Faculty of Commerce and Economics
School of Marketing

MARK7210/ MARK8995
BUSINESS RESEARCH METHODS IN MARKETING

COURSE OUTLINE
SESSION 1, 2006
1. Aims and Objectives

This course is a concentrated, structured introduction to mainstream academic research processes in marketing. Specifically we shall:

(a) Consider the range of issues that researchers routinely have to address.
(b) Examine how these issues might be managed.
(c) Discuss the design of executable research so that you can undertake research of your own.
(d) Adopt a critical and questioning approach throughout.

Along the way, you will learn about the systems and structures of academic marketing (such as the journals, authors, conferences, societies and institutions), and have some exposure to research controversies, disputes and paradoxes. Much of this will come from your critical evaluation of the set readings, rather than from formal instruction in research methodology.

2. Syllabus

Marketing methods are varied, giving rise to many different ways to investigate topics of interest. Pricing, for instance, can be seen as a problem of optimisation or gaming strategy, it can be modelled econometrically or experimentally, the focus may be on buyers' responses to prices or the managerial task of price setting. We will discuss some of these different approaches, and consider the methodological issues that arise. However, we cannot do this in great depth for all the approaches that you might come across in marketing. It is for you, therefore, to extend the discussion to approaches that are of particular relevance for your work. What we will address are the following:

(a) An introduction to the research process: Research planning. The role of academic research and published material in the process of advancing marketing thought and knowledge. How to read, critique and prepare research proposals. Using this knowledge to write viable research plans.

(b) Theory construction, methodology, and the research process in marketing: Sources and developments in research in the marketing discipline; Asking meaningful research questions - inductive and deductive approaches. Conjectures, propositions and hypotheses. The role of mediating and moderator variables. Construct definition and measurement. Methodology paradigm unbundling. Empirical generalisation.

(c) Methodological approaches and issues: Overview of alternative methodological approaches in the research process, considering generalisability, realism and research setting, and precision of measurement. Questions of proof, validity, reliability, robustness, representativeness, generalisability, scope, and meta-analysis. Preparing research designs to minimise error and bias. Specific focus on survey methods, cross-cultural methods, archival methods, field and case methods, experimentation and quasi-experiments, marketing modeling and behavioural process modeling.

(d) Presentation of research: Student presentations of research proposals, formal critique of presentations, and feedback on research progress.
Format and Teaching Methods

Readings from the academic literature will be assigned every week and during the class these will be discussed and debated. Periodically a more didactic approach may be necessary, but on the whole the aim will be to adopt an interactive "workshop" format.

The class discussions will help you to develop critical skills. (See notes entitled "Reading Academic Papers Critically" (in course pack). These notes provide a checklist of issues to think about and questions to ask when reading an article and debating its contents in class.)

3. Assignments

1. Reading Critiques and Assigned Questions for Analysis and Discussion. You will be expected to prepare either a written and verbal critique of an assigned reading or to complete a specifically assigned task or question for write-up and brief discussion in each of the following weeks: Week 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 10, and 11. The written critiques or responses should be confined to 1-2 pages (A4 and not less than 10-pitch). You are welcome to bring along supplementary material to support your verbal critique (e.g., articles related to your topic or in support of your line of argument).

Lecturers assessing these will generally consider:

- Your ability to assemble evidence (from the readings).
- The logical consistency of your argument.
- Persuasiveness of your argument (in terms of critical insights).
- Awareness of the methodological implications of your argument.
- Communication / presentation skills.

Given the interactive nature of the classes the feedback is as likely to be verbal as written (in other words, take note of what is said in class and do not simply respond to any written comments that might be provided).

2. Research plan. You will be expected to prepare a viable proposal for a well-stated research question in the area of marketing (examples of good practice will be made available during the course). Although the subject matter is wide open, your proposal should:

- State and justify the focus of your work.
- Identify questions/propositions/hypotheses.
- Specify and justify your approach and preferred method.
- Include a viable and feasible research design.
- Say something about sampling and data acquisition procedures.
- Comment briefly on your intended analyses and schedule of work.

The strengths and limitations of your chosen approach need to be considered, including questions to do with validity, robustness, universality and predictive power. The practical constraints should also be considered (for example, timing and budgetary constraints). If you have already undertaken exploratory work or pilot studies, you should incorporate the conclusions from these into your research plan.

Typically, a complete research plan contains a literature review. However, that – in essence – is your assignment for the Research Seminar in Marketing (MARK7211/8996) and there is no point repeating the review here. Nevertheless, you might find it useful to list the key conclusions of your review - such as the conceptual framework that you derive or the synthesis that you propose.

Assessment of the research plan will be based on criteria such as the following:

- Clearly specified aims and goals.
- Mastery of the academic/methodological sources that underlie the research.
- Evidence of critical thought.
• Technical validity of the proposed research.
• Practical viability of the research.
• Logical flow of ideas.
• Linkage of theory/concepts, methods and practical research planning.
• Communication of ideas – clarity, structure, presentation (including compulsory oral presentation in class).

Written reports should be 20-25 pages (A4 and not less than 10-pitch). You should aim to have a draft report ready for formal presentation to the whole group during our final class in week 14 – which is to be combined with the class for MARK7211/8996 (Friday 10th June). Allow time for your supervisor to see, and comment on, your draft before the presentations. You then will have until 10am on (day and date to be coordinated with MARK7211/8996) to make changes and submit your final report. Please note that the in-class presentation of this report is required.

3. Participation. The "workshop" format of this course means that you will be expected to contribute to the discussion - in terms of making observations, offering criticisms and putting forward constructive suggestions.

4. Assessment

1. Critiques and Assigned Questions (for write-up and discussion) ...................40%
2. Research plan (including in-class presentation) .............................................50%
3. Participation ....................................................................................................10%

5. Sources

There is no set textbook for this course. Most of the relevant material is scattered across specialist books, journal articles and web-sites. To help you, set readings are to be reproduced for you and included in a course pack which will be updated as the course proceeds. However, you will need to read more widely than this – the process of reading for a research assignment is likely to be very different from the way you have previously read for courses.

A list of sources is provided in the course pack.

The complete course outline for MARK 7210/8995 including weekly topic and assigned reading outline for lectures is only available in class from the lecturer for those enrolling in the subject.