

## Time for a good Cuppa T. as we ask, “How difficult was Research Methods?”

One word: **Difficult.**

Two words: **Nothing. Compares.**

Three words: **Is. Failure. Imminent.**

Four words: **What. Is. Life's. Purpose.**

These phrases do not do justice to the level of difficulty faced in this module, emotional, physical, and educational. I plan to describe these aspects and the thinking process behind the painful journey. I felt this entry needed its own entry separate from any module reflections, because, maybe, somewhere out there, other students are experiencing the same issues. Perhaps my learnings (and failings) can assist. I do not have an academic background and two deliverables for this module are: a literature review, and a research proposal. Secondly, I found **little support** from the online education facility that helped to clarify, and guide students toward a successful delivery of these artefacts.

### The Engagement

Research Methods and Professional Practice is overall is a good module and sound (I think) in what it's trying to educate students in. From a distant, it looked attractive, appealing, and useful. But as the saying goes, “The devil is in the details”, and how true a saying this is!

I feel that there are *many* failings in the online educational delivery of this module. So many that unfortunately I must give this module a **one out of ten** stars and highly make recommendation to the higher-ups to look at improvements to supporting part-time students to complete one of the most difficult modules in the Computer Science program.

### The First Fight: Statistics

It is understandable based on insights from the rather insightful course e-Book that introduces students to research, that statistics is a necessary component of research. However, this was the **first stumbling block** to a (so far) fruitful engagement with this module. I do not know,

understand nor ever used statistics in my career. Yes, I may have used some *watered-down* implementation of finding ratios, showing bar graphs, or even looking at costs for product or resources.

So, imagine with me, the confusion when encountering terms like “two-tailed”, “p-value”, “nominal data” and so forth. Not having a foundation in statistics made understanding what these are about and what is the meaning of their creation, difficult to grasp. Yet, “**Quantitative This!**” and “**Quantitative That!**” was all I ever heard concerning statistics. These too, were terms unknown to me before this module, but which now, I can partially translate from statistician-speak into real man-on-the-street speak. One deals with touchy-feely concepts (Qualitative) and the other deals with hard, cold facts and numbers (Quantitative). Useful to know the separation when dealing with “data”.

“Data? What is data?” you may ask. Good question. While I thought it was any piece of useful information found in the natural, numerical, and ethereal worlds, that can be used for processing, the impression I got during this module was that it is only numbers, or information pieces that can satisfy statistics. Akin to the paper boy shouting on the street corner, “**Quantitative tables!**”, “**Statistics! Statistics! Numbers!**”

Why is my impression of data belonging only to the realm of statistics? Simply because in trying to understand the role of data in research, I had to look for information **not readily found the online university**<sup>1</sup>. And lo! “Statistics!”, “Surveys!”, “Questionnaires!”, “Focus Groups!”, “Charts!” and on and on are the topics talked about showing an end goal to turn that data into bar graphs and pretty line diagrams.

The module required students to attempt several statistical analysis exercises, such as testing a null hypothesis and other fanciful tasks. Each exercise, I tried to comprehend what the (expletive) I was doing and more importantly *why*. And so, this engagement started to drive a tiny iron wedge of discontent into my otherwise harmonious engagement.

## The Birth Pangs: Literature Review

In review, I enjoyed the literature review. However, I may be suffering from Stockholm Syndrome because I found this challenging, having never performed an academic literature review before. Again, the weapons of flaming torture were

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<sup>1</sup> A point for improvement

## **The “Is-It-Breathing?” Question: Research Proposal**