

# **The Place of Assessment in Reducing Student Anxiety about a Research Methods and Statistics Unit**

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It has been suggested that reduced assessment may lead to reduced student anxiety. Here we argue that it is not necessarily the case that reduced assessment is the most effective way to reduce student anxiety. In fact, for some units, the opposite may be true. When it comes to learning about research methods and statistics students often begin the unit with high levels of anxiety. In this case, early and regular assessment, accompanied by immediate feedback, may serve to reduce student anxiety by providing students with a means of monitoring their progress and a sense of confidence in their ability upon achieving regular learning goals. We present data on a group of 15 female students enrolled in a third-year undergraduate unit on research methods and statistics. At the end of the unit, participants completed an anonymous survey designed to explore their attitudes and experiences of learning during this unit. Results revealed that 73.4% of students had been dreading learning about this topic at the beginning of the unit; however, 93.4% agreed that at the end of the unit they were proud of their statistics knowledge and 100% agreed that they felt more positive about statistics by the end of the unit. We were especially interested in the place of early and regular assessment in this unit. Regarding the weekly mini-tests that were a core design feature of the unit, 93.4% of students reported that these tests were helpful in boosting their confidence in their ability to learn statistics successfully.