

Programme Specification

Award and title: Doctor of Business Administration (DBA)

<i>School:</i>	York Business School
<i>Subject area:</i>	Business Management
<i>Entry from academic year:</i>	2025/2026
<i>in the month(s) of</i>	September, February
<i>Awarding institution:</i>	York St John University
<i>Teaching institution:</i>	York St John University
<i>Delivery location:</i>	York St John University Lincoln University of Business and Management, Dubai (online delivery only)
<i>Programme/s accredited by:</i>	N/A
<i>Exit awards:</i>	Postgraduate Certificate in Business Research Postgraduate Diploma in Business Research MA in Business Research MPhil in Business Administration
<i>UCAS code / GTTR / other:</i>	N/A
<i>Joint Honours combinations:</i>	None
<i>QAA subject benchmark statement(s):</i>	Business and Management Doctoral Degree Characteristics Statement (Published 8 th March 2023)
<i>Mode/s of study:</i>	Full time minimum of 3 years <u>Part time minimum of 4 years</u>
<i>Language of study:</i>	English
<i>Paired with Foundation Year</i>	No
<i>Study abroad opportunities:</i>	No
<i>Opt-in YSJU Placement Year opportunity:</i>	No
<i>Excluding a year-long placement/professional experience, are there placement/field trip/work experience(s) totalling 20 days or more?</i>	No

Introduction and special features

The York St John Doctorate in Business Administration (DBA) programme stands on par with a Doctor of Philosophy (PhD) degree and is distinguished by its focus on applied research and theoretical knowledge. It is structured as a two-part programme that offers you the opportunity to develop your capacity as a reflexive researcher before moving on to complete your own original doctoral thesis. This focused, carefully curated programme is designed for management professionals across all sectors, enabling you to meet the higher intellectual and professional practice demands of your role. The programme provides a structured yet flexible learning environment that combines taught modules, access to UK and international academic networks, new business networks, and independent research within a work-based professional context.

The central theme of the York St John University's DBA is sustainability, broadly defined as meeting the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs, and how innovation through leadership and technology can drive businesses forward in a socially just and environmentally responsible way.

The DBA combines both taught and research-based elements across two stages of the doctoral programme. Stage One, (in years 1 and 2 if full time and 1 to 4 if part-time), includes three core modules, each of which is focused on acquiring systematic business management disciplinary knowledge and engaging in meaningful reflection, interpretation, and critique of specific research discourses in the context of real-world challenges. During Stage One you will start the process of designing your own doctoral level research. Stage Two, (across years 3 and 4 if full time and 5 to 7 if part-time), is focused on implementing your own original doctoral level research. This element is facilitated through a co-constructive approach with a supervisory team – who will have expertise in your specific area of disciplinary and professional interest – from the start of Stage Two.

Theoretically rich learning opportunities.

The three taught modules across Stage One emphasise the value of engaging with your professional roles as managers and senior leaders in a critical and reflective way, leading to thoughtful and innovative discussion and analysis. Each of the modules build systematically towards your thesis, with a focus on how individuals and organisations can address social and environmental problems effectively. Furthermore, the programme is designed to equip you with both disciplinary expertise and the professional research skills to develop original research into sustainable business innovations. Taught modules will advance your knowledge and understanding of the latest debates concerning sustainability in business. You will learn about the dynamic relationships between business (and business leadership), society, technological innovations and the environment. Taught module assessments will promote the development of practical solutions to the pressing social justice and environmental challenges that both small and large organisations experience. You will develop entrepreneurial strategies that promote sustainable and inclusive growth, ensuring the businesses you are engaged with can thrive in dynamic environments. The DBA provides opportunities for you to interrogate ethical challenges, responsible leadership, and sustainable business practices at an advanced level. This reflects York St John University's commitment to the United Nations Principles for Responsible Management Education (PRME).

A research-active teaching team.

Whilst on the programme you will be taught and supervised by leading research-active academics all of whom have expertise in their respective fields in business management disciplines and research methodologies, and who regularly publish in international journals and present at prestigious conferences. You can expect to be taught by academics from the University professoriate as well as other members of the team with significant responsibility for research.

The collegiality that develops as you learn together with others.

Unlike traditional PhD programmes where you are a sole-researcher, on the DBA you can listen to and contribute as part of a small but diverse doctoral cohort, allowing you to consider your professional experience and management expertise from a range of perspectives and business contexts and backgrounds. Moreover, as you complete your assessed components and move towards your thesis, you are encouraged and supported to see yourself as part of the wider academic community and management professionals with a valid contribution to make. If you undertake the DBA on the part time route you will be taught alongside full time candidates to encourage your learning and skills development within a community of postgraduate researchers (PGRs). Part time candidates will, however, have a longer period of time to complete the module assignments as detailed in the programme structure information.

The flexible nature of the programme.

Having completed Stage One, you will embark on your 60,000-word thesis, with the option of taking between one and two years (if full time) and three years (if part-time) to complete, thus allowing you to work at your

own pace and in accordance with the demands of your professional and personal context. In order to progress to Stage Two of the DBA programme, all candidates must complete a transfer review. The process of transfer will be analogous to both the admissions and transfer processes of the PhD award (see Stage Two for further information).

The level of support.

We appreciate that many embark on a professional doctorate after a break in study. Therefore, alongside the structured teaching in Stage One, we provide additional guidance to enable you to grow your confidence as an academic writer, including opportunities to make use of formative assessment opportunities, group development drop-ins, research writing days, and individual tutorials with your module tutors. Taught modules will be delivered through a combination of in-person contact dates and online delivery (transnational education (TNE) provision is 100% online). Finally, as a postgraduate researcher, you will also have access to all the provision for those on a traditional PhD route, which includes bespoke training, seminars, conferences, and development opportunities.

Admissions criteria

You must meet the minimum entry requirements which are published on the programme specific webpage. In addition, you must have:

- An undergraduate degree (2:1 or above) and Masters degree from an accredited institution
- a personal statement describing how the programme will benefit applicants' professional working life
- a minimum of 3 years' relevant managerial work experience

If your first language is not English, you need to take an IELTS test or an equivalent qualification accepted by the University (see <https://www.yorksj.ac.uk/international/how-to-apply/english-language-requirements/>).

If you do not have traditional qualifications, you may be eligible for entry on the basis of [Recognition of prior learning \(RPL\)](#). We also consider applications for entry with advanced standing.

Programme aim(s)

The York St John Doctorate in Business Administration (DBA) is designed to enhance executive level professional practice in business and management through the application, creation and evaluation of theoretical frameworks and research findings to increasingly complex real-world business issues. Its aim is to provide a high-level set of learning opportunities combining structure, a community of practice and independent research in a practitioner context.

At the end of the programme graduates will be able to conduct independent, original research that applies the latest knowledge and original thinking to novel contexts, generating insights that advance both managerial practice and organisational outcomes.

Programme learning outcomes

Upon successful completion of the programme students will be able to:

- 8.1 Demonstrate a systematic and critical understanding of advanced theories, concepts and frameworks relevant to business, management and professional practice.
- 8.2 Critically evaluate and synthesise current research, theoretical perspectives, and emerging debates in business and management.
- 8.3 Conceptualise, design and implement a programme of original research that makes a significant contribution to professional knowledge and practice.
- 8.4 Apply critical reasoning, creativity and independent judgement to analyse complex, uncertain or incomplete data.
- 8.5 Generate new insights that advance theory and practice in business and management.
- 8.6 Design and apply appropriate qualitative, quantitative, or mixed research methodologies to complex professional contexts.

- 8.7 Demonstrate advanced competence in managing research projects, including ethical considerations and governance.
- 8.8 Apply research findings to inform and enhance professional practice, organisational strategy, and leadership decision-making.
- 8.9 Serve as a reflective practitioner, integrating critical self-awareness and ethical responsibility into professional practice.
- 8.10 Demonstrate the capacity for continuous professional learning, adaptability, and resilience in responding to emerging business challenges.
- 8.11 Complete a substantive, original piece of research that meets the requirements of the University's regulations for the award of Professional Doctorate.

Programme structure

September start (full-time) - note: programme starts in Semester 1 of Year 1

Code	Level	Year/ Semester	Month	Title	Credits	Module status	
						Compulsory (C) or optional (O)	non-compensable (NC) or compensable (X)
DBA8001 M	8	Year 1 Semester 1 & 2	September to May	Sustainability, Ethics, and Impact	60	C	NC
DBA8002 M	8	Year 1 Semester 3 & Year 2 Semester 1	July to January	Research Methodologies: Bridging Professional Experience and Scientific Enquiry	60	C	NC
DBA8003 M	8	Year 2 Semester 2 & 3	March to September	Future Technologies	60	C	NC

February start (full-time) - note: programme starts in Semester 2 of Year 1

Code	Level	Year/ Semester	Month	Title	Credits	Module status	
						Compulsory (C) or optional (O)	non-compensable (NC) or compensable (X)
DBA8001 M	8	Year 1 Semester 2 & 3	February to August	Sustainability, Ethics, and Impact	60	C	NC
DBA8002 M	8	Year 2 Semester 1 & 2	September to May	Research Methodologies: Bridging Professional Experience and Scientific Enquiry	60	C	NC
DBA8003 M	8	Year 2 Semester 3 & Year 3 Semester 1	July to January	Future Technologies	60	C	NC

May start (full-time) - note: programme starts in Semester 2 of Year 1 (FOR TNE ONLY)

Code	Level	Month	Title	Credits	Module status		
					Compulsory (C) or optional (O)	non-compensable (NC) or compensable (X)	
DBA8001 M	8	Year 1 Semester 2, 3 & Year 2 Semester1	May to November	Sustainability, Ethics, and Impact	60	C	NC
DBA8002 M	8	Year 2 Semester 1 & 2	December to June	Research Methodologies: Bridging Professional Experience and Scientific Enquiry	60	C	NC
DBA8003 M	8	Year 2 Semester 3 & Year 4 Semester 1	August to February	Future Technologies	60	C	NC

September start (part-time) - note: programme starts in Semester 1 of Year 1*

Code	Level	Year/ Semester	Month	Title	Credits	Module status	
						Compulsory (C) or optional (O)	non-compensable (NC) or compensable (X)
DBA8001 M	8	Year 1 Semester 1, 2 & 3	September to August	Sustainability, Ethics, and Impact	60	C	NC
DBA8002 M	8	Year 2 Semester 1, 2 & 3	September to August	Research Methodologies: Bridging Professional Experience and Scientific Enquiry	60	C	NC
DBA8003 M	8	Year 3 Semester 2, 3 & Year 4 Semester 1.	February to January	Future Technologies	60	C	NC

February start (part-time) - note: programme starts in Semester 2 of Year 1**

Code	Level	Year/ Semester	Month	Title	Credits	Module status	
						Compulsory (C) or optional (O)	non-compensable (NC) or compensable (X)
DBA8001M	8	Year 1 Semester 2, 3, & Year 2 Semester 1	February to January	Sustainability, Ethics, and Impact	60	C	NC
DBA8002M	8	Year 2 Semester 3, Year 3 Semester 1, & 2	July to June	Research Methodologies: Bridging Professional Experience and Scientific Enquiry	60	C	NC
DBA8003M	8	Year 3 Semester 3, Year 4 Semester 1, & 2	August to July	Future Technologies	60	C	NC

*Candidates undertaking the DBA programme part time will experience module teaching at the same time as full time candidates but receive an additional semester in which to complete module assignments.

**The programme structure for candidates starting the DBA part time in February is the same delivery as for those beginning in September. However, the timetabling of module delivery means that there exists a longer period between the end of DBA8001M and start of DBA8002M for candidates starting in February.

Any modules that must be passed for progression or award are indicated in the tables above as non-compensable. All summative assessments in Stage One are marked on a pass/fail basis based on meeting the requirements of the specified Programme Learning Outcomes/ QAA level 8 doctoral descriptors and benchmark standards for business and management.

Learning, teaching and assessment

The York St John DBA is a professional doctorate designed to integrate advanced academic study with practice-based knowledge that facilitates the development of new knowledge which is at the forefront of the discipline and organisational practice. Learning and teaching approaches are therefore research-informed, practice-oriented, and designed to enable both intellectual independence and professional impact.

The DBA has two parts, each of which has their own distinctive approaches to learning, teaching and assessment. Stage One of the programme is taught, and Stage Two is an independent doctoral thesis.

Stage One

The first part of the DBA has a deliberate 'architecture' designed to build towards your thesis. Stage One has three 60-credit modules each consisting of least 90 hours of contact time. In DBA8001M (Sustainability, Ethics, and Impact) you will acquire a deep understanding of current academic theories and discourses examining processes of sustainability, society, economy and the environment. In DBA8002M (Research Methods: Bridging Professional Experience and Scientific Enquiry) you will build your capacity as a researcher in readiness for Stage Two. This module aims to deliver substantive research methods training where you will acquire the necessary skills, knowledge and understanding in qualitative and quantitative

research methods to be able to conceptualise, design, and implement your own doctoral thesis. In DBA8003M (Future Technologies) you will examine how technological advances are changing business strategy, operation and organisation and the social and environmental impacts of businesses both large and small.

You will benefit from access to the University's research training provision, library resources, academic writing support, and a dedicated supervisory team. The programme is structured to build progressively from research training and taught modules through to independent doctoral research, ensuring you develop the advanced capabilities required of a professional doctorate graduate.

The programme is designed around a blended and flexible delivery approach that supports students who are often balancing doctoral study with senior professional roles. You will study via a mix of lectures, seminars, workshops, case study analysis, online learning, and supervisory meetings. Modules are delivered by research-active academics and are informed by business management research discourses and contemporary debates in business, management, leadership, and professional practice. Peer-to-peer interaction and cohort-based activities are an important element of the programme and learners are encouraged to share experiences and apply learning to complex, real-world contexts. Throughout the programme guest speakers, applied projects and knowledge exchange activities ensure learning is grounded in contemporary business challenges associated with the theme of sustainability through future technologies and leadership.

Online learning will include access to pre-recorded materials, guided readings, and group activities accessed through our Virtual Learning Environment. Taking a blended approach in this way offers greater flexibility to think, reflect, and apply learning at your own pace but with the benefits of face-to-face interactions which serve to extend your depth of understanding. Beyond the module teaching contact periods, you will be encouraged to attend monthly group development drop-ins facilitated in the evenings by module leads. In addition, you will have the opportunity for individual tutorials with module tutors which can be accessed online or face-to-face. Finally, you will be invited to join and be an active part of the University's various research clusters, which provide further support but also embed you into a research culture with opportunities to share findings, test out ideas, and gain confidence in presenting your research.

Supervision and support are a major component of the York St John University DBA and you will be supported through a mix of face-to-face meetings, email and online interaction. You will be assigned a supervisor with the relevant expertise to support you in shaping your research. Typically, they will be a research active academic who will provide expert advice and guidance on content and research methods. All professional doctorate students are assigned to a supervisory team that meets University supervisory eligibility criteria and are listed on the YSJU supervisory register.

From the outset of your doctoral journey, you will be encouraged to see yourself as a researcher rather than a student. Your written assessed work will reflect your own research interests and professional priorities and seek to 'speak' to the academic audiences where it will have the most impact. The first three core modules include written submissions equivalent to 8000 or 9000 words and are designed to reflect the varied structure and format of academic journal articles, thus making your submissions more 'authentic' in nature and increasing your potential to publish from your doctoral studies. Whilst publication is not a condition of passing any module, it is the ambition of many doctoral students and enhances the capacity to transform practice in your professional field. Your submissions will first undergo a process of formative review, where you will receive feedback from tutors on how to develop, improve or clarify your ideas before being submitted for summative assessment. All summative assessments in Stage One are marked out of 100 in addition to detailed feedback so that you understand how to meet the requirements of the specified Programme Learning Outcomes.

Stage Two

Having successfully completed all three modules in Stage One, you will be invited to submit a doctoral proposal and complete a Transfer meeting with your supervisory team and an independent Chair to assess your plans and ensure that you are in a position to embark on your 60,000-word thesis. The process of transfer to Stage Two of the DBA will be implemented according to the existing Research Degree Committee policies and procedures which are available to review at <https://www.yorksj.ac.uk/policies-and-documents/research/research-degrees/>. Before the transfer review meeting, PGRs will need to have submitted a doctoral thesis research proposal and Training Plan. The research proposal will be reviewed for its viability, within the allowed timeframe (2-4 years), and potential originality (see <https://www.yorksj.ac.uk/policies-and-documents/research/research-degrees/#progress-monitoring> for further information). PGRs will be deemed to have produced evidence of critical ability and the ability to write at doctoral level by virtue of having passed their taught modules. However, at the transfer review meeting they will need to demonstrate an advanced level of knowledge and understanding of the literature related to their chosen research topic, and competence in carrying out relevant research methods. PGRs will also need to demonstrate that the research topic is aligned with the subject area of their intended award.

Once approved, you will begin the process of completing a substantive and original piece of research. You will be expected to attend a minimum of 10 supervision meetings annually full time and a minimum of 6 if part time that may be conducted face-to-face or online. Whilst the pattern and timing of formal supervision meetings will vary according to the needs of individual PGRs and between subject areas it is expected that meetings will be held regularly throughout the standard period of study with gaps between meetings of no more than 8 weeks for full-time PGRs (or 12 weeks for part-time PGRs) according to the [Code of Practice for Research Degrees](#)

If a candidate does not receive approval at the first transfer review meeting, candidates will receive further supervisory support and guidance to achieve the necessary standard, and a further transfer review meeting will be held to assess the updated transfer report to support approval to move on to Stage Two of the DBA.

In Stage Two, the Transfer process, supervision and review processes will proceed according to the same guidelines as for PhDs. Assessment of the thesis will follow the regulations and procedures laid out for YSJU Research Degrees, using the specific learning outcomes and thesis requirements for this programme as the criteria against which your thesis will be judged. Examination will be by viva voce, which you must attend in person, and will include feedback from both an external examiner as well as internal examiner from outside of your supervisory team.

Assessment

Assessment methods are designed to assess your ability to integrate theory and practice, demonstrate advanced research competence, and make an original contribution to professional knowledge. Formative and summative assessments are varied and include 8000- or 10000-word critical essays and 30-minute presentations with opportunities for discussion and feedback. Assessments will include opportunities for reflection, idea development and analysis that explore theoretical frameworks and their application to practice.

You will write a doctoral thesis, between 60,000 words in length which is examined by viva voce and must make a significant and original contribution to professional knowledge and practice.

Assessments are aligned with the QAA level 8 doctoral descriptors, requiring originality, critical insight, methodological sophistication, and the ability to communicate research outcomes to specialist and non-specialist audiences.

Progression and graduation requirements

The University's general regulations for [professional doctorate awards](#) apply to this programme. Any modules that must be passed for progression or award are indicated in the Programme Structure section as non-compensable.

In addition, the following programme-specific regulations apply in respect of progression and graduation:

- Students must pass all three taught modules in order to be eligible to progress from Part One to Part Two.
- Progression to Part Two will be determined by a Transfer Panel set up under the Research Degree Regulations who will assess individual research proposals
- Award of a Doctor of Business Administration will be determined by a viva examination according to the Research Degree regulations
- The Postgraduate Certificate in Business Research will be awarded to students who exit with at least 60 credits from taught modules
- The Postgraduate Diploma in Business Research will be awarded to students who exit with at least 120 credits from taught modules
- The MA in Business Research will be awarded to students who exit with at least 180 credits from taught modules (e.g., successful completion of all taught modules)
- The Master of Philosophy may be awarded at the discretion of examiners for those students who complete a thesis but are not awarded a Doctor of Business Administration

Internal reference points

This programme specification was formulated with reference to:

- [University Mission, Culture and Values](#)
- [University 2026 Strategy](#)
- [QAA subject benchmark statements](#)
- [Frameworks for Higher Education Qualifications](#)

Date written / revised:

Programme originally approved: