

Argentina

Demographics for Argentina

Population:	39,537,943 (July 2005 est.)
GDP (by PPP method):	US\$483.5 billion
Currency (inc code):	Argentine peso (ARS)
Language(s):	Spanish (official), English, Italian, German, French
Internet country code:	.ar

Elementary and secondary education

Students normally spend one to three years in nursery school and kindergarten, followed by one year of compulsory pre-elementary school and nine years of compulsory elementary education referred to as Educación General Básica (EGB) from ages six to 15 (representing grades one through nine) leading to the Certificate of General Basic Education. Following the EGB, at age 15, students begin what is known as polymodal education which lasts for three non-mandatory years and leads to the certificate of Bachiller at age 18. In parallel to the polymodal cycle, there is a technical-professional track which leads, after a further year's study, to the degree of technician or técnico. Some schools provide a course lasting one year longer leading to the Bachillerato Especializado.

Education is a primary competence of the provinces, which are responsible for the funding of public schools. Curricula contents result from the combination of federal agreement of the nation and the provinces, and each particular province. The Argentine National Council of Education, in which every province is represented by its Minister of Education, sets a standard curriculum that is followed by schools throughout the country. However, these standards offer some flexibility to accommodate local variations between provinces. Public

primary schools (EGB) are free but there are no public school buses and students must buy their own books and uniforms. For children with special needs there are separate programs. It is important to mention that most public educational institutions are chronically under funded, and often suffer disruptions due to teacher strikes.

Higher education

Higher education in Argentina is provided by two types of institutions: on one hand, universities and university institutes; and on the other hand, non-university superior institutes (institutos terciarios) which comprehend technical and professional studies, as well as teacher-training institutes (leading to degrees such as technician, expert, analyst, among others). Universities are autonomous. The National Inter-University Council (CIN) coordinates university policies and their relationship with public and private, national and foreign bodies; as well as the drawing of proposals for the national recognition of degrees and diplomas. Private universities are autonomous but must be recognized by the state and their statutes. They may award degrees and qualifications that are valid nationally if recognized by the central government.

It is important to mention that during the first half of the 1990s, the effective criteria for the creation of universities was substantially modified, thus the number of institutions expanded remarkably, especially the private ones. As a consequence, between 1990 and 1996, 22 new private universities and 12 national universities were created (generating a strong diversification as far as academic and institutional proposals, as well as in quality levels). That is to say that within a few years 34 new universities were created (more than one-third of the number of existing ones). At present there are 97 university institutions of which 54 are private and 43 are public (basic tuition is free). Likewise, there are around 1,800 non-university institutes.

In 1995, the Consejo Nacional de Evaluación y Acreditación Universitaria (CONEAU) was created with the mission of overseeing the external evaluations of all universities, accreditation of graduate and postgraduate studies, and providing authorization for the establishment of new universities. The CONEAU is a decentralized body inserted in the organic structure of the Ministry of Education, Science and Technology.

According to The National Commission of Higher Education Improvement there are around 4,250 graduate and pre-graduate university careers at present. A Bachelor's degree normally requires between four and five years of study. The first stage corresponds to the study of basic subjects and the second stage corresponds to a concentrated more specific program of study according to each career. In fields such as architecture and law, professional degrees are awarded after five to six years of study. In the medical field, degrees take between five and seven years to be accomplished and require a mandatory work experience at the end of the academic cycle, commonly known as medical residence. In 2002 there

were 74,798 university graduates in the country, 75 percent of which graduated in public universities, and 56 percent of whom were women.

University applications may include completion of an entrance examination, high school transcripts, an essay, letter of recommendation and a personal interview (the last one usually in private universities). The University of Buenos Aires (UBA), a public institution and the largest university in the country, requires completion of a full year study program prior to the beginning of any career. This is referred to as the *Ciclo Básico Común* (CBC) and constitutes the first cycle of university studies. Its purpose is to offer an integral and interdisciplinary basic formation, to consolidate learning methodologies and to contribute to an ethical, civic and democratic formation.

Graduate education includes three programs of study leading to a specialization, a Master's degree, or a Doctor's degree. A specialization implies further training in a discipline or in an interdisciplinary field and is conferred after at least one year of further study after the Bachelor's degree. The Master's degree, in addition to the previous requisites, includes carrying out a project or defending a thesis under the guidance of a supervisor. Following the Master's degree, the Doctor's degree is the highest. The intention is that candidates produce true and original contributions in a specific field of knowledge within a frame of academic excellence. These contributions are presented in a Doctoral thesis and culminate in an evaluation by a jury composed of at least one member who is external to the institution. At the moment there are around 2,151 postgraduate careers in the country, of which 49 percent are specializations, 37 percent are Master's degrees, and 14 percent correspond to Doctor's degrees.

In Argentina, an academic year is usually a period of time from March to December. Winter recession is held in the month of July and comprises two or three weeks depending on the institution; summer recession extends to a period of two to three months and generally takes place from the end of December to the beginning of March. As in the USA, institutions operate under a semester or quarter academic calendar.

Management education

Although rather delayed in relation to the developed world, the growth of management education is a well-known phenomenon in the recent evolution of the Argentine university system. The amount of postgraduate careers that have been created in the last decade is a clear example of this. Business programs within universities are usually managed and delivered by an academic unit often referred to as a business school or a faculty within a university (e.g. *Facultad de Ciencias Económicas*, or *Facultad de Ciencias Empresariales*). Non-degree management education such as short management programs and executive workshops are provided by universities and by a wide range of associations, educational institutes and consulting companies.

Undergraduate education (leading to a Bachelor's degree) in business and management is provided by universities and university institutes and requires between four and five years of study. Generally, the program involves two years of general studies and two or three years of specific business studies. Degree titles may vary depending on institutional preferences. The most commonly offered degree titles are Bachelor of Business Administration and Bachelor of Science in Business. Some degree programs allow students to select a concentration within business, which usually requires between four and six specific courses in the area of emphasis.

Graduate business education includes three types of degrees: specialization, Master and Doctorate. Specializations in the business field can be earned in areas such as finance administration, agribusiness, marketing, etc. At Master's level, business education includes programs leading to a general business Master's degree (Master of Business Administration) and programs leading to a specialized Master's degree (e.g. Master in Administration of Health Care Institutions, Master in Finance), which provide specialized training within a specific field. Likewise, Doctorate level business education may also lead to a general business degree or to more specific degrees.

Regarding MBA programs in the country, there is only one institution (IAE Business School) that offers a full-time MBA program aimed at young professionals who dedicate one academic year to a full-time schedule in order to earn the Master's degree. Regarding part-time MBA programs, there are several institutions that offer different program types designed for professionals who work during the day and attend classes in the evening, or attend classes during one week day and Saturdays. There are many different combinations of part-time executive MBAs, which normally last between 18 and 24 months, and are generally company sponsored. Some executive MBA programs combine the part-time agenda with some full-time dedication weeks during the program.

Regarding business Doctoral programs, in Argentina there are only five institutions that offer accredited business Doctorate degrees. These programs prepare candidates to conduct specialized research intended to produce original contributions in a specific business area. Each student has an academic advisor or tutor who is responsible for providing direction throughout the academic obligations (classes, seminars, etc.) and guidance in the identification and planning of the investigation that will constitute the Doctoral thesis. Once the subject is chosen and accepted, the student begins a research stage that will culminate with the writing of a Doctoral thesis which must be presented and defended before a Doctoral committee constituted by faculty and authorities expert in the subject matter. The candidate must justify his/her research and answer questions.

Regarding accreditation in Argentina, there is no local association specialized in management accreditation. It is worth mentioning though, that the MBA and Executive MBA programs dictated at IAE Business School are the only ones that receive AACSB and EQUIS accreditation.

Faculty

In the beginning, most business faculty came directly from the business world, and although this trend is still a reality, it has been somewhat complemented by the fact that since the end of the 1990s business schools have started to recruit Doctoral graduates from related academic disciplines. There is little evidence that (regardless of exceptions such as IAE Business School) institutions are investing in faculty development; meaning by faculty development the process of hiring young professors and building an academic career, with them which includes attending Master and PhD programs in universities abroad.

Although faculty models vary across institutions, generally full-time faculty expected to conduct research, teach, and execute some sort of management responsibility within the school. Likewise, some professors conduct independent consulting assignments for local and foreign companies, which keep them connected to the business world.

A study done by Instituto de Estudios Superiores para América Latina y el Caribe (IESALC), which included 246 specializations, 181 Master's, and 58 Doctoral programs, distributed in 70 institutions, came to the conclusion that in the field of social sciences (where management is included), 51.1 percent of the faculty in specialization programs has at least a specialization degree, 53.3 percent of the faculty in Master's programs has at least a Master's degree, and 68.2 per cent of the faculty in Doctoral programs holds a Doctor's degree.

Students

In 2003, there were 100,000 undergraduate students in business and management programs in the country. Argentine universities awarded 5,000 Bachelor's degrees in business administration in 2002 which means that 7 percent of Bachelor's degrees were awarded in business and management. Likewise, around 50 percent of all business Bachelor's degrees are awarded to women. Regarding MBAs, there were around 1,700 MBA graduates in 2004.

The following data corresponds to institutions that have been accredited by CONEAU:

- Number of institutions that offer undergraduate business degree programs: 69.
- Number of institutions that offer business specialization degree programs: 27.
- Number of institutions that offer business Master's degree programs: 33.
- Number of institutions that offer business Doctoral degree programs: 5.
- Number of institutions that offer at least one level of postgraduate business degree programs (specialization, Master, or Doctoral): 45.
- Number of institutions that offer all three levels of postgraduate business degree programs: 2.

Issues facing business schools

As stated earlier, one of the issues that face business schools in Argentina is the lack of culture regarding full-time faculty. Some universities have recently started to develop full-time professors for graduate programs but there is little evidence of this happening in management education (with the exception of IAE Business School that currently has 45 full-time faculty members). This is somewhat related to the lack of academic investment that is present at all levels in the country.

It is very difficult for business schools to obtain funding for the academic development of faculty (Doctoral programs abroad, research, publications, etc.). Likewise, it is hard to obtain support with regard to student scholarships, in order to give high potential young executives with limited economic resources, the opportunity to have access to a Master's degree. The fact is that business schools in developed countries receive important donations which play a key role in funding these activities, and the truth is that Argentina has little or no donation culture. (It is worth mentioning that donation in Argentina is not tax deductible as it is in the USA.)

Likewise, business schools have a crucial role in providing answers to tensions between global management trends and local social and economic reality. In order to contribute to the inclusion of Argentina in a world that is becoming more globalized each day, business schools should provide multinational companies working throughout the region with the social and cultural idiosyncrasy of Latin American society while enhancing local and regional small, medium, and large companies in their process of becoming international players. Argentine management educational institutes are faced with a big challenge in opening themselves to the world.

All of these issues – development of full-time faculty, funding capability, and internationalization – are key competitive factors that will play a crucial role in both the quality, and sustainability of business schools in Argentina.

Fernando Fragueiro
IAE Universidad Austral

Sources

CONEAU – Comisión Nacional de Evaluación y Acreditación Universitaria.

IESALC/UNESCO – Instituto Internacional para la Educación Superior en América Latina y el Caribe.

Ministerio de Educación, Ciencia y Tecnología anuarios – estadísticos.

PMSIU – Programa de Mejoramiento del Sistema de Información Universitaria.