



DBA Program

Doctor of Business Administration – Programme Design

1. Executive Summary

GenevaTech Business School offers fully online Doctor of Business Administration (DBA) program designed for senior executives and experienced professionals. The DBA is an advanced professional doctorate oriented toward applied research that addresses real-world organizational, industry, and policy challenges.

The program carries 180 ECTS credits at EQF Level 8 (Doctoral level), fully compliant with the Swiss Qualifications Framework for Higher Education (nqf.ch-HS), the Framework for Qualifications of the European Higher Education Area (QF-EHEA), the European Qualifications Framework (EQF), UK RQF Level 8 comparability, and EFMD/EQUAL standards for professional doctorates in business and management.

Six research concentrations are offered:

Concentration	Focus
FinTech	Digital finance, blockchain, AI in financial services, regulatory technology
EdTech	Educational technology leadership, digital transformation in education, learning analytics
Business	Strategic management, innovation, corporate governance, organizational transformation
ESG	Sustainable finance, climate risk, sustainable development, impact measurement
Public Policy & Governance	Policy analysis, regulatory governance, public sector innovation
International Organizations	Multilateral governance, diplomacy, development finance, humanitarian leadership

The program is delivered entirely online with hybrid research workshops and international research collaboration, designed for working professionals at senior levels.

2. Regulatory and Accreditation Compliance

2.1 Swiss Regulatory Context (nqf.ch-HS)

GTBS DBA design operates within the Swiss institutional autonomy framework for doctoral education, applying nqf.ch-HS third-cycle descriptors and ECTS credit values in a manner consistent with Bologna principles. GTBS applies ECTS credit values to the DBA for transparency, workload management, and international comparability, consistent with Swiss institutional practice and the rules of the Bologna Process.

2.2 European Qualifications Framework (EQF) – Level 8

The DBA is positioned at EQF Level 8, the highest level of the framework. The descriptor requires:

Knowledge: “Knowledge at the most advanced frontier of a field of work or study and at the interface between fields.”

Skills: “The most advanced and specialized skills and techniques, including synthesis and evaluation, required to solve critical problems in research and/or innovation and to extend and redefine existing knowledge or professional practice.”

Responsibility and autonomy: “Demonstrate substantial authority, innovation, autonomy, scholarly and professional integrity and sustained commitment to the development of new ideas or processes at the forefront of work or study contexts including research.”

2.3 UK RQF Level 8 Comparability

UK doctoral degrees are positioned at RQF Level 8. The QAA Characteristics Statement for Doctoral Degrees confirms that all doctoral graduates, including professional/practice-based doctorates, must demonstrate “an original contribution to knowledge in their subject, field or profession, through original research or the original application of existing knowledge or understanding.”

3. Program Architecture

3.1 Credit Distribution (180 ECTS)

Component	ECTS	Phase
Doctoral Coursework & Research Methods	36	Phase 1
Research Proposal & Confirmation	24	Phase 1
Applied Doctoral Research	60	Phase 2
Dissertation & Viva Voce	60	Phase 3
Total	180	

Institutional Note: while doctoral degrees in the EHEA are generally research-based and not uniformly assigned ECTS, EFMD requires a minimum of 180 credits where ECTS is used. GTBS adopts these values for transparency, workload management, and international comparability.

3.2 Program Structure

Phase 1 – Foundations & Candidacy (60 ECTS)

- Advanced Research Methodology (12 ECTS)
- Quantitative & Qualitative Methods (12 ECTS)
- Responsible AI in Research (6 ECTS)
- Academic Writing & Scholarly Publishing (6 ECTS)
- Research Proposal Development & Defense (24 ECTS)
- Milestone: Doctoral Candidacy upon successful proposal defense

Phase 2 – Applied Research (60 ECTS)

- Fieldwork, data collection, and analysis
- Industry-based applied research
- International research collaboration (where appropriate)
- Interim progress reviews
- Milestone: Progress review panel

Phase 3 – Dissertation & Defense (60 ECTS)

- Dissertation writing (monograph or 3-paper format)
- Supervisor and reader review
- Viva voce examination with external examiner
- Milestone: Award of DBA

4. Research Concentrations

4.1 FinTech

Focus Areas: Digital banking transformation, blockchain and digital assets, AI and machine learning in finance, regulatory technology (RegTech), sustainable finance, financial inclusion.

Indicative Research Questions:

1. How do AI-driven credit scoring models affect financial inclusion for unbanked populations in emerging markets, and what governance mechanisms ensure fairness and transparency?
2. What organizational capabilities and leadership practices enable incumbent banks to successfully execute digital transformation at scale?
3. How can regulatory technology (RegTech) enhance compliance efficiency and reduce systemic risk in cross-border banking operations?
4. What governance frameworks are required to manage risks associated with decentralized finance (DeFi) platforms while preserving innovation?
5. How do central bank digital currencies (CBDCs) affect monetary policy transmission and commercial bank intermediation in developed versus developing economies?
6. What factors influence consumer trust and adoption of blockchain-based financial services in different cultural and regulatory contexts?

7. How can sustainable finance instruments (green bonds, ESG-linked loans) be structured to accelerate climate transition in emerging economies?
8. What is the impact of open banking regulations on competition, innovation, and consumer outcomes in retail financial services?
9. How do FinTech firms and traditional financial institutions differ in their approaches to cybersecurity risk management and operational resilience?
10. What role do regulatory sandboxes play in fostering FinTech innovation, and how can their effectiveness be measured across different jurisdictions?
11. How can AI-powered fraud detection systems be designed to balance security effectiveness with customer experience and privacy protection?
12. What organizational and cultural factors determine the success of FinTech partnerships between banks and technology startups?

4.2 EdTech

Focus Areas: Educational technology leadership, digital transformation in schools and universities, learning analytics, AI in education, EdTech entrepreneurship and policy.

Indicative Research Questions:

1. What leadership capabilities and organizational conditions drive successful EdTech adoption at scale in K-12?
2. What leadership capabilities and organizational conditions drive successful EdTech adoption at scale in higher education institutions?
3. What policy frameworks and funding mechanisms support equitable digital education access for underserved populations?
4. How does the integration of AI tools in teaching affect educator roles, professional identity, and pedagogical practice?
5. What factors determine the effectiveness of blended and fully online learning models in different educational contexts?
6. How can EdTech ventures achieve sustainable business models while maintaining educational quality and accessibility?
7. What are the measurable impacts of digital learning platforms on student outcomes in STEM versus humanities disciplines?
8. How do institutional leaders navigate the tension between innovation and standardization in educational technology adoption?
9. What professional development models most effectively prepare educators for technology-enhanced teaching?
10. How can privacy-preserving learning analytics be designed to protect student data while enabling institutional improvement?
11. What role do public-private partnerships play in scaling EdTech solutions in developing countries?
12. How do cultural and socioeconomic factors influence parental acceptance and support for digital learning in schools?

4.3 Business

Focus Areas: Strategic management, innovation management, organizational transformation, digital business models, international business.

Indicative Research Questions:

1. How do incumbent firms successfully manage the dual challenge of exploiting existing business models while exploring digital opportunities?
2. What organizational capabilities and leadership practices enable sustained innovation performance in highly regulated industries?
3. How do cross-cultural factors influence the effectiveness of global strategy implementation in multinational corporations?
4. What is the relationship between digital business model transformation and firm performance across different industry sectors?
5. How do organizational culture and structure affect the speed and success of digital transformation initiatives?
6. What governance mechanisms enable effective oversight of AI and emerging technologies in large corporations?
7. How do firms in emerging markets leverage digital platforms to overcome institutional voids and achieve competitive advantage?
8. What factors determine the success of strategic alliances and partnerships in technology-intensive industries?
9. How do leadership succession patterns affect strategic continuity and organizational performance in family-owned enterprises?
10. What is the impact of remote and hybrid work models on organizational innovation, collaboration, and knowledge sharing?
11. How do firms develop and sustain dynamic capabilities in rapidly changing technological environments?
12. What role do corporate venture capital units play in fostering innovation and strategic renewal in established firms?

4.4 ESG

Focus Areas: Sustainable finance, climate risk and adaptation, corporate governance, ESG reporting and disclosure, impact measurement, circular economy.

Indicative Research Questions:

1. How do institutional investors integrate climate risk into portfolio decisions, and what methodologies best capture physical and transition risks?
2. What factors drive effective ESG disclosure in emerging markets, and how do regulatory frameworks influence reporting quality?
3. How can circular business models be scaled in manufacturing sectors, and what organizational capabilities are required?

4. What is the relationship between ESG performance and financial performance across different time horizons and industry sectors?
5. How do board composition and governance structures affect corporate ESG strategy and performance?
6. What mechanisms ensure the credibility and comparability of ESG ratings, and how do rating agencies differ in their methodologies?
7. How do companies measure and manage social impact, and what frameworks enable effective impact reporting?
8. What role do green bonds and sustainability-linked loans play in financing climate transition, and how effective are they?
9. How do supply chain sustainability requirements affect supplier behavior and environmental outcomes in global value chains?
10. What are the drivers and barriers to corporate adoption of science-based climate targets?
11. How do climate litigation and regulatory enforcement affect corporate climate strategy and disclosure practices?
12. What governance mechanisms enable effective stakeholder engagement on ESG issues in multinational corporations?

4.5 Public Policy & Governance

Focus Areas: Policy analysis, regulatory governance, public sector innovation, digital government, international organizations, development policy.

Indicative Research Questions:

1. How do regulatory sandboxes affect innovation and risk management in financial services, and what design features enhance their effectiveness?
2. What governance mechanisms enable effective public-private partnerships in infrastructure and service delivery?
3. How can digital technologies improve public service delivery, and what factors determine successful digital government transformation?
4. What policy frameworks support equitable and inclusive digital transformation in developing economies?
5. How do international organizations balance competing stakeholder interests in setting global standards and policies?
6. What is the impact of regulatory uncertainty on innovation and investment decisions in emerging technology sectors?
7. How do public sector leaders navigate the tension between accountability and innovation in policy implementation?
8. What mechanisms enable effective coordination across government agencies in implementing complex policy initiatives?
9. How do evidence-based policymaking practices differ across policy domains, and what factors enhance their adoption?

10. What role do civil society organizations play in shaping policy outcomes, and how do they influence governance processes?
11. How can governments design effective regulatory frameworks for AI and emerging technologies that balance innovation and public protection?
12. What factors determine the success of international development programs in achieving sustainable outcomes?

4.6 International Organizations

Focus Areas: Multilateral governance, United Nations system and specialized agencies, diplomacy and international negotiation, development finance and aid architecture, humanitarian leadership and disaster response, NGO management, global public health and education policy, international trade and investment governance, peacebuilding and conflict resolution, and the intersection of international organizations with the private sector and emerging technologies.

Indicative Research Questions:

1. How do United Nations specialized agencies balance competing member-state interests in formulating and implementing global policy frameworks?
2. What leadership capabilities and governance mechanisms enable effective coordination among multilateral institutions, national governments, and private-sector actors in humanitarian crises?
3. How do international financial institutions (World Bank, IMF, regional development banks) measure and enhance the development impact of their lending and technical assistance programs?
4. What factors determine the success of public-private partnerships in achieving the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), and how can their effectiveness be evaluated?
5. How do diplomatic negotiation strategies differ across multilateral forums (UN, WTO, COP) and what determines negotiation outcomes in complex, multi-stakeholder environments?
6. What governance and accountability mechanisms enhance the transparency, integrity, and effectiveness of international NGOs operating in fragile and conflict-affected states?
7. How can international organizations harness AI and digital technologies to improve humanitarian response, while managing risks related to data privacy, bias, and equitable access?
8. What organizational capabilities and leadership practices enable international organizations to adapt to shifting geopolitical dynamics and emerging global challenges (e.g., climate migration, pandemics)?
9. How do multilateral institutions manage the tension between universal norms and country-specific contexts in implementing development and governance reforms?
10. What role do international organizations play in shaping global standards for emerging technologies (AI, digital finance, climate data), and how do these standards influence national policy and corporate practice?
11. How do humanitarian organizations measure and improve the effectiveness of disaster risk reduction and emergency response interventions across diverse cultural and institutional contexts?

12. What governance frameworks enable effective coordination and burden-sharing among international organizations, governments, and civil society in addressing protracted refugee and displacement crises?

5. Admission Requirements

Requirement	Standard
Master's Degree	MBA, MS, MA, or equivalent (merit level or higher preferred)
Professional Experience	Minimum 5 years at management/professional level
Research Proposal	5–10 page concept note (mandatory at application)
English Proficiency	IELTS 6.5 or equivalent
Interview	Required; assessment of research potential and fit

Alternative Entry: candidates without a Master's degree but with exceptional professional achievement and demonstrated research capability may be considered on a case-by-case basis, subject to evidence of ability to work at doctoral level.

6. Duration and Flexibility

Parameter	Specification
Normal Duration	3–4 years (part-time, online)
Maximum Duration	6 years
Mode	100% Online + Hybrid Research Workshops
Intakes	Rolling admissions

Flexible Delivery Components:

- Online doctoral seminars
- Hybrid research workshops (optional residential)
- Individual supervision (monthly minimum)
- Virtual research colloquia
- Industry-based applied research
- International research collaboration

7. Research Supervision

Each candidate is assigned a primary supervisor with:

- Doctoral qualification and supervisory experience to completion
- Subject expertise in the research area
- Practitioner orientation for DBA research

Co-supervision is provided where:

- Interdisciplinary expertise is required
- International perspectives add value
- Industry practitioner input is beneficial

Supervision Requirements (QAA alignment):

- Minimum monthly contact (documented)
- Written feedback within agreed timelines
- Progress review at least annually
- Clear expectations of supervisor and candidate responsibilities

8. Dissertation and Viva

8.1 Dissertation Format

The dissertation may take one of two forms:

Format	Description
Monograph	Traditional single-narrative thesis
3-Paper Format	Three publishable papers with integrative introduction and conclusion

Required Structure:

1. Introduction
2. Literature Review
3. Research Methodology
4. Findings
5. Analysis & Discussion
6. Conclusions & Recommendations
7. References
8. Appendices

8.2 Viva Voce

- Examination: oral defense before a panel including at least one external examiner
- Focus: originality, contribution to practice, methodological rigor, critical reflection
- Outcome: Pass; Pass with minor corrections; Major revisions; Fail

9. Learning Outcomes

Upon successful completion, DBA graduates will be able to:

1. Conduct advanced, systematic research at the frontier of business and management practice
2. Generate original knowledge through applied research that addresses significant organizational or policy challenges
3. Critically evaluate existing theory and practice, identifying gaps and opportunities for improvement

4. Design and implement rigorous research projects that withstand peer review
5. Communicate research findings effectively to academic, professional, and policy audiences
6. Demonstrate scholarly integrity, ethical awareness, and responsible use of AI in research
7. Lead evidence-based change in organizations, industries, or policy environments

10. Quality Assurance

10.1 Governance

Body	Responsibility
Academic Council	Program approval, standards, award ratification
Doctoral Research Committee	Candidacy decisions, progress reviews, viva outcomes
Supervisory Team	Day-to-day supervision and guidance
External Examiners	Independent assessment of theses and vivas

10.2 Quality Mechanisms

- Candidacy Confirmation: formal review of research proposal before progression
- Annual Progress Review: documented assessment of progress
- External Moderation: external examiner participation in vivas
- ESG Alignment: quality assurance processes aligned with European Standards and Guidelines
- Publication Encouragement: support for conference papers and journal articles

11. Fees

Item	Basis	Fee in CHF
Registration	One-time	100
Annual tuition	Per academic year (3–4 years typical)	600 per annum
Supervision	On-going supervisory support	Included in tuition
Viva	One-time at final examination	Included in tuition
Time Extension	Per additional year beyond normal duration	300

Specific fee amounts determined by management.

12. Comparison with PhD

Feature	DBA	PhD
Primary Focus	Applied research solving organizational/industry challenges	Original scholarly research contributing to theory

Feature	DBA	PhD
Typical Candidates	Senior executives, consultants, entrepreneurs, public-sector leaders	Academics, researchers, policy analysts
Research Orientation	Practice-based and impact-focused	Theory-driven and research-intensive
Career Outcomes	Executive leadership, consulting, organizational transformation	Academia, research, policy, advanced professional practice
ECTS Points	180	180