

Hi

Welcome to the Principles of Data Management and Analysis. I am Iain Atherton, the module leader who has developed this module.

The aim of the module is to facilitate you to develop the skills needed to analyse data and produce robust answers to your research questions. These skills are invaluable in helping you to understand research, whether to the benefit of your practice or to enable you to take forward your own research as an academic or a practitioner.

Let me tell you a little bit about the approach we will take to that end.

Learning is often most effective when doing. For that reason, the module will be very practical. In the first part, in Trimester 2, you will develop the ability to open programmes and very basic analysis. By understanding the principles underlying that analysis, you will have the basis for much more challenging data analysis. The second half of the module, in Trimester 3, will afford you the opportunity to take forward much more complex work.

Learning is also most effective when you are teaching. Emphasis is given to encouraging you to develop a community of learning. Multiple choice questions will encourage you to reflect and review at the end of each unit. But we will not give you the answers or even tell you which ones you got right and which ones you got wrong. If you are unsure then discuss with your colleagues through the discussion board. And help them where they are unsure. You will benefit from teaching them as much as I do from teaching you! You can also join in the weekly tutorials where questions can be raised and discussed. Even if you think you know an answer, the different angles afforded might just alter your thinking just a little bit. Or it might even change your mind entirely! That is the lifeblood of research and what makes it so exciting.

My expertise is in the use of routinely collected data. I am not an expert in every element of research. Even in the quantitative component of the course, I will be learning. The statistics program we will use, R, is new to me. Teaching is a learning opportunity. I have only touched lightly on qualitative research over the past few years. It is probably a decade since I last used Nvivo, the qualitative analysis programme to which you will be introduced. I am not here to give answers. Rather, my role is to work with you to develop your understanding. Your abilities to develop your research knowledge is probably as important – no it is way more important – than “facts” I can impart on you.

By the time you hand-in your final assessment, which involves a report on your own data analysis, you will have demonstrated an ability to manage and analyse data to a high standard. I really look forward to working with you towards that endeavour.