

Chapter 3
Topic 4 Questionnaires
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Activity: Research

What factors affect students' decisions about university?

Learning objectives

At the end of this activity you should be able to:

- Apply the use of questionnaires to researching a topic in education.
- Evaluate the strengths and limitations of using questionnaires.

As a class, design and use a questionnaire to investigate what social factors affect A-level students' decisions about university.

1. Decide who will complete it (e.g. first year A level/AS students) and how to ensure you get the completed questionnaires back.
2. Discuss which 10-20 questions to ask about:
 - (a) a range of social and educational factors (e.g. respondents' gender, ethnicity or class)
 - (b) A-level students' decisions about university.Some or all of your questions should be closed-ended.
You may find it useful to re-visit pages 34 and 56 on higher education to give you some ideas about possible research issues you could investigate.
3. Conduct a small pilot study to test your questions. Amend them if necessary.
4. In small groups, distribute at least 50 questionnaires, e.g. by giving them to whole class groups.
5. Collect in and analyse the responses, and then as a class answer the following:
 - a. Are there any correlations between any social factors and university decisions?
 - b. What conclusions can you draw about this issue?
 - c. Did your research confirm the practical advantages of questionnaires described in this Topic? If not, why not?
 - d. Do you feel your results are (a) reliable; (b) representative of your school/college? Why? (Tip: first check the definitions of reliability and representativeness.)
 - e. From your experience, list the positive and negative aspects of using questionnaires.