

Graduate Management Association of Australia

Index of the Attractiveness of Australian MBA Courses

A. D. McArthur (GMAA National Secretary) and R. R. Gould

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Graduate Management Association of Australia (GMAA)
P O Box 6328
Melbourne VIC 3004
Australia
Ph: 61 3 9536 3110
Fax: 61 3 9525 3656

www.gmaa.asn.au

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1 Introduction

1.1 Purpose

The purpose of this document is fourfold, namely to :-

- *Outline the objective of the GMAA annual MBA assessment*
- *Provide a history of the assessment*
- *Explain the methodology used to produce the assessment*
- *Provide an analysis of the results of the 2008 assessment.*

1.2 Objective

For a number of years, the GMAA has obtained data relating to MBA programs being offered in Australia and used the material to produce an index of the quality (“attractiveness”) of the approximately 50-60 MBA courses provided by some 40 organisations in Australia to onshore students.

The results are presented as the “**GMAA 5 Star Assessment**” and distributed by the GMAA via a media release and by posting the assessment and this paper on the GMAA web site (www.gmaa.asn.au). The assessment is also printed in Hobsons annual “*MBA and Management Programs*” publication.

The purpose of the assessment is threefold :-

- *As a mechanism to help maintain the value of members’ investment in their MBA*
- *To assist potential MBA students by providing an independent assessment of the various programs on offer by people who have been through the process*
- *As a service in the public interest.*

1.3 Terms, Abbreviations and Acronyms

Listed below are all of the terms, abbreviations and acronyms used in this document.

Abbreviation	Definition
AACSB	Association to Advance Collegiate Schools of Business
AMBA	Association of MBA Schools
DEST	Department of Education, Science and Training
GMAA	Graduate Management Association of Australia
GUG	<i>The Good University Guide</i> - A series of books, published by Hobson’s
Hobsons	Hobsons Australia Pty Ltd (publishers of <i>The Good University Guide</i> series)
MBA	Master of Business Administration

2 History of the GMAA's MBA assessment

The GMAA began assessing MBA programs in the 1990's using similar questions to those used by its UK equivalent body AMBA and the American AACSB.

In the late 1990's, Hobsons and the GMAA, in the course of their normal operations, both collected essentially the same data and then used it for their own purposes. GMAA used the data in the preparation of its annual MBA assessment, whilst GUG published much of the same data in *The Good Universities Guides*, a series of books providing details of the institutions, undergraduate and postgraduate degrees and executive short courses they offer and rankings and ratings on a variety of characteristics. The data used to produce these books were obtained from a variety of sources including questionnaires completed by the institutions and government departments.

Following discussions between Hobsons and the GMAA, it was agreed that provided there were no negative side-effects, reducing this duplication of effort was desirable. It would result in the various institutions only needing to respond to one request for data and the GMAA and Hobsons not wastefully duplicating each other's work. This led, in July 2001, to agreement by Hobsons to allow GMAA to use the Hobsons data for its own purposes. The agreement is that, subject to approval by the various program providers, Hobsons will collect the data annually through its normal collection mechanisms and supply it to GMAA.

In 2001, GMAA's Dr Richard Gould undertook a review of the questions previously used by GMAA, those used by AMBA and those used by Hobsons. AACSB's assessment publication was ordered but received too late to be used during that review, however, subsequent inspection of AACSB's methodology indicated that very similar questions continue to be used by them.

Discussions were held during 2001 between Hobsons and GMAA about the quality of the data obtained by Hobsons and the cross checking of data undertaken with independent data suppliers, such as DEST. Some desirable questions were discarded by GMAA as a result of those discussions (e.g. research outcomes of MBA schools).

Dr Gould's review of questions led to only minor adjustments being made to the questions to be used by the GMAA in its 2002 assessment.

Following the 2002 cycle of data collection and production of the assessment, further discussions between Hobsons and GMAA resulted in Hobsons adding a small number of questions to increase the breadth and depth of the assessment of quality of MBA courses. Following the 2003 and 2004 cycles, further discussions took place between Hobsons and GMAA resulting in additional minor changes being made to the questions used in the 2005 survey.

For the past four years (2005 - 2008), exactly the same questions have been used to produce the assessment. The questions used for the 2008 assessment are given in Appendix A.

Data used in the GMAA index are almost entirely made public in the GUG publication, although some datum is published as quintiles rather than as raw scores.

2.1 Presentation of the final results

The GMAA assessment is presented as a table split into five bands with the programs receiving the highest score in the top, five star, band. All programs are then listed alphabetically within each band. The total score for each program is not released.

The results of the 2008 assessment are given in Appendix B.

3 Methodology used to produce the assessment

The process for calculating the final result for each program involved:-

- *Determining if a program meets the three mandatory requirements*
- *Assigning a score for the answer to each question*
- *Applying a weighting for each question*
- *Totalling the weighted scores to determine the final total for each program.*

3.1 Mandatory requirements

To be included in the annual assessment, a program must first satisfy three requirements, namely:-

- *The program must have been operating for at least three years*
- *There must be at least 18 students currently in the program*
- *The program must be offered onshore and not be a specialised course (e.g. Aviation)*

3.2 Scores

The scores given for each question ranged from 10 for the best answer to 0 for the worst.

For those questions which required a Yes/No answer, the scores were simply 10 for “Yes” and zero for “No”.

Where the answer given was a number, there were two ways to assign a score, namely:-

- *A linear arrangement where the higher the answer, the higher the score up to a maximum of ten (e.g. percentage of academics with a doctorate)*
- *A bell curve arrangement was used where the maximum score was given for an answer that was in a range in the middle of the array of answers. Answers that were above and below the middle high score range then received lower scores.*

The process by which scores were given for each question (Yes/No, linear, bell curve) is given in Appendix C.

3.3 Weights for questions

Weights are assigned to each question. All questions start with a weight of one, reflecting the research practice of equally weighting all matters unless knowledge indicates otherwise.

The questions were then assessed for their importance in determining course quality and as a result of the review, weights for some of the questions were reduced while others were increased.

Of the 47 questions used in 2008, the distribution of weights was:-

- *3 are mandatory matters where there was no weight (refer to section 3.1)*
- *23 had a weight less than 1*
- *16 had a weight equal to 1*
- *5 had a weight greater than 1.*

In 2008, criteria weights ranged from .5 to 3 and the total of all of the weights was 39.998.

The weights assigned to each question are presented in Appendix D.

3.4 Producing the final table

The score given for each question was then multiplied by the weight assigned to that question, producing a weighted score for each question for each program. The weighted scores for each program were totalled to give a final score for the institution’s program.

All programs were sorted using the final score and the sorted table was then split into five groups, with the programs having the highest scores assigned to the 5-star group.

3.5 Questions and Categories

The 47 questions used to produce the assessment were grouped into categories that examine:-

- *Mandatory pre-assessment matters (3 criteria)*
- *Institution's structure and its school links with the business community and overseas schools (4 criteria)*
- *The size, diversity and experience of the academic staff (11 criteria)*
- *Support facilities the school has to assist students (3 criteria)*
- *Entry requirements for prospective students (7 criteria)*
- *The size and diversity of the student population (3 criteria)*
- *The online facilities available to students (7 criteria)*
- *The library (2 criteria)*
- *The course length and content (7 criteria).*

The categories highlighted above are used only to clarify and simplify the processing and reporting of the results. They play no part in the calculation of the results.

3.6 Missing data treatment

The rule for handling missing data was as follows:

- *Where data from an institution were missing, if the question or questions involved had an accumulated weighted value of more than one point (out of a possible 38.998), the course was eliminated from the assessment on the basis that too large an estimate was required to be made;*
- *Where the weighted value of the unanswered question(s) accumulated to no more than one point, the missing datum was replaced by the arithmetic mean of the responses from all institutions for the assessed courses.*

Note that the weights of several questions might be accumulated to exceed the weight limit, or that a single unanswered question might result in ejection of the course.

In 2008, no programs were eliminated as a result of missing data.

3.7 Constraints and limitations

Three practical constraints influence development of the assessment. They are:-

- *Due to the cost of collecting data, criteria are assessed using secondary data*
- *Data need to be collected in a way which minimises the possibility of the institution misinterpreting the questions or exaggerating their attributes*
- *Data are sometimes available only at university or faculty level, rather than at MBA school level.*

The following issues have not been addressed in the 2008 assessment, principally because of the third constraint, data availability at school level:-

- *the research outcomes of MBA schools (potentially indicated by DEST points)*
- *the student-staff ratio (because the current Hobson's questionnaire does not eliminate portions of staff time spent on areas such as overseas MBA courses delivered, non-MBA degrees delivered, etc.)*
- *course outcomes (salaries earned, teaching quality, job seeking success and graduate satisfaction with their course).*

In addition to the issues already listed, the GMAA believes that the inclusion of the issues listed below would enhance future surveys:-

- *Demonstrated adequacy of staff resources for students enrolled*
- *Staff aware of debates at forefront of knowledge and involved in appropriate research*
- *Staff development policy and mechanisms in place to ensure continuance of staff capability*
- *Participation in internal or national audit process and evidence of successful implementation of recommendations*
- *Having feedback mechanism for student reactions to course delivery and contents*
- *Demonstrated level and quality of administrative support*
- *Availability of up to date, and an adequate volume of, IT resources for students*
- *Demand for places in the program*
- *Success at attracting research grants (e.g. Australian Research Council)*
- *Success in the international market (full-fee international enrolments).*

It is hoped that future surveys will be able to assess some or all of these issues. To achieve this, GMAA is working with Hobsons to ascertain if their questionnaire could be modified to enable the required data to be collected.

The approach of an index is to accumulate points (or to not accumulate them) for a large number of matters which, in total, proxy the overall quality of the subject assessed. A disadvantage is that this approach conceals especially strong or weak performance levels by an organisation in a particular question. Nevertheless, an index is a robust overall indicator of quality. Advantages include an index being more transparent, more easily understood and less prone to statistical problems than many other approaches (e.g. regression or cluster analyses). Quantifying the differences between MBA schools is also more rigorous and accurate than attempting to make an intuitive assessment.

4 Analysis of the 2008 results

4.1 The 2008 GMAA 5 Star Scores

The results of the 2008 assessment are given in appendix A.

Initially, Hobsons provided data on 69 MBA programs offered through 41 institutions. Of those, 51 programs were included in the final table after the remainder were excluded for one or more of the following reasons:-

- *Primarily an offshore course or too specialised (e.g. Aviation)* 5
- *Program operating for less than 3 years* 2
- *Student numbers too low (less than 18 students)* 13
- *Data inadequacies* 0

4.2 Summary of answers

Appendix E contains a table that summarises the answers given for the 2008 survey. The table shows, for each of the 47 questions, either:-

- *The maximum, minimum and average where the answer given was a number*
- *The number of "Yes" answers and the number of "No" answer.*

4.3 Scores in 2008

Listed below is a table showing the maximum score, the minimum score, the ranges of scores and the average score for the 51 programs in the 5 quintiles.

Stars	Maximum score	Minimum score	Range	Average score
5	274.3	250.6	23.7	256.6
4	244.3	232.7	11.6	239.0
3	231.7	221.4	10.3	225.9
2	217.7	193.9	23.7	203.0
1	192.2	168.9	23.3	181.0
Overall	274.3	168.9	105.4	221.2

4.4 Scores in previous years

Listed below is the same table as above for the other three years (2005 - 2007) which used exactly the same questions as were used in 2008.

4.4.1 2007 49 programs

Stars	Maximum score	Minimum score	Range	Average score
5	270.3	251.7	18.6	260.7
4	251.6	235.8	15.9	244.3
3	233.3	210.8	22.5	223.5
2	210.3	193.9	16.4	200.6
1	182.7	169.2	13.5	175.2
Overall	270.3	169.2	101.1	220.8

4.4.2 2006 55 programs

Stars	Maximum score	Minimum score	Range	Average score
5	262.5	237.4	25.1	252.1
4	235.6	218.8	16.8	227.2
3	216.1	205.8	10.3	209.6
2	205.4	189.1	16.3	197.0
1	188.2	138.5	49.7	165.3
Overall	262.5	138.5	124.0	239.1

4.4.3 2005 55 programs

Stars	Maximum score	Minimum score	Range	Average score
5	281.8	259.7	22.1	268.4
4	258.3	237.0	21.3	245.9
3	232.0	211.7	20.2	224.1
2	211.7	178.8	32.9	198.7
1	178.6	142.8	35.7	166.3
Overall	281.8	142.8	138.9	220.7

Appendix A: Questions used in 2008

Questions
Mandatory requirements
Program must have been operating for at least three years
There must be at least 18 students currently in the program
The program must be offered onshore and not be a specialised course (e.g. Aviation)
Business School's links with the business community and overseas schools
Number of chairs/lectureships sponsored
Donations > \$10K last financial year
Number of corporate members on School Board
International study aboard placement arrangements
The size, diversity and experience of the academic staff
Number of academic staff
% of academic staff who are female
% of part time academics
% of academics with doctorate
% of academics with masters
% of academics with international industry experience
% of academics with international consulting experience
% of academics with domestic industry experience
% of academics with domestic consulting experience
% of academics with domestic teaching experience
% of academics with international teaching experience
Support facilities the school has to assist students
English language learning support available
Job placement support is available
Child care facilities are available
Entry requirements for prospective students
Is the GMAT score used
If used, what is the minimum score
Is a prior degree required
Required years work experience
Required years management experience
Fees for domestic students
HECS places available
The size and diversity of the student population
Number of students enrolled
% of female students
% of students from non English background
The online facilities available to students
Lecture notes available online
Submit assignments online
Assessment results available online
Access video conference of lectures online
Participate in group tutorials online
Down load journals
Library facilities online
The library
No of books in the library
No of journals in the library
The course length and content
Number of units required to complete the course
% of compulsory subjects
% of subjects that are considered by international accreditation organisations as core subjects
Total time commitment in hours
No of contact hours (On Campus courses only)
Minimum completion time (years) for full time course
Minimum completion time (years) for part time course

Appendix B: 2008 GMAA 5 Star MBA Assessment

Stars	Institution Name	MBA name
5	Deakin University	MBA
5	Griffith University	IMBA
5	Griffith University	MBA
5	Macquarie University	MBA
5	University of Melbourne	MBA
5	Monash University	MBA
5	University of Queensland	MBA
5	University of South Australia	MBA
5	University of Western Australia	MBA
5	University of Western Australia	MBA Advanced
4	Bond University	MBA
4	Deakin University	MBA International
4	Edith Cowan University	MBA
4	La Trobe University	MBA
4	Queensland University of Technology	EMBA
4	Queensland University of Technology	MBA
4	Queensland University of Technology	MBA (Major)
4	RMIT University	EMBA
4	University of New South Wales	MBA(Full Time)
4	University of Wollongong	MBA
3	Australian National University	MBA
3	University of Adelaide	MBA
3	University of Adelaide	MBA (Advanced)
3	University of Ballarat	MBA
3	Curtin University of Technology	MBA
3	Edith Cowan University	IMBA
3	RMIT University	MBA
3	Swinburne University of Technology	MBA
3	Universitas 21 Global	MBA
3	University of Technology, Sydney	MBA
3	University of Western Australia	EMBA
2	University of Canberra	MBA
2	Charles Darwin University	MBA
2	Central Queensland University	MBA
2	University of Melbourne	EMBA
2	University of Newcastle	MBA
2	Southern Cross University	MBA
2	University of New South Wales	EMBA
2	University of Southern Queensland	MBA
2	University of Technology, Sydney	EMBA
2	Victoria University	MBA
1	Australian Catholic University	MBA
1	Australian Catholic University	MBA (Accounting)
1	Chifley Business School	MBA (Technical Management)
1	Gibaran Learning Group	MBA
1	James Cook University	MBA
1	Murdoch University	MBA
1	University of the Sunshine Coast	MBA
1	University of Tasmania	MBA
1	University of Tasmania	MBA (Maritime)
1	University of Western Sydney	MBA

Appendix C: Method of assigning scores to answers

Questions	Scoring Process
Mandatory requirements	
Program must have been operating for at least three years	N/A
There must be at least 18 students currently in the program	N/A
The program must be offered onshore and not be a specialised course (e.g. Aviation)	N/A
Business School's links with the business community and overseas schools	
Number of chairs/lectureships sponsored	Line
Donations > \$10K last financial year	Line
Number of corporate members on School Board	Line
International study aboard placement arrangements	Yes/No
The size, diversity and experience of the academic staff	
Number of academic staff	Line
% of academic staff who are female	Bell curve
% of part time academics	Line
% of academics with doctorate	Line
% of academics with masters	Line
% of academics with international industry experience	Line
% of academics with international consulting experience	Line
% of academics with domestic industry experience	Line
% of academics with domestic consulting experience	Line
% of academics with domestic teaching experience	Line
% of academics with international teaching experience	Line
Support facilities the school has to assist students	
English language learning support available	Yes/No
Job placement support is available	Yes/No
Child care facilities are available	Yes/No
Entry requirements for prospective students	
Is the GMAT score used	Yes/No
If used, what is the minimum score	Line
Is a prior degree required	Yes/No
Required years work experience	Line
Required years management experience	Line
Fees for domestic students	Bell curve
HECS places available	Yes/No
The size and diversity of the student population	
Number of students enrolled	Line
% of female students	Bell curve
% of students from non English background	Bell curve
The online facilities available to students	
Lecture notes available online	Yes/No
Submit assignments online	Yes/No
Assessment results available online	Yes/No
Access video conference of lectures online	Yes/No
Participate in group tutorials online	Yes/No
Down load journals	Yes/No
Library facilities online	Yes/No
The library	
No of books in the library	Bell curve
No of journals in the library	Bell curve
The course length and content	
Number of units required to complete the course	Bell curve
% of compulsory subjects	Bell curve
% of subjects that are considered by international accreditation organisations as core subjects	Line
Total time commitment in hours	Line
No of contact hours (On Campus courses only)	Line
Minimum completion time (years) for full time course	Line
Minimum completion time (years) for part time course	Line

Appendix D: Weights assigned to questions

Questions	Weight
Mandatory requirements	
Program must have been operating for at least three years	N/A
There must be at least 18 students currently in the program	N/A
The program must be offered onshore and not be a specialised course (e.g. Aviation)	N/A
Business School's links with the business community and overseas schools	
Number of chairs/lectureships sponsored	0.666
Donations > \$10K last financial year	0.666
Number of corporate members on School Board	0.666
International study aboard placement arrangements	0.5
The size, diversity and experience of the academic staff	
Number of academic staff	1
% of academic staff who are female	0.5
% of part time academics	1
% of academics with doctorate	2
% of academics with masters	0.5
% of academics with international industry experience	1
% of academics with international consulting experience	1
% of academics with domestic industry experience	1
% of academics with domestic consulting experience	1
% of academics with domestic teaching experience	0.5
% of academics with international teaching experience	0.5
Support facilities the school has to assist students	
English language learning support available	1
Job placement support is available	1
Child care facilities are available	0.5
Entry requirements for prospective students	
Is the GMAT score used	1
If used, what is the minimum score	1
Is a prior degree required	1
Required years work experience	0.5
Required years management experience	0.5
Fees for domestic students	2
HECS places available	1
The size and diversity of the student population	
Number of students enrolled	0.5
% of female students	0.5
% of students from non English background	0.5
The online facilities available to students	
Lecture notes available online	0.5
Submit assignments online	0.5
Assessment results available online	0.5
Access video conference of lectures online	0.5
Participate in group tutorials online	0.5
Down load journals	0.5
Library facilities online	0.5
The library	
No of books in the library	0.5
No of journals in the library	0.5
The course length and content	
Number of units required to complete the course	1
% of compulsory subjects	1
% of subjects that are considered by international accreditation organisations as core subjects	3
Total time commitment in hours	2
No of contact hours (On Campus courses only)	2
Minimum completion time (years) for full time course	1
Minimum completion time (years) for part time course	1

Appendix E: Summary of 2008 answers

Questions	Min	Max	Ave	Yes	No
Business School's links with the business community and overseas schools					
Number of chairs/lectureships sponsored	0	6	0.51		
Donations > \$10K last financial year	0	26	3.16		
Number of corporate members on School Board	0	59	12.65		
International study abroad placement arrangements				41	10
The size, diversity and experience of the academic staff					
Number of academic staff	6	140	42.45		
% of academic staff who are female	0	53.3	27.78		
% of part time academics	0	100	40.55		
% of academics with doctorate	26.9	100	71.25		
% of academics with masters	73.1	100	95.59		
% of academics with international industry experience	0	56.7	19.28		
% of academics with international consulting experience	0	74.1	35.97		
% of academics with domestic industry experience	0	72.4	32.86		
% of academics with domestic consulting experience	2.9	91.4	66.62		
% of academics with domestic teaching experience	5.7	100	62.46		
% of academics with international teaching experience	8.6	100	49.74		
Support facilities the school has to assist students					
English language learning support available				48	3
Job placement support is available				34	17
Child care facilities are available				33	18
Entry requirements for prospective students					
Is the GMAT score used				7	44
If used, what is the minimum score	500	570	535.71		
Is a prior degree required				46	5
Required years work experience	0	5	1.37		
Required years management experience	0	10	2.33		
Fees for domestic students	\$16,200	\$96,000	\$31,346		
HECS places available				4	47
The size and diversity of the student population					
Number of students enrolled	18	1646	361.71		
% of female students ¹	0	97.1	31.99		
% of students from non English background	0	97.7	38.3		
The online facilities available to students					
Lecture notes available online				50	1
Submit assignments online				50	1
Assessment results available online				51	0
Access video conference of lectures online				24	27
Participate in group tutorials online				38	13
Down load journals				49	2
Library facilities online				49	2
The library					
No of books in the library	0	613,324	48,754		
No of journals in the library	0	56,000	6,656		
The course length and content					
Number of units required to complete the course	11	26	14.24		
% of compulsory subjects	0	100	67.9		
% of subjects that are considered by international accreditation organisations as core subjects	0	78.46	50.84		
Total time commitment in hours	960	3,000	1,822.12		
No of contact hours (On Campus courses only) ²	117	725	528.98		
Minimum completion time (years) for full time course	0	2.5	1.26		
Minimum completion time (years) for part time course	0	6	2.65		

Notes

1. minimum figure was questioned, but confirmed by the institution
2. distance education programs excluded