Doctor of Business Administration
Notes for Examiners

1. OVERVIEW & EXPECTATIONS OF THE DBA

The Doctor of Business Administration degree at Monash University is a professional doctorate consisting of a combination of coursework and research. The DBA is a research degree, with the research component constituting 79% of the total degree.

The DBA is targeted at individuals who wish to study their field in depth in order to improve their professional practice, but who do not wish to do this using the methodology of a single research topic as required for a PhD. To demonstrate mastery of the field, substantial research is still required by the DBA degree, but it will have more of an applied nature than does a PhD.

The DBA is a considerably more structured approach than that associated with traditional doctorates, and its aim is to achieve theoretical and practical outcomes through an incremental approach to developing advanced management competencies and research skills. The specific objectives of the DBA are to:

- provide a high-quality professional doctorate in the area of business administration and related areas;
- extend the knowledge, expertise and skill of students through the application of research to business problems and issues;
- facilitate in-depth study of particular aspects of business administration;
- provide access to relevant academic theories, concepts and techniques;
- provide experience in the design and conduct of research in the field of business administration and related areas;
- develop the candidate's ability to carry out independent research at an advanced level, together with their analytical and written communication skills;
- through the research component of the degree make a significant contribution to knowledge and/or to the understanding of one or more aspects of business administration.
## 2. STRUCTURE OF DBA – THE RESEARCH PORTFOLIO

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Requirement</th>
<th>Total Words</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Research Component – Stage 1</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Literature Review</td>
<td>Approx 10,000 words</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>OR</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Research or a review of the literature on a topic of interest to candidates, and which may not necessarily be related to the key research topic in Stage 3.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

| **Research Component – Stage 2** | |
| A pilot test of their research methodology | Approx 10,000 words |
| OR | |
| An exploratory case study or research study to help validate the proposed research design and method to be utilized in the research report | |
| OR | |
| Research or a review of the literature on a topic of interest to candidates, and which may not necessarily be related to the key research topic in Stage 3. | |

| **Research Component – Stage 3** | |
| Discrete Research Report | Approx 40,000 words and no more than 50,000 including tables and figures but excluding references and appendices |
| OR | |
| Building on research in stages 1 & 2, provided there is no overlap in work completed in research stages 1 & 2 | |

Examiners are reminded that a professional doctorate such as the DBA is both theoretically and practically-focused, and should include implications for practice for both the profession generally and the workplace specifically. Therefore, examiners should expect to see considerable discussion of the practical implications of the study findings in the final chapter.

**All 3 stages make up the research portfolio.**

Examiners are requested to note that there should be no overlap between any of these stages of the research portfolio.

In addition to the research component, examiners should note that candidates are required to undertake a number of coursework units as part of the DBA. They are as follows:

- DBA6000 Quantitative business research methods
- DBA6010 Qualitative business research methods
- DBA6007 DBA Seminar
- DBA6008 Current Issues in business

Portfolio of work for the DBA consists of approx 60,000 words in total.
3. NOTES FOR EXAMINERS OF DBA PORTFOLIO

1. All matters pertaining to the examination of the DBA degree are the responsibility of the Graduate Research Committee under the general direction of the University’s Academic Board.

2. The research component of the Doctor of Business Administration (DBA) degree is examined externally by two examiners.

3. Examiners are requested to judge the whole research portfolio. Examiners are to note however that candidates will receive internal feedback for research component Stages 1 and 2. The University views this process as comparable to the feedback candidates may receive when submitting their work to a refereed journal.

4. The Committee wishes to receive clear advice on specific aspects of the portfolio and, to this end, the examiner is asked to place a tick by the appropriate statements in the enclosed report form. If an examiner reports negatively on any aspects referred to in Section 1 of the form then comments should be made in the general summary, Section 4.

   Recommendation 2(ii) should be made only when the examiner can specify amendments with reasonable precision.

5. An examiner may request the University to obtain from the candidate clarification of specific points in the portfolio. Such requests must be made through the Monash University Institute of Graduate Research.

6. The research portfolio is forwarded to an examiner in confidence. An examiner is under an obligation to maintain confidentiality and in no circumstance should the portfolio or any part of the examination process be discussed with a third party without the prior approval of the Monash University Institute of Graduate Research.

7. In examining the portfolio, it is important to remember that the work embodied therein, together with any examination recommended by examiners, constitutes substantially the only test of the candidate’s fitness for the award of the degree.

8. In cases where examiners deem it necessary to annotate a portfolio, it should be done lightly in pencil.
4. THE EXAMINATION PROCESS

APPOINTMENT OF EXAMINERS

Two examiners are appointed to examine the DBA portfolio, one of whom may be an industry expert in the field with appropriate academic qualifications.

The names of the examiners are revealed formally to the candidate after their appointment, provided the examiners have agreed to examine the research portfolio on this condition and provided the divulgence of the examiners’ names takes place after the research portfolio has been submitted. Unedited copies of their reports are submitted to the examinee in due course.

The name of each examiner is not revealed to the other.

LENGTH OF EXAMINATION

On being invited to examine a DBA research portfolio, examiners are given an initial deadline for reporting. Examiners are given eight weeks from the date of the invitation letter to complete their reports.

Examiners are also requested to contact Monash University Institute of Graduate Research if they anticipate a delay in submitting a report beyond the given deadline. If a report is not received within one week of the deadline indicated in the invitation letter, a reminder is sent.

If the examiners are not unanimous in passing a portfolio, further time may be spent for example, in adjudication by a third person or in seeking further responses from the candidate. In these circumstances candidates should not expect a rapid notification of the result.

CONTACT WITH EXAMINERS

Students under examination are instructed that they cannot contact the examiners directly during the examination process.

Supervisors of students under examination are not to have any contact with the examiners.

If an examiner wishes to seek clarification on aspects of the research portfolio before submitting his/her report, a request may be made through the Examinations Unit of the Monash University Institute of Graduate Research.

OUTCOME OF THE RESEARCH PORTFOLIO EXAMINATION

Pass
The candidate and department are advised immediately of the pass result.

Minor amendments
Candidates and departments are advised if minor amendments are required. These are normally certified by the Head of Department, unless the examiner has selected recommendation 2 (iii), which entails return of amendments to the examiner for approval.
Response to questions
If one or both of the examiners has asked for the candidate to respond to questions, these will be referred to the Graduate Research Committee representative of the relevant faculty. The representative will seek the advice of the supervisor and head of department to ascertain if the questions raised are appropriate and reasonable. In the majority of cases, the candidate will be advised to respond to the examiners via the Monash University Institute of Graduate Research office.

Other recommendations
Where there is a significant difference between the recommendations of the two examiners or where both examiners have recommended revision and resubmission of the portfolio, then an advisory panel will be convened.

Candidates are issued with copies of the examiners’ reports upon the receipt of both reports. They are strongly advised to contact their supervisors to discuss the contents of the examiners’ reports.

ADVISORY PANELS FOR DOCTORAL EXAMINATIONS

Where there is a difference of substance between the recommendations of the examiners, an advisory panel must be constituted to assist the committee in its assessment of the research portfolio.

An advisory panel consists of the convenor (ie the representative of the relevant faculty on the Committee), head of department, supervisor and a fourth member who is normally from outside the department and not necessarily from the same faculty. Copies of the reports are made available to members of the panel and also to the candidate.

In special circumstances it may seem appropriate for a panel to contact one or both examiners. If so, the panel may first seek comment on the relevant issues from the candidate by way of clarification for transmission to the examiner. Supervisors of students under examination are not to have contact with the examiners. All contact with examiners and the candidate is through the Examinations Unit of the Monash University Institute of Graduate Research.

As Monash University does not reveal the names of examiners to each other at any stage during the examination process, a panel cannot recommend that examiners be asked to consult each other about a research portfolio under examination.

The Graduate Research Committee may accept, vary, or reject the report of an advisory panel.

Initial recommendations of an advisory panel
An advisory panel may normally recommend, depending on the examiners’ recommendations:

- amendments, either to examiner(s) or head’s satisfaction
- fail
- revision and resubmission
- appointment of an adjudicator. Advisory panels are reminded that this should be the normal recommendation where there is a substantial disagreement between examiners.

This would normally apply to recommendations other than:

- pass
- pass with corrections, or
- response to questions raised by the examiner on the examination report form
- provision of additional information/clarification by examiners
- other, eg oral examination, response by candidate to questions posed by examiner(s).
Note: An advisory panel does not have the authority to overturn an examiner’s revision and resubmission assessment. Only the adjudicator may recommend this.

Where an advisory panel is asked to advise Graduate Research Committee on an apparent inconsistency in an examiner’s report (i.e., where a ticked box indicates a pass but the detailed report suggests more substantial revisions), an advisory panel may recommend a pass result, subject to justification for this recommendation being submitted to Graduate Research Committee.

Fail
A fail recommendation will normally arise only where both initial examiners have recommended fail or where one examiner recommends fail and the other recommends revision and resubmission and the adjudicator subsequently submits a fail report.

There should be no presumption that a fail result is to be avoided at all costs. The portfolio must in the opinion of the examiners make a significant contribution to knowledge and/or understanding of the relevant subject. If the examiners do not think a portfolio meets these requirements, it fails.

Revision and resubmission
Advisory panel members should differentiate quite unequivocally between revise and resubmit on the one hand and minor or substantial amendments on the other. In the case of the latter, the candidate is not required to re-enrol but to undertake amendments to the satisfaction of the head of department and/or dissenting examiner.

Where the candidate is required to revise and resubmit he/she is required to re-enrol. The research portfolio will be resubmitted to one or two examiners, depending on the number of dissenting examiners’ reports received.

Committee policy on the examination of revised and resubmitted research portfolio:

(a) Where a candidate has been required to revise and resubmit a research portfolio on the basis of one dissenting report only, the relevant advisory panel may recommend the appointment of only one examiner.

(b) Where a DBA candidate has been required to revise and resubmit a research portfolio on the basis of two dissenting examiners’ reports or subsequent to the receipt of an adjudicator’s report, the resubmitted research portfolio shall normally be examined by two examiners who shall be appointed in the usual way on the recommendation of the relevant head of department.

(c) The examiner(s) recommended for appointment in accordance with (a) and (b) preceding shall normally include the dissenting examiner(s) or, if appropriate, the adjudicator. Examiners will be given the full range of recommendation options, regardless of whether they are an original or a new examiner. The original assenting examiner will be notified that the candidate has been advised to revise and resubmit the research portfolio, following endorsement of the adjudicator’s recommendation by the advisory panel and the Graduate Research Steering Committee.

Where an advisory panel recommends fail or pass and the Graduate Research Committee accepts the recommendation, the panel’s task is completed. However, in the case of a revise and resubmit or other verdict, the advisory panel will normally reconvene to consider the recommendations of the examiner(s) of the revised research portfolio.

Should a research portfolio be re-examined, the examiner(s), regardless of whether they were one of the original/initial examiners or are a new appointee, will be given the full range of recommendation options.
**Appointment of adjudicator**

A panel may resolve to recommend the appointment of an adjudicator.

Consequently, it is considered appropriate that where a portfolio is to be submitted for adjudication, the candidate is invited to submit a written defence of the portfolio in response to the criticisms and comments of the dissenting examiner. The candidate’s defence will then be sent to the adjudicator together with the portfolio and the de-identified examiners’ reports.

Both the candidate and the examiners are informed that an adjudicator has been appointed and the candidate is informed of the adjudicator’s name under the same conditions of confidentiality as apply to the appointment of examiners. *However, the identity of the original examiners and the adjudicator are not revealed to each other.*

The Committee considers an appropriate order in which an adjudicator might proceed with the task is first to read the portfolio, next assess the examination reports and finally consider the candidate’s portfolio defence.

An adjudicator is not an additional examiner, but a judge requested to pronounce on the relative soundness, correctness and appropriateness of the initial two examiners’ recommendations. To this end the adjudicator should offer an opinion on whether the examiners were competent and fair.

For example, the adjudicator should assess whether:

- the examiners have fully grasped the substance of the candidate’s research;
- they have erred in their judgement of the portfolio;
- the examiners have reviewed the research portfolio at a level appropriate to that of a DBA candidate.

An adjudicator is asked to provide reasons for agreeing or disagreeing with examiners. It should be reiterated that in making an assessment on the appropriateness of the two examiners’ reports, the adjudicator is not being asked to set additional requirements for the candidate.

The adjudicator’s report is referred to the advisory panel for a subsequent recommendation.

### 5. FURTHER INFORMATION

A more detailed explanation of doctoral examination matters is available at: