

TRAMS project
Training and Mentoring for Science Shops

INTERACTIVE STUDENT HANDBOOK

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An information resource for students undertaking
community-based applied social research



Produced by Interchange, Liverpool, UK

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Contents

1. Powerpoint presentation for student recruitment to applied social research

[Continue to click to see whole presentation](#)



2. Documentation for students on course outline and details

The University of Liverpool
School of Sociology and Social Policy

**Applied Social Research
SOCI 303**
2006-7
[Double module: 30 credits]

Wednesdays
11.00-13.00 Alastair Pilkington Room 2.10

Module Coordinators: David Hall, Louise Hardwick
Rooms: ERB 1.16 / 1.25
Tel: 42981 / 42994
E-mail: David.Hall@liv.ac.uk
Louiseha@liv.ac.uk

Seminar Tutors: same

3. Documentation for students on negotiation and agreements

University of Liverpool
INTERCHANGE
Applied Social Research Project
AGREEMENT FOR RESEARCH

The following is the outcome of a meeting on [date] between David Hall, Lecturer, and [name(s)], students at the Department of Sociology, University of Liverpool and [contact name] of [voluntary organisation], [address], [telephone number & fax number].

(All parties may comment on the agreement and if any section needs to be altered, a fresh agreement will be issued. Please contact David Hall, the Project Supervisor, with any comments at the Sociology Department, University of Liverpool, Bedford Street South, Liverpool L69 7ZA: Tel 0151 794 2981 or 2995, Fax 0151 794 2997).

- Project agreement** between [name of student(s)] and Dr David Hall of the Department of Sociology, University of Liverpool and [contact name] of [voluntary organisation].
- Duration of project:** The project will run from October 2003 to May 2004: fieldwork to be completed by February/March 2004.
- About the organisation.** [Name of organisation] is [insert brief description]. It was established in [year] in order to [insert brief statement of aims and objectives]. It aims to provide [services for clients etc, noting any special characteristics, eg age, sex, disability]. It is managed by [name of manager] with the assistance of [number of paid workers / volunteers], and is funded by [names of grant giving body or bodies].
- Issues identified:** [Name of organisation] has identified a need for research on [insert topic(s)] in order to [evaluate services, feasibility study, obtain funding etc] for [type of clients etc].
- Proposed project:** To [insert project objectives] by means of [list of probable research methods and information providers], and to report on findings [with recommendations (if appropriate)].
- Project outcome:** [Name of student(s)] will produce a report to be available in draft form by Easter and in its final form in May. The report will be word-processed. [Name of organisation] will receive one copy of the report and have the right to use and copy the report as it wishes, with due acknowledgement being made to the students and to the University of Liverpool.
- Permission to reproduce the report:** The students and supervisor will have the right to use the report for academic publication, provided the [name of organisation] is first consulted, and has no objections.
- Attendance:** [Name of student(s)] will commit the equivalent of one day per week to the project for fieldwork, analysis and writing reports.

RISK ASSESSMENT – COMMUNITY VISITING

This form should be completed for community visiting and survey work. The University's Code of Practice for Safety in Fieldwork requires that for such work an itinerary must be left with a responsible person and other precautions taken as judged appropriate in a risk assessment.

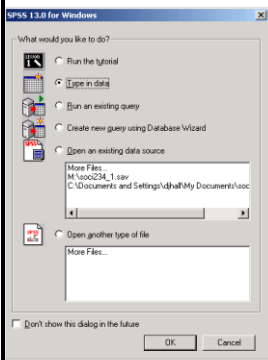
- Department:**
Supervisor(s)
- Brief Description of Project**
- For student courses, state the number of students:**
For projects involving individuals or small numbers, give the names of those carrying out the fieldwork:
- Hazard / Risk Analysis**
Is there any risk to personal safety? Yes / No
Comments on the risk:

Will visits take place during hours of darkness Yes / No
If so, are extra precautions required?

4. Documentation for students on research analysis and report writing

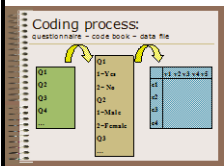
SPSS Refresher

The main difference from what you did last year is that you will be entering your own data. So on the entry screen, click the **Type in data** button.



You now have the data matrix available for entering data, remembering that each questionnaire will occupy one horizontal row, and that each question on your questionnaire will translate into one (or sometimes more) columns.

It is possible to code directly from your questionnaire into the data matrix, but usually it makes more sense to write out a coding frame first, which will show how each answer to questions in your questionnaire is translated into a number. This helps with consistency in coding. The coding frame is the link between the actual questionnaire and the SPSS datafile.

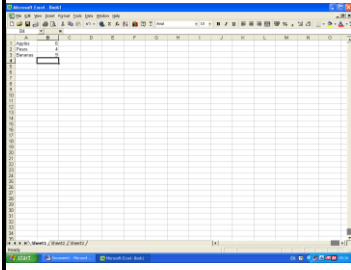


Doing graphs and charts for your report using Excel

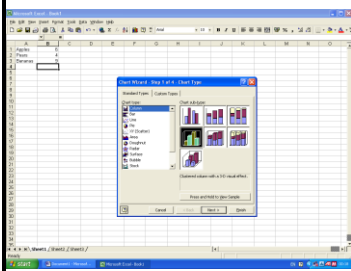
All reports can be illustrated with simple graphs and charts, even if you don't have a lot of quantitative data, and no need for SPSS

The spreadsheet program Excel has quite a good chart facility, and the graphs can easily be transported into Word through copy and paste.

Say you start with some basic data in Excel – three categories of data with different numbers in each – in the first two columns of the spreadsheet.



Making a table is easy using the **Insert / Chart** command, which starts a chart wizard to guide you through the steps. Select the 3-D bars.



Writing Reports for Applied Social Research

A new skill in communication

A report is not an extended essay. Pages and pages of undivided text may be easier to write, but they are definitely off-putting to read. You are trying to present your work to a non-academic audience, so you need to think of what will interest your readers to read, and to read on.

See how others have tackled the problem

The best advice for report writing is to have a look at a selection of official reports before trying to decide on your own style. Government reports – from the Home Office, Department of Health, or Department for Education and Skills, for example – can be seen and downloaded from the web, and there are many examples of social science report publications from bodies such as the Joseph Rowntree Foundation. Some of these are published by the Policy Press and available in the library

For example:

http://www.communities.gov.uk/pub/615/ImprovingOpportunityStrengtheningSocietyEnglishversion_id1502615.pdf

http://www.communities.gov.uk/pub/4/StateoftheEnglishCitiesVolume1PDF33Mb_id1164004.pdf

<http://www.jrf.org.uk/about/pdf/JRHTAnnualReview2006.pdf>

or one that I've been involved with:

http://ec.europa.eu/research/science-society/pdf/science_shop_en.pdf

The influence of design

What is readily apparent is that to greater or lesser extent, reports these days have been **designed** to be easy to read. So the first thing is to rid your mind of the basic text format in Word (automatic margins, Times New Roman 12 point, no separate headings), and think of applying some simple design principles to your own report.

Compare, for example, in different reports:

- Width of margins
- Use of repeating headers for each page
- Single or double columns?
- Page numbering
- Paragraph numbering?
- Use of bullet points
- Headings contrasting with body text
- Use of serif and sans-serif fonts
- Call-outs (repetition of key phrases in large fonts)
- Placing of tables, graphs and photos
- Use of colour
- Use of white space (with no text)

5. Documentation for students on assessment

Department of Sociology, Social Policy & Social Work Studies
University of Liverpool

SOCI:303 APPLIED SOCIAL RESEARCH (ASR)

ASSESSMENT CRITERIA

1. Aims

a) for you the student:

- To undertake a complete piece of applied research, from design and administration to writing up that research for a client.
- To take responsibility for meeting the needs of the client while adhering to academic standards of work and presentation.
- To gain practical experience of the ethical issues involved in research, working with organisations and reporting on the material obtained.
- To develop skills in research methodology, building on earlier teaching.
- To gain skills in presenting data in clear and graphic terms, using computer programs for data analysis and word-processing.
- To gain expertise in social skills: contacting informants and the client organisation, negotiating with them, working with them and keeping to schedule.
- (*For group projects*) To develop skills in teamwork, delegation of responsibilities and handling of internal team relations.
- To gain through practice and reflection a critical awareness of the methodological issues involved in social research.

b) for the supervisor:

- To relate sociological theory and research methods to empirical application meeting needs in the local community.
- To provide contacts and information about community organisations which can be used to enhance teaching generally.
- To develop innovative methods of teaching and learning distinct from traditional courses and dissertations.
- To provide the opportunity for 'quality' learning, individually tailored to student interests, yet still fitting in to the pattern of increasing demands on time.

c) for the community organisation:

- To make possible (at no or minimal cost) the collection and presentation of information for research or evaluation, through using a student supervised in a Higher Education institution.
- To gain contacts with the academic world.
- To make use of the report for its own purposes, eg. monitoring and improving services or supporting applications for funding.

d) for your future employment:

- To demonstrate the use of computer and word-processing skills.
- To demonstrate the facility to produce a clear report on data collected, presented in an attractive manner appropriate to its audience.
- To develop interpersonal skills gained through contacting the client organisation and informants, such as confidence, communication skills and (where appropriate) teamwork.
- To indicate the ability to manage a project in real life, and to understand community and organisational processes.

File: L:\sociology\ugrad\modules\soci303\Marking.doc Oct-02 Email: djhall@liverpool.ac.uk

6. Community-based research video from Interchange, with examples and interviews from actual projects

(This is a large file, and obtainable on request from Interchange or downloadable from the Living Knowledge / TRAMS website)