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Planning for research design also includes sampling decisions. Sampling involves any procedure that draws conclusions based on measurements of a portion of the population called a sample. In sampling, the research design should provide the answers to the following questions:

- i. Who is to be sampled?
- ii. Who do we want the sample to reflect?
- iii. What should be the sample size?
- iv. How do we select them?

The concept of sampling, various sampling techniques, and sample size determination will be discussed in detail in Unit 4.

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### Check Your Progress 2.4

**Note:** Attempt the following questions and compare your answers with those given at the end of this unit.

1. Surveys are an important instrument to collect the ..... data.
2. Surveys are usually used for conclusive research.
  - a. True
  - b. False
3. Secondary data are used principally in both descriptive and explanatory research.
  - a. True
  - b. False
4. Observation is a ..... process of recording behavioural patterns of people and objects.
5. Experiments are studies conducted under controlled conditions.
  - a. True
  - b. False
6. Control groups are groups that are not exposed to the manipulated ..... variable.

7. Laboratory experiments tend to be of higher cost and longer duration than field experiments.
  - a. True
  - b. False
8. Planning for research design also includes the ..... decisions.

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## **2.7 DATA COLLECTION**

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This stage reflects the actual data collection and fieldwork. This stage merely follows the plan laid down in stage three. If stage three requires that a survey questionnaire is to be used for getting the responses from 30 MBA students on their perceptions of quality education. Then this stage ensures that a proper questionnaire is available and 30 MBA students are approached and their responses recorded. Data may be gathered by human observers or interviewers, or they may be recorded by machines as in the case of scanner data and Web-based surveys.

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## **2.8 DATA PREPARATION AND ANALYSIS**

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Once the survey or collection of data is completed, the next steps involve the preparation of data that includes data editing, coding, transcription, and verification. The process of data preparation and analysis is essentially the same for both quantitative and qualitative techniques, for data collected from both secondary and primary sources. Editing refers to the inspection of data for accuracy and correctness. The data is edited if necessary for correctness. Assigning numbers, characters, or alphabetic letters to the options given in the questions like 1 for Male and 2 for Female is called coding. Transcription involves entering the collected data into relevant software packages whereas, verification refers to testing the correctness of the transcribed data.

Analysis refers to the use of statistical techniques for drawing meaningful interpretations from the data. Univariate techniques are used for analysing data when there is a single variable to be analysed or if the study has several variables but only one variable is required to be analysed in isolation. Multivariate techniques are used for analysing data when two or more variables are to be analysed simultaneously.

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## **2.9 REPORT PREPARATION**

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This is an important component of research. This stage of research documents the various phases of research in a written report. It gives a detailed description of the questions, describes the research methodology and design adopted in the study, the process of data collection, and the use of data analysis tools and techniques. This stage

of research also presents the results and major findings. This stage performs the important step of communicating the research results. Research findings should be presented in a comprehensible format so that they can be readily used in the decision-making process. In most cases, the management is not interested in the full comprehensive report and expects an executive summary report. The same is also required to be a part of your report.

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### Check Your Progress 2.5

**Note:** Attempt the following questions and compare your answers with those given at the end of the unit.

1. .... stage reflects the actual collection of information and fieldwork.
2. Editing refers to the inspection of data for accuracy and correctness.
  - a. True
  - b. False
3. Coding refers to assigning a number or letter codes to represent each response to each question in the questionnaire.
  - a. True
  - b. False
4. The research report should have.
  - a. The preliminary, main text, and end matter.
  - b. Only the main text.
  - c. The preliminary and main text.
  - d. All the research findings.
5. A research report communicates what was actually done in a study and what resulted.
  - a. True
  - b. False
6. In a report, a description of the results of data analysis is presented, along with a discussion by the researcher of what the findings of the study imply for overall knowledge and current practice.
  - a. True

b. False

**Activity 2.1:**

1. Which of the research approaches outlined in this unit would be suitable for the following research topics:
  - i. Measuring the success of product sales forecasts
  - ii. Identifying factors affecting the development of a restaurant
  - iii. Measuring the performance of suppliers
  - iv. Identifying the best method of training
  - v. Designing and evaluating training programmes
  - vi. Measuring the performance of employees

Give reasons for your answers and discuss any practical problems you may encounter with your chosen research approach.
2. Discuss how you might conduct field research if researching how the professionals maintain quality work-like balance. What particular problems would you encounter in gathering suitable data?

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## 2.10 LET US SUM UP

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The overall purpose of business research is to assess information needs and provide relevant information systematically and objectively to improve decision-making. The business research process consists of six broad steps that must be followed creatively and systematically. Formulating the research problem, framing the research objectives, deriving the research design, data collection, analysis, report preparation, and presentation form the important steps in the business research process. Within these six broad steps are many iterations and routes that can be taken, reflecting the reality of business research in practice.

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## 2.11 KEYWORDS

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**Business process research** : The business research process entails studying all aspects of a company, its customers, and the market, then using that information to make sound business decisions.

**Problem Formulation** : The first step in the design of the research is the selection of a question that has its roots in an interesting theoretical argument.

<b>Research Objectives</b>	: Research objectives are a specification of the ultimate reason for carrying out research in the first place.
<b>Research Design</b>	: A research design encompasses the method and procedures employed to conduct scientific research.
<b>Research Method</b>	: The process used to collect information and data for the purpose of making business decisions.
<b>Data Collection</b>	: Systematic gathering of data for a particular purpose from various sources, including questionnaires, interviews, observation, existing records, and electronic devices.
<b>Data Preparation</b>	: The processes that ensure the accuracy of data and their conversion from raw form into categories appropriate for analysis; include editing, coding, and data entry.
<b>Data Analysis</b>	: The process of evaluating data using analytical and logical reasoning to examine each component of the data provided
<b>Report Preparation</b>	: A process of Composing, typing, organizing, amending, coordinating, etc.

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## **2.12 SUGGESTED FURTHER READINGS / REFERENCES**

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## **2.13 CHECK YOUR PROGRESS: POSSIBLE ANSWERS**

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### **Check Your Progress 2.1**

1. Six
2. c
3. b
4. a
5. Information
6. a

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### **Check Your Progress 2.2**

1. a
2. Goals
3. a
4. b
5. State

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**Check Your Progress 2.3**

1. a
  2. Exploratory
  3. True
  4. False
  5. c
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**Check Your Progress 2.4**

1. Primary
  2. a
  3. a
  4. Systematic
  5. a
  6. Independent
  7. b
  8. Sampling
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**Check Your Progress 2.5**

1. Data Collection
  2. a
  3. a
  4. a
  5. a
  6. a
  7. a
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**2.14 UNIT END QUESTIONS**

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1. Describe the phases of the business research process.
2. Do the stages in the research process follow the scientific method?
3. Identify the most critical task step in the research process, and explain why it is so important.

4. Why is it still important for you to understand the research process?
5. Why is the problem formulation stage probably the most important stage in the research process?
6. Explain the role of literature review/information sources in the problem formulation.
7. Define the research objectives phase in the research process and its purpose.
8. Does exploratory research design always lead to conclusive research? Give adequate examples to explain your perspective.
9. Differentiate between exploratory and conclusive research.
10. What do you understand by longitudinal and cross-sectional research designs? Give examples.
11. Distinguish between research methods and research methodology.
12. Describe the different types of research methods.
13. Differentiate between an experiment and a survey.
14. Explain how experiments are carried out in research.
15. What is meant by the observation method of research methods?
16. What types of sampling decisions are taken in the research methodology?