



The University of Southern Queensland

Course specification

The current and official versions of the course specifications are available on the web at <http://www.usq.edu.au/coursespecification/current>.
Please consult the web for updates that may occur during the year.

Description: Communication Research Methodology

Subject	Cat-nbr	Class	Term	Mode	Units	Campus
CMS	8010	90527	2, 2009	WEB	1.00	Toowoomba

Academic group:	FOART
Academic org:	FOA003
Student contribution band:	1
ASCED code:	100700

STAFFING

Examiner: Jill Lawrence

Moderator: Alison Feldman

RATIONALE

Masters level students proceeding to media, communication, public relations or editing & publishing dissertations and research projects require knowledge of a range of methods, both qualitative and quantitative. The researcher needs to be able to identify a research problem, decide on research objectives and select appropriate method/s to carry out the research.

SYNOPSIS

This course examines, from both practical and critical perspectives, a range of qualitative and quantitative research methods relevant to professional and academic needs in the communications field. These methods may include focus groups, content and semiotic text analysis, in-depth interview and survey methods. The course examines these methods in the context of current research issues and practices in the fields of Editing & Publishing, Multimedia, Journalism, Film, Communication, International Communication and Media Studies and Public Relations. The course then addresses the processes involved in commencing a research project, the ethics of research and questions of validity and reliability.

OBJECTIVES

On successful completion of this course students will be able to:

1. identify and critically analyse a variety of communication research methods currently employed by researchers in relevant fields of interest; (The At Home Test assessment item refers)
2. evaluate qualitative and/or quantitative research data, in the context of declared methodological frameworks; (The At Home Test and Essay 1 assessment items refer)
3. demonstrate an understanding of ethical issues in relation to communication research projects; (The At Home Test assessment item refers)
4. demonstrate an understanding of the political contexts in which research is carried out; (The At Home Test assessment item refers)

5. utilise a range of methods to assess the validity and reliability of a research process. (Essay 2 refers)

TOPICS

	Description	Weighting (%)
1.	SECTION 1 RESEARCH CONTEXTS, THEORIES AND GENERAL APPROACHES	20.00
	1.1. The political and ethical contexts of research practice in Communication	
	1.2. Overview of qualitative and quantitative approaches to communication research - major research paradigms	
2.	SECTION 2: COMMUNICATION RESEARCH METHODS	20.00
	2.1. Ethnographic methods in communication research, including: - sampling; - interview techniques; - focus group techniques; - participant observation.	
	2.2. Statistical methods in communication research, including: - sampling; - social surveys; - questionnaire design; - opinion sampling; - measurement	
	2.3. Textual analysis, including: - content analysis and qualitative textual analysis.	
3.	SECTION 3: MULTI-METHOD APPROACHES APPLIED TO SPECIFIC COMMUNICATION CONTEXTS	20.00
	3.1. Audience/Readership/Target Population: quantitative and qualitative approaches to identifying, characterising and analysing audiences and markets OR	
	3.2. Public Relations research and organisational communications research.	
4.	SECTION 4: DATA ANALYSIS	20.00
	4.1. Analysing qualitative data; manual and computerised methods	
	4.2. Analysing quantitative data: understanding statistical Methods; use of computerised methods such as SPSS	
5.	SECTION 5: RELIABILITY & VALIDITY	20.00
	5.1. Reliability and validity in quantitative and qualitative communications research	

TEXT and MATERIALS required to be PURCHASED or ACCESSED

ALL textbooks and materials are available for purchase from USQ BOOKSHOP (unless otherwise stated). Orders may be placed via secure internet, free fax 1800642453, phone 07 46312742 (within

Australia), or mail. Overseas students should fax +61 7 46311743, or phone +61 7 46312742. For costs, further details, and internet ordering, use the 'Textbook Search' facility at <http://bookshop.usq.edu.au> click 'Semester', then enter your 'Course Code' (no spaces).

Bauer, Martin W & Gaskell, George (eds) 2000, *Qualitative researching with text, image and sound: a practical handbook*, Sage, London.

Wimmer, R & Dominick, J 2006, *Mass media research: an introduction*, 8th edn, Wadsworth Publishing Company, Belmont, CA.

REFERENCE MATERIALS

Reference materials are materials that, if accessed by students, may improve their knowledge and understanding of the material in the course and enrich their learning experience.

STUDENT WORKLOAD REQUIREMENTS

ACTIVITY	HOURS
Private Study	165.00

ASSESSMENT DETAILS

Description	Marks out of	Wtg (%)	Due date
CMA TEST 1	100.00	0.00	25 Jul 2009 (see note 1)
CMA TEST 2	100.00	0.00	01 Aug 2009 (see note 2)
CMA TEST 3	100.00	0.00	01 Aug 2009 (see note 3)
CMA TEST 4	100.00	0.00	08 Aug 2009 (see note 4)
AT HOME TEST	100.00	25.00	18 Aug 2009 (see note 5)
CMA TEST 7	100.00	0.00	22 Aug 2009 (see note 6)
CMA TEST 9	100.00	0.00	29 Aug 2009 (see note 7)
CMA TEST 10	100.00	0.00	05 Sep 2009 (see note 8)
ESSAY 1	100.00	40.00	22 Sep 2009 (see note 9)
ESSAY 2	100.00	35.00	30 Oct 2009 (see note 10)
CMA TEST 16	100.00	0.00	31 Oct 2009 (see note 11)

NOTES

1. CMA tests should be completed, but are self- testing and carry no summative weighting
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5. This assignment is aligned with objectives 1,2,3, & 4.
6. CMA tests should be completed, but are self-testing and carry no summative weighting.
7. CMA tests should be completed, but are self-testing and carry no summative weighting.
8. CMA tests should be completed, but are self-testing and carry no summative weighting.
9. This assignment is aligned with objective 2.
10. This assignment is aligned with objective 5.
11. CMA tests should be completed, but are self-testing and carry no summative weighting.

IMPORTANT ASSESSMENT INFORMATION

- 1 Attendance requirements:
There are no attendance requirements for this external course. However, it is the students' responsibility to study all material provided to them or required to be accessed by them to maximise their chance of meeting the objectives of the course and to be informed of course-related activities and administration.
- 2 Requirements for students to complete each assessment item satisfactorily:

- To complete each of the assessment items satisfactorily, students must obtain at least 50% of the marks available for each assessment item.
- 3 Penalties for late submission of required work:
If students submit assignments after the due date without prior approval, then a penalty of 10% of the total marks available for the assignment will apply for each of the first FIVE working days late, after which a zero mark will be given.
 - 4 Requirements for student to be awarded a passing grade in the course:
To be assured of receiving a passing grade a student must achieve at least 50% of the total weighted marks available for the course.
 - 5 Method used to combine assessment results to attain final grade:
The final grades for students will be assigned on the basis of the weighted aggregate of the marks (or grades) obtained for each of the summative assessment items in the course.
 - 6 Examination information:
There is no exam for this course.
 - 7 Examination period when Deferred/Supplementary examinations will be held:
Given the details under (6) above, there are no deferred exams for this course. However, if any deferred/makeup work is granted, it would have to be submitted by a date set by the examiner.
 - 8 University Regulations:
Students should read USQ Regulations 5.1 Definitions, 5.6. Assessment, and 5.10 Academic Misconduct for further information and to avoid actions which might contravene University Regulations. These regulations can be found at the URL <http://www.usq.edu.au/corporateservices/calendar/part5.htm> or in the current USQ Handbook.

ASSESSMENT NOTES

- 9 (a) The due date for an assignment is the date by which a student must despatch the assignment to the USQ. The onus is on the student to provide proof of the despatch date, if requested by the Examiner. (b) Students must retain a copy of each item submitted for assessment. This must be despatched to USQ within 24 hours if requested by the Examiner. (c) In accordance with University's Assignment Extension Policy (Regulation 5.6.1), the examiner of a course may grant an extension of the due date of an assignment in extenuating circumstances such as documented ill-health. (d) In the event that a due date for an assignment falls on a local public holiday in their area, such as a Show holiday, the due date for the assignment will be the next day. Students are to note on the assignment cover the date of the public holiday for the examiner's convenience. (e) Students who do not have regular access to postal services or who are otherwise disadvantaged by these regulations may be given special consideration. They should contact the examiner of the course to negotiate such special arrangements. (f) Students who have undertaken all of the required assessments in the course but who have failed to meet some of the specified objectives of the course within the normally prescribed time may be awarded the temporary grade: IM (Incomplete-Makeup). An IM grade will only be awarded when, in the opinion of the examiner, a student will be able to achieve the remaining objectives of the course after a period of non-directed personal study. (g) Students who, for medical, family/personal, or employment-related reasons, are unable to complete an assignment or sit for an examination at the scheduled time, may apply to defer an assessment in the course. Such a request must be accompanied by appropriate supporting documentation. One of the following temporary grades may be awarded: IDS (Incomplete - Deferred

Examination; IDM (Incomplete Deferred Make-up); IDB (Incomplete - Both Deferred Examination and Deferred Make-up).

OTHER REQUIREMENTS

- 1 When a project or dissertation requires students to use surveys or interviews, such methods will need to meet University ethical requirements. The student must satisfy the supervisor and the course examiner that University ethical requirements are being met. This will normally be via completion and submission of an Ethics Clearance form, as per the study materials.
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