PS11300/20
Introduction to Psychology:
Investigation and Communication

Semesters 1 and 2 2014-15

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Contents

1. MODULE OVERVIEW

2. LEARNING OUTCOMES

3. TEACHING

4. TIMETABLE

5. ASSESSMENT

6. READING LIST

1. MODULE OVERVIEW

Welcome to PS11300/20! The aim of this module is to introduce you to a range of methods and techniques that are used in psychological research to collect and analyse data.

Psychology is a scientific discipline and, as such, knowledge and understanding about the research process and research methods are vital to your learning. This is reflected in the fact that research methods form a central component of your undergraduate degree. You will study dedicated research methods module in both Year 1 and Year 2, and in your final year, you will undertake an independent research project that utilises your research methods and statistical skills.

We hope you enjoy this module and trust you will find it of great use, both in your academic studies and in your future career.

2. LEARNING OUTCOMES

On completion of this module, you should be able to:

1. Critically assess the key principles of both quantitative and qualitative research design
2. Understand the use and calculation of basic descriptive, parametric and non-parametric statistical tests
3. Identify when to use different research methods appropriately
4. Examine and evaluate the need for and use of ethics in psychology
5. Communicate research output in a variety of media

3. TEACHING

3.1. Module teaching staff

- The module convenor is Dr Rachel Rahman
- Lectures are taken by Dr Rachel Rahman and Mr Joseph Keenan
- Practicals are led by these staff members and/or postgraduate students
- All staff members may be contacted by e-mail – please see the Contacts section on Blackboard for details of how to contact staff members
- If you prefer to discuss matters face-to-face, members of teaching staff are available during their scheduled office hours. Office hours are advertised in the Contacts section of the Blackboard module. Alternatively, you can attend one of the Drop-In Clinics (see Section 3.3).

3.2. Contact time

Across this module, you will spend a total of 12 hours in lectures and 20 hours in practical sessions. You will also spend approximately 4-5 hours per week carrying out a variety of learning activities via Blackboard.

This is a 20 credit module that carries a notional student workload of 200 hours.

3.3. Overview of teaching methods

This module uses a blended learning approach. This means that you will learn through a mix of traditional face-to-face sessions (such as lectures and practical workshops) and on-line activities (such as blogs, videos and on-line quizzes). This mix of learning activities is specifically designed to provide you with opportunities to develop skills, knowledge and understanding in both the theoretical and practical aspects of research methods.

Lectures

In this module, lectures will provide a basic framework for the course content. Each lecture will also serve as a gateway to a set of directed learning activities on Blackboard that will help you develop your knowledge, skills and understanding.

Lectures last for 50 minutes and run in odd-numbered weeks on a fortnightly cycle (see the Timetable in Section 4 for more details). Due to time constraints, lectures will start promptly at the scheduled time. All lectures will be recorded and available to view on Blackboard.

Attendance at lectures is compulsory and is monitored by the Department of Psychology. An attendance register is used during lectures and it is **your responsibility** to make sure you have signed the register before the end of the session. Poor attendance can have serious consequences, such as being reported to the Head of Department or being excluded from examinations. Furthermore, students with poor attendance tend to perform poorly on coursework assessments and examinations. If you have a genuine reason for non-attendance you should inform Rachel and/or Anna Cole and provide appropriate evidence.

Practical Workshops

Practical workshops provide you with the opportunity to develop hands-on, practical skills in relation to research methods and statistics. We will also use practicals to collect and analyse data which will form the basis of the three practical reports that you will submit as coursework for this module.

Practicals last for 1 hour 50 minutes and run in even-numbered weeks on a fortnightly cycle. Practicals are run in small groups (about 20 students) and are more relaxed and informal than lectures. Practicals give us the opportunity

to try our ideas out and develop our understanding in a supportive learning environment.

Attendance at practicals is compulsory and, as with lectures, the Department of Psychology monitors attendance. Once you are assigned to a practical group, you <u>must</u> keep to that group unless there are exceptional circumstances. If you are unable to attend your usual practical session, you must contact Rachel in advance to get permission to attend a different group. It is **not acceptable** to simply turn up at a different group without gaining prior permission. If you do this, you may be refused entry to the session.

You will need a calculator for this module. Please bring it with you to every practical session. If you are going to buy a calculator, we recommend the CASIO FX-83 (approx. £6.99) or the CASIO FX-85 (approx. £8.99). These calculators are approved for use in examinations and we recommend that you purchase one at the start of your course so you have the whole academic year to get used to using it. We do not recommend the use of programmable calculators or smartphones with a calculator app as you will not be able to take these into the examination with you.

Blackboard weekly learning activities

The weekly learning activities posted on Blackboard are a vital part of your learning. The mix of activities we have designed enable you to test out your ideas, get feedback on your performance, undertake in-depth reading of book chapters and journal articles, practice your statistical skills, learn via different formats (i.e. with video, images, animation, audio), interact with other students and comment upon their ideas, and post questions to staff.

The number of activities will vary from week to week but will typically be between 3-5 activities. These activities are not part of your assessed coursework and are provided as learning tools to enable you to develop and test your own knowledge, skills and understanding. You will usually be required to complete the activities before the practical session related to the tasks.

Drop-in Clinics

Drop-in clinics will be organised once or twice a semester, as required. The dates and times of these sessions will be advertised on Blackboard and via e-mail to all students. These optional sessions enable students who are experiencing difficulties with particular aspects of the course (e.g. statistics, report writing etc) to meet face-to-face with a member of staff or post-graduate student and get some extra support. The purpose of these sessions is not to check your calculations or proof-read your coursework. Rather, the aim of these sessions is to support students who may, for example, need help with understanding how to calculate statistics or how to structure a practical report.

3.4. Blackboard support

The module's Blackboard site provides the module handbook and is the vehicle through which you will submit electronic copies of your assessment. Additional supportive material is also provided via the Blackboard site and you will be advised of new postings as they arise.

As this is a blended learning course, Blackboard is particularly important to this module. You will use it to complete weekly learning activities, to interact with other students, to undertake directed readings, to communicate with teaching staff and to submit your coursework assignments. It is recommended that you log in to Blackboard regularly (every 2-3 days). You should also take note of e-mails from staff relating to the module and make any required response in a timely manner.

3.5. Feedback

Feedback is vital to your learning and it is important that you are aware of all the ways in which you will receive feedback on this module. When most students think about feedback, they usually think about the comments that they get on a piece of coursework. However, on this module you will get a range of formal and informal feedback, delivered in a variety of ways. Some types of feedback you will receive include:

- Written feedback on practical reports

- Peer and staff feedback on presentations

- Feedback responses to blog posts and on-line discussions

- Replies to e-mail questions and queries
- Scores and feedback comments on Blackboard quizzes and assessments
- Answers and feedback to verbal questions in lectures and practical sessions
- Comments and feedback on practical work in practical sessions
- Feedback on brief written exercises

Keep in mind that some feedback will point out areas for improvement and some feedback will highlight what you have done well. Both types of feedback are equally valuable – the former aims to help you improve your work and the latter encourages you to keep doing the things you already do well.

Whatever form the feedback takes, the important thing is that you understand what the feedback is telling you about your learning. If you are not sure how to use the feedback to help you improve, ask the module convenor or your personal tutor. When you get feedback on a particular aspect of your work referencing, report writing etc), make sure that you incorporate that feedback into your next piece of work. The point of feedback is to help you improve your learning – however, this will only happen if you put the feedback into practice.

Finally, feedback is a two-way process and we value feedback from our students. There are several ways that you will give feedback during this module:

- Feedback on the blog posts of other students
- Feedback on own learning and development in written exercises
- Working in small groups in practicals and feeding back to the whole group
- Commenting on the presentations of other students
- Feedback to the module representative
- Informal feedback to the module convenor via Blackboard or e-mail
- Formal feedback to the department using the module evaluation form

3.6 Employability

The Department of Psychology is proud of the fact that 85% of our graduates are in work or further study within six months of graduation. This reflects the fact that the Department places a high priority on the development of employability skills. Whether your future career goals are focused around psychology or not – or even if you haven't yet thought that far ahead! – this module will help you develop a range of skills that are in high demand by employers in a range of job sectors. These skills include:

Statistical Literacy	Statistical thinking, reasoning and modelling of data and distributions
Statistical Analysis	Selection and calculation of appropriate descriptive and inferential statistics
Data Handling	Organising, describing and representing data in appropriate ways
Report Writing	Writing formal scientific reports using appropriate terminology and structure; making suggestions and recommendations
Research Skills	Identification of research questions, development and testing of hypotheses, selection and application of appropriate research methods, drawing conclusions from data
Presentation Skills	Verbal and visual presentation of research data to audience of peers; presentation of paper-based reports
Team Working	Working in small groups in practicals to solve problems, producing presentations in small groups
Communication Skills	Developing written communication through coursework, practical workshops and Blackboard activities; developing verbal communication through interaction with staff and peers, contributing to small-group problem-solving in practicals

4. TIMETABLE

Date	Themes	Unit	Lecture	Practical
29/09/14	Pre-research considerations	1	Introduction and Ethics	
06/10/14				Ethics
13/10/14		2	Research questions and hypotheses	
20/10/14				Report writing, literature and research questions
27/10/14	Data Handling	3	What is quantitative data?	
03/11/14				Describing quantitative data and Probability
10/11/14	Correlational Design and analysis	4	Correlational design	
17/11/14				Report 1 and methods
24/11/14		5	Correlation analysis	
01/12/14				Correlational analysis and the result section
08/12/14			Interpreting results	
			CHRISTMAS	
26/01/15	Experimental design and analysis	6	Experimental design	
02/02/15				Designing experiments
09/02/15		7	t-tests and ANOVA	
16/02/15				T-tests and ANOVA
23/02/15		8	Non-parametric tests	
02/03/15				Non-parametric tests
09/03/15	Qualitative methods and analysis	9	Qualitative research methods	
16/03/15				Thematic analysis
			Easter	
13/04/15		10	Interpreting themes in qualitative research	
20/04/15				Reporting and interpreting qualitative research
27/04/15	Revision		Revision	

Lectures and seminars run in alternate weeks. On odd numbered weeks, you will have a 50 minute lecture. On even numbered weeks you will have a 2 hour practical. Weekly learning activities are associated with each lecture. These activities must be completed before the corresponding practical takes places.

Lectures run on Monday 12.10-13.00 (Semester 1). A different time may be allocated in Semester 2 and so please take note of your student timetable.

5. ASSESSMENT

5.1. Overview of assessment methods

You will be assessed by coursework (70% of overall mark) and examination (30% of overall mark). You must complete both components of the assessment to pass the module. The combination of assessment methods will allow you to develop and demonstrate a number of different academic skills learnt throughout the module – for example, problem solving, literature searching and communication skills.

Coursework

The coursework component of the module carries 70% of the overall module assessment mark and consists of three parts:

1. Quantitative Research Report (25% of overall mark)

- A practical report 1500 words in length (excluding references). This is approximately 4-5 pages.

- The main focus of this report will be your ability to collect data, write a concise and complete quantitative report including a correlational analysis.

- The submission deadline for this report will be advertised on Blackboard

- Guidelines for the report will be available on Blackboard in the 'assignments' folder

- Your work will be marked and returned to you within three weeks of submission.

2. Quantitative Group Research Project (20% of overall mark)

- Group based research project to be presented as an academic poster

- The main focus of this report will be your ability to work as a team, write a concise and complete quantitative report in the form of an academic poster including an appropriate t-test analysis.

- The submission deadline for your group poster will be advertised on Blackboard

- Guidelines for the report will be available on Blackboard in the 'assignments' folder

- Your work will be marked and returned to you within three weeks of submission.

3. Qualitative Research Report (25% of overall mark)

- A practical report 1500 words in length (excluding references). This is approximately 4-5 pages.

- The main focus of this report will be your ability to write a concise and complete qualitative report using a thematic analysis

- The submission deadline for this report will be advertised on Blackboard

- Guidelines for the report will be available on Blackboard in the 'assignments' folder

- Your work will be marked and returned to you within three weeks of submission.

Examination

The second component of the module assessment, a **2 hour examination**, carries 30% of the overall module mark. The structure of the exam is as follows:

1. 20 compulsory multiple choice questions
2. A compulsory short answer section

Exam questions will require you to demonstrate your understanding of research methods using material from across the module.

Please note that this **is not** an open book exam.

Students will be permitted to take a calculator into the exam and will be provided with a formula booklet.

Sample exam questions will be available on Blackboard and past papers will be available via the Aberystwyth website.

5.2. Submitting Coursework

For hand-in dates please see the dates listed on "departmental hand-in sheets" available on Blackboard and posted on departmental noticeboards.

From September 2014, Aberystwyth University is moving to e-submission for text-based word-processed assignments. You'll be asked to submit your work through AberLearn Blackboard using one of the e-submission tools built into Blackboard.

Your lecturer will tell you when and where to submit your work, but here are some helpful tips to get you started with e-submission:

- If you have a chance to practice using e-submission, take it. Some staff set up a practice submission so that you become familiar with using it. Have a go before your first real assessment, so you know what to do when you submit your work.
- If you are planning to use your own computer to submit work:
  - o Check you have a supported web browser on your computer (http://www.inf.aber.ac.uk/advisory/faq/636/) - if you don't, please contact is@aber.ac.uk for advice;
  - o Use this computer when doing your practice submission;
  - o If you encounter any problems on your own computer, you should use the university computers available in a number of locations across the University.
- Watch a video on how to submit: (http://www.inf.aber.ac.uk/advisory/faq/524/).
- Don't leave it until the last minute before submitting your work - if you are stressed and working right up to the clock, mistakes are easier to make. Give yourself some extra time and submit your assignment early. That way, you won't risk missing the deadline. You can find the university policy on late submission on the AU website here (http://www.aber.ac.uk/en/student/ug-issues/)
- Follow all the instructions on screen whilst you are submitting, including details of file size, file format etc. Please use a short file name (15 characters is a good length).

- If you are using the Turnitin tool, keep the receipt that will come to your AU email account. Please note that for all of the e-submission tools, you can also check your receipt of submission by clicking the link where you originally submitted the assignment.
- If your tutors are using e-marking, you may be able to receive your feedback through the same link. Please check with your tutors to find out how you will receive feedback.
- If you have any problems, contact your department straightaway with details of what happened. Technical problems can be reported to bb-team@aber.ac.uk. Please take screenshots of any error messages.
- If you believe that your submission has not gone through correctly, have a look at the Failed Submission Policy at http://nexus.aber.ac.uk/xwiki/bin/download/Main/guides+%2D+Blackboard/failed%2Dsubmission%2Dpolicy.pdf

Please note that computer problems are not considered by the University to be special circumstances for late submission (http://www.aber.ac.uk/en/student/ug-issues/).

All coursework must be submitted electronically, no later than 4pm on the due date. Late submission will be penalised. Further information is available in the Assignment Submission Folder on Blackboard.

For reports, essays and the like, work should be word processed using Times New Roman font size 12, with 1.5. line spacing and 1 inch margins. Work that goes over the word limit by more than 10% will be penalized.

6. READING LIST

6.1 Essential Reading

The three essential texts are available in hard copy in the library. They are also available to buy in the bookshop. Furthermore, each of these texts is available in full-text electronic format via the University's e-brary subscription (log in using your Aber username and password). Links to the texts are available in Blackboard.

Greene, J., & D'Oliveira, M. (2006). *Learning to use statistical tests in psychology* (3rd ed.). Milton Keynes: University Press

Harris, P. (2008) *Designing and reporting experiments in psychology* (3rd ed.). Maidenhead: Open University Press

Oliver, O. (2004). *The students' guide to research ethics*. Maidenhead: Open University Press

6.2 Strongly recommended

Cottrell, S. (2008). *The study skills handbook* (3rd ed.). London: Palgrave Macmillan

Howitt, D. & Cramer, D. (2011) *Introduction to research methods in psychology* (3rd ed.). Essex: Pearson Education

Wilson, S. & MacLean, R. (2011) *Research methods and data analysis for psychology* London: McGraw Hill.