MSM | MAASTRICHT SCHOOL OF MANAGEMENT

Contents of a Good DBA Dissertation

1. A *title* that is appealing and meaningful, reflecting the contents of the DBA dissertation.

2. An *abstract* that summarizes the whole DBA dissertation in an accurate manner. The abstract plays the cardinal role of creating first impressions of a candidate's work. It should therefore be well organized around the problem statement this dissertation addresses, the research approach deployed, the main findings and their theoretical and practical implications. It should not exceed 300 words. Below the abstract, about five key words need to be given that guide the reader towards the main issues of interest in the dissertation.

3. A good DBA dissertation should contain at least five chapters, namely (1) Introduction; (2) Literature review; (3) Research methodology; (4) Findings, and (5) Discussion and Conclusions. Every chapter should begin with a brief introduction to guide the reader into the main contents of that chapter. Similarly, every chapter should end with a brief summary that captures the main points that have been discussed in that chapter.

4. The *introduction* chapter (Chapter 1) should provide an adequate overview of the managerial/societal problem this dissertation addresses, indicating the significance of the study. The problem statement should be accurately defined with the research objectives and research questions being well formulated. A brief description of the research approach should also be included in this chapter. There should be consistency in the problem statement, research questions and research objectives and research approach. The introduction chapter should end with a clear outline of the structure of the document.

5. The *literature review* (Chapter 2), should show mastery of the literature on the topic of interest in this dissertation. Literature used should be relevant to the problem statement and research questions. It should be up-to-date (preferably not older than 5 years from the date they are cited) and from credited sources (e.g., ISI-ranked journals, reputable publishers like SAGE, Blackwell, Oxford University Press and authoritative institutes like World Bank and UNCTAD). Literature should be well reviewed (e.g., discussion of core concepts, their dimensions and relationships between concepts). Your arguments should flow logically (evident in meaningful headings and subheadings) and should express your "own voice". That is, the review should not merely summarize the literature reviewed, but should contrast, compare and combine the literature to make one's argument. At the end of the review, the reader should be able to see the point of departure/gap in managerial/theoretical thinking and how the current study proposes to close the gap, evidenced in the presentation of a conceptual model. This model visualizes the proposed relationships between the variables of interest and guides the formulation of the hypotheses in case of explanatory (often quantitative) research or initial propositions in case of explorative (often qualitative) research. As such, the model helps to guide your empirical work.

6. The *methodology* chapter (Chapter 3) should consist of an elaboration of the research strategy deployed, research setting* and where applicable, the study population, sampling method, operationalization and measurement of key variables, data collection methods (including the research instruments used), data processing and data analysis and the techniques that were used to ensure validity and reliability of the results. Methodological choices are motivated and justified (e.g., it should

be argued why the chosen research strategy is suitable to answer the research question and how the collected data sources were significant to answer the research questions). *In case the research setting text is quite elaborate (e.g., description of company or industry under study), this setting could also be presented in a separate chapter after the methods chapter. This should be discussed with your Supervisor.

7. The *findings* from the study (Chapter 4) should be presented in a transparent manner. Accurate conclusions should be drawn from the data analysis techniques used. Figures and tables are effectively used to present the research findings (e.g., tables with illustrative interview quotations in qualitative research and charts in quantitative research).

8. In the *discussion and conclusion* chapter (Chapter 5), a brief summary of the main research findings should be given, followed by a discussion of the theoretical and practical implications of these findings. Findings should thus be discussed in the context of both the theoretical framework (e.g., how do these findings contribute to the existing body of knowledge? Are they contrasting/confirming/extending what was expected from theory?) and the managerial context (e.g., how do these findings alter managers' view of the business world, decision-making process, organizational strategies? In other words, how do the findings contribute to current professional practice?). There should thus be a thorough reflection on the outcomes of the study. In the limitations section of this chapter, candidates should acknowledge the weaknesses of their study, providing input for the formulation of recommendations for further research.

9. The dissertation should have a sound structure and a clear writing style. All expressions and grammar should be used in the correct way.

10. The dissertation should use APA style references and APA style in-text citation and the reference list should be complete. The Candidate should use information ethically, i.e., there should be no evidence of plagiarism. All ideas, text, graphics, tables and media should be credited to the source. Useful sources explaining APA include:

    - http://www.apastyle.org/
    - https://owl.english.purdue.edu/owl/resource/560/01/
    - http://blog.apastyle.org/apastyle/
    - http://owll.massey.ac.nz/referencing/apa-style.php