

School of Information Management

## COMM 589 RESEARCH PROJECT

Trimesters 1, 2 & 3 2007

### COURSE OUTLINE

**Course Coordinator:**

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**Course Administrator:**

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**Course Dates:** 12 month period from the time enrolment commences. There are no scheduled lectures or tutorials to attend. Attendance is in the form of regular meetings with your supervisor, by arrangement.

#### Course Objectives

COMM 589 is a 45-point research project, and is compulsory for the Master of Communications degree. It is an extension of work undertaken in COMM 504, which provides an introduction to the various research methodologies and research procedures; it is normally expected, therefore, that you will have completed and passed COMM 504 prior to COMM 589.

COMM 589 is designed to assess a student's ability to:

- identify, clarify, and investigate a problem/topic;
- locate, analyse, and integrate relevant literature;
- gather and analyse additional data if appropriate;
- to apply theory to practice, and
- present a coherent and well organised argument based on all of these.

#### Course Content

There are four stages involved in successful completion of the research project; each of these must be completed in sequence.

### **Stage 1: Topic Approval and Supervisor allocation**

You are required to submit a brief description of your proposed research topic to the Course Coordinator using the prescribed Topic Approval Form (contact Programme Administrator for the TAF). Supervisor allocation may take 1-2 weeks and it is advisable that

### **Stage 2: Research Proposal**

*Length: 2500-3000 words*

*Value: 20% of assessment*

A research proposal is required as the first piece of assessment in COMM 589 and must be submitted to your supervisor 2 months after enrolment. The proposal must be assessed and assigned a passing mark by your supervisor **before** you proceed with your research study. If your proposal is not of a passing standard, or has major deficiencies, you may not proceed until the proposal has been revised to your supervisor's satisfaction.

Please note that the revision of an unsatisfactory proposal must be completed within 4 weeks and that such revision will not receive more than a minimum pass (50%).

The proposal should demonstrate:

- a. that you have identified an interesting and worthwhile problem for investigation.
- b. that you have the means for conducting a viable investigation within the time frame available.

### **Stage 3: Human Ethics Approval**

If your project involves human subjects - i.e. asking people their views, or observing people doing something - you must find out whether you will require approval from the SIM Human Ethics Committee. For relevant forms and further information, you should refer to the Guidelines and Procedures page on the SIM website, at <http://www.sim.vuw.ac.nz/research/hec/index.aspx>.

### **Stage 4: Completion of the Project**

*Length: 15,000-18,000 words*

*Value: 80% of assessment*

Once you have been informed that the proposal is ready for implementation, you can proceed with your research study. You will be studying a problem in depth, and gaining hands-on experience of designing and conducting research on a relatively small scale. You will experience directly the difficulties inherent in research, and should gain an appreciation of the essentially tentative nature of knowledge, evidence and data available to the social sciences and communication professions.

### **Materials and Equipment**

Students should ensure they read the printed *COMM 589 Guidelines*, which has additional information on Proposal and Project guidelines.

## **Assessment Requirements**

There are two pieces of assessment in COMM 589; a formal research proposal (worth 20% of the total mark) and a completed research report (worth 80% of the total mark), written in the format and style expected of those who undertake scholarly or applied research. Terms requirements for COMM 589 are that **both** pieces of work must achieve a pass mark.

Your supervisor will be responsible for marking both the research proposal and final research report. They may also be reviewed by another academic staff member of the School, as well as by the Course Co-ordinator.

Both the proposal and final research report will be assessed according to those elements in the following criteria that are relevant to your particular approach to the investigation:

- \* problem statement/research question
- \* literature review (coverage of relevant primary and secondary materials)
- \* critical analysis of source material
- \* methodology
- \* data analysis and graphic presentations
- \* conclusions
- \* understanding of theories and concepts
- \* coherence and development of ideas
- \* original thought and critical evaluation
- \* clarity of communication (organisation of material and readability)
- \* correct spelling, grammar, citations.

## **Timetables, extensions and withdrawal**

You will have enrolled for a 12 month period and should expect to spend an average of 450 on the project.

If you withdraw from COMM 589 within 4 weeks of the trimester commencing, you may re-enrol at a later date and continue working on the same topic. If you withdraw after this date, or do not withdraw and fail to submit a project, you may be required by the Course Co-ordinator to develop a new topic upon re-enrolment. If you complete but do not pass COMM 589, upon re-enrolment you may be permitted to continue with the previous topic, or you may be required by the Course Co-ordinator to select a new topic.

Withdrawal from the project requires formal notification to your supervisor and you must contact the programme administrator to obtain a change of course form. Please note that to gain withdrawal with refund, you are still required to withdraw within the timeframes set by the University as documented on the back of your change of course form and in the University Calendar.

## **Faculty of Commerce and Administration Offices**

### Railway West Wing (RWW) - FCA Student and Academic Services Office

The Faculty's Student and Academic Services Office is located on the ground and first floors of the Railway West Wing. The ground floor counter is the first point of contact for general enquiries and FCA forms. Student Administration Advisers are available to discuss course

status and give further advice about FCA qualifications. To check for opening hours call the Student and Academic Services Office on (04) 463 5376.

#### Easterfield (EA) - FCA/Education/Law Kelburn Office

The Kelburn Campus Office for the Faculties of Commerce and Administration, Education and Law is situated in the Easterfield Building - it includes the ground floor reception desk (EA005) and offices 125a to 131 (Level 1). The office is available for the following:

- Duty tutors for student contact and advice.
- Information concerning administrative and academic matters.
- Forms for FCA Student and Academic Services (e.g. application for academic transcripts, requests for degree audit, COP requests).
- Examinations-related information during the examination period.

To check for opening hours call the Student and Academic Services Office on (04) 463 5376.

#### **General University Policies and Statutes**

Students should familiarise themselves with the University's policies and statutes, particularly the Assessment Statute, the Personal Courses of Study Statute, the Statute on Student Conduct and any statutes relating to the particular qualifications being studied; see the Victoria University Calendar or go to [www.vuw.ac.nz/policy](http://www.vuw.ac.nz/policy).

For information on the following topics, go to the Faculty's website [www.vuw.ac.nz/fca](http://www.vuw.ac.nz/fca) under Important Information for Students:

- Academic Grievances
- Academic Integrity and Plagiarism
- Student and Staff Conduct
- Meeting the Needs of Students with Impairments
- Student Support

#### **Manaaki Pihipihinga Programme**

Manaaki Pihipihinga is an academic mentoring programme for undergraduate Māori and Pacific students in the Faculties of Commerce and Administration, and Humanities and Social Sciences. Sessions are held at the Kelburn and Pipitea Campuses in the Mentoring Rooms, 14 Kelburn Parade (back courtyard), Room 109D, and Room 210, Level 2, Railway West Wing. There is also a Pacific Support Coordinator who assists Pacific students by linking them to the services and support they need while studying at Victoria. Another feature of the programme is a support network for Postgraduate students with links to Postgraduate workshops and activities around Campus.

For further information, or to register with the programme, email [manaaki-pihipihinga-programme@vuw.ac.nz](mailto:manaaki-pihipihinga-programme@vuw.ac.nz) or phone (04) 463 5233 ext. 8977. To contact the Pacific Support Coordinator, email [pacific-support-coord@vuw.ac.nz](mailto:pacific-support-coord@vuw.ac.nz) or phone (04) 463 5842.