



University of the
West of England

MODULE SPECIFICATION

Code: UMKCSE-60-M **Title:** Marketing Communications Dissertation **Version:** 2

Level: M **UWE credit rating:** 60 **ECTS credit rating:** 30

Module type: Dissertation

Owning Faculty: FBL **Field:** Marketing

Valid from: 1 September 2008 **Discontinued from:**
(Revised September 2010)

Contributes towards: MSc Marketing Communications

Pre-requisites: none

Co-requisites: none

Excluded combinations: none

Aim of module

The marketing communications dissertation provides students with the opportunity to investigate a marketing communications topic in-depth. Completion of the dissertation and a taught course in dissertation methods will enable students to develop significant research skills. The research process will enable students to develop skills in the analysis and synthesis of complex material and to develop skills in planning and managing a substantial analytical marketing communications investigation.

Learning outcomes

On successful completion of this module students will be able to:

- Demonstrate knowledge and understanding of their chosen marketing communications subject specialism, including leading edge, research based material in this subject area;
- Demonstrate knowledge and understanding of research philosophies, strategies and methodologies that can be used in the area of their marketing communications specialism;
- Critically evaluate academic literature, sources, arguments and interpretations, assessing their relevance to the marketing communications issue in question, discriminating between opposing viewpoints and forming judgements on the basis of evidence and argument;
- Critically evaluate their own research and form judgement on its suitability for dealing with the selected marketing communications context ;
- Synthesise information (academic literature as well as own research findings), resulting in innovative solutions to the selected marketing communications issue;
- Make use of the academic perspective as well as primary research findings to make practical marketing communications recommendations that management could implement, while providing directions for future research;
- Make discriminating use of a range of information sources, identifying and acknowledging appropriate material that can be used to inform their own marketing communications research;
- Communicate ideas, information and arguments in a clear, organised, and well presented written proposal and dissertation.

All of the above will be assessed. In addition, the educational experience may explore, develop, and practise, but not formally discretely assess, the following:

- Oral presentation, communications and negotiation skills through a supervision process;
- Time management skills;
- Effectiveness at working independently with the minimum of guidance;
- Reflection on own learning;
- Use of appropriate IT and electronic data resource to aid efficient searching, communication and presentation of information.

Syllabus outline

Research methods

- **Introduction to business and management research:** definitions of research; debates on the nature, generation and dissemination of knowledge; features and the range of business, management and marketing research; ontology, epistemology and methodology; aims and structure of the course
- **Research planning:** the research process; generating a research topic and conceptualising the research problem; selecting an appropriate methodological approach; research design and project management; negotiating access; ethical issues in business and management research.
- **Reviewing the literature:** purpose and process of literature review; use of library data-bases and the internet; characteristics of a convincing, critical literature review; relationship with the conceptual/analytical framework informing the research; attribution of sources; use of appropriate software packages.
- **The survey method:** characteristics of the survey method; potential scope of application; questionnaire design and piloting sampling techniques; questionnaire administration, data analysis, and evaluation.
- **Quantitative data analysis:** statistical data analysis techniques; presentation of statistical data.
- **Qualitative interviewing and observation methods:** interviewing, observation and ethnography; planning and conducting semi-structured and unstructured interviews; recording, analysing and evaluating the data; types of observation study and examples of use in business & management research.
- **Case study approach:** nature, types and applications of the case study method; planning and conducting a case study investigation; use of multiple data collection methods; organising, analysing and evaluating the findings.
- **Qualitative data analysis:** quantifying and non-quantifying methods of qualitative data analysis; evaluating the data and analysis; presentation of qualitative data.
- **Writing-up and presentation of research findings:** planning the work, getting started and avoiding the problems and pitfalls; structuring the dissertation report, organising the content, achieving overall coherence writing styles and issues of presentation.
- **Critical evaluation of research methodologies and methods:** the indeterminacy of knowledge; evaluating critically the purpose of an investigation, approach adopted and results obtained

Research Proposal:

Defining research problem (corporate relevance, academic interest and validity, application of taught material, originality, data usage); setting context of research (major issues or hypotheses) and justification of purpose of research (clarity of purpose, balance, critique)

Establishing objectives; the literature review; selecting data collection methods (variety, triangulation), measurement techniques and samples; identifying resource requirements; specifying time/milestones; specifying financial cost; preparing research proposal

Final Dissertation:

Structure; writing style (accuracy, clarity, conciseness, unity, readability); referencing, attribution and citations; presentation of data and results.

Teaching & Learning Strategy

Support for the module includes a teaching programme designed to help students prepare for the marketing communications dissertation as well as a personal tutoring system which is used to support students during completion of the dissertation.

The taught element for the module consists of 24 hours of formal class sessions which include staff mini-lectures, student-led discussions and debates as well as exercises involving the practical

application of social marketing research concepts, principles and techniques. The classes are a key component in preparing students for the dissertation and are designed to:

- guide students in marketing communications topic selection and problem formulation
- develop student knowledge and understanding of research philosophies, strategies and data analysis in the context of business and management research overall, and marketing communications in particular.
- equip students with the knowledge and skills required to plan, undertake and effectively manage a substantial, analytical investigation of an organisational practices, issue or problem in a marketing communications related area.

Completion of the taught programme results in the preparation of a research proposal. This is assessed and acts as a foundation for the dissertation.

The marketing communications dissertation itself represents a significant piece of independent study undertaken by students. Involvement of academic staff in student completion of the dissertation is limited to the role of tutor, providing guidance for example on standards expected, planning stages of work and constructive criticism of proposed actions, thought processes and presentation of work.

Resources such as the University Library as well as the study skills web pages will aid learning

Reading Strategy

All students will be encouraged to make full use of the print and electronic resources available to them through membership of the University. These include a range of electronic journals and a wide variety of resources available through web sites and information gateways. The University Library's web pages provide access to subject relevant resources and services, and to the library catalogue. Many resources can be accessed remotely. Students will be presented with opportunities within the curriculum to develop their information retrieval and evaluation skills in order to identify such resources effectively.

Essential reading

There is a multitude of research process and methods texts from the area of applied business/marketing research that students could draw successfully from when undertaking their dissertation. The specifics of the dissertation topic will determine the most suitable sources. However, for an appropriate general research textbook that will help with the research process overall and with many of the methodological issues students will face, we recommend purchase of the following:

Zigmond, W.G., and Zigmond, E.G. (2003) *Business Research Methods*, 7th Edition, Mason, OH: South-Western.

to which they will often certainly be referred during the Research Methods course. As the Marketing Communications Dissertation Handbook will have the most current details on reading strategy, students are advised to check before proceeding to purchase.

Any additional essential reading material will be provided. Where possible, materials will be made available on Blackboard for easy access.

Further reading

As well as the Essential Reading, students will be expected to read articles as directed by the tutor or as part of a self learning strategy. Additionally, to further enliven class discussions, students will be expected to be alert to 'live' or recent examples of marketing communications in the press that may be prevalent during the module.

Indicative reading list

As well as the Essential Reading, students will be expected to read articles as dictated by their dissertation topic. This should extend to relevant periodicals but may also include textbooks. The following constitutes a list of additional textbooks that students may find useful and which will be available through the University Library:

Baker, M.J. & Foy, A. (2003) *Business and Management Research*, 2nd Edition, Helensburgh:

Westburn.

Bearden., W. & Netemeyer, R. (1999) *Handbook of Marketing Scales* 2nd edition, London: Sage.

Bourque, L. B. & Clarke, V. A. (1992) *Processing Data: The Survey Example*, London: Sage.

Bruner, G.C., James, K. & Hensel, P.J. (2001) *Marketing Scales Handbook: A Compilation of Multi-Item Measures*, Mason, OH: South-Western.

Burrell, G. & Morgan, G. (1979) *Sociological Paradigms and Organisational Analysis*, London: Heinemann.

Carson D., Gilmore, A., Perry, C. & Gronhaug, K. (2001) *Qualitative Marketing Research*, London: Sage.

Cresswell, J. W. (2002) *Research Design: Qualitative, Quantitative, and Mixed Approaches*, Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

Cryer, P. (2000) *The Research Student's Guide to Success*, 2nd Edition, Milton Keynes: Open University Press.

Daymon, C. & Holloway, I. (2002) *Qualitative Research Methods in Public Relations and Marketing Communications*, London: Routledge.

Denzin, N. K. & Lincoln, Y. S., (Eds.) (2000) *Handbook of Qualitative Research*, 2nd Edition, Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

Easterby-Smith, M., Thorpe, R. & Lowe, A., (2002) *Management Research: An Introduction*, 2nd Edition, London: Sage.

Gill, J. & Johnson, P. (2002) *Research Methods for Managers*, 3rd Edition, London: Sage.

Gomm R., Hammersley R, & Foster P (2000) *Case study method: key issues, key texts*, London: Sage.

Gummesson, E. (2000) *Qualitative Methods in Management Research*, 2nd Edition, London: Sage.

Hakim, C. (2000) *Research Design: Successful Designs for Social and Economic Research*, 2nd Edition, London: Routledge.

Kervin, J. B. (1992) *Methods for Business Research*, New York: Harper-Collins.

Mariampolski, H. (2001) *Qualitative market research: a comprehensive guide*, London: Sage.

Miles, M.B. & Huberman, A.M. (1994) *Qualitative Data Analysis*, 2nd Edition, London: Sage.

Patton, M.Q. (2002) *Qualitative research and evaluation methods*, 3rd Edition, Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage

Polonsky, M.J. & Waller, D.S. (2005) *Designing and Managing a Research Project: A Business Student's Guide*, Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

Robson, C. (2002) *Real World Research*. 2nd Edition, Oxford: Blackwell.

Rudestam, K.E. & Newton, R.R. (2000) *Surviving Your Dissertation*, 2nd Edition, Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

Saunders, M., Lewis, P. & Thornhill, A. (2007) *Research Methods for Business Students*, 4th Edition, Harlow: FT Prentice Hall.

Silverman, D. (2001) *Interpreting Qualitative Data: Methods for Analysing Talk, Text and Interaction*. 2nd Edition, London: Sage.

Strauss, A. and Corbin, J. (2008) *Basics of Qualitative Research techniques and procedures for developing grounded theory*. 3rd Edition, London: Sage.

Vince, R. (1995) 'Emphasizing Learning in Management Research'. *Management Learning*, 26(1), 55-71.

Assessment

The assessment is split into two sections, the dissertation and the dissertation proposal.

The dissertation proposal identifies and limits the topic to be researched and identifies an appropriate methodology for the study. This has a word limit of 5000 words and accounts for 20% of the final mark.

The dissertation is an extended piece of work (18,000–20,000 words) investigating a marketing communications topic-in-depth, during which the student will have guidance from a dissertation supervisor. This accounts for 80% of the final mark.

Percentage Split

Weighting between components A (controlled component) and B : N/A

ATTEMPT 1

First Assessment Opportunity

Component A

Description of each element

	Element weighting
1. Dissertation proposal (5000 words) (Final assessment)	20%
2. Dissertation 18,000–20,000 words	80%

Second Assessment Opportunity (further attendance at taught classes is not required)

Component A

Description of each element

	Element weighting
1. Dissertation 18,000–20,000 words	100%

ATTEMPT 2 (OR SUBSEQUENT): Attendance at taught classes is not required