Instructor's Manual

Research Methods for Business Students

7th edition

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INTRODUCTION

An overview of the instructors' manual

This instructors' manual provides commentary for the seventh edition of the textbook *Research Methods for Business Students*. The commentary is on a chapter by chapter basis and includes:

- chapter learning outcomes;
- summary of the content;
- comments on likely student reactions and possible use of materials;
- ideas for students' preparatory work;
- suggestions for delivery in the classroom;
- ideas for students' follow-up work.

In addition, we have included a copy of a research project assignment we have used with our students and a copy of a dissertation proposal assignment as appendices.

Research Methods for Business – an overview of the seventh edition

Pedagogic features

The over-riding purpose of *Research Methods for Business Students* is to help undergraduate and postgraduate students and students on professional courses to undertake research. Each chapter deals with a part of the research process and discusses the ideas, techniques and methods using as little jargon as is possible. Tables, checklists and diagrams are used to aid this discussion. Where new terms are introduced for the first time, they are shown in bold, and a definition or explanation follows shortly afterwards. They are also listed with a brief definition in the glossary. The application of appropriate information technology is considered, in most instances as an integral part of the text. Chapters have been cross-referenced as appropriate, and an index is provided to help students find their way around the book.

Focus on student research boxes are included within the text of each chapter. These are based on actual research projects, undertaken by students, in which points made in the text are illustrated. In many instances these worked examples illustrate possible pitfalls students may come across while undertaking their research. Where a pitfall has been illustrated, it will, it is hoped, help your students avoid making the same mistake. Further illustrations are provided by focus on management research and research in the news boxes.

Focus on management research boxes discuss recent research in business and management. These are normally derived from refereed academic journal articles and students are likely to be able to download the actual articles from online databases at their university.

Focus on research in the news boxes provide topical news articles that illustrate pertinent research related issues. All these will help students to understand the technique or idea and to

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assess its suitability or appropriateness to their research. ***Boxed checklists*** provide students with further focussed guidance for their own research.

A ***summary of key points*** at the end of each chapter, can be used by students before and after reading the chapter to ensure that they have digested the main points

S*elf-check questions* enable students to check whether they have understood the chapter. These can all be answered without recourse to other (external) resources. Answers are provided to all the self-check questions at the end of each chapter.

Review and discussion questions follow the self-check questions. These suggest a variety of activities students can undertake to help them further develop their knowledge and understanding of the material in the chapter, often involving discussion with a friend.

Self-test multiple choice questions and **true/false questions** for each chapter are available on this book's companion website.

Chapters 2 to 14 each include a section towards the end titled '***Progressing your research project***' that can be undertaken as part of the student's research project. These are presented in sufficient detail to enable them to focus on the techniques that are most appropriate to his or her research. By completing all these sections, the student will have also completed his or her project report.

Each chapter is also accompanied by references, further reading and a case study.

Further reading is included for two distinct reasons:

- to direct students to other work on the ideas contained within the chapter;
- to direct students to further examples of research where the ideas contained in the chapter have been used.

Case studies at the end of each chapter are all new to the seventh edition. They have been drawn from a variety of business and management research scenarios and have been based on the case study's authors' students' experiences when undertaking a research project. They have been written to highlight real issues that occur when undertaking business and management research. To help to focus students' thoughts or discussion on some of the pertinent issues each case is followed by evaluative questions, answers to which are provided on the Instructors' Companion Website. A case study follows every chapter. A further 67 case studies from earlier editions of the book are available on the Students' Companion Website; answers to these cases are provided on the Instructors' Companion Website. A list of these cases is provided in Appendix 3.

Contents

Chapter 1 outlines the nature of research and, more specifically, of business and management research. The basic versus applied research and relevance debates are considered and advice offered regarding keeping a reflective diary or notebook. The chapter concludes with an overview of the purpose and structure of the book.

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Chapter 2 is written to assist students in the generation of ideas, which will help them to choose a suitable research topic, and offers advice on what makes a good research topic. If your students have already been given a research topic, perhaps by an organisation or tutor, they will need to refine it into one that is feasible, and should still therefore read this chapter. After their idea has been generated and refined, the chapter discusses how to turn this idea into clear research question(s) and objectives. (Research questions and objectives are referred to throughout the book.) Finally, the chapter provides advice on how to write a research proposal.

The importance of the critical literature review to students' research is discussed in Chapter 3. This chapter outlines what a critical review needs to include and the range of secondary and primary literature sources available. The chapter explains the purpose of reviewing the literature, discusses a range of search strategies, and contains advice on how to plan and undertake a search and to write the review. The processes of identifying key words and searching using online databases and the Internet are outlined. It also offers advice on how to record items and to evaluate their relevance as well as discussing plagiarism.

Chapter 4 addresses the issue of understanding different research philosophies including positivism, critical realism, interpretivism, post modernism and pragmatism. Within this the functionalist, interpretive, radical humanist and radical structuralist paradigms are discussed. Deductive, inductive and abductive approaches to theory development are also considered. In this chapter, students are challenged to think about their own values and how they view the world and the impact this will have on the way they undertake their research.

These ideas are developed further in Chapter 5, which explores the process of research design. As part of this the methodological choice of quantitative, qualitative or mixed methods is considered. A variety of research strategies are explored and longitudinal and cross sectional time horizons discussed. Consideration is given to the implications of design choice for the credibility of students' research findings and conclusions.

Chapter 6 explores issues related to gaining access and to research ethics. It offers advice on how to gain access both to organisations and to individuals using both traditional and Internet mediated strategies. Potential ethical issues are discussed in relation to each stage of the research process and different data collection methods. Issues of data protection are also introduced.

A range of the probability and non-probability sampling techniques available for use by students in their research is explained in Chapter 7. The chapter considers why sampling is necessary, and looks at issues of sample size and likely response rates for both probability and non-probability samples. Advice on how to relate the choice of sampling techniques to the research topic is given, and techniques for assessing the representativeness of those who respond are discussed.

Chapters 8, 9, 10 and 11 are concerned with different methods of obtaining data. The use of secondary data is discussed in Chapter 8, which introduces the variety of data that are likely to be available and suggests ways in which they can be used. Advantages and disadvantages of secondary data are discussed, and a range of techniques for locating these data, including using the Internet, is suggested. Chapter 8 provides an indication of the myriad of sources available via the Internet and also offers advice to students on how to evaluate the suitability of secondary data for their research.

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In contrast, Chapter 9 is concerned with collecting primary data through observation. The chapter examines four approaches to observation: participant observation, structured observation, Internet-mediated observation and observation using videography. These approaches are considered in turn to allow practical advice on each to be offered and their respective data quality issues to be discussed.

Chapter 10 is also concerned with collecting primary data, this time using semi-structured, in-depth and group interviews. The appropriateness of using these interviews in relation to different research strategies is discussed. Advice on how to undertake such interviews is offered, including the conduct of focus groups, Internet mediated (including online) and telephone interviews. Particular attention is given to ensuring that the data collected are both reliable and valid.

Chapter 11 is the final chapter concerned with collecting data. It introduces students to the use of both self-completed and interviewer-completed questionnaires, and explores their advantages and disadvantages. Practical advice is offered on the process of designing, piloting and delivering Internet, postal, delivery and collection and telephone and face-to-face questionnaires to enhance their response rates. Particular attention is again given to ensuring that the data collected are both reliable and valid.

Analysis of data is covered in Chapters 12 and 13. Chapter 12 outlines and illustrates the main issues that students need to consider when preparing data for quantitative analysis and when analysing these data by computer. Different types of data are defined, and advice is given on how to create a data matrix and to code data. Practical advice is also offered on the analysis of these data using computerised analysis software. The most appropriate diagrams to explore and illustrate data are discussed, and suggestions are made about the most appropriate statistics to use to describe data, to explore relationships and to examine trends.

Chapter 13 outlines and discusses the main approaches available to students to analyse data qualitatively both manually and using Computer Aided Qualitative Analysis Software (CAQDAS). The nature of qualitative data and issues associated with transcription are discussed. A number of aids that will help students to analyse these data and record their ideas about progressing their research are also discussed. The chapter then outlines and briefly evaluates a number of procedures to analyse students' qualitative data.

Chapter 14 helps students with the structure, content and style of their final project report (dissertation) and any associated oral presentations. Differences between consultancy (management) reports and project reports (dissertations) are outlined. Above all, the chapter encourages students to see writing as an intrinsic part of the research process that should not be left until everything else is completed. This chapter also includes a section on writing a reflective essay.

In addition, there are four appendices including guidance on author-date (*Harvard, American Psychological Association*) and numeric (Vancouver) styles of referencing and guidelines for non-discriminatory language. The seventh edition also includes an extensive glossary of over 600 research methods terms.

Using Research Methods for Business Students

This book is written with a progressive logic, which means that terms and concepts are defined when they are first introduced. One implication of this is that it is sensible for students to start at

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the beginning and to work their way through the text and focus on student research boxes, focus on management research boxes, focus on research in the news boxes, self-check questions, review and discussion questions, case studies and case study questions. They can do this in a variety of ways depending on the reasons for using this book. However, this approach may not necessarily be suitable and you may wish to use the chapters in a different order or just dip into particular sections of the book. If this is true then the students will probably need to use the glossary to check that they understand some of the terms and concepts used in the chapters they read. Suggestions for three of the more common ways in which the book might be used are given below.

As part of a research methods course or for self-study for a student's research project

For students taking an undergraduate degree in Business or Management, the research methods course and associated project or dissertation usually comes either in the second or final year of study. In such situations, we suggest that the chapter order is followed quite closely (see Figure P.1). Groups of chapters within which we believe students can switch the order without affecting the logic of the flow too much are shown on the same level in this diagram and are:

- those chapters associated with data collection (Chapters 8, 9, 10 and 11);
- those associated with data analysis (Chapters 12 and 13).

In addition, the sections in Chapter 14 on writing can be read prior to the students starting to draft their critical reviews of the literature (Chapter 3).

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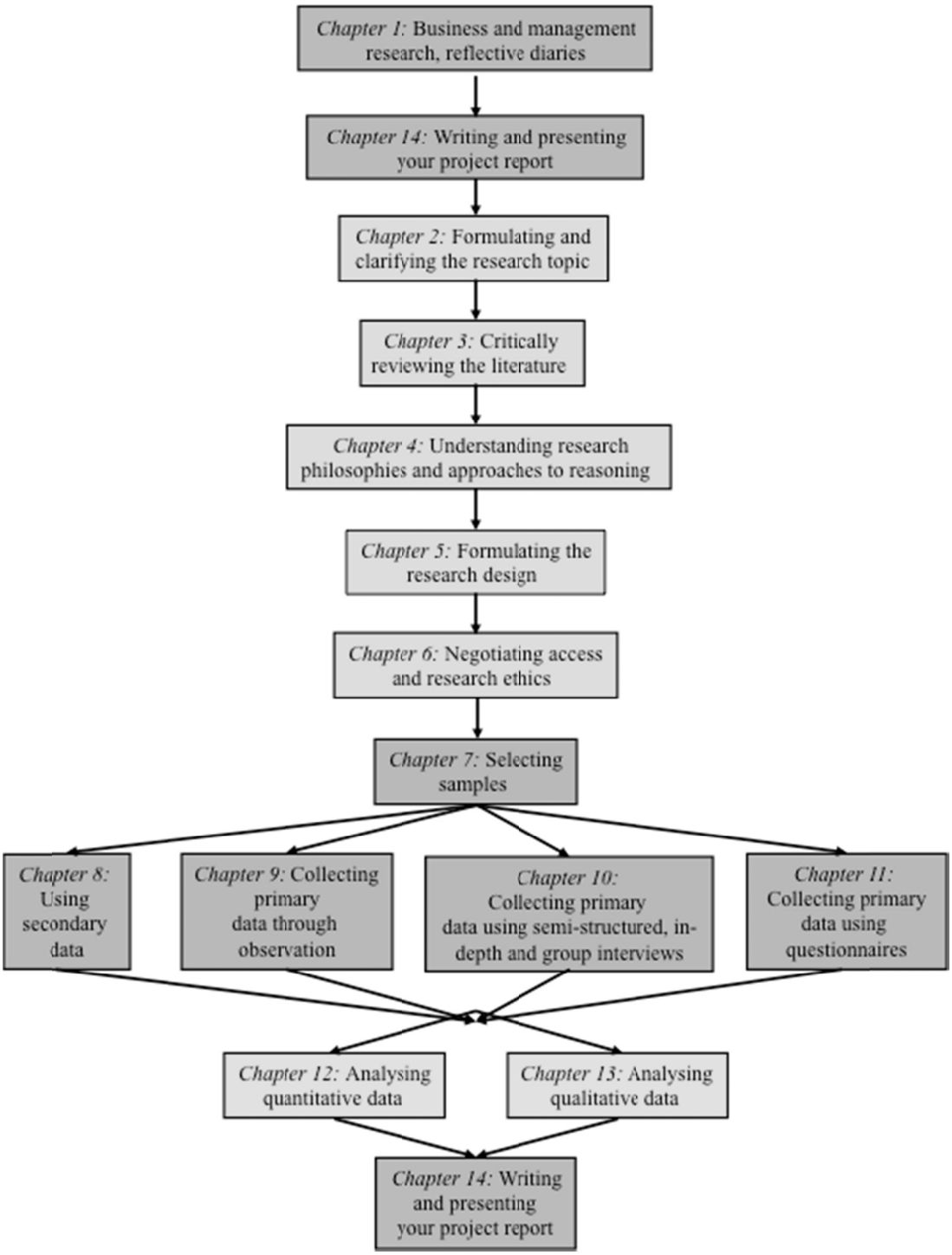

Figure P.1 Using this book in your final year of study

Alternatively, students may be returning to academic study after a gap of some years, to take a full or part time course such as a Masters of Business Administration. Many students in such

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situations need to refresh their study skills early in their programme, particularly those associated with critical reading of academic literature and academic writing. If this is necessary, students can start with those chapters which support these skills (Chapters 3 and 14) followed by Chapter 8, which introduces them to the range of secondary data sources available that might be of use for other assignments (Figure P.2). Once again, groups of chapters within which we believe students can switch the order without affecting the logic of the flow too much are shown on the same level in the diagram and are:

- those chapters associated with primary data collection (Chapters 9, 10 and 11);
- those associated with data analysis (Chapters 12 and 13).

In addition, we would recommend the students re-read Chapter 14 prior to starting to write their project report or dissertation.

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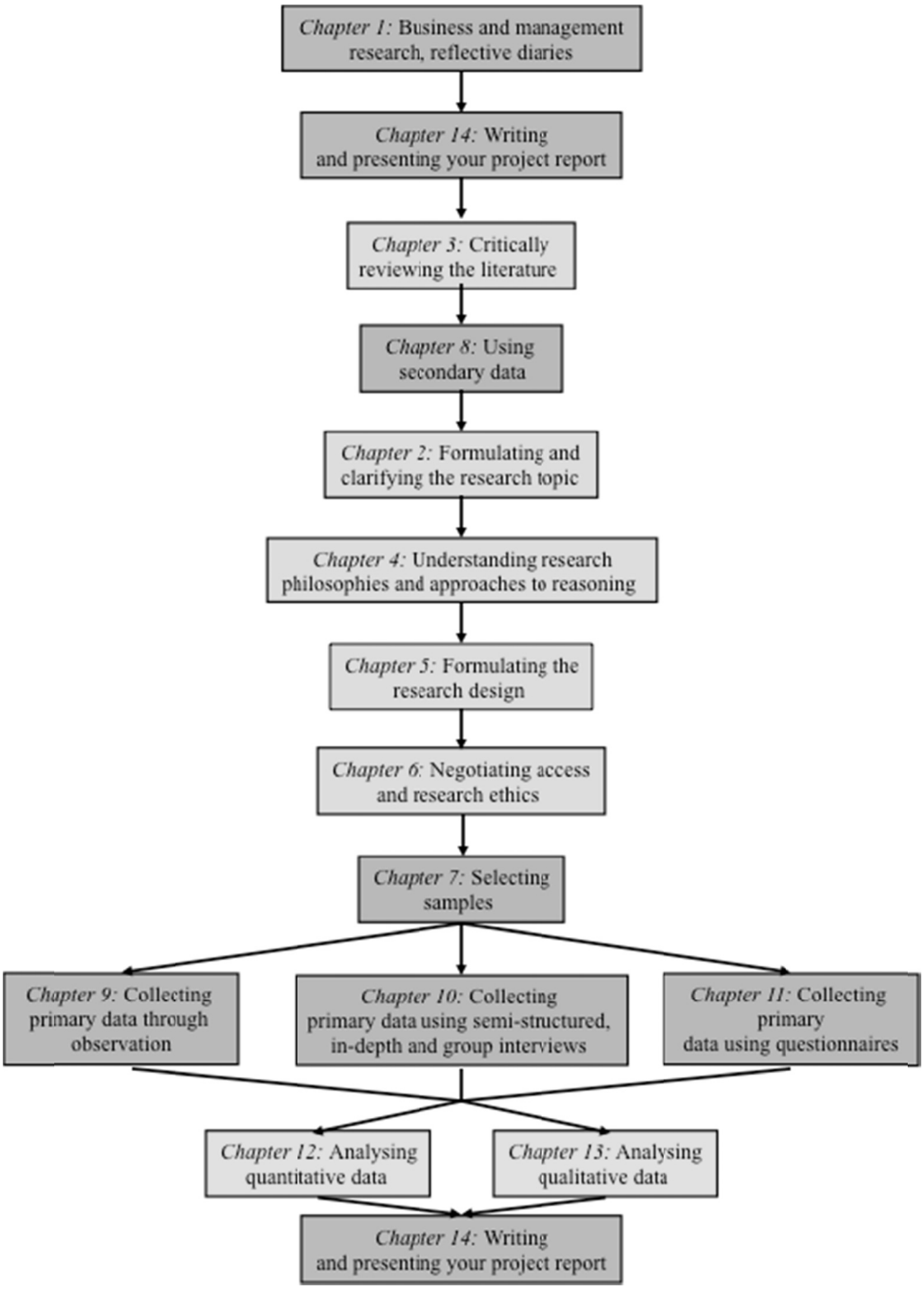

Figure P.2 Using this book as a new returner to academic study

Whichever order students read the chapters, we would recommend that they attempt all the self-check questions, review and discussion questions and those questions associated with the case studies. Their answers to the self-check questions can be self-assessed using the answers at the

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end of each chapter. If they need further information on an idea or a technique they can look at the references in the further reading section and use the focus on management research boxes. These have all been updated for the sixth edition.

At the end of every chapter the section headed 'Progressing you research project' lists a number of tasks. Such tasks might involve the student in just planning a research project or, alternatively, designing and administering a questionnaire of their own. This section always includes making a reflective diary entry. When completed, these tasks will provide a useful *aide-mémoire* for assessed work and can be used by students as the basis for the first draft of their project report.

As a guide through the research process

If you are recommending that students use the book to guide them through the research process for a research project, such as their dissertation, we suggest that they read the entire book quickly before starting their research. In that way they will have a good overview of the entire process including the range of techniques available and will be better able to plan their work.

After they have read the book once, we suggest that they work through the book again following the chapter order. This time they should attempt the self-check questions, review and discussion questions and those questions associated with each case study to ensure that they have understood the material contained in each chapter prior to applying it to their own research projects. Their responses to self-check questions can be assessed using the answers at the end of each chapter.

If students are still unsure as to whether particular techniques, procedures or ideas are relevant then we recommend that they pay special attention to the 'Focus on student research', 'Focus on management research' and 'focus on research in the news' boxes. 'Focus on student research' boxes are based on actual students' experiences and illustrate how an issue has been addressed or a technique or procedure used in a student's research project. 'Focus on management research' boxes discuss recent research articles in established refereed academic journals allowing students to see how research is undertaken successfully. These articles are easily accessible via online databases. 'Focus on research in the news' boxes provide topical news articles of how particular research techniques, procedures and ideas are used in the business world. Students can also look in the 'further reading' for other examples of research where these have been used. If they need further information on an idea, technique or procedure then, again, start with the references in the further reading section.

Material in some of the chapters is likely to prove less relevant to some research topics than others. However, we would stress that students should beware of choosing techniques because they are happy with them, if they are inappropriate. Completion of the tasks in the section headed 'Progressing your research project' at the end of Chapters 2–13 will enable students to generate all the material that they will need to include in their project report. This will also help them to focus on the techniques and ideas that are most appropriate to their research. When they have also completed these tasks for Chapter 14 they will have written their project report or consultancy (management) report.

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As a reference source

It may be that you wish students to use this book now or subsequently as a reference source. If this is the case, an extensive index will point them to the appropriate page or pages. They should also find the contents pages and the glossary useful. In addition, we have tried to help them to use the book in this way by including cross-references between sections in chapters as appropriate. If they need further information on an idea or a technique they should begin by consulting the references in the further reading section. Wherever possible we have tried to reference books, which are in print and readily available in university libraries; and journal articles that can be accessed using the Emerald, Business Source Complete or JSTOR online full text databases.

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CHAPTER 1

Business and management research, reflective diaries and the purpose of this book

Learning outcomes

By the end of this chapter students should be able to:

- be able to outline the purpose and distinct focus of business and management research;
- be able to place their research project on a basic-applied research continuum according to its purpose and context;
- understand the utility and importance of keeping a reflective diary;
- understand the stages they will need to complete (and revisit) as part of their research process;
- have an overview of this book's purpose, structure and features;
- be aware of some of the ways they can use this book.

Summary

- *Research Methods for Business Students* is designed to help students to undertake a research project whether they are an undergraduate or postgraduate student of business and management or a manager. It is designed as an introductory text and will guide them through the entire research process.
- Business and management research involves undertaking systematic research to find out things. It is transdisciplinary, and engages with both theory and practice.
- All business and management research projects can be placed on a basic–applied continuum according to their purpose and context.
- Wherever student's research projects lies on this continuum, they should undertake their research with rigour. To do this they will need to pay careful attention to the entire research process.
- In order to enhance students learning during their research we recommend they keep a reflective diary or notebook.
- In this book, research is represented as a multi-stage process; however, this process is rarely straightforward and will involve both reflecting on and revising stages already undertaken and forward planning.

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- The text of each chapter is supported through a series of boxed examples. These include, focus on student research and focus on research in the news. In addition, there are checklists, self-check questions and review and discussion questions, an assignment and a case study with questions. Answers to all self-check questions are at the end of the appropriate chapter.

- Answering the questions in the section 'Progressing your research project' for Chapters 2–13 will enable students to generate all the material that they will need to include in their project report. When students have also answered the questions in this section for Chapter 14, they will have written their research report.

Comment

In order for students to use *Research Methods for Business Students* to the full, we believe it is important to spend time outlining the structure of the book and the way it will be used during the module. Our preferred method is to set pre-work and reading prior to each session, and to run the taught part of the research methods course alongside an assignment in which the students undertake their own piece of primary research. A copy of this assignment is included in Appendix 1 of this guide. Please feel free to adapt it as you see fit. It is, of course, also important that students understand the nature of business and management research and are aware of the importance of theory in research.

Student preparation

Many students will come to the first class of a course having undertaken only limited preparation. However, it is still worthwhile setting some preparatory work and asking students to purchase the book and bring it with them to the first class. For a class based solely on chapter one, we suggest you ask the students to read the chapter and make notes when answering the three self-check questions at the end.

In the classroom

Inevitably, the first class will involve some administration and an overview of the module. In recent years, rather than simply going through a module outline we have used a variation of Easterby-Smith *et al*.'s (2012: 7–8) 'Skills and qualities' of researchers rating exercise to encourage students to think about the module and its content. Each student has assessed her or his strengths and weaknesses for each area of knowledge, skills and personal qualities using this checklist. Areas, which students scored as strengths and weaknesses, have then been used as part of a class discussion in which we refer to the module outline to highlight how the knowledge, skills and personal qualities required for business and management research will be developed over the module. As part of this discussion, we also clarify problems with terminology.

One exercise, which we have found useful, is to ask students to brainstorm two interlinked questions in groups of four to six. These are:

1. What do you understand by the term 'research'?

2. What distinguishes business and management research from research more generally?

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An alternative, devised by Bryans and Mavin (2004) of Newcastle Business School involves asking the students in groups of three (or individually) to draw a visual representation of how they see research or how they see a researcher. Subsequently students explain their visual representations to each other, their explanations providing a way of discussing research and providing insights into what the students do and think. Common pictures for research include road/journey/path, tree, tunnel, brick wall, magnifying glass, climbing and scales. Common pictures for researchers include a monk, canoeist, hunter, diver, silos, dunce and a bungee jumper.

In addition, it is important that students obtain an overview of the research process and how this is covered in the book. PowerPoint slide 1.1 may prove helpful here.

In recent years, we have combined the introductory class with one based upon the material in chapter two, having ensured that students receive detailed instructions regarding preparatory work prior to the class.

Follow up work

Selected further reading with a brief overview of each suggestion's content is given at the end of Chapter 1. Easterby-Smith, M., Thorpe, R. and Jackson, P. (2012). *Management Research,* (4th ed). London, Sage. Chapter 1 provides a very clear and readable introduction to management research and how it is distinct from other forms of research. The paper by Starkey and Madan (2001) argues for the distinctiveness of management research emphasising its applied nature and the importance of the relationship between theory and practice.

Alternatively, or in addition, students can be asked to undertake one or both of the review and discussion questions. Question 1.4 asks them to look at how the term research is used in the media whilst Question 1.5 focuses on the articles discussed in Section 1.3. Of these our students have found the article by Hodgkinson *et al*. (2001), also referred to in Box 1.2, particularly thought provoking.

The students can also be asked to reflect on their assignment for the module and come to the next class with questions about the assignment and ideas for their own research topic.

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