



Nelson Mandela
METROPOLITAN UNIVERSITY
Business School

Leaders for tomorrow

Doctorate in Business Administration

Nelson Mandela Metropolitan University Business School

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THE NMMU DBA DEGREE

DESCRIPTION OF THE DEGREE

The DBA degree is an outcomes-based degree. It does not include a taught component for credit and is assessed solely on the basis of a thesis that is presented for examination. The thesis is examined by an internal examiner and two external examiners, who are approved by our Faculty Management Committee on the basis of formal criteria. The DBA is awarded in recognition of the demonstration of high-level research competence that results in a substantial and original scholarly contribution in a business discipline or field.

ENTRANCE REQUIREMENTS

An MBA degree or its equivalent, or as otherwise approved by the HOD in terms of the guidelines approved by Faculty Board. The candidate must have obtained an aggregate mark of at least 65% for such a degree, as well as a 65% for the treatise, research project or dissertation.

CRITERIA FOR AWARDING THE DEGREE

Our degree meets the following requirements for formal government accreditation:

South African government criteria

The NMMU DBA programme was accredited by the South African Qualifications Authority (SAQA) in 2006. The *Government Gazette* of October 2007 outlines the criteria for a doctoral qualification as follows (emphasis added):

*“A Doctoral Degree requires a candidate to undertake research at the most advanced academic levels culminating in the submission, assessment and acceptance of a thesis. **Course work may be required as preparation or value addition to the research, but does not contribute to the credit value of the qualification. The defining characteristic of this qualification is that the candidate is required to demonstrate high-level research capability and make a significant and original academic contribution at the frontiers of a discipline or field. The work must be of a quality to satisfy peer review and merit publication.** The degree may be earned through pure discipline-based or multidisciplinary research or applied research. This degree requires a minimum of two years' full-time study, usually after completing a Master's Degree. A graduate must be able to supervise and evaluate the research of others in the area of specialisation concerned.” (Government Gazette, 5 October 2007, No.30353: 29).*

The *Draft HEQF Framework of July 2004* prescribes the following applied competence and autonomy of learning criteria for awarding a doctoral degree:

Applied competence criteria:

- A comprehensive and systematic grasp of a discipline/field's body of knowledge with expertise and specialist knowledge in an area at the forefront of the discipline, field or professional practice.
- A critical understanding of the most advanced research methodologies, techniques and technologies in a discipline/field; an ability to participate in scholarly debates at the cutting edge of an area of specialisation; an ability to apply knowledge, theory and research methods creatively to complex practical, theoretical and epistemological problems.
- Substantial, independent research and advanced scholarship resulting in the (re) interpretation and expansion of knowledge which is judged publishable by peers.
- An ability to identify, conceptualise, design and implement research projects that address complex, ill-defined problems at the cutting-edge of a discipline/field.
- Advanced information retrieval and processing skills; an ability to independently undertake a study and evaluation of the literature and current research in an area of specialisation.
- An ability to effectively present and communicate the results of research and opinion to specialist and non-specialist audiences using the full resources of an academic/professional discourse; the production of a thesis which meets international standards of scholarly/professional writing.

Autonomy of learning criteria:

- A capacity to operate autonomously in specialised, complex, ill-defined and unpredictable contexts.
- Intellectual independence and research leadership through managing advanced research and development in a field professionally and ethically.
- A capacity to critically evaluate own and others' work on the basis of independent criteria.

NMMU Vision 2020 guidelines

Our Business School is guided philosophically by our university's Vision 2020, which requires that graduates should be known for demonstrating:

In-depth disciplinary/interdisciplinary knowledge. The ability to engage in the expanding knowledge base of their disciplines/ professions. Excellence in both the art and science of their disciplines/professions. Awareness of the latest advances in and technical competencies required by their disciplines/professions. Leadership in the production of new knowledge and understanding through inquiry, critique and synthesis. An appreciation of the interdisciplinary nature of knowledge that combines breadth and depth of understanding. An awareness of the global context of their disciplines/professions.

Social awareness and responsible citizenship. Commitment to ethical conduct, social awareness and responsible citizenship. An acknowledgment of and respect for constitutional principles and values such as equality, equity, quality, humanity, diversity and social justice. Respect for and awareness of the environment in all its manifestations. A commitment to improving local, national and global environmental sustainability.

Adaptive expertise. The ability to apply knowledge and skills in a range of contextual and conceptual frameworks. Ability to anticipate and accommodate change, ambiguity and differing views. Self-management including the ability to work autonomously, exercise initiative, and apply time management and organisational skills. The capacity to sustain intellectual curiosity and a willingness to improve personal performance through self-reflection, the pursuit of lifelong learning, and building networks.

Creativity and innovation. Ability to think creatively and to generate a range of innovative ideas that are appropriate to the particular context. Innovation in their approach to and solution of complex problems. Commitment to innovative thinking to advance scholarly excellence.

Critical thinking. Openness to new ideas. The ability to understand, interrogate and apply a variety of theoretical and philosophical positions and objectively assess the merits of competing and alternative perspectives. The capacity for critical reflection.

Intra- and interpersonal skills. Self-awareness. The ability to relate to and collaborate with others, individually or in teams, to exchange views and ideas and to achieve desired outcomes. The ability to function in a multicultural and multilingual context.

Communication skills. The ability to articulate ideas and information confidently and coherently in visual, verbal, written and electronic forms to audiences of different sizes in a range of situations. Respect for the multitude of voices, stories, perspectives and knowledge systems.

Doctoral Short Learning Programme (DPSLP)

The DBA degree requires candidates to work independently and is awarded on the basis of the successful examination of a doctoral thesis comprising "own, unaided work." As a School aspiring to make a pan-African contribution, we feel that it is important to provide developmental avenues to assist potentially promising doctoral candidates not yet able to demonstrate the ability to work independently and meet admission criteria. In this vein, the School has developed a special Doctoral Preparation SLP (DPSLP).

According to the formal University rules governing the DBA degree, the DPSLP may not earn credits toward the degree. Rather, it is intended to prepare prospective doctoral students cognitively for the process and rigours of doctoral research. Programme content addresses topics such as identifying interesting research topics, surveying the literature, crafting arguments, choosing appropriate methodological approaches and understanding recent systematic statistical approaches. The DPSLP is ideal for potential candidates who have been away from formal education for a few years and wish to bring themselves up-to-date.

The DPSLP applies a "hands-on" blended learning approach in which students work independently and in class on the elements of a compelling DBA research proposal. The blended learning approach comprises a self-study phase and a four-day contact phase. Web resources are available to complement reading materials during self-study. Depending on demand, the programme can be offered up to three times annually.

The DPSLP is offered by the School at additional cost. Potential candidates are not guaranteed admission to the DBA programme on completing the DPSLP and may decide to pursue their doctoral research at another university.

Rules for the appointment of supervisors

The NMMU *Policy, Procedures and Rules for Postgraduate Research Degrees* (Annexure 1) sets out formal roles for the appointment of supervisors (and co-supervisors), who must be qualified to supervise proposed DBA research, outlining supervisor responsibilities in section 4.2 as follows:

- Supervisors must have a doctoral qualification from a recognised university.
- Suitability to supervise a particular candidate is assessed on the basis of the supervisor's knowledge of particular research domain, as evidenced by publications in accredited scholarly, peer-reviewed journals and supervision of doctoral candidates to completion.
- Supervisors may be drawn from academic staff in the School, the Faculty of Business and Economic Science, or other departments in the University.
- In some cases, where an external supervisor demonstrates exceptional capabilities required by a particular doctoral candidate, a co-supervisor outside the University may be appointed to provide a candidate with a necessary mix of supervisory support competencies.

Notwithstanding this assistance provided by the relevant offices in the Business School, the onus to gain the agreement of a suitably qualified supervisor ultimately rests on the doctoral candidate.

ADMISSION PROCEDURES

Candidates may express interest in doctoral research by email, telephone or website information request on the NMMU Business School website. All expressions of interest are directed to the School's Research Co-ordinator (RC, Dr Annelie Pretorius, tel: 041-504-3795; e-mail: annelie.pretorius@nmmu.ac.za).

[The RC](#) begins a process of engagement with the prospective candidate, which can be thought of as a two-phase process. In Phase 1, the RC makes an initial assessment of the potential candidate. In Phase 2, the potential candidate demonstrates the ability to identify an original and substantive contribution to the literature and work with appropriate levels of independence and rigour.

Phase 1: Preliminary assessment

DBA enquiries typically fit into three categories:

- *Qualified applicants with interesting research ideas that are within the scope of the Business School's capacity to provide competent supervision.* The RC immediately approves these candidates for Phase 2 interaction (see below).
- *Qualified applicants with interesting research ideas that are not within the scope of the Business School's capacity to provide competent supervision.* In this situation, the candidate may be allocated to an external supervisor, introduced to another department within the University or referred to another University, when it is in the candidate's interest.
- *Applicants who do not yet meet admission criteria in terms of having a well-conceptualised doctoral research topic and exhibiting the ability to engage in independent doctoral research.* The RC encourages these individuals to consider the Doctoral Preparation SLP to gain the necessary research competencies.

Phase 2: Developing the research proposal

In this phase of interaction with potential doctoral candidates, the RC identifies the scholarly domain in which the proposed research would be conducted and facilitates a conversation between the potential candidate and potential supervisors who appear to have the relevant competencies and a desire to supervise the candidate.

- *When potential candidates demonstrate readiness to work independently under supervision to complete a draft summary doctoral research proposal, they are encouraged to prepare a preliminary draft proposal (3000-4000 words).*
 - The preliminary draft proposal summarises the conceptual motivation for the research, outlines the intended contribution (e.g., theoretical, empirical, practical), provides evidence from the literature to support its originality and importance, and outlines the major elements of the research design and analytic approach.
 - The preliminary draft proposal serves as an introductory document for an exploratory conversation with a suitably qualified supervisor and usually takes 1–3 months to complete.
- *When potential candidates do not demonstrate readiness to work independently under supervision to complete a draft summary doctoral research proposal, we recommend the Doctoral Preparation SLP.*
 - Admission into the DPSLP provides potential doctoral candidates with access to online resources, doctoral colloquia, and developmental seminars that are intended to provide them with the opportunity to engage in assisted self-study and build the necessary competencies. This facilitates the acquisition of relevant competencies, while working toward identifying potential contributions that interest the potential doctoral candidate.
 - Potential candidates interact with faculty teaching on the DPSLP, who may not be subject experts but are competent in the domains of philosophy of science, research design and methodology. The seminars and content survey a wide range of qualitative and quantitative research approaches, popular statistical analysis software, and other issues that candidates will encounter in the literature.
 - Once candidates complete the DPSLP, they should be in a position to engage in an introductory conversation with a potential supervisor identified by the RC.
- Following the introductory supervisory conversation, the potential candidate works independently under the guidance of the supervisor to develop a tightly-written final DBA proposal (4000-6000 words). The final DBA proposal is presented to the supervisor for approval and then to the Business School Research Committee (BSRC) for consideration for formal admission to the DBA programme.

- This process usually takes 1 – 6 months and, although the product of independent work, may include multiple interactions with the potential supervisor.
- During this time prior to registration for the degree, the potential supervisor may decline to continue supervisory responsibilities. In this case, the supervisor will inform the candidate and the RC of the reason for this decision, which can derive from an assessment of the candidate (e.g., not really able to work independently toward the degree or will require inappropriately high levels of supervision) or the evolution of the research topic (e.g., topic has changed and is no longer within the supervisor's domain of supervision expertise). The RC will then decide on an appropriate course of action.
- Once the potential candidate and proposed supervisor agree that the proposed research will make an original and substantive contribution to the literature and to their respective roles, the supervisor submits the final proposal to the BSRC. The BSRC may request that the candidate and supervisor present an oral defence of the proposal.

Phase 3: Registration and approval of final DBA proposal

On approval of the final DBA proposal, the candidate will be allowed to register for the DBA programme.

- To be registered for the programme, the candidate submits the following documentation to the RC to begin the admission process:
 - The final DBA proposal.
 - The University application forms.
 - Official university transcripts providing evidence of prior relevant degrees (e.g., MBA, other Masters or Doctoral qualifications), for verification by the University.
 - *Appendix A: Undertaking by the Research Supervisor/Promoter* from the University's *Policy, Procedures and Rules for Postgraduate Research Degrees*. In this form, the supervisor indicates willingness to supervise the proposed research to completion, provides evidence to support competency to supervise the research and comments on the originality and importance of the intended contribution, in terms of the prescribed instructions as specified in institutional and faculty policies and procedures for postgraduate research degrees. The supervisor's CV is attached as an annexure to the form.
 - The *Learning Agreement* in which the supervisor and candidate negotiate and record their respective roles, provides a project plan including timelines and major steps, and outlines possible scholarly contributions that could emerge from the research agreeing recognition and order of authorship.
- The RC verifies that all documents are present and completed correctly, then co-ordinates the registration process.
- The final proposal is now submitted to the Faculty Research and Innovation Committee (FRTI) for final approval.
- The FRTI approves the research proposal and indicates whether ethical clearance is needed. If ethical clearance is needed, the supervisor and student prepare ethical clearance documentation and submit them to the RC, who then submits the documentation to the NMMU Ethics Committee for approval.
- The FRTI submits the application to the Faculty Management Committee (FMC).
- From registration, the candidate must complete the degree in a minimum of two and a maximum of three years, with a possibility of a one-year year extension. The duration of the DBA degree is therefore a minimum of two years and a maximum of four years.

RULES FOR ASSESSMENT

Formal assessment criteria

The DBA thesis is examined according to formal criteria that ensure compliance with the South African government outcome standards. Evidence in the form of a written thesis and at least one published article, through intellectual scrutiny and where feasible, expert external assessment, must show that graduates demonstrate high level research capability, make a substantive and original empirical contribution to the relevant literature, and render work of a quality that satisfies peer review and merits publication. A Business School Postgraduate Committee, comprising the Business School Director, Graduate School Director, and Research Director, oversees the assessment process internally.

Plagiarism

As a preliminary step, every DBA must be assessed for plagiarism using the well-known Turnitin software prior to assessment by the internal and external examiners. Plagiarism is a serious offence and any NMMU students involved in plagiarism could face disciplinary action. The NMMU Policy, Procedures and Rules for Postgraduate Research Degrees requires supervisors to explicitly advise DBA students of the requirement to comply with University plagiarism policy, while placing responsibility on the DBA candidate to be aware and fully compliant with NMMU plagiarism policy. The School treats the prevention of plagiarism in a positive way. DBA candidates are aware that their thesis will be evaluated using Turnitin software, as is the practice in peer institutions worldwide. DBA candidates have access to Turnitin and can assess their own work for inadvertent and unintentional plagiarism. It is compulsory for all MBA and DBA students to submit their theses for Turnitin before examination.

Assessment process

Supervisors submit compulsory semester reports on the progress of the study to the Graduate School, to inform the School about progress in line with the project plan and anticipated submission for examination. The RC requests the candidate to make a verbal progress report to the Business School in the 2nd year after the DBA proposal has been accepted by the FRTI.

- Candidates may submit for examination at any time. However, in September of the final year of study, the candidate is asked to indicate his/her intent to submit by signing and submitting the relevant form.
- On completion of the required form, the supervisor signs a permission form to submit the thesis for examination. If a candidate is submitting without the permission of the supervisor, then this is noted.
- On receipt of the permission form from the supervisor, the RC administers the process.
- The RC asks the supervisor to recommend five external examiners for consideration, from whom the Business School Postgraduate Committee chooses two examiners.
- The supervisor serves as the internal examiner.
- If the candidate has not published from the thesis already, then the candidate submits a manuscript to an accredited peer-review based on the DBA research. The candidate submits the published article, or a copy of the manuscript in review, to the FRTI.
- The FRTI approves and appoints the examiners. On receipt of the examiners' reports, the FRTI finalises the examination results, informing the University's Examination Office, who informs the candidate of the outcome.

KEY RESOURCES

The following are important resources available to DBA candidates to support their studies:

Funding opportunities

As an NMMU postgraduate student, a DBA candidate can apply for numerous funding opportunities from both internal and external sources. More information about Doctoral funding can be found on the NMMU Research Capacity Development (RCD) website (<http://rcd.nmmu.ac.za/Master-s-and-Doctoral-Student-Funding>). Supervisors can also access funding for their doctoral students via the Faculty RTI.

NMMU Library and Information Services

DBA candidates have access to all the NMMU libraries. These state-of-the-art libraries are equipped with workspaces, computers, photo copying and printing facilities and the latest in academic materials for students to use and access. Five of these campuses (including the Business School Campus) are located in Port Elizabeth.

Through the NMMU libraries, students have access to a range of comprehensive online academic databases where they can source the latest research from a comprehensive selection of international and local journals and scholarly publication from a wide selection of electronic resources, including EBSCO Host, Gale Info Trac, ISI Web of Knowledge, JSTOR, LexisNexis Academic, ReportLinker Academic, SABINET (local journals), SpringerLink, SwetsWise, and Wiley

Online Library among others. An extensive collection of books is available for business and related disciplines, research methodology and analytic approaches, including rigorous quantitative approaches (e.g., structural equation, multilevel, hierarchical regression, Bayesian and latent class models) and qualitative approaches (e.g., ethnography, depth interview, case analysis, grounded theory)..

Students can also access the NMMU libraries from off-campus. Library training is also offered on a regular basis and a dedicated faculty librarian is available to assist students in finding relevant information for their research. More on the mission of the NMMU Library and Information Services is available on their website (<http://library.nmmu.ac.za/>).

Statistical assistance

DBA candidates are encouraged to perform their own statistical analyses, but may receive assistance from experts in this regard. The NMMU Unit for Statistical Consultancy (USC) provides free statistical assistance to postgraduate students.

Students are also provided with free STATISTICA licenses and regular statistical workshops are offered by the NMMU RCD. Resources are provided to assist with the use of the R Statistical Package, LISREL, SmartPLS, and other statistical packages. In addition, the Business School offers a number of data analysis workshops at part of its Research Skills Programme in 2013. Assistance must be reported in the thesis.

Research Skills Programme

The School will launch a new and improved high level research workshop in 2013 and beyond as part of its Research Skills Programme. These workshops will be hosted by internationally recognised experts in research methodology. The topics to be address in the 2013 workshops include Structural Equation Modelling (SEM) using the LISREL, R statistical packages and qualitative data analysis. Each workshop will be advertised via appropriate media channels.

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