



WAKE FOREST
UNIVERSITY

SCHOOL *of* BUSINESS

Master of Arts in Management

**Professional Dress
Guide**

This is a guide to help students better understand what we mean by “Professional Dress.” Women’s wear is shown first, and men’s wear is later in the presentation. We’ll give examples of three types of professional dress:

Business Professional – This is traditional business wear, and should be worn for interviewing and special events, especially events with employers and speakers. In general, this means a traditional full business suit.

Business Casual – This is the everyday dress for many modern companies. In the MA program, this is what students should wear to school Monday-Thursday. In general, it’s a mix between business professional and casual.

Smart Casual – This is for casual Fridays or casual events. In general, this means clothes that are nice, but not dressy. This look can include jeans and khaki-type pants. Students should look casual, but as though they have still taken care to make themselves look presentable.

Business Professional (Wear for Interviews)



This is perfect for an interview, though she may want to button her second button and pull her hair back.



Great for an interview. To be on the safe side, she might want to wear closed-toe shoes. Note, the skirt hits at the top of the kneecap, which is just right.



This would be great for an interview. Just be sure the blouse neckline isn't too low.

Business Professional (wear for interviews)

*These would be appropriate for creative industry interviews, not finance or consulting interviews. If in doubt, ask your career coach or the company's recruiter.



Very nice, but wear closed-toe heels. Perfect length for the skirt.



Needs closed-toe shoes. Because this is white, it would be appropriate only for advertising or very creative industry interviews.



She should lose the red bag and go for something more subtle. Otherwise, this could work for a marketing interview or something less formal than finance or consulting.

Business Casual (wear to class)



This dressy version of business casual looks great. She might want to bring along a cardigan or nice jacket for meetings.



This could be improved with slightly dressier shoes, but works for business casual.



Very nice for business casual.

Business Casual (wear to class)



All of these are appropriate for business casual. Be sure your skirt hits just at the top of the kneecap.

Business Casual (wear to class)



Very nice. She might want a cardigan or jacket for meetings. Also, be sure the neckline is not too low.



Great! The skirt should be no shorter than this.



The woman on the right should have a jacket or cardigan for meetings.

Business Casual (wear to class)



Great business casual. Make sure the pants are not too tight.



She should have a jacket or cardigan for meetings, and more enclosed shoes.



A little trendy, but it still works for business casual.

Smart Casual (wear on casual Fridays)



Very nice, though the neckline is a little too low.



She looks casual, but has still taken the time to look presentable.



Great smart casual!

Smart Casual (wear on casual Fridays)



Perfect. The heels are not necessary!



Very nice smart casual. Note the fun pants style that wouldn't be appropriate for business casual.



Looks great for casual Fridays!

Business Professional (wear for an interview)



Note the traditional full suit, white shirt, tie, and nice shoes. These are quintessential business professional for all interviews. The best bet for an interview suit is dark gray or black. It's okay for less traditional companies to wear light-colored non-white shirts like the guy on the left, or slightly more fun ties, but when in doubt, go more conservative.

Business Casual (wear to class)



Note the nice slacks and put-together tops, with nice shoes. The second guy on the left should tuck in his shirt for business casual.

Business Casual (wear to class)



Looks great. Note that he's wearing slacks, not jeans.



This guy looks great with a tucked-in basic shirt. You can never go wrong with this look for business casual.



This guy is showing a little more style. Note the socks... men should always wear socks with business casual.

Smart Casual (wear on casual Fridays)



Think of this as the most casual you can be and still be appropriate. Make sure the shirt is wrinkle-free!



This is a great outfit. He could lose the jacket and still be very appropriate for smart casual.



Short-sleeved shirts are okay for smart casual!

Smart Casual (wear on casual Fridays)



Polo shirts are okay for smart casual, either tucked in with a belt or un-tucked. Just make sure the shirt is pressed and the collar is crisp. All-cotton polos tend to fade and stretch easily, so be sure your polo is in good shape before you wear it.

This is perfect for smart casual. Note that if he had on nicer shoes and rolled down his pants, he would be close to business casual.

A few additional guidelines:

- Shorts are NEVER appropriate for work... unless it's a field day-type situation when your boss has specifically said casual or athletic wear is appropriate.

Women:

- Pantyhose – Pantyhose are necessary only for business professional wear when interviewing with conservative firms, or if you want to be on the safe side when interviewing in general. Otherwise, you can make a choice as to whether pantyhose will be complementary to your outfit.

Men:

- Socks – Men should ALWAYS wear socks for business professional and business casual. When wearing socks for business professional and business casual, never wear white socks. Usually a dark black, blue, gray, or brown sock will be appropriate. You can get a little fun with patterned socks for business casual, but make sure you know what you're doing or get a second opinion before you wear them out. For smart casual, white socks may be appropriate if you're wearing nice athletic shoes, but again, get a second opinion before you try it.

We hope this guide helps you understand the distinctions between dress styles that are appropriate for the MA in Management program and for the workplace.

If you have doubts about an outfit, ask any staff or faculty member, or check with your classmates. Fashion is subjective, so opinions may vary, but if you ask a few people, you should get an idea of what works and what doesn't. When in doubt, go for the dressier or more traditional option.