Research Skills in Psychology 1
Undergraduates: C8511

IMPORTANT ADVICE FROM SOOTY - GO TO

www.sussex.ac.uk/Users/grahamh/RM1web/teaching08-RS.html

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 - SO GET THIS WEB ADDRESS TATTOOED SOMEWHERE.

Module Convenor: Dr Graham Hole
MODULE DOCUMENTATION: RESEARCH SKILLS 1 (2014)

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:

*Autumn term:*
One lecture per week, starting in week 1 and ending in week 12.
One 1-hour practical per week, starting in week 2 or 3 and ending in week 12.

MODULE OUTLINE:
The aim of this module is 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 in order to obtain data. You also need to know how to analyse those data using various statistical techniques. Finally, you need to know how to present 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 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).

LEARNING OUTCOMES:
By the end of the module a successful student should be able to:
- Analyse data using statistical techniques, with SPSS.
- Understand the strengths and weaknesses of the methods used in psychological research.
- Produce write-ups of research results, using APA conventions.
- Use the Internet and library electronic resources to find relevant published research on which to base their lab reports.

METHOD OF STUDENT FEEDBACK:
Anonymous questionnaires at the end of the module. Please fill these in; we do read them, and we act upon the comments.

Electronic Submission and Feedback- new for 2014-15 (Year 1)

From 2014/15, students taking first year modules will usually be asked to submit assessments electronically where assessments are text-based, for example, an essay. Your Sussex Direct webpages and module handbook (see page 5, point b) will give all assessment details, including whether the assessment is to be submitted via e-submission through Sussex Direct or in hard copy via the School Office. Feedback for all e-submission assessments will also be provided electronically. Please refer to the frequently asked questions available on the following webpage for further information:

www.sussex.ac.uk/adqe/standards/examsandassessment/esubmission
Turnitin

You are encouraged to use the internet-based text-matching service, Turnitin, prior to submitting your assessments. This may help you identify problems with your referencing.

Turnitin is also used during the marking process as a means of checking the originality of submitted work. From 2014/15 all assessments submitted electronically via e-submission will be uploaded to the Turnitin database and an Originality Report will be made available to the marker. Please refer to the frequently asked questions available on the following webpage for further information:

www.sussex.ac.uk/adge/standards/examsandassessment/esubmission

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! If you do fail the module, you will be offered a resit. A sample exam is available so that you know what to expect.

Please consult your assessment deadlines timetable on Sussex Direct;
https://direct.sussex.ac.uk

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Type of assessment</th>
<th>Value</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Unseen exam (mid-year assessment block):</td>
<td>60%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Lab-report 1:</td>
<td>10%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Lab-report 2:</td>
<td>20%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Research participation:</td>
<td>10%</td>
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Coursework makes up 40% of your overall mark. 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 perform statistical tests and understand SPSS output. You can take into the exam a university-approved calculator.\(^1\)

(b) Lab-reports: via e-submission
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) 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 your 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

\(^1\) The Examination handbook has information on the use of approved calculators in the exam room. At the time of writing, you are only allowed to use one of the following: Casio fx-82, fx-83, fx-85, fx-115, fx-570 or fx-991 (all with any suffix). The university rules say that "you are not allowed to take instruction notes or booklets relating to your calculator into the exam (except for the insert on the cover)". Make sure you familiarise yourself with how to use your calculator before the exam.
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 or 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).

**Late Submissions and Mitigating Evidence**

What happens if I miss an assessment deadline?

Where applicable you may still submit the assessment within 7 days of the published deadline. This will incur a penalty, as follows:

- Work submitted up to 24 hours late shall incur a penalty deduction of 5 percentage points (not 5% of the actual mark).

- Work submitted after 24 hours and up to 7 days late shall incur a penalty deduction of 10 percentage points (not 10% of the actual mark)

- No work shall be accepted after the 7 day penalty period has elapsed

Please consult your assessment deadlines timetable on Sussex Direct;  

[https://direct.sussex.ac.uk](https://direct.sussex.ac.uk)

For any piece of late work where the student wishes to claim mitigating circumstances or impairment a MEC claim needs to be completed and submitted to the Student Life Centre.
Please access the links for further information.

- [http://www.sussex.ac.uk/studentlifecentre/mitigation](http://www.sussex.ac.uk/studentlifecentre/mitigation)
- [http://www.sussex.ac.uk/academicoffice/documentsandpolicies/examinationsandassessmenthandbooks](http://www.sussex.ac.uk/academicoffice/documentsandpolicies/examinationsandassessmenthandbooks)

**Plagiarism and Collusion**

Plagiarism is the use, without acknowledgement, of the intellectual work of other people and the act of representing the ideas or discoveries of another as one's own written work submitted for assessment.

Collusion is the preparation or production of work for assessment jointly with another person or persons unless explicitly permitted by the examiners. An act of collusion is understood to encompass those who actively assist others as well as those who derive benefit from others.

Information on how to avoid plagiarism and collusion can be found here;

- [http://www.sussex.ac.uk/s3/?id=33](http://www.sussex.ac.uk/s3/?id=33)
- [http://www.sussex.ac.uk/academicoffice/documentsandpolicies/examinationsandassessmenthandbooks](http://www.sussex.ac.uk/academicoffice/documentsandpolicies/examinationsandassessmenthandbooks)

**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! Your personal tutor may also be able to help.

**MODULE CONVENOR:**

Dr Graham Hole [grahmh@sussex.ac.uk](mailto:grahmh@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](https://direct.sussex.ac.uk)

Details will also be found at:

[www.sussex.ac.uk/Users/grahmh/RM1web/teaching08-RS.html](http://www.sussex.ac.uk/Users/grahmh/RM1web/teaching08-RS.html)

ALL module materials will also be available at this web address (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.
There is a link to this site from the teaching pages for Research Skills on Sussex Direct.

Statistics problem sheets, giving you practical experience in using the statistical methods covered in the lectures, will be put on the web at regular intervals. Access them from: www.sussex.ac.uk/Users/grahamh/RM1web/teaching08-RS.html

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 for this module is available on Graham Hole’s web pages. Go to

http://www.sussex.ac.uk/Users/grahamh/RM1web/teaching08-RS.html

You might also find the following books useful:


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’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. This is what one of the reviewers on Amazon said:
"This book has changed my whole attitude to a subject that I hated at school and have never had any confidence in. Just flicking through it was enough to make me realise that I could actually understand things straight away that I had always thought I couldn't do! It was a real eye-opener for me and has given me the confidence to face up to something that I have always avoided. I was so chuffed I wrote an email to the author to thank him and got a lovely email back from him straightaway. If you didn't keep up with maths at school or thought everybody else 'got it' whilst you got left further and further behind then this is a great book for you".