



BUSINESS RESEARCH METHODS

Course code	<i>MNG165</i>
Course title	<i>Business Research Methods</i>
Type of course	<i>Compulsory</i>
Year of study	<i>2nd</i>
Semester	<i>Spring</i>
ECTS	<i>6: 24 hours of lectures, 24 hours of seminars; 112 hours of individual work, 2 hours of consultation</i>
Coordinating lecturer	<i>Eglė Verseckaitė (Grzeskowiak)</i>
Study form	<i>Full-time</i>
Course prerequisites	<i>None</i>
Language of instruction	<i>English</i>

Annotation

The ability to formulate the right questions and choose the most efficient tools for seeking answers, as well as to intelligently interpret the information gathered and presented by others, is indispensable for those who want to succeed in today's highly complex business environment. This course will equip students with both the understanding of principles that guide quality research and the tools needed to implement those principles in formulating a research project, selecting appropriate methods, collecting and analyzing data, and presenting their findings. We will focus on the practical application of the concepts and methods discussed in the course by conducting students' own research projects and critically analyzing others' research.

Course Aims

The main goal of this course is to impart knowledge and skills necessary for conducting and evaluating business research. The course will begin with the introduction to the fundamental principles that underlie approaches to research and the practical implications of these principles, including formulation of research questions, concepts of validity and reliability, and issues of research ethics. We will then proceed to unpack the main qualitative and quantitative methods used in business research. Conducting their own research projects will help develop students' practical research skills, and analysis of published research and other students' research projects will sharpen their ability to critically evaluate the information coming from research conducted by others. Presentation of their own research findings and discussion of others' research will also serve to refine the students' presentation and communication skills. Students who have successfully completed the course and all its assignments will be able to define the research question, formulate the research design, choose the appropriate methods for data collection and analysis, present and apply their findings, and critically evaluate other researchers' output. Finally, the skills and knowledge gained in this course will also be employable during the preparation of BA theses.

Subject learning outcomes (SLO)	Study methods	Assessment methods
SLO1. To understand the purpose of research.	Lectures, seminars, individual study	Exam, research project, seminar participation scorecard
SLO2. To identify and understand potential ethical, empirical and analytical problems plaguing the research process and ways to overcome them.	Lectures, seminars, individual study	Exam, research project, seminar participation scorecard
SLO3. To identify a business problem/ need, translate it into a research question, and design an appropriate way to answer it.	Lectures, seminars, individual study	Exam, research project, seminar participation scorecard
SLO4. To formulate testable hypotheses and choose the most appropriate tools for testing them.	Lectures, seminars, individual study	Exam, research project, seminar participation scorecard
SLO5. To identify and understand the main qualitative and quantitative methods of business research, their advantages and disadvantages and appropriate application areas.	Lectures, seminars, individual study	Exam, research project, seminar participation scorecard
SLO6. To understand and be able to design an experiment as a research method.	Lectures, seminars, individual study	Exam, research project, seminar participation scorecard



SLO7. To develop skills in choosing suitable case studies, sampling, measurement, questionnaire design, conducting interviews and surveys, leading focus groups.	Lectures, seminars, individual study	Exam, research project, seminar participation scorecard
SLO8. To develop skills of quantitative data analysis and interpretation of its results.	Lectures, seminars, individual study	Exam, research project, seminar participation scorecard
SLO9. To communicate research findings and their implications in a clear and well organized way, both orally and in writing.	Lectures, seminars, individual study	Research project, seminar participation scorecard
SLO10. To critically evaluate the quality of other people's research findings and the process used to obtain them.	Lectures, seminars, individual study	Exam, seminar participation scorecard, research project commentary

Quality assurance issues

The lecturer assures a variety of teaching methods and timely feedback to students. Thoughtful feedback on the objectives and methods of the course is always welcome. The course is designed to maximize active engagement by students in their own learning process and the successful achievement of the learning outcomes is dependent upon the quality of such engagement. Depending on the particular situation in class, the syllabus may be adjusted, in that case the students will be informed during lectures and via the e-learning notification system.

Cheating prevention

The teaching and testing methods are chosen taking into account the purpose of the minimization of cheating opportunities. The course is based on and promotes the value of integrity. Lack of academic integrity (e.g. plagiarism, improper citing, copying another person's work, misrepresentation of your research process and results, the use of unauthorized aids on examinations, cheating, facilitating acts of academic dishonesty by others, etc.) will not be tolerated. Consequences for violations range from zero grade given for the assignments, to failure of the course, to university-level disciplinary measures for severe cases.

Topics, homework and readings

(The italicized readings are optional and will not be used for testing, they are only for yourselves to enhance your understanding.)

No.	Topic	Contact Hours		Readings, notes
		Lecture	Seminar	
1	Lecture 1.1. Introduction to the course. Research problem and research design. Purpose of business research. Fundamental approaches to research. Definition, scope, significance, ethics and limitations of business research. Identification of business problem/ need. Formulation of research problem. Definition of research design. Types of research design. Exploratory research. Conclusive research. Evaluative research.	2		Zikmund et al., Chs.4, 6, pp.50-74, 107-131. <i>Tharenou, Donohue, and Cooper, Ch.1, pp.3-29.</i>
	Seminar 1.2. Homework presentation and commentary. Possible quiz. Homework: Form teams of 5 students from the same small seminar group and choose a real world business problem to study. You can either choose from the list of tasks offered by ISM partner companies (they will be allocated on a first-come-first-served basis) or get tasks from some other company who agrees to cooperate with you and to provide access to necessary data and/or respondents. Students who have not formed teams and chosen tasks during the first week of the semester will be assigned into teams and given leftover tasks by the lecturer. Meet with the company representative before the first seminar. Prepare the Introduction of your paper and bring it to the first seminar. Make sure to follow the formatting and citing requirements.		2	<i>Computer classroom. Large seminars.</i>

No.	Topic	Contact Hours		Readings, notes
		Lecture	Seminar	
2	Lecture 2.1. Types of data and data collection methods. Literature review. Types of data. Primary and secondary data and their collection methods. Advantages & limitations of secondary and primary data. Literature review. Writing.	2		"Writing a Literature Review" by the Language Center, Asian Institute of Technology, February 17 th , 2005. <i>Saunders, Lewis, Thornhill, Ch.3, 8, pp. 58-105, 256-287</i>
	Seminar 2.2. Homework presentation and commentary. Possible quiz. Homework: Complete the introduction and the literature review for your research project and submit them by a specified time.		2	<i>Computer classroom. Large seminars.</i>
3	Lecture 3.1. Data measurement and quality. Qualitative and quantitative data. Scale characteristics and levels of measurement, types of scales, scaling techniques, scale evaluation. Validity. Reliability.	2		Zikmund et al., Chs.13, 14, pp.291-334. <i>Tharenou, Donohue, and Cooper, Ch.8-9, pp.149-185.</i>
	Seminar 3.2. Homework presentation and commentary. Possible quiz. Homework: Prepare the methodological part of your research project. Conceptualize and operationalize your variables, prepare the measurement scale for your research project.		2	<i>Computer classroom. Small seminars.</i>
4	Lecture 4.1. Sampling. The sampling design process. Probability sampling techniques and nonprobability sampling techniques. Sample size determination. Bonus: A few words about papers.	2		Sekaran and Bougie, Ch.10, pp.261-301.
	Seminar 4.2. Consultation on research projects. Homework: Calculating and defining the sample for your research projects. Writing up the research project so far. Everyone must bring a fully completed midterm project (title page, table of contents, lists of figures and tables, introduction, literature review, and preliminary methodological section (data measurement and sampling)) to the seminar. Make sure that your work is properly formatted and referenced according to ISM requirements and that its structure matches the guidelines provided in Lecture 1.		2	<i>Computer classroom. Large seminars.</i>
5	Seminar 5.1. Evaluation of research projects. Homework: Everyone has to bring their midterm projects improved based on the feedback given in the preceding seminar.		2	<i>Computer classroom. Small seminars.</i>
	Lecture 5.2. time-slot. <u>MIDTERM EXAM. Topics 1-4.</u>	2		

No.	Topic	Contact Hours		Readings, notes
		Lecture	Seminar	
6	Lecture 6.1. Data collection: Survey. Development of questionnaires. Questionnaire design process. Formulation and order of questions. Administration of surveys. Advantages and disadvantages of different methods of survey. Errors in survey research. Particularities of fieldwork in survey research.	2		Babbie, Ch.9, pp.243-284.
	Lecture 6.2 Data collection: Qualitative methods. Individual and group interviews. Particularities of fieldwork in qualitative research.	2		Malhotra, Ch.5, pp.140-173.
7	Lecture 7.1. Data collection: Observation. Observation methods. Advantages and disadvantages of observation. Personal observation, mechanical observation, audit, content analysis, trace analysis, experiments.	2		Zikmund et al., Ch.11, pp.238-255.
	Seminar 7.2. Homework presentation and commentary. Possible quiz. Homework: Bring your questionnaire/ interview schedule/ focus group scenario/ observation schedule.		2	<i>Computer classroom. Large seminars. NB! Seminar will take place after several lectures in a row.</i>
8	Lecture 8.1. Data preparation and analysis. Descriptive and inferential statistics. Data coding, cleaning. Descriptive statistics: frequencies, percentages, central tendency. Cross-tabulation. Hypothesis testing. Selection of univariate statistical methods. Selection of bivariate and multivariate statistical methods. Independent and paired samples. Analysis of differences and associations.	2		Bryman, Ch. 14, 15, pp.313-362.
	Seminar 8.2. Working with MS Excel/SPSS software – data entering, data preparation for analysis, univariate data analysis. Homework presentation and commentary. Possible quiz. Homework: Collect your data, prepare your data codebook, and work on your data coding during the seminar.		2	<i>Computer classroom. Large seminars.</i>
9	Lecture 9.1. Report preparation and presentation. Preparation of written report, presentation of research findings. Critical analysis of others' research findings.	2		Sekaran & Bougie. Ch.14, pp.389-422. <i>Tharenou, Donohue, and Cooper, Ch.13, pp.275-315.</i>
	Seminar 9.2. Consultation on research reports. Homework: Everyone must finish writing the second chapter and the conclusions, and bring the full draft to the seminar. The full draft must include all parts of the paper and be properly formatted and referenced. Pay special attention to visual aids etc.		2	<i>Computer classroom. Small seminars. NB! There will be several seminars in a row.</i>
10	Seminar 10.1. Participation in survey experiments.		2	<i>Computer classroom. Small seminars. NB! There will be several seminars in a row.</i>
	Seminar 10.2. Evaluation of full paper drafts. Everyone must bring a fully completed and properly cited and formatted paper draft for evaluation.		2	<i>Computer classroom. Small seminars. NB! There will be several seminars in a row.</i>

No.	Topic	Contact Hours		Readings, notes
		Lecture	Seminar	
11	Lecture 11.1. Overview and consultation.	2		
	Seminar 11.2. Presentations of research projects with discussants.		2	<i>The seminar schedule may change depending on the companies for whom the presentations are given. Some presentations may take place in companies' offices rather than on campus.</i>
12	Seminar 12.1. Presentations of research projects with discussants.		2	<i>The seminar schedule may change depending on the companies for whom the presentations are given. Some presentations may take place in companies' offices rather than on campus.</i>
	Lecture 12.2. Review of the course and final pre-exam consultation.	2		
Total number of contact hours		24	24	

Individual work and assessment:

Type of assignment	TOTAL HOURS	EVALUATION, %
Research project	43	30%
Participation	24	25%
Presentation	10	10%
Midterm exam preparation	15	15%
Final exam preparation	20	20%
Total:	112	100%

Course requirements and evaluation:

1. Midterm exam.

Midterm exam will be administered during lecture 5 of the course. It will be a closed-book test and will include multiple choice and open questions. Midterm will be based on topics 1-4 and your own research projects, use material from both lectures and readings, and will count towards 15% of the final grade. It will last 2 academic hours. Students must have fully completed all seminar participation tasks (such as possible quizzes and homework assignments) and submitted the research project for evaluation on time to be allowed to take the midterm. It is the students' responsibility to keep track of their homework completion on time, the teacher calculates the results after the deadline and informs the students who are not allowed to take the midterm. Not taking the midterm means a much lower (potentially failing) final grade, so the students should ensure they stay on top of their weekly research project homework and other tasks.

2. Research project.

This is the key part of the course that helps you master the craft of researching. Research project will be conducted in teams of 5 students. The students have to be in the same small seminar group. All team members are equally responsible for each week's homework and for the whole research project. Labour division does not equal knowledge division, therefore each member of the team has to know everything about the research project, be able to explain and justify any choices of methods and information and defend any part of the research project, such as the literature review, data measurement scales, questionnaires, choice of sampling, data collection process and data analysis results, and be competent to answer any questions the lecturer may ask. Saying things like „I don't know what this means because my teammate did this part“ or „this part is not done because my teammate was supposed to do it“ will only garner penalty points. A large part of the educational benefit of team work is learning by explaining to others and finding common ground, so make sure to plan enough time for team meetings and for checking each other's work. The most successful teams are those that meet often and work on the paper together far in advance



before any deadlines. If you do not leave yourselves enough time to check each other's work, you risk submitting an internally incoherent paper, which is one of the biggest shortcomings and can bring your grade down significantly. In order for teamwork to function properly, it is imperative that the team members follow the basic rules of teamwork, including personal responsibility, open communication and commitment to efficiency.

Each team has to choose a real world case to work on: a firm, a business or an organization that would have a problem/need and would give their consent to provide you access to their data and personnel, turn this problem/need into a research question, formulate the research design, choose the appropriate methodology (since the purpose of this paper is to practice what you learn, it is usually required to use more than one method), gather and analyze data, and present their findings. Since most tasks are given by ISM partner companies, it is imperative for students to realize the responsibility they carry as representatives of our university and to strive to maximize the quality of their work.

The steps of the preparation of the research project will be part of the weekly seminar homework. Please make sure that any written assignment you submit is formatted according to ISM requirements, that the names of the team members are clearly indicated on the first page, and that the team number is included in the running head.

It is crucial for the students to meet the deadlines in order to get proper feedback and to not jeopardize both their seminar grade and the quality of the research project. Considering the number of students that are participating in this course, any kind of delay causes a chain reaction of problems for others – be considerate!

Feedback will be provided several times during the process and must be taken into account immediately. Repeating the mistakes that have already been pointed out earlier would result in penalty points, so please pay close attention to all comments.

Keep in mind that not only the final paper, but all homework tasks, midterm and draft projects have to be properly cited and formatted according to ISM requirements (you can find them on elearning).

At the end of the semester the students will present their research results during seminars. Students will also have to provide comments on other students' research projects and act as discussants during presentations. Afterwards students will have to submit the research report in written form with adjustments based on the commentary they receive. You will be given more detailed step-by-step guidelines for your research projects during the lectures.

Your final paper should be approximately 25000 characters long (not counting spaces or the bibliography) and formatted according to the official ISM requirements. Papers that are shorter than 20000 or longer than 30000 may be downgraded based on whether they are characterized by unnecessary wordiness and repetitiveness or, conversely, are missing relevant information. Keep in mind that having a streamlined, non-repetitive, yet comprehensive text is more important than churning out a certain number of characters.

Late submissions of research reports will not get feedback and will be given a grade of 0, and will prevent those students from taking the final exam. Papers that have plagiarism issues or misrepresent the research process and data will also be given a 0 and reported to the ethics commission for disciplinary measures. The rules regarding plagiarism apply to all interim and final project submissions and include both intentional and accidental plagiarism, so make sure to always reference your sources properly.

The evaluation of the research project will count towards 30% of the final grade (consisting of 20% for the midterm proposal + 30% for the full draft + 50% for the fixed final research report. However, its actual weight is greater, since your work on the research project directly affects the seminar participation grade and the presentation grade. Despite the fact that it is possible to improve in the process, it is imperative to put maximum effort into the interim submissions, as their grade will be part of the final grade. The research project grade cannot be substituted with a retake.

3. Participation.

This is the key part of the course that affects all the other three parts of evaluation. It is imperative for students to have done the readings and the assigned homework before each seminar and to actively participate in the seminar meetings. Without completing all seminar participation tasks (such as formative quizzes, homework assignments, serving as experimentation participants, in-class work and commentary on research projects), the student cannot be allowed to take the midterm and later the final exam. All members of a research project team must come to the seminar together. The homework grade applies to the whole team, but a student must be physically present to get points for attendance and in-class work. Those who come late, leave early, or engage in unrelated activities such as social media will get penalty points. Smartphones must be put on silent mode and put out of sight during class.

Since one of the key skills that students should learn is the ability to critically evaluate the research of others, they will be discussing each others' research projects. It is imperative that each team takes both their own research project and the one they are commenting on seriously, as the quality of their work will affect the work of others. Therefore, a part of each team's participation grade will reflect the quality of their „mentoring“.

Seminar participation scorecard will include points for attendance and active participation in class, exercises and quizzes, and, most importantly, for timely completion of homework tasks and their quality. The quality of each team's comments on others' research is also a part of this grade. Last, but not least, a part of the participation grade is given for serving as participants in ISM experimental research. There will be an individual session in the lab and a small seminar group session in the computer classes. Students need to participate in both rounds of experimentation.

The participation grade will count towards 25% of the final grade. It is worth emphasizing that the seminar grade greatly depends on the students work on the research project in a timely manner. It is also worth emphasizing that this is usually the highest part of the final grade, as the points are given mostly for the effort and are rather generous, so it would be quite shortsighted to waste the opportunity to gather a comfortable cushion of points by missing many seminars. Each student will have to submit peer review of his/her teammates twice during the semester and the participation grades will be adjusted accordingly, so it is imperative to take the teamwork seriously during the course of the semester, as



freeriders are likely to get their participation grade lowered to the point where it becomes unlikely to have a passing grade for the class overall. The participation grade cannot be substituted with a retake.

4. Presentation.

At the end of the semester students will prepare presentations on their research projects and comments on other students' papers and presentations. The presentation is graded based on the visual quality of the slides, the quality of the speech, the precision of terminology usage, the coverage of all relevant material, the quality and legibility of the figures and tables, the smoothness of presentation, fitting into the time limits, and the quality of the Q&A with the discussants and the audience. Some presentations may take place in the partner companies' offices rather than on campus. Please keep in mind that presentations will be grouped by topic, therefore, their schedule will not match the regular seminar group times. Take whatever preparations necessary to ensure that your schedule is flexible on the last week of the semester.

The presentation grade counts for 10% of the final grade and cannot be substituted with a retake.

5. Final exam.

The final exam will be based on the whole course material and count towards 20% of the final grade. It will be a closed-book test, use material from both lectures and readings, and will include closed and open questions, some related to the post-midterm part of the course and some questions based on cumulative course material and your own research projects. It will last 2 full hours. Students must have completed all seminar participation tasks (such as quizzes and homework assignments) and submitted the research report on time to be allowed to take the final exam. It is the students' responsibility to keep track of their homework completion on time, the teacher calculates the results after the deadline and informs the students who are not allowed to take the exam.

In case of a failing final grade, students are allowed a retake exam. It will cover all course material and take place in the computer class. The weight of a retake is 35% (which means a student is quite likely to fail the class if s/he doesn't collect enough points to build a passing grade for seminar participation and especially for the research project). The grades for the seminar participation, the presentation and the research project are not annulled and cannot be substituted by the retake.

Some notes on class rules

- Each week you are expected to know everything said during the lectures and everything that is in the weekly readings, and may be periodically tested on that knowledge.
- This course is about learning a craft, which requires rigour and paying close attention to detail. You need to master the terminology and the methods, both the theory and the practical skills. This is a fundamental course for any person with university education and there are no unimportant parts here, you need to learn everything.
- The most important thing the students can do to succeed in this class is work during the semester and complete all assignments on time. Those who expect to only study before the exams can expect to fail, because the largest part of your grade is determined by your ongoing work on the research project and participation in seminars.
- Keep in mind that it is a violation of academic ethics to pressure the teacher for a higher grade than you have earned throughout the semester. Students who try to skirt the rules and get away from doing all the work they are supposed to do will cause a tightening of the rules for everyone. You have plenty of opportunities to gather points throughout the semester, so do not start asking for additional opportunities at the end of the class, there will be none. In contrast, those who work diligently throughout the semester can expect relatively high grades.
- Meeting deadlines is imperative. No excuses and no exceptions. Lateness will be heavily penalized – from getting a 0 for the assignment to not being allowed to take the midterm or the exam.
- The students must use their official ISM e-mail to contact the lecturer and clearly indicate the course name, team number and the subject matter of the question in the subject line of the e-mail. Meanwhile, in the body of the e-mail, students should indicate what the lecture slides and the readings say about the topic they are asking about in order to substantiate their need for additional inquiry. It is very important that you respect the time of others. If you have a question, first check whether there is no answer to your question in the readings or the lecture slides, and then write: "this is what the lecture says..., this is what the readings say..., this is what I don't understand...". The lecturer is available for feedback and comments, but it is your responsibility to maximize the efficiency of communication. If you ask for information that has already been given, this indicates that you were not paying attention, which means that you expect to be taught the same thing twice, which is an abuse of other people's time, as thus you take up the time that could be devoted to moving forward with the research projects. The detailed slides are there for a reason! It is also crucial to pay close attention to the e-mails that come from the e-learning notification system and to check them daily. In sum, make sure that you are not being careless and asking for information that has already been provided to you.
- Whenever the students have to submit their work, their surnames must be clearly indicated on the document in alphabetical order, and the document must be properly formatted according to ISM requirements. The file names of e-mailed documents, such as the research project, must start with the students' last names. Due to the number of students the teacher has to manage, it is very important that you follow these rules so your e-mails and submissions do not get lost.
- If there are any changes to the rules, you will be informed during the lectures and through the e-learning system. Lecture attendance is not mandatory, but is highly advisable, since that will be the main source of information and



each student is expected to know everything that has been said during the lecture. Remember: *ignorantia legis non excusat*.

Literature

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