



UNIVERSITY OF WALES
Trinity Saint David
LONDON

UNIVERSITY OF WALES: TRINITY SAINT DAVID
PRIFYSGOL CYMRU: Y DRINDOD DEWI SANT

School of Business

MBA Dissertation
SBMA7123

Introduction

It is a prerequisite of this module that students attend a series of Research Methodology workshops and as a result have produced a successful research proposal for a dissertation. The workshops are intended to prepare students for the requirements of independent research and to enhance their professional competencies necessary for this purpose. This will ensure that students will:

- have developed a clear focus for their research, inquiry or investigation;
- have identified the context, boundaries and stakeholder interests;
- have considered research perspectives and ethical concerns and procedures;
- have considered research perspectives and ethical concerns and procedures; are informed about data collection and analysis and are in a position to successfully complete their research project.

All MBA Pathway students must write their Research Proposal and Dissertation that relates to the pathway specialism, e.g. (MBA Marketing Management) must choose a Marketing Management theme. Students will be given guidance in the Research Methods workshops and, following the Research Proposal submission, on the parameters of the specialist themes.

- Once the Research Proposal has been successfully completed, the dissertation module provides the student with the necessary support and opportunity to produce a substantial specialist body of research (15,000 words) which has been instigated, developed and produced as a consequence of their own research initiative.
- Only on the successful completion of Part 1 and the research proposal, will the student be formally invited to submit a dissertation.

Aims and Objectives

The aim of the dissertation is to produce an original piece of work on a well-defined and relevant topic. The dissertation is an original piece of research that involves individual primary research. It is undertaken by the student, with the support of the academic supervisor.

- To develop in the student an understanding of the application of research methodologies, and an ability to frame a research proposal.
- To develop in the student the ability to report research results in written format to an academic and/or professional audience, and to further develop the student's capacity for critical analysis and independent thought.

Indicative Content

- The complexities and practical issues of business and management research: Independent learning and development; stakeholder interests and ethical considerations; the investigative process; philosophical considerations; the use of theory; the importance of on-going clear communication.
- The importance of clear aims and objectives: project management, use of project management skills to budget, manage time and other resources, building and managing relationships; learning and reflection, reviewing and judging.

- Exploring the literature, writing a literature review, reviewing published literature critically, showing conceptual and theoretical understanding, identifying research problems and questions.
- Choosing a research method, data collection and sampling, data analysis and interpreting results, reliability and validity of data, evidence based approach; disseminating findings in a way that is consistent with professional business and management practice. Drawing valid conclusions and recommendations. Reflecting on the research process and outcomes and the learning experience.

Stages in the development of a dissertation

Developing the necessary Research Skills

This is undertaken via a series of Research Methods workshops.

Deciding on a research topic

Look at the modules you have studied so far. Think about topical management issues. Consider your future career plans. Read and talk to friends and academic staff. It is important to select a topic that really interests you, and that is directly connected to your programme of study.

When you have a broad area of interest, you then need to focus in to find a narrow and specific topic that will be manageable within the time and resource constraints of the MBA dissertation. At this stage it is often useful to discuss your ideas with one or more academic members of staff. Think about the feasibility of your idea. Will there be good information sources (books, papers etc.) available? Will access to primary research information sources be straightforward? Is this a topic to which you can bring your own individual perspectives?

Using your focussed research topic generate some research aims and objectives, and/or research questions.

Constructing a research proposal

Before writing the proposal you should carefully consider research methodologies, access to information and any relevant issues related to ethics. The proposal should also include a preliminary literature survey, which demonstrates how you intend to link the research literature with your own research. A timetable must be attached to the proposal. On the basis of the research proposal a relevant supervisor will be allocated in order to reflect the specific area of focus of the dissertation and provide effective and knowledgeable support.

The main research phase

Once you have agreed the proposal with your supervisor, and your ethical form has been approved, you are ready to start work. You will find it helpful to keep in regular contact with your supervisor. The supervisor can direct you to relevant literature, encourage you to be reflective about your methodology and research instruments, and provide you with opportunities to discuss your developing research ideas.

A programme of individual and, where appropriate, small group tutorials will be agreed between the student and the tutor, defining the nature and frequency of meetings.

The role of the supervisor will be to:

- encourage students to explore a range of possible research areas;
- provide support in identifying an appropriate workplace related topic where relevant;
- aid in selection of a definitive research area;
- assist in clarification of aims and objectives;
- provide support during literature review;
- recommend appropriate research sources and methods with emphasis on fitness for purpose;
- guide the structuring and presentation of the dissertation;
- generally support, encourage and motivate the student in their research.

Records should be kept of all meetings and discussions with your supervisor and these records will be considered during the allocation of marks in the category of "Planning, adapting, initiative and effort".

Dissertation Assessment

Assessment Component 1

Proposal - 2000 words

Exemplar

Students are required to produce a viable research proposal that provides a persuasive and convincing argument for the research to be undertaken, clear aims and objectives and an understanding of research design and project management.

Total word count – 2000 words or equivalent

Assessment Component 2

Thesis - 15,000 words

Exemplar

Students are required to provide a thesis which is based upon a clear expression and articulation by the student of the research focus, use of appropriate methodology, analysis and evidence, and findings.

Total word count – 17,000 words

Learning Outcomes tested (from module syllabus)	Assessment Criteria to achieve each outcome a student must demonstrate the ability to:
1. Prepare a research/independent study proposal that provides evidence that the topic to be studied is worth addressing; that the way the proposal addresses the topic is both appropriate and feasible in terms of intended activities, outcomes and resources and thus establishes its importance to both academic and professional communities	<i>Produce a realistic and appropriate Research Proposal</i> Project overview and introduction. Must clearly state the research question(s), aim(s) and objectives, as well as provide a rationale for carrying out research in this area. The research question must relate to the student's MBA pathway and must be sufficiently well focused as to be thoroughly researched within the dissertation word limit. Background literature review and bibliography. Must show how the proposed study will draw upon previous research and academic theory. Appropriate methodology. Should be described in sufficient detail to assess feasibility and appropriateness to the stated research question(s). Should also cover study design details such as sampling and draft questionnaire/interview questions as appropriate. Ethical considerations. Must be discussed in full on the accompanying form, and any difficulties adequately addressed. Timetable. Must be clearly presented and show detailed, realistic targets.
2. Plan, manage and execute an in depth research, inquiry or investigation with a business and/or management focus by applying the principles of research design to the formulation of a research question including, where appropriate, formal hypotheses that can be tested and the selection of appropriate research methods for answering these questions. 3. Critically evaluate the appropriateness of qualitative/quantitative methods of data collection, in combination as necessary, to analyse, synthesise, interpret and present the resulting data and the applications of those methods by other researchers in other contexts. 4. Demonstrate the ability to conduct research under supervision in a business and management context including the ability to review published literature critically, show conceptual and theoretical understanding, identify research problems, use project management skills to budget, manage time and other resources, handle data, interpret results and disseminate findings in a way that is consistent with professional business and management practice and normal principles of research ethics. 5. Exhibit the analytical, numerical, literacy, communication and computer skills to enable critical research to be undertaken and be able to apply those transferable skills to develop research based inquiry in future employment settings.	Compete a Dissertation Taking account of: Research Planning, Initiative and Effort Knowledge and comprehension of the topic area Research Methodology Research and Analysis Discussion Conclusions and Recommendations Presentation

Research Methodology Workshops

The Research Methodology workshop will be delivered during over two weeks and it will be divided into seven parts:

- ✓ Research Structure
- ✓ Research Methods
- ✓ Quantitative Analysis
- ✓ Qualitative Analysis
- ✓ Developing a Model
- ✓ Writing Up
- ✓ Specialist Library session – 1 hour

1: Research Structure

1. Research fundamentals
2. Research strategies
3. Hypothesis development
4. Reliability, Validity, Ethics

2: Research Methods

1. The importance of data collection
2. Qualitative and quantitative, primary and secondary data data collection methods Primary data collection methods
3. Sampling: sampling frames and sampling methods (probabilistic and non-probabilistic)

3: Data Analysis - Qualitative

1. Basics of data analysis - types of data; the framing exercise: determining 'ontology' (data types, data sources, factor analysis of variables) and 'epistemology'(Methods and techniques of data gathering / analysis and presentation).
2. Analysis of qualitative data - deductive (top-down) versus inductive (bottom-up) approaches: categorising and unitising qualitative data; pattern-matching and explanation-building; content analysis versus thematic analysis versus grounded theory (coding qualitative data).

4. Data – Analysis – Quantitative

1. Basic principles of quantitative data analysis: descriptive versus inferential statistics. Mean, Median, Mode and Standard Deviation - and when to use them.
2. Properties of distributions -- "normal" distributions, kurtosis and skew.
3. Probabilities
4. Parametric and nonparametric statistics and when to use them

5. Developing a Model

6. Writing Up

1. Technicalities
2. Do's and Don'ts
3. Putting it all together

The Dissertation Proposal

A Dissertation Proposal needs to include the following information:

1. **Working title**
2. **Introduction.** The aim of the research. A brief outline of the subject area, expanding on the title. You need to make clear exactly what your dissertation will cover and what it won't. You also need to construct a number of research objectives.
3. **A short review of relevant literature.**
4. **The research strategy and methodology.** An outline of what primary research you intend to carry out, and why it is appropriate. This should include the research methods that you intend to utilise.
5. **Logistical and ethical consideration.** How will you gain access to respondents, premises, information? Are there ethical considerations?
6. **Outcomes.** An outline of what results (or at least what *sort* of results) you expect.
7. **A planned timetable** for the various elements of the work (in the form of a GANTT chart, or similar)
8. An **indicative bibliography**.

Word limit 2,000 words

Ethical Form

To be submitted on the University of Wales: Trinity Saint David Ethical Form (Form E2)

Bibliography

Essential

The reading will be guided by the topic selected for research. Suggested Research Methods texts are listed below.

Recommended

- Anderson, T. and Kanuka, H. (2006) *E-research methods, Strategies and Issues*, London: Allyn and Bacon
- Bell, J. (2005) *Doing your research projects*. 4th ed. Maidenhead: Open University Press
- Clegg, F. (1990) *Simple Statistics*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press
- Collis, J. & Hussey, R. (2009) *Business Research, A Practical Guide for Undergraduate and Post Graduate Students*, London: Palgrave,
- Cresswell, J. (2002) *Research Design: Qualitative, Quantitative, and Mixed Methods Approaches*, London: Sage Publications
- Davies, M. (2007) *Doing a successful Research Project*. New York: Palgrave MacMillan
- Hart C (2004) *Doing Your Masters Dissertation (Essential Study Skills series)*, London: Sage Publications
- Easterby-Smith, M. (2002) *Management Research: An Introduction*. London: Sage Publications
- Finn, M. Et al (2000) *Tourism and Leisure Research Methods*, Harlow: Longman
- Gregory, I. (2003) *Ethics in Research*, London: Continuum, 2003.
- Grix, J. (2004) *The Foundations of Research* (Palgrave Study Guides), Houndmills: Palgrave Macmillan
- Kane, E. and O'Reilly-De Brún, M. (2001) *Doing Your Own Research*, London: Marion Boyars.
- Kinnear, P.R. and Gray, C. D. (2007) *SPSS 15 Made Simple*, Hove: Psychology Press.
- Krippendorff, K. (2004) *Content Analysis*, Thousand Oaks, Calif.: Sage.
- Maylor, H. and Blackmon, K. (2005) *Researching Business and Management*, Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan.
- McNiff, J. and Whitehead, J. (2006) *Action Research*, London: Sage
- Oppenheim, A.N. (2000) *Questionnaire Design and Attitude Measurement*, London: Continuum.
- Pallant, J. (2007) *SPSS Survival Manual 3rd Ed.*, Maidenhead: Open University Press.
- Sapsford, R. and Jupp, V. (2006) *Data Collection and Analysis*, London: Sage.
- Saunders, M. et al (2006) *Research Methods for Business Students*, Harlow: Prentice Hall.
- Rowntree, D. *Statistics (1991) Without Tears: An Introduction for Non-Mathematicians*, London: Penguin.

Background Reading

- Alvesson, M. & Skoldberg, K. (2009) *Reflexive methodology: new vistas for qualitative research* 2nd ed. Los Angeles ; London : Sage Publications.
- Alvesson, M. (2002) *Postmodernism and Social Research*, Buckingham: Open University
- Brown, R.B. (2006) *Doing your dissertation in business and management : the reality of researching and writing*. London: Sage Publications.
- Bryman, A. and Bell, E. (2007) *Business research methods*, 2nd Ed., Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007.
- Cameron, S. and Price, D. (2009) *Business research methods: a practical approach* London: Chartered Institute of Personnel and Development.
- Cooper, D.R. and Schindler, P (2008) *Business research methods*, 10th Ed., London: McGraw-Hill.

- Creswell, J.W. (2009) *Research design: qualitative, quantitative, and mixed methods approaches*, London: Sage Publications.
- Davies, M.B. (2007) *Doing a successful research project: using qualitative or quantitative methods* Basingstoke : Palgrave Macmillan.
- Denscombe, M. (2007) *The Good Research Guide for small scale social research projects, 3rd Ed.*, Maidenhead, Open University Press
- Denscombe, M. (2010) *Ground Rules for Social Research*, Maidenhead, Open University Press
- Dul, J and Hak, T (2008) *Case study methodology in business research*, London: Butterworth-Heinemann/Elsevier
- Fisher, C.M. & Buglear, J (2010) *Researching and writing a dissertation: an essential guide for business students* 3rd ed., Harlow : Financial Times/Prentice Hall.
- Glatthorn A.A. and Joyner R.L. (2005) *Writing the Winning Thesis or Dissertation: A Step-by-Step Guide*, London : Sage
- James, N. & Busher, H. (2009) *Online Interviewing*, London: Sage Publications.
- Johnson, P. and Clark, M. (eds.) (2006) *Business and management research methodologies –Vols. 1-6*, London: Sage Publications
- Levin P (2005) *Excellent Dissertations*, Maidenhead: Open University Press
- Murrar, N & Hughes, G. (2008) *Writing up your university assignments and research projects: a practical handbook* Maidenhead, Berks: Open University Press
- Matthews, B. & Ross, L. (2010) *Research methods: A practical guide for the social sciences*, London: Longmans.
- Oakshott, L. (2006) *Essential Quantitative Methods for Business, Management and Finance*, Basingstoke, Palgrave MacMillan
- Ruderstam K and Newton R (2007) *Surviving Your Dissertation: A Comprehensive Guide to Content and Process*, London: Sage Publications
- Stewart, D. W., Shamdasani, P.N. and Rook, D.W. (2007) *Focus groups : theory and practice* 2nd ed. Thousand Oaks ; London : Sage Publications.
- Veal, A. J. (2005). *Business research methods : a managerial approach*. 2nd ed., Frenchs Forest, N.S.W. : Pearson/Addison Wesley.
- White B (2003) *Dissertation Skills: For Business and Management Students*, London: Thomson Learning
- White B, (2004) *Writing Your MBA Dissertation*, London: Thomson Learning
- Yin, R.K. (2007) *Case study research: design and methods*, 4th ed., London: Sage.

Websites

- Practical Assessment, research and Evaluation (online) Available from: <http://pareonline.net/Home.htm> (Accessed: 26-08-2012)
- Social Research Update (online) Available from: <http://sru.soc.surrey.ac.uk/> (Accessed: 26-08-2012)
- Academic Journals (online) Available from: <http://www.academicjournals.co.uk> (Accessed: 26-08-2012)
- ReStore (online) Available from: <http://www.aimexpertresearcher.org/> (Accessed: 26-08-2012)
- Audit Commission (online) Available from: <http://www.audit-commission.gov.uk/Pages/default.aspx> (Accessed: 26-08-2012)
- CIM (online) Available from: <http://www.cim.org.uk> (Accessed: 26-08-2012)

- CIMA, Chartered Institute of Management Accountants (online) Available from: <http://www.cimaglobal.com> (Accessed: 26 August 2012)
- Copac Library (online) Available from: <http://www.copac.ac.uk> (Accessed: 26-08-2012)
- UK Data Archive (online) Available from: <http://www.data-archive.ac.uk/> (Accessed: 26-08-2012)
- The Economist (online) Available from: <http://www.economist.com/research/> (Accessed: 26-08-2012)
- The electronic Journal of Business research Methods (online) Available from: <http://www.ejbrm.com/> (Accessed: 26-08-2012)
- Business Research checklists and guidelines (online) Available from: <http://www.palgrave.com/business/collis/br/students/checklists.html> (Accessed: 26-08-2012)
- Web Centre for Social Research Methods (online) Available from: <http://www.socialresearchmethods.net/> (Accessed: 26-08-2012)

Proposal Marking Schedule

Name _____

Swansea Business School MBA Research Proposal Marking Scheme			
Assessment Criteria	Indicative content	Completed	Grade Awarded P or F
Provides a persuasive and convincing research rationale and aims and objectives and, identifies the context, boundaries and ethical and resource considerations of the research.	1. Academic Focus and Research Rationale - State you chosen topic of research - Define the context, boundaries and ethical considerations of your topic - Provide a justification for your topic choice based on a review of previous research in the topic area. - Define the concepts and theory(theories) that will inform your research - State the primary research question - State the aims and objectives of the research.	✓ ✓ ✓ ✓ ✓ ✓	
Identifies the research paradigm and evaluates and justifies the choice of research methods.	2. Research Paradigm and Method - Identify the research paradigm you will use to research the topic - Identify the research methods that you will use to gather the data - Critically evaluate the advantages and disadvantages of the chosen research methods - Summarise the methodological limitations of the research	✓ ✓ ✓ ✓	
Understands the employment of data collection methods and can justify their use	3. Data Collection - Select the appropriate data collection techniques for your topic - Identify the respondent population and sample if required - Explain how you will analyse the data collected - Specify the research limitations in terms of both reliability and validity	✓ ✓ ✓ ✓	
Evaluates the methods of analysis of data and how the data will be presented	4. Methods of Data Analysis - Qualitative analysis and/or - Quantitative analysis	✓	
Identifies how the research is to be managed in terms of budget, time management and other resources.	5. Resource and Time Management - Evaluate the resources needed - Produce a time plan for the research - Budget considerations	✓ ✓ ✓	
TOTAL			

Assessments will be graded PASS or FAIL.

Please note the following when completing the proposal:

1. Writing: Written in English in an appropriate business/academic style
2. Focus: Focus only on the items specified to be included in the portfolio
3. Length: 2000 words (maximum)
4. Formatting: Typed on A4 paper in Times New Roman or Arial (or similar) font, font size 12 with at least 2 centimetre space at each edge, double spaced and pages numbered
5. Document format: In business report format, with a clear title, course, and name or ID number on a cover sheet and including a bibliography using Harvard referencing throughout
6. Indicative Bibliography: Research should use reliable and relevant sources of information e.g. academic books and journals that have been peer reviewed. The research should be extensive

MBA Dissertation Marking Form

UWTSD

**MBA
2014 - 2015
DISSERTATION ASSESSMENT**

Name of Student:

Title of Dissertation:

Date:

First Examiner:

Second Examiner:

Guideline Criteria for Assessment		Possible %	Actual %
i)	Introduction	15	
ii)	Literature review	20	
iii)	Research Methodology	20	
iv)	Analysis of results	20	
v)	Conclusions / recommendations	15	
vi)	Presentation	10	
		100%	

(i) INTRODUCTION/ RATIONALE (15%) <i>Marks will be awarded for:</i> <i>Over all coherence/justification</i> <i>Rationale for study</i> <i>Clear research question/hypothesis</i> <i>Clear aims and objectives</i> <i>Background to subject area</i>	COMMENT Grade:
ii) LITERATURE REVIEW (20%) <i>Marks will be awarded for:</i> <i>Range of literature & appropriate use and review of literature</i> <i>Evaluation and review of both theoretical and secondary research data</i> <i>Thorough knowledge and comprehension of topic</i> <i>Understanding of relevant concepts and theories</i> <i>Discussion of conceptual and theoretical issues</i> <i>Summary and clear understanding of principal issues relevant to topic</i>	COMMENT Grade:
iii) RESEARCH METHODS (20%) <i>Marks will be awarded for:</i> <i>Selection of clear research question or testable hypotheses (where applicable)</i> <i>Selection of clear aims and objectives</i> <i>Selection of appropriate research methodology</i> <i>Theoretical and applied research methods knowledge</i> <i>Effective survey techniques</i> <i>Effective Sample framework</i> <i>Critical evaluation of such methodology</i> <i>Clear understanding of research limitations</i>	COMMENT Grade:
iv) ANALYSIS OF RESULTS (20%) <i>Marks will be awarded for:</i> <i>Clear presentation of results</i> <i>Appropriate analytical interpretation of results</i> <i>Application of results to research objectives, hypotheses research question and literature</i>	COMMENT

SIGNATURE: _____ **DATE:** _____

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Overall structure for a dissertation

Title - comprises a topic (body of theory) and a subject (specific object of enquiry). For example:- "Corporate Social Responsibility and market share: an investigation into how a medium size high street retailer can increase its market share".

Title page (including your name, degree scheme, year of study, title of dissertation)

A **signed statement** – that the dissertation is your own work

Acknowledgements

Abstract - one third problem, one third aims and methodology, one third findings (not more than 300 words)

Contents

Chapter 1. Introduction

Introduces the topic, the subject, the research (aims and methodology) and the dissertation (structure).

Chapter 2. Literature Review

Review of the Literature (on the topic). Reviews and critiques the literature. Identifies what we know and the gaps in the knowledge. Sets up the research questions.

Chapter 3. Aims and Methodology.

Outlines the research aims and describes and justifies how these are to be met. Reviews the different methodological possibilities and explains what has been done and why. Deals with primary and secondary data collection AND methods of analysis. Any access and ethics issues should also be addressed.

Chapter 4. Context

Deals with the subject under investigation. Based primarily on secondary data. May include information about a host company and/or sector.

Chapter 5. Findings.

Presents the results of the primary research.

Chapter 6. Discussion and Analysis

Discusses the findings in the context of the literature reviewed in Chapter 2. Do the findings corroborate or refute the body of theory?

Chapter 7. Conclusion. Summarises the aims and key findings, points to the implications of the findings for both theory and practice, acknowledges the limitations of the work (the questions that the research has not been able to answer) and points to the directions for future research. (may also include some **recommendations**)

Bibliography

Appendices

Note: not all of these chapters will be necessary in all dissertations, and sometimes one of these chapters might be split into two. It depends on the nature of the research topic.

(See also the University of Wales: Trinity Saint David guidance notes on the structure and formatting of Masters Degree thesis).

Record of Meetings

A record of all meetings and exchanges of e-mails must be kept using the UWTSD GA19 form.