

A word cloud featuring various business and academic terms. The most prominent words are 'Business' (large, black, horizontal), 'FACTS' (large, purple, horizontal), 'Research' (large, orange, vertical), 'Methodology' (large, orange, vertical), 'Administration' (large, black, vertical), 'Education' (large, teal, vertical), 'Ethics' (large, black, horizontal), 'Development' (large, purple, horizontal), 'Investigation' (large, teal, horizontal), 'Theory' (large, black, horizontal), 'Testing' (large, black, horizontal), 'Information' (large, black, vertical), 'Motivation' (large, teal, horizontal), 'Qualitative' (large, purple, horizontal), 'Quantitative' (large, purple, horizontal), 'Inquisitive' (large, black, horizontal), 'Problem' (large, black, horizontal), 'Exchange' (large, black, horizontal), 'Crime' (large, black, horizontal), 'Bribe' (large, purple, horizontal), 'Leadership' (large, black, horizontal), 'Economy' (large, black, horizontal), 'Audit' (large, black, horizontal), 'Payment' (large, purple, horizontal), 'Interventions' (large, black, horizontal), 'Resources' (large, black, horizontal), 'Topic' (large, black, horizontal), 'Clear' (large, purple, horizontal), 'Excellence' (large, black, horizontal), 'FINANCE' (large, purple, horizontal), 'Fraud' (large, black, horizontal), 'FINANCE' (large, black, horizontal), 'Definition' (large, purple, horizontal), 'Corruption' (large, black, horizontal), 'Money' (large, black, horizontal), 'Explanation' (large, black, horizontal), 'Learning' (large, black, horizontal), 'Insight' (large, black, horizontal), 'Quality' (large, black, horizontal), 'Support' (large, black, horizontal), 'Exploration' (large, black, horizontal), 'Conclusion' (large, black, horizontal), 'History' (large, black, horizontal), 'Critical' (large, black, horizontal), 'Questions' (large, black, horizontal), 'Empirical' (large, black, horizontal), 'Cyclical' (large, black, horizontal), 'Logical' (large, black, horizontal), 'Focus' (large, black, horizontal), 'Maladministration' (large, black, horizontal), 'SA' (large, black, horizontal), 'Cash' (large, black, horizontal), 'Dirty' (large, purple, horizontal), 'Exchange' (large, black, horizontal). The words are arranged in a dense, overlapping manner, with some words appearing in different colors and sizes to create a visually appealing and informative composition.



NWU
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Shaping Executive Minds in Africa

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Module information

Module name	Research Methodology
Module code	MBAA 874
NQF level	9
Module credits	12
Notional learning hours	120
Duration	Year module (both semesters)
Name of lecturer	Prof Stéphan van der Merwe
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Building and office number	Potchefstroom Campus, building E3, office 415
Consulting hours	By appointment

Purpose of the module

The purpose of this module is to give you a thorough understanding and knowledge of the research process, enhance your research competency to investigate a business or managerial problem, and to guide you to the completion of a research proposal.

Conducting business research is essential for any manager to solve critical business-related problems and make informed and evidence-based decisions. This module aims to introduce the student to the world of business research methodology and further expand your knowledge and skills to conduct rigorous and ethical research by applying quantitative and qualitative research approaches.

Research is one of the critical competencies for socio-economic development. This module aims to develop a research culture to assist students in employability and prosperity. Students should develop an inquisitive mind, which promotes enthusiasm for reading and writing, learning and living.

The research proposal will form the basis of and give you the experience of completing a mini-dissertation as part of your MBA programme. A mini-dissertation is a clear reflection of your scholarship and is often used as a culminating measure of an MBA's educational success. You will also be allowed to reflect on aspects of your acquired knowledge in research methodology.

Enjoy this module and become the manager and responsible leader who can make evidence-based and informed decisions by conducting ethical business research to optimise performance at all levels.

Prerequisites

The following are prerequisites to enter into this module and should be acquired before the commencement of this module in January 2021:

- Selected into the NWU MBA programme and registered as a student at the NWU.
- Registered on the NWU library system.
- Registered to access eFundi.
- Computer literate in MS Office.
- Broadband internet access.
- English language proficiency in reading, writing and oral presentation.

Module outcomes

On completing the module, the student will be able to:

- Demonstrate an understanding of the business research process.
- Understand research management at the Business School.
- Select a business or management area for research.
- Identify a research problem and formulate objectives to research the problem.
- Critically review the relevant literature.
- Design a research plan in line with the mini-dissertation's completion structure according to the provided guidelines.
- Demonstrate an understanding of selecting and applying appropriate research methodologies and collecting data methods.
- Produce an abridged research proposal that will be the foundation of applying for ethical clearance and completing the mini-dissertation.
- Demonstrate competence in using the Harvard referencing method.
- Demonstrate competence in problem-solving and report writing.

[Note that the Research Methodology module focuses on research's conceptual and planning phases. The execution, monitoring and closing phases of the research will be conducted in the second year of the study.]

Notional hours of learning

Notional learning hours are the average student's estimated learning time to achieve outcomes of the programme or course unit (module). Therefore, notional learning hours are not a precise measure, but provide students with an indication of the amount of study and degree of commitment expected. It includes contact time, reading prescribed material, time spent in structured learning and completing assignments (www.sun.ac.za). One credit equals 10 notional hours of learning. Consequently, this module requires 120 hours of learning for the average student as per the following schedule.

Learning activity	Average time	Comments
Reading prescribed study material and preparation for the class.	10 hours	Approximately five (5) hours of preparation for each study school is required.
Complete assignment 1 (Identify a research problem, formulate objectives, write a preliminary literature review).	24 hours	Refer to the briefing of the assignment
Complete assignment 2 (Plan the research methodology).	18 hours	Refer to the briefing of the assignment
Complete assignment 3 (Complete the research proposal).	42 hours	Refer to the briefing of the assignment Completing an abridged research proposal
Attend class (contact and online sessions).	20 hours	Class attendance: Study school sessions Three online sessions
Peer-review assessments	6 hours	Students should peer-review the proposals of at least three students in their cluster
Total	120 hours	

Kindly note that the notional hours allocated are for an average student with an average level of exposure to this particular subject area. It is realistic to expect more or less effort based on students' current knowledge and experience level.

Sources

Prescribed study material

As this is a master's class, any suitable and relevant materials can be used in your preparation. However, you have to purchase the prescribed handbook before entering the formal class/contact sessions. Learners will receive a selection of literature and other resources on eFundi, not mentioned in this study guide, related to the module. Learners are encouraged to search for additional sources on the online library services provided by the NWU. This will enable the learner to prepare for class by reading relevant sources before attending classes to participate fully in discussions.

For this module, students should use the PowerPoint slides, class notes, templates of submissions and other relevant information available on the eFundi platform as a broad guideline to complete the assignments and ultimately submit an abridged business research proposal.

The prescribed textbook for the module is:

Bryman, A., Bell, E., Hirschsohn, P., Dos Santos, A., Du Toit, J., Masenge, A., Van Aardt, I. & Wagner, C. 2014. *Research methodology: Business and management contexts*. Cape Town: Oxford University Press. [ISBN 978 0 19907613 0]

[Refer to following link for an e-book version:

<https://libguides.nwu.ac.za/mba/phase1-prescribed>]

Recommended reading

Creswell, J.W. & Creswell, D.C. 2019. *Research design: Qualitative, Quantitative, and mixed-method approaches*. 5th ed. SAGE.

Field, A. 2016. *Discovering statistics using IBM SPSS Statistics*. 4th ed. Thousand Oaks, CA: SAGE.

Friese, S. 2019. *Qualitative data analysis with ATLAS.ti*. 3rd ed. UK: SAGE.

Some useful websites:

Jones, J. (2013). *Statistics: Lecture Notes*. <http://people.richland.edu/james/lecture/m170/> -accessed 12 September 2015

Emerald (2015). *Research methods and methodology*. Available at: <http://www.emeraldgroupublishing.com/research/guides/methods/>

Hofstee, E. (2006). *Constructing a Good Dissertation: A Practical Guide to Finishing Master's, MBA or PhD on Schedule*, <http://www.exactica.co.za/>

Information on eFundi

Use the eFundi student platform for guidance and structure to obtain the module's objectives.

[Refer to the NWU Library guides for more information and links.]

NWU website (libguides)

Kindly visit the following website for more information: <https://libguides.nwu.ac.za/mba>. There, you will find a great deal of useful information and links.

Official NWU Referencing Guide

The NWU Referencing Guide (the 2020 edition) is the official and only referencing guide to MBA mini-dissertations/Research project studies.

Download the guide and utilise the **NWU Harvard Referencing Guide** (2020:3-57) for all your assignments, projects and the mini-dissertation.

Work programme (all three campuses)

Each student must please ensure that the due dates are scheduled on their learning programme and that they adhere to these dates.

ACTIVITY	DATE & TIME	TOPIC/CONTENT	STUDENT PREPARATION BEFORE SESSIONS	STUDENT ACTIONS AFTER SESSIONS
Summer study school	25-29 January 2021 RM1: 26/01 11:00-13:00 RM2: 27/01 14:00-17:00 RM3: 28/01 08:00-10:30	Study unit 1: Introduction to research Study unit 2: Problem identification and study objectives Study unit 3: Preliminary literature review	Work through the slides loaded on eFundi before the contact sessions. Read Bryman <i>et al.</i> (2014) (Chapters 1-5). Read Saunders <i>et al.</i> (2019) (Chapter 4). Refer to the Research Methodology (RM) Reader on Efundi.	Identify a potential research topic and read about the topic. Decide on a preliminary title. Write the problem statement, study objectives and research question. Conduct a preliminary literature review on the topic.
Online session	24 March 2021 19:00-21:00	Revision: Study units 1-3 Guidelines: Completing Assignment 1	Work through the slides and the assignment guidelines before the online session. Read Bryman <i>et al.</i> (2014) (chapters 1-5). Read Saunders <i>et al.</i> (2019) (chapter 4). Refer to the Research Methodology (RM) Reader on Efundi.	Revise the following deliverables after the session: • The title of the study • Problem statement • Research objectives • Research question • Preliminary literature review • Complete the rest of the assignment

ACTIVITY	DATE & TIME	TOPIC/CONTENT	STUDENT PREPARATION BEFORE SESSIONS	STUDENT ACTIONS AFTER SESSIONS
Submission of Assignment 1	7 April 2021 23:00	Research topic (title and study field) Preliminary literature review Problem statement Primary and secondary objectives Research questions	Refer to the assignment guidelines. Complete the technical care sheet, sign the sheet and attach it to the assignment.	Deliverables: Completed Assignment 1 Signed technical care sheet
Winter study school	19-23 July 2021	Study unit 4: Research design Study unit 5: Sampling and data collection Study unit 6: Introduction to data analyses and interpretation Study unit 7: Writing up the research proposal	Work through the slides loaded on eFundi before the contact sessions. Read Bryman <i>et al.</i> (2014) (Chapters 6-17). Refer to the Research Methodology (RM) Reader on Efundi.	Decide on and write the research design of the study Identify and write the sampling and data collection plan of the study Write the planned data analyses of the research project Writing up the abridged research proposal
Online session	28 July 2021	Revision: Study units 4-7 Guidelines: Completing Assignment 2	Work through the slides and the assignment guidelines before the online session. Read Bryman <i>et al.</i> (2014) (Chapters 6-17). Refer to the Research Methodology (RM) Reader on Efundi.	Revise the deliverables needed to complete Assignment 2
Submission of Assignment 2	4 August 2021 23:00	Amending and improving the content of Assignment 1 Sampling and data collection Research methodology plan	Refer to the assignment guidelines. Complete the technical care sheet, sign the sheet and attach it to the assignment.	Deliverables: Assignment 2 Signed technical care sheet

ACTIVITY	DATE & TIME	TOPIC/CONTENT	STUDENT PREPARATION BEFORE SESSIONS	STUDENT ACTIONS AFTER SESSIONS
Online session	22 September 2021	Revision of the module content Guidelines: Completing Assignment 3	Work through the slides and the assignment guidelines before the online session. Read Bryman <i>et al.</i> (2014) (chapters 1-17). Refer to the Research Methodology (RM) Reader on Efundi.	Amending and finalising the abridged research proposal
Submission of Assignment 3	6 October 2021 23:00	Completed abridged research proposal	Refer to the assignment guidelines. Complete the technical care sheet, sign the sheet and attach it to the assignment.	Deliverables: Assignment 3 Signed technical care sheet
Peer-review of proposals	October 2021	Students have to peer-review at least three proposals of other students in their respective clusters of research (field of study)	Refer to the examination rubric form.	Deliverable: Assessing at least three proposals and completing the examination form (rubric)

Assessing the module

Unlike the other MBA-programme modules, this module demands mostly self-study and stretches over one year. You will attend classes at every study school/session (as per site) and proceed through the module by completing your instructions and assignments, as indicated in this study guide. The final product will be a business research project plan (Business Research Proposal), submitted in October as your 'examination' for the module. Passing this module affects your final progress to MBA2, as it is the input into MBAC873, which is the research mini-dissertation that you must submit at the end of your final MBA year.

Due dates have to be adhered to at all times. Assessment will be via two assignments, which have to be submitted on eFundi (refer to the scheduled dates and time). In addition to the two assignments, you will also need to submit a summative assessment (examination proposal), which will count 50% towards your final mark. The assessment will therefore be in both formal and summative format. Formal assessments will be in the form of completing individual assignments. The summative assessment will be in the form of writing an abridged research proposal.

A student must obtain at least 45% for the two individual assignments to enter into the 'examination'. A subminimum of 45% for the examination and an aggregate mark for all the assessments, not less than 50%, are required to pass the module. Only students who failed the first opportunity (Assignment 3) will be afforded a second opportunity (re-submission.)

Assessment plan

Formal (participation mark)

Assessment method	Maximum marks	Weight
Assignment 1	100	20
Assignment 2	100	20
Peer-review assessments	100	10

Summative (examination mark)

Assessment method	Maximum marks	Weight
Assignment 3 (evaluation by the module leader)	100	25
Assignment 3 (evaluation by the supervisor)	100	15
Assignment 3 (peer-review evaluation)	100	10

Module mark = Participation:Summative (abridged research proposal) = 50:50

The research project plan (proposal), serving as the module's summative assessment, is the point of departure for your research component, since this project plan should guide your empirical research.

The lecturer will act as a facilitator and not as an instructor. The lecturer is not the sole provider of knowledge or insight, but creates the challenge whereby learning about business research methodology and methods becomes an enjoyable process that adds value to the student.

Individual assignments

Assignment	Assignment brief – summary	Due date
Assignment 1 (20%)	Clearly state a topic, describe a business research problem and provide a short literature review to motivate the problem (see briefing).	7 April 2021 23:00
Assignment 2 (20%)	Complete and submit the first draft business research proposal (see briefing and template).	4 August 2021 23:00

Summative assignment (Abridged research proposal)

Assignment	Assignment brief – summary	Due date
Assignment 3 (50%)	Complete and submit an abridged business research proposal (see briefing and template).	6 October 2021 23:00

Note: Refer to the MBAA 874 eFundi site for the assignments' briefing and guidelines.

List of action verbs

The following action verbs are included to give you the clarity to know what is expected of students/learners. Please take specific notice of them. When you come across these action verbs in the outcomes, learning activities, self-evaluations and examination, you can refer back to the definitions listed here to determine how you must interpret the questions so that your answers correspond to what is expected of you.

- **Analyse**

Identify the parts or elements of a concept.

- **Comment**

Give, in short, your opinion on a topic.

- **Compare**

Show the resemblances (aspects that are the same) and the differences between objectives, ideas or perspectives. When you compare two or more objectives, you must systematically complete one aspect first. It is always better to do it in your own words.

- **Criticise**

This means you must indicate whether you agree with a perspective or not. After that, you must describe your refutation or corroboration of your point of view and give reasons for your point of view.

- **Debate**

Take a critical stand and make a formal argument. Present more than one point of view, debate the pros and cons of each, and reach and motivate a conclusion.

- **Define**

Explain the correct meaning of a concept by conveying the necessary characteristics.

- **Demonstrate**

Give and discuss examples. You must give evidence that you know how the process works or how a concept is applied in a real situation.

- **Describe**

Say exactly how something is, give a report on something's characteristics, and describe how something works. No view or argument is needed.

- **Discuss**

Discuss something in your own words. It sometimes requires debating two points of view or two different possibilities.

- **Evaluate**

Discuss the importance of a case through a well-thought-out discussion of the case where you discuss something's importance or value.

- **Exemplify**

A practical illustration of a concept is required.

- **Explain**

Make something more straightforward or simplify it so that it is easier to understand.

- **Identify**

Give the necessary characteristics or aspects of a phenomenon.

- **Indicate**

Indicate, make known, and explain in short.

- **List**

Simply provide a list of names, facts or items asked for. A specific category or order might be required. No discussion or explanation is necessary.

- **Mention**

Name something in short without providing more detail.

- **Motivate**

You must justify the reasons for your statements and points of view. You must try to convince the reader of your point of view.

- **Write an essay**

A detailed description of a subject is required.

Warning against plagiarism

Copying of text from other students or other sources (for instance the study guide, prescribed material, journal articles, books or directly from the internet) is not allowed – only brief quotations are allowed and then only if indicated. Learners are expected to reformulate existing text in their own words in order to prove an understanding of what they have read.

It is not acceptable to retype the existing text and just acknowledge the source in a footnote. Learners should relate the idea or concept, without repeating the original author to the letter. The assignments aim not to reproduce existing material, but to ascertain whether learners can understand and integrate existing texts, add their own interpretation and/or critique of the texts, and offer a creative solution to existing problems.

Explicit warning: No student may copy any part of hard copy or electronic information in academic or non-academic textbooks, articles, assignments, dissertations and other copyrighted sources without acknowledging or referencing the author. A student who copies from another student, or permits a fellow student to copy their original work will be committing misconduct. Furthermore, a student may not pay another person to complete any part of an assignment or dissertation on his or her behalf. Any student who submits plagiarised academic work will be dealt with regarding the policy on plagiarism and other forms of academic dishonesty or misconduct.

Take note: It also came to our attention that some students find ways to manipulate Turn-it-in to ensure a lower similarity index. This type of dishonesty is a crime and a punishable offence. The NWU Business School will spot-check documents with suspiciously low similarity indexes to identify manipulations.

Specific objectives

Study unit 1: Introduction to business research

This study unit aims to introduce the MBA learner to the fundamentals of business research methodology and methods and distinguish between the various research approaches.

After completing this study unit, you should:

- Understand the meaning and purpose of the module and research.
- Be aware of the North-West University and Business School's research processes and support.

- Display working knowledge of business research principles and practices and apply them ethically.
- Be aware of the level of rigour of a master's research project (mini-dissertation).
- Critically evaluate the business research process and distinguish between qualitative and quantitative research.

Study unit 2: Research problem and objectives

This study unit introduces the learner to the first phase of research by identifying the management dilemma and research problem and formulating objectives to carry out the research.

After completing the study unit, you should be able to:

- Develop a relevant business research topic argument and state a title.
- Discuss the management dilemma and problem statement underpinning a specific research project.
- Formulate research objectives, research questions and/or hypotheses.
- Develop a theoretical framework or conceptual model that guides a research project.
- Identify, analyse and comprehend a research problem, based upon a preliminary literature review, as well as formulate a scientific problem statement, research objectives and relevant hypotheses.

Study unit 3: Preliminary literature review

This study unit explains how to carry out a literature search, with all the relevant issues related to such an activity.

After completing the study unit, you should be able to:

- Identify the necessary library facilities and support.
- Assess the value of available secondary and published material to carry out a literature search.
- Conduct a preliminary literature review in support of the research problem.
- Demonstrate your understanding of the NWU Harvard referencing technique.

Study unit 4: Research design

This study unit aims to comprehend the main steps and various business research designs to conduct the research to address the research problem.

After completing the study unit, you should be able to:

- Demonstrate the foundations of business research methodology and methods and plan a research design suitable for the problem statement.
- Critically evaluate the business research process and distinguish between qualitative and quantitative research.

- Select an appropriate research design, sampling method, as well as data collection and analysis methods to support the research question/hypothesis.
- Develop and propose a research design, sampling method, data collection and analysis based on the problem statement and research questions/hypotheses.

Study unit 5: Sampling and data gathering/collection

This study unit aims to introduce the learner to data sampling and data collection.

After completing the study unit, you should:

- Demonstrate command of the various sampling techniques and when each is used.
- Acquire the necessary competence to identify the study population to investigate the business research problem.
- Understand the data collection methods/instruments used in research
- Understand the influence of scale types, question content, question-wording, response strategy and preliminary analysis planning on question construction.
- Understand question design issues influencing instrument quality, reliability and validity (trustworthiness in qualitative studies).
- Be able to source, generate and pre-test (pilot study) measurement questions.
- Demonstrate a command of the ethical conduct to collect quantitative or qualitative data from the study population and sample.

Study unit 6: Introduction to the analysing of data

This study unit aims to introduce the learner to the data analysis process through various quantitative and qualitative research approaches.

After completing the study unit, you should be able to:

- Acquire the necessary competence to conduct business research through various quantitative and qualitative approaches.
- Understand and explain which quantitative data analyses techniques are appropriate for particular research circumstances.

Study unit 7: Develop and complete a research proposal

This study unit aims to provide guidelines and structure for the learner to complete an abridged proposal as a foundation to the ethical clearance proposal and Chapter 1 of the mini-dissertation.

After completing the study unit, you should be able to:

- demonstrate an understanding of a research proposal and its contents.
- develop and complete a sound business-related abridged research proposal that could be further developed in conjunction with an assigned research supervisor for ethical

approval and continuation of the research towards the completion of MBAC 873 – MBA mini-dissertation in the consecutive year in any of the following three formats: Classic mini-dissertation / Article option / Business case study option.

- demonstrate an understanding of business research rigour and critically assess and review others' research (peer-reviews).
- conduct an empirical study on the topic of your choice in order to fulfil the partial requirements of your MBA degree.