

Thunderbird programs ranked No. 3 in the US by Financial Times

The 2026 rankings also placed Thunderbird No. 1 globally for international clients

By Nicole Almond Anderson, ASU News
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[Thunderbird School of Global Management](#) at Arizona State University has once again earned recognition among the world's premier providers of executive education.

In the [2026 Financial Times Executive Education rankings](#), Thunderbird's custom executive education programs were ranked No. 3 among U.S.-based institutions.

This achievement marks the third consecutive year Thunderbird has secured a top-three position in the U.S., underscoring the school's reputation for delivering transformative and highly customized learning experiences.

[Thunderbird's executive education programs](#) serve leaders and teams from global corporations, government agencies and nonprofit organizations around the world. Each custom program is thoughtfully co-created with clients to align with their strategic priorities, organizational culture and leadership objectives.

"We are honored that organizations around the world continue to place their trust in Thunderbird as a partner in developing their leaders," said [Charla Griffy-Brown](#), director general and dean of Thunderbird. "Our immersive, globally focused learning experiences are designed to help executives lead with agility, think across borders and navigate the challenges of an increasingly complex and fast-changing world."

The Financial Times ranking evaluated 100 institutions and their custom program offerings based on direct client feedback in areas such as program design, faculty, preparation, teaching methods and materials, new skills and learning, aims achieved, value for money, future use and follow-up.

Several criteria are also calculated from information provided by schools, including number of international clients, overseas programs, revenue growth, partner schools and faculty diversity.

The 2026 rankings also placed Thunderbird No. 1 globally for international clients — ahead of the University of Oxford (Saïd), INSEAD and IMD — reflecting the substantial number of corporations

and organizations headquartered outside the United States that participated in Thunderbird's custom executive education offerings.

The recognition marks a significant rise for Thunderbird, which climbed from No. 13 in 2025 and No. 16 in both 2024 and 2023, further underscoring the school's expanding global reach and influence in executive education.

"Thunderbird's top recognition for international clients reflects our continued commitment to delivering timely, relevant programs that address the evolving needs of the organizations we proudly serve," said [Lawrence Abeln](#), deputy dean of Thunderbird Executive Education and clinical professor of global management.

"Additionally, our faculty bring a distinctive global perspective and an exceptional ability to understand the complex needs of clients across markets and cultures, consistently delivering experiences that exceed expectations."

As such, a majority of Thunderbird's executive education offerings take place in global locations and regions near its clients, utilizing the school's regional centers.

Thunderbird's recent clients have included Fortune 500 companies Boeing, Merck and Stryker, as well as other international companies including Saudi Basic Industries Corporation (SABIC) in Saudi Arabia, Pertamina and Pelindo in Indonesia and Henkel in Europe. Thunderbird's executive education team also works with many public sector organizations including government ministries around the globe.

Through its Jakarta regional center, Thunderbird partnered with PT Pelabuhan Indonesia (Pelindo), the largest port operator in Indonesia, to deliver an international apprenticeship program for port operations and logistical leaders. This unique program matched Pelindo leaders to international organizations together with mentorship.

"The program allowed participants to gain insights into best practices in the industry across borders, furthering their global professional network and fostering cross-sector and practical learning in operations, logistics and port leadership," Abeln said.

Aljazira Bank, a financial services company in Saudi Arabia, contracted Thunderbird Executive Education via its Dubai regional center, to deliver a program to champion AI leaders throughout the organization.

"We delivered this program in Riyadh but it also included an immersive experience in Dubai, as well as modules to discuss how AI and other digital tools impact the banking sector and the financial industry as it utilizes technology and applies these to improve the customer experience," Abeln said.

Additionally, Thunderbird partnered with the Oman government and its ministry of housing and urban development to deliver a leadership program focused on smart cities across ministries and departments in the public sector.

Participants completed immersive international experiences in three critical regions — Amsterdam, Dubai and Phoenix — combining academic modules with organizational visits to examine innovative leadership practices and learn how to design and deliver services that meet the evolving

needs of diverse urban populations.

According to the Financial Times [rankings release](#), business schools must be recognized by at least one of the main accreditation agencies, the AACSB and EQUIS. Additionally, they need to have earned revenues of at least \$1 million in 2025 from either custom or open enrollment non-degree programs in order to participate in the relevant ranking.

The ranking of customized course providers is compiled using data from the business schools and their clients in 2025. Each school must have a minimum of 10 clients who have commissioned programs from them. At least five clients per school must complete the Financial Times survey for a course provider to be eligible for the final ranking.

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Main image



Participants in Thunderbird's Smart Cities Leadership Program for the government of Oman and its ministry of housing and urban development gather with Thunderbird professors Bas Boorsma and Monica Kerretts-Makau. The program focused on innovative leadership and smart-city development through immersive international experiences, academic modules and organizational visits. The 2026 Financial Times Executive Education rankings placed Thunderbird No. 1 globally for international clients — ahead of the University of Oxford (Saïd), INSEAD and IMD. Photo courtesy of Thunderbird at ASU