



# Is MBA a must after BBA?

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*BBA is one of the most sought after degrees in the country today. With Bangladesh's promotion to a "developing" status on the horizon, more and more students are expected to pursue business degrees to take on newly emerging executive roles.*

*However, doing an undergrad in BBA ushers in a range of intriguing questions to reflect on. While pure subjects have a rather natural progression from bachelor's to master's and then PhD (if you opt for it), the same cannot always be said for BBA. For instance, given the highly career-oriented approach of this degree, it poses a burning question upon completion: Should I go for an MBA or do I get into a job straight away?*

Being a final year BBA student, I often discover myself pondering the directions that might possibly make the most out of my BBA degree – from not only a career perspective but also personal growth in terms of learning. Unfortunately, this is a dilemma that most BBA graduates (and soon-to-be graduates) are constantly riddled with.

Furthermore, our constant societal pressure and prejudiced

perception force us to leap head-first into higher degree programmes even when they do not align with our goals. So, I have decided to get to the bottom of this and address some of the frequently asked questions. Please note that there is no definitive answer to the questions; rather, this is a guideline that can make your decision-making easier.

**What is an MBA degree?**

The Master of Business Administration (MBA) is an internationally-recognised degree designed to develop the skills required for careers in business and management. The value of the MBA, however, is not limited strictly to the business world. An MBA can also be useful for those pursuing a managerial career in the public sector, government, private industry, and other areas.

Most MBA programmes include a "core" curriculum of subjects, such as accounting, economics, marketing, and operations, as well as elective courses that allow participants to follow their own personal or professional interest. The degree generally takes 2 years to complete and is offered worldwide.

**Should I pursue an MBA or go for specialised master's?**

This completely depends on your ambitions. MBA is a highly professional degree; so, if you intend to run your own business or be in a managerial position at any company, you should go for an MBA over a specialised master's degree. It is especially necessary for students willing to switch from research-based careers to a managerial or entrepreneurial career. However, it is NOT mandatory for business graduates since BBA in itself, more often than not, suffices to get one ready for a career in this field in Bangladesh.

On the contrary, if you want to pursue a career in research or academia, or if you want to work for research and development in financial research firms, then a specialised master's degree is required.

**Should I go for MBA right after BBA?**

Most entry level jobs ask for BBA graduates. MBA degrees are often required after a few promotions to work further up the ladder. Saqiful Alam, a Senior Lecturer at North South University believes it is better to gain some work experience before going for MBA. To quote him, "Internationally, it is encouraged to finish your Bachelor's and work for 2 or 3 years before you go for MBA." He added that the alarming rate at which our graduates are pursuing MBA degrees might change the status quo and result in MBA requirements imposed in all entry level jobs in the future. Nonetheless, it is better to not go for MBA straight away as things stand.

**Should I stay in the country or go abroad for MBA?**

Let's face it, MBA is one of the most expensive degrees offered

across the world. In order to get an MBA degree abroad, you would need substantial financing for the hefty tuition fees. To put it into context, getting an MBA degree costs around 60,000 to 100,000 BDT per semester in Bangladesh. In USA's state universities, the full programme requires around 65,000 USD or 5.5 million BDT approximately. Most of these programmes are self-financed, therefore you need to cut your coat according to your cloth. However, MBA curriculums abroad are more comprehensive and demanding than ours. This reflects in their alumni's average salary which is often the basis in ranking these schools.

A.T.M. Jakaria Khan, Lecturer at Institute of Business Administration, University of Dhaka suggested that the first thing to do when deciding if you want to do your MBA here or if you want to go for it at all, is to look at the courses offered by various universities' programmes and then choose the one that would benefit you, if any.

**Do I learn anything new in MBA (in Bangladesh)?**

This is where things get a little tricky. The answer can be "yes" and "no" at the same time. Tasmeem Iqbal is a business graduate currently doing his MBA upon graduation. Tasmeem states, "Unfortunately, I got a lot of the same courses and even the same faculty members in MBA classes as my BBA days. This has resulted in a repetition of the lectures and in some cases, exam patterns to a great extent. Therefore, I mostly did not really learn anything that I had not already gone through." He further adds, "If the case was such that the courses were the same but I had different faculty members, I think I would be able to get new perspectives, thus making it a bit more interesting."

On the other hand, Omar Faruq Khan who did his BBA and MBA from North South University described a contrasting experience. In his words, "I did some courses which I did not do in BBA. Even in the courses that I had taken in BBA, I learnt new things because the faculty was different." Omar is currently working at a prominent MNC and elucidates the importance of how the work experience and the value derived from MBA are intertwined. He says, "The difference between BBA and MBA is that in MBA you can relate the content with your work. So, without having 2-3 years of work experience there is no point of doing MBA. After gaining some work experience it will add some value."

Adel Mostaque Ahmed, an adjunct faculty member at United International University, believes that doing an MBA right after BBA does not add much from a learning perspective unless you are changing tracks. According to him, institutes in Bangladesh offering MBA degrees have not started the trend of asking for work experience from applicants. So, it is tough to

accommodate industry experience and job experience-sharing sessions in the classroom. Also, as MBAs are widely available, students from diverse backgrounds join the programme to get business knowledge, but their lack of prior knowledge means a significant part of the programme is dedicated towards getting them accustomed to it.

**Does an MBA set me apart from BBA graduates during job interviews?**

A lot of people often believe that doing an MBA gives one an edge over BBA candidates. That is mostly not the actual scenario in jobs that ask for a minimum of BBA in the circular. Once you meet the criteria, what matters is how you tackle the next stages. Mohammad Naimuzzaman, the head of Human Resources and Workplace at BASE Technologies Limited, was called for his expert opinion. To quote him, "My simple answer is: It depends, but generally I don't see any difference."

**How do I get the most out of my BBA degree then?**

In Adel Mostaque Ahmed's words, "Getting value out of your BBA degree requires a focused sense of what you want to do in life. It is not like you need to absolutely decide which career track or industry you will go into. You should, however, have some idea about what you are not good at and should not waste valuable time of your career in pursuing that." He adds, "An important thing to remember is to keep core ideas of the education close to heart, but you also need to be willing to adapt to changes in demand. Being too laid back at that stage will push you further backwards."

In a nutshell, the key is to realise that everyone has different aspirations and visions for themselves. Therefore, it is better to do your own research keeping the aforementioned points in mind. You can get information from the university websites and connect with respective alumni to get an in-depth idea of the programmes. There are Facebook groups such as "Higher Study Abroad" to assist you with your queries if you want to apply abroad.

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