

University of Cincinnati's review of Cleveland State University (CSU)'s Program Development Plan (PDP) for a Master of Science - Business Analytics (MS-BA).

This review is based on the following four areas:

1. Market need for the proposed program and the distinctions or differences between the proposed program and other similar programs across the state;
2. Opportunities for collaboration with UC or other universities;
3. Concerns with substantive elements of the proposed degree program; and
4. Suggestions that might help the submitting institution strengthen the proposal or refine its focus.

1. Market need for the proposed program and the distinctions or differences between the proposed program and other similar programs across the state;

The development plan supports the need for the program in two ways: a. By comparing to existing programs indicating an absence of graduate data science / business analytics programs in the Greater Cleveland region, and b. Discussing a general shortage of business analysts in the US by 2018, according to a famous and well-cited McKinsey report.

While many statements describing similar programs in Ohio show recent market analysis (e.g. Kent State University is in the process of offering an MS-BA), the absence of some other relevant programs is surprising. For instance, the Case Western Reserve University (CWRU) plan to launch an undergraduate major in data science is mentioned but CWRU's MS-Management: Business Analytics Specialization is not. Note that one should not view the presence of CWRU's MSM-Business Analytics as a reason to not have another program in a large metropolitan area like Cleveland. Many schools have been seeking to meet the estimated shortage in Business Analysts and have better access to different segments of the student population. I think the PDP could do a better job highlighting the uniqueness of the proposed program and connecting its base of potential students to the market need. What will the program do to sustain and grow its student body?

Note that many international students populate several BA graduate programs. Is this international-student market segment being considered or is there no exchange program or other international applicant pool at CSU?

2. Opportunities for collaboration with UC or other universities;

No collaborations with UC or other Ohio universities is considered, possibly because each university in Ohio tends to operate on a geographical basis and few offer distance learning courses. But one could consider allowing some students to substitute a few courses taken at other universities as a means to give students exposure to either material not offered at CSU or provide a different perspective on BA. For instance, a more technically oriented student may benefit from a

technology-oriented data science course (in computer science or information systems) or even a course on data visualization / business communication. This would need to be done at the discretion of the program academic director.

Concerns with substantive elements of the proposed degree program;

The one unique programmatic aspect I saw was the idea that the program could be comprised as three modules, two of which correspond to certificates. Note that, if the program is set up to allow students to complete certificates and leave without completing the specialization project work part, I anticipate that you may have much fewer graduates of your proposed MS-BA program than those that start the program, which can correspond to poor retention metrics.

In the specialization track “select two electives from the following” - could a student take one course on Supply Chain Analytics and one on Health Informatics and would that correspond to sufficient specialization? Are all these course options already being offered regularly and will they be suitable for the average business student? With a cohort size of 30 planned, there won't be enough students to offer specialization courses, unless they are already being offered to other students. How does this specialization correspond to 12 credits (refer to your 9-12 credits in Appendix A)?

I believe that every graduate program in Ohio needs to have an *individual* capstone experience. Students working in a team-based practicum exercise in a course cannot count as an individual capstone experience. So some process may be required to enable students to do individual work that is assessed as a capstone experience.

4. Suggestions that might help the submitting institution strengthen the proposal or refine its focus.

I did not see a set of learning objectives for the program. It may be good to develop such a list and identify which course satisfies which learning objective.

One way the quality of a MS-BA program is evaluated can be its placement record. Your advisory board is a good step. However, it may be a good idea to also think about what you will do for your students to assist them in their job search process. It may be advisable to have some component of the program that relates to an internship option or provides the opportunity to connect with local practitioners in BA (not to solve structured problems but to know of the kinds of BA activities businesses are focused on and the skill sets they are seeking in future employees).