



UNIVERSITY OF  
LIVERPOOL

Management  
School

# EXECUTIVE DBA

## Doctorate in Business Administration

Drive transformational change

Become a thought leader in your  
professional area

Create powerful impact

We are the original redbrick  
[liverpool.ac.uk](http://liverpool.ac.uk)





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## Gain high level research skills to lead with confidence and transform your business, with our Executive Doctorate in Business Administration

If you hold a leading role in your organisation, our Executive DBA is an action-research doctoral programme specifically designed for senior professionals.

Learn to use advanced research methods to solve existing workplace issues and improve business performance.

**Format:** [Part-time](#)

**Delivery:** [Hybrid](#)

**Starting in:** [September](#)

**Duration:** [4.5–7.5 years](#)





# Enable transformational business impact

Our Executive DBA develops world-class scholar practitioners, skilled in using research to promote impactful solutions within their own professional contexts.



## Achieve organisational change, by turning theory into practice

Academic research holds significant transformational value for modern businesses.

It provides rigorous, data-driven insights that allow organisations to confidently address real-life problems, drive innovation and become more competitive.



The Executive DBA emphasises highly relevant workplace-based research, with its practical approach being highly beneficial to the business you work for.

You'll gain high level analytical and problem-solving skills and become ready to use research strategically, to tackle varied business challenges in real-life scenarios.

Rather than focusing on creating narrowly defined and theoretical scholarly research, the thesis you produce during the course allows for the immediate integration of actionable knowledge into your work environment.

You'll be ready to address complex organisational problems, not only while you study, but most importantly, when you encounter new challenges after graduation.

Some examples of impact research undertaken by our students are:

- Development of recovery strategies and initiatives following major natural disasters in the USA
- Creation of a bespoke leadership evaluation and development tool used in management consultancy interventions
- Design of a technology transfer process for a major international food security programme in Mozambique
- Avoidance of COVID-related deaths in a chain of UK care homes.

## Not just a PhD for managers

Our Executive DBA provides the highest level of academic qualification you can achieve, but it's not simply a PhD for managers.

While being equivalent in status and demand to a PhD, the Executive DBA is specifically tailored to those pursuing professional rather than academic careers.

The pedagogy of the programme is based on research by University of Liverpool experts, who have studied how to best equip business leaders with the skills to undertake organisational research.



*The Executive DBA allows you to grow as a leader while you're working, because you can directly integrate what you learn into daily practices. I already see how the modules come together to build the person I am now. They can be applied to any problem we have at work, like how I'm looking at the data, how I'm doing observations, etc. This is something you really get to understand once you're living it.*

**Mohamad Bitar**  
Head of Operational Technology Systems  
Engineering at Bayer Pharmaceuticals

## The next step in your professional career

A DBA is a prestigious accomplishment which can open doors to significant career opportunities in the corporate world, policymaking and consultancy.

By becoming a Doctor in Business Administration, you'll be prepared for positions which require deep understanding of complex business processes and strategic decision-making:

- Top executive roles, eg Chief Executive Officer (CEO), Chief Financial Officer (CFO), Chief Operations Officer (COO)
- Senior management positions, eg Executive Director, Programme Director
- Public sector and government roles, eg Senior Policy Analyst, Economic Advisor
- Non-Profit Leader
- Management Consultant
- Independent Business Consultant
- Research and development (R&D) roles, eg R&D Manager, Market Research Analyst.



*When I look back, the DBA at Liverpool had a huge impact on my career path. It gave me the voice, the critical thinking and the knowledge, but it also built me as a leader. I became more confident in openly sharing my knowledge, my views and suggestions. Soon after graduation, I was elected to the role of Chair of Global Staff Association in a multinational environment of a UN agency. Staff in 40 offices around the world had given me their trust and valued my knowledge and qualifications to represent them and advocate for their employment rights and conditions. Using my knowledge of change management and leadership, I reformed the Association to improve staff management relations, bring in effective communication and make the organisation an active contributor to corporate reforms.*

**Dr Lenyara Fundukova**  
Head of the United Nation's International Fund  
for Agricultural Development's Knowledge Unit





# A programme compatible with your working life

The Executive DBA has been designed with the commitments of busy businesspeople in mind, so you can achieve your career goals while keeping up with personal and professional demands.

The programme is part-time and delivered in a hybrid format, to facilitate completing the course without interfering with your agenda.

The Executive DBA starts in September and is structured in two stages, with a shorter taught component followed by a longer research phase.

## Hybrid delivery

The Executive DBA is primarily delivered remotely via online sessions and one-to-one meetings with your supervisor, except for our four on-campus residencies.

Although we highly recommend you attend in person, if you're unable to come to Liverpool you still have the option to take part remotely.

## Flexible timeframe

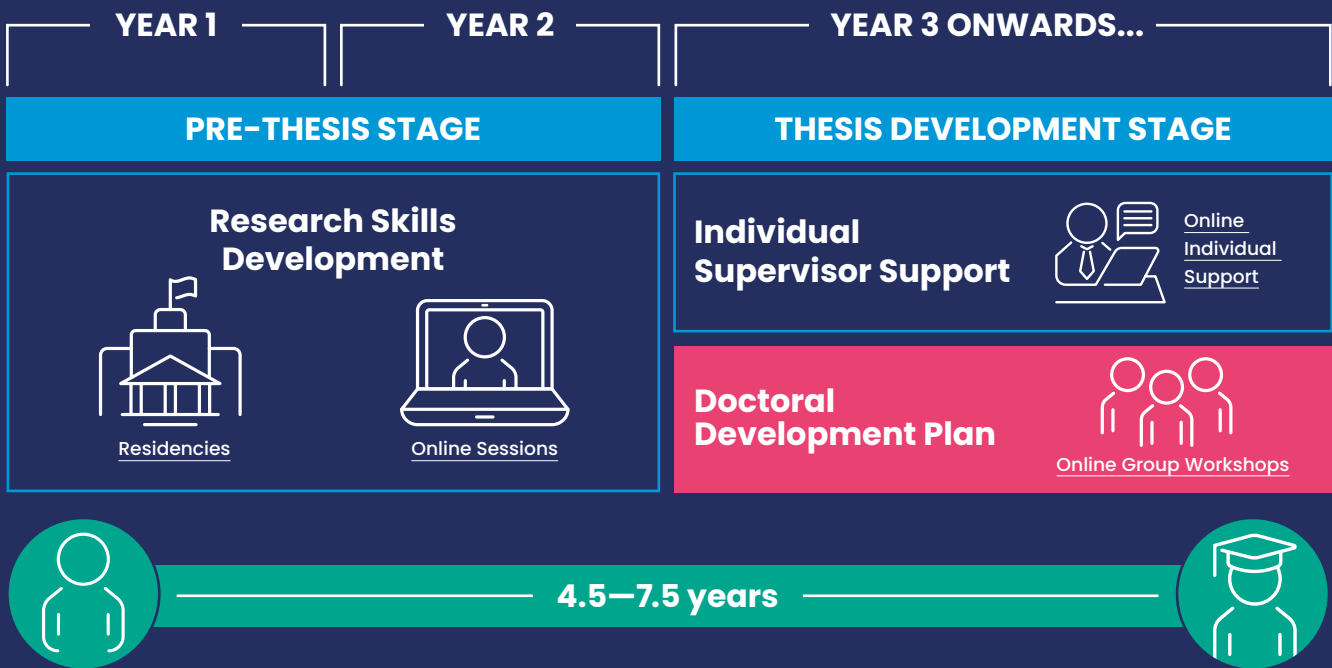
The whole process can be completed in 4.5 years. However, we understand unexpected personal or professional situations can affect your progress.

So, if needed, you can have up to 7.5 years to finish the programme.



*The programme is perfect for me because I work full time. Most of it is online, but I'm also able to come to the university, which is super important for me. I'm not a natural academic, so discussing in person is really the way I process and learn. It suits me very well personally and I love the international flavour it gives. The lecturers take a great personal interest in all of us and are really accessible and responsive.*

**Debbie Grey**  
CEO at Irish Equine Centre





# Stage 1

## Pre-thesis stage

**2 years: 180 credits at Level 7**

The pre-thesis stage of the Executive DBA develops your research skills in an intensive two-year period combining online learning with residencies that can be attended in Liverpool or remotely.

During Stage 1 you'll complete four online modules and four residencies (one per module).

Residencies take place during weekends and consist of special sessions with academics and guest speakers, group workshops and networking events.

Face-to-face residencies bring high added value to your academic development, as they provide the opportunity to discover the University's research ecosystem, and discuss your ideas with your peers and experienced researchers.

After completing the pre-thesis stage, you'll be awarded with 180 credits at Level 7 and then progress onto the next phase of the programme.

## Modules Year 1

### Introduction to doctoral research

**Year 1: 45 credits at Level 7**

In this module, you'll become prepared for doctoral management research and learn what it means to be a 'scholar practitioner'.

We use this term to describe the senior manager who is able to integrate the research skills of the scholar, with the leadership insights of the practitioner.

You'll learn to create and implement new organisational strategies, and how to make a significant contribution to the development of management as a profession.

The module will also introduce you to different styles of scholarship and allow you to develop your own voice.

### Key topics

- The nature of management knowledge
- Philosophy of management research
- Researching with others through action in the workplace
- Conceptualising and problematising the organisation of work
- Integrating leadership and scholarly research.

### Assessment

Written assignments that will test your understanding of foundational concepts for scholarly practitioner research and your ability to use them in the workplace.



### Working with literature

**Year 1: 45 credits at Level 7**

Doctoral reading facilitates viewing issues from different perspectives.

This module will prepare you to utilise ideas from existing academic literature to inform your thesis and demonstrate connections between theory, enquiry and management practice.

### Key topics

- The function of existing research in a DBA thesis
- Designing and conducting a literature review
- Writing a literature review
- Concept development and theory-building
- Developing research questions.

### Assessment

Written assignments to test your skills at designing literature reviews and using existing literature to develop research questions.

## Modules Year 2

### Research methods

**Year 2: 45 credits at Level 7**

During this module, you'll develop a comprehensive understanding of quantitative and qualitative research methods, and gain practical research skills needed to conduct the empirical aspects of your doctoral research.

This includes designing effective and rigorous data collection tools, and being able to analyse data using a range of appropriate methods.

You'll also learn how to evaluate research methods in terms of suitability and commensurability, and how to effectively report and write up quantitative and qualitative research findings.

### Key topics

- Qualitative research methods
- Quantitative research methods
- Executing research methods in business and management
- Evaluating relevance and effectiveness of research methods.

### Assessment

Written assignments where you must demonstrate an ability to analyse quantitative and qualitative data.

### Designing scholarly practitioner research

**Year 2: 45 credits at Level 7**

In this module, you'll learn how to construct and justify a scholarly practitioner research design that - if successfully executed - will generate knowledge of practical value in your organisation.

This involves integrating learning from the first three modules; whilst its justification will extend your understanding of the philosophy of management knowledge and major methodologies of social research.

The importance of researching with integrity is also explained during this module, in terms of the principle and practices of research ethics.

### Key topics

- Researching with integrity
- Constructing research designs
- Explaining and justifying research designs
- Project managing doctoral research.

### Assessment

A thesis research proposal which will serve as a foundation to your future research.





# Stage 2

## Thesis development stage

**2.5–5.5 years: 360 credits at Level 8**

During the thesis development stage, you'll receive regular one-to-one online support from your individual supervisor and access to continuous research skills development sessions.

You'll become a Doctor in Business Administration when you complete Stage 2 of the programme, which accounts for 360 credits at Level 8.



## Modules Year 3 onwards

### Doctoral development plan

**Year 3 onwards:**  
**30 credits at Level 8**

During these sessions, you'll have access to group seminars and refresher workshops on different methodologies and aspects of the research process.

The goal is to pull together a thread from the taught phase and reflect on your role as a 'scholar practitioner' within your organisation, to set you up for the thesis phase.

### Assessment

A written piece of work with an accompanying mind map, in which you critically reflect on your development as a scholar practitioner.

### Executive DBA thesis

**Year 3 onwards:**  
**330 credits at Level 8**

The Executive DBA thesis involves conducting in-depth research into an organisational problem and reporting the contribution of the actionable knowledge produced as a result.

Typical aims of an Executive DBA thesis include:

- Progressing an intractable work-based problem towards a solution
- Bringing about organisational change
- Empirically investigating an issue of relevance to management/business.

Your thesis must report new actionable knowledge and critically evaluate progress towards realising the project aims.

You must also demonstrate your engagement with research participants and an awareness that your presence as a manager – and as a researcher – has an effect on what happens in the workplace.

### Assessment

A 60,000-word thesis and a viva voce examination with two independent examiners.



# Who is the Executive DBA for?

If you are a senior leader with the ability to design and implement transformative strategies within your organisation, the Executive DBA is the perfect fit for you.



*Doing a DBA has positive benefits that continue to show years after the programme is completed. I still find myself learning and growing with the different critical thinking skills I gained from my participation in the programme. These have allowed me to move into completely new sectors professionally as well as growing in confidence to tackle large global systemic challenges.*

**Dr Katherine Gunderson**  
CEO at Grand Bequest, Historical Real Estate Platform

In addition, you'll need a UK undergraduate degree, or international equivalent, in a relevant subject, preferably with an Upper Second-Class (2:1) or above, plus:

- A UK, or international equivalent, MBA or master's degree in a business and management (or related) discipline<sup>1</sup>
- At least five years of significant experience working at senior level within an organisation or as a consultant.

If you're not from a majority English speaking country, you'll also need to demonstrate competence in the use of English language, (ie IELTS 7.0 overall, with no component below 6.5, or equivalent).

<sup>1</sup> If you have a master's qualification in a different area, your suitability for the programme will be assessed based on your experience and research proposal.





# Start your application

Applications for the Executive DBA are online and open all year round.

You don't need to find a supervisor prior to starting your application. This will be arranged during the pre-thesis stage of the programme, once you've demonstrated a sufficient level of progress.

## Prepare your application documents

You may need the following documents to complete your online application:

- A research proposal of around 2,000 words
- Evidence of your academic background (eg university transcripts, degree certificates)
- Evidence of English language proficiency, if applicable
- A personal statement of around 500–800 words, explaining your motivation to study the Executive DBA<sup>2</sup>

- A curriculum vitae (CV), including relevant employment details and your educational background
- Two signed references on letterheaded paper<sup>3</sup> – If you're a working professional, you should submit one academic reference and one professional reference. If this isn't possible, you can submit two professional references.



## Register and apply online

Finally, visit our website to register and apply online.



[theuniversityofliverpool.my.site.com](https://theuniversityofliverpool.my.site.com)

You'll receive an email acknowledgment once you've submitted your application.

If you're a suitable applicant, we'll invite you to a 30-minute online interview. We'll inform you of the outcome of the application via email.

<sup>2</sup> Good personal statements normally incorporate information on how your background, experience and training make you the ideal candidate for this highly demanding programme.

<sup>3</sup> Strong references are tailored to the Executive DBA programme and provide information on your intellectual capabilities, work ethic, business/management experience, research and analysis experience, and ability to work on long-term projects.

# Funding your Executive DBA

Before starting your Executive DBA application, you need to plan how you'll cover the programme's fees.

Securing funding can be complex and time consuming, so it's important to start your search early.

As well as self-funding, the cost of studying the Executive DBA can be met via other sources.

## Employee sponsorship

Completing our Executive DBA has benefits for both you and your employer, as it brings the opportunity to capitalise on your enhanced business and leadership skills.

For this reason, many of our students are sponsored by the organisations they work for.

Guaranteeing support from your employer, boosts your learning experience and future career development, while your company ensures meaningful, relevant research is carried out.

We recommend approaching your line manager, HR or Training and Development Team with a proposal on how the Executive DBA can bolster your skillset and organisational performance<sup>4</sup>.

If you are successful in gaining this type of sponsorship, we recommend contacting our Executive DBA Admissions Team with the proposal you've agreed with your employer.

<sup>4</sup> Normally, once your proposal is approved, you'll need to agree the terms and conditions of the sponsorship, including the amount your organisation is willing to cover, working and study hours, amount of time to complete the research and any allowance for learning materials.

Funding is usually awarded based on academic excellence and/or economic hardship, so we recommend researching potential funding opportunities based on your circumstances.

## Postgraduate Doctoral Loan

If you're a UK national, Irish citizen or have settled status in the UK, a Postgraduate Doctoral Loan can help with course fees and living costs while you study.

If eligible, the loan isn't means tested, issued directly to you in three instalments per academic year and repayable when you're earning above a certain income threshold.

Visit our website to find out more about funding opportunities for doctoral students.



[www.liverpool.ac.uk/postgraduate-research/fees-and-funding](https://www.liverpool.ac.uk/postgraduate-research/fees-and-funding)

## Scholarships and awards

The University offers a range of scholarships and awards (grants and bursaries) for UK and international postgraduate research students, which can help cover all or part of your tuition fees and other expenses.

## Charities and trusts

Many national and international organisations, including the Nuffield Foundation, Leverhulme Trust and Wellcome Trust, offer financial support to postgraduate researchers before and during their degree.

# Executive DBA fees

There's a set fee for years one and two of the Executive DBA, and a different (lower) fee from year three onwards.

If you continue in the thesis development stage beyond 2.5 years (over 4.5 years in total), an additional yearly fee will be payable.

Visit our website to find out the most up-to-date Executive DBA fees.



[www.liverpool.ac.uk/postgraduate-research/research-opportunities/executive-dba/#fees](https://www.liverpool.ac.uk/postgraduate-research/research-opportunities/executive-dba/#fees)





# Join our excellent research environment

Become part of the University of Liverpool's live research environment and gain access to professional networks which bring together students, faculty, industry partners and public sector organisations.



Our University is part of the Russell Group of universities, acknowledged as the UK's leading academic establishments for excellence in teaching and research.

The Management School itself is a research powerhouse with international experts shaping world-class academic thought and making an impact on business practice, policymaking and society.

Our research encompasses a wide range of topics in accounting and finance, economics, marketing, operations and supply chain management, strategy, international business, entrepreneurship, organisational management and HR.

As well as publishing in leading scholarly journals, our academic staff also conduct research projects for companies and governments worldwide, focusing on growing enterprises, innovation and communities.

Our research strength is reflected in the latest Research Excellence Framework (REF 2021), with our School reaching the Top 20 out of 108 UK business and management schools:

- 12th place for research classified as 'world leading' (4\*) or 'internationally excellent' (3\*)
- 100% of research supported by a 'world leading' (4\*) or 'internationally excellent' (3\*) environment
- 9th place for research power, which considers strength in numbers of research staff and research performance.

These excellent results reflect our commitment to developing outstanding academic knowledge with a direct benefit for a wide range of institutions.

We're also in the 1% of academic institutions across the world to hold the gold standard triple accreditation from the Association of MBA's (AMBA), the Association to Advance Collegiate Schools of Business (AACSB) and EQUIS.

These are the three most rigorous quality assessments for business and management schools, which means we provide the highest standard in educational experiences, including faculty, staff and facilities.





# Liverpool: a city with business at its heart

Warm and welcoming, characterful and full of characters, there's nowhere quite like Liverpool. Discover our vibrant city and its burgeoning business ecosystem.



With a personality of its own, Liverpool is considered one of the friendliest cities in the UK. Our University shares and shapes the city's spirit by opening our doors to learners from all walks of life.

Home to nearly half a million people, Liverpool is famous for its commercial influence and cultural impact worldwide, and is the perfect place to bring teaching, research and practice together.

Our beautiful campus offers the ideal environment to learn and live in, peppered with a catalogue of stunning architecture, beautiful green spaces and facilities that ensure everything you could ever need is right here.

From our iconic Victoria Gallery and Museum to high-tech sustainable buildings, our campus blends tradition and modern design, with spaces that are both timeless and functional.

We sit at the heart of Liverpool's Knowledge Quarter, a world-leading urban innovation district located near the city centre, port and major cultural assets.

Just a few steps away, you'll discover Liverpool's exciting cultural scene, with more galleries and museums than any other UK city outside London, and a rich calendar of music events, theatrical performances and football matches.

Alongside the renowned Royal Albert Dock, Liverpool offers beautiful surroundings and stunning beaches, including Sefton Park, Formby's coastal nature haven and plenty of walking routes in the neighbouring Wirral peninsula.

Liverpool's entrepreneurial and creative spirit is also fuelling a boom in start-ups and attracting many global businesses. This growing ecosystem offers fertile ground to connect and collaborate with key industry players.

As an Executive DBA student, you'll have the option to attend our in-person residencies, where you'll experience the exciting things happening on-campus and discover our fantastic city.





## Find out more

If you have any questions about our Executive DBA, please visit our website<sup>5</sup> or send a message, and a member of our team will contact you as soon as possible.

Get in touch via [execdba@liverpool.ac.uk](mailto:execdba@liverpool.ac.uk)



## Connect on social

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 uolmanagementschool

 UniversityOfLiverpoolManagementSchool

 @uolmanschool.bsky.social

Management School specialist research channels:

 University of Liverpool Management School Research

 @ulmsresearch.bsky.social

<sup>5</sup> All details are correct at time of going to press. For the most up-to-date information please scan the QR code or visit our website.



Learning to make  
a difference from  
an enterprising  
and vibrant world  
maritime city of  
culture

