Student Name:.....

(Qualitative) Research Methods for the Information Sciences (code 400290)

10 February 2005

FINAL EXAM

Vrije Universiteit Amsterdam (VUA/FEW/I)

IMPORTANT NOTICE: This is a **closed book** exam. You are supposed to answer the questions on your own, i.e. without the use of a computer, books or any other material and without discussing the exam with anyone else. Cheating is not tolerated and will be handled according to strict University policies.

This exam has been designed to test your overall knowledge and understanding of the material covered in the course. It consists of **a total of 6 questions for a total of 100 points**. The exam score is your total number of points divided by 10, and yields 2/3 of the final mark for this course; the remaining 1/3 comes from your score for the MSc review essay assignment.

You are free to give your answers in either English or Dutch. Please make sure to use *the present form* for your answers, and use the space provided under each question. Answers will be evaluated based on content rather than length. In other words, there are no extra points for providing long answers (i.e., for "jabber"!).

This exam is not meant to be stressful and should not take you more than one hour to complete if you have carefully studied the course materials. But: **Please make sure that your handwriting is legible and that you have printed your name at the top of each page. Good luck!**

Student Name:.....

Student ID Number:.....

Points:	
1)	____ out of 10
2)	____ out of 20
3)	____ out of 15
4)	____ out of 10
5)	____ out of 20
6)	____ out of 25

Points total: ____ out of 100 **(Exam score = points/10)**

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Question 1 (10 points):
Science clearly has its roots in common-sense investigation and problem solving concerning the world around us. However, over time, it has developed distinctive characteristics that make it different from common sense. Identify and briefly describe two major characteristics of scientific research that clarify how science differs from common sense problem-solving.

1. (5 points – limit your answer to 3 lines):

2. (5 points – limit your answer to 3 lines):

Question 2 (20 points):
The interview is one of the most common and practical research methods in the Information Sciences.

Question 2a: List three different types of "interview" and give their typical format and purpose.

1. (5 points – limit your answer to 3 lines):

2. (5 points – limit your answer to 3 lines):

3. (5 points – limit your answer to 3 lines):

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Question 2b (5 points):
Give a practical *example* of a research situation or problem where the interview would be a good method to use.

Question 3 (15 points):
The "research design" is one of the key scientific concepts in the early stages of conducting a research study. Give a (concise) definition of what a research design is.

Question 4 (10 points):
Both the "case study" and "action research" are prime examples of flexible research designs in the Information Sciences. This question concerns two of their central characteristics.

Question 4a (5 points):
Case study and action research have one central characteristic in common that sets them apart from other research designs and methods. What is this *common* feature? Limit your answer to 3 lines.

Question 4b (5 points):
What is the key characteristic as a consequence of which case study and action research *differ* from each other? Limit your answer to 3 lines.

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Question 5 (20 points):

Question 5a (5 points):
Explain what "triangulation" means and what it tries to achieve in carrying out a scientific research study. Limit your answer to 4 lines.

Question 5b:
List and characterize three different types of triangulation.

1. (5 points – limit your answer to 3 lines):

2. (5 points – limit your answer to 3 lines):

3. (5 points – limit your answer to 3 lines):

Question 6 (25 points):
Certain empirical research methods are quite naturally related to certain styles of reasoning employed to come to conclusions. The method known as "survey" and "inductive" reasoning are one example.

Question 6a (5 points):
Explain what "induction" is. Limit your answer to 4 lines.

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Question 6b (5 points).
Explain what a "survey" is. Limit your answer to 5 lines.

Question 6c (5 points):
Give a practical *example* of a research situation or problem where the survey would be a good method to use. (If you feel a lack of creativity at this point, you may think of the educational processes at VUA.)

Question 6d (10 points):
In interpreting the outcomes of a survey and coming to valid general conclusions, the concept of construct validity is important. Explain what "construct validity" means. (It may help you to also use an example to illustrate your description). Limit your answer to 8 lines.

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Feedback (optional):

- If you feel that a question was unclear, please indicate below the number of the question and provide a brief explanation.

- Was preparation for this exam a good way to get you to go over the class material again? Would you have reviewed the material otherwise?

- Do you feel that this exam was fair as a test of your knowledge about the course material? If not, what would you have done differently?

- How long did it take you to finish this exam?