

# RESEARCH THAT MAKES A MARK ON THE WORLD

The CityU College of Business' DBA is hard work, but senior executives are able to apply their findings in a number of rewarding areas

Each September, the executives who join the doctor of business administration (DBA) course at the College of Business, City University of Hong Kong (CityU) all have something important in common.

That's because the 15 or so senior executives are all keen to conduct in-depth research into an issue affecting their company and their industry. All of the executives have previously made a mark in their respective sectors.

From the outset, they know that the coursework, seminars, data research, and interviews, along with their final 50,000-word thesis, add up to a sizeable amount of work.

But the executives are also aware that they can rely on the

teaching, support and guidance of a renowned faculty which boasts expertise in the intricacies of everything from cross-border investment and fintech, to data security and China's "Belt and Road Initiative."

"Our students do impactful research. It is significant work," says Professor Muammer Ozer, director of the DBA programme.

"They are highly respected figures within their own fields, but they want to keep learning and contribute something more."

The DBA is designed to be completed in three years, but students can take up to six years if necessary.

The DBA offers courses on research methodology, as well as workshops to illustrate the type

of difficulties encountered in developing a thesis and how to overcome them.

There is practical instruction on how to use library resources, and how to make the best use of statistical and data support, and an emphasis on academic rigour.

Monthly get-togethers provide the chance to share ideas, float theories, and get valuable feedback from peers and recent graduates.

Each student is assigned a supervisor from day one, who can provide advice, and even words of caution if necessary.

This ensures the thesis proposal is viable and clear steps and steady progress is made towards completion. It also means students always have

someone to turn to for general encouragement, or a different perspective if their research hits a roadblock, or results are lacking.

"I think our structure is now very well established," Ozer says.

"Overall, students are happy with it. But we still listen to them, along with graduates and people in industry, to modify tools, methods and topics when necessary," he adds.

This could mean adding workshops or seminars and inviting outside speakers to explain the latest thinking or technology.

Each class includes a diverse mix of leading executives from industries like IT, banking and export, manufacturing and shipping. So there is often an

expert within the group who can offer new information and perceptive insights.

"In addition to the quality of the academic work, we also emphasise the networking opportunities the programme provides as a source of added value," Ozer says. "Moreover, we know that most of our students are returning to academic study after some time away, so we don't overwhelm them at the start.

"Instead, we build things up gradually. We start with one-page assignments asking which stakeholders will benefit from their research, we show them how to differentiate their work from the existing literature, and how to set milestones within each course," he notes.

"That way, they are able to see the big picture, and can then start to fill in the details," Ozer says.

This year, 19 graduates will receive their doctorates.

Displaying a real diversity of interests, their chosen topics dealt with areas ranging from finance, human resources, and innovation to cloud computing, vendor selection, and supply-chain management.

One project examined the development of "job crafting" in today's workplace. It considered the steps needed to make employees feel better in their individual roles and, therefore, become more effective and productive.

This has implications for HR managers in terms of staff

retention, employee satisfaction, and performance management.

Another project focused on the internationalisation of the renminbi, a subject of interest across the global banking community.

A third project looked at the handling of perishable items within the food supply chain, to find out where there is scope to improve reliability and minimise disruption.

"The findings of this year's theses are not specific to a particular company. They have a wide range of implications," Ozer says. "We are very proud of the programme, the professors, and this class of DBA graduates who will go on to share their work on different platforms," he says.



Professor Muammer Ozer says that executives on the CityU DBA programme carry out meaningful research that can make an impact beyond their sectors.