



## **Business School**

### **School of Information Systems, Technology and Management**

Never Stand Still

Business School

# **COMM 8001 INTRODUCTION TO RESEARCH METHODS**

## **Course Outline Semester 1, 2015**

### **Part A: Course-Specific Information**

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	Availability; times and location
Lecturer-in-charge	<b>Prof Dubravka Cecez-Kecmanovic</b>	<a href="mailto:dubravka@unsw.edu.au">dubravka@unsw.edu.au</a>	Quadrangle Building, Room 2101
Lecturer	<b>Prof Gary Monroe</b>	<a href="mailto:g.monroe@unsw.edu.au">g.monroe@unsw.edu.au</a>	Quadrangle Building, Room 3084
Lecturer	<b>Dr David Morgan</b>	<a href="mailto:d.morgan@unsw.edu.au">d.morgan@unsw.edu.au</a>	Business School West Wing, Level 5, Room 539

Consultation time TBA.

### 2 COURSE DETAILS

#### 2.1 Teaching Times and Locations

Lectures start in Week 1 until Week 12.

The time and location are:

Lecture Time: **Monday 2-6pm**

Location: **Colombo 01**

#### 2.2 Units of Credit

The course is worth 6 units of credit.

There is no parallel teaching in this course.

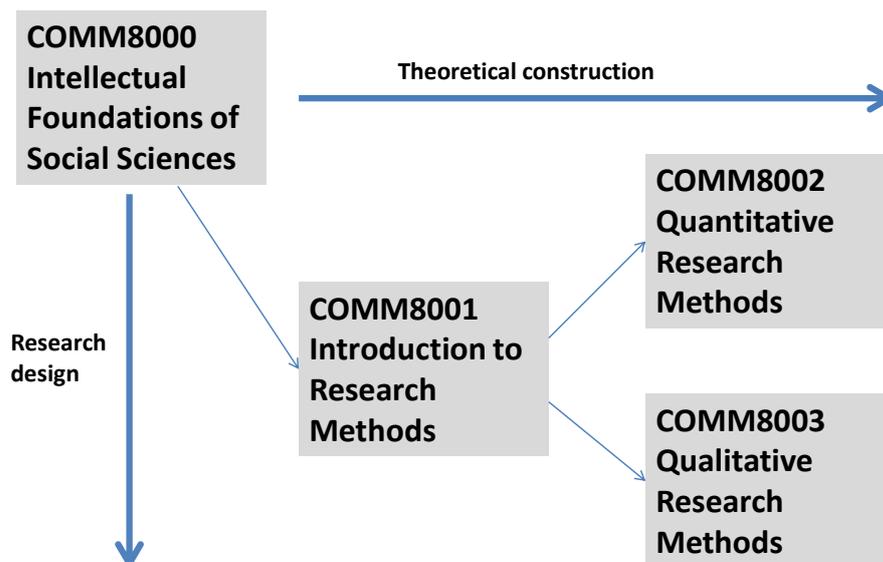
#### 2.3 Summary of Course

Building on Intellectual Foundations of Social Sciences course this course aims to extend the understanding of different research approaches and methodologies in the social sciences and to introduce a range of research methods typically applied in the business and management disciplines. The course also aims to develop fundamental research skills and prepare students for undertaking an independent research study. The course will provide students with knowledge and skills to guide them through the research process including: a literature review, development of research question(s) and theoretical perspective that will inform the methodology, selection of research strategy/design, and the application of selected research methods and techniques of data collection and analysis.

## 2.4 Course Aims and Relationship to Other Courses

This course is offered as part of the portfolio of postgraduate research training courses offered to all Business School research students presented in Figure 1. These courses are complemented with discipline specific research training courses offered by each discipline based school.

**Figure 1: Graduate research training at Business School**



The COMM8001 course builds on the Intellectual Foundations of Social Science course, which is highly recommended to all postgraduate research students. However COMM8000 is not a formal prerequisite for COMM8001.

The course COMM8001 aims to:

- Develop understanding of the nature of research, research process and design, and ways of knowledge creation in different business disciplines
- Develop broad understanding of different research approaches and traditions and related research methodologies
- Acquire deeper knowledge of selected research methods and hands-on experience in their application, including ethical and professional issues
- Develop and apply fundamental research skills, such as literature searching, critical reading of research papers and reports, classification and assessment of the literature and writing a literature review.

## 2.5 Student Learning Outcomes

The course learning outcomes are what you should be able to DO by the end of this course if you participate fully in learning activities and successfully complete the assessment items. The course learning outcomes are:

1. Ability to understand different research approaches and methodologies, the nature of knowledge and the ways it is produced and interpreted
2. Identify research problems, develop and justify research questions and hypothesis (if applicable), select research methods and techniques of data collection and analysis, conduct research and analyse and interpret results
3. Discuss and apply selected research methods to achieve research objectives and answer research questions
4. Discuss and address ethical and professional aspects of research
5. Critically analyse and review research papers that adopted different research approaches and methodologies and assess their strengths and weaknesses
6. Conduct information searches, critically assess relevant literatures and write a literature review
7. Write a well articulated and logically structured academic text
8. Present orally a well argued and convincing argument

The learning outcomes in this course also help you to achieve some of the overall Program learning goals and outcomes for all graduate research students in the Business School. Program learning goals are what we want you to BE or HAVE by the time you successfully completed your degree. Program learning outcomes are what you are able to DO by the end of your degree. The relevant Business School PhD Program learning goals and outcomes for this course are:

### Business School PhD Program Learning Goals and Outcomes

- 1. Specialist knowledge: Our students will have the ability to understand and apply a substantial body of knowledge at the frontier of the relevant field.**
  - a. Students should be able to demonstrate an expert/authoritative command of knowledge in the relevant field.
  - b. Students should be able to demonstrate a thorough understanding of research principles and methods appropriate to the relevant field of work.
- 2. Research capability: Our students will have the ability to undertake research that makes an original contribution in the relevant field.**
  - a. Students should be able to critically evaluate existing theoretical knowledge, ideas and practice within the relevant field to generate original knowledge.
  - b. Students should be able to undertake an independent investigation to generate original knowledge.
- 3. Communication: Our students will have the ability to communicate research effectively in the scholarly community.**
  - a. Students should be able to cogently present the theoretical underpinnings, methodologies and results of research through oral presentations to peers and the scholarly community.
  - b. Students should be able to demonstrate an ability to effectively communicate their research in writing suitable for publication.

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	<p>Ability to understand different research approaches and methodologies, the nature of knowledge and the ways it is produced and interpreted</p> <p>Identify research problems, develop and justify research questions and hypothesis (if applicable), select research methods and techniques of data collection and analysis, conduct research and analyse and interpret results</p> <p>Discuss and apply selected research methods to achieve research objectives and answer research questions</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Workshops I-IV</li> <li>• Exam</li> </ul>
2	Research capability	<p>Critically analyse and review research papers that adopted different research approaches and methodologies and assess their strengths and weaknesses</p> <p>Conduct information searches, critically assess relevant literatures and write a literature review</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Assignment #1</li> </ul>
3a	Oral communication	Present orally a well argued and convincing argument	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Discussions and presentations as part of workshops I-IV</li> </ul>
3b	Written communication	Write a well articulated and logically structured academic text	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Assignment #1</li> <li>• Research outcomes in workshops I-IV</li> </ul>

### 3 LEARNING AND TEACHING ACTIVITIES

This is a seminar style course with a strong emphasis on class discussions and peer-centred learning rather than teacher-centred learning. Two thirds of the course are workshops that involve active student participation and hands-on experience. A particular emphasis is placed on comprehensive preparation, critical thinking and discussions of the reading material in lectures and workshops. While some reading material is generic and relevant across disciplines, other materials are discipline-specific. Students are encouraged to take an active role in all learning activities and contribute to class discussions. For each week students will find a reading list and the e-copies of selected papers on the course Moodle site. In addition,

in most weeks there will be specific tasks that students will be asked to complete before the class. Preparation for classes and workshops (e.g. reading of specified material) and active participation in classes will enable students to achieve the learning goals and outcomes.

## 4 ASSESSMENT

### 4.1 Formal Requirements

In order to pass this course, you must:

- achieve a composite mark of at least 50; and
- fully complete and submit all assessment tasks, and
- attend at least 80% of the lectures and all workshops

**Note:** While a mark of 50 will provide a pass, this will not be sufficient to meet the requirements of your program. This course will generally be a component of a research degree program and will have a performance level set by the program and your School. You should discuss the expected (minimal) performance level for your degree with your supervisor. It is your responsibility to be aware of the relevant requirements for your degree program.

### 4.2 Assessment Details

Assessment Task	Weighting	Length	Due Date
1. <b>Assignment</b> Literature review	20%	2500 words	Week 12
2. <b>Workshops I-IV (Research tasks completed during workshops)</b>	40%	TBA	Submission in class
3. <b>Exam</b>	40%		Week 14
<b>Total</b>	100%		

### 4.3 Assessment Format

#### **Assignment: Literature Review (20%)**

This assignment is an individual assignment.

The purpose of this assignment is to develop your capacity

- to engage with and critically assess research results and synthesise the body of knowledge relevant for your research problem and
- to present your argument logically and in a clear and concise form.

You are required to review 20 or more peer-reviewed papers from leading journals in your discipline and related disciplines on a topic of your interest.

The literature review should follow good standards for writing a literature review most of which are discussed in the prescribed textbook and also in selected articles on literature reviews. Literature review is also discussed in class (weeks 2). In particular, the review should:

1. introduce a research domain and selected problem(s)
2. synthesise selected papers and systematically and critically present what is known, streams of research, contributions, directions, unknown
3. identify conflicting results, areas of agreement and disagreement, as well as a lack of research or gaps
4. assess the 'state of art' in the assigned area
5. identify areas that need further research.

Literature review should not exceed 2500 words excluding references and appendices (if needed). Each review is to be accompanied by a full set of cited references. The use of Endnote for your references is required. Reports are to be typed using 12 point font and 1.5 line spacing, and submitted in Word via Moodle.

Marking criteria will focus on the quality, strength and soundness of the analysis undertaken (assignment #1 specification and marking guide document can be downloaded from Moodle). Word count will be checked and marks will be deducted for excessively long reports.

### **Workshops I-IV**

To achieve in-depth understanding and experiential knowledge in selected research methods (highly relevant for research in business disciplines) four workshops will be conducted from week 5 till week 12 (each during 2 weeks period). The selected research methods and techniques include: experiments, survey based research, case study research and qualitative data analysis.

Every workshop will include reading material provided in advance and discussed in class, introduction to a research method (experiments, case study research), and hands-on experience in designing a research study, applying a research method and conducting research. During each workshop students will complete specified research tasks and produce the outcome as an assessment item. Each workshop outcome is worth 10%. For every workshop a detailed specification of research tasks and outcomes, together with assessment criteria will be provided in advance.

### **Exam**

The breadth of knowledge will be assessed in the final exam which will consist of short answers to questions related to the content covered in the course.

#### **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 and will not be related to course grades.

#### 4.4 Assignment Submission Procedure

Paper critique assignments should be submitted in class when they are due. Assignment #1 and #2 should be submitted via Moodle.

#### 4.5 Late Submission

A penalty of 10% 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.

### 5 COURSE RESOURCES

The website for this course is on Moodle at:  
<https://moodle.telt.unsw.edu.au/login/index.php>

You will have access to the course website once you have enrolled in the course. The course website contains the course outline, the weekly plan, seminar slides, reading lists and copies of papers, assignment details, announcements and other information relevant for the course.

The textbooks for this course is:

Neuman, W.L. (2009) *Social Research Methods – Qualitative and Quantitative Approaches*, 7<sup>th</sup> ed, Pearson.

For each week's seminar a topic, class activities and the list of required and suggested additional readings is provided in advance via Moodle. A PDF document of the slides to be used in the seminar will also be posted on Moodle in advance of the seminar. They are posted so you can print them out and bring them to class.

### 6 COURSE EVALUATION AND DEVELOPMENT

Each year feedback is sought from students and other stakeholders about the courses offered and continual improvements are made based on this feedback. UNSW's Course and Teaching Evaluation and Improvement (CATEI) Process is one of the ways in which student evaluative feedback is gathered. In this course, we will seek your feedback through CATEI evaluation at the end of semester.

## 7 COURSE SCHEDULE

Week	Date	Lecturer	Lecture Content/Topic	Tutorial/workshop/ exercise	Chapter in Neuman
1	2 March	Dubravka	<b>Introduction to research methods in business and management disciplines</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Why do we do research?</li> <li>• Types of research</li> <li>• Research process</li> <li>• Approaches to research and nature of data collected</li> <li>• Writing a research report</li> </ul>	Course planning Students' engagement Assessments Endnote requested  Exercise: How to read and critique a research paper	Ch 1, and 2  Ch 16
2	9 March	David  Guest speaker Sebastian Boell	<b>Literature review</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Purpose</li> <li>• Approaches</li> <li>• The role in the thesis</li> <li>• Writing</li> </ul> <b>Literature searching strategies</b>	Discussion: Examples of lit review  Exercising your searches  <b>Assignment #1 Planning,</b> how to find relevant papers	Ch 5
3	16 March	David	<b>Theory and research</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• What is theory?</li> <li>• Types of theories</li> <li>• Theory building and theory testing</li> <li>• Theory vs. practice</li> </ul> <b>Ethical concerns in research and obtaining ethics approval</b>	<b>Lecture</b>  Discussion: Critiquing existing research	Ch 3
4	23 March	Dubravka	<b>Research paradigms and approaches</b> – positivist, interpretivist and critical approaches and beyond  Relations between research approaches and research methodologies	Discussion:  <b>Designing your research</b> from research questions to research methods – how to develop your argument	Ch 4
5	30 March	Gary	<b>Workshop I</b>  <b>Introduction to quantitative research design</b>  <b>Survey based research</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Defining and measuring variables</li> <li>• Developing a model and hypothesis</li> <li>• Constructing and testing survey instrument</li> <li>• Sampling and administering</li> <li>• Data analysis</li> </ul>	<b>Lecture</b>	Ch 6, 7, 8, 10
			<b>MID-SEMESTER BREAK</b>		
6	6 April	Gary	<b>Workshoping survey design</b>		
7	13	Gary	<b>Workshop II</b>	<b>Assignment # 1</b>	Ch 6, 7, 8,

	April		<b>Experimental research</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Designing experiments</li> <li>• Analysing data I</li> <li>• Internal and external validity</li> </ul>	<b>Submission Due</b> <b>Assignment # 2 Planning</b>	9
8	20 April	Gary	<b>Workshoping on experimental research</b>		
9	27 April	David and Dubravka	<b>Workshop III</b> <b>Introduction to qualitative research</b> <b>Quality of qualitative research</b> <b>Case study research</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Research design</li> <li>• Positivist and non-positivist case study research</li> <li>• Data sources; quantitative and qualitative data collection and processing</li> <li>• Theorizing with cases</li> </ul>	Discussion: Examples of case study research	
10	4 May	Dubravka and David	<b>Field and ethnographic research workshoping</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Designing and conducting field research</li> <li>• Qualitative interview</li> </ul>	<b>Lecture</b>  Workshop on interviewing	Ch 6,7, 8, 13  Ch 15
11	11 May	Dubravka	<b>Workshop IV</b> <b>Qualitative data analysis</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• First level and second level analysis</li> <li>• Grounded theory</li> <li>• Thematic analysis</li> </ul>	Workshop on qualitative data analysis – grounded theory and thematic coding	Ch 15
12	18 May	Dubravka	<b>Workshoping data analysis</b>		
13	5 June			<b>Assignment # 1</b> <b>Submission Due 23:59</b>	
14	8 June		<b>Exam</b>	<b>Time and place TBA</b>	