

BE425 Coursework Brief (2020-2021)

Research Plan (40%) – 1500 words

In preparation for Capstone projects in your final year, and in order to meet the relevant Learning Outcomes for this module (please see Module Guide), this assignment is designed to help you develop the skills involved in planning and designing small-scale research projects in Management and/or Marketing. With this in mind, the assignment requires you to work through the following process:

- Choosing a topic
- Searching and reviewing literature
- Critically evaluating published research
- Identifying a research question and objective(s)
- Selecting a suitable case study for data collection and analysis
- Identifying any practical, ethical or legal issues in your research

For this assignment, you must write a 1,500 word Research Plan focusing on ONE of the topics listed below.

Once you have chosen your topic, you should complete the following seven sections (ideally using the headings and structure suggested):

1. Introduction (approx. 250 words)

Topic, Research Question/ Objective, Rationale and Road Map for the Plan: In this first section, briefly introduce your chosen research topic, its rationale and significance, state your research question and objective and provide an outline (“road map”) for the coursework assignment (i.e, say what you will do, and in what order).

Tip: Don't write this section until you have finished writing the rest of the document – it is always best to write your introduction, and provide a road map, once you know exactly what rest of the document will be saying.

2. Key Terms (approx. 50 words)

List the five best key terms you have used to search for relevant academic literature on your topic and explain why these terms have proven to be the most appropriate for your literature search. There may be a very large body of published work on your topic, or not very much at all, depending on how emergent the topic is within management and marketing research. Your aim is to focus, not to try to cover everything -- so try not to be too broad. Your key terms may change as you do your search, and come across more relevant or useful terms, but list the five that have proven most appropriate in the write-up of your coursework assignment.

3. Annotated Literature Review (approx. 500 words)

This is a 'mini' literature review and could provide the basis for a more thorough review at a later date. **Produce a list of FIVE relevant articles in academic journals that focus on your topic.** For the annotated review, first give a full Harvard-style reference for each article. **Then, for each article, provide a short summary of what each article is about.** This section should be about 500 words overall, so you should aim to write about 100 words for each article. We are looking for you to clearly summarize the main focus of each article, and to briefly explain and evaluate its contribution to understanding the topic (What does it tell us? What can we learn about the topic?). Ideally, you should be able to identify any gaps or questions, or avenues for further research that the papers you have read so far open up.

You do NOT need to compare and contrast each paper, but you may want to identify areas of overlap and similarity, as well as any significant differences in approach. Your focus should be on the substance of each article, not its style.

Tips: Please refer to the "EBS Harvard Referencing Quick Guide" posted on the BE425 Moodle page, for guidance in properly formatting your references. Some articles might focus in depth on just one of your key words, others might address several or even all of your terms. It is useful to find articles that are quite recent and/or have been widely cited. You can tell this from Google Scholar, which tells you how many times the article has been cited in other word – this gives you an idea of how important and influential it has been in the area.

4. Research Question and Objective(s) (approx. 100 words)

Based on the reading that you have done so far, identity ONE research question/objective(s) that you think would provide the basis for an interesting, important and timely contribution to research on your chosen topic. You will have very briefly introduced this question in your introduction. In this section, state again what your question/objective is, and then explain why you have chosen to focus on this particular aspect of the topic. Aim for clarity and focus – so only around 100 words for this short section. Ideally, you need to evaluate what we can learn from the combined insights of the five papers you have reviewed (state what we already know from the literature), and what gaps from the literature/ topic emerge that has not been covered in previous research (what we don't yet know, or haven't thought about). It should be clear to the marker/examiner how your question/objective(s) has emerged from your reading of these articles, and how your chosen question/objective (s) might form the basis of a future research project on the topic under consideration.

5. Case Study Design (approx. 500 words)

Identify ONE case study (example of an organization, programme, event) that you might research to help you collect and analyse data to answer your question and address your objective(s). Explain why you will use this case? What type of data would you collect and potentially analyse? Briefly state some practical limitations and ethical concerns that you may encounter. You should aim to write around 500 words in this section.

Please note: You do not need to actually do the case-study analysis. Just select a case that you might analyse, and explain your choice. State what would you study and why. Your selection and rationale are what you will be marked on in this section of the assignment.

Tip: This should be a 'real' organization, not a fictitious one. It does not have to be a business; it might be an NGO, government agency or political party. There are many ways of identifying a good case-study organization. You can use the academic literature that you have reviewed, search through the mainstream media, the business press, or google for ideas. You could look at examples that have been in the news recently, because of particular issues or initiatives. You could examine lists of organizations such as the Times Top 100 Employers.

6. Summary (approx. 100 words)

End with a relatively **brief summary stating any potential contribution/ value of the research.**

7. References

You must provide a full list of References for all sources cited in the whole assignment. Your reference list should ONLY include material cited in the review, including (but not limited to) the five papers you have reviewed. **References at the end of your assignment are not included in the total word count.** Any assignments that do not include a full list of References will be marked as incomplete.

NOTE: Coursework assignments must be spell-checked and proof-read prior to submission, and they must be fully referenced, with all in-text citations using the Harvard (author, date) system. All assignments should be written in the first person (using 'I', 'me', and 'my' to refer to oneself, rather than 'the researcher' or 'the author'). Please make sure that you are fully aware of the University's guidelines on how to avoid plagiarism, and the consequences of committing an academic offence before you begin work on your assignment. If you have any questions or concerns, please ask any of the lecturers on the module, or your class tutor.

Suggested Topics (but not limited to)

Big data
Climate change
Consumer behaviour/Consumer Psychology
Corporate branding
Corporate culture management

Corporate social responsibility
Cross-cultural marketing
Discrimination in recruitment and selection
Digital economies
Digital Innovation and management
Digital marketing & social media
Entrepreneurial culture
Environment and sustainability
Gender discrimination
Gender pay gap
Gig Economy
Global value chains
Heritage branding
Human Resource Management
Information systems management
International competitiveness
International supply chain management
IT innovation and work transformation
Managing voluntary workers
Multi-lingual organizations
Multi-stakeholder regulation
Non-profit organizations/Charities
Occupational segregation by gender
Organizational space and architecture
Organizational surveillance and new technologies
SME's and/or family businesses
Social enterprises
Social media and digital marketing
Social movements
Sustainability/Triple bottom line reporting
Tax evasion
Team working
Wage policy (fair wages and discrimination)
Whistle-blowing and ethical disclosures
Work-life balance and/or the 'overwork' culture
Workforce skill development

Marking criteria

Distinction (72 and above) – Excellent/ Outstanding answer

- It should provide a clear justification of the importance or relevance of the chosen topic and research question(s).
- It should clearly identify five relevant key words, and briefly state why they were selected in searching for the literature.
- It should be well connected to existing literature on the topic and highlight its relevance to the topic.

- It should clearly propose and justify a research question/ objectives(s) based on the gaps in existing literature.
- It should clearly justify a practical case design; in terms of sampling, access, collection of data and proposed data analysis technique.
- It should show awareness of any possible problems or limitations in conducting the research.
- It should demonstrate good ethical awareness of research practice.
- It should show coherence in connecting the elements of the research philosophy, approach, design, methods and proposed data analysis.
- It should clearly provide a summary of the research stating any contribution/ value of research.
- It should display correct use and format of references.

Upper Second Class (62 - 68) – Good/ Very Good answers

- It should provide some justification of the importance or relevance of the chosen topic and research question(s).
- It should identify five relevant key words, and briefly state why they were selected in searching for the literature.
- It should be connected to existing literature on the topic and highlight its relevance to the topic.
- It should propose a research question/ objectives(s) with limited justification based on the gaps in existing literature.
- It should identify some elements of a practical case design; in terms of sampling, access, collection of data and proposed data analysis technique.
- It should show some awareness of any possible problems or limitations in conducting the research.
- It should demonstrate some level of ethical awareness of research practice.
- It should show some coherence in connecting the elements of the research philosophy, approach, design, methods and proposed data analysis.
- It should provide a summary of the research; stating any contribution/ value of research.
- It should display some correct use and format of references.

Lower Second Class (52- 58) – Satisfactory answers

- It will provide little justification of the importance or relevance of the chosen topic and research question(s).
- It will identify three to five relevant key words, without stating why they were selected in searching for the literature.
- It will be loosely connected to existing literature on the topic and highlight its relevance to the topic.
- It will propose a research question/ objectives(s), but will not provide justification in highlighting the gaps in existing literature.
- It will not illustrate a case design that may not be fully practical; in terms of sampling, access, collection of data and proposed data analysis technique.

- It will show little awareness of any possible problems or limitations in conducting the research.
- It will demonstrate limited ethical awareness of research practice.
- It will not be completely coherent in connecting the elements of the research philosophy, approach, design, methods and proposed data analysis.
- It will not provide a clear summary of the research stating any contribution/ value of research.
- It will display limited use and incorrect format of references.

Pass (42-48) – Basic answers

- It will provide very limited justification of the importance or relevance of the chosen topic and research question(s).
- It will identify three to five relevant key words, without stating why they were selected in searching for the literature.
- It will be weakly connected to existing literature on the topic, failing to highlight its relevance to the topic.
- It will propose an unclear research question/ objectives(s), and will not provide justification in highlighting the gaps in existing literature.
- It will not illustrate a fully practical case design; in terms of sampling, access, collection of data and proposed data analysis technique.
- It will show very limited awareness of any possible problems in conducting the research.
- It will demonstrate very limited ethical awareness of research practice.
- It will not be coherent in connecting the elements of the research philosophy, approach, design, methods and proposed data analysis.
- It will not provide a clear summary of the research stating any contribution/ value of research.
- It will display very limited use and incorrect format of references.

Fail (Under 40) – Poor answers

- It will provide very limited/ no justification of the importance or relevance of the chosen topic and research question(s).
- It will identify two to five relevant key words, without stating why they were selected in searching for the literature.
- It will be very poorly connected to existing literature on the topic, failing to highlight its relevance to the topic.
- It will propose an unclear research question/ objectives(s), and will not provide justification in highlighting the gaps in existing literature.
- It will illustrate a poor case design; in terms of sampling, access, collection of data and proposed data analysis technique.
- It will show no awareness of any possible practical problems in conducting the research.
- It will demonstrate no ethical awareness of research practice.
- It will not be coherent in connecting the elements of the research philosophy, approach, design, methods and proposed data analysis.

- It will not provide a summary of the research stating clearly any contribution/ value of research.
- It will display poor use and incorrect format of references.
- Weak grammar, spelling errors and misunderstanding of the key concepts.
- Parts of the question have not been answered.

Feedback

Feedback will be provided in three forms: (i) individual feedback on FASER (ii) generic (group) feedback on Moodle, and (iii) informal feedback discussion during the final class of the term. Please pay particular attention to any developmental feedback given.

Learning Support

Lorcan Whitehead and Hugh Kilmister provide support for all Essex Business School students. You can use this support at any time to have a general discussion about study skills to help you with your studies, to talk through any difficulties you are experiencing, or to discuss feedback on your coursework and to get advice on how to improve your grades. You can contact the EBS Learning Support team on eblearningteam@essex.ac.uk or 01206 872314. You can also find study skills resources on Moodle on the EBS Student Resources page.