



Has the coronavirus pandemic changed what employers are looking for in business graduates?

## Description

**What programme, skills and experience are employers from the UK, US and China looking for in business graduate hires?**

The coronavirus pandemic has had a significant effect on the way many businesses function.

Higher education institutions that keep up-to-date with the changing employment landscape are more likely to shape programmes that best suit employers' needs and, in turn, produce employable graduates.

In our QS Global Employer Survey 2022, we asked more than 5,000 employers of business graduates from 40 countries about their most favourable programmes to hire from, their preferred quantity of work experience and desirable skills.

Below are key insights from employers from three key countries: UK, USA and China. This data was collected from March 2021 to June 2021.

Explore our [interactive employability tables](#) to access the full data set by country for [salary](#), [function](#), [skills](#) and more.

### UK

In 2021, 75% of UK employers identified the MBA as the type of graduate business programme they have or would consider recruiting talent from, making it the most popular programme among respondents.

MBA programmes were also the most popular source of talent for UK employers in 2020, with 74% of respondents hiring or considering hiring from this pool.

This demonstrated the return on investment that MBA programmes typically offer graduates and highlights the value an MBA can add to a graduate's career.

The popularity of specialised masters is rising. Nonetheless, due to their narrow focus, the percentage of UK employers who have or would consider recruiting talent with a specialised qualification in 2021 is unsurprisingly lower than for a general management programme like the MBA.

For example, 27% of the surveyed UK employers indicated the intention to recruit graduates specialised in Supply-Chain Management while 28% shared the intention to recruit graduates specialised in Human Resource Management.

There was a slight increase in the number of UK employers who have or would recruit graduates of online MBA programmes, from 30% in 2020 to 38% in 2021, possibly reflecting the growing popularity and quality of online study as a result of the coronavirus pandemic.

99% of UK employers in 2021 consider communication to be an important skill and a significant 92% are satisfied with the capacity of graduates to perform this skill.

In fact, most skills that were considered to be important by UK employers were also given high satisfaction rates.

In 2021, most employers preferred MBA graduates to have 3-5 years of work experience (39%) or 1-3 years (38%); there was little change from the previous year.

## US

In the US, a smaller, though still significant, proportion of employers have or would consider recruiting talent from MBA programmes; 59% compared to the UK's 75%.

It is still the most popular programme that US employers would consider recruiting graduates from, followed by specialised Master's in Management (43%) and Finance (39%).

A smaller proportion of US employers have or would consider recruiting graduate talent from online MBA programmes than in the UK; 29% compared with 38%.

There was again a high satisfaction rate among US employers when it came to the skills they considered to be important in graduates.

For example, 98% of US employers considered IT skills to be important and 95% of these employers were satisfied with the way graduates demonstrated these skills in 2021.

US employers expect their MBA graduate hires to have more work experience than UK employers, with 49% of respondents preferring 3-5 years of experience and 24% preferring 1-3 years.

In 2020, it was more evenly split between these two options, 42% (3-5 years) and 32% (1-3 years), suggesting that US employers are increasing their expectations of MBA graduate hires.

## China

MBA programmes were, once again, considered to be the most popular programmes Chinese employers have or would consider recruiting talent from, with 58% of respondents from this region making this selection.

Compared with employers from the UK (29%) or the US (38%), an even smaller proportion of employers from China would recruit graduates from online MBA programmes (23%).

This suggests that the graduate employment market in China may be more challenging to enter for online MBA graduates than in other countries.

However, it is positive to see that the proportion of Chinese employers open to hiring online MBA graduates has significantly increased from the 14% seen in 2020.

This may suggest that the expansion of online MBA programmes as a result of the coronavirus pandemic has encouraged Chinese employers to see the ability of these programmes to produce exceptional graduates.

100% of Chinese employers of MBA graduates considered communication and interpersonal skills to be important and shared the same degree of satisfaction (89%) with regards to whether these skills were present within their graduate hires.

36% of employers from China consider academics to be an unimportant skill in their MBA graduate hires, followed closely by 34% of Chinese employers who felt the same about entrepreneurship.

43% of Chinese employers in 2021 prefer to see 3-5 years of work experience in their MBA hires and 33% would like to see 1-3 years.

Higher expectations were seen in 2020, with 24% of Chinese employers preferring a significant 5-8 years of work experience compared with only 9% in 2021.