Guidelines relating to the statistical consulting service:

The University employs a full-time statistical consultant to provide assistance to staff, and postgraduate students in areas of their research that require the use of statistical methods. His brief is to assist clients to help themselves rather than to conduct either research or analysis on their behalf.

1. In order to precisely tailor statistical tools and methods to researchers’ problems and queries, it is necessary for the client to provide introductory information about the research project for which statistical assistance is required. In addition, contact details are collected.

   Please read and complete the “Request for Statistical Consultation” form.

2. Statistical assistance is primarily provided for staff and postgraduate students (PhD and Master Degrees by Research) undertaking research at Flinders University.

3. Master by Coursework students with minor research components are not eligible for statistical consulting, particularly if those projects are a part of a standard component of coursework load such as, for example, assignments in a Research Methods class. However, if the research component has a value of 13 or more units, supervisors can seek additional assistance related to more complex statistical analyses on behalf of their students.

4. Supervisors of Honours students can seek additional assistance related to more complex statistical analyses on behalf of their students, particularly in cases of Honours research projects that may lead to a refereed publication.

5. As requests from staff and PhD students are treated with higher priority, the statistical consultant may not be able to respond quickly to queries from supervisors of Masters by Coursework and Honours students, and they may have to be placed on a waiting list.

6. Undergraduate students are not eligible for one-to-one statistical consultation. However, the Student Learning Centre provides a range of academic support services for them.

7. For consultations undertaken for postgraduate students or research assistants under supervision, their supervisors or project managers are strongly encouraged to participate in meetings with their students/subordinates. All email correspondence, materials produced, suggestions given after the consultation, etc. should be shared and discussed by researchers with their supervisors or project managers. Support given by the statistical consultant is only supplementary to guidance and help given by their overseers.

8. Researchers are encouraged to consult early in the formulation of a research project so that data are specified and collected in a format that is both manageable and conducive to the appropriate analysis.

9. It is recognised that different research problems will require different amounts of consulting time. However, it is expected that on average, the statistical consultant may spend up to 8 hours working per one request for consultation. This includes the necessary time for familiarisation with data and research problems, e-mail communication, reading background literature for the particular research field, self-development, etc.

10. It is expected that during consultations, various documents will be collected and produced (data files, research proposals, drafts of dissertations/papers, etc.). All documents will be stored securely, and only the Statistical Consultant (and her/his line manager) will have access to them. The files will be stored, and in due time disposed of, following the university policies on research data / records retention which are in line with the Australian Code for the Responsible Conduct of Research.

11. The Statistical Consultant will not write dissertations / reports on behalf of the researcher. However, examples of how particular statistical analyses should be presented can be provided.

12. An appointment is necessary due to the continuing demands for consulting time. In addition, as researching is a lengthy process and efficient consultation requires familiarity with the particular statistical inquiry, statistical help for “yesterday” will not likely be provided.

13. Ad hoc statistical advice over the telephone will not be provided. Seeking a “quick” answer to statistical questions may mask a complex research problem that requires a consultation to talk over all the statistical and research considerations involved.

14. Depending on the level of statistical consultant involvement, the support provided by her/him should be recognised by researchers in acknowledgements or by co-authorship. Acknowledgements should report the degree of help provided.