Warwick Economics Society

Divisional Starter Packs – Bulge Brackets

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Bulge Bracket Banks

What are they?

A bulge-bracket (BB) bank is a large, global investment bank which provides a broad range of financial services to major corporations, governments, financial institutions and institutional investors.

Unlike smaller advisory firms, bulge-bracket banks offer services across investment banking, capital markets, corporate banking, sales and trading, transaction banking and often asset management and wealth management. Their large balance sheets also allow them to provide financing alongside strategic advice.

How is a Bulge Bracket Bank Organised?

As discussed above, bulge-bracket banks operate full-service business models, offering a broad range of products and services across multiple divisions. Although the organisational structures vary between firms, a typical front-office structure includes:

Investment Banking	Global Markets	Coverage	Transaction Banking
M&A Product Team	Fixed Income, Currencies & Commodities (FICC)	Sector Coverage Teams	Cash Management
M&A Sector Teams	Equities	Geographical Coverage Teams	Trade Finance
Equity Capital Markets	Equity Research		Working Capital Finance
Debt Capital Markets	Structuring		
Leveraged Finance	Quantitative Analytics		
Restructuring			

Key Characteristics of Bulge Bracket Banks:

Bulge-bracket banks share several characteristics which distinguish them from smaller investment banks. These are useful to bear in mind when preparing a "Why this firm?" answer, although they should be supported by firm-specific evidence such as sector strengths, recent transactions or distinctive capabilities. The general bulge-bracket characteristic include:

- **Global Reach:** Operate across major financial centres, allowing them to serve international clients and execute cross-border transactions.
- **Large Balance Sheets:** Can provide loans, bridge financing and other forms of committed capital alongside strategic advice.
- **Full-Service Offering:** Provide M&A advice, capital raising, corporate banking, transaction banking and markets services within one institution.
- **Distribution Capabilities:** Maintain extensive relationships with institutional investors, helping them market and distribute loans, bonds and shares.
- **Scale and Complexity of Transactions:** Regularly advise on and finance large, complex and high-profile transactions
- **Major Client Relationships:** Maintain long-term relationships with multinational companies, governments, financial institutions and private equity sponsors.

Firm Specific Characteristics

While all bulge-bracket banks offer broadly similar capabilities, each has distinct strengths, business models and areas of market leadership. Some firm-specific factors to consider include:

Goldman Sachs:

- **Leading M&A Franchise:** world's number one M&A adviser in 2025 for the 23rd consecutive year
- **Diversified Asset & Wealth Management business:** Alongside Investment Banking and Global Markets, Goldman has a significant Asset & Wealth Management division with investment capabilities across private equity, private credit, real estate and other alternative assets. This provides a more diversified business model and recurring management-fee revenues.

J.P. Morgan:

- **Largest US bank by total assets:** JPMorgan Chase had approximately $4.4 trillion in assets at the end of 2025, supported by its universal-banking model and substantial consumer, commercial and corporate deposit base.
- **Market-leading financing capabilities:** Its balance sheet and global distribution network allow it to provide substantial financing alongside strategic advice. J.P. Morgan ranked number one globally by DCM volume and number one by LevFin revenue in both the US and Europe in 2025.

Morgan Stanley:

- **Leading M&A and equity franchise:** Morgan Stanley is particularly strong in M&A advisory, Equity Capital Markets and equities trading. It generated approximately $3 billion of M&A advisory fees in 2025, ranking third globally behind Goldman Sachs and J.P. Morgan.

- **Scale of Wealth and Investment Management:** Morgan Stanley has built a highly diversified Wealth and Investment Management platform

Bank of America:

- **Large Balance Sheet and Lending Franchise:** Bank of America had approximately $3.3 trillion in assets at the end of 2025.
- **Strong Institutional Distribution Network:** Ranked number one globally for syndicated loans in 2025
- **Merrill Lynch Acquisition:** in 2009 Bank of America agreed to acquire Merill Lynch, improving their investment banking, sales and trading and wealth management capabilities

Citi Bank:

- **Distinctive Global Network:** Cover clients across more than 180 countries, on-the ground presence in 90 countries. Particular strength in Asian franchise.
- **Market-leading services franchise:** Leading transaction banking franchise. These day-to-day relationships give Citi a deep understanding of client's businesses.

Barclays:

- **Acquisition of Lehman Brother's:** Barclays completed its acquisition of Lehman Brothers' North American investment-banking and capital-markets operations on September 2008**,** adding a major US platform to its established UK and European presence.
- **Strong Sales & Trading franchise:** Barclays generated €10.1bn in equities and FICC income in 2025, the highest among the major European investment banks for the seventh consecutive year, giving it a leading position in Global Markets

UBS:

- **Leading global wealth-management franchise:** UBS had more than $7tn in invested assets at the end of 2025, providing extensive relationships with entrepreneurs, family offices and ultra-high-net-worth clients that can support its investment-banking franchise
- **Acquisition of Credit Suisse:** UBS completed the acquisition in June 2023, significantly increasing its scale across wealth management, Swiss banking and investment banking.

Deutsche Bank:

- **Global Hausbank Model:** emphasis on long-term banking, building strong relationships through their full-service model.
- **Strong European Franchise:** has deep relationships throughout Europe, particularly with German industrial companies.