

Teaching psychological research methods through a pragmatic and programmatic approach

What did/do you do?

We took an action research approach to re-design, implement and evaluate a module guiding students through a programmatic and pragmatic research cycle. These revisions allowed for a move away from tutor-led, direct instruction and built in more opportunities for collaborative and peer-led, enquiry-based learning. In three sequential studies, researching the same topic, the module integrated qualitative methods with psychometric scale development and finally, hypothesis testing. The aim of the re-design of the model was to incorporate the full spectrum of student engagement with research, aiding their transition from passively receiving research content to interacting in research processes and problems.

Who is involved?

Patrick Rosenkranz, Amy Fielden & Effy Tzemou
Stage 2 Psychology students

How do you do it?

Students developed an interview schedule investigating the question, 'How do people use Facebook to manage their online and offline relationships?' They collected data by individually interviewing a participant and transcribing that data, then pooling the transcripts with their research team members, finally conducting individual thematic analysis on the pooled data. Based on the results of the qualitative interviews, the students went on to develop a psychometric scale. In the final phase, the validated scale was used to investigate a set of hypotheses that were derived from the literature on the psychology of online social network use.

Why do you do it?

Research methods teaching in psychology is pivotal in preparing students for the transition from student as learner to independent practitioner.

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Teaching and Learning Case Study

2014/15

**Patrick Rosenkranz,
Amy Fielden & Effy
Tzemou**
Psychology

Coherent Curriculum themes:

- Research-Informed Teaching
- Skills and Employability
- Student engagement

Other keywords:

Peer learning, research-led teaching, research method, research group, research, group work, teamworking, student engagement, collaboration

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Does it work?

We evaluated the first delivery of this revised module using an extended teaching evaluation questionnaire (quantitative and qualitative measures) and a small focus group (qualitative). The evaluation highlighted students felt they had developed a broad range of transferable skills, but experienced uncertainty associated with the research process and anxiety attributed to the introduction of new methods. Students felt they had a realistic experience of working in a collaborative environment. They felt they were better prepared for '*delegating group roles, and dealing with conflicts*'

They also explained their awareness of research as a collaborative exercise, which they had been less aware of previously.

Students came to understand the importance of reaching evidence-based conclusions. They were able to appreciate the broader implications for their general writing and argument development skills and the importance of being able to justify their conclusions appropriately

What the students perceived as particularly useful was this module was good preparation for what they would experience in their third year whilst completing their final year project.

They felt they had a truer appreciation of real research by the end of the module and they felt prepared to undertake their final year project where their independence would be expected and assessed.

For further details, please see: Rosenkranz P., Fielden A., Tzemou E., (2014). Teaching Psychological Research Methods through a Pragmatic and Programmatic Approach. *Psychology Teaching Review*, 20(2).

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