

The background of the slide is a photograph of a stage. Red curtains are drawn back, revealing a dark stage floor. A bright spotlight illuminates a circular area on the floor in the foreground. The text is overlaid on this image in white, bold, sans-serif font.

Business Research Methods

Introduction to business research:

Purpose and objectives

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- **To understand what business research is, who needs it and why.**
- **To reflect upon the objectives and benefits of conducting research – for graduates, businesses and academic scholars.**
- **To illustrate the research process.**
- **To provide a very brief overview of this module.**

What is “research”?

- Systematic means of **problem solving**: obtaining, analyzing and confirming new **and reliable knowledge** (Bruce W. Tuckman, B. W. 1978 Conducting Educational Research).
- Research includes “search”, it asks for the analysis of yet unstructured material. It is *not* a write-up of selected sources or a summary of what we already know.
- **Key features:**
 - **Novelty** of both, the problem and the knowledge that will be generated
 - Reliable inquiry
 - Systematic approach – So there is an important element of justification why, how and what you inquire

What is “research”?



What is “research”?

- According to Popper, the scientist’s role is to produce **true statements** (cf. Popper, K. 1935/1959/1992 The Logic of Scientific Discovery). This inter alia requires...
 - Evidence for each statement
 - Falsification
- Modern times also require **Impact** → see UK REF exercise
- True statements but - Business scholars’ second question may be “*So what?*”

So what makes novelty?

- Novelty can only be judged within project **context**: Journals exist to debate new problems that have arisen from theory thought or business practice and have not yet been addressed with dedicated articles and/or data sets.
- **Unknown does not equal new**. If a concept is known to e.g. a psychologist but not known to a business researcher, it is not “new” but unknown to our discipline.
- Research requires the researcher to make a novel **contribution**
 - Novel combination of logics / Grounded theory
 - Generating novel data and meaningful analysis
 - Novel application of theory or statistical assumptions to an important practice or policy making case, yielding to surprising results

- **Audience:** Research needs to be meaningful for academic debate on businesses, economy, management functions, business policy etc.
- Implicit **instrumental dimension?**
- **Multi-methods** discipline without scientific origin.
- “Universitas” initially where places where scientists and philosophers met, rather than tradesmen. Community of “Masters” and their “Scholars”.
- New knowledge objective can be abstract, empirical explorative or quite applied – hence continuum of scientific and social science approaches borrowed from various disciplines.

Why do we claim it's systematic?

- Following a well-defined process and findings robust against objection
- Process that assures qualities of outcomes:
 - Induction/deduction → **Logical arguments**
 - Methods of philosophic debate or Empirical evidence → **Evidence-based arguments**
 - Systematic reduction of findings → **Generalisation**
 - Well documented process and outcomes → **Replicable**
- A “research method” does specify **how** such qualities will be achieved and assured from the processes of inquiry and analysis
- Tensions in business research: Where does research end and action or practice begin. New knowledge? (Too) applied knowledge? Consultancy?
- A systematic process may still not be objective, researchers have to reflect upon
 - Biases
 - Involvement with the object of study
 - Philosophic assumptions and limitations from research design, especially sampling and wording/items of the instrument

The Research Process

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- To **get started** is an **intense experience** and can be difficult as well as exciting at the same time
- Get started and seek feedback, **structure will unfold** in the process initially
- Planning:
To be organized, to make progress.
But the work will unfold differently than planned eventually.
- **Don't panic!**
- **Don't wait** 'till time becomes scarce for fieldwork and write up.

Towards a research proposal

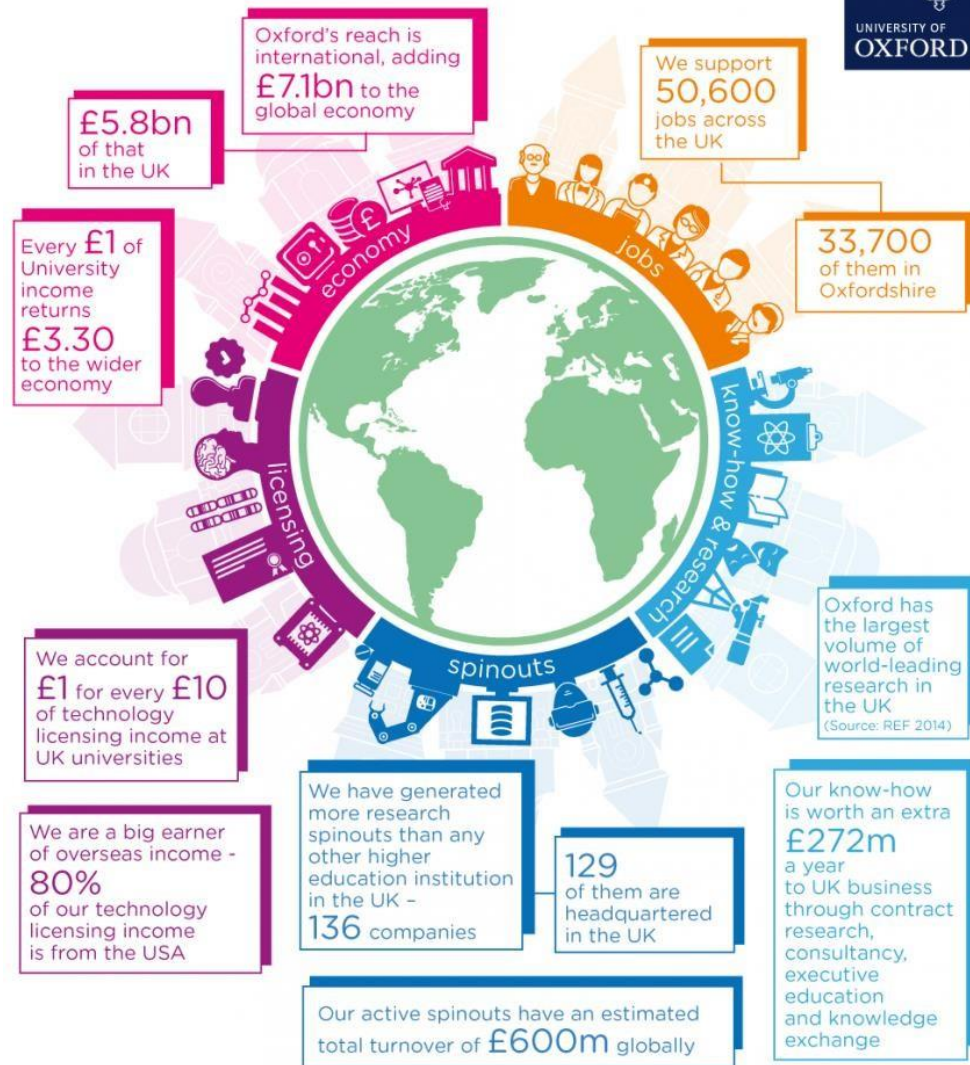
Item of research project	Element	Purpose
Topic	Topic title	Can an expert sense what questions you might approach?
Topic	Research questions (and objectives)	What are you trying to find out and which concepts does this relate to?
Justification	Significance (background and relevance)	Why important?
Justification, Instrument	Object of study: Selection criteria, Sampling design	What data will be collected, how and why? Is the method robust?
Instrument	Research approach (in detail)	Credible approach? Established and accepted within discipline?
	Variables, Guiding questions or Hypotheses	What measurements and operationalisation will be made?
	Analytic approach, Complimentary secondary information and its context, Software	How will the findings be derived systematically and be used for rigour analysis?
Project management	Time frame, Milestones	To judge whether the project is on track and making progress

The benefits of conducting research to society, the economy and the professions



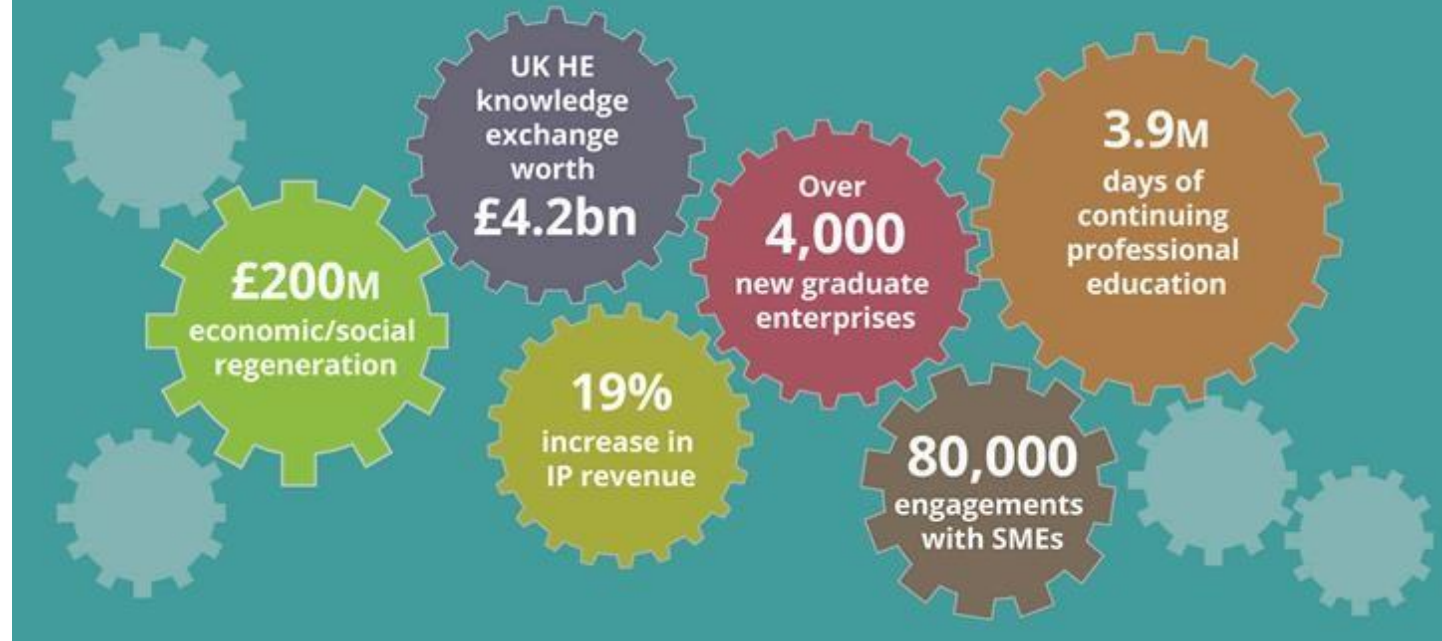
- Because research is an **investigative** process, it adds value to many jobs and tasks in society where high quality of investigation is required.
- Because it's an activity, it **generates experience** and expertise in itself. You cannot become an excellent researcher just by instruction, you need to engage into the activity and gain experience.

Economic Impact of the University of Oxford



All of Oxford's commercialisation activity added **£320m** to the UK economy

Interaction between universities, business and community 2014-15



Source: <https://www.wired-gov.net/wg/news.nsf/articles/UK+Universities+focus+on+delivery+and+spur+economic+growth+18082016142000?open>

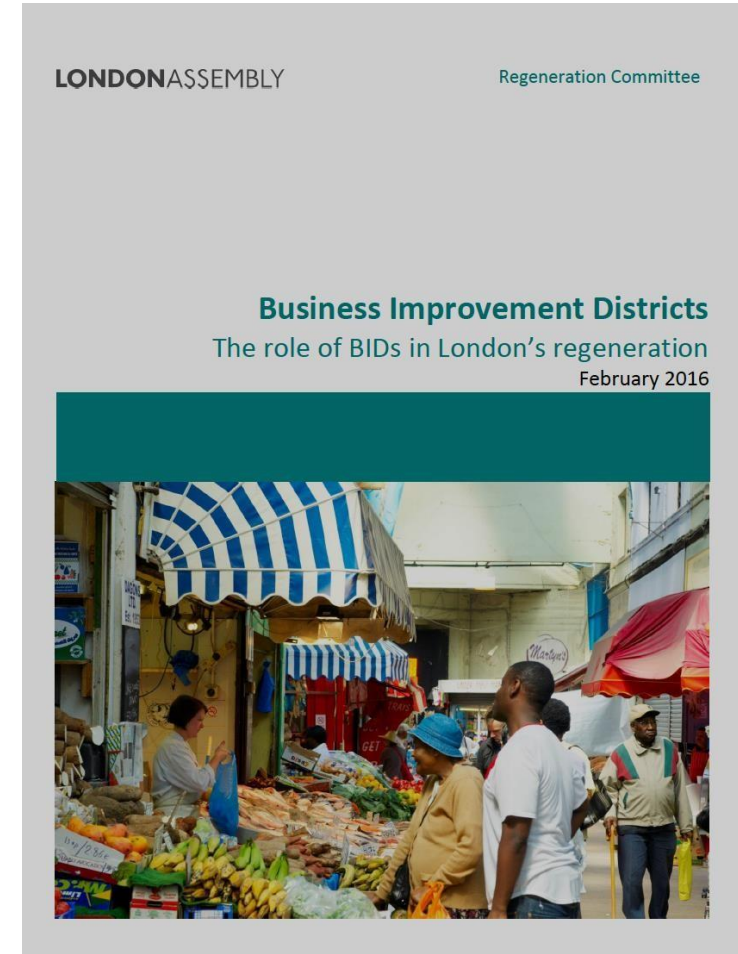
and

[2014-15 UK Higher Education – Business and Community Interaction Survey](#)

Research may also take an applied shape and contribute to growth:

Knowledge transfer projects

- Technology development by leading centres at MIT, Cambridge, ETH Zurich, NTU Singapore, Tsinghua U., U. of Tokyo, KAIST, Technion etc.
- Example British BIDs
 - Business, policy makers and universities working together to improve business efficiency for their community
 - to improving local security or infrastructure
 - or to support enterprise growth by providing networking opportunities and skills training



Module overview: Notes for organisation



- Weekly lecture-online recordings
- Weekly seminars-see timetable/Moodle
- Additional library workshops/help sessions

Structure of the module (1)

Week	Lecture & Seminar
1	Introduction to business research
2	Different types of research
3	What is a literature review?
4	Qualitative data collection
5	Qualitative data analysis

Structure of the module (2)

Week	Lecture & Seminar
6	Quantitative research design
7	Quantitative data analysis
8	Business consultants research/ research dissemination
9	Communicating Research Outcomes
10	Assessment Clinic

Coursework gravitating around these key tasks:

- To provide a detailed critique of at least **two well-used research methodologies**.
- To construct a **research instrument** that could be used to collect data in your capstone project. You will not be collecting any data – just designing the tool.
- To **reflect upon the audience** and critical aspects of research dissemination in the specific context of your potential research findings and outcomes from the developed instrument.

- Working with a hypothetical research question
- Methodology has to describe the process how to address that question –
Note we ask for two alternatives
- To reflect upon the audience, you may need to obtain a working definition of “impact” for your research question, and to make assumptions about the likely findings from your research.

What the assessment is not

- Do not conduct the proposed research and do not collect any data
- It doesn't pre-empt your Dissertation or Consultancy Project topic

- The formative assessment is a one page overview of what you aim to undertake in the summative submission
- You will indicate the discipline in that one page overview (marketing, supply chain management, economics etc.)
- Based on the discipline that your submission aligns most with, we will already allocate you a supervisor for the Final Year Project.
- Just for example, please don't submit a proposal in the context of quantitative finance when you are rather interested in a Marketing dissertation and vice versa!

