

BHM353 RESEARCH METHODS IN HRM & OB

Academic Year 2013/14

Number of Aston Credits: 15

Number of ECTS Credits: 7.5

Staff Member Responsible for the Module:

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Availability: See 'office hours' on door

Other Staff Members Contributing to the Module:

Dr. Matthew Carter, Work & Organizational Psychology
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Availability: See 'office hours' on door

Dr. Imelda McCarthy
Main Building South Wing, Room SW716, Extension 3056
Contact via Jenny Thompson (J.L.Thompson@aston.ac.uk)

All members of the Work and Organisational Psychology Group
Availability: see 'office hours' on door
Or Contact the Work and Organisational Psychology group administrator
Jenny Thompson, Room SW8002, Extension 3257

Pre-requisites for the module:

None

Mode of Attendance:

Lectures for the module take place during term 1. In Term 3 there are skill workshops and the dates that will be advised. The lectures in Term 1 will take place on a Tuesday evening between 6pm and 9pm. We will also organize one library session that will take place during the day. You will be informed of the day.

PLEASE NOTE: There is an introduction to the module and to faculty in the first term.
Date TBA at the start of term.

Module Objectives and Learning Outcomes:

- > To develop students' critical understanding of how to conduct research in an organizational setting
- > To develop the skills and knowledge necessary to carry out a major piece of independent work.
- > To provide a platform for the successful completion of the research proposal and an assessed piece of work justifying your selected methodology
- > To develop students' capabilities as 'critical consumers' of research, so that they can make valid choices about where to look for information and interpret and analyze data effectively.

By the end of this module, students will be able to:

1. Understand the philosophy that underpins the choice of research design
2. Understand the need for rigour in the research process
3. Understand the importance of ethics in the research process
4. Write a high quality research proposal
5. Understand the research tools used in quantitative and qualitative research
6. Conceptualize, design and implement a research project
7. Apply appropriate techniques for data analysis
8. Understand and experience the ethical challenges in conducting research
9. Provide a convincing justification for their selected methodology
10. Acquire the appropriate skills for the research process
11. Be able and committed to completing their research projects, in line with supervisory guidance

The module addresses the following programme-level outcomes:

MSc Human Resource Management and Business: B1 Demonstrate a high level of intellectual and analytical skills, and, through intensive postgraduate study, have acquired and developed understanding of HR, business and management subjects; B2 Demonstrate competence in synthesis, critical reasoning, evaluation and decision-making. B3 Critically assess and engage with HR, business and management problems to develop problem solving skills C1 Apply principles, models and theories in the working environment. D6 Research skills

MSc Organisational Behaviour: B1 Analyse and evaluate individual, group and organisational processes that enhance effectiveness, well-being and safety at work B2 Critically analyse, evaluation and solve problems D2 Desk research skills

MSc Work Psychology and Business: Analyse and evaluate individual, group and organisational processes that enhance effectiveness, well-being and safety at work B2
Critically analyse, evaluation and solve problems D2 Desk research skills

Module Content:

Week 1: Introduction to the module and considering your dissertation (JS)

- > Meet the faculty
- > Introduction to research in HRM/ OB/Work Psychology
- > What is primary and secondary research?
- > The research process
- > Research questions and research objectives
- > Selecting research topics
- > Selecting your supervisor
- > Enjoying your research dissertation
- > Working in groups

Week 2: Philosophy of social science research & methodological design (JS)

- > Philosophical assumptions underlying social science research
- > Historical legacy of social research
- > Qualitative and quantitative methodologies
- > Identifying a research problem
- > Role of theory in research
- > Research rigour
- > Hypotheses development in quantitative research
- > Why and why questions in qualitative research
- > Debating your preferences for methodological design

Week 3: Research Proposal: structure; objectives literature review: referencing and gaining access (JS)

- > Structure and objectives of research proposal and dissertation
- > Role and procedure of literature review
- > Procedure for literature review
- > Sources of literature
- > Relating your literature review to your research findings
- > Starting the research process and managing your organisation
- > Ethical issues and ethical conduct throughout the research process
- > Procedures for gaining access and exit
- > Assessment criteria
- > Writing recommendations from your research findings
- > Developing your research proposal

Week 4: Mixed –Methods Research Design and practical research tools interviewing (JS)

- > The third paradigm
- > Practically combining quantitative and qualitative research
- > Strengths and weaknesses
- > Designing questions to improve Survey Design
- > Different types of interview techniques
- > How to design interviews
- > How to conduct interviews
- > Practice interviewing
- > Group work to present exercise

Week 5: Quantitative research design (MC)

- > Issues in research design
- > Translation of research questions into variables
- > Measurement of variables
- > Questionnaire design

Week 6: Qualitative research design (JS/IM)

- > Qualitative research design
- > Case studies
- > Focus groups
- > Mixed methods
- > Use of quotes
- > Presenting findings

Week 7: Introduction to quantitative research analysis and writing up (MC)

- > Structure of a report/thesis
- > An illustrative case
- > Assessment criteria

Week 8: Introduction to qualitative research analysis and writing up(JS/IM)

- > Qualitative data analysis
- > Grounded theory
- > Content analysis
- > Mixed methods analysis
- > Case study analysis
- > Difficulties and limitations of qualitative analysis

Week 9: NO LECTURE JS will be available to discuss proposal

Week 10: Submission of project proposal

Term 3: Workshops (Timing TBA)

There will be a number of day skill building workshops in Term 3. The purpose of the workshops is to practice research analysis and understand how to present your research findings. These will include SPSS workshops in which you will learn and practice how to use statistics to analyze quantitative data. There will also be Grounded Theory Analysis and NVIVO workshops in which you will learn and practice how to analyze qualitative data. There will also be a final session on how to write up your research findings.

These workshops are compulsory elements of your research skills development and successful completion of your dissertation and you are required to attend.

The workshops are assessed and you will be required to submit a portfolio assignment. Details of the assessment requirements for the workshops will be provided at the start of Term 3.

Corporate Connections:

The course team on BHM353 have extensive corporate connections with national and international corporations. They draw on these connections to inform the course material offering insights from their work at the most senior levels of the UK National Health Service, manufacturing organisations across the United Kingdom, and organisations operating in cross-cultural contexts.

International Dimensions:

The international dimension entails sensitizing students to the cultural context within which the skills and mindset for undertaking rigorous scientific research are practised. This is particularly evident in the problem formulation and research design and implementation phases of the research process.

Contribution of Research:

Work & Organisational Psychology Group members are active in almost every area of research in Organisational Behaviour and Human Resources Management using a variety of methods and approaches. We use our own study designs to provide students with examples of how to design surveys, how to conduct quantitative and qualitative research, and to analyse data. As the major purpose of this module is to equip students with the mindset and the skills and competencies to design and implement their own research, students acquire hands on experience working closely with their individual supervisors.

Ethics, Responsibility & Sustainability:

There is a particular focus on ethics in this module, which covers the ethical factors to be considered by those conducting primary research, according to Aston University's guidelines as well as those stipulated by professional bodies (the CIPD and BPS). Ethics

are considered explicitly in Week 6: Writing the research proposal (all students) and Week 7 (MSc Work Psychology and Business students).

Method of Teaching:

The module is designed such that session reflects a stage in the research process. As much as possible, the lecture sessions are highly interactive and participative which enable students to acquire hands on experience and work through their research as the term progresses. Extensive use will be made of journal articles and reports to illustrate good practices.

In order to progress your project, students are required to have a supervisor by the start of the module. Contact with potential supervisors facilitated in a compulsory introductory session held mid-way through Term 1. Students must have a working title for their project and their supervisor's signature on the Project Management Form, ready to be collected in by the module leader at the start of Week 1, Term 2. The PM form is designed to support the research project to help students make timely progress in their project work.

Method of Assessment and Feedback:

Students are required to submit 1 assignment:

Research Proposal (100%)

Students are expected to submit a research proposal (3500 words maximum) in week 10 of Term 2. The proposal will require an Abstract (summary of the research), Introduction (development of the research problem, statement of research objectives and contributions of the study); Theoretical framework and literature review (discussion of the theory underpinning of the study, preliminary literature review and hypotheses), Methodology (description of the sample and data collection procedures, description of the measures, description of data analysis techniques) and Ethical considerations (description of the steps taken to meet potential ethical concerns).

The proposal will be assessed by the supervisor of your research project on a percentage/mark basis and accounts for 100% of the coursework assignment.

Learning Hours:

Pre-reading	25
Contact Hours (Sessions, Workshops & Supervision)	50
Class Preparation	30
Coursework Preparation (Portfolio, Draft Proposal & Full Proposal)	45
Total	150

The following readings are subject to change. Students should not therefore purchase textbooks prior to commencing their course. If students wish to undertake background reading before starting the course, many of the chapters/readings are available in electronic form via on-line library catalogues and other resources.

Pre-reading:

Bryman, A. and Bell, E.,(2007) *Business Research Methods* Oxford University Press., New York 2nd Edition (Part one p3-126 and part 2 p153-150 and part 3 p 401-439)

Saunders, M., Lewis, P. & Thornhill, A. (2009). *Research Methods for Business Students* , Harlow, Prentice-Hall. 5th Edition.(Chapter 2 p12-40 Chapter 3 p42-82 Chapter 4 p84 111)

Essential Reading

Anderson, V. (2009). *Research Methods in Human Resource Management*. London, CIPD. 2nd Edition.

Bryman, A. and Bell, E.,(2007) *Business Research Methods* Oxford University Press., New York 2nd Edition

Saunders, M., Lewis, P. & Thornhill, A. (2009). *Research Methods for Business Students* , Harlow, Prentice-Hall. 5th Edition.

Indicative Bibliography:

Bryman, A. (2001). *Social Research Methods*, Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Anderson, V. (2009). *Research Methods in Human Resource Management*. London, CIPD. 2nd Edition.

Creswell, J.W., Lynn, V.L., & Clark, P. (2010) *Designing and Conducting Mixed Methods Research*. Second Edition. London, Sage Publications Inc.

Kelemen, M.L. & Rumens N. (2008). *An introduction to critical management research*, London: Sage.

Lee, N., & Lings, I. (2008). *Doing business research. A guide to theory and practice*. Los Angeles: Sage.

Robson, C. (2002). *Real World Research*, London: Blackwell Publishers.

Yin, R.K. (2009) *Case Study Research-Design and Methods*. Fourth Edition. London, Sage Publications Inc.