Course Outline 2017 BUSADMIN 798 A & B:
MBA RESEARCH PROJECT (30 POINTS)

Quarter 2 & 4 (1174 & 1178)

Course Prescription

Individual project addressing a specific management challenge or business issue facing an organisation.

Programme and Course Advice

To complete this course students must enrol in BUSADMIN 798 A and B, or BUSADMIN 798.

Goals of the Course

This is the capstone course of the MBA. Integrated and linked with prior MBA courses, the research required by this project provides an opportunity to engage with real world problems and enhance individual competencies. Students undertake an individual project that addresses a specific and real management challenge or business issue. In doing so they have the opportunity to develop and demonstrate their capacity for high value thinking and effective decision making. We will work to develop lasting skills in thinking and critical inquiry, communications, managing information and decision making.

Learning Outcomes

By the end of this course it is expected that the student will be able to:

1. Apply their knowledge and understanding of management to identify and describe a pertinent business or management problem of appropriate scale and scope
2. Review current understanding and assess alternate approaches to the identified problem, applying theory and demonstrating a capacity for evaluative and critical thinking
3. Apply skills in locating and analysing information and in planning and executing independent research
4. Reflect upon and integrate their own work and the research of others to develop a coherent and evidence-based set of conclusions and recommendations
5. Deliver persuasive, informed and evidence based and written communications on a researched topic

Content Outline

Quarter 2

EMBA	AMBA	Week	Topic	Hand-in
March 31	March 30	1	Introduction and course overview	
	April 6	2	Defining your topic and literature review	
April 7	April 13	3	Relevance and rigor: Researching for impact	
	April 20	4	Quantitative research 1: Design and data	
April 28	April 27	5	Quantitative research 2: Working the numbers	
	May 4	6	Qualitative research 1: General approaches	
May 12	May 11	7	Qualitative research 2: Making sense of text data	
	May 18	8	Ethics in business research	
May 26	May 25	9	E-research: Internet research methods	Problem description and summary of readings
	June 1	10	Planning for project completion and review	
	June 9			Peer feedback

Quarter 4

Week	Topic	Hand-in
1	Introduction and course overview	
2	General issues, topic and method clarification	
3	General issues, topic and method clarification	
4	General issues, topic and method clarification	
5	General issues, topic and method clarification	
6	General issues, topic and method clarification	
7	General issues, topic and method clarification	
8	General issues, topic and method clarification	
9	General issues, topic and method clarification	
10	Planning for project completion and review	Submission:

Learning and Teaching

BUSADMIN 798 works towards a single clear goal: the completion of a useful and significant piece of applied business research. The objective will be achieved through a defined process of (usually) sequential steps. Class participants will clarify a personally-relevant research idea; find, understand and assess prior research related to the topic; evaluate potential data sources and acquire usable data; develop an appropriate approach to analysing that data; and write a clear and convincing research report which encapsulates the important elements developed through the research process. Class sessions are designed to facilitate this research process, and will include interactive lectures, exercises, peer review and one-to-one consultation with members of academic staff.

Weekend streams will meet for six hours each fortnight during Quarters 2 and 4, while Cohort A07 will usually meet for three hours one evening per week. Class time will be used for a combination of lectures and seminar discussions of individual projects. In addition to attending class, students should be prepared to spend about another fourteen hours per

fortnight on activities related to this course. In Quarter 2 you will identify your research topic and select a specific issue for further investigation. You will then assess the theories, findings and approaches of other researchers using a range of quality sources.

The key output for Quarter 2 will be a summary of background readings concluding with a refinement of your chosen problem. In Quarter 4 you will use your summary of background readings as a starting point and explore your issue further using business data and information drawn from your research context. You will analyse your data and write a well-argued and evidence-based report that addresses your business problem, draws on the research of others and your own findings to culminate in a coherent set of conclusions and recommendations.

This is a two quarter course [Q2 and Q4], with a single grade reported at the end of Q4.

The MBA Breakfast for December 2017 will feature a selection of presentations from both cohorts. Presenters will be chosen on criteria including quality of the research, accessibility of the topic to a general business audience, and presentation skills.

Cohort 07&08 Teaching Staff

Dr. Benjamin Fath
Lecturer
Graduate School of Management
Office: OGGB 374
Email: b.fath@auckland.ac.nz

Dr. Nina Brosius
Email: n.brosius@auckland.ac.nz
Available during class & by appointment

Cohort 46 Teaching Staff

Dr. Elizabeth George
Professor
Graduate School of Management
Office: OGGB 344
Tel: 09 9235310
Email: e.george@auckland.ac.nz
Available during class & by appointment

Dr. Nina Brosius
Email: n.brosius@auckland.ac.nz
Available during class & by appointment

Learning Resources

A suggested textbook for this course is: Jankowicz, A.D. (2004), Business Research Projects (4th Ed.). London: Cengage Learning.

A more recent alternative is: Polonsky, M. J., & Waller, D. S. (2010). *Designing and managing a research project: A business student's guide*. Sage Publications, Incorporated.

An excellent general textbook: Bryman, A., & Bell, E. (2015). *Business research methods*. Oxford University Press, USA. Other general texts may also be helpful.

There is no course book for this course. Additional materials and templates will be provided via Canvas.

Assessment

A single cumulative grade is assigned at the end of the year for the total work completed in Quarters 2 and 4. Quarter 2 assignments count for 40% of the final grade. The Quarter 4 assignments count for 60% of the final grade to fairly reflect the higher workload required during Quarter 4.

Q2
Individual Assignments:
Problem Description & Summary of background readings   30%
Peer feedback on problem description and background readings (2 * 5%)   10%
Subtotal for Quarter 2 (40% of final 798A+B grade)   40%

Q4
Individual Assignment:
Project Plan & Final Research Report.   50%
Peer feedback on project plan and report (2 * 5%)   10%
Subtotal for Quarter 4 (60% of final 798A+B grade)   60%

Total for Course   **100%**

Details of the Assessments:
There are three types of assessments for this course. More details on each will be provided during the quarter.

The first, Problem Description and Summary of Background Readings, gives you an opportunity to present the topic you have chosen to research, the nature of the specific problem, and a summary of what has been studied earlier. The aim of this assessment is for you to demonstrate that you have a "researchable" problem and that you know what has been written about this problem earlier in the academic or managerial literatures. The assessment will be up to 3000 word document (approximately 12 pages, double spaced, 12 point font). This document is due in Week 9 (for the weekly class) and May 26 (for the fortnightly class), and will be given to two peers on that day.

The second type of assessment, Peer Feedback, gives you an opportunity to read and critique the work of two classmates and give them developmental feedback. The aim of this assessment is for you to develop the skill of identifying the strengths and weaknesses of a proposed research project. You will also have to suggest to the authors what they could do to make their problem description or summary of research stronger. Your feedback will be marked by the academic staff for the quality of the feedback and its' constructive tone. You will provide peer feedback to two classmates in Quarter 2 and another two classmates in Quarter 4. Each document of feedback will be approximately 500 words (approximately 2 pages, double spaced, 12 point font). In Quarter 2, you will receive the report to which you will give your feedback in week 9/May 26. You will have to submit your peer feedback electronically by the end of the working day (5:00 pm) on June 9 for both the weekly class and the fortnightly class.

The third type of assessment, Project Plan and Final Research Report, gives you the opportunity to demonstrate your ability to systematically find answers to the research question to identified in Quarter 2. This assessment should be informed by the feedback that you will have received in Quarters 2 and 4 from your peers and the academic staff.

You assessments will be graded based on the quality of your ideas as well as the manner in which you present your work. You can find more information on how we will assess your work in the grading rubrics at the end of this document.

The broad relationship between these assessments and the course learning outcomes is as follows:

Learning Outcome	Problem description	Summary of Background Readings	Plan	Research Presentation	Project Report
1 Problem	X			X	X
2 Literature		X		X	X
3 Analysis			X	X	X
4 Decision making		X	X	X	X
5 Communication	X	X	X	X	X

Academic Integrity
The University of Auckland regards cheating as a serious academic offence.

Plagiarism is a form of cheating. In coursework assignments submitted for marking, plagiarism can occur if you use the work and ideas of others without explicit acknowledgment. Work can be plagiarised from many sources, including books, journal articles, the internet, and other students' assignments. A student's assessed work may be reviewed against electronic source material using computerised detection mechanisms. Upon reasonable request, students may be required to provide an electronic version of their work for computerised review.

The way of avoiding plagiarism is to reference your work properly. If you are in doubt about how to reference properly, ask someone – your lecturers, tutors and the Student Learning Centre are good places to start. Please refer to the following website for further information about academic referencing:
www.cite.auckland.ac.nz/
The document Guidelines: Conduct of Coursework provides further advice on how to avoid plagiarism. It can be found at:
www.business.auckland.ac.nz/conductcoursework

The penalties for plagiarism can be severe, including losing some or all of the marks for the assignment. Major offences can be sent to the University's Discipline Committee, where further penalties can be imposed

Help with Academic Referencing
Acknowledgement of sources is an important aspect of academic writing. The University's Referen©ite website www.cite.auckland.ac.nz provides students with a one-stop online resource for academic referencing needs. Referen©ite explains the essentials of referencing and how to avoid plagiarism. It also includes practical tools to help students reference correctly, use references effectively in writing, and gives fast access to some major reference formats with examples.

Inclusive Learning
Students are urged to discuss privately any impairment-related requirements face-to-face and/or in written form with the instructor. If you have been granted special examination conditions, please make the instructor aware of these at the beginning of the quarter, so that appropriate arrangements can be made.

Student feedback
Just as I will be giving you feedback throughout the quarter I will also expect you to give me feedback on ways in which I can facilitate the learning environment in the class. I cannot promise that I will make all the changes that you might want but I will certainly listen to you and attempt to find a solution that will work for everyone.

This course has been offered by the Graduate School of Management previously. In response to feedback from 2016, we made the following modifications:
- Peer feedback will now be a formalised part of the learning experience.
- The word count of the final report is now reduced to accommodate this change.
Students will be asked to complete a course evaluation near the end of the course to provide feedback that will be used to inform the ongoing development of the course.

In the Event of an Unexpected Disruption
We undertake to maintain the continuity and standard of teaching and learning in all your courses throughout the year. If there are unexpected disruptions the University has contingency plans to ensure that access to your course continues and your assessment is fair, and not compromised. Some adjustments may need to be made in emergencies. In the event of a disruption, the University and your course coordinators will make every effort to provide you with up to date information via canvas and the university web site.

CHEATING AND PLAGIARISM
The University of Auckland regards cheating as a serious academic offence.

Plagiarism is a form of cheating. In coursework assignments submitted for marking, plagiarism can occur if you use the work and ideas of others without explicit acknowledgment. Work can be plagiarised from many sources, including books, journal articles, the internet, and other students' assignments. A student's assessed work may be reviewed against electronic source material using computerised detection mechanisms. Upon reasonable request, students may be required to provide an electronic version of their work for computerised review.

The way of avoiding plagiarism is to reference your work properly. If you are in doubt about how to reference properly, ask someone – your lecturers, tutors and the Student Learning Centre are good places to start. Please refer to the following website for further information about academic referencing: www.cite.auckland.ac.nz/

The document Guidelines: Conduct of Coursework provides further advice on how to avoid plagiarism. It can be found at:
www.business.auckland.ac.nz/conductcoursework

The penalties for plagiarism can be severe, including losing some or all of the marks for the assignment. Major offences can be sent to the University's Discipline Committee, where further penalties can be imposed

Grading rubric (B): Peer feedback

Criteria	Exemplary	Competent	Unsatisfactory
Problem statement	Demonstrates an accurate understanding of the research problem	Shows an adequate understanding of the research problem	Fails to address the question/task appropriately
	Critiques with clarity, reflection, and insight into the topic	Displays basic subject knowledge	Lacks clarity, may be confused, or is otherwise incomplete
	Incorporates key information from lectures, observations and readings. Uses evidence to support key arguments and offers new insights to the author	Incorporates some new information to guide the author	Does not incorporate content from lectures or assigned readings
Clarity and focus of feedback	Presents feedback very clearly and concisely Maintains strong focus	Presents information clearly, may have minor problems Maintains focus but may occasionally diverts from the central issue	Shows problems with organization, clarity, and concision, making the answer difficult to comprehend Digresses from the central issue
	Provides genuine insight into core issues and provides sensible suggestions for improvements.	Offers a brief and relevant critique. Emphasises the identification of issues but does not provide sufficient guidance for resolution.	Offers an underdeveloped review
	Maintains good style and grammar	Uses acceptable style and grammar and contains only few errors	Contains distracting errors to make it substantially incomprehensible

Grading rubric (A): Research project

	Exceeds standard	Meets standard	Nearly meets standard	Does not meet standard
Part A				
Research problem	Research problem is clearly presented in the opening and concluding sections of the project. The project has an excellent focus on a key issue and the boundary conditions of the research problem are made explicit.	Thesis is evident in the main argument, but not well articulated. The main thesis is debatable and links well to the assignment. The thesis has a good focus and potential limitations to the thesis are acknowledged.	Thesis is unclear or self-evident and not debatable. The theses somewhat lacks a focus a key issue. There is little appreciation of the boundary conditions of the research problem.	No focus on a research problem evident.
Originality and impact	The research report is original and creative. Concepts and examples are related in interesting ways. The report makes the potential impact explicit.	The research report is strong, but plays it safe. It focusses on 'reporting' and does not try to push our understanding of the main issues forward. There is little acknowledgment of the boundary conditions of the research problem	The research report is expository rather than analytical. Concepts and main ideas are described, but not well integrated. The report does not sufficiently empathise the relevance and impact of the research problem.	The research report is weak and incoherent.
Part B				
Evidence and analysis	There is a clear fit between the research problem and the collected evidence. The analysis of the evidence is technically correct and gives rise to new and important insights. The analysis processes are logical and transparent.	There is a clear fit between the research problem and the collected evidence. The analysis of the evidence is technically correct. The analysis processes are logical and transparent.	There is fit between the research problem and the collected evidence is weak. The analysis of the evidence has some technically problems. The analysis processes are not always logical and transparent.	The collected evidence is not relevant. Analytical procedures are opaque.
Discussion and implications	Strong review of key conclusions. Insightful discussion of the impact on the research topic. The project develops clear, actionable recommendations that can inform practice.	Strong review of key conclusions and some discussion of the impact on the researched topic. The project makes some recommendations that can inform practice.	Review of conclusions. Some discussion on the impact of researched material on the topic. Recommendations are not very well thought out.	Does not summarise evidence or key conclusions. Does not discuss the impact of researched material on the topic.
Generic				
Argumentation	Core arguments are developed from the existing literature and presented clearly and logically. Key counter-arguments are identified, addressed, judged, and effectively dismantled. The paper recognizes the complexity of the argument and excels at synthesising different ideas to construct a convincing backdrop for understanding the research problem.	Argument is presented clearly and logically, yet points do not naturally build on each other. Some counter arguments are superficially addressed. The paper identifies the complexity of the argument but does not adequately address it.	Argument is confused and there are contradictions and important counter arguments left unaddressed. There is little appreciation of the complexity of the main argument.	There is no discernible argument.
Literature and sources	Each logical point is supported by strong evidence. The evidence provided clearly advances the argument. All sources are correctly represented.	The evidence provided is relevant to the argument. Some evidence is from questionable sources. Few reference are incorrectly acknowledged or represented	Evidence is not very relevant and much of the argument relies on opinions rather than evidence. Some reference are incorrectly acknowledged or represented	Evidence is insufficient. Sources are not correctly acknowledged.
Writing and structure	Clear organization with a natural flow. There is a clear structure to the research report and the individual paragraphs. There are few mechanical errors.	Clear structure, but writing is not always fluid. There are some mechanical errors and paragraphs are not fully developed.	Organization is unclear. Significant mechanical errors	Little discernible organization. Significant mechanical errors.