

FIT4007
Advanced topics in information systems

Unit guide

Semester 2, 2008

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Unit leader :

Ron Weber

Lecturer(s) :

Clayton

- Ron Weber

South Africa

- Jan Meyer

Introduction

Welcome to FIT4007: Advanced Topics in Information Systems. This six-point unit will develop your capabilities to undertake research in the information systems field. You will learn various research methods and study published research papers in which these research methods have been used. As a class, we will evaluate how well the research methods have been used in the published research papers we study. You will also develop an understanding of some of the exciting, leading-edge research in the information systems field. This understanding may enable you to identify research topics that you would like to pursue, perhaps in an honours, masters, or PhD thesis.

Unit synopsis

This seminar-based unit will use research literature to develop students' research capabilities. The topics covered include choosing a research problem, theory building, experimental research, case study research, design science research, and action learning research.

Each week a topic will be addressed through a critical discussion of two journal papers. Each discussion on a journal paper will be led by a class member.

Learning outcomes

At the conclusion of this unit, students will be able to:

1. identify and describe the strengths and weaknesses of a piece of research published in an information systems journal;
2. articulate the implications of the strengths and weaknesses of the research that they have identified for future research and practice.

Workload

Workload commitments are:

- weekly two-hour seminar;
- on average, a minimum of eight hours of personal study each week to complete reading assignments, prepare for the weekly seminar, and complete assessment material.

Unit relationships

Prerequisites

Students must have completed or be concurrently studying FIT4005 IT Research Methods.

Relationships

FIT4007 is a core unit in the Bachelor of Business Information Systems (Honours).

It is also available for other information systems-oriented honours students in FIT.

Continuous improvement

Monash is committed to 'Excellence in education' and strives for the highest possible quality in teaching and learning. To monitor how successful we are in providing quality teaching and learning Monash regularly seeks feedback from students, employers and staff. Two of the formal ways that you are invited to provide feedback are through Unit Evaluations and through Monquest Teaching Evaluations.

One of the key formal ways students have to provide feedback is through Unit Evaluation Surveys. It is Monash policy for every unit offered to be evaluated each year. Students are strongly encouraged to complete the surveys as they are an important avenue for students to "have their say". The feedback is anonymous and provides the Faculty with evidence of aspects that students are satisfied and areas for improvement.

Student Evaluations

The Faculty of IT administers the Unit Evaluation surveys online through the my.monash portal, although for some smaller classes there may be alternative evaluations conducted in class.

If you wish to view how previous students rated this unit, please go to <http://www.monash.edu.au/unit-evaluation-reports/>

Over the past few years the Faculty of Information Technology has made a number of improvements to its courses as a result of unit evaluation feedback. Some of these include systematic analysis and planning of unit improvements, and consistent assignment return guidelines.

Monquest Teaching Evaluation surveys may be used by some of your academic staff this semester. They are administered by the Centre for Higher Education Quality (CHEQ) and may be completed in class with a facilitator or on-line through the my.monash portal. The data provided to lecturers is completely anonymous. Monquest surveys provide academic staff with evidence of the effectiveness of their teaching and identify areas for improvement. Individual Monquest reports are confidential, however, you can see the summary results of Monquest evaluations for 2006 at <http://www.adm.monash.edu.au/cheq/evaluations/monquest/profiles/index.html>

Unit staff - contact details

Unit leader

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Dean

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Lecturer(s) :

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Mr Jan Meyer

Senior Lecturer

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Teaching and learning method

The basic approach we will use to learning in this unit is to first study the nature of and procedures involved in a particular research method and then to evaluate how well it has been used in some published piece of research. Our understanding of each research method will be enhanced if we examine how it has been used in published research. We will also develop our critical abilities as researchers when we examine how well the research method has been used in published research.

You must do the assigned reading *before* coming to class. During each class meeting, one or two members of the class will lead the class discussion on the readings. All members of the class are expected to contribute actively to the class discussion. By engaging with the class discussion, you will develop your communication skills. You will also reach a deeper understanding of the research methods we study and their application in the field of information systems.

You must also keep a reflective diary, which can be an exercise book. After each class, you should reflect on fundamental principles you have learned from the readings for the week and the class discussion for the week. During the class discussion on the following week, you should be prepared to share your learnings with other members of the class.

Communication, participation and feedback

Monash aims to provide a learning environment in which students receive a range of ongoing feedback throughout their studies. You will receive feedback on your work and progress in this unit. This may take the form of group feedback, individual feedback, peer feedback, self-comparison, verbal and written feedback, discussions (on line and in class) as well as more formal feedback related to assignment marks and grades. You are encouraged to draw on a variety of feedback to enhance your learning.

It is essential that you take action immediately if you realise that you have a problem that is affecting your study. Semesters are short, so we can help you best if you let us know as soon as problems arise. Regardless of whether the problem is related directly to your progress in the unit, if it is likely to interfere with your progress you should discuss it with your lecturer or a Community Service counsellor as soon as possible.

Unit Schedule

Week	Topic	Key dates
1	Introduction	17 July 2008
2	Choosing the Research Problem	24 July 2008
3	Theory Building - I	31 July 2008
4	Theory Building - II	7 August 2008
5	Experiments - I	14 August 2008
6	Experiments - II	21 August 2008
7	Case Study Research - I	28 August 2008
8	Case Study Research - II	4 September 2008
9	Design Science Research - I	11 September 2008
10	Design Science Research - II	18 September 2008
11	Action Learning - I	25 September 2008
Mid semester break		
12	Action Learning - II	9 October 2008

13	Review	16 October 2008
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Unit Resources

Prescribed text(s) and readings

A reading list is available on the FIT4007 web site. Copies of papers to be read are also on the FIT4007 web site.

There is no textbook for FIT4007.

Recommended text(s) and readings

Required software and/or hardware

There are no software requirements for FIT4007.

Equipment and consumables required or provided

Students studying off-campus are required to have the minimum system configuration specified by the Faculty as a condition of accepting admission, and regular Internet access. On-campus students, and those studying at supported study locations may use the facilities available in the computing labs. Information about computer use for students is available from the ITS Student Resource Guide in the Monash University Handbook.

Study resources

Study resources we will provide for your study are:

The FIT4007 website on MUSO where weekly requirements including readings, assignment specifications, and supplementary materials will be posted.

Library access

The Monash University Library site contains details about borrowing rights and catalogue searching. To learn more about the library and the various resources available, please go to <http://www.lib.monash.edu.au>. Be sure to obtain a copy of the Library Guide, and if necessary, the instructions for remote access from the library website.

Monash University Studies Online (MUSO)

All unit and lecture materials are available through MUSO (Monash University Studies Online). Blackboard is the primary application used to deliver your unit resources. Some units will be piloted in Moodle. If your unit is piloted in Moodle, you will see a link from your Blackboard unit to Moodle (<http://moodle.monash.edu.au>) and can bookmark this link to access directly. In Moodle, from the Faculty of Information Technology category, click on the link for your unit.

You can access MUSO and Blackboard via the portal: <http://my.monash.edu.au>

Click on the Study and enrolment tab, then Blackboard under the MUSO learning systems.

In order for your Blackboard unit(s) to function correctly, your computer needs to be correctly configured.

For example:

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- Blackboard supported browser
- Supported Java runtime environment

For more information, please visit: <http://www.monash.edu.au/muso/support/students/downloadables-student.html>

You can contact the MUSO Support by: Phone: (+61 3) 9903 1268

For further contact information including operational hours, please visit:

<http://www.monash.edu.au/muso/support/students/contact.html>

Further information can be obtained from the MUSO support site:

<http://www.monash.edu.au/muso/support/index.html>

Assessment

Unit assessment policy

The unit is assessed with via weekly performance in class, one assignment, and one two-hour open-book examination. To pass the unit you must

- achieve no less than 50 percent in class performance
- achieve no less than 40 percent on the assignment
- achieve no less than 40 percent on the examination

Assignment tasks

• Assignment Task

Title : Critical evaluation of a published paper in an information systems journal

Description :

The specific task will be distributed at the appropriate time in the semester.

Weighting : 30%

Criteria for assessment :

The specific criteria for assessment will be provided at the appropriate time in the semester.

Due date : 5 September 2008, 5 pm

Remarks (optional - leave blank for none) :

Assignment must be submitted electronically via the MUSO web site for FIT4007.

• Assignment Task

Title : Seminar participation

Description :

Students are expected to actively participate in and from time to time lead the class discussion. When students are responsible for leading the class discussion, they should prepare a brief handout (maximum one page) identifying the strengths and weaknesses of the paper to be read by the class. They should make sufficient copies of this handout to give to each member of the class at the start of the discussion on the paper.

Weighting : 20%

Criteria for assessment :

The "ability to contribute to a structured discussion of key IS issues" is one of the objectives of FIT4007. Each week the lecturer will assess the contribution of each student. The seminar participation mark will be the average of a student's best eight participation scores. Students will be notified of their participation mark each week and their overall participation mark in Week 13. A copy of the assessment proforma that will be used is available on this web site.

Due date : At the beginning of each week's class.

Examinations

- **Examination**

Weighting : 50%

Length : 3 hours

Type (open/closed book) : Open book

Remarks (optional - leave blank for none) :

Critical evaluation of a paper published in an information systems journal.

Assignment submission

Assignments must be submitted electronically via the MUSO web site for FIT4007.

Assignment coversheets

Assignment cover sheets can be obtained from the MUSO web site.

University and Faculty policy on assessment

Due dates and extensions

The due dates for the submission of assignments are given in the previous section. Please make every effort to submit work by the due dates. It is your responsibility to structure your study program around assignment deadlines, family, work and other commitments. Factors such as normal work pressures, vacations, etc. are seldom regarded as appropriate reasons for granting extensions. Students are advised to NOT assume that granting of an extension is a matter of course.

Requests for extensions must be made to the unit lecturer by email at least two days before the due date. You will be asked to forward original medical certificates in cases of illness, and you may be asked to provide other forms of documentation where necessary. A copy of the email requesting an extension plus the email from the lecturer approving the extension must be attached to the assignment submission.

Late assignment

Assignments received after the due date will be subject to a penalty of 10% per working day. Assignments received later than five working days after the due date will not normally be accepted.

Return dates

Students can expect assignments to be returned within two weeks of the submission date or after receipt, whichever is later.

Assessment for the unit as a whole is in accordance with the provisions of the Monash University Education Policy at <http://www.policy.monash.edu/policy-bank/academic/education/assessment/>

We will aim to have assignment results made available to you within two weeks after assignment receipt.

Plagiarism, cheating and collusion

Plagiarism and cheating are regarded as very serious offences. In cases where cheating has been confirmed, students have been severely penalised, from losing all marks for an assignment, to facing disciplinary action at the Faculty level. While we would wish that all our students adhere to sound ethical conduct and honesty, I will ask you to acquaint yourself with Student Rights and Responsibilities (<http://www.infotech.monash.edu.au/about/committees-groups/facboard/policies/studrights.html>) and the Faculty regulations that apply to students detected cheating as these will be applied in all detected cases.

In this University, cheating means seeking to obtain an unfair advantage in any examination or any other written or practical work to be submitted or completed by a student for assessment. It includes the use, or attempted use, of any means to gain an unfair advantage for any assessable work in the unit, where the means is contrary to the instructions for such work.

When you submit an individual assessment item, such as a program, a report, an essay, assignment or other piece of work, under your name you are understood to be stating that this is your own work. If a submission is identical with, or similar to, someone else's work, an assumption of cheating may arise. If you are planning on working with another student, it is acceptable to undertake research together, and discuss problems, but it is not acceptable to jointly develop or share solutions unless this is specified by your lecturer.

Intentionally providing students with your solutions to assignments is classified as "assisting to cheat" and students who do this may be subject to disciplinary action. You should take reasonable care that your solution is not

accidentally or deliberately obtained by other students. For example, do not leave copies of your work in progress on the hard drives of shared computers, and do not show your work to other students. If you believe this may have happened, please be sure to contact your lecturer as soon as possible.

Cheating also includes taking into an examination any material contrary to the regulations, including any bilingual dictionary, whether or not with the intention of using it to obtain an advantage.

Plagiarism involves the false representation of another person's ideas, or findings, as your own by either copying material or paraphrasing without citing sources. It is both professional and ethical to reference clearly the ideas and information that you have used from another writer. If the source is not identified, then you have plagiarised work of the other author. Plagiarism is a form of dishonesty that is insulting to the reader and grossly unfair to your student colleagues.

Register of counselling about plagiarism

The university requires faculties to keep a simple and confidential register to record counselling to students about plagiarism (e.g. warnings). The register is accessible to Associate Deans Teaching (or nominees) and, where requested, students concerned have access to their own details in the register. The register is to serve as a record of counselling about the nature of plagiarism, not as a record of allegations; and no provision of appeals in relation to the register is necessary or applicable.

Non-discriminatory language

The Faculty of Information Technology is committed to the use of non-discriminatory language in all forms of communication. Discriminatory language is that which refers in abusive terms to gender, race, age, sexual orientation, citizenship or nationality, ethnic or language background, physical or mental ability, or political or religious views, or which stereotypes groups in an adverse manner. This is not meant to preclude or inhibit legitimate academic debate on any issue; however, the language used in such debate should be non-discriminatory and sensitive to these matters. It is important to avoid the use of discriminatory language in your communications and written work. The most common form of discriminatory language in academic work tends to be in the area of gender inclusiveness. You are, therefore, requested to check for this and to ensure your work and communications are non-discriminatory in all respects.

Students with disabilities

Students with disabilities that may disadvantage them in assessment should seek advice from one of the following before completing assessment tasks and examinations:

- Faculty of Information Technology Student Service staff, and / or
- your Unit Coordinator, or
- Disabilities Liaison Unit

Deferred assessment and special consideration

Deferred assessment (not to be confused with an extension for submission of an assignment) may be granted in cases of extenuating personal circumstances such as serious personal illness or bereavement. Information and forms for Special Consideration and deferred assessment applications are available at <http://www.monash.edu.au/exams/special-consideration.html>. Contact the Faculty's Student Services staff at your campus for further information and advice.