

**MN3201 – RESEARCH METHODS 1:
CULTURES OF FORMAL KNOWLEDGE-MAKING**

MODULE TYPE/SEMESTER: Junior Honours/**Core** (20 Credits)/Semester 1

PRE-REQUISITE(S): Entry to a Single Honours Management

CO-REQUISITE(S): MN3202

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AIMS:

The module seeks to provide students with a meticulous understanding and nuanced appreciation of ways of knowing the social world through diverse social science approaches. Upon completing this module, students will:

- have a sound grasp of theoretical concepts that underpin different traditions in social science research;
- have the capacity to engage constructively and thoughtfully with social science research literature.

Alongside these two core aims, the module helps students become familiar with the political and ethical implications of knowledge creation. Students will come to know knowledge-making as socially-embedded phenomena of power and resistance.

THE MODULE IN CONTEXT

This module begins a sequence of three linked honours modules addressing ideas of knowledge creation, application and use in contexts of responsible enterprise: MN3201, MN3202 and MN4301.

This first module (MN3201) explores how we can attempt to know the world through systematic empirical study. It emphasises the crucial importance of theory in the creation of understandings, introduces notions of methodological rigour and critical appreciation, and highlights the political and ethical connotations of knowledge-making.

The second module (MN3202) builds on these new understandings and skills by facilitating students to think through how they would investigate a social or managerial phenomenon of their choice. In doing so, students are encouraged to reflect critically on methodological underpinnings and choice of methods, the importance of research ethics, and the politics of use of any knowledge generated. In developing their proposals, students are also introduced to practical issues such as reflexivity, self-management and getting the best out of supervision.

The final (optional) module in this suite (MN4301) can be accessed by those students who now wish to operationalise their planned project from MN3202 (after reflections on any appropriate modifications). Here, intensive self-study under close one-to-one supervision allows development and execution of the project outlined as a proposal. This module again strengthens independent learning, appreciation of ethics, and reflexivity, as well as exposing students to the wide range of practical difficulties encountered during data gathering, analysis and interpretation.

METHOD OF TEACHING & LEARNING.

Individual study, small-group and individual tasks, peer-to-peer discussion supported by tutorial input in all sessions. A 2-hour session (blend of lecture-type and interactive) each week (x 10 weeks) supplemented by tutorials (x3 across the module). Assessed individual essays.

Please note: the core learning for this class comes from active small-group discussions and conversations amongst the learning community alongside guided independent study. Full participation in the weekly tasks is essential to get full value from the module.

Most importantly, note that **materials are released** (via Moodle) **at the start of each week. The purpose of Tuesday session is to reflect on students' responses to these materials. You are expected to work with them individually in advance of the session.**

LEARNING OUTCOMES:

By the end of the module, students should be able to:

- understand and articulate diverse ways of observing and conceptualising the social world;
- comprehend the (often obscured) political roles that research-based knowledge plays in societies, organisations and management;
- knowledgeably discuss different research approaches, methodologies and methods, appreciating their relative strengths and weaknesses and relations to each other;
- critically and appreciatively analyse published empirical research studies;
- explain and critique the role of research-based knowledge in organisations and management;
- explore linkages between knowledge, politics, power and ethics in the context of responsible enterprise.

INDICATIVE TOPIC OUTLINE:

Topics by week: materials are released at the beginning of each week. Synchronous interactive sessions take place on Tuesday.

Full attendance is expected, and a register will be taken.

Week

- 1 **Module foundations.** Agenda and ground rules for course; staff and student introductions; reflection on introductory materials and introductory task; introduce Assignment 1.
- 2 **Thinking in paradigms:** How can we begin to make sense of, and classify, different ways of inquiring about social worlds, in relation to each other?
- 3 **Theory for gathering data:** Appreciating theory as a necessary 'lens' and structure for making sense of observation and experience.
- 4 **Focus on quantitative methods:** Scrutinising paradigms and approaches associated with quantitative methods (eg. positivism and realism).
- 5 **Focus on qualitative methods.** Scrutinising paradigms and approaches associated with qualitative methods (eg. constructionism, interpretivism).
- 6 **Independent Learning Week:** Student-led learning and work on first assessed coursework
- 7 **Constructive analysis 1:** Quality, coherence and persuasiveness in quantitative and qualitative research.
- 8 **Constructive analysis 2:** Engaging constructively and thoughtfully with scholarly texts.
- 9 **Assessment 2 support:** to engage with the set texts in a supported way, divert any common misconceptions, guard against nihilism and short-cut thinking.
- 10 **Drawing lessons from the module:** And looking ahead to RM2 – what insights will you take forward towards planning your own research?
- 11 **Independent study for Assessment 2.**

ASSESSMENT:

Continuous assessment is employed throughout. There will be two pieces of assessed work, equally weighted (50% + 50%):

- An essay-based question exploring aspects of research approaches, their conceptual foundations and methodological considerations.
- A practical test of constructive analysis skills, using set texts.

CORE READING LIST:

Specific readings are given each week, and related readings suggested. Students should use research methods textbooks for independent study. Many are available, and students should use various of these to deepen their knowledge.

Three key texts (whose earlier editions are still good) that will provide a good background are:

- Business research methods / Bryman and Bell (Oxford university press, 2019)
- Management research / Easterby-Smith, Thorpe and Jackson (Sage, 2008)
- Doing critical management research / Alvesson and Deetz (Sage, 2000)

Organisation of courses may be subject to change without notice.