1. PREAMBLE

This document presents the guidelines for doctoral programmes in business and management as the EQUAL Board has adopted them in May 2016.

The European Quality Link (EQUAL) is the international association of quality assessment and accreditation agencies in the field of business and management education. EQUAL operates for the benefit of member business schools, students, end users and society at large. As part of this activity, EQUAL aims to agree common standards for programmes, where appropriate, and to establish international benchmarks in the form of Guidelines.

The aim of the document is to present a common understanding of what constitutes a doctorate in the field of business and management research and, as such, it is intended to serve as the basis for quality assessment and enhancement of doctoral programmes in the field. This document serves the purpose of defining minimum standards for continuous programme development, benchmarking, as well as peer-based quality assurance and accreditation.

Business and management education has undergone rapid expansion in recent decades and today represents one of the largest academic fields in higher education. In parallel, business and management research has grown significantly in size and relevance for society. A strengthened focus on the standards and quality of research has put a premium on the quality of research training for doctoral candidates in business and management as well as related disciplines. In this context, it is deemed particularly important that (a) academic institutions granting doctoral degrees have qualified faculty with a rigorous training at the highest level in research and (b) professional practice is advanced by research-informed managers and executives of private, public and community-supported organisations. The central role of business and management education for the development of present-day society therefore has important implications for the research conducted in these and adjacent fields as well as the training of early stage researchers.
1.1. Principles of doctoral education in business and management

Facilitated through the ‘Salzburg Principles’ developed by the European University Association (EUA), there has emerged a common understanding of the basic principles underpinning doctoral education and doctoral degrees. The four most important principles are:

1. The core component of doctoral education is the advancement of knowledge through original research. At the same time it is recognised that doctoral education must increasingly meet the needs of an employment market that is wider than academia.

2. Doctoral candidates are Early-Stage Researchers (ESR). ESR should be recognised as professionals – with commensurate rights – who make a key contribution to the creation of new knowledge.

3. Supervision and assessment play a crucial role in doctoral education. Arrangements for supervision and assessment should be based on a transparent contractual framework of shared responsibilities between doctoral candidates, supervisors and the degree-granting institution (and, where appropriate, also other partners).

4. Doctoral programmes should seek to offer geographical, interdisciplinary and cross-sectoral mobility as well as international collaboration opportunities within an integrated framework of cooperation between degree-granting institutions and other partners.

Doctoral graduates can qualify for a research and teaching role in academia or functions outside of the higher education sector informed by research work at the highest level. The EQUAL guidelines for doctoral programmes have been developed in conformance with the ‘Salzburg Principles’ and also build on the ‘European Code of Practice for Doctoral Studies in Management and Business’ jointly developed by the European Doctoral programmes Association in Management and Business Administration (EDAMBA) and the European Institute for Advanced Studies in Management (EIASM). They are also aligned with international accreditation criteria, for instance defined by the Association of MBAs (AMBA) and the EFMD Programme Accreditation System (EPAS).


3 The EU Commission has also published Principles for Innovative Doctoral Training, which are also captured by these guidelines: http://ec.europa.eu/euraxess/pdf/research_policies/Principles_for_Innovative_Doctoral_Training.pdf
1.2. The continuum from academic to professional doctorates in business and management studies

Doctoral research in management and business covers a broad spectrum of disciplines (e.g., accounting, finance, human resource management, information systems management, innovation and entrepreneurship, international management, marketing, organisational behaviour, operations management, organisation theory, strategy and policy, etc.) and diverse academic and professional practice degrees, including Ph.D. (Doctor of Philosophy), DBA (Doctor of Business Administration), Executive or Industrial Ph.D., Executive Doctor of Management.

A. The main function and purpose of an academic doctorate (e.g., Ph.D.) is to provide the qualification for entering the research community in a field of business and management studies. Depending on the applicable regulatory framework, it normally requires a minimum of three to four years of full-time research (or equivalent) and may be inscribed in direct continuity of a Master Research programme (as in integrated PhDs). The doctorate should be a sign of competence in doing research necessary for functioning as a faculty member in a research-based educational environment, or as a member of a research institution in the field. It should conform to the principles outlined above.

B. A professional practice doctorate (e.g. DBA, Executive or Industrial PhD.) typically takes a minimum of four to five years to complete, but national regulations still differ significantly. It is primarily conducted by research on a part-time basis and/or from a distance and is jointly supported by at least a research-led university (or/and business school), and a doctoral candidate.

In comparison to an academic doctorate, a professional practice doctorate aims more explicitly to make a contribution to management practice in industry and society. It offers managers and executives, as doctoral candidates / reflective practitioners, an opportunity to carry out a rigorous and relevant research training programme at the highest level of academic qualification for advanced personal and professional development, while conforming to the "Salzburg Principles". In doing so, a professional doctorate in management is likely to be multi-disciplinary in nature and may involve more than one academic institution locally or across large geographical distances. Professional doctorates will enable graduates to develop varied career paths ranging from change leaders in business organisations, consultancy, self-employment, to joining the faculty of a university or business school.

4 http://www.edamba.eu/r/default.asp?ld=GKGJFJ
2. GUIDELINES AND MINIMUM STANDARDS FOR DOCTORATES IN BUSINESS AND MANAGEMENT

2.1. Research Environment

A. A doctorate in business and management invokes training through and for research. The existence of a strong research environment is a ‘sine qua non’ condition for the provision of quality doctoral education. Professional practice doctorates require in addition strong links with industry and/or other non-academic organisations.

B. The doctoral programme must be supported with a sufficient number of research-active faculty members, who have a proven record of academic achievement. Professional practice doctorates require in addition external engagement of faculty as experts to industry, government and non-profit organisations.

C. The degree-granting institution must provide an adequate research infrastructure (IT hardware and software, access to literature and other databases, etc.) in support of the doctoral programme. It must offer fair and non-discriminatory access for all students enrolled in the doctoral programme. The same must apply to development opportunities embedded in the programme.

D. The doctoral programme should be embedded in a vibrant intellectual environment, e.g. supported by an active seminar culture. The doctoral programme should target the production of analytically rigorous, innovative, and, whenever feasible, practically relevant research outputs. These objectives should underpin all dimensions of programme operations.

I. Supervisors, doctoral students and all other individuals involved in the provision of doctoral education must adhere to a Code of Good Practice formally adopted by the degree-granting institution. The Code should be aligned with national regulations and quality assurance guidelines; it should also make reference of supranational guidelines.

II. Doctoral programmes must be operated with an effective governance structure, ideally with a dedicated programme directorate and an appropriate number of administrators. The programme directorate must have sufficient formal authority and control over resources to have an impact on the programme and its quality.

III. Professional practice doctorates in addition require links with non-academic organisations, which can for instance be established on the basis of the external engagement of faculty involved in course delivery and dissertation supervision (e.g. project work, active engagement in knowledge transfer).
IV. To enhance their role as reflective practitioners for making meaningful contributions in terms of policy and/or practice.

V. To communicate and collaborate with peers and to function within the context of a wider scholarly community.

VI. To work within an international research context and to demonstrate the ability to function in cross-cultural environments.

E. Doctoral candidates should ideally gain cross-border learning experiences with research stays abroad.

F. Doctoral candidates targeting an academic career path should be enabled to gain teaching experience during their doctoral studies.

G. Professional doctorates should prepare scholars to become reflective practitioners, able to conduct original research in order to solve real management issues in business, management or public administration settings. Successful graduates should therefore be suited for a variety of organisational roles and career advancement paths.
2.2. Objectives of Doctoral Programmes

A. The doctoral degree qualification is a third-level higher education award and corresponds to level 8 in the European Bologna Qualifications Framework.

B. Doctoral programmes must contain a mix of coursework, original research under supervision and professional development activities.

C. All activities within a doctoral programme should mobilise both analytical and synthetic skills, and should foster critical and methodical thinking. In order to develop the doctoral candidate's academic and scholarly identity, educational training should include elements aiming at the acquisition of advanced knowledge, through exploration of the diversity of paradigms and (qualitative and quantitative) methodologies in the field of research.

D. Doctoral programmes must be associated with a number of explicitly stated learning objectives, such as:

I. To master theories and methods at the frontiers of knowledge in a particular discipline or area of concentration.

II. To develop sound research designs so as to use and apply existing theories, to acquire new information and to develop new insights for theoretical and practical problems with scholarly integrity.

III. To explore complex problems and to deploy critical thinking in policy and practice.

IV. To enhance their role as reflective practitioners for making meaningful contributions in terms of policy and/or practice.

V. To communicate and collaborate with peers and to function within the context of a wider scholarly community.

VI. To work within an international research context and to demonstrate the ability to function in cross-cultural environments.

E. Doctoral candidates should ideally gain cross-border learning experiences with research stays abroad.

F. Doctoral candidates targeting an academic career path should be enabled to gain teaching experience during their doctoral studies.

G. Professional doctorates should prepare scholars to become reflective practitioners, able to conduct original research in order to solve real management issues in business, management or public administration settings. Successful graduates should therefore be suited for a variety of organisational roles and career advancement paths.
2.3. Admission Criteria and Policies

A. Doctoral candidates should be selected with consideration of existing strengths and specialisations amongst research-active faculty members and field supervisors. Preference should be given to applicants with matching research interests.

B. The process of selection of doctoral students should be open, competitive, fair and transparent involving all interested stakeholders from the university or business school as well as, in the case of professional practice doctorates, possibly also sponsoring organisations.

C. The admission decision should be collective, collegial and coordinated at the programme level to ensure fair treatment and homogeneity of selection criteria and quality expectations across cohorts. Faculty supervisors (and, if possible, industry specialists) with the same subject specialisation as the proposed doctoral work should be involved in the selection process.

D. Successful applicants should normally have at least a Master’s degree equivalent to Level 7 of the EU Qualification Framework. In the case of integrated doctoral programmes delivering a Research Master as well, qualified candidates from honours bachelor programmes can also be considered.

E. The degree-granting institution should normally define additional admission criteria related to:

   I. Prior academic achievements
   II. Reputation of institutions having delivered prior degrees
   III. Quality and feasibility of the envisioned research project
   IV. Language proficiency
   V. The prospective time to completion
   VI. Significant professional experience in a managerial or executive role (in the case of professional practice doctorates)
2.4. Doctoral Coursework

A. The length of the coursework period may vary but should be sufficient for doctoral candidates to acquire – under academic guidance and building on the competencies acquired by earlier academic studies – the theoretical and methodological skills necessary for the development and execution of their dissertation project.

B. Delivery modes can offer a combination of face-to-face teaching, blended learning and independent study. Part-time programmes may utilise block teaching, which must however be organised in a way to facilitate the doctoral candidate’s intellectual progression.

C. The curriculum of the taught part of the programme should include coverage of the literature of the field of specialisation, targeted and high quality methodology training, guidance on how to frame a research project, personal/professional development and, ideally, philosophical foundations of scientific inquiry.

D. Doctoral coursework should involve substantial coverage of research ethics and scholarly integrity. Doctoral candidates should be guided towards conducting academic research in a socially responsible and relevant manner.

E. Assessment of doctoral coursework should be rigorous, targeting the achievement of learning objectives. Assessment methods should enable the doctoral candidate to conduct a self-evaluation of his or her ability to complete the programme successfully.

5 https://ec.europa.eu/ploteus/content/descriptors-page.
2.5. Doctoral Dissertation

A. The degree award certifies that the doctoral candidate has been judged capable of carrying out independent, original and scientifically sound research and able to make an original contribution to management practice (or policy), while mobilising critical thinking to reflect on the work of others. The evaluation is primarily based on the quality of the doctoral dissertation.

B. The format of the doctoral dissertation can vary – from a research monograph to a body of research papers published or publishable in internationally recognised, peer-reviewed journals.

C. Parts of paper-based dissertations can be co-authored if the doctoral candidate serves as the main author. It is however encouraged to require the submission of at least one single-authored paper. If a paper is co-authored by more than one doctoral candidate, then only one of them (the main author) should be permitted to submit it as part of his or her dissertation. Best practice may require from the outset that each author states the percentage of the paper s/he wrote for publication and all authors sign an agreement in advance of publication.

D. The doctoral dissertation must include:

   I. A relevant and up-to-date review of the research literature concerning the themes and questions treated;

   II. A clearly expressed presentation of the research objectives;

   III. An in-depth presentation of the research design and selected methodology, main findings, discussion and conclusions, including implications for theory, practice and policy;

   IV. A presentation of further issues and challenges emerging from the dissertation.

E. Professional doctorate dissertations must explicitly address the contribution to professional practice in a way that demonstrates the distinctive nature of this contribution.
2.6. Supervision and Dissertation Progress

A. The degree-granting institution should formally appoint a supervisory team (including a primary supervisor and ideally at least one secondary supervisor) to support the doctoral candidate in the process of writing the doctoral dissertation. At least one supervisor must be research active in the field where the candidate plans to develop his/her research project.

I. Academic and/or primary supervisors must hold a doctoral degree, be research active and able to provide guidance and monitoring of doctoral research.

II. The primary supervisor should have experience with doctoral supervision and a track record of successful completions as supervisory team member prior to the appointment.

III. Primary supervisors should not take responsibility for supervision beyond a number of students compatible with his/her workload and seniority.

D. The supervisory team for each doctoral candidate should ideally be constituted shortly after the doctoral candidate’s enrolment in the programme (e.g. within 6 months).

E. Supervisors must be accessible for the doctoral student, especially the primary supervisor, and provide timely, effective and constructive feedback on the candidate’s work.

F. In order to establish an effective working relationship, doctoral candidate and supervisors should formally meet on a regular basis (the frequency should mirror the doctoral candidate’s need for guidance and conform to national or international quality assurance guidelines / codes of good practice) and should maintain a rolling progress report (if possible, available online for others, such as programme directors and administrators, to access and review).

G. Formal mechanisms should be established to prevent doctoral candidates with low prospects of completing the dissertation from remaining enrolled in the programme (e.g. annual progress reviews and formal procedures for re-registration).

H. The degree-granting institution and supervisors should also assume responsibility for the professional development of the doctoral candidate (e.g. research writing and presentation skills, pedagogical development, academic etiquette). Progression in the programme should also be formally linked to the doctoral candidate’s achievements in these areas.

I. Doctoral supervision must be quality-assured by the degree-granting institution, including the establishment of formal mechanisms for the fair and impartial resolution of conflicts between supervisors and doctoral candidate.

J. Degree-granting institution and supervisors should formally encourage the doctoral candidate to engage in research stays abroad and to present research outcomes at academic/professional conferences.

K. The degree-granting institution should maintain regular activities targeting the development of supervisory capabilities of its faculty in the business and management area.

L. In the case of professional doctorates, supervisory teams should be assembled to provide a range of experience in alignment with the multidisciplinary nature of the programme. Best practice would be to include a qualified practitioner in the supervisory team.
2.7. Final Assessment

A. The institution awards the doctoral degree on the basis of a formal evaluation by a thesis examination committee. The majority of the committee should consist of members not formally involved in the supervision of the candidate. The committee gives its recommendation with respect to the standards defined below and determines the outcome of the examination process in compliance with national and/or international regulations.

I. Examiners must be scientifically qualified and should have adequate expertise in the field explored by the candidate. They are appointed in compliance with national and international regulations.

II. Examiners should have experience with examining doctoral degree theses.

III. Examiners should not have any conflict of interest (such as co-authoring parts of the dissertation).

B. The final assessment consists of an examination of the dissertation and an oral defence (i.e., viva voce). Preferably, the oral defence is open to the public. The assessment process varies across higher education systems and normally involves multiple steps, such as:

I. Examiners submit an independent evaluation pre-viva report of the dissertation in preparation of the oral defence.

II. Following the oral defence, the thesis examination committee issues a common report, which is shared with the student and all interested parties.

III. The final examination report should include any grading and be safely kept for an appropriate length of time (e.g. 10 years) for quality assurance and accreditation purposes.
C. The thesis should be evaluated on the basis of the following criteria:

I. Theoretical foundation (based on a relevant literature review and the development of a conceptual framework);

II. Rigorous research (e.g. publishable or published in internationally recognised, peer-reviewed journals);

III. Empirical testing (based on methodological framework and rigorous analysis);

IV. Implication for theory (innovative contributions to theory application / development);

V. Implications for practice (relevance of contributions to the improvement of management and society);

VI. Readability of the manuscript, quality of the oral presentation and discussion.

D. The assessment of professional doctorates must take into account the contribution made to professional practice in terms of its originality and usefulness. Where possible, suitably qualified practitioners should contribute to this assessment of the research contribution made to policy and practice.
2.8. Quality Assurance of Doctoral Education

A. The doctoral programme must be supported by institutionalised quality assurance, which assigns management as well as reporting responsibilities and ensures compliance with formally adopted Codes of Practice as well as external regulations.

B. Quality assurance processes must be established to monitor, evaluate and improve the quality of teaching & learning, doctoral supervision as well as the effectiveness and fairness of the assessment regime.

C. Doctoral programmes should be subjected to periodic review, which allows for the updating of programme structure and delivery in light of achieved programme outcomes.

I. Regular internal review should be organised at least annually.

II. More fundamental external review should take place every 3 to 5 years.

III. Review exercises should incorporate the feedback of internal and external stakeholders with the balance determined by the type of programme and the length of the review cycle.

IV. Records of reviews should be kept for an appropriate length of time (e.g. 10 years) and shared with internal/external stakeholders.

D. Doctoral programmes should be subjected to periodic review, which allows for the updating of programme structure and delivery in light of achieved programme outcomes.
CURRENT MEMBERSHIP OF EQUAL

- AACSB International, US
- Chartered ABS-Chartered Association of Business Schools, UK
- AEEDE, ES
- AMBA, UK
- ASFOR, IT
- Association of Business Schools - Finland, FI
- BMDA, LT
- CAMBAS, CZ
- CEEMAN, SI
- CFBSD, CA
- Chapitre des Ecoles de Management, CGE, FR
- CLADEA, Consejo Latinoamericano de Escuelas de Administración, Peru
- ECONA, NO
- EDAMBA, BE
- EFMD, BE
- FIBAA, Foundation for International Business Administration Accreditation, DE
- FNEGE, FR
- FORUM, PL
- GMAC, US
- IAE France, FR
- Swedish Association of Graduates in Economics and Business Administration, SE
- The Finnish Graduates in Economics and Business Administration, FI
- VSNU, NL