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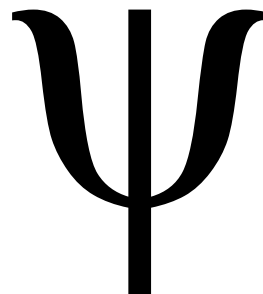
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Institute of
EDUCATION
& HUMANITIES

ACADEMIC DISCIPLINE OF PSYCHOLOGY AND COUNSELLING

Psychology Empirical Project



ECPS6001

BSc (Hons) Applied Psychology

BSc (Hons) Psychology

BSc (Hons) Psychology and Counselling

Module handbook 2024-2025

CONTENTS

1. Introduction	2
2. General Information	3
3. Assessment	5
4. Key Milestones and Submission Dates	6
5. Supervision	7
6. Submission Requirements	9
7. Ethical Practice and Data Storage	10
8. Researcher Code of Conduct	12
9. Reading for your Empirical Project	13
10. Academic Standards	14
11. Layout of written empirical project dissertation	15
12. Written Dissertation Structure	17
13. Empirical Project Completion Checklist	22
14. Empirical Project Presentation	23
15. FAQs	24
Appendix A - Declaration/Statements page	28

1. Introduction

What is the Psychology Empirical Project?

The psychology empirical project, also known as a dissertation, is an extensive piece of work, which gives you the opportunity to conduct your own research into one of the areas of Psychology that you have found most interesting. Over the past two years, you have been reading what others have studied and evaluating their conclusions. An empirical project should seek to take forward an existing area of research in a way that adds to the existing knowledge in the area. Through a detailed review of the psychological literature, you will identify your own research question, explore it, and reach your own conclusions.

An empirical project is a lot of work. It is accompanied by highs and lows, but ultimately, you are in charge. Remember it is your work and your responsibility. Your supervisor will be there to advise you, but you must remember that your empirical project is a piece of independent research, with marks awarded for initiative. It is vital you keep on top of your work from day one.

Ultimately, your empirical project should be a rewarding and enjoyable experience. This will be easier to achieve by following the guidance given in this handbook, planning your workload, and making appropriate use of supervision through preparing well for meetings and submitting drafts at each opportunity.

Good luck with your Empirical Project!

The Psychology Empirical Project Module Team

2. General Information

Dissertation module leader:

Karen Eaton-Thomas

Dissertation module moderator: Dr Kate Williams

Dissertation supervisors:

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Stacey Coleman	Stacey.coleman@uwtsd.ac.uk
PsychLabs email	Psychlabs@uwtsd.ac.uk

Contribution of the Psychology Empirical Project to your degree

The empirical project is a **40-credit** module. It must be passed and cannot be condoned. Therefore, it is important to work consistently on it throughout the final year and to dedicate time and effort to it over the summer months.

This module is a core requirement for Graduate Basis for Chartership (GBC) accreditation with the British Psychological Society (BPS), as set out in documentation to the BPS February 2018. This module must be passed for the student to be eligible for GBC.

In order to pass this module, you must demonstrate the ability to:

- plan, conduct and write-up an ethically sound empirical study using appropriate theory and methods;
- generate appropriate hypotheses and/or research questions;
- use evidence-based reasoning to explore relevant practical, theoretical and ethical issues associated with a specific research question;
- carry out an independent empirical study involving primary data collection using appropriate tools;
- manage and analyse research data using appropriate quantitative and/or qualitative methods;
- take responsibility for their own learning and skill development; including effective personal planning, self-reflection and project management skills.

3. Assessment

ASSESSMENT

Assessment Component 1

Mode of assessment	Volume	Weighting
Written Assignment	1,000 words	10%

Students will be required to complete a written proposal for their Empirical Project in the summer period prior to the start of the third year of study. Guidance is released during Semester two including the opportunity for one draft submission on a specified date.

Assessment Component 2

Mode of assessment	Volume	Weighting
Written Assignment	8,000 words	65%

Students will be required to write up their empirical research study and submit this thesis following standard psychology reporting conventions. The volume range including +10% is to enable students to appropriately reflect the requirements of different types of study designs, which will be reflected in the assessment criteria.

Assessment Component 3

Mode of assessment	Volume	Weighting
Presentation	20 minutes	25%

Students will be required to present their Empirical Project and will be assessed on their presentation skills, engagement and understanding of their Psychology Empirical Project.

4. Key Milestones and Submission Dates

Key Milestone	Submission Date
Provisional supervisor and topic area agreed	Semester two (year two)
Initial half hour formal meeting with supervisor	Semester two (year two)
Draft Research Proposal Submission for Feedback	Semester two (year two)
Final Research Proposal Submission	Summer
Ethics Form Submission dates	Ethics Submission date one: Oct 2022 Ethics Submission date two: Nov 2022 Ethics Submission date three: Dec 2022 Specific submission dates to be confirmed on Moodle
Data Collection	November – January NOTE: Data collection must not, under any circumstances, take place until your ethics form has been approved.
Draft Written Thesis Chapter Submissions	Literature Review: November 2024 Literature review &/or Methods: December 2024 Methods &/or Results: February 2025 Results &/or Discussion: March 2025 Specific submission dates to be confirmed on Moodle
Written Thesis Write-up Submission Deadline	Tuesday 25th March 2025 by 23:59pm via Turnitin
Presentation Deadline	After Easter holidays: Tuesday 20th May 2025 Slides and Script submitted to Turnitin by 9am. Individual presentation time: TBC on Moodle.

5. Supervision

Each student will be allocated a supervisor who will oversee your progress and provide appropriate advice and guidance. Supervisors will remain provisional until receipt of the final research proposal.

Please note that in exceptional circumstances a change in supervision arrangement may be necessary at short notice (e.g., due to staff illness). Where this occurs, students will be matched with the most appropriate available supervisor.

For this module, you will receive a combination of pre-recorded lectures, online individual and group supervision meetings, and optional online workshops.

The dates and times of meetings will be posted on Moodle, and it is your responsibility to make a note of when these will be taking place.

Regular attendance at meetings and engagement with online materials and lectures is essential and will be monitored closely.

It is essential that you continue to work steadily on your empirical project throughout the course of the year and between any scheduled supervision meetings. You will then ensure that you receive maximum benefit from your supervision meetings in the form of constructive feedback and advice.

Responsibilities of the Student

1. Consider the ethical implications of your work and submit the appropriate forms to the Supervisor and School's Research Ethics Committee (SREC).
2. Write and submit the Proposal and Ethics form in a timely manner following an initial discussion with the supervisor.
3. Gain a thorough understanding of relevant psychological theory and evidence, proposed methods, and the intended analysis.
4. Attend scheduled online supervision meetings and keep a note of contact and advice.
5. Adhere to your agreed plan of action and timescales and inform supervisor of any problems – the sooner, the better.
6. Ensure your written work follows APA style and is of a rigorous academic standard. This includes proofreading your work for clarity, spelling, grammar, and correct referencing.
7. Submit the thesis (one electronic copy) by the specified date and time.
8. Present your research in either oral or hosted poster format at the appointed time and location.

Responsibilities of the Supervisor

1. Help the student refine the original dissertation proposal. The emphasis must be on what is achievable. It may be at this stage the supervisor believes the original proposal unworkable. If so, students should redraft and come back to the supervisor.
2. Discuss approaches to the literature review, research design and choice of appropriate methods.
3. Discuss the plan of action and appropriate timescales.
4. Meet with the student at agreed times and keep a note of contact, issues discussed, and deadlines agreed upon.
5. Discuss progress and advise the Module Co-ordinator and/or Head of Academic Discipline of any students causing concern.
6. Discuss research findings and advise on appropriate analysis.
7. Read and comment on draft chapters if presented in time.

Time management

It is your responsibility as the student to manage your time appropriately so that you meet the various submission dates. Ensure you consult Moodle regularly for important information about your Empirical Project, key milestones, and times/dates of supervision meetings and other online sessions. It is YOUR responsibility to ensure you access email/Moodle regularly, engage with online recordings, and sign up for any online supervision or workshops in a timely fashion.

6. Submission Requirements

Final deadline for written dissertation:

Students must submit ONE electronic copy uploaded to Turnitin by the deadline given.

The Cover Sheet MUST show:

- University Logo
- Title of the empirical project
- Your Student Number
- 'Psychology Empirical Project'
- The month and year of submission
- University of Wales Trinity Saint David
- Your Programme of Study

This sheet is followed by the Declarations page (see Appendix A). You MUST electronically sign all three parts of the Declarations.

Failure to hand in a readable electronic version will constitute non-submission resulting in a mark of zero.

Presentation slides and script

Your presentation slides and script will also need to be uploaded to the Turnitin plagiarism detection programme. Failure to hand in a readable electronic version will constitute non submission resulting in a mark of zero.

A Note on Electronic Failure

Electronic failure, such as corrupted disks, lost memory sticks, computer failure, etc., will not be accepted as reasons for late submission warranting excuse from penalty. You should anticipate these things and make suitable contingency plans. Please ensure that you back up your work consistently and store it in more than one location.

7. Ethical Practice and Data Storage

All students carrying out research on BPS accredited programmes are bound by the ethical requirements of the University and the British Psychological Society (BPS) Code of Human Research Ethics. Where there is any doubt regarding ethical practice whilst carrying out research the student must contact their supervisor or module coordinator for advice and clarification.

Approval

Recruitment and data collection processes must, always, follow the University's and the BPS code of Human Research Ethics. The storage and handling of research data must also follow the processes approved in students' proposals in line with relevant University and BPS guidance.

Approval to run a study can only be given by the School Research Ethics Committee (SREC). ALL students must adhere to the following:

- You MUST obtain Ethics Approval from the SREC before running your study.
- You MUST obtain approval of your final study materials from your supervisor before you run your study.
- You MUST obtain informed written consent from all participants and place a sample Form of Consent in an Appendix of your final written dissertation.
- You MUST provide a study debrief sheet to all participants at the end of the study. The amount of detail will vary depending upon the nature of the study and should be discussed with your supervisor. Student and supervisor email addresses for follow-up questions must be included. If necessary, you must ensure that any other debriefing procedures necessary are carried out if any manipulation of mood, belief or attitude has taken place as outlined in your research proposal.
- If you run your study on UWTSD students, these MUST be students of the Academic Discipline of Psychology and Counselling unless permission has been given by the Director of Discipline.
- Studies using UWTSD students as participants should in most cases be carried out through the School Experimental Management System (SONA EMS). If you are not using the EMS, you must NOT offer credits for participation.
- You MUST obtain written permission from any organisation/s where you wish to collect your primary data and include this in an Appendix.
- For participants under 18, you MUST additionally obtain written consent from their legal guardians and place a sample Form of Consent in an Appendix. Also, if you have unsupervised contact with participants under the age of 18, you MUST have successfully obtained a DBS check and include this in an Appendix.
- You MUST keep ALL primary data collected (e.g., completed questionnaires, transcripts of interviews, etc.), as the Examiners may ask to see such evidence.

Data Management & Storage

“Primary data” is the actual data that you collect. This is likely to be in the form of either (a) audio recordings of interviews or (b) data collected on paper or online questionnaires, or (c) data collected via an experimental computer programme. The University is responsible for storing your primary data (audio files, completed questionnaires, computer data) and you are not permitted to keep this data after the end of the project. This is required under the Research Governance Framework to ensure that research data is not falsified, and the primary data must be stored for a stipulated length of time. The University retention periods for research data (in the absence of any stipulations from funders) are documented at:

<http://www.uwtsd.ac.uk/library/research-data-management/>

Once you have either (a) transcribed your audio files and anonymised the transcript or (b) input your questionnaire or computer response data into SPSS or Excel, you **MUST** pass the primary data to the programme team for storage. All audio files must be stored digitally, labelled clearly with your name, year and project title, and given to your supervisor for storage. Completed questionnaires should be given to your supervisor, labelled clearly with your name, year, and project title. All primary data (audio files, paper questionnaires, etc.) should be deleted from your own or any other computers you have used. The data will be stored securely by the programme team for the requisite time.

“Secondary data” (interview transcripts, questionnaire responses in SPSS/Excel, etc.) should be stored in anonymised (de-identified) form with a key to indicate which identifier corresponds to which participant. You can keep the anonymised data, but you must ensure that any data that you keep protects the confidentiality of your participants.

Boundaries and safe practice

Be conscious of how the role of a researcher is different to that of any other professional or training role you may have had. Safe practice is just as important in research as it is in clinical practice. Your research participants may be vulnerable; care must be taken not to cause distress unnecessarily, and not to provide misleading information. Research participants may still become distressed in an interview, or when filling in a questionnaire, just because they are reminded of very distressing events that may have occurred. You must have plans in place to safeguard participants who do become distressed, or who have information needs e.g., by providing them with an opportunity to discuss their concerns with you. These are key considerations in your ethical approval process.

8. Researcher Code of Conduct

All students are expected to always abide by the department's Researcher Code of Conduct. This is in addition to the BPS Code of Human Research Ethics and the BPS Code of Ethics and Conduct.

Participant Panel:

Any study carried out utilising Psychology students from UWTSD as participants must be controlled through the SONA Experiment Management system. This helps us to ensure that all studies carried out on students have passed through the ethics process (the system cannot be used until ethics clearance has been granted). It also provides you as researchers with a pool of participants, which should make the collection of data for your study much easier.

In addition to the Participant Panel Rules (set out on in your main Psychology Student Handbook available on Moodle), any researcher requiring the use of the EMS will be given instruction in its use and the protocols of carrying out EMS research at a date to be confirmed.

9. Reading for your Empirical Project

Essential Reading

APA (2019). *Publication manual of the American Psychological Association* (Seventh Edition).
APA: Washington, DC.

Journal Articles

It is essential that your work is informed by wider reading of the relevant psychological literature and theory. This will only be achieved by reading and reviewing many journal articles relating to your field of interest. These journal articles will form the basis of your literature review and inform your research question.

The type of journals you access will depend upon your chosen area of research, but many relevant journals will be available in the library or as electronic journals.

Research Methods and Statistics Textbooks

The library has many books on psychological research methods – both qualitative and quantitative. You have been using research methods textbooks and SPSS textbooks throughout your degree and it is imperative that you continue using these in both the planning stage and the analysis stage of your empirical research project. Popular examples include:

Brace, N., Kemp, R., & Snelgar, R. *SPSS for psychologists*.

Coolican, H. *Research methods and statistics in psychology*.

Field, A. P., & Field, A. P. *Discovering statistics using IBM SPSS statistics: And sex and drugs and rock 'n' roll*.

Smith, J. *Qualitative psychology: A practical guide to research methods*.

Walliman, N. *Your undergraduate dissertation: The essential guide for success*.

Braun, V., & Clarke, V. *Successful qualitative research: A practical guide for beginners*.

10. Academic Standards

You are all aware that all work submitted in Psychology is expected to follow the standard for academic writing in Psychology based upon the Publication Manual of the American Psychological Association (APA). **There are also heavy penalties for work found to involve plagiarism, collusion, or substantial repetition.**

Plagiarism

You must never attempt to pass off the work of others as your own. You must explicitly acknowledge others' ideas, phrases, and forms of expression through correct citation of their work.

Collusion

The work that you produce for your dissertation should be your own. Collusion is the act of attempting to pass off (wholly or in part) another students' work as your own. Often this can result in action being taken against not just the student who has copied the work, but also the student whose work has been copied (because it may be impossible to know who has copied whom).

Substantial repetition

You are warned that you must avoid 'substantial repetition' in your work. Substantial repetition is where a student copies his or her own work substantially from one assignment to another (or exam or dissertation).

Word count/time limits:

Proposal: 1,000 words

Written Thesis: 8,000 words (including all quotes)

Presentation: 20-minutes

Please also be aware that the university will impose penalties to work that is over 10% of the word count/time limits, with the number of marks deducted depending on the percentage of words or time over the limits:

- Between 10% and 25% above limit – Deduction of 5 marks off final mark (or reduce the mark to the capped mark, whichever is lesser)
- Between 25% and 50% above limit – Deduction of 10 marks off final mark (or reduce the mark to the capped mark, whichever is lesser)
- 50% or more over length – Maximum mark of capped mark

11. Layout of written empirical project dissertation

An important element of your assessments is presentation. You are expected to submit work that is presented in the correct format as set out below and in the APA manual. Deviation from these requirements will result in loss of marks.

Layout of text

The typescript should be written in Times New Roman or similar and in 12-point font. The lines should be double-spaced on an A4 document, with left- and right-hand margins at 2.5cm. EXCEPT for the Abstract, which is single line spaced and centre-justified.

Page numbering

Page numbers should be located at top right of the page. The entire work, including references and appendices, should be numbered consecutively from the first page of the main body of work. Preliminaries such as Table of Contents, Abstract and Acknowledgments, which obviously cannot be completed until the main work and its pagination is finished, should be numbered in lower case Roman numerals (i. ii. iii etc.). As an alternative, it is acceptable practice for all pages, including appendices, except for the front or title page, to be numbered consecutively with Arabic numerals (1, 2, 3 etc.).

Tables and figures

All tables and figures should be numbered and labeled and should follow APA formatting guidelines. All tables and figures should be listed in the Table of Contents.

Quotations

These are generally to be avoided. Always paraphrase in your own words where possible.

Should you need to quote a source (e.g., a definition), then quotations up to 40 words long are encased in "quotation marks", and quotes over 40 words long should be set as an extract underneath and indented ½ inch to the left (quotation marks not required). The exact spelling and punctuation of the original should be followed. The author or authors' name(s), date and page number are written in this case in brackets underneath.

For qualitative research, participant quotes should be included in the results section. However, you must remember that all quotes are included in the overall word count. Therefore, you should use a representative number of quotes when presenting qualitative results.

Abbreviations (and acronyms)

These must be typed in full when first mentioned, with the abbreviation in brackets. The abbreviation can be used thereafter.

Numbers

Use words to express numbers zero through nine, and use numerals to express numbers 10 and above. If a sentence starts with a number, this should be written as a word. However, when reporting data in text and in tables, always use figures.

Referencing

At this stage of your degree, your referencing should be impeccable and adhere fully to APA style. Students are reminded that there is an APA Referencing handbook available through the online Library system and the Psychology department has a Referencing and Report writing House rules document that can be found on Moodle.

Marks will be lost if there is any significant inconsistency to a student's method of setting out of citations and references. As with marks deducted for weaknesses of spelling and grammar, such a loss can bring an assignment down an entire grade.

It is essential you acknowledge all sources you have used in your work as it:

- (a) proves that your work has a factual basis;
- (b) allows the reader to identify and retrieve the sources for their own use;
- (c) shows the research you have undertaken to reach your conclusions.

Wherever you quote (that is, copy directly from another author) or use their ideas (paraphrase), you must acknowledge that you have done so. Failure to acknowledge your sources of information may result in your facing charges of plagiarism, which may result in disciplinary action. Avoiding plagiarism is easy: **use your own words** and **give credit where credit is due**.

12. Written Dissertation Structure

The structure is as follows. **Each section must start on a new page.**

1. Title page
2. Declarations
3. Acknowledgements
4. Table of Contents
5. Abstract
6. Chapter 1 – Literature review
7. Chapter 2 – Method
8. Chapter 3 – Results
9. Chapter 4 – Discussion
10. Reference List
11. Appendices

Title Page

The title itself should be a maximum of 15 words. Also, include university logo, your student number, 'Psychology Empirical project', month and year, University name, programme of study.

Declarations

The Declaration Sheet (on Moodle) must follow the title page. The Declaration Sheet must be signed electronically at the three appropriate places.

Acknowledgments

Here you thank those who you feel have supported you. This could be members of staff, any academics outside of UWTSD who have helped you (e.g., by supplying their questionnaire), those who have made your data collection possible and moral support from family and friends.

Table of Contents

This page is generated last, i.e., when the dissertation is finished and in its final version. It should include all chapters, the Reference List, List of Tables, List of Figures, and a List of the Appendices – all with the appropriate page numbers.

Abstract

Your abstract must be approximately 150 words, single-line spaced, centre-justified and include:

- a) Brief background to the research
- b) The overall aims/hypotheses
- c) A synopsis of the methods used
- d) A brief description of the participants
- e) A summary of the major findings
- f) The conclusions based on the results

Chapter 1 – Review of Literature

This chapter should start with introducing your reader to the area you will be researching, summarising the background to the subject area to set the context for your research question. You will then go into considerably more detail, writing an extensive in-depth review of the literature, moving from the general to the specific. You must critically evaluate and synthesise existing literature, identify what others have concluded and where you intend to go with your study. Throughout your literature review, you should be building a strong and clearly explained rationale for your specific study question based on psychological evidence and theory. This section will finish with your aims and specific hypotheses. Remember that:

- a) Recent research and extensive use of journals is essential.
- b) Citing reports that go against your hypotheses as well as those that support it is essential.
- c) All sources must be acknowledged, be correctly cited, and all cited sources must appear in the Reference List.
- d) Finish by homing in on your particular study and explain its rationale, but in more depth.
- e) You **must** state your specific research questions and/or study hypotheses (as appropriate for qualitative/quantitative research).

Chapter 2 – Method

The Method includes several sub-sections. It must be written as concisely and precisely as possible. The purpose of this section is to allow the reader to understand exactly what you did and to decide upon the scientific validity and rigour of your chosen methods. It should provide enough information to allow the reader to replicate the study if they so choose but should not include superfluous or unnecessary information that would not impact upon the study design (e.g., the colour of pens used to sign the consent form is not important, unless your research study is exploring the influence of colour on the consent process!).

Read a methods section of a journal article to see the level of detail required for this chapter. Study guides on writing dissertations in Psychology will also be a useful reference source for your Method section.

Participants

1. Describe your participants i.e., who you were targeting for your research and why
2. Their mean age, the standard deviation from the mean age, the age range and (if appropriate) gender (remember you cannot provide mean scores or SDs for categorical variables – frequencies, percentages, or ratios are needed here).
3. If you have examined different groups, each group needs to be described in terms of the important demographic or psychosocial characteristics.

Design

This is the section where you clearly describe the specifics of your study design. You must describe the nature of your study using the following points as a guide. If you have a more complex mixed methods design, you may have to describe each element in turn. You must write in meaningful complete sentences and include clear operational definitions of all your study variables. You should state the following....

1. whether the design is between- or within-subjects, or a mixed design
2. whether the study is, for example, correlational, experimental, qualitative ...
3. the independent and the dependent variables if quantitative
4. the intended analysis plan

Materials

By the end of this section, it should be clear exactly what materials you developed or used for this study, and how you identified, developed, and adapted them (if necessary) for your own study. The description of the materials must be detailed enough to allow anyone to replicate your study and should include reference to example materials in your appendices.

- If your study involves the manipulation of experimental stimuli (e.g., computer images or word lists) these must be fully explained. It must be clear from where you identified/obtained the stimuli set, how you adapted or developed the stimuli for your study, and specific details about how the stimuli were created for your study.
- If you employed one or more questionnaires from other sources, you must fully acknowledge these. You must describe the nature of each questionnaire, including any sub-scales, example items, any reverse-coding or scoring instructions, and the psychometric properties of each validated scale. Here, you should report psychometric properties of the existing measures based on similar studies; you then need to report your own reliability statistics for your own study (you will be expected to discuss the psychometric strength of your measures in your discussion).
- If you have created your own questionnaire or scale then you need to justify why this was necessary (e.g., due to a lack of existing robust measures in the literature) and document the creation, piloting, and psychometric testing of this scale. Again, you will need to define how the scale is scored.
- If your study is a qualitative design, you need to describe how you developed your interview questions or topic guide, briefly describing key literature that has been used to inform the questions you have asked. You will need to summarise the topics being explored in your interview/focus group and refer readers to the full interview schedule/topic guide in the appendices. You must clearly document how you have ensured your questions are appropriate for your target group (readability, grammatical sense, and ethical sensitivity). If you have provided any other study materials (e.g., provision of additional written information about a particular issue) you also need to define the development of this clearly.

Procedure

This is where you describe what you did. The reader should be able to answer the following questions when he or she has read this sub-section.

1. Was there a pilot test, on how many participants, and if there were any weaknesses identified, were these rectified for the actual study and how?
2. How were participants approached? What was the sampling method?
3. Did participants give informed consent? What instructions did they receive? Had any organisation given permission to run the study? Was parental consent needed and given? Were they de-briefed? How?

- How were the data collected exactly? Questionnaires? Interviews? Moreover, how were they returned? Filled in on the spot? A collection point?
4. What ethical issues were considered in the design of the study and how were these dealt with? (You will be required to include your approved School Research Ethics Form as an appendix in your final dissertation).

Chapter 3: Results

Your results section must demonstrate clearly the way your research questions have been analysed and answered and must reflect the design and analytical process outlined in your methods chapter. The specific layout of the results will depend upon your individual study design and nature of the data collected and should be discussed with your supervisor.

Whether your study is qualitative, quantitative, or mixed methods, the order the results are presented must be logical and clearly linked to your specific hypotheses or research questions. It can be useful to make use of sub-headings to help “signpost” the reader to the purpose of each specific analysis.

Do not just report key findings but also provide a clear brief interpretation of how these findings link back to your hypothesis/research question (this will then be expanded on in your discussion).

For qualitative results, you must include participant quotes. However, do not just repeat or reinstate participants' quotes, instead you must also interpret the meaning of the quotes considering the research aim(s) and question(s). Remember, quotes are also included in the word count. Therefore, you need to be selective when presenting participant quotes as part of a qualitative results section.

For quantitative results, you must include values from inferential statistics. However, do not just present the values, you must also interpret the meaning. For example, does the p value show there is a significant outcome, and if so, in what direction.

It is imperative you consult your research methods and statistics textbooks and the results sections of appropriate journal articles to see how to set out your results section and report the results of statistical tests or specific qualitative analyses.

Also, you should ensure that you apply the teaching that has covered appropriate Results sections during the course and be guided by the appropriate documentation and sources (e.g., APA manual, statistics and research methods textbooks, journal articles, etc.).

DO NOT cut/copy and paste outputs/tables from SPSS into your results section! Create your own meaningful tables where necessary, in accordance with APA format guidance, and with appropriate axis labelling and title, to demonstrate you understand and are able to interpret your results.

Chapter 4 – Discussion

In this chapter, you refer to each of your findings and tell your reader what these mean in the context of your research. For example, you may have found evidence that perceived social support can reduce stress significantly. You will have presented the actual statistics in Chapter three. Here in Chapter four, you make it clear to your reader that you understand what these findings mean in the real world. Relate your figures back into real life and to the literature discussed in your Introduction.

Step 1: Remind your reader, very briefly, of what the study was about. Avoid repetition, keep it short.

Step 2: Give a summary of your first key finding, but do not simply repeat what you wrote in your results. How does your finding compare to the findings of others? Remember you have discussed these (also those that go against your hypotheses) in Chapter 1.

Do not repeat statistics in your discussion. At this stage you should be reporting *what* these statistics *mean* in psychological terms in relation to the aims and hypotheses of your study.

Step 3: Discuss whether you have found new evidence or more evidence to support a particular notion. Discuss the implications of these findings (e.g., is it fair to conclude based on your evidence that working women with children are more prone to stress than working women without children?). If your findings do not support past research, say so, and indicate why you think this might be with supporting evidence.

Repeat steps 2 and 3 for each hypothesis/research question.

Step 4: Discuss the limitations of your study. This is essential. There is no such thing as ‘the perfect study’! However, this must be a constructive discussion acknowledging the limitations of an undergraduate study: do not destroy everything you have tried to do but be honest about what could have been done better in an ideal world. What would you do differently if you were to run the study again? What problems did you face (e.g., recruitment, biased samples, poor measures) and how could these have been overcome?

Step 5: Make suggestions of how your study could be taken one-step further in future research. In other words, based on your findings, what might the next research question be?

Finally, you must summarise your project, and report the key implications of your study in terms of the psychological literature and its application to the real world.

Avoid repetition and redundancy in your reporting!

Reference List

The Reference List should be *impeccable* and in APA style.

Appendices

An appendix usually includes detailed material (such as tables, questionnaires etc.) that would be of interest to the reader but would interrupt the flow of the main text. We have noted throughout this handbook which documents you must include in the Appendices. These include:

- Research Proposal and Ethics Form/School Research Ethics Approval Form
- Copies of blank Questionnaires, images, any other materials used etc.
- Copy of Information Sheet
- Copy of blank consent form
- Copy of debrief form
- Copies of letters of approval from outside organisations if appropriate
- All SPSS outputs and/or qualitative transcripts

Label your appendices as Appendix A, Appendix B etc., in the order they are first mentioned in your main text.

13. Empirical Project Completion Checklist

Upon completion of your written thesis and presentation, ask yourself the following questions:

- 1.** Is the meaning clear throughout? Are there any obscure passages?
- 2.** Is the report well written (e.g., tenses, grammar, spelling, overlapping passages, punctuation, jargon)?
- 3.** Are all terms clearly defined?
- 4.** Are the aims and hypotheses of the study stated clearly?
- 5.** Does the title indicate the nature of the study well?
- 6.** Does the abstract give the reader a clear idea of what is in the report?
- 7.** Has enough literature relating to the topic been studied? Have enough journal articles been consulted?
- 8.** Is the literature referenced pertinent to the research? Is evidence displayed of the ability to identify key themes and issues in the literature and to compare, contrast, and critically review them?
- 9.** Are the selected methods of data collection accurately described? Were they suitable for the task? Why were they chosen?
- 10.** What ethical issues did your study raise and how were these dealt with?
- 11.** Were variables that might influence the study recognised and either controlled in the research design or properly measured?
- 12.** Which statistical techniques have been used? Were they appropriate for the task?
- 13.** Are the data likely to be reliable? Could another researcher replicate the work?
- 14.** Are the data analysed and interpreted or merely described?
- 15.** Are the results clearly presented? Are there clear links between primary and secondary data?
- 16.** Are the aims fulfilled?
- 17.** Have all hypotheses been clearly accepted and/or rejected?
- 18.** Are conclusions based on evidence? Have any claims been made that cannot be substantiated?
- 19.** Were limitations inherent in the study recognised and stated?
- 20.** Are recommendations (if any) feasible?
- 21.** Is the report written in APA style? Is the referencing perfect? Are there any omissions?
- 22.** Is the report of the required academic standard at this level?
- 23.** Are there any unnecessary items in the Appendices?

14. Empirical Project Presentation

Presentation guidance

Assessment component three is a twenty-minute presentation of your empirical project thesis to an academic audience, and this makes up 25% of your overall empirical project mark. You should make use of a PowerPoint slide show as part of your presentation or present a hosted poster.

The presentation should follow the structure of the main sections of your written thesis in that these will be the key issues you will want to convey:

- Firstly, you will need to introduce the research topic area – explain what the issue is and the background (essentially a short literature review with link to theory and findings from previous empirical research).
- You will need to clearly explain your methodology, including information on the main sub-areas: participants, design, materials, procedure.
- You must then present your results. When presenting the results, you must:
 - Explain how you prepared the data for analysis.
 - Present the inferential statistics - for quantitative research studies.
 - Present participant quotes - for qualitative research studies
 - Discuss what the findings mean (do not just present the results)
- You will then need to provide a discussion of the findings in relation to the wider topic area and discuss the implications of your findings.
- Finally, you should reflect upon the research process, including what you have learnt, recognising issues and potential ways to address these.

If presenting as a hosted poster you should ensure your poster addresses all the above issues in written format on the poster and be prepared to describe each of these to delegates and be able to answer questions on them. A hosted poster is by no means the 'easy option' to an oral presentation, and you will be responsible for printing the poster!

15. FAQs

10.1 How strict is the word limit?

Very strict! You must remain within the +10% limits for all components. Conciseness is a key skill in academic writing, and the 8,000-word limit of the written thesis is to encourage you to write a dissertation that does justice to your work, and that demonstrates all the key skills outlined in the assessment criteria. Similarly, presentations that run over time will also receive a penalty in the form of a mark reduction.

10.2 Are quotes included in the word count?

Yes, they are, so use them judiciously. Furthermore, participant quotes collected as part of qualitative research studies are also included in the word count. However, for thematic analysis (for example), not every quote needs to be provided, but a representative number of quotes will suffice. If you are doing a thematic analysis and find yourself using many individual quotes, be certain that these are in fact representative of common themes, rather than individual quotes that make statements that you see as important.

10.3 Is the Abstract included in the 8,000-word count?

No – the abstract is not included in the overall thesis word count. However, the abstract should only be roughly 150 words.

10.4 What is the word limit for each chapter?

There are no set word count limits for each chapter (except for the abstract which should be roughly 150 words). The word count for each chapter will depend on the type of study you are conducting, and on the complexities of the different elements involved. For example, some research may require more information to be included in the methods section to comprehensively describe the set-up of the study, while other research involving multiple analyses may require more word count allocated to the results. There are also likely to be differences in chapter word count allocation depending on whether you are conducting a qualitative or quantitative study. However, you are advised to think about how many words you are allocating to each chapter. For example, you would not want to have 7,800 words covering the literature review, methods, and results; leaving only 200 words for the discussion. This would not serve you well in being able to provide the type of discussion required for an undergraduate empirical project write-up. Therefore, you may wish to work on the premise of having roughly 2,500 words each for the literature review and discussion (total: 5,000 words), and then using the remaining 3,000 words as relevant for the method and results. Or perhaps 2,000 words each for the literature review and discussion (total: 4,000), and then using the remaining 4,000 words split across the methods and results if you have a particularly complex design involving multiple steps that require explanation or are using a mixed-methods design. You should also discuss chapter word count limits with your supervisor.

10.5 Is the reference list included in the word count?

No – the reference list does not count in the word count limit.

10.6 Are Sub-headings and Tables included in the word count?

No - Sub-headings and the contents of Tables are not included in the word count.

10.7 Am I able to pay participants or purchase materials for my research?

UWTSD is unable to contribute to the costs of conducting the project, or of presenting and submitting. Thus, the scope of the project needs to reflect that this is unfunded work.

10.8 What if my submission to the School Research Ethics Committee is rejected?

Whilst every effort will be made by the Supervisor and Programme Team to assist each student in preparing their submission, ultimately the decision made by the Ethics Committee is independent. If a recommendation is made that the submission be rejected, the student must submit to the next SREC and adjust their plans accordingly. Poorly presented, incomplete, or ethically weak submissions will almost always be rejected, and you should take this into consideration when preparing your initial ethics submission. Ethical applications that are particularly sensitive may be referred to the Faculty or University Ethics Committee.

10.9 What if I do not get all the data that I intended to collect?

It is important for the nature and scope of the research to be considered as part of the planning process; looking to answer a research question that would require hundreds of participants within the remit of an undergraduate project timescale would be ill judged from the outset. However, if realistic data collection projections have been set out but not reached due to logistical issues, poor uptake, etc., this need not be detrimental to the entire thesis; whilst it is likely this will impact upon the results section, it does not necessarily mean other chapters will be influenced by issues of poor recruitment.

10.10 Do I need to include a glossary of terms?

No. There is no need to include a glossary of terms. Any aspects that are specific to your research study should be explained in the main body of work.

10.11 What if I miss the submission deadline due to extenuating circumstances?

In this instance, you would need to follow the usual university protocols. Individual supervisors **cannot** grant extensions. You should also refer to the assessment proformas for details on penalties applied to work that is submitted late.

10.12 I usually receive differentiated deadlines on my assessed work – can I apply for a differentiated deadline on the Empirical Project submissions?

Yes. However, this will need to be formally documented at least one week in advance of the final submission deadline through your support worker in the student services department and sent to the Empirical Project module lead and to your supervisor for confirmation. Students should not email supervisors to request differentiated deadlines

10.13 Can I have a differentiated deadline on the submission of draft chapters.

Differentiated deadlines typically apply to formal assessed pieces of work. Due to draft chapters not being formal assessed pieces of work, and due to the feedback on draft chapters being returned within one week of submission, there are no applications of differentiated deadlines on the submission of draft chapters. Instead, you would have the opportunity to submit to the next draft chapter submission option if you missed any deadlines.

10.14 Can I submit more than one draft chapter at the designated times for feedback?

Yes. You can submit up to two chapters at a time. However, your supervisor would not then be expected to return feedback within the one-week timeframe. You would need to discuss the submission of more than one chapter in advance with your supervisor, and a date in which to expect feedback mutually agreed.

10.15 How many hours of supervision will I receive?

All students are permitted to have six hours-worth of supervision time divided into three hours per semester (so three hours in semester one and three hours in semester two). Any supervision or meetings that take place over the summer after receiving feedback on the proposal assessment and before the start of the new academic year will count towards the allotted hours. The hours from semester one cannot be rolled over into semester two. Therefore, if you do not use your hours in semester one, you will lose them.

10.16 When will supervision meetings take place and how long will each one last?

The specific weeks, dates, and times of meetings will be flexible and agreed in advance with your supervisor. Each project will have its own set of requirements and different types of research study designs will require different levels of focus at different times throughout the process where supervisor support is needed. Therefore, meetings will be arranged based on student and staff availability, type of research being conducted, and progress. The only caveat, as noted above, is that each student will be allotted three hours' worth of supervision in each of the two semesters.

10.17 How will supervision take place and how will it be documented?

Supervision meetings will involve discussing all aspects of your research project, from conception and design, practicalities of conducting the study, discussing the results, discussing feedback on written work, etc. Supervision can take place via Microsoft Teams or in person on-campus (e.g., in the labs as part of experimental study set-up). When on Teams, some supervisors may record meetings, others may ask you to take your own notes, others may complete the record of supervision meetings form. Discussions falling under the proviso of supervision also includes extensive email exchange, where instructional information is provided or where responses to queries are provided. Ultimately, it is your responsibility to work on any tasks set by your supervisor during meetings.

Appendix A – Declaration / Statements page

**Specimen Layout for Declaration/Statements page to be included in Dissertations
(include from below):**

DECLARATION

This work has not previously been accepted in substance for any degrees and is not being concurrently submitted in candidature for any degrees.

Signed (candidate)

Date

STATEMENT 1

This dissertation is being submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of

.....(insert degree title)

Signed (candidate)

Date

STATEMENT 2

This dissertation is the result of my own independent work/investigation, except where otherwise stated.

Other sources are acknowledged by giving explicit references. A reference list is appended.

Signed (candidate)

Date

STATEMENT 3

I hereby give consent for my dissertation, if accepted, to be available for photocopying and for inter-library loan, and for the title and summary to be made available to outside organisations.

Signed (candidate)

Date