



Quality – Community - Diversity - Knowledge

Reimagining Accreditation of DBA Programs

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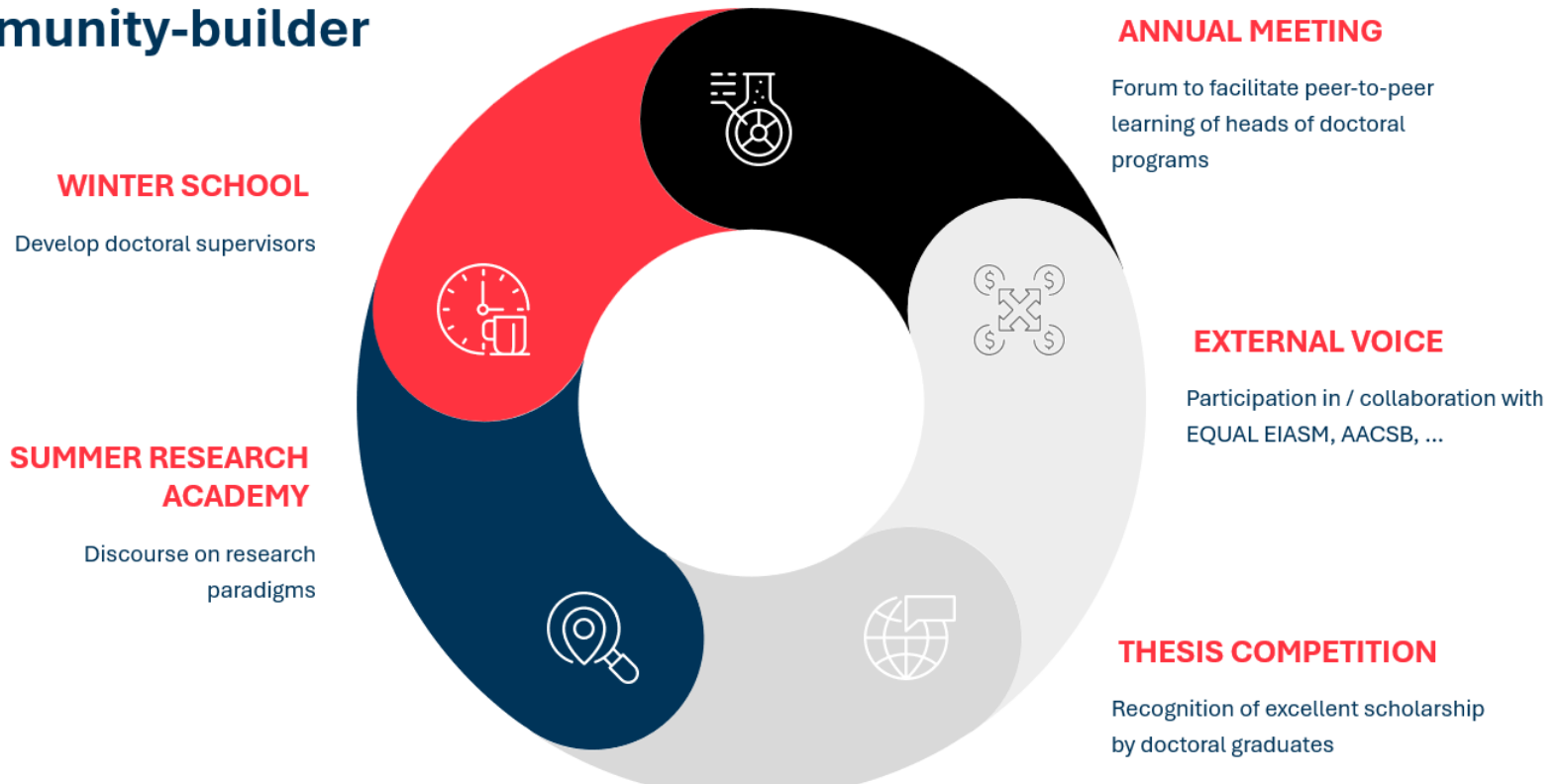
Strategic Perspective

01

DBA Accreditation is fully aligned with the EDAMBA Mission.

- This strategic initiative is solidly based on the EDAMBA Mission:
- Our mission is to develop common ideas, values, evaluation criteria, **standards**, and practices to assess and **enhance the quality of doctoral education**, through the exchange of experiences and cooperation in a global network.
- EDAMBA members are committed to creating and sharing initiatives and **achieving excellence whilst appreciating and promoting collaboration, diversity, and community building**.

The new service is intended to strengthen EDAMBA's role as a community-builder



DBA programs offer more quality diversity, are subjected to less regulatory oversight, and are externally reviewed with a different lens

A select few areas shape the outcomes of external reviews:

1. Program governance (e.g., division of responsibilities between Assoc. Deans Research /Teaching/ExecEd)
2. The academic rigor of taught part of the program (e.g., strengths of research “toolbox”, amount of coursework in person or blended, research ethics), incl. assessment regime
3. Organization and quality of supervision (e.g., supervisory teams, core / external faculty)
4. Organization of assessments (e.g., external reviewers, viva, supervisors as co-authors)
5. Evidence of output quality (e.g., publications, impactful scholarship)

Why DBAs?

Delivering DBA Education comes with a host of challenges influencing the quality of provision

DBA programs operate in a market with heterogeneous quality of provision.

- **Tradeoff** between **income** maximization vs. **quality/impact** of research outcomes (publications, impact case studies in real world organisations).
- **Balancing academic rigor and relevance** in coursework and supervision
- **Cannibalization** of the **supervisory capacities** of **core qualified faculty**
- **Incentivization** of supervising **faculty** (which can include non-core faculty)
- Managing **learner progression** in remote (online) delivery mode (incl. vivas)
- Risk of succumbing to **satisficing motives** of students (paying high fees)

The design and operation of the DBA accreditation system should be based on ideas and principles developed during the Annual Meeting 2024 and the 13th Consortium

- DBAs have a strong commercial flavor and are often subjected to weaker quality oversight than Ph.D. programs.
- This implies a development opportunity for **EDAMBA to address quality enhancement as a lever for community building. We use our flexibility to act** (that the established accreditors do not have).
- EDAMBA is interested in **providing quality review and enhancement services for DBAs to our membership**, we make our offer distinctive and different (**forward looking**).
- **We should be a complementor**, not an imitator, of established accreditation systems. We use quality enhancement services to **strengthen the role of institutions as EDAMBA stakeholders**.
- Make this tangible and relevant from the start. Provide help in **the institutional discovery of complementary paths to impactful scholarship. Encourage sharing and peer learning**.

Our Executive Decision

The EDAMBA Board supports the accreditation for DBA programs as a service as an attractive development option – EIASM, Brussels, February 6, 2025.

This will help to scale the EDAMBA service portfolio, strengthen its link to member schools, and contribute to fulfilling the EDAMBA mission, with positive spillover effects for its other activities.

Initial Selection Criteria

02

Quality of DBA provision is defined by 8 dimensions that need to be examined during the accreditation process

1. Research Environment and Linkage to School's Strategic Positioning
2. Program Objectives
3. Admission Policy and Criteria
4. Doctoral Training Program
5. Supervision & Student Progress
6. Doctoral Thesis
7. Assessment & Examination
8. Quality Assurance Processes

EDAMBA is in the process of defining general eligibility criteria to discriminate at the entry door

The applicant institution

1. ...is an EDAMBA member in good standing (but can also become a member when applying),
2. ...is a degree-granting institution (separate regulations need to be established for collaborative provision with another degree-granting institution) offering DBAs, Executive Ph.D.s, Industrial Doctorates, and all types of professional practice programs equivalent to [Level 8 of the European Qualification Framework](#),
3. has an institutional scope to supply DBA education in line with international standards and to develop further the quality of its provision on an ongoing basis,
4. ...has been accepting students in the past ? years, has currently enrolled ?? students, has graduated ? students over the past ? years,
5. ...has sufficient faculty in terms of depth, breadth and qualifications to support the program with a minimum threshold employed on a permanent basis,
6. ...has a reasonable prospect of satisfying the EDAMBA accreditation standards.

The group of pilot schools entering the system first will define the market positioning of the service for the years to come

- The pilot program accreditations (Example: 20 pilot applicants in 2025) must establish the new accreditation system credibly to attract applications during the subsequent period of normal operations.
- Pilot selection criteria must be considered fair by the institutions to whom no invitation was issued.
- Suggested selection criteria:
 - The applicant is accredited by AACSB or EQUIS or holds several accreditations up to the Triple Crown. If exceptions are granted, then it must be based on evidence that the applicant has a high international reputation.
 - Each country is represented only once
 - 12 slots are allocated to Europe, the remaining 8 to non-European countries, to ensure international diversity and global reach from the start.
 - Pilot applicants can credibly demonstrate the presence of a strong research environment.

Discussion

How should the general and pilot phase eligibility criteria be further adjusted?

How to Reach Out?

03

The initial communication should be non-discriminatory

- Identify all members offering DBA-type programs and extend the offer of a conversation. Follow up with a short infographic summarizing the main pros and cons and encourage the EDAMBA contact to test the willingness of the institution to come forward.
- Identify and contact in addition schools that have shown a willingness to join EDAMBA to offer participation in the pilot phase as an additional incentive. This will enable external recruitment of applicants.

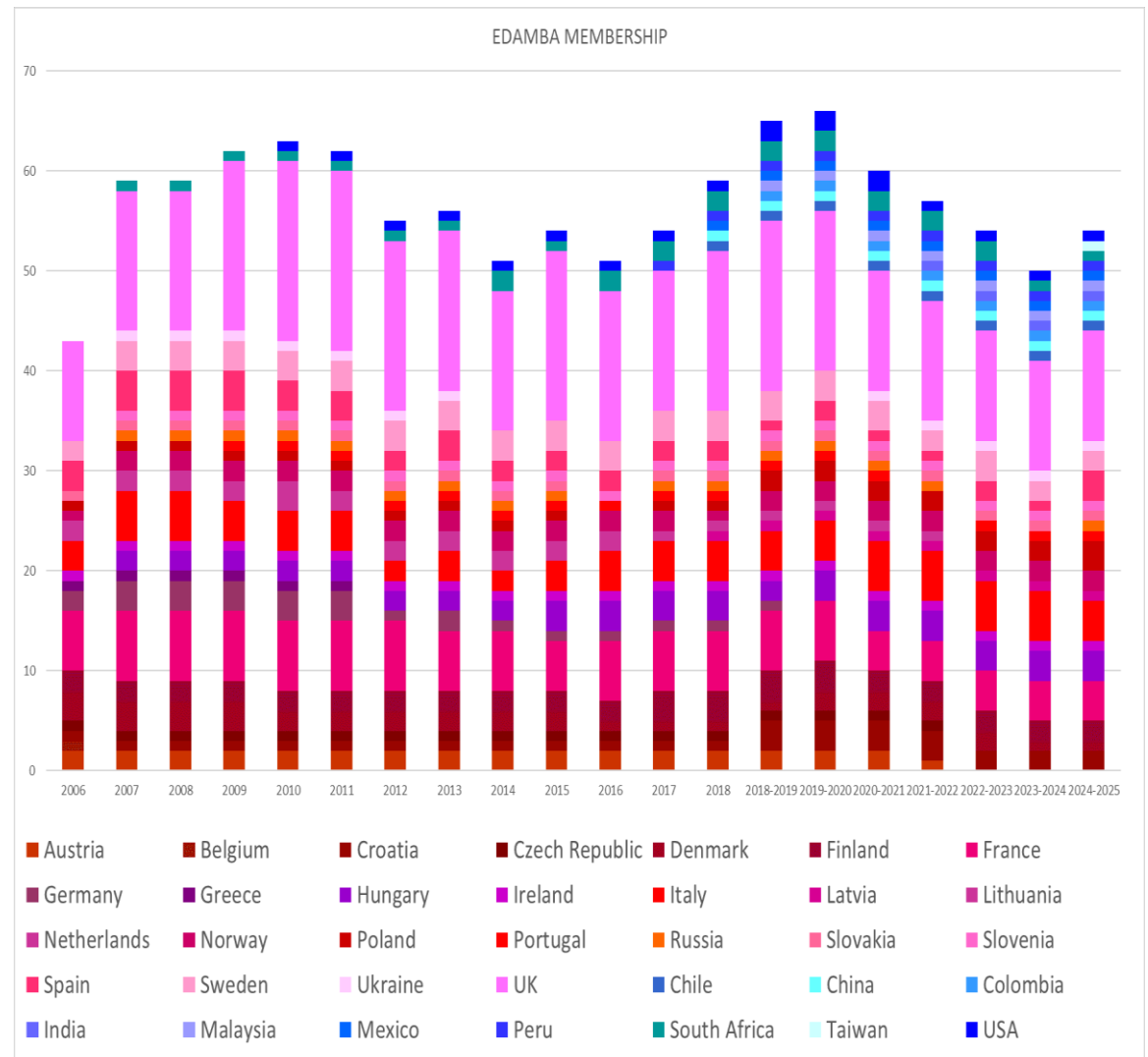
EDAMBA Demand Analysis

04

EDAMBA is the leading professional association for doctoral education with a strong European base and global reach.

Membership size has been in the 50-60 range, with a downward trend in recent yrs.

DBA accreditation should act as an enabler for membership growth and diversity; it should also help to avert the risk of moving into a precarious state due to a decline of membership.



The launch requires a critical mass of initial applicants. We propose the following initial list for consideration:

- Bocconi (Italy)
- Budapest BU (Hungary)
- Burgundy (BSB) (France)
- Comillas (Spain)
- Dauphine Paris (France)
- Durham (UK)
- EGADE (Mexico)
- ESADE (Spain)
- ESAN (Peru)
- Henley Reading (UK)
- Grenoble EM (France)
- Kozminski (Poland)
- Tongji (China)
- NSYSU (Taiwan)
- Nelson Mandela U (South Africa)
- Oxford Brookes (UK)
- RISEBA (Latvia)
- York U (UK)

Recruitment of Pilot Schools

05

EDAMBA needs to develop a carefully crafted communication process that addresses the main concerns

- The communication process can be structured in three steps that are likely to require weeks rather than days:
 - Step 1: EDAMBA must win over an internal champion, typically the director of the DBA program. The starting point should be a personal conversation.
 - Step 2: EDAMBA must bring QM on board. They will likely be overwhelmed with work as is and will question the strategic value of the initiative.
 - Step 3: EDAMBA must bring the Dean on board, which requires making a compelling case for the commercial value of the accreditation.
- Key issues to address in the communication are:
 - What are the long-term financial commitments for the school (based on the current fee schedule to be developed and the length of the accreditation cycle)?
 - What is the long-term value added of holding the accreditation (likelihood of commercial viability and external recognition)?

Discussion

How can EDAMBA ensure that its communication pitch is carefully crafted with likelihood of success?

Options for Managing School Burden

06

Many business schools suffer from “Accreditation Fatigue,” which can make the recruitment of applicants challenging

The proposed commercial case:

- Pilot applicants will not have to pay an accreditation fee. This will imply no accreditation revenue for 2025.
- Review visits should occur virtually and not incur travel costs, which is another important pain point for potential applicants. We suggest three-person review teams (initially, two members of the accreditation committee plus a non-academic member; review team members will not participate in the meeting of the Accreditation Committee discussing the case), possibly an optional on-site visit for marginally qualified applicants.
- The burden on QM units should be minimized, as this would be a critical source of resistance. The main burden should be on the DBA program management teams.
 - Business schools holding AACSB or EQUIS Accreditation and schools with DBA programs accredited by EFMD Accredited or AMBA will automatically be eligible without further review.
 - Accreditation documentation will consist of the “institutional part” and the “program-specific part”. The institutional part can be replaced by a self-assessment report not older than 3(?) years, potentially plus the corresponding Peer Review Report.
 - Data requirements should be specified to be easily fulfilled using established accreditation databases in support of AACSB or EQUIS.
 - EDAMBA should explicitly position AI as a tool for producing and analyzing accreditation materials and automate paperwork as much as possible.

“Accreditation Fatigue” can also be addressed academically to break the resistance of the business school leadership

The proposed academic case:

- Accreditation reviews need to produce insights that schools did not have already. There must be a developmental value added beyond adding another jpeg to the website.
- The system should complement existing accreditation frameworks (no copycat) which is easy to achieve as other accreditation systems devote little attention to DBA-type programs.
- The EDAMBA offer should avoid the draw-back of other accreditation systems that are overly invested in history and track record. EDAMBA’s service should adopt a forward-looking approach to encourage innovation and development on the program- as well as school-level.
- The interactions during the peer review could be intentionally different than traditional Q&A approaches in order to make them more developmental. The selection of reviewers will be key.

Discussion

Does the community support an approach that fundamentally change the approach how international accreditation is set up and executed?