# AI expertise now top priority for employers seeking MBA graduates



As economic uncertainties such as recession fears and inflation persist globally, business school graduates—particularly MBA holders—remain in strong demand. This is highlighted in the Graduate Management Admission Council’s 2025 Corporate Recruiters Survey, which reveals a significant shift: while traditional skills like problem-solving and strategic thinking remain vital, fluency in artificial intelligence (AI) tools has become the most sought-after competency for future hires.

Drawing from responses from more than 1,100 corporate recruiters and hiring managers across 46 countries, including nearly two-thirds from Fortune 500 companies, the survey provides a broad global perspective. It shows that employers increasingly value graduates who can not only understand but strategically apply AI in decision-making and innovation. This marks a shift towards ethical, transparent and impactful AI use, rather than basic technical knowledge.

Joy Jones, CEO of GMAC, said, “As AI becomes more integral in a company’s decision-making and strategy development, employers continue to turn to business school graduates for their versatility and strategic thinking, along with growing appreciation for their ability to innovate and navigate the challenges and opportunities of technological disruption.” Ethical considerations around AI are also gaining traction, with recruiters placing greater emphasis on responsible AI use.

Beyond AI, core business capabilities remain essential. Communication skills—particularly verbal communication and conflict resolution—continue to rank highly in hiring decisions, even as some pandemic-era abilities such as video conferencing have become less prominent. Familiarity with modern cloud platforms like Amazon Web Services and Microsoft Azure, as well as data visualisation and statistical analysis tools, complements the AI expertise now expected of graduates.

The report reflects strong confidence in business education. Almost all employers trust business schools to prepare graduates effectively, with nearly two-thirds considering business education more essential than ever amid rapid technological change. Christine Murray, associate dean at Georgetown McDonough, said, “Business school graduates—whether they earned their degrees in person or remotely—should feel empowered that their employability continues to outperform those without an advanced management degree.” The MBA hiring outlook remains robust, with 90% of employers intending to recruit MBA graduates in 2025. Many plan to prioritise MBA hires over bachelor-level or external candidates. Around three-quarters of employers expect to maintain or increase MBA hiring compared with the previous year, reflecting a steady rebound following pandemic-related volatility.

The survey also explores perceptions of Generation Z MBA graduates. While 61% of recruiters view Gen Z candidates as equally professional as previous cohorts, sectors such as consulting and healthcare remain cautious, citing concerns over client-facing skills, reliability and workplace etiquette. This suggests younger graduates, while strong in technical and analytical areas, may benefit from additional support in high-pressure, interpersonal roles.

The technology sector leads in embracing hybrid work models and shows greater acceptance of online or blended business degree programmes. More than half of tech employers value business skills in remote settings, and 57% place equal value on graduates regardless of whether their education was delivered fully in-person or partially online, reflecting shifting attitudes towards non-traditional learning. Supporting this, UK research highlights the growing urgency to align education with business needs, particularly in AI. A survey commissioned by the University of Exeter found that 85% of UK firms see skills gaps as a major risk and favour university partnerships to address AI talent shortages. However, many businesses report difficulties navigating such collaborations, underlining the need for practical, sector-specific training that matches market demands.

Together, these findings paint a positive picture: business schools remain vital in producing leaders ready to drive innovation responsibly. With AI literacy now a key requirement alongside traditional managerial skills, the future looks bright for MBA graduates—provided institutions continue to evolve their curricula to meet the demands of a rapidly changing business environment. Employers’ ongoing confidence signals a strong outlook for graduates who can combine strategic thinking, ethical AI use and effective communication in an increasingly complex global economy.

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## Bibliography

1. <https://poetsandquants.com/2025/07/01/employers-are-still-eager-to-hire-mbas-gmac-finds-especially-those-with-ai-skills/?pq-category=business-school-news&pq-category-2=mba-jobs> - Please view link - unable to able to access data
2. <https://www.gmac.com/market-intelligence-and-research/research-library/employment-outlook/2025-corporate-recruiters-survey-report> - The Graduate Management Admission Council's 2025 Corporate Recruiters Survey reveals that employers across various sectors and regions continue to highly value graduate business degrees, particularly the MBA. The survey indicates that while problem-solving and strategic thinking remain top skills, familiarity with AI tools now ranks as the most important skill for the future. The report is based on responses from over 1,100 corporate recruiters and hiring managers from staffing firms in 46 countries, with 64% being Fortune 500 companies. The data was collected between January and March 2025, highlighting the growing importance of AI fluency in the hiring process.
3. <https://poetsandquants.com/2025/05/03/mba-employers-want-ai-skills-and-they-say-higher-ed-must-step-up/> - A recent UK survey indicates that 85% of businesses view skills gaps as a significant threat, with AI expertise being a primary concern. The report, 'Equipping Researchers for Impact: Unlocking the Potential of University-Business Relationships,' commissioned by the University of Exeter Business School and authored by CBI Economics, highlights that nearly half of large companies prefer collaborating with university researchers to address AI talent shortages. However, businesses often find collaboration pathways with academia complex and misaligned with their immediate needs, underscoring the necessity for universities to adapt and provide sector-specific training and immersive business experiences.
4. <https://blog.gmac.com/gmac-advisor/2024s-top-10-trends-from-gmac-research-year-in-review> - The Graduate Management Admission Council's 2024 Year in Review highlights that core business skills like problem-solving and strategy remain essential for both candidates and employers. The report notes that while 40% of candidates consider AI essential to their ideal graduate management education curriculum, only 26% of global employers deem AI skills important for current graduates. However, employers anticipate a significant increase in the importance of AI skills over the next five years, ranking them fourth after strategic thinking, problem-solving, and broader technology and IT skills.
5. <https://www.prnewswire.com/news-releases/new-survey-finds-employers-keen-on-hiring-business-school-graduates-as-ai-integration-accelerates-302492441.html> - A recent survey by the Graduate Management Admission Council (GMAC) reveals that despite concerns about inflation and recession, employers remain optimistic about hiring business school graduates, especially as AI integration accelerates. The survey indicates that while problem-solving and strategic thinking are top skills, knowledge of AI tools has risen in importance and is expected to top the list of valued skills in the next five years. The survey also highlights that 56% of global employers agree that the skills gained through a business degree are more important in today's remote or hybrid work environments.
6. <https://cfo.economictimes.indiatimes.com/news/strategy-operations/b-school-graduates-remain-top-choice-for-employers-amid-ai-expansion-survey-reveals/122205543> - The Economic Times reports on the GMAC's annual survey of global corporate recruiters, which found that problem-solving and strategic thinking remain the top skills employers desire. Additionally, the importance of new hires' knowledge of using AI tools has measurably increased since last year and is expected to top the list of skills employers will value most in the next five years. The survey, conducted with 1,108 corporate recruiters and hiring managers, underscores the growing appreciation for business school graduates' ability to innovate and navigate technological disruptions.
7. <https://economictimes.indiatimes.com/industry/services/education/future-mbas-want-strategy-problem-solving-and-ai-in-the-curriculum-gmacs-prospective-student-survey-2025/articleshow/120374562.cms> - The Economic Times reports on the GMAC's Prospective Student Survey 2025, which reveals that future MBA candidates are prioritising strategic thinking, problem-solving, and AI skills. Nearly half of the respondents expect hands-on experience with AI tools that support decision-making, highlighting the growing alignment between employer needs and candidate expectations. The survey indicates a year-on-year increase in interest in AI, with 46% of candidates considering it essential to their ideal graduate management education curriculum, up from 40% in 2023 and 29% in 2022.