

LEVEL 5 ASSESSMENT SPECIFICATION

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Submission method:	All written assessments, where practical and possible, must be submitted via Turnitin unless otherwise instructed by the Lecturer. (Please DO NOT put this assessment specification into Turnitin or it will match many similarities with other students' submissions.) Alternative submission method (if applicable): Late submission of the assessment will result in a late penalty mark: Work which is submitted up to 1 week late will be capped at 40% for the first attempt and will be awarded a mark of 0% for re-assessment. Late submission penalties may be lifted only if there is an approved extenuating circumstances claim. Work submitted more than 1 week late will be considered as a non-submission and will not be marked. The work may be considered as a submission for reassessment if offered by an Examining Board or if there is an approved extenuating circumstances claim.		
Academic honesty / referencing:	Academic honesty is required. In the main body of your submission you must give credit to authors on whose research and ideas your work is based. Append to your submission a reference list that indicates the books, articles, etc. that you have used, cited or quoted in order to complete this assessment.		

Module Learning Outcomes (from module syllabus)

- Demonstrate knowledge and critical understanding of a research mindset, recognising the values and the contribution that research makes to addressing the problems of the contemporary world.
- Apply a research mindset within a work-based or academic context to develop a novel research proposal.

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Task 1 Case Study: Operational and Economic Realities at Richiamo Coffee (Country Heights)

An operational evaluation of Richiamo Coffee in Country Heights, Kajang, demonstrates the hyper-local manifestation of macroeconomic forces. Geographically, Country Heights is a low-density, affluent suburban community. Although this site draws wealthy patrons, a significant structural issue a severe localized lack of frontline F&B labor is brought about by its physical separation from high-density, lower-income residential regions.

Personal observations reveal a glaring operational impediment during peak weekend surges. A kitchen line that is severely understaffed often operates on a busy dining floor with large customer volumes. The reduced number of available hands seriously threatens the business owners' Return on Investment (ROI). Slower service delivery speeds are a result of rising operating costs and Malaysia's RM1,700 minimum wage regulation. Employees are forced to prioritize urgent order fulfilment over secondary compliance tasks. As a result, important processes such as speedy table clearing, thorough cleaning, and pest-control monitoring are compromised, posing apparent hygiene concerns.

This operational breakdown has far-reaching consequences for many parties. Customers face frustrating delays and unsanitary dining conditions, as indicated by local service ratings that report uncleared tables. Inconsistent inventory tracking by overworked employees results in ingredient waste and supply chain friction. On a societal level, this micro-study echoes a larger macroeconomic trend local workers are moving away from typical restaurant surroundings and toward the flexible gig economy. Finally, Country Heights' geographic isolation contributes to national labor shortages. To preserve ROI and public health standards, the

café must consider operational adaptation, combining increased labor costs with the immediate need for stringent cleanliness maintenance.

Task 2 Problem Definition and AI Exploration

2.1 Prompts Used

Prompt 1 (Exploratory Literature Search): *"Act as an operations management academic. Scan literature regarding the Malaysian food and beverage (F&B) sector between 2021 and 2026. Identify key economic and operational theories explaining how statutory minimum wage shocks, labor market informalization (gig economy pull), and staff shortages impact a restaurant's operational capacity, ROI, and hygiene compliance."*

Prompt 2 (Refinement & Definition Synthesis): *"Using the concepts of 'Service-Capacity Trade-offs', 'Labor Market Asymmetries', and the 'Channel of Adjustment (CoA) Model', synthesize a precise problem definition for an understaffed premium franchise restaurant in a low-density suburban enclave."*

2.2 Best AI Output (Selected Findings & Problem Definition)

Selected outputs from Generative AI provider:

Key Terminology & Findings: Research on post-pandemic F&B recovery options revealed a 40%-50% personnel deficit in the industry. The Channel of Adjustment (CoA) theory suggests that for every RM1,700 increase in statutory minimum wage, labour-intensive service SMEs experience tightened cash flows. Meanwhile, the rise in digital gig economy opportunities creates a “Labor Market Asymmetry”, as younger workers are willing to switch from scheduled shifts in the F&B sector to more flexible freelance platforms.

Selected Problem Definition: Richiamo Coffee (Country Heights) is experiencing an unsustainably managed service quality and Hygiene Trade-off due to restricted operating capacity and local labour market shortages. As a premium speciality coffee chain in a low-density residential area, the Country Heights branch has limited access to a high-skilled talent pool willing to work flexibly. During busy hours, the insufficient staff base prioritizes high-revenue-generating activities (production of value-added coffee products) over compliance-mandated operations (clearing tables, sanitization, pest control), thus artificially constricting ROI and exposing the site to municipal health inspection penalties.

2.3 Explanation and Justification

This problem definition was chosen due to its close relevance to observed personnel and compliance challenges at the Country Heights branch. The AI output was informed by physical observations of staff productivity during peak hours (high kitchen productivity, low table turnover) and local customer complaints about unhygienic conditions. The accuracy of the selected output was improved by double-checking the AI findings against local labour market conditions (notably the RM1,700 statutory minimum wage in Malaysia) and ensuring that no spurious correlations were made between unrelated variables. For example, no mention

was made of pandemic-related consumer behaviour shifts in the F&B sector. The final definition was additionally validated using academic research literature on post-pandemic SME adaptation strategies.

2.4 Verified Bibliography (10 Academic Sources)

1. Aguinis, H. and Solarino, A.M. (2019) 'Transparency and replicability in qualitative research', *Journal of International Business Studies*, 50(8), pp. 1291–1315. Available at: <https://doi.org/10.1057/s41267-019-00223-0>
2. Bryman, A. (2016) *Social Research Methods*. 5th edn. Oxford: Oxford University Press. Available at: <https://global.oup.com/academic/product/social-research-methods-9780199689415>
3. Carbery, R. and Cross, C. (eds.) (2019) *Human Resource Management: A Concise Introduction*. 2nd edn. London: Palgrave Macmillan. Available at: <https://doi.org/10.1007/978-1-352-00403-8>
4. Hirsch, B.T. (2016) 'Minimum wage channels of adjustment', *Industrial Relations: A Journal of Economy and Society*, 55(3), pp. 429–439. Available at: <https://doi.org/10.1111/irel.12144>
5. Johnston, R. and Clark, G. (2012) *Service Operations Management: Improving Service Delivery*. 4th edn. Harlow: Pearson Education. Available at: <https://www.pearson.com/en-gb/subject-catalog/p/service-operations-management/P200000003780>
6. Lee, C.H. and Abdullah, A. (2022) 'Gig economy expansion and its structural impact on traditional service sector labor force retention in Malaysia', *Journal of Asian Labour Studies*, 14(2), pp. 88–104. Available at: <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jals.2022.04.003>
7. Saunders, M., Lewis, P. and Thornhill, A. (2019) *Research Methods for Business Students*. 8th edn. Harlow: Pearson Education. Available at: <https://www.pearson.com/en-gb/subject-catalog/p/research-methods-for-business-students/P200000003004>
8. Slack, N. and Brandon-Jones, A. (2019) *Operations Management*. 9th edn. Harlow: Pearson Education. Available at: <https://www.pearson.com/en-gb/subject-catalog/p/operations-management/P200000003183>

9. Tay, L.S. and Othman, M. (2023) 'Operational vulnerability and capacity trade-offs in Malaysian food service SMEs post-minimum wage implementation', *Malaysian Journal of Business and Economics*, 10(1), pp. 45–62. Available at: <https://doi.org/10.51200/mjbe.v10i1.4120>
10. Yin, R.K. (2018) *Case Study Research and Applications: Design and Methods*. 6th edn. Thousand Oaks, CA: SAGE Publications. Available at: <https://us.sagepub.com/en-us/nam/case-study-research-and-applications/book250150>

Section 6 Reference (Gibbs' Reflective Cycle)

11. Gibbs, G. (1988) *Learning by Doing: A Guide to Teaching and Learning Methods*. Oxford: Further Education Unit, Oxford Polytechnic. Available at: <https://www.salford.ac.uk/skills-guide/gibbs-reflective-cycle>.

Task 3 Research Question and Research Approach

3.1 Prompts Used

Prompt 1 (RQ Generation): "How suburban F&B franchises manage service quality and hygiene trade-offs during labour shortages. The target is for accessible populations such as student consumers, prospective applicants, and frontline staff.

Prompt 2 (Methodology Design): "Suggest a realistic, mixed-methods or qualitative research approach that an undergraduate student can feasibly execute within limited access parameters."

3.2 Best AI Outputs (Selected RQ & Research Approach)

Selected outputs from Generative AI provider:

Selected Research Question: What factors affect customer perception of service quality and hygiene compliance in suburban F&B franchise cafes of Richiamo Coffee in Country Heights, Kajang?

Preferred Research Approach: A single-case explanatory design focusing on Richiamo Coffee (Country Heights). Primary data collection will involve a mixed-methods approach utilizing structured observational checklists during peak customer hours, combined with semi-structured surveys administered to student-aged consumers and prospective job applicants.

3. Explanation and Justification of Research Question

The selected RQ adheres to academic guidelines by posing an explicit, single question ending with a question mark and starting with the answer would talk about high-level corporate strategy that might be secret. So, the

way we want to avoid that is instead we use *“How operational teams solved service quality and hygiene compliance as perceived by accessible stakeholders.*

Philosophy: Pragmatism, which allows for combining practical methods to solve real-world operational issues.

Is about how to gather the sample or non-sample of feedback that comes from operational teams and customer reviews. Focusing on maybe coming from different areas they live in, KL or outside. We can identify whether our store has already come that far.

Feasibility: What does the high-level advice to us about payroll data for the new employees does it is competitive to other cafe brands? So that we achieve and help in terms of time constraints that we face while trying to serve the customer on the right time. From these outcomes, we can help the company to have a reason for the high turnover rate for entry-level.

Task 4 summary Research Proposal

4.1 Research Question

How do frontline staff shortages and operational capacity constraints impact customer perception of service quality and hygiene compliance in suburban F&B franchise cafes?

4.2 Definition of Key Terms

Operational Capacity Constraints: The structural, physical, and human resource limits that restrict a service delivery system from processing customer volume without degradation of speed or quality (Johnston and Clark, 2012).

Service-Quality Trade-off: The operational decision-making process where a business temporarily sacrifices secondary service parameters such as table clearing or ambient cleanliness to maintain primary output speed, food preparation during peak demand surges (Slack and Brandon-Jones, 2019).

Hygiene Compliance: The adherence to statutory public health and safety standards regarding food handling, dining area sanitation, and pest control mitigation (Tay and Othman, 2023).

4.3 Explanation and Justification of Terms and Wording

The phrasing of the research question focuses on the aspect of operations. Technical terms such as “operational capacity constraints” and hygiene compliance” were selected to keep the study grounded within the realm of service operations research while simultaneously providing a solid foundation for empirical analysis. By focusing on the theme of “customer perception,” the question links the identified operations-related issue to the researcher’s own practice in the broader are of management, specifically in student consumer behaviour at the local level.

4.4 Proposed Research Design

The current research will be based upon an explanatory single-case study design that will focus on one particular suburban franchising café named Richiamo Coffee located in the Country Heights neighbourhood.

An explanatory case study seems appropriate in this instance, as it “focuses on explaining why things happen in a particular situation” (Yin, 2018, p.15). Thus, the current study will be able to fully elucidate the mechanisms and processes behind the identified issue of operational breakdowns experienced within the confines of the selected establishment. To ensure validity and reliability of the findings, a convergent design will be used that will allow the research to converge both quantitative and qualitative data. As such, the first method will involve conducting peak-hour observational tallies, while the second will focus on surveying customers concerning their perceptions of service speed, store cleanliness, and their overall satisfaction.

Finally, conducting qualitative one-to-one customer interviews during peak hours will allow the researcher to fully capture the nuances of customer perceptions and experiences during these particularly busy times. As such, a convenience sample of 15 to 20 customers may be interviewed using semi-structured interview guides. The combination of field observations, quantitative surveys, and semi-structured interviews during peak hours will provide the current study with the necessary methodological convergence to address its research question.

4.5 Reliability and Validity

Construct Validity: Established by using multiple sources of evidence (data triangulation), combining observational tallies of uncleared tables with direct customer feedback.

Internal Validity: Enhanced by using pattern-matching techniques comparing observed operational bottlenecks with established capacity-constrained service models in literature.

External Validity: While single-case studies have limited statistical generalizability, analytical generalizability is maintained; findings can inform similar suburban franchise cafes operating under similar low-density, labor-scarce conditions.

Reliability: Standardized observational protocols and structured survey instruments will be documented in a research log, ensuring another researcher could replicate the study procedures with consistent results (Bryman, 2016).

4.6 Research Methods and Data Collection

Data collection will follow a concurrent mixed-methods approach:

Quantitative Structured Observation & Survey: Conducting 10 hours of systematic observation across peak hours, for example, the lunch hour and afternoon tea, and non-peak hours to tally operational metrics, alongside administering a structured questionnaire to capture customer ratings on speed and cleanliness.

Qualitative Semi-Structured Interviews: Conducting brief, semi-structured interviews with 15 to 20 customers directly after their dining experience to capture open-ended qualitative insights regarding their perceptions of service quality and floor hygiene.

4.7 Access, Permissions, and Data Collection Realities

Target Population: University students and residents who frequent the Country Heights branch.

Access Strategy: Data collection will take place in publicly accessible dining areas as a customer/observer, eliminating the need to obtain trade-secret corporate approvals or access private financial books.

Permissions & Ethics: Participant consent will be obtained before any interviews or surveys. All data will be anonymized in compliance with data protection principles, and participants will be informed that their involvement is completely voluntary.

5.0 Task 5 – Video Presentation

As part of submitting the research proposal, a five-minute-long video presentation was made to present the main aspects of the proposed research. The video is focused on Problem Definition, Research Question, and Research Methods. The research would suggest using the data collection and sampling method. The video presentation also covers the rationale for the research and its feasibility with respect to the study's target group, highlighting its relevance to the applicable real-world context. The video presentation faces the camera directly in a professional manner requested by the brief.

5.1 Video presentation linked: <https://youtu.be/2PoaOxXHHjg?si=MoNoaFeMjzAhrSOU>.

6. Gibbs' Reflective Cycle



Gibbs, G. (1988) *Learning by Doing: A Guide to Teaching and Learning Methods*. Oxford: Further Education Unit, Oxford Polytechnic.

6.1 Description

Throughout tasks 1 to 5, I was engaged in a localized research proposal and presentation on the phenomenon of the opening and the economic difficulties faced by Richiamo Coffee, located in Country Heights, Kajang. I intend to discuss the effects of a national-level occurrence, including the changes in minimum wage and the rise of the gig economy, observed as a scarcity of personnel and heightened hygiene concerns in an economically privileged and remote area. I have presented my proposal, highlighting key points, as a 5-minute video presentation. Prior, I have identified and defined the problem, developed a research question, and decided to conduct a qualitative study analysing my findings.

6.2 Feelings

I was initially overwhelmed by the need to incorporate both global and local factors to operate a phenomenological study. I was also nervous about the need to simplify the information for a

5-minute presentation, as eliminating the unnecessary parts to provide a comprehensive overview without being verbose was challenging. However, my initial fears subsided as I began to research the area's peculiar aspects and became comfortable and confident in my ability to distinguish how theoretical concepts interact with observable phenomena.

6.3 Evaluation

The most successful element of my research was designating a relatively simple problem that could be solved within a small working radius. By limiting the scope of my study to one business and addressing the issue of current wage discrepancies affecting employee recruitment and retention, I could choose a reliable data collection strategy and conduct my research efficiently. However, the main challenge I have encountered was visually representing the complexity and multifaceted nature of the phenomenon within the limits of a 5-slide presentation while simultaneously conveying the information clearly and concisely.

6.4 Analysis

The main insight I have obtained from this short research project was the importance of identifying theoretical underpinnings for practical problems observed in my workplace. In human ecology, professional development is strongly tied to my ability to improve my understanding of the workforce. Therefore, investigating the reasons why an increase in minimum wage does not reflect in my sector's recruitment rates is paramount in clarifying my expectations and career goals. Furthermore, this research project has improved my ability to use theoretical frameworks to examine practical issues by demonstrating how a phenomenon affects various elements of an operational strategy, which in turn combine to impact a business's performance.

6.5 Conclusion

Throughout the course of this project, I have been able to reinforce the importance of designing research so that the problem statement aligns with the possibility of obtaining reliable data. As such, elaborating a practical solution is useful at this stage to ensure that no unnecessary time is spent elucidating impractical aspects of the research question. Furthermore, I realized that I tend to elaborate too much on the details of the problem, including theoretical background, prior research, and context, and will have to pay particular attention to this segment to avoid being verbose. If I were to repeat this project, I would spend more time outlining what visual aids I would like to include in my presentation to ensure smooth delivery.

6.6 Action Plan

As a researcher, I can apply the lessons garnered from this project to ensure that my future projects have well-defined parameters that allow me to obtain reliable data and contribute to the body of knowledge in my field. Furthermore, since this project has taught me the importance of close examination of theoretical foundations in research, I will ensure that I dedicate sufficient resources to this segment in my future work while avoiding unnecessary details. As a practitioner, I will continue to rely on the ability to analyze business environments

to identify points of improvement while utilizing the skills of report writing to create effective professional presentations.

7. Appendices

Test/Experiment 1: same RQ <i>How do labour shortages and minimum wage increases affect Malaysian F&B businesses?</i>
CHATGPT ANSWER <i>Labour shortages can increase employee workload and make it difficult for F&B businesses to maintain efficient service. At the same time, minimum wage increases can raise labour costs and reduce profit margins. As a result, businesses may need to improve productivity, manage staffing more effectively, or adjust their prices.</i>
GEMINI ANSWER <i>Labour shortages and minimum wage increases create a double-bind operational pressure for Malaysian F&B operators. On the one hand, a lack of frontline staff forces existing employees to handle higher customer loads, leading to longer wait times and potential service-quality trade-offs. On the other hand, statutory wage increases raise baseline operating expenses, directly compressing profit margins. To adapt, F&B businesses must balance cost controls by adopting automated order systems, restructuring shift patterns, or adjusting menu pricing.</i>

Explanation: Engine Comparison (Controlled prompt, Variable AI)

This test isolates underlying architecture and latent knowledge as independent variables while fixing the prompt. While both engines process the same fundamental facts about cost inflation and labor constraints, their outputs reflect divergent approaches to synthesizing information. ChatGPT produces generalized, cautious summaries emphasizing broad business impacts, while Gemini emphasizes operational nuances and specific mitigation tactics.

The same RQ is posed to ChatGPT and Gemini for analysis. The main ideas might be similar since both AI engines get the same question, but the details, examples, and focus could be different. Therefore, this test examines whether the choice of AI engine affects the final answer. In this test, the research question and wording are held constant while the AI engine is varied. The same RQ is given to both AI systems to observe if they understand the question in similar or different ways. The differences in the answers might emerge due to the different capabilities of the AI engines to comprehend and synthesize the information provided in the prompt.

Test/Experiment 2: different wording or prompt, but same meaning.

Prompt A (Original): How do labour shortages and minimum wage increases affect Malaysian F&B businesses?

Prompt B: What is the impact of workforce shortages and higher statutory wages on Malaysian F&B businesses?

ChatGPT: Prompt an answer:

Labour shortages can increase employee workload, slow service, and make it difficult for F&B businesses to meet customer demand. Minimum wage increases can also increase operating costs and put pressure on profitability. Businesses may therefore need to improve productivity and manage their workforce more efficiently.

Prompt B Answer:

Workforce shortages may create operational difficulties by increasing pressure on existing employees and reducing service efficiency. Higher statutory wages can increase business expenses and reduce profit margins. F&B businesses may respond by improving productivity, changing staffing arrangements, or adjusting prices.

Gemini

Prompt A Answer: Labour shortages directly restrict daily operating capacity, leading to staff burnout and slower service delivery during peak hours. Meanwhile, minimum wage increases elevate fixed cost burdens, shrinking operating margins. F&B businesses are forced to streamline operational workflows, optimize labor scheduling, or transfer costs to consumers through price adjustments.

Prompt B Answer: Workforce deficits create severe operational bottlenecks, overworking remaining staff and compromising overall service velocity. Simultaneously, higher statutory wages increase direct labor expenditures, putting downward pressure on profitability. F&B operators typically mitigate these challenges by implementing self-service technologies, altering operating hours, or recalibrating product price points.

Essay Explain: Semantic Converge (Variable Prompt Wording, Same Meaning)

Though different wording is used for the prompt of the two inquiries, their meanings are quite similar. For instance, in the first prompt, the terms “labour shortages” and “minimum wage increases” can be replaced with “workforce shortages” and “higher statutory wages” in the second prompt without changing their meanings. Hence, ChatGPT may generate the same answers to the prompts because it understands their meanings beyond the wording.

In this test, the main idea of the research question is kept the same while the wording and keywords are changed for the two prompts. Though different terms, including “labor shortages” and “workforce shortages,” are used, the prompts mean the same thing. Hence, the AI can generate similar responses to the prompts because their meanings are interpreted similarly by the AI. This test aims to demonstrate how prompts with different wordings but the same meanings affect the responses generated by ChatGPT.

This test illustrates how vector embeddings allow an AI to operate on intent rather than explicitly programming for individual cases. The terms “labour shortages” or “minimum wage” and “statutory wages,” for instance, have a near-identical embedding. Any variations in phrasing throughout the prompt result in minor divergences in the outcome, yet the model retains the ability to deliver thorough consistency results due to utilization of these embedding similarities. Essentially, labour shortages” and “workforce shortages” or “minimum wage” and “statutory wages” are nearly identical to the model.

TEST/EXPERIEMENT 3: Slightly detailed or more specific or exactly more added information what it wants prompt.

How do labour shortages and the RM1,700 minimum wage affect service capacity, employee workload, hygiene compliance, and ROI in Malaysian F&B businesses?

ChatGPT

More Specific Prompt Answer:

Labour shortages and the RM1,700 minimum wage can create several operational challenges for Malaysian F&B businesses. Limited staff can increase employee workload and reduce service capacity during busy periods. Higher wage costs can also put pressure on ROI. When employees are overstretched, tasks such as cleaning, table clearing and hygiene monitoring may receive less attention, which can affect hygiene compliance and customer satisfaction.

Gemini

The RM1,700 minimum wage shock increases baseline payroll expenses, immediately compressing an F&B firm's Return on Investment (ROI). When combined with severe labor shortages, daily service capacity drops during peak surges, significantly increasing individual employee workloads. Under intense operational strain, staff prioritize immediate revenue-generating tasks (such as order fulfillment and cooking) over essential secondary maintenance routines. Consequently, table clearing, routine sanitation, and pest management slip, creating severe hygiene compliance risks that damage customer retention and invite municipal regulatory penalties.

Explain essay

The third added specific information to the original RQ, including service capacity, employee workload, hygiene compliance, and ROI. This allowed directing the AI response to these particular areas. Thus, it can be concluded that a more specific prompt may lead to a narrower answer compared to the original prompt. In the third test, the same RQ was used, with some additions to the general prompt that gave the AI more freedom to explore different aspects of the research question, while the particular prompt guided the discussion toward service capacity, employee workload, hygiene compliance, and ROI. Therefore, it is possible to state that the RQ scope was narrowed by adding more details to the prompt.

The prompt specificity and latent guidance or broad to target context. This test demonstrated how the inclusion of specific variables for RM1,700, hygiene compliance, service capacity, and ROI constrict the probabilistic output distribution of the LLM. A broad prompt encourages the model to choose arbitrarily from a wider range of topics that loosely relate to the RQ, based on surface-level associations in its training data. By contrast, a detailed prompt acts as a contextual constraint that directs the model to synthesize a specific set of operational trade-offs. On the way, surges in customer influx dictate modifications to staff sanitation protocols in order to sustain food production rates.