

Research Topic Form Guidance

It is important to bear in mind that the DBA is a professional doctorate which means that the topic you propose for the final research element must be based in professional practice and this should be the starting point.

Indeed, for a professional doctorate like the DBA there are two requirements:

1. To make a contribution to professional practice, and
2. To make a contribution to academic knowledge

This differs to a PhD where the key requirement is to make a contribution to academic theory.

Normally this means that you will identify an area that either within your organisation or within your sphere of professional practice needs to be improved. Unlike with a PhD the starting point will not be a gap in the literature or a general topic of interest.

This does not mean that you can ignore literature and academic theory and models. Certainly it is expected that you will refer to the current knowledge (academic and professional) about the topic and the reason this remains an area worthy of study despite research to date.

You will see on the form that the above has to be addressed in three parts of the Research Topic Form, and for each of these sections additional guidance is provided on the form itself. Do read and follow what it says. The sections are:

Area of business practice: which is identifying the general area of interest

Area of business practice: what you are specifically interested in and why (include literature here)

Contribution to professional practice: so what might change if this research is undertaken.

The Approach section requires you to describe your thinking to date on the methodology and methods you have in mind for the empirical research and, very importantly, the reasons that you think this is the best way to meet the research aims / objectives / questions. If you are thinking of extending a project you undertook for your Masters it is not enough to describe what you did for your Masters. You need to think about what the DBA research will require.

Timescale is all about you demonstrating that you understand the structure of the DBA and have given some serious thought to how long the research topic you have proposed will take and how this may be divided up into the component parts. Something that is brief and rather generic is not good enough – we need to see that you have given this some thought.

Finally, the Bibliography. This does not have to be extensive but it should include all the sources you have included in the form and should use Harvard Referencing. If you are unclear what Harvard Referencing is look it up.