

**BMA205**  
**Business Research Methods**

*Semester 2, 2009*

This unit will be offered in:

**Hobart & Launceston**

The lecturing team responsible will be:

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**<http://www.utas.edu.au/mgmt/student.htm>**

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## Introduction to the Unit

Managers in business use information to make managerial decisions; they are the people in the organisation responsible for knowing what information must be obtained, how to get it, and how to draw conclusions from it. For most businesses, available information is frequently inadequate, and must be supplemented with systematic business research.

This unit equips you with a broad understanding of both qualitative and quantitative research methods, techniques and issues, and their application to business and marketing problems. The unit aims to develop a critical understanding of the value of the research endeavour and thereby help the management/marketing researcher to build business knowledge and theory that generates new questions as well as provides answers. Topics in the unit include: identifying research problems within management and formulating specific research questions; research processes and proposals; ethics in business research; issues in the design and measurement of qualitative and quantitative research; sources of qualitative and quantitative data; surveys, interviews and observation; and presentation of results.

### Enrolment in the unit

Unless there are exceptional circumstances, students should not enrol in BMA units after the end of week two of semester, as the School cannot guarantee:

- that any extra assistance will be provided by the teaching team in respect of work covered in the period before enrolment; and
- that penalties will not be applied for the late submission of any piece or pieces of assessment that were due during that period.

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## Learning Outcomes

On completion of this unit, you should:

- Have knowledge of the fundamentals of research design in business contexts.
- Be familiar with how research can be applied in order to solve business problems.
- Have developed skills in qualitative and quantitative data analysis.

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## Generic Graduate Attributes

The University has defined a set of generic graduate attributes (GGAs) that can be expected of all graduates (see <http://www.utas.edu.au/tl/policies/index.htm>). By undertaking this unit you should make progress in attaining the following attributes:

### Knowledge

- To develop an understanding of what business researchers do and why they do it.
- To develop a detailed understanding of the issues involved in conducting research in management and marketing.
- To acquire knowledge in qualitative and quantitative data collection, analysis and interpretation.
- To use a wide range of academic skills (research, analysis, synthesis).
- To develop the ability to analyse and critically appraise key concepts, arguments and research findings.
- To demonstrate skills in understanding and interpreting numerical data.
- To learn both independently and cooperatively.
- To apply learning to new and unexpected situations.

#### Communication Skills

- To communicate effectively using oral and written mediums and to present well-reasoned arguments in a logical and coherent manner.
- To demonstrate numerical and graphical communication skills.

#### Problem Solving Skills

- To develop a practical understanding of different methods of data collection and analysis.
- To develop skills in the facilitation of Management and Marketing decisions.
- To develop skills in making inferences within the business environment.

#### Global Perspective

- To demonstrate an awareness of the local and global context of Management and Marketing research.

#### Social Responsibility

- To act ethically, with integrity and social responsibility, in the conduct of Management research.
- To acknowledge the social and ethical implications of Management research.

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## Prerequisites

100% of level 100 for relevant degree.

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## Texts

### Prescribed Text

Bryman, A. & Bell, E. 2007. *Business research methods* (2<sup>nd</sup> ed.). Oxford: Oxford University Press. ISBN: 9780199284986.

### School Publications

Students must obtain the following electronic publications which are available from the School of Management website:

<http://www.utas.edu.au/mgmt/student.htm>

*Writing Assignments: A Guide*

*Referencing Style Manual*

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## Recommended Reading

The publications listed below are highly recommended for further reading on the topics covered in the unit.

### Books

Aaker, D.A., Kumar, V. & Day, G.S. 2000. *Marketing research* (7<sup>th</sup> ed.). New York: John Wiley & Sons.

Babbie, E. 2002 & 1999. *The basics of social research*. (1<sup>st</sup> & 2<sup>nd</sup> ed.). Belmont, CA, USA: Wadsworth

- Cooper, R. & Schindler, P. 2003. *Business research methods* (8<sup>th</sup> ed.). Boston: McGraw-Hill. (includes SPSS software CD).
- Easterby-Smith, M., Thorpe, R. & Jackson, P.R. 2008. *Management research* (3<sup>rd</sup> ed.). London: Sage.
- Forest, E. 1999. *Internet marketing research—Resources & techniques*. Sydney: McGraw-Hill.
- Ghuri, P. & Gronhaug, K. 2002. *Business research methods in business studies: A practical guide* (2<sup>nd</sup> ed). Sydney, Australia: Prentice Hall.
- McDaniel, C. & Gates, R. 1999. *Contemporary marketing research* (4<sup>th</sup> ed.). St Paul: West Publishing Co.
- Malhotra, N.K., Hall, J., Shaw, M. & Oppenheim, P. 2002. *Marketing research: An applied orientation* (2<sup>nd</sup> ed.). Frenchs Forest, NSW: Prentice Hall. Other editions are also useful.
- Neuman, W.L. 2004. *Basics of social research: Qualitative and quantitative approaches*. USA: Pearson Education, Inc.
- Parasuraman, A. 1991. *Marketing research* (2<sup>nd</sup> ed.). Sydney: Addison-Wesley.
- Richards, L. 2005. *Handling qualitative data: A practical guide*. London: Sage.
- Saunders, M., Lewis, P. & Thornhill, A. 2003. *Research methods for business students* (3<sup>rd</sup> ed). Sydney, Australia: Prentice Hall.
- Sudman, S. & Blair, E. 1998. *Marketing research*. Sydney: McGraw-Hill.
- Ticehurst, G.W. & Veal, A.J. 2000. *Business research methods: A managerial approach*. Sydney: Longman.
- Zikmund, W.G. 2003. *Business research methods* (7<sup>th</sup> ed.). Mason, Ohio USA: Thompson – South-Western.
- Veal, A.J. 2005. *Business research methods: A managerial approach* (2<sup>nd</sup> ed.). Frenchs Forest, NSW: Pearson.

## Library Resources

The library contains a variety of electronic and physical resources that may be of help for completing assignments.

- Library Home Page: <http://www.utas.edu.au/library/>
- Assistance & Training: <http://www.utas.edu.au/library/assist/>
- eReserve: <http://www.utas.edu.au/library/cat/ereserve.html>
- Many reserve readings are available on-line. Find out how to use eReserve and save time
- Search the Library catalogue for eReserve items: <http://www.utas.edu.au/library/>
- Information Resources for Management: <http://www.utas.edu.au/library/info/subj/management.html>
- Electronic databases: <http://www.utas.edu.au/library/info/dbase/index.html>
- Ausstats: <http://www.ausstats.abs.gov.au/>
- Indispensable resource for secondary data. Free to University of Tasmania students and staff (from on-campus or off campus through <http://ezproxy.utas.edu.au/> or via Tassie Access).

## Other Useful Resources

- A.C.Nielsen, Australia: <http://www.acnielsen.com.au/>
- Ad\*Access (history of advertising database): <http://scriptorium.lib.duke.edu/adaccess/>
- American Marketing Association: <http://www.marketingpower.com/>
- Austrade (Australian Trade Commission): <http://www.austrade.gov.au/>
- Australian Bureau of Statistics: <http://www.abs.gov.au/>
- Australian Market and Social Research Society (AMSRS): <http://www.mrsa.com.au/>

- Business Links (Rutgers University): [http://www.libraries.rutgers.edu/rul/rr\\_gateway/research\\_guides/busi/business.shtml](http://www.libraries.rutgers.edu/rul/rr_gateway/research_guides/busi/business.shtml)
- Global Edge: <http://globaledge.msu.edu/ibrd/>
- International Advertising Association: <http://www.iaaglobal.org/>
- International Market Research Information: <http://www.imriresearch.com/>
- Plagiarism Resource Site, The: <http://plagiarism.phys.virginia.edu>
- Referencing: <http://www.docstyles.com/>
- Turnitin: <http://www.Turnitin.com>
- World Factbook (CIA), The: <https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook>

## Journals and Periodicals

Apart from books, you will find it valuable to get into the practice of reading relevant articles from journals and periodicals (including newspapers and magazines).

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## Flexible Learning: MyLO

MyLO software has been incorporated into the delivery of this unit to enhance the learning experience by providing access to up to date course materials and by allowing for online discussion through this web-based environment.

To access MyLO from your own computer you will need the appropriate software, and hardware to run that software. See *Learning Online* <http://uconnect.utas.edu.au/> for computer software you will need.

*Note:* Older computers may not have the hardware to run some of the required software applications. Contact your local IT support person or the Service Desk on 6226 1818 if you experience difficulties.

## Privacy Policy and Notice

The School of Management takes the utmost care to protect the privacy and security of your personal information and to ensure its accuracy.

If you have any concerns about your privacy in MyLO please contact the lecturer-in-charge of this unit or view the University of Tasmania MyLO Privacy Policy Statement available from the university website on <http://www.utas.edu.au/coursesonline/privacy.htm>.

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## Assessment

In order to pass this unit you must achieve an overall mark of at least 50 per cent of the total available marks. Details of each item of Coursework are provided in the Assignment Topics section.

Method of Assessment	Value	Due Date	Length*
<b>Coursework</b> Group Presentation	20	Monday 10th August (for submitting Power Point slides) (presentations in weeks 5 & 6)	15 minutes
Individual Research Proposal	20	Monday 21 <sup>st</sup> September	1500 words
<b>Examination</b>	60	Exam Period	3 hours
Total Marks	100		

\* **Word Limit:** The word count includes such items as headings, in-text references, quotes and executive summaries. It **does not** include the reference list at the end of the assignment.

## Study Week

All undergraduate units offered by the School of Management are scheduled to include a Study Week. The dates for this Semester are shown in the attached Study Schedule.

The purpose of the Study Week is to allow students an opportunity to consolidate their studies thus far, and to research coming assignments.

## Examination

### *Format*

The final examination will be closed book. It will be of three hours duration. The examination is worth 60 per cent of your total assessment and may include a combination of true-false and multi-choice questions, definitions and short-answer questions and essay type and case study questions. The exact format of the examination shall be detailed in the final lecture.

The best preparation for the exam is consistent work throughout the semester and active participation in the tutorials.

### *Scheduled date and place*

Your final examination for this unit will be held during the scheduled examination period as indicated by Student Administration in correspondence to you.

Examinations will normally be scheduled Monday to Saturday inclusive. Examinations may be held during the day or evening and students should consult the university information which will be made available towards the end of semester.

You are advised to make any necessary arrangements with employers now for time off during examination period to sit this examination. Your participation at the scheduled time is not negotiable unless there are exceptional circumstances.

**Note that you will be expected to sit the examination at your recorded study centre.**

### ***Supplementary Examination***

Except in special circumstances and on the recommendation of the lecturer-in-charge or the Head of School, a student who fails will not be granted a supplementary examination.

### **Special Consideration and Student Difficulties**

If a student is experiencing difficulties with their studies or assignments, have personal or life planning issues, disability or illness which may affect their course of study, they are advised to raise these with their lecturer in the first instance. Students may also contact the Student Adviser, who will be able to help in identifying the issues that need to be addressed, give general advice, assist by liaising with academic staff, as well as referring students to any relevant University-wide support services. The Student Adviser is located in room 318a in the Commerce Building in Hobart and is contactable by phone on 6226 1916. In Launceston the Student Adviser is located in room A168 in Building A and is contactable by phone on 6324 3312. There is also a range of University-wide support services available including Student Services, International Services and Learning Development. Please refer to the *Current Students* homepage at:  
<http://www.utas.edu.au/students/index.html>

Should a student require assistance in accessing the Library, visit their website for more information at  
<http://www.utas.edu.au/library/>

Students who have completed their examinations and who feel that they have been disadvantaged due to illness or other circumstances affecting their study, may fill out a form to request that their lecturer takes this into consideration when marking the examination. Forms should be submitted directly to the relevant school, accompanied by appropriate supporting documentation, as soon as possible after the completion of the examination. Granting of special consideration is at the discretion of the lecturer and school. The relevant form can be found at the following website:

[http://www.studentcentre.utas.edu.au/examinations\\_and\\_results/forms\\_files/index.htm#eits](http://www.studentcentre.utas.edu.au/examinations_and_results/forms_files/index.htm#eits)

Students with a non-English speaking background may be permitted to take a bilingual dictionary into an exam. This dictionary must not be annotated, that is, it must have no notes written in it. In order to use a bilingual dictionary students must request permission from the Student Centre.

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## **Submission of Coursework**

### **Lodging Coursework**

All Coursework must have the School of Management Assignment Cover Sheet and Title Page attached, both of which are available as a blank template from the School of Management website:

<http://www.utas.edu.au/mgmt/student.htm>

**All assignments must include the tutor's name on the assignment Cover Sheets when they are handed in. If this is not done the assignment will not be accepted and therefore marked.**

Please remember that you are responsible for lodging your Coursework on or before the due date. We suggest you keep a copy. Even in the most 'perfect' of systems, items sometimes go astray.

Note that you may also be required to submit an electronic copy of your Coursework. More details of this will be given in Lectures.

*Hobart students:* Lodge in assignment box next to room 321, Commerce & Economics Building.

*Launceston students:* Lodge in assignment box beside room A170.

**All coursework must be handed in at 2.00 pm on the due date.**

## **Late Coursework**

### *Written Work*

Extensions will only be granted on medical or compassionate grounds and will not be granted because of work or other commitments. Requests for extensions should be **made in writing** to the lecturer-in-charge prior to the due date. Medical certificates or other evidence must be attached and must contain information which justifies the extension sought.

Late assignments which have **not** been granted an extension will, at the lecturer's discretion, be penalised by deducting ten per cent of total marks for each full day overdue.

Assignments submitted more than six days late will normally not be accepted by the lecturer-in-charge.

### *Tests*

Students who are unable to sit a test on medical or compassionate grounds (work or other commitments are not considered 'compassionate grounds') may request that they be permitted to submit alternative Coursework.

Please do not expect a special test to be held for you if you choose to go on holidays or undertake other activities on the scheduled date. If you do need to request alternative Coursework, you should do so in writing to the lecturer-in-charge prior to the due date. Medical certificates or other evidence must be attached and must contain information which justifies the request. The telephone number of the doctor should also be included.

## **Return of Coursework**

Coursework will be returned during classes or it can be collected from the lecturer's or tutor's room at nominated times; it will not be available from the School's offices.

## **Plagiarism**

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; or
- 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.utas.edu.au/tl/supporting/academicintegrity/index.html>.

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/universitycouncil/legislation/ord9.pdf>

**The University reserves the right to submit (or to require you to submit) assignments to online plagiarism detection software, and might then retain a copy of the assignment on its database for the purpose of future plagiarism checking.**

## **Occupational health and safety (OH&S)**

The University is committed to providing a safe and secure teaching and learning environment. In addition to specific requirements of this unit you should refer to the University's policy at:  
[http://www.admin.utas.edu.au/hr/ohs/pol\\_proc/ohs.pdf](http://www.admin.utas.edu.au/hr/ohs/pol_proc/ohs.pdf)

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## **Tutorial Program**

### **Tutorial Questions for Discussion**

Note that the tutorial program does not start until Week 2 of semester.

Students in Hobart are required to sign-up for the tutorials through MyLO. Sign-up sheets shall be available in MyLO from 4.00pm on Wednesday 15 July 2009.

A detailed guide to the tutorials in this unit shall be provided in the lectures in week 1. The guide shall also be posted up in MyLO.

Tutorials in this unit will follow an active style of learning. In order for you to contribute fully to these activities and to gain the most from your tutorial program, you will need to prepare for these sessions in advance of the class.

Working together as a group is an essential part of completing the presentation effectively. Please see the section below about the project.

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# Assignment Topics

## Group Presentation

*Due Date:* Monday 10<sup>th</sup> August, 2.00pm (for the submission of the PowerPoint slides). Actual presentations shall take place in the tutorials in Week 5 (beginning 10 August) or Week 6 (beginning 17 August).

*Length:* 15 minutes

*Value:* 20 marks

### *Introduction*

The ability to collect, analyse and interpret data is integral to the effective conduct of a professional manager or a marketer. The aim of this project is to design a piece of research in which information related to management, business, or marketing is to be gathered and organised in a critical, planned manner with due reference to methodological protocols. The objective is to develop competency in devising a research proposal. In this instance **you will not actually collect data** but set up a research proposal and work through the research stages prior to actual data collection or fieldwork.

### *Group presentation overview*

Students must work in groups of 4 or 5 to develop a research idea and to prepare a research presentation based on this research. The presentation will be in the form of a PowerPoint presentation within the tutorial. The focus of the research is on a business problem and therefore the research proposals will have a business focus.

The proposal will work at the developmental stage of the research process and work through conceptualisation, operationalisation and sampling issues. The proposal will also develop a link between any previous theory and your research question(s). Also, you need to address any ethical issues that might arise from the research.

### *Group formation*

Students shall form into groups in the tutorials in Week 2. **IT IS ESSENTIAL THAT YOU ATTEND YOUR DESIGNATED TUTORIAL IN WEEK 2 SO THAT THE PROCESS CAN BE BEST FACILITATED.**

As noted above, groups must consist of 4 or 5 members. Each group shall nominate a group leader whose email address and telephone number (preferably mobile) shall be taken by the tutor.

**IT IS NOT POSSIBLE TO WORK ON THIS PROJECT ON YOUR OWN, AND THE GROUP YOU JOIN MUST BE IN THE TUTORIAL THAT YOU HAVE SIGNED UP FOR.**

Those who enrol late in the unit, or who fail to attend the tutorial in Week 2 shall have to make their own arrangements to join a pre-existing group. This shall be at the discretion of tutor and the existing group members. Latecomers should follow the procedure outlined in the box below.

## JOINING A GROUP LATE

If, for whatever reason, you fail to attend the tutorials in Week 2 in which groups are formed, **it is your responsibility to contact a pre-existing group to gain permission to join with them.** You can only join a group within your allocated tutorial slot. You should follow the procedure outlined below:

1. By the Monday of Week 3, each tutor shall have a list of each Group and its members. These shall include the contact details (email and telephone number) of each group leader.
2. Contact the Group Leader to ascertain if you can join their group.
3. The Group Leader is not obliged to let you join their group. If it is not possible to join a particular group, you must approach another group and see whether it is possible to join theirs.
4. Bear in mind that if no group is open to new members, you shall not be able to carry out this part of the assessment. You can undertake the individual proposal and forfeit the potential 20% marks or consider enrolling on-time in the unit in Semester 2, 2010.

### *The task*

You should follow the steps outlined below in order to tackle the task at hand. For those of you that completed BMA101 Introduction to Management from Semester 1, 2006 onwards, it may be helpful to refer back to your notes from the Skills Development Workshops.

*The research question: what is the research aiming to investigate?*

Your proposed research must focus on a management, business or marketing issue which is of significance to the discipline and worthy of investigation.

- You need to develop an explicitly stated research question.
- What theoretical perspectives are used to inform the research question?
- You need to consider whether the question is realistic/realisable, that is, is it a question for which empirical data can be gathered?
- Can the research question be justified in the context of the discipline?
- Is the research question testable – do you need to develop a hypothesis?

*Methodology: an overall consideration of the research topic.*

- Is this research descriptive, exploratory, explanatory or evaluative?
- Is this research taking a deductive or inductive approach?
- Could you use a case study or experimental design?
- Is it qualitative or quantitative or a combination (triangulation)?
- Is your approach to the research question different to previous research and how would this approach improve data gathering?

*Literature review: what theory/literature informs and familiarises you with your research topic?*

- What literature/theory is used to develop the research question? You need to justify your particular theoretical perspective.
- Does the literature/theory deepen your understanding of the research issue(s)?
- What does the literature suggest about this research? Is this 'new' research or adopting a 'new' perspective, or does the literature suggest a gap in knowledge that would be interesting/rewarding to fill?
- Are there other theoretical perspectives that could be used in answering this research question?

### *Conceptualisation*

This is the phase where concepts and ideas used in the research are fleshed out.

Remember that a concept is an idea that has meaning for **this** research project. For example – concept: 'university', explanation: 'when talking about a university for the purposes of this research a university is any accredited tertiary institution within Australia'. You need to bear in mind the following:

- How is the research question refined/defined?
- Are there any concepts out of the literature review that need explaining?
- Are there any relationships between concepts or variables that need explaining?

- What is the research question? Is the research question interpretable, that is, would a reader know explicitly what the question is?
- What subsequent or subsidiary questions need to be thought through?

### *Operationalisation*

The 'how' question – how are the questions going to be posed to the world?

This is the data gathering phase. You need to turn abstract concepts into questions that people can respond to and give meaningful answers to.

- Does the project suggest that data can be collected?
- Would the data collected answer the question?
- Is there a match between the questions asked and the answers needed?
- How have other researchers answered their question? Is there a better way to go about data collection to yield informative data?

### *Sampling: The 'who' question*

It is not possible to undertake research with everyone, so we need to develop a plan regarding who we see/talk to/survey.

- What sampling method will you use?
- Is the sample appropriate for the research topic?
- What will be your sampling frame or sampling criteria?
- Is there a need to consider statistical tests of significance and therefore sample size?

### *Ethical considerations*

If relevant, you may wish to include consideration of any ethical issues in your proposed research.

### *The presentation*

Your presentation should be prepared in PowerPoint. It should last for no more than 15 minutes. Presentations shall be scheduled for the tutorials in weeks 5 and 6. Every member of the group must take part in the presentation. **In addition, the number of slides that you use should be appropriate for a 15 minute presentation. For example 10 slides is usually sufficient for a 15 minute presentation, as this allows approximately 1 – 2 minutes per slide.**

### *Submission of PowerPoint slides*

To ensure that those who are presenting first (i.e. in week 5) are not disadvantaged unduly, it is a requirement that all groups must submit an **exact** copy of the slides that they shall use in their presentations.

A hard copy of the slides that will be used in the presentation must be handed in through the assignment submission boxes in Hobart and Launceston. Slides should be printed out in 'Handout' mode at either 1 or 2 per page. It is a good idea to check that the slides have printed out correctly. ONE COPY PER GROUP IS TO BE HANDED IN.

### *Participation in Group Project*

Successful completion of this project depends on teamwork and on each member of the group taking an active role in the tasks required. All group members are expected to contribute equally to the presentation. Steps can be taken if the effort put in by group members is not equal (see overleaf).

**BMA205 Group Mark Allocation Adjustment**

Your group's presentation will be marked out of a score of 20. This document allows you to provide feedback as to what percentage of that mark you believe each individual member of your group should receive. **YOU DO NOT HAVE TO SUBMIT THIS FORM – ONLY SUBMIT IT TO YOUR TUTOR IF YOU BELIEVE THE MARK AWARDED TO YOUR GROUP SHOULD VARY.**

**AT LEAST TWO GROUP MEMBERS MUST SIGN THIS FORM FOR IT TO BE TAKEN INTO CONSIDERATION.**

Note: all members will receive 100% of the group's mark unless this form is submitted to your tutor.

**Forms shall only be taken into consideration if they are submitted by Friday 21<sup>st</sup> August 2009.**

If you feel that a group member has not contributed equally, please place a value of between 0% and 100% next to that group member's name that reflects their level of input. Under this system (and if approved by the tutor), the mark that students receive for their group's presentation will equal:

**(The group's overall score) multiplied by (the individual's average "effort score").**

For example...Group A consists of Wanda, Henry, Archie and Marilyn. Their tutor awarded the group a score of 16/20 for their presentation. Because it was felt that Wanda and Henry did not contribute equally, Marilyn and Archie both filled in the Mark Adjustment form. After speaking to Wanda and Henry about their input, their tutor altered the marks allocated as follows:			
<b>Name</b>	<b>Score for Group</b>	<b>x Percentage Effort</b>	<b>Student's Score</b>
Wanda	16	x 50%	8
Marilyn	16	x 100%	16
Archie	16	x 100%	16
Henry	16	x 75%	12

In the section provided below, please write the names of your fellow group members and *the percentage of the score you believe that individual deserves.*

Student Name	% effort or input
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____

Signed: \_\_\_\_\_ PRINT NAME: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_ PRINT NAME: \_\_\_\_\_

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\_\_\_\_\_ PRINT NAME: \_\_\_\_\_

## **Individual research proposal**

*Due Date:* 2pm Monday 21<sup>st</sup> September

*Length:* 1500 words

*Value:* 20 marks

### ***Introduction***

The research proposal follows on directly from the group presentation. Each member of the group is to write up a more comprehensive project brief with full theoretical and methodological justification, thus blending project material and theory into a more substantial individual work. The issue is one of a critique of methods, potential alternatives, applications used to justify the research process and the extent to which the research contributes to a practical business situation.

### ***Detail***

In your individual project you are required to develop your analysis of the group project research question further. The individual assignment requires students to address all elements of the group presentation (described on pages 11-13 of the unit outline) in written format.

In addition, students need to do the following:

1. Highlight any modifications/improvements they would suggest to strengthen the research proposal.
2. Provide a clear justification or rationale for each component of the research proposal

It should be noted that as you expand on the slide material and justify your individual approach the individual proposal need not be identical to the group presentation. Students are encouraged to strengthen the research proposal by using feedback from the group presentation to make improvements. The steps and overview used in the group presentation should, however, form the basis for your individual research project.

### ***Suggested structure***

A suggested structure for the proposal is given below:

#### **1. Introduction**

In your individual project you are required to develop further the research question and give an overview of how your approach has been developed and extend the group brief into a rigorous individual research proposal.

#### **2. Literature Review**

This section of your proposal should look at existing research and identify key elements within prior work that will inform your topic of interest. The most obvious sources of material are library catalogues and databases. If using the internet for general material be aware that there some issues around the value of some sites in terms of academic worth or importance.

Library catalogues and databases should provide a relevant review of the literature specifically looking at what other research has been undertaken and what theoretical materials have been incorporated into their research. This can be used to establish a basis and support for your research question and/or hypothesis. Also when looking at this material see how they have structured and written up their research as a guide to how you might structure your proposal.

The section should also outline any conceptual limits or ambiguities. Is it clear to you how previous research has focused on its research question supported by previous theory/literature? Does the previous work suggest a new approach or follow on from prior research? Does the previous work suggest that your research adopt a

new approach or follow on from prior research? Do your research question(s) flow logically from the literature review?

Develop and define your concepts and conceptual relationships. A few examples of this are as given below:

- Concept: Social class.  
Definition: Socioeconomic status in any social setting (SES); How to measure SES: e.g. quantitatively by development of a scale including variables such as income, education and occupation.
- Concept: Attitudes to work.  
Definition: Need to think about work options to limit the scope of the project – type of eg. Government, Private – Full Time, Part Time. For example, the research will focus only on full time workers at the Cadbury factory in Claremont, Tasmania; How to measure attitudes: qualitatively using an interview schedule.

### **3. Methodology**

This part of your proposal is about which research technique(s) will be used to gather the data. Some information on this will be informed by review of the literature, including your analysis of how other researchers have addressed similar research questions. Some issues to bear in mind with qualitative approaches include the following:

- How have others gone about their research and how have they justified this approach?
- How are you going to investigate the topic?
- How many interviews/focus groups will you carry out?
- What types of questions might you pose?
- Will questions be closed or open-ended?
- How will you probe for further information?

If adopting a quantitative approach, you may need to bear in mind the following:

- Do you need to develop a questionnaire or use a questionnaire already developed and in use?
- What technique will you use?

All research materials (eg. questionnaire items, interview questions, etc.) need to be described in enough detail to enable a researcher (the marker of your proposal in this case) to directly replicate your research. This means that you should provide a detailed description of measurement items, questions, or other stimuli in the text of your assignment, and you should include a copy of the full research instrument you intend to use as an appendix.

You also need to bear in mind the following considerations:

- You need to justify why you have selected this approach in the light of previous research and data collection strategies.
- What are the characteristics of the techniques you are using?
- Have they been clearly explained and justified?
- Is it clear how the techniques will enable you to research the question and gather data?
- Will the proposal answer the question that it proposes to answer?

### **4. Ethics**

If appropriate, what ethical issues do you need to consider in your research topic and how will you address them?

### **5. Sampling**

You need to consider how you will select samples from the population of interest. For quantitative research do you take a probability or non-probability approach? In terms of qualitative research is your sampling purposeful, convenient, etc.? If undertaking interviews, who are the key people to interview?

Is the sampling frame a good representation of the population? Is the sample adequate, ie. will it allow you to generate enough data to answer the question. What is the sample size? Will it be adequate for statistical testing?

### **6. Theoretical Issues**

Have you considered issues surrounding validity, reliability and generalisability?

**7. References**

Include a list of references cited in the text of the report. Make sure that you follow the School of Management referencing style.

**8. Appendix**

You should include a copy of the research instrument you intend to use, eg. a qualitative interview schedule, a questionnaire survey, etc.

# Study Schedule

Semester 2, 2009

Week	Start of Week	Text Chapter	Topic	Due Dates
1	13 July	1	The research process	
2	20 July	3	Research Design	
3	27 July	5	Research Ethics	
4	3 August	6 and 7	Quantitative Research and sampling	
5	10 August	8, 9,10 and 12	Quantitative methods (Part 1)	10 August hard copy of presentation slides  Group presentations in tutorials this week.
6	17 August	8, 9,10 and 12	Quantitative methods (Part 2)	Group presentations in tutorials this week.
7	24 August		Study Week	
Mid-Semester Break 31 August – 4 September				
8	7 September	14	Analysing quantitative data	
9	14 September	16	Qualitative research	
10	21 September	18 and 19	Qualitative interviews and focus groups	21 September Individual proposals due in.
11	28 September	11 and 21	Unobtrusive research	
12	5 October	22	Analysing qualitative data	
13	12 October		Review	
A Calendar/Study Planner showing dates is available from School of Management website at <a href="http://www.utas.edu.au/mgmt/student.htm">http://www.utas.edu.au/mgmt/student.htm</a> .				