

6.5 Module 5: Research Methods

6.5.1 Headline information about the module

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|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Module title | Research Methods |
| Module NFQ level (only if an NFQ level can be demonstrated) | 9 |
| Module number/reference | MIBL-RM |
| Parent programme(s) the plural arises if there are embedded programmes to be validated. | MSc in International Business Management |
| Stage of parent programme | 1 |
| Semester (semester1/semester2 if applicable) | 2 (core) |
| Module credit units (FET/HET/ECTS) | ECTS |
| Module credit number of units | 5 |
| List the teaching and learning modes | Full-time, part-time |
| Entry requirements (statement of knowledge, skill and competence) | Learners should normally hold an approved honours degree in business, law or related discipline or equivalent qualification from an approved tertiary/or professional institution |
| Pre-requisite module titles | None |
| Co-requisite module titles | None |
| Is this a capstone module? (Yes or No) | No |
| Specification of the qualifications (academic, pedagogical and professional/occupational) and experience required of staff (staff includes workplace personnel who are responsible for learners such as apprentices, trainees and learners in clinical placements) | Lecturer(s) should be qualified to at least masters level in strategy or business equivalent preferably with a third level teaching qualification (e.g. Certificate in Training and Education). |
| Maximum number of learners per centre (or instance of the module) | 60 |
| Duration of the module | 12 weeks |
| Average (over the duration of the module) of the contact hours per week (see * below) | 3 hours |
| Module-specific physical resources and support required per centre (or instance of the module) | Normal lecture room with internet access and good-quality audio-visual equipment. |

| Analysis of required learning effort | | |
|----------------------------------------------|---------------------------------|------------|
| Effort while in contact with staff | Minimum ratio teacher / learner | Hours |
| Classroom and demonstrations | 1:60 | 18 |
| Monitoring and small-group teaching | 1:30 | 18 |
| Other | | |
| Independent Learning | | |
| Directed e-learning (hours) | | |
| Independent Learning (hours) | | 89 |
| Other hours (group project) | | |
| Work-based learning hours of learning effort | | |
| Total Effort (hours) | | 125 |

| Allocation of marks (within the module) | | | | | |
|-----------------------------------------|-----------------------|--------------------|---------------------------------|-------------------------------|-------|
| | Continuous assessment | Supervised project | Proctored practical examination | Proctored written examination | Total |
| Percentage contribution | 100 | | | | 100% |

6.5.2 Module aims and objectives

Within this module, learners will develop an understanding of the nature, purpose and value of business and commercial research. The learner will be guided on how to conduct a critical literature review using best practice in developing a critical approach. Through the module, workshops will be provided covering the various primary data techniques. Learners develop a knowledge of quantitative and qualitative research methods and understand how these can be usefully employed in carrying out a research dissertation. Learners can make a strong argument and defend their work in a professional manner. Learners are equipped with a well-developed research proposal which will direct their dissertation research.

A significant element of the module is devoted to research design issues to ensure that learners understand the significance of the process of research and its implications for how trustworthy the findings from the research can be considered. This component of the programme covers research paradigms, research strategies, and quantitative and qualitative data collection and analysis. The importance of illustrating the process in reporting and presenting the research concludes the programme.

6.5.3 Minimum intended module learning outcomes

On successful completion of this module learners are able to:

- (i) apply scientific inquiry skills to assess the effectiveness of any research approach when faced with potential organisation research questions
- (ii) critically evaluate literature at the forefront of knowledge that underpins justification for the chosen field of research and progression towards a conceptual framework
- (iii) formulate a rigorous and appropriate research design with methods for data collection and analysis consistent with a learner's research philosophy/paradigm and the requirements of their research question
- (iv) evaluate the selected research method and to be able to describe the possible outcomes relevant data to the research questions posed
- (v) critically evaluate and critique the findings of their own research and appreciate its value in terms of its contributions, limitations and position within the overall research in the field.

6.5.4 Rationale for inclusion of the module in the programme and its contribution to the overall MIPLOs

Research methods prepares the learner for the capstone part of the programme, the dissertation, which constitutes one-third of the credits of the MSc programme. It does so by introducing the learner to the purpose and role of research in business and the different qualitative and quantitative traditions and approaches practiced in research. The ultimate aim of the module is to ensure that the learner is well prepared for the dissertation by the development and production of a solid, well-informed research proposal that provides them with a sound basis for carrying out independent research under supervision. In order to achieve this, the learner is coached through the selection and development of a research topic with well-developed research objectives and questions.

The emphasis of the first half of the module, is to identify a potential topic, placing it in the literature with a developing sense of feasibility as research design issues are addressed. As part of this portion of the module, topic workshops and individual learner-lecturer sessions are part of the teaching mix in order to respond to individual learner research interests and difficulties. The latter part of the first six weeks focuses on quantitative approaches and methods. The second part of the module, addresses qualitative approaches and methods while also addressing conceptual frameworks and completion of the dissertation process itself including supervisor allocation. The development of the research proposal continues in this semester based on the “feedforward” provided on the completion of a topic and literature paper in semester.

6.5.5 Information provided to learners about the module

Research methods prepares the learner for the dissertation stage of the MSc programme. It is designed to be delivered to give the learner the best chance of selecting a researchable topic informed by the ever-increasing knowledge of both the related subject matter by searching and reading through good quality literature and by exposure to the various approaches and methods that can be used to carry out research. The module is particularly important in that, along with its own module credits, it also prepares you for the dissertation stage where you will be conducting a substantial, independent piece of independent research under the supervision of a supervisor.

6.5.6 Module content, organisation and structure

Introduction and topic selection

- Overview of research methods and the research process
- Expectations and assessment of a dissertation
- Inspiration for topics
- Criteria for research topics for the dissertation

Literature review and critical review of literature

- Purpose of literature review
- Identify quality sources
- Recording what you have read
- Citation and referencing workshop – Harvard and Zotero
- Structure of literature review
- Developing a critical approach to literature as a reader and as a writer
- Review of techniques to developing a critical approach

Research design

- Research approaches and design
- Research paradigms and philosophy
- Research strategies
- Triangulation
- Link of research paradigms to research methods

Introduction to quantitative methods of data collection and analysis

methods of data collection

- Quantitative methods in business
- The application of quantitative methods in research
- Overview of quantitative data collection methods
- Survey tools for collecting data
- Sampling

Generating statistics and Software applications

- Statistical analysis overview
- Statistical concepts and their application
- Hypothesis testing
- Modelling relationships
- Statistics and software applications

Interpreting statistics & presentation of quantitative data

- The application and use of statistics in business decision making
- Presenting and displaying data

Methods of qualitative data collection

- Major issues in data collection
- Methods of data collection
- Qualitative methods
- Primary data collection methods
- Recording data and storage
- Assessing the focus and logic of your data collection
- SPSS workshops

Methods of qualitative data analysis

- Major issues in qualitative data analysis – trustworthiness
- Methods of qualitative analysis – from approaches to coding to quasi-judicial methods
- NVivo workshops

Proposal

- Structure and format of proposal
- Planning and timetabling research

Ethics

- Ethics and access
- Making basic ethical provisions
- Human participants / organisations
- Guidelines, policies and procedures

Findings and synthesis

- Interpretation
- Findings and synthesis
- Developing conclusions

Presentation of dissertation

- Presentation of findings
- Writing up
- Structure and template
- Presentation and formatting
- Viva

6.5.7 Module teaching and learning strategy

This module is delivered through a series of seminar type lectures with an emphasis on extensive feedback for topic selection and guidance on literature selection and exercise-based tutorials / workshops for the quantitative component of the module. Extensive discussion of examples are used to assist learners in the design of their own research illustrating the reasoning behind the selection of the various options in each research design. Case studies of research, in some cases delivered by those who have successfully completed substantial pieces of research, are used as a basis for discussion and as a starting point for work on the learners' own dissertations. In order to obtain maximum benefit from the module and to prepare the learners effectively, learners are encouraged to develop their proposal throughout the semester in order to make a constructive contribution in the lectures and workshops and to develop and justify their ideas without a "deadline" rush towards the end of the semester.

6.5.8 Work-based learning and practice-placement

There is no practice-placement element within this module.

6.5.9 E- learning

Moodle, the College VLE, is used to disseminate notes, advice, and online resources to support the learners.

6.5.10 Module physical resource requirements

Normal lecture room with internet access and good-quality audio-visual equipment. All learners have access to an extensive range of 'actual' and 'remote access' library resources. The library monitors and updates its resources on an ongoing basis, in line with the college's Library Acquisition Policy. Computer software is installed on machines with specific computer rooms within the college, especially for Nvivo and SPSS. Learners can access both pieces of software for their research analysis through their personal login.

6.5.11 Reading lists and other information resources

Primary Reading

Bell, E. and Thorpe, R. (2013) A Very Short, Fairly Interesting and Reasonably Cheap Book about Management Research. Los Angeles: Sage Publications Ltd

Cottrell, S. (2017) Critical Thinking Skills: Effective Analysis, Argument and Reflection. Basingstoke: Palgrave

Gray, D. E. (2017) Doing Research in the Real World. London: SAGE Publications Ltd

Saunders, M. N. K., Lewis, P. and Thornhill, A. (2018) Research Methods for Business Students. New York: Pearson.

Secondary Reading

Creswell, J. W. and Creswell, J. D. (2018) *Research Design: Qualitative, Quantitative, and Mixed Methods Approaches*. London: SAGE Publications Inc

Easterby-Smith, M., Thorpe, R. and Jackson, P. (2018) *Management and Business Research*. London: Sage Publications Ltd. 6th ed

Fisher, C. (2011) *Researching and Writing a Dissertation: a guidebook for business students*. London: Prentice Hall

Flick, U. (ed.) (2018) *The SAGE Qualitative Research Kit: Collection*. London: SAGE Publications Ltd

Patel, Y. (2017) *SPSS for Academic Research*. Lynda.com

Rivers, D. (2018) *NVivo 2018 Essential Training*. Lynda.com.

6.5.12 Specifications for module staffing requirements

Lecturers should be qualified to at least masters level preferably with a third level teaching qualification (e.g. Certificate in Training and Education).

6.5.13 Module summative assessment strategy

Assessment for RM is centred on the completion of a research proposal that is used to guide and inform the dissertation. There is a strong emphasis put on the idea that there should be no 'break' between the work the learner does in RM, ending in the proposal, and in the work they do for the dissertation, starting with the proposal. As the proposal is an end of semester assessment with no exam, there is a considerable effort made to ensure learners understand the importance of class participation informed by the incremental development of their proposal.

In order to ensure learners formulate their topic in a well thought out manner, the learner is brought through a number of workshops in the first semester to prepare them for research methods in the second semester. Quality class participation is essential and the guiding rule for assessing quality is the potential of the learner themselves and other learners to learn and develop from such participation. There is a small component of the marks reserved for in-class tests related to quantitative methods of collection analysis. Module is assessed by continuous assessment alone, with two parts. Due to the iterative nature of proposal development with feedback / feedback provided to enable improvement, the alignment of module learning outcomes and assessment are dichotomous as indicated in the assessment strategy below.

| No. | Description | MIMLOs | Weighting |
|-----|-----------------------------------|---------------|-----------|
| 1 | Topic and Literature Paper | (i) (ii) (iv) | 40% |
| 2 | Fully developed research proposal | (iii) (v) | 60% |

6.5.14 Sample assessments

Please see Sample Assessment Handbook.