

EXPERIMENTAL RESEARCH Researchers study variables, which are characteristics that take on different values across people or things. If test scores and final grades were higher than could be accounted for by chance in the section receiving online feedback, the researcher could tentatively conclude that there is evidence the online feedback (treatment or independent variable) contributed to greater learning than the in-class feedback. Using two sections of economics taught by the same professor, the researcher using a random procedure would select one section to receive immediate online feedback about their performance on test questions; the other section would receive feedback during their next class session (independent variables). In the foregoing example, the researcher would attempt to make sure that both groups had the same instructor; that both sections met at the same time of day but on different days; that lecture notes, readings, and exams were the same; and so forth. For example, assume a university researcher wanted to investigate the effect of providing online feedback to students immediately following course examinations. The researcher would compare the two sections' exam scores and their final grades in the course (dependent variables).