

EQUAL POSITION PAPER ON DOCTORAL DEGREES IN BUSINESS & MANAGEMENT IN EUROPE

Preamble:

The European Quality Link (EQUAL) is the international association of quality assessment and accreditation agencies in the field of European management education. It has as its main objective the continued improvement of quality in business schools. As part of this activity, EQUAL aims to agree common standards for programmes, where appropriate, and to establish benchmarks.

Doctoral degrees exist in many European countries but there are currently variable interpretations of their nature. This position paper is intended to assist business schools, inform participants and employers as the "Bologna" process and the creation of the European Higher Education Space evolve.

Titles

Doctoral degrees (also called Doctorates and used interchangeably) have a variety of titles and abbreviations across Europe; among the most widely used are: Doctor of Philosophy (PhD/DPhil) and Doctor of Business Administration (DBA).

Where institutions use the abbreviation DBA to signify a Diploma in Business Administration, which is not at Doctoral level, then it is recommended that this be changed to DipBA and institutions reserve the abbreviation DBA solely for the Doctor of Business Administration degree.

Only successful Doctoral graduates and those granted an Honorary Doctorate should be able to use the title Doctor.

Level

Doctoral degrees are assumed to be above the level of a Masters degree or equivalent (as set out in the "Framework for Masters Degrees in Business and Management" produced by efmd).

Nature and orientation

Doctoral degrees can place emphasis on the development of new knowledge and theoretical perspectives and this will normally lead to PhD or DPhil or similar titles.

They can also be oriented towards a significant contribution to the enhancement of applied/professional practice through the development and application of theoretical frameworks. Where this is the main orientation then this will normally lead to the DBA or similar title.

In either case successful Doctoral students are expected to demonstrate the capability to do advanced, scientific, systematic research using specialised, knowledge, at the frontier or leading edge of the subject or applied/professional area in the field of business and management.

Admission

Doctoral degrees will normally require a Masters degree or equivalent, initially or on route for purposes of admission.

Admission to DBA type Doctorate will also require a sufficient amount and level of business and management experience, normally not less than five years and appropriate to the research being undertaken.

During the admissions process, particular attention should be paid to the student's propensity to do research which may be evidenced by for example, development of the initial proposal and problem definition, initial research, personal capacity and appropriate business experience.

Duration

Normally, the minimum duration for a Doctoral degree will be the equivalent of three years full time study.

Assessment

Doctorates are awarded following successful completion of a major thesis/dissertation which demonstrates the following characteristics:

- a. A detailed understanding of applicable techniques for research and advanced academic enquiry.
- b. The general ability to conceptualise, design and implement a project for the generation of new knowledge, applications or understanding and to adjust the project design in the light of unforeseen problems.
- c. A systematic acquisition and understanding of a substantial body of knowledge which is at the forefront of an academic discipline or area of applied/professional practice.
- d. The creation and interpretation of new knowledge, through original research, or other advanced scholarship, of a quality to satisfy peer review, extend the forefront of the discipline, and merit publication.

DBA type Doctorates should also normally have a substantial thesis as their central method of assessment. However, other additional assessments and methodologies may be used. Equivalence in terms of assessment between the two main types of Doctoral degrees is essential.

Where the European Credit Transfer Scheme is used Doctoral degrees are expected to be a minimum of 180 credits at the appropriate level.

Supervision and support

There should be clear and shared expectations by all involved as to the amount and nature of supervision and support provided to Doctoral students.

Students must have supervisors who collectively have sufficient experience of supervising Doctorates to completion, specialist subject knowledge and external practitioner orientation.

EQUAL Full Members

ABS (Association of Business Schools), UK; AEEDE (Asociación Española de Representantes de Escuelas de Dirección de Empresa), E; ASFOR (Associazione per la Formazione alla Direzione Aziendale), I; Association Nationale des IAE, F; CAMBAS (Czech Association of MBA Schools), CZ; CEEMAN (Central and Eastern European Management Development Association), SI; Chapitre des Ecoles de Management, F; Civilekonomerna (Swedish Association of Graduates in Business Administration and Economics), SE; Civilekonomerne (Association of Danish Business Economists), DK; EFMD (European Foundation for Management Development), B; FIBAA (Foundation for International Business Administration Accreditation), D-A-CH; FORUM (Association for Management Education), PL; RABE (Russian Association for Business Education), RUSS; SEFE (Finnish Association of Graduates in Economics and Business Administration), FIN; Siviløkonomene (The Norwegian Association of Masters of Science in Business), NO; VSNU (Vereniging van Samenwerkende Nederlandse Universiteiten), NL

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