Doctoral Student Handbook: The Courses Stage

1. DBA Programme

The DBA programme at Edinburgh Business School comprises a combination of formal courses (the courses stage) and research (the research stage).

The courses stage requires you to complete three research-based courses and the research stage requires you to produce a viable doctoral-level research proposal before you begin to work under the supervision of an Edinburgh Business School appointed expert to review literature, design a research method, collect data, analyse results and submit a doctoral thesis for examination.

2. Nature of Doctoral Programmes

You should only undertake the Edinburgh Business School DBA after careful consideration. The time demands are likely to be considerable, there will be constant, and changing, pressures as you progress through the programme. You cannot take the research stage lightly as it requires skills that you may not have had to exercise before. This may be the first time you have faced such a combination of demands. You are unlikely to have worked on a single project alone, for three to four years, without the support of a team and other resources.

3. The Courses Stage

This stage provides the theory, knowledge, tools, and techniques that underpin the subsequent research stage. There are three compulsory courses – Research Methods 1, 2 and 3.

Given the nature of the courses, you must start with the first course. You can study the other two courses in any order or alongside the first course and you can attempt more than one assessment at an individual assessment session.

Compulsory Research Courses

The research courses will provide sufficient guidance so that you can develop your research to the standards and detail required at each stage. They provide a basic grounding in research design and methods. These courses will bridge the gap between your existing research experience and the specialist research guidance provided by the research supervisor.

Research Methods 1: an introduction

This course presents the first step in a basic review of the nature of research and methods for business and management doctoral students. It will provide students with the practical research tools and the theoretical background for

critiquing and designing research on a variety of topics. It also serves as a useful guide as to the content required in a thesis, the nature of examination for a doctoral degree, and how to generate research questions and write in an appropriate 'academic' style.

Research Methods 2: The qualitative researcher

This course introduces qualitative research methods for business and management doctoral students. It will help students to assess the advantages and disadvantages of different qualitative methods and look at how they can combine with each other. Moreover, it provides a holistic understanding of the qualitative research process starting from outline of philosophical underpinnings to qualitative data collection, analysis, and reporting.

Research Methods 3: The quantitative researcher

This course introduces quantitative research methods for business and management doctoral students. It will provide an understanding of the different techniques available from data collection through to analysis. The course is designed as an introduction to quantitative techniques, bridging into more advance ones with a comprehensive coverage of the most used methods. The course will also train students on the use of SPSS to carry out analysis and apply the techniques covered within the course.

4. Postgraduate Certificate in Business Research Methods

We will initially register you on the Postgraduate Certificate in Business Research Methods. Successful completion, by assessment, of the three Research Methods courses entitles you to this award. You can take it as an interim award once you progress to the research stage or, if you decide to withdraw from the programme, as an exit award. Once eligible, you can apply for the award via the [Student Portal](#).

5. Progression to the Research Stage

On completion of the courses stage, you will have been equipped with the tools to produce a credible research proposal which you will use to approach potential supervisors from within the School's faculty.

If your research outline is credible and you have found a supervisor for your research you will be formally registered a DBA student and will begin to develop your research field, set research aims and objectives and develop the necessary research background before embarking on your data collection and analysis.

6. Award of the DBA

The DBA is awarded only when you have successfully completed an oral defence of your research (*Viva Voce*), made any changes recommended by the examiners and submitted the final copy of your thesis.

Until you have graduated with the degree, it is very important if you cite your doctoral studies in your CV that there is a clear distinction between actual qualifications and present education. You must make it clear that you are currently studying for the DBA and that it cannot be construed as an actual qualification, even inadvertently. Failure to do so can lead to disciplinary action by the University.

It is only after graduation that you can use the letters 'DBA' after your name or use the title 'Dr'.

7. Guidance Notes

The following is a brief guide to the processes and regulations of the courses stage of the DBA programme. The University updates the Regulations and Ordinances on a regular basis; the online editions available here, replace all previous editions.

Registration (Matriculation)

To register as a matriculated student of Heriot-Watt, you must accept your offer of a place on the programme and register on the first Research Methods course.

Student Identification and Registration Numbers

Upon accepting an offer, you are allocated a Student Identification (SID) and a Registration Number (RegNo). These numbers are unique to you and will remain with you for the duration of your studies. You should use your SID in all communication with Edinburgh Business School and its partners.

You will use these numbers when logging in to the Student Portal. Your SID is your username, and your Registration Number is your temporary password. You will change your password when you log in for the first time. Your username will continue to be your SID.

You can change your password at any time via the Account section of the

[Student Portal](). If you forget your username or password, please follow the onscreen instructions on the [Student Portal]() login page.

Exemptions
Exemptions do not apply to the DBA programme, as we consider your previous qualifications when designing your courses stage.

Assessment
We assess each course entirely from your performance in a single, written examination. Our exams are currently in a 'Take-at-Home' format and are referred to as 'Timed-Online-Coursework'. It should take approximately 3 hours to complete the timed online coursework. However, you do have a 24-hour period to complete, review, and upload your answers. To complete a course successfully you must obtain at least 50% in the assessment.

All assessments are subject to rigorous scrutiny by both Heriot-Watt University examiners and external examiners from other leading UK universities.

Timed-Online-Coursework Assessment Requirements and Guidance
All students will have access to the above course on the [Student Portal]() that has been specifically designed to help you prepare for the 'Timed-Online-Coursework' format. The course will take around 1 hour to complete and the main areas covered are –

- Requirements
- Performance Criteria and Question Types
- Academic Integrity, Plagiarism and Referencing

The course and supporting documents have been developed to aid your understanding of the 'Timed-Online-Coursework' assessment, and it is strongly recommended that you complete this course at the earliest opportunity. Doing so will not only assist with your preparations, but also highlight the expectations placed on you by the University.

Assessment Sessions and Dates
There are three assessment sessions each year in Apr/May, August & December at which all three Research Methods courses will be examined. The full timetable is available on the [Student Portal]().

Special Arrangements
We permit you to record your answers by an appropriate alternative means approved by the School if you suffer from a disability that, in the opinion of

the School, prevents you from completing an examination. You must contact the School in advance of the exam deadline providing certified copies of medical evidence confirming your disability.

Registration & Reschedule Deadlines

The deadline for registering or rescheduling an assessment can be found within the Studies section of the [Student Portal](). **It is your responsibility to be aware of and abide by these deadlines.**

Registering for an Assessment

In most cases, when you register for a course, you will automatically be registered for the next available assessment session that is at least 3 months away. You can amend this to a different session within the Assessment Registration section of the [Student Portal](). Please check the details of each registered assessment and, if necessary, correct any mistakes by following the steps detailed in the 'Amending a Registered Assessment' section below.

You can only sit an examination if you have paid for the course associated with the examination.

If your assessment fee was not bundled with your course, you will need to register for an assessment. You can register via the Assessment Registration section or Assessment Timetables sections of the [Student Portal](). Once you have confirmed the language, assessment session and location, your selection will appear with a status of **Awaiting Payment**. You can add multiple examination entries in this way before making payment.

You will have 48 hours to make an online payment by credit or debit card or indicate that you are paying offline. If you do not pay within 48 hours, the entry will disappear from your list of upcoming assessment, and you will have to create a new entry.

All assessment entries with the status **Awaiting Payment** will disappear from your list if you do not pay before the registration deadline for the relevant assessment session.

Your assessment entry is finalised only on receipt of payment, at which point its status will change to Registered.

Amending a Registered Assessment

If you wish to move your assessment to a different session, you may do so without financial penalty, if you advise the School before the appropriate deadline date. Simply click on Amend beside the assessment in the list of upcoming assessment.

Rescheduling a Registered Assessment Entry

If you wish to move an assessment after the deadline you may do so, but you will forfeit your fee. Simply click on Reschedule beside the relevant assessment in the list of upcoming assessments and select a future session. This will create a provisional entry that will require payment as outlined in the section above.

Withdrawing a Registered Assessment Entry

If the deadline for amending an assessment has passed and you decide you no longer wish to attempt it, you can withdraw your entry without rescheduling it for a future session. Simply click on Withdraw beside the relevant assessment in the list of upcoming assessments. To attempt the assessment at a future session you will have to register and pay a fee as detailed in the sections above.

Absence

We do not count an absence from an assessment as one of your permitted attempts. However, you will forfeit your assessment fee. To attempt the assessment at a future session you will have to register and pay an assessment fee as detailed in the sections above.

Absence on Medical Grounds

If you are absent, owing to illness, you must confirm this by sending a certified true copy of your medical certificate to the University, within four weeks of the end of the assessment session. This must cover the day of the assessment. If the University accept you were unable to attempt the assessment owing to illness, your fee will be credited, and you will be registered for the assessment at a future session of your choice.

Assessment Results

Once results have been presented to the Board of Examiners, they will be posted on the [Student Portal](#), where you will also be able to access a mark breakdown that details your performance in each section of the assessment. The date on which the results will be released will be publicised in advance on the [Student Portal](#).

You will receive the following information in relation to your results:

- Notification of the mark awarded for each course which will be available in the My Assessment Results in the [Student Portal](#).
- For guidance, a breakdown of your performance in each section of the examination.

Please note that the School will not provide any information on results over

the telephone or by email under any circumstances.

Feedback on Assessment

Solutions and other guidance are available for courses in the Past Papers section of each course on the Student Portal and will provide you with an indication of the standard required to pass the course and help you to prepare for a possible resit.

Appeals

There are specific grounds under which you can submit an academic appeal. These are set out in the Student Academic Appeal Policy and Procedures documents, available here. **You cannot dispute the decisions or question the academic judgement of the Board of Examiners after we release the results.** If you are considering submitting an appeal, it is important that you act promptly. **We will not return scripts to you under any circumstances.**

Re-sits

If you fail a course at the first attempt, you will have one further attempt in that subject. **The School will require a student who twice fails an assessment in any of the Research Methods courses to withdraw from the programme.**

You can register to re-sit an assessment at a future session and pay a fee by following the process detailed in the 'Registering for an Assessment' section above.

Mitigating Circumstances

You should notify the School as soon as possible after the assessment of any illness or other exceptional circumstances that may have adversely affected your performance and that you would like the examiners to consider in making their decision. For further guidance, please go here.

Changes to Contact Details

You are responsible for notifying us of any changes to your contact details. You can do this directly through the Student Portal. You must notify us of changes in name in writing together with a copy of the legal documentation that confirms this change (marriage certificate, deed poll certificate, etc.).

Changes to Fees and Programme Structures

Edinburgh Business School reserves the right to make changes to its fees and the structure of the programme at any time. Students will have advanced notice of any changes and we will take steps to ensure that existing students are not disadvantaged.

Privacy Policy

Heriot-Watt University and its commercial partners work in partnership to deliver the courses and programmes. To ensure we manage this programme efficiently and students supported effectively, we will share some information recorded as you progress in your studies between Heriot-Watt University and its partners. The full privacy policy is available here.

Complaints Policy and Procedures

Heriot-Watt University is committed to providing an excellent education and high-quality services to its students, from enrolment through to graduation. The University values complaints and uses the information gained to help improve services. The Complaints Policy and Procedures apply to all services provided by Heriot-Watt University.

Comprehensive information is available in the Policy and Procedures documents, which are available here.