



## **Business and Management Programme**

### **BAM201 Research Skills**

#### **Module Handbook 2007/08**

Learning is a collaborative activity, even though each of us learns something at least slightly different from our collaboration.

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“The practical farmer does not hesitate to consult the neighboring farmers, and make use of their experience... Yet if another farmer, instead of availing himself of his neighbors’ experiences only, consults books containing the digested results of a thousand farmers’ experiences, he is called, by a strange inconsistency, a ‘book-farmer’, a mere theorist.”

(William Mathews’s *Words and their Abuses*, published in 1884.)

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## Our aims

Welcome to BAM201!

A degree programme in business studies or a related area will usually involve some study of theory and some study of business practices. For example, you might study theory concerning the variations in the economic conditions within which businesses operate; and you might study how to go about producing a marketing plan. Research is important to both. Research is conducted to test theoretical ideas and to inform practice. A marketing plan that was not based on knowledge of your business and the business environment would not be worth much, and there are times when research is needed to contribute to that knowledge.

Do you have the research skills needed to obtain and analyse the necessary information in the real world of a live business? Can you conduct analysis that can withstand criticism? Can you judge just how strong your own arguments are and how robust is your analysis? These are the sorts of skills that this module aims to help you develop.

Academics engage in business consultancy work and research, so these skills are also academic skills. The standards of analytical rigour demanded in academia are high but that rigour also has value in business, where a wrong decision may lead to financial losses or even bankruptcy.

Key purposes of this module are to help students to develop their:

1. knowledge of research as practised within academia and elsewhere;
2. skills in planning appropriate research activity to address specific problems/issues;
3. skills in question design;
4. skills in interviewing for research and facilitating focus groups;
5. skills in the use of other qualitative research techniques;
6. skills in analysing qualitative data.

We also hope that your energetic and committed participation in BAM201 will help you to produce an excellent final year project of which you can be proud.

## Our practices

BAM201 is a practical module in which students can expect to be active rather than passive. You will not be expected to sit quietly and listen to a member of academic staff for long periods. You will be expected to talk, think, and listen attentively to other students. Above all, you will do some real research of your own!

In class we will do some work in small groups and some work all together in plenary sessions. (A plenary session is one involving all of the members of a group who are entitled to be present.) These different ways of working will require us to move around – this is a good thing! Moving around keeps us alert and energized. It may also mean rearranging the furniture to maximize the benefits of different activities. Please be prepared to help move the furniture and do so safely. Please also do your bit to keep our working environment clean, tidy, safe and pleasant – do not leave litter around!

When we are working in a plenary it is important that only one person speaks at a time and that everyone listens to the speaker. Class members who engage in conversation with their neighbours while a speaker is trying to address the whole class, or otherwise act in such a way as to reduce the effectiveness of a plenary, will be warned about their conduct and may be asked to leave the class.

One of the most obvious distractions in a classroom is the mobile phone. Please do not use a mobile phone for any purpose during time when we are working in BAM201 sessions. Please show consideration and respect for all participants in the module at all times. Note that the University's Commitment Charter states that students are expected to "respect the rights of, and to treat with dignity, all fellow students and other members of the University" (University of Chichester, 2006, p8).

It is important to remember that people learn in a variety of ways. There are always many opportunities to learn every day. Make sure you try to take advantage of every opportunity in the BAM201 sessions, remembering that sometimes you may learn more from your fellow students than from the academic staff or from books and other resources. Think about how you can contribute to relaxed, friendly, productive sessions in which everyone gets an equal opportunity to participate and benefit, and about how **YOU** can make the sessions better.

The classroom sessions are timetabled for 2½ hours. We will always take at least one break; we may take more. You should feel free to suggest taking a break if you feel there is a reason to do so at a particular point. For example, you may feel the room is becoming stuffy, or you may feel some of the group are tiring.

There will be directed tasks to be undertaken outside of the weekly sessions. Please ensure you undertake these tasks by the deadline given. For every 2½ hours of classroom time you are expected to do at least 5 hours of additional work outside the classroom. If you find you're not doing this, then you're not doing enough and you are unlikely to fulfil your potential.

We will make use of electronic media. There is a BAM201 course home page under "My Courses" on Portia. You should feel free to use it for chat and messages etc. On the Portia BAM201 course home page you will find a link to Chris Downs's website. Here you will find a set of pages devoted to BAM201. These will be used extensively to provide reading advice, directed tasks and other material.

Check Chris's BAM201 website frequently.

Some reading material may be supplied in pdf files. You may be directed to the H drive on the student network to pick up pdf files.

If you are absent from a session for any reason please note that you should complete a student absence form. These are available from Lesley-Anne Holder in the BAM office.

### **Summary of basic rules of classroom conduct**

1. Take seriously your share in the whole class's responsibility for ensuring a productive and respectful working environment.
2. All classroom time is working time unless it's a break.
3. Working time is mobile-free time - no mobile phones are to be used for any purpose during working time.
4. Only the class tutor can designate any time as break time, though all class members can request a break.

5. Keep focused on work conversations - do not engage in conversation with a sub-set of the class while the class is working in plenary. (A plenary session is one involving all of the members of a group who are entitled to be present.)
6. The issue of a yellow card to a student by the class tutor is a warning that that student's conduct is deemed to have contravened the rules or otherwise to have breached good classroom etiquette. A red card may be issued for a second offence.
7. The issue of a red card to a student by the class tutor will require that the student concerned leave the session immediately. At the class tutor's discretion, the student may be permitted to return later in the session or may be marked as absent in the attendance register. (See p29 regarding student absence.)

## Outline of weekly programme

Session no.	Week beginning	
1	21/01/08	Introduction to the module; reflecting on our existing knowledge and skills; qualitative research
2	28/01/08	Repertory grid technique
3	04/02/08	Interviewing for research
4	11/02/08	Interviewing for research
	18/02/08	<i>Reading week</i>
5	25/02/08	Facilitating a focus group
6	03/03/08	Facilitating a focus group
7	10/03/08	Managing your research
8	17/03/08	Analysing qualitative data
9	24/03/08	Analysing qualitative data
10	31/03/08	Tutorials on assessment work
	07/04/08	<i>Spring break</i>
	14/04/08	<i>Spring break</i>
11	21/04/08	Tutorials on assessment work

This programme may be subject to change.

## Module Assessment

The assessed work for this module will be a paper reporting some qualitative research you will conduct during the module, and reflecting on your experience of researching. You are required to undertake some primary data collection and analysis of that data. You may choose the method of data collection but the research must be essentially qualitative in character.

You will choose the subject of your research but the focus of your research should have some connection with your degree studies. For example, you could do research on a human resources-related issue, or on some aspect of consumer behaviour, or you could start from an interest in some particular business.

It is expected that most students will use other members of the university as their research participants. For example, you could interview a member of staff, or you could run a focus group with a group of third year history students. There are plenty of opportunities. However, you may, with the permission of the module tutor, work with research participants from outside the university community.

You should discuss your plans for your research with the module tutor before you begin any primary data collection.

Your work will be assessed on the basis of the competence with which research methods are used (the research process) and the quality of your reflection on the experience, not on the results obtained. That is to say, your research may not in the end produce the results you hoped for, but this need not affect your mark if your approach to and conduct of the research was good. There is always a risk that even research conducted by experienced and able researchers will be adversely affected by events beyond the researcher's control. Since you will be doing a piece of real research, you will be in the same position and face the same risk.

Your paper should report your research in as much detail as is possible within the word limit. It should cover both the data collection and data analysis stages of research. It should refer to appropriate literature on research (that is to sources of guidance on doing research that is relevant to your own work) and be properly referenced. However, it should focus on the research techniques that you have used rather than discussing at length a range of alternative research techniques.

You are recommended to include examples of interview schedules, discussion guides, transcripts, and data analysis as appendices, but take care not to require your reader to refer too frequently to these. Appendices are included for the benefit of the particularly interested reader, and material you wish all readers to read should be included in the main body of your paper. So, for example, if you wish to discuss the effectiveness of one particular prompt in a discussion guide then that prompt must be presented in the main body of the text even though it is also included in the full discussion guide that is contained in an appendix.

In a larger piece of work, such as that you may well undertake in the final year of your degree programme, you would be expected to include a substantial literature review in which you would discuss previous research on the subject on which you have done your research. This is not expected in BAM201.

It is expected that you will include a clearly identifiable separate section in your paper that contains some reflections on your experience of researching. This section is not expected to exceed approximately 20% of the paper.

It is likely that you have had some experience of writing reflectively, eg on BAM122 and BAM244. You are encouraged to look back at the guidance given on those modules, at the work you did on them, and the feedback you received. If you did not take either of these modules then you are advised to speak to Chris Downs and to students who did take those modules for guidance.

### Assessment criteria

Your paper will be judged against the following criteria:

1. Quality of presentation (structure, referencing, English etc.) Any errors that the marker judges should have been identified by using a spell checker will result in a zero mark for this criterion.
2. Competence with which data collection has been undertaken. (Note that a high degree of detail and clarity is needed in your description of your research activities in order to demonstrate this.)
3. Competence with which data analysis has been undertaken. (Note that a high degree of detail and clarity is needed in your description of your research activities in order to demonstrate this.)
4. Quality of reflection on the experience of researching.

Criterion 1 will be given a 10% weighing, while the other three criteria should be regarded as equally important and will each be given a weighting of 30%.

**The word limit for the paper is 3,500 words.**

Penalties

If you exceed the word limit by more than 10% your mark will be reduced by 10 percentage points. Appendices, lists of references etc are not to be included within the word count. You must state the number of words clearly in your assignment (at the beginning or end). If you fail to do so your mark will be reduced by 10 percentage points.

Failure to submit work on time will result in a fail mark for the module.

Failure to submit an electronic version (on disk or CD) will result in a zero grade being awarded.

**THE HAND IN DATE IS WEDNESDAY 30 APRIL 2008**

**Cheating, Plagiarism and Collusion**

In light of increasing incidences of academic malpractice, Chichester has joined other universities and colleges in using electronic plagiarism detection services. You are therefore required to submit an electronic version (on disk or CD-ROM) alongside a hard copy of your written work. Failure to submit an electronic version (on disk) will result in a zero grade being awarded. (This does not apply to work prepared under exam room conditions.)

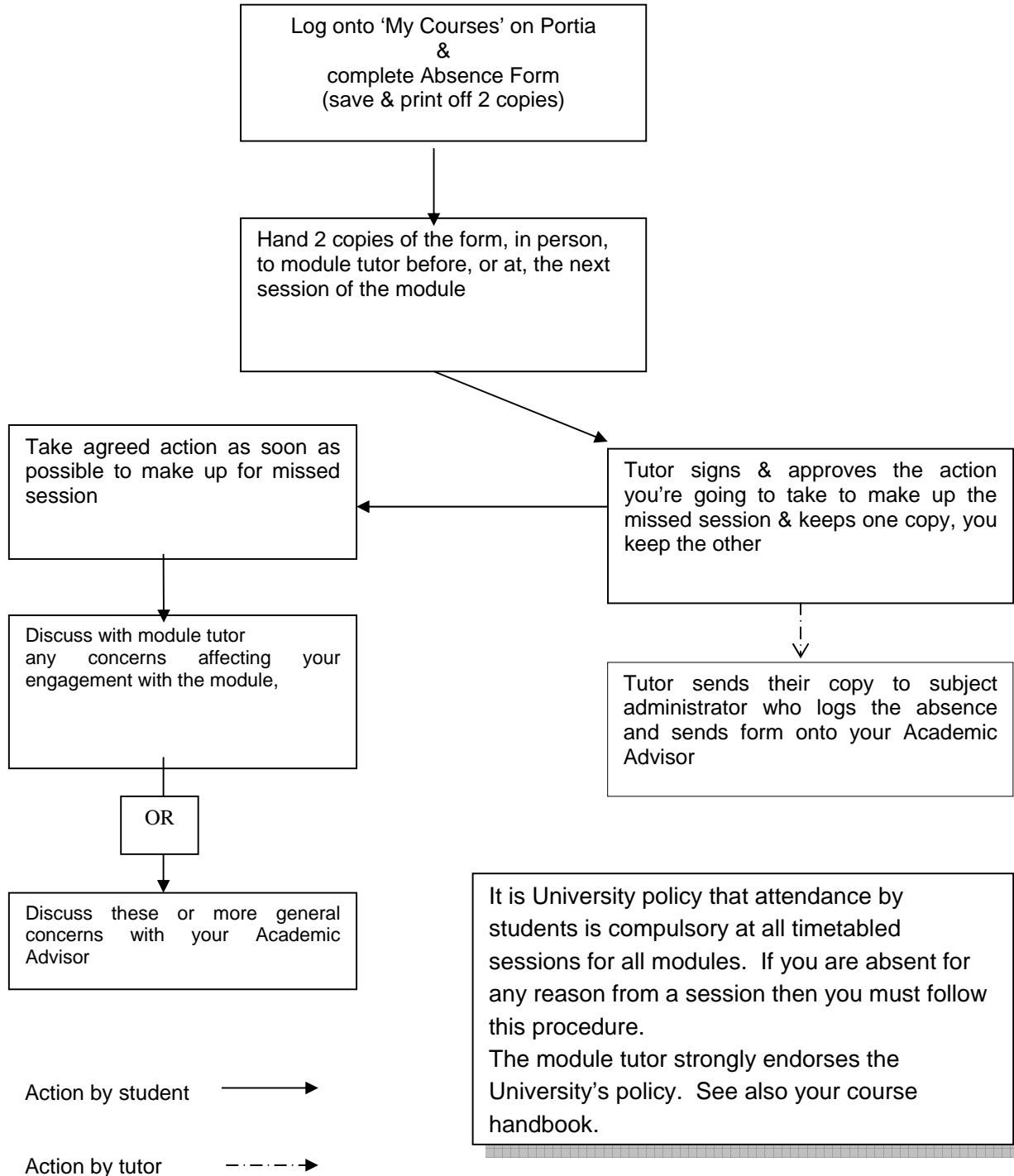
## Grading criteria

Criteria				
Grade	1	2	3	4
85+	The page layout is of professional quality; there are almost no typographical, spelling or grammatical errors. The writing exemplifies clear communication and makes it easy for the reader to read quickly. There are appropriate references to the literature (public knowledge).	Data collection has been well planned and professionally executed. No obviously significant issues have been overlooked. The report of data collection activity is self-critical but almost all of the issues raised are likely to have arisen even if the research had been done by a highly experienced researcher.	Data analysis has been conducted in a thorough and imaginative manner, attempting to follow a recognised good practice (eg using coding etc). It has been described in detail and in a self-critical manner.	Events, examples, learning, and the thoughts and feelings of the writer are described in the needed level of detail. Examples/evidence used to illustrate/support claims made so that conclusions may be judged to be robust. No unnecessary material is included.
70-84	The work is attractive and user-friendly; there are only one or two typographical, spelling or grammatical errors. There are appropriate references to the literature (public knowledge).	Data collection has been well planned and well executed. No obviously significant issues have been overlooked. The report of data collection activity is self-critical but some of the issues raised are unlikely to have arisen even if the research had been done by a highly experienced researcher.	Data analysis has been conducted in a thorough manner, attempting to follow a recognised good practice (eg using coding etc). It has been described in detail and in a self-critical manner.	Events, examples, learning, and the thoughts and feelings of the writer are mainly described in the needed level of detail. Examples/evidence used to illustrate/support claims made so that conclusions may be judged to be robust. Little unnecessary material is included.
60-69	The work is quite attractive and user-friendly; there are very few typographical, spelling or grammatical errors. References provided are well presented but the referencing is insufficient.	Data collection has been quite well planned and quite well executed. No more than one or two obviously significant issues have been overlooked. The report of data collection activity is self-critical and most of the issues raised have been sensibly addressed.	Data analysis has been conducted with some clear reference to a recognised good practice (eg using coding etc). It has been described in reasonable detail and in a fairly self-critical manner.	Events, examples, learning, and the thoughts and feelings of the writer are mainly described in a good level of detail. Examples/evidence used to illustrate/support claims made so that conclusions may be judged to be plausible.

50-59	The work shows evidence that thought has been given to presentation and ease of use; there are sufficient typographical, spelling or grammatical errors to distract the reader. Referencing may be poor.	Data collection has mostly been quite well planned and quite well executed. No more than two or three obviously significant issues have been overlooked. The report of data collection activity is reasonably self-critical and most of the issues raised have been sensibly addressed.	Data analysis has been conducted with little clear reference to a recognised good practice (eg using coding etc). It has been described in insufficient detail and in an insufficiently self-critical manner.	Events, examples, learning, and the thoughts and feelings of the writer are mainly described rather superficially. There is little use of examples/evidence to illustrate/support claims made so that conclusions may be judged to be almost purely speculative.
40-49	The work is not presented so as to make its use by readers easy; the English is sufficiently poor to make reading difficult in places.	Data collection has been, in part, quite well planned and quite well executed but there are significant flaws. Some obviously significant issues have been overlooked. The report of data collection activity is insufficiently self-critical and the issues raised have not been adequately addressed.	Data analysis has been conducted with no reference to a recognised good practice (eg using coding etc). It has been described in insufficient detail and in an insufficiently self-critical manner.	Events and examples are mainly described, with little space given to learning and the thoughts and feelings of the writer. There is very little use of examples/evidence to illustrate/support claims made, and very little in the way of relevant conclusions.
<40	The work is not presented so as to make its use by readers easy; the English is sufficiently poor to make reading difficult in large parts of the work.	Data collection has been mostly, poorly planned and poorly executed. Many obviously significant issues have been overlooked. The report of data collection activity is insufficiently self-critical and the issues raised have not been adequately addressed.	Little or no data analysis has been conducted and what there is has been done very casually. There is little description of any data analysis process or technique.	There is no real effort at reflection at all. The work may contain a summary of the module activities.

## 6 Student absence

What to do when you've been absent from a module session.



## Appendix

### Module descriptor

Please note this is an official document used by the College for academic purposes. It is primarily intended to be used by academic staff and others involved in curriculum design and course quality assurance. Students are given a copy of this document for background information only. In particular, you should refer to the reading list available on the module webpages reached via Portia's My Courses tab for up-to-date reading advice; and you should **not** rely only on the information on reading in the module descriptor.

<b>Module Title:</b>	Research Skills
<b>Module Code:</b>	BAM201
<b>Credits:</b>	15
<b>Level:</b>	2
<b>Home School and Subject Area:</b>	Social Studies (Business and Management)
<b>Programme to which the module contributes:</b>	BA (Hons) Business Studies, BA (Hons) Information Technology Management for Business, BA (Hons) Tourism Management
<b>Module Co-ordinator:</b>	Chris Downs

#### Entry Requirements:

#### Aims:

The module aims to contribute to students' preparation for final year project work. The aim is to develop students' skills in devising research appropriate to a specific problem/issue, and in data collection and analysis. These skills are also needed in order to use professionally some of the techniques featured elsewhere in the course, such as SWOT analysis, gap analysis, benchmarking etc. The focus is on qualitative research.

#### Learning Outcomes:

On successful completion of this module students will have developed their:

- skills in planning appropriate research activity to address specific problems/issues;
- skills in question design;
- skills in interviewing for research and facilitating focus groups;
- skills in assessing the research of others;
- understanding of knowledge creation through research.

**Indicative Curriculum Content:**

- question design;
- interviewing;
- focus group research;
- content analysis;
- research ethics;
- project management.

**Learning Strategy:**

The module will comprise a series of workshops wherein students will work sometimes together and sometimes individually. The emphasis will be placed on learning by doing and reflecting on the experience of doing, but students will also study selected published research papers. Students will be encouraged to participate fully in a supportive atmosphere.

Directed tasks will be used to enable students to pursue further work done in class and to progress towards completion of the assessment task.

The module will be supported by a website.

**Mode of Assessment:**

**Summative:** Students will undertake a small scale research activity – eg one or two interviews, a small focus group, a short questionnaire survey – and analyse the data collected. Participants should be drawn from the membership of the University or local business community. A paper (3,500 words maximum) will report the research and include a personal reflection on the experience of researching.

**Formative:** There will be much in-class discussion, with opportunities for students to reflect, share experience, and to receive feedback from each other and from staff.

**Assessment Criteria:**

- Relevance of research activity to the stated purpose of research (chosen by the student).
- Level of detail and clarity with which the research activities are discussed.
- Quality of reflection on experience.

**Indicative Reading:**

- Andrews, R. (2003) *Research Questions*. London: Continuum
- Bennett, J. (2003) *Evaluation Methods in Research*. London: Continuum
- Blaxter, L., Hughes, C., and Tight, M. (2001) *How to Research*. 2nd. edn. Buckingham: Open University Press
- Bryman, A. and Bell, E. (2003) *Business Research Methods*. Oxford: Oxford University Press
- Collis, J. and Hussey, R. (2003) *Business Research*. 2nd. edn. Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan
- Coombes, H. (2001) *Research Using IT*. Basingstoke: Palgrave
- Costello, P. (2003) *Action Research*. London: Continuum
- Cottrell, S. (2003) *The Study Skills Handbook*. 2nd. edn. Basingstoke: Palgrave (esp Chapter 9).
- Denscombe, M. (2003) *The Good Research Guide*. 2nd. edn. Buckingham: Open University Press (UCC library holds copies of the first edition.)
- Gillham, B. (2000a) *Case Study Research Methods*. London: Continuum
- Gillham, B. (2000b) *Developing a Questionnaire*. London: Continuum
- Gillham, B. (2000c) *The Research Interview*. London: Continuum
- Gregory, I. (2003) *Ethics in Research*. London: Continuum
- Jankowicz, A.D. (2005) *Business Research Projects*. 4th. edn. London: Thomson
- Litosseliti, L. (2003) *Using Focus Groups in Research*. London: Continuum
- Marshall, L. and Rowland, F. (1998) *A Guide to Learning Independently*. 3rd. edn. Buckingham: Open University Press
- Maylor, H. and Blackburn, K. (2005) *Researching Business and Management*. Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan
- Oliver, Paul (2003) *The Student's Guide to Research Ethics*. Maidenhead: Open University Press
- Oppenheim, A.N. (1992) *Questionnaire Design, Interviewing and Attitude Measurement*. New. edn. London: Continuum
- Orna, E. and Stevens, G. (1995) *Managing Information for Research*. Buckingham: Open University Press
- Saunders, M., Lewis, P., and Thornhill, A. (2003) *Research Methods for Business Students*. 3rd. edn. Harlow: Prentice Hall
- Thomson, A. (2002) *Critical Reasoning: a practical introduction*. 2nd. edn. London: Routledge
- White, B. (2003) *Dissertation Skills: for business and management students*. London: Continuum

“Without curiosity, learning is dull and mechanical if it occurs at all.”  
- Marshall & Rowland (1998) *A Guide to Learning Independently*

“The history of ideas... develops to an indispensable degree on the basis of criticism. A puts forward a theory, and is then followed by B, who perceives not only its value but some of its shortcomings, and puts forward a new theory which subsumes what is good in A's without containing its perceived faults. Then along comes C, who does exactly the same with B's theory. And so it goes on indefinitely – albeit untidily, with interruptions, detours, zig-zags, journeys up blind alleys and garden paths, waves of reaction, and so on. There are always last-ditch defenders of A against B who, when C comes along and effectively criticizes B, claim C's efforts as justifying their own pertinacities. We are all under a temptation to stay put in the most forward resting-place that is felt by us to be comfortable.”

Bryan Magee, *The Philosophy of Schopenhauer*, p85

“An expert is a man who has made all the mistakes which can be made in a very narrow field.”  
- Neils Bohr

“Every man I meet is in some way my superior; and in that I can learn of him.”  
- Emerson

If you want to be a success for ever more, don't put anything on your 'to do' list that you don't intend to do!

- Whitmore (2002) p91

“We tend to get what we focus on. If we fear failure, we are focused on failure and that is what we get.”  
- Whitmore (2002) p62

“The worst mistake that can be made about human thinking, and the mistake most commonly made, is to suppose that thinking intelligently is identical with thinking logically; identical with arguing, identical with reasoning. Reasoning does play a crucial role in thinking, of course. But as crucial is the material reasoned on, and this is not the work of reason.”  
- David Miller “Reasoning: Control, not Command”

'managers draw on all the knowledge of the humanities and social sciences — on psychology and philosophy, on economics and history, on the physical sciences and on ethics. But they have to focus this on effectiveness and results — on healing a sick patient, teaching a student, building a bridge, designing and selling a user-friendly software programme.'

- Peter Drucker

“The common assumption that to grasp a theory one need only be sufficiently intelligent is misplaced. Over and again... men of the highest intelligence fall into an imaginative, not an intellectual, shortcoming in the way they fail to grasp a theory, or in the point-missing way they criticize it; indeed this happens only too often to every one of us.”

Bryan Magee, *The Philosophy of Schopenhauer*, p81