

Assignment Project Exam Help

ECOS1997

Introduction

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- My name is Guy Mayraz
- I am a behavioural and experimental economist
- I am responsible for the Behavioural Interventions Stream
- This stream is also known as Stream 3

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ECOS3997 is a fairly new course

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It was born out of several desires:

① to create an interdisciplinary course

② to teach communication skills

③ to bridge the gap between university and the workplace

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Typical economics courses

- Focus on a particular academic topic
- Solve isolated problems (e.g. problem set)
- Typically work alone
- Communication is relatively unimportant

Workplace

- Focus on projects
 - may combine several knowledge domains
 - components must fit together
 - components valued only as part of the whole
- Typically work with other people
- Communication is extremely important

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- Work on a project with outside academia significance

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- External lecture

- Lectures on communication

- Evaluation:

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- Report to an expert but non-academic audience
- Media piece to a non-expert audience

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- Integrate what you've learned in your degree
- Produce something that may differentiate you in the job market
- Smooth the transition into what you may be expected to do after you graduate

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- projects—not exams
- communication skills no less important than technical skills

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Independent project work and communication are different skills than what you've been practising at uni

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The shift may well be challenging, perhaps particularly for students who thrive in exams!

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Think of this as a low-stakes environment to prepare yourself for the “real world”

- ECOS3997 has several separate streams
- Each stream has a different lecturer and a different topic, and consequently a different project
- These streams run independently:
 - Each stream has its own lecturer
 - On Canvas, each stream has its own section in the Modules tab
- The different streams share a common structure:
 - The overall arrangement of the term
 - The evaluation pieces (final report and media piece)
 - Effort will be made to ensure fair marking across the streams

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Stream 1

- Lecturer: Christian Gillitzer (also course coordinator)

- Topic: **Economic inequality**

Stream 2

- Lecturer: Ashani Amarasinghe

- Topic: **Conflict and economic development**

Stream 3

- Lecturer: Dr. Guy Mayraz

- Topic: **Behavioural interventions**

Stream 4

- Lecturer: Stefanie Schurer

- Topic: **The economics of pandemics**

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It's worth choosing the topic that interests you most:

- you will enjoy the course more (or suffer less)
- you are likely to do a better writing job

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Also be aware that the task for my stream is particularly

open:

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- more freedom to do your own thing
- more freedom to get things badly wrong

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Course coordinator

Christian Gillitzer is the course coordinator

- Contact Christian with any course level issue
- This includes anything about registration, switching streams, special consideration, etc.

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Behavioural Intervention Stream

- I am your stream lecturer.
- I am also responsible for the written report

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Communications/media lectures

- There will be a separate set of lectures culminating on communications/media
- These lectures would be delivered by a different lecturer who would also be responsible for the media

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piece

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For all questions about the material, assessments, etc. you should ask the tutor or use <https://powcoder.com>

- [Stream 3](#) category for questions specific to this stream

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- [Course level](#) category for questions at the course level

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You are very welcome to ask **general** questions about the material, and about the characteristics of good topics

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However

We will not be answering questions about your particular

project. This is because we cannot help everyone with their project, and would not want to advantage some students at the expense of others

Email

Please only email me if you have a question that is

- about your own particular situation (general questions should be asked on Ed)
- not about the particulars of your project (we cannot answer such questions)
- under my responsibility (rather than that of Christian, the media lecturer, or the Student Centre)

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TL;DR If you have a problem and want to get an answer, make sure you ask the right person and using the right method

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I have no authority to grant extensions

Students seeking an extension (e.g. because of a health issue) should apply for Special Consideration

(please note that something like “I postponed everything to the last week, but then realised that this other course also has a deadline, and I am in over my head” is probably not going to be accepted as a valid reason for an extension)

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The topic of this stream is **behavioural interventions**:

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- Changes to public policy designed to improve outcomes

- The desired change is a change in the **behaviour** of people

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- The intervention works through **behavioural mechanisms**, rather than through incentives

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Behavioural interventions are designed with **evaluation** in mind.

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- in the real-world, you can never be certain which ideas would work

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- you want to tell whether your idea actually works
- you may want to tell which of several ideas works best

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Expectation

- 1 Come up with an **original** and **non-trivial** behavioural intervention that addresses an **important problem**

- 2 Design an **evaluation strategy**

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Not required

You are not expected to come up with a truly ground-breaking intervention

- The point of the course is developing your idea and communicating your work, rather than the idea itself

An **ideal** behavioural intervention is characterised by the following:

- 1 Addresses an important problem
- 2 Has the potential of making a meaningful difference if it works
- 3 Has a meaningful chance of working (based on theory and/or empirical evidence)
- 4 Is original

What I expect

I don't expect you to come with the perfect behavioural intervention, but you should (i) try your best, and (ii) address these issues in your writing (e.g. why you think your intervention has the potential of making a meaningful difference)

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What is a meaningful difference?

Something that is worth doing

Related to the importance of the problem:

- reducing COVID deaths by “only” 1% may worth doing, because saving lives is very important
- a similar difference to a minor problem is too trivial

Related also to the cost / complexity of the intervention:

- A costly and/or complex intervention is only worthwhile if the benefit is large
- A cheap and simple intervention faces a much lower bar

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What is original?

No direct copy

- Do not **directly copy** something that has been done before or suggest a **trivial variation** on a pre-existing idea

Strong influence is fine

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This does not mean that you have to come up with something completely new

It is perfectly ok to be strongly influenced by previous work:

- Adapting a previous intervention to a new setting (as long as the adaptation involves non-trivial changes)
- Improving a previous intervention (as long as the improvement is non-trivial)
- Combining ideas from two different interventions

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- While it's perfectly ok to build on other people's ideas, anything that comes from someone else's work must be acknowledged as such

- Presenting someone else's ideas as your own is considered plagiarism, and could lead you in deep trouble

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The final report is also known as the written report

The report

- You should imagine that you are working on the project as part of your job at some public organisation.
- The CEO would like to read about your idea, so that he or she can decide whether to approve the project, and actually carry out the intervention and proposed evaluation
- The final report is what the CEO would read

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- Project: the project is good enough

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- **Successful communication:** By reading the report, the CEO can (easily, rather than with great effort) understand (in detail, rather than vaguely) the problem, the proposed solution, and the proposed evaluation strategy

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Final report

- Week 10 (Friday 23:59)

- 60% of course mark

- I am responsible for grading

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Media piece

- Week 13

- 40% of course mark

- Media lecturer is responsible for grading

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- The **media piece** is also known as the **media task** or **media presentation**

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- The general idea is to practice communicating the same project to a non-professional audience

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- The media piece is the responsibility of the media lecturer

My lectures

- Week 1: Introductory lecture
- Week 2: External lecture
- Weeks 3–4: Behavioural economics
- Week 5: Behavioural interventions
- Week 6: Randomised Controlled Trials
- Week 7: The written report

Tutorials

- Weeks 3–7
- Small groups, with an opportunity to ask questions

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Next week, I will upload two external talks:

Rory Gallagher

The first is by [Rory Gallagher](#), the head of the [Australia branch of the Behavioural Insights Team \(BIT\)](#). Originating in the UK, BIT consults various government bodies on behavioural interventions.

Richard Thaler

The second is by [Richard Thaler](#), a Nobel prize winning economist who is a pioneer of behavioural interventions and the author of “Nudge” (together with Cass Sunstein)

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Now

You can already start reading on behavioural economics and behavioural interventions

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The remainder of the term

The rest of the term would be devoted primarily to your own work

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I will provide lectures to help you, but you should be spending most of your time researching the topic you want to write on, and writing the report and media piece.

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You have plenty of time, and should make sure to handle it well

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If you postpone all work to the last week, you would be lucky to pass

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A good target is to have an outline ready by the end of the mid-term break