# BA Hons in Social Care Yr. 4 2024/25, Final-Year Research Project

## Module Coordinator: Dr. Colletta Dalikeni

### Submission Date for FYRP: *To be advised*

### FYRP Interviews: *To be advised*

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### Aim

The aim of this module is to facilitate students to complete a research project, on a topic of their choice, relating to any of the subjects and or issues covered during their programme of study.

### Intended Learning Outcomes

A student successfully completing this module will be able to:

1. Identify a research area, collate, evaluate and integrate relevant literature
2. Develop a relevant research question/research aim, built around identified core concepts
3. Identify an appropriate research methodology, and apply relevant research methods, to gather and analyse data
4. Present findings from the data, discussing these findings and relating them back to the research aim
5. Present the research project in a succinct, well-structured, well-written, appropriately referenced, document
6. Justify, to an interview panel, the research question and the process taken to answer it

### Assessment of Intended Learning Outcomes (ILOs)

Intended Learning Outcomes 1-6 are assessed by means of a, 8000-word document.

Intended Learning Outcome 7 is assessed by means of a 20-minute interview which seeks to explore the student’s assessment of the research process he/she went through and the document they produced.

The **written document** is worth **80%** of the marks available for this module; the **project interview** is worth the remaining **20%.**

### Word Count

The word count of the FYRP’s document, 8000, is deliberately specific, with the aim of encouraging focused writing. Given this, there are penalties for presenting work that has strayed too far from this prescription. Any document with a word count over or below 10% of the 8000-word limit will incur a penalty of 10%.

**The word count does not include abstract, table of contents/figures, declaration of authorship, source list, nor does it include appendices.**

**The maximum number of appendices is 10.**

### Styles

The text is to be 12-point, Calibri or Calibri Light font, at 1.5-line spacing, in justified alignment. All paragraph breaks are to be the Word default, ‘Auto’ (for indented quotations see below). No more than the three Word default heading types are to be used:

# Heading 1

## Heading 2

### Heading 3

## Ethics

For the purposes of the undergraduate FYRP ethical practice boils down to the way in people and or their works are treated. If live subjects are involved in the research then they must be able to give, and to have given, informed consent. If data are gathered by watching and or speaking to people, they are entitled to know what the researcher is doing and why. All questions to be presented to live subjects must be passed by your research supervisor prior to interview. Only non-vulnerable service providers are to be interviewed by students. Researchers have a duty to inform people, who, in turn, do not have to participate in the research in the first place and can withdraw their participation at any point in the process. If people are interviewed, for example, they have a right to know that what they said has been interpreted fairly and accurately and to refuse to allow what they have said to be used as data. The best way to do this is for researchers to run their interpretations by the research subjects before the project is submitted. Once people know how what they’ve said is to be used, this allows them to clarify or even withdraw their commentary. Informing people as fully as possible, as to precisely what the research is about, is the key to ensuring that potential misunderstandings and misrepresentations are minimised. Informed consent then is the foundation of ethical primary research.

### Plagiarism

Key to ethical is practice is making sure people, their ideas, actions and words, are not misrepresented. Plagiarism is a form of data misrepresentation; it is the taking and using of work produced by other people and passing it off as one’s own. The college’s policy on academic integrity set out in and is available at

<https://www.dkit.ie/registrars-office/academic-policies/academic-integrity-policy-procedures>

Students are expected to familiarise themselves with these guidelines. Having read them, if students are still not clear on what constitutes academic integrity, they should discuss this with their supervisor. One of the core assumptions underpinning the Research Project is that the final document submitted is entirely the student’s own effort, and that all sources and materials used have been cited and referenced.

### Referencing

Deliberate plagiarism is rare. Far more likely are instances of students failing to reference their work fully, and this can look like plagiarism. The key to avoiding inadvertent plagiarism is good referencing, which is to be based on the Harvard system, as set out in the DkIT guide to Harvard Referencing which is available from the library and online at

<https://www.dkit.ie/dkit-library/support/guide-harvard-referencing>

When quotes are included, it is important to follow a consistent format. All quotations of *less than* 40 words are embedded in the text, signaled by single quotation marks. For example: The international financier George Soros claims ‘We are in the midst of the worst financial crisis since the 1930s.’ (Soros, 2008: 1). Quotations of 40 words or over are to follow this style: 12-point font, single-spaced, left aligned, and indented to 0.5cm. For example:

The problem of plagiarism has now reached the stage where it is threatening the integrity of degree programmes across the third-level sector. Research amongst both Irish and British employers has shown that many are increasingly sceptical about the authenticity of the qualifications that some job-applicants are presenting. This scepticism is particularly acute in relation to applicants who have studied at one of the lesser known third-level institutions, in what employers euphemistically described as “soft” subjects, media studies, community development etc (IPEC, 2004, p.69).

***Note:* Lectures notes are not legitimate sources,** and therefore should not be referenced as such. For example, a reference such as (Howard, K, 2007), that is, a reference to a lecturer’s set of notes ought not to be used.

So, to ensure that students are clear about the ethical implications of what they are doing, they are required to include a declaration of authorship. This is to be located in the FYRP document, on the page following the list of tables and figures, and is to read:

I ------------- affirm that the contents of this FYRP are my own work. Any written material written by others and used in this project has been fully cited and the authorship acknowledged. Any subjects who’ve been involved in the research were informed of what I was doing, have been represented fairly and, where necessary, have given their consent.

### Submission

The FYRP’s written documents are to be submitted to the Module Coordinator’s office, no later than **to be confirmed**. Two copies are required: one in hard copy and one electronically. If the hard copy contains appendices material that cannot be sent electronically then this can be left out of the soft copy. For the hard copy, students are responsible for ensuring they attach the relevant CA submission form. The hard copies are to be bound, spiral binding is sufficient. The project’s title page to be used when submitting is that set out in Appendix 2.

## The FYRP interview

### Rationale

The overall assessment of the FYRP involves the evaluation of two components. Firstly, there is the bound document, the written product; secondly, there is the research and writing process gone through in producing the document. Traditionally, in the assessment of undergrad research projects it was the final product, the written document, which mattered. External examiners for example rely solely on the written document to make their assessments. Nevertheless, the final product is a result of a process to which students show varying levels of commitment. It is possible that the final document might not fully capture the student’s commitment and effort. Therefore, there is a justification for assessing and giving credit to students who show sustained commitment to the research process and who put in a special effort in producing the written document. The marking scheme allows some latitude allowed for this. The FYRP interview is an opportunity to further reward students for process. As the FYRP interview is a stand alone exercise worth 20% of the marks available the student’s overall marks can only improve by attending.

The FYRP interview is not a presentation; it’s an academic conversation the purpose of which is to allow the interviewers to gauge the student’s ownership of both the process they went through and the document they produced. Ownership is evidenced by the student being able to explain: the project’s general research aim, the key concepts and literature; the methodological approach taken and the methods used; the rationale for choosing the particular topic and exploring it in a particular way; what was discovered, the implications and possible recommendations. Students are advised to take a copy of their project to the interview. The key point for the students is that they are very familiar with the document, and will be able to answer as effectively possible questions put to them. Above all, the interview provides the student the opportunity to show how, having reflected on what they’d been through, they can identify the strengths and weaknesses of what they did, and what they produced, and the adaptations they might make if faced with a similar task.

### The structure of the FYRP interview

The FYRP interview lasts between 15-20 minutes and, ideally, involves an interview panel made up of three people: the module coordinator/second reader, the principal supervisor, and the Head of Department. If a three-person panel is not possible it is still envisaged that the course coordinator and principal supervisor will attend, which means that in either event there will be two people present who will have read the student’s work.

The questioning is necessarily generic, and is divided up into three parts: the first part is a series of questions concerning the ‘What’ ‘How’ ‘Why’; the second is a series of questions concerning the student’s assessment of the strengths and weaknesses of their work, the possible ethical implications of what they did, and how they might adapt their approach for a future project; the third is a series of questions concerning the marking scheme, principally, the extent to which, if at all, the students orientated what they did on the basis of the marking scheme.

Part One: ‘What’ ‘How’ ‘Why’, this is led by the HoD or the second reader. The questions are concerned with topic area, research question, key concepts, literature, research methods and rationale.

Part Two: this is led by the principal supervisor. The questions are concerned with: what has been learned about the topic, about the research process, issues of time and resource management, further directions the research could take, and, what would be done differently with the benefit of hindsight.

Past Three: this is led by the course coordinator. The questions are concerned with: how often, if at all, did the students consult the marking scheme, if they could make sense of it, if they are in favour of a marking scheme, and, how in their view it could be improved.

At the end of the questioning process, students will be given the opportunity to ask questions of their own in relation to the project etc.

## Supervision

The relationship between students and their supervisors is very important to the FYRP’s process and outcomes. For many students, it is the first time they will have had to work individually over an extended period in collaboration with one lecturer. The important point for students to remember is that the supervisor’s role is that of an academic guide. In the early stage of the process this guidance might need to be quite prescriptive; as the process develops students should increasingly follow their own directions. Throughout the process, the decision as to whether to follow any guidance offered lies with the student. The FYRP, more than any other piece of work in the entire programme of study, is the student’s own creation and ultimately his/her responsibility. During the processes, the supervisor’s touch should be light and in the final products his/her presence barely perceptible. Only in this way can the student stand over and claim ownership of the work and, crucially, justify the work in the face of probing critique.

### Power relations

The collaboration involved when a student works closely his/her supervisor can prove to be immensely rewarding for both parties. Nevertheless, the relationship is inevitably asymmetrical because of the supervisor’s authority within the academic structure. Criticism from a person in authority can be difficult to challenge. There is a responsibility therefore on the part of supervisors to ensure their commentaries are constructive and collegiate, empowering rather than disempowering.

If students do have concerns about their supervision, they are entitled to express these. Any concerns should be directed firstly to the principal supervisor. Working relationships can be damaged by elementary misunderstandings of which neither side might be fully aware. If problems persist, students should approach the module coordinator, failing that, the relevant Head of Department. What is not acceptable is for students to decide unilaterally not to work with the principal supervisor initially allocated to them and to seek to work with someone else. Neither is it acceptable for supervisors to unilaterally ‘drop’ a student assigned to them. Problems are less likely to persist if students know they are entitled to voice their concerns, and if those in authority listen respond empathetically.

### ****Supervisor’s role:****

* to meet with students when arranged;
* help students clarify the focus of their projects;
* offer guidance on methodological approaches and methods;
* possible sources of literature;
* provide feedback on submitted drafts;
* guidance on structure; and,
* recap and refine the project’s main aims, processes and outcomes, in reparation for the final viva

### Student’s role:

* to initiate contact with their allocated supervisors and arrange a schedule of meetings;
* submit work, and in sufficient time before a scheduled meeting to give the supervisor the opportunity to assess the work;
* take responsibility for incorporating any feedback given;
* draw up a synopsis of the meeting, using the appropriate document format (see appendix 3) drawn up by student, send this to the supervisor; and,
* familiarise themselves with the document in preparation for the FYRP interview

The time allocated to supervision is 20 minutes per student, per week. This is a time quota, not a requirement to meet every week. Once both parties agree, the time allocation can be worked out however they think best. The main point to remember is that students shouldn’t expect their supervisors to be available for any more time than that. The time quota also includes email communications. Ideally then, communication via email should be brief, dialogue about the research project kept for the scheduled face-to-face meetings.

### Record keeping

Record keeping is an important part of the process. On the one hand, it can help reduce any potential misunderstandings about what was said between students and supervisors. Recalling the detail of verbal interactions can be quite difficult. Moreover, even when there is broad agreement on what actual words were used, the sense of what was said can be interpreted differently. It is important therefore that supervisors and their students are both satisfied as to:

* the date/time and duration of meetings;
* that any work submitted has been received at least four days before any meeting (shown most effectively through the email receipt mechanism);
* the main points of the supervisor’s assessment of the work; and
* actions points to be pursued before next meeting

On the other hand, a basic record provides written data which can be used by the supervisor in making an assessment of the student’s commitment to the process. Therefore, it is important to try and make sure that the interactions between students and their supervisors are timetabled, structured and a record kept of key points made.

A generic form for the recording of meetings is given in Appendix 3. It is the responsibility of students to complete the form and ensure that both parties have a copy. The form need not be filled out if both parties agree; however, its usage would promote mutual clarity, provide a record of process, and facilitate the supervisor when assessing the commitment to the project.

## Assessment Criteria

Set out below is the suggested rubric for the evaluation of the FYRP. The aim of the rubric is to steer a middle ground between the practice of supervisors basing their assessment on an overall/holistic impression of the work, and the practice of strictly criteria-based evaluations. Given this, the number of assessment categories is limited and the criteria within each category have sufficient latitude for supervisors’ individual interpretations.

All methods of assessment face the challenges of achieving ***validity*** and ***reliability***. The rubric addresses the first, ***validity,*** in that it acts as the set of guidelines which supervisors are given towards the beginning of the FYPR process, which then orientates their supervision. In addition, each student receives a copy of the rubric. From the beginning then, the criteria according to which work is to assessed is known to all. The second issue***, reliability***, is addressed by each supervisor using the same set of guidelines. Once the supervisors have completed their assessments, the module coordinator double marks the written documents using the same rubric. In the unlikely event of radical disparity (anything greater than 10%) between the supervisor’s and the module coordinator’s assessment the Head of Department will assess the document using the same guidelines and an average of the three will be the mark awarded.

There are 10 categories of various weightings. As would be expected, the categories most heavily weighted are ‘Literature’, ‘Findings’ and ‘Discussion’, which combined account for 60% of the total. The other categories are nonetheless important and students should pay attention to these thereby ensuring they don’t drop marks unnecessarily. Possible criteria to aid the assessment of each category are divided into bands and arranged along a spectrum ranging from ‘70+’ to ‘39 AND BELOW’. The supervisor assesses the work according to the categories and records a mark out of 100 in the space provided. The module coordinator will calculate the various weightings and the final overall mark.

The rubric below is scored, and a list of the weightings tabled, as an example of how it works.

|  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **CATEGORY**  **AND WEIGHTING** | **1st SPECTRUM OF MARK BANDS FAIL** | | | | |
| **CRITERIA TO AID IN ASSESSING EACH COMPONENT, RELATIVE TO EACH BAND OF MARKS** | | | | |
| **70+** | **60-69** | **59-50** | **40-49** | **39 AND BELOW** |
| ABSTRACT  (300-400words)  5% | Captures within the word limit an accurate summary of the project’s main aims, its context, the methods used, the main conclusion/s reached, and the possible implications of the research | An accurate summary of the project’s main aims, but what may be missing or not satisfactorily explained are the project’s context, or the methods used, or the main conclusion/s reached or the project’s relevance. Could also be slightly outside the word limit | The project’s main aim is reasonably clear; however, more than one of the other main elements required: context, methods, rationale, conclusion, relevance, may also be missing, may be well outside the word count | The project’s main is not clear, not contextualised, little discussion of methodology or rationale, much of the material included is irrelevant. Perhaps significantly under or over the word count | No real relevance to the content of the document, no indication of what it contains. Way outside the word count/not included at all |
| **75** |  |  |  |  |
| TOPIC AREA/  RESEARCH PROBLEM  5% | Topic area explicitly relevant to the programme of study, research problem defined explicitly and succinctly | Topic area stated and research problem explained | Topic area defined though it’s possibly too broad/too narrow, research problem not clear, doesn’t relate obviously area of study | Topic area not obviously relevant to programme of study, research problem not stated sufficiently clearly | Topic area not defined, relevance to programme of study not clear, no attempt to define a research problem |
| **70** |  |  |  |  |
| RESEARCH QUESTION/S  HYPOTHESIS/ES  5% | Research question’s relevance clearly justified, realistic and doable | Research question’s relevance is implied rather than explained, perhaps unrealistic/too ambitious | Research question’s implicit rather than stated clearly, not realistic | Research question not clearly related to the topic area/programme of study, totally unrealistic question | No/irrelevant research question |
|  | **70** |  |  |  |  |
| LITERATURE  20% | Extensive integration of literature. Peak texts identified and their relevance explained, evidence of theories and key concepts identified and explained | Relevant literature integrated, than explicitly stated, perhaps some key texts/ theories and concepts explained | Relevance of literature perhaps not clear, literature listed rather than integrated, theories and concepts used are listed rather than explained | A narrow range of literature, relevance not explained, theories and key concepts implicit, little attempt at explanation | Little or no usage of appropriate literature, no relevant theories or concepts |
|  | **65** |  |  |  |
| METHODS  5% | Research paradigm/s (qualitative and/or quantitative) clearly stated and justified, as is/are the method/s used | Research paradigm/s clearly stated, research methods implicitly rather than explicitly justified | Research paradigm/s described as are the research methods used, though there is little justification as to why they are used | Inappropriate research paradigms and/or research methods used | Displays little or no knowledge of research paradigms and or research methods |
|  | **65** |  |  |  |
| ETHICS  5% | Clear evidence of ethical awareness, drawing on appropriate literature, the ethical implications of research stated explicitly | Clear evidence of ethical awareness, drawing on appropriate literature, the ethical implications of research stated implicit rather than stated explicitly | Some evidence of ethical awareness, and usage of literature, little evidence of ethical implications of research | Limited evidence of ethical awareness, no obvious usage of literature | No evidence of ethical awareness |
|  | **65** |  |  |  |
| FINDINGS  20% | Clear evidence of original and extensive findings, following clearly from methods used, findings show explicit and logical relationship to research area, question and literature | Evidence of findings following from research methods, shows relationship to research area, research question. Findings follow clearly from methods used | Findings relevant to research area though not perhaps clearly following from research methods used | Limited findings, relevance not clear, relationship to research methods not clear | No findings at all. Alternatively, irrelevant findings unrelated to topic area, no connection to methods |
|  | **65** |  |  |  |
| DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS  20% | Detailed discussion of findings, showing how they relate to each other, their relevance clearly stated, confirming/supporting /challenging the existing literature | Discussion of findings, their relevance to each perhaps implicit rather than clearly stated, as is the relationship to the existing literature | Findings discussed, relationship to each other and literature not clear | Findings only briefly discussed, not really related to each other, not related back to the literature | Little or no/irrelevant discussion of findings, |
|  | **65** |  |  |  |
| ORGANISATION, PRESENTATION  and WRITING SKILLS  5% | Structure immediately clear and logical, includes all the necessary components,\* headings and text consistent, referencing is consistent and pertinent; excellent writing style: paragraphing and sentencing; few typos, indicating rigorous proof reading | Structure clear and logical, most of the necessary components, some inconsistencies in headings, text, and referencing, appropriate writing style, mostly consistent paragraphing and sentencing, extensive vocabulary though not always relevant, some typos and spelling mistakes, obvious proof reading | Structure not clear, missing some of the components. Figures, tables, headings, text are appropriate and consistent, referencing is consistent and pertinent, inconsistent paragraphing and sentencing, limited vocabulary, many typos and spelling mistakes indicating the need for further proof reading | Structure not clear, missing many of the necessary components, inconsistencies in headings, text usage and referencing, writing style too casual, weak paragraphing and sentence structure, a narrow and at times irrelevant vocabulary, multiple typos and spelling mistakes, needs proof reading | No structure, poorly organised, no logic to chapter sequences, lacking some of the basic components, little or no usage of headings, titles, no rationale to paragraphs, sentences, poor spelling, narrow and/or inappropriate vocabulary, obvious lack of proof-reading. |
| **75** |  |  |  |  |
| SUPERVISOR’S ASSESSMENT OF STUDENT’S COMMITMENT  10% | Displayed the highest levels of commitment to the project, was pro-active in seeking out data, worked consistently, attended and recorded all meetings, was punctual, and responsive to guidance. Shows clear awareness of the limitations of the work, clearly states directions for further research | Showed a good level of commitment to the project, worked consistently, attended meetings, and was responsive to guidance. Shows clear awareness of the limitations of the work, clearly states directions for further research | Sporadic commitment to the project and the work, attended meetings, was not fully responsive to guidance, was aware of the limitations of the work and indicated some possibilities for future developments | Limited commitment, worked inconsistently, was casual in relation to meetings, was unresponsive to guidance, didn’t show any awareness of the limitations of the work nor of any possibilities for its further development | No commitment to the task at all, failed to attend meetings, shows no attempt to understand what the process was about, no indication of considering further directions the research might take |
| **75** |  |  |  |  |

\* Appropriately bound, cover page, abstract, declaration of authorship, table of contents, list of figures, list of tables, glossary, source list, appendices

Final mark for the written document:

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| ABSTRACT | 75 X 5% | 3.75 |
| RESEARCH PROBLEM | 70 X 5% | 3.5 |
| RESEARCH QUESTION | 70 X 5% | 3.5 |
| LITERATURE | 70 X 20% | 14.0 |
| METHODS | 65 X 5% | 3.25 |
| ETHICS | 65 X 5% | 3.25 |
| FINDINGS | 65 X 20% | 13.0 |
| ANALYSIS | 65 X 20% | 13.0 |
| PRESENTATION | 75X 5% | 3.75 |
| SUPERVISOR’S ASSESSMENT | 75 X 10% | 7.5 |
| **TOTAL MARK** | | **67.5** |

The written document component of the FYRP is worth 80% of available marks, therefore 68.5 X 80% = **54.8**

The final mark for the module will be those given for the written document **PLUS** the marks awarded for the project interview. For example: the interview is marked at75 X 20% = 15, therefore, the overall mark for the module is 15+54 = **69.8 = 70**

### APPENDICES & STUCTURE OF THE FYRP Appendix 1: Cover/Title page

# TITLE OF THE WORK

# NAME\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

# Submitted in partial fulfilment for the

# BA (Hons) in APPLIED SOCIAL STUDIES IN SOCIAL CARE

# TBC May 2024

# Department of Humanities, DkIT

# Supervisor:\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

### Title/Cover page,

### Declaration of Authorship

### Acknowledgements

### Abstract

### Table of Contents

### List of Figures and Tables (if any are used)

### Chapter 1: Introduction

### Research Question

### Chapter 2: Literature Review

### Chapter 3: Methodology

### Chapter 4 Findings

### Chapter 5 Discussion

### Conclusion

### References

### Appendices

# CHAPTER ONE

## INTRODUCTION:

The Research Problem: the general issue you are concerned with,

Conceptual considerations: what are the key concepts?

Literature context: how the literature treats the issue you want to explore

Procedure of your investigation: an outline of the rest of the project

## CHAPTER TWO: LITERATURE REVIEW: A literature review should set the scene, demonstrate current knowledge, identify gaps in the field and, if relevant, demonstrate where your research fits with your research topic. It should be a critical appraisal of the current knowledge in a subject area. It should be evidence-based, using a variety of peer-reviewed original research articles, reporting facts, commenting on similarities or discrepancies and highlighting knowledge gaps or areas of unmet need. Structure your review thematically. Summarise information in your own words and give appropriate credit to other authors’ work. A systematic approach to writing a literature review should be used to reduce bias

## CHAPTER THREE: METHODOLOGY

Methodological approach: qualitative, quantitative, mixed mode? Crucially, explain why you chose the approach you’ve chosen

Methods used: interviews, documentary analysis, focus groups, participant observation, questionnaires, surveys, secondary data analysis? Again, crucially, why you chose one way rather than another

## CHAPTER FOUR: FINDINGS

What did you discover?

## CHAPTER FIVE: DISCUSSION

What are/could be the implications of your findings? How do they confirm, challenge, add to, what you already knew from the literature?

CONCLUSION: **RECOMMENDATIONS**

Summing up what your study has been about, what it has uncovered and what recommendations follow based on this/these discovery/discoveries

### Appendix 3: Generic form to be used when recording meetings

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| DATE OF  MEETING: | STUDENT: | SUPERVISOR: |
| WORK SUBMITTED ON TIME YES/NO | | |
| MAIN POINTS OF SUPERVISOR’S REVIEW OF THE WORK SUBMITTED FOR THIS SESSION (IF APPLICABLE) | | |
| MAIN POINTS OF STUDENT’S RESPONSE/OBSERVATIONS | | |
| AGREED ACTION STEPS (IF ANY) | | |
| SIGNED: SIGNED: | | |