



ACE THE EMBA: EXPERT ADVICE FOR THE RISING EXECUTIVE



TABLE OF CONTENTS

| | |
|-----------|--|
| 3 | About Accepted |
| 3 | About the Author - Esmeralda Cardenal |
| 4 | Introduction |
| 5 | What is an EMBA? |
| 8 | Top EMBA programs |
| 11 | Top EMBA program stats |
| 12 | Five key qualifying factors EMBA adcoms look for in applicants |
| 15 | What are your career service needs? |
| 16 | Applying to EMBA programs |
| 18 | Differentiating and distinguishing yourself: Essays are key |
| 20 | Your recommendations |
| 21 | Your EMBA interview |
| 23 | Conclusion |



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Executive MBA Programs 101

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ABOUT THE AUTHOR - ESMERALDA CARDENAL



Esmeralda consistently receives five-star reviews on *Poets&Quants*, GMATClub, and Trust Pilot for her personable coaching style, helping her clients present their best. Her **nine years in MBA admissions** as former Yale SOM associate director of admissions, Michigan State director of MBA admissions, and Cardiff Business School (United Kingdom) consultant prepared her to effectively help clients gain entry to elite MBA/EMBA programs and a wide range of master's programs, as she's done for more than eight years.

[Click here to learn more about Esmeralda Cardenal.](#)

INTRODUCTION

Congratulations on considering this next step in your educational and professional journey!

Yes, the road to an Executive MBA (EMBA) acceptance can be complicated and unwieldy – especially if you’ve been out of the academic loop for a long time. But on the positive side, I have worked with so many clients who have not only found the acceptance thrilling but also found the application process illuminating as they reflect on their careers, their lives, and their goals.

WHAT IS AN EMBA?

Essentially, any MBA program is a graduate program in business administration for professionals who seek knowledge, skills, a credential, and/or a network to advance in their careers and to maximize their business performance.

EMBA programs are MBA programs targeted to [seasoned managers and entrepreneurs](#), typically in their mid-30s to late-40s (depending on the program), whose rise to senior manager level is imminent, who are already in senior management, or whose entrepreneurial venture is set to “scale” to a level requiring formal management expertise.

Almost all EMBA programs are part-time programs, but they vary in terms of desired or required length of experience. While their coursework covers the same topics as that of traditional MBA programs, it’s developed and presented with a higher-level perspective.

A great benefit of EMBA programs is the chance to network and form relationships with peers from a variety of industries and functions at a career moment when a fresh perspective is highly valuable. These programs previously didn’t target career changers, but now they are increasingly used for that purpose and are adapting their career services and curricula accordingly.

Like everything in life, EMBA programs have their pros:

- Students can apply their learnings immediately at work.
- The breadth of exposure is valuable at a pivotal professional moment.
- The degree is a valuable credential. Having it on your resume will enhance your stature and value in the eyes of future employers, customers, and business partners.
- Having the degree could open the door to faster and/or higher-level promotions and thereby enhance one’s earning power.
- These programs facilitate moves from a technical management role to a general management role.

And EMBA programs have their cons:

- There’s the challenge of simultaneously handling school plus a demanding career and personal/family responsibilities.
- There’s usually no formal recruiting for EMBA career changers.
- These programs tend to be expensive, so it’s important to accurately assess their potential value for you personally and understand your motivations for pursuing the degree if you are self-funding it.
- If your company is providing the funding, there is the ethical and perhaps contractual requirement to stay at that company for a given period.

MBA vs. EMBA

Let's say you are in your early to mid-30s; you are in middle management and have C-suite ambitions. You also have a fairly strong technical background. Should you apply for an MBA or an EMBA?

The answer, as with many things, is "it depends." If you are in your early 30s and are in a middle management position, you might be better off with a full-time MBA. If you are in your mid-30s, you are at the limit of the full-time range but might be still too young for an EMBA, particularly if your positions have all been in middle management. You need to learn what the different programs are looking for in applicants to see whether you qualify. Many EMBA programs prefer managerial experience, so it is important to keep that in mind. It also can depend on whether or not you are interested in changing industries or job functions to get to a C suite eventually. A full-time MBA can advantage you if you are a career switcher, but if you are continuing on with your current organization or job function, [an EMBA might make more sense](#).

Types of EMBA Programs

While most full-time MBA programs have a similar duration and cycle, EMBA programs come in all types and sizes.

Most EMBA programs offer multiple options for program schedules and formats, have satellite campuses, target geographically dispersed students, provide some form of global opportunities (which in turn often involve multiprogram collaborations), accept and provide options for self-funding, welcome entrepreneurs, and partner with EMBA programs in other countries. Given the increasing number of EMBA programs that offer spread-out schedules for their on-campus segments, applicants can pursue programs beyond their immediate locale.

Here are two examples: The [Kellogg EMBA](#) program has a Miami, Florida, campus as well as its home base in Evanston, outside Chicago, Illinois. The Miami program meets once a month, Thursday through Sunday, and the Evanston program meets twice a month, usually Friday and Saturday, each with different class schedules and "intensive weeks." Another example is the Booth EMBA, located in London, Hong Kong, and Chicago. Students can apply to either location but are able to take classes at the other campuses during "international session weeks."

Another trend to note is this: partnering among global EMBA programs to provide a global education. Consider these examples:

- [OneMBA](#) is an international EMBA consortium that includes the Miami Herbert Business School in the United States as well as business programs in Mexico, Brazil, and China.
- The [EMBA-Global](#) is a partnership between Columbia University and London Business School.
- The [TRIUM](#) Global EMBA is collectively offered by the London School of Economics and Political Science, New York University Stern School of Business, and HEC Paris School of Management.

And these are just three of many!

While it is exciting to have so many appealing options to choose from, this variety also means it's important to (a) do up-front research to understand exactly which programs are the right fit for you and why and (b) articulate in your essays (and interviews) your fit for each *particular* program.

There also is one more option, and it's both narrow and highly competitive. These are full-time, one-year, executive-level programs, such as those offered by London Business School, MIT Sloan ([Sloan Fellows MBA](#)), and Stanford Graduate School of Business ([the MSx program](#)). The University of Southern California Marshall School of Business offers a similar program: the [International Business Education and Research \(IBEAR\) MBA](#) for mid-career professionals. Of course, the full-time nature of these programs undercuts their feasibility for the vast majority of prospective EMBA applicants, but for those who can take a year for an intensive, immersive, transformative experience, these programs are all outstanding. They are highly selective, feature a extremely accomplished global student body, and seek to train leaders who will shape their domains.

TOP EMBA PROGRAMS

Let's zoom in on several top EMBA programs to see what their commonalities are and how they also have unique "personalities." Understanding these points is critical to creating the most effective applications, ones that show fit with both the overarching purpose of the EMBA and each specific program's culture and values.

I'll focus on five programs – three US programs and two global/European programs. Keep in mind a couple of points of context: (1) The US-based programs have many international students, address global business issues, and sometimes have overseas components, but they remain fundamentally US-centric. (2) The two European programs, while based in the United Kingdom and continental Europe, are not Europe focused but truly globally focused.

Wharton EMBA

This competitive EMBA program has three modalities: Philadelphia, San Francisco, and Global. The [Wharton MBA for Executives](#) is known for its flexible, comprehensive program, outstanding global network, and engaged alumni. With a basic schedule of every other weekend, the Philly and San Francisco programs attract top talent in each region. Both have highly diverse student bodies, which tend to be favored by dominant local industries/sectors (e.g., many finance and pharma professionals on the East Coast; many IT and healthcare professionals on the West Coast). Entrepreneurs are a strong presence in both programs, particularly in California. The new Global Cohort offers blended learning with virtual synchronous classes every other week on Thursday evenings and Friday and Saturday mornings, along with five in-person residencies on either US campus as well as other locations around the globe.

Wharton EMBA students tend to form close relationships with each other and to stay involved through Wharton's many lifelong learning opportunities (including Global Forums).

Considering Wharton?

[Wharton EMBA Application Essay Tips](#)

Kellogg EMBA

The [Kellogg EMBA program](#) is renowned for its emphasis on management training – and the program seeks candidates who already have some "seasoning" as managers. Kellogg is where they go to master the art and science of management. They acquire the know-how to manage complex organizations, navigate change, supervise people, handle uncertainty, and guide their career trajectories.

The program offers two campuses: one outside Chicago (Evansville, Illinois), whose students meet twice monthly, and one in Miami, Florida, whose students meet once monthly and represent a unique international mix, thanks to the school's close connection to Latin America.

Kellogg EMBA students are functionally diverse, with strong representation from healthcare, finance, tech, consumer products, and, interestingly, government/nonprofit.

Considering Kellogg?

[Kellogg EMBA Application Essay Tips](#)

MIT EMBA

Now 12 years old, the [MIT EMBA](#) was established in 2011 and rapidly became one of the leading programs both domestically and internationally. It seeks experienced managers and entrepreneurs who have intellectual agility, inspire with vision, navigate change, execute for impact, and work skillfully with others. Beyond teaching requisite management and leadership skills, the program aims to provide a transformative experience for its students. As a result, MIT Sloan admits applicants who will be open to and able to take full advantage of the cutting-edge resources it offers in management, innovation, decision-making, and sustainability. Not to be confused with the MIT Sloan Fellows program, the EMBA is a 20-month program designed for mid-career working professionals. The Sloan Fellows program, as explained earlier, is also geared to mid-career professionals, but it is a full-time, one-year program.

Considering MIT Sloan?

[MIT EMBA Application Essay Tips](#)

INSEAD Global EMBA

To meet the needs and interests of hard-working, rapidly advancing business professionals from all over the world, the [INSEAD Global EMBA \(GEMBA\) program](#) has created a modular approach that is executed across three global campuses: France (Fontainebleau, outside Paris), Singapore, and Abu Dhabi. One of its four admissions criteria is International Outlook. This means more than overseas experience; it means a

multicultural, global perspective. This criterion mirrors the International Outlook element of the GEMBA program – implemented through both program structure and classroom approach.

Although classes are in English, native English speakers must demonstrate basic proficiency in a second language to graduate. However, most INSEAD GEMBA students speak at least two languages and often more even before they start.

Overall, the program attracts a cosmopolitan, cultivated student body. Most students attending this program have often lived in multiple countries and speak multiple languages.

LBS EMBA

With a deep focus on the practice of leadership and management, the LBS EMBA program is targeted to people preparing to advance to senior management in an established company or to lead their own growing venture. Its two campuses are in London and Dubai; it is fully global in terms of student nationality, and it features global experiential opportunities, adapted, of course, to the limitations imposed by the ongoing pandemic.

The LBS EMBA has a keen, practical focus on career management. It offers one of the most intensive and comprehensive career development approaches in the EMBA realm, with four major components: executive coaching, professional development, career development, and career coaching.

Considering LBS?

[LBS EMBA Application Essay Tips](#)

TOP EMBA PROGRAM STATS

Let's zoom in on several top EMBA programs to see what their commonalities are and how they also have unique "personalities." Understanding these points is critical to creating the most effective applications, ones that show fit with both the overarching purpose of the EMBA and each specific program's culture and values.

| EMBA program | Class size | Average age | Average work experience (years) |
|---|------------------------------------|----------------|---------------------------------|
| Chicago Booth | 200 | 37 | 13 |
| Columbia Business School | 259 (in 4 clusters) | 33 | 10 |
| Cornell Johnson EMBA (Metro NY class) | 70-75 | 36 | 13 |
| London Business School | 509 | - | 5 |
| IMD Executive MBA | | 40 | 16.3 |
| Michigan Ross EMBA | 98 (Ann Arbor + Los Angeles) | 40 | 16.3 |
| MIT Sloan Fellows | 109 | - | 15 |
| MIT Sloan Executive MBA | 124 | 41 | 17 |
| Northwestern Kellogg | - | 39 | 15 |
| NYU Stern | - | 37 | 13 |
| UC Berkeley Haas EMBA | 76 | 38 (median) | - |
| UCLA Anderson | - | - | 15 |
| UVA Darden Executive MBA | 134 | 35 | 12 |
| Stanford MSx | ~85 | - | 12.9 |
| Wharton EMBA | 278 | 37 | 13 |
| Yale SOM Executive MBA | 76 | 37 | 14 |

FIVE KEY QUALIFYING FACTORS EMBA ADCOMS LOOK FOR IN APPLICANTS

As you explore the options and decide which programs you'll apply to, keep in mind several "qualifying" factors that EMBA admissions committees want to see in you as an applicant. These factors will put you in the running for consideration and make you a fitting candidate. I'll elaborate on these qualities via five important questions.

Five questions to address in your EMBA application

1. *Are your goals credible, and do they contain the right blend of feasibility and ambition?*
2. *Do you have the knowledge and skills to succeed in the EMBA academic program?*
3. *Will you contribute to the program (professionally and/or personally, during and after)?*
4. *Do you have the right level and amount of experience to fit the program (both its student body and its coursework)?*
5. *Do you understand the demands of studying while employed, and do you have a workable plan for fitting the EMBA into your life?*

Throughout the application, but primarily through the essay(s), address these key questions.

Are your goals credible, and do they contain the right blend of feasibility and ambition?

Appropriate goals will place you within senior or executive management, given that, presumably, you are already at the mid-management level or higher (or in a comparable position). If you are an entrepreneur/business owner, your goals should clarify not only your plans for the business but also how you envision your role evolving and broadening as the business grows.

Most, if not all, EMBA applications require a goals essay or a similar Statement of Purpose/Intent. Be prepared to discuss your immediate/short-term, intermediate, and long-term goals. Not all goals essays ask for this breakdown, but many do – and even if a question doesn't ask for it, it will hardly hurt to present such a progression, appropriately, for context. Having it clarified in your own mind also helps you contextualize the phase you are addressing in the essay.

Do you have the knowledge and skills to succeed in the EMBA academic program?

Even if your goals are credible and appropriate, you will need a fundamental familiarity with business operations, plus quantitative skills to handle the coursework. Undergrad and/or grad transcripts will cover the quant aspect.

But for [EMBA applicants](#) who come from non-business sectors – education, government, clinical medicine, and nonprofit – you have a higher burden to (a) make the case that you need business training specifically to achieve your goals and (b) that you understand and will make productive use of graduate-level business education. You can ask your recommenders to address this point and make sure to work it into your essays. For those who lack quant coursework, I suggest taking a reputable online college course or two – and earn an A, obviously! Also, if you are taking a standardized test (not all EMBA programs require them), a relatively high quant score will mitigate this gap.

Will you contribute to the program (professionally and/or personally, during and after)?

This is a three-pronged query: (1) Does the quality of your experience make it a potentially rich and valuable resource for you to draw from as a student in the classroom and on learning teams? (2) Do you have something to say (i.e., do you draw insight and meaning from that experience, and can you communicate it effectively)? (3) [Are you a team player/collaborator?](#)

EMBA programs are learning communities and thus require willing contribution from students. While your recommendations can and should shed light on this point, your essays will be the primary vehicle to communicate your prospective contributions both as a student and as an alumnus/a.

Do you have the right level and amount of experience to fit the program (both its student body and its coursework)?

EMBA programs and their various subprograms/options are usually looking for specific amounts and levels of experience. And these two factors – amount and level – are interrelated.

As for amount, some EMBA programs are open to “younger” applicants, in their early 30s, while some have more stringent experience requirements or preferences, seeking candidates with a specified minimum duration of experience (overall or management experience). Look at the average ages and experience levels

in the student profiles, and also probe programs' websites for a "what we look for" type of section, usually under the admissions tab, to glean the preferences of specific schools in this regard.

As for quality, that should *always* include being a high performer – that you excel among accomplished peers. Aside from that, "quality" is open-ended, and it will vary greatly from person to person. It combines being impressive in some way and standing out in some way. For one person, it might be guiding a team or department through organizational or industry volatility; for another, it might be innovative leadership in a matrix organization; for yet another, it could be starting up a business or a division in a developing region. Examine your experience and determine what is most impressive, interesting, meaningful, and illuminating about it. That will reflect its quality.

Do you understand the demands of studying while employed, and do you have a workable plan for fitting the EMBA into your life?

Some EMBA applications (Columbia's, for example) have an essay question specifically on this point. The last thing the adcoms want is for someone to leave the program before completing it or to attend without being a full participant in the learning community. And it's very easy to underestimate the demands of studying and contributing while maintaining one's professional and personal responsibilities. Whether in an essay or during your interview, demonstrate your time management skills, show that you have juggled multiple responsibilities effectively, and/or describe a concrete plan for incorporating school into your other responsibilities.

WHAT ARE YOUR CAREER SERVICE NEEDS?

Given today's volatile business climate, almost everyone in the professional world must continuously evaluate their career path, whether they are planning an imminent change or not. It's an ongoing part of being a business professional. EMBA applicants who aren't planning a career change still know that their well-laid plans can blow apart in an instant. And increasingly, applicants are pursuing an EMBA specifically to facilitate a career transition.

To address this trend, EMBA programs have beefed up their EMBA career services and now offer career counseling and other related resources.

These services and resources include various types of career coaching, self-assessments, and alumni networking and events. While career services are now common among EMBA programs, the line is often drawn at regular recruiting (a major draw of regular MBA programs).

Before putting all the effort into applying, if this factor is important to you, look closely at what each program offers and gauge carefully whether the available resources are sufficient for what you need.

APPLYING TO EMBA PROGRAMS

The fun begins! Once you decide to go ahead with [applying to EMBA programs](#), I suggest keeping a steady momentum, if possible. Staying engaged will enhance the quality of your application and also enable you to – yes – enjoy the process because you will be taking concrete steps toward an exciting experience and impactful career growth.

Here are some specific preparation steps EMBA applicants should take:

1. Plan to request scheduling accommodations at work for your EMBA.

You will likely need a company sponsorship letter (more about this later) agreeing to time accommodations, even if the company isn't offering financial sponsorship. For some applicants, this is a "slam dunk" because their company regularly sponsors EMBA applicants. For others, it takes some strategy and convincing. If you're in the latter category, start strategizing and planning *now* to make your case to the decision-maker at your firm. I've seen people finish their entire application and then hit a red light at this very stage. Many EMBA websites have advice for applicants on how to make the case to their employers for the needed schedule adjustments.

2. Sketch out concrete plans to carve out time for school in your schedule.

Even if you plan to attend a weekend-only program, and even if you are without major personal obligations, you *still* can't just add hours to a week on top of your current schedule without any change (and maintain excellence). Moreover, this accommodation might take some sensitive planning, given that it almost certainly involves other people. (Sometimes this can be a "plus" for subordinates; if you must delegate more, they gain the opportunity to shoulder higher level responsibilities.) For your own sake and for the sake of your application (because you might have to explain this in an essay or interview), start this planning now.

3. Make sure that you and your recommenders are on the same page about your future.

If you're planning to stay with your current company during your studies and after you complete your MBA, your company needs to be included in any discussion of your goals. Sometimes, recommenders comment on your future career (either on their own initiative or in response to a question). It's not too great if your ideas and your recommender's ideas about your career differ! [Watch: An EMBA student talks about the challenges of procuring EMBA letters of recommendation](#)

4. Identify elements of your work that differentiate you and that will allow you to contribute distinctly to class discussions.

Your current work scenario and your work situation over the next one to two years are what you will *directly* bring to the EMBA table. Look at your experience from the perspective of someone outside it; what would be most interesting and relevant? Plan to integrate those points into your application, in the essays, resume, and interview.

5. Review the standardized test requirements of your target EMBA programs and start lining up undergrad (and grad, if any) transcripts.

The transcripts are straightforward. As for the test – the most commonly used for EMBA programs is the Executive Assessment (EA), which is a shorter test than the GMAT and GRE. Happily, many top-notch EMBA programs require no standardized test, including those at MIT Sloan, Kellogg, NYU, and Michigan Ross. If your target programs do require an exam, definitely try some practice tests and dedicate the necessary prep time if you need a good score (e.g., if you have a low undergrad GPA) or if you are really rusty at tests. Check the average or median scores for your target programs to get a sense of where you fit in that range and/or how much you must prepare to achieve a satisfactory score for your unique situation.

A word on company sponsorship requirements/expectations

EMBA programs usually require that applicants' employers sponsor their applicants' time in the EMBA program (because, for example, many require occasional Fridays off). But sponsorship can range from paying 100% of someone's tuition (rare) to accommodating the individual's need to take time away from work (almost universal).

EMBA programs that require a candidate's employer to provide a statement of support and accommodation for the applicant's EMBA plans take this factor seriously. MIT Sloan's extensive resources on sponsorship exemplify this point – the program offers in-depth information and support for both [applicants](#) and sponsoring companies.

Financial sponsorship can still be a competitive plus for applicants because it underscores their value and high potential in the organization's eyes. But not having it is *not* a negative factor.

If you're an entrepreneur, you basically sponsor yourself. Therefore, you must indicate how you'll accommodate the time requirements within the context of your organization. Fortunately, many EMBA program websites provide guidance on this point for entrepreneurs.

Sometimes, regularly employed applicants who are eligible for financial sponsorship prefer to self-fund because they do not want to be beholden to their organization but instead free to pursue other options. Even time sponsored can create an obligation on the applicant's part. If that's not desired, EMBA programs (such as [Columbia University's](#)) that offer a Saturday- or weekend-only option might be appealing.

DIFFERENTIATING AND DISTINGUISHING YOURSELF: ESSAYS ARE KEY

After determining your schools of interest and your qualifications for those schools comes the biggest challenge: differentiating and distinguishing yourself. You must convey your uniqueness and value as an applicant in a way that is relevant to the EMBA program. Essentially, you must give the adcom reasons to select you from among other highly qualified, accomplished peers in similar industry, functional, and demographic groups.

While some differentiating factors might be apparent from your resume (e.g., if you work in an industry or function that is relatively underrepresented), the essays are where you can most vividly portray your distinctiveness.

There are three key avenues for differentiating yourself:

1. Distinctive factual points

These are the unique facts of your experience, such as industry niche, pertinent experience (e.g., managing through a global merger), special challenges (e.g., dealing with heavily regulated industries), or an unusual organizational structure.

How do you determine whether an aspect of your experience is a differentiating factor? Dig past the topsoil. For example, it's likely for any top EMBA program that a good percentage of applicants will come from the consulting industry, so that might not seem like much of a differentiator. But if you delve deeper into your consulting experience for the specifics (e.g., you consult on IT strategy for the defense sector), you'll find details that are differentiating.

To get the most mileage out of a differentiating factor, don't just include the factor in your essays but provide illustrative detail about it and an anecdote to truly *show* how it is special, different, and relevant. (Let the reader really see it!)

2. Your individual perspective

Individual perspective is inherently differentiating. In most essays, you will reflect on your experiences to some extent. When later discussing them in your essays, go beyond just highlighting the facts and accomplishments to also address the key learning, growth, and/or insight you gained from each change or important event (without relying on buzzwords). Also, clarify the decision process you underwent when taking career steps. Your individual view is naturally unique, even if the experience(s) you describe might seem commonplace. Do keep such perspective relevant; for maximum impact, it should align with your decision-making vis-à-vis your career path and/or goals.

3. Your goals

Your goals essay will be the backbone of your application. (Rather than a specific goals essay, some EMBA applications request a Statement of Purpose or Statement of Intent, which will typically include some discussion of your goals as well.)

Depending on the wording of your target program's goals essay question, for each phase of your goals addressed, discuss the following:

- a. What you expect to do at that level
- b. How you hope to grow
- c. What you hope to accomplish (for the company and/or industry and/or market and/or consumers and/or community, and so on (This is about external, real-world impact.)

The last point (c) is most important because it's what will get the adcom rooting for you.

Provide specifics: titles or positions, specific markets, likely number of people to manage, budget size or P&L responsibility, and so on. Also describe how each given step builds on your previous experience. How do you make your goals do "extra duty" by differentiating you? The best way is through the vision for what you want to achieve, what impact you want to have – see our earlier point (c). While other candidates might present similar goals, only you will present your specific vision. For example, if your goal is to become a senior manager at a major pharmaceutical firm, don't just explain why this is a logical and likely step. Get the reader excited about what you want to make happen through that role.

In summary, for powerful goals essays, keep three short words in mind: *what*, *how*, and *why*.

Be sure to check out our EMBA Sample Essay [here](#).

YOUR RECOMMENDATIONS

EMBA recommendations tend to be on the shorter side, considering they are written by very busy people fairly high up the ladder.

Here are a few tips for [getting the most out of your recommendations overall](#):

- Select people who really know you and can write meaningfully about your performance and contributions – better your direct supervisor in most cases than a higher-level exec with a fancier title.
- Give your recommenders a link to the program, especially to the program's website page that discusses the desired attributes they look for in applicants. This will help your recommender identify the most relevant points to discuss that will enhance your profile for that program. (At this level, they should not be saying things like "hard worker"!)
- Give your recommenders a copy of your resume. This will serve to remind them where you were before (or have been since) your tenure with them and refresh their memory with respect to your quantifiable accomplishments.
- Be available to answer any questions they might have about your plans for the program, the application process, and so on.

If you are currently working for one of your recommenders, that recommender might discuss your career development plan within the company, anticipated future roles/positions, and why you are targeted for those positions. (As noted earlier, these must be consistent with your stated goals!) You should be shown to be a high-performing, high-impact contributor who stands out from your accomplished peers.

If you are an entrepreneur, you obviously won't have supervisors or superiors. Depending on your business, you could call on company peers, business partners, customers, and those of similar relationships as your recommenders. I have even seen some of my entrepreneur clients (who were accepted at top EMBA programs) use immediate subordinates. Although this wouldn't be my ideal approach, it can work if done *credibly*, which means not just that the *recommender* is credible but also that they present a *candidacy* that conveys credibility and integrity.

YOUR EMBA INTERVIEW

It's probably been quite a while since you've been in an interview – as the interviewee. Therefore, unfamiliarity with the situation could trigger nerves, even though overall, your interpersonal skills are top-notch. Moreover, if you're applying to only one or two programs, each interview holds great weight – there's no room for error!

These factors make it all the more important to prep and practice for your EMBA interview. [Consider signing up for our Interview Assistance here.](#)

At what point in the EMBA admissions process will you interview?

This factor will affect your approach to and preparation for your interview. If you interview before submitting your application (as some programs request), don't just jump into it without thinking through your "story" and your goals. What you write later in the application must align with what you say initially. If you interview after submitting, you're immersed in your story, thanks to the app writing process. Be careful not to sound like you're reciting your application. Your challenge here is to be fresh and engaged.

Is your interview blind or not?

In a blind interview, your interviewer has not read your application, though they might have possibly seen [your resume](#). For blind interviews, you're essentially a blank slate to the interviewer. Your challenge is to impart a vivid, appealing impression that will leave the interviewer enthusiastic about you and your candidacy. If you've completed your application, you can use examples and stories from it because they will be new to the interviewer. For non-blind interviews, expect questions that probe more deeply into topics you presented in your application, and try to not repeat examples from your essays. Make sure you have some new stories/anecdotes to offer.

What types of questions should you prepare for?

You should be ready for anything. Still, there are types of questions that often are asked.

- Open questions such as "So, tell me about yourself" or "[Please walk me through your resume](#)" are common as openers. Actually, I suggest always preparing a "Tell me about yourself" reply – it requires you to identify key points about your candidacy, which helps you strategize overall. It's a great interview prep exercise.

- Because EMBA programs are part-time, expect a question about how you will balance and fit school into your work and life. And be specific.
- For questions like “What is your leadership style?” or “What are your strengths and weaknesses as a manager?” don’t just offer a response but also give a brief example of how the qualities manifest in practice. Find examples/stories that show you in a high-level role and/or dealing with high-stakes issues.
- There might be behavioral questions such as “Describe a time when [X happened].” These essentially require you to offer a story in response. Answer with enough detail to make your story meaningful and interesting but not too long. Ideally, select stories that reflect higher-level, higher-stakes situations.
- Goals questions are also common. Be consistent with what you have presented (or intend to present) in your application, and indicate [why you want to pursue that path](#). Ensure that your motivation is clear.
- You might also be asked to explain why you chose the program and/or why you need an MBA. Let your enthusiasm for the program show! Cite program details and connect the program to your goals and professional growth needs. If it’s a non-blind interview, bring in some fresh points not mentioned in your essay.

Beyond these, there are often questions about your industry, your function, your work culture, and similar kinds of topics.

With these factors in mind, strategize before your interview: Think about your candidacy and what further points you want to make. Then, during the interview, try to weave those points into your discussion. Use your social and emotional IQ to nudge the interview toward dialogue, rather than just interrogation-style Q&A. Most EMBA interviews are probing but also enjoyable conversations; you will do best if you look forward to an interesting exchange!

You can prepare for your EMBA interview by teaming up with me or another of Accepted’s consultants. Just a few mock interviews with a pro will give you the tools you need to walk into your interview with confidence, poise, and plenty of ammunition to launch a compelling dialogue with your interviewer.

CONCLUSION

Congratulations on reading this whole guide! You've taken an important step toward creating a successful EMBA application.

Now it's time to move from general tips to personalized advice tailored just for you.

Sign up for a free consultation with one of Accepted's business school admissions experts!

GET STARTED!

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