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Advice on carrying out psychology practical work during Covid-19 restrictions

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General Advice

The key to effective delivery of research methods is through active, experiential learning. As the Chinese proverb says: 'I listen and I forget, I see and I remember, I do, and I understand'.

Covid-19 restrictions certainly make carrying out our psychology practicals more difficult, but these problems are not insurmountable. The benefits of carrying out practicals for student engagement and understanding certainly outweigh any issues.

During 2020 lots of teaching time has been lost during lockdown, local restrictions and isolation. This puts pressure on teachers to deliver the content and skills necessary in limited available time. One solution to this issue is flipped learning. Practical activities can be carried out at home, rather than in the classroom, as part of blended learning. Face to face teaching can focus on giving students the guidance, explanations and examination techniques and skills that they need to succeed, while homework can be dedicated to practicing those practical skills.

Students do not necessarily have to do a full practical every time. It might be prudent to sometimes give them the data set (results) to let them practice analysing data and writing up a results section. At other times you can focus purely on the procedure.

Data collection can take place online via zoom, teams or other software. However, students will need guidance on how to set this up and how to control extraneous variables. Students should be instructed to use the other students in their bubble as participants to avoid violating Covid regulations. Students should not gather data in public places as this would also be an unnecessary risk and could violate local restrictions or guidance at the time.

**I LISTEN AND I FORGET, I SEE
AND I REMEMBER, I DO AND I
UNDERSTAND.**

EXPERIMENTS

Simple memory experiments can be carried out online via Zoom or Teams. However, it is not possible to control situational variables in these circumstances, but as long as students are aware of this and mention it in their discussion this is not an insurmountable problem. There are ready to run experiments on some university websites that can be used. For example, a [Stroop Effect test](#).

CORRELATIONS

Correlations only require data from two co-variables. This can easily be collected online by asking participants two closed questions which generate ordinal data. For example, participants could be asked to rate how stressed they feel on a scale of 1–10 and how many days they had been ill in the last six months, which would be a simple variation on Holmes & Rahe's (1967) research on the relationship between stressful life events and ill health. Another possibility could involve asking other students to report their shoe size and how far they could fly a paper airplane (measured in metres) in their living room or garden. See [this video](#) for further details.

SELF-REPORT

This is probably the easiest type of practical to carry out online. Interviews can take place via Zoom and questionnaires can be easily emailed to participants or shared via social media. Software such as Survey Monkey can be used freely for questionnaires with a maximum of 10 questions. www.surveymonkey.co.uk.

A very simple idea would be to [use a ready made questionnaire](#).

The Buss Aggression Questionnaire is very easy to analyse, a simple difference between male and females scores could be looked for.

OBSERVATIONS

Observations are a little more difficult to facilitate during restrictions. If students live in a family, they could observe family members, but many may not have a large enough group to observe. It may be in some areas that students are still attending sports clubs etc., which could provide participants for observation. However, it would not be advisable to suggest to students that they go into public places unnecessarily for the purpose of observation.

It might be more appropriate to get students to undertake a content analysis instead of an observation. They are using the same skills, but on secondary rather than primary data.

CONTENT ANALYSIS

Content analysis is carried out on secondary data, so well suited as a practical during Covid restrictions. TV programmes offer a wealth of material which could be analysed and students could be given a choice to suit their particular interests. Perhaps a content analysis of TV adverts aimed at children for gender differences. Social media is another rich source of material for content analysis.

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