COMM 8001
Introduction to Research Methods

Course Outline
Semester 1, 2015

Part A: Course-Specific Information
Part B: Key Policies, Student Responsibilities and Support

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

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

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.

The course enrolls students from PhD and MPhil research programs as well as honours programs across the Business School. Assessment requirements are determined appropriately for each program.

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:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Business School PhD Program Learning Goals and Outcomes</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>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.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>a. Students should be able to demonstrate an expert/authoritative command of knowledge in the relevant field.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>b. Students should be able to demonstrate a thorough understanding of research principles and methods appropriate to the relevant field of work.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Research capability: Our students will have the ability to undertake research that makes an original contribution in the relevant field.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>a. Students should be able to critically evaluate existing theoretical knowledge, ideas and practice within the relevant field to generate original knowledge.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>b. Students should be able to undertake an independent investigation to generate original knowledge.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Communication: Our students will have the ability to communicate research effectively in the scholarly community.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>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.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>b. Students should be able to demonstrate an ability to effectively communicate their research in writing suitable for publication.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The following table shows how the Course learning outcomes relate to the overall Program learning goals and outcomes:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Program Learning Goals and Outcomes</th>
<th>Course Learning Outcomes</th>
<th>Course Assessment Item</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>This course helps you to achieve the following learning goals for all Business School PhD and MPhil students:</td>
<td>On successful completion of the course, you should be able to:</td>
<td>This learning outcome will be assessed in the following items:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1 Specialist knowledge</td>
<td>Ability to understand different research approaches and methodologies, the nature of knowledge and the ways it is produced and interpreted</td>
<td>• Workshops I-IV</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2 Research capability</td>
<td>Critically analyse and review research papers that adopted different research approaches and methodologies and assess their strengths and weaknesses</td>
<td>• Exam</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3a Oral communication</td>
<td>Present orally a well argued and convincing argument</td>
<td>• Assignment #1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3b Written communication</td>
<td>Write a well articulated and logically structured academic text</td>
<td>• Discussions and presentations as part of workshops I-IV</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### 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

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

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. The selected research methods and techniques include: survey based research, experiments, case study research and interviewing 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

Assignment #1 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:

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:


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

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Week</th>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Lecturer</th>
<th>Lecture Content/Topic</th>
<th>Tutorial/workshop/ exercise</th>
<th>Chapter in Neuman</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| 1    | 2 March | Dubravka | **Introduction to research methods in business and management disciplines**  
- Why do we do research?  
- Types of research  
- Research process  
- Approaches to research and nature of data collected  
- Writing a research report | 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 | Literature review  
- Purpose  
- Approaches  
- The role in the thesis  
- Writing  
**Literature searching strategies** | Discussion: Examples of lit review  
Exercising your searches  
**Assignment #1 Planning, how to find relevant papers** | Ch 5 |
| 3    | 16 March | David | Theory and research  
- What is theory?  
- Types of theories  
- Theory building and theory testing  
- Theory vs. practice  
**Ethical concerns in research and obtaining ethics approval** | Lecture  
Discussion: Critiquing existing research | Ch 3 |
| 4    | 23 March | Dubravka | Research paradigms and approaches – positivist, interpretivist and critical approaches and beyond  
Relations between research approaches and research methodologies | Discussion:  
**Designing your research from research questions to research methods – how to develop your argument** | Ch 4 |
| 5    | 30 March | Gary | **Introduction to quantitative research design**  
Workshop I  
Survey based research  
- Defining and measuring variables  
- Developing a model and hypothesis  
- Constructing and testing survey instrument  
- Sampling and administering  
- Data analysis | Lecture | Ch 6, 7, 8, 10 |
<p>|      |       |          | MID-SEMESTER BREAK |                               |                   |
| 6    | 13 April | Gary | Workshop I cont - survey design |                               |                   |</p>
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<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| 7  | 20 April | Gary | Workshop II  
Experimental research  
- Designing experiments  
- Analysing data I  
- Internal and external validity | Assignment # 1  
Submission Due  
Assignment # 2 Planning | Ch 6, 7, 8, 9 |
| 8  | 27 April | Gary | Workshop II cont - experimental research |    |    |
| 9  | 4 May | David and Dubravka | Introduction to qualitative research  
Quality of qualitative research  
Workshop III  
Case study research  
- Research design  
- Positivist and non-positivist case study research  
- Data sources; quantitative and qualitative data collection and processing  
- Theorizing with cases | Discussion: Examples of case study research |    |
| 10 | 11 May | Dubravka and David | Field and ethnographic research  
Workshop IV  
- Designing and conducting field research  
- Qualitative interview | Lecture  
Workshop on interviewing | Ch 6, 7, 8, 13  
Ch 15 |
| 11 | 18 May | Dubravka | Workshop IV - cont  
Qualitative data analysis  
- First level and second level analysis  
- Grounded theory  
- Thematic analysis | Workshop on qualitative data analysis – grounded theory and thematic coding | Ch 15 |
| 12 | 25 May | Dubravka | Workshop IV - cont  
Course wrap up | Presentation and discussion of results |    |
| 13 | 1 June |    | Assignment # 1  
Submission Due 23:59 |    |    |
| 14 | 9 June | Exam | Time and place TBA |    |    |
PART B: KEY POLICIES, STUDENT RESPONSIBILITIES AND SUPPORT

1 PROGRAM LEARNING GOALS AND OUTCOMES

The Business School Program Learning Goals reflect what we want all students to BE or HAVE by the time they successfully complete their degree, regardless of their individual majors or specialisations. For example, we want all our graduates to HAVE a high level of business knowledge, and a sound awareness of ethical, social, cultural and environmental implications of business. As well, we want all our graduates to BE effective problem-solvers, communicators and team participants. These are our overall learning goals for you and are sought after by employers.

You can demonstrate your achievement of these goals by the specific outcomes you achieve by the end of your degree (e.g. be able to analyse and research business problems and propose well-justified solutions). Each course contributes to your development of two or more program learning goals/outcomes by providing opportunities for you to practise these skills and to be assessed and receive feedback.

Program Learning Goals for undergraduate and postgraduate students cover the same key areas (application of business knowledge, critical thinking, communication and teamwork, ethical, social and environmental responsibility), which are key goals for all Business students and essential for success in a globalised world. However, the specific outcomes reflect different expectations for these levels of study.

PhD Program Learning Goals and Outcomes

4. 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.

5. 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.

6. 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.
2 ACADEMIC HONESTY AND PLAGIARISM

The University regards plagiarism as a form of academic misconduct, and has very strict rules regarding plagiarism. For UNSW policies, penalties, and information to help you avoid plagiarism see: http://student.unsw.edu.au/plagiarism as well as the guidelines in the online ELISE tutorials for all new UNSW students: http://subjectguides.library.unsw.edu.au/elise

To see if you understand plagiarism, do this short quiz: https://student.unsw.edu.au/plagiarism-quiz

For information on how to acknowledge your sources and reference correctly, see: https://student.unsw.edu.au/harvard-referencing

For the Business School Harvard Referencing Guide, see the Business Referencing and Plagiarism webpage (Business >Students>Learning support> Resources>Referencing and plagiarism).

For information for staff on how UNSW defines plagiarism, the types of penalties that apply and the protocol around handling plagiarism cases, see:

3 STUDENT RESPONSIBILITIES AND CONDUCT

Students are expected to be familiar with and adhere to university policies in relation to class attendance and general conduct and behaviour, including maintaining a safe, respectful environment; and to understand their obligations in relation to workload, assessment and keeping informed.

Information and policies on these topics can be found in UNSW Current Students ‘Managing your Program’ webpages: http://student.unsw.edu.au/program.

3.1 Workload

It is expected that you will spend at least nine to ten hours per week studying this course. This time should be made up of reading, research, working on exercises and problems, online activities and attending classes. In periods where you need to complete assignments or prepare for examinations, the workload may be greater. Over-commitment has been a cause of failure for many students. You should take the required workload into account when planning how to balance study with employment and other activities.

We strongly encourage you to connect with your Moodle course websites in the first week of semester. Local and international research indicates that students who engage early and often with their course website are more likely to pass their course.

Information on expected workload: http://student.unsw.edu.au/uoc

3.2 Attendance

Your regular and punctual attendance at lectures and seminars is expected in this course. University regulations indicate that if students attend less than 80% of scheduled classes they may be refused final assessment. For more information, see: https://student.unsw.edu.au/attendance
3.3 General Conduct and Behaviour
You are expected to conduct yourself with consideration and respect for the needs of your fellow students and teaching staff. Conduct which unduly disrupts or interferes with a class, such as ringing or talking on mobile phones, is not acceptable and students may be asked to leave the class. More information on student conduct is available at: http://student.unsw.edu.au/conduct

3.4 Occupational Health and Safety
UNSW Policy requires each person to work safely and responsibly, in order to avoid personal injury and to protect the safety of others. For more information, see http://www.ohs.unsw.edu.au/.

3.5 Keeping Informed
You should take note of all announcements made in lectures, tutorials or on the course website. From time to time, the University will send important announcements to your university e-mail address without providing you with a paper copy. You will be deemed to have received this information. It is also your responsibility to keep the University informed of all changes to your contact details.

4 SPECIAL CONSIDERATION
You must submit all assignments and attend all examinations scheduled for your course. You should seek assistance early if you suffer illness or misadventure which affects your course progress.

General information on special consideration for undergraduate and postgraduate courses:

1. All applications for special consideration must be lodged online through myUNSW within 3 working days of the assessment (Log into myUNSW and go to My Student Profile tab > My Student Services > Online Services > Special Consideration). You will then need to submit the originals or certified copies of your completed Professional Authority form (pdf - download here) and other supporting documentation to Student Central. For more information, please study carefully in advance the instructions and conditions at: https://student.unsw.edu.au/special-consideration

2. Please note that documentation may be checked for authenticity and the submission of false documentation will be treated as academic misconduct. The School may ask to see the original or certified copy.

3. Applications will not be accepted by teaching staff. The lecturer-in-charge will be automatically notified when you lodge an online application for special consideration.

4. Decisions and recommendations are only made by lecturers-in-charge (or by the Faculty Panel in the case of UG final exam special considerations), not by tutors.

5. Applying for special consideration does not automatically mean that you will be granted a supplementary exam or other concession.

6. Special consideration requests do not allow lecturers-in-charge to award students additional marks.
5 STUDENT RESOURCES AND SUPPORT

The University and the Business School provide a wide range of support services for students, including:

- **Business School Education Development Unit (EDU)**
  https://www.business.unsw.edu.au/students/resources/learning-support
  The EDU provides academic writing, study skills and maths support specifically for Business students. Services include workshops, online resources, and individual consultations. EDU Office: Level 1, Room 1033, Quadrangle Building. Phone: 9385 5584; Email: edu@unsw.edu.au.

- **Business Student Centre**
  https://www.business.unsw.edu.au/students/resources/student-centre
  Provides advice and direction on all aspects of admission, enrolment and graduation. Office: Level 1, Room 1028 in the Quadrangle Building; Phone: 9385 3189.

- **Moodle eLearning Support**
  For online help using Moodle, go to: https://student.unsw.edu.au/moodle-support.
  For technical support, email: itservicecentre@unsw.edu.au; Phone: 9385 1333.

- **UNSW Learning Centre**
  www.lc.unsw.edu.au
  Provides academic skills support services, including workshops and resources, for all UNSW students. See website for details.

- **Library training and search support services**
  http://info.library.unsw.edu.au/web/services/services.html

- **IT Service Centre**: Provides technical support for problems logging in to websites, downloading documents etc. https://www.it.unsw.edu.au/students/index.html Office: UNSW Library Annexe (Ground floor). Ph: 9385 1333.

- **UNSW Counselling and Psychological Services**
  https://student.unsw.edu.au/wellbeing Provides support and services if you need help with your personal life, getting your academic life back on track or just want to know how to stay safe, including free, confidential counselling. Office: Level 2, East Wing, Quadrangle Building; Phone: 9385 5418.

- **Student Equity & Disabilities Unit**
  http://www.studentequity.unsw.edu.au Provides advice regarding equity and diversity issues, and support for students who have a disability or disadvantage that interferes with their learning. Office: Ground Floor, John Goodsell Building; Phone: 9385 4734; Email: seadu@unsw.edu.au