

Research Support Policy & Roadmap

1. Purpose of Research at Masters' Union

The most consequential decisions in business are made under uncertainty. Great managers are not those who have the most data, they are those who ask the sharpest questions, build rigorous frameworks to seek answers, and act on evidence rather than instinct alone. Research is the discipline that builds this capability.

At **Masters' Union**, research is not an academic obligation. It is a core leadership skill. In a world driven by AI, rapid market shifts, and increasing competitive complexity, the ability to structure a problem, gather credible evidence, generate original insight, and communicate findings with clarity is what separates exceptional managers from ordinary ones.

Across every career path: consulting, product management, entrepreneurship, investing, operations, policy, or general management, research capability creates compounding advantage:

- Consultants use structured analysis to generate client recommendations grounded in evidence.
- Product managers use consumer and market research to make build-or-kill decisions.
- Entrepreneurs use startup validation and customer discovery to reduce the cost of failure.
- Investors use financial and industry analysis to develop differentiated theses.
- Policy professionals use field studies and data to design interventions that actually work.
- Operations leaders use experimentation to drive efficiency and continuous improvement.

In an AI-first business environment, the ability to design a research question, evaluate sources critically, and synthesize insights across disciplines is more valuable than it has ever been. Machines can retrieve information; only humans can determine what questions are worth asking.

2. Research Philosophy

Masters' Union believes that research should be practical, impactful, and grounded in real business problems. The institution does not pursue research for its own sake. Instead, research here is defined as structured inquiry that generates insight useful for decision-making, innovation, or leadership.

Our research philosophy rests on seven principles:

- **Practical first:** Research must connect to real business problems, industry contexts, or student career goals.
- **Impact-oriented:** The measure of good research is not theoretical novelty but actionable insight.
- **Interdisciplinary:** Business problems are complex. Students are encouraged to draw on economics, psychology, technology, sociology, and data science.

- **Data-informed:** Rigor requires evidence. Claims must be grounded in data, whether quantitative or qualitative.
- **Experiment-driven:** Where possible, hypotheses should be tested. Experimentation is as valid as observation.
- **AI-enabled, human-led:** AI tools may assist at every stage, from literature scans to data analysis but judgment, framing, and interpretation remain the student's responsibility.
- **Ethical at the core:** Research must respect intellectual property, data privacy, and the dignity of every participant.

Research at Masters' Union spans a wide range of methodologies and formats, including:

- Market studies and industry analysis
- Startup validation and customer discovery
- Consumer research and behavioural studies
- Product experimentation and user research
- Financial modelling and investment analysis
- Policy analysis and field studies
- Operations and process research
- AI-assisted business intelligence and analytics
- Case writing and institutional knowledge capture

Both qualitative and quantitative approaches are equally valued. Insight quality matters far more than methodological complexity.

3. Research Roadmap for PGP Students

The following roadmap is designed to help students progressively build research capability across the program. Each stage corresponds to a discrete set of skills, tools, and expected outputs. Students may move through this roadmap within individual projects or across the full program arc.

Stage 1: Problem Identification

Every good research project begins with a well-formed question. Before collecting any data, students must be able to articulate what problem they are solving, why it matters, and who it matters to. Vague questions produce vague answers.

Tools & skills: Design thinking, problem framing, stakeholder mapping, MECE frameworks.

Expected output: A clear, one-page problem statement that defines scope, context, and desired outcome.

Stage 2: Literature & Industry Scan

Before generating new knowledge, students must understand what is already known. This includes reviewing existing research, industry reports, competitor analyses, and practitioner literature. AI tools can accelerate this stage but students must evaluate source credibility and avoid surface-level synthesis.

Tools & skills: Database search, AI-assisted summarization, source evaluation, citation management.

Expected output: An annotated bibliography or landscape map identifying key themes, gaps, and questions.

Stage 3: Hypothesis Framing

A hypothesis is a testable claim. Students should be able to translate their problem statement into one or more specific hypotheses that can be validated or refuted through evidence. This discipline borrowed from scientific method and applied to business forces clarity of thinking.

Tools & skills: Hypothesis-driven thinking, logical structuring, research design.

Expected output: Clearly articulated hypotheses or research questions with defined success criteria.

Stage 4: Data Collection

Data collection must be systematic and appropriate to the research question. Students may use surveys, interviews, field observation, public datasets, transaction data, financial records, or AI-generated analysis depending on what the question demands. Mixed methods are encouraged. All data collection must comply with ethical standards outlined in Section 5.

Tools & skills: Survey design, interview protocols, data sourcing, API integration, primary and secondary research methods.

Expected output: A clean, structured dataset or a set of documented qualitative findings.

Stage 5: Analysis & Synthesis

Analysis transforms raw data into patterns. Synthesis transforms patterns into meaning. Students should be able to apply both quantitative techniques (statistical analysis, modelling, visualization) and qualitative approaches (thematic analysis, narrative synthesis) to make sense of their findings.

Tools & skills: Excel, Python, R, Tableau, AI-assisted analytics, thematic coding.

Expected output: Analysed findings presented as charts, tables, or structured narrative.

Stage 6: Insight Generation

Insight is the value-creating output of research. An insight is not a finding, it is the “so what” behind the finding. Great insights are specific, actionable, and non-obvious. Students should resist the temptation to report data without interpretation, and instead push toward clear managerial or strategic implications.

Tools & skills: So-what thinking, pyramid principle, executive communication frameworks.

Expected output: A set of clear, prioritised insights with direct implications for the problem being solved.

Stage 7: Communication & Publication

Research that is not communicated is research that does not exist. Students are expected to present their findings in formats appropriate to their audience whether that is a startup pitch, a consulting deck, an industry whitepaper, a written report, or an internal case study. Strong communication amplifies the impact of good research.

Tools & skills: Data storytelling, slide design, written communication, presentation skills, publishing formats.

Expected output: A polished, audience-appropriate deliverable (report, deck, article, or presentation).

4. Expected Research Outputs

Masters' Union does not prescribe a single research format. The goal is that students produce something of genuine value to themselves, to an organisation, to a market, or to the broader intellectual community. Outputs are assessed on quality of thinking, rigor of process, and relevance of application.

Recognised output formats include:

- Industry reports and market analyses
- Whitepapers and thought leadership pieces
- Original case studies grounded in Indian and global business contexts
- Startup validation reports and customer discovery briefs
- Consulting-style analytical deliverables
- Investment memos and financial due diligence reports
- Product research and user insight reports
- Consumer behaviour and demand studies
- AI-assisted analytics and intelligence projects
- Capstone research projects with real-world sponsors
- Conference presentations and academic submissions
- Internal knowledge publications contributing to the Masters' Union knowledge base

Students are encouraged to aim for outputs that could be used in the real world: published, shared with a client, presented to a board, or integrated into a business plan. The aspiration is not to produce documents that sit in archives, but insights that drive action.

5. Research Ethics & Responsible AI Usage

Integrity is not a constraint on good research but it is a prerequisite. Students are expected to hold themselves to high ethical standards across every stage of the research process. The following principles are non-negotiable.

5.1 Academic Honesty & Attribution

All work submitted must be the student's own. Ideas, data, frameworks, and language borrowed from others must be appropriately cited and attributed. Plagiarism including paraphrasing without acknowledgement constitutes academic misconduct and will be treated accordingly.

5.2 Data Integrity

Fabrication or falsification of data is a fundamental violation of research ethics. Students must not manufacture data, selectively omit unfavourable findings, or misrepresent results. Transparency about data limitations is expected and valued.

5.3 Privacy & Participant Rights

Research involving human participants through surveys, interviews, or observations must ensure informed consent, confidentiality, and respect for personal data. Participants have the right to withdraw at any time. Student researchers must not collect or store data in ways that violate applicable privacy regulations.

5.4 Responsible AI Usage

AI tools are encouraged as productivity amplifiers at every stage of the research process. However, students must:

- Disclose the use of AI tools in their research documentation.
- Verify AI-generated outputs for hallucinations, source errors, and bias are real risks.
- Never submit AI-generated text or analysis as their own original work without meaningful human judgment and transformation applied.
- Be aware that AI tools may reflect biases present in training data; critical evaluation of AI outputs is required.

5.5 Source Credibility

Students must evaluate the credibility and currency of every source. Reliance on unverified web content, anonymous posts, or non-peer-reviewed material without triangulation is insufficient for rigorous research. Where sources conflict, acknowledge and explain the discrepancy.

6. Faculty & Student Responsibilities

6.1 Faculty Responsibilities

Faculty and research mentors at Masters' Union are expected to:

- Provide timely, constructive feedback on research proposals, in-progress work, and final outputs.
- Guide students in refining research questions, selecting appropriate methodologies, and maintaining rigour.
- Encourage original thinking and intellectual risk-taking, not just safe, conventional approaches.
- Share relevant networks, datasets, and practitioner contacts to support student research.
- Model good research practice in their own work and classroom engagement.

6.2 Student Responsibilities

Students enrolled in the PGP at Masters' Union are expected to:

- Approach research with genuine curiosity and a commitment to original thinking.
- Maintain intellectual honesty at every stage in data collection, analysis, and communication.
- Engage proactively with faculty mentors and incorporate feedback substantively.
- Meet deadlines and manage research timelines with professionalism.
- Respect the intellectual property of others and the dignity of research participants.
- Build data literacy as a career-long skill, not merely a program requirement.

7. Conclusion

Research is not what happens in laboratories or academic journals. Research is what happens every time a manager pauses before a major decision and asks: “What do we actually know? What are we assuming? What would it take to find out?”

The leaders who create lasting impact are rarely those who moved fastest. They are those who asked better questions, built cleaner evidence, and acted on insight rather than impulse. This is the research tradition Masters' Union seeks to cultivate not in service of academia but in service of better management, bolder entrepreneurship, and more informed decision-making across every domain.

We are building builders, thinkers, and problem-solvers. Research is how thinking becomes rigorous. Rigour is how thinking becomes impact.