

## Doctor of Business Administration (DBA) Programme Specification

This document applies to Academic Year 2021/22 onwards

Table 1 DBA programme specification

1.	<b>Awarding institution/body</b>	University of Worcester
2.	<b>Teaching institution</b>	University of Worcester (taught online and at FHM Bielefeld by staff from the University of Worcester)
3.	<b>Programme accredited by</b>	N/A
4.	<b>Final award</b>	DBA
5.	<b>Programme title</b>	Doctor of Business Administration (DBA)
6.	<b>Pathways available</b>	N/A
7.	<b>Mode and/or site of delivery</b>	Taught input during the pre-thesis stage, followed by supervision at the thesis stage.
8.	<b>Mode of attendance</b>	Part time 36 months minimum – 72 months maximum
9.	<b>UCAS Code</b>	N/A
10.	<b>Subject Benchmark statement and/or professional body statement</b>	The programme is informed by Vitae's <i>Researcher Development Framework</i> and the QAA's <i>Doctoral Degree Characteristics</i> . The guidelines published by the Association of Business Schools for DBA (2005) and the QAA Code of Practice for PG Research Programmes have also informed the design of the programme.
11.	<b>Date of Programme Specification preparation/ revision</b>	September 2012 August – October 2014 (Regulations) August 2016 (Regulations amended - Section 20) August 2017 - AQU amendments August 2018 – AQU amendments February 2019 – AQU amendments August 2019, AQU amendments to Section 19 August 2020 AQU amendments amendments, May 2021 - Research School amendments, August/September 2021 – WBS and AQU amendments.

### 12. Educational aims of the programme

The Professional Doctorate can be awarded to a candidate who has made an independent and original contribution to a specific professional area and who has successfully completed an approved course of study incorporating a *taught component* and a *research component*, culminating in the submission of a thesis to a requisite standard.

The purpose of the programme is to provide an opportunity for business and management professionals to work creatively by analysing and synthesising research literature and their own research evidence to understand their own contexts more critically and to find solutions to key challenges in their working environment. In doing so it is envisaged that the cohort will become (and ultimately lead) communities of practice for their profession.

The Professional Doctorate award is distinct from the PhD award in the following respects:

- There is a considerable weighting given to a taught component which comprises an integral and key part of the programme, and the assessment of the taught component contributes directly towards the final award.
- The thesis produced by Professional Doctorate students will make an original contribution to knowledge within the relevant area or areas of professional practice.

Each Professional Doctorate Programme at the University of Worcester includes:

- Stage 1 - a relevant and up to date Masters Programme. It is expected that candidates will enter the programme with this qualification.
- Stage 2 - a pre-thesis stage of structured learning that integrates the choice of a research topic and design with high quality training in research skills and methods. Stage 2 will be delivered in a series of 5 blocks: one week residential and three weekends Friday-Sunday.
- Stage 3 - a thesis stage. Students work with supervisors to either prepare a thesis (a substantial independent piece of work following systematic and detailed investigation into a discrete area of research which will primarily be in written form although it may include material in other than written form)..

The DBA Programme aims to develop business and management professionals' ability to integrate rigorous academic/critical analysis with practical relevance and application to enable them to become more effective evidence-based practitioners and to contribute to the development of their profession through the furtherance of knowledge. In so doing, it seeks to improve the quality of their profession.

The Doctorate of Business Administration will be awarded to students who can show they meet the following criteria:

- the creation and interpretation of new knowledge, through original research or other advanced scholarship, of a quality to extend the forefront of the discipline, satisfying peer review and meriting publication;
- a systematic acquisition and understanding of a substantial body of knowledge which is at the forefront of an academic discipline or area of professional practice;
- the general ability to conceptualise, design and implement a project for the generation of new knowledge, applications for understanding at the forefront of the discipline and to adjust the project in the light of unforeseen problems;
- a detailed understanding of applicable techniques for research and advanced academic enquiry.

### 13. Intended learning outcomes and learning, teaching and assessment methods

*Table 2 intended learning outcomes*

Intended Learning Outcomes	Teaching and Learning Methods	How Demonstrated?
<b>(i) Mastery of an appropriate body of knowledge</b>		
Demonstrate deep understanding of recent professional	Tutorials Seminars Directed reading	Assignments Written reports Reviews

developments, current theoretical frameworks and approaches which have direct relevance to their own professional context	Project supervision Independent research	Individual research projects Theses Oral Examinations
Make informed judgments on complex issues	Tutorials Seminars Directed reading Project supervision Independent research	Assignments Written reports Reviews Individual research projects Theses Oral Examinations
Combine different approaches to a topic and synthesise them coherently	Tutorials Seminars Directed reading Project supervision Independent research	Assignments Written reports Reviews Individual research projects Theses Oral Examinations
<b>(ii) Undertake an appropriate substantial piece of research</b>		
Conceptualise, design and implement a programme of work for the generation of new knowledge and relate it to their past experience reflectively and self-critically	Tutorials Seminars Project supervision Independent research	Individual research projects Theses Research papers Oral Examinations
Create work of publishable quality and of a standard which satisfies peer review within the profession	Tutorials Seminars Project supervision Independent research	Individual research projects Theses Research papers Oral Examinations
Make a contribution to knowledge and practice within a specific area of their profession	Tutorials Seminars Project supervision Independent research	Individual research projects Theses Research papers Oral Examinations
<b>(iii) Critical analysis of key issues</b>		
Contribute substantially to the development of new techniques, ideas or approaches.	Tutorials Seminars Directed reading Project supervision Independent research	Assignments Written reports Reviews Individual research projects Theses Research papers Oral Examinations

<b>(iv) Clear and concise communication of ideas</b>		
Communicate their ideas and conclusions clearly and effectively to specialist and non-specialist audiences.	Tutorials Seminars Project supervision	Presentations Reviews Assignments Written reports Thesis
Present and defend their work to their peers, professionals and academic colleagues	Independent research	Oral Examination Published papers
<b>(v) Critical appraisal of evidence with appropriate insight</b>		
Evaluate critically evidence, whether from empirical research or theoretical enquiry, that is put forward to support or contradict particular arguments	Tutorials Seminars Directed reading Project supervision Independent research	Assignments Written reports Reviews Individual research projects Theses Research papers Oral Examinations
<b>(vi) Other discipline specific competencies</b>		
Display the qualities and skills of personal responsibility and largely autonomous initiative in complex and unpredictable situations	Tutorials Seminars Independent research	Assignments Written reports Reviews Individual research projects Theses Research papers Oral Examinations
Exhibit competence as an independent professional and the capability to continue to undertake work at an advanced level, contributing substantially to the development of new techniques, ideas or approaches.	Tutorials Seminars Independent research	Assignments Written reports Reviews Individual research projects Theses Research papers Oral Examinations

#### 14. Assessment Strategy

*Students are assessed in 4 ways during the programme:*

- a) Through the taught modules.
- b) Their progress against the programme of research which they develop with the guidance and support of their supervisory team is assessed through Annual Progress Review.
- c) Their progress is also kept under constant review by their supervisory team.
- d) Finally, all students must submit a thesis and defend this thesis at an oral examination (*viva voce*) which determines if they have met the Learning Outcomes and if they should be awarded a DBA

##### Taught Modules

The Assessment strategy has been designed to provide students with a variety of challenges appropriate for a doctoral level modules in Business. The range of assessments specified in the module outlines have been developed in order to

support the pedagogical approaches employed and which are appropriate for the nature of the subject disciplines covered.

In line with the University of Worcester Assessment Policy, assessments for the individual modules have been designed to enable students to demonstrate that they have successfully met the learning outcomes. These are specified in each assignment brief along with any assessment criteria. Students are also supported through the use of grade descriptors.

### Annual Progress Review

The Annual Progress Review (APR) is designed to complement the ongoing monitoring of research student progress by the supervisory team. It sets out to provide an independent assessment of a student's progress against the requirements of the degree and the student's own programme of research as agreed with the supervisory team. The review will take place annually during the thesis stage and is designed: to allow student and supervisors to reflect on progress; to provide assurance to the University that the student's progress is as expected and the programme of research is fit for purpose; to identify any problems or issues that have emerged over the previous 12 months; and to establish an action plan to address any problems or issues thus enabling the student to get back on track.

### Supervisory Review

It is the role of the supervisory team, in particular the Director of Studies, to keep the student's progress under regular review throughout the programme of research and to raise any concerns as soon as these arise.

### Examination

The assessment of the programme as a whole is based on a two-stage process:

- an assessment of a written thesis by an examination panel of 2-3 examiners, who are experts in the field of study
- an oral examination at which the student is asked to "defend" their thesis in front of the same examination panel, demonstrating that the written thesis is their work, that they are aware of its strengths and weaknesses and that they are able to explain and justify any issues or problems in the written thesis.

## **15. Programme structures and requirements**

The programme consists of:

- 180 credits at Level 7 (Stage 1) see below
- 90 taught credits at Level 8 (Stage 2)
- 270 credit thesis at Level 8 (Stage 3)

### **Stage 1**

It is expected that the Professional Doctorate programmes at Worcester will primarily recruit active, experienced professionals who have already recently been awarded a relevant Masters qualification and who are now seeking to further enhance their professional development. If an applicant does not have a recent, relevant Masters level qualification the Programme Leader will talk to the applicant and suggest an appropriate programme. Please refer to Programme Specifications: <https://www.worc.ac.uk/aqu/716.htm>

On successful, completion of Stage 1 a student will be awarded a Masters. He/she may then progress to Stage 2 if he/she also has at least 3 years senior management experience (see Section 18 below).

Table 3 programme structure stage 2

<b>Taught Stage 2</b>				
<b>Module Code</b>	<b>Module Title</b>	<b>Pre-requisites</b>	<b>Module status</b>	<b>Credits</b>
PRDC8001	The Researching Professional	None	Mandatory	30
PRDC8002	Research Methods and Design	None	Mandatory	30
PRDC8003	Project Development, Planning and Management	None	Mandatory	30

Students who successfully complete Stage 2 of the programme but who do not wish to proceed to Stage 3 will be awarded a Postgraduate Certificate in Research Enquiry.

Table 4 programme structure stage 3

<b>Thesis Stage 3</b>	
<p><u>Annual Progress Review</u></p> <p>The review will be undertaken initially by the DBA Course Leader or nominee whose role is to assess the student's progress against the programme of research and to make recommendations to University's Research Degrees Board (responsible for oversight of the Doctoral programme).</p> <p>The Course Leader's assessment will be based on consideration of written documentation submitted by the student, the Director of Studies and Research School. The written documentation required for review will be determined by the stage the student has reached in their programme and will be set out in the relevant Course Handbook.</p> <p>The Course Leader will make one of the following recommendations to Research Degrees Board for each student reviewed:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>i. The student's progress and standard of work is at or above expectations; the student may progress and no further action is required.</li> <li>ii. The student's progress and standard of work is at or above expectations but there are some outstanding issues identified by the Course Leader; the student may progress subject to providing a satisfactory response to the issues outlined by the Course Leader by an agreed deadline.</li> <li>iii. The student's progress and/or standard of work is below expectations and the student should be referred to an APR panel.</li> </ol> <p>If the Course Leader has concerns around the standard of work produced, based on feedback from the supervisory team, they may call on an external expert to review the work submitted. Where subject expertise exists at Worcester, it is expected that a member of UW staff will normally be used.</p>	<p>270 Credits</p>

Where there is limited expertise internally then an external expert from outside the University can be used.

If the Course Leader is of the view that the student's progress is being limited by their supervisory team, they may refer this to the Research Degrees Board. Research Degrees Board will consider and confirm or reject the Course Leader's recommendations.

Where a student's response to the Course Leader is not satisfactory, the Course Leader may:

- i. Refer the student to an APR panel.
- ii. Request further information by a specified deadline. If the Course Leader is still not satisfied with the response, they should then refer the student to an APR panel.

Where a student does not provide documentation or a response by the deadline then the Course Leader will normally refer the student to an APR panel. A student will not be referred to an APR panel when a delay is caused by information not being provided by the RS or Supervisory Team.

The APR panel will normally include:

- Senior researcher (Chair)
- Course Leader or nominee
- A subject expert nominated by the Course Leader who is independent of the supervisory team

The Panel will first consider the written documentation and then, normally, convene a meeting with the student and the Director of Studies. However, the Panel may on occasion make its recommendations without convening a meeting if it feels it has enough information.

The Panel will produce a report setting out progress against the expectations and make one of the following recommendations to RDB:

- i. The student's progress and standard of work is at or above expectations. The student may progress and no further action is required.
- ii. The student's progress and standard of work is at or above expectations but there are some outstanding issues identified by the Panel; the student may progress subject to providing a satisfactory response to the issues outline by the Panel by an agreed deadline.
- iii. The student's progress and/or standard of work is below expectations and the student must respond to a set of actions determined by the Panel by a specified deadline.
- iv. The student's progress and/or standard of work is well below expectations and the student must respond to a set of actions determined by the panel *and* must meet with the Panel again on an agreed date, normally within 6 months of the original meeting.

The Panel will consider the student's responses to the actions specified and may recommend the following to RDB:

- i. The student has responded satisfactorily to the actions specified and no further action is required.

- ii. The student has not responded satisfactorily to the actions specified and should be given a specified timeframe to provide a further response to the Panel.

If the Panel deems that this further response is not satisfactory, the Panel may recommend that RDB withdraw the student from the programme.

Where a student does not respond by any deadline without explanation, RDB may withdraw the student from the programme.

Where a student's progress is deemed below expectations in two consecutive Annual Progress Reviews, RDB may withdraw the student from the programme without need for further action.

### Examination

The text of the thesis excluding ancillary data, must be a minimum of 40,000 and a maximum of 60,000 words. It must fulfil the requirements for format, content and appearance as set out in the Research Degree Regulatory Framework.

There will be a +10% margin for the maximum word count. There is no fixed penalty for exceeding this word count but, in line with the University's 'Policy on Word Count' the examiner will not normally consider any work after the +10% margin has been reached.

The oral examination (viva voce) will normally take the form of a meeting of 1-3 hours to discuss the content of the thesis, although the timeframe may on occasion extend beyond this.

## **16. QAA and Professional Academic Standards and Quality**

This award is located at level 8 of the FHEQ. The programme has been designed with reference to the QAA Doctoral Degrees Characteristics (2011) and FHEQ (2008) Qualification Descriptor for Level 8. The guidelines published by the Association of Business Schools for DBA (2005) and the QAA Code of Practice for PG Research Programmes have also informed the design of the programme.

## **17. Support for students**

On acceptance, students are assigned a supervisor (Director of Studies) who has expertise in their specialist area. The supervisor provides advice and undertakes regular progress reviews during the period of study. Written records should be kept for all meetings. At the end of each year a report on progress is produced by the supervisor in consultation with the student.

Students are also provided with:

- an induction programme
- the *Handbook for Professional Doctorate Students and Supervisors*
- day to day support through the Research School.
- an introduction to the process of Personal Development Planning (PDP)
- training opportunities for career planning through the Research School and Careers Service
- <https://www.worc.ac.uk/life/help-and-support/services-for-students/home.aspx>
- <https://www2.worc.ac.uk/disabilityanddyslexia/>

## 18. Admissions

### Admissions Policy

#### Entry requirements

Stage 1: Applicants are normally expected to have:

A second class honours degree in any subject (or International students holding a qualification recognised as equivalent by the University), **plus** a minimum of 2 years business/management experience, at an appropriate senior level.

Stage 2: Applicants are normally expected to be:

Active experienced professionals who have recently (within the last 6 years) been awarded a relevant Masters qualification (see 14 above). Applicants must also be able to demonstrate that they have a minimum of three years **senior** management and /or business experience.

International students will also be required to demonstrate that they have the appropriate level of written and spoken English (normally IELTS score of 7 with a minimum score of 7 in written English). Entry qualifications for international students are guided by the National Academic Recognition Information Centre's (NARIC) advice on international qualifications.

In keeping with University policy on widening participation and diversity the Programme encourages and welcomes the contribution of older learners and people from the widest range of social, economic and cultural backgrounds.

See [Admissions Policy](#) for other acceptable qualifications.

#### Recognition of Prior Learning

**Stage 1:** Candidates may be admitted on to stage 1 (Masters Programme) without a first degree via Recognition of Prior Experiential Learning (RPEL). For more information, please refer to the relevant Masters Programmes Handbook and/or discuss this with the Masters Programme Leader.

Where an applicant has successfully completed one or more appropriate Masters level modules in a subject related to the course in the last 6 years they may apply for credit transfer which may eliminate the need to undertake one or more modules in the Programme.

Similarly, where an applicant can demonstrate that they have appropriate and relevant professional experience related to the subject area of the course they may apply for Recognition of Prior Experiential Learning (RPEL) or Recognition of prior certificated learning (such as professional development awards or employment-based awards) which is at higher education level but which has not led to the award of credits or qualifications positioned on the relevant higher education qualifications framework; which may eliminate the need to undertake one or more modules in the Programme.

**Stage 2:** Prior to commencing their studies or during the first few weeks of the programme, students will be required to apply formally for credit transfer for the 180 credits at Level 7 unless the Masters qualification has been completed at UW.

It is not normally possible to claim RPEL or RPCL for Stage 2 of the Professional Doctorate. There may however be rare occasions where an applicant has already completed some or all of a professional doctorate taught programme at another UK HEI and wishes to transfer this credit in order to complete their programme of study at the University of Worcester. The credit must have been completed within the last 6 years and the maximum credit that can be awarded under credit transfer or RPL is set out in PRF.

In these cases, applicants will be required to provide the university with transcripts showing credit achieved at Level 8, copies of module outlines, progress reports and samples of written work. All applicants will be asked to complete the relevant RPL documentation prior to interview so that this can be considered by the interview panel (the Professional Doctorate Programme Lead, the Course Leader, a potential supervisor and the RESEARCH SCHOOL Manager). The Panel will look at all the evidence and make a decision about how much credit can be transferred, what the student is still required to complete, the maximum completion date and the supervisory team.

In all cases, applicants will be expected to provide the interview panel with a detailed research proposal and ethics protocol for the thesis which is equivalent to the assessment expected for module PRDC8003 Project Development, Planning and Management. If this cannot be provided then the applicant will be required to take and pass this module before entering Stage 3, the thesis.

It is not possible to claim RPL for any part of Stage 3 of this programme.

*Table 5 award detail*

<b>Award</b>	<b>Credit required for award</b>	<b>Maximum credit allowed</b>	<b>Level</b>
Professional Doctorate	180 (M) + 360 (D)	180 (M) 90 (D)	7 and 8

Information on eligibility for recognition of prior learning for the purposes of entry or advanced standing is also available from the University [webpages](#) or from the Research School (01905 542595).

### **Admissions procedures**

All applications are submitted to the Research School and passed to the relevant Programme Leader for consideration. In the application form applicants are required to outline a research proposal for their intended thesis. If the application has potential, an interview is scheduled by a panel comprising at least two members of academic staff. Completion of an interview checklist allows for a thorough rigorous evaluation of the candidate's strengths at interview. It also means that details about the offer conditions are passed back to the Research School, enabling a comprehensive offer letter and contract to be produced.

Applications from those with international qualifications are checked by the Research School Manager against NARIC and copies of all certificates are required before an unconditional offer is made to the student. All international applicants are checked for their competency in English language by the Language Unit. When it is felt that the applicant does not possess the appropriate level of English language, an in house English language course may be recommended before the student embarks on their RDP. Information about all offers made to international students is passed back to the relevant personnel in Student Services who can provide the student with additional support and guidance (for example, to obtain a visa, accommodation etc).

The selection and admission processes outlined above ensure that only appropriately qualified students are admitted to a DBA and that the student can be satisfactorily supported in their research.

#### **Admissions/selection criteria**

An offer of a place on a DBA will be made when the following conditions are satisfied:

- Applicant meets the specified entry requirements.
- The Institute has the supervisory capacity and expertise to support the research project outlined in the application form.
- The proposal outlined has the potential to become a viable research project at Doctoral level.

### **19. Regulation of assessment**

#### **Stage 1 and 2**

The course operates under the University's Taught Courses Regulatory Framework

#### **Requirements to pass modules**

- Modules are assessed using a variety of assessment activities which are detailed in the module specifications.
- The minimum pass mark is D- for each module.
- Students are required to submit all items of assessment in order to pass a module, and in some modules, a pass mark in each item of assessment may be required.
- Full details of the assessment requirements for a module, including the assessment criteria, are published in the module outline.

#### **Submission of assessment items**

- Students who submit course work late but within 7 days (one week) of the due date will have work marked, but the grade will be capped at D- unless an application for mitigating circumstances is accepted.
- Students who submit work later than 7 days (one week) will not have work marked unless they have submitted a valid claim of mitigating circumstances.
- For full details of submission regulations please see the Taught Courses Regulatory Framework.

#### **Retrieval of failure**

- Students are entitled to resit failed assessment items for any module that is awarded a fail grade.
- Reassessment items that are passed are capped at D-.
- If a student is unsuccessful in the reassessment, they have the right to retake the module (or, in some circumstances, take an alternative module); the module grade for a re-taken module is capped at D-.
- A student who fails 60 credits or more after exhausting all reassessment opportunities may be required to withdraw from the University.
- A student will be notified of the reassessment opportunities in the results notification issued via the secure student portal (SOLE). It is the student's responsibility to be aware of and comply with any reassessments.

## Requirements for Awards

Table 6 award requirements

Award	Requirement
PG Cert	Passed a minimum of 60 credits at level 7, as specified on the award map
PG Dip	Passed a minimum of 120 credits at level 7, as specified on the award map
Masters (MA/MSc/MBA/MTL)	Passed a minimum of 180 credits at level 7, as specified on the award map
PG Dip in Research Enquiry (doctoral level) Exit award after Stage 2 of the Professional Doctorate	Has entered stage 2 of a Professional Doctorate Programme and passed a minimum of 120 credits at level 8.

PG Cert and PG Dip awards are unclassified. The awards of Masters may be made with Pass, Merit or Distinction.

If a student chooses to exit the award at the end of Stage 2 they can leave with a certificate of credit or complete an additional 30 credit (at level 8) negotiated study module. Students who pass stage 2 plus the additional module will be awarded the Postgraduate Diploma in Research Enquiry.

### Stage 3

The regulations for stage 3 are set out in the [Research Degree Regulatory Framework](#).

## 20. Graduate destinations, employability and links with employers

- The DBA qualification will enhance Graduates career prospects both for promotion within their chosen fields, working in a different economic sector, or to become an academic.
- Worcester Business School aims to promote closer links with employers through the work of its **Business Development Team**. The team is currently working with key decision makers in a variety of private, public and third sector organisations, and is supported by **the School's Employers' Advisory Group**, which meets on a regular basis.
- The School works closely with a number of **professional organisations** and **external agencies** including the Chartered Institute of Management, Institute of Commercial Management, Chartered Institute of Marketing, Chartered Institute of Personnel and Development, Chartered Institute of Public Relations, Institute of Financial Accountants, Chartered Institute of Payroll Professionals, British Computer Society, Institute of Directors, Federation of Small Businesses, Chamber of Commerce and Confederation of British Industry.
- The School has worked with a number of **business clients** in developing and delivering its programmes. These include - The NHS (a range of Primary Care and Acute Trusts); Local Government (a range of County, District and Unitary Authorities); West Mercia, Warwickshire, Gloucestershire and Staffordshire Constabularies; Ministry of Defence and The Royal Air Force; Her Majesty's Prison Service; Royal Mail; Financial Service Organisations (e.g. Lloyds TSB,

HBOS Plc, Clerical Medical, NFU Mutual and Virgin Money); Housing Associations, Southco and Malvern Instruments.

- The School has well-developed working relations with the **local business community** many of whom contribute to Masters programmes to give a real-world insight into the future world of work.
- These professional and business networks also involve **external events**, many of which are open to students, as well as employers.
- The School has, for a number of years, been an important focus for **projects linked with the West Mercia Constabulary** through the Shared Police and Higher Education Research and Enterprise (SPHERE) partnership, which enables the force to utilise academic expertise to enhance its policing activities eg through Masters students' dissertation/ consultancy projects. Partnership
- **Career guidance** is available through University of Worcester Careers Advisory
- Service and periodic Career Fairs are organised by Student Services.

**Please note:** This specification provides a concise summary of the main features of the programme and the learning outcomes that a typical student might reasonably be expected to achieve and demonstrate if s/he takes full advantage of the learning opportunities that are provided. More detailed information on the learning outcomes, content and teaching, learning and assessment methods of each module can be found in the module outlines.