



Business School

Never Stand Still

Business School

COMM8003/4003 QUALITATIVE RESEARCH METHODS

Course Outline Semester 2, 2016

Part A: Course-Specific Information (subject to change)

Please consult Part B for key information on Business School policies (including those on plagiarism and special consideration), student responsibilities and student support services.

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PART A: COURSE-SPECIFIC INFORMATION

1 STAFF CONTACT DETAILS

Position	Name	Email	Location
Course Co-Ordinator & Lecturer	Dubravka Cecez-Kecmanovic	dubravka@unsw.edu.au	QUAD Room 2101
Course Co-Ordinator & Lecturer	Jane Baxter	j.baxter@unsw.edu.au	Quad 3106

Lecturers will be available for consultation by appointment.

2 COURSE DETAILS

2.1 Teaching Times and Locations

The course will be offered as a 3 hour seminar class, which will include presentations by the staff and students as well as class discussion and exercises. The class will require significant contribution by student participants in presenting, discussing, and evaluating readings and research.

Time: Wednesday 12pm—3pm

Location: Goldstein G01

Consultations: TBA

2.2 Units of Credit

This course is weighted at 6 Units of Credit.

2.3 Summary of Course

This course builds on COMM8000 Intellectual Foundations of Social Sciences and COMM8001 Introduction to Research Methods and provides an advanced understanding of qualitative research approaches, methods and techniques. This course will enable students to acquire in-depth knowledge, skills and experience necessary to conduct qualitative research studies. It will inspire, excite and prepare students to undertake qualitative research. The course focuses on issues critical for qualitative inquiry, such as philosophical foundations, theory building, the design and conduct of qualitative study (of different types), methods of data collection and analysis, researcher role and relationships with subjects researched, the quality of qualitative research, presentation of findings and writing a research proposal and a thesis. It will also include the review of exemplary papers adopting a variety of qualitative research methods from organization studies, management, marketing, accounting, information systems, and other business disciplines. The course will adopt

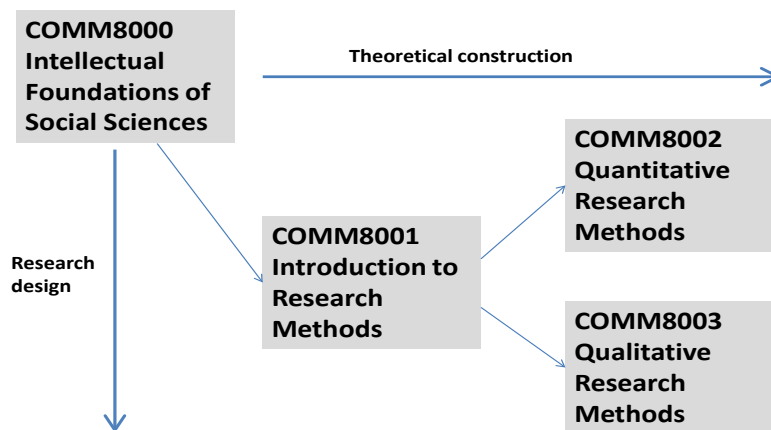
a workshop style and active students' engagement in workshops, debates and class activities. The course content and structure will be responsive to students' needs.

2.4 Course Aims and Relationship to Other Courses

Figure 1 provides an indicative outline of the portfolio of courses offered to all UNSW Business School research students in addition to specific courses offered by each school. Figure 1 shows the relationships between the courses.

This course is taught in parallel to both honours and postgraduate research students.

Figure 1: Graduate research training at UNSW Business School



The course aims to:

1. Develop understanding of different approaches and theoretical foundations of qualitative research and how they relate to different qualitative research methodologies;
2. Develop capacity to formulate research problems, conduct literature review and justify research questions leading to qualitative inquiry;
3. Develop in-depth understanding and gain practical experience in applying selected qualitative research methods, including research design, selection of research site and conduct of a qualitative inquiry, data collection, analysis and interpretation, and theory development;
4. Develop understanding and apply quality criteria for qualitative research;
5. Develop and apply fundamental research skills, including conducting observations and interviews, analysing qualitative data using thematic analysis and Grounded Theory, etc;
6. Foster critical attitude and question taken-for-granted assumptions and views;
7. Identify, understand and debate ethical and professional issues in practicing qualitative inquiry; and
8. Develop writing and presentation skills.

2.5 Student Learning Outcomes

By the end of this course, you should be able to:

1. Demonstrate knowledge of the distinct nature of qualitative inquiry and varieties of qualitative research in business discipline;
2. Understand and reflect on different qualitative research traditions and approaches and their relations with methodological choices;
3. Formulate research problems, conduct literature review and justify research questions leading to qualitative inquiry;
4. Discuss arguments for a particular research perspective/approach, the selection of research sites(s), and application of particular research methods/techniques of data collection and analysis; as well as assess the quality of qualitative research;
5. Competently conduct observations and interviews and apply several data analysis methods;
6. Understand and debate ethical aspects of qualitative research and in particular the relationship between research and practice and between researchers and subjects researched; and
7. Write up and present research report (research proposal, research paper or methodology).

The Learning Outcomes in this course also help you to achieve some of the overall Program Learning Goals and Outcomes for all postgraduate research students in the Business School. Program Learning Goals are what we want you to BE or HAVE by the time you successfully complete your degree (e.g. 'be a critical thinker'). You demonstrate this by achieving specific Program Learning Outcomes – what you are able to DO by the end of your degree. The relevant Business School program learning goals and outcomes for this course are outlined below:

Program Learning Goals & Outcomes			
	Doctorate of Philosophy	Master of Philosophy	Undergraduate Honours
1. Specialist Knowledge	Specialist knowledge: Our students will have the ability to understand and apply a substantial body of knowledge at the frontier of the relevant field.	Advanced knowledge of a field: Our students will have the ability to understand and apply an advanced body of knowledge within a particular field.	Advanced knowledge of a field: Our students will have the ability to understand and apply an advanced body of knowledge within a particular field.
1a	Students should be able to demonstrate expert/authoritative command of knowledge in the relevant field.	Students should be able to demonstrate a superior command of knowledge in the relevant field.	Students should be able to apply a highly developed understanding of the theoretical concepts and body of knowledge in one or more disciplines to address a research topic.
1b	Students should be able to demonstrate a thorough understanding of research principles	Students should be able to demonstrate an understanding of research principles and methods appropriate to	

	and methods appropriate to the relevant field of work.	the relevant field of work.	
2. Research Capability	Research capability: Our students will have the ability to undertake research that makes an original contribution in the relevant field.	Research capability: Our students will have the ability to undertake research that makes a contribution to knowledge in the relevant field.	Research capability: Our students will have the ability to undertake a piece of research in the relevant field.
2a	Students should be able to critically evaluate existing theoretical knowledge, ideas and practice within the relevant field to generate original knowledge	Students should be able to reflect critically on existing theoretical knowledge, ideas and practice within the relevant field.	Students should be able to reflect critically on existing theoretical knowledge, ideas and practice within the relevant field to address the research topic.
2b	Students should be able to undertake an independent investigation to generate original knowledge	Students should be able to plan and execute a substantial piece of research with a high level of autonomy.	Students should be able to plan and execute a piece of research with some independence.
3. Communication	Communication: Our students will have the ability to communicate research effectively in the scholarly community.	Communication: Our students will have the ability to communicate research effectively.	Communication: Our students will have the ability to communicate research effectively.
3a	Students should be able to cogently present the theoretical underpinnings, methodologies and results of research through oral presentations to peers and the scholarly community.	Students should be able to coherently present the theoretical underpinnings, methodologies and results of research through oral presentations to specialist and non-specialist audiences.	Students should be able to present and defend their research in oral presentations.
3b	Students should be able to demonstrate an ability to effectively communicate their research in writing suitable for publication.	Students should be able to demonstrate an ability to present a coherent and sustained argument and disseminate their research in writing.	Students should be able to present and defend their research in writing.

The following table shows how the Course learning outcomes relate to the overall Program learning goals and outcomes:

Program Learning Goals and Outcomes		Course Learning Outcomes	Course Assessment Item
<i>This course helps you to achieve the following learning goals for all Business School PhD and MPhil students:</i>		<i>On successful completion of the course, you should be able to:</i>	<i>This learning outcome will be assessed in the following items:</i>
1	Specialist knowledge	Demonstrate knowledge of the distinct nature of qualitative inquiry and varieties of qualitative research in business disciplines	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Class discussions and activities • Assignment # 1
		Understand and reflect on different qualitative research traditions and approaches and their relations with methodological choices	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Class discussions and activities • Assignments #1 & #2
		Formulate research problems, conduct literature review and justify research questions leading to qualitative inquiry	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Assignment #2 • Proposal Presentation
		Discuss arguments for a particular research perspective/ approach, the selection of research sites(s), and application of particular research methods/techniques of data collection and analysis; as well as assess the quality of qualitative research	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Class discussions and activities • Assignment #2 • Proposal Presentation
2	Research capability	Competently conduct observations and interviews and apply several data analysis methods	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Class discussions and activities
		Understand and debate ethical aspects of qualitative research	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Class discussions and activities • Assignment #2
3a	Communication (oral)	Present orally a research report	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Proposal Presentation
3b	Communication (written)	Present a written report.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Assignments #1 and #2

3 LEARNING AND TEACHING ACTIVITIES

3.1 Approaches to Learning and Teaching in the Course

The course is designed to be highly participative and cooperative. Given that the course aims to develop in-depth understanding of qualitative research and enable students to gain practical experience in the application of selected research methods, the approach to learning and teaching is student-centered and based on cooperation and knowledge co-construction. The course fosters an ethics of appreciation for a diversity of views and philosophical positions, criticality and tolerance. It encourages questioning of taken-for-granted assumptions and a critical attitude towards 'established truths'.

Consistent with the principles of adult education and student-centred learning, the course is designed to provide a stimulating atmosphere for exploring, questioning, and debating research issues and for exercising rational argumentation. Apart from providing an enjoyable learning environment the course will demonstrate how research can be an exciting journey and invigorating experience.

The cooperative nature of learning and teaching and the course design assume significant contribution and commitment by both teachers and learners. While teachers need to be flexible and respond to emerging students' needs, students need to be highly active and well prepared for each class. Furthermore, students are expected to take responsibility for their own learning. Responsibility in this context means responsibility for individual learning as well as for knowledge sharing and co-creation, and participation in cooperative learning processes. Reflection on learning processes, the way we learn or the factors that impede learning – individual or collective – would therefore be part of our learning practice.

3.2 Learning Activities and Teaching Strategies

The course will consist of a series of seminars and workshops involving students' active engagement in presentations, workshops and debates. The success of seminars and workshops depends on everyone's active participation, with preparation being an essential prerequisite. The list of seminar/workshop topics for each week is provided in the last section.

All students should read the compulsory readings. Reading means a thorough study that enables discussion and active participation in class activities. Students are expected to contribute to class discussion on a regular basis. Active students' participation and contribution to knowledge co-creation is expected and encouraged. Students are also encouraged to bring their own specific research issues to the class and seek debate and comments. Different learning activities will be included in each class.

Such highly interactive and cooperative format of learning/teaching is designed to assist students in developing their critical thinking, communicative and presentation skills, their ability to work independently and in a team and their capacity to identify and deal with a variety of ethical and professional issues. These skills are necessary for students' undertaking and completion of PhD research, MPhil and honours.

4 ASSESSMENT

4.1 Formal Requirements

In order to pass this course, you must:

- achieve a composite mark of at least 50; and
- make a satisfactory attempt at all assessment tasks (see below).
- attend at least 80% of classes.

Note: While 50 marks will provide a pass this will not be sufficient for your program. This course will generally be a component of research degree program and will have a performance level set by your School for each program. It is the responsibility of students to be aware of the relevant requirements.

4.2 Assessment Details

Assessment Task	Weighting	Length	Due Date
Class discussions and activities	10%	N/A	Ongoing
Essay	25%	2000 words	Week 5
Course Conference	25%		Week 13 in class
Research proposal or research paper	40%	5000 words	Week 13

Essay and Research proposal/paper may be modified for COMM4003 students to fit their program requirements.

4.3 Assessment Format

Class discussions and activities (10%)

Class discussions and activities will be specified for each class. Each student should prepare for classes (read suggested papers, make notes and complete required tasks) and contribute to class activities. Some class activities will be individual while others will involve group work.

Essay (30%)

This assignment is an individual essay. The purpose of the assignment is:

- to develop your ability to understand and analyze an example of a field study research, its philosophical approach, methodology and contribution
- to discuss the quality of qualitative non-positivist research in your discipline
- to develop your research writing skills, and your ability to present your arguments in a clear, concise and logical form.

Course Conference (25%)

All students will be requested to present their research proposal or paper in week 13. The presentation will be 10 minutes in duration (15 marks). All students will also deliver a five minute commentary on another students' presentation (5 minutes).

Research Proposal or Research Paper (40%)

This is an individual assignment designed to help you develop your capacity to write research papers, your research proposal and a thesis. The selection of assignment format should be made in consultation with your supervisor.

Marking criteria for the above assessments will be provided on the course Moodle site.

4.4 Assignment Submission Procedure

Assignments are to be submitted to the course staff in class and also via the Moodle site when due.

4.5 Late Submission

A penalty of 5% per day will apply for work received after the due date, unless prior permission for late submission has been granted by the Lecturer in Charge.

NOTE: EXTENSIONS ON ASSIGNMENT WILL NOT BE GRANTED EXCEPT WHERE THERE ARE EXTENUATING CIRCUMSTANCES SUPPORTED BY MEDICAL EVIDENCE OR IN INSTANCES WHERE PRIOR AGREEMENT HAS BEEN MADE WITH THE LECTURER. THIS MUST BE AGREED ON IN ADVANCE OF THE DUE DATE.

Quality Assurance

The Business School is actively monitoring student learning and quality of the student experience in all its programs. A random selection of completed assessment tasks may be used for quality assurance, such as to determine the extent to which program learning goals are being achieved. The information is required for accreditation purposes, and aggregated findings will be used to inform changes aimed at improving the quality of Business School programs. All material used for such processes will be treated as confidential.

5 COURSE RESOURCES

The course website is hosted on Moodle. You will have access to the course website once you have enrolled in the course. The course website contains the course outline and other relevant material (e.g., reading lists, lecture slides).

There is no text book for this course. Selected sources will be provide via Moodle. Your lecturers will advise you of the required reading for each week.

Students may find that the following book provides a useful overview of qualitative research methods.

Silverman, D. (2013) *Doing Qualitative Research: A Practical Handbook* (4th Edition), SAGE Publications, London

6 COURSE EVALUATION AND DEVELOPMENT

Each year feedback is sought from students about the courses offered in the School and continual improvements are made based on this feedback. In this course, we will seek your feedback through the CATEI evaluation process. Students are encouraged to complete the teaching and course evaluations.

7 COURSE SCHEDULE

The course schedule (see Table 1) contains seminar topics and class activities for each week. It also shows assignment deadlines.

Week	Topic	Lecturer
Week 1 27 July	Introduction to qualitative research	Jane
Week 2 3 August	Reading and evaluating (non-positivist) qualitative research	Jane
Week 3 10 August	Ethnographies, focussed ethnographies, netnographies, mixed method studies	Jane
Week 4 17 August	Collecting qualitative data – 1	Jane
Week 5 24 August	Collecting qualitative data – 2 (<u>Essay due</u>)	Jane
Week 6 31 August	Collecting qualitative data – 3	Jane
Week 7 7 September	Theorising qualitative data	Dubravka
Week 8 14 September	Analysing qualitative data – 1	Dubravka
Week 9 21 September	Analysing qualitative data – 2	Dubravka
Mid-semester break: Saturday 24 September – Sunday 2 October inclusive Monday 3 October – Labour Day Public Holiday		
Week 10 5 October	Using NVivo to analyse data	Dubravka
Week 11 12 October	Discussing and theorizing qualitative data	Dubravka
Week 12 19 October	Writing qualitative research	Dubravka
Week 13 26 October	Course conference assessment task <u>(Research Proposal/Paper due)</u>	Dubravka & Jane