

BUS 230: Business and Economics Research and Communication
Methodology Section of the Final Research Paper
Instructor: James Murray
Due in D2L Dropbox by Friday, November 15 at 11:59pm

Purpose: The methodology section is the second section of your research paper, following the introduction. The purpose of the methodology section is to explain with a significant level of detail, how you will be answering your research question.

Learning Outcomes:

- LO-3: Interpret data using statistical analysis.
- LO-4: Develop the ability to effectively communicate research results both written and orally.
- CBA LO-1A: Communication - Develop the ability to convey information and ideas effectively in professional business reports.

Important Elements of a Methodology Section:

1. *Population and sample:* Describe your population of interest and include in your description a justification for why this population is appropriate given your research question, and more largely, the purpose of your research project as you describe in your introduction. Then describe how will you be selecting your sample, and be sure it is clear that your sample represents your population.
2. *Survey and variables:* What variables will you be collecting from your sample? In your case, your variables will be the answers to your survey questions, so you should include your entire survey in the appendix at the end of your paper (include this appendix in your initial submission of your methodology section). Items in an appendix do not need to be discussed in excruciating detail, but they should have general explanations in the paper. Describe the type of variables you will be collecting. For example, you may have one or two sentences describing that you will be collecting data on academic performance, including measures of cumulative GPA, semester GPA, and progress in the program as measured by the number of credits students' have accumulated. You do not need to describe in so much detail which numbered questions in the survey correspond to which variables.
3. *Describe analysis of the variables:* What will you do with the data you collect to answer your research question? Will you compare averages from two or more groups? Will you look for relationships between two or more variables? In your description, be clear how the analysis answers your research question, or subset questions related to your larger research question. The level of detail needed here varies. At a minimum, a reader with basic understanding of statistics should be able to read this section and be able to figure out what statistical tests could be used to conduct this analysis. At a maximum, you could give your reader enough details so that he or she can *exactly replicate* your analysis.

Be careful to keep this part of your methodology well organized. Do not make it sound like a list, or letter to mom from summer camp, "Then we did this.. then we did this.. etc." Organize your analysis around themes. What sub-questions of your research question are you addressing? For example, first you might look for a relationship between academic engagement and academic performance. Then you may look for a difference in academic engagement between subgroups of your sample, like between males and females, between freshman and upper classes, etc. Then you might look to determine if there is a relationship between academic engagement and parental influences, etc. Keep your section organized around each of these themes, and when as you begin discussing each theme, describe why you examining this theme. Bring this justification back to the purpose of your research project.

4. *Keep your paper connected:* Remember, this is the second section of your research paper, following the introduction section. Your paper should read like one unified paper, not two separate papers stapled together. Make sure your discussion of your analysis is consistent with your purpose laid out in the introduction.

Length: There is no length requirement for the methodology. It is most important that you write a methodology which meets the above expectations. Well written methodology sections will usually be between 3 and 5 pages, double spaced.

Methodology Assignment: Write the methodology section of your final paper following these guidelines. Submit to the appropriate D2L dropbox by Friday, November 15 at 11:59pm.