

Data Analysis Assignment – general information

Here are some broad details to give you an idea of what to expect. The data analysis assignment will focus mostly on the statistical analysis of data, although the principles and ideas underlying research design are still important and directly relevant in part. Nevertheless, the main aim is to give you practice and to assess your ability to analyse and interpret data. The assignment will involve several related research questions and your goal will be to analyse a data set. One of the important aspects is to emphasize the role that the research context plays in the analysis and interpretation of data. Furthermore, this assignment has been designed to be challenging and to require you to think about what to do or how you analyse the data. As such, you will have to make decisions on the best way to answer each question.

In general, for each research question, you must generate a suitable research hypothesis or hypotheses (unless otherwise stated), carry out appropriate statistical analysis of the data you have been provided with (USING the statistical techniques learned in the topic), present the results of the data analysis in a properly formatted Results section, and then discuss the results in a Discussion section.

Essentially, you will write an abbreviated research report. Thus, you should produce the following three sections: (a) Hypotheses; (b) Results; (c) Discussion.

DO NOT write an Introduction or a Method section. I will provide these for you.

You will be allocated a data set based on the last digit of your student number. Ten data sets will be set up and the data set that will be applicable to you is the one that corresponds to the last digit of your student number (this is NOT your FAN or login code but your student number). It is imperative that you use the correct data sets. Students using incorrect data sets will be penalized 10% and will have their work more closely scrutinized for plagiarism than usual. The reason behind multiple data sets is to reduce the possibilities for plagiarism. We are happy for students to discuss the problems together (we think this can be a good learning strategy), however, it is expected that you will all undertake your own data analysis, make your own decisions on what to do, and decide on the best interpretations, by yourself. Most importantly, write your assignments on your own and, under no circumstances, show your written work to other students. Assignments will be closely scrutinised for plagiarism.

The data sets for the assignment will be available when the exact details of the assignment are posted on FLO. Given the new circumstances this year, this can be done from home if you have access to SPSS on your home computer or you will need to come into the University. Most computers on campus have SPSS on them. If those options don't suit, you could buy a copy of SPSS but I don't encourage it due to the expense (they only offer fixed term licenses) and you probably need the Graduate pack which is a bit more expensive. Personally, I would come into campus if I couldn't get it working at home but this just reflects my philosophical views on life. If you really want to buy a copy, email me and I'll send you some information.

Apart from being able to download your data sets from FLO, it may be to your benefit to regularly check FLO¹. I may post hints and will deal with FAQs through this medium; either in a special section on the assignment or in response to posted questions. In regard to any postings on the Discussion page, I encourage students to try to answer the queries of their fellow students and I will usually wait a few days to respond. If a clear (and valid) answer is given, I will probably not respond and will mainly respond where I feel that clarification is required.

Also, if people could avoid posting comments simply to complain, I would be grateful. This just clogs up the Discussion page and doesn't help. If you are finding it hard, I can guarantee others are too. If you have been keeping up with the practical classes and the workshops, you should be able to do the assignment and pass comfortably (if not do much better).

All assignments are to be submitted electronically via FLO. Remember to also click on the Submit button when you put your final assignment(s) in. Late assignments without an extension will incur a late penalty of 1% per day (or part thereof).

¹ Not everyone finds the Discussion page helpful. Some find it overwhelming and work better working alone or with a group of friends (but be careful of plagiarism). It's up to you to decide what is and what isn't beneficial.