



IoSCM Assessment Guidance

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RESEARCHING

Researching

Before embarking upon research for an essay, you need to know what is required. By using this knowledge to plan your preparation and to structure your research, you will save a large amount of time at a later stage.

Read carefully through the assignment guidelines and:

- Identify what is being asked of you.
- Establish what your work should look like when it is completed.
- Consider why this particular essay has been set - Is it an essay that is always set on the course? Alternatively, is it topical and related to recent research which has brought the issues into the news?
- Identify the marketing criteria.
- Scale your research to fit the word limit – How many words are you expected to write?
- Check on how many books or articles you are expected to use.

Types of Research

Within your course, gathering and analysing data is an important aspect of your studies. In order to debate, substantiate or reinforce your ideas you will frequently need to reference literature, research papers or other sources in your work.

Quantitative Research

Quantitative research collects facts and studies the relationship of one set of facts to another. It begins with the collection of data, followed by the application of various descriptive and inferential statistical methods.

Examples:

- Research that consists of the percentage amounts of all the elements that make up our atmosphere.
- Protest/Survey which concludes that the average patient has to wait two hours in the waiting room of a certain doctor before being selected.
- An experiment in which group X is given two tablets of Aspirin a day and Group Y is given two tablets of Tylenol a day.

The numerical factors such as two tablets, percent of elements and the time of waiting make the situations and results quantitative.

Qualitative Research

Qualitative research is more concerned with understanding individuals' perceptions of the world. It concentrates on seeking insight rather than statistical analysis.

In statistics, qualitative analysis consists of procedures that use only dichotomous data – that is, data which can take only the values 0 (zero) and 1 (one). These techniques are suitable where events can only be counted or classified rather than measured. The techniques themselves are numerically based.

Conversely, in climate research, qualitative reconstructions of past temperatures rely on records of events such as frost fairs, which indicate periods of cold or warmth, but give little or no information as to the degree of temperature variation.

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Some of the different methods included under the umbrella of qualitative research, therefore, include:

- Ethnography (the human social phenomena or participant observation)
- Ethnology (the comparison of beliefs and practices of different societies)
- Oral life history.
- Case study, focus groups.
- Conversation analysis (the study of talk in interaction)

Many forms of qualitative analysis are labour-intensive. A number of software packages have been developed with the aim of reducing the load and systematising the task. Commercially available packages include Nud*ist; open source or free packages include AnSWR.

Validity Tests

If we are talking about how to assess the effectiveness of research, we need to establish a measure of accuracy. Within the confines of this course we have chosen to measure the research's validity by the likelihood of error. This has been developed into three stages or questions, they are:

- Plausibility - Do the results and conclusions make sense based on our existing knowledge?
- Credibility - Based on assessment of the methods of research: how well are they conducted?
- Then if any doubt exists, we look for evidence from other sources to support or not support the research and its findings.

Relevance Tests

The second way to test the value of research is by assessing its relevance. This can be seen as judging the value of the work by comparing it to its validity and relevance. The second part of this test is to judge how good the research is by setting it into a context. After all, unless it is for personal use, there is no point in conducting research without hoping to meet an aim. This aim will influence upon how relevant the research is.

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