

Student Name:.....

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

10 April 2007

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 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. 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 15 |
| 2) | _____ | out of 16 |
| 3) | _____ | out of 10 |
| 4) | _____ | out of 10 |
| 5) | _____ | out of 15 |
| 6) | _____ | out of 15 |
| 7) | _____ | out of 19 |

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

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Question 1 (15 points):

There are many different forms of reasoning, and they are variously used in different types of scientific method. This question is on a basic form of scientific argumentation.

Question 1a (6 points):

(i) Explain what “induction” is. (ii) Give also a concrete example. Limit your answer to 6 lines.

Question 1b (9 points):

The method known as “survey” provides an example of the use of inductive reasoning. Explain clearly (i) what a survey is and (ii) in what *specific* way it uses induction to come to conclusions. (iii) Illustrate your explanation with an example. Limit your answer to 10 lines.

Question 2 (16 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. In *each* case, give a concrete example of a setting where you may usefully employ this type of interview.

1. (limit your answer to 5 lines):

2. (limit your answer to 5 lines):

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3. (limit your answer to 5 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.

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 (10 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 5 (15 points):

This question concerns the research method known as “focus group”.

Question 5a (5 points).

Explain what a “focus group” is. Limit your answer to 4 lines.

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Question 5b (10 points).

Give a concrete, practical example of a research question in which the use of focus groups would be a good approach. Outline briefly how you would run the focus group in your chosen research setting. Limit your answer to 8 lines.

Question 6 (15 points):

Suppose you work in the IT department of a company that wants to make its business processes much more Web-enabled. It is common in IS to analyze 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 adequately reflect the business process reality. (Limit your answer to about 12 lines.)

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Question 7 (19 points): Shakira

The well-known singer Shakira, after her recent concert in the Gelredome in Arnhem, fell in love with a Dutchman and has (surprisingly indeed) decided to stay and live in The Netherlands after her marriage. She performs songs in different languages. Knowing about the attitude these days of some Dutch whites towards foreigners, she is wondering whether she should start to include some songs in Dutch as part of her repertoire, in order to become more accepted as “one of us”.

Remarkably, she has selected *you* to carry out a market research study to investigate whether this is a good idea. Describe a good research design to answer Shakira’s research question. (Limit your answer to about 15 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?