**research project**

**PAPER AND POSTER: STUDENT SURVEY
(HON 180)**

Here are guidelines for the poster session and the written report. The guidelines will also serve as a checklist or rubric for the papers and the posters.

**The Paper**

The length of the paper should be about three pages of text, plus SPSS output.

Chapter 9 shows how the reports are structured (although we will not have a lit review section).

**Title**

Use the word “exploratory” in your title, because we don’t have a representative/probability sample so we can’t claim that our results really tell us much about a population.

**Abstract**

This is a short summary of the research question, the methods, and major findings.

**Introduction**

This section of the paper spells out the broad overall topic (or question) of our survey and the more specific research question you decided to ask. Research questions often do one of two things:

* Try to identify predictors of an outcome in which we are interested (e.g., what are significant predictors of involvement with the university?)
* Try to identify outcomes associated with a predictor/independent variable in which we are interested (e.g., is gender related to study hours, campus activities, etc.?).

In the introduction you can also discuss experiences, observations, reading, and insights that led you to think about questions for the survey and your own research question—although this report will not have a literature review section.

Stating hypotheses (still part of the Introduction): After identifying a broad research question or research topic, try to state a number of specific hypotheses. These are stated in terms of the operational variables/survey items, rather than in broad conceptual terms. Present about 4-5 of these. These are going to be bivariate hypotheses—just involving two variables (IV and DV).

For each hypothesis, state very briefly (in a sentence or so) what your prediction is and why you think it might turn out that way—this is just a hunch, maybe only a stereotype (in a complete research report, each hypothesis might be motivated by findings in the research literature).

**Methods**

Keep this section short (a paragraph or so), summarizing what we did to put together the questionnaire and collect the data. Look at the questions in the text for inspiration, but don’t feel that you have to answer them all. Use the word “convenience sample” in describing our sampling.

**Findings**

Present the results of the data analysis that you performed for each of your hypotheses. The SPSS printout is fine for this—it is nice to place the output for each hypothesis as close as possible to your discussion of the results (in the poster, interpretations under printouts).

Make sure that:

* Your choice of data analysis technique matches the level of measurement of the variables.
* The data analysis is carried out correctly.
* Cross-tabs are laid out correctly (IV in the columns, percentaging in the columns).
* ANOVAs are accompanied by options-descriptives (so that we can see the means that we are comparing).
* Regressions (and you might not have very many) are done correctly.
* **The p-value, “significance,” is in the output and interpreted correctly.**

**Interpretation**

For each data analysis/hypothesis, briefly discuss in plain language what the results are. For example: Do women report longer study hours than men? Try to write the interpretation in a way that “regular people” can understand the findings, even if they cannot read all of your SPSS output.

Include at least a couple of hypotheses and the matching SPSS output that were not supported—where the results are not significant. You actually may end up with a lot of these! Sometimes you will see results that are very close—e.g., p = .056, or even anything up to .10 (1/10). These may be worth some extra attention, because with a larger sample they might well have been significant.

**Discussion/Conclusion**

What did your results (findings) tell us about your broader research question? Do not be upset if few of your findings were significant—sometimes that suggests that stereotypes are not accurate (e.g., men and women really differ very little in their study habits and activities).

Conclude your paper with two reflections:

* What could have been done better (and here you can look again at the questions in the text for inspiration)—e.g., better ways of operationalizing the variables and wording the questionnaire items, better sampling, etc.
* 3-4 “things you learned” from this exercise (not about student life, but about data production and analysis)—things you think will stick with you and possibly be useful to you in your profession or in civic life. A sentence or so for each one is plenty.

**The Poster**

The poster condenses the paper.

**Elements**

* Title
* Overall research question
* Your own more specific research question
* Very brief statement of methods
* Complete SPSS output and comprehensible interpretation for each of the 4-5 bivariate hypotheses
* Short overall conclusion (relate it back to the research question—focus on the research question and what the findings enable you to say about the research question)

**Be prepared to talk about your poster, explaining the hypotheses and what you found!**

**Design Guidelines**

Please use an inexpensive poster board for the poster—kill as few trees as possible.

Type all the elements of the poster except the printed SPSS output.

Possibly display each element on a square of construction paper with color coding (e.g., green for each hypothesis, its SPSS output and interpretation, blue for the title, etc.)

Line up the elements neatly.

**If you don’t like the idea of a poster, you can create a PowerPoint, with the same elements.**