

Analysis and Evaluation

Webinar

Answers to students' questions

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Dr Kate Ringham, Programme Lead Applied Accounting, OBU and Dr Jane Towers-Clark, Head Academic Partnerships, ACCA held a webinar – getting Started on the Research and Analysis Project.

The webinar can be viewed [on demand](#). These are the answers to the questions asked in the webinar.

Is competitor analysis mandatory for all topics?

This depends on your research question and research approach. Some topics are more focused on a particular organisation, for example T17 Corporate governance, T20 CSR focus on weak performance. It may be useful to make a comparison to illustrate best practice, but you did also need to use a framework or model. If you have collected primary data, for example T6 motivation, then industry benchmarks or standards may be helpful in your analysis.

For topics where competitor analysis is applicable, can I use multiple competitor organisations to evaluate performance?

I would not recommend using multiple competitor organisations due to the limited word count. It is important that your analysis and evaluation has sufficient depth. When considering the competitor, do provide a justification of why you consider this organisation a suitable comparison.

Does the comparator analysis need to be as detailed as that of the main organisation?

You are evaluating and analysing the main organisation. You do need to use the information about the comparator to illustrate the points you are making. So if the main organisation has responded well to an opportunity in the external environment (eg developed a new product) then it's revenue performance may be better than the competitor in the year of launch. The information about the competitor is likely to be less detailed than that of the main organisation.

T8 is by far the most popular choice. Lots of students must use the SWOT and PESTLE models/frameworks. How can I make my RAP more interesting for the marker?

It is up to you which topic you choose. RAPs are assessed on the criteria ([Appendix 1 Information Pack](#)) and looking at these criteria is the best ways of considering how to produce a good RAP. For T8 thinking about how the analysis in SWOT, PESTLE or other models links to the business performance (the ratios) is key.

For my research question, can I use the topic 8 full sentence except change to a chosen company name eg. XYZ co ?

Yes that is a good research question, you then need to consider research objectives. There is an article on the OBU website about aims and objectives.

Do I need to produce a systematic literature review and how do I choose which models/theories to use in the analysis?

Your approach to the research needs to be systematic. The models of theories you choose need to be relevant to the topic/question you are answering. It is not necessary to use lots of academic sources (we recognise students may not have access to an academic library). You do need to justify your choice of model/theory/framework and identify where you found the information (the source).

Page 29 of the [Information Pack](#) has more detail

Is it necessary to include a hypothesis in the RAP?

You do need to demonstrate the use of appropriate theory/concepts / business models. As this is an applied project, you need to explain what the relevant theory/model/framework might suggest, but this is not a dissertation and so a hypothesis as you might see in a thesis/dissertation is not required.

I'm planning to write my RAP between now and Christmas, with submission for May. If something happens to the company during that time, or the environment it operates in - will that be an issue or will my research & conclusions still stand, as long as I've used the most recent financial statements?

You need to use the most recent financial statements so it depends when these are issued. You want your RAP to be current, so if there was a significant issue, you may want to make reference to it and the possible impact on future financial performance. For very current events, it is sometime difficult to make the judgement as to impact until some time has passed.

Which financial statements should I use in my Research Report?

The information pack has details as to which financial statements to use.

The Information Pack includes a requirement to include an excel file for the graphs and analysis. Can I use other analysis tools like Power BI?

You must include an excel spreadsheet that demonstrates the use of formulae. If you wanted to use other tools for analysis, state what package you are using (for what and why) and submit the additional spreadsheet.

The wording for T17 does not specifically state an evaluation of the impact on key stakeholders unlike T20. Is it possible to consider the impact on stakeholders within T17?

T17 does ask you to consider the organisational response. It is possible to consider this response in terms of different stakeholder groups. You might also want to consider including the organisation's response to key stakeholders as part of your research question.

Should I use Medelow's matrix to discuss on the impact on the stakeholders? Do I need to justify the placing of the stakeholders in the relevant quadrants of the model?

The key here is to be analytical and evaluative. This is often a topic where students can be descriptive. If your research question considers the impact on stakeholders, evaluate this, rather than describing the key stakeholders. You may want to consider why has there been an impact on the stakeholder (supported by a source).

If you have used a recognised CG framework (and justified why this framework is an appropriate choice (eg national legislation/SE requirement), then you have used a model/framework. Sometimes students appear to include the Medelow matrix so they can discuss another model.

What if my company choice for topic 17 is niche and I want to use a comparison company, can I choose a company from another industry then?

It is important that you justify the choice of any comparator you use, but you may want to consider using an industry benchmark for this type of topic

Do you have any advice for the Marketing Strategy (topic18)?

As with other topics, you need to demonstrate evaluation and analysis. Sometimes students describe a marketing campaign/product range without explaining why the company may have targeted particular segments with particular products. In order to evaluate the marketing strategy, I would suggest using a model (7Ps can be used) and then link this with the actions the company has taken, and the results (often found in the financial statements).

Referencing and sources

What if you read articles that are relevant for the topic but don't make it specifically in the text, should these then not be included in the list references?

No, OBU ask that you submit a list of references. This includes all the in-text references but no others. So, if you have read something, but not used it as a source it is not included in the reference list.

How do I know which sources are authoritative when doing internet research?

In assessing a source think about the author (are they expert in the area), the timeliness and any potential bias (which you acknowledge). If you were considering the environmental performance of an organisation, an environmental charity or NGO would potentially be expert in the area, but would have a particular perspective. You can use this source but acknowledge that there may be bias. For example, Greenpeace, an environmental campaigning organisation, argues that the oil companies, including Shell, have not made sufficient R&D investment in sources of renewable energy (ref). However, Shell (Annual Report pxx) argue that the level of R&D investment was at its highest in 2019.

Can I use short URL links?

For the in-text citation, you use the author, or if no author the organisation and the date. For example, Tom Burrige wrote an article for BBC Business on the decline of the aviation industry. The in text citation is (Burrige, 2019) or Burrige (2019) and this appears in the reference list

Burrige, T (2019) "Government 'overseeing the demise of UK aviation" available from <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/business-54004169> (accessed 3 September 2020)

If there was no author, then it is acceptable to use BBC instead of Burrige. When referencing you want to make sure that the reader can find the sources that you have used.

Are does direct quotes and paraphrasing included in the word count?

Yes. Quotes and paraphrases are in the word count

Are the words in tables, diagram and charts included in the word count?

Yes.

Is it realistic to attempt the RAP before the November submission session after the September ACCA exam cycle?

If, because of the disruption to June exams, you have already started the RAP, then it is possible to take exams in September and **as long as you have passed all the exams and completed the Ethics and Professional Skills module**, you can submit in November. If you have not started then I would suggest targeting May 2021.

Does OBU take into consideration any extenuating circumstances that affected my performance in my ACCA exams as the exam marks are used in the degree classification?

The ACCA marks are not be given any extenuating circumstances adjustment by OBU as this would have already been accounted for within the ACCA assessment process.

How can I find out more about the OBU degree and how to choose a research and analysis project?

There are two webinars available on demand

What is OBU's BSc Applied Accounting

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Getting Started on the Research and Analysis Project

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What is the 10 year rule?

You have 10 years from the date of your first examination pass, or exemption granted, to submit and pass the Research and Analysis Project. If, as a result of Covid19, your last opportunity to submit was May 2020, **and you did not submit**, you have an automatic extension to Nov 2020. Please contact acca@brookes.ac.uk if you have questions about eligibility

Is my old PEM still valid for submission of my research or do I have to complete EPSm?

The old version of the ethics module (PEM) is still valid.

How do I contact OBU?

The OBU team are available on acca@brookes.ac.uk