



Doctor of Business Administration

How did Deutsche Bank shift from a regional to a global operational structure? How does Siemens maximise the entrepreneurial spirit of its leaders towards identifying innovative solutions for customer requirements? How did National Semiconductor improve its delivery performance with a key client?

- The answer to all of these questions is Action Learning. In the words of Gerard van Schalk, Chairman of the Executive Board at Heineken, "... Action Learning has become the primary vehicle for generating creative ideas and building business success at Heineken."^[1] In action learning, working professionals in leadership roles form small teams and work cooperatively to tackle complex, deep-rooted problems and they learn by doing so.
- What is the most efficient and effective way for you to enhance your business acumen and develop critical leadership qualities? The answer is also Action Learning. In the University of Liverpool's DBA Programme by Critical Action Learning, you will develop doctoral-level depth of knowledge and research skills across critical management areas by relating your classroom scholarship to your management problems in real time, every day.
- In traditional business programmes, students are left to themselves to determine how to apply their studies and their research to the actual practice of management. This is problematic because only 5% of learners claim to use classroom knowledge directly on the job. Even worse, after five days, learners remember less than a tenth of what they heard in

a lecture. This is why we have designed our DBA around this proven educational methodology.

¹ Marquardt, M. (2004). Harnessing the Power of Action Learning. Training & Development , 58 (6), 26-32.



"Most universities offer a face-to-face Doctor of Business Administration programme which requires an onsite, classroom learning environment. The University of Liverpool offers a 100% online DBA by Critical Action Learning programme in a virtual platform, and is one of the very few universities delivering the curriculum by Critical Action Learning and Action Research."

Dr. Lisa Anderson,
Director of Studies Online MBA & DBA,
University of Liverpool Management School

Legend

DBA = Doctor of Business Administration
CAL = Critical Action Learning

AR = Action Research
DDP = Doctoral Development Plan

DOCTOR OF BUSINESS ADMINISTRATION

The University of Liverpool's online Doctor of Business Administration programme places great emphasis on highly relevant, workplace-based research by producing truly actionable knowledge, in the context of the student's organisation, rather than focusing on creating narrowly defined and theoretical scholarly research.

This professional doctoral business programme produces a qualification which, whilst being equivalent in status and challenge to a PhD, is more appropriate for those pursuing professional rather than academic careers. Its practically-oriented approach is highly beneficial to working professionals as it allows the immediate integration of actionable knowledge and critical thinking skills into their working environment.

The DBA programme's combination of deep practice-based learning and research, with rigorous classroom scholarship, is made possible due to the unique delivery of the programme by Critical Action Learning. The Critical Action Learning (CAL) and Action Research (AR) hands-on learning methods allow students to reflect, not only upon the tribulations and practices encountered at the workplace, but also on one's attitudes and biases that led to the decision-making which impacted the situation.

Today's business environment is fully globalised and highly complex with disruptive change seemingly lurking around every corner. In this environment, effective leaders need to be able to make sense out of a morass of sometimes conflicting information and help their organisations solve truly challenging problems. The University of Liverpool DBA programme's utilisation of critical action learning, and focus on the creation of highly relevant and useful research, is uniquely positioned to prepare its students to thrive and take their careers to the next level.

WHO THIS PROGRAMME IS FOR

- The DBA by Critical Action Learning provides an exciting experience for working professionals who wish to improve their practice and advance their careers.
- This programme is ideal for senior business managers, independent consultants, government and policy makers, and a myriad of other leadership positions who want to become significantly more effective in the practice of management, as well as enhance their ability to engage in intense and highly relevant research.
- Entrepreneurs and working professionals who ply their trade in both the profit and non-profit sectors will also benefit from this practice-based learning approach to become change agents in their respective organisations.

PROGRAMME OUTLINE

- The innovative approach of our Doctor of Business Administration programme advocates learning by engagement and action. You will be able to create professional actionable knowledge, both through classroom learning, and by applied research through Critical Action Learning and Action Research, utilising appropriate quantitative and qualitative methods.
- The core curriculum of the DBA programme consists of contemporary management topics such as change and crisis management; innovative approaches to leadership; managerial decision making; as well as ethics, sustainability and social impact.
- In addition to rigorous classroom scholarship, you will create a Doctoral Development Plan (DDP) which will allow you to chronicle your development as a doctoral practitioner and researcher.
- The DDP will also assist you in understanding your transformation process and reflections on becoming a scholar/practitioner, creating doctoral-level professional knowledge, as well as the development of critical thinking skills such as leading in the midst of ambiguity.

- You will complete your qualification with an original thesis that's based upon a critical project that you undertake in your organisation. Unlike doctoral business programmes that are more theoretical in nature, the thesis for our DBA is designed to produce new, actionable knowledge that you will immediately use.
- We understand that most senior managers will change positions and organisations throughout their career. Therefore, due to our DBA programme's focus on building critical reflection, critical thinking, and doctoral-level skills, you should graduate with the knowledge and expertise necessary to apply what you've learned in a variety of organisational and managerial settings.

ACTION LEARNING AND CRITICAL ACTION LEARNING

- Action Learning is an educational process that occurs when a group of individuals meet on a regular basis to deliberate and learn from their experiences to improve practice in an organisational context. Strategies, tactics and actions determine the outcomes and results which subsequently influence the strategies again.
- Critical Action Learning is a critical reflection on the beliefs, attitudes and biases that led to the selection of the chosen actions which improved the results. Reflection makes the learner aware and provides opportunity to modify these underlying assumptions. This practice-based hands-on approach, referred to as Double Loop Learning, is a unique feature of this programme.
- We have chosen to base our DBA programme on Critical Action Learning because this approach recognises that even seemingly simple business problems can be impacted by the dynamics of personal attitudes and the complexities of organisation power and politics.

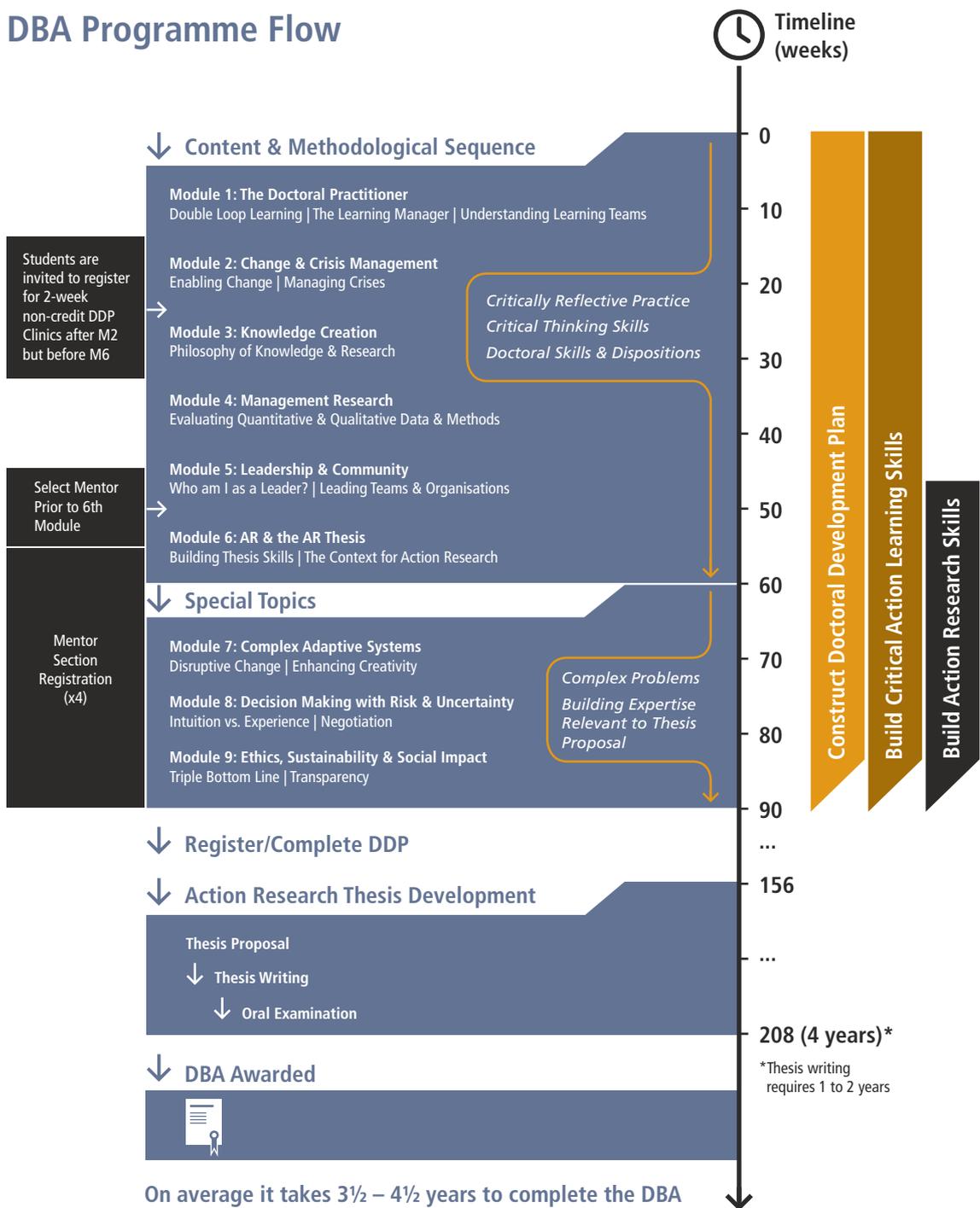
ACTION RESEARCH

- Action Research is where the researcher takes on a project, or intervention, with the dual purposes of solving an identified problem and generating new, actionable knowledge. In the context of our DBA programme, students as action researchers are fully engaged with their organisation which facilitates a close examination of that organisation. This "insider" action research allows meaningful and positive changes to be applied through the proposed intervention.
- As with Critical Action Learning, Action Research begins with critical reflection. In fact, becoming a critically reflective practitioner is one of the key outcomes of the DBA programme. Action Research is a systematic approach and takes into account what has already been said about the phenomena in literature. A set of sophisticated analytical tools are also utilised for the research.

PROGRAMME STRUCTURE

- The DBA programme is comprised of nine core modules. The first six modules will incorporate the Critical Action Learning methodology while the remaining three will incorporate both Critical Action Learning and Action Research methodologies.
- Each module is ten weeks in length and is worth 30 credit points - inclusive of the management research that you undertake in each module.
- You will complete your degree with a thesis (for a total of 540 credit points).

DBA Programme Flow



CORE MODULES

- The Doctoral Practitioner
- Change and Crisis Management
- Knowledge Creation
- Management Research: Quantitative & Qualitative Methods
- Leadership and Community
- Action Research & the Action Research Thesis
- Complex Adaptive Systems
- Decision Making with Risk and Uncertainty
- Ethics, Sustainability and Social Impact

THESIS

- The culmination of your programme, this written project demonstrates your mastery and integration of all your previous learning. The thesis is the cornerstone of the UK university system. It is an original, scholarly work that applies your new knowledge and experience and allows you to prove your mastery of the techniques you have studied.
- We understand that writing your doctoral thesis is a daunting task. That's why we have integrated a support system into the programme to enable you to progress successfully through the stages of thesis development. In fact, you will begin "scaffolding" thesis writing skills mid-way through your programme in mentoring sections that allow you to share ideas with other students while you build a rapport with a faculty mentor.
- Thesis development will last between one and two years and will consist of four stages. These stages are: developing your thesis proposal, faculty review and approval of your proposal, writing the thesis itself, and the oral examination (known as the "viva voce") of your thesis.

PROGRAMME DURATION

- The programme will take between 3.5 and 4.5 years based on the recommended study schedule.

Should students need to alter their study path due to work or family commitments they can do so in consultation with a Student Support Manager.

- Course work: 2.5 years
- Thesis: 1 – 2 years

CORE MODULES

- The Programme will contain nine taught modules. These are as follows:

The Doctoral Practitioner

AIM: To provide a comprehensive introduction of the Doctor of Business Administration Programme and to our unique and intensive management learning environment.

- The Doctoral Practitioner introduces students to the DBA Programme and to the requirements for successful participation in our online pedagogical environment. The module examines the significance of learning and of fostering personal and organisational learning. The module also explores the origins and growth of Action Learning (and the related concept of Critical Action Learning) and their application to management development. The module also explores the nature and applicability of a range of other action modalities. Emphasis will be placed on planning small phases of project work that can be applied and studied throughout the Programme; on critical reflection; and on sustaining the application of learning throughout one's career. Module assignments focus on practical application of writing and critical-thinking skills and promote professional practice and academic excellence.

Change and Crisis Management

AIM: To understand and apply several models for change management particularly from a stakeholder perspective and to develop the ability to lead teams and organisations through disruptive change scenarios.

- This module begins with the notion that the success of any organisation is dependent upon its ability to manage change and handle crisis while also creating value for its stakeholders. "Crises" in this sense encompass a wide range of events impacting the organisation. In this module, students analyse and evaluate several models for change management, and consider their application in practice. This module also prepares students to lead change initiatives within a variety of organisational settings. For example, students will explore constructs such as intervention theory (see Argyris, 1970) as a means of developing effective decision making strategies regarding process and expected outcomes. Additionally students will explore and apply skills of effective coaching such as active listening, empowering, enabling change, and using feedback to create interactive dialogue and deeper understanding. Finally, the role of leadership in crisis situations will be explored and analysed.

Knowledge Creation

AIM: To provide students with a philosophical and methodological foundation of knowledge creation in Management Research.

- The aim of this module is to provide students with a philosophical and methodological underpinning of knowledge creation in management research. The module will provide students with key theories to support their application of action research during the Programme and place action research in historical context.
- In the construction of knowledge it is important that students consider what management research is; how to understand the relation between cause and meaning; the notion of positivism, idealism, realism and post modernism; the nature of the qualitative process and the nature of the quantitative process.

Management Research: Quantitative & Qualitative Methods

AIM: To introduce students to the qualitative and quantitative aspects of management research. Rather than simply concentrating on the development of research skills, this module focuses on applying this understanding towards "making meaning" of scholarly and popular research articles.

- In this module, qualitative and quantitative frameworks for inquiry are introduced. Qualitative designs including case study, phenomenology, grounded theory, and ethnography. This module also helps develop the student's skills in descriptive statistics; statistical inference; quantitative techniques, including analysis of variance and covariance; multiple linear regressions; and various nonparametric techniques. Quantitative designs covered include experimental and quasi-experimental, survey, and causal-comparative. The "frame of reference" for this module is not simply a demonstrated understanding of particular techniques. Rather, the focus is on applying this understanding towards "making meaning" of published research. Assignments, therefore, focus both on skill development & demonstration as well as on the effective interpretation of published research and the application of that research to workplace problem solving.

Leadership and Community

AIM: To provide an intensive examination into the concepts and practices underlying the successful leadership of high performing teams and organisations, particularly in a challenging global context.

- This module is premised on the notion that organisations are comprised of interlinked "communities" of varying sizes from small teams to large departments. Additionally, these communities not only interact with each other within an organisation, but also relate to larger communities outside of the organisation. This module focuses on

the theory behind and practical skills of (1) effectively leading teams and departments (“micro” communities); (2) strategically managing the interrelationships among teams and departments to create high-performing organisations (the “meso” community); and (3) thoughtfully leading teams, departments, and organisations in the context of diverse cultures and nations (“macro” communities). In this context, the module also presents a critique of particular aspects of leadership theory, its negative aspects, and its substitutes. Focus areas include the development of oneself as a leader, development of others as leaders, shared leadership, and development of effective and vibrant organisational communities. Finally, the module examines the concept of the learning organisation and the relationship between leadership and facilitating learning within the organisation.

Action Research & the Action Research Thesis

AIM: To introduce the concepts and practices of action research as a mode of intensive management inquiry. This module also introduces the student to the structures and expectations of the doctoral thesis.

- This module explores the notion of action research in its many and varied forms. The term action research is used to describe a planned intervention by a researcher in an organisational or community setting which attempts to solve a problem, or effect a change, and to simultaneously study the phenomena employing rigorous and ethically acceptable methodologies. Action research involves a series of stages of entry, contracting, diagnosis, action and evaluation (Gill, 1986). It is necessarily collaborative and differs from basic research in that it involves mutually agreed goals and control between the researcher and the client. It differs from consultancy in that it has a strong research focus and should result in a contribution to professional and/or theoretical knowledge. Students will become familiar with the stages of action research, the methodologies typically used in such an intervention and the ethical dilemmas often faced by action researchers by critically examining a number of case studies.

Students will also explore the distinctions between insider and external action research and appreciate the challenges and opportunities presented by both modalities. The module will also help students to understand how to write, structure and present an action research thesis at doctoral level.

Complex Adaptive Systems

AIM: To provide an additional frame of reference for understanding how organisations manage through disruptive change. This module compares organisations to biological organisms that must adapt to a changing environment or perish.

- This module builds on concepts covered in Change and Crisis Management. What does it mean for organisations to manage successfully through disruptive change? One approach to answering this question is Darwinian: crises in the environment demand that species adapt or perish. The species that have survived can be described as complex adaptive systems. Modern organisations can also be understood as complex adaptive systems and they face the same dilemma as living species: adapt or perish. Considering organisations in this framework leads us to new insights about how to lead them effectively. The primary aims of this module are to describe the formal underpinnings of complex adaptive systems and to give students an intuitive appreciation for the behaviour of organisations as complex adaptive systems. Students will also explore how organisations respond successfully and unsuccessfully to environmental “stimuli” such as emergent technologies, competitive pressures, and economic and political instability.

Decision Making with Risk and Uncertainty

AIM: To examine the complexities of managerial thinking and decision making with a particular focus on the trade-offs between rationality and intuition as well as the strategies effective managers can use to mitigate risk in decision making processes.

- This module examines the psychological, social and organisational processes and problems

associated with thinking and decision making in various organisational contexts, and with varying level of certainty. Emphasis is placed on exploring the complexities of managerial thinking and decision making, the trade-off between rationality and intuition, and strategies to manage risk in decision making processes. Current theories and approaches in understanding managerial thinking and decision making are explored as are issues associated with group decision making, conflict and negotiation. A particular focus is placed on the relationship between decision making theory/practice and workplace learning modalities.

competitive strategy. This module provides the student with an understanding of how ESSI fits into the strategic development of organisations. The aim is to introduce the student to the tensions and trade-offs involved in the adoption of a focus on ESSI by an organisation in a competitive economy. The module also introduces the student to the concepts of stakeholder analysis and the triple bottom line. A principal part of the module is devoted to personal & organisational ethics and issues of transparency, including discussion of the social impact of non-ethical and non-transparent practices.

Ethics, Sustainability and Social Impact

AIM: To introduce the student to the tensions and trade-offs involved in the adoption of a focus on ethics, sustainability, and social impact by an organisation in a competitive economy. The module also introduces the student to the concepts of stakeholder analysis and the triple bottom line with a focus on personal & organisational ethics and issues of transparency.

- Ethical, sustainability, and social impact (ESSI) issues have been largely treated as peripheral concerns to business. However, for a variety of reasons, organisations are now fusing social mission with