

Victoria Management School

**MMBA 532 BUSINESS RESEARCH PROJECT**

Trimester One 2007

**COURSE OUTLINE**

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**Start Date:** Negotiated with the student on an individual basis

**Format:** One-on-One Academic Supervision  
(Student – VUW academic staff)

**Course Objectives**

The Victoria Master of Business Administration Programme serves to produce professional managers capable of fulfilling strategic roles within business and government enterprises. Integral to this capability is the application of systematic and organised research methodologies to investigate specific problems or opportunities encountered in the work setting.

This course aims to provide students with applied research methodologies with which practical solutions to real organisational issues can be derived. The scope of this course, being focused on individual student proposals, is open-ended and negotiable. Students need to gain access to an organisational sponsor, identify a relevant issue, and propose an applicable methodology in order for the business research project to proceed.

By the end of this course, students will:

1. Have an understanding of the major social science research methodologies available for applied business research.
2. Have the experience of defining and addressing real-life problems and opportunities in organisational settings.
3. Have an appreciation for the validity and application of research methods as a means to address organisational issues.

**Textbook:**\*Applied Business Research: Qualitative and Quantitative Methods, Robert Cavana, Brian Delahaye, Uma Sekaran, John Wiley & Sons, (2001) – recommended but subject to discussion with individual academic supervisor.

\* - In addition to the textbook, this course will rely on materials from a variety of sources, including practitioner and academic journals, dependent on the specifics of topic area chosen by the student.

## Assessment

Research Proposal	20 %	due (as negotiated)
Business Research Report	80 %	due (as negotiated)

**Research Proposal (20%)** – Students will be required to prepared a research proposal document subject to terms and conditions set by the supervising academic staff member in consultation with the MBA Director. At a minimum, research proposals will clearly identify the organisational sponsor, describe the relevant issue and its performance implications, and suggest a proposed methodology to address the issue.

**Business Research Paper (80%)** – Upon conclusion of the project students will be required to submit a detailed research paper subject to the terms and conditions set by the supervising academic staff member in consultation the MBA Director. At a minimum, research proposals will incorporate key aspects of the research proposal and build from that foundation, including: a detailed literature review, a comprehensive research design that covers data collection and analysis, a discussion of findings and conclusions, and a recommended management action plan.

## COURSE TERMS OF REFERENCE

### Late Assignments

Unless otherwise authorised by the MBA Director in consultation with the Academic Supervisor, students will have one month to prepare a proposal and three months, subsequently, to complete the research and submit the report. Penalties will be incurred in the event of late submission.

### Obtaining Terms

To obtain terms for the course students must submit two documents – a research proposal and a final business research report.

### Passing the Course

In order to pass this course, students are required to obtain at least fifty percent of the overall course marks available.

### Victoria MBA Grading Standards

- Victoria MBA - **Excellent** Category  
A (80 – 85%) to A+ (above 85%): The quality is performed to a very high level of proficiency, i.e. it is at a standard that makes it exceptional at Master’s level.
- Victoria MBA - **Very Good** Category  
B+ (70 – 74%) to A- (75 – 79%): The quality is performed at a high standard. Students have reached a level which clearly exceeds “competency”.
- Victoria MBA - **Good** Category  
B- (60 – 64%) to B (65 – 69%): The quality is clearly demonstrated without being exceptional in any way. Students can be thought of as competent in respect of this quality.
- Victoria MBA - **Satisfactory** Category  
C (50 – 54%) to C+ (55 – 59%): The quality is demonstrated to a minimally acceptable level. There may be flaws but these are not serious enough to “fail” the student on this quality.

- Victoria MBA - **Unsatisfactory** Category  
E (0 – 39%) to D (40 – 49%): The quality is absent or performed to a very low level, or the performance is seriously flawed in this respect.

### **Individual Work**

While the Victoria MBA programme has a tradition of study group collaboration, there are important elements in the assessment process that are strictly individual. Unless otherwise approved by the MBA Director in advance, MMBA 532 is designed as an entirely individual learning module. Study group collaboration is not permitted.

### **Plagiarism**

The Victoria MBA programme views plagiarism as a serious offence. Students who plagiarise put themselves at risk of expulsion from the programme.

### **Appeals / Concerns / Statute on Conduct**

If you have any concerns with your research supervision, you should first talk to the academic staff member concerned and, if you are not satisfied with the result of that meeting, contact the Director of the MBA. (paul.mcdonald@vuw.ac.nz). The University has well developed, independent procedures for dealing with academic grievances and complaints. These procedures are set out in the Statute on Academic Grievances in the University Calendar (please refer to following page).

### **Session Schedule**

<u>Session</u>	<u>Date</u>	<u>Topic</u>	<u>Basic Reading</u>
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This course will not be offered in lecture format. It will be subject to interaction between the student and the VUW academic staff member.

Course evaluation and success will be defined by the proposal document negotiated between the student and the academic supervisor in consultation with the MBA Director who will ensure parity across individual projects and supervisors.

This course has three core teaching outcomes as follows:

1. Understanding of research methodologies available to address issues in organisational settings.
2. Preparation of a Research Proposal Document
3. Preparation of a Business Research Report

### **Outcome 1 – Conceptual Understanding**

Students will be expected, via self-study under the supervision of the academic staff member, to understand the array of applied business research methodologies available to address organisational issues. This will be achieved by reading the course textbook and other article / journal readings assigned by the academic supervisor. The supervisor will confirm an adequate understanding of the conceptual material before the student advances to the proposal stage.

At the end of this stage students should have an understanding of the:

- philosophical traditions of business research
- distinction between applied and basic research

- major steps in the process of applied business research
- distinction between qualitative and quantitative methods
- components of a good literature review
- requirements for problem / opportunity definition
- incorporation of a relevant conceptual framework
- options in research design
- data gathering technologies and instrumentation
- data analysis and interpretation methods
- research reporting approaches
- practical management action planning processes

### **Outcome 2 – Research Proposal**

The research proposal will be the proposed plan for the conduct of the research. It will be subject to negotiation between the individual student and the assigned academic supervisor, in consultation with the MBA Director. Agreement on the research proposal will be a prerequisite to carrying out the research and completing the research report. The research proposal should cover the following areas of discussion:

- the organisational setting, including adequate access
- definition of the problem / opportunity
- important stakeholders in the analysis
- the research objectives
- rationale for the research, including performance implications
- limitations / constraints on the research
- overview of the literature
- proposed conceptual / theoretical bases
- proposed research design
- anticipated outcomes – academic and practitioner
- proposed content outline for the research report
- research schedule, including key milestone dates

### **Outcome 3 – Business Research Report**

The business research report is the culmination of the course. The final report will reflect the purpose of the report and its intended audience, as defined in the proposal. It will manifest clarity, conciseness, and coherence. Proper emphasis will be given to report organisation, including logical sequencing and smooth transition from one section to the next. The contents of the research report will be specified in outline form during the proposal stage and approved by the academic supervisor. Suggested items for inclusion in the report are:

- succinct, accurate report title
- executive summary or synopsis
- introduction, to include:
  - problem definition in the context of the organisational setting
  - rationale for the research
  - research report organisation
- literature review, to include:
  - summary of the relevant literature
  - implications for the conduct of the research
- research design, to include:
  - research questions / objectives / hypotheses
  - research methodology
  - sampling and data collection
- discussion of findings, to include:
  - analysis of the data and results achieved
  - findings and conclusions
  - recommended management action plan

## **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.