

DBA Research Topic Selection Guide

A step-by-step framework to evaluate, narrow, and validate your research topic before supervisor submission.

Purpose of this guide

Choosing the right research topic is one of the most critical decisions in your DBA journey. This guide helps you systematically move from broad interests to a supervisor-ready research topic that is relevant, feasible, original, and academically strong.

Step 1: Clarify Your Professional Problem Area

- Identify key challenges from your professional or organizational context.
- List industries, functions, or processes you are deeply familiar with.
- Write 3–5 real-world problems that genuinely need investigation.
- Ensure the problem has managerial, organizational, or strategic relevance.

Step 2: Convert Problems into Researchable Areas

- Transform business problems into research-oriented themes.
- Check whether the topic allows investigation through data collection.
- Avoid overly broad or purely descriptive topics.
- Frame your interest around relationships, processes, impacts, or decision-making.

Step 3: Preliminary Literature Scan

- Search Google Scholar, Scopus, or university databases.
- Identify how much research already exists.
- Note dominant theories, models, and methodologies.
- Look for inconsistencies, gaps, limitations, or outdated contexts.

Step 4: Narrow the Topic Strategically

- Define a specific population, industry, or geographical context.
- Clarify key variables or constructs.
- Reduce the scope so it can be completed within DBA timelines.
- Ensure alignment with your program specialization.

Step 5: Feasibility & Access Check

- Can you realistically access data, participants, or organizations?
- Do you have time, skills, and ethical clearance potential?
- Is the methodology manageable at doctoral level?
- Is the topic stable enough for long-term research?

Step 6: Evaluate with the Doctoral Quality Test

- Significance: Does it solve an important academic or professional problem?
- Originality: Does it add new insight, context, or perspective?
- Theoretical grounding: Can it be supported by solid literature?
- Contribution: Does it offer implications for theory, practice, or policy?

Step 7: Draft Provisional Research Titles

- Write 3–5 potential titles.
- Ensure clarity, focus, and academic tone.
- Include key constructs and target population.
- Avoid vague or overly technical wording.

Step 8: Develop Topic Justification Notes

- Problem background
- Why the topic matters
- What gap it addresses
- Expected academic and professional contribution
- Why you are suitable to research it

Step 9: Supervisor-Ready Validation Checklist

- Clear problem statement
- Focused research direction
- Preliminary literature support
- Feasible scope and data access
- Alignment with DBA level and ethics

Final Note

Before submitting to your supervisor, your topic should demonstrate clarity, feasibility, relevance, and contribution. Use this guide as a working document and refine each step until your topic withstands academic and practical scrutiny.

Topic Development Worksheet (Optional)

- My professional problem area: _____
- Target population/industry: _____
- Key constructs/variables: _____
- Preliminary research gap: _____
- Data source & access plan: _____
- Provisional research title: _____