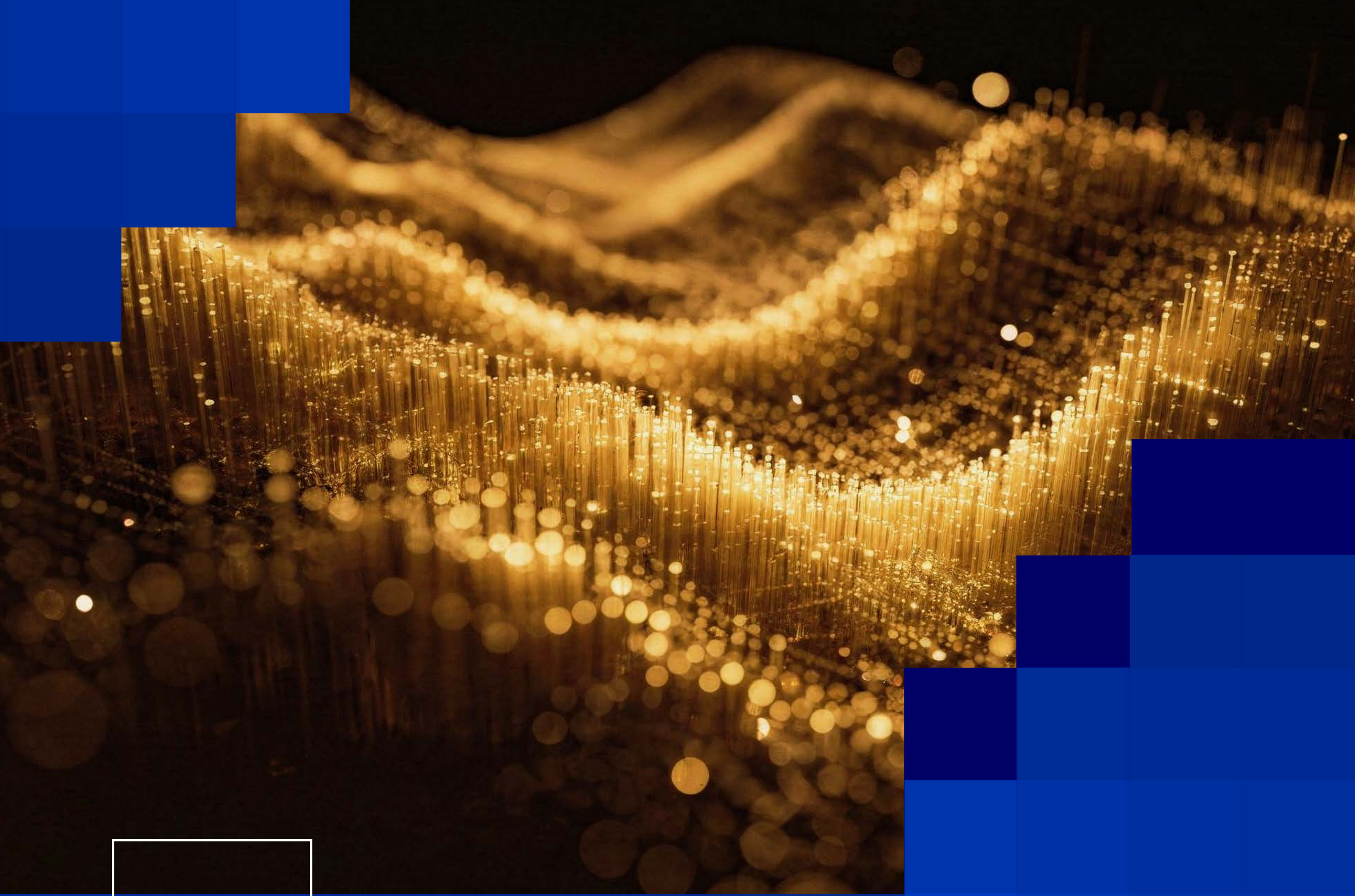

INDUSTRY SECTOR REPORT

Finance

JUNE 2026

IE UNIVERSITY
TALENT & CAREERS

Executive Summary

The finance industry in 2026 is being reshaped by the convergence of AI, regulation, and the rapid expansion of private markets. While traditional banking and corporate finance remain stable, the strongest growth is concentrated in private credit, FinTech, ESG, digital assets, and AI-enabled financial services. Firms are increasingly moving from transaction-based models toward advisory, technology, and data-driven business models.

AI has become the defining structural shift across finance. Beyond automating repetitive tasks, AI is now integrated into decision-making, risk management, client advisory, and operational workflows. As a result, employers increasingly value professionals who combine strong financial fundamentals with AI literacy, strategic judgment, critical thinking, and communication skills.

At the same time, private markets, embedded finance, and tokenization continue to expand, supported by improving deal activity and regulatory clarity through frameworks such as MiCA and DORA. The most in-demand talent profiles include AI Finance Analysts, Private Credit professionals, ESG and Climate Risk specialists, FinTech Product Managers, Digital Asset experts, and compliance professionals.

For IE University, finance remains the largest employment sector, representing 17.7% of placements in 2025 (397 placements). Corporate Finance and FP&A are growing strongly, while Investment Banking, PE/VC, Asset Management, and Global Markets have declined and represent key strategic priorities for recovery.

IE's international profile, multidisciplinary programs, and strong positioning in Spain, LATAM, and emerging Middle Eastern markets create a significant competitive advantage. However, the institution faces increasing competition from schools such as INSEAD, LBS, IESE, and EDHEC, particularly in elite finance recruitment. The largest identified gap is the integration of AI and technical finance skills within the curriculum.

The strategic priority for IE is therefore to position itself as a leading producer of "AI-native finance talent" — graduates who combine financial expertise, technological fluency, quantitative skills, and global business judgment. To achieve this, IE should accelerate AI integration across finance programs, strengthen technical and quantitative training, expand partnerships with top global financial institutions, and deepen exposure to private markets, ESG, digital assets, and development finance.

397
IE Finance Placements
2025 Total

17.7%
Share of IE
Employment
#1 Sector

418
Target Placements
2026 Goal

EMERGING ROLES · FINANCE SECTOR 2026

New job titles
(last 12–18 months)

- AI FINANCE ANALYST
- AI RISK OFFICER
- TOKENIZATION PRODUCT MANAGER
- ESG DATA SCIENTIST
- CLIMATE RISK MODELER
- DIGITAL ASSET COMPLIANCE SPECIALIST
- EMBEDDED FINANCE PRODUCT LEAD
- PRIVATE CREDIT ANALYST
- WEALTH TECH ADVISOR

Future roles
(2–3 year outlook)

- AGENTIC AI WORKFLOW DESIGNER (FINANCE)
- QUANTUM FINANCE ANALYST
- CBDC IMPLEMENTATION SPECIALIST
- IMPACT MEASUREMENT OFFICER
- REAL ASSET TOKENIZATION LAWYER

PURPOSE OF THIS REPORT

This report provides an annual update on the state of the Finance industry, key talent trends, employer landscape, and strategic recommendations for IE University's Careers team and academic stakeholders.

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1. Challenges, Opportunities & Recommendations for IEU

KEY INDUSTRY CHALLENGES

Talent shortages

Investment Banking, PE/VC, and Asset Management face structural talent shortages at the senior level. Simultaneously, AI is compressing junior analyst roles — creating a paradox where entry-level demand is more selective, not less competitive.

Skills gaps

Graduates lack hands-on experience with AI tools in finance workflows (Python, AI-assisted modelling, Bloomberg AI, Aladdin). Only 20–30% of IEU finance courses genuinely assess judgment and critical thinking in an AI context.

Regulatory pressures

MiCA, DORA, CSRD, and SFDR 2.0 are creating compliance complexity that accelerates hiring in regulatory and risk functions, but IEU must ensure programs cover these frameworks — particularly for MiF and MBA students.

Market saturation vs. quality gaps

Corporate Finance/FP&A placements (172 in 2025) dominate the portfolio, but this sub-sector has lower employer prestige scores. PE/VC (29 placements) and IB (50) represent quality-employment gaps that undermine IE's premium brand positioning.

OPPORTUNITIES FOR IEU

Curriculum alignment

The Vice Dean's AI Strategy document confirms a clear institutional mandate: AI must be embedded across all core finance courses by 2026–27. The MiF is already well-positioned; MBA and MiM need accelerated redesign.

New partnership opportunities

Priority targets: BlackRock (AM Academy), Allianz, Citi, IFC/EIB/ECB (development finance), Ant Group, Airwallex, American Express — all present at INSEAD/LBS but absent at IE.

Competitive positioning

IE's diverse, international student body (Spain, LATAM, DACH, MEA) and multidisciplinary programs are genuine differentiators. The MiF's quant-finance strength and MiM's breadth can compete with EDHEC and LBS if employer engagement is formalised via MOUs.

PROGRAM & CURRICULUM ENHANCEMENTS

Enhancement	Description & Rationale
AI-Native Finance Curriculum	Embed AI tools (Python, Bloomberg AI, Aladdin) into Corporate Finance, Fixed Income, Portfolio Construction, and Valuation courses. Move from 'Adoption' to 'Integration' maturity level across all core courses.
Revised Assessment Methods	Shift from output-based to judgment-based assessment: oral defenses, live problem-solving, iterative AI-assisted workflows. Target: 60%+ of finance course assessments verifying critical thinking by end of 2026.
Finance + AI Lab	Launch a dedicated Finance AI Lab with simulated trading, M&A deal rooms, and LBO modelling environments. Partner with Bloomberg, FactSet, and Aladdin for platform access.
Pre-Program Math/Stats Prep	Strengthen quantitative pre-program preparation — especially for MiF and MBA Finance — to close the gap with EDHEC and LBS in quant profile competitiveness.
Certifications & Credentials	Promote CFA Level 1, CAIA, FRM, and Bloomberg Market Concepts certification pathways. Create an internal Finance Pathway credential (as demonstrated in the FinTech Day AI in Finance event).
ESG & Sustainable Finance Module	Introduce a mandatory ESG/Sustainable Finance module in MiF and MBA covering SFDR, EU Taxonomy, CSRD, and impact measurement — aligned with DACH employer expectations (key hirer segment).

INTERNSHIP & PLACEMENT STRATEGIES

Placement targets

418 total finance placements in 2026 (+21 vs. 2025). 7 signed MOUs. IB share from 7.7% to 15%. PE/VC share from 7.7% to 20%. Asset Management share from 5.1% to 12%.

Pipeline initiatives

The Events-to-Pipeline Model: run quarterly Finance Days (London Q1, New York Q2, Madrid Q3, Frankfurt Q4) that feed directly into target account interviews and offers. Activate 50+ alumni champions as referral nodes.

Employer engagement

Red Carpet Strategy: convert 10 senior relationship meetings per quarter into formal MOU negotiations. Tier 1 Q1–Q2: Allianz, Citi, BlackRock. Tier 2 Q3–Q4: Embat, Pagonext, Tarmeez Capital (MENA PE).

PARTNERSHIP EXPANSION

New employer targets

PE/VC: Alchemy Partners, Bridgepoint Capital, Vitruvian Partners, Quona Capital (all at INSEAD); Aldea Ventures, Arroyo Capital, Atlantic Bridge Ventures (all at IESE). Target 8–15 new firms.

Deepening existing partnerships

Asset Management: BlackRock (AM Academy partnership), Amundi (Europe's #1 AM), Candriam, Fidelity, Pictet (all at EDHEC but missing at IE). Requires dedicated senior relationship meetings in London and Paris.

Cross-vertical opportunities

Development Finance: IFC (World Bank), EIB, ECB, British International Investment — present at LBS/IESE but not IE. Q4 Frankfurt event is the ideal activation vehicle. This segment also diversifies placement geography and student purpose.

2. Industry Overview & Market Trends

STATE OF THE INDUSTRY

Industry snapshot

Finance remains a large, resilient global sector, with investment banking, private markets, and digital finance all contributing to renewed momentum in 2026.

Structural shift

Traditional banking is consolidating and digitising, while private credit, FinTech, and tokenized assets are expanding faster and attracting disproportionate strategic attention.

2026 drivers

AI adoption, stronger deal activity, private capital growth, and shortages in hybrid finance-tech talent are the main forces reshaping the market.

KEY TRENDS

AI at scale

Firms are moving beyond pilots and using AI to accelerate research, reporting, onboarding, risk, and client workflows.

Revenue model change

Growth is shifting toward advisory, data-driven services, and platform-based business models rather than purely transaction-led revenue.

Talent implications

Employers increasingly want finance professionals who combine technical depth, AI fluency, and strong judgment.

MARKET GROWTH & OUTLOOK

Growth outlook

Capital markets activity is improving, supported by recovering M&A, equity issuance, refinancing demand, and cross-border advisory opportunities.

Geographic hotspots

London and New York remain core global hubs, while Frankfurt, Dubai, and Riyadh continue to gain relevance for specialized and regional finance activity.

Winning profiles

The strongest demand is for AI-enabled analysts, private credit specialists, ESG data talent, FinTech product profiles, and digital asset professionals.

GLOBAL & REGIONAL INFLUENCES

Macro backdrop

Interest-rate normalization and better financing conditions are helping revive lending, advisory, and issuance activity.

Regional divergence

Europe remains regulation-heavy, North America is more politically mixed on ESG, and Asia-Pacific plus the Middle East offer comparatively strong growth momentum.

Sustainability shift

In Europe especially, ESG has moved from branding to compliance, increasing demand for sustainability, reporting, and climate-risk capabilities.

EMERGING TECHNOLOGIES & INNOVATIONS

Priority innovations

Agentic AI, tokenization, digital settlement, and AI-enabled ESG tooling are the most influential innovations entering real workflows.

Operational effect

Routine analytical work is being compressed, which shifts human value toward commercial judgment, origination, and client leadership.

Role risk

Standardized processing roles face the highest automation pressure, while hybrid roles combining expertise, judgment, and technology fluency are becoming more resilient.

REGULATORY ENVIRONMENT

Operational resilience

DORA is raising demand for digital resilience, cyber risk, and compliance talent across European finance.

Digital assets

MiCA is increasing clarity for tokenized assets and stablecoins, encouraging institutional hiring in crypto compliance and product strategy

Sustainable finance

CSRD and related ESG rules are narrowing in scope for some firms but still strengthen demand for reporting, governance, and sustainability expertise.

> Routine analytical work is being compressed, which shifts human value toward commercial judgment, origination, and client leadership.

3. Sector-Specific Insights

FINANCIAL MARKET TRENDS

Investment Banking

Deal flow and capital markets activity are improving, creating better conditions for analyst and advisory hiring.

Private Markets

Private equity is recovering selectively, while private credit remains one of the clearest structural growth areas.

FinTech and Digital Assets

FinTech platforms continue to scale, and tokenization is shifting from experimentation toward practical institutional use cases.

ESG & SUSTAINABLE FINANCE

Market relevance

Sustainable finance remains highly relevant, especially in Europe, where regulation continues to anchor demand.

Talent effect

Demand is strongest for ESG reporting, climate-risk, and sustainability data profiles, often supported by AI-enabled platforms.

Regional split

Europe continues to formalize ESG compliance, while the US remains more politically fragmented despite ongoing practical climate-risk work.

REGULATORY ENVIRONMENT IN FINANCE

Area	Main Regulation Theme	Talent Impact
Banking and Investment Banking	Capital, conduct, and reporting requirements remain central.	Continued demand for compliance, risk, and advisory roles.
Asset Management and ESG	SFDR, CSRD, and related disclosure rules are raising reporting expectations.	Growth in ESG data, sustainability, and governance talent.
FinTech and Digital Assets	DORA and MiCA are making resilience, data governance, and crypto compliance more strategic.	Higher demand for cyber, operational resilience, legal, and product specialists.

> Digital wealth platforms are creating a hybrid hiring category that combines investment knowledge, client experience, and data skills.

EMERGING SUB-SECTORS

Embedded Finance

Lending and payment capabilities are increasingly built into non-financial platforms, creating product, risk, and compliance roles.

DeFi and Open Banking

The opportunity is shifting from speculative use cases toward regulated infrastructure and institutional adoption.

Wealth Tech

Digital wealth platforms are creating a hybrid hiring category that combines investment knowledge, client experience, and data skills.

4. Talent Landscape & Recruitment Trends

IN-DEMAND SKILLS

Technical skills

Financial modelling (DCF, LBO, M&A comps), Python/SQL for data analysis, AI prompt engineering and tool fluency, valuation methods, quantitative risk management, and portfolio construction techniques.

Analytical skills

Critical evaluation of AI-generated outputs, scenario analysis under uncertainty, strategic business judgment, cross-asset market intuition, and data-to-narrative translation.

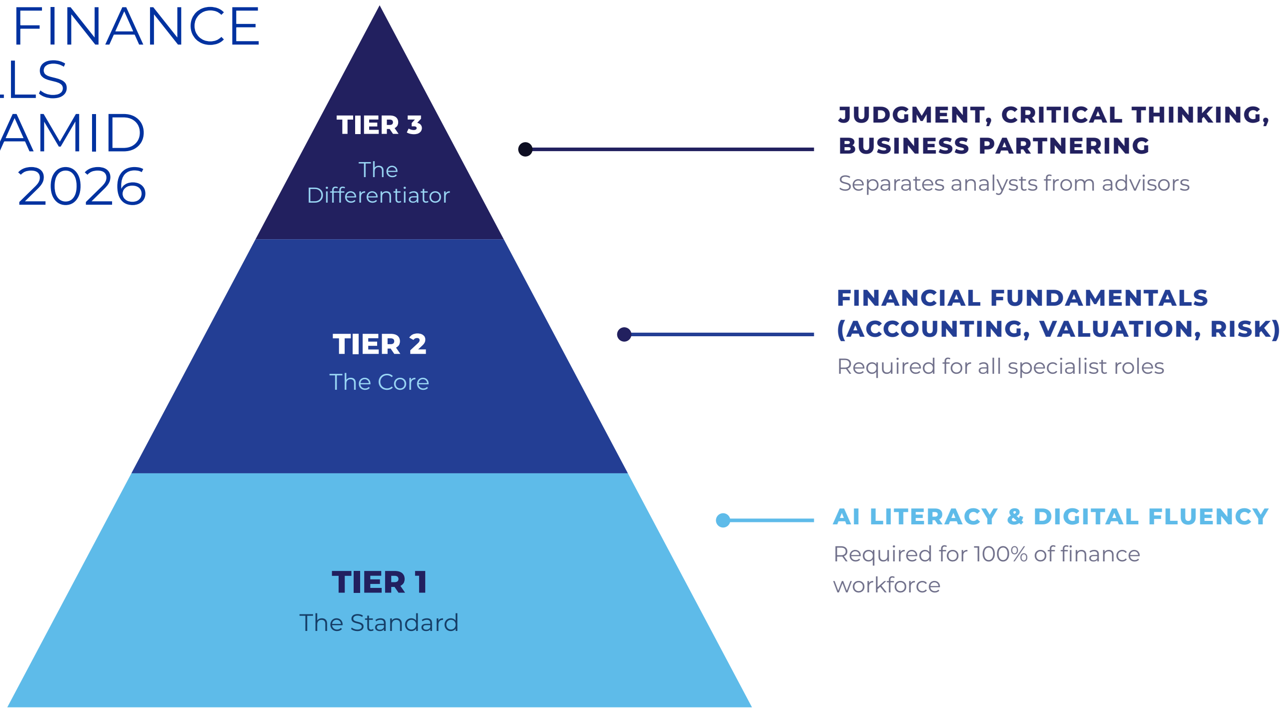
Soft skills

Communication and storytelling with data, client relationship management, cross-cultural adaptability, leadership in deal teams, and ethical decision-making in AI-augmented environments.

Digital fluency

Sector-wide minimum: AI literacy (understanding what AI can and cannot do), data fluency, prompt engineering. Advanced: Python, Tableau/PowerBI, Bloomberg, FactSet, Aladdin (BlackRock), Salesforce for client management.

THE FINANCE SKILLS PYRAMID FOR 2026



FINANCE AND ACCOUNTING LEADERS

83%

Feel confident about their 2026 business outlook

"— intensifying competition for candidates with AI + finance hybrid skills."

HIRING MANAGERS

61%

Report it is harder to find skilled candidates than a year ago

EMERGING ROLES IN 2026

New job titles (last 12–18 months)

AI Finance Analyst, AI Risk Officer, Tokenization Product Manager, ESG Data Scientist, Climate Risk Modeler, Digital Asset Compliance Specialist, Embedded Finance Product Lead, Private Credit Analyst, Wealth Tech Advisor.

Future roles (2–3 year outlook)

Agentic AI Workflow Designer (finance), Quantum Finance Analyst, CBDC Implementation Specialist, Impact Measurement Officer, Real Asset Tokenization Lawyer.

RECRUITMENT PATTERNS

Hiring volumes

83% of finance and accounting leaders feel confident about their 2026 business outlook. 61% of hiring managers report it is significantly harder to find skilled candidates than a year ago — intensifying competition for candidates with AI + finance hybrid skills.

Most in-demand profiles

Investment Banking Analysts, Corporate Finance/ FP&A Associates, Private Credit Associates, ESG Reporting Specialists, FinTech Product Managers, and Compliance Officers for DORA/MiCA are among the most actively recruited profiles.

Competition for talent

Top candidates are moving fast. Firms report losing offers when processes exceed 3–4 weeks. Selective hiring for quality over volume is the dominant strategy, particularly in IB and PE.

GEOGRAPHIC HIRING TRENDS

City / Region	Key Sub-sectors	IE Context
London	PE/VC, IB, Asset Management, Hedge Funds	Highest density; strong alumni base; competitor schools dominant
Madrid & Spain	Corporate Banking, FinTech, Corporate Finance	IE home market; anchor recruiters BBVA, Santander, CaixaBank
New York	Bulge Bracket IB, PE, AM	NYC office gap; key target for MOU expansion
Frankfurt	ECB, EIB, Deutsche Bank, Public Finance	Development finance and German banking opportunity
Dubai / Riyadh	Sovereign Wealth Funds, MENA PE, Islamic Finance	Less competition from peer schools; emerging IE hub
LATAM	Corporate Finance, Regional Banking, FinTech	Strong MBA pipeline; 37% of LATAM finance placements via MBA

RECRUITMENT SEASONALITY & TIMELINES

Peak hiring months

Investment Banking and Asset Management: Summer internship applications open September–November for following summer (off-cycle year-round). Graduate programmes: October–January for September starts.

Process duration

IB: 4–8 weeks from application to offer (structured processes). PE/VC: highly variable, often 2–6 months. Corporate Banking: 6–10 weeks. FinTech: 3–5 weeks, faster for technical roles.

Internship timelines

IB and large banks recruit for summer internships 12+ months in advance (London on-cycle: Oct–Dec). PE and VC are primarily off-cycle. Asset Management: October–March for September intakes.

Full-time timelines

US firms (Goldman, JPM, Morgan Stanley) recruit for full-time Analyst roles in Oct–Jan. European banks open in Sep–Nov. PE/VC full-time is almost entirely off-cycle and relationship-driven.

5. Key Employers, Partnerships & Alumni

TOP FINANCE EMPLOYERS — IEU 2025

Employer Category	Companies & Notes
Tier 1 — Highest Volume	Revolut (12), BBVA (10), Banco Santander (8), UBS (7), JP Morgan (5), BNP Paribas (5), Rothschild & Co (5)
Tier 2 — Growing Engagement	Aon (4), Marsh & McLennan (4), Visa (4), Alter Domus (3), American Express (3), Mastercard (3), Deutsche Bank (3), Arcano (3)
Employers to Watch	Embat, Pagantis/Pagonext, Ant Group, Airwallex, Cleo AI — all active at INSEAD but missing at IE
Competitor Gap — INSEAD/LBS	24 companies recruiting at INSEAD/LBS but NOT at IE, dominated by PE/VC (65 firms gap) and FinTech (AmEx, Ant Group, Airwallex)
Competitor Gap — IESE	34 companies at IESE but not IE, primarily PE/VC (15 firms), Asset Management (5), and Iberian/Asian banking
Competitor Gap — EDHEC	15 companies at EDHEC missing at IE, concentrated in IB (BofA Merrill Lynch, BPCE, Crédit Agricole) and Asset Management (BlackRock, Amundi, Fidelity)

KEY PARTNERSHIPS WITH IEU

Existing strategic partnerships

State Street (Asset Management Partnership), Embat (Fintech) and Tarmeez Capital (Fintech). Target: 7 total MOUs by end of 2026 via the Red Carpet Strategy.

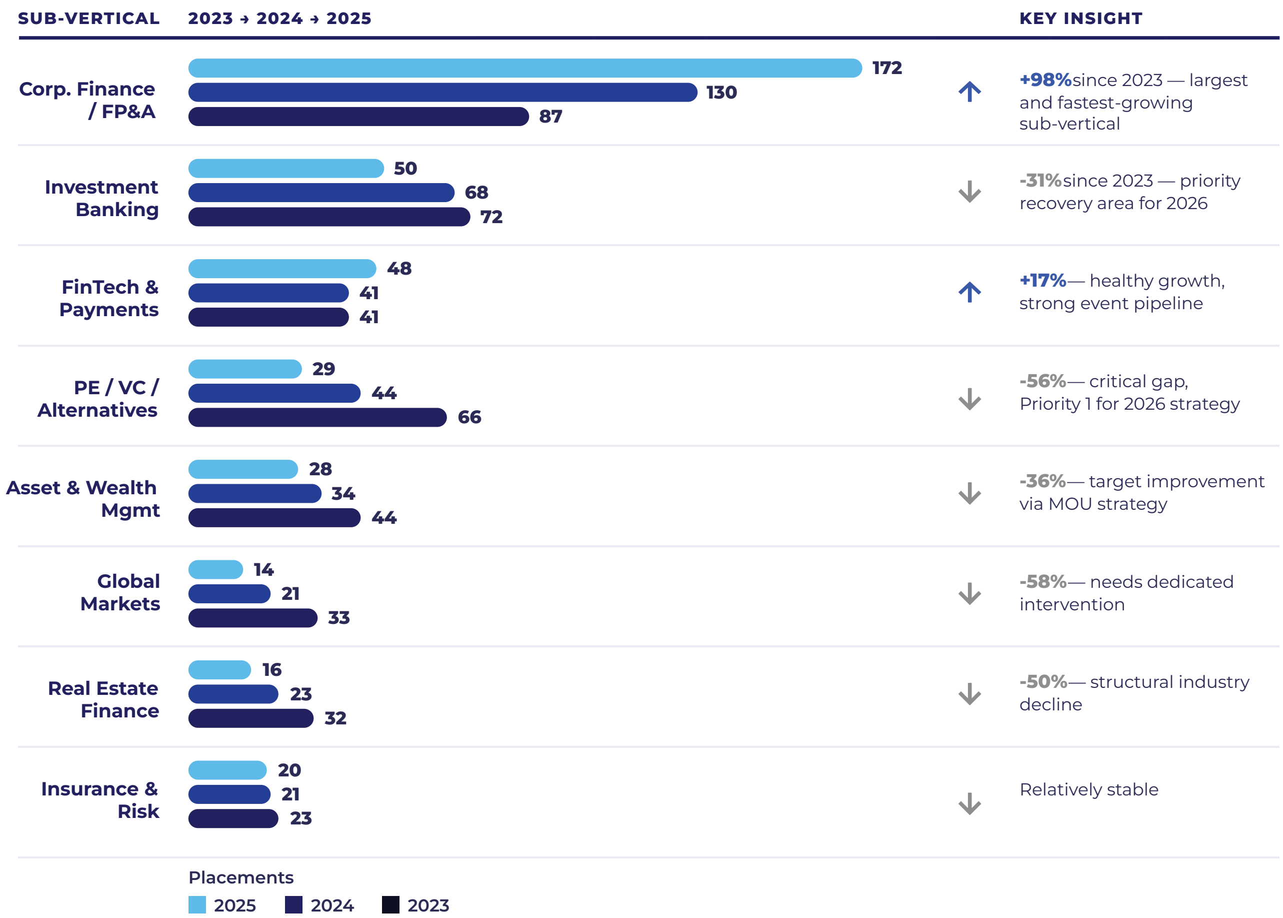
MOU pipeline

Tier 1 MOU Targets (Q1–Q2 2026): Allianz, Citi, BlackRock (AM Academy). Tier 2 MOU Targets (Q3–Q4 2026): Pagantis/Pagonext, .

Events & engagement

Investment Banking Day (September), Asset & Wealth Management Day (October), Private Equity Day (April), IE FinTech Day (May). Target: 25+ firms, 200+ students at flagship Q3 Madrid event.

RECRUITMENT VOLUMES — IE FINANCE 2023–2025



ALUMNI OVERVIEW

Alumni in sector

Finance is the #1 employment outcome at IE University, representing 17.7% of all placements in 2025 (397 students). Over a 3-year horizon, 1,172+ alumni have been placed in finance roles through the Talent & Careers team.

Top companies

Top alumni concentration: BBVA, Santander, CaixaBank, Sabadell (Spanish banking); JPMorgan, Goldman Sachs, Rothschild (IB); BlackRock, State Street (AM); Revolut, Klarna (FinTech).

Career trajectories

Common paths: Junior roles → Associate (2–3 years) → VP/Director (5–8 years). MBA alumni tend toward PE/VC, Corporate Strategy, or CFO tracks. Undergrad/MiM alumni concentrate in Corporate Finance and Banking analyst roles.

MENTORSHIP & NETWORKING

Alumni engagement

Target: 50+ activated alumni champions via formal Referral Program (incentivized introductions) and 100+ active mentor matches via Mentorship Matchmaking Program.

Networking events

Q1: London Finance Day (PE/VC breakfast, IB lunch, AM cocktail — 20+ firms, 150+ students). Q2: New York Finance Day. Q3: Madrid Career Fair. Q4: Frankfurt Public Finance Forum.

Alumni impact

61% of top finance hires come from companies that participated in IE events — evidence that the events-to-pipeline model works and must be scaled.

+1,172

Alumni placed in finance roles over a 3-year horizon

61%

Of top finance hires come from companies that participated in IE events

+50

Activated alumni champions
Via Referral Program

+100

Active mentor matches
Via Mentorship Matchmaking Program

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Notes

This report integrates internal IEU placement data (2023–2025) with publicly available market research and industry reports current as of April 2026. Placement figures reflect employed students/alumni tracked by the Talent & Careers team and may differ from official Careers Report totals due to reporting timing. Competitor gap analysis is based on 2025 recruiter databases cross-referenced with IE's 2025 placements data. Market size and CAGR figures are sourced from IBISWorld and ResearchAndMarkets as referenced above. Forecast placement targets (418 for 2026) are aspirational goals set by the Finance T&C team, subject to market conditions and institutional support.

INDUSTRY
SECTOR
REPORT

Finance

IE UNIVERSITY
TALENT & CAREERS