Module Guide

Projects Co-ordinator: Morag MacLean

Contents

Other relevant documents

 Module Description

Students complete an empirical investigation of a topic approved by their supervisor. This will normally include the design and execution of a research project together with the interpretation of data.

Preparatory work

READ: The papers published/recommended by your supervisor (look on the resources page where you will find pdfs of recent papers) – or do a Google scholar search

READ: the methods literature recommended for the three methods modules (statistics, questionnaires and qualitative) to review your understanding of research methods.

REVIEW: Your feedback from methods practicals in the light of the methods literature, assess strengths and weaknesses and USE the feedback to note where you need to develop your skills and understanding

REVIEW: Your understanding of statistics and the SPSS step-by-step guide.

READ: Past projects (good past projects are kept in the tutorial room and can only be read in the department)

NB: This suggested reading is also likely to help you on other honours modules

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Supervision (starting September 2018)

Two slots have been designated for the module and they appear on your programme as 'lectures'. Early in semester 1 (in weeks 2 and 4) they will be used for whole module meetings and you will be emailed about this. The slots may also be used by your supervisor for small group or individual meetings but supervisors do not have to use these slots - so be prepared for supervision to be arranged outside of the module slot.

Possible meeting times for supervision
Monday evening (5-7pm)
Tuesday evening (5-7pm)

NB: Due to supervisors' other responsibilities you will need to be flexible about supervision times.

Check with your supervisor 24 hours in advance of your supervision meeting to find out what room you will meet in.

Large group meetings in weeks 2 and 4 of semester 1

Details of these will appear in moodle and you will be emailed.

The aim of the project

The aim of the project is to demonstrate competence in selected research methods and critical appreciation of the relevant literature. It is the department's view that students benefit from the experience of working on well-designed projects under the supervision of staff with an active interest in the area of study. The organisation of supervision ensures that students are offered the best possible introduction to the nature of psychological research by investigating topics that are among the active interests of supervising staff. Please note that while negotiation of the topic area is possible, if you work outside your supervisor's area of expertise you will not have the quality of experience or supervision that comes with working with your supervisor on a topic on which they are expert.

During their progress through the course, students will have become familiar with a wide range of theory and methods in psychology. The project is one of the Honours student's major opportunities to develop a deeper acquaintance with a particular area of the discipline familiar to their supervisor, and to acquire expertise in appropriate empirical techniques by investigating a well-defined problem. The design of the project, which may be partially provided by the supervisor, leaves scope for the student to develop their own ideas. Working on topic areas proposed by staff will give the student the experience of working alongside interested staff on a well designed and potentially fruitful project.

Supervision will consist of one-to-one or small group meetings between student and supervisor. Staff are allocated a maximum of 10 hours for supervision to include meetings, preparation for meetings, reading and commenting on drafts and help with experimental materials (if appropriate). Students should be aware that the proportion of this time spent on these activities will vary from student to student. Some supervision may take place in groups.

All supervisors are committed to commenting on your proposal or outline, your ethics review application and your final draft, if submitted at the time requested. This is a major opportunity for formative feedback on your progress.

For many students, apart from the discussion with the supervisor, the first major opportunity for feedback on ideas is the review of the application for research ethics clearance. The form completed requires a clear research proposal, including a justification of the research in terms of previous literature, description of method as well as details of recruitment strategy and the process of obtaining informed consent. Staff evaluation of this provides important feedback on the progress of the work.

In later stages of the supervision process, feedback may be verbal and informal, but the comments made on drafts are usually much more specific. This formative feedback is a key part of the process of producing a polished piece of work, and the timing of submitting the draft to the supervisor is therefore very important. Unless otherwise agreed with your supervisor in advance, your draft should be submitted at least three weeks before the deadline to allow time for your supervisor to read and comment on it. Some supervisors like to comment on a draft introduction at an early stage, some like to see the whole report.

For all supervisors, the research ethics review provides a draft of the justification of the study and a method section on which you will receive comments. You should negotiate with your supervisor and find out at an early stage how they like to provide feedback on the draft.

Expenditure must be agreed in advance with the Programme Leader (Professor Vincent Connelly). Arrangements for projects requiring laboratory space must be made early in semester 1.

The model for the form of final report is the specialist journal article, culminating in a discussion of results in relation to the initial hypotheses and theoretical issues.

Working towards the deadline

The requirement that projects be submitted in week 8 of the second semester of your final year dictates that all the work, including a draft of the whole report, should be completed well in advance of this date. Your complete draft should be with your supervisor by the beginning of week 6 of semester 2 or by the date agreed with your supervisor, which may be earlier than this. The following timetable is indicative only.

Year 2, semester 2, week 12	**Assignment to supervisor, meet and agree topic area.**
By Year 3, semester 1, wk 3 3	Submit draft proposal to supervisor
By Semester 1, week 5-8	**Complete research ethics application (includes method section)**
By Semester 1, week 8	Submit draft introduction
HARD DEADLINE Semester 1, week 8 (Friday)	SUBMIT APPLICATION FOR RESEARCH ETHICS APPROVAL - This is the last date for submission.

NB: The timing of data collection depends on your methods, but aim to be finished by week 1 of semester 2

By Semester 2, week 2	Initial analysis ready for discussion with supervisor
By Semester 2, week 4	Submit draft results section to supervisor
By Semester 2, week 6	Submit complete draft to supervisor (late drafts may not receive feedback)
By Semester 2, week 8	Check format, references, print and bind
Semester 2, week 8 (Friday)	Submit 2 bound copies and electronic copy to Turnitin

Extensions

Extensions will only be permitted in truly exceptional circumstances, and must be applied for using the mitigating circumstances procedure. You should organise your work to ensure that you will not be adversely affected by losing a few weeks of work through illness, disk failures or unusual events. Do not expect your supervisor to be available during the Christmas break unless they have clearly stated that they will be available.

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Departmental Support

Careful early design is essential and can alleviate many later problems. If you have not understood your supervisor's responses to questions about the analysis please see one of the demonstrators and then check back with your supervisor to ensure that your analysis is appropriate. The demonstrators are available throughout the year for statistical and SPSS support. An I.T. technician is available if specialist equipment is required.

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Research Ethics

You must read the Psychology Field Ethics handbook and receive clearance from the Psychology Department Ethics Committee before you begin recruitment or data collection. Students who recruit or collect data without research ethics approval will be reported to the Academic Conduct Officer and run the risk of their project not being assessed (i.e. failing). Projects submitted without having been approved by the Research Ethics Committee will fail.

Take time to read the material on research ethics you will find on the resources page. The Research Ethics review procedure for research projects involving human participants requires you to complete a number of forms. **Both the E1 and the E2 must be completed by all students carrying out an empirical study**. **Keep a copy of your completed forms. ONE hard copy of the E2 and all attachments that has been read, discussed, approved and signed by your supervisor must be sent to the Department Administrator (in the SNC.G.02) by the Friday of week 8, in your first semester of project work.**

One full electronic copy must be submitted via moodle and a copy also sent by email to Keron Harris (keron.harris@brookes.ac.uk) including in the email the link to any online questionnaire to be used. The electronic copy should have your name as the file name followed by E2 and the date (e.g. Student_Name_E2_Feb_2018)

NB: It would be better to submit your application before week 8 as applications arriving close to the deadline may be delayed in the review process due to staff workloads.

You should discuss any ethical issues, including the details of your recruitment strategy and data storage with your supervisor and complete the forms with their help. The Psychology Research Ethics Officer aims to report the decision of the Psychology Department Research Ethics Committee to you within 10 working days of receipt of your E2.

You will be notified by email of any changes required or if any clarification is needed. Amendments and clarifications should be sent back to the Research Ethics Officer within ten working days of your receiving the committee's response to your initial application.

Students will be notified when their full clearance form (E3) is available for collection from the Administrator's office. Your final ethics approval letter (E3) must be bound into your submitted project for your work to be assessed. Work is not marked without appropriate clearance.

When applying for clearance, ensure your supervisor and the research ethics reviewers can see from the E2 form exactly, and in detail, what you intend to do (you need to know this anyway!)

Use the E2 to plan your project, including the academic background, method, recruitment and informed consent process. The Research Ethics pages include examples of participant information sheets and guidance on recruitment and online questionnaires.   You should download these and edit them, keeping standard wording where it fits with your research design and making changes where you need to.

Annotated examples of research ethics applications are on the Research Ethics pages and will help you write your application.

The key sections in the E2 form that are useful to you in planning your project are:

- Background and rationale: This includes a full description (with references) in one of more long paragraphs.
- Aims and objectives: States what you think your study will show – i.e. what differences, associations, effects, what theory tested?
- Methods of data collection: This should be as complete as a short version of your method section – treat it as a draft of your method section and be comprehensive rather than brief
- Recruitment of participants: Think it through and describe carefully and in detail. How will you approach potential participants (poster, in corridor, through school/company, why these people, how will you select the appropriate people (e.g. native English speakers, people with school age children or elderly parent etc) What EXACT procedure will you use to gain informed consent?
- Potential adverse effects: Could your project cause distress or disquiet (e.g. if looking at mood, what if a participant is or has been severely depressed?)
- Potential benefits: These are usually only to you!

Participant information sheet(s): Use and edit the most appropriate example on the research ethics pages. Information sheets must be on headed notepaper.

Consent forms: Use the form on the resources page and edit it to make it appropriate for your study.

Draft questionnaires or test protocols: check that these are appropriate for the study.

Letters to head teachers or companies: if you are recruiting outside the university you must attach your copy of the letter you will send to the organisation seeking permission to recruit through them.

YOUR SUPERVISOR MUST SEE, **READ, APPROVE** (AND SIGN) YOUR E2 BEFORE YOU SUBMIT IT TO BE REVIEWED.

Students working with potentially vulnerable participants must talk to their supervisors about DBS clearance. ALL students working with children must seek DBS clearance. Forms are available from Keron Harris in room SNC.G.02. Clearance can take some time so you are advised to do this as soon as you know you will be working with children or other vulnerable participants.

Once your application for research ethics approval has been read and reviewed by members of the Psychology Research Ethics Committee (all Psychology lecturers are members of this committee), you will receive an email response from the Research Ethics Officer. A copy of this email will also be sent to your supervisor. If you are asked for additional information or to make

some minor changes, you should discuss these with your supervisor to ensure any changes you make have your supervisor's approval before responding to the email. Once your have received full approval (by email) you will be able to collect an E3 form from the Administrator and begin recruiting participants.

General Progress

Your general progress is primarily your own responsibility, although it will be monitored by your supervisor. It is obviously very much in your interests to make sure that you use your supervisor appropriately. Try to attend supervision meetings with a clear plan of what you wish to achieve and the questions you need to ask. It is a good idea to keep a record of all supervision meetings in the form of a 'project book'. Make notes of your supervisor's recommendations, your ideas, questions and problems etc.

Teaching and Learning Experience

Students completing this module will:

- be supervised in small groups or on their own as appropriate for the topic area and the stage of the project work. This will provide them with opportunity for discussion with a supervisor about the topic and method of their study.
- receive formal and informal feedback on their research design and application for research ethics approval and also receive feedback on their draft report
- attend large group session in support of their information skills and also to support their ethical review of their research proposals
- attend tutorials to support the preparation of the report
- produce a written report similar to a journal article on which the assessment of the module is based.

All supervisors are committed to commenting on your proposal or outline, your ethics review application and your final draft, if submitted at the time requested. This is a major opportunity for formative feedback on your progress. For many students, apart from the discussion with the supervisor, the first major opportunity for feedback on ideas is the review of the application for research ethics clearance. The form completed requires a clear research proposal, including a justification of the research in terms of previous literature, description of method as well as details of recruitment strategy and the process of obtaining informed consent. Staff evaluation of this provides important feedback on the progress of the work. In later stages of the supervision process, feedback may be verbal and informal, but the comments made on drafts are written and usually much more specific.

Expected Class Contact:

See section on supervision above.

Assessment

100% coursework

The model for the form of final report is the specialist journal article, culminating in a discussion of results in relation to the initial hypotheses and theoretical issues.

Marking of Projects

Marking criteria for projects can be found on the resources page.

Projects will be marked by the supervisor and at least one assessor who will then agree upon a common mark. In the case of a difference between marks within a class boundary, the average will be taken. Where the marks differ by a figure greater than 10, or cross a class boundary (e.g. 58 and 63) a third marker will be called upon. All projects are double marked within the Psychology Field and sent to the External Examiner. Marking criteria can be found in the Assessment skills handbook and on the resources page.

The Michael Argyle Memorial Prize is awarded for the best Psychology Project submitted each year. The list of previous winners is in the main Psychology Department corridor.

The model for a project is the specialist journal article such as those in the Journal of Experimental Psychology, or Child Development.

Submission procedure

Submit **2 bound copies. One copy should have the university front sheet and the second copy must have the cover sheet from moodle. This second copy must include your student number but NOT your name. In addition to this you are required to upload a file containing your entire text into Turnitin. You will also be asked to upload your SPSS data file, dissertations title and supervisor's name.** Submit both bound copies to the Faculty Office in Sinclair by 1pm on the Friday of week 8, Semester 1 2018-19. Do not submit your report to your supervisor.

A word document containing your report should be submitted to TurnItInUK via the Moodle page.

Word Limit

The upper limit for projects, set by the University, is 8,000 words**. However, the expectation is that psychology projects will be around 6,000 words in length.** The reason for aiming at 6,000 words is that this is the length of a long journal paper, and published empirical papers are the model for your project report. If you wish clarification of this, please talk to your supervisor. **Projects exceeding 8,000 words will not be marked.**

Feedback

Supervision is <u>feedback</u> - on the development of research ideas, critical thinking skills etc. Every supervision session includes informal but highly specific feedback tailored to the student and their stage of work.

The ethics review also includes feedback, sometimes written and for everyone, verbal when they submit their E2 (the research proposal) to their supervisor. There is also written and verbal feedback on the draft if it is submitted by the deadline set by the supervisor. It is important to review feedback before after each supervision session and keep good notes

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Guidelines for the Presentation of Projects

Projects are expected to be laid out in the format of a published paper. **For further guidance, look at an APA style guide and published papers.**

(1) Title Page (available from Student Administration) for the named copy or the Psychology cover sheet for the anonymous copy.

(2) Ethics approval (An E3) (Only in the named copy)

(3) Acknowledgements

If and where appropriate - e.g. help from outside bodies/agencies, equipment loan, etc

Word count and acknowledgements

(4) Abstract (no more than 200 words)

(5) Introduction (i.e. Begin body of text here)

(6) Method

(7) Results

(8) Discussion

(9) References (These should be in APA style)

(10) Appendices (This should include a copy of your full questionnaire, test items etc.)

(11) Supporting materials. There should be very few students submitting supporting materials. This section is generally only used by students submitting computer programs they have developed or transcripts used in qualitative analysis.

SPSS output should **not** be included but may be called for by the markers after the date of submission. **Do not include** participant information sheets, consent forms or raw data. However, if two or more students collected the data, your supporting materials section must include a clear statement of which parts of the dataset (participant numbers, tasks/tests) were collected by you. You must also include a list of the names of the people who collected data.

If you are in doubt about what to include in the appendix or whether or not you need to include supporting materials, consult your supervisor. Regardless of what you include in your appendix and supporting materials, the main body of the project report needs to include sufficient information for your study to be understood without reference to additional sections.

Format for printing

Left margin should be 3.5 cm to allow for the binding. Text must be no smaller than 12pt. Times Roman is the usual font. The main body of the text should be one and a half spaced, but quotations can be single spaced (see APA style). Number pages consecutively in the bottom right-hand corner (this includes any appendices).

Projects can be bound by BrookesPrint at minimal cost. The card cover should be the university approved project cover, which has a window in it so that the project cover sheet can be seen. You can buy the OBU cover and title page in advance if you wish to have your project bound elsewhere.

Pages can be single or double-sided so long as the paper quality is sufficiently high that there is no 'show through'.

Tables, figures and other formatting problems

Use the normal conventions for tables and figures. Consult one of the following:

- The APA style guide (see internet guides, two given below):
  http://www.docstyles.com/apacrib.htm
  http://www.uwsp.edu/psych/apa4b.htm#IC
- The BPS style guide (on BPS website)
- Sternberg, R.J. (1993) *The psychologist's companion: a guide to scientific writing for students. (3rd edition).* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press. OR a similar publication
- A paper published in a psychology journal

- The assessment criteria on the resources page

Citing Your References

When producing an essay, report or dissertation, it is essential to cite your sources of reference and to acknowledge works you have used because:

a) this affords evidence of your research and provides justification for your statements.

b) the reader is able to follow up and continue your work by going back to the original sources.

There are various ways of citing bibliographical references. APA style is recommended, and there are many short guides to APA style on the internet.

What is included in the word count

The word count must include all the text that it is essential for an assessor to read and understand the document fully. This is considered to include the Abstract, but to exclude tables, references and any Appendices. There are NO Supplementary Materials to be added to the submission (i.e. no SPSS output)..

Learning Outcomes

On successful completion of this module, students will be able to:

A) Academic literacy – HIGH

- Develop a testable hypothesis from published literature and design a study to test it
- Undertake and present scholarly work
- Communicate fluently and effectively in writing
- Think conceptually
- Present a coherent argument

B) Research literacy – HIGH

- Collect data, analyse and interpret it appropriately
- Use library skills
- Analyse, assess and report empirical psychological information

C) Critical self-awareness and personal literacy – HIGH

- Set goals
- Manage time and tasks
- Learn independently
- Learn co-operatively
- Approach and interact with human participants in an inclusive and ethically approved manner
- Evaluate their own work

D) Digital information literacy – HIGH

- Practice information retrieval

- Use information technology as a research tool

E) Global citizenship – HIGH

- Assess the ethical issues involved in carrying out a piece of empirical research
- Negotiate within a framework of respect for others

Office Hours

Please make appointments with your supervisor using the online system.

Core Texts

Reading will vary from student to student.