



Convergence of coverage

The globalisation of business and the growth in size, sophistication and scope of leading businesses will continue to drive demand for well-educated MBAs

The business markets of the world have been moving up the steep slope of globalisation for several decades and that progression shows no sign of stopping. In response, MBA programmes have made huge efforts to globalise their curricular content, student and faculty population and placements.

The top business schools have seen an increase in their international student population, with full-time programmes in particular drawing the best talent from across the world. The classic on-campus full-time programmes give students the most diverse learning experiences, primarily because students learn a lot from other experienced students who have worked in different cultures around the world. The part-time and distance programmes are geared to students who do not want to move or leave their current jobs for the purpose of earning a degree; so they don't have that added dimension of a two-year interaction with colleagues with diverse work experiences.

Another area that has exploded in MBA programmes is the 'study abroad' course and project work, which gives additional international opportunities to students. At Tuck, many student teams have worked with companies and NGOs in all parts of the world on all types of real business problems, all of which require considerable work with clients in each country. Over the past two decades, numerous courses, visits, projects and internships have added a layer of global exposure to the full-time MBA student population.

Many global electives have been created in traditional fields such as Strategy, Economics and Marketing, and a variety of courses, focussed on doing business in different countries, have been added to our curriculum. For instance, we have new course titles such as 'Doing Business in Central Asia', 'Doing Business in Korea', 'Doing Business in the Gulf States', and 'Doing Business in China'.

In most B-schools, students can spend a term at a school outside their home country, while earning credit towards their degree without additional tuition. At Tuck, students are able to choose a term of study at one of 19 different business schools around the world. In addition to exchanging students, schools in different countries can also exchange courses and professors. Tuck collaborates with exchange school partners to offer short one-week or two-week intensive courses. This past year, students had the opportunity to take a course in either Spain or France,

that focussed on doing business in Europe.

The faculty is also becoming increasingly international. At schools like Tuck, it is not unusual for one-third of the faculty to be from countries other than the one in which the campus is located. Most of the top faculty members have the common experience of having earned their PhDs from programmes in the US. This phenomenon will not change much until there are considerably more non-US PhD programmes receiving international recognition.

There are many differences of opinion as to what constitutes 'global coverage' in MBA programmes. Some faculty members contend that covering best practices which are applicable in most business settings is the way to be uni-

versal in their teaching. Students often believe that a specific example emphasising the differences in practices for different locations in the world is the way to give a 'global' picture. I can see both points of view, and while I encourage faculty to seek out generalisations based on good evidence, I also encourage the creation of materials that bring the differences in cultures and local practices into focus. To do both at the highest levels is a challenge, but it is the correct path to understanding global business.

Research done by our faculty is the most important way for them to get exposure to the world's business practices. The advantage of doing research at the highest level is that researchers seek to understand how whole classes of business operate. At Tuck, we have an extensive programme for visiting executives, who are currently practising to present in courses that are offered by research professors.

Another way for a faculty member to meet the globalisation challenge is to be involved in executive education. Many top business schools such as Tuck, while specialising in the full-time MBA programme, also have significant executive offerings. This gives the faculty a good way to interact directly with the world's top business leaders.

One thing is for sure – the globalisation of business and the growth in size, sophistication and scope of leading businesses will not reverse. This will continue to drive demand for well-educated MBAs. Multinational businesses must co-ordinate their practices and communications, and therefore, they will want their managers to have somewhat similar global education and training. This will lead to a continuing convergence of coverage in the world's MBA programmes.



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