Angela_Berkeley: We read applications by country of education and industry.

Brian: Hi everyone! **I read that if we have taken non-degree classes we only need to include a transcript if the grades were in quantitative classes. Could you explain what counts as a quantitative class? Is it strictly math and statistics or would classes in finance also require a transcript?** Thanks!

Sandra_Berkeley: Dear Brian, thank you for your question. If an applicant has taken an additional non-degree quantitative course, we will require the transcript for the math or statistic course to be uploaded.

Christined: **Does it matter what industry an applicant comes from? Are tech and IT more commonly preferred?**

Angela_Berkeley: We do not prefer a certain industry and want to bring in the most diverse class possible!

Hilary: **Is there an application fee waiver for MBA Launch Forte participants?**

Sandra_Berkeley: Hello Hilary, please review our fee waiver at http://mba.haas.berkeley.edu/community/FTMBA_Fee_Waiver.pdf

S_g: **What advice would you give to a candidate who, unfortunately, does not have a lot of volunteering experience?**

Angela_Berkeley: We are looking for quality over quantity when it comes to community involvement. We will also look for that experience in many places. It could be working at your current company on a diversity initiative or volunteering at a local non-profit organization. That being said, we will also take into consideration the number of hours you work per week and we understand that that may limit your ability to volunteer.

- S_g:** **Do you consider work experience in multiple countries to be a positive or does that metric not matter as such?**
- Sandra_Berkeley:** Hello S_g, thank you for your question. There is no difference in terms of where the work experience has taken place. We review all full-time professional experience following the completion of your undergraduate degree.
- Andrea_Moderator:** Thanks again for joining us! Our chat is wrapping up and shutting down. We really appreciate your questions and apologize if we didn't get to all of them. You should receive a follow-up email within the next week with a transcript of today's chat. If you have any further questions, please feel free to reach out to us at mbaadm@haas.berkeley.edu. Go Bears!
- Sandra_Berkeley:** It was great chatting with you all today. Best of Luck and Go Bears!
- Jamie_Berkeley:** Thank you for joining us today. If you did not get a chance to submit your financial aid questions, please feel free to contact us at finaid@haas.berkeley.edu
- Angela_Berkeley:** Great chatting with you all today! Best of luck with your applications. Go bears!