

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

Throughout the module, learners 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 its implications 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, such as informed consent, and guidelines for researchers, are also analysed.

Topic Three: Understanding Surveys and Data Journalism

This section of the module examines important questions such as when should survey research be used, how can it be used effectively and what is its attraction for readers, researchers and journalists. The topic addresses key areas in survey research including structured interviewing, questionnaires (including online questionnaires) and sampling.

This topic also examines the issues faced by journalists in writing about research and 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.

Topic Four: Content Analysis and Analysing the Media

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. Content analysis as a method provides a valuable way of understanding these differences. This topic therefore explains the origins of quantitative content analysis and evaluates the main strengths and drawbacks of the method. In this section, we also look at how to undertake a quantitative content analysis and examine and provide examples of research that used this method.

Using quantitative content analysis as a method, and selecting a number of case studies, 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) and show an application of how using a research method and theory can be used to construct an effective argument.

Topic Four: Conducting Interviews and Focus Groups

In this topic we examine the many different types of interviews and how and why they are used. The advantages and disadvantages of in-depth interviews (the most common type of research interview) are identified and critiqued. A practical example of the use of interview as a research method is also analysed and considered in this section. This topic also examines what a focus group is before discussing the role of the moderator and how focus groups work, the history of focus groups in research, their uses and what can and should be done before a focus group takes place.

Topic Five: Analysing Data

Whether quantitative or qualitative research methods are used, deciding on how to analyse material is often a source of concern. In this topic, a number of methods of analysing data are explained and critiqued with specific attention given to thematic analysis and discourse analysis.

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 includes 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.