



**PSY4004**

**Introduction to Research Methods 1**

**Experimental**  
**and**  
**Quasi-Experimental Research Reports**

Date for Submission: Please refer to the timetable on ilearn

(The submission portal on ilearn will close at 14.00 UK time on the date of submission)

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## Assignment Brief

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As part of the formal assessment for the programme you are required to submit an **Introduction to Research Methods 1 research report** assignment. Please refer to your Student Handbook for full details of the programme assessment scheme and general information on preparing and submitting assignments.

### Learning Outcomes:

After completing the module, you should be able to:

1. Demonstrate knowledge and understanding a range of research paradigms.
2. Demonstrate knowledge and understanding of a range of methodological approaches.
3. Produce a psychology research report with appropriate content and format.
4. Examine practical and ethical issues associated with the use of different methodologies, paradigms and methods of analysis in psychology.



## Guidance

Your assignment should include: a title page containing your student number, the module name, the submission deadline and the exact word count of your submitted document; the appendices if relevant; and a reference list in APA 6<sup>th</sup> or 7<sup>th</sup> Edition format. You should address all the elements of the assignment task listed below. Please note that tutors will use the assessment criteria set out below in assessing your work.

**You must not include your name** in your submission because Arden University operates anonymous marking, which means that markers should not be aware of the identity of the student. However, please do not forget to include your STU number.

**Maximum word count:** 3000 words total (1500 per report)

Please refer to the full word count policy which can be found in the Student Policies section here: [Arden University | Regulatory Framework](#)

### **Please note the following:**

Students are required to indicate the exact word count on the title page of the assessment.

The word count includes everything in the main body of the assessment (including in text citations and references). The word count excludes **numerical data in tables, figures, diagrams, footnotes, reference list and appendices. ALL other printed words ARE included in the word count.**

*Please note that exceeding the word count by over 10% will result in a 10-percentage point deduction.*



## Assignment Task

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This assessment is worth 100% of the total marks for the module.

**(1500 words per report, 3000 words total for the portfolio)  
(50 marks per report, 100 marks in total)  
(LOs: 1, 2, 3 & 4)**

### Task summary

Your task is to design two experiments (one true experimental design, and one quasi-experimental design) investigating the effect of animals on human psychological affect (i.e. feelings, mood, emotion).

Each experiment should be presented in separate reports under separate titles – one for the true experimental design, and one for the quasi-experimental design. These should be submitted together as one document, as **a portfolio**.

Once you have designed your true experiment and quasi-experiment, you should write each of them up as two separate research reports with three sections in each one: An 'Introduction' section, a 'Methods' section, and a 'Validity and Ethical Considerations' section. Detailed guidance on how to construct each of these sections and how to discuss ethical and validity issues can be found below and in the sessions for the module.

### Please note

You must **not** collect any data from participants for your study. You only need to design your study and write up the given sections of the report, as outlined below in the "The details and structure of your research report" section

For more information, please see lesson two, "Components of experimental design". You can also share your ideas on the assessment forum. Then, your fellow students and your lecturer can help you to figure out whether you have come up with an experimental and quasi-experimental design.



## **The details and structure of your research reports:**

Both reports **must** contain **all** of the following sections and sub-headings:

### **Title**

Your title should reflect what the experiment is investigating. More specifically, it should give an indication of what your independent variable was and what your dependent variable was in as few words as possible. For example: “The effects of sugar intake on self-reported happiness”.

### **Introduction**

In this section, you should very briefly introduce the topic area and explain why it is an important area to conduct research into. You should then go on to discuss the methods and findings of 3 existing research studies from the same topic area. You should ideally consider your concepts of interest in the context of a relevant psychological theory. Next, you should explain how your own study builds upon (generates new knowledge or replicates) the previous studies that you discussed earlier. Finally, you should state the aim and hypothesis of your study. Your aim should be a general summary of what you are trying to discover. Conversely, your hypothesis should be a precise prediction of the effect that you expect your independent variable would have on your dependent variable, if you were to actually run the study.

**(10 marks per report, 20 marks in total)**  
**(300 words, in each report)**  
**(LO3)**



## **Methods**

In this section, you should include contain enough information to allow someone reading your report to conduct a full and accurate replication of your experiment. You should also introduce the most important ethical and validity issues that are relevant to your true experiment/quasi-experiment. This section should be written in the past tense (as though you have already completed the studies). Please use the following subsections within your methods section:

### **1) Design**

Start by stating the type of experimental design used (e.g. repeated measures, independent groups or matched pairs for true experiments, and the explicit type of quasi-experiment) and very briefly explain why that design was the most appropriate one for your study. Next, state what your independent variable was and what the levels (conditions) of the independent variable were. Then, state what your dependent variable was and how it was operationalized (i.e. defined and measured). You should also outline the control and random variables that have been considered in your study.

For your **true** experiment, you must use an experimental design, so that you can determine cause and effect, such as independent groups design or repeated measures design. For your **quasi-experiment**, you must use a suitable design, such as a non-equivalent groups design or pre-test, post-test.

### **2) Participants**

This section should cover how many participants you collected data from, what the range, mean and standard deviation of their ages were, what the gender distribution of the sample was and what population you sampled from (you can make these up, as you do not have to collect any data for this assignment). You should also outline your sampling technique (e.g. opportunity sampling), You should also include your inclusion and exclusion criteria for participation in the study.

### **3) Materials**

In this section, you will need to use full paragraphs (not lists!) to provide detailed descriptions of the make, model and setup variables of each material, for each experiment. If you are using questionnaires or similar materials, then you will need to explain how many questions were asked, which specific ones were used, on what topics and (ideally) to provide an example question. You should also give scoring information. If you are using a computer task, then what stimuli were included in the task and how many trials did the participant have to complete?



#### **4) Procedure**

This section should provide details of exactly what it was like to participate in the study. In this section, you should outline the timings of each experiment. Therefore, you should explain when and where consent was obtained, when, how and where the participant engaged with each stage of the task and when and where each dependent variable was recorded, for both experiments. You should also explain when, how and where the debriefing was conducted.

**(20 marks per report, 40 marks in total)**  
**(900 words, in each report)**  
**(LO3 & LO4)**



### **Validity and ethical considerations**

In this section, you should explain the ways in which you designed your methods to be ethical and to ensure a high degree of internal and external validity. You may split this section into a paragraph explaining which precautions you took to ensure a high level of ethical conduct and a paragraph to explain which precautions you took to ensure high levels of internal and external validity. When describing each precaution, you should explain how it improved the ethical conduct or validity of your study, rather than simply stating that it did improve them.

**(10 marks per report, 20 marks in total)**  
**(300 words, in each report)**  
**(LO4)**

### **Relevance of proposed study, adherence to the brief and learning outcomes, presentation and referencing**

You will receive marks based on the relevance of your proposed study, and the extent to which you address the experimental question, and contribution to the wider field. You will also be marked on your ability to plan a psychology study, and the extent to which you achieve the learning outcomes. You will also be marked on your presentation, including appropriate use of subheadings; formatting; and how clear, concise and scientific your writing style is. You will also be marked on your ability to reference strong sources and using in-text citations and a reference list in line with APA 6<sup>th</sup> or 7<sup>th</sup> edition.

**(10 marks per report, 20 marks in total)**  
**(LO1, LO2, LO3, LO4)**

### **Useful References:**

Martin, F., Bachert, K. E., Snow, L., Tu, H-W., Belahbib, J., & Lyn, S. A. (2021). Depression, anxiety, and happiness in dog owners and potential dog owners during the COVID-19 pandemic in the United States. *PLoS One*, <https://doi.org/10.1371/journal.pone.0260676>

Coolican, H. (2017). *Research methods and statistics in psychology*. London: Hodder and Stoughton Ltd.





## Formative Feedback

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You have the opportunity to submit a portfolio plan to receive formative feedback. This will involve you submitting plans of both your true experiment and quasi-experiment, in one document. You should:

- Provide full introductions for both (300 words each)
- Bullet pointed plan of your Method (covering all relevant subsections) and your Ethics and Validity sections
- 1500 word limit for entire portfolio plan

The feedback is designed to help you develop areas of your work and it helps you develop your skills as an independent learner.

If you are a distance learning student, you should submit your work via Turnitin. Please check your iLearn module pages/forum for the formative feedback deadline and submission link.

If you have a confirmed extension to your summative (final submission) deadline, please contact your lecturer for information on extensions to the formative feedback deadline.

Formative feedback will not be given to work submitted after the published date or the date specified by your tutor.

## Referencing Guidance

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You **MUST** underpin your analysis and evaluation of the key issues with appropriate and wide ranging academic research and ensure this is referenced using the APA 6<sup>th</sup> or 7<sup>th</sup> edition format.

Follow this link to find the referencing guides for your subject: [Arden Library](#)

## Submission Guidance

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**Assignments submitted late will not be accepted and will be marked as a 0% fail.**

Your assessment should be submitted as a single *Word (MS Word) or PDF* file. For more information please see the “Submitting an Assignment - Guide” document available on the A-Z key information on iLearn.

You must ensure that the submitted assignment is all your own work and that all sources used are correctly attributed. Penalties apply to assignments which show evidence of academic unfair practice. (See the Student Handbook which is available on the A-Z key information on iLearn.)



### Assessment Criteria (Learning objectives covered - all)

**Level 4** is the first stage on the student journey into undergraduate study. At Level 4 students will be developing their knowledge and understanding of the discipline and will be expected to demonstrate some of those skills and competences. Student are expected to express their ideas clearly and to structure and develop academic arguments in their work. Students will begin to apply the theory which underpins the subject and will start to explore how this relates to other areas of their learning and any ethical considerations as appropriate. Students will begin to develop self-awareness of their own academic and professional development.

Grade	Mark Bands	Generic Assessment Criteria
First (1)	80%+	Outstanding performance which demonstrates the ability to analyse the subject area and to confidently apply theory whilst showing awareness of any relevant ethical considerations. The work shows an excellent level of competence and confidence in managing appropriate sources and materials, initiative and excellent academic writing skills and professional skills (where appropriate). The work shows originality of thought.
	70-79%	Excellent performance which demonstrates the ability to analyse the subject and apply theory whilst showing some awareness of any relevant ethical considerations. The work shows a high level of competence in managing sources and materials, initiative and very good academic writing skills and professional skills (where appropriate). The work shows originality of thought.
Upper second (2:1)	60-69%	Very good performance which demonstrates the ability to analyse the subject and apply some theory. The work shows a good level of competence in managing sources and materials and some initiative. Academic writing skills are good and expression remains accurate overall. Good professional skills (where appropriate). The work shows some original thought.
Lower second (2:2)	50-59%	A satisfactory to good performance which begins to analyse the subject and apply some underpinning theory. The work shows a sound level of competence in managing basic sources and materials. Academic writing skills are satisfactory and expression remains accurate overall although the piece may lack structure. Satisfactory professional skills (where appropriate). The work lacks some original thought.
Third (3)	40-49%	Basic level of performance in which there are some omissions in understanding the subject, its underpinning theory and ethical considerations. The work shows a basic use of sources and materials. Academic writing skills are limited and there are some errors in expression and the work may lack structure overall. There are some difficulties in developing professional skills (where appropriate). The work lacks original thought and is largely imitative.
Marginal fail	30-39%	Limited performance in which there are omissions in understanding the subject, its underpinning theory and ethical considerations. The work shows a limited use of sources and materials. Academic writing skills are weak and there are errors in expression and the work may lack structure overall. There are difficulties in developing professional skills (where appropriate). The work lacks original thought and is largely imitative.
	29% and below	A poor performance in which there are substantial gaps in knowledge and understanding, underpinning theory and ethical considerations. The work shows little evidence in the use of appropriate sources and materials. Academic writing skills are very weak and there are numerous errors in expression. The work lacks structure overall. Professional skills (where appropriate) are not developed. The work is imitative.