**Research for Strategic Development**

The aim of this unit is to develop the knowledge, understanding and skills required to carry out research to meet the needs of strategic business management.

**Indicative Content**

**1. Be able to formulate a research proposal relating to strategic business development**

Research proposal:

* Possible questions or hypothesis; different formats for research proposals; aims of research; scoping research projects; SMART objectives; terms of reference; rationale for selection; ethical issues

Information for strategic development of business area:

* Examples may include analysis of organisation; structure, culture; planned growth strategy, marketing, operational issues; SWOT analysis, PEST analysis, analysis of customers and key stakeholders, competitor analysis

Success criteria:

* Linked to purpose, objectives and outcome, SMART

Project planning:

* Key milestones, resources, risk assessment and management, critical pathways, contingency, accessing relevant information, project goals, schedule, communication systems, sensitivity of information gathered e.g. intellectual property, data protection

Link to Business Development:

* Rationale for chosen research linked to stated business development needs

**2. Be able to use different research methodologies to gather sufficient and valid data**

Research methodology:

* Research methods e.g. survey, questionnaire including manual and electronic, observations; ways to test sufficiency, reliability and validity; definitions of data e.g. primary and secondary sources, qualitative and quantitative; literature search and review – its credibility, use and acceptance; ways to reference sources
* Size and sufficiency of data, reliability and validity of information gathered

**3. Be able to present research findings in an appropriate format for a target audience**

Research findings:

* Report format e.g. title, acknowledgements, contents page, introduction, summary of literature review, research methods used, findings, recommendations, references, bibliography, appendices e.g. questionnaires, surveys
* Referencing e.g. Harvard system

Analysis of data and application of statistical methods:

* Qualitative interpretation of records, feedback, processes, categories, trends and relationships
* Quantitative e.g. mean, median, mode, variability e.g. range, standard deviation, application to business data, reliability of estimates from samples, trends and forecasting

Presentation of findings:

* Methods for statistical data e.g. graphs, charts, statistical tables; chosen audience e.g. colleagues, Board members, external stakeholders; use of language in report appropriate to the chosen audience; power point presentations

**4. Be able to evaluate own skills while undertaking research**

Methods of self-evaluation:

* Personal reflection, constructive feedback from range of sources, evaluation forms, use of electronic equipment e.g. recording interviews, SWOT analysis. Balanced judgements

Improving own research skills:

* Examples may include courses or qualifications, mentoring, coaching, conferences, secondments, application in future research
* Plan with specific actions, timescales, success criteria, resource implications, milestones. The plan is realistic but challenging and can be implemented. It addresses areas of weakness and builds on strengths