(a) Subject Description

The subject provides an overview of the ways accounting and finance researchers identify, formulate and investigate empirical questions in accounting and finance. Subject include: the criteria adopted to select research projects, issues of experimental design, validity threats, measurement problems and statistical analysis. Selected published accounting and finance research will be used to illustrate established methods of empirical research.

(b) General Learning Objectives

Upon completion of this subject students should have sufficient theoretical understanding and analytical skills to:

- describe and discuss the main steps in designing and undertaking a research project
- enumerate and discuss at least one major approach to empirical research, and critically reflect on the implicit assumptions of a chosen research methodology.
- identify and describe the threats to research validity
- identify, describe and discuss major measurement problems and their prevention or circumvention
- identify, describe and discuss the major steps in at least one method of data collection and analysis
- identify and describe the major statistical methods used in at least one approach to data collection model

Particular aims:

In particular, the course seeks to provide students with the following:

1. An awareness of alternative methods of research that are available for empirical research addressing accounting issues (eg. 'questionnaire' surveys, case studies, ethnographic studies) and an ability to identify some of the strengths and weaknesses of alternative methods of accounting research, including the major prior assumptions of each method.

2. An awareness of particular techniques which may be used under these methods and some of the advantages and disadvantages of each; eg. document evaluation, questionnaires, interviews, 'in-depth' analysis.

3. The acquisition of the practical skills for conducting a piece of accounting research, such as:
   - reviews of relevant literature
   - library searches, data-base searches through computer based systems, primary and secondary sources
   - reading and evaluating relevant literature
• problem identification - stating exactly and clearly what issue/s the piece of research addresses and the formulation of problem statements. The necessity for clarity, preciseness and particularity.
• organising the piece of research
  - planning
  - tasks to be performed
  - sequencing of tasks and layout
  - techniques of research report writing
• developing the ability to be analytical and interpretive rather than just descriptive.
• problems of style, clarity, avoidance of redundancy and "academese".

c) Prescribed text

d) Course coordinator:
Associate Professor Michael McCrae
Dept. of Accounting and Finance
Location: Building 40 Room 323
Telephone: (042) 21 4015
e-mail: mccrae@uow.edu.au

e) Consultation Times: Please refer to notice on coordinator's door for consultation times.

f) Lecture/Seminar Times:
Thursday 1:30 - 3:30, Room 38.G08
A combination of interactive lectures and class discussions will be used as the primary mode of instruction. As the course progresses it is expected that lecture style presentation will decrease in favour of shared communication and self directed action learning.

(g) Subject Requirements and Assessment
For the purposes of determining final grades for ACCY907, student performance will be evaluated on a composite mark, determined as follows:

- 3 Case studies
  Case 1 20%
  Case 2 20%
- Seminar participation/presentation 10%
- Final Exam 50%
- Total 100%

All components of the assessment must be completed to pass this subject. To be awarded a Pass or higher grade in this subject, students must attain at least 40% in the final examination. Final composite marks may be scaled.

e) Exam
A final three hour exam will be held in this subject. The exam will include subject matter covered in lectures and/or tutorials. You should study from your class notes, supplementing this material with explanations and further example problems from the textbook as necessary. The problems which you will be asked to solve and discuss in exams will not be the same as those discussed in classes but will require application of the
same concepts and techniques. The objective is to test your understanding of class material rather than mere memory.

**(h) Case Studies**

Two case studies are required to be undertaken during the course to be submitted by the dates below.

Case study 1  Problem formulation, source searching
              Literature review and research design          15th April

Case study 2  Data collection/results presentation          3rd June

Assignments/case studies are to be submitted during the seminar on the due date. They are to be submitted personally to the coordinator. A cover sheet for submission will be provided which provides a tear-off receipt.

Any request for consideration must be accompanied by supporting documentation (eg. a medical certificate). Any case studies submitted after the due date will incur a penalty of one mark per day.

The case studies are to be undertaken by class members either individually or working in groups of no more than two.

**Mandatory case study presentation standards are as follows:**
1. The case study is to be typed using a computer word processing package.
2. A duplicate of the essay is not required. You must ensure, however, that you have the capacity to provide a duplicate, should this be requested. Problems with computers, software, lost disks etc will not be accepted as excuses.
3. The pages should be numbered.
4. At the front of the essay there must be a title page showing your name, your tutorial class, the date the essay is due and the topic as given.
5. An abstract of not more than one page to preface the case study.
6. There must be a margin of about 40 mm to allow for written comments.
7. All essays should include a list of references in academic form. All sourced material, including direct quotations, should be appropriately acknowledged. The conventions on citation and reference of a relevant accounting/finance journal are to be used consistently throughout the case studies.

Case studies will be penalised for failure to meet any of these requirements.

**Faxing Assignments**
Faxed assignments will not be accepted by the coordinator.

**(i) Seminar Requirements**

The material indicated for each week represents recommended background reading and students will be expected to have read selected readings before attendance at seminars. These are indicated by (*). Students are encouraged to contribute actively to discussion and participation in seminars. It is stressed that students must come adequately prepared for seminars by doing the background reading.

Students will be required to make presentations on their case studies during seminars at allotted times for which marks will be awarded as indicated.
University Policy Requirements
Candidates for the course should read the sections on assessment, examinations and plagiarism contained in the 2000 General Information Calendar. In particular, attention is drawn to the ‘Codes of Practice’ section.

Plagiarism
Candidates for the course should read the sections on examinations, plagiarism, code of practice - students, and code of practice - teaching as set out in the Calendar contained in the ‘General Information’ section of the General Information Calendar. As a student you must become familiar with, read and adopt the University of Wollongong Acknowledgment Practice/Plagiarism as set out in the General Information Calendar (2000). It will be assumed that everyone in the subject has read these sections and understands their implications. Any questions about the issue should be directed to the subject coordinator within the first two weeks of the course. The cover sheets provided for handing-in of assignments also require acknowledgement of this issue.

Study Time for the Subject
As an indication of the amount of time to be spent on the subject each week, the Course Rules are taken as the basis. The rules state that:

" 'credit point' is the value attached to a subject as a component of a degree and, for a subject other than a research subject, each credit point has an implied workload of 28 hours over the duration of the subject.". (General Calendar 1996, p. 54).

This unit is worth 6 credit points. So that, in addition to seminar/lecture time, students can expect to spend at least another 12 hours per week on average throughout the session.

Organisational Arrangements
Listed below are the topics and corresponding reading lists for lectures/seminars in this subject. The reading lists are guides and students are encouraged to read more widely on the topics.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Seminar</th>
<th>Major Topic</th>
<th>Reading</th>
<th>Questions</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Overview/organisation and introduction</td>
<td>Ch 1</td>
<td>#1,2,4,6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Conducting Research in Accounting</td>
<td>Ch 7</td>
<td>#1,3,12,14.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Library and data base searches</td>
<td>Ryan, Scapens, Theobold (1992)</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>The Research Process</td>
<td>Ch 3</td>
<td>#1, 7,8,10,</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Characteristics of Scientific Research Assumptions underlying research design Hypotheses and Deduction</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Identifying Research areas and Topics</td>
<td>Ch. 5</td>
<td>#4, 5, 6, 7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Library and data base searches (contd)</td>
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<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Theoretical Framework and Theory Building</td>
<td>Ch. 2</td>
<td>#1, 2,3,5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Hypotheses Testing</td>
<td>Ch. 6</td>
<td>#1, 2,4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- purpose, definition, development, types Statistical Hypotheses, type 1 type 2 error internal, external validity, correlation, causation</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>Research Design</td>
<td>Ch. 6, 8, 9</td>
<td>Ch6 #1, 2,4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Study purpose - exploratory, descriptive, -Analytical and Predictive Study Design -survey based design - sampling -case study design, -experimental design,</td>
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<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>Research report/thesis/dissertation writing</td>
<td>Ch 24</td>
<td>Ch 24#1,6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>literature reviews contd structure conventions of academic writing Visiting Lecturer - Writing the Research Project</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9 &amp; 10</td>
<td>Measurement of Variables</td>
<td>Ch. 12, 13</td>
<td>Ch12#2,5,6,8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>-what is measurement -scales and measurement -validity -reliability</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
11 **Data Collection Methods**  
Ch. 10, 11, 14  
Ch10#2,5,9  
Ch11#2,7,9,11  
Ch14#1,8  
- concepts of data - positivist, qualitative/interpretive  
- questionnaires, interviews, observational, groups.  
**Case Studies**  
Ch 6  
Ch6#3,7  
The researcher as participant  
Types - structured, open  
Issues in case studies -  
- representation, validity, contextual analysis  
- Analysis of Interviews and linguistic  
- data collection, journals, formal methods, triangulation

12 **Analyses of Data**  
Ch 18, 19, 20  
Ch 18#1,3,6  
Ch 19#1,24,8  
Ch 20#1,2,3,16  
Purpose of data analysis  
Descriptive statistics - frequencies  
Inferential statistics - correlations, differences of means, multiple regression, qualitative data  
- computer based statistical packages  
**Analysis of Qualitative data**  
The emergence of concepts and themes, categories, interrelationships  
coding, classification, evolution of concepts, computer based coding and analysis - the Latrobe programs  
isues of rigour and replication

13 **Interpretation of data**  
Ch. 21, 22, 23  
Ch21#2,4,7,13  
Ch22#3,8,9  
Ch23#1,5,8  
Sampling, Categorisation, objectives,  
Correlation and hypothesis testing,  
Confidence intervals and levels of significance.  
Qualitative interpretation - understanding versus knowledge constructions, the validity of subjective interpretation, aim of interpretation, participant ‘ownership’ of data

14 **Review**
**Required reading**
The required reading prior to each week's seminar is shown by an (*) in the reading lists for the relevant seminar as detailed in this hand-out. The lists are not necessarily exhaustive and other relevant material may be added as it becomes available during the session.

**Main References**

**Conducting Research in Accounting**


**Problem Identification and Theoretical Framework**

Choudhury, N. 1987. Starting Out in Management Accounting, *Research, Accounting and Business Research* (Summer); 206-220.


* Long, J. D. *Problem Defining - A Prelude to Problem Solving*, in Courtis (ed). Research and Methodology in Accounting and Financial Management; 140-156


**Research Design/Research Methods**


Christensen, L.B. *Experimental Methodology*, Allyn & Bacon; chs. 6-10,13.


**Measurement**


**Analysis and Interpretation of Data**

*Dey, Ian. 1993  Qualitative Data Analysis*, Rutledge.


* Smith, C., R. Whipp & H. Wilmott. 1988. Case-Study Research in Accounting: Methodological Breakthrough or Ideological Weapon, *Advances in Public Interest Accounting* (2); 95-120.


**Research report/thesis/dissertation writing**


(Practically all of it is good)


* Smith, R. 1990. Graduate Research, 2nd ed. Plenum Press, New York; Chs. 8-10


**Analysis and Interpretation of Findings**

(cause and correlation)


**The Accounting Research candidate**

(Ethics, plagiarism and fraud)


**Other Recommended Reference Texts:**


