

How to Fit the AIB MBA into Your Life

Alexandra Skinner

Deciding to do an MBA is a big decision and one that requires strong commitment and dedication. But with some flexibility from both the study institution and your employer, family support and a good level of prioritising and forward planning, it's very achievable.

The Australian Institute of Business (AIB) offers a 12 Month MBA, meaning students are required to dedicate a significant level of time to study within a 12 month period. But with this dedication comes a large prize within a short timeframe – you have an MBA in 12 months.

AIB's graduates report that while they needed to make some priority adjustments throughout the year of completing their MBA, family support, very careful planning and time management go a long way to making graduating with an MBA a very achievable goal.

This article highlights a number of examples which illustrate how AIB graduates have successfully fitted the MBA into their lives.

Family Support and a Flexible Employer

Jodi Howie: Financial Planner, Flight Centre.

When Jodi recently took on the accelerated 12 month MBA programme at AIB, she found that family support and a flexible employer made her life a lot easier when she was studying.

"My husband was fantastic and I couldn't have done the MBA without his support. It was all the little things that he did that made a difference, such as encouraging me, cooking dinner, and doing the cleaning when I didn't have time," said Jodi. "I also had a flexible employer and was able to arrange to have two days off a month to study. This way I was able to devote more time when I had assignments or exams. The two days off a month were really important and it would have been difficult to do the MBA without having this flexibility."

Jodi had to make some sacrifices and be disciplined with her routine, but she knew it would be worth it in the end.

"I've always been fairly disciplined and I broke the course down for myself to make it more manageable. I would wake up at five in the morning and do two hours of study before work. I would usually do this three times a week and then I would also study most of the weekend."

"I enjoy exercising, but during the MBA I had to reduce the amount of exercise I was doing. I also had to cut down my social life and my first reaction when someone would ask me whether I wanted to catch up was that I had to study. But it worked, because the accelerated programme was for such a short time, relatively, and I was prepared to make these sacrifices."



WEEKDAYS

5AM	Study
9AM	Work
6PM	Social

“Family support, very careful planning and time management go a long way to making graduating with an MBA a very achievable goal.”

Early Mornings and Weekends Aid the Balance

Paolo Trevisan: Finance Manager, Hilton Worldwide.

Paolo Trevisan had always been interested in taking on an MBA. With his career at Hilton Worldwide progressing, he felt he wanted to increase his skills, knowledge and confidence, but also wanted to continue working full-time.

When he decided to take on the AIB MBA, Paolo attended weekend classes and studied every evening to ensure he stayed on top of his coursework.

"I was working from 9am to 5pm at the time and I would attend the MBA classes on the weekends. I would study mostly during the evenings after my daughter had gone to bed, from about nine until midnight every night. I found the study very enjoyable and, for that reason, it wasn't too much of a chore," said Paolo.

"Although I spent a lot of time working and studying, my family was always very supportive. My employer was also very supportive and I found I didn't need to take time off from work to complete my studies."

Paolo also found the support from AIB staff invaluable, making his experience with AIB a very positive one.

"Everyone at AIB was friendly, professional and the course was well organised. That was the key. From the moment you began, you knew exactly what to expect from the course."



WEEKDAYS

9AM	Work
6PM	Social
9PM	Study

WEEKENDS

9AM	Class
6PM	Social

Managing an Unexpected Change in Circumstances

Ashleigh Merriel: Senior Administrative Coordinator, Faculty of Health Sciences, Flinders University.

Soon after Ashleigh Merriel had begun studying the AIB MBA in Adelaide, a change in circumstances meant she had to move to Tasmania. Luckily, AIB accommodated her needs and she switched from studying internally to distance learning.

"I found the AIB MBA to be extremely flexible. I began the course studying on-campus, but when I had to move to Tasmania, I was able to complete the course via correspondence," said Ashleigh.

Ashleigh also managed to fit the MBA into her busy work and life schedule by planning and structuring her days.

"I was studying approximately 20 hours per week. My routine consisted of working from 9am to 5pm. I would make sure that I had a half an hour break for dinner and I would fit in most of my study in the evenings," said Ashleigh.

Ashleigh's own drive and organisation, with the help of AIB's accommodating approach, meant that she was able to successfully complete the AIB MBA without compromising her other commitments.

"I was impressed with how accommodating the Australian Institute of Business was. On one occasion I had to be in Sydney for work when I had an exam scheduled, but the staff at AIB were extremely supportive and I was able to complete the exam at another time."



WEEKDAYS

9AM	Work
6PM	Social
9PM	Study

“I was impressed with how accommodating AIB was.”
Ashleigh Merriel

Managing a Senior Role and a Family

Andrew Werner: ARFF Training Delivery Manager, Airservices Australia.

Working in a senior operational role for Airservices Australia, and with a family to take care of, Andrew Werner already had a lot on his plate before he decided to take on an MBA.

However, after speaking to a colleague who had just undertaken an MBA at AIB, Andrew decided it was a challenge he could tackle. So how did Andrew manage to balance his work and study?

"I started with a routine at the beginning of my studies, and I tried to maintain it. It was difficult, but I found that for me, the best time to study was during the evenings when the kids had gone to bed," said Andrew. "I was working around 50 to 60 hours per week and studying for at least 15 hours per week. However, my employer was very supportive of my studies and once or twice I took some study leave, which was very helpful."

Although Andrew acknowledges he had to restructure his routine and priorities, the benefits were thoroughly worth it.



WEEKDAYS

9AM	Work
6PM	Social
9PM	Study

Taking the External Study Option

David Rowe: MES Business Development Manager, Siemens Healthcare.

David Rowe took on the AIB MBA as he saw the course as a way of gaining formal business qualifications that he could manage alongside his work commitments. At the time of taking on the MBA, David was travelling frequently and needed a course that would accommodate his schedule.

"The external study format appealed to me as it meant that I could balance my family life and my job. In particular, my job at the time involved quite a lot of travel to South East Asia, so I could not physically attend classes. I liked the non-traditional format of studying one subject per month, as I was able to arrange my travel around the four week blocks. The flexibility that the course afforded was great", said David.

Although David was working during the majority of his MBA studies, he found that he was able to manage both working and studying by planning his time and being organised.

"I found that I needed 20 hours a week minimum to study and I looked for innovative ways to achieve that. At the time when I was working, I was getting up early in the morning so that I could have my study done before going to work," said David.

"The course was definitely manageable. I liked the format and I always knew what to expect, which made it much easier to plan and balance study, work and life."



WEEKDAYS

5AM	Study
9AM	Work
6PM	Social

Three Time Management Tips for Students

Plan Ahead

- ▶ Set an achievable study schedule and stick to it. If you have planned to spend one hour on something, try to achieve it within that allocated hour then move on to the next task.
- ▶ Prepare a monthly overview, a weekly overview and a daily planner. This way you will be able to keep sight of what is due for every subject, as well as having a clear plan for how you can achieve everything in the time available.
- ▶ Sometimes it helps to develop a routine with set times during the week that you allocate to studying.

Prioritise

- ▶ Decide on what your most important tasks are and do them first.
- ▶ Try not to postpone tasks.
- ▶ Daily "to do" lists are an excellent way of working out what you need to achieve in a day. You can prioritise these lists and tick the items off as you get them done.

Study Effectively

- ▶ Split large tasks into smaller, more manageable tasks.
- ▶ Try to limit distractions and find a quiet place where you find it easiest to focus.
- ▶ Be aware of procrastination and avoidance strategies.

Biography

➤ **Alexandra Skinner** is Group Editor-in-Chief at the International Graduate Forum