

School of Psychology

Module Handbook 2017-2018

Research Skills in Psychology 1

Undergraduates: C8511



IMPORTANT ADVICE FROM SOOTY - GO TO THE RESEARCH SKILLS ONE WEB-PAGES ON STUDY DIRECT FOR COPIES OF LECTURE SLIDES, HANDOUTS AND JUST ABOUT EVERYTHING ELSE THAT YOU WILL NEED FOR THIS MODULE. THIS IS THE SINGLE MOST IMPORTANT BIT OF INFORMATION IN THIS HANDBOOK.

Module Convenor: Dr Graham Hole

MODULE DOCUMENTATION: RESEARCH SKILLS 1 (AUTUMN 2017)

TITLE:

Research Skills in Psychology 1.

TIMING AND DURATION:

A first year, 15 credit module for all psychology students, running throughout the autumn term.

CONTACT HOURS AND TEACHING METHODS:

One lecture per week, and one 1-hour practical per week starting in teaching week 2.

MODULE OUTLINE:

This module aims to introduce you to some of the skills necessary for conducting and understanding psychological research. Research involves obtaining data, analysing and interpreting them within the framework of relevant psychological theories, and then reporting the findings and conclusions in a clear and comprehensible way to other people. This means you need to know the strengths and weaknesses of the various methods that psychologists use to obtain data. You also need to know how to analyse those data using various statistical techniques. Finally, you need to know how to communicate those findings to others. The skills that you learn in Research Skills 1 will be useful not only in the first- and second-year research methods modules, but also for many other modules too. They will also help you to understand and critically evaluate published research. You will get an introduction to using computer programs for analysing data and producing graphs (using the statistics packages Excel and SPSS) and you will gain experience in using the internet in order to obtain information.

Much of the module is designed to introduce you to the basic logic of doing psychological research, and the necessary statistical methods required to analyse the data obtained. The methods employed in statistical experiments will be demonstrated by a number of practicals, and you will be taught the conventions that should be followed when you report experimental results. The module will concentrate on describing the logic of experimental design and statistical methods, while the mechanics of performing statistical tests will be dealt with in the practical classes.

The following concepts will be expected to be understood by the end of the module: issues concerning methods of acquiring data (survey research methods, questionnaire design and experimental design); exploratory data analysis; frequency distributions; the normal distribution; regression and correlation; hypothesis testing; and the concept of one and two tailed tests. You'll also be expected to know how to perform a few simple statistical tests using SPSS.

You should be able to use SPSS to perform basic data analysis and be able to interpret SPSS output satisfactorily. Finally, you should also be able to present

data both graphically and in table form (using Excel), and understand the conventions for presenting statistical results. You should be able to write up results of a study in a lab-report that follows the format used by psychology journals.

MODULE OBJECTIVES:

The aim of the module is twofold: to provide useful IT skills that you can use in research skills as well as other modules; and to familiarize you with basic techniques of data description and introduce you to the idea of statistical inference, using a minimum of mathematics. You should end up knowing which situations are appropriate for applying each of the inferential tests covered, and you should be able to perform all of the tests using SPSS. You should also know to write a scientific report of experiments carried out, adhering strictly to the relevant conventions (currently those outlined in the latest edition of the Publication Manual of the American Psychological Association).

METHOD OF STUDENT FEEDBACK:

This is to be confirmed during the module.

MODE OF ASSESSMENT:

The module is assessed by a combination of unseen exam and coursework: details are in the table below. Passing the module is defined as getting an *overall* mark of 40% or more. It's the *overall* mark that counts, not just the exam mark - so it is very worth your while to do all the coursework!

Please consult your assessment timetable on Sussex Direct to find out how, when and where to submit; <https://direct.sussex.ac.uk>

Type of assessment	Value
Unseen exam (mid-year assessment block):	60%
Report (Lab-report) 1:	10%
Report (Lab-report) 2:	20%
Professional Log (Research participation):	10%

A variety of assessment modes are used to develop and test different types of knowledge, skills and aptitudes. The assessment modes have been approved to test the course and module learning outcomes. Written submissions usually form an integral part of assessment at all levels. Written submissions include essays, reports, logs etc as appropriate to the module and the skills that you are being expected to develop. *Examinations usually focus more on your ability to use your knowledge of the subject, rather than simply testing your memory for facts.* Feedback is provided to support you in future assessments.

Unseen examinations are typically used to assess your level of knowledge and/or understanding of the discipline without the support of textbooks, notes or internet resources, unless these have been specifically permitted by the examination rubric. For students registered with the Student Support Unit an alternative mode may be approved as a Reasonable adjustment with the Student Support Unit. However, when, in accordance with the academic judgement of the School, where an unseen exam has been approved for a module to assess competence standards, learning outcomes and any accreditation requirements, an alternative mode may not be approved as a Reasonable Adjustment for a student registered with the Student Support Unit. If you have any concerns, please discuss these with the Student Support Unit, who will liaise with the school.

Coursework makes up 40% of your overall mark. All coursework is submitted electronically. The most important thing is to get work in on time - late submissions incur a penalty. Additionally, feedback on the coursework will help you understand what is required and help you to improve subsequent work. There are a number of aspects to a lab-report write-up that are done by convention, and **to get top marks you must follow these conventions**. Even a bad write-up will provide you with feedback that will tell you what needs to be done to get a better mark next time.

(a) Unseen exam:

The exam contributes 60% of the final mark. This is an unseen exam, covering your understanding of statistical concepts, and testing your ability to interpret the results of statistical tests and understand SPSS output.

(b) Reports (Lab-reports):

Two lab-reports must be written. These will be write-ups of two studies that will be undertaken during the autumn term. These must be written up in accordance with the conventions stipulated by the American Psychological Association (APA) - full guidance will be given on this during the module.

(c) Professional Log (Research participation):

In return for satisfactory participation in a total of 4 hours of psychology research during the autumn term, you will be credited with 10% of the overall mark. This is an **all-or-nothing** arrangement: you will receive no marks at all for doing anything less than 4 hours of participation. Each study in which you participate is worth some multiple of 15 minutes. This participation can include both taking part in studies (such as filling in someone's questionnaire or doing someone's experiment) **and** assistance in studies (such as handing out someone's questionnaires to others, or assisting with data entry or stimulus production). The main way that you will be notified about studies is through a computerised research participation management system called SONA. You can find details about this at

<http://www.sussex.ac.uk/psychology/internal/students/researchparticipationscheme>

You will receive your username and password by email at the start of the module. The password will be a temporary one, and you should change it as soon as you can to something secure that does not match your Sussex password. SONA will send you emails from authorised researchers once a fortnight during term time, telling you about studies for which they want participants and assistants. You can browse through the available studies, click on those you wish to sign up for, and book yourself in for a time and day for participation or assistance. You can view your accumulated credits in the profile section of the site, which will allow you to see how much more you need.

If you sign up for a study, PLEASE make sure you turn up (or let the researcher know in good time that you won't be able to). Not only is it very rude not to show up, but "no-shows" waste a lot of a researcher's time. If you fail to show up for three separate appointments, your name will automatically be forwarded to the Head of School and your Academic Advisor. You may lose your 10% credit for Research Skills unless you are able to demonstrate that significant extenuating circumstances prevented you from attending your appointments.

Only researchers who are authorised to use the scheme can advertise on SONA and award you credits: third-year students and MSc. students doing their projects are NOT allowed to give you credit. Obviously if you want to, you can take part in one of their studies out of the kindness of your heart, but you should be aware that this will not count towards your 10%.

Psychologists must adhere to a strict code of ethics in their research (for details see the British Psychological Society's website). Participants in research studies must give informed consent to take part, must not be coerced into participating, and are free to withdraw from a study at any time. If you do not wish to be a research participant at all, you can still obtain your module credits through research assistance.

Taking part in research is one of the best ways to learn how real research is done. Therefore your participation and/or assistance should be educational to you as well beneficial to the research taking place in the School. There is a sufficient range of research going on that you should be able to find something to volunteer for that you're happy to do. Whether participating or assisting, at the end of the study the researcher will explain to you the aims of the study ('debrief' you) and give you the chance to ask any questions (whether to with design/method or the topic itself).

WARNING: do not leave all of your research participation/research assistance until shortly before the deadline for completion, as studies may not be available by then for you to participate in! Studies are available throughout the term, so complete your four hours/16 credits in good time.

Information on the following can be found at the link below:

- Submitting your work
- Missing a deadline
- Plagiarism and Collusion - Academic Misconduct
- Late penalties
- Exceptional circumstances
- Exams
- Help with managing your studies and competing your work
- Assessment Criteria

<http://www.sussex.ac.uk/psychology/internal/students/examinationsandassessment>

GETTING ASSISTANCE:

Research skills is a module that can be intimidating to many students. If you have a problem, the most important thing is to seek help - problems can often be fixed easily if they are caught early. Trying to ignore them will not make them go away, and you will merely fall further and further behind! Often asking someone else on the module can make something that initially seems complicated seem clear. If you still have problems, ask the tutors who take the practicals and statistics classes - they are there to help you, so do not be afraid to use them! There is also a FORUM on the Study Direct website for this module on which you can post questions. Your academic advisor may also be able to help.

MODULE CONVENOR:

Dr Graham Hole grahamh@sussex.ac.uk

LOCATION AND TIMES OF SESSIONS:

Location and times of lectures and practicals will be supplied on Sussex Direct:
<https://direct.sussex.ac.uk>

ALL module materials will be available on the Research Skills 1 Study Direct website (lecture slides, handouts, copies of all of the lecture slides, statistical tables and "frequently asked questions", plus any last-minute revisions or corrections to timetabling, etc.). Consequently, you should check it frequently.

Statistics problem sheets, giving you practical experience in using the statistical methods covered in the lectures, will be put on this site at regular intervals. You should attempt these in your own time. Worked solutions to these problems will be put on the web about a fortnight after the questions themselves, so that you can check your answers. However, if you get really stuck, ask for help from the tutors in the practical sessions.

Useful reading material:

Essentially everything you need will be on the Sussex Direct web-pages for this module. You might also find the following books useful:

Bourne, V. (2017). "Starting out in Methods and Statistics for Psychology: a Hands-On Guide to Doing research". OUP: Oxford.

Field, A. and Hole, G. (2003). "How to design and report experiments". London: Sage.

Field, A.P. (2013). "Discovering statistics using IBM SPSS Statistics (Fourth Edition)". London: Sage. (The fifth edition is published in December 2017).

It's also worth reading the following "popular science" book, as it's a brilliant demonstration of *why* it's useful to learn about statistics and research methods.

Goldacre, B. (2009): "Bad Science". London: Harper Perennial.

Goldacre's website is also worth a look: <http://www.badscience.net>

Help for the maths-phobes:

There is minimal maths in this module, and everything will be explained as we go along, using as little maths as possible. However if you feel you need to brush up on your arithmetic and algebra, the following is a very accessible paperback that will help you do just that:

Lawler, G. (1999) "Understanding maths: basic mathematics explained". Studymates.co.uk.