

EQUAL POSITION PAPER ON THE DESIGNATION OF MASTER'S DEGREE TITLES IN MANAGEMENT EDUCATION IN EUROPE

The European Quality Link (EQUAL) is the international association of quality assessment and accreditation agencies in the field of European management education. It has as its main objective the continued improvement of quality in business schools. As part of this activity, EQUAL aims to agree common standards for programmes, where appropriate, and to establish benchmarks.

Master degrees exist in many European countries but there are currently variable interpretations of their nature. This position paper is intended to encourage business schools to consider a common approach, and to inform participants and employers as the "Bologna" process and the creation of the European Higher Education Space evolve.

Objectives

- The aim is not to impose harmonisation or standardisation of management programmes either in format or in content.
 - The intention is not to dictate what degrees are called in the language of the different national systems.
 - The main aim is to provide clear information to the international market regarding the nature of the programmes on offer. To the extent that in each national system there is an attempt to communicate internationally in English, there is a need to have some minimum consensus on the use of the different labels. As an international association representing the management education profession in Europe, EQUAL is seeking to make a positive contribution to the establishment of a European market in higher education.
 - The purpose of this document is to propose a simple segmentation by major degree types and to promote agreement on the terms to be used to designate them in English.
 - The system should be coherent across Europe, i.e. acceptable in all countries, and be consistent with accepted practice in the United States.
 - An important outcome is (1) to facilitate the establishment of exchange programmes at the appropriate level among European institutions and between European and non-European institutions and (2) remove one of the obstacles to students' and graduates' mobility.
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1) Definition of the Master's level in Europe

A level achieved after 4 or 5 years of higher education.

It is usually preceded by a first university qualification, which can be considered a Bachelor's level, although sometimes this level is only marked by an intermediate stage in a long 5-year continuous programme, sometimes after 2 years, more often after 3 years.

2) Segmentation of Master's degrees in Europe by programme type

The following segmentation does not imply that these types are sequential. There is no hierarchy, no assumption that a student must graduate from one level before entering another higher level.

Programme types	Definition	Suggested titles in English
Type A	<ul style="list-style-type: none">- Generalist- After 3 years of HE- Younger students graduating at 23-25- Pre-experience- Career preparation- Duration 1 to 3 years	Master of Science in Management MSc Management
Type B	<ul style="list-style-type: none">- Specialised- In-depth study of one area- Pre-experience- May require relevant previous qualification- Career preparation- Two sub-types: research orientation or professional orientation	Specialised Master's in ... MSc in Finance MS in Finance Master's in Finance
Type C	<ul style="list-style-type: none">- Generalist- Professionally oriented- Significant work experience required- Career change/acceleration- Typical age range: 26-35	Master of Business Administration MBA

Type A: Generalist Master's for younger students

This segment includes the largest number of Master's programmes in Europe and accounts for by far the largest number of graduating students. Most of the mainstream university based programmes that provide European companies with their principal source of recruits in the management education field fall into this category.

These programmes are **generalist** in coverage. There is often a strong conceptual and theoretical emphasis in these mostly university-based programmes. Students typically graduate at **23 to 25** after a fairly long period of continuous university-level study. These programmes are thus **pre-experience** and designed for **career preparation**.

In duration they are very variable: in some cases **one year**, but more usually **two** or **three** years, depending on where the intermediate stage is positioned in the Continental European higher education systems. Many national systems have traditionally been organised on a 2 + 3 structure, although there may be a shift to a 3 +2 structure if the convergence movement initiated by the Bologna Declaration takes hold.

The proposed degree title in English for this programme type is **Master of Science in Management**. Some institutions might prefer **Master of Science in Business Studies**.

Type B: Specialised Master's

These programmes recruit students with a previous degree that is **relevant** to the specialism in question. They are intended to allow **in-depth study** of a particular area. They do **not** require previous **work experience**, although some students enter the programmes after several years in a job. They are essentially designed for **career preparation** in a clearly defined type of job or profession.

Around Europe there are two main sub-categories of this type of programme. First of all, those that are professionally oriented, leading to a job in a company or an organisation, and secondly those that are more academically and research oriented, including a dissertation.

The duration of these programmes is usually **one year**.

Suggested titles in English for these programmes are: MSc in Finance
MS in Finance
Master's in Finance

Type C: MBA

The MBA is defined as a **generalist** programme with the main emphasis on management rather than on business studies. There is strong **practical** and **professional orientation** in the curriculum. Entry into these programmes requires significant **work experience**. Students are typically between **26 and 35** in this type of programme. The main objective is **career change** or **career acceleration** rather than career preparation. The programmes of this type are not positioned at a higher academic level than the Master of Science in Management programmes in Type A. They are, however, substantially different in their objectives, in their pedagogical processes, and in their recruitment. The pedagogical approach is particularly concerned with integration, both across a range of business and management subject areas and between theoretical concepts and the practice of management.

MBA programmes are offered in a variety of formats known as part-time, executive, modular, distance learning, consortium or in-company MBAs. These variants of the full-time MBA are designed to allow practising managers to earn the qualification without leaving their jobs. In particular the Executive MBAs are designed for senior managers in the 40+ age range with many years of managerial experience.

Duration is between 1 and 2 years.

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