# Ethics, Philosophy & Methods (EPM) - Essentials

**Autumn Term/Teaching Block 1: Weeks 1-10**

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<tr>
<th>Week</th>
<th>Format</th>
<th>Time</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Qualitative Methods</strong>&lt;br&gt;John Drury&lt;br&gt;<a href="mailto:j.drury@sussex.ac.uk">j.drury@sussex.ac.uk</a>&lt;br&gt;Tel 2514</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2-hour seminar</td>
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<td>Introduction: The qualities of qualitative research</td>
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<td>2</td>
<td>2-hour seminar</td>
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<td>Qualitative methods in practice</td>
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<td>3</td>
<td>2-hour seminar</td>
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<td>Evaluation – The quality of qualitative research</td>
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<td>Assessment: 33% weighting: 1000-word essay. See Sussex Direct for submission date in week 5</td>
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<td><strong>Ethics and Governance</strong>&lt;br&gt;Michael Morgan&lt;br&gt;<a href="mailto:m.j.morgan@sussex.ac.uk">m.j.morgan@sussex.ac.uk</a>&lt;br&gt;Pev 1, 1C6: Tel 7202</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>2-hour seminar</td>
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<td>An introduction to research governance and the BPS Code of ethics</td>
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<td>5</td>
<td>2-hour seminar</td>
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<td>Ethics committees and risk assessment</td>
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<td>6</td>
<td>2-hour seminar</td>
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<td>The use of non-human animals in psychology – the ethical debate</td>
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<td>Assessment: 33% weighting: 3 parts: research summary (400 words), ethical summary (400 words) and ethics application. See Sussex Direct for submission date in week 8</td>
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<td><strong>Philosophy of Science</strong>&lt;br&gt;Zoltan Dienes&lt;br&gt;<a href="mailto:Z.Dienes@sussex.ac.uk">Z.Dienes@sussex.ac.uk</a>&lt;br&gt;Tel 7335</td>
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<td>2-hour seminar</td>
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<td>Popper</td>
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<td>10</td>
<td>2-hour seminar</td>
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<td>Assessment guidance</td>
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<td>Assessment: 33% weighting: 1000-word essay. See Sussex Direct for submission date in week 12</td>
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Module Overview

This module will consider the conceptual foundations of psychological research and is divided into three key elements (referred to in this document as “mini-modules”):

1) **Qualitative methods.** These are becoming increasingly important in psychology and related disciplines (e.g., biology, medicine, sociology). Nevertheless, heated debates continue to rage about their essential qualities (if any) and “quality” (if any). In this part of the module we will examine all aspects of qualitative research, from (claimed) philosophical underpinnings, through method selection, project planning, ethical considerations, data collection, data analysis, and the production, assessment, and presentation of results, though to the scientific, practical, ethical, and theoretical benefits of the end product(s). Particular attention will be given to the prospects of developing qualitative methods that are truly complementary to quantitative ones.

2) **Ethics and Research Governance.** During this part of the module students will learn about the ethical principles and guidelines relating to research in psychology, in particular the BPS code of conduct and how it applies to research studies, and the UK frameworks for research governance. The ethical issues involved in using non-human animals in psychological research will also be addressed.

3) **Philosophy of Science.** This part of the module explores different approaches to what it means for psychology to be scientific and why it matters. Half of the material considers classic philosophy of science as represented in the views of Popper, Kuhn and Lakatos and how they apply to psychology. The remaining material considers the foundations of statistical inference, comparing the conceptual basis of orthodox (Neyman Pearson) statistics with that of Bayesian statistics. The aim is to clear up popular misconceptions in interpreting statistics, not to teach any particular statistical technique.

Learning Outcomes

1. Critically evaluate the merits of at least one qualitative method, both in its own terms and in relation to currently dominant quantitative methods

2. Apply the UK frameworks for Research Governance and the BPS Code of Conduct, Ethical Principles and Guidelines to research questions in psychology

3. Explain what the scientific basis of psychology is by linking ideas from philosophy of science to research areas in psychology
Assessment

There are three assessments for this module, one each for each of the “mini-modules” below.

- See below for details of each assessment.
- See Sussex Direct for deadlines for each assessment.
- Make sure that you familiarise yourself with how to avoid accusations of academic misconduct, including plagiarism, collusion, and personation. The Study Skills at Sussex (“S3”) website provides help with this, with the most relevant page currently housed at http://www.sussex.ac.uk/s3/index.php?id=33
Qualitative Methods ‘Mini-Module’

Mini-Module Leader: John Drury

Teaching: Two-hour interactive lectures/seminars in Weeks 1-3.

Reading: The core reading is the following:


Other recommended books are given in an annotated bibliography below, as are some useful articles.

Assessment: A single 1000-word essay. See above for general assessment details. See below for titles.

Qualitative Methods – Essay Titles

Below are some titles you may use for your 1000-word essay for the Qualitative Methods ‘mini-module’ assessment. You may use another title if you first get emailed permission for it from John.

- Qualitative research: Supplement, complement, or alternative to quantitative research in psychology?
- To what extent are qualitative and quantitative modes of enquiry compatible?
- How may the quality of qualitative research best be assessed?
- Critically evaluate the utility of adopting any one form of qualitative research within psychological research.
- What amount and type of philosophical knowledge is needed in order to be able to conduct effective qualitative research?
- Explain how a particular piece of qualitative research made a significant contribution to psychological knowledge. What are the implications for improving future qualitative research?
- To what extent is generalisability a necessary and sufficient condition of scientific research?
- To what extent does subjectivity preclude the possibility of qualitative research being scientific?
- Qualitative research: a precursor to science. Discuss.
- To what extent is qualitative research necessary and sufficient within psychology?
Can qualitative research contribute to the establishment and improvement of a body of useful psychological knowledge?

To what extent should qualitative researchers strive for objectivity?

What should be done about the inevitability of researcher interpretation within qualitative research?

To what extent should qualitative researchers care about the particularity and generality of their analyses?

Qualitative Methods – Books

None of the readings included in this document are ‘essential.’ Please read as widely and deeply as possible to answer the questions you have for each topic (whilst ensuring that you achieve the Learning Outcomes.)


Qualitative Methods – Selected Articles

As said above, none of the readings included in this ‘mini-module’ are ‘essential.’ Please read as widely and deeply as possible to answer the questions you have for each topic (whilst ensuring that you achieve the Learning Outcomes.)


http://www.nova.edu/ssss/QR/QR2-3/presenting.html
Plenty to think about in a brief, well-written paper.

*Sociological Research Online, 3*,
http://www.socresonline.org.uk/socresonline/3/3/2.html

http://www.aom.pace.edu/rmd/2001forum/methods_article_with.refs.pdf


Richards, H. M., & Emslie, C. (2000). The "doctor" or the "girl from the University"? Considering the influence of professional roles on qualitative interviewing. *Family Practice, 17*, 71-75.


Ethics and Research Governance ‘Mini-Module’

Mini-Module Leader: Michael Morgan

Section Overview

Structure, Aims and Objectives
This short component of the module is concerned with the general topic of research governance; primarily ethical considerations in carrying out psychological research but also addressing issues around risk assessment and other components of research governance. The ethical issues involved in using non-human animals in psychological research will also be addressed. Some knowledge in this area is essential to anyone who plans a career that involves a research component in psychology. However the issues have a very much broader relevance than this. Almost all professions – especially those that involve offering services to individuals – will have ethical codes that depend, to some extent, on shared philosophical principles and moral codes.

Learning Outcomes.
By the end of the module you should be able to: 1. Understand the BPS Code of Conduct, Ethical Principles and Guidelines and the specific way in which they are implemented at the University of Sussex. 2. Apply the Code to a range of research studies 3. Understand UK frameworks for Research Governance 4. Understand the ethical issues involved in using animals in psychology

Pre-Requisites
There are no formal prerequisites.

Contact Information
Organiser: Michael Morgan
Location: Pevensey 1, 1C6
Telephone: internal x7202, external; 01273 877202
E-mail: m.j.morgan@sussex.ac.uk
Teaching and Learning

*Teaching Sessions.* There are three timetabled teaching sessions, in Weeks 4-6, for this module. Each session will involve a mix of presentations by the convener and practical exercises that will involve work in small groups. The Chair of our Research Ethics Committee (REC) will also give a short presentation during the second session. The third session will be in two parts. In the first I shall discuss the ethical issues that arise when using non-human animals in psychological research and I will finish with an informal session to help you along with the module assessment.

*Independent study.* The teaching sessions for this module will provide a background to ethics and research governance but you will be expected to carry out a significant amount of private study both prior to and following the teaching sessions.

Prior to the first teaching session you should identify a paper published during 2011 that reports empirical research in an area that interests you. Ideally it might be in an area that relates to the project that you hope to carry out later in the year. The paper should have been published in a journal from the British Psychological Society. This stipulation means that (a) you can identify the ethical code that applied to the work and (b) the paper will not be same one that you base the assessment for this module on, since this requires a paper published in 2012. You should read the paper and come to the session prepared to very briefly explain the research findings and to identify any areas in which you imagine that the authors would have had to consider ethical issues. You might also wish to look at the BPS Ethical Principles and Code of Conduct, but this is not necessary at this point.

Following the teaching sessions you will need to complete the assessment. This will involve careful reading of the relevant ethical codes and also the downloading of the forms used by the University of Sussex in judging the ethical issues that arise in a particular piece of research. You will also need to examine some of the other issues that arise in Research Governance, primarily relating to health and safety.

*Office Hours.* I have office hours at 1.00-2.00 pm on Mondays and Thursdays. You may use these office hours (without appointment) to discuss or ask about anything that relates to this module.

*Study Direct.* You are encouraged to access module materials and use the module forum in Study Direct. This is the best way to share ideas amongst your fellow students and ask questions about the module. All of the module reading is provided on the website and is not repeated here.

School of Psychology webpage. ALL PGT student applications for projects considered “low risk” must be submitted online. Applications will first be authorised by the Student’s Supervisor or Course Convenor, and then reviewed by the Psychology School Research Ethics Officer (SREO): Dr Michael Morgan. Applications must be submitted through the online ethical review application system via Sussex Direct. See the Research Governance website for more details: [http://www.sussex.ac.uk/staff/research/spg/researchgovernance/apply](http://www.sussex.ac.uk/staff/research/spg/researchgovernance/apply)
Books and Reading

There is no module text for this module, but you are encouraged to read all relevant material that is available online such as the BPS code of human research ethics: http://www.bps.org.uk/sites/default/files/documents/code_of_human_research_ethics.pdf

Assessment

The Task. There is a single summative assessment task for this part of the module. You should choose a paper reporting empirical research (i.e. not a review), in a “house” journal of the British Psychological Society, which was published during 2012. These journals are listed here. http://www.bps.org.uk/publications/journals/bps-journals/bps-journals

The paper should report experiments in an area that is close to your own interests, perhaps in the area in which you hope to carry out your project. Note that the publication year is one year later than for the paper that you used in the first teaching session – so it cannot be same paper, but can certainly come from the same journal and be on a similar research topic if you so choose.

Your task is divided into three parts:

1) You should write a brief summary of the research findings and their significance, setting these in context for a broad, scientifically literate audience, in not more than 400 words. This part of the assessment should not simply be an expansion of the abstract of the paper, together with the main findings. Instead you should make a genuine attempt to present the ideas in a broader context. “News and Views” pieces in the journal Nature do this regularly should you be looking for a possible model to follow.

2) Outline, in not more than 400 words, the ethical issues that are raised by the study together with information about the way in which they were dealt with, if specified, or the way in which you would expect them to have been dealt with, if the paper is not specific. You should make explicit reference to the BPS Ethical code in this section of the assessment.

3) Access the PGT ethics form from the link on the Sussex Psychology website here and fill it out, to the extent that you are able, using the information provided in the paper. Check “yes” or “no” the box on risk assessment. If you judge that a risk assessment would have been necessary for the study say why, download the relevant form from the Sussex Psychology website and look at it but do not print it or fill it out. You can address any significant risk-related issues in Part 2 of your answer. Thus your assignment will consist of three parts: the research summary (400 words), the ethical summary (400 words) and the Ethics application. You can print out the Ethics form “2-up” – i.e. 2 pages onto a single a4 sheet. Do not include any supporting documents and leave the names of the applicants, address details etc. blank. However you must provide the description of the experiment.
Marking Scheme. The marking scheme mirrors the structure of the assessment piece.

(1) The first part of the assessment will be allocated 40% of the marks and will be marked using the PGT assessment criteria, specifically that for shorter essays, though also informed by the criteria for “data analysis problems.

(2) The second part of the assessment will be allocated 40% of the marks and will be marked using the PGT assessment criteria for shorter essays.

(3) The final part of the assessment, relating to the completion of Part A of the ethics form and risk assessment, is allocated the remaining 20% of the marks. The assessment criteria for assessed essays and practical reports can be downloaded from the School teaching pages.

Submission deadlines should be shown on your timetable and in Sussex Direct. The deadline will be towards the end of the Autumn Term. Since this is a summative assessment there is no particular deadline for the completion of marking. However I shall post some generic feedback on the module website after the submission deadline and expect to complete the marking and moderation process over the Winter vacation.

How does assessment meet learning outcomes? The assessment exercise is designed to test the learning outcomes 1, 2 and 3 of the module. The background material and introductory material to learning outcome 4 will also be tested by this assessment though only a few of you are likely to explicitly choose a paper describing work involving non-human animals. Thus the assessment gives you the opportunity to present your knowledge and mastery of each of the four outcomes listed at the beginning of this module handbook.

Submission deadlines and late penalties. Two copies of your assessment must be submitted to the Psychology School Office, Pevensey 1 2A13 before the deadline. You must ensure that you have attached the relevant coversheet. Penalties for late submission are shown on the Academic Office website.

A warning about plagiarism and collusion: There are strict guidelines on copying material and all work is routinely checked for plagiarism. Up to date information on the University regulations concerning plagiarism and collusion can be found here.

Student Evaluation of our Modules
All modules at Sussex are fully audited. You will be asked to complete an anonymous student evaluation form near the end of each term, allowing you to comment on and criticise all aspects of the module. You may also comment on the module at any time, either to the convenor or you may do this indirectly via some intermediary (e.g. a student representative). Feedback received in this way will be collated reported to the psychology teaching and learning committee. Module Evaluation summaries from last year are available on the School web pages.
Session Overview

Session 1  An introduction to research governance and the BPS Code of ethics.

Session 2  The work of ethics committees, an introduction from Richard de Visser. A brief introduction to Risk Assessment.

Session 3  The use of non-human animals in psychology – the ethical debate.
Philosophy of Science ‘Mini-Module’

Mini-Module Leader: Zoltan Dienes

Section Overview

Aims: The aim of this section is to provide students with an understanding of core conceptual and philosophical issues relevant to the scientific and statistical nature of psychology.

Objectives: At the end of the course a student should be able to:

Argue what the scientific basis of psychology is, by linking ideas from the philosophy-of-science field to research areas in psychology.

Summary: This section of the module explores different approaches to what it means for psychology to be 'scientific' and why it matters. It considers classic philosophy of science as represented in the views of Popper and Lakatos and how it applies to psychology. It also considers the foundations of statistical inference, comparing the conceptual basis of orthodox (Neyman Pearson) statistics with that of Bayesian statistics: This part of the course aims to clear up popular misconceptions in interpreting statistics, rather than teach any particular statistical technique.

This is the schematic time table. You should rely on Sussex Direct for complete information on dates and times.

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<td>Assessment guidance</td>
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Assessment: Assessment will consist of a 1000-word assignment due at the end of the term (see Sussex Direct for submission deadline).

Plagiarism: I presume you all understand what plagiarism is (for advice see: http://www.sussex.ac.uk/s3/?id=35). Plagiarism is a high risk strategy: People guilty of plagiarism or collusion (see: http://www.sussex.ac.uk/s3/?id=153) have failed their degrees (I know of three such people in psychology in the last few years). On collusion: in conversation you can share ideas and discuss plans, but when you get down to writing that should be all your own work, as should obtaining specific numerical answers.
Readings by topic:

KARL POPPER

**Essential reading.**

**Background reading:**

IMRE LAKATOS

**Essential reading.**

**Background reading:**
A 20-minute talk by Lakatos:
http://www.lse.ac.uk/collections/lakatos/scienceAndPseudoscience.htm

NEYMAN-PEARSON

**Essential reading.**

**Background reading:**
http://jpepsy.oxfordjournals.org/content/34/9/903.full

Good talk by Cumming:

Useful site for exploring confidence intervals:

First part of this paper explains using confidence intervals:
Dienes, Z (submitted). Using Bayes to get the most out of non-significant results.

**BAYESIAN INFERENCE**

**Essential reading.**  


**Background reading:**  
If you are staying in research this book is worth getting:  


**Assessment**  
For a paper published in 2013 (for example, from the journal *Psychological Science*), where a key result apparently testing a theory comes from a t-test, answer the following questions. Try to limit your total words to about 1000, so each answer will need to be very concise, while being informative.

You can use one of the following papers:

http://pss.sagepub.com/content/24/5/797.full

Or:


If you wish to pick another paper, that is fine, but do not spend a lot of time searching for the “right” paper. If you pick another paper, include a copy in your submission.
Section A. Popper (25 marks)

1) Concisely state the theory that the authors present as being put up to test?
2) What pattern of results, if any, would falsify the theory?
3) What background knowledge inspired this theory but is not being directly tested?
4) What background knowledge must be assumed in order for the test to be a test of the theory in (1)?
5) How safe is the background knowledge in (4)?

Section B. Neyman Pearson (25 marks)

6) Have the authors determined what minimal difference could be expected if the theory were true?
7) If not, do you know any results or other papers that could allow you to state an expected size of difference or a minimal interesting difference? Provide an expected raw difference and state your reasons. Provide a minimal difference if you can.
8) Have the authors established their sensitivity to pick up such a difference, through power or confidence intervals? Calculate a confidence interval and use it to argue whether or not the data sensitively distinguished the alternative and null hypotheses.

Section C. Lakatos (25 marks)

9) State the hard core of the research programme the authors are working in
10) Does the paper contribute to the research programme in a progressive or degenerating way? State your reasons.

Section D. Bayes (25 marks)

11) What was the mean difference obtained in the study?
12) What was the standard error of this difference?
13) Extending your answer in (7) concerning an expected raw difference, specify a probability distribution for the difference expected by the theory and justify it
14) What is the Bayes factor in favour of the theory over the null hypothesis?
15) What does this Bayes factor tell you that the t-test does not?

If you used your own choice of paper, please attach a copy of your chosen paper so I can check your critical analysis of the paper against mine, and check your calculations.