

insider Spark

Executive education can give your career and skills a real boost, writes Nicola Porter. But with so many options on offer, make sure you look at them carefully before you sign up

Ready, exec, go!

When Gareth Prosser signed up for an Executive Master of Business Administration (EMBA) course in 2010, he didn't realise the commitment and juggling it would take. The 33-year-old senior manager at construction and building maintenance company Hilti GB is often on the road for several days a week, so finding space in his diary can be a struggle. "I no longer have a social life and spend my holidays in the library," he says. "But this course is still the best thing I've ever done.

"It's all been quite humbling, because I thought I knew it all before." **Gareth Prosser**

"The qualification is giving me an in-depth grounding in good business management and it's all been quite humbling, really, because I thought I knew it all before."

All being well, Prosser will graduate from the University of Glamorgan in September. He's already gained a promotion from area manager for Wales to trading manager for Northern Europe since signing up for the course.

Leadership and management courses are often seen as fast tracks to promotion for executives, or as a chance to gain an extra qualification for talented business people who didn't take an undergraduate degree.

For those below board level, support and goodwill from managers is crucial because juggling the day job and coursework can be difficult. Prosser's company sponsored the two-year part-time course and gave him free study time. It was his former boss who suggested he enrolled on an EMBA, with the proviso that he chose a course that was business-focused and not too theoretical.

Companies *Insider* contacted said the first thing they looked for in a leadership and management course was whether it was "true to life" and could be accommodated around a busy working week.

With a growing number of providers competing for business in tough financial



BEST IN CLASS Graduates at the University of Glamorgan

conditions, executive education has become a buyer's market. Providers have had to think more originally and design courses to suit tight budgets and packed diaries.

Companies including the insurer Admiral, Welsh Water and breweries and pubs group SA Brain are continuing to invest in management training. In 2009, Brains joined forces with the Cardiff Business School at Cardiff University to develop a course called Power of Positive Leadership.

But critics say some smaller Welsh companies don't sign up to executive education because courses are not flexible enough. Barrie Kennard is director of Leadership & Management Wales (LMW), which helps small businesses develop their leadership and management skills. He says executive education is under-utilised in Wales and believes the problem is with the providers rather than the customers. "Providers have to be more creative in their thinking and get out

FINANCE CENTRE LAUNCHED

The University of Glamorgan has set up a Centre for Financial and Professional Services with the aim of improving skills among the sector's workforce. The centre was launched in May by first minister Carwyn Jones. The Welsh Government worked with the university to develop courses and training. Facilities at the new centre include a mock courtroom, in which students can hone their advocacy skills. It will also feature an equity trading room, with screens showing breaking news, stock market data and personal finance advice. The room will allow students to take part in simulated share dealing in a real-time environment. Jones said: "Wales needs to be attractive to businesses and organisations looking to base their operations here, and the opportunities provided by the new centre will ensure that we can offer a highly skilled workforce."

Welcome to our classroom...

Our leadership day is based on Challenge Wales (72-foot round-the-world yacht based in Cardiff). Each Executive MBA student is given training on how to sail the boat and then has to race the yacht as captain against the clock over a set distance.

This picture was taken by the course director on the 13th of May 2012.

The Cardiff Met Executive MBA:

- ↘ Eight starting points per year
- ↘ Weekend delivery (normally one weekend per month)
- ↘ Action learning environment (Challenge Wales)
- ↘ Very flexible programme design
- ↘ Course can be completed between two and five years
- ↘ 45 options courses
- ↘ 14 named routes
- ↘ Includes CMI membership
- ↘ Dual award includes PRINCE2
- ↘ Runs as short courses and an integrated course
- ↘ APL and APEL considered



Cardiff Metropolitan University

Executive MBA

Executive MBA Student undertaking the one-day live Leadership Challenge of skipping an ocean-going yacht in the Bristol Channel as part of their academic programme.

Contact information: Professor Mark M. H. Goode

[cardiffmet.ac.uk/
execmba](http://cardiffmet.ac.uk/execmba)

Tel 029 2020 5685

Cardiff Metropolitan University
Prifysgol Fetropolitan Caerdydd

UWIC

INVESTORS | BUDDSODDWR
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Upcoming new programme

➤ MSc Lean Enterprise

If you'd like to find out more about this exciting new programme contact: cardiffmet.ac.uk/business

IoD LINKS UP WITH CMU

The Institute of Directors (IoD) has set up a student membership scheme with Cardiff Metropolitan University. Membership will be available to students across the university, including those studying at the Cardiff School of Management. The scheme, intended to strengthen links between Welsh enterprise and the next generation of entrepreneurs, is one of a small number across the UK and the only one in Wales. IoD Wales director Robert Lloyd Griffiths said: "Our members are eager to identify, cherish and nurture the next generation of leaders. This partnership is an effective way of doing just that."

more," he says. "The very term 'executive education' gives the wrong impression – managers and leaders don't always wear suits and sit in a boardroom. Why not hold an afternoon session in a hairdresser or in a garage, for a start?"

"There is innovative work being done by providers, but there needs to be better engagement with smaller businesses and a better mix of courses available."

As well as full EMBA, many university business schools and other private training providers also offer short part-time leadership courses over eight to ten months. There is also the option of Welsh Government affiliated leadership and management courses, which can be apid for with funding from the Sector Leadership Fund or React 11, a training fund for people who have been made redundant.



ROBINSON 20Twenty course

Elizabeth Parkes, award leader for the EMBA and senior marketing lecturer at the University of Glamorgan, says the customer now defines executive education. She says successful EMBA are overseen by business people, focused on the right skills and on real life. One of the greatest benefits of executive education, she says, is that it gives talented employees the confidence to challenge their bosses.

Kate Bennett graduated from the University of Glamorgan's EMBA course last year. An assessment associate with the International Baccalaureate education organisation, she says completing the EMBA has given her the "gift of confidence" and a network of new contacts who regularly exchange ideas through social media and in person. But she warns that anyone considering an EMBA must be certain they can commit enough time, or it could end up being a waste of money.

While universities are keen to stress the positives of executive education, there can also be some negatives. Parkes says employers should choose their EMBA carefully as quality varies across providers.

For those going solo for the first time, a leadership and management course can be a savvy move. Sara Robinson set up public relations and digital media consultancy Cake Communications last year. She had a strong reputation in the industry but no business management experience and needed a strong grounding in good business practice.

She signed up for the part-time 20Twenty course at Cardiff Metropolitan University, which she says is helping to provide her with the key leadership skills she needed to run her own business. She attends two 'classroom days' every seven to eight weeks, during which she is being helped to put together a three-year strategy for growth.

"The course has helped crystallise my vision and aided me in practical planning as well as finance," says Robinson. "It's also helping me to keep on top of new innovations and ideas around leadership and gives me the 'white space' I need to step away from the day to day and focus on the future."

For other high flyers embarking on courses, it's all about professionalism and being the 'real deal'. As the reputation of banking and finance has taken a knock, one course has emerged in Wales to raise its professional status. John Howard Jones is a bank manager at a Co-operative Bank branch in Bangor and a member of the first intake on the Chartered Banker MBA, a course being run in association with the Chartered Banker Institute. The online course, set up in 2010, attracts bankers from across the globe.

Sponsored by his bank, Jones says he enrolled on the course to learn good practice and become a banking professional with chartered status.

Simon Thompson, chief executive of the Chartered Banker Institute, says: "For some time we had been concerned that too many banking leaders were not developing and demonstrating the professional knowledge, skills, attitudes and behaviours we would expect to see. We set about finding a learning partner with whom we could develop a post-crisis MBA for a future generation of bank executives committed to the high standards of professionalism required."

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Judy Craske

For companies and individuals unable to access funds or sponsorship, there is the Welsh Government's Enhanced Leadership and Management Skills Programme. The programme provides workshops in skills management that, depending on the company's size, can be up to 70 per cent subsidised.

But according to Judy Craske, who is spearheading the £4m talent programme Shaping the Future in north west Wales, good leadership and management courses are scarce. Craske says the development of future leaders is key to the future of Wales. But her research along the A55 corridor led her to conclude: "The courses are all too academic. If we are going to raise Wales's prosperity and be really serious about it, we need to train people with big ideas in the basics of good business practice."