RESEARCH METHODS

DEGREE: BACHELOR IN BUSINESS ADMINISTRATION

DEGREE COURSE YEAR: ☐ FIRST ☐ SECOND ☐ THIRD ☒ FOURTH
SEMESTER: ☒ 1º SEMESTER ☒ 2º SEMESTER ☐ 3º SEMESTER ☐ 4º SEMESTER
CATEGORY: ☐ BASIC ☒ COMPULSORY ☐ OPTIONAL
NO. OF CREDITS (ECTS): ☒ 6 ☐ 3
LANGUAGE: ☒ ENGLISH ☐ SPANISH

PREREQUISITES: THERE ARE NO SPECIFIC PREREQUISITES FOR RESEARCH METHODS, BUT IN ORDER TO SUCCESSFULLY COMPLETE YOUR FINAL THESIS, YOU MAY BE FAMILIAR WITH THE SUBJECT FROM WHICH YOU INTEND TO SELECT YOUR TOPIC. IN A SIMILAR WAY, ACCORDING TO THE METHODOLOGY YOU INTEND TO ADOPT FOR YOUR THESIS WORK, YOU MAY BE FAMILIAR WITH SOME BASIC STATISTICAL AND ECONOMETRIC TOOLS. LAST BUT NOT LEAST, WRITING SKILLS IN ENGLISH ARE FUNDAMENTAL TO TRANSFORMING THE IDEAS IN A HIGHIMPACT FINAL DOCUMENT.

1 - COURSE DESCRIPTION

This course is designed to help you successfully craft your BBA thesis. The BBA thesis shows your ability to deal with a topic in depth and to work autonomously. Many reports produced in the context of an organization follow a similar approach to a research thesis. For example, in the context of Evaluation of specific activities (Mergers & Acquisitions); Studies of development opportunities prepared for general management; Reports for government and non-government institutions (Ministry, OECD, etc.), and so on.

The BBA thesis is a necessary step for any BBA degree or international equivalent. The BBA thesis reflects qualities such as analytical thinking, writing skills, creativity, and sensitivity to contemporary business issues impacting organizations and management. Moreover, the thesis represents the beginning of an expertise on a precise business related topic, and it will give students a competitive advantage during the recruitment stage.

2 - COURSE GOALS

Developing the skill to write a thesis is fundamental as it a valuable aid to better decisionmaking. It provides managers with evidence based on facts and data; helps modeling problems and suggesting efficient solutions, it enhances critical thinking, and improves the ability to trace information in today’s Big Data world. Moreover, it requires originality in synthesizing previous knowledge. During the course we will touch upon contemporary business issues that can lead to impactful research questions.

Among the learning objectives of the course is: increase critical thinking skills, demonstrate this by seriously considering multiple perspectives in class discussions, in-class writing, group work, and the final presentation.
Apply course material to your own research. Demonstrate this through participation in in-class discussions and activities, and in applying course concepts to class assignments. Become active in the process of seeking, analyzing, and synthesizing information.

3 - COURSE ORGANIZATION

The course will follow an intensive blocked-seminar form during a limited number of days in the first weeks of the semester. The first days will consist in face-to-face lectures that introduce the main topics and to engaging students in small groups to examine in detail research papers and best practice BBA thesis from past years. The last day is dedicated to students’ presenting their own research ideas and receiving feedback.

Specifically, the Research Methods course is:
- Scheduled in the first weeks of the same semester that students write their thesis.
- **Highly recommended** for all students who are enrolled in the 4th year and who need to complete their BBA thesis.

4 - ACADEMIC DISHONESTY

Includes: cheating or plagiarism, and it occurs when a student or group of students uses or attempts to use, unauthorized aids, assistance, materials or methods. Cheating is a severe educational offense. Plagiarism occurs where a student represents the work or ideas of another person as his or her own. Examples of plagiarism include:

- Borrowing the ideas, theories, illustrations, lab data, or language of others, in whole or in part, without properly quoting and citing the source within the text of the paper;
- Substantially paraphrasing without acknowledging the source, even though you have used your own words;
- Combining your words with substantial phrases from a source that is either not cited or under cited;
- Using synonyms to change words within a phrase or sentence derived from another source and then treating the phrase or sentence as if it was your own;
- Failing to cite the correct source of a quotation;
- Submitting an assignment that does not acknowledge the contribution of co-authors where such acknowledgement would be appropriate;
- Submitting an assignment, in whole or in part, that was previously graded in another course, whether or not the other course was taught at RPI;
- Submitting an assignment, in whole or in part, which was purchased from another source.

5 – COURSE CONTENT

- Presentation of the seminar and general rules
- Research and the business world
- Industry Analysis and Market Research
- Research and the scientific approach
- Qualitative and Quantitative research
- Identifying a research question
- Bibliographical search
- Useful Databases
The four steps of a research project
Different steps to produce your thesis
Work in small groups analyzing a research question
Students' presentations of a thesis idea
Feedback and discussion

7 - EVALUATION COMPONENTS

Group Work: 30% of total grade
Final Presentation: 60% of total grade
Class Participation: 10% of total grade

8 - EVALUATION CRITERIA

Group Work: In order to emphasize your understanding of the research methods, each group will be assigned a research paper to examine in terms of:

1. Research question: importance, originality, etc.
2. Methodology used
3. Data
4. Results
5. Overall impact and contributions

Each group will present the research paper assigned within 5 to 7 minutes to the entire class using the whiteboard. Then they will reply to questions from the class and the professor. According to the number of students, final presentations will be individual or in groups. The idea you choose to present for the evaluation of this class may or may not be your final thesis idea. A hard copy of the document must be delivered to the professor in class before the presentation itself begins. You also have to send a soft copy of the presentation to the professor via email.

Final Presentation: In a few slides (max 2), describe a SPECIFIC research question that interests you. Make sure that this question (a) clearly relates to some area of business, (b) would lend itself to empirical test (i.e., it is a testable question), and (c) would lend itself to a study that would be ethically sound (i.e., no one would get hurt in your attempt to answer this question). Additionally, given your knowledge of business, this question should be a new question that has not been addressed previously.

The quality of the presentation will determine your evaluation of this course. Accordingly, the quality of the presentation will be judged based on the following criteria:

1. the importance of the research question;
2. the originality and the clarity of idea;
3. the organization of the arguments;
4. the selection of the most appropriate method
5. the impact and time management during the presentation.

Class participation: Attendance, participation, and contribution to in-class discussion is critical in for a dynamic learning experience. Your willingness to share your views with the class, and the quality of your comments will contribute to your final evaluation. Frivolous and unnecessary use of electronic devices, emailing, texting, facebooking, or other out of context, potentially distracting behavior, will influence negatively your class participation. Please be conservative in your judgment and actions regarding your classroom conduct.