Swiss School of Business and Management Geneva
(SSBM Geneva)

SSBM Geneva Program Outline

Doctor of Business Administration (DBA) Program in Project Management

Method: Online

Duration of Program: 30 months

Total number of ECTS: min. 120

Avenue des Morgines 12, 1213 Genève

Switzerland

www.ssbm.ch

1. Enrollment criteria

Admission to DBA studies is granted to people who fulfil the following requirements:

- Hold MBA (or equivalent qualification) from a recognized higher education institution;

or

- Hold Master's degree in management (or associated discipline);

or

– Hold a Master's degree in a field other than management (or related discipline) but with a minimum of 5 years professional work experience.

- English requirements:

- TOEFL, IELTS or Cambridge
- Intensive English Program certificate
- Previous education in English speaking or Bilingual school with an official certificate
- Test/Interview with SSBM member staff (75 EUR cost which will be deducted from tuition fees upon enrolment).
- If a candidate is not from a majority English-speaking country, then an evidence of English language competency is required.

2. Credit Transfer and Recognition of Prior Learning

Credit Transfer and Recognition of Prior Learning are described in the "Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL) Policy" of SSBM Geneva.

3. Graduation Requirements

To successfully complete the DBA program, students must:

- Complete all program courses with a passing grade
- Complete and defend the final dissertation with a passing grade
- Have no outstanding financial obligations towards SSBM

Summa Cum Laude

"Summa cum laude" is an honorary title to signify a DBA that was earned "with the highest distinction". It is awarded to students for exceptional DBA Dissertation which was awarded the highest grade of 100 with innovative and original contribution to the field of research.

4. Teaching Method and Learning Materials

DBA Dissertation program is delivered online through the SSBM Online Learning Portal used by Harvard and MIT and by remote online mentor supervision.

All learning materials for this program are made accessible through the SSBM Online Learning Portal.

Access to S-Connect is provided to all SSBM students. S-Connect is an online platform to socialize / exchange / engage and communicate with current students, alumni, professors and industry partners.

Access to SSBM e-Library and ESBCO (largest provider of research databases, e-journals, magazine subscriptions, e-books and discovery service) is provided to all students. SSBM Librarian is available to all students to further advance their access to literature.

5. Program Outcomes

Learning Outcomes for DBA programs

- DBA students will demonstrate fundamental knowledge of the functional areas of research
- DBA students will demonstrate effective research skills including formulation of research problem, building of an appropriate literature review, using and designing a research study, ability to conduct data analysis and summarize and present the results
- DBA students will understand the importance of ethical obligations and responsibilities
- DBA students will be able to apply different frameworks into business context
- DBA students will acquire academic mindset and be able to scientifically analyze, approach and implement solutions to business problems

Learning outcomes specific to DBA in project management

Graduates of the IPMA-certified DBA program will be able to:

- Produce research that critically examines governance, compliance, and stakeholder dynamics, contributing new insights into strategy and organizational alignment in project, program, and portfolio contexts.
- Conduct research into ethical, cultural, and value-based dimensions of project management, generating frameworks that enhance responsible and sustainable leadership.
- Investigate advanced leadership, negotiation, and stakeholder engagement practices, providing evidence-based recommendations for managing complexity, diversity, and crisis situations.
- Develop and apply research to extend methodologies in project, program, and portfolio management (scope, time, cost, risk, quality), adapting them to contemporary and future business challenges.
- Research emerging approaches, such as agile, sustainability-driven, and technology-enabled practices, assessing their impact on organizational performance and value creation.

- Design and execute original, rigorous, and impactful research that advances both academic theory and IPMA's global body of project management knowledge.

6. Core Program Curriculum

Course ID	Course	Lecturer	ECTS
26649	Research Methodology I (RM01)	SSBM Supervisor	5
26650	Research Methodology II (RM02)	SSBM Supervisor	5
26654	Research Proposal (RP01)	SSBM Supervisor	20
37250	DBA Dissertation (IPMA)	SSBM Supervisor	80
37251	Applied Research Project in Project Management	SSBM Supervisor	10
		TOTAL:	**120**

Course Descriptors

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY I

Course Description

The focus of this DBA level course is on social science research, in particular, research methods. We address different methodological perspectives including experimental type research as well as research in the applied context. Students will get a full understanding of basic statistical concepts and qualitative/quantitative analysis techniques. At the end of course, students would have developed the capacity to frame research questions, derive appropriate experimental research designs, and analyze the data collected from these designs. They would also acquire proficiency in the use of software for analyzing experimental data

Course objectives

The course is designed to acquaint researchers with the principles of experimental design, basic research designs used in social science research including qualitative and quantitative research design methods.

Course Learning Outcomes

After this course, students will be able to:

- Develop the capacity to frame research questions and identify suitable experimental research designs.
- Demonstrate an understanding of basic statistical concepts and qualitative/quantitative analysis techniques.
- Analyze different methodological perspectives, including experimental and applied research contexts.
- Acquire proficiency in the use of software for analyzing experimental data.
- Understand and comply with ethical considerations in research, including academic integrity and avoiding plagiarism.
- Prepare a research concept paper following academic standards and guidelines provided by the course

Assignment Overview: Concept Paper

Your task is the following one:

- You have to submit to your mentor 4-5 pages document (including citations and the first page) where you will write about the topic you would like to study. You have to strictly follow the CONCEPT PAPER template that you can find on the DBA info course or you can request it from your mentor.
- You should structure your short research talk in the following way:

1) Introduction
2) Literature review
3) Discussion
4) Conclusion

- For the Introduction part you should briefly introduce the topic of your study (e.g., why your topic is important? why you would like to study it?

why is it novel? what is so new with your topic? what you will bring to the management/business world by studying that particular topic? etc...)

- For the Literature review: at this stage you can use Google Scholar as the main database and you should query it with some keywords related to your topic (e.g., if your topic is "Business challenges related to Bitcoin introduction"
- Then you should enter some keywords in google scholar such as "business challenge bitcoin" or "organization challenge bitcoin". etc. Once done, you need to briefly review what for example top 20 papers said about that topic (you need at least to read the abstract of those papers).
- Finally, once you analyze the first 20 or 30 papers, you should do the critical review of that literature and say what will be your work contribution and how you will fill the gap with your work. You do not need to go too much in details but just to indicate and cite past papers in this literature review section.
- For example: According to Pelletier 2017), business challenge related to bitcoin is largely underestimated and further research is needed to deep dive in this topic. Indeed, Mancure et al. (2013) argue that bitcoin is still in the nascent stages and....
- Citation style: Harvard style
- For the discussion part: you need to briefly discuss what you have found and how the findings from other studies will related to your research.
- Finally, in the conclusion, you should briefly say what your paper on this literature review dealt with and what you have found.

Overview of student workload

Learning activities	Number of Hours	ECTS Allocation
Researching subject and reading literature	110	4.4
Supervision meetings	2	0.1
Writing Concept Paper	12.5	0.5

Course materials and textbooks

Saunders, Lewis and Thornhill, *Research Methods for Business Students*, 5th Edition, © Mark Saunders, Philip Lewis and Adrian Thornhill 2009

RECOMMENDED REFERENCES:

Keppel, G., & Wickens, T. D. (2004) Design and analysis: A researcher's handbook (4th ed.). Pearson, Prentice Hall.
Kirk, R. E. (1995). Experimental design: Procedures for the behavioral sciences. Brooks/Cole Publishing Company.
Shadish, W. R., Cook, T. D., & Campbell, D. T. (2001). Experimental and quasi-experimental designs for generalized causal inference. Houghton Mifflin Company.
Tabachnick, B. G., & Fidell, L. S. (2007). Experimental designs using ANOVA. Duxbury.
Alan Agresti (2007) An Introduction to Categorical Data Analysis (Wiley Series in

Probability and Statistics), Publisher: Wiley-Interscience; 2 edition
On SPSS: George, D. & Mallery, P. (2005). SPSS for windows step-by-step: A simple guide and reference, update (6th Ed.). Allyn & Bacon.

SSBM web platform

Presentations, seminars and additional materials for class participation

Web

Different web sites will be mentioned during the lectures. The students are fully advised to consult such web pages in advance of lectures so that they can be prepared to better understand different chapters.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY II

Course Description

The focus of this DBA level course Research Methodology II is on providing high level overview of the research process that includes data collection, literature review, ethical guidelines, research proposal, research design and several other research related tips.

Course objectives

The course is designed to acquaint researchers with the principles of the research process that includes literature review, research design and research methodology.

Course Learning Outcomes

- Develop proficiency in conducting literature reviews, including identifying relevant sources, critically evaluating existing research, and synthesizing findings.
- Gain an understanding of ethical guidelines and considerations in research, including issues related to data collection, participant consent, and research integrity.
- Acquire skills in formulating research proposals, including defining research questions, selecting appropriate methodologies, and outlining research objectives.
- Demonstrate competence in research design, encompassing the selection of appropriate methods, procedures, and analytical techniques for investigating research questions.
- Enhance knowledge of different research methodologies, including qualitative, quantitative, and mixed-method approaches, and their applications in various research contexts.
- Develop the ability to apply research methods learned in the course to address practical research challenges and contribute to the advancement of knowledge in the field.
- Practice academic writing skills, including adhering to citation conventions, structuring literature reviews, and presenting research findings effectively.

- Foster critical thinking and analytical skills necessary for evaluating research literature, identifying research gaps, and formulating research questions.
- Understand the importance of academic integrity and ethical conduct in research, including avoiding plagiarism and adhering to ethical guidelines throughout the research process.
- Prepare a comprehensive literature review following academic standards and guidelines provided by the course.

Assignment Overview: Literature Review

Your task is the following one:

- You have to submit to your mentor a literature review (including citations and the first page) where you will review the topic you would like to study
- You should structure your literature review as per instructions provided on the learning portal.

Overview of student workload

Learning activities	Number of Hours	ECTS Allocation
Researching subject and reading literature	110	4.4
Supervision meetings	2	0.1
Writing Literature Review	12.5	0.5

Course materials and textbooks

Saunders, Lewis and Thornhill, *Research Methods for Business Students*, 5th Edition, © Mark Saunders, Philip Lewis and Adrian Thornhill 2009

RECOMMENDED REFERENCES:

Keppel, G., & Wickens, T. D. (2004) Design and analysis: A researcher's handbook (4th ed.). Pearson, Prentice Hall.
Kirk, R. E. (1995). Experimental design: Procedures for the behavioral sciences. Brooks/Cole Publishing Company.
Shadish, W. R., Cook, T. D., & Campbell, D. T. (2001). Experimental and quasi-experimental designs for generalized causal inference. Houghton Mifflin Company.
Tabachnick, B. G., & Fidell, L. S. (2007). Experimental designs using ANOVA. Duxbury.
Alan Agresti (2007) An Introduction to Categorical Data Analysis (Wiley Series in Probability and Statistics), Publisher: Wiley-Interscience; 2 edition
On SPSS: George, D. & Mallery, P. (2005). SPSS for windows step-by-step: A simple guide and reference, update (6th Ed.). Allyn & Bacon.

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RESEARCH PROPOSAL

Course Description

The Research Proposal course guides students in developing a comprehensive research proposal that serves as the foundation for their final thesis. Building on the Concept Paper and Literature Review, students refine their research problem, research questions, theoretical framework, and methodology while demonstrating academic rigor and critical thinking.

Course Objectives

The objective of this course is to equip students with the knowledge and skills necessary to design a coherent, academically rigorous, and feasible research proposal. Students will strengthen their ability to critically evaluate scholarly literature, formulate meaningful research questions or hypotheses, select appropriate research methods, and justify their methodological decisions.

Course Learning Outcomes

Upon successful completion of this course, students will be able to:

- Define and critically evaluate a research problem, establishing its significance, relevance, and contribution to the field.
- Formulate clear research objectives, research questions, and hypotheses or propositions aligned with the identified research problem.
- Conduct a comprehensive and critical literature review to identify research gaps and develop an appropriate theoretical or conceptual framework.
- Design and justify a suitable research methodology, including research approach, sampling strategy, data collection methods, and analytical techniques.
- Evaluate the reliability, validity, ethical considerations, and feasibility of the proposed research design.
- Integrate theoretical knowledge, scholarly evidence, and methodological decisions into a coherent and academically rigorous research proposal.
- Prepare and present a structured research proposal that meets academic writing standards and provides a clear blueprint for the final thesis.

Assignment Overview: Research Proposal

Students are required to develop a comprehensive Research Proposal based on their previously completed Concept Paper and Literature Review. The assignment should clearly define the research problem, objectives, and research questions; provide a critical and sufficiently developed literature review; and present a detailed methodology explaining the research design, sampling approach, data collection procedures, data analysis techniques, and relevant ethical considerations.

The proposal should normally be **10–12 pages long and must not exceed 30 pages**. Unless otherwise approved by the Mentor, it must include a title page, table of contents, Chapter 1: Introduction, Chapter 2: Review of Literature, Chapter 3: Methodology, references, and appendices where appropriate.

The proposal must be written in a formal academic style, demonstrate critical analysis and independent research skills, use appropriate scholarly references and consistent citation formatting, and present a logical connection between the research problem, literature, and methodology.
The completed Research Proposal should provide a clear, feasible, and academically sound foundation for conducting the research and writing the final thesis. Once approved, it serves as the guiding framework for subsequent thesis development, with any significant changes subject to agreement with the Mentor.

Overview of student workload

Learning Activities	**Hours**	**ECTS**
Research problem and objectives development	50	2
Literature review and synthesis	125	5
Theoretical framework and hypotheses	50	2
Research methodology development	100	4
Research validity, reliability, and ethics	25	1
Research proposal writing	75	3
Mentor consultations and feedback	25	1
Revision and final submission	50	2
Total	**500**	**20**

DISSERTATION

Course Description

The Dissertation course represents the final stage of the doctoral research process, during which students independently conduct and complete an original research study based on an approved Research Proposal. Students collect and analyze data, critically interpret their findings, develop evidence-based conclusions, and demonstrate their ability to contribute to academic knowledge and professional practice through a comprehensive doctoral dissertation.

Course Objectives

The objective of this course is to enable students to conduct independent, academically rigorous research and produce a doctoral dissertation that demonstrates advanced research competencies, critical thinking, and methodological expertise. Students will strengthen their ability to apply appropriate research methods, systematically analyze empirical evidence, evaluate findings in relation to existing literature, and formulate meaningful theoretical and practical contributions.

Course Learning Outcomes

Upon successful completion of this course, students will be able to:

1. Conduct independent research by implementing an approved research design and addressing clearly defined research questions, objectives, and hypotheses or propositions.
2. Critically evaluate and synthesize scholarly literature to establish the theoretical foundations of the study and demonstrate its contribution to existing knowledge.
3. Apply advanced research methodologies by selecting and implementing appropriate sampling, data collection, and analytical techniques.
4. Demonstrate research rigor and ethical responsibility by ensuring appropriate reliability, validity, transparency, and adherence to ethical research standards.
5. Systematically analyze and present research findings using suitable quantitative, qualitative, or mixed-methods approaches.
6. Critically interpret and evaluate research results in relation to the research questions, theoretical framework, and existing scholarly literature.
7. Develop evidence-based conclusions and recommendations that demonstrate theoretical contributions, practical implications, and opportunities for future research.
8. Produce a comprehensive doctoral dissertation that demonstrates independent scholarship, academic integrity, critical analysis, and advanced academic writing skills.

Assignment Overview: Dissertation

Students are required to complete an independent doctoral dissertation based on their previously approved Research Proposal. The dissertation must demonstrate the student's ability to conduct original research, apply appropriate research methodologies, collect and systematically analyze data, critically evaluate findings, and develop well-supported conclusions and recommendations. The research must demonstrate academic rigor, methodological transparency, and a meaningful contribution to scholarly knowledge and/or professional practice.

The dissertation must contain 120–200 pages of main text, excluding photographs, images, tables, and similar visual elements. Unless otherwise agreed with the Mentor, the dissertation should include a title page, signature page, table of contents, lists of tables and figures, abstract, Chapter 1:

Introduction, Chapter 2: Review of the Literature, Chapter 3: Methodology, Chapter 4: Results, Chapter 5: Discussion, Conclusions, and Implications, references, and appendices. The dissertation must follow the Harvard referencing style and the official SSBM dissertation templates provided by SSBM or the Mentor.

The completed dissertation must demonstrate independent scholarly work, critical engagement with relevant literature, appropriate data collection and analysis, and objective interpretation of research findings. Students are expected to revise previously developed chapters as necessary, incorporate Mentor feedback, and ensure that the final document meets the highest standards of academic quality, coherence, research ethics, and professional presentation.

Overview of student workload

Learning Activities	Hours	ECTS
Research planning	100	4
Literature review	225	9
Methodology development	225	9
Data collection	450	18
Data analysis	350	14
Results and discussion	225	9
Conclusions and recommendations	100	4
Mentor consultations	100	4
Revision and submission	225	9

APPLIED RESEARCH PROJECT IN PROJECT MANAGEMENT

Course Description

The course provides advanced knowledge of project management competencies based on the IPMA Individual Competence Baseline (ICB4), focusing on the areas of Perspective, People, and Practice. Students will critically examine selected competence elements, evaluate relevant academic literature, and explore their theoretical and practical implications in contemporary project management environments.

Course objectives

The course aims to develop students' advanced analytical, research, and critical thinking skills through the evaluation of project management competencies and their application in professional practice. Students will strengthen their ability to synthesize scholarly literature, compare competence frameworks, identify research gaps, and develop evidence-based arguments through an academically rigorous critical review.

Course Learning Outcomes

Upon successful completion of this course, students will be able to:

- Analyze the IPMA ICB4 competence framework and its relevance to contemporary project management.
- Critically evaluate selected competence elements within the Perspective, People, and Practice domains.
- Synthesize scholarly literature to identify theoretical perspectives, research gaps, and emerging challenges in project management competencies.
- Compare IPMA competence elements with alternative project management competence frameworks.
- Assess the methodological approaches, limitations, and potential biases associated with project management competence research.
- Evaluate the practical applicability and adaptability of project management competencies across different organizational contexts.
- Develop coherent, evidence-based academic arguments and recommendations through an independent critical review.

Overview of student workload

Learning Activities	**Hours**	**ECTS**
Competence mapping and research planning	25	1
Literature search and review	50	2
Theoretical framework and comparison	37.5	1.5
Critical analysis and evaluation	50	2
Methodological reflection and synthesis	25	1
Critical review writing	37.5	1.5
Revision, referencing and submission	25	1
Total	250	10