

The rise of the 'ethical' MBA student

Most MBA graduates will shamelessly admit that they took the post-graduate degree in order to boost their earning potential. Students enrolling on the new Green MBA programme at Marbella University, however, are likely to graduate with a different answer if their course description is anything to go by.

Taking what it calls a "vanguard" approach to international business, the Green MBA's homepage states that: "The majority of the business world has been poisoned by exaggeration, understating, sweet talking, lies, deceit, cheats, fraud, seduction, manipulation, and distortion.

"There are hundreds of thousands of leaders that act with megalomania, paternalism, extreme greed, stubbornness, sick narcissism, arrogance, falseness and scrupulousness, perversion, amorality or political lunacy.

"Humanity and the world need new leaders and experts to resolve the global problems. The MBA programs at Marbella University entail a vanguard approach to international business with a strong focus on 'human factors' and the complexity of today's global business world." The 30-week course taught entirely in English is broken down into three terms starting in July and will cost students in the region of £20,000.

According to a recent survey of the mindset and aspirations of MBA applicants by career and education specialists, the number of MBA candidates searching for an "ethical" MBA degree or one that has sustainability and social responsibility at its core has increased dramatically over five years.

Another QS survey indicates that business school students are significantly less likely to accept a position in controversial industries such as defence or tobacco, or with a company that doesn't have a proven ethical track record, than they were five years ago.

MBAs without Borders, a non-profit organization that connects experienced MBA graduate volunteers with NGOs in the developing world has 50 MBA graduates applying for each unpaid position and suggest that times are changing.

Ross Geraghty, managing editor of the QS TopMBA Career Guide said: "The war for talent is no longer being fought with wages alone but with a different measure -

by how an MBA graduate can contribute positively and ethically to the world around them. Business leaders have come in for great criticism over the last few years, and the University of Marbella's attack is just one, albeit extreme, example.

"It's hard to question that the Milton Friedman-esque profit-motive ("the social responsibility of business is to increase its profits") did lead a minority of greedy financiers down a slippery slope towards the recent financial crisis, but I believe there are equally as many who have community, the environment or corporate ethics at their core.

"It's not going to happen overnight but the next generation of business leaders are likely to look as unfamiliar to Milton Friedman's generation as 1980s business people would have done to pre-war industrial oligarchs.

"I hope that this will start to bring business back into the fold and to play a leading role in communities and the environment in the future, to stave off future crises, which profits no-one in the long run, and make over-the-top attacks such as the University of Marbella's, a thing of the past."

Marbella University, the only English-speaking university in southern Spain, was founded in 2009 and, in addition to its MBA, offers courses in communication and public relations, tourism, journalism and psychology (The Telegraph 22-12-11).