



# IBCM Alumni Survey Report

Quality Assurance Office

# 2015

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## **1.0 Executive summary**

The second IBCM alumni survey was conducted in September through October of 2015 to collect data and feedback from the first and second generation of IBCM bachelor graduates. The response rate of 63% was well below target but yielded some instructive results. Notably, overall satisfaction with the IBCM experience was strong: 95% of respondents expressed a strong degree of satisfaction with their experience at IBCM, and 95% agreed completely that they would recommend the IBCM to a friend or family member.

Due to the limited response rate of only 63%, employment figures were deemed inconclusive. To arrive at a more reliable figure, the office of Student Service followed up by calling alumni one by one and getting the information regarding their employment status and also amassing a comprehensive database of their post-graduation activities. In doing so, it was found that 81% of IBCM alumni are currently working or in a few cases pursuing more advanced study.

Employed alumni were spread out across sectors, with 63% employed in the private sector, 15% public, and 22% non-profit. Through the survey, alumni also indicated how they found their current positions, with results evenly divided among 1) internet job advertisements, 2) internships, and 3) social contacts. The prominent position of internships reflects the positive feedback IBCM has received from internship supervisors.

The survey suggested that there is substantial interest among alumni in participating in ongoing college events and activities, such as career fairs, conferences, trainings, workshops and business club events. Respondents also provided feedback on subject areas that they feel should be strengthened at IBCM in order to ensure that alumni are well prepared for the labor force. These should be taken into consideration during curriculum review and the design of future trainings.

## 2.0 Introduction

As an internationally- oriented higher education institution with a professional/vocational mission, the [International Business College Mitrovica](#) (IBCM) is focused on preparing competitive candidates for the workforce. As such, IBCM coursework includes a strong focus on developing in demand skills that are applicable to the needs of employers with a learner- centered approach to education at the center of this endeavor.

The IBCM graduated its first cohort of 47 bachelor students in May of 2014, with 9 graduates having completed their studies at the North campus and 38 at the South campus. Second cohort of IBCM graduates count for 65 bachelor students who graduated in May of 2015, with 33 graduates having completed their studies at the North campus and 32 at the South campus. The total number of IBCM graduates from first and second cohort is 112.

The purpose of the IBCM alumni survey is to gauge the success of IBCM graduates in the labor force and gain feedback on how the college might better prepare them for entering the world of work.

**Figure 1. Number of 2014 alumni by spur and campus**

	ISM Bachelor	PSM Bachelor	EAM Bachelor	Total by Campus
North Campus	8	1	0*	9
South Campus	25	13	0	38
<b>Total by Program</b>	<b>33</b>	<b>14</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>47</b>

**Figure 2. Number of 2015 alumni by spur and campus**

	ISM Bachelor	PSM Bachelor	EAM Bachelor	Total by Campus
North Campus	16	8	9	33
South Campus	19	6	7	32
<b>Total by Program</b>	<b>35</b>	<b>14</b>	<b>16</b>	<b>65</b>

\*There was a mismatch in data reporting from 2014 alumni report, where a first cohort AP graduate was counted as a bachelor graduate in EAM.

Figure 3. Number of 2014 & 2015 alumni by spur and campus

	ISM Bachelor	PSM Bachelor	EAM Bachelor	Total by Campus
North Campus	24	9	9	42
South Campus	44	19	7	70
<b>Total by Program</b>	<b>68</b>	<b>28</b>	<b>16</b>	<b>112</b>

### 3.0 Survey Design

Design of the 2015 Alumni Survey was guided by the Quality Assurance Office with feedback from other stakeholders at the college. Several key objectives were determined during the planning phase, and questions were designed to collect data corresponding to these areas. The following general categories were defined:

- Student background data for future disaggregation
- Employment information
- Plans for further education
- How well-prepared alumni feel for entering the workforce
- General satisfaction and attitudes toward the IBCM experience
- Suggestions for improvement and future activities
- Updated contact information

The survey was designed such that it would take roughly 10 minutes to complete while still containing sufficient question items for gathering a variety of instructive data. It was piloted first with several IBCM staff members to gain feedback on structure, wording, and question types.

Items were selected to incorporate both quantitative and qualitative measures depending on the nature of the question under examination. Given that alumni are spread out and difficult to reach on a face-to-face basis, the IBCM used Google forms for this survey. In this way the survey was conducted fully online and broken into different sections.

### **Section 1: Background information**

The first section collected general background information useful for disaggregating data during analysis. Questions in this section touched on:

- Gender
- Location of residence
- Program and campus of study at the IBCM
- Current employment status

### **Section 2: Employment details**

Participants responding that they were currently working were directed to a second section with more detailed questions regarding their employment. Those not working were forwarded on to section 3. Given that IBCM programs span both public and private spheres, respondents were asked about the sector of their employment and whether they are currently working in the same area as their field of studies at the IBCM. Respondents were also asked how they found their current work position. Here the purpose was to determine 1) how many students found employment through their internship experiences and 2) how many relied on social contacts as opposed to applying through standard mechanisms such as responding to a job advertisement. A final question asked whether respondents planned to open their own business within the next year.

### **Section 3: Further studies**

A third brief section explored alumni attitudes toward further studies, with one question asking whether students were planning to continue with further studies during the current year and a second asking whether they expected to do so within a 5-year timeframe.

### **Section 4: Satisfaction with IBCM**

This section included a series of seven Likert scale items with responses ranging from 1 (Disagree Completely) to 7 (Agree Completely). These questions were selected to explore the degree to which alumni feel:

- Overall satisfied with the IBCM experience
- That IBCM imparted them with the education and skills necessary to succeed in the workforce
- That IBCM gave them the skills necessary to be entrepreneurs and play an active role in regional development

### **Section 5: Open-ended feedback**

This section included a series of four open-ended questions designed to elicit broad feedback in the following areas:

- How IBCM might better prepare students for the workforce and make them more competitive?
- How IBCM might better support and engage with alumni in the future?

## Section 6: Updated contact information

A final section containing optional questions allowed respondents to provide updated e-mail and telephone numbers to facilitate future communications.

### 4.0 Survey Administration

The survey was disseminated via email to all alumni along with a brief introductory message explaining how survey results would be used. Reminder emails were sent roughly every 2 weeks over the course of two months with 4 emails sent in total. Early responses were slow to come in, so Student Service staff members followed up with telephone calls to check that alumni had received the email and to emphasize that the survey would provide valuable information for the IBCM to better serve future generations.

## 5.0 Results

### 5.1 Response

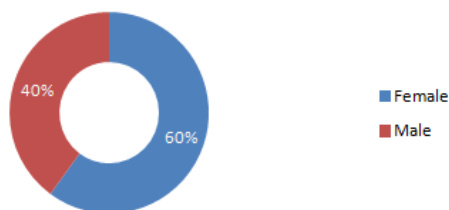
The survey ultimately yielded 71 responses out of 112 alumni who graduated in the 2014 and 2015, representing a response rate of 63%. There were 25 responses from alumni graduated in 2014 representing a rate of 53%, and 46 responses from alumni graduated in 2015 representing a response rate of 71%. This was lower than targeted even with multiple rounds of reminder emails and additional follow-up reminders done by phone. The relatively low response rate and small sample size are important to bear in mind in reviewing results of the 2015 Alumni Survey, which likely have an element of bias and are thus inconclusive.

Some alumni contacted via telephone indicated that they rarely check their institutional email now that they have finished their studies, which may be one reason for the limited response. One recommendation arising from this observation is that the IBCM should collect and organize personal emails for graduating students to facilitate ongoing communications.

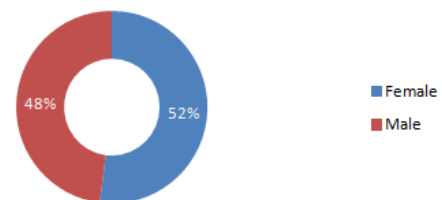
A few students also indicated that they no longer felt an obligation to complete IBCM surveys now that they have finished and moved on to the next stage of their lives. This suggests survey fatigue as well as a lacking awareness of how surveys are used and the central role they play in the quality cycle that aims to build up a well-recognized institution of the highest quality. Thus a second recommendation is to review how surveys and data collection is presented to students throughout their studies to ensure that a “*culture of feedback*” is cultivated.

Of the 71 respondents, 25 are of 2014 and 46 are of 2015. Of 2014 alumni the gender breakdown is as follows: 15 were female or 60% and 10 male or 40%, whereas of 2015 alumni the gender is 24 female or 52% and 22 male or 48%.

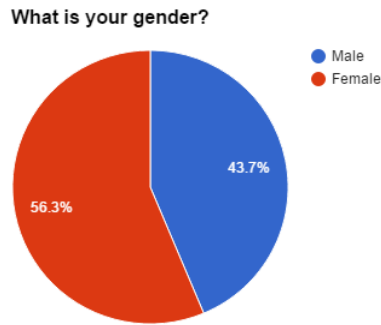
**Gender of 2014 alumni respondents**



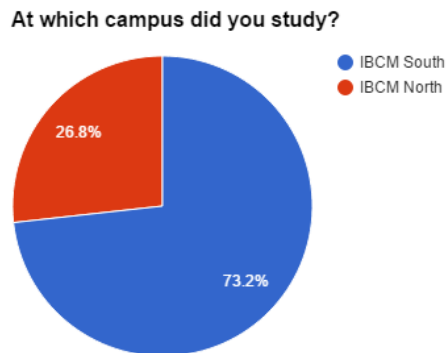
**Gender of 2015 alumni respondents**



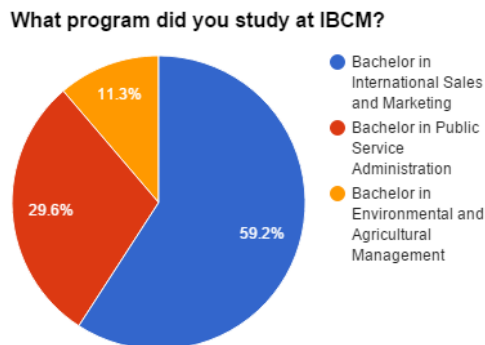
**Gender:** Of the combined 71 respondents, 56% were female and 44% male.



**Campus affiliation:** 27% were graduates of the north campus with 73% from the south.



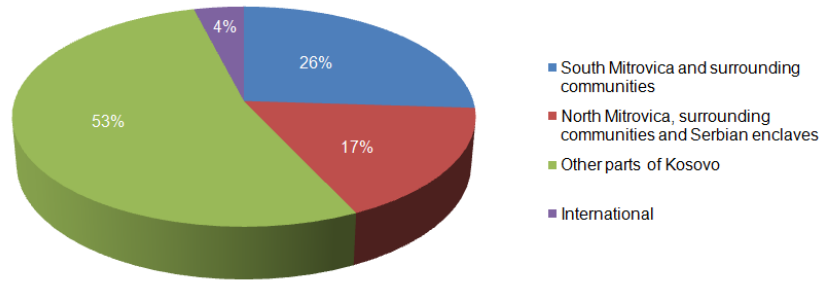
**Program of study:** 59% of respondents had graduated from the ISM program and 30% from PSM, and 11% from EAM.



**Geographic spread:** 26% come from South Mitrovica and surrounding communities; 17% from North Mitrovica, surrounding communities, and Serbian enclaves; 53% Other parts of Kosovo; and 4% International.



Where do you currently live?



## 5.1 Employment<sup>1</sup>

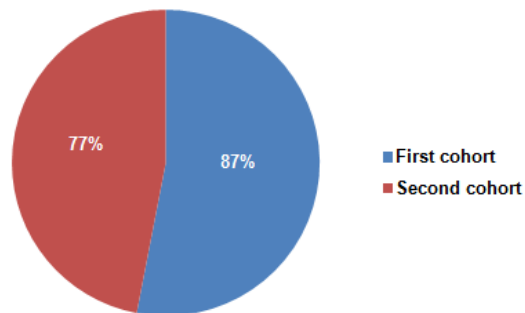
In order to gather more accurate and comprehensive data on alumni employment, the office of Student Service contacted alumni by phone and created a comprehensive database of their activities. In doing so, they were able to bring the response rate up to 95% for data on employment. The student service comprehensive database, created at 1 year post-graduation, finds that **81%** of alumni are employed or in a few cases pursuing higher education.

This employment rate is beyond IBCM's target of 80% and represents an excellent figure given regional economic challenges and youth unemployment rates. Employed respondents provided information on their sector of employment. 63% of working respondents were employed in the private sector, 15% public, and 22% non-profit. This general spread of sectors reflects alumni's programs of study.

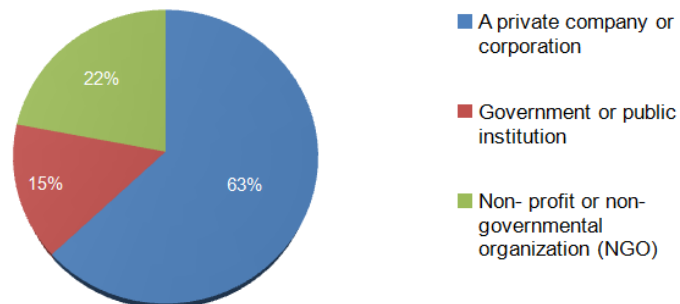
### Employment of graduates between cohorts

Of the first cohort graduates 87.23% are currently working or pursuing higher education, whereas from second cohort 77% are employed or pursuing higher education.

Employment of graduates divided by cohorts

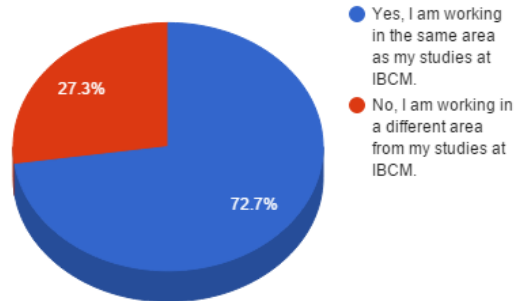


In which sector are you currently working?



On the original online survey, 73% of employed respondents reported that they are employed in the same field as their studies at the IBCM, whereas 27% of graduates mentioned that they work in different area

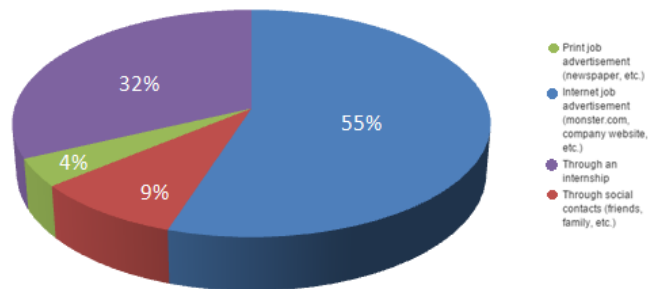
**Is your current work in the same field as your IBCM studies?**



Those who were working also indicated how they found their current position. Results were as follows: 1) internet job advertisements with 55%, 2) social contacts 9%, 3) print job adverts 4%, and 4) through an internship with 32%.

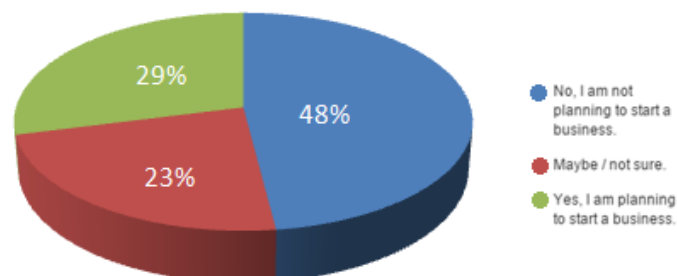
It is worth noting that internships are one of the primary means of finding employment for IBCM graduates, and this reflects the favorable feedback from internship supervisors, many of whom indicated that they would be willing to hire their interns were a paid position to become available.

**How did you find your current job?**



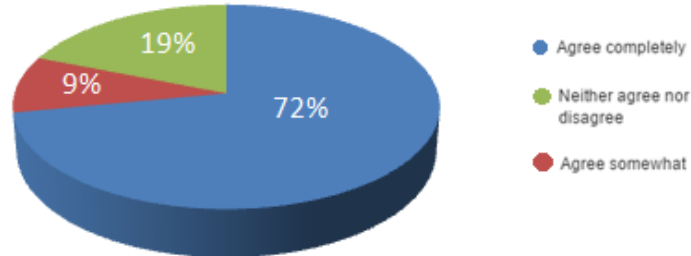
The online survey also collected information on alumni entrepreneurship. 48% of respondents report that they do not plan to start their own business within the next five years, whereas 23% are not sure, and 29% that plan to start a business.

**Are you planning to start your own business in the next 5 years?**



At the same time, 81% agree completely or agree somewhat that their studies at the IBCM left them with the skills required to start a business independently.

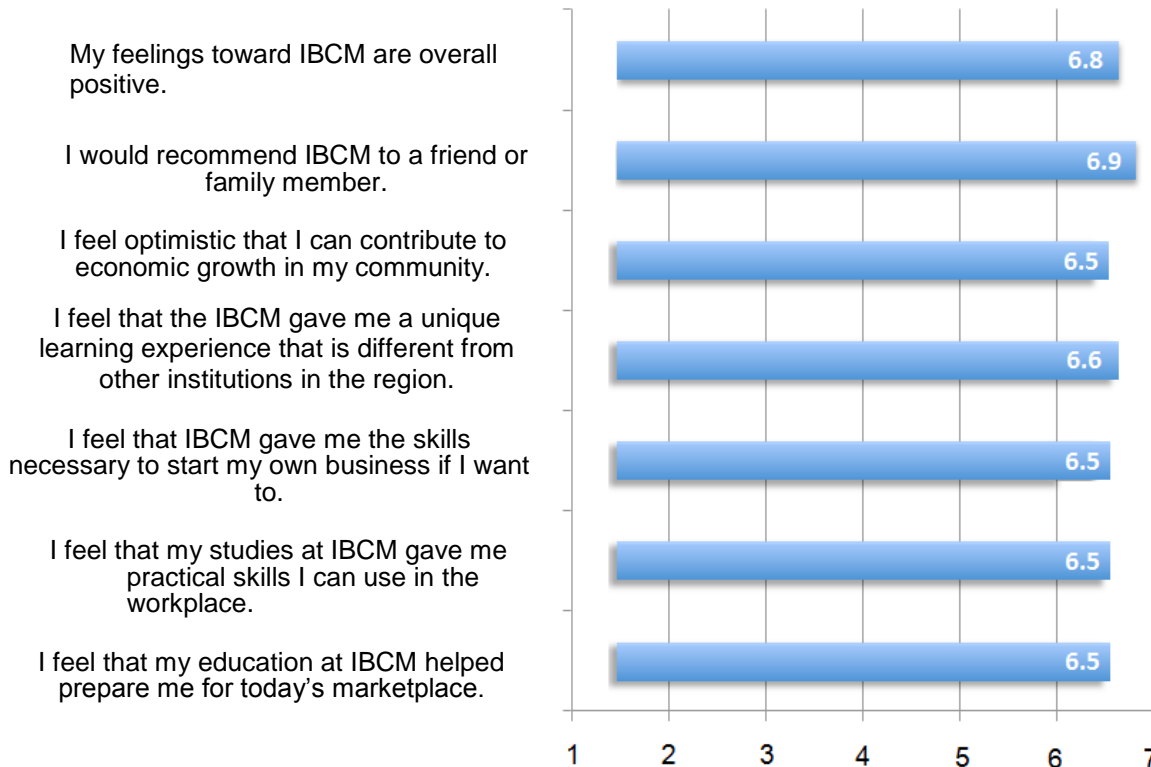
**IBCM gave me the skills necessary to start my own business if I want to.**



## 5.2 Attitudes

A series of Likert scale items gives a snapshot of alumni satisfaction. Average scores in this section were across the board strong (Figure 2). While these results are encouraging, it is possible that less satisfied alumni were less apt to respond.

**Figure 2: Average response on Likert scale items, where 7 = agree completely and 1= disagree completely**



### 5.3 Qualitative feedback

The survey also included several open-ended questions to elicit alumni's suggestions for making institutional improvements. The first two questions focused more on the student experience at IBCM and how it might better prepare them for their professional lives. The last two examined the alumni experience with the goal of exploring how IBCM might better engage with and support alumni.

#### Improving the IBCM experience

The question asking if there was anything missing from the IBCM experience that would have better prepared them for work yielded the following suggestions:

- IBCM should offer part-time studies and courses (3)
- Provide full academic merit based scholarship awards. (2)
- Include Serbian language to Albanian students and Albanian language to Serbian students. The labor market in Kosovo requires graduates who know these two languages besides English.

The IBCM career center has more recently been compiling information on internship opportunities and the college continues to work on developing connections with companies. These activities should further the goal of improved support in finding internship locations and better cooperation with companies.

#### Improving the alumni experience

The second open-ended question asked how IBCM might better support alumni, giving the following results:

- Alumni events, conferences, trainings (4)
- Develop better relations with businesses
- Hire alumni graduates and assist them in finding work

Results of these items indicate that there is substantial interest among alumni in ongoing events at the college. IBCM has recently organized career fairs, business club meetings, and conferences which will further this goal, and it will be important that alumni are informed and invited to activities that would be of interest to them. Moreover, the possibility was raised of creating a formal alumni association, which might support the planning of these events among other activities.

## 6.0 Discussion and recommendations

The response rate of <63% is a major consideration in thinking about future alumni surveys. Future surveys should aim for a response rate of >90%. This may be achieved by conducting the survey on face-to face basis at the place and time of graduation ceremony and make it mandatory as part of the admin procedure and also previous generations of graduates could be surveyed via a phone call. While requiring a greater time investment, this would yield better results and is still feasible given the manageable alumni numbers.

Student Service should continue to develop and maintain a database of alumni activities. Updates about employment and ongoing studies might be collected, for instance, during phone calls inviting alumni to events organized by the college. This information can be used in upcoming alumni reports in addition to that obtained through the survey.

The employment rate found through the alumni survey is beyond IBCM targets, and it is a good figure given the high unemployment rate in the country. Regardless, IBCM needs to continue assessing how it can best support those alumni who continue seeking employment.

IBCM also should consider hiring its alumni for internship and full-time positions in the college. IBCM also started organizing career fairs as of 2015, and invite all alumni and students so they can meet with the prospective employers and companies exchange ideas and contact details. During the recent job openings, the IBCM strongly prefers its alumni as they already have the required skills and experience in the internship positions being advertised.