

Guidelines for Student Theses Using Existing Databases or Contributing to Data Collection in “Ready-Made” Studies

The issue we face: One of the pathways for completing a thesis in the School of Psychology is to use data that are provided by the supervisor and/or supervisor’s research team. These include: (a) projects which utilise an existing database, where ethics approval, design and methodology, recruitment of participants, data collection and data entry have all been achieved; or (b) projects which are already in progress, whereby ethics approval, design and methodology, recruitment of participants have been achieved, but where the student will be able to contribute to the data collection. When (a) or (b) is the case supervisors require their students to complete a research placement in lieu of having access to a “ready made” study. However, there are no School guidelines to guide the supervision of projects that fall under (a) and (b).

The solution to this issue: In order to comply with the following APAC requirement for research projects conducted at the fourth year, Masters, or HDR level - Is the project structured so that students undertake all of the steps involved in the research including the formulation of the research question(s), the design of the study including the selection of appropriate methodology, the collection and analysis of data, the interpretation of the findings and preparation of the report? - we have developed the following guidelines. These guidelines have been designed to foster consistency in student requirement of research placement time and activity and to ensure students do not get an “easier” ride to thesis completion.

Guidelines:

Activities that must be undertaken by all students

All students should have at the very least minimal experience in all facets of research and in most areas extensive experience; requisite research activities include:

- ethics applications;
- literature reviewing;
- development of aims/research questions/hypotheses informed by theory and the evidence base;
- an understanding of the national benefit and significance of their research - why is their research thesis important;
- clear understanding of design and methodology including psychometric properties of measures and rationale for their use;
- data entry; database cleaning; analyses;
- interpretation of findings in terms of theoretical and practical implications; and

- the writing up of research data for peer reviewed journals, conference/community/stakeholder presentations, and their thesis.

Research placement days

The number of days of research work that students are required to complete will depend on their course level and how much work they have to do in their own project. Many of the research activities above will be covered in the research placement days to ensure the student has covered all aspects of a research project despite being given a ready-made database or study. The other activities need to be achieved by the student as part of their candidature in order to fulfil the requirements of a research thesis; in other words, the research placement days are not the only days devoted to research by the student but have been designed to contribute to the capacity building experience of the student as a researcher. These days have been calculated in terms of the average number of days needed to conduct an independent study:

Fourth Year/ Honours: 25 days (7 hours per day)

Clinical Masters: 30 days (7 hours per day)

DPsych: 50 days (7 hours per day)

Research Masters: 50 days (7 hours per day)

PhD: 90 days (7 hours per day)

Fall-back plan in the event that data are not available for the student

In the event that the student is relying on data collection that does not occur in time for their thesis to be completed, the supervisor must have an alternate plan for a research thesis that can be enacted immediately with minimal disruption to the student. This plan needs to be discussed with the student at the start of the project and worked into the **Research Commencement Agreement Form** (see below).

Evaluation of guidelines:

The **Research Commencement Agreement Form** (see below) outlining the plan and timetable of the research work to be completed during the year between the supervisor(s) and student will be developed at the start of the project and presented at the confirmation meeting for DPsych and PhD students. Students will then be required to keep a log of their days and nature of tasks completed. These will be reviewed, evaluated (satisfactory/non-satisfactory), and signed off by the supervisor(s) each month using the **Monthly Review Form** (see below). Students will be given access to their required dataset(s) once they have: (a) satisfactorily completed 50% of the research placement work, and (b) the supervisor has reviewed the plan and timetable for the remaining research work. The research work needs to be completed before the thesis is submitted.



Research Commencement Agreement Form

Section A: Student Details

Student Name	Student ID
Course Name	Course Code

Section B: Contact Details

Telephone/Mobile:	
Email:	

Section C: Research Agreement

Number of agreed research days	
Days of the week available	
Dates available	
Nature of research work and fall-back plan if the data are not collected in time	
Research work to be completed by	
Thesis submission date	
Other Comments	

Student

Signature _____

Print Name _____ Date ____/____/____

Supervisor

Signature _____

Print Name _____ Date ____/____/____



Monthly Review Form

Section A: Student Details

Student Name		Student ID	
Course Name		Course Code	

Section B: Review and Evaluation

Month	
Number of completed research days this month	
Research work completed:	satisfactory/ non-satisfactory
If non-satisfactory, what additional work is required?	
Revisions to the research plan	
Number of remaining research days	
Final review	yes/no
If Final review, overall evaluation	satisfactory/ non-satisfactory
Comments	

Student
Signature _____

Print Name _____ Date ____/____/____

Supervisor
Signature _____

Print Name _____ Date ____/____/____