Student Name:……..…

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

11 April 2006

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 **4 set of 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.

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 needlessly long answers. You are free to answer in English or Dutch.

This exam is not meant to be stressful and should not take you much more than one hour to complete if you have carefully studied the course materials. **Please make sure that your writing 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 13
2)	_____	out of 17
3)	_____	out of 10
4)	_____	out of 15
5)	_____	out of 10
6)	_____	out of 15
7)	_____	out of 20

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

Student Name:……..…

Question 1 (13 points):
One of the key notions in scientific research is "theory". Explain what a theory is, and in addition give two concrete examples of a scientific theory, one from social/business sciences, and another one from information systems/computer sciences.

Question 2 (17 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. (limit your answer to 3 lines):

2. (limit your answer to 3 lines):

3. (limit your answer to 3 lines):

Question 2b (limit your answer to 4 lines):
Give a practical *example* of a research problem where the interview is a good method to use.

Student Name:……..…

Question 3 (10 points):
A key term in empirical research is "data", but real data come in many different guises.

Question 3a: Explain what "primary data" are. Limit your answer to 3 lines.

Question 3b: Explain what "secondary data" are. Limit your answer to 3 lines.

Question 4 (15 points):

Question 4a (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 4b: (10 points)
List and characterize at least *two* different types of triangulation.

Student Name:……..…

Question 5 (10 points):
What is intersubjectivity? Limit your answer to 4 lines.

Question 6 (15 points):
Suppose you work in the IT department of a health insurance company that wants to make its business processes and interactions with customers much more Web-enabled. It is common in IS to analyze such workflows and business processes by constructing a model of reality, in terms of (for example) UML activity diagrams or similar Web standards such as BPEL. As part of your research design, explain how you can *validate* your business process models so that you can be confident that your UML (or BPEL etc.) models sufficiently reflect the business process reality.
(Limit your answer to about 12 lines.)

Student Name:……..…

<u>Question 7</u> (20 points):
The VU Executive Board (College van Bestuur, CvB) is in the process of setting up a new VU-wide ICT strategy. Suppose you are invited to become the student member of the CvB ICT strategy development group. The CvB asks you to conduct a study on what the general needs and requirements are of the VU students concerning the ICT facilities and applications that should be(come) available as part of the campus network. Come up with a research design describing how you would find out and validate what these student needs and requirements are.
(Limit your answer to about 20 lines.)

Student Name:……..…