January 1, 2012

Doctoral research output structures

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Available at: https://works.bepress.com/peter_miller/137/
Overview

Doctoral research programs at universities are constantly seeking ways to improving their research outputs as measured by completion rates, publications and external recognition for the quality of their programs. This chapter outlines a change management program undertaken at the Southern Cross University Doctor of Business Administration program that aimed to put into place the research output structures necessary to create a successful quality research training program.

The chapter identifies the organisational, cultural and academic issues involved in the change program undertaken over a five year period to the end of 2008 and describes a framework of measures put into place to underpin the achievement of the research outputs.

Introduction

The title of this chapter is purposefully ambiguous and presents an opportunity to expand upon important questions like ‘what makes a doctoral research program successful’ and ‘what structures need to be put into place in order to create successful research outputs’ in these programs. In order that the chapter has a sensible structure, output structures have been defined to mean the organisational, cultural and academic infrastructure developed to ensure the SCU DBA program attained high academic and service standards that would inevitably lead to successful research outputs. Successful research outputs for doctoral programs can be measured as:

- Higher than average completion rates
- Rigorous scholarship flowing from the doctoral research projects in terms of publications
- High level satisfaction ratings from both candidates and graduates
- High level satisfaction ratings from research supervisors
- External recognition of the program and benchmarking with other programs.
In order to achieve the above research outputs, an integrated strategic vision must be formulated. The vision needs to include a framework of measures to be put into place to underpin the achievement of the research outputs. These measures can be categorised into the following areas:

- Cultural change initiatives
- Knowledge management initiatives
- Research infrastructure initiatives for both candidates and supervisors
- Feedback loops and quality control to enable continuous improvement
- Infrastructure and professional development initiatives for supervisors.

This chapter records a major organisational and cultural change project undertaken in the SCU DBA program over a five year period to the end of 2008 and identifies the output structures established over the period. The program commenced at the appointment of the new Director of the DBA program, Associate Professor Peter Miller, in January, 2004.

Up until 2004, most of the DBA candidates worked predominantly on their own, with a supervisor with whom they shared and created new knowledge as they pursued the research project. The rapid increase in enrolments over the early years of the program and the concentration on admission and student growth meant that the administrative systems and infrastructure to support the program were a secondary consideration to the priority of the program’s establishment and growth. As a result, the future success of the program and the ability of the program to sustain additional candidates were potentially restricted.

The change program commenced with a comprehensive survey and needs analysis of both the DBA candidates and their supervisors to determine their needs. Professor Miller wrote to each candidate and supervisor to introduce himself as the new Director of the program, to float some tentative ideas about how the DBA leadership team might better support the candidates and supervisors and to seek the assistance of DBA supervisors and candidates on some matters concerning the program.


**Context and History**

The Business faculty decided to first develop and launch a Doctor of Business Administration (DBA) program in 1996 under the guidance of Emeritus Professor Geoffrey Meredith. The DBA was one of the first business-related professional doctorate programs offered in Australia.

Following the establishment of the DBA in 1996 at Southern Cross University, strong arguments were developed for a separate Graduate College of Management...
(GCM) and advantages were seen for GCM to be established on the Tweed Coast with land made available adjacent to the Tweed City Council facilities at Tweed Heads. Senior staff of the GCM were located at the Tweed Campus although some administrative facilities in particular organisation of distance learning programs, remained at the Lismore Campus. The significant growth of the MBA since its establishment in 1990 and further growth of Doctoral candidates with a launch of the DBA in 1996, provided sound justification for the establishment of a separate Graduate College of Management to cover the administration and delivery of all graduate programs in management and business including doctoral programs.

When the Graduate College of Management was formally established, it assumed administrative responsibility for the academic quality and delivery of the DBA program.

**The Change Program**

In July, 2004, the DBA leadership team undertook an extensive review of the DBA program, its systems and processes. The review included the data and feedback from the comprehensive survey of stakeholders and feedback from both DBA candidates and supervisors.

As a result of the review, the team developed a strategic plan and change program to put in place world class administrative systems and to re-engineer existing processes and systems. The overall aims were to support candidates and their supervisors and to increase the academic quality of the program.

Issues identified in the survey of candidates and supervisors and considered as part of the review included:

- **GCM cultural issues**—the organisational culture of the GCM was predominantly anti-research and publication and dominated by full time staff who did not have doctorates or did not research or produce scholarship. There was a perception that ‘research took resources from teaching’. The then Director of the GCM made yearly appointments to the GCM of junior academic staff who did not have doctorates and/or who were not research trained or research active. Such actions diluted the pool of senior research staff available to supervise doctorates and lowered the average publication output per academic staff member in the GCM, a critical measurement factor for performance of the College.

- **data bases and administrative systems**—the GCM had four different data bases and a number of spreadsheets holding data on DBA candidates, supervisors, examiners, committees etc. All were stand alone and not connected to the university’s student system. There were significant duplications of data entry. It was very difficult to get information on the DBA program or to relate supervisors to candidates etc.

- **candidate networking and self service**—there was no provision to enable candidates to network with each other or with their supervisor or other supervisors. All customer service was met directly from DBA administrative staff.
paper based reporting system—the reporting system for candidates and supervisors was archaic, time consuming and paper based. Candidates reported on their supervisors on the same form as the supervisors made comment on. Candidates therefore had no reasonable opportunity to be critical of their supervisors without fear of retribution. The paper based reporting system required several iterations between candidates and supervisors for signatures and was not functioning as a process. It was up to one year behind real time. The system required to be re-engineered to be more relevant and to collect data the DBA leadership team could use and respond to.

DBA supervisors—supervisors had virtually no support especially if they were contract supervisors. Feedback from the contract supervisors suggested that they also had little understanding of the GCM processes. There was no professional development available to supervisors to improve their skills.

DBA administrative forms—the current forms used were inadequate and inconsistent and needed redesigning and updating to a more professional image. All forms were paper based. There was no real ‘theme’ or ‘brand’ for the program.

overseas partner agreements—there were no operations manuals for each agreement with overseas partners that would enable the educational agreements with the partners to be easily operationalised in a professional manner.

methodology units—both methodology units that were a core part of the program were in need of substantial revision to ensure that when supervisors received their candidates, the candidates were rigorously research trained and research ready.

client relationship management—there was no real client relationship management system in place to track applications and candidates. A ‘white board’ was the only tracking systems in place.

Cultural Change

The need for change leaders to understand the culture and climate of the organisation and the difficulties involved in change program implementation are well known (Dubrin, Dalglish & Miller, 2006). Organisational culture has been defined as a system of widely shared and strongly held values and beliefs (Robbins et al, 2008). All change management programs are undertaken in a particular context and organisational cultural environment in which the change leader needs to be aware of the shared beliefs and values of existing staff. As was indicated above, the 2004 organisational culture of the GCM was predominantly anti-research and publication and dominated by full time academic staff that did not have doctorates, were not research active and did not produce scholarship. There was a perception that ‘research took resources from teaching’ and this perception permeated the shared beliefs of the majority of the then staff. The then Director of the GCM reinforced this culture by making yearly academic appointments to the GCM of
junior academic staff who did not have doctorates and/or who were not research trained or research active. Such actions also diluted the pool of senior research staff available to supervise doctorates in the GCM and lowered the average publication output per academic staff member of the GCM, a critical measurement factor for performance of the College and for benchmarking within the university and with other colleges outside the university.

It was evident that a change in the overall culture of the GCM was not possible without the support of the then Director of the GCM who did not appreciate the need for a change and was unwilling to make it. Therefore, it was planned to create a sub-culture in the GCM around the DBA program, a culture where research and scholarship were to be highly valued and pursued. This involved setting new academic standards and values in the GCM around research and scholarship that needed to be role modeled by the doctorally qualified staff involved in the DBA program.

Inevitably, the two sub-cultured caused conflict and tension within the GCM and this tension continued throughout the change program due to the inability and unwillingness of the then Director of the GCM to improve overall academic standards in the College generally.

The Australian Universities Quality Agency (AUQA) made mention of the implications of poor academic standards in their 2008 Audit Report when it listed ‘A comparatively low proportion of academic staff with doctoral qualifications’ (p4) as a factor that may affect academic standards at the university.

In addition, Professor Brian Stoddart, in his 2008 review of the DBA program noted:

Any entity entitled the Graduate College of Management might be expected to have a strong research culture with good research output… In future, the strength of the research reputation is likely to influence research student choice, so further research strengthening will be beneficial for GCM. In the period 2001-2007 inclusive, staff in the Graduate College of Management that hosts the DBA averaged 12.4% of Business and Law weighted publications, with a median production of 12.5%. Directly or indirectly, then, the DBA contributes to the research publication output component of RTS/IGS within SCU… Closer data examination suggests that a very small staff group provides most GCM production. With adjunct and emeritus staff largely out of consideration in calculations of official outputs, that puts considerable pressure on the relatively low number of GCM fulltime and equivalent staff (p23).

The fact that the change program was so successful in lifting the academic standards in the DBA program while, as reflected in the AUQA report and Stoddard report, overall GCM academic standards remained unchanged, demonstrates how a sub-culture can be established successfully even when the overall organisational culture is mature and stable and management is incapable of bringing about overall change themselves.
Development of Significant Research Outputs

Within the above cultural context, the DBA leadership team developed and established a number of knowledge sharing technologies, techniques and practices. The cost of underwriting this change program was provided by Professor Peter Baverstock from the university’s Graduate Research College.

The infrastructure encouraged collaborative knowledge creation and sharing by of doctoral research and supervision by the use of electronic networks permitting asynchronous distance learning in a real-time collaborative environment. The major achievements during this period are summarised below.

Doctor of Business Information System (DoBi)

A new data base was conceptualised, developed and implemented to replace the spreadsheets and data bases that were in existence.

DoBi was designed to include a candidate module, supervisor module, workshop module, examinations module, graduations module and was connected to the university student system to ensure no duplication of data entry. Full customer relationship management and enquiries management capacities were introduced to increase conversions of applicants to candidates. Screen shots of some of the higher level windows are shown below.

Figure 15.1: Screen shots of DoBi
CHAPTER 15 – DOCTORAL RESEARCH OUTPUT STRUCTURES

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As can be seen from the above screen shots, DoBi enabled the full tracking of candidates and supervisors and provided data, for the first time, for marketing and strategic campaigns.

**Candidate Centre (on MySCU)**

An online electronic forum was developed and established for the DBA candidates. The Doctoral Candidate Centre on MySCU was established as a central place where all doctoral candidates could visit to find resources, network and communicate with other candidates, complete candidate progress reports and to generally assist candidates to better understand the processes and procedures that affected them. Its main objective was to break down the isolation some doctoral research candidates’ encounter and create a community of scholars. Supervisors are not given access to the candidate centre allowing candidates to communicate freely.

When candidates enrol, they are given access to the MySCU environment. The online centre then becomes the focal point for candidate contact with the university. Candidates are able to access an array of academic resources, to engage in discussion forums on matters affecting their candidature and establish specific forums to seek engagement from other candidates from around the globe engaged in similar research to their own research projects. Candidates also use the online centre as a portal to submit their six monthly progress reports.

All DBA forms were mounted in the centre to enable self service on policy and advice, theses, links to library, assistance on ethics etc. The progressive introduction of self-administration by DBA candidates through the DBA candidate centre was to recognise the increasing expectations of candidates for electronic access to information and for flexibility and input to processes directly affecting them.
A screen shot of the online centre is provided in Figure 15.2 below.

**Figure 15.2:** Screen Shot of the Doctoral Candidate Centre

![Screen Shot of the Doctoral Candidate Centre](source: www.scu.edu.au)

**Supervisor Centre (on MySCU)**

The Doctoral Supervisor Centre on MySCU was established as a central place where all doctoral supervisors can visit to find resources, network and communicate with other supervisors, share innovative supervision ideas, access supervisor training modules, complete progress reports for their candidates and to generally assist supervisors in their role as a supervisor of DBA candidates and to better understand the processes and procedures that effect them. Candidates do not have access to this centre.

Supervisors are first approved on the basis of an application to be placed on an approved supervisor register. When potential supervisors approach the GCM, they are sent a professional looking Expression of Interest Pack and application form. Discipline classifications were developed to assist with processes and this linked with DoBi to assist in the selection and matching of supervisors for candidates. New and improved supervisor/candidate agreements forms were implemented. All supervisors (including overseas co-supervisors) are given access to the MySCU environment.
Once access to the Centre is established, all supervisors (including local co-supervisors) have access to:

- SCU’s extensive electronic library resources, data bases and 5000 full text online journals
- the alerting systems to enable staff to be advised of the publication of their favourite journals or authors
- an SCU email account and address

The resources provided to candidates in the doctoral candidate centre are duplicated in the supervisors centre to enable supervisors to understand and appreciate the resources provided to their candidates. In addition, supervisors are able to contribute to discussion forums on best practice supervision and to submit their six-monthly progress reports.

**Web Based Reporting**

A web based reporting system was conceptualised, developed and implemented for candidates and supervisors six monthly progress reports. The reports were also linked to the university student system. The DBA leadership team ensured that the reports were also able to obtain continuous feedback from candidates about their experience in the program that could be used for continuous improvement and benchmarking.
**Figure 15.4:** Screen Shots of the Web Based Reporting System for Candidates and Supervisors

The images display a web-based system designed for supervising doctoral research. The interface includes options for selecting a student, progress reports, and a form for supervisor progress reports. The system appears to be integrated with Southern Cross University's My Enrolment portal, offering a streamlined way for supervisors to manage and report on their students' progress.
DBA Administrative Forms

The then administrative forms were inadequate and inconsistent and needed redesigning and updating to a more professional image. All forms were paper based. There was no real ‘theme’ or ‘brand’ for the program. A new brand was therefore introduced and themed across all forms and web sites so that candidates and supervisors had some conformity. New forms were needed to address the new processes introduced. For example, candidates and supervisors were required to enter into a formal ‘agreement’ at the commencement of supervision to ensure that both appreciated the expectations of the other. Therefore, a new form, the candidate/supervisor agreement form needed to be designed and introduced.

Policy and Practice

All policy matters were reviewed and a number of changes made. For example, the IELTS was raised to 7.0 when the IELTS for PhD applicants at the university was 6.5. All applicants for the program, in addition to submitting their CV, qualifications and research proposal with their application were to be interviewed by telephone by the Director. There was no clear policy advice on academic matters for both candidates and supervisors. Accordingly, a comprehensive policy manual (the DBA candidate/supervisor manual) was developed to provide policy advice and direction on all academic and administrative matters in the program. The manual was loaded onto the candidate and supervisor centres to enable electronic access, immediate updating and version control.
Candidates often did not achieve the ‘credit average’ required under the rules of the program to progress to the thesis stage. It was considered as part of the review that an ‘exit point’ from the program should be established to allow these candidates to exit the program with a graduate certificate in research methods so that the units they completed were given some recognition. This provision was placed in the rules of the program in the 2006 rules changes.

**Overseas Partner Agreements**

Operations manuals were developed in consultation with each overseas partner for each agreement including New Zealand, Singapore, Kuala Lumpur and Hong Kong. This provided a quality framework for the agreements to proceed under and some uniformity in the administration of all overseas locations.

**Research Methodology Units**

The then research methodology units that were a core part of the program were in need of substantial revision to ensure that when supervisors received their candidates, the candidates were rigorously research trained and research ready. The units were therefore reviewed by senior academic staff and agreement reached on content and depth.

**Doctoral Research Symposia**

The doctoral symposia are offered to all candidates twice per year.

The symposia offer candidates an important opportunity to mix and network with other candidates and supervisors for intellectual exchange and support. Attendance at one symposium per year (in any location) is compulsory for all DBA candidates. The symposia often cover topics like:

- library skills,
- working with SPSS,
- doctoral supervision,
- undertaking literature reviews,
- publishing during candidacy,
- research methodologies.

but the main theme is to provide candidates the opportunity to present to their peers and supervisors about where their research project is placed and to get feedback on their direction and assistance with problems or issues.

The aims of research in progress presentations are to:

- Inform other researchers and academic staff of the status and direction of the candidate’s proposed/current research project,
- Provide candidates with the opportunity to put forward ideas and to receive critical feedback on their planned or current research project,
• Give candidates an opportunity to reflect on their research by having to prepare a presentation to their peers.

Publication Project

One of the success criteria that can be measured for any doctoral research program is the quality and quantity of rigorous scholarship flowing from the doctoral research projects in terms of publications. In July 2004 under the leadership of Professor Alex Kouzmin and Gita Sankaran, a publication project was established with the aim of increasing the rate of knowledge diffusion from the DBA program. The cost of underwriting this project was provided by Professor Peter Baverstock from the University’s Graduate Research College. Through the GCM publications program, students and staff published at the following rates:

• 2005 candidates and staff published 19 articles in scholarly international peer-reviewed journals.
• 2006 staff and candidates produced 2 books and 1 book chapter, 13 scholarly journal articles and 22 scholarly conference papers.
• 2007 staff and candidates produced one book and ten book chapters, 13 scholarly journal articles and 20 scholarly conference papers.
• 2008 staff and candidates produced 3 books and 5 book chapters, 5 scholarly journal articles and 17 conference papers.
• 2009 staff and candidates produced 3 books and 5 book chapters, 6 scholarly journal articles and 12 conference papers.
• 2010 staff and candidates produced 4 books and 8 book chapters, 11 scholarly journal articles and 21 conference papers.

In addition, a number of books have been published. Some of these are:

Supervisor Professional Development

The policy on the supervision of doctoral candidates is to appoint a suitably qualified and experienced local supervisor for all candidates. All supervisors must meet the following criteria:

- have a doctoral qualification
- be experienced in research and/or in the supervision of research higher degrees
- have relevant knowledge and expertise for the research project
- have sufficient time and access to adequate resources to supervise the research project.

All supervisors must apply to be appointed to the Professional Doctorate supervisor register on the appropriate form and undergo a rigorous review to ensure that they are experienced researchers capable of undertaking doctoral supervisory roles.

The GCM also developed a policy whereby it also appoints a suitable member of staff to be the principal supervisor for all overseas partners. The GCM utilises a 'pod' model whereby one principal supervisor is appointed to take responsibility for principal supervision of all candidates (and co-supervisors) at an overseas location (partner).

The principal supervisor does not supervise directly each individual candidate's research project (this being the role of the local co-supervisor) but provides a quality control watch over the project and the local co-supervisor(s).

In addition to the quality control role with the co-supervisor, the principal supervisor has formal roles for each candidate's project including:

- Liaison with local partner doctoral co-ordinator
- For ethics applications assists the Co-supervisor with the ethics process and forms
- Responsible to monitor progress reports from the partner’s candidates and supervisors
- Takes action where progress is not satisfactory
- Signs off qualifier programs
- Final sign off for thesis submission

All doctoral supervisors have access to an online supervisor professional development program, through the doctoral supervisor centre. The wide ranging campuses of SCU and network of overseas partners necessitated an online program to enable Higher Degree Research (HDR) supervisors in a number of national and overseas locations to participate in HDR supervisor professional development.
Benefits to the University as a Result of the Change Program

Benefits to students (candidates)

The launch of the DBA candidate centre in November, 2004 has established networking forums for candidates, who can now identify other candidates working in their area of research, swap literature and create a ‘community of scholars’. It also enabled candidates to search for completed theses by research methods, research areas and geography and provide forums for discussion. By mounting all forms, policy and advice, and links to the library, candidates are able to self-administer much of their processes in the DBA candidate centre to recognise the increasing expectations of candidates for electronic access to information and for flexibility and input to processes that directly affected them.

Benefits to staff

The introduction of self-administration by DBA candidates through the DBA candidate centre has freed time for the DBA leadership team to concentrate on more strategic issues in the program such as proactive customer service and marketing. DBA supervisors now are able to provide information to candidates about prospective supervision and as candidates can network in a ‘community of scholars’, the effective expertise for supervision is spread across candidates in addition to formal supervisors, potentially lightening their supervision load.

Wider university benefits

The Doctor of Business Information System (DoBi) was extended to the Graduate Research College and the web based progress report system approved for university wide application to PhD candidates. DoBi was also a forerunner to the university wide customer relationship database.

External Recognition for the Change Process

DBA programs offered by Australian Universities are diverse in terms of both curriculum and advanced standing arrangements. The SCU DBA is classified by the Australian Government Department of Education, Employment and Workplace Relations (DEEWR) to be a doctoral research degree as the thesis component of the degree is a minimum of 66% of the program (that is 16 units of 24 units of study). Most other Australian DBA programs are not considered to be research degrees as the coursework component of these degrees are much higher and in some cases candidates may submit portfolios of two research papers and are not required to undertake a major research project in the form of a thesis.

Comparisons between DBA programs are therefore difficult. However, the SCU DBA has been benchmarked against other Australian DBAs by the Australian and New Zealand Academy of Management (ANZAM). Results show that the SCU DBA is the largest DBA program by enrolments and has the largest number of graduates when compared to other DBA programs (ANZAM 2005)
In 2005, the DBA leadership team consisting of Professor Peter Miller, Director of DBA, Ms Sue White, DBA Administrator, Ms Chantelle Howse, DBA Administrative Officer and Ms Susan Riordan, DBA Administrative Officer was awarded the Vice Chancellor’s Award for Excellence and Achievement in the improvement in process category for the development and establishment of the web based candidate’s and supervisor’s centres and the customer service management software developed specifically for the program.

Each year graduates from Australian Universities are asked to complete an independent Government ‘Postgraduate Research Experience Questionnaire (PREQ)’. The report is released by Graduate Careers Australia and is aimed to provide a national picture of selected aspects of graduates’ research experience to allow national comparisons of educational quality among the 39 Australian universities.

The 2005 report showed that in respect of our post graduate research candidates (includes both DBA and PhD graduates), Southern Cross University achieved the following rankings:

- number 1—Overall Satisfaction
- number 1—Goals and Expectations
- number 1—Intellectual Climate
- number 2—Skill Development
- number 2—Thesis Examination
- number 11—Infrastructure

The 2006 report also showed a number 3 rating for overall satisfaction.

Further external recognition came from The Melbourne Institute (Williams and Van Dyke, 2006), which was formed in 1962 under the leadership of Professor Ronald Henderson. It was the first economics research institute in an Australian university. The Melbourne Institute aims to be a major institute of applied economic and social research that is nationally and internationally renowned in academia, government, business and community groups. In November, 2006, the Institute released its report titled: Rating Major Disciplines in Australian Universities: Perceptions and Reality. In that report, SCU had the highest number of doctoral completions (principally DBAs) in Business and Economics over the period. Monash University was ranked second and University of New South Wales third.

In 2006, a Course Review of the DBA was undertaken to consider re-accreditation of the degree for a further five (5) years. The review provided an opportunity to consider the governance and structure of the other professional doctorate program then in existence, the Doctor of Education (EdD).

To take advantage of the opportunity provided by the DBA formal review, a number of Committees and working groups were established to consider the University’s professional doctorate programs and in what direction the programs might go forward into the future.
The Chair of the DBA Review Committee, Professor Martin Hayden was also the Chair of Programs Committee of Academic Board with three external members of the panel. The outcome of the review was a recommendation to Academic Board that the DBA be reaccredited for a further five (5) years and this was accepted by the University Council in 2007. The review report included a number of recommendations:

• That the DBA be more strongly promoted as a research higher degree qualification and that the focus of this promotion be upon its suitability as a qualification for tertiary level teaching and for problem-solving across a wide range of fields in business and management.

• That a proposal for there to be three examiners for a DBA Thesis be rejected.

• That an intention to develop a Centre for Professional Doctorates be supported.

• That an intention to apply a set of generic rules to all professional Doctorates be supported.

• That a policy of limiting to a maximum of ten (10) the number of Doctoral candidates per supervisor be supported.

• That an intention to embed the two units: Qualitative Research Methods and Quantitative Research Methods, in all Master Degree Programs that articulate with the DBA be supported.

• That the DBA and fee paying PhD’s be the principal focus of the Graduate College of Management’s Higher Degree by Research activity.

• That an intention to develop a Graduate Attribute to apply to the DBA program be supported.

• That an intention for the Graduate College of Management to embrace its alumni more pro-actively be supported.

• That an intention to make the action research approach a significant vehicle for DBA Theses be supported.

• That an intention for the Graduate College of Management to seek more research and development grants from large companies be supported.

• That an intention for a Graduate College of Management to explore industry partnership possibilities that will support DBA and MBA research be supported.

• That the College investigate further the progression and attrition data and address this issue based on the findings.

The DBA course review concluded with a strong statement of support.

The Southern Cross University DBA Program is one of the largest and most successful programs of its type in Australia. It has a current enrolment of 180 students all full fee paying. It enjoys strong market demand from across Australia and the Asia/Pacific region. The program is making a significant contribution to the University’s strategic priorities. It is held in high esteem among business management educators
across Australia. It is distinctive for its focus on the development of research skills, its high levels of candidate satisfaction, the quality of supervision, its vastly superior completion rates and its high overall quality standards.

In making its recommendations for re-accreditation for a further five (5) years, the panel commended the Graduate College of Management for the following achievements:

• The extraordinary market success, as evidenced by the strong demand for the program, its remarkable retention and completion rates and the high peer esteem in which it is held.

• Its impressive commitment to continuous quality improvement as evidenced by numerous initiatives to provide better forms of support for candidates and supervisors, the decision to raise the IELTS score required for admission to the DBA to 7 and the activities of the Course Advisory Committee in implementing internal course review procedures.

• Its willingness to support a proposed Professional Doctorate Centre, which is likely to have benefits for other Schools across the University.

• The uncompromising approach to the maintenance of high quality standards in the approach to the assessment of candidate performance in the DBA program.

In April 2008, the Hong Kong Council for Accreditation of Academic and Vocational Qualifications (the HKCAAVQ) re-accredited the Doctor of Business Administration degree for a period of five years after an exhaustive review process that involved senior professorial staff from a number of overseas universities.

In October, 2008, the Malaysian Qualification Agency (MQA) and the Ministry of Higher Education approved the SCU DBA—the first for a foreign University DBA in Malaysia. Equally significant was that the accreditation was accorded a Category ‘A’ approval which is usually only reserved for PhD programs.

In November, 2008, Professor Brian Stoddart, former VC of La Trobe university presented an independent report on ‘An investigation into the structure, range of activities, performance and supervisory arrangements concerning the University’s DBA program.’ The investigation coincided with the then SCU Director of the program stepping down from the position.

The report concluded that:

Broadly, SCU may be satisfied that the DBA program is fundamentally sound. It consistently attracts good numbers of quality students from Australia and New Zealand as well as overseas, specifically in Singapore, Malaysia and Hong Kong. The program is conducted through a structured supervisory system that ensures students receive consistently high levels of supervision. The student support systems are excellent, with exemplary customer service readily available. Academic standards are high as attested by the time taken to complete, and by the evidence that a reasonable number of students are admitted to but do not complete the program. There is a strong process of continuous improvement imposed on the program.
In addition, the report made four commendations:

- Commendation 1—GCM is commended for the construction of a professional development program for doctoral supervisors
- Commendation 2—GCM is commended for the consistently high customer service provided to students by both academic and administrative staff
- Commendation 3—GCM is commended for having created such a stimulating learning environment for students
- Commendation 4—GCM is commended for the high level of continuous improvement shown throughout the life of the DBA program

The independent report was acknowledged by the Strategic Standing Committee of Academic Board on 26 February, 2009, as a tribute to the leadership of the program over the previous five years and added ‘congratulations to the Graduate College of Management on achieving the commendations included in the Report’.

**Conclusion**

This chapter has outlined an organisational and cultural change program over the five year period to the end of 2008 involving the SCU DBA program. The change initiatives were undertaken in a difficult cultural environment and a sub-culture needed to be created in order for the change to be successfully implemented. During the change process, a number of critical research output structures were conceptualised, developed and implemented to provide the framework and infrastructure necessary for high academic and service standards to be attained. As a result of the change program, the SCU DBA has received significant external recognition as the leading DBA program in Australia.
References


Graduate Careers Australia. 2005. Postgraduate Research Experience Questionnaire (PREQ)

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