



STAFFORDSHIRE
UNIVERSITY



Business
School

DBA
Doctorate in Business Administration

DBA

Doctor of Business Administration

"For the reflective professional the DBA is an unceasing learning approach".

Dr David Douglas, Director DBA Programme

The Staffordshire University Business School DBA is a professional doctorate that combines sound high order academic rigour with practical management application. This part-time programme is designed for experienced managers from public, private and third-sector organisations who would like the opportunity to cognitively focus more deeply and critically with the work they do and to subsequently effect change to their organisational environment.

Participants on the DBA will engage in the creation and interpretation of new knowledge, through:

1. Original business and management research and advanced scholarship;
2. The systematic acquisition and understanding of a substantial body of business and management knowledge at the forefront of academic discipline;
3. Developing aptitude to conceptualise, design and implement a business and/or management project for the generation of new business and management knowledge;
4. Critically applying techniques for carrying out business and management related research and advanced academic enquiry;
5. Making informed judgment on complex issues in specialist business and management fields, and;
6. Demonstrating personal qualities and transferable skills necessary for high level management action requiring capacity for exercising management initiative in complex and unpredictable organisational situations

Programme Aims of the DBA are to enhance through the undertaking of a programme of research, the participant's ability to question, analyse, critique and theorise and so develop their professional management practice.

To provide sound training in the design, execution and analysis of research to enable the completion of a thesis and potentially other academic publications that represent original contributions to the practice of management and thereby business and management knowledge.

To recognise the relationship between management research and the professional practice of management within business organisation.

To facilitate and foster the ability to question and challenge received wisdom in business and management arenas, and consider how learning is translated into management practice, and practice into business and management theory.

To build a rich community of reflective business and management practitioners.

How you will study



The learning strategy that underpins the DBA award embraces planned support for participants to become independent and effective researchers in their individual professional settings. The overall structure and delivery of the programme is shaped by its key learning outcome, which envisages that participants will become research-equipped for professional purposes. The initial phase of the programme will enable participants to critically re-examine aspects of management that have a bearing on their professional interests and roles, to identify key components, reconfigure them in relation to chosen ends, and apply new knowledge for particular professional management functions.

The award provides relevant training for professional managers in the techniques of knowledge production. The learning relationships and processes in the professional DBA learning environment might, arguably, be better described as taking place in a 'distributed' learning field, in which the University shares learning space with the practitioner's workplace and any professional positioning that s/he may be associated with, for example, that of senior manager. Exploration of management professionalism, organisation and workplace, and communities of practice linked to structures and relations of power and control could provide materials, tools and motivation for the design and development of personal learning and research objectives. These, together with appropriate research training experiences, have been formulated in this programme into the eight modules that constitute the DBA award.

Programme Assessments

All assessments are expected to have a work-based context. All directed modules have an assignment that the participant has to successfully complete to progress. Participants are expected to critically reflect on issues and topics of theory set within the operational practicalities of everyday to long-term strategic management. Participants are encouraged to continuously weave between the dual strands of professional development and the management research training offered by the DBA – which are in turn designed to provide mutual development of both management theory and management practice.

M1 - Contemporary Issues and Challenges in Management Practice and Theory # 1

This module is a critical review and analysis of management and organisational theories and practices. It develops a culture of evaluation where statements are critiqued and examined for evidence, the grounds of portrayed evidence, and where claims are systematically checked for validity, reliability and process, with a non-acceptance of the 'givens' in organisational life. Analytical, critical and discursive aptitudes and skills are developed through rigour and relevance.

M2 - Research Design in Management and Organisational Settings

An exploration of the relationship between philosophical presuppositions in researching management and methodological issues involved in research design. The module is grounded in epistemology and ontology that allows participants to critically comprehend ongoing debates in management theory and research. Develop a critical awareness to the understanding of how taken-for-granted assumptions and values influence versions of reality and are socially constructed. It reviews methods in social science and principles of the major intellectual traditions in qualitative and quantitative research (e.g. positivist; hermeneutic; constructivist). It considers the legal and ethical basis of precautionary and protective aspects of research practice and implications of ethical requirements for research design.

DBA Modules

M3 - Contemporary Issues and Challenges in Management Practice and Theory # 2

This developing area of management research, from that explored and achieved in Contemporary Issues and Challenges in Management Practice and Theory #1, seeks to further extend in terms of breadth of experience, and cognitively deeper in understanding and practically in terms of action, the original indicative areas, that build on and develop a culture of advanced evaluation where 'the givens' of both practice and theory' and their underpinning statements are critiqued and examined for evidence, the grounds of such evidence, and again where claims are systematically checked for their validity, reliability and the process of their establishment. The continued aptitudes of critical analysis and founded communication are advanced through rigour and relevance.

M4 - Research Methods and Analysis

This module develops from module two and explores further the framing, coding and logic of interpretation. Using practical workshops in design, use and analysis of data collection methods it covers topics such as: questionnaires, focus groups, interviews, observation, and documentary analysis.

M5 – Developing an Effective Literature Review

Here a systematic critical literature review and identification of research question and structured research approach is explored. The review task will be taken forward and developed by the participant's engagement with questions exemplified in the following list: What are the origins and competing definitions of this topic? What are the major issues and debates? What are the main questions and approaches within these debates that have already been researched? How does a particular study/paper/report relate to my research questions? What are its key theoretical and conceptual ideas? How has the literature reviewed increased knowledge and understanding of the topic? What are the main sources that support the line of argument? What are the main sources that question the line of argument? Are there any areas that have not been previously explored in the literature?

M6 - Reflective Practice-into-Theory Portfolio #1

In this module a systematic reflection upon oneself in the context of one's work organisation is considered. Working in action-sets participants will provide analytical-reflective change processes that connect award modules throughout the life of the award tasks. The role of reflection, reflexivity and reflective practice. Underpinning Learning theories, experiential learning, types of knowing. The development of your thinking from the beginning. The identification of personal/research skills. Conflict management. Challenging the connections. Engagement with the processes of professional development and planning. Encouraging self-awareness and critical reflection upon the research project(s) and their conceptual scholarship. Encouraging self-awareness and critical reflection on your values, ethics and impact on and within a group.

M7 - Reflective Practice-into-Theory Portfolio #2

Continuing a systematic reflection upon oneself in the context of one's work organisation. Working in action sets participants will provide analytical-reflective change processes that connect award modules throughout the life of the award tasks. This developing portfolio from that explored and achieved in Reflective Practice-into-Theory Portfolio #1, seeks to further extend in terms of breadth of experience, and cognitively deeper in reflection and practically in terms of action, the indicative areas: The role of reflection, reflexivity and reflective practice. Underpinning Learning theories, experiential learning, types of knowing. The development of your thinking from the beginning. The identification of personal/research skills. Conflict management. Challenging the connections. Engagement with the processes of professional development and planning. Encouraging self-awareness and critical reflection upon the research project(s) and their conceptual scholarship. Encouraging self-awareness and critical reflection on your values, ethics and impact on and within a group. Plus other emergent agenda and areas of reflective interest.

Developing Your Research Proposal

By the end of Year Two all participants who have successfully completed the modules are required to produce a thesis proposal document. This is a short document (approx. 6 pages) that sets out one's proposed line of research inquiry that the participant intends to engage in over the forthcoming two years in order to develop and subsequently produce your original DBA thesis.

M8 – Your DBA Thesis

The thesis enable participants to demonstrate, via a substantial piece of written research of doctoral quality, that they can make an original contribution to a relevant field of business, management, organisational and/or professional knowledge and practice. Participant researchers should aim to: 1. Identify a topic worthy of high level research; 2. Select and justify appropriate methods of investigation; 3. Execute the research approach; 4. Analyse findings, interpreting and appraising them against a wider context of relevant scholarship; 5. Demonstrate the ability to critically reflect on the contribution/s made; and 6. Demonstrate ability to write to a professional doctoral standard. The thesis is orally defended by the candidate at a formal examination board and is both internally and externally examined under University Regulations (Professional Doctorate) for research degrees.



Academic qualifications

Candidates should normally have a first degree in any subject and have (or expect to acquire prior to starting) a Masters degree in Management (MBA, MA or MSc) from a UK University or the equivalent qualification from a recognised overseas institution.

Practitioner experience

Candidates must have senior management experience of at least 5 years pre- or post-Masters qualification. In exceptional circumstances, applicants without a Masters qualification will be considered where they have substantial compensating business and/or professional experience (a minimum of 10 years senior management experience), and, a high score first degree (Upper Second Class minimum) in an appropriate field (e.g. Business, Management, Organisation Studies), plus other relevant experience (e.g. research training) would be considered.

English language requirements

The DBA is conducted in English, with the final thesis written and examined in English. Students whose first language is not English or who have not already studied successfully in an English-speaking environment will be required to provide evidence of advanced proficiency in English. Recent IELTS 7 will be required (or above).

Initial Research Interest Proposal

A research proposal of approximately 1,500 words, indicating the academic and practitioner fields of proposed inquiry is to be submitted prior to any consideration of the candidate's suitability for the programme. This submission is important to determine the University's adequacy to future supervise a prospective participant at the thesis research stage (years 3 & 4).

Fees, Residential Learning and Teaching Blocks

As stated the award is delivered, inter alia, over a series of residential learning and teaching blocks. It is envisaged that these 'blocks' will be situated on Staffordshire University campus or other identified premises.

See separate document for forthcoming timetable.

Annual Fee

The annual fee covers tuition costs, daytime catering during the taught blocks, and core reading materials in the form of handouts. The fee does not include overnight accommodation, books, textbooks or any further substantial overheads.

Admission Criteria

See separate document for current fees.

The DBA is a four-year part-time programme organised with years 'one and two' covering taught and mediated modules, and with years 'three and four' mainly focusing on a participant's individual 'management research' activities (See Table). The first two years are spent undertaking six modules in preparation for carrying out field research and producing an individual DBA thesis of approximately 50,000 words in length. Participants are required to be successful in all directed modules in order to progress to the thesis stage of the programme. The first two years require attendance at three 4 x Day programme blocks for each of the two years (24 days in total). These will be tutor-directed seminars or workshop-based tuition sessions that will involve tutor and participant led discussion and activities (for example, guest speakers). In the research methods modules use will be made of appropriate software laboratories. Participants are expected to read and prepare materials in advance of all sessions. In addition independent learning time will be spent in wider reading, drafting assignments and revising assignments after formative feedback. Personal feedback is provided either orally (in a tutorial) or written (by email or annotations). A series of early induction events and presentations are organised for assisting participants in maximising from the onset available University resources. From the beginning all participants are allocated a Mentor. This person will act as a trusted adviser to whom you may call on to share practical experiences and challenges. In addition, tutors will be available at each stage to support you in your assignment-based studies. During years 3 and 4 attendance is mainly by face-to-face meetings with one's thesis supervisors (usually two University appointed members). Finally, there are two 1xday blocks arranged each year during years 3 and 4 to present your research and to discuss your progress.



Programme Structure

Year 1	Year 2	Year 3	Year 4
Module 1 30 L7 Credits Contemporary Issues and Challenges in Management Practice & Theory #1	Module 3 30 L7 Credits Contemporary Issues and Challenges in Management Practice & Theory #2	Module 7 30 L8 Credits Reflective Practice-into-Theory Portfolio #2 (Over Years 3 & 4)	Module 7 30 L8 Credits Reflective Practice-into-Theory Portfolio #2 (Over Years 3 & 4)
Module 2 30 L7 Credits Research Design in Management & Organisational Settings	Module 4 30 L7 Credits Research Methods and Analysis	Module 8 300 L8 Credits Thesis (Over Years 3 & 4)	Module 8 300 L8 Credits Thesis (Over Years 3 & 4)
Module 5 60 L8 Credits Developing an Effective Literature Review (Over Years 1 & 2)	Module 5 60 L8 Credits Developing an Effective Literature Review (Over Years 1 & 2)		
Module 6 30 L8 Credits Reflective Practice-into-Theory Portfolio #1 (Over Years 1 & 2)	Module 6 30 L8 Credits Reflective Practice-into-Theory Portfolio #1 (Over Years 1 & 2)		

Staffordshire University Business School has been providing high calibre business and management education for over thirty years. There are excellent links with Industry and we make sure everything we do is geared to real life business. The Business School is on two campuses. The Stoke-on-Trent campus, located in the heart of 'The Potteries' offers a city environment, particularly attractive to those who seek the cultural lifestyle. At Stafford the school is located on the Beaconside campus.

what sets us apart?

For further information please contact the Business School's Research Degrees Administrator:

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