

Financial Times Executive Education 2020: methodology and key

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This is the 22nd edition of the Financial Times rankings of the world's leading providers of customised and open-enrolment executive education programmes.

The customised ranking features the top 85 business schools — these are courses tailored to the training needs of the organisations that commission them. The second ranking includes the top 75 schools for open-enrolment programmes — courses on specific topics, such as leadership, that are directed towards professionals regardless of their employer. A third, combined ranking lists the top 50 schools for executive education, calculated from the customised and open tables.

Schools taking part must be internationally accredited by either EQUIS or AACSB and have earned revenues of at least \$2m in 2019 from either their customised or open-enrolment non-degree programmes. This year, a total of 107 schools took part in either or both rankings.

The ranking of customised course providers is compiled using data from the business schools and their corporate clients in 2019. Each school must nominate a minimum of 20 clients. At least five of them must complete the FT survey for a school to be eligible for the final ranking.

The FT survey was completed by about 1,135 business school clients this year — a response rate of 56 per cent. Each rated their programme on a 10-point scale according to a range of indicators. Their answers directly inform the first 10 of the ranking's criteria, from course design to follow-up and future use, which account for a combined 80 per cent of the ranking's weight.

Client responses are weighted according to programme type. Clients select one of three options to categorise their programme: strategic — delivered to top management and designed to influence a company's direction; general — delivered to management on operational aspects of a company; or functional — related to a specific function, such as marketing. Strategic programmes have the largest weighting and therefore the greatest impact on the ranking.

Responses are also weighted according to the seniority of the individual responsible for specifying the course, the size of the client organisation and the number of schools with which that client has commissioned customised courses in the past three years.

The last five criteria are calculated from information provided by schools on international clients, overseas programmes, growth, partner schools and faculty diversity.

The open-enrolment ranking is compiled using data from course providers and individuals who completed their nominated management programmes in 2019. Schools submit one or two general courses of at least three days in length and one or two advanced courses of at least five days. At least 20 per cent of these programmes' participants must complete the FT survey, with a minimum of 20 completed surveys, for a school to be considered in the final ranking.

About 5,480 participants answered this year's open programme survey — a response rate of 37 per cent — rating elements of their course on a 10-point scale. Responses by advanced and general-level participants are combined to calculate the first 10 ranking criteria.

These criteria, which include the quality of the participants, of the teaching and the relevance of the skills they gained, inform 80 per cent of the ranking. School data are used to calculate the remaining criteria on female and international participants, growth, international location and partner schools.

For both rankings, information collected in the preceding two years is used, where available, to calculate criteria informed by client and participant responses. If a school has participated for the past three years, the weighting is 40:33:27, with 2020 data counting for 40 per cent. If two years of information is available, the weighting is 55:45, with 2020 data accounting for 55 per cent.

The weightings accorded to the first nine and 10 criteria in the customised and open rankings respectively are determined by the level of importance clients and participants attach to each in their surveys for the 2020 ranking. Weightings for these criteria therefore vary slightly from year to year.

Schools that feature in both rankings are eligible for the combined overall ranking. The top 50 schools are calculated according to an equal weighting of the total scores achieved in both rankings, rather than an average of ranking positions.

Judith Pizer of Pizer-MacMillan Ltd acted as the FT's database consultant

Key to customised programmes (weights for ranking criteria are shown in brackets as a percentage of the overall ranking)

The first 10 criteria, up to and including "future use", are based on data from companies that commissioned executive courses.

The next five are based on data reported by business schools. Schools are ranked for each of these criteria.

The last category, "Total responses†", is for information only and does not inform the ranking.

Figures in brackets show the weight each criterion contributes to the overall ranking. The weighting accorded to the first nine criteria, from preparation to value for money, accounts for 80 per cent of the total ranking's weight. It is determined by the level of importance that clients attach to each.

Preparation (8.3): level of interaction between client and school, the extent to which clients' ideas were integrated into the programme and the effectiveness of the school in incorporating its latest research into teaching.

Programme design (8.4): flexibility of the course and the willingness of schools to complement their faculty with external experts.

Teaching methods and materials (7.9): extent to which teaching methods and materials were contemporary and appropriate, and included a suitable mix of academic rigour and practical relevance.

Faculty (8.4): quality of teaching and the extent to which teaching staff worked together to present a coherent programme.

New skills and learning (8.3): relevance of skills gained to the workplace, the ease with which they were implemented and the extent to which the course encouraged new ways of thinking.

Follow-up (7.3): extent and effectiveness of follow-up offered after course participants returned to their workplaces.

Aims achieved (8.4): extent to which academic and business expectations were met and the quality of feedback from individual participants to course commissioners.

Facilities (7.4): rating of the learning environment's quality and convenience, and of supporting resources and facilities.

Value for money (7.7): clients' rating of the programme's design, teaching and materials in terms of value for money.

Future use (8.0): likelihood that clients would reuse the same school for other customised programmes in the future and whether they would recommission the same programme.

International clients (5.0): based on the percentage of clients with headquarters outside the business school's base country and region.

Overseas programmes (2.0): international reach of the school's customised programme teaching.

Growth (5.0): based on the overall growth in revenues from customised programmes as well as the growth in revenues from repeat business.

Partner schools (3.0): quantity and quality of programmes developed or taught in conjunction with other EQUIS or AACSB accredited business schools.

Faculty diversity (5.0): diversity of school faculty according to citizenship and gender.

Total responses‡: number of individual surveys completed by the school's clients. Figures in brackets indicate the number of years of survey data counted towards the ranking.

Footnotes

‡ The first figure refers to the number of individual surveys completed by clients of the business school. The figure in brackets indicates the total number of years of survey data included in this ranking. Data are retained for those schools that participated in the 2018 or 2019 ranking but were not ranked in either or both.

Key to open-enrolment programmes (weights for ranking criteria are shown in brackets as a percentage of the overall ranking)

The first 10 criteria are based on data from programme participants; the next six are based on data submitted by the business schools. Ranks are shown for each of these criteria, apart from "Female participants (%)", which shows the percentage.

Figures in brackets show the weight each criterion contributes to the overall ranking. The weighting accorded to the first 10 criteria, from preparation to facilities, accounts for 80 per cent of the total ranking's weight. It is determined by the level of importance that participants attach to each.

Preparation (7.7): provision of advance information on programme content and the participant selection process.

Course design (8.6): flexibility of the course and appropriateness of class size, structure and design.

Teaching methods and materials (8.3): extent to which teaching methods and materials were contemporary and appropriate, and included a suitable mix of academic rigour and practical relevance.

Faculty (8.7): quality of teaching and the extent to which teaching staff worked together to present a coherent programme.

Quality of participants (7.9): the extent to which other programme participants were of the appropriate managerial and academic standard, the international diversity of participants, and the quality of interaction among peers.

New skills and learning (8.7): relevance of skills gained to the workplace, the ease with which they were implemented, and the extent to which the course encouraged new ways of thinking.

Follow-up (7.3): level of follow-up offered after participants returned to their workplaces, and networking opportunities with fellow participants.

Aims achieved (8.4): extent to which personal and professional expectations were met, and the likelihood that participants would recommend the programme.

Food and accommodation (6.8): rating of the quality of food and accommodation.

Facilities (7.6): rating of the learning environment's quality and convenience, and of supporting resources and facilities.

Female participants (2.0): percentage of female course participants.

International participants (3.0): based on the percentage of participants from outside the business school's base country and region.

International location (2.0): extent to which programmes are run outside the school's base country and region.

Growth (5.0): based on the overall growth in revenues from open programmes as well as the growth in revenues from repeat business.

Partner schools (3.0): quantity and quality of programmes taught in conjunction with other Equis or AACSB accredited business schools.

Faculty diversity (5.0): diversity of school faculty according to citizenship and gender.

Footnotes

All categories show rank numbers except "Female participants (%)", which shows the percentage.