

The Cambridge Executive MBA - Seeking Employer Support

An Executive MBA is a programme designed for people who have excelled in their career to date and have proved their ambition and drive to succeed and wish to invest in their future.

As an Executive MBA student you will continue to work and the knowledge you gain will be beneficial to both you and your organisation, some of these benefits are listed below.

Benefits to you

- You can earn your Cambridge Executive MBA degree whilst continuing to work
- You will learn from an outstanding faculty at one of the most historic, distinguished universities in the world
- Our collaborative approach to learning allows you to share experiences and develop knowledge by interacting with faculty, peers and business practitioners from across the world
- You will develop both personally and professionally, enabling you to continuously improve your effectiveness
- You will be constantly exposed to global business issues, in particular through the International Business Study Trip
- You will be part of a close-knit, supportive and internationally diverse professional network at Cambridge Judge Business School, in addition the wider university alumni group comprising over 170,000 members.

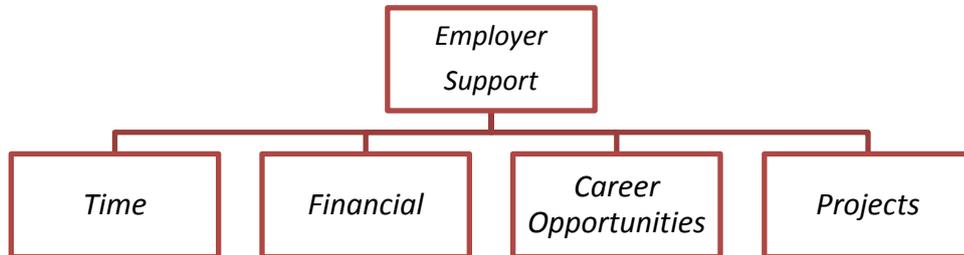
Benefits to your organisation

- New skills, theories and knowledge learnt in the classroom may help your organisation approach everyday business problems in a new way
- Your access to an extended business network can help you gain a fresh perspective on global issues facing your organisation
- You will share insights from classmates and faculty that will help you to improve the performance of your organisation
- You will be able to bring real business problems into group discussion, providing you with the opportunity to obtain solutions with a global perspective

As your organisation may benefit from you attending the programme you may wish to consider asking them for support.

Types of Employer Support

Employer Support can come in many forms, as can be seen from the chart below, it is important that you explore the different options and are realistic about the support you require. The information below has been put together to help you think about the various of employer support.



Time

The format of the Cambridge Executive MBA allows for participants to be away from their employer for a very short amount of time, the equivalent of 28 days out of the office over a period of 20 months to complete the core requirements of the programme. As you will need to attend lectures on one Friday afternoon a month in Cambridge and attend three week long blocks it is essential to gain support from your employer for this time away from work.

All current Executive MBA participants have some form of agreement for their time away from work.

When deciding how much time support you will need you may wish to consider the following:

- The time it will take to travel both to and from Cambridge – a third of current Executive MBA students do not live in the UK and hence require more time away from work.
- Private study time – you are expected to do 10 hours of private study a week, whilst most students will do this outside of the working day, you may wish to take study days when assignment are due or to study for exams.
- If you just want the Friday afternoon or if you want to take the whole day off – some students like to come to Cambridge early to meet up with their study group and attend college events.
- In asking for time away from work it is important to also think about how you will manage your time at work to ensure that deadlines and commitments are not neglected –an employer will value your reassurance that all projects will be completed on time and that all consideration has been taken to ensure that projects are managed effectively in your absence.

Financial

When participants think of Employer Support they often think of financial sponsorship; 46% of all Cambridge Executive MBA students have some level of financial support from their Employer.

It is solely at the discretion of your employer if they wish to offer you financial support, it is therefore vital to start negotiations regarding financial support as soon as possible to allow you to seek alternative funding if necessary.

Some Executive MBA students have found that employers are only open to discussions once your place on the programme has been secured, but this does not stop you doing the necessary company research to find out if any previous funding has been awarded and under what circumstances – this type of research will give you a good starting point to base your case for funding on or provide you with advanced warning that you may need to prove your case to your employer.

When asking for financial support you should be realistic about the amount you ask for, out of the current class 32% have sponsorship for 50% or more of the fees.

The level of financial sponsorship you are offered maybe in direct correlation to the return on investment that your employer feels they will receive from you attending the programme, or maybe attached to a retention clause stipulating that you must stay with the organisation for a set number of years post qualification. You may wish to explore the possibility that you are retrospectively sponsored with a percentage of the fees being offered as the company sees the additional benefits you are able to bring to the organisation.

A list of benefits to your organisation can be found above.

Career Opportunities

The main reason people undertake an Executive MBA is that they wish to develop their career – this is usually within the industry they are currently working.

As you will be remaining with your employer for the duration of the programme it is important that you have opportunities to develop your career during, as well as after it. The level and type of career opportunities available will vary between organisations but it is important that you discuss how you can use the knowledge you are gaining to best effect with your employer. You may wish to present a career plan demonstrating where you see yourself in 4-5 years time and how you feel the organisation and the Executive MBA will enable you to reach your goals, this maybe with reference to particular courses, the format or the networking opportunities.

For some students the idea of an Executive MBA may have initially been a suggestion by their organisation as part of their annual appraisal, for candidates in this position your thoughts maybe towards ensuring you are offered support for the programme you wish to undertake.

Projects

The Cambridge Executive MBA incorporates two real world projects. One with your group and one individually. In your discussions with your employer you may wish to include the idea of a company projects as this is a tangible area where they could see a return on investment, this is particularly the case with the individual project which may allow you to explore in depth an area of your organisation you wouldn't normally work on and help make improvements.

Approaching your Organisation for Support

In choosing the Cambridge Executive MBA you recognise that an Executive MBA adds significant value both to you as an individual and to your organisation. You have read the information about the types of support your organisation could offer and want to think more about how to best approach the situation.

Planning

To create a good case to present to your employer, you may want to break down your research and planning into three areas:

- **Know your company** – This is your opportunity to demonstrate to your employer that you have thought about the value of an Executive MBA from the company perspective.

Areas you might like research or discuss with your employer:

- Has your organisation ever sponsored employee education in the past? What is their policy on this? Do any of your competitors sponsor Executive MBA's? Have any senior managers taken an Executive MBA or similar course? What benefits did previous employees gain from their Executive MBA? What were the benefits to the organisation? How might your colleagues/ line managers/ subordinates support you? How can you obtain buy in from your manager as well as HR?
- **Know your chosen programme** – There are a number of Executive MBA programmes available – it is important that you are able to show why you feel the Cambridge Executive MBA is the right programme for you and your organisation

You therefore will need to be able to address the following questions:

- Why is the Cambridge Executive MBA right for you personally and professionally? How do you expect to benefit from the programme (improved performance, networking opportunities)? Which courses are going to make you more effective in your current role? Which course will directly benefit your employer? What individual project can you carry out that will help you/ your organisation? How will the Cambridge reputation add value to your career and organisation?
- **Know yourself** – This is probably the most important section for you to consider as a complete understanding of your motivation for undertaking the Cambridge Executive MBA will be vital when discussing the programme with your employer and may influence the type of support you require.
 - Why is this the right time for you to start an Executive MBA course? How will taking this course improve your performance? How will you balance work, study and the other aspects (family/partner) of your life? How do you plan to make use of your personal and professional development?

Employer discussion

When you have finished your research and planning, you may wish to consider exactly how you will approach your organisation to ask for support. Will you have a formal or informal discussion with the various parties involved, will you need to write a business case or give a presentation to a group of people. Regardless of the type of discussion you have you will be to use the research you carried out to do the following:

- Clearly demonstrate the reasons why the Cambridge Executive MBA is right for you and your organisation and that you have thought about these points in relation to the level of support you require and the return on investment for all parties involved
- Provide your employer with relevant and correct information about the programme as you will have visited the Cambridge Executive MBA website (www.thecambridgeEMBA.com) and found the most recent information about the courses on offer, weekend dates and programme costs

You may only have one opportunity to ask for support, it is therefore important to make sure that you are prepared for the meeting and have all the facts you require.

We are happy to look at your plan before you speak to your organisation or you may ask your organisation to contact Ous directly if they have any questions.

We can be contacted at emba-enquiries@jbs.cam.ac.uk or by phone +44 (0) 1223 766329.