

Communication Studies Students' Understanding of Research Methods

Communication Studies BA - College of Communications

Step 1: Student Learning Outcome

Communication Studies graduates should possess a basic understanding of fundamental principles of research methods and experimental design

Step 2: Methods and Measures

HCOM 308 is the quantitative research methods course for all Communication Studies undergraduates. Two key skills for both courses are the ability to read and comprehend original, peer-reviewed scholarly articles and statistical printouts. These outcomes are measured at the end of the course and are embedded into the final exam. All students in HCOM 308 are assigned a peer-reviewed journal article and are asked to answer basic questions about key concepts related to research methods. Students are assigned the article before the final exam and objective test items about the article are embedded within the final exam. They are also provided with statistical printouts of results (such as SPSS tables) and asked to interpret what they mean.

Step 3: Criteria for Success

Because some questions are intended to be discriminators, it is expected that scores would not generally be above 90% and should not generally drop below 70%.

Step 4: Results

Data were collected in one class in spring 2014 (typically 3-4 sections are offered per semester) and two classes in fall 2014.

All expectations were met (70% and above), however the data also suggested that students are better at interpreting research articles than understanding raw statistical printouts.

Step 5: Improvement Actions:

Instructors who teach HCOM 308 were encouraged to give greater attention to the statistical printouts. Since the results met the Criteria for Success, no programmatic action is warranted on the basis of these data.