**Research Methods**

**MSc in Business and Management**

**2019-2020**

**Research Methods: an Introduction**

1. **Objectives**

On successful completion of this unit students should be able to

* Select a contemporary topic for conducting research, determine Masters level research objectives, undertake a critical literature survey, set up an appropriate research design and deploy the chosen research methods
* Understand different research designs and data collection techniques and their applicability to various management research
* Present the data, qualitatively and/or quantitatively, and draw appropriate conclusions.
* Understand the requirements of conducting and preparing a Master level dissertation in which the research findings are communicated clearly, concisely and effectively.
* Present a coherent research proposal in which the objective of the research as well as the process of the research is clearly outlined.

**Moodle Site**

We have set up a separate Moodle site for this module to help you easily locate all materials related to research methods.

[Research Methods Resources (BAL-2019)](http://moodle.port.ac.uk/course/view.php?id=3465)

Important information relating to lectures and seminars will be communicated via the site. We will add your reading list over time and help you with signposting other resources. So make sure that you log in to this Moodle site regularly.

**Access to the Moodle site is essential. You will need to submit your assignments for Research Methods in this Moodle site. Please check if you have access to the site and contact the unit co-ordinator as soon as possible if you are unable to access the site.**

1. **Assessment (MBM students)**

This unit prepares you for the Research Project module. Your summative assessment consists of i) a topic outline, including definitions of main concepts and a literature review table ii) a research proposal, incorporating a brief literature review of the chosen topic as well as a critical discussion of the proposed methodology, methods and sampling strategy

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| **Assessment** | **Assessment Type** | **Weighting Factor** | **Pass Mark** | **Description** |
| Item 1- Research Problem | Coursework/  Presentation | 20% |  | 500 words (excluding literature review table). Topic outline, including definitions of main concepts and a literature review table ( |
| Item 2- Applied Research Design | Coursework | 20% |  | 400 words (assignment will be released two weeks before the deadline) |
| Item 3 - Research Proposal (CW) | Coursework | 60% |  | 2100 Words. Research proposal, including indicative literature review and critique of proposed methods |

Research Methods Training (Week 1-12 in teaching block 2) is provided to help you gain the necessary knowledge and skill for conducting a master level research and preparing your final dissertation. Research methods lecturer(s) and tutor(s) can help you to think about different research methodology and address your questions on the structure and content of your research proposal.

**All queries about your Research Project after the submission of research proposal should be addressed to your Research Project module coordinators and your research supervisor.** You will be allocated to a supervisor familiar with your chosen topic at the end May after you submitted your proposals and received your mark for this element of the unit. You are encouraged, however, to get in touch with your Research Project module coordinator and other lecturers in your specialism to discuss your ideas for dissertation earlier on during the academic term. You can see below the list of dissertation unit coordinators for different specialisms**.**

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| --- | --- | --- |
| Unit | Dissertation unit | Unit Coordinator |
| U26500 | MBM Research Project (Systems) | Dr Adrian Benfell |
| U26492 | MBM Research Project (Management) | James Rowe |
| U26501 | MBM Research Project (HRM) | Dr Yvonne Rueckert |
| U26502 | MBM Research Project (Innovation) | Dr Sercan Ozcan   |  |  | | --- | --- | | |  | | --- | |  | | |

**If you are studying for MSc International Business and Management (those students who start their course in January) you do not need to submit any assignment for Research Methods Unit. Details of your coursework will be conveyed to you by your dissertation unit coordinator, Emre Cinar and your deputy course leader, Dr Rui Yang.**

**For all other MBM students, you assignment due date are as follows:**

**Assignment Due date: Friday, February, 28th, 23:59**

**Assignment 1: Research Problem**

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **Due Date:** | February 28th 2020 by 23:59 |
| **Submit to:** | Your research outline should be uploaded as Microsoft word file to the Research Problem Portal on the Research Methods Moodle Site. The title of your document must be your Student Number. |
| **Word Limit:** | The Research outline **MUST NOT** exceed 500 words- excluding the table of references. |

The assessment is a literature outline for your dissertation. This should include a brief outline of the main concept (construct) of interest, followed by 3-4 paragraph outlining more specific concepts that were highlighted in the literature (500 words). The required format is shown below. Further information will be placed on the units Moodle site.

This submission should include a reference table in the appendix, which summarises 8-10 key articles in your chosen topic of research. This essay should be no more than 500 words in length in maximum two pages—excluding table of references. The students should present this at the classroom in the following week. Each student will have four minutes to present.

**An exemplar Format of the assignment:**

Main concept: outlining the broad topic of interest (e.g. Gender Inequality), provide a definition, and explain why you are interested in this concept, and how you can research that drawing on more specific concepts

Main concept (e.g. Gender Inequality): give brief definition.

Concept 1: Discrimination: give brief definition

Concept 2: Glass ceiling effect: give brief definition

Concept 3: Gender Roles: give brief definition

**The submission should include a table of references in the following format:**

|  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Reference  APA Style | Research Aims/ Research Questions | Conceptual framework/ Theories utilised | Methods  (Specify if review paper) | Key findings | Gaps in the literature/ shortcoming of the paper |

**Assignment 2: Applied Research Design**

**Assignment Due date: Friday, March, 27th, 23:59**

You will be given a short case-study based on a real management scenario. You will need to describe a tailored research design to help management decision making. The purpose of this assignment is to check your understanding of research methods and to help your employment skills.

**The short case-study will be issued two weeks before the deadline.**

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **Due Date:** | Friday 27th March 2020 by 23:59 |
| **Submit to:** | Your research outline should be uploaded as Microsoft word file to the Research Design Portal on the Research Moodle Site. The title of your document must be your Student Number. |
| **Word Limit:** | **MUST NOT** exceed 400 words and should be fitted in two pages.  (excluding the table of references) |

**Assignment 3: The Research Proposal (60%)**

**Deadline: Wednesday, May 13th at 23:59.**

The final assessment is a Research Proposal for your dissertation. This will be 2100 words long (maximum word count: 2100) and should include an ethics form and a project plan diagram. You will be briefed fully at the start of Teaching Block Two. It will account for 60% of your marks for this unit. The topic for your proposal must be in the area of your chosen specialism. The submission is due on **Wednesday, May 13th at 23:59**.

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **Due Date:** | Wednesday 13th May 2020 by 23:55 |
| **Submit to:** | Your Proposal should be uploaded as Microsoft word file to the Proposal Assignment Portal on the Research Methods Moodle Site. The title of your document must be your Student Number. You also need to submit a separate ethics from (ethics form should be later submitted to your supervisors for approval) |
| **Word Limit:** | The Proposal **MUST NOT** exceed 2100 words. The 2100 words do not include footnotes, numerical tables, references, and other appendices. |

All work submitted must adhere to the University Policy on ‘Cheating, Collusion and Plagiarism’. This means that all proposals are submitted to turnitin to assess the similarity index. Examiners will check the ‘turnitin’ report before marking your proposals.

The required format is as follows not necessarily in this order:

1. **Title**.
2. **Introduction, Including research rationale: justification of why this research is going to be done, Background literature and Research questions (can be one but usually not more than three questions)**
3. **Critical review of key literature**.
4. **Justified methodology and data collection method(s)**

**Including a discussion on challenges of gaining access**

Appropriate referencing must be used throughout and a reference list is required.

Three other documents should be supplied as appendices and will be read in conjunction with the proposal, these are:

* A project plan in table form (included in the main file)
* An ethics form (separate file)
* Poster presented at the seminar

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| --- | --- |
| Word Limit | 2100 words not including quotations and appendices |
| Page Size | A4 |
| Spacing | Proportional, single line (1.15) |
| Font | 11 point Arial or equivalent |
| Justification | Right and left justified |
| Pagination | Number pages |
| Title | Bold capital letters, left aligned |
| Headings | Bold upper and lower case |
| Paragraphs | One line space between paragraphs, no indent |
| References | APA style. |

Additional guidelines about the content of the assignment will be given in week 18.

**3. Programme Outline**

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| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **TB.WK** | **W/C** | **Lecture** | **Seminar** |
| 2.1 | 20st  Jan. | Introduction to the unit and Assignment Brief | Start thinking about your dissertation! |
| 2.2 | 27-Jan-20 | Making reading work? Looking and searching  (online lecture) | Thinking about a topic (before it is too late!) |
| 2.3 | 03-Feb-20 | Literature Review: Making sense of scholarly research  (online lecture) | Practice in accessing articles |
| 2.4 | 10-Feb-19 | Research Design: An introduction | Techniques on writing a literature review |
| 2.5 | 17-Feb-20 | Research Design: Understanding Quantitative data  (online lecture) | Dissertation/ Research Proposal analysis |
| 2.6 | 24-Feb-20 | Research Design: Understanding Qualitative data  (online lecture) | Making sense of quantitative data |
| 2.7 | 02-March-20 | **Assignment 1: 28.02.2020**  Consolidation week | |
| 2.8 | 9-Mar-2020 | Data collection: Primary vs. Secondary data and Sampling | Making sense of qualitative data |
| 2.9 | 16-Mar-20 | Data collection:  Interviews | How to formulate your research questions: presenting your topic outlines |
| 2.10 | 23-Mar-20 | Data collection: Questionnaire Design | How to formulate your research questions: presenting your topic outline |
|  | **Assignment 2: 27th March 2020**  **Easter Holidays** | | |
| 2.11 | 21-April-20 | Writing research proposal | Poster session |
| 2.12 | 27-April-20 | Key issues in data collection: Ethics  (online) | Introduction to Ethics: How to fill ethics forms |
| 2.13 | 4-May-19 | Revision | Revision |
|  | Assignment 3: May 13th 2020 | | |

Research Methods – Reading and Resources – please look on Moodle for further texts

There are a vast number of research methodology texts available; it is vital that you read some of these before you undertake any research and continue to read them until you finally hand in your completed project. The following are a list of useful references linked to this unit. It is almost certainly worth buying at least one of the main textbooks as a handy reference guide.

**Main Text Books:**

Bryman, A. and Bell, E. (2015) *Business Research Methods*: Oxford: Oxford University Press. (4th edition)

Saunders, M., Lewis, P. and Thornhill, A (2012) *Research Methods for Business Students*, London: Financial Times, Prentice Hall (6th edition).

**Alternative books and additional resources:**

Robson, C. (2011) *Real World Research: a Resource for Social Scientists and Practitioner-Researchers*, Oxford: Blackwell. (3rd edition)

Anderson, V. (2013) *Research Methods in Human Resource Management:* London: CIPD. (3rd edition)

Berman- Brown, R. (2006) *Doing Your Dissertation in Business and Management: The Reality of Researching and Writing*, Sage, London.

Bryman, A. And Cramer, D. (2011) *Quantitative Data Analysis: with IBMSPSS: a guide for social scientists*. Rutledge

Creswell, J. (2013) Research Design, Qualitative and Quantitative and Mixed method research. Sage. London

Easterby-Smith, M., Lowe, R. and Thorpe, A. (2015) *Management Research: An Introduction*, London: Sage. (5th edition)

Gill, J., Johnson, P. (2010) *Research methods for Managers*, London: Sage (5th edition).

Hart, C. (1998) *Doing a Literature Review: Releasing the Social Science Research Imagination*, London: Sage.

Hart, C. (2004) *Doing your Masters Dissertation,* London; Sage.

Jankowicz, A. D. (2005) *Business Research Projects*, London: Thomson Business Press.

Pallant, J. (2013). *SPSS Survival Manual: A step by step guide to data analysis using SPSS for Windows,* Maidenhead: Open University Press. (5th edition)Wallace, M. and Wray, A. (2006) *Critical Reading and Writing for Postgraduates*, Sage, London.

**Other resources:**

1. Whilst it is important to have access to **at least one** research methods text throughout this unit there are other sources of information that might be useful. Most of the current journals subscribed by the library are in electronic format and can be downloaded easily from the ’Subject Guide’ on the university web pages - many of these journals will have first hand accounts of research and are invaluable when undertaking any work during your research. It is expected that you will use mainly journal articles for sources when writing your dissertation.
2. It is very important that you use journal articles in your proposal and in your Research Project - these present the most current up-to-date accounts of research and you will need to demonstrate in your literature review that you are aware of current debates and issues surrounding your topic.
3. Google Scholar can also be helpful in searching for relevant journal articles and any full text article that you can download via the library web site can also be accessed through Scholar under My Library Full Text.
4. It is worth a visit to:

<http://www.port.ac.uk/library/staff/>

for a general overview of information available to you from books, journals, statistics and datasets, research reports, ‘grey literature’ and much more.

1. There is a listing of useful web pages on research methods etc. at <http://gsociology.icaap.org/methods/>
2. In addition there are some electronic research method journals - eg.

Qualitative Report: <http://www.nova.edu/ssss/QR/index.html>

However, as with all information on the web its quality can be variable and with research material there is an overreaching dominance of American based material which is not always compatible with the way research is conducted in the UK.

**Summary of lectures and useful material**

**Week 1: Lecture**

**Introduction to the unit and Assignment Brief**

Aims: This first week is about looking at what we expect of you and how you can utilise the resources within the Business School and University to enable you to be a successful Masters Student. We shall consider the transition to a Masters, to outline the purpose and distinct focus of management research and consider the basics of how you go about choosing a topic.

**Reading**:

Saunders, et.al. (2012) Chapter 1

**Preparation:**

1. Go to <https://lifescience.roche.com/usa/quiz/what-type-of-researcher-are-you/#quiz> – take the quiz (it’s a bit of fun but should get you started thinking about your research skills and approach)
2. Answer the questions below for seminar 9 and bring it to class (you will not have to show it to anyone)
3. Start a diary or notebook to jot ideas down as they come to you.

**Week 2: Lecture**

**Making reading work? Looking and searching**

Aims: Your research project is only as good as the reading that goes into it. Learning how to search efficiently and effectively can not only save you time it can also improve your overall project. This session will demonstrate how to search for literature, how to utilise different techniques and how to start thinking about your topic area and search terms.

**Reading:**

Saunders, et.al. (2012) Chapter 3

Handy tips for searching on Moodle

Handy tips for making notes on Moodle

The Half Hour Rule on Moodle

**Searching for Literature and Information**

**Sources of information:**

* Books – Portsmouth library or other libraries
* http://www.port.ac.uk/library/essentials/
* Journal articles – database list available from:

http://www.libr.port.ac.uk/ROADS/subject-listing/databases/business.html

* Portals and gateways – see below
* World-wide web resources

**Some Useful Electronic Gateways**

**Some Sites for Sources of Information from Official Publications**

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| Name | URL |
| DirectGov | www.direct.gov.uk |
| Office of Public Sector Information | www.opsi.gov.uk |
| The Official Documents | www.official-documents.gov.uk/ |

Sites for Methodological Information and Help

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| Qualitative Analysis | Data |
| Resources site funded by ESRC to support qualitative data analysis with: resources, methodologies, IT issues and step-by-step | guides http://onlineqda.hud.ac.uk |
| Quantitative methods Links to resources that form part of the ‘gsociology’ website (North American) | http://gsociology.icaap.org/methods/surveys.htm |
|  |  |

Some Sites for International HRM Resources

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| World Federation of Personnel  Management Associations | www.wfpma.com |
| American Society for Training and Development | www.astd.org |
| International Federation of Training and  Development Organisations | www.iftdo.org |
| European Industrial Relations Observatory Online | www.eiro.eurofound.ie |

**Sites Providing Country Information**

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| **Name** | **Notes** | **URL** |
| CIA World  Factbook | Country profiles which  provide geographical and government information  as well as key economic  indicators | https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/index.html |
| IMF country  reports | Full text access to country reports | https://www.imf.org/external/country/index.htm |
| International Monetary Fund | IMF statistics and articles,  including exchange rates and economic indicators for countries of the world | www.imf.org |
| Mondaq Business Briefing | Access to world business news  pages | www.mondaq.com |

**Sources of Information about Companies**

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| **Name** | **Notes** | **URL** |
| CAROL | Corporate online service with  annual reports covering UK,  Europe and Asia | http://www.carol.co.uk |
| Companies House | Basic information available via Free Company Information link | www.companies-house.gov.uk |
| Corporate Information | Over 3 million company profiles, searches through search engines | www.corporateinformation.com |
| Corporate Reports | Company reports and accounts,  search by company name or sector, free registration | www.corpreports.co.uk |
| Financial Times | Key financial data for 20,000  limited companies worldwide | www.ft.com |
| Fortune 500 | Information on Companies in the  ‘big 500’ | www.fortune.com/fortune |
| FTSE International | Requires registration but then  provides free access to detailed information on FTSE indices and member companies | www.ftse.com |
| Business.com | One of the most substantial and  useful resources for business research and information | www.business.com |
| UK Company News | Directory of UK listed companies arranged by sector. Annual/interim reports | www.companynews.co.uk |

**Week 3: Lecture**

**Doing a literature review**

Aims: This session is about understanding the importance and purpose of the critical literature review to your research project. To demonstrate what we mean when we talk about being critical when reading. To know what you should include (and exclude) when writing your review.

Reading:

Saunders et.al. (2012) Chapter 3

Hart (2005) Chapter 6

Hart (2001) - Basic knowledge: organization of the literature, planning techniques and searching / Literature types / using information communications technology.

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Evaluating your literature review – some indicative criteria** | | | |
| Rationale for the research |  | Some indication of why this  research might be useful | No clear rationale why this topic has been chosen |
| Research Questions | Clear RQ’s that relate closely to the rationale | Coherent RQ’s but limited links to rationale. | RQ’s unclear. Poor links to rationale. |
| Literature review | Clear and logical structure/ literature is presented well – and relevant to the research | Literature is loosely focussed does not narrow to research agenda – some relevance to research but needs to be clearer | No clear structure to the literature, vague and unfocused – little apparent relevance to research |
|  | Highlights main theoretical concepts - extensive range of sources used. | Illustrates a few theoretical concepts – limited range of sources | Few or no theoretical concepts discussed -- few sources used |
|  | Presents a strong critical argument for the research – strong insights or synthesis shown | Vague argument for the research – Descriptive account | Leaves reader wondering why the literature is included – little or no argument made for the research |
| Overall coherence | Excellent links made between sections | Some links made | Very few or no links made |

**Reading critically and evaluatively** (adapted from Quinton and Smallbone, 2006)

Does your source make use of primary data? If so – use this checklist

**For sources that use primary data**

**Date** – when was the research reported or actually done? How current are the results? What are the author’s credentials?

**Data collection methods** – what did they actually do? In what ways is this article/survey similar or different to others that you have read?

**Style -** Is the article / report constructed clearly? Can you follow the argument through a logical progression? Does the use of tables, diagrams, and charts add value to the conclusions or the explanations

**Analysis -** What is the central issue dealt with in this report / article? Is there a particular cultural bias? What assumptions have been made, e.g. about the generalizability of the results? What is the evidence supporting these conclusions?

**Reflection -** How do you respond to what the author is saying? How do you rate this article (and why?) How does it relate to other concepts / ideas you have come across? How can you verify the results? Does it point to further research in a particular direction? Is it relevant to your current work?

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Is your source one that makes use of theory or opinion? – if so, use this checklist

**For sources that use theory or opinion**

**Date** – when was it written, revised, published? How current is the discussion? What are the author’s credentials? What is the author’s perspective? Where is he or she coming from? In what ways is this article similar to or different from others you might have read?

**Style -** Is the article / report constructed clearly? Can you follow the argument through a logical progression? Does the use of tables, diagrams, and charts add value to the conclusions or the explanations?

**Analysis -** What is the central issue dealt with in the paper? What assumptions have been made? Are the explicit, if so what are they? Are the implicit, if so what are they? Are the sources drawn from a variety of areas? Are the sources drawn from a wide range of different authors? Is there an apparent cultural bias?

**Reflection -** How do you respond to what the author is saying? How do you rate this article? If this article is purely theoretical, how do you assess its academic quality? How does it relate to other concepts / ideas you have come across? Does it point to further research in a particular direction? Is it relevant to your current work?

Quinton, S. and Smallbone, T. (2006) Postgraduate Research in Business: A Critical Guide, Sage, London.

**Week 4: Lecture**

**Research Design (An introduction): Making a start on understanding methodology:**

Aims: This session aims to introduce you to the complexity in business methodologies; we consider contemporary philosophies - exploring the methodological continuum between positivism and non-positivism. If the four aims of a science are to describe, explain, predict and control, we consider how positivist and non-positivist understand description, explanation, prediction and control. We also consider how you would choose a methodological approach?

**Essential reading**: Saunders et al. chapter 4. Bryman and Bell part 1

**A glossary of terms for research philosophy and methodology**

(see Brown (2006) for an accessible explanation of these terms)

\* Note this is an area that has perplexed philosophers from Plato onwards. As such is it both complex and contentious. The following is only the crudest of outlines and by no means a definitive guide.

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| **Definition** | **Why bother about it?** | **Key issues** |
| **Ontology** (position, being  in the world) –  *basic assumption about the fundamental nature of*  *reality and existence* | The view that you take  about what you consider  to be real will affect  everything that you do, including your research | Do you feel secure in your identity? Do you feel that  reality is ‘out there’  (objectively external to you) or do you feel that reality is ‘in here’ (subjectively within yourself)?  Do you believe that reality is shared?  How ‘real’ are abstractions  such as ‘justice’ or ‘vision’? |

Two extreme positions have tended to hold sway in social science:

1 - scientific rationalism – the assumption that all aspects of social life are subject to fundamental laws that will ultimately be discovered by scientific investigation

2 - humanist interpretation - here the assumption is that human existence has unique properties derived from our ability for conscious thought, which mark it off from other aspects of nature. Thus although science may understand aspects of human biology and physiology, such methods are not suitable for understanding human action which is rooted in subjective meaning systems.

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| --- | --- | --- |
| **Definition** | **Why bother about it?** | **Key issues** |
| **Epistemology** *what*  *information counts as valid knowledge and how it*  *should be acquired and interpreted* | Research is about  knowledge, so assumptions about the nature of  knowledge underpin any approach to research. If you don’t consider something  to be worth knowing then  it is logically not worth  researching. | What do you think is worth knowing in business and management? What might  you do about the knowledge that you recognise is worth knowing? How can  worthwhile knowledge be obtained? |

The two ontological positions (above) point to different epistemological assumptions.

1 Scientific rationalism (often refereed to as positivism) asserts that the world is characterized by objective facts about the nature of things and people. These facts constitute valid knowledge, can be studied and regularities between them established. Well-established regularities can assume the status of universal laws which in turn can generate further hypothetical propositions which can then be tested against new facts. This approach deals with verifiable observations and measurable relations between them.

2. Humanist interpretation (also referred to as interpretivism or phenomenology) rejects the notion of absolute facts (at least in social situations) in favour of a view which sees knowledge as socially and historically constructed, affected by socialisation and perception. From this position the significance of specific issues and situations must be determined through the interpretations placed on them by participants. The task, therefore is to understand the meanings which individuals and groups attach to certain activities in their own terms. Universal laws are not seen to be possible, the best that can be achieved is a deep understanding of actions in their specific socio-cultural context. From this position the social world is an inter-subjective accomplishment that is always being made and remade by thinking, feeling actors who have the capacity to make a difference to the world they inhabit.

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| --- | --- | --- |
| **Definition** | **Why bother about it?** | **Key issues** |
| **Methodology** - *the overall perspective or philosophy of researching .* | The methodology is the foundation on which your research is based. It will  provide the basis for the rationale behind the  methods you will use  and the type of research  you will undertake | Will positivist or humanist principles underpin your considerations of what  is real, what is knowledge  and knowable and what  values underpin your  research? |

Methodology is different and distinct from ‘Methods’ which are *the procedures and techniques used to collect, store, analyse and present information.*

**Summary of positivist and humanist paradigms (Easterby-Smith, 2002 :27)**

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
|  | **Positivist paradigm** | **Interpretivism paradigm** |
| **Basic Beliefs** | The world is external and objective  Observer is independent  Science is value-free | The world is socially constructed and subjective  Observer is part of what is observed  Science is driven by value-interests |
| **Researcher should** | Focus on facts  Look for causality and fundamental laws  Reduce phenomena to simplest elements  Formulate hypotheses and then  test them | Focus on meanings  Try to understand what is happening  Look at the totality of each situation  Develop ideas through induction from the data |
| **Preferred methods**  **include** | Operationalising concepts so that  they can be measured  Taking large samples | Using multiple methods to establish different views  Small samples investigated in  depth of over time |

**Strengths and weakness - choosing a methodology**

Positivist – (tend towards quantitative methods) - the main strengths are that they can provide wide coverage of the range of situations - they can be fast and economical and particularly when statistics are aggregated from large samples they may be of considerable relevance to policy decisions - however tend to be inflexible and artificial - not very good in understanding processes and the significance that people attach to actions - they are not very helpful in generating theories

Interpretivism - (often associated with qualitative methods) - strengths in their ability to look at change processes over time - to understand people's meanings - to adjust to new issues and ideas as they emerge and to contribute to the evolution of new theories - provide a way of gathering data that is seen as natural rather than artificial - in terms of weakness - data collection can take up a lot of time and resources and the analysis and interpretation of data can be difficult.

**Week 5: Lecture**

**Research Design: Understanding Quantitative data**

Aims: To enable students to read the research results in quantitative journal articles. Student rarely examine the data outlined in articles but this often provides rich material for their dissertations. This session helps make sense of quantitative data.

Reading: Saunders Chapter 5 pp 159-170 and Chapter 13

**Quantitative Methods - please read below**

1. Be honest about your capability

Are you:

A Fairly competent in stats

B. Used to be fairly competent in stats, but very rusty

C. Have never been competent in stats

D. Incompetent and scared

2. Outline scope of descriptive and associative statistics

**Descriptive Statistics**

These describe the data - e.g. 32% of respondents are rusty at stats. This can extend to some level of 'analysis', e.g. Of the 32%, 46% were women.

**Associations**

Much of stats looks at associations - similarities and differences between constructs. E.g. Chi squared for difference; there was no significant difference between men and women on their self-estimated capability in stats. E.g. Pearson's correlation for (dis)similarity; there was a positive correlation between education type and self-estimated stats competence. Association draws heavily on probability theory.

**More sophisticated techniques**

Other stats involve predictive techniques to establish cause and effect. For example… When taking into account age, gender, type and level of education and job type, science -based education accounted for the greatest variance in stats competence, and is the main predictor of competence. These techniques require deeper study and reading.

3. Further reading and software

Stats does not change over time, so old books are fine! What does change is the software social scientists use, and this has developed such that one rarely needs a large computer to undertake a good level of analysis.

SPSS is the software used internationally for quants data. The company has been taken over by IBM and the software is also called PASW temporarily. *Excel is not sufficient.* Copies of SPSS can be obtained from the library. It is not critical which version you use, so long as it is reasonably 'current' v 15. At the time of writing we are up to v20. Excel is used to ‘dump’ data and then you can cut-and-paste the data across into SPSS that you have prepared for your analysis.

There are good books on learning SPSS such as Kinnear and Gray. Field's book is very popular among many of us for stats at a higher level. Both are on your reading list.

For the basics in probability, I would suggest you cruise text books, Wikipedia, google scholar etc, until you find something you do understand and a style that you grasp. Keep going, and you will succeed.

What is the end goal? Papers provide us all with examples which show the different techniques and how they are written up. Understanding the data generated by others helps you refine how you will communicate your own results, and use SPSS. Follow these and other accepted templates when you are writing up.

**DESCRIPTIVES**

Although statistics is often put forward as a ‘science’, in reality much judgement is needed. Stats are used for real data from a real sample, and much of our judgement rests on the sample.

Hence in a paper you are looking for the sample frame (the whole population from which you sample could be drawn – such as all employees at PBS), a description of this and ideas of actual numbers (300 staff including academics and administrators). From which one then decides to take a sample (all women). The technique of sampling should be identified (census, probability, convenience, structured etc) and then we get to the key issue --- how many and who replied? The response rate is how many people replied (expressed a percentage %) and the descriptive stats tell us the make-up of those respondents. Commentary from an author should cover how far those who replied fit the sample frame (ie how far we can generalise). In the end you usually only have one go at getting replies, so researchers have to work with what they have!

The bigger the sample, the easier it is to achieve good associations. Hence the descriptive statistics are crucial to provide context for the rest of your analysis.

The other issue is that of missing data. Technically there are two types of missing data. One type is where the question should not have been replied to (e.g. if you reply ‘No’ to Q 10, skip from this question to question 17) where some respondents simply are never asked the questions. The other type of missing data is where someone has not replied to a question they should have. In e-questionnaires you can set it up so people have to reply to all questions, not the case in paper questionnaires. Both situations mean all descriptive tables provided should have an ‘N’ (which is the number of people who are associated with responding to that question).

One should always use percentages for descriptive and only occasionally should one show actual numbers. When this is the case, one might be trying to get the point across more forcefully.

**Associations**

When looking for difference, the easiest test to use is chi-squared. You will need to decide your threshold of probability. The larger the sample size, the tougher you should be. Hence p<0.01 should be used for samples of over 200, and p<0.05 would be acceptable in samples of 100. In between, its up to you to make the judgement. In SPSS, Chi squared comes in analyse, descriptives, cross-tabs and in the statistics box. NOTE: the lower the number, the more significant it is.

When looking for sameness, the simplest test to use is Pearson two-way correlation. In SPSS this is the top box in the analyse, correlate option. Tables are presented with the full item (or scale) descriptor at the horizontal side, and then each line of the horizontal is numbered and has a column across the top so that you can see what correlates with what. The central line is 1.00, where of course each item correlates perfectly with itself.

Reading Pearson tables needs one to again think about sample size. You also get the p< number. But essentially (and confusingly) as Pearson’s coefficient goes up, so the association is more impressive. For decent samples (200+), I use the following:

0.0 -.19 too slight to count seriously

.20 - .39 respectable

.4 - .59 good!

.6 - .79 wow!

Over .8 I would be suspicious I have two questions asking the same thing!

**Factor analysis**

Linked to correlation, factor analysis asks how questions vary with each other – how do they clump together with respondents providing similar patterns of replies? You don’t need to do the maths, but it is a very useful technique for reducing the number of questions in a questionnaire, and also as a researcher being able to understand any substructures which might be present in your questionnaire. *In SPSS Factor Analysis is under analyse, reduction. Use Varimax rotation. Follow Kinnear and Gray or other introductory text book.*

Again cut-offs are important. The items from your questionnaire will ‘load’ onto the factors. The higher the loading, the better the ‘stickiness’ of the questions with each other. The software will not name the factors, you have to look at the items which have collected together and give them a name yourself. Very high loadings (over 0.9) mean you might have some question items asking the same thing. Hence this is a ‘reduction’ technique where you can legitimately reduce the number of questions in your questionnaire using factor analysis.

0.6 loading is fine in everyone’s book. 0.5 might be acceptable to some, but can be wobbly, especially if you have decent sample size. But I think 0.5 would be OK at Masters level (my opinion). Under 0.5 you might see, but I would urge you to use extreme caution!

Finally connected to Factor Analysis or to any sub-scales (where several items combine to form one construct), you might see Cronbach’s Alpha being used and this tests validity. Here the higher the number the better. Hence anything over .8 is fine. .7 is arguable (especially for fuzzy constructs such as engagement) and some argue for lower numbers. A matter of judgement for you, but the more kickable the construct the tougher you should be – hence for something like ‘intelligence’ be tough, while ‘inclination to be a bully’ you might be able to argue something between .6 and .7. Do not believe any scale validity under .6!

**Calculating your sample numbers**

Sample size has been mentioned many times and you are probably thinking about your own sample size. The question of ‘how many is enough?’ haunts most researchers. There are rubrics (equations) in stats books which will help you work this out. But they vary! *The more the better* is a general rule. Remember if one is looking at sub-groups (for me the 20% who might call themselves ‘bullied’) then I need a decent number for any analysis on the bullied. Hence if I want to have 200 bullied, and I think only 20% of my respondents will be bullied, I need to get replies from 1,000 people, but not everyone I ask will reply, so I have to guess at my response rate. Hence if I think only 1 in 4 will reply, I have to get the questionnaire out to 4000 people, to achieve 1000 responses and within that I think I will get 200 bullied. So work backwards!

**Data preparation**

Get your own data prepared properly. Make sure the numbers you assign to response options ‘go’ in the direction that is sensible, thus if you are interested in agreement, make ‘strongly agree’ the highest number and ‘strongly disagree’ the lowest number.

BE CAREFUL of ‘don’t knows’. It’s fine to have ‘don’t know’ in a response group (as some people may not know) but don’t give it a number for your stats– instead THINK how you want to analyse that response.

**TIPS**

NEVER delete the original file in SPSS. Always work with a copy.

Organise your data using Excel. Once it is right, then cut and paste it into SPSS.

ALWAYS keep a pristine copy of your data set. Make a copy and use the copy for all your calculations.

Do print out the SPSS outputs and also save soft copies. SPSS outputs can be cut and pasted into WORD. However I find they look rubbish visually, and almost always retype them into nice looking tables. DO NOT FORGET to put your N’s on every Table.

**Notes for using SPSS**

SPSS has two tabs at the bottom of the page. One tells you how you have constructed your variables and is called Variable view. This is where you start. The other let's you see the data as you would normally and is called Data View. The variables you have created in the variable view on horizontal lines will appear as titles on the columns in the Data View. You cut and paste your data from Excel into the Data View.

**Variable view**

Here are the key fields for you to consider:

**Name**s can have no spaces. Keep them short and obvious in meaning.

**Type** is preset to numeric.

**Decimals** is pre-set to 2.

**Label** is the name that will appear on your printouts, so use proper titling.

**Values** is very useful when any single response number will have a certain meaning – e.g. female =1, male = 2.

**Missing data** is for when the data SHOULD be missing (see above) to not confuse the ‘should be missing’ with the ‘not-answered’.

**Measure** indicates what type of data you are using: scale, nominal, ordinal. Look in the books, if you are in doubt.

**How to do the calculations**

Analyse is the start for all statistics. Descriptive statistics and Frequencies show percentages. Try this and also Descriptives. Investigate the options.

Comparing two questions is very useful and chi squared can be found under Analyse, Descriptive and then Cross tabs. You need to tick the Chi squared box in statistics. NOTE the machine will only tell you if any difference is significant, not where the difference is. Hence you need to tick also in ‘cells...’ the ‘expected’ box for row and column. By examining what the machine was expecting as well as what was observed you can see where the real difference is. Hence I would tick ‘expected’ and aldo row and column percentages. In your printout make sure you do not have more ‘missing cells’ than you should have.

Correlations are under Analyse Correlate and Bivariate. Pearsons is already ticked. Often you need to print then cut out and stick together your table!

Factor analysis is under Analyse, Dimension Reduction, Factor. Most are preset to what you are likely to want BUT under extraction UNTICK unrotated solution. In Rotation tick Varimax. The printout will show a lot of tables but you are looking for the factor table towards the end (often the end one) where you will see the numbered factors and the loadings of the questions in columns.

Cronbach’s alpha is under Analyse, Scale, Reliability analysis. Put in the variables for the alpha.

**Week 6 : Lecture**

**Research Design: Understanding Qualitative data**

**When truth comes from ‘feelings’, ‘understanding’ or ‘belief’. Qualitative data.**

**Reading**:

Saunders Chapter 5 and Chapter 13

**Aims**: This session aims to examine the nature of qualitative data and to evaluate the different approaches to analysing qualitative data.

**Week 7: Lecture**

**Consolidation!**

**Submit your first assignment.**

**Week 8:**

**Data Collection: Secondary and Primary Data- and Sampling**

**Reading:** Saunders Chapter 8

Some of you will not be doing primary research, you will instead either be doing research based on secondary data or doing a systematic review of the literature based on your research questions

Aims: Whatever research you intend to do, you need to consider how you are going to collect the data and from whom. Do you need a representative sample? Do you need a sampling frame? Who should be in your sample? How many? How should you choose your sample? Even if you are going to do a desk based research project you need to think about where other researchers obtained their data. This session aims to outline the range of sampling techniques and to enable you to apply these to your own research project.

Essential reading: Saunders Chapter 7

**Week 9: Lecture**

**Data Collection: Questionnaire Design**

Reading: Saunders Chapter 11

Aims: This session outlines the main factors you need to consider when undertaking a quantitative approach to your research. It will examine in detail how you select and justify the use of appropriate quantitative methods for a variety of research scenarios – in particular designing a questionnaire.

**Week 10: Lecture**

**Data Collection: The art of research interviews**

**Reading:** Saunders Chapter 10

**Aims:** This session outlines the main factors you need to consider when undertaking a qualitative approach to your research. It will examine in detail how you select and justify the use of appropriate qualitative methods for a variety of research scenarios – in particular gathering data using interviews.

**Week 11: Writing a proposal**

**Reading:** Saunders Chapter 2 pp 50-59

**Aims:** The research proposal is a structured plan of your project, this session explains why it is useful to go through the process of writing a research proposal and outlines the main problems students usually face.

**Week 12: Key issues in data collection: ethics and access**

**Reading:** Saunders Chapter 6

This session outlines the need for ethical oversight and goes through the process of ethical consent. We also consider the importance of gaining access and consider some strategies to help when requesting access to individuals and organisations

**Week 13: revision (independent study)**

Research Project module coordinators organise workshops in this week. These workshops update you on how you can start planning for your dissertation now that you are done with research methods training.

**Research Methods Seminar Pack**

**Week 1: start thinking about your dissertation!**

**Section A: Ice-breaker: What type of researcher are you going to be?**

Aims: This session is aimed at demonstrating that you can change and become a ‘master / mistress of your own destiny’, to help you envision what makes a successful scholar and reflects on previous experiences.

**Discuss with other classmates about your dissertation experience before you joined the degree. If you did not do a dissertation, write about any major project that you have accomplished.**

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| Which year did you finish the previous study? What was the topic of your research/project? |
| How easy/ hard it was to decide a topic, and why? |
| Did you need to read any material before starting your research?  What did you find easy/ hard about reading and using academic literature? |
| Did you need to collect any data?  How did you collect data?  What did you do well and poorly when collecting and analysing data? |
| What did you enjoy and dislike about writing up the project |
| What would you like to keep and what you would like to change in this dissertation experience? |

**Activity in the class:**

After sharing your dissertation experience how do you now see yourself as a scholar for your MSc?

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| What personal attitudes will you adopt? |
| What will motivate you? |
| How will you know how well you are doing? |
| How will you keep going? |
| Have you any ideas about your topic? |

**Section B. Developing ideas**

Aims: This session is a practical hands-on approach on how you might develop ideas for your research and how these might translate into a research strategy.

Coming up with good ideas for a research proposal is sometimes quite difficult – this session is intended to help you start this process?

**Questions:**

**In your groups, come up with at least 3 ideas that might turn into research projects using one of the articles below for ideas.**

**What is the idea – what might you research?**

**How might you gather the data?**

**What problems might there be with each of these ideas?**

**Feedback these ideas to the whole class**

**Article 1 : Paying late: an ethical business issue?**

Late payments exemplify how rotten corporate ethics can erode company culture from inside, adapted from an article by Philippa Foster in The Guardian

Imagine this: It's payday, but instead of your usual envelope containing your payslip, you receive an email. "Dear employee," it reads. "Looking for your payslip? Afraid we've changed our payment terms. You'll be being paid every six weeks from now on. Hope you don't mind. If you do, of course, we can always find someone else to do your job." Does this sound improbable and outrageous?

And yet it is the situation in which many small and medium-sized businesses find themselves because customers pay late, or insist upon punishingly long payment terms, or change payment terms retrospectively. SMEs report that this is the most important issue for them after access to finance. Data from BACS – the bank automated clearance scheme – shows that the average SME was owed over £31,000 in April 2013. That translates to over £30bn across the UK economy. Evidence from the Federation of Small Businesses indicates that more than half of small businesses are not paid promptly by large companies with the average payment time of 58 days, nearly double normal contract terms. And the situation has got worse in the current economic climate.

Paying suppliers late is an ethical issue. Late payments, for no valid or legitimate reason, are unethical. They are an abuse of "power" and in essence bullying behaviour by customers who hold all the cards. Small businesses are reluctant to use legislation, or they agree to punishingly long payment terms, for fear of losing contracts with bigger businesses on which they are often reliant.

The ethical principle underlying any contract is trust. And trust comes from fairness, honesty and mutual benefit. A reputation for trustworthiness can provide sustainable competitive advantage – it enables the organisation to attract and retain top talent and establish effective business partnerships and a loyal customer base. But when the customer abuses a contract by late paying of invoices or changing payment terms, trust is quickly broken. In reality, suppliers, especially SMEs, are rarely in a position to challenge their customers for fear of damaging the business relationship. Small businesses are often unable to walk away and look for another customer, especially if an existing one owes them significant money; and charging interest on the outstanding balance rarely works.

Paying suppliers late reflects the leadership and prevailing culture in the organisation. When it comes to business ethics, companies focus on employees potentially doing "bad" things – fraud, bribery, corruption. Strategic decisions such as changing contractual terms, not paying on time, "losing invoices" or not passing invoices for payment or actioning requests for purchase orders, may seem to be "victimless crimes". During the 2008 recession it is estimated that 4,000 businesses failed as a direct result of late payments.

The decision to not pay promptly begins at company board level a culture of late payments is an example of how rotten corporate ethics can erode company culture from the inside. If suppliers are not treated with respect, then other stakeholders – customers, employees, investors, society at large – are not likely to be either.

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| **What is the research idea?** |  |
| **How might you gather the data?** |  |
| **What problems might there be with this idea** |  |

**Article 2: Leaving a bad taste:** ‘sweatshop’ **– adapted from an article in the Guardian March 2012**

The term ‘sweatshop’ often suggest that cramped and inhuman factories of south each Asia. But there are many similar sweatshops closer to home – in Sapling, Lincolnshire – where indentured South African workers pack vegetables for supermarkets and in Thetford Norfolk where Chinese and Brazilian migrants process meat for supermarkets. Often for many of these workers the conditions are extremely poor – working in filthy conditions and without regard to employment rights. Many employment agencies and suppliers of labour ignore legal employment rights for these workers in order to service their contracts with a roll-call of Britain’s high-street food retailers including Morrison’s, Safeway, Sainsbury’s and Tesco. The policing of health and safety regulations and employment law is inadequate – a one day audit of some of these ‘sweatshops’ was sufficient to uncover a catalogue of abuses at fuite and vegetable packers. For some the unscrupulous gang masters and poor working and living conditions go hand in hand with illegal payments and deductions, tax evasion and fraud. If the chickens had been as badly treated as the chicken packers, action would have already been taken. The agricultural sector is an unpopular, poorly skilled and badly paid industry. As a result few British citizens are attracted to work in it – the outcome is that workers from developing nations coming to the UK (legally or illegally) end up as the only group of willing wokers in an agricultural industry that in may respects only exists because of the lucrative EU subsidies that penalise developing nations from exporting their own agricultural products. If major food retailers are not willing to change on their own account, they will find themselves dangerously vulnerable to customer backlash. They need only ask their counterparts in the clothing sector such as Nike and Gap about the consequences of losing public trust of suppliers and sources. PTO

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| **What is the research idea?** |  |
| **How might you gather the data?** |  |
| **What problems might there be with this idea** |  |

**Article 3: Why Big Brother makes an uneasy workmate** adapted from the Observer Jan 13 2008 by Simon Caulkin

More than half of all UK employees - 52 per cent - are subject to computer surveillance at work, according to research from the Economic and Social Research Council's 'Future of Work' programme. This large number is drawn mainly from white collar administrative staff and forms a revolution in our work practices. The argument that computers remove routine and leave people free to be creative, and remote working delivers individuals from 'presenteeism' and allows them to be productive in their own way. But, it is also suggested that this is damaging employees' wellbeing. But there also appears to be a shift in employment relations. Instead of cutting full-time jobs and using the market to reduce costs, British employers have been devising new ways of keeping their employees, but getting more out of them. Many of the techniques they use - teamwork, performance management and pay, individual development - form part of the bundle of human-resource management (HRM) practices many believe contribute to the much touted 'high-performance workplace'. Yet the effect seems to be negated when computers rather than people do the managing.

Job satisfaction is falling, everything is logged, so people become much more accountable. The result is a tightening of the performance screw, with a stronger effect for those at the bottom of the ladder who are no longer covered by trade union representation. While managers and professionals are well placed to strike individual pay bargains, the lower-paid -especially women - tend to be left out in the cold. The divergence is exacerbated by the computer-generated tendency to centralise information and intensify hierarchy: managers see the performance figures, lowly employees don't. The consequence, is increasing earnings inequality. Substantial pay rises for most managers contrasts with static or even declining wages for low-end computer-monitored workers, who are working harder, and longer hours, into the bargain.

Hence the strain. In effect, today's employment anxieties are not about being out of work: they're about the job itself being more demanding, and the rewards more unequal. One of the casualties of surveillance is trust: this is true even when people don't know if they are being watched or not. Is surveillance by computer the virtual equivalent of Jeremy Bentham's 'panopticon' (a prison whose inmates could all be watched from a central point without their knowing), by means of which employers can keep the advantages of employment continuity and tight job control without the cost of trust-building measures such as pensions and career structures?

Managing by machine may be easier, but the prospect it raises - of a generation of managers being denied the opportunity (and obligation) to use common sense, experience and method as the primary tools of their trade - is an unsettling one.

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| **What is the research idea?** |  |
| **How might you gather the data?** |  |
| **What problems might there be with this idea** |  |

**Article 4:** **Pro Social Brands – adapted from an article from The Guardian 2 Jan 2015**

Pro-social brands are the next step for companies looking to morally engage with consumers. Driven by marketers who are moving beyond claims of sustainability and into strong stands on relevant social issues. So what’s the difference between sustainable and pro-social brands?

A traditional sustainable brand expects that customers will applaud it for its charitable giving and its actions on key environmental issues. It’s the classic, safe, (usually) apolitical approach: sustainable brands tell stories that cast them in the role of hero and expect audiences to simply play the role of starry-eyed hero-worshipper.

In the past, marketing based on sustainability or triple-bottom line approaches has been shown to drive a certain amount of loyalty the most ethical shoppers care about these issues, but the majority of customers hardly notice the claims of cleaner supply chains, fair trade or carbon offsetting. And even if they do notice, many have lost trust in such claims. Even much-admired one-for-one programs, such as those pioneered by Toms shoes, have lost their novelty.

This isn’t to say that the era of brands striving to behave ethically is over: cleaning up supply chains and pushing for fair trade. But it is not enough.

Social issues transform ethics, the pro-social trend will accelerate the urgency for ethical behaviour. At the same time, it will transform how companies – and customers – live those ethics.

Pro-social brands are more politically disruptive and inspiring than basic sustainable brands. Instead of focusing on what a brand has done internally to drive a better world, pro-social brands look outward to take a stand on key moral issues, they publicly prove that these issues have reached a tipping point of acceptability – and, in so doing, they increase the rate of change. A perfect example is the issue of same-sex marriage. In 2014, the Huffington Post reported on 27 major companies that boldly came out in favour of marriage equality. Taking this position wasn’t a safe stand, but it was a highly viral one.

When a brand puts a stake in the ground on a controversial topic, such as carbon pricing, gender equality, racial justice, or even excessive corporate power, it sticks its neck out, adding fuel to a cause and challenging its customers to rally behind it. The brand becomes far more participatory, making room for its customers to take on a heroic role by fighting for a more altruistic, tolerant, selfless world. The pro-social brand doesn’t say: “Look what we’ve done. Now buy our stuff.” Instead it says: “We’re willing to take a stand. Stand with us.” Examples of this can be seen in brands like Always, Airbnb and Fat Tire around key pro-social values

This connection between beliefs and consumption isn’t new: since the mid-20th century, brands have served as tools for people to express their identities and values. True pro-social brands will stay away from the ballot boxes while encouraging citizens to raise their voices.

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| **What is the research idea?** |  |
| **How might you gather the data?** |  |
| **What problems might there be with this idea** |  |

**Article 5: 1.2 Million UK SMEs Could Increase Growth And Productivity By Updating Accounting Systems**

**Source:** [**https://www.businesscomputingworld.co.uk/**](https://www.businesscomputingworld.co.uk/)

**BY**[**CHRIS CONWAY**](http://www.businesscomputingworld.co.uk/author/?author=Chris%20Conway)**·  01/12/2017  ·**

Almost a quarter of small businesses in the UK are sacrificing higher rates of growth and productivity by maintaining their accounting records on paper rather than online, according to an independent study by the team at Accounts and Legal.

The research has been based on data collected from the company’s “Interactive Instant Quote tool”, whereby businesses answer simple questions such as, business size; annual turnover; no. of employees; frequency of accountant input; and current internal accounts system.

Of the 10,000-strong sample, an incredible 22% businesses when asked how they “currently ran their internal accounts” selected Paper over Excel or Accounting Software. In many of these cases no aggregated accounting data of any kind was prepared, meaning the businesses had no insight into their performance beyond what their bank balance said. Those with the old-style approach were most prominent in businesses with an annual turnover of less than £500,000, with 94% of the paper system adoptees being represented in this bracket.

Perhaps most surprisingly, given the level of marketing and PR by the likes of Xero and Quickbooks regarding cloud accounting software in the last 5 years, and its relatively low cost, the study shows the number of small businesses actually adopting accounting software only began to noticeably increase during 2017.

Despite this, the study shows the most popular choice of accounting method among the UK’s 5.5 million small businesses remains Microsoft Excel, which, although a better solution than paper in our view, does not offer the efficiency or insight of a properly maintained cloud accounting software system. Overall, 49% currently employ the Microsoft package as their choice of accounting system.

Traditional Vs Modern

Just as some small businesses are unwilling or unable to embrace cloud storage services like Dropbox, some are also resistant to the concept of cloud accounting. However, modern “intelligent” accounting technology has proven why small businesses should embrace the power of cloud computing. The future of cloud accounting is going to be something of a given for all small businesses, rather than the optional extra it is today.

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| **What is the research idea?** |  |
| **How might you gather the data?** |  |
| **What problems might there be with this idea** |  |

**Article 6: To SMEs, patent trolls are an existential threat**

From Gary Shapiro, President and CEO, Consumer Technology Association, Arlington, VA, US Source: <https://www.ft.com> NOVEMBER 1, 2017 2

Sir, Rana Foroohar’s article “America’s battle over patents dollars” (The Big Read, October 17) implies that Big Tech is hurting small companies by tilting the patent debate. Yet 80 per cent of the Consumer Technology Association’s 2,000 member companies are small and medium-sized enterprises, and while most big companies view patent trolls as an expensive nuisance, for the smaller ones they are an existential threat. The 2013 Government Accountability Office report cited only included suits brought between 2007 and 2011. Patent trolls continue to plague US tech companies, stymying innovation and stunting the growth of our job market and economy. Regardless of which measurement of troll activity you rely on, it’s undeniable that patent extortion schemes are a persistent and devastating threat to innovative companies. In 2015, Unified Patents tracked all patent cases filed in US district courts. Of these, two-thirds — 66.9 per cent — came from non-practising entities (NPEs). The vast majority, but not all, of NPEs are patent trolls that exist for the sole purpose of using patents to extort businesses. Ms Foroohar’s article suggests that the system favours Big Tech at the expense of life sciences companies and smaller companies. In fact, patent trolls concentrate their energies on small and medium-sized companies, especially in tech. According to the same Unified Patents report, roughly 64 per cent of patent suits are brought against tech companies, while about 16 per cent are brought against medical companies. Under current law, the patent troll business model has thrived at the expense of innovation in the tech industry. The scales are far from tilted towards big tech companies. Small and medium-sized companies are 80 per cent of the defendants in patent infringement cases. Many of our small business members have shared horror stories of being terrorised by trolls. They can’t afford the millions of dollars it costs to defend themselves in court, so the mere threat of a lawsuit often leads them to pay off trolls even if they are innocent. The economic impact of these out-of-court settlements isn’t captured in statistics about the number of patent troll lawsuits. Patent abuse costs the US economy more than $80bn a year. Supreme Court decisions, including TC Heartland v Kraft Foods Group Brands, and the creation of proceedings such as inter partes review give some companies a fighting chance. But it’s still far from a fair fight for a start-up trying to fend off an extortion attempt by a troll. Recent judicial rulings and proposals before Congress to reduce the harm from patent trolls seek to foster and encourage American innovation and ingenuity. They are not a plot on the part of Big Tech to squash small start-ups. Gary Shapiro President and CEO, Consumer Technology Association, Arlington, VA, US.

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| **What is the research idea?** |  |
| **How might you gather the data?** |  |
| **What problems might there be with this idea** |  |

**Week 2 : Thinking about a topic.**

**Aims:** Finding a research topic can be quite a stressful process, you can never start too early or work too hard on refining your ideas. Before you start your research (and proposal) you need to have some idea of what you want to do. Reading

**Saunders et al (Chapter 2)** to help you think about this process.

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| --- | --- | --- | --- |
|  | Topic 1 | Topic 2 | Topic 3 |
| Person A |  |  |  |
| Person B |  |  |  |
| Person C |  |  |  |

**Preparation:** Before attending the tutorial, check the profile of three university lecturers in your specialism. List two or three topics that lecturer in your specialism do research about. Are you interested in any of these topics? Choose two topics that you might be interested in?

**Activity in the classroom**

Share your preparatory work in small group of two or three. Discuss the following questions:

Do you have any shared areas of interest?

Are you interested in a research area listed by your classmate?

All students should write one or two topics that they found interesting on a paper that will be distributed by the tutor. In the following week, you will need to find three articles on one of the topics.

**Week 3: Practice in accessing articles**

Aims: The best way of understanding how to research is to actually do some. This session should demonstrate to you how to develop critical research skills in searching for and downloading a specific article. We also discuss how to read an academic article.

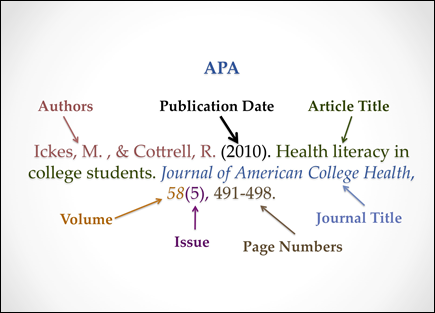
**Preparations**:

**This session has two parts.**

**A.** In the first part you need to search the web to find three articles on your chosen area of research from last week. You should show this to each other and your tutor.

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| Topic: | |
| Article 1 |  |
| Article 2 |  |
| Article 3 |  |

In writing the references, use APA style of referencing.



**Section B. Before the seminar download and print off a copy of following article:**

Zhen, Li. (2012) ‘A Critical account of employability construction through the eyes of Chinese postgraduate students in the UK’. *Journal of Education and Work,* 26:5, 473-493

Read the article before coming to class and be prepared to discuss the following:

* 1. Who do you think the author considers to be a key researcher in this academic area?
  2. Are there any definitional issues raised in the paper?
  3. What are the areas open for research
  4. What other papers cited in this article might you want to read and why?

**You need to bring a copy of article with you to the classroom.**

**Discussion in the classroom**

**1. Searching an article**

a) How did you find the article? Did you use any search engines?

b) Assuming that you want to do your research in this area “employability of post-graduate students”, how can you find other useful articles?

**2. Reading an academic article**

a. How can we find the answer to the following questions? Which part of article directs us to the answers to these questions?

* 1. Who do you think the author considers to be key in this academic area?
  2. Are there any definitional issues raised in the paper?
  3. What are the areas open for research
  4. What other papers cited in this article might you want to read and why?

1. After reading the journal article what further database searchers (topic areas) might you want to try if you were exploring this topic?

**Week 4: Seminar**

**Techniques on writing a literature review**

**Aims:** The literature review is very important to your dissertation. There is nothing like actually doing a literature review to understanding how to do a literature review. In this session you will be working in small groups and looking the article from last week (*A critical account of employability construction through the eyes of Chinese postgraduate students in the UK)*. What we would like you to do is to review the article as though you are going to write a literature review on the topic, this will give you a start on the process of constructing a review. There are a number of steps that you need to undertake before you will be ready to undertake a full critical review. You must first decide on a topic and develop embryonic research questions – both these come from reading (a lot!). Once you can see what your project is going to be about you need to search for literature (mainly academic journal articles) that are relevant to this topic. You then will spend time organising, assessing and ‘unpacking’ the sources. Once you can see clearly what different perspectives might address the research question you can then start to construct an ‘argument’ that looks at the topic in a more systematic way:

* The overall structure - starting at a general level before narrowing down
* The provision of a brief overview of the key ideas
* The linking of ideas or themes
* Narrowing down to highlight the work which is more relevant to the research

To do this each article needs to be analysed in turn before writing a synthesis (or review) of the articles based on themes that have developed out of your reading – there are several ways of doing this but as a starting point it is worth thinking about using the grid method. There is a YouTube video on Moodle to explain this in more detail. But basically you construct a grid consisting of several categories for each article that you are going to use.

Once, you have constructed a grid you can then develop the thematic analysis of the articles and construct your argument or structure of your work from these. There is a YouTube clip on Moodle to help with this as well.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=nX2R9FzYhT0>

Check the Moodle for other links.

You have a template to use in the following page. You also are given an example in the page after to help you craft your own literature search.

**Section A) you will need to fill the table below with two or three articles that you have found in the previous week. Discuss how filling this table will help you develop your literature review.**

|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Author, Year, reference | Short title | Discipline | Research Aims Research Questions | Conceptual framework/ Theories utilised | method | Context / sample | Key findings | Gaps in the literature/ shortcoming of the paper |
|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |

|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Author, Year, reference | Short title | Discipline | Research Aims Research Questions | Conceptual framework/ Theories utilised | method | Context / sample | Key findings | Gaps in the literature/ shortcoming of the paper |
| McGrath, Madziva & Thondhlana (2015) | Rethinking the employability of international graduate migrants: | Education  Employability | To bridge the gap between international higher education and migrants  Specific focus on Zimbabweans who have studied HE in UK | Recent accounts look at student mobility literation and critical accounts on employability  **Themes developed:**  1.Employability  Critique of employability Capability approach  2. Notion of structure and agency  3. Poverty and aspirations | In-depth semi-structured interviews  - Five interviews (part of a larger sample) Snowball sampling | Zimbabwean migrants | 1.Structure / agency dynamics which push individuals to further study - including costs, immigration status  2.Racialized labour market  2.Psychological dimensions – including fragility of emotions / health | Past research did not look at the relationship between getting an international degree and achieving employability  Further research on international HE and employability and migration studies |
|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |

**An alternative way to keep the record of the article you read:**

This framework developed by Wallace and Wray provide an alternative structure for summarizing the article you read and keep a record of them.

**Critical Reading and Note taking from a Text**

(adapted from Wallace, M. and Wray, A (2006) *Critical reading and writing for postgraduates*, Sage)

**a) Why am I reading this?**

|  |
| --- |
|  |

**b) What are the authors trying to do in writing this?**

|  |
| --- |
|  |

**c) What are the authors saying that is relevant to what I want to find out?**

|  |
| --- |
|  |

**d) How convincing is what the authors are saying?**

|  |
| --- |
| 1. Is their argument well-structured? 2. Are their claims supported by appropriate evidence? 3. What other justification is offered in support of their claims? 4. Do the authors define their key terms and then use those definitions consistently? 5. What underlying values or assumptions may be guiding and influencing the authors’ claims? |

**e) In conclusion, what use can I make of this?**

|  |
| --- |
|  |

**Section B: Your tutor will remind about four different ways to organise a literature review.**

Exercise : Structural Patterns

Can you correctly identify the structural pattern for each of these four examples—**seminal, topical, debate, or chronological?**

1) Example A:

Three important aspects of this field have received extended critical attention: (1) length of time students spend on writing literature reviews, (2) the amount of revision typically required by thesis advisers, and (3) the extent to which highlighters help or hinder the review process.

The first of these subjects, the length of time students spend on writing literature reviews, has been studied both in terms of total time and in terms of time spent reading as considered separately from the time spent writing. In terms of total time, Horowitz found that the average number of hours spent on a literature review is 22.6 hours. This is very close to the finding of Smith (1910), who in a study of Harvard Divinity school graduates found an average time of 21.8 hours.

The second major issue in this field, the amount of revision typically required by thesis advisers, has received more complete study. Downs (1980), Thomas (1981) and Hyperion (1997) have concluded that advisors always require at least two drafts of a literature review. In terms of the high end of the spectrum, these studies vary in their findings. Downs found a maximum of 10 drafts, and Thomas found a maximum of 14, while the highest number of revisions required of any single student in Hyperion’s study was 274. These studies have all been challenged by Xie’s 1994 study, which determined that advisors in social science fields require on average 2 more revisions than advisors in engineering or biological sciences, with some engineering advisors requiring only one revision.

The third major issue in the field is…. (continued) ..

2) **Example B:**

This subject was first studied by Smith in 1910, who found that graduate students writing literature reviews often took much longer to complete the tasks than their initial estimate. Fifty percent less hours than the actual time spent on the task.

In 1955, this finding was contradicted [or expanded, or confirmed, or extended] by Jones, who found that graduate students were able to write literature reviews in just about exactly the amount of time they predicted.

After the influx of large numbers of students in the 1960s, Harbor and Timon (1970) took a different approach to the problem, triangulating the students’ estimates of how long the task should take with their advisers’ estimates. They argued that the congruence of the adviser’s estimate with the student’s estimate had a direct correlation to the accuracy of the student’s estimate.

Today, Young (1990) and Horowitz (1997) represent the current state of thinking on this question. Young has confirmed Harbor and Timon’s findings, while adding the insight that earlier studies likely yielded different results because of the differences among graduate students early in the century and post-World War II. Horowitz’s synthetic study offers further confirmation of Young’s arguments.

**3) Example C:**

There have been two (or three, etc.) distinct approaches to this field. The first model (commonly referred to as the Smith proposition) posits that students are reasonably good at predicting the length of time it will take them to write a literature review. This point of view was first taken by Smith in 1910, who found that students underestimated the time required for the task by only 3%. Confirmation of Smith’s general argument can be found in Jones (1935), Horowitz (1955), Timon and Hyperion (1980), with only a few variations. Notably, Horowitz correlated the accuracy of students’ perceptions with their advisers’ predictions and found that when advisers overestimate by more than 10%, students also overestimate by more than 10%. Left on their own, however, Horowitz found that students could estimate the time required with great accuracy, usually within 2.5% in either direction.

The second model, called the poor predictions model or PPM, has critiqued the Smith proposition on the basis that all students involved in Smith’s early study, and in the studies that replicated them, were students in the humanities or liberal arts. Proponents of PPM have shown that, when the mix is between students in engineering and the humanities, the accuracy of students’ predictions falls drastically, with students underestimating the time required by an average of 27% in one study (Yakov 1975) and as much as 63% in the most recent study (Hughes 1994).

4) **Example D:**

The most important research on this topic was the study by Smith in 1910. This study established the basic facts in this field, as well as serving as the source for future research and hypotheses. Smith studied 374 graduate students in English at fourteen universities in the Northeast. He used the Smith Writing Time Estimate Inventory (SWTE) to obtain prior estimates of the time required to write a literature review for a dissertation. He then observed students writing literature reviews under controlled laboratory conditions. Students wore electronic monitors that determined when they were daydreaming, so that those time periods could be eliminated from the actual performance time (APT). When comparing the estimated performance time (EPT) to the APT, Smith found that students overestimated the time required by approximately 3%.

Following Smith’s research, studies on this subject either merely replicated Smith’s (Jones 1917, Yakov 1940, Dubronov 1967) or extended Smith’s inquiry by comparing student’s EPT to adviser’s EPT (Hardwick 1978), by adding engineering students to the study (Hughes 1994), or by eliminating the daydream of control monitors (Crawford 1972). All of these studies offered findings that reinforced those of Smith.

**Week 5: Dissertation analysis**

**Preparation: (to be done before coming to the class)**

Before the session read **one** of the MSc Business and Management dissertations on the Research Methods Resources Moodle site. (**Choose one from your specialism**). Bring a copy of **the literature review and methodology** part of the dissertation to the seminar. You do not need to print it if you have a tablet or computer with you (but not phone), otherwise, please bring a printed copy. (you can work in groups for this).

Aim: In this seminar we want to focus on how the research was conducted, the ‘story’ the research and researcher tells. To understand how the methodological reasoning determined the overall research strategy, literature review, research questions, and methods of collecting data.

Methodology exercise

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| Questions to consider on your chosen dissertation | |
| What did the dissertation say it was going to research?  Were there clear Research Questions or Objectives?  What were they? |  |
| What was the scope of the research? |  |
| Was the dissertation clear in describing the overall research methodology?  Did you understand it?  Research Paradigm – set of basic beliefs – are they explicit? ( you might not understand this yet but reflect on this after the lecture) |  |
| Epistemology – assumptions about ‘best way’ of inquiring into the nature of world – ‘truth or ‘truths’ Positivism or Interpretivism or Realism?  You will need to reflect on this after the lecture but were they clearly set out in the dissertation |  |
| What was the approach to theory? (Induction or Deduction- Exploratory/Confirmatory)  Did the dissertation explain what it was going to do with the theory? |  |
| What research strategy is used?  (case study or survey or action research or…….? |  |
| What method (s) are used? |  |
| Sample: How many respondents were used to collect data? How were they chosen? Is it clear? |  |
| In the methodology section did the student support their work with academic references? |  |
| What observations do you have on the overall research approach |  |

**Week 6: Making sense quantitative data**

**Reading:** Saunders et al Chapter 5 pp 159 – 173. Chapter 12

**Aims**: This is a practical session aimed at helping you to understand the process of quantitative research and also to understand quantitative data with a critical eye utilising the knowledge and skills you have learnt through your reading and the lecture last week.

**Reading the result of statistical tests**

The tables in today’s exercise have been extracted from a research project on gender inequality in promotion. They are based on Wage-Indicator (WI) data. The WI is a web-based survey that is present in more than 90 countries of the world. Therefore, access to the survey is through internet and respondents participate on voluntary basis.

Table 1: work experience of the sample.

Q1: What does table show? How many years of experience most people have? What is the least work experience people have? Why?



Table 2: Age at labour market entry

Q2: At which age most people enter the labour market? What does this table say about the sample selection? Does it indicate any sample bias? What and why?



**Two way tables**

Table 3

Q3: Interpret the table below. How many men and women have been promoted in the organization?



Table 4

Q4: what does table 4 suggest? What is the difference between Table 3 and Table 4?



**Pearson chi2(1) = 5.7661 Pr = 0.016**

Table 6a: **Separate tables for two groups**

Q6a: what does two tables show the difference by parenthood? How does parenthood affect men and women differently?

bysort gender: tab children promotion, col chi



Table 6b



**Correlation**

Table 7: Interpret the correlation between promotion and other variables.

aglm refers to age at labour market entry

wexp refers to work experience



**Week 7: consolidation week!**

**Week 8: Making sense of qualitative data: practical**

**Non-numeric truth: making sense of qualitative data & analysis”**

**Reading: Find an academic article based around your topic choice that uses qualitative data - this could come from semi structured interviews, visual research methods, or observation. Read the article before coming to the session be prepared to answer the questions.**

**Research Methods Tutorial- Week 6: Making Sense of Qualitative Data**

**PURPOSE**

In this tutorial, we aim to look into one exemplar qualitative study to review the process of qualitative research. Extracts of a paper on ‘employee silence’ will be distributed in the class. Please follow your tutor’s instruction in completing this exercise.

**LEARNING OUTCOMES**

This exercise helps you to better understand the differences between qualitative and quantitative approaches to research. It also enables you to develop your skills in designing a qualitative research.

**EMPLOYABILITY SKILLS**

* Exercise judgment about relevance and usefulness of business research
* Effective communication (working in groups and presenting your ideas to an audience)
* Analysis and problem solving

**Preparation: (to be done before coming to class)**

You will be given a short extract from a paper in the journal of Organization Studies. Read these few pages and be ready to discuss the questions that followed in your handbook.

You can find the reference to the full article bellow:

Brown, A. D., & Coupland, C. (2005). Sounds of silence: graduate trainees, hegemony and resistance. *Organization Studies*, *26*(7), 1049-1069.

**Questions for discussion in the classroom**

1. **Data Collection**

Please read the abstract and the research design section in the article and answer following questions.

1. What does this study aim to do?
2. Which methods did they use for data collection?
3. What constituted their sample (study participants)?
4. How were the study participant selected? What is the limitation of this method of sampling and how can you justify it?
5. Why do you think they used a qualitative research design?
6. **Research Design**
7. Which philosophical school of thought has informed this study?
8. Positivism 2) Interpretivism
9. What type of interviewing they used in this study

(Structured, Semi-Structured, Unstructured)

1. If you were doing this research, what questions would you ask from the interviewees?
2. **Analysis and Writing in Qualitative Research**

1. Read the analysis (findings) section of the article. How writing the result of a qualitative study is different from writing the result of a quantitative study?

2. Is there any difference in style of academic writing?

3. Similar to quantitative research, qualitative data should be analyzed before writing the report. What steps do you need to take for analyzing qualitative data? Can you think of any systematic way for analyzing this type of data?

**Week 9 and Week 10: How to formulate your research questions?**

You will need to present your research problems in one of these two sessions.

Your tutor divides the class to two groups. The first half of the group present their work in week 9 and the other half present their research problem in week 10.

Aims: This session is designed to help you decide on which of your three ideas you wish to take forward. In small groups (3 or 4) take turns on presenting your ideas to your group. Each student should contribute in turn and the others in the group offer supportive feedback on the ideas.

**Preparation**

You have handed in your topic outline. Before coming to the seminar, you should try to develop them in terms of thinking how you can extend your topic outline to a research idea. Based on the ideas you developed for your topic outline, fill the table below.

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
|  | **Idea 1** | **Which articles/books did you read for this topic** |
| **What is the research idea?** |  | **1.** |
| **What might be the research questions?** |  | **2.** |
| **How might you gather the data?** |  | **3.** |
| **What problems might there be with this idea** |  |  |
|  | **Idea 2** | **Which articles/books did you read for this topic** |
| **What is the research idea?** |  | **1.** |
| **What might be the research questions?** |  | **2.** |
| **How might you gather the data?** |  | **3.** |
| **What problems might there be with this idea** |  |  |

**Activity in the classroom:**

**A.** Exchange your work with the person next to you? Ask their opinion about your chosen topic for your dissertation. Use the following questions to assess the ideas.

- Is this research interesting?

- Is this research relevant to your specialism?

- Can you gather data for this research?

- Can you finish this research in the time-frame available for Msc thesis?

**B.** If you finished the previous section before the end of the class, try to craft two research questions for your dissertation.

**C. Activity after the seminar:**

**In three weeks time (Week 10), you will need to develop your research idea into a poster. You can use the information provided in the following table to help you develop your ideas and find relevant readings on the topic.**

**This assignment (the poster) is formative. But you will have an opportunity to receive feedback on work-in progress from your tutor. Develop IDEAS EXERCISE – FIRST STEPS TO A PROPOSAL**

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| What is your idea or your ‘big question? | Research aim or research questions? (no more than 3) |
| Why is it important?   * Interest for your specialism generally? * Organisational application (if any) | Rationale… |
| * What are the main topics for a literature search? * What theories or theorists would underpin your research? * What are the debates? | Literature review |
| What literature sources may be relevant?   * Academic sources? * Practitioner sources? * Past research in organisation / sector? | Literature review |
| How might you do the research?   * What research philosophy will underpin your study? * What might your overall research strategy involve? | Methodology |
| * Which methods of gathering data could you use to answer your research question? Why not other methods? * Where and how will you get your data? * What will be your sampling strategy? | Methodology / Sampling |
| Possible problems   * Access to information or to research subjects/respondents? * How will you gain informed consent from human subjects? * How might you get access to data if not doing primary research? * Technical issues? | Methodology |

**Week 11: Poster**

In this week’s seminar you are going to bring in a prepared poster of your research idea, this poster will be put on the wall (or desk) and the whole group will go round and offer constructive feedback – see below for a sample poster but you do not have to use this you can use your own if you wish.

**Research Poster**

|  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Research Idea (s)** | **Rationale** | **Literature** | **Methodology (Theoretical and Practical)** | |
| **Research Questions** | **Sample** | **Method** |
| **Ethics** | |

**Week 11: Seminar**

**Ethics in research**

Aims: This session provides information on how to fill in the ethical consent form using your research plan. You will need to fill this form even if you are planning to only use secondary data. An updated ethics form is available on Research Methods Resources Moodle site. E-versions of the form and guidance can be also found at:

<http://www.port.ac.uk/research/ethics/faculties/>