Welcome

Welcome to Business Research Methods, your first step in the process of post-graduate research at RMIT Business. This course is taught to Honours students, Postgraduate course work students, Master and PhD by research students. In this course you will be introduced to the complexities and differences in research methods currently being undertaken in business related research. You will learn how to frame your research question, how to undertake the answering of that question and how to present key aspects of your work.

Contacting RMIT Staff

It is recommended that students use e-mail as the preferred method for contacting the course co-ordinator in this course. The course co-ordinator will attempt to reply to your e-mails within 24 hours of receiving a question or request during business hours.

Course Identification

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Faculty</th>
<th>Business</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Course Code</td>
<td>BUSM1408, BUSM 2288, OMGT 1000</td>
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<tr>
<td>Course Name</td>
<td>Business Research Methods</td>
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<tr>
<td>Duration</td>
<td>One Semester, offered first and second semester</td>
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Credit Points: 12 Credit Points

Mode of Delivery: Predominately on-line plus 2 face-to-face classes.

Contact Hours: Two all day Saturday workshops for all students, plus a one hour Introduction Session for Honours students only. Generally, students will have to spend an additional five hours per week of semester on the course, outside direct contact hours.

Pre-requisites: There are no pre-requisites.

Location: RMIT Building 108 (239 Bourke Street).

Dates and times:

**Introduction (Honours students Only)**
Wednesday, 4 August, 2004
10.30 am to 11.30 am
108.06.31

**Orientation and Workshop One (All students)**
Saturday, 21 August, 2004
9.30 am to 3.30 pm
From 9.30 until 1.30pm we will be located in 108.07.24 where lunch will be provided, then after lunch from 1.30 until 3.30 we will move to Computer Laboratory 108.07.07 for an on-line resources session.

**Final Research Proposal Presentations (All students)**
Saturday, 13 November, 2004
9.30 am to 4.30 pm with lunch provided.
108.07.24

Course Description

**Aim**
The aim of this predominately on-line course is to enable students to acquire the necessary knowledge and skills (or to further develop their existing knowledge and skills), to be able to successfully complete a significant research project in a business environment.

In this course students will be introduced to the complexities and differences in research methods currently being utilised in business related research. Students will learn how to frame their research question(s), how to undertake the answering of that question and how to present their work to examination level.

**Course Objectives**

By the completion of this course, students will:

- understand the major approaches to business research and the methodological choices that need to be made;
- understand the various aspects of research design and be able to design business research;
- be able to access library resources using various retrieval techniques;
- understand the requirements of a literature review;
- understand the principles of quantitative and qualitative data analysis;
• be familiar with the various quantitative and qualitative methods of data gathering and have knowledge of methods appropriate to their research;
• be familiar with the ethical issues involved in business research;
• be able to prepare and present a research proposal.

Planned Student Learning Experience – Learning Activities
This course is designed to enable students to move through the materials at their own pace. All teaching materials in the form of modules can be accessed on-line. In addition there will be two face to face classes that students are expected to attend.

The first class will be held on Saturday 21 August from 9.30 until 3.30. From 9.30 until 1.30 the class will be held in 108.07.24 and then from 1.30 until 3.30 we will move into the Computer Laboratory located at 108.07.07 Lunch will be provided.

The second class in which students will present an outline of their research proposal will be held on Saturday 13 November from 9.30 until 4.30 in 108.07.24.

In addition to these two classes Honours students enrolled in OMGT1000 will need to attend an Introduction session being held on Wednesday 4 August from 10.30 until 11.30 in 108.06.31.

As the students undertaking the course will be studying research topics in a variety of business disciplines, it is expected that this will lead to greater exposure for all students to different approaches to research in different disciplines. The emphasis in this course as with the preparation or a thesis, is on guided independent learning with the content adapted as far as possible to cater for students’ previous experience and to compliment the nature of their research.

Assessment
There are two pieces of assessment that are compulsory for this course:

Assignment 1: Critical review essay on approaches to business research methods (literature review); and

Assignment 2: Research proposal report and presentation.

Assignment 1: Critical review essay on approaches to business research methods (literature review).

Due Date: Friday 24 September, 2004 by 5 pm.

For the critical review essay on approaches to business research methods (literature review) students are required to select a topic of research interest, preferably in the proposed research area for their thesis. In providing a critical review of key literature relevant to their topic students are expected to select a minimum of (5) five research articles on this topic and to critically review these in an integrated manner such that this work could be incorporated into a thesis literature review. The critical review essay should address such as:

- what was the research objective or aim?
- how was the research conducted?
- in your view, how reliable was the knowledge produced as a result of the research?
- what other research methods could have been used to research the problem?
- are there potential areas of research not covered by the study/article?

This critical review essay should be between 2,000 and 3,000 words in length (longer assignments will be asked to re-submit). It should be typed and single-spaced. Students are advised to refer to the style guide in the Research Students Manual for guidelines on referencing, citing sources and formatting assignments (see http://www.rmit.edu.au/bus/rdl/student_manual ). It is not necessary to attach the articles reviewed with your assignment, however you should include a detailed reference list. The Harvard system (one of the most commonly used author-date styles) is the preferred referencing and citation system used by RMIT Business.

Please attach a cover sheet to your assignment indicating your name and student number. This assignment can be emailed, posted or hand delivered to the course co-ordinator and must be received by 5 pm on the due date.

Assessment Objectives for Assignment 1:
- to show evidence of succinct writing skills;
- to demonstrate the ability to critically evaluate other peoples research/writing; and
- to show competency in referencing and citation.

Assignment 2 - Research Proposal Report and Presentation

Due Date: Saturday 13 November, 2004

The assessment for Assignment Two consists of two compulsory components. Firstly, there is a written research proposal component. For this students are required to prepare a research proposal between five (5) and ten (10) pages (or 3,000 to 6,000 words) which covers:

(i) The title of project.

(ii) A summary of your proposed research project written in language understandable to people outside your discipline area.

(iii) A description of what your proposed research project entails, including the background, statement of the research problem, your objectives, the research question(s) and the scope and location of the research.

(iv) The rationale or reason why you intend to conduct your research and what academic and practical implications might flow for it.

(v) The research methods that you will be using to actually go about conducting the research, including a research schedule and time scale.

A cover sheet with your name, student number, School you are enrolled in and proposed research title should be attached. The written research proposal is due on the day of the presentation and can be handed in during class.

The second component of the assessment for Assignment Two is a presentation of your research proposal to the class. Students should plan their presentations to be no more than 10 minutes. Teaching aids including a PC with PowerPoint and data projector facilities, an overhead projector and a whiteboard can be utilised by students for their presentations. Please note that all PowerPoint presentations should be emailed to the course co-ordinator the day before the presentations so they can be loaded onto the PC without the use of floppy disks. The presentations will take a similar format to the research proposal presentations required for students Candidature Review and will be followed by 5 to 10 minutes of discussion and questions.
The aim of Assignment Two - Written Research Proposal and Presentation, is to provide students with experience in preparing a research proposal in the form required by the Portfolio for approval of all higher degree candidatures as part of the Candidature Review process. For further information on the Candidature Review process please visit: http://www.rmit.edu.au/bus/rdu/cand_info

Please be aware that satisfactory completion of this assignment for the purposes of this course does not imply that your research proposal will be automatically approved by your supervisors, by your School or by the Portfolio.

Assessment Review

If you require an assessment review you should apply in writing to the Head of the Research Development Unit, Prof. Robert Brooks, Associate Dean (Research), Level 3, 255 Bourke St, Melbourne 3000 within a month of the official notification of the result.

Course Grades Available

For students enrolled in BUSM1408 and BUSM2288 the grades available of this course are PX Pass (no higher grade available); or NN Fail.

For Honours students enrolled in OMGT1000 the following course grades are available:

- 80 - 100 High Distinction
- 70 - 79 Distinction
- 60 - 69 Credit
- 50 - 59 Pass
- 00 – 49 Fail.

Academic Administration Procedures

**What do I do if I need help with deadlines or have become ill?**

If extenuating circumstances or illness affects a students progress in this course, the student must contact the course co-ordinator (Bronwyn Coate) as soon as possible to discuss what measures can be taken. Where appropriate an extension on assessment requirements may be negotiated.

Course Evaluation and Feedback

RMIT is strongly committed to the principle of continuous improvement in relation to teaching and learning and also seeks to ensure that the academic materials and learning resources that are provided to students meet the objectives in facilitating students learning. As such after the completion of the course all students will be provided with a course evaluation form to complete. Whilst students are strongly encouraged to complete the evaluation form and provide feedback on the course to assist in aiding its future development and continual improvement, this is voluntary and students are not required to include any personal details which would identify them in their evaluation of the course. That is to say, if students wish to provide feedback on the course (anonymously or not) they are encouraged to do so.
Plagiarism

Plagiarism is the presentation of the work, idea or creation of another person without appropriate referencing as though it is one’s own. Plagiarism is not permitted in this course. The use of another person’s work or ideas must be acknowledged. Failure to do so may result in charges of academic misconduct which carry a range of penalties including cancellation of results and exclusion from this course.

Referencing

The format for citing references in this course is the Harvard system (or alternatively other systems from the Author-Date style such as the American Psychological Association (APA) style are acceptable). Aside from Author-Date styles the other main style of referencing used in business disciplines (although less than author-date styles) is the footnote system. The various styles and systems used for referencing and citing sources are outlined in the Research Student Manual and the Style Manual for Authors and Printers, John Wiley and Sons (previously printed by Australian Government Printing Service, Canberra).

All written submissions must be referenced consistently in accordance with an acknowledged system.

Learning Resources – The Distributed Learning System

The course materials are divided into modules that students can access individually via the Distributed Learning System or DLS. Instructions for logging on to the DLS to access course materials are provided below:

1. Go to: http://www.rmit.edu.au/online

2. Click on the area labelled: Login to the learning hub. Use your student number as your login and your password i.e. your RMIT network password, to gain access to the system.

3. This will automatically link you to the courses you are enrolled in and begins with a Welcome Page.

4. Go to the New Blackboard Button for your course and double click BUSM 1408 or BUSM2288 or OMGT1000 - Business Research Methods.

5. Go to the Course Documents button, double click and then select the modules you are interested in.

If you are denied access, please contact the Research Development Unit, Student Administration Officer Prue Lamont on (03) 9925 5598 so that she can check your current enrolment status. During orientation, students will be given a guided tour through the online study and communication tools.
Text and References

Prescribed Text

The prescribed text will assist students in obtaining the most value from this online course, and will be a useful reference for students throughout their candidature as they pass various stages in the process of conducting their research project.

The prescribed text is:


Other Recommended Texts

Other useful texts that are recommended for research students (and are available from the Business Library) include:

For novice researchers:


For advanced Researchers:


Student Learning Program

*Where do I start?*

This is an online course where the students undertake the work at their own pace. It is generally recommended that students work through the modules in the order they have been provided i.e. Modules 1 through to Module 8. While each module is self contained it is recommended that students pay particular attention to focus on those modules or sections of modules that are most pertinent to the research methodology and approach that the student will be taking in their own research.

It is recommended that students complete modules 1 - 4 before starting the first assignment.

Students can commence work at any stage, however, if this is your first attempt at research, you should allow yourself at least five hours per week per module to ensure you have enough time to complete the entire course prior to your second assessment.
The course consists of 8 modules:

Module One - Introduction to Business Research Methods;
Module Two - Approaches to Research Methodology;
Module Three - Designing Business Research;
Module Four - Literature Reviews;
Module Five - Introduction to Data Generation;
Module Six - Qualitative Research Methods and Data Analysis;
Module Seven - Quantitative Research Methods and Data Analysis; and
Module Eight - Writing a Thesis

Supplemental Information - On-line Research Student Support Resources

The RMIT Business Research Development Unit has produced a Research Student Manual. This manual contains information on your candidature here at RMIT, plus valuable information on ethics and the presentation of written work including:

- Matters of Style
- Role of Supervisors and Responsibilities of Students
- Ethical Procedures
- Policy and Procedures for Higher Degrees by Research (Doctor of Philosophy (PhD) & Master by Research
- Research Degree Policy
- Student's Complaint Policy
- Faculty Higher Degrees Process Improvement project
- RMIT University's Research Practice Policy
- RMIT University's Practice relating to Data Storage, Retention and Confidentiality
- RMIT University's Practice relating to Authorship and Publication of Research Output
- RMIT University's Practice relating to Potential Conflicts of Interest
- RMIT University's Practice relating to Research Misconduct
- And the Joint NHMRC/AVCC Statement and Guidelines on Research Practice

It can be found at http://www.rmit.edu.au/bus/rdu/student_manual Changes to RMIT Research and student management practices will be updated in this publication. You should ensure you read this manual at the start of your enrolment and again prior to submitting your thesis.

Other Useful Web Sites

http://www.rmit.edu.au/bus/rdu/current_students Current research students information

Useful e-mails

bronwyn.coate@rmit.edu.au
robert.brooks@rmit.edu.au
john.terrell@rmit.edu.au