

Questions and Answers About Using WWC Evidence Standards in Postsecondary Research Methods Courses

The purpose of this document is to provide answers to the questions submitted before and during the WWC technical assistance webinar hosted on April 23, 2019 about using WWC Evidence Standards in Postsecondary Research Methods Courses.

This document is meant as a companion to the slide deck and course planning matrix used during the webinar, which can be found on the [webinar archive page](#). Whenever possible, we identified the slide(s) to which a question or answer pertains. We combined similar questions and rephrased some others for clarity, preserving the meaning of the original question. If additional questions arise, please contact the WWC Help Desk at <https://ies.ed.gov/ncee/wwc/help>.

The end of this document provides links to the following resources mentioned during the webinar: WWC Standards Handbook 4.0, WWC Procedures Handbook 4.0, Course Planning Matrix of WWC Resources, and WWC database of reviewed studies.

1. Where can I find additional resources, such as free webinars, in order to learn more?

The course planning matrix introduced during the webinar provides a list of 15 categories of WWC resources, which includes both webinars and online training videos. Using this matrix, you can quickly and easily identify a WWC topic of interest and the specific resource (in this case, a webinar or video) aligned with that interest, if available.

2. Is it possible to incorporate the WWC resources into a research methods course, along with other methods papers and tutorials, to expand upon content in the WWC resources?

As discussed briefly at the beginning of webinar (see slides 8–11), the WWC Evidence Standards and Handbooks have been through four generations of revisions, have been recently updated to align with current best methodological practices, and therefore can be used as fundamental building blocks in postsecondary research methods courses. There are many ways that instructors can organize their course to include additional methodological papers and tutorials that build on these fundamental concepts that are the focus of most WWC resources. Many instructors will use these WWC resources to supplement other course readings, which might include more in-depth methodological readings on specific topics, or example empirical articles demonstrating key concepts.

3. Students still have trouble understanding the term "resources." How do we include the growing open resources in postsecondary courses?

Instructors do not need to refer to WWC materials as “resources” but can instead choose to use more descriptive labels (such as webinars, training videos, or readings) that might resonate better with students. As discussed in this webinar, the course planning matrix lists 15 resources categories, such as Webinar Videos, Slide Decks, Reporting Guides and FAQs; and the webinar discusses another resource, the database of WWC-reviewed studies (<https://ies.ed.gov/ncee/wwc/StudyFindings>). It is up to the instructor how to incorporate “open resources” in their course, but we recommend that any selected open resources align with or are consistent with the WWC resources included in the course.

4. How can the WWC resources be used in special education research methods courses?

The WWC resources and example course plans discussed in the webinar could be used in any range of postsecondary research methods courses offered in education, social science, or behavioral science disciplines. Instructors of research methods courses in special education can certainly use the course planning matrix discussed in the webinar to identify resources that might be most appropriate given the topic areas planned for the course. It is important to note, however, that in special education research, large sample sizes may not be attainable. Therefore, the designs covered in the webinar, such as randomized controlled trial, quasi-experimental, and regression discontinuity designs that often require large samples may not be feasible in special education research. The WWC provides pilot evidence standards for appraising empirical research that uses single-case, or single-subject designs, which are covered in appendix A of the WWC Standards Handbook 4.0. Although this webinar did not cover WWC single-case design pilot standards, instructors could certainly use that portion of the Standards Handbook as required or supplemental reading in special education research methods courses covering single-case design methodology.

5. I see that some study data are archived. After how long are the study data moved to the archive?

If a study has been reviewed more than once, then the data from the most recent review is available in the review of individual studies database, and all previous reviews are available in the archive (<https://ies.ed.gov/ncee/wwc/StudyFindingsArchive>). Study data are only moved to the archive when a new review of the study becomes available; there is no length of time after which study data are automatically moved to the archive.

General Resources

In addition to the webinar and Questions and Answers document, the following resources provide additional guidance about confounding in group design studies and other relevant topics.

- WWC Standards Handbook 4.0:
https://ies.ed.gov/ncee/wwc/Docs/referenceresources/wwc_standards_handbook_v4.pdf
- WWC Procedures Handbook 4.0:
https://ies.ed.gov/ncee/wwc/Docs/referenceresources/wwc_procedures_handbook_v4.pdf
- Course Planning Matrix of WWC Resources: <https://ies.ed.gov/ncee/wwc/multimedia/48>
- WWC database of reviewed studies: <https://ies.ed.gov/ncee/wwc/StudyFindings>
- WWC archived data from individual studies:
<https://ies.ed.gov/ncee/wwc/StudyFindingsArchive>