

Module 6: Business Research Methods

Stage	1						
Semester	1 and 2						
Module Title	Business Research Methods						
Module Number/Reference	MSC-IPM-BRM						
Module Status (Mandatory/Elective)	Mandatory						
Module ECTS credit	5						
Module NFQ level (only if applicable)	9						
Pre-requisite Module Titles	N/A						
Co-requisite Module Titles	N/A						
Is this a capstone module? (Yes or No)	No						
List of Module Teaching Personnel	Justin Keogan / Aine McManus						
Contact Hours				Non-contact Hours			Total Effort (Hours)
Lecture	Practical	Tutorial	Seminar	Assignment	Placement	Independent work	
18		18		40		49	125
Allocation of Marks (Within the Module)							
	Continuous Assessment	Project	Practical	Final Examination	Total		
Percentage contribution	100%				100%		

Intended Module Learning Outcomes

On completion of this module learners will be able to

Part 1: BRMI

1. Develop a dissertation topic with research questions that will guide and focus the research process;
2. Identify relevant literature and critically review the most pertinent for their proposal and have a conceptual framework in development;
3. Interpret and assess quantitative data in a manner that addresses business and research problems;

Part 2: BRMII

4. Generate and evaluate an appropriate research design and methods for data collection and analysis which are consistent with their research philosophy/paradigm and the requirements of the question;
5. Identify appropriate quantitative methods of data collection and analysis for business related research problems selecting the appropriate data types, statistical measures, and methods of display using the relevant formula and computer software;
6. Identify appropriate qualitative methods of data collection, analysis and interpretation for business related research problems ensuring a high level of trustworthiness in the data process from generation to discussion of findings;
7. 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;
8. Present their work in a professional manner, communicating results clearly and confidently.

Module Aims & Objectives

This module initiates the preparation of learners for their Masters dissertation. It reviews business research in general and facilitates dissertation topic selection by the learner and guides their drafting of a preliminary critical literature review and the development of a conceptual framework. The will be further developed and proofed against the demands of an appropriate research design in the iterative process of proposal development. 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 course 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 course.

The aims for BRM are to ensure

Part 1: BRMI

1. That learners develop an understanding of the nature, purpose and value of business and commercial research;
2. That learners are able to conduct a critical literature review using best practice in developing a critical approach;
3. That learners understand the different perspectives and approaches to business research;
4. Learners develop an in-depth knowledge of quantitative research methods and understand how these can be usefully employed in carrying out a research dissertation as well as their application in the wider business context.

Part 2: BRMII

1. Learners develop knowledge of qualitative research methods and understand how these can be usefully employed in carrying out a research dissertation;
2. Learners can make a strong argument and defend their work in a professional manner;
3. Learners are equipped with a well-developed research proposal which will direct their dissertation research.

Module Curriculum

Part 1 BRM1

- **Introduction and Topic Selection**
 - Overview of business research methods and the research process
 - Overview of the module
 - Expectations and assessment
 - Process (research question and hypothesis)
 - Inspiration for topics
- **Literature review and Critical review of literature**
 - Purpose of Literature Review
 - Identify quality sources
 - Recording what you have read
 - 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
- **Topic Clinic**
 - Topic Clinics: Learners will have the opportunity to get oral feedback on a one-to-one basis on their chosen topic
- **Research Design**

Introduction to the following (more detail in Part II);

 - Research Approaches and Design
 - Research paradigms and philosophy
 - Research methodology
 - Positivism
 - Phenomenology
 - Research methodologies
 - Cross sectional studies
 - Survey approach
 - Case studies
 - Action research
 - Participative enquiry
 - Value based perspectives
 - Methodological pluralism
 - Triangulation
 - Link of research paradigms to research methods
- **Introduction to Quantitative Methods of Data Analysis and Methods of Data Collection**
 - Overview of quantitative data analysis
 - Quantitative methods in business
 - The application of quantitative methods in research
 - Brief overview of research design
 - Brief overview of data collection methods with an emphasis on quantitative methods
 - Sampling
- **Generating statistics and Software applications**
 - Probability
 - Inference
 - Hypothesis testing
 - Modelling relationships
 - Correlations
 - Multiple regression
 - Time series and forecasting
 - Distribution
 - Location
 - Variation

- Models for finance and accounting
- Statistics and software applications
- Using Excel
- **Interpreting statistics & Presentation of quantitative data**
 - Exploring and examining data
 - Describing large and small data sets
 - Confidence levels
 - Reliability and validity
 - Generalisability
 - Presenting and displaying data - tables, graphs, charts

Part 2: BRM II

- **Research Design**
 - Research Approaches and Design
 - Research paradigms and philosophy
 - Research methodology
 - Positivism
 - Phenomenology
 - Research methodologies
 - Cross sectional studies
 - Survey approach
 - Case studies
 - Action research
 - Participative enquiry
 - Value based perspectives
 - Methodological pluralism
 - Triangulation
 - Link of research paradigms to research methods
- **Methods of Qualitative Data Collection**
 - Major issues in data collection
 - Methods of data collection
 - Qualitative methods
 - Questionnaire
 - Observation
 - Interviews
 - Archival / documentary
 - Panels
 - Secondary data
 - Recording data and storage
 - Assessing the focus and logic of your data collection

- **Methods of Qualitative Data Analysis**
 - Major issues in data analysis
 - Trustworthiness
 - Methods of qualitative analysis
 - Content analysis
 - Coding
 - General analytical procedure
 - Template analysis
 - Influence of grounded theory
 - Repertory grid technique
 - Cognitive mapping
 - Data displays
 - Quasi-judicial method

- **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
 - Process
 - Focus and logic of the dissertation
 - Structure and template
 - Presentation and formatting
 - Viva
 - Preparation
 - What to bring
 - Presentation
 - Questions
 - When answering questions

Teaching plan BRM1

Weeks 1&2	Introduction and Topic Selection
Weeks 3,4&5	Literature review an critical review of the literature
Week 6	Topic Clinic
Week 7	Research Design
Week 8&9	Introduction to Quantitative Methods of Data Analysis Methods of data collection
Week 10&11	Generating statistics and software applications
Week 12	Interpreting statistics & presentation of quantitative data

Teaching Plan BRM2

Weeks 1,2&3	Research design
Weeks 4,5&6	Methods of qualitative data collection
Weeks 7&8	Methods of qualitative data analysis
Week 9	Proposal
Week 10	Ethics
Week 11	Findings and synthesis
Week 12	Presentation of dissertation

Reading lists

Core Reference Materials

Collis, J. and Hussey, R., 2003. *Business Research*. 2nd Ed. Basingstoke: Palgrave MacMillan.

Denzin, N. K. And Lincoln, Y. S. (eds), 1994. *Handbook of Qualitative Research*. Thousand Oaks: Sage

Fisher, C. 2007. *Researching and Writing a Dissertation for Business Learners*, 2nd Ed. London: FT Prentice Hall.

Miles, M.B. And Huberman, A. M., 1994. *Qualitative Data Analysis*. Thousand Oaks: Sage

Saunders, M., Lewis, P., and Thornhill, A., 2009. *Research Methods for Business Learners*, 3rd Ed. Harlow: Pearson Education.

Wallace, M. And Wray, A., 2006. *Critical Readings and Writing for Postgraduates*. London: Sage.

Waters, D. 2007. *Quantitative Methods for Business*. London: Financial Times/Prentice Hall.

Zikmund, W. G., 2003. *Business Research Methods*, 7th Ed. Mason (OH): Thomson-Southern Western.

BRM I & II Reading List

Introduction

Russell, B., 1998. *The Problems of Philosophy*. 2nd Ed. Oxford: Oxford University Press. - 1st chapter - Appearance and Reality

Saunders et al – Chapter 1

Fisher – Chapter 0 – Introduction – P.1-12

Topic Selection

Saunders et al – Chapter 2

Fisher – p29-39

Zikmund – Chapter 6 – Problem Definition and the Research Proposal

Literature Review and conceptual framework

Wallace and Wray – Chapters 11 and 12

Saunders et al – Chapter 3

Fisher – p77-116

Fisher – Chapter 3 – Concepts, conceptual framework and theories

Research fundamentals

Collis and Hussey - Chapter 3 – Dealing with conceptual issues

Zikmund – Chapter 3 – Theory Building

Methodology

Collis and Hussey - Chapter 3 – Dealing with conceptual issues

Saunders et al – Chapter 4 – Deciding on the research approach and choosing a research strategy

Methods of Data Collection

Fisher – Chapter 4

Collis and Hussey - Chapter 7 – Quantitative Data

Saunders et al – Chapter 6 – Selecting Samples

Saunders et al – Chapter 7 – Using Secondary Data

Saunders et al – Chapter 8 – Collecting data through observation

Saunders et al – Chapter 9 –Collecting primary data using semi-structured and in-depth interviews

Saunders et al – Chapter 10 – Collecting primary data using questionnaires

Saunders et al – Chapter 11 – Analysing quantitative data

Zikmund – Chapter 10 - Survey Research

Zikmund – Chapter 13 – Measurement and Scaling Concepts

Zikmund – Chapter 14 – Attitude Measurement

Zikmund – Chapter 15 – Questionnaire Design

Zikmund – Chapter 16 – Sample Design and Sample Procedures

Zikmund – Chapter 18 – Fieldwork

Zikmund – Chapter 19 – Editing and Coding (quantitative)

Methods of Data Analysis

Collis and Hussey - Chapter 8 – Qualitative Data

Saunders et al – Chapter 12 – Analysing qualitative data

Ethics

Saunders et al – Chapter 5 – Negotiating access and research ethics

Zikmund – Chapter 5 – Ethical Issues in Business Research

Findings and Synthesis

Fisher – Chapter 5 – Interpreting the research material

Write up & Viva Voce

Fisher – Chapter 6 – Framing articles and writing up

Saunders et al – Chapter 13 – Writing and presenting your research

Module Learning Environment and Teaching 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 course. Extensive discussion of examples is 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 to develop and justify their ideas without a "deadline" rush towards the end of the semester. In addition to the lectures, there are extensive support materials available on Moodle.

Module Assessment Strategy

Assessment for BRM 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 BRM, 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. 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.

Constructive Alignment of Assessment

In designing the assessment for the module, a conscious effort is made to ensure that each of the intended learning outcomes is assessed in the proposal. The following table of grading criteria for the proposal provides an indication of how the intended learning outcomes for the module are aligned with the assessment criteria used to assess the proposal. The full grade descriptors for the assessment criteria are detailed in the Sample of Marking Criteria further below. It should be recognised that, strictly speaking and consistent with the overall aim of the module, some of the intended learning outcomes are assessed to a fuller extent at the dissertation stage. This would apply in particular to the interpretation of data.

Intended Learning Outcome	Grading Criteria for Proposal
MLO 1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Clarity in the topic of research, focus on a research objective and justification for the purpose of the research. Applies a coherent and consistent approach to all aspects of the research proposal; linking RQs to literature, to CF, to methodology, to data collection and analysis and to how the analysis will be used to address the research question.
MLO 2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Conducts a critical literature review of pertinent sources, identifying the gaps and debates in the literature and embedding the RQs in the literature. Has started to develop a reasoned conceptual framework that will assist in linking the literature to the research design. • Used the template provided, completes a detailed critical analysis of a text within the context of their research proposal. • The relevance and quality of the sources identified to the research proposal.

MLO 3	<p>Outlines a research strategy consistent with their outlined research methodology, including details of, and justifications for, the type of information needed to address their research question, the sources of the data, how they will collect the data needed, how they will analyse the data and present the analysis.</p> <p>[It is not possible or indeed appropriate to assess some of the intended learning objectives at this stage as it would require the research to be complete.]</p>
MLO 4	
MLO 5	
MLO 6	
MLO 7	
MLO 8	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The quality of the presentation of their research proposal and the practicality of the timeline.