

# unit guide

Research Methods for  
Business Students

BIS – 2 - 001

Faculty of Business

Academic Year 2010-11

**become what you want to be**

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## 1. UNIT DETAILS

<b>Unit Title:</b>	[Research Methods for Business Students]		
<b>Unit Level:</b>	2		
<b>Unit Reference Number:</b>	BIS-2-001		
<b>Credit Value:</b>	15		
<b>Student Study Hours:</b>	150		
<b>Contact Hours:</b>	36		
<b>Private Study Hours:</b>	114		
<b>Pre-requisite Learning (If applicable):</b>	None		
<b>Co-requisite Units (If applicable):</b>	None		
<b>Course(s):</b>	BA (Hons) Business Studies BA (Hons) Business Admin Combined Hons FdA SBED		
<b>Year and Semester</b>	Year 2 Semester 2		
<b>Unit Coordinator:</b>	Godwin Tetteh		
<b>UC Contact Details (Tel, Email, Room)</b>	X7860, <a href="mailto:tettehgk@lsbu.ac.uk">tettehgk@lsbu.ac.uk</a> , L403		
<b>Teaching Team &amp; Contact Details</b> :	Anne-Marie Scott	L306	x8143
	Ceyhun Elci	L317	x7071
	Greg Tallent	L352	x7867
	Steve Freeman	L217	x7778
	Jon Warwick	L349	x7436
<b>Subject Area:</b>	Business		
<b>Summary of Assessment Method:</b>	100% coursework		

## 2. SHORT DESCRIPTION

Students studying business and management studies are required to undertake a research project in their final year as part of the degree program assessment. Business and management research is conducted to increase our knowledge, solve managerial problems and address business issues. This unit therefore serves as an introductory input to the research process, necessary knowledge and skills required to undertake a piece of research commencing from thinking of a research topic, conducting the research and writing up the report.

## 3. AIMS OF THE UNIT

The aims of the unit:

- to prepare students to undertake business and management research.
- to help them acquire knowledge and develop information skills to enable them to complete their final year project and prepare them for work.

The unit considers this process in the context of individual development

## 4. LEARNING OUTCOMES

### 4.1 Knowledge and Understanding

- Understand different theoretical framework and methodologies
- Appreciate and gain insight into the research process

## 4.2 Intellectual Skills

- Identify and define the boundary for a business research project
- Select, evaluate and justify an appropriate methodology for the project
- Reflect on and evaluate one's own strengths and weaknesses with respect to conducting business research and develop strategies to improve performance at Level 3

## 4.3 Practical Skills

- Use technology to locate information from different sources
  - Apply alternative theoretical frameworks to the research
- Communicate findings using an appropriate format

## 4.4 Transferable Skills

- Critical thinking
- Analytical
- Learning how to learn
- Application and use of information technology
- Communication

# 5. ASSESSMENT OF THE UNIT

The unit will be assessed through 100% coursework consisting of a **Portfolio**.

## 5.1 The contents of the Portfolio are:

(a)Task 1: Research Proposal	20%
(b)Task 2: Design and conduction of a small scale research study	80%

## 5.2 Assessing the Portfolio

Upon completion of the portfolio you would have developed the ability to reflect on and evaluate your strengths and weakness and developed ways to improve how you learn. The portfolio is individually assessed and it should be your own work. Therefore in order to pass the assessment successfully students must complete all the tasks listed below. They must demonstrate that the work is their own product and does not include **plagiarised materials\*\***.

***(NOTE: It is strongly advised that the topic/subject selected for these tasks should be consistent with your expected pathway. For example, if your expected pathway is Human Resources, then your proposal, academic journal paper to be critiqued and the pilot study should be in the subject area of Human Resources; if your selected pathway is Management Science, then your proposal, academic journal paper to be critiqued and the small scale research study should be in the subject area of Management Science.)***

### **Task 1 - Research proposal**

**(Mark: 20%)**

In this task **you** are required to identify a general business area of research that interests you. It would be a good idea if the proposal is consistent with your expected pathway in the final year – e.g. human resources, management, management science, or information systems. Your choice may be based on curiosity, and may involve resolving a problem, explaining a phenomenon, uncovering a process by which something occurs, demonstrating the truth of a hidden fact, building, re-evaluating or testing some theory in your field. You will write a research proposal describing the problem that you want to investigate, the questions that you want to address, the research aims, the methods that you hope to use, the data collection techniques you will use. Also outline the data analysis techniques that you hope to use, how you hope to address research ethical issues and finally comment on your contribution of the research. The proposal must be related to Task 2. Draw a research plan for the proposal and attach it to the proposal. The proposal should be 1500 words long. Use Lecture 2 Handout – Formulating Research Topic and Example: Research Proposal as guides.

### **Task 2 - Design and conduction of a small scale research study**

Design and carry out a small scale research study. (This should preferably be linked to Task 1, Research Proposal.)

In this task **you** will design and conduct a small scale research study using a questionnaire or an unstructured interview. Write up the study using the following **structure/sections**:

- Critiquing the literature/academic paper **(15 marks)**

In this task, **you** are required to select one ***academic journal paper\**** (***see page 11 for the definition of an academic journal paper***) from any journal of your choice, e.g. human resources, management, management science, or information systems, accounting and marketing. The paper must be relevant to your research topic and the research problem you are trying to address with this study. Read the paper critically and then write the critique. Write your critique in the form of an essay following this structure:

- Section 1: Précis or summary of the paper,
- Section 2: Main critique
- Section 3: Conclusion.

**Use Attachment 2: *Critiquing Academic Research Paper – A Guide*** to guide you in writing the critique. This task should be 1500 words long.

**(Note: Please include in your portfolio, the original paper/article that you critiqued).**

- Research strategy **(10 marks)**

In this task, you will explain survey, action research, case study, ethnography, grounded theory, experimentation; secondly discuss the strengths and weaknesses of these strategies. One of the strategies should then be selected, giving reasons for its selection for the small-scale pilot study. This section should be 800 words long.

- Research methods **(15 marks)**

In this task, you will evaluate quantitative, qualitative and mixed methods commenting on their merits and limitations. One of these should then be selected

with good reasons to aid conduction of the small-scale research study. This section should be 700 words long.

- Data collection, and analytical tools/techniques **(30 marks)**

In this task, you will describe the questionnaire and how you administered it; if a qualitative interview technique was used for the data collection, describe how you went about utilising the technique. This section should be 600 words long.

- Analysis, results and conclusions

In this task, write up the analysis of the research data. Analyse your data using appropriate tools/techniques e.g. PASW(Predictive Analytics Software) or MS Excel. Explain the techniques used; interpret and describe your results and findings; where tables, diagrams and figures are used, write and explain these. Describe your conclusions relating this to the problem. This section should be 1500 words excluding the pages for charts, diagrams and tables.

- Reflexivity **(10 marks)**

In this section you will write about your reflections. This task requires that **you**:

Think back on the unit from the beginning to the end of the semester; reflect on all your experiences and what you have been involved with – lectures, seminars, lab sessions, knowledge, topics, group work and discussions, individual work, talking to colleagues, lecturers and seminar tutors.

Write a short essay:

1. about your strengths and weaknesses as a potential 'business student researcher' with respect to knowledge, skills and abilities.
2. on how you feel your weaknesses can be improved and also how your strengths can be extended.
3. on how you questioned the way you learn, illustrate how you explored the rationale for and the effects of what you did,
4. to demonstrate how you brought in and used new ideas and approaches and evaluate their effects.
5. what you have learnt on this unit, why these are important to you and how you would have done things differently. This section must be about 600 words long.

*Total number of words for the Portfolio must be between 6000 and 7000 word.*

**AN EXCELLENT RESEACH WILL BE ABLE TO DEMONSTRATE THE SYNERGY WHICH LINKS ALL THESE SECTIONS INTO A COHERENT ANALYSIS.**

***NOTE: It is useful that you base the pilot study on your expected pathway.***

### **5.3 Research Portfolio submission:**

Please submit your (i) **Portfolio (hard and soft copy)** and (ii) the **signed Statement on Plagiarism** in the School Office:

**Room:** 105 **Date:** May 11<sup>th</sup>, 2011 **Time:** 12 noon

### **NOTE CAREFULLY:**

1. Please note that late submission of work without approved and signed extension form will be awarded 0 mark.
2. Submitted work that has no signed Statement on Plagiarism will be awarded 0
3. Coursework deemed to contain plagiarised material will be awarded 0 mark.
4. Your completed work must be submitted to Turnitin for a report.
5. Attach the report to the Portfolio.
6. You will be awarded 0 mark if you do not attach a Turnitin Report.
7. You will be awarded 0 mark if you fail to put your seminar tutor's name on the marker field on the Coursework submission form
8. Please note that if you fail to attach the original paper critiqued, you will be awarded 0 mark for this section of the Portfolio.
9. You will be awarded 0 mark if you fail to attach sample completed questionnaires or qualitative interview transcripts. (The rest of the questionnaire may be kept by you; they may be required later when necessary by the marker).

## 6. [FEEDBACK](#)

Feedback will normally be given to students 15 working days after the submission of an assignment.

## 7. [INTRODUCTION TO STUDYING THE UNIT](#)

### 7.1 Overview of the Main Content

- Introduction to business research
- Search and research strategies
- Theoretical framework
- Access and manipulation of databases in the context of the Internet
- Review of scholarly publishing
- Research methods for business - Quantitative & Qualitative
- Presentation of research findings – analysis: tables, diagrams, charts
- Research report production

### 7.2 Overview of Types of Classes

For Full-Time students, the contact teaching and learning time is 3 hours per week. This comprises of 1 hour lecture and 2 hour seminar session. For Part-Time students, the contact teaching and learning is 6 hours every other week. This comprises of 2 hours lecture and 4 hours seminar.

A combination of the following teaching and learning approaches will be used:

- ❑ formal lectures
- ❑ tutor-led and student-led seminars
- ❑ case study
- ❑ internet
- ❑ laboratory sessions

These will facilitate critical reflective and analytical discussion, exchange and communication of different views within the group.

### 7.3 Importance of Student Self-Managed Learning Time

In addition, the inclusion of a large private study component is intended to encourage and support research activities and self-managed time.

### 7.4 Employability

On completion of the unit, students will increase their employability by developing:

- ◆ An understanding of different research strategies and methods
- ◆ Skilful practices with respect to the application of relevant research analytical tools and techniques
- ◆ Ability to reflect productively on learning and experiences
- ◆ Capability to work satisfactorily in both familiar and unfamiliar contexts conducting and implementing research

## 8. THE PROGRAMME OF TEACHING, LEARNING AND ASSESSMENT

### 8.1. Full Time Students

#### ❑ Lectures

Week	Topic
1	Introduction to research; nature of business and management research ( <i>Saunders et al Ch 1</i> )
2	Formulating and clarifying the research topic; research questions, objectives; research proposal and sample proposal ( <i>Saunders et al Ch 2</i> )
3	Literature search - using the Library Web Site
4	Theory and research ( <i>Saunders et al Ch 2</i> )
5	Critically reviewing the literature ( <i>Saunders et al Ch 3</i> ): Example of academic paper & critique: <i>A Context for Learning: Collaborative Groups in the Problem-Based...</i>
6	Research strategy; primary and secondary data; reliability and validity – ( <i>Saunders et al, Ch 5</i> .)
7	Research ethical issues ( <i>Saunders et al Ch 6</i> )
8	Questionnaire design; collecting primary data using questionnaire ( <i>Saunders et al Ch 11</i> )
9	Analysing quantitative data ( <i>Saunders et al, Ch 12; Norusis, Introduction to PASW</i> )
10	Proposal for Final Year Dissertation – Unit Guide p16
11	Collecting and analysing qualitative data using qualitative methods ( <i>Saunders et al Ch 10 &amp; 13</i> )
12	Revision - Portfolio



***(Note: The sequence of lectures may change depending upon circumstances)***

□ **Laboratory sessions for Full-Time Students:**

<b>Week</b>	<b>Topic</b>
1	No Seminar
2	Brainstorming exercise: What is research? what is business and management research? sample research topics; describing problem situations; writing down research questions based on the problem situation
3	Case Study: Catherine Chang and women in management
4	Exercise: Literature search - Using Library Web site
5	Case Study: Disability and dementia: a study of empowerment
6	Case Study: Critiquing a research paper – Effects of Classroom Testing by microcomputer
7	Case Study: Embedded Quality at Zarlink Semiconductor
8	Case study: Getting in, getting on....? Misreading issues related to access and ethics
9	Case Study: The provision of leisure activities for younger people in rural areas
10	Quantitative data analysis – Introduction to SPSS
11	Proposal for Final Year Dissertation – Refer to Unit Guide p12; Quantitative data analysis – Descriptive Statistics ( <i>PASW Ch 4 Q1 page 72-73</i> ); Correlation ( <i>PASW Ch 20; Exercise 12 page 474</i> )
12	Revision – Portfolio

***[Note: Students are required to provide blank memory stick to be used for saving exercises carried out in the lab].***

## 8.2 For Part-Time Students

### □ Lectures

Week	Topic
1	Introduction to research; nature of business and management research ( <i>Saunders Ch 1</i> ) Formulating and clarifying the research topic, research questions, objectives; research proposal and sample proposal ( <i>Saunders Ch 2</i> )
2	Literature search using the Library Web site; Case study: Theory and research ( <i>Saunders Ch 2</i> )
3	Critically reviewing the literature ( <i>Saunders Ch 3</i> ;) Example of academic paper and critique: <i>A Context for Learning: Collaborative Groups in the Problem-Based Learning.....</i> Research strategy; primary and secondary data; reliability and validity( <i>Saunders et al Ch 5</i> ); Research ethical issues ( <i>Saunders et al Ch 6</i> ), Collecting primary data using questionnaire ( <i>Saunders Ch 11</i> )
4	Analysing quantitative data ( <i>Saunders et al Ch 12</i> ) – Intro to PASW 18.0
5	Proposal for Final Year Dissertation; Collecting primary data using qualitative methods ( <i>Saunders Ch 10</i> ) Analysing qualitative data ( <i>Saunders Ch 13</i> )
6	Revision – Portfolio

### □ Laboratory sessions for Part-Time students:

Week	Topic
1	Brainstorming exercise: What is research? what is business and management research? sample research topics; describing problem situations; writing down research questions based on the problem situation
2	Case Study : Literature search using library web site; Case Study: Case Study: Disability and dementia: a study of empowerment
3	Case Study: Critiquing a research paper –Effects of classroom testing by microcomputer Case Study: Embedded quality at Zarlink Semiconductor;
4	Case Study: The provision of leisure activities for younger people; Case Study: Embedded quality at Zarlink; Case Study: Getting in, getting on.....
5	Quantitative data analysis – Introduction to PASW; MS Excel; Quantitative data analysis – Descriptive Statistics (PASW Ch 4 Q1 pages 72-73); Correlation (PASW Ch 20; Exercise 12 page 474)
6	Revision – Portfolio; Proposal for Final Year Dissertation – Unit Guide p12

*(Note: The sequence of lectures may change depending upon circumstances*

*[Note: Students are required to provide blank memory stick to be used for saving exercises carried out in the lab].*

## 9. STUDENT EVALUATION

The value of application of research to business problems for solution was acknowledged by the last cohort on the unit. As a result, the students had recommended additional workshop sessions to help improve their research practical skills and academic knowledge to address business problems. The provision of informal workshop session has therefore been suggested to be considered for inclusion in the teaching and learning programme.

## 10. LEARNING RESOURCES

### 10.1 Core Materials

- ❑ Saunders, M; Lewis, P. & A. Thornhill, (2009) Research Methods for Business Students, 5th Edition Prentice Hall
- ❑ Norusis, M. J. (2010) PASW (Predictive Analytics Software) 18.0 Guide to Data Analysis. Prentice Hall

### 10.2 Optional Materials

- ❑ Bryman A. & Bell, E. ( 2003) Business Research Methods – Chapter 19 – Qualitative Data Analysis, Oxford university Press, Oxford.
- ❑ Blumberg, B. et al (2008) Business Research Methods. McGraw Hill, London
- ❑ Cameron & Price (2009) Business Research Methods. CIPD, London.
- ❑ Wilson, J. (2010) Essentials of Business Research, Sage, London.
- ❑ Pallant, L. (2007) SPSS Survival Manual Open University Press
- ❑ Coakes, S. J., Steed, L. G. & Ong, C. (2009) SPSS Analysis Without Anguish, Ver. 16 for Windows, John Wiley , Chichester .
- ❑ Zikmund, W. Business Research Methods, Dryden Press, Harcourt College Publishers, London, 2000
- ❑ Hart, C.; Doing a Literature Review. Sage London 2000
- ❑ Gahan, C. & Hannibal M. Doing Qualitative Research Using QSR NUD.IST. Sage London 1999.
- ❑ Walliman, N.: Your Research Project, Sage

#### **Additional resource - Websites**

[www.theory.org.uk](http://www.theory.org.uk)  
[www.lisa.sbu.ac.uk/quest](http://www.lisa.sbu.ac.uk/quest)

#### **Additional resources - Journals/Daily Newspapers**

- Management Today
- Professional Manager
- Accounting, Organisation and Society
- Harvard Business Review
- International Journal of Accounting Education and research
- Financial times
- Guardian

#### **\*Academic journal paper**

*For this unit and the coursework, an academic journal paper is taken to mean one written by a scholar for the academic community. The paper is usually research-based and the subject of the research may focus on an aspect of business or management e.g. finance, accounting, marketing, management science, human resources, production, operations and information systems. The paper is at least 12 pages long, excluding references/bibliography. The content of the paper will include:*

- ❑ *A problem, a concern, an issue, an unsatisfactory situation or a gap in knowledge that the scholar wants to address. .*
- ❑ *a theory (hypotheses, concepts) philosophy, paradigm or model that underpins the study*
- ❑ *A discussion of methodologies, data collection and analysis techniques that the scholar employed*
- ❑ *Conclusion, contribution, recommendation and reflexivity*
- ❑ *References/Bibliography*

## **Attachment 1:**

### **ALSO USEFUL FOR PREPARATORY WORK DURING THE SUMMER PERIOD**

#### Research Proposal

1. Write the title of the research
2. Write a brief discussion of the background to the research
3. Describe the problem situation that you want to investigate
4. Write three research questions that you want to find answers to.
5. Write the objectives of the study
6. Why do you think this study is important?
7. Discuss the theoretical framework (hypotheses/proposition) that you will use to guide the study? Provide reasons why you want to use this framework.  
(400 words)
8. Write a brief outline of the research methods that you hope to use to help you conduct the study; Give your reasons why you want to use these methods
9. Briefly explain the data collection techniques you want to use; give your reasons for choosing these techniques.
10. How do you hope to address ethical issues?
11. Briefly explain the data analysis techniques you want to use; give your reasons.
12. Briefly comment on the contributions this study hopes to make.
13. Draw a high level plan that shows resources, timescales, tasks to be carried out to complete the study. [Hint: You may use MS Excel or MS Project].

#### **Reference:**

## Attachment 2

### **Critiquing Academic Research Paper – A Guide**

1. Does the abstract adequately summarise the article?
2. Does the introduction fully set the context for the research?
3. Is there an adequate overview of relevant literature in the area?
4. Are the terms adequately defined?
5. Are the limitations and or strengths of existing studies discussed?
6. Is a critical or descriptive perspective adopted?
7. Are there any gaps or oversights?
8. Is the sample size large enough for any conclusions to be valid?
9. Are the research methods clearly described?
10. Are data gathering and analysis techniques and tools transparent and visible?
11. Is it clear what data sets are being used?
12. Do we learn a sufficient amount about the context in which the research was conducted?
13. Is the writing style clear or is there evidence of vagueness and or repetition?
14. How successful is the paper in demonstrating an ability to move beyond description and critically analyse data?
15. How easy is it to follow the thread of the argument? Is it coherent, well structured or muddled?
16. Are there any unsupported statements/assertions?
17. Is the data related back to existing research in the area?
18. Are any quotations included supported by sufficient commentary?
19. Is a reflexive approach to both methods and data adopted?
20. Are other possible interpretations recognised?
21. Does the paper develop new theoretical insights or add constructively to existing theory?
22. How well does the paper look at interactions?
23. Is use made of tests of statistical significance?
24. Are the statistics mainly descriptive rather than confirmatory?
25. Are there any exaggerated claims?
26. What do you like about the paper? Why?
27. What do you dislike about the paper? Why?
28. Are the interpretations consistent with the result?
29. How well is the interpretation of the results linked to the theoretical background?
30. How strong is the conclusion?
31. Does the study show anything new, innovative or of particular interest?
32. If a theoretical or a philosophical perspective is employed, what is this perspective?
33. Is this consistent with the problem, methodology, data collection and the analytical techniques?

## NOTES



**STATEMENT ON PLAGIARISM**

Name.....

Course.....

Unit.....

Title of Coursework:.....

I, the undersigned, confirm that I have read and understood the statement about plagiarism which is outlined in the students handbook and unit guide.

I testify that the work that I have submitted accompanying this sheet is wholly my own, and that any quotations or section of text taken from the published or unpublished work of any other person is duly and fully acknowledged therein.

Signed.....

Date submitted .....