



PROJECT WORKSHOPS

Number of Aston Credits: 10

Number of ECTS Credits: 5

Staff Member Responsible for the Module:

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Mrs Rosaleen Shirley, Room ABS 404, Extension 3238

Other staff members contributing to the module:

Nicola Dennis, Information Specialist,
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Pre-requisites for this Module:

None

Mode of Attendance:

On campus

Module Objectives and Learning Outcomes:

This module is designed to support you in preparing the proposal for your final individual/group project by enabling you:

- > To assess critically the research and consultancy studies carried out by others.
- > To prepare convincing research proposals
- > To define and commission effective research or consultancy studies
- > To collect valid and reliable data in order to achieve research objectives

- > To analyse these in an appropriate way
- > To highlight the management implications
- > To report the findings effectively in order to help guide management decision making

After completing this module course members should be able to:

- > Evaluate critically research and consultancy reports prepared by others
- > Design and present research or consultancy proposals in an effective manner
- > Collect valid and reliable data to help answer management questions
- > Analyse these in an appropriate manner
- > Assess the reliability and validity of research findings
- > Interpret and present them in an effective manner in order to inform and guide the development of management policies and to evaluate their effectiveness.

Module Content:

The workshops are designed to lead you step-by-step through the most important stages of the research and consultancy processes and to support the development of the projects you will be undertaking with the guidance of your individual supervisor.

At each stage, there will be opportunities to explore, by reference to practical examples and exercises, some of the potential problems that need to be solved if the results of your research are to provide a valid and reliable basis for management decision making.

Workshop 1: Getting started.

- > The scope and purpose of the project.
- > Choosing a topic.
- > Focusing down.
- > Formulating the aim and objectives.
- > Identifying the needs and expectations of key stakeholders.

Workshop 2: Using Library resources.

- > Introduction to LIS on-line databases.
- > Planning your literature search.
- > Practical session on literature searching strategies.

Workshop 3: Reviewing the literature.

- > Identifying gaps in existing knowledge and understanding.
- > Critically evaluating research-based information.

Workshop 4: Identifying and applying appropriate theories, concepts and models.

Workshop 5: Reviewing alternative ways of meeting your research aim and objectives.

Workshop 6: Designing the data collection 'instruments' and approaches.

Workshop 7: Tools and techniques for analysing your data.

Workshop 8: Developing recommendations and communicating these effectively.

Corporate Connections:

This module draws directly on the extensive experience gained by staff and previous generations of course members in conducting practical, policy-oriented research projects for a wide range of businesses, governmental and non-governmental organizations. The successful completion of this part of the course requires course members to prepare a convincing proposal for researching a real-world practical business or management problem on behalf of a sponsoring organisation.

International Dimensions:

The practical examples that will be used to illustrate the application of particular research methods and techniques will be drawn from recent research projects carried out by previous course members and others in Europe and other parts of the world. Particular stress is laid upon the importance of being sensitive to cultural and economic contexts when designing and presenting research and consultancy proposals.

Contribution of Research:

This module draws heavily upon the first-hand practical experience gained by the module team in carrying out a wide range of practical research and consultancy projects for an extensive range of clients in the private, public and not-for-profit sectors.

Method of Teaching:

Workshops and case study exercises focusing on real-world practical management and business research/consultancy problems and issues, supported by material provided on Blackboard.



Method of Assessment and Feedback:

A project proposal incorporating an initial review of the relevant background literature and a fully worked out and carefully justified methodology, to be submitted by the 11th of April.

This should include:

- > Aim
- > Context and background – including a brief review of previous work which has been undertaken and the organizational context of the proposed project
- > Objectives
- > Critical review of relevant literature and theory
- > Methods it is proposed to adopt to collect the data needed to achieve the research objectives – including a brief review of their potential strengths and weaknesses in this specific context
- > A brief discussion of the ethical issues which the use of these methods may raise
- > A programme of work summarizing the key tasks & potential problems likely to be encountered and how it is proposed to overcome these
- > References cited in the text.

This assignment provides an opportunity for course members to demonstrate, in a practical context, the extent to which they have understood and are able to apply the principles, concepts, approaches, techniques and methods introduced in the workshops.

The criteria by which it will be assessed relate directly to the intended learning outcomes.

Feedback on each of these elements will be provided on the standard coursework assessment form.

Additional Information for Distance Learning and Part-Students:

Distance learning students are encouraged to contact members of the teaching team by e-mail to discuss issues and their proposed approach - particularly when they are drafting their proposal.

In addition, a series of weekend workshops will be arranged for part-time and distance learning students at which there will be an opportunity to discuss their approach to the assignment and gain hands-on experience in searching for relevant literature.



Learning Hours:

Workshops & Tutorials	30
Private Study	70
Total	100

Essential Reading:

Bryman, A. and Bell, E. (2011) *Business Research Methods*, Oxford: Oxford University Press

Gummesson, E. (2000) *Qualitative Methods in Management Research*, London: Sage

Jesson, J., Matheson, L. and Lacey, F. M. (2011) *Doing your literature review*, London: Sage

Additional Reading:

Bryman, A. & Bell, E. (2004) *Social Research Methods*, Oxford: Oxford University Press

Easterby-Smith, M. Thorpe, R., & Lowe, A., (2008) *Management Research*. (3rd ed) London: Sage

Gill, J. & Johnson, P. (2002) *Research Methods for Managers*. Paul Chapman Publishers

Lee, N. and Lings, I (2008) *Doing Business Research: A guide to theory and practice*, London: Sage

Luck, M., Pocock, R. & Tricker, M. (2000) *Market Research in Health & Social Care*, London: Routledge

Rosen, M (1999) 'Coming to terms with the field: Understanding & doing organisational ethnography'. *Journal of Management Studies*. 28 (1), 1 - 24

Saunders, M. Lewis, P. Thornhill, A. (2009) *Research Methods for Business Students*. (4th ed.) London: Prentice Hall.

Walliman, N.S.R (2005) *Your Research Project: A step-by-step guide for the first time researcher*. London: Sage

Yin, R.K (2003) *Case Study Research: Design and Method*. (3rd ed.) London: Sage

