



**UNIVERSITY OF
STIRLING**

School of Arts and Humanities
Division of Communications, Media and Culture

MSc/Dip Strategic Public Relations and Communication Management

**MSc Strategic Public Relations
(Double Degree with Lund University)**

**MSc Strategic Communication and Public Relations
(Joint Degree with Universitat Pompeu Fabra, Barcelona)**

**PREP64 Research for Dissertation
(Research Design I)
Module Outline**

**Academic Year 2013-14
Semester 1**

MODULE COORDINATOR AND SEMINAR LEADER

Name: Dr Alenka Jelen

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Room: J9, Pathfoot Building

Office hours: Tuesday, 12.00 – 14.00

Contributing Lecturers

Professor Richard Haynes, Dr Derek Hodge, Dr Pietari Kaapa and Dr Alenka Jelen.

Seminar Leaders

Dr Derek Hodge and Dr Alenka Jelen.

MODULE AIMS

The purpose of this module is to provide:

- an understanding of the nature of social research paradigms, principles and methods and how these relate to the public relations and communication management disciplines;
- a capacity to conduct research for a dissertation;
- an ability to prepare a research proposal.

LEARNING OUTCOMES

On completion of this module students will:

- understand the nature of research paradigms and methods and how these relate to the public relations and communication management disciplines;
- have acquired core qualitative research skills (data collection/analysis);
- understand the issues that face researchers undertaking quantitative research;
- have a sound understanding of different methods of research and their applications;
- be aware of the ethical issues raised by social research;
- have acquired an ability to construct a research proposal.

MODULE CONTENT

This module focuses on social research and explores research paradigms, methodological approaches and methods in relation to the public relations and communication management

disciplines. It provides general understanding of research process and enables students to design and conduct an original empirical research project.

The indicative syllabus includes:

- Philosophy of research: epistemologies and methodological approaches
- Developing research proposals
- Surveys and questionnaires
- Interviews and focus groups
- Content analysis
- Ethnography
- Case studies
- Secondary research
- Analysis of findings
- Writing up your research

TEACHING

The learning and teaching process includes lectures, seminars, workshops, discussions, presentations, readings, individual research and self-study.

Students will attend shared spine of lectures with other masters students in the Department of Communications, Media and Culture, plus three intense seminar / workshop sessions for public relations students. Attendance at lectures, seminars and workshops is compulsory.

ASSESSMENT

Assessment of this module consists of:

	Type of assignment	Weighting	Words
1	Research proposal outlining your ideas and plans for designing and conducting an original empirical research project.	100%	3,000

This module outline should be read alongside the assignment brief, which includes the assessment criteria. These will be issued and discussed as indicated in the schedule of work.

Assessment Criteria

To be provided in the assignment brief.

Distribution Date

Your assignment briefs will be distributed on 4 October 2013.

Submission Date and Place

Your research proposal is due on **Friday, 29 November 2013 by midday**. Electronic versions must be submitted via the digital assessment submission facility in Succeed or in case of technical difficulties emailed to Jane Cambell (jane.campbell@stir.ac.uk). Please do not email the assignments to the module coordinator (marking at the University of Stirling is anonymous).

Feedback

You will receive detailed written feedback on your assessments usually within 20 working days of submission. You will also receive direct verbal feedback and have the opportunity to attend separate feedback sessions.

MODULE PASS REQUIREMENTS

Students must attempt all elements of assessment and obtain an overall pass grade to successfully complete the module.

TIMETABLE AND OUTLINE OF WEEKLY SESSIONS¹

Lectures will be on Fridays, 15.00 – 17.00 in Pathfoot Building P.LTA96.

Seminars will be on Fridays, 10.00 – 11.00, 11.00 – 12.00 and 13.00 – 14.00 in Pathfoot Building P.L.20 (only weeks 8 – 10 as indicated in the outline of weekly sessions below).

	Date w/c	Topic	Seminar
1	9/9	Introduction to Research <i>Professor Richard Haynes</i> This session will introduce the module; its aims and assessment methods. It will also provide an introductory map of types of research (academic/industry); differing research paradigms; quantitative and qualitative approaches; and ethical and cross-cultural issues.	N/A
2	16/9	Developing a Research Proposal <i>Dr Pietari Kaapa</i> This session will explore the practical and creative issues that need to be taken into account in selecting a research topic: research hypotheses and research questions; building on previous work (the literature review); considerations in choosing appropriate methods.	N/A

¹ Subject to change as/when required. Please check Succeed regularly for updates.

3	23/9	<p>Researching People 1: Surveys and Questionnaires <i>Dr Derek Hodge</i></p> <p>This is the first of two sessions considering means of researching people. It will concentrate on the advantages and disadvantages of descriptive and analytical surveys. It will also discuss means of designing questionnaires: length, constructing and ordering questions etc.; applications in relation to research hypotheses and questions; and issues of ethics.</p>	N/A
4	30/9	<p>Researching People 2: Interviews and Focus Groups <i>Dr Alenka Jelen</i></p> <p>This session discusses the nature of qualitative research, explores focus group research: brief history, how to organise, quality of data; and discusses interviews as a form of social interaction; different types of question; quality of data. <i>Assignment brief issued</i></p>	N/A
5	7/10	<p>Finding Sources <i>Dr Pietari Kaapa</i></p> <p>This session will look at sourcing secondary material such as library searches and will also explore the options for gathering materials from the Net: online journals, full-text databases, mailing lists, and the 'hidden' web. The session will also examine the sourcing and use of official documents, such as policy and government documents and company reports, as well as secondary material from archival sources, both public, private, material and online.</p>	N/A
6	14/10	<p>Researching Texts: Content Analysis <i>Dr Derek Hodge</i></p> <p>This session provides an introduction to content analysis – ‘a research technique for the objective, systematic and quantitative description of the manifest content of communication’ (Berelson, 1952).</p>	N/A
7	<i>Mid-semester break</i>		
8	28/10	<p>Ethnography <i>Dr Pietari Kaapa</i></p> <p>This session takes a deeper look at qualitative approaches to researching people, drawing on anthropological method of ethnography. The lecture will focus on understanding issues of social and cultural relations in organisations through participant observation and other phenomenological methods of enquiry.</p>	<p>Preparing research proposal and research design <i>Dr Alenka Jelen</i></p>
9	4/11	<p>Case Studies <i>Dr Alenka Jelen</i></p> <p>This session provides an overview of the case study approach. This includes exploring the use of the case study approach to research problems, types and uses of case study research in media studies and PR, defining a research problem and selecting a case.</p>	<p>Quantitative research methods <i>Dr Derek Hodge</i></p>

10	11/11	Analysing your findings and writing up research <i>Professor Richard Haynes</i> This session reviews the final stages of the research process and provides advice on structuring the analysis of research findings and the final writing up stage.	Qualitative research methods <i>Dr Alenka Jelen</i>
11	18/11	N/A	N/A
12	25/11	N/A	N/A

The final teaching weeks of semester will be given over for personal study time to finalise the submission of your research proposals or final assessment. Individual tutorials will be arranged with the module coordinator to discuss these further.

READING LIST

This course is organised around the discussion of issues and problems rather than articles or books, but the following reading list is an important first source for the development of your own ideas about research methods.

Core Module Texts (recommended for purchase)

Bryman, A. (2012). *Social research methods* (4th ed.). Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Daymon, C. & Holloway, I. (2009). *Qualitative research methods in public relations and marketing communication*. Taylor & Francis.

Punch, K. F. (2006). *Developing Effective Research Proposals* (2nd ed.). London: Sage.

Key Books

Bell, J. (2005). *Doing Your Research Project* (4th ed). Maidenhead: Open University Press.

Berger, A. A. (1998). *Media Research Techniques* (2nd ed.). London: Sage.

Bertrand, I. & Hughes, P. (2004). *Media Research Methods*. London: Palgrave MacMillan.

Creswell, J. & Clark, V. (2007). *Designing and conducting mixed methods research*. London: Sage.

Cohen, L., Manion, L. & Morrison, K. (2011). *Research Methods in Education* (7th ed.). Milton Park, Abingdon, Oxon : Routledge.

Deacon, D., Pickering, M., Golding, P. & Murdock, G. (2007). *Researching Communications: A Practical Guide to Methods in Media and Cultural Analysis* (2nd ed.). London: Arnold.

Denscombe, M. (1998). *The Good Research Guide for Small-Scale Research Projects*. Maidenhead: Open University Press.

Denzin, N. K., & Lincoln, Y. S. (Eds.). (2011). *The Sage Handbook of Qualitative Research* (4th ed.). Thousand Oaks, London, New Delhi, Singapore: Sage.

Gill, J., & Johnson, P. (2010). *Research Methods for Managers* (4th ed.). London: Sage.

Gubrium, J. F., & Holstein, J. A. (Eds.). (2001). *Handbook of Interview Research: Context and Methodology*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications.

Gubrium, J. F., Holstein, J. A., Marvasti, A. B., & McKinney, K. D. (Eds.) (2012). *The SAGE Handbook of Interview Research: The Complexity of the Craft* (2nd ed.). Thousand Oaks, London, New Delhi, Singapore: Sage.

Hart, C. (2005). *Doing your masters dissertation: Realizing your potential as a social scientist*. London: Sage.

Jensen, K. B. & Jankowski, N. W. (Eds.) (1991). *A Handbook of Qualitative Methodologies for Mass Communications Research*. London: Routledge

Kvale, S. & Brinkmann, S. (2009). *InterViews: Learning the craft of qualitative research interviewing* (2nd ed.). Thousand Oaks, New Delhi, London, Singapore: Sage.

Liamputtong, P. (2011). *Focus Group Methodology: Principles and Practice*. London: Sage.

Mason, J. (2002). *Qualitative Researching* (2nd ed.). Thousand Oaks: Sage.

Messenger-Davies, M. & Mosdell, N. (2006). *Practical Research Methods for Media & Cultural Studies: Making People Count*. Edinburgh: EUP.

Oliver, P. (2004) *The Student's Guide to Research Ethics*. Maidenhead: Open University Press.

Richards, L. (2005). *Handling Qualitative Data: A Practical Guide*. London, Thousand Oaks, New Delhi: Sage.

Rubin, R. B., Rubin, A. M. & Piele, L. J. (1992). *Communication Research Strategies and Sources* (3rd ed.). Belmont, CA: Thomson Wadsworth.

Rugg, G. & Petre, M. (2007). *A Gentle Guide to Research Methods*. Maidenhead: Open University Press.

Saunders, M., Thornhill, A. & Lewis, P. (2009). *Research Methods for Business Students* (5th ed.). London: Prentice Hall.

Seale, C. (2004). *Researching Society and Culture* (2nd ed.). London: Sage.

Silverman, D. (2010). *Doing Qualitative Research: A Practical Handbook* (3rd ed.). London: Sage.

Silverman, D. (Ed.). (2011). *Qualitative Research: Issues of Theory, Method and Practice*. Los Angeles, London, New Delhi: Sage.

Strauss, A. L., & Corbin, J. M. (2008). *Basics of Qualitative Research: Techniques and Procedures in Developing Grounded Theory* (3rd ed.). Thousand Oaks, London, New Delhi: Sage.

Treadwell, D. (2014). *Introducing Communication Research: Paths of Inquiry* (2nd ed.). Thousand Oaks, London: Sage.

Wimmer, R. D. & Dominick, J. R. (2006). *Mass Media Research: an Introduction* (8th ed.). Belmont CA: Thomson Wadsworth.

Yin, R. K. (2009). *Case Study Research: Design and Methods* (4th ed.). Thousand Oaks: Sage.

Journal Articles

Curtin, P.A. (2012). Public relations and philosophy: Parsing paradigms. *Public Relations Inquiry*, 1(1), 31-47.

Edwards, L. (2012). Defining the 'object' of public relations research: A new starting point. *Public Relations Inquiry*, 1(1), 7-30.

Botan, C. & Soto, F. (1998). A semiotic approach to the internal functioning of publics: implications for strategic communication and public relations. *Public Relations Review*, 24(1), 21–44.

Coombs, T. (1993). Philosophical underpinnings: ramifications of a pluralist paradigm. *Public Relations Review*, 19(2), 111–119.

Cutler, A. (2004). Methodical failure: the use of case study method by public relations researchers. *Public Relations Review*, 20, 365–375.

Daymon, C. & Hodges, C. (2009). Researching the occupational culture of PR in Mexico. *Public Relations Review*, 35(4), 429–433.

Gower, K. (2006). Public relations research at the crossroads. *Journal of Public Relations Research*, 18(2), 177–190.

Hallahan, K. (1999). Seven models of framing: implications for public relations. *Journal of Public Relations Research*, 11(3): 205–242.

Hallahan, K. (1999). The paradigm struggle and public relations practice. *Public Relations Review*, 19(2), 197–205.

Holmstrom, S. (2005). Reframing public relations: the evolution of a reflective paradigm for organizational legitimation. *Public Relations Review*, 31(4), 497–504.

Holtzhausen, D. (2002). Towards a postmodern research agenda for public relations. *Public Relations Review*, 28(3), 251–264.

Olasky, M. (1989). The aborted debate within public relations: an approach through Kuhn's paradigm. *Journal of Public Relations Research*, 1(1), 87–95.

Pasadeos, Y., Berger, B., & Renfro, R.B. (2010). Public relations as a maturing discipline: an update on research networks. *Journal of Public Relations Research*, 22(2), 136–158.

Petelin, R. (2005). Editing from the edge: de-territorialising public relations scholarship. *Public Relations Review*, 31(4), 458–462.

Pieczka, M. (2007). Case studies as narrative accounts of public relations practice. *Journal of Public Relations Research*, 19(4), 333–356.

Sharpe, M. (2000). Developing a behavioral paradigm for the performance of public relations. *Public Relations Review*, 26(3), 345–361.

Toth, E. (2002). Postmodernism for modernist public relations: the cash value and application of critical research in public relations. *Public Relations Review*, 28(3): 243–250.

Xifra, J. & Castillo, A. (2006). Forty years of doctoral public relations research in Spain: a quantitative study of dissertation contribution to theory development. *Public Relations Review*, 32(3), 302–308.

Journals

Convergence: the International Journal of Research into New Media Technologies

International Journal of Qualitative Methods

Journal of Mixed Methods Research

Journal of Public Relations Research

Media, Culture & Society

Public Relations Inquiry

Public Relations Review

Qualitative Research Journal

The European Journal of Communication

Websites

ECREA – European Communication Research and Education Association. [online]. Available at: www.ecrea.eu [Accessed: 2 September 2013]

EUPRERA – European Public Relations Education and Research Association. [online]. Available at: www.euprera.eu [Accessed: 2 September 2013]

International Communication Association. [online]. Available at: www.icahdq.org [Accessed: 2 September 2013]

Institute for Public Relations [online]. Available at: <http://www.instituteforpr.org/> [Accessed: 2 September 2013]