INFS4887
BUSINESS RESEARCH METHODS

Course Outline
Semester 1, 2013

Part A: Course-Specific Information

Please consult Part B for key information on ASB 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>Dr Lesley Land</td>
<td><a href="mailto:l.land@unsw.edu.au">l.land@unsw.edu.au</a></td>
<td>QUAD2099A</td>
<td>93854738</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The best way to contact your lecturer is via email or during their consultation times. Please note that only your UNSW email account will be used for formal notices and correspondence regarding the course.

| Lesley Land | QUAD2099A | Wed 2-4pm |

If you need to contact the school urgently, ring 93855320 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: Wednesday 4-7 pm, in Electrical Eng 218 (K-G17-218).

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 Principles of Research Design this course aims to extend and deepen the understanding of different research approaches and methodologies in order to prepare students for their own research projects in their business discipline. This course will assist students in identifying, discussing and formulating a research problem, in selecting and applying appropriate research approaches and methods of inquiry (both quantitative or qualitative), and in presenting their results. Successful completion of this course should be sufficient for students to undertake a research project.

2.4  Course Aims and Relationship to Other Courses

While Principles of Research Design introduces students to IS research literature, research approaches and methodologies, its major aim is help develop a research proposal, driven and justified from the literature. In doing so, the philosophical and epistemological assumptions underpinning the research approaches and methodologies should be clearly presented.

This course follows from the Principles of Research Design to provide deeper knowledge and experience in applying commonly used qualitative and qualitative
research methods to the research process. In particular, this current course concentrates on the different methods and techniques used in the field of IS. Students engage in the research process, from identifying, discussing and formulating a research problem, to selecting and applying appropriate research approaches and methods of inquiry (both quantitative or qualitative), and in presenting their results. The course aims to provide an in-depth study of the IS field and the different methods and techniques essential to the execution of high quality research in business and/or in IS. The objectives are to:

- Advance knowledge in IS research methods and techniques of data collection and analysis;
- Prepare students for conducting an independent study including formulating research questions and selecting a research approach, applying research methodology – designing a study and selecting specific methods and techniques appropriate for answering the questions;
- Develop practical skills in developing instruments for both qualitative and quantitative methods;
- Develop practical skills in analysing both quantitative and qualitative data.

The course is essential for students' ability to conduct research and therefore INFS 4887 is a mandatory course for all honours students in the IS discipline offered by the School of Information Systems, Technology and Management. Principles of Research Design and Business Research Methods courses are designed to prepare students for independent research studies for their honours or masters thesis.

### 2.5 Student Learning Outcomes

The learning outcomes for this course include:

1. Discuss and apply different research approaches and methodologies
2. Develop data collection instrument according to the underlying theoretical framework.
3. Explain how to conduct data collection (quantitative and qualitative)
4. Analyse quantitative data (e.g., using PLS) and qualitative data (e.g., using NVivo)
5. Refine research questions to meet high level research objectives/questions.
6. Construct and document an appropriate research design, including argumentation for data collection and analysis methods/techniques
7. Discuss limitations and potential contribution to theory and practice of research

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 coursework students in the ASB. 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’).
ASB 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.

<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 ASB undergraduate coursework 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>• Explain how to conduct data collection (quantitative and qualitative).</td>
<td>* Class participation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2 Critical thinking and problem solving</td>
<td>• Develop data collection instrument according to the underlying theoretical framework.</td>
<td>* Data analysis</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Analyse quantitative data (e.g., using PLS) and qualitative data (e.g., using NVivo)</td>
<td>* Instrument development</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Refine research questions to meet high level research objectives/questions.</td>
<td>(quantitative and qualitative)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
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, the lecturer is 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, workshops, 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 hands on activities related to the topic for the week. Students will be expected to present or discuss pre-specified reading material in the class. Please bring your printed preparation work to class because these may be collected in selected weeks. These activities will be assessed.

4 ASSESSMENT

4.1 Formal Requirements

To receive a pass grade in this course, you must meet ALL of the following criteria:

- attain an overall mark of least 50%;
- attend at least 80% of all scheduled classes;
- attain a satisfactory performance in each component of the course. A mark of 45% or higher is normally regarded as satisfactory;
- attain a mark of at least 45% in the final exam;
- 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.

4.2 Assessment Details

Assessment in this course is based on class participation, and two individual assignments. Details of the assignments will be posted on the course website.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Assessment Task</th>
<th>Weighting</th>
<th>Length</th>
<th>Due Date</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Class Participation</td>
<td>20%</td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>Ongoing from week 2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Data Analysis</td>
<td>20%</td>
<td>5 A4 pages maximum</td>
<td>24 April due.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Quantitative instrument</td>
<td>30%</td>
<td>7 A4 pages maximum</td>
<td>8 May due.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>design</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Qualitative instrument</td>
<td>30%</td>
<td>7 A4 pages maximum</td>
<td>22 May due Oral presentations</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>design</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>of both designs in weeks 12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>and 13.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>100%</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

4.3 Assessment Format

The following subsection describes each assessment component.

Class Participation

Class activities are specified for each class on the course webpage. Students are expected to read the prescribed material, keep notes on their reading and complete any tasks required before a class. Students may also be asked to submit their homework in class. These will indicate their level of preparation before class. Students’ attendance and participation are marked from Weeks 2-12. The assessment rubric for class participation is below:
Assessment Rubric for Class Participation

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Mark</th>
<th>Conditions for which it will be awarded</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>0</td>
<td>Below 80% of lab and workshop attendance as required by school.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>0.5 – 4</td>
<td>&gt;80% attendance. Overall minimal *preparation and participation in the workshop.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.5 – 9.5</td>
<td>&gt;80% attendance. Overall poor *preparation and participation in workshop.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10 – 14</td>
<td>&gt;80% attendance. Overall average *preparation and some participation in workshop discussions in some weeks.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14.5 – 18</td>
<td>&gt;80% attendance. Overall good *preparation and active participation in workshop discussions in most instances. Have contributed to good arguments, discussed in relevant and constructive ways.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>18.5-20</td>
<td>&gt;80% attendance. Overall, excellent *preparation and very active participation in workshop discussions. Commonly presents good to excellent arguments in class. Have demonstrated excellence in their contribution to the dynamics of the course.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Preparation will be assessed in 2 forms, via the completion and quality of class discussions and homework submissions.

**Data Analysis (20%)**
This assignment is to be completed as an individual assignment. The purpose of this assignment is to demonstrate your ability to analyse a given set of data using either SPSS or plsgraph. Details of the assignment including the marking scheme will be on the course website.

**Quantitative Instrument Design (30%)**
This assignment is to be completed as an individual assignment. The purpose of this assignment is to demonstrate your ability to design a research study using a quantitative method. You will choose from a range of topics and questions. Details of the assignment including the marking scheme will be on the course website.

**Qualitative Instrument Designs (30%)**
This assignment is to be completed as an individual assignment. The purpose of this assignment is to demonstrate your ability to design a research study using a qualitative method. You will choose from a range of topics and questions. Details of the assignment including the marking scheme will be on the course website.

**4.4 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, competing deadlines of assignments from other
courses, and computer failures are usually considered insufficient grounds for an extension.

**Quality Assurance**
The ASB 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 ASB programs. All material used for such processes will be treated as confidential and will not be related to course grades.

### 5 COURSE RESOURCES

The required text is:


The text is available from the UNSW Bookshop and at [http://www.amazon.com](http://www.amazon.com).

**Additional references:**


Others will be uploaded on Blackboard.

### 6 COURSE EVALUATION AND DEVELOPMENT

Each year feedback is sought from students and other stakeholders about the courses offered in the School 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 primarily through end of semester CATEI evaluations.
## 7 COURSE SCHEDULE

Workshops start in Week 1 and finish in Week 12.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Week</th>
<th>Topic</th>
<th>Chapter</th>
<th>Activities</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Week 1 4 March</td>
<td>Introduction to business research methods</td>
<td>1, 3, 4</td>
<td>Discussion on research questions to work on, refining questions, and examining possible research methods.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
| Week 2 11 March | Planning and Preparation:  
- measurement (quantitative and qualitative) and scales  
- reliability and validity  
- sampling  
Ethical considerations | 3, 6-8 | Planning and preparing for your research. |
| Week 3 18 March | Design of a survey instrument | 10 | Design questions for constructs |
| Week 4 25 March | Quantitative data analysis 1:  
Answering research questions using descriptive statistics, correlation and regression  
Note: Friday this week is Good Friday holiday. | Creswell 13, Yin | Hands on SPSS. |
| Mid-Session Break: Week 1-7 April | | | |
| Week 5 8 April | Quantitative data analysis 2: Path modeling using PLS | | Hands on plsgraph |
| Week 6 15 April | Designing a case study – protocols and interview guides | 13, Yin | Develop interview guidelines for a question. Hands on with NiVivo |
| Week 7 22 April | Qualitative data analysis 1: Open, axial and selective coding. (Dr Michael Calahane)  
Note: Thursday this week is Anzac Day holiday. | 15 | 3 selected research designs will be presented. Data analysis report due 24 April in workshop. |
| Week 8 29 April | Qualitative data analysis 2: Repertory Grid Techniques | 10 | Hands on RepGrid interviewing. |
| Week 9 6 May | Manipulation 1:  
Design and conduct of experiments | 9 | Designing an experiment, protocols, variables. Quantitative instrument design due 8 May in workshop. |
| Week 10 13 May | Manipulation 2: Action research and design science | | Examining published papers using these methodologies. |
| Week 11 20 May | Mixed Methods | Creswell | Examining examples of mixed designs. Qualitative instrument design due 22 May. |
| Week 12 27 May | Reporting research | | Individual presentations of research design and instrument. |
| Week 13 3 June | | | Continue on presentations.  
Note that the course schedule is subject to change. |