INFS4886
PRINCIPLES OF RESEARCH DESIGN

Course Outline
Semester 2, 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

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Position</th>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Email</th>
<th>Room</th>
<th>Phone</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Lecturer-in-charge</td>
<td>Shan Pan</td>
<td><a href="mailto:shan.pan@unsw.edu.au">shan.pan@unsw.edu.au</a></td>
<td>QUAD2105</td>
<td>9385 0475</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The best way to contact your lecturer is via email. Please note that only your UNSW email account should be used for formal notices and correspondence regarding the course. Always sign your email with your name and student number. The subject of your e-mail should begin with the course code (i.e. INFS4886).

Please make an appointment for a consultation with the LIC if you need to discuss issues in detail.

If you need to contact the School urgently you can contact the School Office on 9385-5320 or email: istm@unsw.edu.au.

2 COURSE DETAILS

2.1 Teaching Times and Locations
Lectures start in Week 1 (to Week 12): The Time and Location are:
Monday 16:00 – 19:00, Law Building 389 (K-F8-389).
Consultation Time: Monday 14:00-15:00 or By Appointment.

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
This course introduces students to research problems and the ways business research is conducted. The course aims to develop foundational research skills required for designing research projects, and provides an overview of research approaches and methodologies useful for conducting business research. Topics covered include: overview of the research process, theory and theorizing, critiquing a research paper, conducting a systematic literature review, writing a literature review, conceptual modelling and research design, archival research, case studies, surveys, experimental and simulation research, action and design research, writing and defending a research proposal.

2.4 Course Aims and Relationship to Other Courses
This is a foundation course that introduces students to research problems, different approaches to understanding these problems and conducting good quality academic research. This course is primarily for all students who intend to undertake the Honours Thesis in Information Systems. It is also suitable for students who wish to understand how to conduct research. It can be considered as an Introduction to research, with the
follow-on course INFS4887, which will cover key research methodologies from a more practical angle. This course aims to:

- Improve understanding of the nature of research, the research process and the creation of knowledge,
- Develop understanding of the different research approaches and traditions, and different research methodologies, methods and techniques applied in business research
- Assist students in identifying interesting research topics and articulating the reasons for undertaking a research project
- Develop and apply fundamental research skills, including conducting literature reviews, designing a research project, collecting and analysing data and presenting research results
- Assist students in developing research writing skills.

2.5 Student Learning Outcomes

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

1. Critique the nature, types and characteristics of academic research.
2. Critically review different perspectives and approaches to research and consider their strengths and weaknesses.
3. Critically analyse and assess research papers.
4. Conduct an information search and write a literature review.
5. Formulate research problems and justify research questions.
6. Explain the applicability of various research approaches and methodologies.
7. Demonstrate the applicability of different data collection and data analysis techniques.
8. Recommend research strategies cognizant of the limitations of different research methods and data analysis techniques.
9. Prepare and present your research proposal.

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 Learning Outcomes in this course also help you to achieve some of the overall Program Learning Goals and Outcomes for all undergraduate 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 an effective team player’). You demonstrate this by achieving specific Program Learning Outcomes – what you are able to DO by the end of your degree (e.g. ‘participate collaboratively and responsibly in teams’).

For more information on the Undergraduate Program Learning Goals and Outcomes, see Part B of the course outline.
Business Undergraduate Program Learning Goals and Outcomes

1. Knowledge: Our graduates will have in-depth disciplinary knowledge applicable in local and global contexts. You should be able to select and apply disciplinary knowledge to business situations in a local and global environment.

2. Critical thinking and problem solving: Our graduates will be critical thinkers and effective problem solvers. You should be able to identify and research issues in business situations, analyse the issues, and propose appropriate and well-justified solutions.

3. Communication: Our graduates will be effective professional communicators. You should be able to:
   a. Prepare written documents that are clear and concise, using appropriate style and presentation for the intended audience, purpose and context, and
   b. Prepare and deliver oral presentations that are clear, focused, well-structured, and delivered in a professional manner.

4. Teamwork: Our graduates will be effective team participants. You should be able to participate collaboratively and responsibly in teams, and reflect on your own teamwork, and on the team’s processes and ability to achieve outcomes.

5. Ethical, social and environmental responsibility: Our graduates will have a sound awareness of the ethical, social, cultural and environmental implications of business practice. You should be able to:
   a. Identify and assess ethical, environmental and/or sustainability considerations in business decision-making and practice, and
   b. Identify social and cultural implications of business situations.

The following table shows how your Course Learning Outcomes relate to the overall Program Learning Goals and Outcomes, and indicates where these are assessed (they may also be developed in tutorials and other activities):

<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 undergraduate 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 Knowledge</td>
<td>Critique the nature, types and characteristics of academic research. Critically review different perspectives and approaches to research and consider their strengths and weaknesses. Critically analyse and assess research papers. Conduct an information search and write a literature review. Formulate research problems and justify research questions. Explain the applicability of various</td>
<td>• Class preparation and participation • Paper critique • Research proposal</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>---</td>
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</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
|   | research approaches and methodologies.  
   |  Demonstrating the applicability of different data collection and data analysis techniques.  
   |  Recommend research strategies cognisant of the limitations of different research methods and data analysis techniques. |
| 2 | Critical thinking and problem solving | Critique the nature, types and characteristics of academic research.  
   |  Critically review different perspectives and approaches to research and consider their strengths and weaknesses.  
   |  Critically analyse and assess research papers.  
   |  Conduct an information search and write a literature review.  
   |  Formulate research problems and justify research questions.  
   |  Explain the applicability of various research approaches and methodologies.  
   |  Demonstrate the applicability of different data collection and data analysis techniques.  
   |  Recommend research strategies cognisant of the limitations of different research methods and data analysis techniques. |
| 3a | Written communication | Construct written work which is logically and professionally presented.  
   |   |   |
| 3b | Oral communication | Communicate ideas in a succinct and clear manner.  
   |   |   |
| 4 | Teamwork | Work collaboratively to complete a task.  
   |   |   |
| 5a | Ethical, social and environmental responsibility | Ethics is addressed from the point of ethical practices in research, particularly on UNSW and ASB regulations.  
   |   |   |
| 5b | Social and cultural awareness | Not specifically addressed in this course. However, depending on the proposed research topic and the paper chosen for critiquing, they may be addressed.  
   |   |   |
3 LEARNING AND TEACHING ACTIVITIES

3.1 Approach to Learning and Teaching in the Course

This course adopts the principles of student-centred learning and dialectics. This involves a combination of providing information to students and motivating them to use this information in problem-solving environments. The manner in which students present and argue the reasoning behind their solutions demonstrates their knowledge of the area, as one cannot convincingly argue something that is not understood. Arguing an issue also expands one’s understanding of a topic as one is forced to consider alternative points of view. Finally, dialectics empower students to collaboratively negotiate, rather than passively learn, an area or topic. This has implications for teaching strategies and assessment (discussed below) as well as for students’ role, responsibilities and expected contribution to knowledge creation.

First, lecturers are responsible for creating a learning environment that is stimulating and interesting, and that encourages collaboration, knowledge sharing and co-creation by all participants. The learning environment includes both the physical and virtual spaces where learning and teaching activities take place. The aim is to develop an atmosphere of cooperation and a spirit of learning, inquiring and innovating in all activities, underpinned by a sense of responsibility for our individual and collective learning.

Second, students as active participants are expected to take responsibility for their own individual and collective learning. While this course is designed to foster students’ active participation and contribution to knowledge co-creation, this will not happen unless students take seriously their roles and responsibilities. As active contributors students are expected to be prepared for each class and take active role in discussions and other learning activities.

3.2 Learning Activities and Teaching Strategies

The course involves lectures, presentations, discussions, and individual and group learning activities and assignments. Each class will have a topic, specific tasks and reading material set in advance. A class will typically involve a lecture/seminar — presenting a new topic and related readings - followed by groupwork, discussions, workshop, or student presentations. Students will be expected to present or discuss pre-specified reading material in the class. These activities will be assessed.

Discussions and group work will be conducted in class, face-to-face but also via electronic media. Students will be encouraged to use Moodle to share their ideas, collectively write a group assignment and discuss anything of interest to their study. Assignments are designed to enable students to undertake individual and group learning guided by the lecturer.
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). A mark of 45 percent or higher is normally regarded as satisfactory.
- Attend at least 80% of all scheduled classes.

In the case of peer assessed group work, the mark assigned to each member of the group may be scaled based on peer assessment of each member's contribution to the task.

The School reserves the right to scale final marks to a mean of 60%.

It should be noted that group members are expected to work in a harmonious and professional fashion which includes adequate management of non-performing members.

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>Class Preparation and Participation</td>
<td>15%</td>
<td>See 4.3 below</td>
<td>Ongoing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Paper Critique</td>
<td>35%</td>
<td>2,500 words</td>
<td>4pm. 14 September, 2015</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Research Proposal</td>
<td>50%</td>
<td>5,000 words</td>
<td>4pm. 26 October, 2015</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>100%</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

4.3 Assessment Format

**Class Preparation and Participation (25%)**

You are expected to prepare for classes by reading specified materials. During class you are expected to actively participate in class activities, group discussion, class presentation and answer questions that have been posed during the class. This assessment has been designed to develop your analysis and critical thinking skills and improve your understanding and appreciation of research methods. It will also improve your communication skills, group-work skills, time management and personal organization.

Each student is assigned 15 marks for their preparation and participation; graded based on the following guidelines.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Below 80% attendance (i.e. 10 classes) as required by school</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1-2</td>
<td>Has satisfied the attendance requirement but has not prepared and/or contributed to class activities</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3-6</td>
<td>Has satisfied the attendance and preparation requirements and participated in team activities during class.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7-9</td>
<td>Has satisfied the attendance and preparation requirements, participated in team activities during class and contributed to class discussion.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10-12</td>
<td>Has satisfied the attendance and preparation requirements, has participated in team activities during class, and contributed to class discussion in relevant and constructive ways.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13-14</td>
<td>Has satisfied the attendance and preparation requirements, has participated in team activities during class, contributed to class discussion in relevant and constructive ways, and demonstrated exceptional insight during discussions.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15</td>
<td>Has satisfied all of the above and demonstrated excellence in their contribution to the dynamics of the course.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Paper Critique (25%)**

This assignment is to be completed in groups of 2 or 3 as agreed with the LIC.

The purpose of this assignment is:

1. to develop your capacity to understand and critically assess research papers in your discipline, and
2. help you to be able to present your arguments logically and in a clear and concise form.

Further details on this assignment will be released on Moodle.

**Research Proposal (50%)**

This assignment is to be completed as an individual assignment.

The purpose of this assignment is to demonstrate your ability to:

1. Identify relevant and interesting research problem(s) in your field, and demonstrate their significance;
2. Assess the current body of knowledge and formulate research question(s);
3. Propose and justify your research approach and methodology to examine your research problem(s) and answer your research questions;
4. Propose and discuss an appropriate research design;
5. Discuss expected results and potential contribution and significance of research.

Further details on this assignment will be released on Moodle.

**4.4 Assignment Submission Procedure**

Submission of assignments must be accompanied by a signed cover page. Digital signatures are not allowed. Missing cover page or cover page without authentic signatures may result in a penalty of 5% of the maximum marks available for assignments.
4.5 Late Submission
The late submission of assignments carries a penalty of 10% of the maximum marks for that assignment per day of lateness (including weekends and public holidays), unless an extension of time has been granted. An extension of time to complete an assignment may be granted by the course co-ordinator in case of misadventure or illness. Applications for an extension of time should be made to the course co-ordinator by email or in person. You will be required to substantiate your application with appropriate documentary evidence such as medical certificates, accident reports etc. Please note that work commitments and computer failures are usually considered insufficient grounds for an extension.

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 website for this course is on UNSW Moodle at:

Below contains a list recommended for reading. It is organised in topic areas:

Problem Solving and Research

Theory and Theorizing

Critiquing a Research Paper
Hirschheim, R. Guidelines for Critical Paper Reviews. Available at:

Writing a Literature Review

Epistemological Positions

Research Design and Research Proposals

Survey-based Research

Action & Design Research

**Experiments and Simulations**


**Action & Design Research**


**Case Study Research**


**Field and Ethnographic research**


6 COURSE EVALUATION AND DEVELOPMENT

Your feedback at the end of this course will be invaluable in assessing our current course design and introducing further improvements in the future. UNSW’s Course and Teaching Evaluation and Improvement (CATEI) process is an important way in which student evaluative feedback is gathered systematically from all courses. We will also add some more specific forms of evaluation, including informal feedback, at the end of semester. Given our approach to teaching and learning and the role of students in these processes, we see students’ evaluation as an integral part of teaching and learning. We have made some minor changes to the course based on feedback from 2013 and we look forward to your comments on the course.
# 7 COURSE SCHEDULE

**Lecture Schedule**

Lectures start in Week 1 and finish in Week 12.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Week</th>
<th>Topic</th>
<th>Reference</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Week 1</td>
<td>Course Introduction</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>27 July</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Week 2</td>
<td>Research Design and Research Proposal</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>3 August</td>
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<tr>
<td>Week 3</td>
<td>Literature Search &amp; Writing a literature review</td>
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<tr>
<td>10 August</td>
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<tr>
<td>Week 4</td>
<td>Critiquing a research paper</td>
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<tr>
<td>17 August</td>
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<tr>
<td>Week 5</td>
<td>Survey-based Research</td>
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<tr>
<td>24 August</td>
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<tr>
<td>Week 6</td>
<td>Experimental Research</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>31 August</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Week 7</td>
<td>Case Study Research (I)</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>7 September</td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Week 8</td>
<td>Case Study Research (II)</td>
<td>Paper Critique due on 4pm, 14 September. Submit and print a bounded hardcopy and hand it to LIC in class.</td>
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<tr>
<td>14 September</td>
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<tr>
<td>Week 9</td>
<td>Case Study Research (III)</td>
<td></td>
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<td>21 September</td>
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<td>Week 10</td>
<td>(Monday 5 Oct is a public holiday)</td>
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<tr>
<td>5 October</td>
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<tr>
<td>Week 11</td>
<td>Research Proposal Discussion and Feedback Session</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12 October</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Week 12</td>
<td>Managing the Thesis Writing Process and Course Debrief</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>19 October</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Week 13</td>
<td>NO LECTURES</td>
<td>Research proposal due on 4pm, 26 October. Submit and print a bounded hardcopy and hand it to LIC in class.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>26 October</td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
</tbody>
</table>