

## Nottingham Trent University Course Specification

### Basic Course Information

1. Awarding Institution: Nottingham Trent University
2. School/Campus: Nottingham Business School
3. Final Award, Course Title and Modes of Study: Doctor of Business Administration, Part-time
4. Normal Duration: 4 years
5. UCAS Code:

### 6. Overview and general educational aims of the course

The primary goal of the DBA programme is to enable you, the student, to earn a DBA degree that will help you to leverage your careers and/ or make a transition into the highest levels of academia. Through our course, we offer senior managers, independent consultants and senior academics the chance to gain new, relevant insights that will inform and enhance their own career profile and make a contribution towards the enhancement of business and / or professional practice.

You will conduct a long- term research project that is highly relevant to management practice and based on up to date, evidence-based knowledge. Your research will make academically recognised contributions to your chosen fields, thus providing private and public sector organisations with doctoral dissertations that address their practice and policy needs.

The four- year DBA programme consists of two main stages:

1. Stage 1, 18 months: 'Training in Doctoral Research in Management: Literature, Philosophy and Methods'. During this part of the course, you will attend a series of workshops relating to scoping the DBA project, reviewing literature and methodology. These constitute 81 hours of face-to-face workshops. In parallel, with your supervisory team, you will formulate the research questions driving your DBA thesis, developing and submitting 3 documents. The first involves scoping the DBA project; the second explores the relevant literature while the third details the methodology to be adopted in the research. All three documents will assess the impact of the project on academic, non-academic audiences and your own personal development. Successful completion of all three documents and a satisfactory annual monitoring report from your supervisory team means that you are allowed to progress to the second stage.

2. Stage 2.5 years. Writing, submitting and defending the DBA thesis. For this stage of the DBA, you must finalise your data collection and analysis, complete your writing, submit, and defend your work.

### 7. Course outcomes

*Upon completion of the course you should be able to:*

CLO1 - Develop, design and implement an original, ethical and creative piece of work that contributes to scholarly thinking as well as

organizational policy and practice and is worthy of publication.

CLO2 - Critically reflect upon practice as a professional doctoral researcher and consider how future career and development plans might apply research to practice.

CLO3 - Make informed judgements on complex issues in specialist fields and adopt an innovative approach to solving problems which will have an impact on the business and key stakeholders and, where relevant, wider society and the economy.

CLO4 - Exhibit a deep understanding of methodological and epistemological issues and acquire advanced research skills to undertake an independent doctoral level project

CLO5 - Identify, evaluate and criticise the academic and professional literature relevant to the selected research topic at a level commensurate with advanced academic enquiry

CLO6 - Demonstrate a high level of conceptual thinking and academic writing commensurate with the award of a doctorate.

CLO7 - Analyse and construct arguments that are insightfully and fluently written as commensurate with doctoral-level study.

#### **Knowledge and understanding**

By the end of the course you should be able to:

CLO1 - Develop, design and implement an original, ethical and creative piece of work that contributes to scholarly thinking as well as organizational policy and practice and is worthy of publication.

CLO3 - Make informed judgements on complex issues in specialist fields and adopt an innovative approach to solving problems which will have an impact on the business and key stakeholders and, where relevant, wider society and the economy.

CLO5 - Identify, evaluate and criticise the academic and professional literature relevant to the selected research topic at a level commensurate with advanced academic enquiry

CLO6- Demonstrate a high level of conceptual thinking and academic writing commensurate with the award of a doctorate.

#### **Skills, qualities and attributes**

By the end of the course you should be able to:

CLO2 - Critically reflect upon practice as a professional doctoral researcher and consider how future career and development plans might apply research to practice.

CLO4 - Exhibit a deep understanding of methodological and epistemological issues and acquire advanced research skills to undertake an independent doctoral level project

CLO7 - Analyse and construct arguments that are insightfully and fluently written as commensurate with doctoral-level study.

8. **Teaching and learning methods**

***The taught workshops***

**Stage 1:** 'Training in Doctoral Research in Management: Literature, Philosophy and Methods'

During Stage 1 of the DBA, you must attend a series of events given during the training workshops. The workshops represent 81 hours of face-to-face time. The workshops embrace the following themes:

1. Introductory Workshop
2. Literature Review/ Designing a Conceptual Framework
3. Research Methodology and Impact Planning

**Stage 2: 'The Thesis'**

During Stage 2, you are required to attend three workshops, as follows:

1. Advanced Literature Review/ Conceptual Framework
2. Advanced Research Methodology
3. Advanced Writing Skills and Impact Evaluation

**Course attendance**

During both stages of the DBA course, attendance at workshops is compulsory. You cannot submit Stage 1 assessments or defend your thesis unless you have participated in all the workshops. In case of exceptional circumstances, you may request to attend the same workshop with another cohort from the NBS DBA portfolio. You must send a formal letter stating the reason for the request to the course leader, who will make a decision together with the course team. If this substitution is not possible, you must attend the particular workshop the following year.

***Research supervision***

Supervisors are allocated in line with the University's Common Assessment Regulations (located in Section 16 of the Quality Handbook).

You are expected to keep in regular contact with your supervisory team and initiate contact at a minimum of once per month through the duration of the course.

Once you have commenced Stage 2 of the course, annual monitoring forms must be completed. You are required to submit your part of the form, which will be further completed by your supervisory team and considered by the DBA Progression Board.

Disagreements between the supervisor and the student may arise. If those disagreements cannot be resolved by the two parties, either the student or the supervisor may inform the course leader or Head of Doctoral Studies who will serve as a mediator by meeting with both parties, determining a solution and making necessary decisions. If the

issue cannot be resolved, the course director may decide to assign a new supervisor, in which case the course leader will notify both you and the supervisor of the change.

All students are free, and encouraged, to obtain diverse support from both their appointed supervisors and other academics that might provide relevant advice. In particular, students are encouraged to participate in events such as research conferences, discussions with workshop leaders and interactions with academics worldwide.

9. **Assessment methods**

Successful completion of Stage 1 involves three elements of assessment:  
Stage 1: Training in Doctoral Research in business and management

Here, you are required to submit three deliverables:

1. The scoping document (5,000 words) must include:

A brief introduction and problem statement  
The organisational, managerial, professional & policy context  
The research question and its justification (from both managerial and academic perspectives)  
Discussion of relevant literature  
Proposed design  
Ethical & access issues  
Anticipated impact of the work on personal development and organisational/professional practice

2. The literature review (5,000-7,000 words **amended at students' request 2017**) must:

Offer a critical analysis of evidence-based knowledge in a pertinent research field and a preliminary conceptual framework.  
Highlight existing research gaps and must be accompanied by a reference list (Harvard), include a revised set of research questions and suggestions on how completing the document has impacted on personal development and organisational/professional practice

3. The methodological review (7,000 words). This must include:

A brief introduction and problem statement  
The definitive research question and its justification (taking into account management practice and academia)  
A justified case for the selected methodology  
An impact plan  
Access and ethical issues  
A detailed statement of timescales for gathering data, analysis and writing up (as required for Stage 2)

The above 3 documents will be assessed by students' supervisory teams and successful completion, together with the necessary annual monitoring documentation, will allow progression to Stage 2- the thesis.

Stage 2:

For the thesis (Stage 2), you will conduct the empirical work as set out in the preceding documents. You will further extend the literature review and theoretical framing for your work, analyse the data and draw

appropriate and informed conclusions based on your analysis. You will need to clarify their contribution to scholarly literature and conduct an impact evaluation, that assesses the extent to which the impact plan set out in the third document of Stage 1 has been delivered. The final thesis should be between 50-60,000 words.

When the thesis is complete, two examiners examine students. One will be a member of the academic staff of NBS, who has not been involved in the student's work, and the other shall be an external assessor. The choice of external assessor will be made by the course leader, in consultation with your supervisors, and ratified by the Progression Board. Two external assessors and an internal assessor shall examine a student who is a member of staff of the University. In addition, and in line with the University's Professional Doctorate Research Degree Regulations, there will be an independent chair present at the viva voce examination.

Each examiner will submit a report on the thesis to the course administrator before the viva takes place. The viva voce examination will then be held and the examiners will make a joint report on the outcome. They will make a decision on document 4 and may recommend

- Pass
- Pass subject to minor modifications
- Pass subject to substantive changes
- Fail and refer
- Fail and not be allowed to resubmit

If changes are required, the examiners shall provide the candidate with a written account of the work's deficiencies and a list of the changes they wish to be made. The assessors will decide whether one or both of them should mark a resubmitted document. In the case of a fail and refer the assessors shall decide whether a further viva voce examination is required. When the revised document(s) are submitted the appointed examiner(s) will confirm in writing whether the required changes and improvements have been made to the necessary standard to award a pass.

Grading is submitted to the course administrator and submitted work moderated by the DBA programme team prior to presentation at the Progression Board. All assessed documentation are assessed using the grading matrices and CLOs.

To clarify and simplify the assessment process leading up to the thesis, documents 1, 2 and 3 are given either a Pass or Fail and Refer. A third marker will be appointed in cases where supervisors fail to agree a grade on documents 1, 2 and 3. If students fail one of these three documents more than twice they will only be given a third attempt in exceptional circumstances before they are withdrawn from the course. All grades are provisional until ratified by the Progression Board.

10. **Course structure and curriculum**

540 credits are awarded for doctoral completion. We offer APL for 140 credits. In sum, the credit envelope is as follows:

APL	130 credits
Introductory stage:	90 credits
Thesis	320 credits

DBA students complete the programme over a four-year time-frame; the first 18 months are the introductory phase, while the following two and a half years represent the thesis itself. The workload expected from DBA students includes an element for critical reflection, which is also a requirement of their normal jobs. Some of the hours for this part of the DBA can be undertaken within your normal hours of employment. DBA students, as they are working on a professional doctorate, are required to research issues relevant to their job or industry. It is expected that some of your academic work can be legitimately done as part of your normal work.

### *Curriculum Design*

Stage 1: Training in Doctoral Research in Management: Literature, Philosophy and Methods

Stage 1 (a): the scoping document. This first document remains intact as in the existing structure. You are required to set out their research objectives through engaging with relevant stakeholders and to conduct a short, preliminary review of the literature to set your study in context. This document will also require you to put forward an informed case about why your question or questions are important, in terms of potential contribution to practice, academia and personal development.

Stage 1 (b): Introductory literature review & conceptual development. This document requires you to engage with relevant literatures and present a reasoned case about how and why your question is important based on relevant theory, and what insights are presented for the questions and objectives identified in the preceding document.

Stage 1 (c): Methodological justification, fieldwork and impact plan. In this document, you are asked to reflect on epistemological and methodological paradigms and justify your choice of methodology. You need to present a reasoned case to support your selected research design, offer a plan detailing how the research will be operationalised and discuss how your research will potentially influence non-academic and academic audiences.

Three compulsory workshops will address your learning needs for each area identified above. All three documents need to be successfully completed before you can progress onto Stage 2 of the programme.

Stage 2: The final thesis.

The final thesis builds upon the first three documents but also includes the data analysis and is externally assessed. To support this stage students are required to attend three compulsory workshops exploring:

The thesis stage and advanced literature review  
 Advanced methodology  
 Reflection, impact, academic writing, submission & the Viva.

<b>11.</b>	<b>Admission to the course</b>
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	There are no changes to the admissions policy. This is governed by the Quality Handbook Section 4d - Regulations for Professional Doctorates.
12.	<b>Support for learning</b>
	<p>Supervisors are allocated in line with the University's Common Assessment Regulations (located in Section 16 of the Quality Handbook).</p> <p>Course leaders provide further guidance and support especially around academic and pastoral issues. The Graduate School takes responsibility for managing day-to-day contact including assessments submitted by students and Progression Boards. As with all students, DBA students will have full access to NOW, to the library resources and to the Student Support Services team who can provide guidance on a wide range of issues.</p>
13.	<b>Graduate destinations/employability</b>
	DBA students are normally in employment throughout the course of their studies.
14.	<b>Course standards and quality</b>
	<p>All course related matters, including student progression, are reviewed and discussed at Course Committees (at least 3 per year) and Progression Boards (at least 2 per year and include an external examiner). On an annual basis, the course team are required to submit a Course Standards Quality Report, which is reviewed at University level. The course is also subject to the Regulations for Professional Doctorates set by the University.</p> <p><i>Generic Level Descriptors for Doctoral Level Awards</i></p> <p>The standard for the DBA is set nationally. The professional doctorate uses a framework of generic level descriptors for Doctoral awards that is consonant with standards across all Doctoral awards in England, Wales and Northern Ireland; i.e., both Ph.D. and professional doctorate qualifications in any field of enquiry.</p> <p><i>Generic Level Descriptors for Doctoral Level Awards</i></p> <p>DBA CLOs are mapped across the QAA 2011 and AACSB guidelines</p> <p>e.g. QAA (2011) states that doctoral level study involves:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1.The creation and interpretation of new knowledge, through original research or other advanced scholarship, of a quality to satisfy peer review, extend the forefront of the discipline and merit publication</li> <li>2. A systematic acquisition and understanding of a substantial body of knowledge that is at the forefront of an academic discipline or area of professional practice.</li> <li>3.The general ability to conceptualise, design and implement a project for the generation of new knowledge,</li> </ol>

applications or understanding at the forefront of the discipline, and to adjust the project design in the light of unforeseen problems.

4. A detailed understanding of the applicable techniques for research and advanced academic inquiry.

*Typically holders of the qualification will be able to:*

- a. Make informed judgments on complex issues in specialist fields, often in the absence of complete data and be able to communicate their ideas and conclusions clearly and effectively to specialist and non-specialist audiences
- b. Continue to undertake pure and /or applied research and development at an advanced level, contributing substantially to the development of new techniques, ideas, or approaches

*and will have:*

- c. The qualities and transferable skills necessary for employment requiring the exercise of personal responsibility and largely autonomous initiative in complex and unpredictable situations, in professional or equivalent environments.

The University's doctoral level descriptors are based on those of the QAA as well as AACSB.

15.

**Assessment regulations**

This course is subject to the University's Common Assessment Regulations (located in Section 16 of the Quality Handbook). Any course specific assessment features are described below:

This is governed by the Quality Handbook Section 4d - Regulations for Professional Doctorates.

16.

**Additional Information**

Collaborative partner(s):  
Course referenced to national QAA  
Benchmark Statements:  
Course recognised by:  
Date this course specification  
approved:  
Any additional information: