



GRADED EXAMPLES

Research Methods in Psychology

Name: Craig A. Wendorf, Ph.D., Professor and Chair of Psychology
Location: D240 Science Center, University of Wisconsin – Stevens Point
Contact: cwendorf@uwsp.edu, 715-346-2304 (with voicemail)

Types of Graded Student Work

My Research Methods course typically involves two basic types of in-class written material to be graded: essay questions and activity worksheets. This document provides a graded examples of each type of graded work.

For an extensive explanation of my grading guidelines:

<http://www4.uwsp.edu/psych/cw/teaching/Wendorf-GradingRubricExplanation.pdf>

Samples of Graded Work

A 4-Point Short Essay Question from Research Methods with a Sample Answer

1. What are the main differences between a within-subjects and a between-subjects design? Describe characteristics such as the number of distinct groups, the number of treatment conditions, and the assignment of participants to conditions.

There are several important differences between within-subjects and between-subjects designs. A between-subjects design randomly assigns participants to two or more groups, with one group typically being a control group. A within-subjects design uses the same participants across two or more conditions (and is sometimes called a repeated-measures design).

Category	Unacceptable	Problematic	Satisfactory	Exceptional
Theories & Concepts (0-3 Points)	<input type="checkbox"/> Inappropriate <input type="checkbox"/> Incomplete <input type="checkbox"/> Incomplete	<input type="checkbox"/> Lack of Focus <input type="checkbox"/> Lack of Focus <input type="checkbox"/> Lack of Focus	<input type="checkbox"/> Relevancy Implied <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Minor Inaccuracies <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Too Broad	<input type="checkbox"/> Relevancy Described No Inaccuracies Thorough
Writing Style & Integration (0-1 Points)	<input type="checkbox"/> Improper use of language <input type="checkbox"/> Several errors <input type="checkbox"/> Unclear	<input type="checkbox"/> Improper use of language <input type="checkbox"/> Several errors <input type="checkbox"/> Unclear	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Proper Format for Question Few Grammatical/Spelling Errors Focused and Integrated Organization	

- Aspects of this answer are acceptable; for example, the description of within-subjects designs is OK. However, not all between-subjects designs involve random assignment. Neglect of these other possibilities means that the answer is on-target, but too broad.
- As a result, the answer is probably too short (it was about one-third of an 8.5" x 11" sheet of paper). Nonetheless, the writing style is generally good.

A 4-Point Activity from Research Methods with a Sample Answer

Your Small-Group Task: Choose a recent media claim about human behavior. Adopt a skeptical, scientific approach to the problem by beginning to design an empirical study that could be used to test the claim.

List the Media Claim That You Will be Testing:
"Skeptics are less gullible but more lonely"
<p>How would you define and describe the important principles or practices of your study?</p> <p>First, we need to find two groups of people - skeptics and "acceptors." We need to find a way to differentiate them. A survey test maybe?</p> <p>Next, we'd need to measure both gullibility and loneliness. The claim would only be accurate if we found group differences on both of these measures. Loneliness might be easier to measure (again a survey) but gullibility is harder. Perhaps people could read a urban legend and state whether they believe it!</p>
<p>How would you assure that your study ruled out alternative explanations for the behavior?</p> <p>This would be more difficult. The research would be nonexperimental because the researchers would not determine who is the skeptic and who is not. Therefore, it would be hard to determine cause and effect.</p> <p>On second thought, that shouldn't matter for the claim. The claim does not try to describe WHY the difference exists, only that it does exist.</p>
<p>What things might you need to be careful about while running the study?</p> <p>The claim is not clear what the people are skeptical about. Some people might be skeptical about the politics of health care, but not at all about religion. So, we would need to be very careful about how we measure things (as stated above) but also about what conclusions we make.</p>

Category	Unacceptable	Problematic	Satisfactory	Exceptional
Theories & Concepts (0-3 Points)	<input type="checkbox"/> Inappropriate <input type="checkbox"/> Incorrect <input type="checkbox"/> Incomplete	<input type="checkbox"/> Major inaccuracies <input type="checkbox"/> Lacking	<input type="checkbox"/> Relevancy Implied <input type="checkbox"/> Minor Inaccuracies <input type="checkbox"/> Too Broad	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Relevancy Described No Inaccuracies Thorough
Writing Style & Integration (0-1 Points)	<input type="checkbox"/> Improper Format <input type="checkbox"/> Several Grammatical Errors <input type="checkbox"/> Unclear or Haphazard Organization		<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Proper Format for Question Few Grammatical/Spelling Errors Focused and Integrated Organization	

- For an in-class activity with limited space, the answers are fairly thoughtful. Major aspects of measurement and research design are addressed, as are concerns about generalization. Of course, many more details would be required for a full research proposal on the topic.
- Note that writing style (grammar, spelling, etc.) is evaluated here. There are typographical and grammatical errors, but they are quite minor. Therefore, there is no deduction.