

MODULE 2: Research Methods

Stage	1						
Semester	1						
Module Title	Research Methods						
Module Number	2						
Module Status	Mandatory						
Module ECTS Credits	5						
Module NFQ level	9						
Pre-Requisite Module Titles	None						
Co-Requisite Module Titles	None						
Capstone Module?	No						
List of Module Teaching Personnel	Dr Jane Carrigan Robbie Smyth						
Contact Hours				Non-contact Hours			Total Effort (hours)
Lecture	Practical	Tutorial	Seminar	Assignment	Placement	Independent Work	
24			12	36		48	120
Allocation of Marks (Within the Module)							
	Continuous Assessment	Project	Practical	Final Examination			Total
Percentage Contribution	100						100%

Intended Module Learning Outcomes

On successful completion of this module, the learner will be able to:

1. Critically analyse research findings and data from a variety of sources.
2. Conduct informed independent research to help identify and apply the requisite knowledge, concepts, and tools of enquiry at the forefront of the media industry.
3. Produce and present research which demonstrates independent critical judgement, analytical and problem solving skills.
4. Distinguish between quantitative and qualitative research methods and be able to justify appropriate application.
5. Critically assess the ethical implications of research and be able to apply ethical standards to own work.

Module Objectives

This module aims to significantly deepen the learners' research skills, both in relation to their module related assignments and later in their completion of their major dissertation / dissertation by practice. Specifically, it extends their abilities as self-directed learners by equipping them with the appropriate vocabulary for reflecting on, critiquing and evaluating their own work and that of others. Throughout the module, they are required to engage in a number of research methodologies and current research issues and trends in the media industry. The module also addresses the need for good project management skills and techniques for the successful delivery of any project.

Module Curriculum

Indicative Syllabus

Topic One: Introduction to Research Design and Methodologies

In this introductory topic we look at the variety of sources and research designs open to researchers. Research design refers to the structure of the research investigation rather than data collection and a broad overview is given of different research designs such as experimental, cross-sectional, longitudinal and case study. This topic also describes the main differences between qualitative and quantitative research methods and specific research terms that are liable to cause the general reader and journalist confusion. In this opening section of the module, an overview of how to research and search for information effectively is given as well as a demonstration of how to use documents as sources of data.

Topic Two: Research Ethics

This topic addresses the role of ethics in research and as part of this section examines through use of case studies, the risks of doing research both for the researcher and the researched. Ethical principles and guidelines, which have been used in research, are also analysed.

Topic Three: Quantitative Research

This topic gives an overview of key areas in quantitative research including structured interviewing, questionnaires (including online questionnaires), content analysis, and sampling. This section of the module addresses important questions such as when should quantitative research be used, how can it be used most effectively and what is its attraction for readers and journalists.

Topic Four: Qualitative Research Methods

Punch (2005) argues that *'Qualitative research methods is a complex, changing and contested field – a site of multiple methodologies and research practices. 'Qualitative research' therefore is not a single entity, but an umbrella term which encompasses enormous variety.'* With that in mind, this topic gives an overview of key areas in qualitative research including interviewing, focus groups and ethnography.

Topic Five: Mixed methods research

Using quantitative or qualitative data has often historically been presented as an either/or option. This topic however examines how researchers have used both quantitative and qualitative methods in their research and examines how effective it is and whether the combination is successful.

Topic Six: Data Journalism 1: Writing about Research

How should the journalist write about research? Are there rules for writing about research findings? In this topic we look at how opinion polls, surveys and other key statistical data are reported on in our news media and we discuss whether there is a case to be made for Philip Meyers' Precision Journalism.

The creation of online data archives by government and statutory agencies has opened up new opportunities and challenges for journalists and we look at the methods and tools available to journalists to present this data to their audiences.

Topic Seven: Data Journalism 2: Creating the news

News media outlets originating news through their editorial policies and decisions such as the commissioning of opinion polls and surveys, making freedom of information inquiries and formulating particular strategies or focus for their investigations are all part of another aspect of data journalism. In particular we focus on the role of opinion poll surveys in the news media.

Topic Eight: News Selection and News Framing

Often journalists and media workers can view, participate and report on seemingly straight forward news events but produce differing observations about not just the context or value of the event but also the actual structure or nature of the event itself. In this topic we give an overview of media theories and studies of how the news is created focusing on theories such as Galtung and Ruge's news selection theory, pack journalism, news framing and priming.

Reading lists and other learning materials

Recommended Reading

- Berger, A.A., 2011. *Media and communication research methods : an introduction to qualitative and quantitative approaches*, Thousand Oaks, Calif: SAGE Publications.
- Clough, P. & Nutbrown, C., 2012. *A learner's guide to methodology*. London: SAGE.
- David, M. & Sutton, C.D., 2010. *Social research : an introduction*. London: SAGE.
- Deacon, D., 2010. *Researching communications : a practical guide to methods in media and cultural analysis*, London: Bloomsbury Academic.
- Denscombe, M. 2007. *The Good Research Guide*. Buckingham: Open University.
- Fairclough, N., 2009. *Analysing discourse : textual analysis for social research*, London: Routledge.
- Hansen, A., 2010. *Mass communication research methods*, Los Angeles: SAGE.
- Johnson-Cartee, K.S., 2005. *News narratives and news framing : constructing political reality*. Oxford: Rowman & Littlefield.
- Morrison, D.E., 1998. *The search for a method : focus groups and the development of mass communication research*. Luton: University of Luton Press.
- Seale, C., 2012. *Researching society and culture*, Thousand Oaks, CA: SAGE Publications.

Secondary Reading

- Berg, B.L. & Lune, H., 2012. *Qualitative research methods for the social sciences*. Boston: Pearson.
- Boyd-Barrett, O. & Newbold, C., 2008. *Approaches to media : a reader*. London: Hodder Education.
- Bryman, A., 2012. *Social research methods*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Burnham, P., 2008. *Research methods in politics*. Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan.
- Creswell, J.W., 2007. *Qualitative inquiry and research design : choosing among five traditions*. Thousand Oaks: Sage.
- Creswell, J.W., 2014. *Research design : qualitative, quantitative, and mixed methods approaches*. Thousand Oaks: SAGE Publications.
- Fiske, J. & Hartley, J., 2005. *Reading television*. London; New York: Routledge.
- Goodson, I. & Sikes, P.J., 2001. *Life history research in educational settings : learning from lives*. Buckingham: Open University Press.
- Grbich, C., 2013. *Qualitative data analysis : an introduction*. London: SAGE.
- Hammersley, M., 1992. *What's wrong with ethnography? : methodological explorations*. London: Routledge.
- Kaid, L.L., 2008. *Handbook of political communication research*. New York: Routledge.
- Liebes, T. & Katz, E., 1993. *The export of meaning : cross-cultural readings of Dallas*. Cambridge: Polity Press.
- Mason, J., 2006. *Qualitative researching*. London: Sage.

- McGivern, Y., 2013. *The practice of market and social research: an introduction*.
- Milgram, S., 2009. *Obedience to authority : an experimental view*, New York; Enfield: Perennial
- Punch, K., 2006. *Introduction to social research quantitative and qualitative approaches*. London: SAGE Publications.
- Richardson, J.E., 2007. *Analysing newspapers an approach from critical discourse analysis*, London: Palgrave Macmillan.
- Riessman, C.K., 2008. *Narrative methods for the human sciences*. London: SAGE.
- Rowntree, D., 2004. *Statistics without tears : a primer for non-mathematicians*. Boston: Pearson.
- Rubin, H.J. & Rubin, I.S., 2012. *Qualitative interviewing : the art of hearing data*. Los Angeles: Sage.
- Scheper-Hughes, N., 2001. *Saints, scholars, and schizophrenics : mental illness in rural Ireland*. Berkeley: Univ. of California Press.
- Seale, C., 2011. *Qualitative research practice*. Los Angeles: SAGE.
- Silverman, D., 2010. *Qualitative research : theory, method and practice*. London: SAGE.
- De Vaus, D., 2009. *Research design in social research*. London: Sage.
- De Vaus, D.A., 2012. *Surveys in social research*. London: Routledge.
- Webster, L. & Mertova, P., 2008. *Using narrative inquiry as a research method : an introduction to using critical event narrative analysis in research on learning and teaching*. London; New York: Routledge/Taylor & Francis Group.
- Wimmer, R.D. & Dominick, J.R., 2011. *Mass media research : an introduction*. Belmont, California: Wadsworth.
- Wright, D.B., 1997. *Understanding statistics : an introduction for the social sciences*. London: Sage.

Websites

www.esri.ie
www.cso.ie
www.postgrad.com/editorial/uk_research_planning/
www.socialresearchmethods.net

Module Learning Environment

The learning environment is designed to both engage the learners and to encourage critical thinking. This is achieved through lecturers, case studies and practical examples which are designed to stimulate discussions and questions. Lectures are given in a lecture room and weekly seminars held in a smaller venue.

Learners are also supported with resources to offer structure and guidance. This includes lecture notes, reading materials as well as a detailed module curriculum which include the learning outcomes, a class schedule, the necessary reading material and the assignment strategy. Participants also have access to Moodle, the College's Virtual Learning Environment (VLE).

Module Teaching and Learning Strategy

This module is supported with structured web-based resources and applies the use of the programme Teaching Learning and Assessment methodologies. Specifically, the module is delivered using:

- Case Studies
- Participative Lectures
- Seminars

Module Assessment Strategy

Continuous assessment develops critical analysis and academic research skills and is based on seminar logbooks and presentations throughout the semester. The Assessment consists of three components.

1. A research Log Book that is maintained for the Semester by the learner. The Log Book is assessed in terms of:
 - Evidence of engagement with case studies and articles covered during the module
 - *critical reflections on seminar readings and evidence of seminar presentation*
 - Project plan
 - *effectively demonstrate a project plan and show how your project has changed and modified throughout the semester*
 - Background research on Research Proposal
 - *evidence of conducting independent background research*

Overall the log book should demonstrate:

- Attention to detail
- Ability to work through a variety of approaches
- Ability to select relevant information

2. Learners are required to submit a Research Proposal on one of the research topics they have selected as worthy of further research. The research paper is typically about 2000 words.

Each proposal though should have at least the following headings:

- a) Aims and Objectives
- b) Literature Review (if traditional dissertation)/Evidence of Research (if dissertation by practice)
- c) Methodology (if traditional dissertation)/Design of technical Application (if dissertation by practice)
- d) Identification of potential challenges and possible ethical implications

This accounts for 50% of their grade.

3. Presentation

Learners make a presentation of their planned research proposal to a group of examiners.

This accounts for 10% of their overall grade.

Element Number	Weighting	Type	Description
1	40%	Logbook	This is an on-going record, maintained by the learner, of their research throughout the module, their demonstration of understanding and analysis of seminar readings, and the developing of their research proposal and project plan.
2	50%	Research Proposal	This is an essay based proposal of learners planned research project.
3	10%	Presentation	Learners are required to give a presentation of their project to examiners and answer questions based on their work.