Tutorial Letter 101/3/2020

Research in the Social Sciences

RSC2601

Semesters 1 and 2

College of Human Sciences

Department of Sociology
Department of Health Studies
Department of Psychology
Department of Social Work
Department of Communication Science

IMPORTANT INFORMATION:

This tutorial letter contains important information about your module.

BARCODE

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1 INTRODUCTION

Dear Student

Welcome to the module RSC2601 offered by the College of Human Sciences' Departments of Health Studies, Psychology, Social Work, Sociology and Communication Science. We hope you will enjoy your studies and would like to take this opportunity to wish you the best of luck in your studies. Please do not hesitate to contact us if you experience any problems (see our contact information on page 6-7 of this document).

Bear in mind that in distance education the written word is the main means of communication between lecturers and students. We use tutorial letters to bring important aspects of the module to your attention and therefore they must all be read carefully, acted upon where necessary, and kept handy for future reference.

Furthermore, we make extensive use of the myUnisa site in order to communicate with students. We urge you to go to this site regularly. Various resources have been made available in the "Additional Resources" link. Announcements concerning the module are also posted frequently so please make sure to check the "Announcements" link on a regular basis. Finally, you can join the "Discussion Forum" directed to lecturers in order to post any questions or queries you might have.

Your RSC2601 registration is either a semester 1 or a semester 2 registration.

The Research in the Social Sciences module is based on a modular system. Semester courses differ from full year courses in that a module is completed in a semester, which is a six month period.

PLEASE TAKE NOTE OF THE FOLLOWING: The content for Study unit 9 does **NOT** end on page 253, you need to make sure to read and study up to page 256.

We wish you well in your studies.

RSC2601 MODULE COORDINATORS

1.1 Tutorial matter

The tutorial material for RSC2601 is based on one study guide, the tutorial letter and at least one additional tutorial letter which you will receive during the semester. You are **not** required to buy any additional prescribed books, or to study additional recommended study material.
Thus, your initial study package for 2020 consists of:

- This tutorial letter, that provides general information on RSC2601 (Research in the Social Sciences) and information on the assignments and the examination for both semesters.
- One study guide.
- Tutorial letters providing further guidance, as needed, will be sent out during the course of the semester.

Please do **not** contact the Coordinator or the staff of any of the academic departments listed regarding **administrative related matters** (for example the whereabouts of your study material, etc.). Consult *Study@ Unisa* for further information and contact numbers.

Tutorial matter that is not available when you register will be mailed to you as soon as possible. Note that you can also access the module, RSC2601, on *myUnisa* once you are registered. You may then download the material electronically.

1.1.1 Tutorial letters

The Tutorial Letters for this module all have the code RSC2601 printed on the top right-hand corner. The Tutorial Letter (101) contains important information about your assignments and examination. Please study-read this tutorial carefully.

You will also receive a Tutorial Letter 201 that contains our comments on the assignments. If the need arises to communicate any other information during the course of Semester 1 or Semester 2, you will receive an additional tutorial letter, numbered 102 for that semester.

1.1.2 Study Guide

The full details of the study guide are:

van Rensburg, G.H; Alpaslan, A.H; du Plooy, G.M; Gelderblom, D; van Eeden, R and Wigston, D. 2010. *Research in the Social Sciences*: *Only study guide for RSC2601*. Pretoria: Unisa.

The study guide consists of ten (10) study units. Work through the study units systematically. Do the activities in each study unit and assess your answers against the comments on each activity.

Self-assessment questions are included in each study unit of the study guide. You are strongly advised to answer these questions for better insight and understanding of the work.

2 PURPOSE AND OUTCOMES

2.1 Purpose

The purpose of this module is to introduce you to research in the social sciences to enable you to understand and apply the basic principles of scientific research.

2.2 Outcomes

The outcomes of the module are given at the beginning of each study unit. The module entails a basic introduction to social science research, forming the foundation for the research methodology courses in Communication Science, Health Studies, Psychology, Social Work and Sociology. This module is a prerequisite for some third-level modules in the social sciences. You are advised to check the prerequisite of your major subject(s).

3. LECTURER(S) AND CONTACT DETAILS

3.1 Lecturer(s)

You are welcome to contact the lecturers directly should you have **module specific** questions regarding a study unit. Please contact lecturers within office hours, Monday to Friday between 08:00 and 16:00. If availability times are indicated on myUnisa, please keep to those times to ensure that your query is answered.

If you would like to see a specific lecturer in their office you need to contact them in advance and make an appointment. Without an appointment the lecturer that you want to consult might not be in the office.

For general administrative queries you need to refer to the contact details under the item University. Specific module queries should be directed to the Module Coordinators Ms Sinteché van der Merwe or Dr Ntokozo Mthembmu (refer to their availability times on the myUnisa website). Below are the contact details for your lecturers.

UNIT	LECTURER	DEPARTMENT	TELEPHONE NUMBER	EMAIL ADDRESS @unisa.ac.za	OFFICE NUMBER (Theo van Wijk building)
1 & 2	Dr Sinteché van der Merwe	Sociology	+27 (0) 12 429 6033	vdmers	9-026
	Dr Ntokozo Mthembu	Sociology	+27 (0) 12 429 6402	mthemnc	9-010
3 & 6	Prof Lizeth Roets	Health Studies	+27 (0) 12 429 2226	roetsl	7-178
4 & 7 & 10	Mrs Therise Breet-Van Niekerk	Communication Science	+27 (0) 12 429 6287	breett	7-082
5 & 8	Prof René van Eeden	Psychology	+27 (0) 12 429 8252	veeder	5-044
	Ms Errolyn Long	Psychology	+27 (0) 12 429 8071	longel	5-078
	Mr Sibusiso Maseko	Psychology	+27 (0) 12 429 3896	maseks1	5-122
9	Dr Maditobane Lekganyane	Social Work	+27 (0) 12 429 2906	lekgamr	5-010
10	Mrs Therise Breet-Van	Communication Science	+27 (0) 12 429	breett	7-082

	Niekerk		**6287**		

NB: Lecturers cannot assist you with registration, payments, module codes and the like. These are administrative issues which should be discussed with the relevant sections.

When contacting any Department by letter or e-mail, you must provide us with the following details:

- your **name**
- your **address** (including the postal code)
- your **student number**
- the relevant **module or paper code** (e.g. RSC2601)
- particular **assignment number** of the assignment that you are enquiring about
- Also, you may visit us if you experience any problems with the **contents** of the module. Make an **appointment, in advance**, to ensure that we are available for your appointment.

3.2 Department

General Unisa contact details where you can direct queries in connection with assignments, study guides, and tutorial letters are provided in the *Study @ Unisa* brochure.

3.3 University

Other means of contacting the university are:
Addresses

Physical address	University of South Africa Preller Street Muckleneuk Pretoria City of Tshwane
Postal address	University of South Africa P O Box 392 UNISA 0003
Online address	http://my.unisa.ac.za
Unisa Website	http://www.unisa.ac.za

E-mail addresses:

First enquiries (prospective students)	study-info@unisa.ac.za
All international students (registration related enquiries)	international@unisa.ac.za

Other departments

Aegrotat exams	aegrotats@unisa.ac.za

Assignments	assign@unisa.ac.za
Despatch, study material	despatch@unisa.ac.za
Examinations	exams@unisa.ac.za
Graduation affairs	gaudeamus@unisa.ac.za
Remark papers	remark@unisa.ac.za
Recheck papers	recheck@unisa.ac.za
Finance	finan@unisa.ac.za

Student information

Fellow student names	condiscipuli@unisa.ac.za
Student counselling and career development	counselling@unisa.ac.za
Enquiries about prescribed books	vospresc@unisa.ac.za

Library

NB: The *Study@ Unisa booklet, which is part of your registration package, lists all the services offered by the Unisa Library*

General library catalogue enquiries	bib-oasis@unisa.ac.za
Library Web Coordinator	bib-web@unisa.ac.za
Inter-Library loans and enquiries	libr-ill@unisa.ac.za
Enquiries about subject databases	bib-dbase@unisa.ac.za
Library information desk	bib-help@unisa.ac.za
Enquiries about training presented in the library	bib-oplei@unisa.ac.za
Send a question to the library staff	bibrefq@unisa.ac.za

Short SMS codes

Applications and registrations	43578
Assignments	43584
Exams	43584
Study material	43579
Student accounts	31954
myUnisa / myLife	43582

4 RESOURCES

4.1 Prescribed books

There is **no** prescribed book for this module.

4.2 Recommended books

There are **no** recommended books for this module.

4.3 Electronic reserves (e-reserves)

There are **no** e-Reserves for this module.

4.4 Library services and resources information

For brief information, go to www.unisa.ac.za/brochures/studies

For detailed information, go to the Unisa website at http://www.unisa.ac.za/ and click on **Library**.

For research support and services of personal librarians, go to http://www.unisa.ac.za/Default.asp?Cmd=ViewContent&ContentID=7102.

The library has compiled a number of library guides:

- finding recommended reading in the print collection and e-reserves – http://libguides.unisa.ac.za/request/undergrad
- requesting material – http://libguides.unisa.ac.za/request/request
- postgraduate information services – http://libguides.unisa.ac.za/request/postgrad
- finding, obtaining and using library resources and tools to assist in doing research – http://libguides.unisa.ac.za/Research_Skills
- how to contact the library/finding us on social media/frequently asked questions – http://libguides.unisa.ac.za/ask

5 STUDENT SUPPORT SERVICES

E-tutors

Please be informed that, with effect from 2013, Unisa offers online tutorials (e-tutoring) to students registered for modules at NQF level 5, 6 and 7, this means qualifying first year, second year and third year modules. Please log on to *myUnisa* to find out if any of the modules that you have registered for falls in this category.

Once you have been registered for a qualifying module, you will be allocated to a group of students with whom you will be interacting during the tuition period as well as an e-tutor who will be your tutorial facilitator. Thereafter you will receive an sms informing you about your group, the name of your e-tutor and instructions on how to log onto *myUnisa* in order to receive further information on the e-tutoring process.

Online tutorials are conducted by qualified e-Tutors who are appointed by Unisa and are offered free of charge. All you need to be able to participate in e-tutoring is a computer with internet connection. If you live close to a Unisa regional Centre or a Telecentre contracted with Unisa, please feel free to visit any of these to access the internet. E-tutoring takes place on *myUnisa* where you are expected to connect with other students in your allocated

group. It is the role of the e-tutor to guide you through your study material during this interaction process. For you to get the most out of online support, you need to participate in the online discussions that the e-tutor will be facilitating.

There are modules which students have been found to repeatedly fail, these modules are allocated face-to-face tutors and tutorials for these modules take place at the Unisa regional centres. These tutorials are also offered free of charge, however, it is important for you to register at your nearest Unisa Regional Centre to secure attendance of these classes.

Free computer and internet access

Unisa has entered into partnerships with establishments (referred to as Telecentres) in various locations across South Africa to enable you (as a Unisa student) free access to computers and the Internet. This access enables you to conduct the following academic related activities: registration; online submission of assignments; engaging in e-tutoring activities and signature courses; etc. Please note that any other activity outside of these are for your own costing e.g. printing, photocopying, etc. For more information on the Telecentre nearest to you, please visit www.unisa.ac.za/telecentres.

6 STUDY PLAN

Right now you might be feeling confused about what to do first. There is no need to panic; you start right here by reading this tutorial letter from beginning to end. Its number is Tutorial Letter 101/2018 for RSC2601. This tutorial letter is very important: it includes the assignments you have to submit and tells you what you have to do to prepare for the examination. Keep this letter in a safe place for further reference throughout the semester.

Turn to the only Study Guide for RSC2601 and read the introduction, which describes the aim and structure of the module. Then draw up your own study programme for this module, keeping in mind the number of modules for which you have registered. Include the closing dates for your assignments and your examination date. Also allow yourself time to revise for the examination. This will help you to plan your studies and complete the syllabus in good time.

Also, make sure to visit the *myUnisa* site for this module on a regular basis. This will allow you to access important Announcements, Additional Resources, Official Study Material and Discussion Forums.

Begin your studies with study unit 1 in the study guide. Work through all the study units. Do not leave out any study unit, as the research process will then not make sense.

Use your *Study@ Unisa* brochure for general time management and planning skills.

7 PRACTICAL WORK AND WORK-INTEGRATED LEARNING

There are **no** practicals for this module.

8 ASSESSMENT

8.1 Assessment plan

This module has two (2) assignments for the semester, which are both compulsory. Assignment 01 is compulsory for admission to the examination as well as for the semester mark. In other words, if you do not submit assignment 01 by the closing date, you will not be admitted to the examination.

The marks that you obtain for the two assignments will count towards a semester mark which will contribute 20% towards your final mark.

The contribution that the semester mark makes towards the final mark should therefore not be underestimated.

8.2 Assignment numbers

8.2.1 General assignment numbers

Assignments are numbered consecutively per module, starting from 01. Only Arabic numerals are used, for example: Assignment 01, 02, 03, and so on.

8.2.2 Unique assignment numbers

In addition to the general assignment number (e.g. 05), assignments to be completed by means of mark-reading sheets (multiple-choice questions) must also have their own unique assignment number (e.g. 102717). Please refer to the information below.

8.3 Assignment due dates

RSC2601	**SEMESTER 1**	**ASSIGNMENT NUMBER**	**SEMESTER 2**	**ASSIGNMENT NUMBER**
First **Compulsory** Assignment (for exam admission)	Due date: **20 March 2020**	Assignment 01 **Unique number: 827350**	Due date: **28 August 2020**	**Assignment 01 Unique number: 849502**
Second **Compulsory** Assignment (for year mark)	Due date: **20 April 2020**	Assignment 02 **Unique number: 794952**	Due date: **25 September 2020**	**Assignment 02 Unique number: 755729**

PLEASE NOTE: No extensions will be given for deadlines.

REMEMBER TO FILL IN THE CORRECT MODULE CODE (RSC2601) AND THE CORRECT ASSIGNMENT NUMBER OR UNIQUE ASSIGNMENT NUMBER.

8.4 The assignments

8.4.1 Assignments for the first semester

You may submit written assignments and assignments done on mark-reading cards either by **post or electronically** via *myUnisa*. NB: Assignments may **not** be submitted by fax or e-mail.

To submit an assignment via *myUnisa*:

- go to *myUnisa*
- log in with your student number and password
- select the module
- click on assignments in the menu on the left-hand side of the screen
- click on the assignment number you wish to submit
- follow the instructions
- for detailed information on assignments, please refer to the Study@ Unisa brochure, which you received with your study package.

Send **all assignments** to:

The Registrar

Assignments

P O Box 392

UNISA

0003

Please note that due to the high volumes of student assignments that we receive we cannot allow for extensions of the assignment date. Perhaps except under extreme or extenuating circumstances, in which case some supporting evidence will have to be provided should you request an extension from the module leader.

Each assignment comprises 20 multiple choice items (questions) that have been compiled from the study material. The purpose of the assignments is to:

- familiarise yourself with the content of the module.
- assist you in systematically working through the contents.
- provide you with an opportunity to critically reflect on the course content.
- aid you to indentify important facts for you to learn/memorise.
- understand how to test the relationship between ideas and variables.
- assist you to prepare for the exam.

Guidelines

1 If you submit your assignment by post, it must be completed on the mark-reading sheet you received with your study package registration. If you submit using myUnisa you need to click on the correct buttons.

2 You have to select the most correct option for each item. Although in some items you may regard more than one answer as correct, you must select only one option which is more acceptable when compared with the other options.

3 Carefully read and follow the instructions for completing a mark-reading sheet given in the brochure Study@ Unisa.

4 The sheet must be completed with a HB pencil – do not use a pen or a coloured pencil.

5 No holes must be punched.

6 Should you mark an incorrect space (which can easily happen) erase the pencil marks to prevent the computer from reading such marks.

7 The following information should be written, correctly, in the spaces/blocks of the multiple choice page:

- Your student number.
- Your surname, initials and address.
- The code of the module: RSC2601
- The assignment number: 01 or 02
- Unique assignment number: **827350** for Assignment 01

  794952 for Assignment 02

8 Since these sheets are marked by a computer:

- No extension for the closing dates of the assignments can be granted.
- Sheets that are rejected by the computer will be returned to you without being marked.
- Sheets received after the closing dates will not be marked.

The assignments will help you to establish how well you understand the work. More importantly, by doing the assignments you give yourself practical experience in completing a mark-reading sheet. In so doing you will be able to monitor yourself in terms of the time it takes to actually fill in a mark-reading sheet. In the examination you will have approximately two (2) minutes to respond to each multiple-choice item.

FIRST SEMESTER (1)

FIRST COMPULSORY ASSIGNMENT FOR THE FIRST SEMESTER

Your main source for answering these multiple choice questions will be the Study Guide. In order to answer these questions you are expected to do a type of speed reading called scanning as a means of familiarising yourself with the scope of the study material, the focus themes of the module, and key terms and concepts in the different study units.

Due date: 20 March 2020
Assignment 01
Unique number: 827350

Scope: This assignment is based on study units 1-5. Make sure to go to the *MyUnisa site for Additional Resources that can assist you in completing this assignment*

PLEASE TAKE NOTE THAT NO EXTENSIONS WILL BE GRANTED FOR ASSIGNMENTS.

QUESTION 1

Scientific thinking makes sense because it …

(1) is logical

(2) collects evidence

(3) explains relationships between variables

(4) all the above

QUESTION 2

Which norm of the scientific community is trespassed in the following scenario?

A scientist, employed by a government medical research laboratory, discovers an agent that can drastically reduce the transmission of HIV from mother to unborn baby. He keeps his discovery a secret. The scientist resigns from the laboratory taking the formula for the agent with him for later personal financial gain.

(1) trespassing communalism in science

(2) lack of interest in the welfare of people

(3) entrepreneurial vision in the present capitalistic dominated society

(4) a lack of honesty in the scientific community

QUESTION 3

"Violence in the media reflects violence in society".

This statement is an example of …

(1) tradition.

(2) mysticism.

(3) common sense.

(4) media myths.

QUESTION 4

Identify the potential error in human inquiry the following example illustrates.

After briefly interviewing 2 (two) students, a researcher concluded that the prescribed textbook for a module does not pose any problems and can be prescribed for all students.

(1) inaccurate observation

(2) overgeneralisation

(3) selective observation

(4) ego involvement

(5) premature closure

QUESTION 5

In social science research induction is the process …

(a) whereby the researcher becomes familiar with a particular setting.

(b) through which theory is tested.

(c) whereby abstract concepts are made concrete variables.

(d) through which theory is built.

(e) through which general statements are derived from specific evidence.

(1) (a) (c)

(2) (b) (c)

(3) (c) (d)

(4) (d) (e)

(5) (b) (e)

QUESTION 6

Which of the following are examples of an operationalised hypothesis?

(a) Car hijackings in South Africa occur to 4 out of every 100 000 people.

(b) Car hijackings in South Africa will decrease if the average personal disposable income of people increases.

(c) Car hijackings in South Africa occur as a result of past oppression of poor people.

(d) Car hijackings in South Africa will decrease if we impose the death penalty on people guilty of this crime.

(e) Car hijackings in South Africa will increase if the justice system deteriorates.

(1) (a) (b) (c) (d) (e)

(2) (a) (b) (d)

(3) (a) (c) (e)

(4) (b) (d)

(5) (a) (e)

QUESTION 7

In social science research the purpose of a literature review is to …

(a) help the researcher identify sub questions.

(b) sensitise the researcher to potential pitfalls.

(c) assist in determining the feasibility of a research project.

(d) link the research to other studies on the topic.

(1) (a)

(2) (a) (d)

(3) (b) (c)

(4) (a) (b) (c)

(5) (a) (b) (c) (d)

QUESTION 8

Which of the following statements regarding the nature of theory is/are correct?

(a) A scientific theory does not need any facts to back it up to be a viable theory.

(b) Theories consist of relationships between concepts that provide explanations for phenomena.

(c) Theoretical development often occurs in order to keep pace with a changing world.

(d) Once a theory has been confirmed, we often do not need to return to it to check its continued acceptability.

(1) (a)

(2) (b) (c)

(3) (b) (d)

(4) (a) (c) (d)

QUESTION 9

The main source of data in qualitative research is …

(1) observers.

(2) natural sources.

(3) structured interview.

(4) human beings (people).

QUESTION 10

The main characteristic of a quantitative approach is that it tends to be …

(1) structured and locally bound.

(2) unstructured and universal.

(3) flexible and valid.

(4) structured and controlled.

QUESTION 11

A researcher intends to establish if there is a causal relationship between levels of atmospheric lead and learning deficits in children.

The design most appropriate for investigating this is a/an … research design.

(1) descriptive

(2) explanatory

(3) exploratory

(4) none of the above

QUESTION 12

A ... study constitutes an in-depth investigation into interactions amongst factors influencing explanations or change, which are then analysed.

(1) case-
(2) trend design
(3) cohort
(4) tracer

QUESTION 13

When you conduct an unstructured interview in a respondent's home …

(1) it minimises control over intervening variables.

(2) it will lead to a clash of interests or even conflict.

(3) the confidentiality of the reported responses cannot be protected.

(4) the respondent's privacy is protected by making notes.

QUESTION 14

Which behavioural norm or principle relates to the researcher's motives for conducting a research study?

(1) voluntary participation

(2) informed consent

(3) freedom from harm

(4) disinterestedness

QUESTION 15

Which ethical problem is being created in the following case?

> **As part of a campaign to combat crime in a certain province in South Africa, a research agency reveals the names of children under the age of 10 who had been physically molested during the past year.**

(1) justice

(2) prejudice

(3) privacy

(4) bias

QUESTION 16

Which one of the situational factors below would be your main concern when you have to make a judgement about ethics in research?

(1) The gender of the subjects you intend observing.

(2) The anticipated consequences of the research findings.

(3) The time it takes to train co-analysts or interviewers.

(4) The choice between a cross-sectional or longitudinal study.

QUESTION 17

Read the following study and indicate how flexible the research design appears to be.

> **A researcher wants to find out how teachers experience cases of child abuse. He decides to conduct open-ended, in-depth interviews with teachers (either individually or in groups) in which he will ask them to tell him about their thoughts on and experiences with child abuse.**

(1) The research question is specified, but the method is quite flexible.

(2) The method is clearly specified, but the research question is left open.

(3) Both the research question and the method are clearly specified.

(4) Neither the research question nor the method is at all specified.

QUESTION 18

Which threat to the internal validity of a study arises if an uncontrolled event that occurs during the study affects the dependent variable?

(1) history

(2) selection

(3) regression effect

(4) maturation

QUESTION 19

Read the following study and identify the intended outcome of the study.

> **A researcher asks a group of outpatients suffering from depression to keep a diary in which they write once a week. After three months the researcher analyses the content of the diaries to try and identify common themes. These findings are presented in a report to the staff at the hospital involved with these patients.**

The intended outcome of the study is …

(1) the diaries of the patients.

(2) a report to the hospital on common themes.

(3) to obtain funds for the hospital.

(4) a "therapy through writing" program.

QUESTION 20

Which one of the following could be a threat to both internal and external validity of an experimental research project?

(1) selection

(2) maturation

(3) instrumentation

(4) testing effect

FIRST SEMESTER (2)

SECOND COMPULSORY ASSIGNMENT FOR THE FIRST SEMESTER

Due date: 20 April 2020
Assignment 02
Unique number: 794952

Scope: This assignment is based on study units 6-10. Make sure to go to the *MyUnisa site for Additional Resources that can assist you in completing this assignment*

PLEASE TAKE NOTE THAT NO EXTENSIONS WILL BE GRANTED FOR ASSIGNMENTS.

QUESTION 1

Which of the following are characteristics of nonprobability sampling?

It …

(a) ensures an accurate reflection of the population.

(b) does not require a list of all the members of the population.

(c) is mostly used in qualitative research.

(d) is used where the researcher is concerned with understanding the experience of special segments of the population.

(e) is used where the researcher is not interested in generalising the findings.

(1) (a) (b) (c)

(2) (a) (d) (e)

(3) (b) (c) (d)

(4) (b) (c) (d) (e)

(5) (a) (b) (c) (d) (e)

QUESTION 2

When a researcher knows in advance that there are important subgroups within the population that need to be included in the sample because they may affect the results of the study, the researcher will use ... sampling.

(1) accidental

(2) quota

(3) judgmental

(4) stratified random

QUESTION 3

If a population contains 50% males and 50% females, and a sample has 10% males and 90% females, then this sample is said to be …

(1) biased.

(2) too small.

(3) representative.

(4) unbiased.

QUESTION 4

Various factors will influence the sample size required for every individual study. In one specific hospital 50 babies were still born in the past 18 months. A researcher conducted 15 individual in-depth interviews with 15 of the fathers to describe their experiences.

The sample size of this study is…

(1) too small, because 50 fathers experienced similar loss.

(2) adequate, because of the heterogeneous small population.

(3) too small, because in-depth interviews are easy to conduct.

(4) adequate, because of the design, population and purpose.

QUESTION 5

Overt participant observation (in field research) occurs when …

(1) a researcher makes tape recordings of conversations, but does not get involved in the social interaction.

(2) the Hawthorne effect takes place.

(3) a researcher becomes involved with the activities of the group of participants being observed.

(4) the reason for a researcher's presence is not known to the group being observed.

QUESTION 6

The item below is to be used in a self-administered questionnaire. However it contains a problem which should be avoided.

Any change in the top executive staff of an organisation involves at least a temporary diminution of efficiency. Do you also agree?

The above item is problematic because it …

(1) is double-barrelled.

(2) contains loaded language.

(3) is a negative statement.

(4) contains an incomplete question.

QUESTION 7

You want to determine the reasons why community health workers are disgruntled in a specific geographic area.

The most appropriate way in which you would collect this information, is by using …

(1) semantic differential scales.

(2) Likert scales.

(3) covert observation.

(4) in-depth interviews.

QUESTION 8

An advantage of using focus-group interviews is that …

(1) diverse opinions can be obtained.

(2) a sensitive topic can be researched.

(3) geographic boundaries do not exist.

(4) it is a covert form of data-collection.

QUESTION 9

A table or graph showing how many cases in a data set obtained each possible score on a test is called a …

(1) score chart.

(2) data summary chart.

(3) random sample of scores.

(4) frequency distribution.

QUESTION 10

The midmost value in a sample of scores, or the value which is higher than half of the scores and lower than the other half, is called the …

(1) central tendency.

(2) mode.

(3) median.

(4) mean.

QUESTION 11

Which measure of variability is equal to 13 in the following set of data?

2 4 9 10 15

(1) range

(2) variance

(3) standard deviation

(4) spread

QUESTION 12

Which best describes the frequency distribution of the age of readers of a financial magazine?

(1) The total of all ages divided by the number of readers.

(2) The standard deviation indicating the spread of the age distribution.

(3) A table of the number of readers aged 18, 19, etc.

(4) A graph of the ages of readers arranged from young to old.

QUESTION 13

See Reading box 9.8 for assistance with the question.

Complete the following statement.

... use Boolean logic to conduct searches in data.

(1) Word processing packages

(2) Text retriever systems

(3) Relational database management systems

(4) Code and retrieve software

(5) Theory and network builders

QUESTION 14

Which of the following statements fit the task description of qualitative researchers?

Qualitative researchers …

(a) aim to understand and interpret how the various participants in a specific social setting construct and interpret the world around them.

(b) aim to give privilege to the perspectives of the research participants.

(c) concern themselves with the question whether participants' perspectives have been authentically represented in the research process and the interpretations made from the information gathered.

(d) concern themselves with whether the findings are consistent in the sense that they "fit" the data and the social context from which they were derived.

(1) (a) (b)

(2) (c) (d)

(3) (a) (c) (d)

(4) (a) (b) (c) (d)

QUESTION 15

What pointers should you as a qualitative researcher keep in mind when reading through the transcription of interviews conducted?

(a) If the transcripts are too extensive, do not attempt to read them all at once.

(b) When your mind starts to wander or you become impatient or start feeling uninterested, it is time to pause.

(c) Refrain from starting to read the transcripts from the beginning of the document.

(1) (a) (c)

(2) (b)

(3) (c)

(4) (a) (b) (c)

QUESTION 16

Coding and analysis should not be confused with one another as they are not synonyms. Coding is a central activity in qualitative data analysis.

Which of the following descriptions provide clarity about what a "code" is?

(a) Codes are tags or labels assigned to meaning units.

(b) Codes are usually attached to chunks of varying-sized words, phrases, sentences or whole paragraphs.

(c) A code is a short-hand method or way of identifying the theme/category in a transcription.

(d) Codes typically take the form of strings of letters and/or symbols.

(1) (a)

(2) (b) (d)

(3) (c)

(4) (a) (b) (c) (d)

QUESTION 17

The type of research report selected to record your research is dependent on …

(1) the context of that research.

(2) the need for archiving that research.

(3) the research being replicable.

(4) scientific norms and values.

QUESTION 18

A literature review for a research report should …

(1) contain a detailed review of all previously published reports.

(2) contain a selective review of evidence pertinent to the current research project.

(3) be at least 5000 words.

(4) contain as many as possible quotations to make the literature review more clear.

QUESTION 19

Which one of the following statements is true?

(1) The discussion section of the report should relate present findings to previous studies.

(2) The literature review should be reported in an appendix labeled "references".

(3) The results section should contain only tables and graphs, and not a description of the data.

(4) Researchers should not report on the results to prevent misrepresentation of the findings.

QUESTION 20

When describing the method you used in a research report, we need to use the …

(1) present tense.

(2) present perfect tense.

(3) past tense.

(4) present tense, present perfect tense and past tense.

8.4.2 Assignments for the second semester

You may submit written assignments and assignments done on mark-reading cards either by post or electronically via *myUnisa*. NB: Assignments may not be submitted by fax or e-mail.

To submit an assignment via *myUnisa*:

- go to *myUnisa*
- log in with your student number and password
- select the module
- click on assignments in the menu on the left-hand side of the screen
- click on the assignment number you wish to submit
- follow the instructions

- for detailed information on assignments, please refer to the Study@ Unisa brochure, which you received with your study package.

Send **all assignments** to:

The Registrar
Assignments
P O Box 392
UNISA
0003

Please note that due to the high volumes of student assignments that we receive we cannot allow for extensions of the assignment date. Perhaps except under extreme or extenuating circumstances, in which case some supporting evidence will have to be provided should you request an extension from the module leader.

Each assignment comprises 20 multiple choice items (questions) that have been compiled from the study material. The purpose of the assignments is to:

- familiarise yourself with the content of the module.
- assist you in systematically working through the contents.
- provide you with an opportunity to critically reflect on the course content.
- aid you to indentify important facts for you to learn/memorise.
- understand how to test the relationship between ideas and variables.
- assist you to prepare for the exam.

Guidelines

1 If you submit your assignment by post, it must be completed on the mark-reading sheet you received with your study package registration. If you submit using myUnisa you need to click on the correct buttons.

2 You have to select the most correct option for each item. Although in some items you may regard more than one answer as correct, you must select only one option which is more acceptable when compared with the other options.

3 Carefully read and follow the instructions for completing a mark-reading sheet given in the brochure Study@ Unisa.

4 The sheet must be completed with a **HB pencil** – do not use a pen or a coloured pencil.

5 No holes must be punched.

6 Should you mark an incorrect space (which can easily happen) erase the pencil marks to prevent the computer from reading such marks.

7 The following information should be written, correctly, in the spaces/blocks of the multiple choice page:

- Your student number.
- Your surname, initials and address.
- The code of the module: **RSC2601**
- The assignment number: **01** or **02**
- Unique assignment number: **849502 for Assignment 01**

  755729 for Assignment 02

8 Since these sheets are marked by a computer:

- **No extension** for the closing dates of the assignments can be granted.
- Sheets that are rejected by the computer will be returned to you without being marked.
- Sheets received after the closing dates will not be marked.

The assignments will help you to establish how well you understand the work. More importantly, by doing the assignments you give yourself practical experience in completing a mark-reading sheet. In so doing you will be able to monitor yourself in terms of the time it takes to actually fill in a mark-reading sheet. In the examination you will have approximately two (2) minutes to respond to each multiple-choice item.

SECOND SEMESTER (1)

FIRST COMPULSORY ASSIGNMENT FOR THE SECOND SEMESTER

Your main source for answering these multiple choice questions will be the Study Guide. In order to answer these questions you are expected to do a type of speed reading called scanning as a means of familiarising yourself with the scope of the study material, the focus themes of the module, and key terms and concepts in the different study units.

Due date: 28 August 2020
Assignment 01
Unique number: 849502

Scope: This assignment is based on study units 1-5. Make sure to go to the *MyUnisa site for Additional Resources that can assist you in completing this assignment*

PLEASE TAKE NOTE THAT NO EXTENSIONS WILL BE GRANTED FOR ASSIGNMENTS.

QUESTION 1

Read the following excerpt and identify the approach to the social sciences that best reflects what the "*new age of scholarship"* possibly refers to.

In *Texts of identity*, Shotter and Gergen (1989:x) argue that there is a "*new age of scholarship"*, one marked by a far greater charity towards disparate voices, sharpened by a sensitivity to the processes by which knowledge claims are made and justified.

The approach to the social sciences that best reflects the "*new age of scholarship*", is …

(1) positivism.

(2) interpretivism.

(3) critical social science.

(4) postmodernism.

(5) feminist research.

QUESTION 2

Norms for the scientific community contain the following:

(1) universalism and organised scepticism

(2) universalism and neutrality as to the possible popularity or unpopularity of research results

(3) communalism and honesty

(4) all the above.

QUESTION 3

All grade ten learners agree with their educator that the earth is round.

This is an example of …

(1) tradition.

(2) authority.

(3) mysticism.

(4) common sense.

QUESTION 4

Identify the potential error in human inquiry the following example illustrates.

The Minister of Education accepts the conclusion that academic support in higher education is unnecessary because it is the viewpoint of an eminent physicist.

(1) inaccurate observation

(2) the “halo effect”

(3) selective observation

(4) ego involvement

QUESTION 5

Choose the most correct option.

Why is research conducted?

(1) To solve practical problems.

(2) It contributes to the development of theories.

(3) To develop knowledge in a particular field, even if it isn't immediately practical or useful.

(4) All of the above.

QUESTION 6

Match each of the following statements with either of the two reasoning processes.

(a) Because all RSC2601 assignment questions are difficult, I can assume that this question will be difficult.

(b) All the questions I have completed up to now were difficult, therefore I can assume that all RSC2601 questions are difficult.

(c) People become aggressive when their attempts to reach their goals are frustrated, therefore I can assume that my daughter will become aggressive if I keep on breaking up her puzzle just before she has fitted the last piece.

(d) Because I have received an electric shock each time I touched these exposed live wires, I can assume that touching live exposed wires gives one an electric shock.

(i) deduction

(ii) induction

(1) (a) = (i) (b) = (i) (c) = (ii) (d) = (ii)

(2) (a) = (ii) (b) = (i) (c) = (ii) (d) = (i)

(3) (a) = (ii) (b) = (i) (c) = (ii) (d) = (ii)

(4) (a) = (ii) (b) = (i) (c) = (i) (d) = (i)

(5) (a) = (i) (b) = (ii) (c) = (i) (d) = (ii)

QUESTION 7

Which of the following statements about theories are correct?

Theories …

(a) are simply the opinions of people and their truth depends on whose side you are on.

(b) can tell us the ultimate truth of the world.

(c) provide explanations for why things are the way they are.

(d) guide us in understanding scientific observations.

(1) (a) (d)

(2) (b) (c)

(3) (c) (d)

(4) (a) (c) (d)

(5) (b) (c) (d)

QUESTION 8

Which of the following conditions for establishing causality are contained in the case study below?

> **In a study to establish whether there is a connection between the number of hours studied and examination results, RSC2601 students are divided into two groups based upon whether they study more or less than 10 hours per week. At the end of the semester, the results of the two groups are compared to see if the group that studies longer periods have better examination results, and we find that those who studied for longer periods do indeed perform better.**

(a) temporal order

(b) association between variables

(c) elimination of alternatives

(d) logical reasoning

(1) (a)

(2) (a) (b)

(3) (c) (d)

(4) (b) (c) (d)

QUESTION 9

Fifteen (15) French speaking students received supervision from one English speaking supervisor with the assistance of an interpreter. They all obtained their masters degrees in 2010. In 2011 a researcher studied the experiences of these students pertaining to the supervision that they have received. Two years later (2013) the researcher conducted a study to assess the professional development of this group of students.

Choose the most correct option.

This study is an example of a …

(1) panel study.

(2) follow-up study.

(3) tracer study.

(4) cohort study.

QUESTION 10

Exploratory research is done to …

(1) describe phenomena.

(2) explain phenomena.

(3) determine causality.

(4) investigate a new field.

QUESTION 11

Which of the following types of research can be classified as longitudinal research?

(a) panel studies

(b) cohort studies

(c) time-series research

(d) case-study

(1) (a) (b)

(2) (a) (c)

(3) (b) (c) (d)

(4) (a) (b) (c)

QUESTION 12

A researcher distributes a questionnaire to a sample of ex-nurses in an attempt to discover their reasons for leaving the profession.

This research design is best described as a/an …

(1) quasi-experiment.

(2) experiment.

(3) survey.

(4) social model.

QUESTION 13

Which ethical principle is disregarded in the following research study?

Impressionable children are exposed to visual violence in television messages.

(1) confidentiality

(2) anonymity

(3) freedom from harm

(4) privacy of thought

QUESTION 14

Which one of the following factors will NOT influence your decision as a researcher to obtain substitute consent to conduct a survey, instead of direct consent?

Respondents' …

(1) legal competency.

(2) language preferences.

(3) cognitive capacity.

(4) emotional capacity.

QUESTION 15

Select any TWO factors that can impose a risk on subjects' right to privacy, when conducting research.

(a) the sensitivity of the topic being researched

(b) the researcher's language preference

(c) the place where the research is conducted

(d) the publication of the findings

(e) obtaining prior informed consent

(1) (a) (b)

(2) (b) (c)

(3) (c) (d)

(4) (e) (a)

QUESTION 16

Which ethical issue is being addressed in the following scenario?

> **The participants in a focus-group interview are identified by wearing name tags with their first names.**

(1) legal competency

(2) protection of privacy

(3) organised scepticism

(4) do no harm

QUESTION 17

> **After completing an experiment the researcher learns that she has unintentionally influenced the behaviour of the subjects.**

This refers to …

(1) selection bias.

(2) the regression effect.

(3) the testing effect.

(4) researcher expectancy.

QUESTION 18

> **A researcher working for an advertisement company wants to investigate if people are more inclined to buy a new product when they have been informed of the advantages of the product. He selects a sample and randomly assigns each person to an experimental group (who receives information on the product) and a control group (who receives no information on the product). He then measures their willingness to buy the product by means of a questionnaire.**

This is an example of a ... design.

(1) pre-experimental

(2) posttest only control group

(3) quasi-experimental

(4) pretest-posttest control group

QUESTION 19

Quasi-experimental designs differ from true experimental designs in that they do NOT include …

(1) an experimental and a control group.

(2) manipulation of the treatment conditions.

(3) random assignment of subjects to groups.

(4) a pretest and a posttest in the study.

QUESTION 20

Which one of the following factors does NOT play a role in designing a study?

(1) Paradigm of the researcher.

(2) Data-analysis techniques.

(3) Results of the study.

(4) Purpose of the study.

SECOND SEMESTER (2)

SECOND COMPULSORY ASSIGNMENT FOR THE SECOND SEMESTER

Due date: 25 September 2020
Assignment 02
Unique number: 755729

Scope: This assignment is based on study units 6-10. Make sure to go to the *MyUnisa site for Additional Resources that can assist you in completing this assignment*

PLEASE TAKE NOTE THAT NO EXTENSIONS WILL BE GRANTED FOR ASSIGNMENTS.

QUESTION 1

Thirty lecturers are randomly sampled from a random sample of five universities.

This is an example of ... sampling.

(1) simple random

(2) systematic

(3) quota

(4) cluster

QUESTION 2

Selecting every 20th patient attending clinic C in the month of April, is an example of ... sampling.

(1) simple random

(2) stratified random

(3) systematic

(4) cluster

QUESTION 3

A researcher wishes to study Agoraphobia. The researcher places an advertisement in the newspaper asking for participants. A total of 50 replies are received, of which the researcher randomly selects 30. Only 15 participants actually turn up for their appointment.

The problem with drawing a representative sample of participants with clinical conditions such as agoraphobia is that …

(a) the participants who consent to participate may be unrepresentative of the target population.

(b) no sampling strategies are appropriate for this research.

(c) no complete lists of sufferers' names are usually available.

(d) the sample size is not an acceptable size for a representative sample.

(1) (a) (b) (c) (d)

(2) (a) (b) (d)

(3) (a) (c)

(4) (b) (d)

(5) (c) (d)

QUESTION 4

Which one of the following statements is <u>true</u>?

(1) Ethically it is correct to have a large sample.

(2) Data collection is more costly when the sample is bigger.

(3) Where lived experiences of people are investigated, the sample must be large.

(4) Experimental studies require larger samples than surveys.

QUESTION 5

The item below is to be used in a self-administered questionnaire. However, it contains problems which should be avoided.

> **We should not be critical of the police services' new action plan against crime.**

The above item is problematic because it …

(a) is double-barrelled.

(b) contains loaded language.

(c) is a negative statement.

(d) contains a vague agent of action.

(1) (a) (b)

(2) (b) (c)

(3) (c) (d)

(4) (a) (d)

QUESTION 6

The item below is to be used in a self-administered questionnaire. However it contains a problem which should be avoided.

> **Our practice of using projected benefit illustrations will remain in place until a more practical alternative is found.**
>
> **Select one of the following options that corresponds with your**

opinion of the above statement:

Strongly agree ❑

Agree ❑

Neutral ❑

Disagree ❑

Strongly disagree ❑

The above item is problematic because …

(1) the scale used in the item is not appropriate.

(2) the item contains a negative statement.

(3) reference is made to a vague agent of action.

(4) the item contains a double-barrelled statement.

QUESTION 7

Which type of question is illustrated in the following scenario?

You are conducting interviews with teenagers with the objective of finding ways in which the community's AIDS-awareness programme can be improved, and you ask one of the respondents the following question:

"Imagine that you are a community health worker. How would you adapt the AIDS-awareness programme to address the needs of the community?"

The above scenario contains a/an ... question.

(1) filter

(2) open

(3) contingency

(4) follow-up

QUESTION 8

Overt participant observation (in field research) occurs when ...

(1) a researcher makes tape recordings of conversations, but does not get involved in the social interaction.

(2) the Hawthorne effect takes place.

(3) a researcher becomes involved with the activities of the group of participants being observed.

(4) the reason for a researcher's presence is not known to the group being observed.

QUESTION 9

The measure of variability that squares the deviations from the mean and then averages them is called the …

(1) variance.

(2) spread.

(3) standard deviation.

(4) range.

QUESTION 10

The procedures used to organise and summarise quantitative data are referred to as …

(1) generalisations.

(2) descriptive statistics.

(3) inferential statistics.

(4) coding.

QUESTION 11

Study Table 1 and indicate which graphic presentation would best represent the data in this table.

Table 1: Examination results for history

pass	170
fail	30

(1) bar chart

(2) histogram

(3) polygon

(4) scatterplot

QUESTION 12

Which measure(s) of central tendency is/are the largest for the following set of data?

1 3 3 3 5

(1) mode

(2) median

(3) mean

(4) all three measures are equal

QUESTION 13

In qualitative research coding categories are …

(1) systematically developed beforehand.

(2) developed as research progresses.

(3) only developed once the data has been collected.

(4) used to quantify the data.

(5) always numerical.

QUESTION 14

See Reading box 9.8 to assist with the question below.

Identify the computer program specifically developed to assist qualitative researchers to write inference and analytic notes.

(1) word processing packages

(2) text retriever systems

(3) relational database management systems

(4) code and retrieve software

(5) theory and network builders

QUESTION 15

Which of the following statements refer to the nature of qualitative research?

(a) Any research about persons' lives, their lived experiences, emotions and feelings.

(b) Any type of research that produces findings not arrived at by statistical procedures.

(c) Any type of research that produces findings not arrived at by any means of quantification.

(d) Any type of research that facilitates discovery by giving a voice to the people and their experiences being studied.

(1) (a) (b)

(2) (c) (d)

(3) (a) (b) (c)

(4) (a) (b) (c) (d)

QUESTION 16

In practice, when is it justifiable for the researcher to commence with analysing qualitative data?

When …

(a) the researcher gets tired.

(b) the research participants get tired.

(c) data saturation becomes noticeable.

(d) multiple interviews have been conducted and/or observations have been made and patterns and themes start recurring, or no new information emerges.

(1) (a)

(2) (b)

(3) (c) (d)

(4) (b) (d)

QUESTION 17

When writing a research report for publication in a newspaper, we should follow journalistic principles because …

(a) journalists have different perspectives on what is important.

(b) the emphasis is placed on findings and sampling.

(c) the general public does not understand academic jargon.

(d) of practical constraints brought about by editing requirements.

(1) (a) (b) (c)

(2) (a) (b) (d)

(3) (b) (c) (d)

(4) (a) (c) (d)

QUESTION 18

The introduction to a research report should …

(1) set out the goals of the research and your point of departure.

(2) provide an outline indicating directions for future research.

(3) contain a brief summary of the essential findings of the research.

(4) consolidate the research by reflecting on the data gathered.

QUESTION 19

The purpose of including the literature review in a research report is to establish the status quo regarding understanding of your research problem.

This statement is …

(1) true, because the literature review defines the limits on the framework of your research.

(2) true, because the literature review provides a summary of the sources you intend using in your research.

(3) false, because the literature review has a limited role in determining the credibility of the research.

(4) false, because the research question is evaluated in the literature review.

QUESTION 20

You are busy writing a research report for an academic journal.

You would present the sampling procedure after describing the …

(1) findings.

(2) interpretation.

(3) method.

(4) literature review.

8.5 The examination

The duration of your examination is 2 (two) hours. The examination paper will consist of 60 multiple-choice items, thereby allowing you roughly 2 (two) minutes per multiple-choice item. These items will be equally distributed among the 10 study units (six per study unit). It is important to realise that the whole syllabus will be examined.

In the semester system, there are only two examination sessions per year, namely May/June and October/November. If you fail a module, you are entitled to one supplementary examination only if you qualify for it. This will be during the next semester.

In terms of the University policy, admission to the examination is granted to students on the basis of submitting Assignment 01 by the closing date. Admission to the examination is based on the submission of Assignment 01, regardless of the mark obtained.

However, both compulsory assignments will be evaluated during the formative process, assessing your learning as part of an ongoing developmental process. Both assignments will count towards a semester mark which will contribute 20% towards the final mark.

In order to pass the examination, you must obtain a subminimum of 40% for the examination and a final mark of 50%. This means that you must obtain at least 40% for the examination before your semester mark will count towards your final mark.

As your examination paper contains multiple-choice items you will have to fill in the answers to these items on a mark-reading sheet which will be marked by computer. This mark-reading sheet will be given to you together with your examination paper.

Use your *Study@ Unisa* brochure for general examination guidelines and examination preparation guidelines.

Release of examination results

Examination results may be released as soon as marks have been finalised. Once released, your result will be displayed on *myUnisa*. You will also receive a formal letter with your examination results. The back of the results letter contains important information, fees and closing dates which may be applicable to you.

If you have outstanding study fees or books you will NOT get your results. Once you have paid the outstanding amount and returned outstanding books, you need to request the release of your examination results. Please refer to the contact details provided earlier in this tutorial letter. **NOBODY** in the academic departments has access to the examination system to release any results.

9 FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

Please make sure to log onto the RSC2601 *myUnisa* site to access the FAQs link on the left-hand pane. This list is updated frequently in order to insure that issues are addressed promptly.

10 SOURCES CONSULTED

van Rensburg, G.H; Alpaslan, A.H; du Plooy, G.M; Gelderblom, D; van Eeden, R and Wigston, D. 2010. *Research in the Social Sciences*: *Only study guide for RSC2601*. Pretoria: Unisa.

11 IN CLOSING

Please remember that you are welcome to contact us if you are unsure about anything or if you experience any problems with this module. Again, you are strongly encouraged to interact with your allocated e-Tutor and fellow students, and participate actively in the online course related discussion forums. We hope that you enjoy learning more about research conducted in the Social Sciences and wish you the best of luck with your studies.

12 ADDENDUM

12.1 Answering of multiple choice items: Guidelines

What is a multiple-choice item?

Multiple-choice items are a means of teaching and testing different levels of cognitive skills. A multiple-choice item consists of several components:

1 **the stem** of the item which is that part in which the question is asked or the problem stated, but excludes the possible answer.
2 **options or responses** which refer to the possible answers in a test item.
3 a number of incorrect or less correct options which are known as **distracters.**
4 the correct option which is known as the **key**.
5 each question as a whole (including both the stem and the options) is called an **item**.

The item as a whole should measure the attainment of a learning objective and should deal with a central theme presented in the problem statement.

The following is a simple example of a multiple-choice item: and disadvantages of multiple-choice items:

Which of the following is an example of primary data? } **stem**

(1) personal interviews — **key**
(2) dissertations
(3) public records
(4) historical documents } **options**

} **item**

Advantages and disadvantages of multiple-choice items

There are both advantages and disadvantages to multiple-choice items. The advantage of multiple-choice items is that the computer marks them; therefore your assignment is objectively assessed. The marker's opinions or feelings are not involved in the mark given, and your work is consistently evaluated. Multiple-choice items can cover a wide field, and can teach and test different cognitive as well as various reading, writing and study skills.

A well set multiple-choice item should discriminate between a good student who knows his/her work, and a poor student who does not. Importantly, multiple-choice items make the process of evaluation possible, providing both student and lecturer with important feedback on the success or failure of the learning process. Your incorrect answers are also a valuable source of information because they should help you diagnose sources of misunderstanding, any misconceptions or learning difficulties you may have. They also help your lecturers identify problems in the study material.

The disadvantages of multiple-choice items are that they sometimes implicitly provide clues to aid recollection and do not test your own formulations or ability to write a sustained coherent argument. Also, it is possible for students to guess the answers. However, if, for example, you were given four possible options to choose from, you only have a 25% chance of guessing the correct answer, and given the number of items set, the statistical chances of guessing enough to pass are virtually nonexistent. Of course, multiple-choice items do not help you learn how to express your own ideas which is a very important skill for communication in any subject area.

One can distinguish between two general levels of difficulty in multiple-choice items: low-level questions and high-level questions.

- Low level questions teach literal comprehension, specific facts (such as dates) and learned definitions. They test only memory, in other words reproduction of knowledge.
- High level questions on the other hand teach insight, deeper comprehension and application of knowledge. These questions test memory and application that is the production of knowledge.

By using a variety of levels and concentrating on higher level questions, multiple-choice items are able to teach and test higher order thinking.

Guidelines for answering multiple-choice items

It is the function of the problem statement or item (the stem) to ensure that one option is more correct than the others. Stated differently, the problem statement or question always provides the perspective from which, or the context within which you have to work to find the most correct option. It tells you how to approach the question. Therefore, always read and consider the stem carefully. Generally, the stem will focus on one specific issue. Try to identify the key issue at hand by looking for content key words or action words in the stem.

It is important to consider all the options from the perspective provided by the problem statement. Sometimes students choose one of the first options which make sense without even looking at the rest. That chosen option may be correct, but one of the later options

may be even more correct in the light of the perspective provided by the stem (problem statement or question). In some multiple-choice items, all the distracters are plausible or may serve as possible answers, but only one option is considered best or correct.

The important activities involved in answering multiple-choice items are always considering the problem statement or question, finding the content key words and thinking about each of the options in the light of the content key words in the stem.

Bear in mind that the distracters in multiple-choice items are not necessarily completely wrong. You must choose the most correct option.

Different forms of multiple-choice items and how to answer them

The multiple-choice item takes many different forms as illustrated by the following examples:

- The **direct question** in which you have to consider the problem statement and use the content key words to find the answer to the direct question. That is, you must find the most correct option in view of the content key words in the problem statement or question.
- The **incomplete statement** in which you would consider the problem statement and use the content key words to find the option that correctly completes the statement.

For example:

Research design refers to the process of …

(1) estimating the feasibility of the project
(2) planning the research process **[*]**
(3) thinking about a research problem
(4) evaluating the validity of the research

The **combination question** in that you have to consider each option in the light of the content key word in the problem statement. Mark each statement that might be considered to be correct and delete those that do not meet the requirements. You will then be able to see which option, or combination of options, is correct. This type of multiple-choice item tests your understanding of the relationship between ideas.

For example:

Which combination best describes positivist research?

(a) Valid knowledge could only be gained from empirical evidence.
(b) Methods of the natural sciences are applied on the social sciences.
(c) The sciences must deconstruct social phenomena through reflection.
(d) The field of communication is defined as media, audience and effect studies.

(1) (a) (b) (c)
(2) (b) (c) (d)

(3) (a) (b) (d) **[*]**
(4) (a) (c) (d)

Other forms of multiple-choice items may include diagrammatic questions or paragraph questions in which you would be expected to determine the relation (which is a content key word) between the sentences in the paragraph.

In order to test both reading and writing skills, multiple-choice items can be set on a whole range of course content, including, for example: a statement, a definition, a paragraph, several paragraphs, an article, an entire study unit, a diagram, a drawing, a photograph, a map or a case study.

Certain misconceptions concerning multiple-choice items

Some of you believe that multiple-choice items only test your knowledge (reproduction or memory), and that all answers to such questions can be found in the prescribed study guide.

This is a misconception. The information required to answer multiple-choice items can indeed be found in the prescribed study material, but it is often expected that you should work with the information by analysing it, synthesising, applying it, or evaluating it.

Some of you sometimes protest that a correct answer is a highly arbitrary matter - that one option is correct if the item is approached from one perspective but another option may be more correct if the item is approached from a different perspective. Gauging the truth or correctness of information is indeed a difficult problem.

What seems true from one perspective or within a given context often is not true from another perspective or within another context. This is exactly why it is so important to consider the content key words in the problem statement so attentively.

The problem statement in a well-structured multiple-choice item provides the perspective or context you have to know to find the correct answer.

Remember that looking for answers in a mechanical manner is a dangerous practice. Read and consider each problem statement carefully and allow the content key words in the problem statement to guide you to the correct answer.

Steps to follow when answering multiple-choice items

In summary, you must follow these steps in answering multiple-choice items (adapted from Van Schoor, A, Mill, E & Van der Merwe, D. 1995. *Effective Study*. Pretoria: Unisa Press):

1. **Read and analyse the stem carefully.** Identify the key term in each question to determine the direction of the answer.
2. **Anticipate the answer.** Try and find the correct answer yourself and then look for it among the options given. Remember however, that you must work only with the options supplied.

3. **Consider all the options.** Make sure you read all the possible answers, especially when the first option seems to be correct. The first option may be true, but another option may be better. You may not always be given a perfect answer to every question. Often most of the options seem acceptable.
4. **Compare the options with each other.** When several options seem possible, or even when none of them seems correct, compare them with each other. Study the options carefully to discover the differences. Pay special attention to words that can alter the meaning of the question.
5. **Use a process of elimination.** Once you have considered and compared all the options, eliminate the options which you are sure are incorrect by crossing them out. Eliminating answers in this way is helpful because you can then concentrate on the most reasonable options. Keep up the process of comparison and elimination until you are left with the option that you think is the best or correct answer.
6. **Minimise the risk of guessing.** When an item is difficult, students often guess. You can avoid this by reading the question and the possible answers until you have identified the best or most correct answer.
7. **Finally, check your choice.** Once you have made your choice, put the stem and the correct option together to make sure that together they form the logical and most correct answer.

The RSC2601 team wishes you everything of the very best in your endeavours.