

UNIVERSITY OF CHICHESTER
BUSINESS AND MANAGEMENT PROGRAMME
MODULE REPORT 2006/2007

UNIT	BAM 201 – Research Skills		
LEVEL	2	SEMESTER	2

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Signature:	Chris Downs
Date:	12 June 2007

1) MODULE AIMS AND LEARNING OUTCOMES

Below left are the module aims as described in the module handbook. Below right are module aims as described in the module descriptor. Students were advised in the module handbook as follows. "Please note this [module descriptor] 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 via My Library on Portia for up-to-date reading advice and you should not rely on the information on reading in the module descriptor.*"

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.

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:

Below are the outcomes as specified in the module descriptor.

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.

2) STUDENT FEEDBACK

Module evaluation questionnaires were completed by 26 students, approximately half of those completing the module. This was due to low attendance at the final sessions in the week after Easter. More than 80% of respondents indicated that they felt they had achieved the learning outcomes.

Written comments from students were a little sparse. It is arguable that more useful feedback may be gained by reading the short reflective accounts written by students as part of their written papers submitted for assessment.

Nevertheless, comments on the questionnaires made clear that students liked the practical aspects of the module, practising interviewing and facilitating focus groups. One student wrote: "It was something that wasn't a standard class (lecture), it makes people think in a more creative way".

There were also favourable comments on the assessment task, with at least one in particular indicating that the student concerned had been more motivated by this task than is usual in their degree studies. Also in this connection, there were some comments that a session in which the writing up of students' research was discussed came too late. However, guidance was provided in the module handbook and throughout the module, so these comments seem to reflect students' assessment anxiety and perhaps their failure to refer to the module handbook or to pay heed to what was said earlier in the module. Some students commented that they under-estimated the amount of work needed to complete the assessment task and found themselves pressed for time as the hand-in date approached.

A number of students commented on how they had not been very comfortable doing interviews and focus groups but had grown in confidence through the module. The module tutor regards this confidence effect to be a very significant benefit of the module and likely to be of real value to students in future work settings and recruitment interviews. Some students commented favourably on the experience of "being in charge" of a conversation in their reflections in the assessment. Overall, one gets a much more positive impression of student perceptions of the module from these reflections than from the evaluation questionnaires. It is not known whether this results from a desire among students to flatter the module tutor and thereby influence their mark, or whether the greater incentive to reflect provided by the promise of marks prompts

students simply to put in much more effort than they did on the evaluation questionnaire.

Student effort and conduct in class is a concern. Compared with 2005/06, increased proportions of students expressed disagreement with the statements: "I made full use of the lecture/seminar sessions by: listening actively; asking questions and offering answers to questions; tackling tasks with others and individually"; and "I completed all the directed tasks set by the module tutor(s) at the appropriate times". Some students complained about the conduct of their peers, and it must be remembered that BAM201 is a module that contains no group assessment.

3) MODULE EVALUATION – STRENGTHS AND WEAKNESSES

Strengths

- The participative nature of the classroom sessions and the extent to which these were focused on exercises/activities.
- The authenticity of the assessment task – students do some real research.
- The freedom of choice given to students regarding the subject of their research, which appears to have a positive motivational effect.
- The assessment discriminated between excellent and poor performances, with five students gaining first class marks and four failing.
- The quality of the work produced by the best performing students was felt to be high.

Weaknesses

- Some students seemed not to engage very fully in all classroom sessions and did not seem to make the most of the opportunities for hands-on practical preparation for research. This is probably reflected in the marks of some students. It proved to be a source of frustration to other students as well as to the module tutor. There were sessions in which this was felt to significantly affect the experience of all students.

4) ACTION TAKEN SINCE LAST YEAR AND RESPONSE TO EXTERNAL EXAMINER FEEDBACK

No significant changes were made.

5) PROPOSED ACTIONS FOR 2007/2008

More guidance on classroom etiquette will be provided in the module handbook, accompanied by a red and yellow card system that was introduced in BAM122 and BAM124 in 2006/07 (for details see the BAM122 module handbook). Many students taking BAM201 in 2007/08 will have taken one or both of these modules and so be somewhat familiar with what is proposed. It is also proposed to draw on the University's *Commitment Charter, July 2006*.

Guidance regarding the choice of subject for students' research for the assessment task will be modified to make it clearer that a business-related subject is required. In the past two years the module handbook has contained the statement "The focus of your research should have some connection with your degree studies. For example, you could interview fellow students about their experience of work in a human resources focused piece of research." Many students have responded to this by focusing on the learning experience on their course. This has led to some interesting research and it is not intended to discourage this, but it is desired that students should be quite clear that this is not necessarily what is expected.

It is proposed that changes to the provision of classroom sessions be made. At present each group taking the module gets one session in which practice focus groups are run. The groups have on occasion contained over 20 students and it is felt that the student experience would be enhanced if group sizes were smaller. It is proposed that sessions such as the practice focus group one be repeated and students invited to sign up, say, either to the week 4 or week 5 running of the session. While keeping class sizes smaller, this should still make it possible to allow some students to attend both if they wish, and places for attending a second session would be allocated on a first come first served basis. The overall effect is intended to be that some students will choose to have fewer contact hours in class while the quality of that class time will be enhanced. It is also hoped that this will further promote the principles of student choice and responsibility that the module already promotes by the nature of its assessment task.

6) ASSESSMENT REPORT

Summative:

The assessed work for this module was a paper reporting some research conducted during the module, and reflecting on the experience of researching.

Students were required to undertake some data collection and analysis of that data. The research had to be essentially qualitative in character. It was expected that students would use other members of the university as research participants. The focus of the research had to have some connection with students' degree studies. For example, students could interview fellow students about their experience of work in a human resources focused piece of research.

The work was assessed on the basis of the competence with which research methods were used (the research process) and the quality of reflection on the experience, not on the results obtained.

The essays were blind marked by the module coordinator. One case of plagiarism was identified. Two colleagues from the BAM staff examined 16 scripts between them in the moderation process.

No adjustments were made to the marking as a result of moderating.

Formative:

The classroom sessions provided opportunities for students to gain formative feedback both from the tutor and also from other students.

UNIVERSITY COLLEGE CHICHESTER
BUSINESS AND MANAGEMENT PROGRAMME
(MODULE STATISTICS)

MODULE: Research Skills	LEVEL: 2
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1. SUMMARY OF MARKS BY SEMESTER:

	Semester 1				Semester 2			
	Ass. 1	Ass. 2	Ass. 3	Total	Ass. 1	Ass. 2	Ass. 3	Total
Mean	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	58.5			58.1
S.D.	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	12.3			12.6
Pass rate	n/a				90% (>40%)			

N = 54

2. OVERALL MODULE MARK FOR CURRENT & PREVIOUS YEAR

	Academic Year 2006/2007				Academic Year 2005/2006			
	Ass. 1	Ass. 2	Ass. 3	Total	Ass. 1	Ass. 2	Ass. 3	Total
Mean	58.1			58.1	57.0			57.0
S.D.	12.6			12.6	11.4			11.4
Pass rate	89% (>40%)				90% (>40%)			

3. ANALYSIS OF CLASSIFICATIONS

<35%	35-39%	40-49%	50-59%	60-69%	70% +	TOTAL
2	4	7	12	20	9	54

MODULE COORDINATOR:

Chris Downs

DATE:

May 2007

Appendix B

BAM 201 Research Skills 2006/07 - Student Module Evaluation Form Summary

1. Through studying this module I have developed my skills as specified above - the module aims were achieved.

Strongly Disagree					Strongly Agree		Total number of respondents
1	2	3	4	5	6		
0%	8%	8%	46%	35%	4%	26	

2. I found the module challenging.

Strongly Disagree					Strongly Agree		Total number of respondents
1	2	3	4	5	6		
0%	12%	15%	42%	27%	4%	26	

3. I have covered significant areas of the module content though previous study or in the work place.

Strongly Disagree					Strongly Agree		Total number of respondents
1	2	3	4	5	6		
12%	35%	19%	19%	8%	8%	26	

4. I believe that the module proceeded at an appropriate pace for me.

Strongly Disagree					Strongly Agree		Total number of respondents
1	2	3	4	5	6		
0%	8%	12%	27%	38%	15%	26	

5. I made full use of the lecture/seminar sessions by: listening actively; asking questions and offering answers to questions; tackling tasks with others and individually.

Strongly Disagree				Strongly Agree		Total number of respondents
1	2	3	4	5	6	
0%	8%	8%	46%	35%	4%	26

6. I completed all the directed tasks set by the module tutor(s) at the appropriate times.

Strongly Disagree				Strongly Agree		Total number of respondents
1	2	3	4	5	6	
0%	0%	19%	15%	54%	12%	26