School of Computing and Information Systems

Unit Outline

KXX401 ICT Research Methods

Semester 2, 2013

Sandy Bay Campus, Hobart

Unit Coordinator

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Lecturing Staff

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**UNIT OVERVIEW**

**Introduction**

This unit is a compulsory unit in the Bachelor of Computing Honours and Bachelor of Information Systems Honours. It is designed to provide students with an understanding of research issues and skills in research methods appropriate for the conduct of a research dissertation as part of the Computing and Information Systems Honours programs.

**Prerequisites**

None

**Unit Weight**

25.0% of one academic year

**Teaching Pattern**

This unit is taught in 10 * 3 hour workshop sessions on Tuesdays 15.00 - 17.50. The sessions will be held in Room 473 (4th floor, Centenary Building) and video-conferenced to Room V137 (Launceston)

- **Week 1** (15 July - 19 July)
  Workshop 1 on Tuesday 16 July 15.00 - 17.50

- **Week 2** (22 July - 26 July)
  Workshop 2 on Tuesday 23 July 15.00 - 17.50

- **Week 3** (29 July - 2 August)
  Workshop 3 on Tuesday 30 July 15.00 - 17.50

- **Week 4** (5 August - 9 August)
  Workshop 4 on Tuesday 6 August 15.00 - 17.50

- **Week 5** (12 August - 16 August)
  No Workshop on Tuesday 13th August 15.00 - 17.50

- **Week 6** (19 August - 23 August)
  No Workshop on Tuesday 20th August 15.00 - 17.50

- **Week 7** (26 August - 30 August)
  Workshop 5 on Tuesday 27 August 15.00 - 17.50

**MID-SEMESTER BREAK (2nd Sept - 8th Sept)**

- **Week 8** (9 September - 13 September)
  Workshop 6 on Tuesday 10 September 15.00 - 17.50

- **Week 9** (16 September - 20 September)
  Workshop 7 on Tuesday 17 September 15.00 - 17.50

- **Week 10** (23 September - 27 September)
  Workshop 8 on Tuesday 24 September 15.00 - 17.50

- **Week 11** (30 September - 4 October)
  No Workshop on Tuesday 1st October 15.00 - 17.50

- **Week 12** (7 October - 11 October)
  Workshop 9 Tuesday 8th October 15.00 - 17.50

- **Week 13** (14 October - 18 October)
  Workshop 10 on Tuesday 15th October 15.00 - 17.50

**SEMESTER ENDS Friday 18th October**

**Unit Content**

This unit is taught in 10 * 3 hour workshop sessions on Tuesday 15.00 - 17.50. The sessions will be held in Room 473
(4th floor, Centenary Building) and videoconferenced to Room V137 (Launceston)

Week 1 (15 July - 19 July)
Workshop 1 on Tuesday 16 July 15.00 - 17.50

Introduction to the Unit.
Introduction to Computing & Information Systems research approaches, tools and techniques.
Examination of the dimensions of research including scope and scale in research
Outline of unit assignments.

Week 2 (22 July - 26 July)
Workshop 2 on Tuesday 23 July 15.00 - 17.50

Understanding research Philosophy: the nature of scientific investigations including ontology, epistemology
Research Strategy: Qualitative and Quantitative approaches to data and to data collection, analysis,
interpretation/discussion.
Types of Research Foci: Applied, experimental, Strategic etc.
Considerations around validity, coherence, comparability, generalisability
Structuring Research Projects: Problem identification; Literature; Methodology; Analysis; Findings/Results.

Week 3 (29 July - 2 August)
Workshop 3 on Tuesday 30 July 15.00 - 17.50

Qualitative Approaches: Conducting qualitative research in Computing & Information Systems
Using qualitative research methods, tools and techniques in practice.

Week 4 (5 August - 9 August)
Workshop 4 on Tuesday 6 August 15.00 - 17.50

Qualitative Research Design: Data collection, Data Analysis; Data Interpretation/Discussion
Conducting fieldwork, planning and implementing the collection of data
Techniques: Modelling, Simulation, Optimization, Usability, Interviewing; focus groups; observation; secondary data,
triangulation etc.

Week 5 (12 August - 16 August)
No Workshop on Tuesday 13th August 15.00 - 17.50

Week 6 (19 August - 23 August)
No Workshop on Tuesday 20th August 15.00 - 17.50

Week 7 (26 August - 30 August)
Workshop 5 on Tuesday 27 August 15.00 - 17.50

Quantitative Approaches: Conducting quantitative research in Computing & Information Systems
Using Quantitative research methods, tools and techniques in practice.

MID-SEMESTER BREAK (2nd Sept - 8th Sept)
Week 8 (9 September - 13 September)
Workshop 6 on Tuesday 10 September 15.00 - 17.50

Quantitative Research Design: experimental design, hypotheses, variables
Conducting quantitative research: questionnaire/survey design and software.

Week 9 (16 September - 20 September)
Workshop 7 on Tuesday 17 September 15.00 - 17.50

Statistical analysis and use of software - descriptive and inferential results
Statistical analysis and use of software (hypotheses, variables, correlations, ANOVA, t-test)

Week 10 (23 September - 27 September)
Workshop 8 on Tuesday 24 September 15.00 - 17.50

Quantitative Results, Experimental Results
Data Evaluation and Data Discussion
Research write-up and presentation

Week 11 (30 September - 4 October)
No Workshop on Tuesday 1st October 15.00 - 17.50

Week 12 (7 October - 11 October)
Workshop 9 Tuesday 8th October 15.00 - 17.50
Managing and maintaining data and data reliability/error
Review and Reflection on Quantitative and Statistical Research methods in Computing & Information Systems Research

Week 13 (14 October - 18th October)
Workshop 10 on Tuesday 15th October 15.00 - 17.50
Research Planning: Presentation of Research Proposal
Communication on Approach, Impact, Write-Up - Critical assessment
Peer-reviewed Publication, Data Management, Archiving Data.
Opportunity for clarification, reflection and review on key ICT research methods

SEMESTER ENDS Friday 18th October

For more information see the section titled 'Content' on the unit website.

Learning Outcomes

On successful completion of this unit, you will be able to:

1. Demonstrate an understanding of the theory and practice of methods and approaches applicable to the conduct of Computing and Information Systems research
2. Demonstrate the capacity to design, implement, evaluate and communicate research and research proposals about Computing and Information Systems
3. Demonstrate an ability to critically assess and evaluate approaches to conducting research on Computing and Information Systems issues

Generic graduate attributes

The university has defined a set of generic graduate attributes expected in its graduates.  
http://www.utas.edu.au/__data/assets/pdf_file/0003/214662/Generic-Attributes-of-Graduates.pdf  Your course is designed to enable you to develop generic skills that are valued in, and expected of, graduates. These are skills that you will need to develop over time. Hence you are encouraged to look for opportunities, as you study each unit, to reflect on and improve these skills.

Knowledge
- Students will learn how to identify, select and apply methods and techniques appropriate for conducting research in Computing & Information Systems.
Communication
- Students will develop and enhance their research communication skills through the completion of the research assignments in Computing & Information Systems
Problem-solving Skills
- Students will develop and enhance problem-solving skills relevant to the conduct of Computing & Information Systems research
Social and Ethical Responsibility
- Students will demonstrate an understanding of the social and ethical issues appropriate to the conduct of Computing & Information Systems research
UNIT ASSESSMENT

Assessment Pattern

Internal (100%)

Assessment Summary

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Component</th>
<th>Weight</th>
<th>Due Date</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Assignment: Understanding Research philosophy</td>
<td>20%</td>
<td>Friday 9th August 2013, 11:55pm</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Assignment: (Practical) Qualitative Exercise</td>
<td>20%</td>
<td>Friday 30th August 2013, 11.55pm</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Assignment (Practical): Quantitative Exercise</td>
<td>20%</td>
<td>Friday 20th September 2013, 11.55pm</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Assignment: Research Plan &amp; Presentation</td>
<td>40%</td>
<td>Monday 7th October 2013, 11:55 pm</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
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Assessment Items

**Item 1**
**Title:** Assignment: Understanding Research philosophy  
**Type:** In-Semester - individual assignment  
**Task Length:** approx 2500 - 5000 words  
**Weighting:** 20%  
**Links to Learning Outcomes:** 1, 2, 3  
**Due:** Friday 9th August 2013, 11:55pm  
**Description:** An important aspect of the conduct of computing & information systems research is the capacity to understand and critically assess the utility of different philosophical positions and their relationships to particular methodologies, tools and techniques. This assignment will increase students understanding and skills in this area.

**Item 2**
**Title:** Assignment: (Practical) Qualitative Exercise  
**Type:** In-Semester - individual assignment  
**Task Length:** approx 2500 - 5000 words  
**Weighting:** 20%  
**Links to Learning Outcomes:** 1, 2, 3  
**Due:** Friday 30th August 2013, 11.55pm  
**Description:** This practical exercise will engage students in a qualitative research exercise that will enable them to directly deploy skills, tools and techniques covered in the unit. Each student will be required to complete the exercise and prepare a written report that displays their level of qualitative research understanding and competence.

**Item 3**
**Title:** Assignment (Practical): Quantitative Exercise  
**Type:** In-Semester - individual assignment  
**Task Length:** approx 2500 - 5000 words  
**Weighting:** 20%  
**Links to Learning Outcomes:** 1, 2, 3  
**Due:** Friday 20th September 2013, 11.55pm  
**Description:** This practical exercise will engage students in a quantitative research exercise that will enable them to directly deploy skills, tools and techniques covered in the unit. Each student will be required to complete the exercise and prepare a written report that displays their level of quantitative research understanding and competence.

**Item 4**
**Title:** Assignment: Research Plan & Presentation  
**Type:** In-Semester - individual assignment  
**Task Length:** approx 5000 - 7500 words  
**Weighting:** 40%  
**Links to Learning Outcomes:** 1, 3, 5  
**Due:** Monday 7th October 2013, 11:55 pm  
**Description:** The Research Plan document will constitute 90% of the mark for this assignment. The Research Presentation for the Research Plan will constitute 10% and will occur on Monday 3rd June 2013.

See the 'Assessment' section in unit website for more detailed information about assessment items.

How your Final Grade will be determined

Overall assessment will be based on the student's performance throughout the semester. In order to achieve a pass...
(or better) result, a student must obtain:
- at least 45% of the combined mark for assessment items 1, 2 and 3
- at least 45% of the mark for assessment item 4
- at least 50% of the overall mark
UNIT RESOURCES

Unit Web Site

This unit is Web Dependent: content. This means that you will need to use the Web for this unit. The unit website contains unit information and resources.

The unit website is accessed from http://www.utas.edu.au/coursesonline/. You will need to use your university email pop account username and password to log on to the MyLO system. Once authenticated by the system your personalised MyLO Learning Online area will be displayed. It contains links to the websites that you have permission to access - including the website for this unit.

If you are not able to access the unit website, please contact the University IT help desk:
  Entrance Level, Morris Miller Library, Sandy Bay Campus;
  Entrance Level, Launceston Campus Library, Newnham Campus.
  Telephone: 6226 1818 and 1300 304 903.
  The 1300 number is a local call from within Tas, with the exception of mobiles.
  Email: servicedesk@utas.edu.au
  Website: http://www.utas.edu.au/servicedesk/student/index.html

Prescribed Text

None

Readings

Highly Recommended:
Allyn & Bacon.
Sage Publications.

Useful Web-sites:
Qualitative Research in Information Systems
Quantitative Research Methods in Information Systems

Theories used in Information Systems Research
Any additional references and information will be placed on the unit website during the semester.

Software

The software that you will need to access the unit website and to study this unit, including general purpose software such as word processors, is provided on the computers in the School's computing labs. If you intend to use software on other computers please check that the versions are compatible. Any additional information on software will be placed on the unit website during the semester.

Other Resources

Any additional information on resources will be placed on the unit website during the semester.
GENERAL RESOURCES

School Website
School of Computing and Information Systems - Faculty of Science, Engineering, and Technology. 
http://www.utas.edu.au/cis

Faculty Website
Information and Resources for Faculty of Science, Engineering and Technology students are available on the faculty website at: http://www.utas.edu.au/scieng

University Website
Information and Resources for 'Current Students’ are available on the university website at: http://www.utas.edu.au/students/

School Help Desk
Contact the School Help Desk if you have any queries or problems with accessing, using, or printing from the computers in the School of Computing and Information Systems labs.

In Hobart the Help Desk is located on level 3 in the Centenary Building, and is open from 10:00am-12:00pm, and 2:00pm-4:00pm Monday-Friday. The phone number is 6226 2929.

In Launceston the Help Desk is located near the entrance to the computing labs and is open from 10:00am-12:00pm, and 2:00pm-4:00pm Monday-Friday. The phone number is 6324 3447.

Both help desks will accept queries over the phone outside the standard opening hours.

The computer labs at the Cradle Coast Campus are maintained by ITR - please contact the University Help Desk for assistance with these computers.

Computing Facilities
The School has PC labs (running Windows 7), Mac labs (running Mac OS X 10.6), and special purpose Networking labs at the Newnham and Sandy Bay campuses. All students are provided with logins for Windows, Macintosh and Unix environments. If you have not used these facilities before please contact the School Help Desk to collect your account details. If you would like to access these facilities after hours please contact the School Help Desk.

In Hobart, there are 4 PC Labs, 2 Mac Labs, and 1 Networks Lab in the Centenary Building. In Launceston, there are 2 PC Labs, 1 Mac Lab, 1 Networks Lab, and one Multipurpose Lab in Building V.

Use of Facilities
Use of computing facilities provided by the School is subject to the School’s Ethics Guidelines, details of which are posted at http://www.utas.edu.au/computing-information-systems/resources/ethics-guidelines. Copies of the guidelines are also available in all School labs. The School’s facilities may only be used for study-related purposes, and may not be used for personal gain. Anti-social behaviour in labs such as game playing, viewing pornography, loud discussion, audio without the use of head-phones, etc is strictly prohibited in all labs at all times. Eating, drinking, and smoking is not permitted in the labs. Before being granted access to the School’s facilities, you will be required to sign a declaration that you have read and understand these guidelines, and that you will abide by them. Disciplinary action may be taken against students who violate the guidelines.
**Learning Strategies**

If you need assistance in preparing for study please refer to your tutor or lecturer. For additional information refer to the Learning Development website: [http://www.utas.edu.au/learndev/](http://www.utas.edu.au/learndev/)

If you will be using MyLO for the first time and would like some information on how to use MyLO refer to the following website: [http://www.utas.edu.au/coursesonline/mylo-support.htm](http://www.utas.edu.au/coursesonline/mylo-support.htm)

Some of the units you will study use videoconferencing to deliver lectures and tutorials. To enable you to get the best out of a videoconference please refer to the following guide: [http://www.its.utas.edu.au/videoconf/vcstudentguide.pdf](http://www.its.utas.edu.au/videoconf/vcstudentguide.pdf)

**Help resolving concerns about this unit**

In the first instance you should contact your lecturer. If the matter is not resolved then you should contact the Head of School. If the matter is still unresolved and you would like to know who to contact or the procedures for resolving your concern refer to the following website: [http://acserv.admin.utas.edu.au/complaints_info.html](http://acserv.admin.utas.edu.au/complaints_info.html)

The Tasmanian University Union (TUU) may also be able to assist.

The School reserves the right to alter the details contained in this Unit Outline. Students will be advised of changes to the outline via their University email account and it remains the responsibility of the student to check their email for such changes.

**Occupational Health and Safety**

The university is committed to providing a safe and secure teaching and learning environment. For more information see [http://www.admin.utas.edu.au/hr/ohs/pol_proc/](http://www.admin.utas.edu.au/hr/ohs/pol_proc/)

**University Services and Support**

If you are experiencing difficulties with your studies or assignments, have personal or life planning issues, disability or illness which may affect your course of study, you are advised to raise these with your lecturer in the first instance.

The University has staff available to assist you, such as the:

- Learning Development Advisor
- Student Counselor
- Careers Advisor
- Disability Officer

For more information and contact details see the Services and Support section on the University 'Current Students' web page: [http://www.utas.edu.au/students/](http://www.utas.edu.au/students/).
GENERAL ASSESSMENT

Approach to Learning

The University is committed to high standards of professional conduct in all activities, and holds its commitment and responsibilities to its students as being of paramount importance. Likewise, it holds expectations about the responsibilities students have as they pursue their studies within the special environment the University offers.

The University's Code of Conduct for Teaching and Learning states:

Students are expected to participate actively and positively in the teaching/learning environment. They must attend classes when and as required, strive to maintain steady progress within the subject or unit framework, comply with workload expectations, and submit required work on time.

You are expected to spend about 130 hrs studying in this unit - this includes attendance at scheduled teaching sessions. (For a 13 week semester this is, on average, 10 hr/wk.) This is the amount of study time that the 'typical' student will need to reach the level of competence and understanding required to fulfil the unit objectives. You are expected to:

- attend all scheduled teaching sessions, unless otherwise notified by the unit coordinator
- prepare for, and actively participate in all scheduled teaching sessions
- complete the assigned learning tasks
- review what has been learnt
- complete assessment items and submit them on time
- access and be familiar with the information and resources available on the unit website
- seek help from teaching staff if you have any questions or difficulties in studying this unit

You are encouraged to read the university's Code of Conduct for Teaching and Learning. Part A describes the 'Responsibility of the University to Students' and part B describes the 'Responsibilities of Students to the University'.


It is expected that students will familiarise themselves with access and use of the MyLO system operated by the University for the electronic delivery of course materials, and for various forms of communication.

It is expected that students will consult email sent to their University email address at least twice a week for notices relating to the administration of the unit, and for notification of the results of assignments.

It is expected that students will read the background material specified in the course curriculum, will actively attend and participate in tutorials, and be prepared to discuss relevant issues arising with tutors, lecturers and fellow students.

Student Expectations of the Unit

Students enrolled in this Unit may reasonably expect the following:

1. To be able to contact a lecturer or tutor by electronic mail, to raise issues arising in the unit, either relating to content or student performance within the unit.
2. Subject to availability, to be able to discuss such issues in person with the lecturer or tutor.
3. That assignments will be marked and the marks will normally be returned within 3 weeks of due dates.
4. That all relevant notices regarding the administration of the unit, including any necessary changes, will be communicated to all students enrolled in the unit via email.

These expectations are in addition to those specified in relevant University regulations.
Plagiarism

Unless specifically stated in the specification of the assessment item provided on the unit website, it is required that:

- work submitted by a student is the work of that student alone OR
- where the assessment item is to be completed by a group of students, the work submitted by the group of students is the work of that group of students alone.

While students are encouraged to discuss the assignments in this unit and to engage in active learning from each other, it is important that they are also aware of the University's policy on plagiarism. Plagiarism is taking and using someone else's thoughts, writings or inventions and representing them as your own; for example downloading an essay wholly or in part from the internet, copying another student's work or using an author's words or ideas without citing the source.

"Plagiarism is a form of cheating. It is taking and using someone else's thoughts, writings or inventions and representing them as your own; for example, using an author's words without putting them in quotation marks and citing the source, using an author's ideas without proper acknowledgment and citation, copying another student's work.

If you have any doubts about how to refer to the work of others in your assignments, please consult your lecturer or tutor for relevant referencing guidelines, and the academic integrity resources on the web at [http://www.academicintegrity.utas.edu.au](http://www.academicintegrity.utas.edu.au).

The intentional copying of someone else's work as one's own is a serious offence punishable by penalties that may range from a fine or deduction/cancellation of marks and, in the most serious of cases, to exclusion from a unit, a course or the University. Details of penalties that can be imposed are available in the Ordinance of Student Discipline - Part 3 Academic Misconduct, see [http://www.utas.edu.au/__data/assets/pdf_file/0006/23991/ord91.pdf](http://www.utas.edu.au/__data/assets/pdf_file/0006/23991/ord91.pdf).

The University and any persons authorised by the University may submit your assessable works to a plagiarism checking service, to obtain a report on possible instances of plagiarism. Assessable works may also be included in a reference database. It is a condition of this arrangement that the original author's permission is required before a work within the database can be viewed."

It is important that you understand this statement on plagiarism. Should you require clarification please see your unit coordinator or lecturer. Useful resources on academic integrity, including what it is and how to maintain it, are also available at: [http://www.academicintegrity.utas.edu.au](http://www.academicintegrity.utas.edu.au)

Referencing

The preferred text referencing systems for the School is the Harvard system (also referred to as the author-date system). In your written work you will need to support your ideas by referring to scholarly literature, works of art and/or inventions. For information on presentation of assignments, including referencing styles: [http://utas.libguides.com/referencing](http://utas.libguides.com/referencing)

It is important that you understand how to correctly refer to the work of others and maintain academic integrity. Failure to appropriately acknowledge the ideas of others constitutes academic dishonesty (plagiarism), a matter considered by the University of Tasmania as a serious offence. The university document on plagiarism contains information about referencing the work or ideas of others (see [http://www.utas.edu.au/plagiarism/](http://www.utas.edu.au/plagiarism/)).
Submissions

The details of the submission method (paper, electronic or other) for each assignment will be supplied in a separate assignment specification sheet. All in-semester assignment submissions (including electronic submissions) are to include an Assignment Cover Sheet which includes a statement confirming that the submission is your own work. The Assignment Cover Sheet is available from the School Help Desk in Launceston and Hobart, and on the School’s website: http://www.utas.edu.au/computing-information-systems/resources.

Students must take responsibility for the correct submission of their assignments. Students are expected to adhere to the following procedure for submission:

- Submitted files MUST be checked by the student to ensure that correct submission of the file has been undertaken.
- Students are expected to notify the Lecturer WITHIN TWO HOURS of submission if their files have not been submitted correctly.
- Students must take responsibility for safely backing up of their own files during the academic year to ensure that no files are permanently lost.

Extensions

Assessment items will not be accepted after the due date except under the conditions stated in the School policy on late assessment. http://www.utas.edu.au/__data/assets/pdf_file/0003/231960/ExtensionPolicy.pdf (PDF - 100KB).

Review of Assessment and Appeals

1. It is expected that students will adhere to the following policy for review of any piece of continuous assessment.
   a. Within 5 days of the release of the assessment result, the student should request an appointment with the Lecturer. The student should be prepared to discuss specifically which section of the marking criteria they are disputing and why they consider the mark is inappropriate.
   b. Following this discussion, students may request a formal remark of the original submission (in accordance with Rule of Academic Assessment 111, clause 22.1). This remark will be undertaken, where practicable, by an alternative assessor.
2. Students may also request a review of the final result in a unit. The request and payment must be made within 10 days from the date of the result notification. Students are referred to Rule of Academic Assessment 111, clause 23 at http://www.utas.edu.au/university-council/university-governance/rules and http://www.studentcentre.utas.edu.au/examinations_and_results/results/result_review_results.htm.

Complaints Procedure

It is expected that students will adhere to the following policy for making any complaint or grievance directly related to a Unit:

a. In the first instance, students are to approach the Lecturer or Unit Coordinator concerned and arrange a time to speak with them about their concern.
b. If an issue remains unresolved, the student should approach the Head of School and arrange a time to speak with them about their concern.

If the School's internal policy of complaints is unable to resolve an issue, students should consult Ordinance 8 Student Complaints for further direction, see http://acserv.admin.utas.edu.au/complaints_info.html

Final Grade

Passing grades will be awarded based on the AVCC guidelines:

- PP at least 50% of the overall mark but less than 60%
- CR at least 60% of the overall mark but less than 70%
- DN at least 70% of the overall mark but less than 80%
- HD at least 80% of the overall mark

In order to comply with the benchmarks set by the Faculty of Science, Engineering & Technology for distribution of grades in units, both the in-semester and examination marks that students obtain may be adjusted either upwards or downwards. See http://fcms.its.utas.edu.au/scieng/scieng/policies.asp for details of the Faculty Assessment Guidelines.