

Doctor of Business Administration (DBA) programme specification

Academic Year:	2026/27
Degree Awarding Body:	The University of Bradford
Main Location:	Blend of distance learning with blocks of City Campus study days
Subject Benchmarks:	Master's in Business and Management (QAA 2019)
Qualifications Framework:	Framework for HE Qualifications of UK Degree Awarding Bodies (FHEQ: QAA 2014)
Target Degree Award:	Doctor of Business Administration (DBA) [FHEQ Level 8]
Intermediate/exit awards:	Postgraduate Diploma (PGD) Management Research [FHEQ Level 7] Postgraduate Certificate (PGC) Management Research [FHEQ Level 7]
Programme Admissions:	UK and international students
Programme Start Date:	October
Programme Mode of Study:	24 months block-taught blended learning followed by 24-60 months distance learning

This programme is taught within the School of Management, in an elite group of business schools to hold the triple accreditations of EQUIS, AMBA and AACSB, often referred to as the "[Triple Crown](#)".

Please note: The University has a set of terms and conditions for all students accepting an offer to study on a course here at Bradford. This is called the Student Contract. This document sets out the Terms and Conditions which apply when an offer of a place on a programme of study at the University of Bradford is accepted. [View our Student Contract for further details](#). Information about this programme and its modules has been published in advance of the academic year to which it applies. Every effort has been made to ensure that the information is accurate at the time of publication, but changes may occur given the interval between publishing and commencement of teaching. Any change which impacts the terms and conditions of an applicant's offer will be communicated to them.

Schedule of recent changes

1. October 2024: Annual changes for 2024/25 academic year and February intake.
2. October 2025: Removed February intake and made changes to academic regulations. Specification reformatted for improved accessibility.
3. July 2026: Initial publication for October 2026 entry.

Programme Aims

The University of Bradford Doctor of Business Administration (DBA) is the pinnacle of management education. The DBA is as academically rigorous as a PhD, but is specifically designed for executives, professionals and senior managers who seek to combine the best of academic knowledge with the best of practitioner knowledge in order to push forward the

boundaries of understanding contemporary and rapidly transforming business and management challenges.

The DBA offers a range of globally oriented career advancement opportunities for senior managers and business professionals. It does this utilising advanced research methods, training through a suite of 4 bespoke taught modules delivered on campus at Bradford by leading scholars to equip students to undertake independent empirical research on contemporary business/management challenges and to develop new knowledge and understandings. Students will be supervised by leading research-active academics who regularly publish in international journals and present at prestigious conferences.

The University of Bradford's mission is to drive sustainable social and economic development through a modern, distinctive, and internationally engaged Faculty of Management, Sciences and Engineering. We are committed to providing outstanding and innovative teaching and learning, by instilling an ethos of responsible business and leadership. The School of Management is one of a handful of business schools worldwide with the coveted triple-crown accreditation of AMBA, EQUIS and AACSB. We have created an environment of world-leading management education and research where everyone can flourish and make a difference to the world. DBA students will conduct detailed empirical research that will be aligned with the 4 University of Bradford Management and Sustainable Development research clusters:

- Global and Sustainable Futures
- Humane Technology and Innovation
- Transformative Entrepreneurship and Small Business
- Wealth, Inclusive Societies and Ethics

The DBA is both challenging and rewarding, as in the DBA thesis students have to make contributions to academic knowledge, concepts and theory, and organisational and management practice. DBA students will have opportunities to present their research at the Annual Doctoral Conference at the Faculty of Management, Sciences and Engineering. They will also have the opportunity to give guest lectures on their research and/or managerial expertise as part of the International Guest Lecture Series. DBA students can also publish their research in academic and practitioner journals. We also have 2 face-to-face Peer Review Workshops per year where DBA students present their research to colleagues and academics, and we also have mock viva-voce examinations in order to fully prepare DBA students for the thesis defence.

Programme Learning Outcomes

The DBA programme is intended to produce executives, managers and leaders who, through gaining comprehensive knowledge about research methods, are able to apply them to critically exploring contemporary organisational and managerial practices.

DBA graduates will be able to clearly communicate complex and advanced theoretical and empirical research to specialist and practitioner audiences in order to contribute to the development of knowledge of and/or professional practice in organisations.

To be eligible for the Framework for Higher Education Qualifications Level 7 award of Postgraduate Certificate in Management Research, students will be able to:

1. Demonstrate a critical and systematic understanding of contemporary academic knowledge and current organisational/management challenges, which are at the vanguard of both academic discipline(s) and professional practice(s).
2. Demonstrate a comprehensive understanding of the philosophy of research methods and how this informs research design, methods, analysis and the presentation of data.
3. Develop comprehensive knowledge of quantitative, qualitative and mixed methods in order to conduct independent empirical research and create, analyse and interpret new knowledge in the discipline.
4. Understand the importance of ethical practices in research, and conform with highest standards of research ethics in accordance with university regulations and the wider academic community.
5. Demonstrate self-direction, autonomy and originality as an independent researcher in conducting empirical research and addressing contemporary organisational/ business challenges at an advanced level.

Additionally, to be eligible for the FHEQ Level 7 award of Postgraduate Diploma in Management Research, students will be able to:

6. Critically assess current research and advanced scholarship in the discipline, develop critiques and new empirical and/or conceptual research.
7. Communicate and disseminate empirical research findings and conclusions to both specialist and practitioner audiences.

Additionally, to be eligible for the FHEQ Level 8 Degree award Doctor of Business Administration, students will be able to:

8. Create and interpret new knowledge through original independent empirical research, which is at the vanguard of both academic discipline(s) and professional practice(s), which is worthy of publication.
9. Demonstrate self-direction, initiative, and originality in order to make informed judgements about complex issues in research fields. Be able to clearly communicate complex and advanced theoretical, conceptual, and empirical ideas effectively to specialist and practitioner audiences.
10. Conceptualise, design, and conduct a significant research project in an employing organisation for the creation and generation of new knowledge, which will make a substantial contribution to both academic theory/ concepts and organisational/ management practice.

11. Address complex and contemporary challenges for business and society. These may include, but are not limited to, such issues as globalisation, corporate social responsibility, and sustainable development.

Curriculum

The DBA programme is structured in two parts: Part 1 comprises four modules taught in Bradford and followed by the Progression to DBA Research Proposal and Defence module, and Part 2 relates to the doctoral research-based thesis. Students should expect to spend at least 2 years in each 'part' of the programme with two years on the 'taught' part of the programme and at least two years on the 'research' part of the programme. Part 1 is equivalent to the first 2 years of study on the 48-month DBA and consists of 120 credits. Part 2 consists of a single 420-credit module, with total award volume of 540 credits. All 6 modules in Parts 1 and 2 are core to the programme.

In order to progress to Part 2 students will complete a Progression to DBA Research Proposal and Defence and defend their research plans in person at Bradford in front of a panel consisting of the DBA Director of Study, an internal assessor and their supervisors. The Progression to DBA Research Proposal and Defence Report comprises an extended research proposal of 7,000 words, setting out – Introduction, Literature Review and Methodology and also include a plan for how the detailed empirical research will be carried out.

In Part 2 of the programme, the student will produce a 60,000-word thesis (420 credits) over a period of at least 2 years, based on original research carried out within an organisation or organisations.

To continue advancing their research skills, the students will have access to researcher development training material from the university, in form of e-modules and access to custom training offered to postgraduate researchers.

Part 1: Postgraduate Certificate/Diploma in Management Research

In the first 24 months of the programme, students will be prepared for advanced level study of management research. The four taught modules (20 credits each) allow the student to cumulatively develop advanced and critical knowledge of and experience in research methods.

For the 2026/7 cohort, teaching blocks will be in October and December 2026 for modules 1 and 2, February and May 2027 for modules 3 and 4, and a final teaching block in April 2028 for module 5.

Table 1: Core Management Research Modules (DBA Part 1)

Module Code	Module Title	Credit	Level	Study Period	Order
MAL7040-B	Research Design and Philosophy	20	FHEQ 7	Year 1 S1	1
MAL7041-B	Qualitative and Quantitative Research Methods	20	FHEQ 7	Year 1 S1	2
MAL7042-B	Literature Reviewing for Doctoral Studies	20	FHEQ 7	Year 1 S2	3
MAL8011-B	Translating Research into Practice	20	FHEQ 8	Year 1 S3	4
MAL8017-D	Progression to DBA Research Proposal and Defence	40	FHEQ 8	Year 2 S1+2	5

Students will be eligible to exit with the award of Postgraduate Certificate if they have successfully completed 60 credits from the FHEQ Level 7 modules and achieved the award learning outcomes.

Students will be eligible to exit with the award of Postgraduate Diploma if they have successfully completed 120 credits including the FHEQ Level 8 modules and achieved the award learning outcomes.

Part 2: Doctoral research phase

Progression to the thesis phase is subject to satisfactory performance in the taught phase of the programme and passing the Progression to DBA Research Proposal and Defence module.

Table 2: Core Doctor of Business Administration Module (DBA Part 2)

Module Code	Module Title	Credit	Level	Study Period	Order
MAL8013-T	DBA Thesis	420	FHEQ 8	Years 3-4	6

Students who have completed programme activities within 4 years but are yet to submit their thesis can remain on the programme for up to 3 further years at a reduced annual tuition fee. Please see [the online DBA course page](#) for details of the different tuition fees that are due.

Students will be eligible for the FHEQ Level 8 Degree award Doctor of Business Administration (DBA) if they have successfully completed 540 credits and achieved the award learning outcomes.

Learning and Teaching Strategy

School of Management programmes aim to combine academic rigour with practicality and relevance to professionals, executives, and managers. They aim to reflect best practice and innovative thinking and research. The approach, therefore, to teaching and learning aims to integrate applied and theoretical knowledge. The DBA in particular facilitates the development of new knowledge which is at the forefront of the discipline and organisational/management practice.

Learning

The philosophy underpinning the taught part of the DBA is that mature students such as those attracted to the DBA learn best by reading, doing, then reflecting on that doing, before beginning the cycle again. Each module builds on the learning achieved in previous modules, so learning is cumulative, and all modules are specifically designed to be inter-related and focused on the students research projects and interests, thereby ensuring cumulative learning and development.

In the Research Design and Philosophy (MAL7040-B) module, the student studies research methods and the philosophy of research. In the Qualitative and Quantitative Research Methods (MAL7041-B) and Literature Reviewing for Doctoral Studies (MAL7042-B) modules, the student will study advanced qualitative and quantitative research methods by developing a more in-depth understanding of research methods, with a continued refining of their own research aims and questions to encourage the development of a brief research proposal outline. They will also learn how to develop an understanding of particular fields of study through focusing on techniques for critically assessing research in their own chosen sub-discipline.

As the student progresses through the modules they will apply the ability of critical review to a wider range of literature in their chosen sub-discipline and search more widely for methods or research outcomes from other disciplines that may be transferred to add value to their own work. This review allows them to identify gaps in knowledge in the sub-discipline, consider creative methods to find ways of extending knowledge in the sub-discipline and to explore how to become a practitioner author through studying how to write for academic journals.

Teaching

Teaching in Part 1 is in intensive study blocks of 3-5 days at Bradford City Campus, and after each study block, the student will have scheduled contact times, in which to undertake the coursework required by the module. This will consist of compulsory face-to-face lectures and seminars. During this period, they must focus on self-directed study, in liaison with the module tutor and Director of Studies DBA, and (starting from MAL7042-B Literature reviewing for doctoral studies) their supervisors. There are four inter-linked, taught modules that take them from research design and philosophy to transfer to doctoral status.

One of the School of Management's main aims is to address major challenges for business and society such as globalisation, Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) and sustainable development. We will seek to prepare the student to be able to contribute to the debates in these key areas and to critically appraise the relationships between the social, environmental and economic dimensions.

There are 2 face-to-face Peer Review Workshops per academic year and this is the forum in which these topics will be explored in depth: they will be asked to relate their evolving ideas to these and any other major challenges identified by the DBA students themselves. We recognise that DBA students are often at the cutting edge of developments in globalisation, CSR, business ethics, sustainable development, etc., and our aim is to ensure that all participants can learn from each other, as well as from academic staff. Our intention is to encourage debate amongst peers so that the student will continue to develop their own values and understanding of sustainability and CSR in a global context and how it applies to their own situation. The international nature of the DBA student cohort will expose them to perspectives that they may not otherwise come across and the peer-to-peer debate is an essential part of the DBA learning and teaching strategy.

DBA students will have the opportunity to give specialist lectures on their academic research and/or area of management/organisational expertise in our International Guest Lecture Series. This opportunity is available throughout the DBA and these guest lectures are attended by post-graduate, under-graduate and academic members of staff.

DBA students are also invited to the University's symposiums and other conferences. Students can deliver full papers, developmental papers, or present posters and this is an excellent networking opportunity.

Student Journey

In the first year of the DBA, the Director of Studies will be the Personal Academic Tutor for each new cohort of students. Once the students pass the first four taught stage modules, they will have

acquired advanced scholarship and research skills to enable them to revise their research proposals.

In the fourth module, the student will undertake a pilot study writing it up in the format of a journal paper to gain experience of that form of academic writing. The student will develop an understanding of the issues of translating research into practice, a fundamental aspect of a DBA. The student will be expected to reflect on the insights already developed into the key issues they are tackling, and explore how such findings, if replicated in a bigger study, could be translated into practice.

Once the student has passed the first four modules, they will then have to pass the Progression to DBA Research Proposal and Defence module, where a detailed 7000-word research proposal is presented and defended. The students will work with the DBA Director of Studies and supervisors on developing their research proposals. Two supervisors will be allocated provisionally through the Director of Studies liaising with the relevant Head of Departments and the Director of Studies for Research Phase at the start of MAL7042-B Literature reviewing for doctoral studies module during which the students will develop a one-page proposal. The supervisors will be confirmed prior to students commencing the Progression to DBA Research Proposal and Defence module. The supervisors will then become the Personal Academic Tutors for the students.

Successful completion of the Progression to DBA Research Proposal and Defence prepares students for the main research stage and ultimately writing the thesis. During the main research phase, they will attend Peer Review Workshops that enhance understanding, provide motivation and support, enable networking, prepare them for presenting their work to non-specialists, give opportunities for the cross-fertilisation of ideas and will expose them to research from outside their specialist area.

Assessment Strategy

Assessment processes test both knowledge of the disciplines and their application and limitations. The range of assessment methods used throughout this DBA programme have been specifically designed to be progressive in terms of developing critical analysis and writing skills in addition to addressing specific learning outcomes as indicated in the previous section. In addition, they benefit from increasing levels of formative feedback as the student progress through the modules and then the research phase with the final thesis being the “capstone” or synoptic assessment that encompasses all the learning outcomes.

Assessment for the early 20 credit modules is by means of one 4000-6000 word written coursework paper, and for the Progression to DBA Research Proposal and Defence it is by means of one 7000 word full research proposal. While the modules are set at level 7, they are nevertheless taken by doctoral students who must be challenged to a higher degree than Master’s students. DBA coursework also needs to provide direct input into the DBA thesis. Non-credit-bearing, informal formative assessment of presentations will be made by academic staff and peers on the programme.

The later 2 modules are set at level 8. In the 'Translating Research into Practice' module, the assignment is expected to follow the format of an academic journal paper. If the student fails to meet the required standard in any module, they will be given feedback and asked to revise the original paper to bring it to the expected standard.

For the taught modules, the module leader first marks all papers, which are then second marked by the module leader of the next module in the timetable. The student will receive formative as well as summative feedback to help them to understand not just the techniques of research but also the culture of constructive critical review that is essential for success. The Progression to DBA Research Proposal and Defence will be assessed by the Director of Studies for the DBA, along with an internal assessor. During the main research phase, the student will develop a close working relationship with their supervisors who act as a "sounding board" for ideas as well as mentoring them through to the preparation of the final thesis. Student progression and performance will be assessed throughout the research phase; students will be expected to engage with researcher development training and complete relevant e-learning modules.

The DBA thesis viva voce examination will involve an oral examination with internal and external examiners who are appointed to examine the final thesis, and this could take place on the University of Bradford campus or online. Both examiners must be satisfied with its content before the candidate will be considered for the award of Doctor. We also offer mock vivas in order to fully prepare DBA students for the final defence of the thesis. These can take place during Peer Review Workshops or separately and involve the Director of Studies and supervisors.

Academic Regulations

This programme comprises a taught Postgraduate Diploma part and a research Professional Doctorate part.

Part 1 of this programme follows the Assessment, Continuation and Awards regulations published on the University's website for Postgraduate Taught courses ([Regulation 9](#)).

Part 2 of the programme follows the Regulations for Professional Doctorates published on the University's website for Research Degrees ([Regulation 10](#)).

What these academic regulations mean:

- For a Degree of Doctor of Business Administration, the student must have acquired 120 credits at level 7/8 in the taught modules, and 420 credits at level 8 for the thesis.
- All elements in Part 1 of the DBA must be passed at 40% before progressing to Part 2.
- Where a candidate has not attained the required level in any module (grades at 40% and above) they must submit work for supplementary assessment.
- Supplementary assessment will be by re-submission of the work, taking into account the feedback received.
- Candidates will be provided with feedback in support of all decisions.

Admission Requirements

The University welcomes applications from all potential students and most important in the decision to offer a place is our assessment of a candidate's potential to benefit from their studies and of their ability to succeed on this particular programme. Consideration of applications will be based on a combination of formal academic qualifications and other relevant experience.

Standard Academic Entry Requirements

- Candidates for the DBA will normally have successfully completed an MBA with average performance of merit or higher within 10 years before they apply to study on the programme.
- Entry to the programme on a similar basis may be possible if the applicant possesses a relevant master's degree, or equivalent, from an approved higher education institution or awarding body. Relevant masters' degrees will normally have included aspects relevant to an understanding of business administration, organisations, and management. Visit [your University of Bradford country webpage](#) for details of equivalent qualifications.

Work Experience Requirements

- The applicant will also normally have worked for at least **3 years** at middle or senior managerial levels since completing their MBA or other Master's degree.
- Applications are welcome from students with non-standard qualifications with significant relevant experience.

English Language Entry Requirements

- The programme is delivered entirely in English. Candidates must have English proficiency equivalent to a 6.5 score on the IELTS test where no sub-test score is below 5.5 or the [equivalent score in another accepted English test](#).
- UK-educated students and holders of a UK degree awarded within 2 years prior to entry to the Bradford programme may be exempted from these English test requirements.

Recognition of Prior Learning

If applicants have prior certificated learning or professional experience which may be equivalent to parts of this programme, the University of Bradford has [Recognition of Prior Learning procedures](#) to evaluate and recognise this learning in order to provide applicants with exemptions from specified modules in the taught part of the programme.

A maximum of 60 credits can be exempted from this programme.

Information in this document is for the contemporary recruitment cycle and was accurate at time of publication. The current tariff and accepted qualifications for entry onto the programme is published at the online course page: <https://www.bradford.ac.uk/courses/pg/dba/>