

**Doctor of Business Administration (DBA)
Programme Specification**

This document applies to Academic Year 2025/26 onwards

1.	Awarding institution/body	University of Worcester
2.	Teaching institution	University of Worcester
3.	Programme accredited by	N/A
4.	Final award	Doctor of Business Administration (DBA)
5.	Programme title	Doctor of Business Administration (DBA)
6.	Pathways available	N/A
7.	Mode and/or site of delivery	Taught input during the pre-thesis stage, followed by supervision at the thesis stage.
8.	Mode of attendance	Part time It is expected that most students will complete and pass the pre-thesis stage of their programme within the first 20 months of Registration. It is then expected that the thesis stage will normally be completed within a further 24-48 months. Max completion date is 8 years.
9.	UCAS Code	N/A
10.	Subject Benchmark statement and/or professional body statement	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.	Date of Programme Specification preparation/ revision	May 2022 - Periodic Review June 2022 – Research School and Worcester Business School amendments August 2022 – AQU amendments July 2023 – annual updates July 2024 – annual updates July 2025 – annual updates

12. Educational aims of the programme

The Doctor of Business Administration (DBA) 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 DBA 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 DBA students will make an original contribution to knowledge within the relevant area or areas of professional practice.

Each DBA 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 6 blocks that are spread across 18 months.
- Stage 3 - a thesis stage. Students work with supervisors to 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 DBA 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

Knowledge and understanding		
LO no.	On successful completion of the named award, students will be able to:	Module Code/s
1.	Critical understanding of various forms of knowledge generation, management and dissemination in different working contexts and the epistemologies underpinning these.	PRDC8001
2.	An in-depth and critical understanding of the complexities of their professional context and the multiple factors shaping it.	PRDC8001

3.	Critical evaluation of the use and critical interpretation of research relevant to their professional context.	PRDC8001
4.	Develop a clear rationale for a research project, drawing appropriately on relevant literature and conceptual frameworks.	PRDC8003
Conceptualization and Critical Thinking		
LO no.	On successful completion of the named award, students will be able to:	Module Code/s
5.	Critical reflection on their professional identity, self and agency in the organisational settings and the philosophies and theories informing practice.	PRDC8001
6.	Critically review and evaluate the main methods of quantitative and qualitative data collection and analysis.	PRDC8002
7.	Explain the paradigm and approach that is most suitable for a proposed study	PRDC8003

Analysis and Evaluation		
LO no.	On successful completion of the named award, students will be able to:	Module Code/s
8.	Appreciate and synthesise a range of research skills relevant to the conduct of a doctoral standard research study.	PRDC8002
9.	Evaluate and articulate strategies for managing information and data.	PRDC8003
10.	Understand how ethical issues apply to the design and implementation of a research project.	PRDC8003

Research and Enquiry		
LO no.	On successful completion of the named award, students will be able to:	Module Code/s
11.	Critically discuss relevant issues of research design, implementation and data analysis.	PRDC8002
12.	Critically debate the differences between the main research paradigms;	PRDC8002
13.	Engage critically with research methodologies and methods.	PRDC8002
14.	Explain why particular strategies and decisions will be adopted and implemented.	PRDC8003

Transferable skills		
LO no.	On successful completion of the named award, students will be able to:	Module Code/s
15.	Present and communicate ideas clearly, orally and in writing.	PRDC8002
16.	Identify and develop an appropriate academic voice for writing the thesis.	PRDC8003
17.	Plan research effectively and flexibly.	PRDC8003

Teaching and Learning

Great care has been taken to adopt an action based and blended approach to learning design throughout this programme. Workshops will be integrated as part of the learning process with tutor and peer led learning activities, on-line resources available via the VLE (Blackboard).

The workshops will be face-to-face or virtual via Blackboard Collaborate if necessary. Individual support may be face-to-face or virtual, via Microsoft Teams, Skype or other appropriate technology.

Structured sessions will utilise a variety of activities, including group discussion, case study analysis, simulation and tutor input as appropriate to the needs of the subject matter and the learning outcomes of the module. Students will be encouraged to reflect on their prior experience of research to identify your researcher development needs and to inform your on-going research project.

Learning Sets will be set up during the first workshop. These sets are a vital resource for this programme and will provide a vehicle for peer support between modules, during research project work and beyond. Participants will be encouraged to continue meeting as a set throughout the course to provide a forum for support, discussion and critique of research plans. Each module will utilise the VLE for the provision of specific module information (module outline, assessment details, and assessment criteria) as well as details of essential reading, hyperlinks to internet-based resources, and key on-line articles from University-subscribed databases.

14. Assessment Strategy

Students are assessed in 4 ways during the programme:

- Through the taught modules.
- 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.
- Their progress is also kept under constant review by their supervisory team.
- 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.

Associated with each module will be several pieces of assessed work:

Module title	Module Code	Assessment items	Weighting
The Researching Professional	PRDC8001	▪ Critically Reflective Journal	20%
		▪ Individual presentation	20%
		▪ Assignment 4000 words	60%
Research Methods and Design	PRDC8002	▪ Analytical review of methodological approaches 5000 words	80%
		▪ Individual presentation (30 mins)	20%
Project Development, Planning and Management	PRDC8003	▪ Ethics Protocol, 1500 words	30%
		▪ Research Proposal, 4,500 words	70%

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 – Masters level work

It is expected that the DBA programme 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 Course 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).

Stage 2 – The Taught Programme

We expect the student to have completed Stage 2 of their programme within the first 20 months of Registration.

Taught Stage 2				
Module Code	Module Title	Pre-requisites	Module status	Credits
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.

Stage 3 - The Thesis

A student registered for a DBA will complete a doctoral thesis. It is expected that students will commence the thesis stage of their programme following notification that they have passed Stage 2 of their programme.

The text of the thesis excluding ancillary data, must be a minimum of 40,000 and a maximum of 60,000 words.

It is expected, within this timeframe that most students will complete and pass the taught element of their programme within the first 20 months of Registration. It is then expected that the Thesis will normally be completed within a further 24-48 months.

Annual Progress Review

<u>Annual Progress Review</u> 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). 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. The Course Leader will make one of the following recommendations to Research Degrees Board for each student reviewed: 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 Course Leader; the student may progress subject to providing a satisfactory response to the issues outlined by the Course Leader by an agreed deadline. iii. The student's progress and/or standard of work is below expectations and the student should be referred to an APR panel. 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. 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	270 Credits
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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.	
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16. **QAA and Professional Academic Standards and Quality**

This award is located at Level 8 of the [OfS sector recognised standards](#). 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 DBA 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 6.5 with no less than 6 in any component). 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 DBA. There may however be rare occasions where an applicant has already completed some or all of a DBA 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 DBA 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.

Award	Credit required for award	Maximum credit allowed	Level
DBA	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 Course 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 Team 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 University 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 taught programme 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

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 Certificate in Research Enquiry (doctoral level) Exit award after Stage 2 of the DBA	Has passed a minimum of 90 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, students who pass stage 2 will be awarded the Postgraduate Certificate in Research Enquiry.

Stage 3

The regulations for stage 3, the thesis, 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.

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 she/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.