

Unit Details

Research Methods for Development Studies

Basic information about the unit

Unit level: M

reference number: PDE-M-108

student study hours: 150 hours, of which:

computer sessions: 18 hours

classroom teaching: 12 hours

private study: 120 hours

pre-requisite learning: part-time students: completion of first-year units

full-time students: social science degree (or equivalent)

unit coordinator: Dr. John Simister SimistJG@lsbu.ac.uk

parent faculty: Faculty of Arts and Human Sciences

parent course: MSc Development Studies

Short description

This course aims to prepare you to be an effective researcher in the field of development. This unit has two strands: theory-based seminars, which will discuss the aims and methods used by researchers; computer-based sessions, which will teach essential skills needed to carry out effective research.

Learning outcomes

By the end of this unit, students should be able to:

- understand the main schools of thought currently used in social science research;
- select an appropriate research methodology for a specific research problem;
- understand how to obtain data/evidence for research;
- carry out various forms of analysis, such as producing graphs.

Indicative content

Bryman THEORETICAL STRAND

week chapter topic contents

1 1 research strategies: can social science research be 'objective'?

2 2 & 21 research design: qualitative/quantitative research - should you study one case, or

thousands?

3 3 & 11 quantitative research: analysis based on a classification system

4 13 & 19 qualitative research: when you can't represent information as numbers

5 22 multi-strategy research: triangulation; combining qualitative research with quantitative research

6 10 secondary analysis: using official government statistics and similar sources

7 9 & 18 content analysis: researching text-based evidence

8 6 & 7 questionnaires: how to write a questionnaire

9 5 & 15 interviewing: how to get information by asking individuals

10 14 participant observation: investigating topics which people won't discuss in an interview

11 23 presenting evidence: how to report your findings in an essay, report, or dissertation

12 24 ethics: what ethical problems arise in research?

EMPIRICAL STRAND

week software package topics covered

1 Word word processing

2 Excel introduction to spreadsheets

3 Excel data analysis

4 Excel graphs

5 Internet Explorer finding internet sites on the web

6 Internet Explorer using the internet to search library catalogues

7 Internet Explorer downloading data from the internet to a personal computer

8 SPSS frequency distribution ('frequencies')

9 SPSS cross-tabulation tables ('crosstabs')

10 SPSS testing hypotheses

11 SPSS data processing

12 SPSS regression

Assessment method

This course is assessed by one essay, of 2,000 words in length (or slightly longer). The essay must include:

- analysis of the research methods which you intend to use in your dissertation;
- a summary of key sources of data/evidence, including discussion of types of data available from each source;
- examples of data (numerical or textual) relevant to your dissertation: both a graph/chart, and a table;
- assessment of how data/evidence can be used to shed light on your chosen dissertation topic.

Core texts

You are expected to buy a copy of: Bryman, A. (2001), *Social Research Methods*, OUP: Oxford. (cost: £19.99)