



DOCTOR OF BUSINESS ADMINISTRATION
DBA
DISSERTATION GUIDE

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1. The Doctor of Business Administration Degree

The Doctor of Business Administration (DBA) degree is a professional degree for managers, leaders, consultants, and educators. It is designed for candidates from private corporations, the public sector, non-profit organizations, healthcare, and education. The goal of the DBA degree is to enhance the competencies of its candidates by providing them the skills and knowledge to make significant management and leadership contributions to their organizations and to help make those organizations more competitive. It also equips candidates to become thought leaders within their professions and to teach in higher education.

The essence of the DBA dissertation is combining knowledge from extensive personal experience with knowledge derived from original research of a practical nature. Due to the synergy of combining these “ways of knowing,” DBA dissertations can be completed more rapidly (typically 9-18 months) than most PhD dissertations, which tend to be more theoretical and less grounded in practice. Thus, DBA dissertation research is both useful and rigorous.

Following the concept of a professional degree, the DBA dissertation may utilize a variety of models and methodologies. Although some dissertations may develop theory, most will be applied research which extend or provide empirical support for existing theories and models. For example, the dissertation may take the form of case study, simulation, policy analysis, or some other format that fits the organizational research question. Although these research methods may differ in style and format, the written portion of most of these research projects should be able to follow the general format described in this guide.

Whatever methodology is selected, the research should be conducted in a rigorous and ethical manner and should make a contribution both to the candidate’s career and to the knowledge base within the profession.

2. What is a Dissertation?

2.1. Introduction

The Doctor of Business Administration dissertation, also referred to as the Final Thesis, is an original, comprehensive and scholarly investigation that makes contributions to both an academic discipline and to professional practice. Research for the dissertation is conducted using rigorous research methodologies. The entire DBA program brings 120 ECTS (or 240 UK) credits upon the completion.

At SSBM, the dissertation is a significant piece of scholarly work that demonstrates the researcher’s skills in planning, analyzing and presentation. It should encompass the skills and knowledge that the researcher has gained from practical experience as well as from previous education. The research may involve traditional quantitative and qualitative methods and/or other approaches such as a case study, policy analysis, or a simulation. The research may be within the candidate’s organization or in some other context. Whatever the methodology used or the venue of the research, the knowledge created should be of value to the industry, the profession, or the community. The dissertation will be available to the public through SSBM online journal GBIS.

The dissertation involves a formal process and has a formal structure. This guide explains the process for completion and the dissertation format. It provides a set of guidelines for working with the DBA Supervisor.

DBA Supervisor provides guidance and determines whether a student has successfully completed the dissertation requirements. Establishing a good working relationship with the Supervisor is crucial to the successful outcomes of the dissertation process.

2.2. Planning for the Dissertation

The dissertation process is long and frequently arduous. Proper planning can help make that process smoother and more efficient. The doctoral student should start to explore potential research topics as soon as they enter the program, if not before, and is encouraged to read literature related to their dissertation ideas, use those ideas for research papers as appropriate, and discuss those ideas with Supervisor and other experts.

Students are encouraged to pose questions about the process to Supervisors. It is also important to develop plans to organize the volumes of research information that will be collected, stored, and retrieved during the dissertation process. It may be useful to set up a database of annotated bibliographies for key sources.

SSBM offers its students a comprehensive research database EBSCO where numerous books, journals, and articles can be accessed. EBSCO is the largest provider of academic journals, articles and provides access to millions of items. SSBM online Library also offers numerous literature sources that students can access for free. Both EBSCO and online Library are accessible through SSBM Connect so registration to SSBM Connect is highly advisable to all DBA students to both search for the literature sources and connect with other students to share information and experience.

2.3. Ethics

During the DBA Program student should adhere to the standards of ethical integrity and act with honesty, trust, fairness, respect, and responsibility.

“Declaration of Academic Integrity” must be signed by the student before the defense and sent to the Supervisor along with the finished dissertation. The Statement will be provided to the student by their Supervisor and is also accessible in eLearning portal.

Students are to refrain from plagiarism and duplicate submissions. Plagiarism and duplicate submissions will not be tolerated, and Supervisor will refuse to accept any plagiarised or duplicate work. Any plagiarism and duplicate submissions can lead to severe consequences for the student, as described in the Student Handbook (Academic Code of Conduct).

Submissions to the Supervisor are checked for plagiarism through the specialised software. Plagiarism check is done by the Supervisor as part of the revision process and cannot be done on student’s demand. Also, students are advised to refrain from running their work through the plagiarism-check software themselves, as it will remain in that software’s database. As a result, any later check of the same or similar work done by the Supervisor could appear as plagiarised, as it will be compared to the same document inputted in the database by the student.

3. The Dissertation Process: General Steps in the Dissertation Process

This guide will provide most of the information that the student will need to produce a successful dissertation. Below are the steps that should be followed when the student is ready to start the dissertation process. The remainder of the guide will provide details for each of these steps.

1. Student chooses their area of interest (AOI). The choice of AOI and a research problem is of the utmost importance in the dissertation process. It must meet the student's interests and career goals as well as the goals of the DBA program. It is recommended that the AOI be selected before admission to the program, as Supervisor cannot be assigned if the area of interest is not known to SSBM.
2. Program lead and DBA Coordinator assign a supervisor based on student's AOI. This process can last up to 3 weeks from enrolment into the Program. For Global DBA (GDBA) students, this process can last up to 5 weeks from the day they receive their credentials directly from SSBM. Once a supervisor is assigned, both student and Supervisor receive an email from SSBM informing them of newly assigned supervision.
3. Student receives an introductory email from their Supervisor. This is the opportunity to arrange an introductory meeting.
4. During early stages of the Program, usually during the introductory meeting, student and Supervisor agree upon work dynamics, schedule, and communication channels. SSBM official email and Google meet/Zoom are advised. Providing personal phone number and other personal communication details is not advised and SSBM shall not be held responsible for any personal data shared between student and Supervisor.
5. Student enrolls to all courses in Student Information System (SIS), where the assignments are to be submitted. Student completes informative seminars on the e-Learning platform, if available, and registers to SSBM Connect.
6. Student submits and gets approval and grade (Pass: 100 points, Fail: 0 points) from the Supervisor for all three assignments (concept paper, literature review and the research proposal). Each assignment is first to be sent to the Supervisor via email. If necessary, Supervisor will provide comments for corrections which student has to make. Only after each assignment is approved by the Supervisor, student uploads it to SIS and Supervisor grades it. Only after the previous assignment is approved and graded, student can submit the next assignments in the following order:
 1. Concept paper – To be uploaded to SIS under Research Methodology I
 2. Literature Review - To be uploaded to SIS under Research Methodology II
 3. Research Proposal - To be uploaded to SIS under Research Proposal
7. Student conducts the research under the guidance of the Supervisor and submits parts of the Final Thesis as previously agreed upon with the Supervisor.
8. Student sends finished Dissertation to the Supervisor for the final revision. Duration of the final revision is not strictly prescribed, as length of the Dissertation and complexity of the topic will determine the time necessary for Supervisor to review it in detail and provide comments for corrections.
9. After student makes all the necessary corrections to the Dissertation, they send it to the Supervisor. DBA coordinator, in cooperation with the Supervisor, sets the date for the

defense and forms a 3-member defense committee consisting of Supervisor and 2 additional SSBM Faculty members. Supervisor delivers the Dissertation for review to other committee members.

10. DBA coordinator organizes the defense and delivers information on date and time, along with the online meeting link to the student, Supervisor, and committee members 10-15 days prior to the defense.
11. Student prepares PowerPoint presentation for the defense using the SSBM template provided by the Supervisor. Presentation is mandatory for the defense and the committee is free to stop the defense if the student didn't prepare one, which results in momentary fail of the defense. Student can send the presentation to the Supervisor prior to the defense, but it is not mandatory.
12. Defense is held according to schedule and rules described in the section 6. DBA Dissertation Defense.
13. SSBM concludes the student in the system, approximately 4 weeks after a successful defense and after all the necessary documentation has been processed. After the student is concluded, they no longer have access to SIS.
14. After the student has been concluded, SSBM uploads their Dissertation to SIS. Student receives Transcript of Records (TOR) and soft copy (digital) degree through email. They are also asked if they wish to participate in the graduation ceremony or want the hard copy diploma sent by post. Depending on student's answer, additional information is timely provided by SSBM.

4. Responsibilities and supervision process

During implementation of the dissertation, the student should maintain regular communication with their Supervisor. Email communication is advised to exchange written work and provide comments. Word files with inserted comments to certain sections are the most transparent way of sharing the necessary corrections and explanations. Students should refrain from sending working, unfinished and unedited files to their Supervisor and send only completed papers or parts of papers.

If necessary, meetings can be arranged. The number of meetings will vary from student to student, depending upon the nature of the study. The purpose of these meetings is to discuss unexpected developments, explore interpretation of unusual results, and jointly develop modifications to methodology or analysis if needed. Regular meetings that occur weekly or biweekly (or any other regular intervals) are not mandatory, as the student, being a DBA candidate, should demonstrate a certain level of independence and proactivity. Meetings should only be arranged if there is a certain topic or problem to be discussed and student should prepare in advance and send to the Supervisor, a comprehensive list of points to be discussed at the meeting. Meetings that don't have a clear agenda are not beneficial to the DBA Process.

4.1. Supervisor responsibilities

Supervisor responsibilities are:

a) before the start of supervision:

- Get familiar with SSBM IT platform, literature sources that SSBM offers, templates forms and standards, relevant policies, phases of DBA journey (Concept Paper, Literature Review, Research Paper and writing the dissertation), grading principles, remuneration policy and duration of the DBA programme and in particular this policy, DBA guidelines, DBA defence procedure and protocols and DBA dissertation guidelines available on <https://dba.e-ssbm.com>.
- Accept or reject supervising of proposed student with proposed research topic within 7 calendar days from the moment Program coordinator sends allocation proposal by email.

b) at the start of supervision:

- Send a welcome mail to a student within 48 hours from the accepted allocation in line with the template of welcome mail received from the Program lead.
- Send to student all information from related to principles of communication with student.
- Give guidance about the nature of research and the standards expected, about the planning of the research programme, about literature and sources, resources and their availability, and about requisite techniques (including arranging for instructions where necessary).
- Discuss with the student the planned level of contact needed, for example through in-person and/or virtual meetings and/or by other electronic means.
- If publications and/or scholarly creative work will be involved, discuss and plan accordingly.
- Give advice and explain the timetable for preparation of research materials.
- Give guidance as to data management and appropriate academic conduct (including ethical conduct).
- Explain and discuss with the student issues and rules of copyright and intellectual property.

c) during the supervision:

- Ensure, as far as is possible, that an appropriate schedule of contact is maintained.
- Be accessible to the student at appropriate times when the student may need advice. In case of holidays, illness or other reasons preventing accessibility, to inform ahead the student and the Program lead.
- Explain and give advice on the necessary milestones and completion dates of successive stages of the work so that the whole may be submitted within the scheduled time.
- Request written work as appropriate and return that work to student with constructive feedback and in reasonable time with highlighted changes option so that student see the changes, modifications and comments directly in text.
- Give guidance as to the referencing style and layout to be used in written work.
- Draw the student's attention to any important new results or concepts that may have come to the attention of the Supervisor through the Supervisor's contacts with other professionals and researchers.

- Provide guidance in fieldwork in the case of field-based research.
- Direct the student to other experts in the discipline, if appropriate, and advise on relevant conferences and organisations.
- Arrange, as appropriate, for the student to talk about their work to individual staff or in seminars and to have practice in oral presentation of the research.
- Monitor the student's progress and quality of work and ensure that the student is made aware in writing of any inadequacy the Supervisor notes with regard to expected SSBM standards.
- Keep written records in relation to the supervision, and in particular of any concerns that have been communicated to the student.
- Ensure in the final stages of thesis preparation that they are available, within reason, to read drafts and provide prompt and appropriate written comments on those drafts.
- Grade Concept Paper, Literature Review and Research Paper in Student Information System (SIS) in line with Program lead guidelines and update on student progress status in SIS.
- Prepare himself/herself and a student for DBA defence (Presentation in ppt format available on eLearning Platform/LMS, DBA metric template and protocol).

4.2. Student responsibilities

Students' responsibilities are to:

- Review this Guide in detail, along with all other relevant documentation.
- Inform Program coordinator on preferred Area of Interest in order for Program lead to assign a Supervisor. Supervisors are assigned according to AOI, and it is not possible to be assigned one if AOI is not known.
- Inform themselves of program requirements and deadlines.
- Work within DBA program deadlines.
- Communicate regularly with the Supervisor and work within timelines agreed upon by the Supervisor and student.
- Prepare a short brief prior to every meeting with specific topic and questions in order to keep meetings organized and brief. Inform Supervisor of the topic and questions Which need to be discussed prior to the meeting.
- Take responsibility for their learning and show initiative and self-motivation in their research as part of developing their intellectual independence.
- Maintain clear, open communication with the Supervisor.
- Take the initiative in raising problems or difficulties, including difficulties with accessing sources or resources.
- Discuss with the Supervisor the type of guidance and comments that are most helpful and agree on a schedule of meetings.
- Take the initiative in organising supervisory meetings according to the agreed schedule and take and circulate notes from meetings.
- Maintain contact as agreed with Supervisor and attend all arranged meetings with the Supervisor fully prepared.
- Give serious attention to the guidance and feedback given by the Supervisor.
- Maintain the progress of the work in accordance with the stages agreed with the Supervisor, including, in particular, completing and presenting written material as required in sufficient time to allow for comments and discussion before proceeding to the next stage.

- Alert in written the Supervisor to any issues arising that might impact on the ability to progress the research.
- Decide when they wish to submit the progress works and/or thesis, taking into account the Supervisor's opinions, and ensuring that SSBM or student contract deadlines are complied with.
- Follow SSBM templates, policies and procedures in respect of the DBA journey.

5. Preparing the Dissertation Proposal

5.1. The Concept Brief

The first step in the proposal process is to develop the concept brief in preparation for the introductory meeting with the Supervisor. The concept brief should contain a clear and short explanation of the topic, background, and student's motivation. A research problem should be posed, and one or more research questions should be formulated. A sufficient literature search should have been done so that a brief background of the problem is presented and there is confidence that the necessary information to answer the research questions will be available. A research methodology should have been considered.

The concept brief should be a very simple document that the DBA student shares with the mentor explaining and providing a high-level idea of what the research could be about. The concept brief does not have to follow any strict template and can be shared with the mentor by email.

5.2. The Concept Paper

The second step in the proposal process is developing the concept paper, part of the Research Methodology I course. This concept paper is one step closer to the more detailed research proposal. The concept paper is submitted to the mentor for feedback and approval of the proposed research.

The concept paper adds another layer to the concept brief. It lays out the crucial elements and scope of the research, and it should include a discussion of the research problem and the proposed research approach and reference the key literature that will support the research. The research problem should be defined in detail, and the background and justification for the research outlined. The literature reviewed and presented should be sufficient to establish the importance of the proposed research, and to identify the theories, models, or professional assertions that will be extended or empirically examined.

The length of the concept paper will vary with the topic and amount of information processed but should be between 2 and 3 pages long and not longer than 6 pages.

It begins with the previously approved concept brief and adds to it a review of the literature, as follows:

1. Concept Brief
2. Review of the literature
 - Theory, model, or professional assertions to be studied or used.

- Organizing framework to be used in the literature review, which is usually Chapter 2 Dimensions by which the research question might be narrowed.
- Key literature references.
- Inclusions and exclusions of topics related to the problem.

Often, as a result of the literature review, the concept brief should be altered to reflect the student's deepened understanding.

DBA students are allowed to combine the concept brief and concept paper into one submission.

5.3. The Literature Review

The literature review assignment, part of the Research Methodology II course, aims to expand on the previously defined literature from the Concept Brief and Concept Paper.

A literature review assignment is a broad-ranging, critical view of the literature on a particular topic. The aim of the literature review assignment is to summarize and critically evaluate the literature to establish current knowledge of a topic.

The length of the Literature Review should be between 3 and 4 pages and not over 15 pages.

What should you include in your literature review?

Your literature review assignment should include the following:

- The main ideas, theories and concepts related to your topic.
- Areas of agreement and disagreement related to your topic.
- Any problems or gaps in the literature related to your topic.

Here are some things to think about:

- What are some common themes?
- Compare and contrast the various findings, arguments, theories, and methodologies in the literature.
- What do the authors agree or disagree about? What are the major areas of disagreement, controversy, or debate?
- Critique the literature; synthesise and evaluate the research, don't just describe or report it. Look for any assumptions or bias in the literature.

What is 'the literature'?

The literature refers to previous work or sources of information relevant to your topic.

There are three sources of materials:

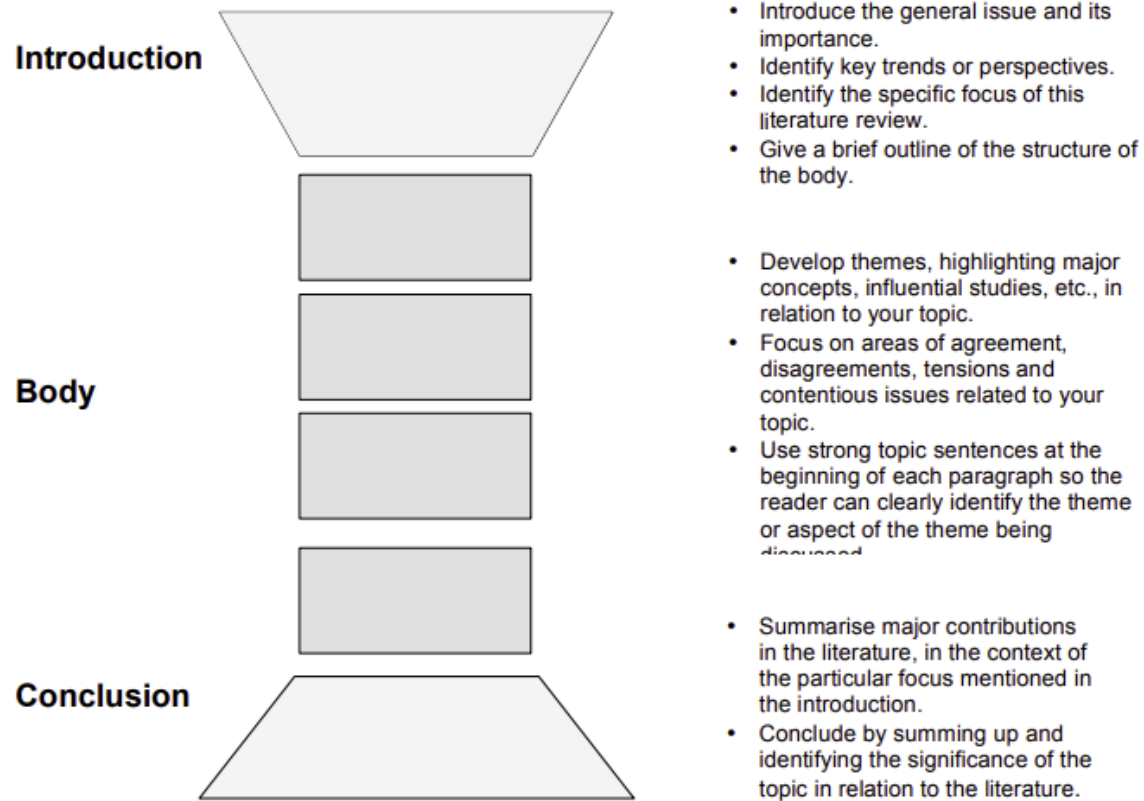
1. Primary sources: First-hand reports of original studies, mainly found in academic journal articles.
2. Secondary sources: Critical evaluations and syntheses of original studies.
3. Tertiary sources: Information and ideas often put together from primary or secondary sources, such as textbooks, encyclopaedias, etc.

You should mainly use primary sources and perhaps the occasional secondary source.

Your literature review should have a clearly organised structure with an introduction and conclusion.

Note that your literature review is not a summary of studies in your field presented one by one, paragraph by paragraph. Instead, you need to structure the body of your literature review in themes or ideas, synthesising information from various sources.

Here is a typical way of structuring a literature review assignment:



5.4. The Research Proposal

The research proposal is based on the Concept Paper and the Literature Review. It expands on the problem definition and research questions, adds the detailed methodology, and completes the detailed literature review. It will be the blueprint for the dissertation. Once the proposal has been approved, it is expected that the Final Thesis will be completed as specified in the Proposal, unless the student and the Supervisor mutually agree to proposed changes. In this case, the previously completed chapters should be revised to reflect agreed upon changes. A high-quality proposal is a major part of the dissertation process, and it is important that the proposal be as complete and detailed as possible. It should be between 10 and 12 pages long and not longer than 30 pages.

The proposal must have at least the components outlined below unless the Supervisor has agreed to a different format.

1. Title page
2. Table of contents (and tables/figures/appendices, if appropriate)
3. Chapter 1: Introduction
4. Chapter 2: Review of Literature
5. Chapter 3: Methodology

6. References
7. Appendices

The detailed guidance for the issues to be addressed in the Research Proposal (usually the first three chapters) is provided in the Dissertation Outline below. The inclusion or scope of some items may vary with the methodology chosen. Subsequent chapters are written after data collection and analysis.

What is appropriate rigor?

- Student has independently developed and demonstrated expertise in the selected data collection and analysis techniques (going beyond the textbooks).
- Hypotheses (or propositions for qualitative) are clear, meaningful, and testable. When possible, hypotheses are built on theory, previous research, or professional assumptions.
- Instruments have high reliability.
- Strong internal validity, including appropriate sample.
- Alternative interpretations and theories are objectively evaluated.
- Evidence is provided as to how the case or sample relates to the universe along with some discussion about how universal results might be different (directionally).

6. DBA Dissertation

Once the research proposal has been accepted by the Supervisor, student can start writing the Dissertation, also referred to as the Final Thesis. There are no strict guidelines when it comes to the length. However, the average length of a DBA dissertation should be around 40,000 words which is equivalent to 160 pages (without appendices and references).

6.1. Dissertation outline

The following outline is generally suggested for most dissertations. However, it is possible to have a different format. If a different format is desired, agreement must be reached with the Supervisor on the details.

1. Title page
2. Signature page
3. Table of contents
4. List of tables List of figures
5. Dedication (optional)
6. Abstract
7. Chapter 1: Introduction
 - 7.1. Statement of the problem
 - 7.2. Significance of the study
 - 7.3. Research questions
 - 7.4. Hypotheses (replaced by objectives or propositions in some qualitative dissertations)
 - 7.5. Limitations, delimitations, and assumptions
 - 7.6. Definition of terms
 - 7.7. Background
8. Chapter 2: Review of the Literature

- 8.1. Introduction
- 8.2. Inclusion criteria
- 8.3. Clear organizing themes
- 9. Chapter 3: Methodology
 - 9.1. Introduction
 - 9.2. Research design
 - 9.3. Population and sample (as appropriate)
 - 9.4. Data collection and instrumentation
 - 9.5. Procedures
 - 9.6. Data analysis Limitations
 - 9.7. Ethics related to human subject participation (if applicable)
 - 9.8. Summary
- 10. Chapter 4: Results
 - 10.1. Introduction
 - 10.2. Organization of data analysis
 - 10.3. Findings regarding each hypothesis, research question, or objective
 - 10.4. Summary
- 11. Chapter 5: Discussion, conclusions, and implications
 - 11.1. Introduction
 - 11.2. Summary of the study and findings Conclusions
 - 11.3. Implications and applications Future research
 - 11.4. Summary
- 12. References
- 13. Appendices

6.2. Writing the Dissertation

The dissertation is to be written in Harvard style (Appendix 1). In writing the Dissertation, students must adhere to the SSBM templates provided by SSBM or supervisor.

In all likelihood, no other document that the student will prepare will demand as much scrutiny as the dissertation. Students may expect their writing to be thoroughly and critically judged. It is the student's responsibility to see to it that this work is of the highest professional quality. The following sections provide guidance for the chapters of the dissertation.

Chapter 1: Introduction

The introduction starts with a brief discussion of the study, which should gain the readers' attention. This is followed by a clear and concise statement of the problem, the significance or purpose of the study, and the need for the study. The research questions should be clearly stated followed by the hypotheses formulated from those questions or the research objectives or propositions in the case of qualitative research. Limitations are aspects of the situation or research design which may adversely impact the generalizability of findings. Delimitations are the boundaries the researcher has placed on the research. That is to say, what is included and what is excluded? Assumptions are those things which the study is taking for granted. Any terms which are central to the study, especially if they are not commonly known or are used in an uncommon manner, should be defined. In particular, if certain concepts or constructs are operationalized in the study, the operationalization should be briefly explained. The background information describes the context of the study and further explains its importance. This background information may be derived from any credible sources, not necessarily peer-reviewed.

Chapter 2: Review of the Literature

The literature review is the foundation of a dissertation that provides a framework for explaining why the study is necessary and relevant. It is an extensive, critical, and insightful review of relevant, peer-reviewed literature but will not be an exhaustive review. The literature review starts with an introduction that reminds the reader of the research problem and purpose of the study, and it outlines the scope of the literature review and how it is organized. The next section discusses the criteria used to determine which literature was considered relevant to the study and how the selection of that literature was made.

The body of the literature review is organized by topical headings. It should be organized in a way that clearly and logically convinces the reader of the necessity and relevance of the study from a scholarly perspective and establishes a solid foundation for choice of methodology. The chapter closes with a summary that ties together the main topical headings of the literature review and a brief preview of what will be presented in Chapter 3.

Other pointers for the literature review

Searching the databases will yield thousands of possible articles. Be smart and efficient with your screening process. You will be able to eliminate many of the articles produced by the search by carefully considering the title. It is also worthwhile looking at the number of citations. If this article has hardly any citations, it's probably not worth reading unless it is clearly on target and/or very recent. For titles that look appropriate, check the abstracts. If an abstract looks relevant, read the beginning and end and scan through the middle. If the content still looks germane, make an entry in your reference database along with some comments. You might choose to read the article more carefully at this point or to put it on the backburner (until you've got a better handle on its importance).

The bottom line is that you will only read a small fraction of the titles that you find in your database searches. You will be much more selective than in a typical term paper, and the sources should be of solid quality (peer-reviewed journals and high-quality practitioner and government sources rather than encyclopaedias, newspapers, popular magazines, and websites).

You should be even more selective about what you include in the literature review. Use only the most relevant and strongest articles. As an ethical researcher, you should include strong articles that argue against, as well as for, your hypotheses or point-of-view. In general, sources should be recent except for selective inclusion of a few foundational works that are ubiquitously cited. More recent articles can be easily located by using the "cited by" feature.

It is particularly helpful to look at several recent dissertations that focus on topics which are similar to your research interests. Examine how the literature reviews are organized and check out references that look on target.

Many of the sources which are used in your literature review to provide background and support your discussion will be cited without providing much if any detail about the articles. Only the most important articles (relating to the core of your research) will be described, critiqued, compared, and contrasted in depth. You will probably end up using less than half of the materials you read.

Chapter 3: Methodology

This chapter discusses the design of the research, and the detailed procedures both proposed and actually used (if different) to conduct the research. The student may write the chapter in the past tense so that it doesn't need to be changed after the research has been conducted.

The procedures should be sufficiently detailed so that reliability and validity can be judged. The introduction to the chapter includes a brief restatement of the nature and purpose of the study, the research questions posed, and the hypotheses to be tested or objectives achieved.

The research design is the blueprint for the collection, measurement and analysis of the data. It describes the specific elements of the investigation used to obtain empirical evidence to answer the research questions and test the hypotheses or achieve the objectives. It is student's responsibility to become expert in the sampling, data collection, and analysis procedures used in your research. This requires reading specialized research books and watching research methods videos as well as critiquing empirical research articles using similar methods. Supervisors provide guidance, but ultimately student must become an expert and be prepared to defend your procedures.

For quantitative statistical research the population and sample section define the population investigated in the study and the method used to assure that a representative sample was selected from that population. The proposed sample size should be defined with a rationale for why that sample size is appropriate.

A qualitative research methodology may involve action research, a case study, or other qualitative methods. It is necessary to indicate the methods and rationale used to select the participants, groups, sites, etc., that were included in the study.

The data collection and instrumentation section must describe how each instrument was used to gather data from the sample or samples selected. A separate section should be devoted to each instrument (surveys, interviews, data mining, etc.) adopted or developed for data collection. If an adopted instrument was used, it must be properly cited and referenced, as should developed instruments that substantially use the ideas of other researchers. Students should remember to seek permission to use instruments developed by others. Occasionally, there may be a fee for use or other restrictions required by the authors. Any instruments developed for the study must be included in the appendices along with the results of any pilot studies that may have been done. The reliability and validity of both adopted and developed instruments must be discussed, addressing similarities and differences with respect to instruments used in prior studies.

A procedures section should be used to provide the detail necessary to allow for the accurate reproduction of the study by an independent researcher. It should include all necessary details for reproduction of the research such as data collection instruments, the settings and techniques used, and institutional permissions required.

The data analysis section describes how the data was analysed. The analysis of data depends on the design of the study and the type of data collected. The analysis may include editing and coding techniques, statistical treatments for quantitative data, logical treatments for qualitative data, and software technology used for these treatments. The analysis should include plans for handling missing data and "don't know" or neutral responses.

Note: Chapters 1-3 are likely to require revision after data gathering and analysis are complete. However, in quantitative research, hypotheses can't be revised.

Chapter 4: Results

Chapter 4 presents the results of the data collection and analysis. The results are presented factually and typically will utilize charts, graphs, tables, individual statistics, or any combination of these methods. What is presented and its organization is highly dependent on the design of the study.

The introduction to Chapter 4 will begin with an overview of how the data presentation is organized. The data should be presented in the order of the research questions in Chapter 1, and these may provide a good outline for the levels and titles of subheadings. If demographic data was collected and used to determine independent variables, this is usually presented first.

Each section of Chapter 4 should present the appropriate research question, any statistical analysis, graphic displays, and the results followed by any related hypothesis and whether it was supported. The chapter should conclude with a summary paragraph of the findings.

Chapter 5: Discussion, Conclusions, and Implications

Chapter 5 is a discussion of the findings, conclusions concerning hypotheses or research objectives, and overall conclusions. It will also address implications for professional practice and possible recommendations for implementation and suggest specific needs for further research. The introduction to Chapter 5 begins with a review of the sections that will be in the chapter.

The summary of study and findings provides an overview of the entire study. It includes a very brief review of the key elements of the literature review and the population from which the sample was drawn. A review of the findings from the analysis of the data is presented in the same order as in Chapter 4.

The conclusions are based on the research questions formulated in Chapter 1 and are presented in that same order. The conclusions should be clearly stated and discussed. The researcher should analyse, synthesize, and evaluate the research findings and tie everything together. This chapter is the researcher's opportunity to tell the reader what the researcher thinks about the research study and perhaps challenge what was found in the literature. Limitations of the findings should be stated along with suggested future research.

The implications and applications section provides practical suggestions for addressing issues raised in the study. They may include recommendations for action and how those recommendations may be implemented.

Chapter 5 should end with a brief overview of the findings and conclusions.

7. DBA Dissertation Defense

The defense of the Dissertation is a formal, public event in which the student presents their dissertation to the committee and others who are present. The student is responsible for preparing for the defense. The student is responsible for knowing every aspect of the research and is answerable to the committee for the procedures, accuracy, interpretation, and integrity of the results.

Defense is accessed via the link provided by the DBA coordinator. Student should not be late for the defense and connect at the agreed time.

Every defense is being recorded by SSBM host.

Supervisors should refer to DBA Defense Guide for more detailed information on the defense process.

The whole defense can last from 45 to 90 minutes, depending on the complexity of the research being presented and defended. It is comprised of the following parts:

1. Head of the Defense Committee welcomes participants and introduces the agenda.
2. Student presents their work and research with a use of PowerPoint presentation. Presentation must be coherent and showcase all important parts of the research, research questions, hypothesis, methodology, conclusions, etc. Presentation should last between 25 and 30 minutes. The student is responsible for knowing every aspect of the research and is answerable to the committee for the procedures, accuracy, interpretation, and integrity of the results.
3. After the presentation, committee members and Supervisor ask student questions about Dissertation, provide comments, and discuss the research with the student.
4. After the discussion part, Head of the Defense Committee will ask student, and any of their guests, to disconnect from the link and reconnect later. They will either state the period of time after which the student should reconnect (e.g., 10 or 15 minutes) or send email to the student when they should reconnect. During this time, student is advised to stay by their computer and watch their email account for any possible information by the committee.
5. During the student's absence, committee members and Supervisor discuss if the student has passed or failed, how should Dissertation be graded and are there any corrections necessary to the Dissertation.
6. Student reconnects to the link following the expiration of the agreed time or after the email invitation from committee. If there were any guests present during the defense, they do not reconnect for this part. Student is provided with the final decision.

Defenses are a public event and student is free to share the link for the defense to anyone, including family members, friends, colleagues, etc. Guests can join the defense only during the presentation and questions/discussion part. Guests must disconnect from the link during committee's discussion on grading and during the final part where decision is presented to the student. Any guest joining the defense should remain muted the whole duration of the defense and must refrain from recording, taking pictures, gesturing, inappropriate behaviour such as drinking alcohol, nudity, or smoking, etc. Any guest that disturbs the defense in any way will immediately be removed from it. Student is responsible for the behaviour of their guests and any severe breach of the solemnity of the defense may lead to defense being stopped which results in momentary fail of the defense.

7.1. Possible outcomes of the DBA Dissertation Defense

1. Student passed without corrections.
 - Student has no more obligations regarding the Dissertation and the Program. SSBM will conclude the student within the usual deadline.
2. Student passed with corrections.
 - a. Option 1: Necessary corrections to the Dissertation are orally presented to student by the Supervisor or committee members during the last part of the defense.
 - b. Option 2: Student receives an email with necessary corrections from the Supervisor or a committee member after the defense.
 - c. Option 3: Separate meeting is arranged between the student and the Supervisor where the Supervisor explains the necessary corrections.
 - Student agrees the deadline for making the necessary corrections with the Supervisor, depending on how extensive they are. Corrected Dissertation is sent to the Supervisor

and the Defense committee, and they inform the student of the final points and grade achieved, if there is any change. SSBM starts the conclusion process.

3. Student failed.

- Possible reasons for failing the defense:
 - o Student didn't prepare the presentation
 - o Student was late or didn't show up for the defense
 - o Student gave unsatisfactory presentation on their dissertation
 - o Student didn't have understanding and knowledge of their own research and topic
 - o Plagiarism or duplicate submission
 - o Unacceptable behaviour during the defense (e.g. student was intoxicated, used inappropriate language, was behaving aggressively or offensive, etc.)
 - o Dissertation presented differed largely from the one approved by the mentor
 - o Major parts of the dissertation are missing
 - o Other reasons as decided by the Defense committee
- In case of failing, the Defense committee informs the student of this decision during the defense. Written confirmation with reasons for failing is sent to the student by email by the Supervisor or the president of the Defense committee within 5 working days from the defense.
- Defense committee can recommend the following:
 - o Second defense is permitted after a period of additional preparation. This period is agreed upon between the student and the Supervisor.
 - o Student is dropped from the DBA Program without the chance for the second defense or reenrolment.
- In case the student fails the second defense, they are dropped from the DBA Program.
- Appeal procedure:

In case of failed defense, the student has the right to appeal the decision of the Defense Committee to the Program Lead within 10 working days from the date of receiving a written notice of failing. Appeal is to be sent by email and should contain information such as student's and Supervisor's name, date and time of the defense, dissertation topic and reasoning for the appeal. Program Lead reviews the dissertation and defense in question and makes the final decision. For the avoidance of doubt, in case of any discrepancies in interpreting what constitutes as reason for failing the defense, Program Lead depending on the facts of a particular case preserves the discretionary right of the final decision.

Exceptions from this appeal procedure are cases where the Program lead is the Supervisor or defense committee member. In those cases, the appeal should be sent to and reviewed by the President who then holds the discretionary right of the final decision.

Final decision will be made within 10 working days from the date at which appeal was received.

8. Publishing of the DBA Dissertation

All Dissertations are published by SSBM in online journal, GBIS.

<https://gbis.ch/index.php/gbis/index>

GBIS journal is public and can be accessed by anyone.

Thesis are published after final, corrected version has been submitted, on a quarterly basis.

11. Leave of absence

A student who has entered doctoral candidacy may apply for one leave of absence by providing an explanation of the need and the desired length of absence. Only one leave of absence is allowed, and there must be a compelling reason for granting the absence.

The DBA Program Lead will evaluate whether the reason provided is acceptable. A serious illness of the student or a close relative would be a suitable reason. A general desire for a break or being busy at work would usually not be acceptable reasons. The student's Supervisor will be informed about the leave and its duration, and the Supervisor will not provide any support to the student during the leave. Also, the student may be required to update thesis documents before continuing with research.

10. "Summa cum Laude" Honorary title

"Summa cum laude" is an honorary title to signify a degree that was earned "with the highest distinction". It is awarded to students for exceptional DBA Dissertation which was awarded the highest grade of 100 with innovative and original contribution to the field of research.

Awardance of the "Summa cum Laude" honor can be initiated by the Supervisor or a defense committee member. All committee members vote on this decision without the presence of the student, after the defense. Following the unanimous decision by the committee, the Dean awards the honor that will be highlighted in the student's degree.

11. Related documents

Doctoral Supervision Policy

DBA Defense Guide

Student Handbook

Declaration of Academic Integrity

Templates (available on the eLearning portal or provided by a Supervisor):

- Concept paper template
- Literature review template
- Research proposal template
- DBA Thesis template

NOTE: The thesis template provides you a generic guidance on what can be included in your thesis. Each thesis is unique which means that it can incorporate other sections than those suggested in the thesis template.

Appendix 1.

HARVARD Guide Sheet

Left Margin: Right Margin: Top/Bottom Margins: Header/Footer:	1.5 (if binding) or 1.0 inch 1.00 inch 1.00 inch 1.00 inch
Font:	Times New Roman, 12 point font
Title Page = i Signature Page = ii, etc.	Small Roman numerals, upper right corner, but number does not appear until the second page of the Table of Contents and hereafter.
Running Head:	No Running Head
Table of Contents:	Contains dedication page (optional), acknowledgement page (optional), list of tables, list of figures, abstract, chapter titles and all headings that appear in the text, and appendices. All double spaced.
Headings:	Chapter headings centered, bold, all caps, double spaced, e.g., CHAPTER 1 INTRODUCTION All other headings follow HARVARD format
Tables:	Double-spaced Exception: May be single-spaced to fit on one page rather than split table onto two pages.
Block Quotes: Any quotes longer than 40 words must appear in block form.	Final punctuation appears before page reference at end of block quote. No quotation marks.
Page numbers:	12 point –UPPER RIGHT TOP CORNER OF PAGE
Definition of terms:	Should be presented in alpha order
Body text:	Left Justified, ragged right, double spaced
Block Quote Spacing:	Double spaced
1 Appendix = 2 or more =	Appendix Appendices
The title "Appendix A" can either be:	On the top of the first page of the appendix or have its own title page with the actual appendix material behind it.
Each page of the appendix should receive a number, even if that number does not appear on the page. This is especially true when the appendix is a document that has not been created on your computer, therefore, a typed number cannot appear on the page.	If the document was created on the computer, include it in its proper place with a page number. If you choose to use an appendix title page with each appendix, it is to have a title and a number.