

This year, students who took Psychology 380, Introduction to Research Methods, completed the same set of questions on the first and last day of class. I designed the questions as a form of direct assessment of students' learning (students' answers were not graded). The questions included close-ended true-false and multiple choice and open-ended questions about the interpretation of data. The good and bad news from this pilot assessment is summarized below.

Results for Academic Year, 2006

	Percentage of students who answered correctly	
	Pre-test	Post-test
Sources of error in qualitative research	53%	73%
Statistical reasoning	13.2%	15.8%
Quantitative methods reasoning	23.1%	41.0%
Effect sizes and statistical probability	2.9%	7.7%
Correlation is not causation	31%	52%
AVERAGE	24.6%	37.9%

Note. N=39. Only 5 students had not taken Math 165.

The good news is that the percentage of students who answered the questions correctly increased. Unfortunately, the final percentages are low, particularly for students' understanding of statistical reasoning. Psy 380 is intended to be a survey course of a variety of research methods. Understanding numerical data is not emphasized. However, given the importance of statistical reasoning for understanding meta-analyses and clinical intervention research, this will be an important target area for the future.