

The Polytechnic of North London
Faculty of Environmental and Social Studies

BSc (Hons) Applied Social Science: Social Research Pathway

Level: Final
Module Number: SR304
Module Title: Survey Research Practice
Location: Policy Studies and Social Research
(Survey Research Unit)
Module Convenor: John Hall (Unit Director)
Place and Time: Ladbroke House, Wednesday evenings, 6pm-9pm
Dates: 12 Feb 1992 to 17 June 1992

Study Requirement:

6-8 hours per week of which 2 hours will involve timetabled classes. 4-6 hours should be used for private study and/or developing coursework assignments.

Objectives: By the end of the course you will:

- a) gain insight and appreciation of the structure, process and context of survey research in Great Britain.
- b) become aware of theoretical, professional, ethical and methodological issues and practical constraints and be able critically to assess published material based on questionnaire surveys.
- c) acquire confidence and basic proficiency in tackling your own questionnaire based projects in college or employment, or as a basis for more advanced study, and know when and where to seek advice, expertise and assistance.
- d) enjoy a distinct advantage in the employment market.
- e) find that survey research, far from being empiricist, technician or positivist, is an interdisciplinary science in its own right.

Assessment:

The course will be assessed by three pieces of coursework.

Coursework must be submitted to the Course Secretary, Amanda Isaacs, not later than 4pm on Friday 19 June 1992

All three assignments must be submitted before any marks can be considered by the Examination Board.

Study Programme:

This specialist course has been taught at PNL since 1976 as a post-graduate short course. However, it is also taken by Final Level undergraduate students on the Social Research Pathway, who take it as one of their Designated Units on the endorsed scheme for the Diploma of the Market Research Society, a prestigious professional qualification.

It consists entirely of presentations by senior research managers and executives from government, independent and commercial agencies. The course is heavily practice-based, but with an emphasis throughout on professional practice and standards. The syllabus covers:

Introduction to Survey Research: History and development; facilities available in UK; who does surveys and why? Research for decision making; limitations.

Initial design considerations: the need for a survey; alternative information sources; setting survey objectives; sources of error; precision and cost.

Sampling principles: bias and precision; confidence limits; design effects; non-response.

Sampling in practice: sample size; sampling frames; sub-samples; practical approaches.

Classification: concepts such as "household" and "occupation" and ways of defining and measuring them.

Questionnaire development: quantifying behaviour; problems and approaches; the concept of attitude; measuring attitudes and opinions; classifying respondents.

Questionnaire design: question forms; problem questions; question wording and sequence effects; layout; piloting.

Data collection: interviewing; recruitment and training; quality control; non-interview methods; telephone and postal methods; cohort and panel studies.

Attitude measurement: beliefs, opinions, attitudes and values; attitudes and behaviour; attitude scales; British Social Attitudes.

Analysis: coding open ended questions, coding frames; editing and coding practice; techniques of presentation and analysis; research and technical reports.

Commissioning and costing: structure and operation of research agencies; cost centres; typical costing for a national survey; information needs of agencies; pitfalls.

Ethical and professional issues: privacy, respondents' rights; researchers' dilemmas.

Teaching programme

(1992 programme not yet fixed: 1991 below gives indication)

SR502: Survey Research Practice	1991 programme
Introduction to Survey Research	(Roger Thomas JCSM)
Sampling I	(Barry Hedges: SCPR)
Sampling II	(Barry Hedges: SCPR)
Definitions & Classifications	(Dr Patten Smith: SCPR)
Qualitative Research	(Jane Ritchie: SCPR)
Questionnaire Design I	(Nick Moon: NOP)
Questionnaire Design II	(Nick Moon: NOP)
Interviewing	(Penny Young: BBC)
Postal and Other Methods	(Penny Young: BBC)
Coding	(Dr Patten Smith: SCPR)
Attitude Measurement	(Dr Alan Marsh: PSI)
British Social Attitudes	(Dr Bridget Taylor: SCPR)
Presenting Results	(Nick Moon: NOP)
Commissioning and Costing	(Nick Moon: NOP)
Panel and Cohort Surveys; Ethical and Professional Considerations	(Dr Alan Marsh: PSI)

BBC BBC Broadcasting Research Department
JCSM Joint Centre for Survey Methods (SCPR/LSE/OPCS/BMRB)
NOP National Opinion Polls (Market Research) Ltd.
PSI Policy Studies Institute
SCPR Social and Community Planning Research

Principal reading:

- S Crouch, **Marketing Research for Managers** (Pan, 1985)
- G Hoinville, R Jowell and Associates, **Survey Research Practice**, (Heinemann, 1978)
- D R Phillips, **Do-it-yourself Social Surveys: a Handbook for Beginners**, (Survey Research Unit, PNL, 1981)
- D de Vaus, **Surveys in Social Research**, (George Allen and Unwin, 1991)
- Survey Methods Newsletter**, (Joint Centre for Survey Methods)

SPECIMEN COURSEWORK ASSIGNMENT

SR304/SR502: Survey Research Practice

Answer questions 1 and 2 (about 900 words each) and two other questions (about 600 words each).

Q1 (30 marks)

Write an outline proposal for a survey-based study of attachment to and satisfaction with local neighbourhood and home town/borough. Decide on the population and variables to be covered, and make recommendations, with reasons, on the methodology to be employed. The proposal should be sufficient both for initial approaches to a sponsor for funding and for inviting outline costings from a research agency. (You do not need to give estimated costings yourself, but you do need to indicate awareness of the cost implications of alternative methods.)

Q2 (30 marks)

Draw up an outline questionnaire (sequence, content and layout) related to your neighbourhood/hometown study. Give examples of, and comment on, the questions and question types you might use.

Answer TWO more questions (20 marks each).

Q3 What is a probability sample? Outline some methods of sampling used in survey research, and discuss their relative merits.

Q4 Discuss the problems involved in defining and measuring some of the principle classification variables used in survey research.

Q5 What makes a good survey interviewer? Explain why so much attention is given to interviewer selection and training in survey research.

Q6 Many surveys these days are conducted by telephone or by post rather than by personal interview. What considerations need to be borne in mind when deciding which method to use?

Q7 Explain what attitudes are and discuss the principle ways in which survey researchers measure them.

Q8 Describe and discuss the coding and data entry process by which answers to questions become data in a computer file, including any implications for questionnaire design.

The above is based on the assessment for SR502 in 1990/91. The precise structure, format, content and weighting for 1991/92 is subject to approval by the External Examiner, but the coverage will be broadly similar, reflecting the final lecture list.