DBA Supervision policy

Version	Approved by	Approval date	Effective date	Modifications
1.0	Dean	June 1st, 2019	June 1st, 2019	New policy
1.1	Dean	April 10th, 2022	April 10th, 2022	Revision
2.0	Dean	June 9th, 2023	June 9th, 2023	Revision

1. Purpose

This policy sets out a framework for effective research supervision and clarifies the roles and responsibilities of supervisors and research students.
The practices embedded in this policy promote integrity, accountability and transparency in the SSBM's provision of research supervision and reinforce the core values upon which research at SSBM is conducted.

These guidelines should help in the planning and conduct during the DBA program. The purpose is to make the supervision process between the Supervisor/Mentor and student clear and transparent. Clear expectations about the responsibilities of both parties are essential to a successful supervision relationship. If the research program changes substantially, these guidelines may be reviewed.

2. Definitions

The following definitions apply to this document:

Academic integrity means the ethical practices of the academic community, including honest execution of research and study and the acknowledgement of sources.

Area of Interest (AOI) particular subject area in which the student wants to do the research.

DBA is Doctorate in Business Administration

Mentor or Supervisor is the lead supervisor who takes overall responsibility for the

supervision of a student and for assistance in the provision of research resources.

Program lead refers to the head of the relevant academic program.

Program coordinator refers to the person in charge for operational part of the DBA process.

QAD refers to Quality Assurance Department

SIS – Student Information System

Thesis/Dissertation is a substantial presentation of the outcome of an original and coherent research project. It situates the research in the broader framework of the disciplinary field(s) and entails a cohesive written document.

3.   Scope

This policy applies to all DBA supervisors, DBA students and staff of the SSBM Geneva. It does not apply to essays or other written work submitted for assessment within the taught course component of a course or to the supervision of undergraduate projects, or research that will lead to a joint award from SSBM and a partner institution.

4.   Policy statement

4.1. General principles

Program lead is the first point of contact for supervisors and students for academic matters. Program lead must appoint in accordance with this policy and with the procedures below one Supervisor for each DBA student.

Program coordinator coordinates operational part of the DBA process - allocation of supervisors to the students in line with the suggestion from the Program lead, coordinating the allocation in SSBM system and organizing thesis defence. Program coordinator is the first point of contact for supervisors and students for operational matters.

Supervisor is appointed **approximately within 4 weeks** from the moment the student has provided the thesis topic or thesis area of interest. Program lead appoints Supervisor once per month and generally by the 15th of each month. If the student provides his/her topic or area of interest after this date, then the thesis supervisor assignment is postponed to the next month.

4.2. Appointment Criteria for the Selection of the Supervisor

All staff under consideration for appointment as part of a supervisory team must fulfil the following criteria:
- Supervisors must have gained a doctoral degree (or have equivalent experience of research) and should normally have at least three years' experience of university teaching and/or research.
- Supervisors should normally have proven supervisory experience.
- Supervisors must have professional and/or research experience in same or an area closely related to that of the student's proposed research project, but this is not mandatory.

The rules and criteria for appointment as a Supervisor are laid down by the SSBM.

4.3. Program lead responsibilities

Program lead is expected to:
- appoint a Supervisor for each student enrolled in the DBA Program.
- ensure that arrangements are in place for new supervisors to be introduced to the supervision processes.
- ensure supervisors are meeting their responsibilities around recording and monitoring the progress of students.
- ensure that SSBM procedures, policy and arrangements are in place should a student need to consult on, and in exceptional circumstances change the Supervisor.
- ensure the appropriate provision for the continuation of supervision when supervisors leave the supervisory role.
- provide objective support for supervisors where serious concerns regarding a student have been identified.
- hold a meeting with supervisors on a minimum 3-month basis addressing all important matters about supervision processes. The idea is to bring more focus on supervisors' knowledge on the SSBM standards, templates, policies and procedures and SSBM's Platform functionalities. SSBM Program coordinator and Quality Assurance Manager shall be present on the meetings as well.

4.4. 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 Schedule 1 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 – to be approved **before** the defence, DBA metric template and protocol).

4.5. Student responsibilities

Students' responsibilities are to:

- 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 with a 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.
- 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 due account of 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.

4.6. Standard response times

Supervisor will reply within an acceptable time frame which should be **up to 15 calendar days**. This is a general practice that will be followed by the Supervisor but depending on the efforts needed to provide feedback to the student this time frame can be much higher.

For example, if the Supervisor needs to review research proposal or thesis that require significant content to be reviewed, then the standard response time of 15 calendar days is not applicable anymore. In this case, Mentor must provide an estimation of a time needed to respond.

4.7. Changes in supervision initiated by the student

The process is as follows:

- Student opens ticket by choosing **"Change of Mentor/Supervisor"** category asking for change in supervision.

- Student **explains in detail** the request and provides valid reasons for the change.

- Student submits all evidence by email to quality@ssbm.ch the same day when he/she opened a ticket, otherwise the ticket is considered as incomplete and shall be closed. Email title has to be "**Change of supervision: ticket #**XXX".

- Quality Department can ask for additional information and evidence to be submitted by email and if necessary, Quality Assurance Department contacts the Mentor/Supervisor for additional information.

- Quality Assurance Department in line with this document decides if the request is approved or not, closes the ticket and informs student of valid and invalid reasons for change of Mentor/Supervisor.

- In case Quality Assurance Department does not succeed at solving the

issue between student and Supervisor, the submitted request will be considered by **the Supervision Committee.**

- Supervision Committee is a 3-member committee constituted from 1 member from quality department, Program lead (or Program coordinate in his/her absence) and 1 Management Board Member. It meets once per month (at the end of the month) and examines the requests for the supervision change submitted by the student.

- Supervision Committee will provide the decision **within 7 calendar days from the date of the meeting held** based on which Quality Assurance Department shall close the ticket and inform the student of the decision of the Supervision Committee via e mail.

- Student can withdraw the request at any time before Supervision Committee meeting.

Every request for the supervision change has to be submitted via **Student Information Systems (SIS) through the ticketing system.**

Requests that were not submitted through SIS will not be considered and will be automatically rejected.

b) In case that the Supervision Committee considers the request justified and approves the change of the Supervisor, Program **lead appoints the new Supervisor** in line with the availability and qualifications of Supervisor.

c) Reasons for Main supervision change

Change of the Supervisor is not permitted without a **valid reason** that must be well grounded and justified by the student when the research activities have already been started with the Supervisor.

- o *Valid reasons* _for the Supervisor change can be for example:_

    - breakdown in the supervisory relationship
    - lack of supervision or poor supervision (not actually or actively listening the other side, lack of respect, unconstructive criticism, repeated and significant violation of deadlines for providing feedback)
    - harassment
    - discrimination or abuse
    - inadequate communication by the Supervisor (offensive language, excessive criticism, comments based on racial, national, tribal, religious, linguistic, cultural origin or background, sex), etc.

- o *Invalid reasons or unjustified reasons* _can be including but not limited to the following ones:_
    - student asks for change when student and Supervisor are not in the same time zone.
    - student asks for change because Supervisor did not reply within 2 weeks
    - student asks for change exactly after the acceptable 15 days for Mentor's response had passed, without sending a reminder to Mentor or Program lead.
    - student is not happy because Supervisor is not helping him/her on writing content.
    - student expects Supervisor to do things that student should do as part of the program.

- student expected Supervisor to be exactly in the same area of research as student.
- student expected Supervisor to speak their language (other than English) or not to have a specific accent in English.
- student expects to be able to assert the frequency of communication and communication channels and doesn't respect what was agreed upon by the Supervisor.
- student expect to have frequent guidance from Supervisor, regarding every detail of research, and does not respect the work dynamics agreed upon by the Supervisor.
- etc.

For the avoidance of doubt, in case of any discrepancies in interpreting what constitutes valid reasons, QAD and/or Supervision Committee depending on the facts of a particular case preserves the discretionary right of the final decision.

Change of Supervisor at a later stage of the student's DBA program (e.g., if student has already submitted some research outputs such as concept paper or literature review) **should be avoided** and all attempts should be made, if possible, to take the relationship to its logical conclusion - namely submission of the thesis.

Change of Supervisor cannot be done if request for change is dated after expiration of 1 year from the date the student is enrolled in DBA Program, except in case Supervisor is sick or absent and cannot continue with the supervision.

4.8. Changes in supervision initiated by the Supervisor

a) Where a Supervisor resigns or retires, a new Supervisor must be appointed in accordance with this policy. A resigning or retiring Supervisor may, where willing, and subject to approval from the Program lead may continue as a new Supervisor or adviser.

b) Changes in supervision initiated by the Supervisor has to be done through email sent to Program lead with necessary justifications. Program lead can request Supervision Committee to decide in specific and/or complex cases.
Non valid or non-justified resigning by Supervisor in supervising a student can have financial impacts/penalties on mentorship contract with SSBM and future cooperation with SSBM.

Supervisor does not have authority to suggest and/or allow and/or deny change of mentors and cannot inform the student of weather the change was approved or denied.

c) Supervisor can resign for the following **valid reasons:**

- lack of feedback from student after two reminders from Supervisor and two reminders from Program lead, exceeding 2-month period from the date of the first reminder. After 1 month has passed from the date the Supervisor sent 1st reminder, the Supervisor notifies Program Lead and Program Coordinator, which then sends additional 2 reminders on behalf of SSBM. In case SSBM did

not receive feedback from student within a month, the supervision can be cancelled. For the avoidance of doubt, even if Supervisor or SSBM sent less than 2 reminders, but it has passed 2 months from the date of the first reminder, the supervision can be cancelled.

- assertive behaviour/expectations (contacting Supervisor by phone or physically beyond reasonable working time and during weekends, during the sickness or similar, if not approved in written by Supervisor, and contacting the Supervisor via private communication channels, i.e., any communication channel aside SSBM official channels or channels that are not agreed in advance in written between student and the Supervisor).
- expectations mismatch (the student behaves rather on a reactive, instead of proactive principle and requires the guidance from the Supervisor beyond the usual guidance that is expected in a DBA program).
- the student does not follow Supervisors' advice, instructions and guidance.
- inadequate communication by the student (offensive language, excessive criticism, comments based on racial, national, tribal, religious, linguistic, cultural origin or background, sex).

For the avoidance of doubt, in case of any discrepancies in interpreting what constitutes valid reasons, QAD and/or Supervision Committee depending on the facts of a particular case preserves the discretionary right of the final decision.

d) **Change of Supervisor at a later stage of the student's DBA program** (e.g., if student has already submitted some research outputs such as concept paper or literature review) **should be avoided** and all attempts should be made, if possible, to take the relationship to its logical conclusion - namely submission of the thesis.

4.9. Advance Notification

If either the student or Supervisor cannot attend a scheduled meeting, each agrees to notify one another in advance. If either the student or Supervisor will not be available for extended periods of time, the student or Supervisor will notify the other ahead of time.

4.10. No-fault Termination

The student and Supervisor will discuss and attempt to resolve any conflicts as they arise. If, however, the student or Supervisor needs to terminate the relationship following the process and decision resulting from this policy, both the student and the Supervisor must abide such decision.

4.11. Absence

Supervisors must:
- inform the student in advance and in written of any leave of more than 4 weeks.
- in the event of an absence of 4 weeks or more, either arrange, with the approval of the Program lead, for another staff member to take up temporary supervisory duties or put in place arrangements for distance supervision.

If Supervisor is taking a leave, the student should discuss this issue first with Supervisor, and if needed, with Program lead who will ensure the student continue to receive appropriate supervision. Depending on the kind and length of leave, the Program lead might appoint a new Supervisor or a

Co-supervisor.

The introductory email is key to clarifying how student and Supervisor will stay in contact, including methods of communication (email, phone, in person) and how frequently student and Supervisor would like to communicate.

4.12. Suggested Timeline for Completion

The timeline below represents suggested milestones for students planning to complete the DBA program. Students should meet with the Program lead or Program coordinator to apprise themselves of respective deadlines and associated fees. Note that DBA students may extend their DBA program and thesis completion which is subject to payment additional fees defined in SSBM Student Contract Extension policy that students have to get familiar with in advance.

DBA PROGRAM MILESTONES

Thesis Start Date	Year 1 Concept Paper up to 6 months Literature Review up to 6 months	Year 2 Research Proposal up to 2 months Writing Chapters up to 10 months	Thesis Defense
	12 months	12 months	

Progress tracking for DBA students is also monitored through SSBM SIS platform where students have to upload their progress reports and such reports will be graded by the Supervisor.

Students with an unsatisfactory grade will have to repeat the reports or milestones based on recommendations from the Supervisor until they receive the pass grade for each report or milestone from Supervisor.

Please note that there might be different deadlines and milestones resulting from different agreements and structures of DBA program.

5.   Monitoring Compliance

All staff engaged in supervision and all students must know and adhere to the supervision responsibilities laid out in this policy.

Schedule 1

Communicating with your Supervisor

These guidelines should be considered as something to assist in planning and implementation during the DBA program. The purpose is to clearly state expectations between Supervisor and student at an early stage. Clear expectations about the responsibilities of both parties are essential to a successful supervisory relationship. If research changes significantly, these guidelines should be reviewed.

The SSBM Expectations for DBA thesis supervision touch on five core responsibilities for Supervisors:

- Build and maintain a respectful, inclusive, professional research environment.

- Be present and accountable by maintaining clear communication channels.

- Provide students with regular, timely feedback.

- Respect limits in supporting students' wellbeing.

- Know policies relevant to DBA program and ask for clarification if unsure.

Principles

- Effective supervision in SSBM is an integral part of research at the highest levels of learning, innovation and research and,as a form of teaching, presents the highest pedagogical values.

- Research supervision reflects SSBM's values: freedom and independence of thought, respect for individual talents, and commitment to critical learning and innovative research.

- Positive interaction between students and supervisors based on open and clear communication, mutual appreciation, accessibility, and ethical work contributes to the research project and enhances the student experience in SSBM.

- On the other hand, the supervisor's role is to help and give guidance to the student as the latter undertakes the research. It is expressly not to undertake the research for the student, and even less to take responsibility for the ultimate writing or submission of the thesis.

- It is understood that there is no single 'supervision model' which is applicable to all student/supervisor relationships (and not only because there are no two students and no two dissertations which are the same).
  There are procedural safeguards that enable the supervision relationship to take place effectively, but not to dictate how the precise relationship should work in practice.

- For this purpose, SSBM has established clear, transparent and supportive systems in place to minimise and resolve issues that may arise over the course of the DBA program but, in the spirit of academic freedom and with the aim of ensuring effective student/supervisor relationships, it does not seek unduly to fetter the manner in which such relationships operate.

- Student data associated with the DBA program (i.e., personal information, research reports, Protection Regulations (EU-GDPR). Where the supervisor is based outside the EU, the data protection legislation of the jurisdiction in which the supervisor is based will apply.

At the first few meetings

Meetings early in the DBA program are the time to set expectations.

Strive to:

- communicate respectfully and professionally.

- ask questions to clarify what your role(s) and responsibilities will be for the coming year (see discussing expectations)

- ask your Supervisor for help in determining areas for your professional growth - see the Developing transferrable skills page for more information, and SKILLSETS for opportunities for personal and academic skill development.

Addressing problems

Problems can occur in any relationship (see FAQ for students, Ask QAD and Staying on track).

When conflicts or problems occur, consider taking the following actions.

1. Seek first to understand.

2. Refer to SSBM policies.

3. Live up to your responsibilities

Discussing expectations

Your success depends on many factors, but one of the most important is the set of expectations that helps define your success. Some expectations are explicit. Other expectations are implicit; also known as unwritten or unspoken rules. The conversation you and your Supervisor will have is important to define at beginning of research and tasks delivery helps you unpack one another's implicit expectations about how you will work together. Clarifying these expectations allows you and your Supervisor to refer back to them and re-clarify as needed.

Make implicit expectations explicit

Explicit expectations help to reduce attrition, time to completion, and supervisory conflicts.

- **Explicit expectations** are expectations that are clear and concrete to both students and Supervisors.

- **Implicit expectations,** on the other hand, are the unspoken, unofficial expectations shaped by our experiences, perspectives, and values. To bring implicit expectations to the surface, discuss expectations with your Supervisor directly, early on in your DBA program.

When you start a DBA program, it can take some time to learn how to navigate the unofficial or unspoken "rules" of your program. Your Supervisor, who has likely been at the institution for longer than you have, might not realize or remember all of the unspoken rules they had to learn when they first arrived. Ask questions and know that it takes time to fully learn what's expected when you enter a new role or a new environment.

SSBM recommends student discussing the following questions:

- How often will you and your Supervisor meet? Who will set up the meetings?

- How will you communicate between meetings?

- What can you expect in terms of feedback (e.g., how often, turnaround times)

- What support is available for your professional development? (e.g., conferences, workshops)

- What will your research responsibilities be?

- Will there be opportunities to co-author research?

- What is the policy on intellectual property and data ownership?

Clarifying expectations with your Supervisor is an ongoing process. As or write to your Supervisor as needed to address misunderstandings and avoid unmet expectations.

Know your responsibilities as well as your Supervisor's responsibilities

Not everything is up for discussion in a supervisory relationship. Students and Supervisors are each responsible for upholding their responsibilities under SSBM policy.

Students may find more information about their rights and responsibilities in the Student Handbook . Students should also review the Thesis supervision policy to learn more about the responsibilities of Supervisors and students responsibilities at SSBM.

From Supervisor's perspective the student has to respect:

- **Punctuality**: What does your supervisor need from you in terms of arriving on time to meetings, and providing them ample time to critique your work before major deadlines?

- **Availability**: supervisors have very busy schedules. How can you find opportunities to connect? How can you make good use of your supervisor's time when you meet?

- **Communication**: How does your supervisor like to communicate and how often? What is a reasonable amount of time for a supervisor to expect a response to an email or phone call?

What do I expect of my Supervisor?

An introductory/welcome email from the supervisor to the student will make it clear to the student what the Supervisor expects, but it will also make it clear what the student can expect from the

Supervisor. Prepare for the expectations discussion by reviewing the Thesis supervision policy and thinking about what expectations students would like to have clarified not only about their role, but also about the Supervisor's role too.

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR EFFICIENT COMMUNICATION

1. Communication: How will the Supervisor and student communicate with one another?

Consider the type of communication that will be used (e.g., email, text, TEAMS, ZOOM, SKYPE, phone), speed of response, when to expect/not expect responses (e.g., holidays, weekends), etiquette for communication (e.g., it is not okay to send 10 short emails in the span of a day before receiving a response or to have a meeting if student has not sent anything to Supervisor to consider), appropriate content for communication, and how to reach one another in cases of emergency or lack of response.

2. Supervisory Meetings: How will supervisory meetings be scheduled and run?

Consider frequency of meetings, focus of meetings, support provided by Supervisor during meetings, expectations for preparation for meetings (e.g., student will present a written progress report, writing, and/or agenda in advance), expectations for follow-up to meetings (e.g., student will present a written summary or a follow up email), and who will be in charge of scheduling meetings (including missed meetings). (Regular contact (meetings or emails) is important. SSBM suggests Supervisors and students have a formal meeting, irrespective of the number of informal meetings.

3. Writing and Feedback (General): What expectations do we have for writing and feedback?

Consider plans for publication/presentations/dissemination (including plans for co-authorship), norms around order of authorship, expected timeframe to receive feedback (including what to do if feedback is not received in that timeframe), expectations for intellectual ownership of ideas (e.g., how to avoid one person feeling that the other has appropriated their ideas), what additional writing support the student should seek out, and expected time needed for additional writing support. The responding deadlines from Supervisor and cases of absences are defined in detail in this procedure.

4. Other Resources Available: What resources will be available to the student?

Consider what resources will be available (e.g., office space, data collection equipment, data basis etc), when they will be available, and how the student can access.

Who can you talk to about supervision?

Even with an introductory email from Supervisor, many students still have questions about what they can expect as students. Talk directly with your Supervisor or with your Program lead or Program coordinator.

The FAQ page answers common questions.

Who can I ask for help?

Additional services for the resolution of confidential concerns are provided by the Quality department

and the Academic Dean. For non-confidential issues, your fellow students can be great resources and support systems.