

Getting started webinar

Answers to student questions

Dr Kate Ringham, Programme Lead Applied Accounting, OBU and Dr Jane Towers-Clark, Head Academic Partnerships, ACCA held a webinar – getting Started on the Research and Analysis Project. The webinar can be viewed on demand from this [link](#). These are the answers to the questions asked in the webinar.

The questions have been grouped into general questions (degree classification, eligibility, mentors) and those relating to the Research Report (topics, research question, business / accountancy models, primary data collection, secondary data – financial information, referencing, submission word count, Turnitin / Plagiarism)

DEGREE CLASSIFICATION

Is the mark obtained in the Ethics and Professional Skills module included in the OBU degree classification? You must have completed EPSm prior to submission but the mark from EPSm is not included in the degree classification calculation.

Do all modules have the same weight in the degree classification calculation? Your marks from your CBL, Tax, PM, FM, AA and FR (old F4-F9) examinations carry the same weight (marks for exemptions do not count).

I think I might be able to obtain a first class degree. How can I check? Please see **page 83 of the 2020/21 Information Pack** for the calculation. The assessment criteria are provided in Appendix 1 of the Information Pack and this explain what OBU expects of Grade A, B and C work. It also provides information about why you might fail.

ELIGIBILITY

When can I complete the RAP? To submit your RAP you must be opted in to the BSc, have completed the Applied Knowledge and Applied Skills, and Ethics and professional Skills module. You have 10 years from the date of your first examination pass or exemption granted, to submit and pass the RAP. So you can submit your RAP after your Strategic Professional papers as long as this is within the 10 year limit.

I thought that 10 year limit had been removed? No, as a result of Covid19, if P40 (May 2020) was your last opportunity to submit, and you were unable to, then you have an automatic extension to P41.

How can I check if I am opted in? Your MyACCA page shows whether you are opted in or not.

Can I start the RAP before I have finished Applied Knowledge? To submit, you must have completed Applied Knowledge and Applied Skills papers and EPSm. You can start work on

This material has been produced to support students it must not be copied and pasted into a RAP.

the RAP, but your research must be up to date and so think about how many papers you have left, and when you plan to take these.

I am planning to take exams in September 2020, can I start now? If you start your RAP now, then take exams in Sept 2020 and pass (notified in Oct 2020) you can submit in Nov 2020. A RAP takes 3 - 4 months to complete and so you do need to allow yourself time to complete the work well.

MENTORS

Where can I find a list of registered mentors please? There is a list on the How to find a Registered Mentor page of the web pages <https://www.brookes.ac.uk/acca/for-students/mentors/>

Can mentor meetings be conducted after September exams for Nov submission? Your mentor should be guiding you as you work on the RAP. When you (remotely) meet your mentor, is up to you and your mentor, but to be ready to submit in Nov, you may want to make a start on the RAP now.

TOPICS

Regarding topic 3, on the impact of impending legislation, can I use a legislation which was passed approximately 2 years ago? This topic is looking for you to analyse the impact the impending legislation might have. So the legislation will have been announced but not yet implemented.

Any insights on the common topics chosen by students and probably reasons for few of them being popular? Topic 8 tends to be very popular as it uses secondary data and is a very common accounting subject area that many students are comfortable with.

Is there a topic specifically related to the effectiveness and usefulness of audits by a 'big 4' company? I am thinking specifically of EY and Wirecard. The audit topic is as follows 11) An investigation into the financial and operational costs and benefits of the internal audit / internal review activities within an organisation. As the topic mentions within an organisation, this is probably a primary data collection topic. There is also a topic relating to weak corporate governance (topic 17). Do remember that you will need to find a range of information sources and as the issues relating to Wirecard are still current, you may not have access to all the information.

Is there any specific advice/or something that comes to your mind to advice student for Topic 18 - Marketing? I would suggest it is important here to identify and use a marketing model (such as the 7Ps) or focus on how marketing sits within the Value Chain, as this helps students focus on strategy. The common issue with this topic is that students describe a marketing campaign, rather than analyse the marketing strategy.

I am interested in Topic 2 - Technology. Would you recommend to work on this topic using primary or secondary research? You could use either approach. It might depend on whether you are working within the organisation and have access to primary data. The key is to consider the link to business objectives.

Is there any guidance on which approach (primary or secondary data) suits which topics? There is guidance on Primary data – Types of Information available from <https://www.brookes.ac.uk/acca/for-students/resources-for-rap-students/> (within the downloads

section). This guidance considers each topic and whether primary data is essential or desirable, and what form this data might take.

RESEARCH QUESTION

How does the aim link to the topic? This depends on the topic, but generally, in writing your aim you make the topic more specific. For a topic based on secondary data you might make reference to the organisation and if you are conducting primary research you might reference the source of your data (eg managers, employees).

What is the difference between Research Questions and Project Objectives? The Research Question (this can also be called the Research Aim) is the overarching aim of the research, and the project objectives are how you will achieve this aim.

Do we have to select variables and calculate correlations between them? We do not expect students to complete a full statistical analysis for their RAP. If they have collected numerical data then descriptive statistics is acceptable. When writing the research aim / question, reflect the nature of the analysis. If you are using descriptive statistics, the research aim might be “an evaluation of managers’/employees’/ customers’ views of....” rather than “an investigation into the relationship between.....”.

I am thinking about researching my own company. What should I consider? Firstly, discuss with your manager to find out whether the company is willing to be involved (and get permission to do the research). Then think about the type of data you have access to and which topic you are interested in.

BUSINESS / ACCOUNTANCY MODELS

What is the optimal number of business models please? This depends on your topic and is your decision. You need to identify model(s) that are relevant to the topic but bear in mind that you need to keep within the word count. We often see students discuss a couple of models but it depends on your topic.

If you chose a model and conclude it isn't viable (and why) will that lose marks? No, but you do need to use a relevant model to guide your analysis and evaluation. As you have a limited word count, you might briefly mention other models you considered and rejected, and (most importantly) why.

Can we use the business models (eg SWOT, PESTLE, Value Chain) in other topics? It depends on the topic, you need to explain how your business model are relevant to your topic.

Is it fine if I do not apply a model? No, the assessment criteria re clear in that you need to demonstrate “Understanding of accountancy / business models” and “Application of accountancy / business models”.

If I am considering the advantages and disadvantages of models, the approach to information gathering, and the tools used in analysis (eg ratios), do I have to be specific to the company I am researching or can they be general? Some of the advantages and disadvantages will be general, but where you can, relate specifically to your company.

PRIMARY DATA COLLECTION

Is an approval / permission letter needed for companies that are listed when their financial information can be easily accessed from the public domain? No using information in the public domain is secondary data and permission is not required (the information is publically available). A permission letter is required if you undertake primary data collection.

Can we gather primary data by emailing firms or industries? The method of data collection needs to be appropriate for the topic. Firms or industries often do not respond to emails unless they know where the email has originated from. If you are emailing from the organisation you work for, you do need permission.

If using questionnaires for Primary Data collection, what is an acceptable amount of responses? The level of response will depend on the nature of the questionnaire and the number of people surveyed. Ideally you will have sufficient responses to be able to answer your research question. In your research report, discuss how many questionnaires you sent, the number of responses, how you encouraged people to respond (reminders). You may also want to include an open ended question in the questionnaire so that you have some narrative comments to analyse as well.

My organisation does not want to remain anonymous, but want to know about the confidentiality of the RAP. The RAPs are not made publically available. Your work will be seen by the marker, and possibly moderator and external examiner (this is done on a sample basis) and no one else.

SECONDARY DATA - FINANCIAL INFORMATION

Where do I get the information from? For topics using secondary data, an important source of information can be the financial statements.

Will the current list of industry sectors will be the same for P42 (May 2021)? Yes the industry classifications are for the academic year

I work for a University - can I not do a project in this sector (it doesn't appear on the industry list)? The industry sectors are only relevant to topics 8 and 15. You can use a University as the organisation for one of the other topics.

For Topic 8, who chooses the organisation, me, my mentor or OBU? You are required to choose the organisation from one of three industry sectors (see below). You also need to select a comparator organisation. It is good practice to explain why you think your comparator organisation is a good choice.

For Topic 8, does the comparator have to have the same financial year end? If there is a difference in the year ends, you will want to understand the impact this might have. When discussing the comparator in your report, explain this impact to the reader.

Should I use the consolidated financial statements? I would recommend using the consolidated statements. If you think this has an impact on your analysis, explain this to the reader of the report.

Can I do my project on a state owned company? Yes, if this is for topic 8 make sure you can identify a comparator organisation and that there is enough information from a variety of sources about the state owned company.

How many years secondary data is minimum to be considered in the research? This depends on topic, at a minimum you will usually compare 2 years for your company and (if topic 8) a comparator.

For Topic 8 & 15 the 2019 financial statements are not yet available. Can I use 2016-2018 annual reports? Your research needs to be current and up to date so please use the most recent financial statements. It is good practice to explain to the reader the reasons for using the information sources. So you might mention in your report that the 2019 financial statements are not yet available. It is very important to explain to the reader why you are not using the most up to date information available. If this is a consequence of Covid19, then explain this.

REFERENCING

Should I include page numbers for information gathered from the financial statements? Yes, this is good practice and helps the reader find the source of the information.

What is the minimum number of references? The references included in your Research Report are the sources of information you have read and have decided are useful to support your work. There is no minimum, it will depend on your topic and research question.

How do I know that the source that I am referring to is a reliable source? Think about where the material (source) is coming from, is it an expert in that area (eg consultancy firm discussing technological innovation), when was it written (it should be in the last couple of years) and is there any bias (the company is likely to say they are doing a great job!)

SUBMISSION

What are the submission windows? RAPs are submitted in November and May. The exact details are on the ACCA website and in the Information Pack.

Is there a time limit from when we start to when the RAP has to be handed in? You must submit your RAP within ten years of your first ACCA examination pass, or date of your first exemption.

Is the RAP be submitted by email, or should it be printed and delivered? RAPs are submitted online. You upload your work to the submission portal. Details are in the Information Pack.

What is the pass rate for the RAP? Globally, it is usually around 64%

Are any of the assessment criteria a common factor for failure? The two assessment criteria students find more difficult are analysis and evaluation, and information gathering and referencing - but it does vary.

How do I register for Nov 20 submission? You don't need to register for a particular submission window. To submit, you need to be opted-in (check your MyACCA page), have passed Applied Knowledge and Applied Skills and completed the Ethics and Professional Skills module.

Do we need to do calculations for every topic? One of the graduate competencies is Information Technology. You are required to have created and submitted an Excel spreadsheet that includes the use of formulae. If you have collected primary data, you can use

Excel to calculate percentages, averages etc. If you are using secondary data then calculating ratios is evidence to support your discussions.

Will I be able to have a model RAP on each topic, just for reference? We do not produce model RAPs for each topic as there are lots of different ways you can approach writing your report and achieve a pass. Be guided by the assessment criteria (Appendix 1 of the Information Pack). There are resources on the OBU website explaining different aspects of the RAP (eg how to write aims and objectives, guidance on reflective writing, referencing). We regularly publish articles in Student Accountant which are then posted on the OBU website.

How long does the project take to complete? Students tell us it takes about 3-4 months to complete the RAP.

WORD COUNT

What is the maximum word count? The maximum is 7500 for your Research Report.

Considering the number of words for the research report, how can I demonstrate wider reading on theories? You need to focus on the relevance of the theories to your topic and question. You can use a lot of words describing the theory in detail. This is not necessary as the markers know the theories, you need to include a brief summary and then focus relevance to your question.

Are references included in the word count? The in-text references (those included in the Research Report) are included in the word count. You also submit a reference list as a separate document. This is not included in the word count.

Is the referencing tool in Microsoft word useful? You can use the referencing tool in MSWord.

PLAGIARISM / TURNITIN

How do I check for plagiarism? There is guidance on the OBU website (Article on WriteCheck). The only Turnitin product that is available is iThenticate. Some of the other websites offering plagiarism checking service, follow up by offering to correct or write work for you. This is not good academic practice and may result in a referral for academic misconduct. If you follow good practice in keeping notes of your sources, writing in your own words and acknowledging the source, limiting the amount of direct quotes you use, then there is no need to use a plagiarism checker.

Is there a threshold percentage match in Turnitin? All RAPs are submitted through Turnitin and the Turnitin report is considered. We do not expect your percentage match to be below a threshold as it is the nature of the matches that is important. It is possible to have reasonably high percentage match where there are lots of small matches to lots of different sources. It can be more problematic if there is a lower percentage match but it is larger pieces of writing to one or two sources.

The next webinar is Analysis, evaluation and critical writing for Research and Analysis Project on Monday 17 August at 9am BST. This is the [link](#) to register to attend. If you can't make that time, it will be available on demand after the event.