

## HPS204 Social Psychology

### Assessment Task 1 (AT1): Research Proposal

These assessment guidelines will help you complete AT1 and are split into three sections.

1. **General Information.** Overviews the general admin for this assessment (e.g., due date, word count, submission details, etc.). It also provides the learning objectives of this assessment.
2. **Topic Information.** Overviews the specific topic of this assessment, including background information to the topic, the study idea, and an overview of your required materials.
3. **Completing Your Assessment.** Outlines what each section of the research proposal requires.

#### 1: General Information

##### *Administration*

Assessment Task 1 (AT1) is an **individually written research proposal**. AT1 is worth 45% of your total unit grade and is due by **8:00 pm AEST Thursday 20 April 2023 (Week 6)**.

Key details	
<b>Student Output</b>	The word count is <b>1,500 words</b> (with a +/- 10% leeway). Includes in-text citations and all sections of the research proposal, besides the title page and reference list.
<b>Referencing</b>	You must use 7 <sup>th</sup> edition APA formatting/referencing for this assessment.
<b>Submission requirements</b>	Must be submitted in electronic format (word docx. or pdf) via the AT1 assignment dropbox. <b>Always check that the work you have submitted is the correct and final version.</b> University policy stipulates that we can only mark what has been uploaded to the assignment dropbox. If you submit multiple versions, we will always only mark your most recent submission (even if it is late). Be sure to review the <a href="#">online submission guide</a>
<b>Extension (only apply BEFORE the due date)</b>	If it is <b>before</b> your due date, and you require more time due to unforeseen circumstances, go to the 'Assessment' tab on CloudDeakin and select 'Extension Application'. Only extensions applied via this online form will be considered (do not email the unit team to apply, we will just direct you to the online form). As per university policy, extensions can only be granted for up to an additional seven calendar days. You <b>must</b> provide supporting documentation with your request.
<b>Special Consideration (only apply AFTER the due date)</b>	If it is <b>after</b> your due date, or you need more time on an extension you have already been granted, you can only apply for special consideration. As per university policy, extension requests are not accepted past the assignment due date. You can apply for <a href="#">Special Consideration</a> via StudentConnect <b>within three (3) university working days after your due date</b> . You <b>must</b> provide supporting documentation with your request.
<b>Late Penalty</b>	As per university policy, submitting late will result in a late penalty, where 5% will be deducted from available marks for each day up to seven calendar days. Where work is submitted more than seven calendar days after the due date, the task will not be marked, and the student will receive 0% for the assignment.

### Academic Integrity

When completing any assessment, you must abide by your [academic integrity responsibilities](#). **Plagiarism, collusion, and contract cheating are not tolerated at Deakin University** and result in severe penalties. Therefore, you must submit a research proposal that only you (no one else) have researched and written yourself.

When it comes to written assessments, we understand students sometimes engage in actions without fully realising the repercussions of what they are doing. Some examples of academic integrity breaches in this context include using artificial intelligence to write content, sharing written content with other students (past or present), and getting another person to write the assessment for you (either paid or unpaid). **Engaging in these actions are all breaches of academic integrity.**

If in doubt, you can use Turnitin before you submit your written assessment via the following website: [Check your submission](#). The report takes a few hours (at minimum) to process, but it will show you any areas that may need revising and more thorough paraphrasing. When checking the Turnitin report, look closely at what the report is identifying as the exact or similar as other sources (rather than looking at just the final percentage score). We give all students the same aim and starter references for this assessment, and so these sections will be identified as identical to other sources. We expect this and would not penalise you for this when reviewing your work.

*Please note: Do not copy or use the guidelines provided here as a source of evidence in your assessment (this is a breach of academic integrity!). **Instead read the materials provided and then write up your research proposal in your own words.***

### Learning Objectives of the Assessment

AT1 targets the following Unit Learning Objectives:

Unit Learning Outcomes		
<b>ULO1</b>	Identify, describe, compare, and apply the major types of social psychological theories and concepts.	✓
<b>ULO2</b>	Recognise and characterise the evolutionary and cultural perspectives that inform social psychology theory and research.	
<b>ULO3</b>	Evaluate and integrate the major social psychology theories, studies, and research methods.	✓
<b>ULO4</b>	Apply social psychology knowledge to generate hypotheses and solutions to everyday situations or problems.	✓
<b>ULO5</b>	Demonstrate effective communication in written form, including writing for coherence and reflecting on group processes in a team setting.	✓

Although this table gives you a brief idea of what skills and content AT1 is trying to teach you, you are probably still wondering what this assessment is all about. Let us elaborate further.

### Overview

One thing we hope you learn when taking this unit is that social psychology (and psychology!) generates and maintains its knowledge via scientific methods. We generate research questions and

conduct studies to help explain something we have observed in the real world. The outcome of these studies is then reported in laboratory reports, essays, journal articles, theses, preprints, etc.

*So, what is a research proposal then? A research proposal is a piece of scientific writing that provides a justification/argument and plan for a study before it is conducted and reported.* The study idea presented in a research proposal *always* uses relevant prior literature and logic (not intuition!) to justify it being conducted and it *always* has implications for the real-world and the literature it is based on.

*Why do I need to learn how to develop and write a research proposal?* Research proposals are commonplace in psychology (and science more broadly), and those who write them include students, psychologists, and researchers. Even if you do not want to be one of these people, the skills that research proposals develop are essential to most jobs and careers (e.g., idea generation, reviewing research, critical thinking, and succinct and clear writing).

We know many students have never written a research proposal before, and so we do not expect you to write one or even think of a study idea completely from scratch. What we will do instead is give you a topic area, relevant readings, and structured suggestions to help you generate a study idea (see 2: Topic Information). We will also guide you on how to write your research proposal in this document (see 3: Completing Your Assessment), in pre-recorded videos (found at the end of the AT1 webpage on CloudDeakin), and in seminars (**Week 1, 3 and 5 seminars**). So, let us get started.

*Handy hint #1.* We acknowledge that these guidelines contain a lot of written information to read and digest. We do this because rather than spreading the required information across multiple sources, everything you need to complete AT1 successfully can be found in this one document. So, **use these guidelines as your one-stop-shop for AT1.** The guidelines have been written in a way to tell you exactly what you need to do and answers most of the questions you will have when completing the assessment.

## 2: Topic Information

### *Background Information*

One issue that has received growing attention in social psychology is **climate change**. Human behaviour contributes to climate change and modifying behaviour to be more sustainable can mitigate the negative impacts of climate change. Yet unsustainable behaviour has continued to rise in several countries, including Australia (even though most Australians agree climate change is a problem). Therefore, social psychologists have tried to determine how to **increase climate action**. This includes conducting correlational studies examining what variables or factors are associated with climate action. Others have conducted experimental studies investigating what type of message is the most effective at getting individuals to increase their climate action intentions or behaviour.

This is somewhat unsurprising as social psychology has long studied persuasive messages and their impact on attitudes and behaviours (see Topic 6 of the unit). Early persuasion research initially assumed that simply providing individuals with facts about why they should modify their behaviour was enough to create desired change (referred to as an informational message). However, messages are often more effective if they go beyond facts and appeal to individuals' emotions (referred to as an **emotional appeal** but also an emotional message or frame). Emotional appeals are a type of

persuasive message where a certain emotion is induced by the content within the message in the hopes it will alter one's attitudes and/or behaviour. These emotional appeals can either induce specific positive emotions (happiness, pride, empathy, hope) or negative emotions (fear, guilt, disgust, anger).

Drawing upon this literature, social psychological research has now begun to investigate whether inducing specific emotions via persuasive messages, notably **pride and/or guilt**, is an effective way to **increase climate action** (specifically in the Australian context).

### *The Study Idea*

Handy hint #2. You do not need to come up with your own study idea, we have provided you one below. Use this study idea (and only this one) for your research proposal.

As alluded to above, research is unclear whether an emotional appeal designed to induce pride (at engaging in climate action) and/or guilt (at causing climate change/not engaging in climate action) increases climate action. **This is your research proposal topic.**

Given this, you are required to **present an argument** that a study should be conducted to help understand this issue. This argument must **build a rationale for one aim and one hypothesis** (nothing more, nothing less). Specifically, you will present an argument that **there is a need to compare between two conditions** (i.e., two persuasive messages) (A vs B) AND hypothesise that one persuasive message will be more effective than the other in increasing climate action.

So, what specific comparisons can you argue for? We have a pre-set list of comparisons you must select from based on the prescribed topic. Depending on your reading of the literature, you must **choose one** (and ONLY ONE) of the following comparisons (and their affiliated research question) to argue for:

1. (A) Pride appeal VS (B) guilt appeal (is a pride appeal or a guilt appeal more effective for increasing climate action?)
2. (A) Pride appeal VS (B) a control (is a pride appeal more effective for increasing climate action than a control?)
3. (A) Guilt appeal VS (B) a control (is a guilt appeal more effective for increasing climate action than a control?)
4. (A) Pride appeal and guilt appeal VS (B) a control (are emotional appeals of pride and guilt more effective for increasing climate action than a control?)

Your argument for your chosen comparison must be evidence-based and supported by relevant previous research. To help you do this, you will be required to use at least 2 of the 4 set assignment readings AND source a minimum of **2** additional peer reviewed journal articles. More on these sources later.

Handy hint #3. Do not decide which comparison you will pick to argue for until *after* you have reviewed the literature (or at minimum read the set assignment readings). This will ensure you pick the comparison that you can argue for the best.

Handy hint #4. We will teach you how to develop **written evidence-based arguments** in your **Week 1, 3 and 5 seminars**, and strongly encourage attendance (rather than just listening to the recording) for the best possible performance on this assessment.

## *Generating your Aim and Hypothesis*

### **The Study Aim**

Depending on your chosen comparison, you must insert (A) and (B) into the sentence below and then copy and paste this aim into your 'Overview' AND 'The Current Study' section in your research proposal (described below under 3: Completing Your Assessment). This is:

The aim of the current study is to compare how effective emotional appeal messages inducing (A) versus/or/and (B) are at increasing climate action.

Edit this aim to ensure it makes logical sense with the comparison you have selected. For example, (A) and (B) should be replaced with the two options that are in the comparison you have decided to argue for (so pride, guilt, and/or control message). You can also change the term climate action to the specific type of climate action (e.g., political protest, energy use reduction, green consumption) you are interested in exploring.

If you are comparing an emotional appeal to a control, **it is up to you to determine what is the control message/stimulus**. The control could be that participants receive no message at all, it could be a different type of (non-emotional) appeal used previously in the literature or even an informational message. Look at the prior research studies in the set assignment readings we have provided you to get ideas.

### **Hypothesis**

For the hypothesis, you will need to develop and present **ONE** testable hypothesis pertaining to the effectiveness of your chosen emotional appeal/s for increasing climate action. This hypothesis should clearly predict which of the two (A or B) will have a stronger effect at increasing climate action when directly compared to the other. Your hypothesis **must** be based on evidence from the prior literature, as a large component of your mark is dedicated to how well you explain the reasoning for why you have made this hypothesis.

As part of your hypothesis, you must also state the **specific kind of climate action** you wish to address with your study. So, rather than saying you expect A to be higher than B on climate action, you should state that A will be higher than B on... (e.g. political protest, energy use reduction, green consumption). The choice of specific action is up to you, but it should be appropriate to the emotion(s) you have chosen and supported by evidence regarding the action orientations elicited by different emotions.

*Please note. You only have the word-count to argue for **one aim** and **one hypothesis**. The aim is provided above. You will need to come up with your own hypothesis.*

Handy hint #5. Be sure to listen to/attend the **Week 3 seminar** to learn how to generate a hypothesis. When coming up with your hypothesis, here are some questions to think about...

1. Do you expect there to be a difference in the effectiveness of A and B?
2. If yes, which emotional appeal (A or B) will be better at increasing climate action?

### *Assignment readings to use (and source)*

In this assessment you **must** use and cite at least **TWO** of the references provided below, and source, use, and cite additional references. You will want to read all the articles and several more you find yourself before you make your hypothesis. Then, you can narrow down the articles to only

the ones you need to build the argument for your hypothesis. **If you decide to only focus on pride in your proposal for example, then you do not need to cite articles about guilt (and vice versa).**

*Please note. It is fine if you choose to use all the assignment readings, but none of these set assignment readings will count towards the additional sources you need to find yourself.*

### Provided References

The provided references **required** for this assessment are listed below. The references given below are not in correct APA formatting and do not include all the required information. You can obtain and print a copy of these readings via the HPS204/774 reading list (in *Content > Reading List*).

1. **Brosch (2021).** This **review article** discusses the role of emotion in driving climate action. It reviews research on several different emotions in the context of climate change. It also examines emotions in climate communications/interventions (like persuasive messages which is what you are looking at), as well as the possible role of anticipated emotions (i.e., emotions you believe you will experience if you perform a particular action).
2. **Adams et al., (2020).** This **empirical article** employs an **experimental** study design. The study examines whether receiving feedback on one's carbon footprint can result in more pro-environmental behaviour, and whether emotions of pride (re: positive feedback) and guilt (re: negative feedback) can explain (or mediate) that relationship. This study provides an example of how guilt and pride have been employed in previous pro-environmental research, and how those concepts can be defined and measured.
3. **Bissing-Olson et al. (2016).** This **empirical article** employs a **correlational** study design. The study examines the extent to which feelings of pride and guilt are related to engagement in pro-environmental behaviour. It also looks at the role of group norms in understanding the effects of those emotions, and whether group norms change (or moderate) the relationship between pride and guilt and pro-environmental behaviour.
4. **Harth et al. (2013).** This **empirical article** employs an **experimental** study design. The study examines how experimentally manipulating the ingroup's responsibility for environmental damage affects pro-environmental behaviour intentions, and the role of several emotions in explaining that relationship. This article also explores the notion that different emotions tend to elicit different kinds of intentions.

Handy hint #6. Remember that **not all information in every article is relevant!** Think about what information you need to support the comparison and hypothesis you are arguing for, and only discuss this information. You do not need to comprehensively summarise the specifics of each article you are referencing. You should use them as needed to build your arguments for why your study is needed and why you have made the hypothesis you have.

*Please note. The set readings discuss moderations and mediations. We will explain these concepts in the Week 2 content (particularly in the Week 2 lecture). You should not argue for a mediation or moderation in your research proposal, but understanding what these concepts are will help to understand the findings presented in the set readings.*

### Additional References

In addition to using and citing the references above, another **requirement** of this assessment is that you also **find, use, and cite additional journal articles** that you consider **relevant** to the topic. These cannot be books or book chapters – they **must** be peer-reviewed journal articles. It is expected students will be able to source additional journal articles on their own. The additional journal articles

should be cited somewhere in-text and provided in your reference list. You are required to source, use, and cite **at least TWO** additional journal articles. There is no maximum.

When it comes to scientific writing, we need to have relevant support/evidence/examples to back up our claims. So, when looking for additional articles, ask yourself “what do I want to argue and what evidence do I need to back it up?”. **It is also helpful to look at the reference list of the set readings too.** To help you, relevant journal articles may refer to topics such as:

- What is climate action and why should we care about it? What effect does climate action have on health and the natural environment?
- What kinds of interventions or methods – especially persuasive messages – have been used previously to increase climate action and how successful have they been? Just be sure to bring it back to emotional appeals and why these are specifically important to examine.
- Reviews on the effectiveness of emotional appeals for influencing attitudes and behaviours more broadly (you might find that it is good to draw on the persuasion literature beyond climate action and look at other similar pro- health/environmental behaviours).
- Studies that show a link between certain positive and/or negative emotions and climate action.
- Theoretical papers that may suggest emotions are important motivators of similar pro-environmental/health behaviour.
- An important note is that researchers use different formats for their persuasive messages – essays, images, short paragraphs, and videos (just to name a few). These are all still considered types of persuasive messages, as their underlying aim is to persuade individuals to change their attitudes and/or behaviours.

*Please note. You are more than welcome to cite government resources or reputable organisations (i.e., the Lowy Institute, UN) on the topic (e.g., climate change). In fact, this might be the best way to show why increasing climate action is so important. However, please note that only peer-reviewed journal articles count towards your additional reference requirement.*

### 3: Completing Your Assessment

*Steps for completing this assessment*

**This research proposal assessment is unsuited to being rushed and completed the night before it is due. We know all units say this but trust us!** This is because a research proposal requires you to review prior literature and critique this literature to justify a hypothesis you have generated yourself – these tasks take time and thought if you wish to do them well.

If you need some structure and additional help completing this assessment, then we **highly recommend** you check out the additional resources found in *Content > Assessments > AT1*

- Suggested steps for completing the assessment (that can be applied week-by-week or over a course of a few days),
- Short videos explaining each section that go through the information below in more detail,
- Resources for searching for, and reviewing, research literature, and,
- Writing and referencing resources.

**You should also attend and review the Week 2 and 4 Lecture.** In the Week 2 Lecture, we will outline some of the core research methods employed in Social Psychology (including experiments \*hint

hint\*). In the Week 4 Lecture, we discuss emotions, emotional appeals, and how they motivate behaviour. Both lectures will be pivotal for reviewing past literature for this topic and thinking about your own hypothesis and study design.

### *Writing style for this assessment*

This assessment requires a **scientific writing style**. When it comes to the writing tense, you should write in *past* tense when discussing previous research, and *present* tense when outlining your proposed study idea and the potential implications that may arise from your proposed study.

### *Sections required for this assessment*

Your research proposal requires the following sections, in this order. Each major section title should have a Level 1 heading as per APA guidelines.

#### **An APA style title page (not included in the word-count)**

- This must be the first page of your assessment and be one page in length.
- Include the unit code, the assessment (i.e., AT1: Research Proposal), your name, your student identification number, and the final word-count. You can also include a unique title for your research proposal, but this is not necessary.
- You should also include a page number on each page of the assessment.

#### **Overview (1 paragraph max; around 150-200 words) (included in the word-count)**

- This should start on a new page, after the title page. It should be one paragraph (not multiple). The first line should be indented. You can use in-text citations in this section if you wish but it is not necessary.
- Start with a few sentences on the topic: What is this topic, why is it important to study, and how can social psychology help to solve this issue?

Handy hint #7. Some starting guidance for this was provided under 2: Topic Information, but you will need to write this in your own words and provide references to back up your claims.

- Follow this with a few sentences on what is known about the topic and the one most significant limitation or gap in the literature (i.e., what we do not know about the topic that your study will specifically address?). Although there may be many gaps your literature review will discuss, you must **only present one gap/limitation** in the overview and it should be the one you think is the most pertinent for the proposed study.

Handy hint #8. The one gap you present here should be the one that aligns most closely to your chosen comparison, aim and hypothesis (as your study aim is meant to 'fill' that gap).

- End with a sentence on the research question we are trying to answer and the current study's aim, both which are provided for you (i.e., what you are trying to achieve in your study). Your research question should align with the comparison you selected. We provided a list of research questions under *The Study Idea* above.

Handy hint #9. The overview section is very short, so be concise and only include what is relevant.



**Literature Review (multiple paragraphs; around 800-900 words) (included in the word-count)**

- Start the literature review with outlining what is the pertinent issue in society that sparked the need for your study? (This is where you build an argument for why a study on the topic/issue is needed). Some stats and facts that get this message across would be particularly great to include here. It is okay for you to use reliable government websites or reputable organisations (e.g., the UN) in this section! One paragraph will do.
- How has social psychology tried to address this issue to date? (This is where you will review previous research on what is well-known about the topic)
- What hasn't been considered, or is only beginning to be considered, by social psychologists as a solution to this issue? And what are the limitations in the current literature? (This is where you will build an argument for why a study is needed to address a particular gap or limitation in the literature)
- What information can we use to help make a prediction about the effectiveness of your proposed solution? (This is where you will build a rationale for your hypothesis using what limited research on this specific topic exists or making reasoned and logical inferences from similar types of studies)
- Ensure that you define key concepts as they arise throughout the above (you will need to define at minimum the constructs/variables that could be considered the dependent and independent variable)

Handy hint #10. Here are some more specific questions that can help you discover some gaps/limitations in the literature and ultimately develop a rationale for why your current study should be done. **All areas of research have several limitations, but we recommend to only focus on one or two significant gaps/limitations in your research proposal (you can't fix all the problems with one study!).**

1. Think about the two emotional appeals that you are looking at in your study (or one if you are including a control). Is there anything we do not know about them (or it) yet? Have other studies compared these two conditions before? What new information about emotional appeals in the context of climate action will we get by comparing these two conditions?
2. Think about the studies that have been conducted before.
  - a. How do they measure the independent or dependent variables? Do these measurements have limitations (e.g., are they subjected to recall bias, self-report)? Are there problems with the way they are operationalising or measuring the constructs (e.g., are they talking about behaviour but measuring an intention or attitude instead)?
  - b. Is the methodology appropriate for answering the research aim? Can we be sure that there are no confounding variables, or can we be sure that this would occur outside a laboratory setting?
  - c. Who are the participants, and are we sure that the results will generalise to other groups (e.g., other countries, ages, gender, cultures, etc)?

Handy hint #11. This section should start broad and then get more specific at the end so that leads the reader to the current study and most specifically, your aim and hypothesis which are to be presented in the section immediately after.

Handy hint #12. You just want to include only what is **relevant** to your current study and the arguments you make to justify it. How do you know if it is relevant? Ask yourself whether you **NEED** this content to justify your hypothesis OR whether it is there because you read it and it was interesting/are just trying to summarise thoroughly. You do not have the word-count to include full comprehensive summaries of each study or to include irrelevant stuff that you find interesting, so be a harsh critic of your own work.

Handy hint #13. Each paragraph within the literature review should have a coherent and logical flow together. You do not want the reader to feel like they are jumping from point to point for no reason. One way to do this is to organise paragraphs around the key points in your argument, rather than around specific journal articles/studies. The **Week 5 seminar** will cover coherence in detail, so it is crucial to attend or at least watch this seminar to do well on the coherence criteria of your rubric.

### **The Current Study (1 paragraph max; around 150-200 words) (included in the word-count)**

- One paragraph that:
  - Provides a summary (2-3 sentences) of what is known and unknown in the literature that clearly restates the gaps/limitations from previous research that your study specifically will address.
  - Provides the study aim (as we have provided you with the required alterations). This should address the gap you have just mentioned directly.
  - Present your hypothesis. This should be the last sentence of the current study section, right after the aim. It must be clear that you derived this from the literature you reviewed in the previous section.

### **Implications (around 200-250 words, a total of two paragraphs) (included in the word-count)**

- Two theoretical/research implications of the proposed study should be explained and discussed. This should be presented in one paragraph (the first paragraph).
  - One referring to implications if the proposed hypothesis is supported.
  - One referring to implications if the proposed hypothesis is not supported.
- Two real world implications of the proposed study should be explained and discussed. This should be presented in one paragraph (the second paragraph).
  - One referring to implications if the proposed hypothesis is supported.
  - One referring to implications if the proposed hypothesis is not supported.

Handy hint #14. So, what are implications? Implications are covered in detail in the **Week 5 seminar**, so attending or at least watching this seminar is crucial to doing well in this section. Implications are tentative conclusions that you can make from the proposed study and can be either relevant to the research literature or the real-world. For example, if the hypothesis is supported (or not), what would it mean for...

1. Our knowledge about the topic? What would it mean if what *you* found was similar or different to what has been found in previous research? Would this change the way we think about this research area? Would our thinking/theories need to be updated?

2. The social world we live in? Would your findings change the way we think about the real world? How could the findings be practically applied to help solve problems in the real world?

**References (not included in the word-count)**

- This must start on a new page after the implications section.
- It must include all the references you used in this assessment, including the additional peer-reviewed journal articles you have sourced yourself. Do not include references you may have read but have not cited in text.
- The references **must** be formatted according to 7<sup>th</sup> edition APA style and include all the relevant information.