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| **OWT.250**  ***Research Methods in Management***  **Assessment Guide**  **Lent Term 2023-2024**  **Module Convenors:**  **Pete Thomas and Kay Greasley**  **Department of Organisation, Work & Technology** |

# Module Assessment

## OWT.250 is worth 15 credits and is assessed 100% by a research proposal (**max: 2500 words).**

## Submission **by 11:00am on Thursday 25th April 2024.**

## Assessment Overview

You are asked to submit a 2,500 words research proposal which outlines how you would conduct research project. You should demonstrate your understanding of the research process by articulating a clear and answerable research question/aim that is feasible, connected to the relevant academic literature and answerable with the research methods you have chosen. This research proposal will provide an outline of how you would go through the research process to find the answer(s) to the proposed research question/aim. You can formulate a proposal on any topic related to Management, Business and Economics **(if you intend to use this as a basis for your final year dissertation, you should check with your Programme Director that the theme/approach is suitable).**

The module is designed so that you can start building your proposal as you learn new elements of research methods, and **the workshop tasks are directly relevant to the assessment** – start as early as possible to be successful!

The proposal should be structured as follows (you should use these titles as section headings):

**Working Title**

This should be no more than 12 words and give the reader an overview of what your research will be exploring.

**Research Topic and Interest**

This should be a brief paragraph introducing what the focus of your research is and should be an identifiable theme in your discipline area. This may be rooted in an issue that has arisen in a particular module you have enjoyed or be something you would like to study/research in more depth, and which is connected to an appropriate academic knowledge base.

**Research Question/Aim**

This should be brief. You should formulate a clear research question or aim and the component sub-questions or sub-objectives that will allow you to accomplish the aim or answer the question. At the UG level you do not need to identify a research gap, but you need to articulate your research questions in connection with the literature review. Pay attention to the criteria of a good research question (clarity, specificity, complexity) and think about how you formulate them with regard to the implications for your research approach.

If you’re proposing quantitative research, you can choose to present your questions as hypotheses.

**Critical literature review**

This is a substantial section in your proposal. You should identify the particular literature to which you will relate your empirical work. Pay attention to the structure of your arguments. The review should start with general issues and definitions and narrow to more specific material (the “funnel” approach). Think about the type of source (10 -15 on average) that you include (peer reviewed article vs news articles, etc.) and how you use them.

**Philosophy, strategy and design**

*Research philosophy*: Will your work be underpinned by a positivist/quantitative or interpretivist/qualitative philosophical position? Why does this approach fit with your research questions, and how does it impact your research proposal?

*Strategy*: Will this work be based on a quantitative or qualitative strategy? Please provide a short rationale for your choice.

*Design*: What research design are you planning (e.g. Cross-sectional, case study, longitudinal etc.)? Is your choice appropriate to answer your research question and is it feasible in the context of a UG dissertation project?

**Method**

This is a substantial section in your research proposal, and you will consider the following subsections or paragraphs:

*Data collection*: Provide details and justification on the kind of data collection you would do (e.g. questionnaires, interviews, focus groups, observation?). Explain how they are suitable for your research question(s) and for your particular research site.

*Sampling strategy or selection of respondents*: Here you will need to identify details of your respondent selection - what/who will be part of the study and why? For example, you may consider what will be a sufficient sample size if doing quantitative work and how you will select a sample, or what criteria you will use to select people to interview in qualitative work.

*Access to research site*: A very short statement of the planned site(s) of your research. This will inevitably be provisional, but you should here engage with questions of feasibility: how do you anticipate negotiating access?

*Data analysis*: Before you collect your data it is important to have a plan of how you are going to analyse it. For example, how will you manage your interview data, transcribing, coding, thematising etc.? If doing a quantitative proposal, what sort of tests do you anticipate running and how will these allow you to test your hypotheses/answer your research questions? How will your methodological choices impact analysis of your data?

**Ethical Considerations**

Outline ethical issues relevant to your plans (e.g. consent, confidentiality, potential harm, during and after the research process. Do you anticipate any conflicts of interest? Take this section seriously and avoid simply stating “ethical considerations will be taken to guarantee respect of confidentiality” and try to think of issues directly related to your proposal. For example, if you are interviewing co-workers during your placement year, how do you guarantee the confidentiality of what they tell you? If you are discussing issues of mental health with fellow students, how will you safeguard your respondents?

**Limitations**

What do you think might be the limitations of the methods selected. What potential, practical problems might you face when attempting to implement this proposal? What steps might you take to safeguard against potential issues (e.g. ‘plan B’).

**Research Timetable**

Demonstration of the feasibility of the project can be supported by supplying a timetable. Consider all the activities that you need to accomplish over this time. This can be presented either in diagram or table format. Please keep in mind some research activities overlap (e.g. further literature review is often conducted while conducting data collection). This exercise is particularly useful for those of you who will be doing a dissertation in your final year.

**References**

Provide a full list of the references you have used in your proposal.

Assessment Criteria

Your proposal will be assessed according to the general criteria (see Annex A). More specifically, for a research proposal, we will be assessing the following:

### Research question/aim and critical literature review

* The research question/aim should be clear, reasonably narrow and feasible
* The structure of the literature review should follow a **clear** format, **positioning** the project clearly within existing debates, and show **logical** progression to the research question(s)
* The literature review should demonstrate **critical** writing/thinking, via the ability to relate and compare various ideas, as well as **evaluate** them for the purpose of the argument

### Strategy, design and method

* This section should demonstrate a clear understanding of the overall principles of research methods by engaging with the following:
  1. A **detailed exploration** of chosen methods
  2. A **clear articulation** of the links between the *nature* of the research question(s) and the chosen strategy, design and method (*fit*), with **justifications** for the chosen data collection and analysis
  3. An evaluation of the ***feasibility*** of the project, anticipating potential issues (such as access to site, timing, complexity, etc) and considering the ***ethical risks*** of the project.

### General presentation

* The overall proposal should be presented in a clear manner (headings are allowed), avoiding overgeneralisations and vague statements.
* The arguments developed should be thoroughly supported with a range of appropriate references, which should be correctly formatted in the text in accordance with academic practice.
* The reference list supplied at the end of your submitted document should be free of any error, correctly formatted, and include all (and only) references used in the text.

# Preparation and Submission Details

Your research proposal should be prepared for submission as follows:

* **Student ID number** to be included on each page in the footer or header section.
* Each page to be numbered and **the word count stated** at the end of your proposal.
* Font Style: Arial, Font Size: 11, using 1.5 line spacing.
* **References to follow Harvard style referencing.**

This module will be marked electronically, and you will receive feedback online via Moodle.

Submit your completed Research Proposal electronically via the module Moodle site in the **‘Assessment submission’** section – you will see a link to the submission area where you need to upload your completed essay.

The file should be submitted as a **Word file** (other formats can cause issues within the Moodle marking page).

Remember to read the declaration that this is your own work and tick the box.

You can delete your submission if the wrong file is submitted, but ONLY until the deadline due time. After this point you will not be able to change it so **TAKE CARE WHEN UPLOADING YOUR FILE.**

The word count does not include: title, reference list/bibliography and appendices. It does not include tables and figures. However, we do warn against placing too much information into these.

The word count is a guide to help you judge the amount of material and analysis needed in a piece of coursework. You should not submit work more than 10% under or over the word limit – otherwise you are likely to be penalised for having an underdeveloped analysis or analysis lacking precision and conciseness.

## Penalties

All course work is to be submitted **by 11:00am** on the due date for submission.

**The submissions will be checked after 11am** and anything received after this time will be deemed as being submitted late and will incur a penalty in accordance with university regulations as follows:

* Coursework submitted up to three days late *(where no extension has been already agreed)* will receive a penalty of one full grade lower than the grade awarded and zero (non-submission) thereafter.

Saturdays and Sundays are included as days in this regulation. However, when the third day falls on a Saturday or Sunday, students will have until 10:00 a.m. on Monday to hand in work without receiving further penalty.

Extensions

Where possible extensions must be sought from the OWT UG Coordinator in the first instance in **advance of the set assessment deadline**.

A completed ‘Extension Request’ form should be submitted to the UG co-ordinator along with any supporting documentation. Please e-mail the UG co-ordinator with your request and the form will be emailed to you for you to fill out and return via e-mail.

Coursework **extensions will only be given for serious illness or serious personal difficulties**, and must be supported by appropriate evidence such as a doctor's sick note (self-certification is not acceptable), or a letter from Student Support confirming personal difficulties.

The request will be reviewed by the Programme Director and a decision confirmed back to you by the UG co-ordinator.

**Please note that the module tutor cannot not approve extensions.**

The University suggests extensions should be granted for the following circumstances:

* Serious or prolonged illness or injury of the student, which is serious enough to require a doctor's certificate for sick leave. In some cases when there is the involvement of relevant counselling or other professional services evidence may be provided by these services;
* Bereavement or serious illness or injury to an immediate family member or significant other of the student;
* Other significant life events of a similar degree of severity (supported by relevant evidence) which are beyond the student’s control and are judged by the department to impact on their ability to submit work by the current deadline;
* Unforeseen events that are deemed by the University to significantly impact on study.

There are some circumstances which **DO NOT** count as mitigation. e.g.:

* Bad time management (too many deadlines/not starting early enough/competing pressures between work and study) – i.e. predictable time pressures/workloads;
* Minor illness (cold/hangover) close to the deadline;
* IT problems – you should back up work regularly. Should you suffer an IT problem, contact the Learning Zone/ISS Help Desk as soon as possible for help with the recovery of lost data.

**Please see the Moodle site for each module for further information about what is classified as extenuating circumstances [**[Exceptional circumstances | ASK - Lancaster University](https://portal.lancaster.ac.uk/ask/exceptional-circumstances/)].

## Marking and Feedback

The University marking turnaround time is 4 weeks (excluding university closure days and public holidays) following submission and the target date for return to you will be shown on the module Moodle page. The UG Coordinator will send a message to you via Moodle/email to confirm when marked essays are ready to view on Moodle.

The tutor will provide overall feedback on your marked work on Moodle and will also add comments throughout your essay, both of which will be given back to you.

This feedback is intended to guide you and to be constructive in helping you to improve your coursework so please ensure you read the comments.

# Annex A – LUMS Grade Descriptors

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| Result | Broad  Descriptor | Grade | Aggregation  Score | Primary level descriptors for attainment of Intended Learning Outcomes | Honours  Class |
| Pass | Excellent | A+  A  A– | 24  21  18 | Exemplary range and depth of attainment of intended learning outcomes, secured by discriminating command of a comprehensive range of relevant materials and analyses, and by deployment of considered judgement relating to key issues, concepts and procedures | First |
| Pass | Good | B+  B  B– | 17  16  15 | Conclusive attainment of virtually all intended learning outcomes, clearly grounded on a close familiarity with a wide range of supporting evidence, constructively utilised to reveal appreciable depth of understanding | 2:1 |
| Pass | Satisfactory | C+  C  C– | 14  13  12 | Clear attainment of most of the intended learning outcomes, some more securely grasped than others, resting on a circumscribed range of evidence and displaying a variable depth of understanding | 2:2 |
| Pass | Weak | D+  D  D– | 11  10  9 | Acceptable attainment of intended learning outcomes, displaying a qualified familiarity with a minimally sufficient range of relevant materials, and a grasp of the analytical issues and concepts which is generally reasonable, albeit insecure | Third |
| Fail | Marginal fail | F1 | 7 | Attainment deficient in respect of specific intended learning outcomes, with mixed evidence as to the depth of knowledge and weak deployment of arguments or deficient manipulations | Fail |
| Fail | Fail | F2 | 4 | Attainment of intended learning outcomes appreciably deficient in critical respects, lacking secure basis in relevant factual and analytical dimensions |
|  |  |  |  |  |
| Fail | Poor fail | F3 | 2 | Attainment of intended learning outcomes appreciably deficient in respect of nearly all intended learning outcomes, with irrelevant use of materials and incomplete and flawed explanation |  |
| Fail | Very poor fail | F4 | 0 | No convincing evidence of attainment of any intended learning outcomes, such treatment of the subject as is in evidence being directionless and fragmentary |