



SOC 831

Qualitative Methods

S1 Evening 2014

Sociology

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General Information

Unit convenor and teaching staff

Unit Convenor

Tobia Fattore

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Contact via tobia.fattore@mq.edu.au

Credit points

4

Prerequisites

Admission to MPASR or PGDipPASR or PGCertPASR or MSocEntre or PGCertSocEntre

Corequisites

Co-badged status

SOC11701: Qualitative Methods: Issues and Practices

Unit description

This unit provides students with an opportunity to develop practical skills collecting, analysing and presenting data to address essential research questions. The unit introduces participants to a wide range of qualitative research methods, including observation, participant observation, interviewing, the use of focus groups and unobtrusive research methods. Students will also learn how to organise and analyse qualitative research data. The unit adopts a hands-on approach to provide an opportunity to develop research skills and a critical perspective of the research process itself.

Important Academic Dates

Information about important academic dates including deadlines for withdrawing from units are available at <https://www.mq.edu.au/study/calendar-of-dates>

Learning Outcomes

On successful completion of this unit, you will be able to:

Understand the nature of qualitative research procedures and what makes them distinctive.

Understand when qualitative research methods should be used and when they are unsuitable.

An appreciation of the ethical dimensions of research practice.

First-hand experience in using the techniques of observation and interviewing.

An ability to apply the techniques of 'grounded theory' in qualitative data analysis and to collect and analyse qualitative research data.

A range of more 'generic skills' including how to read critically; how to locate and retrieve information; how to solve problems and develop concepts; how to work together with others; and how to communicate your own ideas simply and directly.

Assessment Tasks

Name	Weighting	Due
<u>Research Proposal</u>	15%	April 4 (End of Week 5)
<u>Qualitative Research Essay</u>	30%	May 9 (End of Week 8)
<u>Group Research Project</u>	45%	June 13 (End of Week 13)
<u>Seminar Participation</u>	10%	Ongoing

Research Proposal

Due: **April 4 (End of Week 5)**

Weighting: **15%**

Students will be required to undertake a research project involving qualitative methods for this unit. This research will be undertaken in small groups and form the basis of the major assignment for the unit - the individual research report. As part of this process students are required to submit a brief group research proposal for their intended research. The proposal will outline the research question and summarise the intended research methods that will be used to address the question. Proposals will be assessed on whether the project is suitable for a qualitative approach, is feasible and uses the strengths of qualitative methods.

On successful completion you will be able to:

- Understand the nature of qualitative research procedures and what makes them distinctive.
- Understand when qualitative research methods should be used and when they are unsuitable.
- An appreciation of the ethical dimensions of research practice.
- A range of more 'generic skills' including how to read critically; how to locate and retrieve information; how to solve problems and develop concepts; how to work together with others; and how to communicate your own ideas simply and directly.

Qualitative Research Essay

Due: **May 9 (End of Week 8)**

Weighting: **30%**

This assessment requires students to undertake a research essay examining the principles of qualitative research. The essay provides an opportunity for students to reflect on the philosophical foundations of qualitative research, on whether qualitative research is 'scientific', the distinct characteristics of qualitative research techniques and for what types of social research qualitative methods are most appropriate.

On successful completion you will be able to:

- Understand the nature of qualitative research procedures and what makes them distinctive.
- An appreciation of the ethical dimensions of research practice.
- A range of more 'generic skills' including how to read critically; how to locate and retrieve information; how to solve problems and develop concepts; how to work together with others; and how to communicate your own ideas simply and directly.

Group Research Project

Due: **June 13 (End of Week 13)**

Weighting: **45%**

Students will undertake a group qualitative research report throughout the semester. This assignment presents the results of the group research as an individual research report. As well as presenting the research question, study rationale, research methodology and analysis of findings, the report will also provide a critical evaluation of the research experience.

On successful completion you will be able to:

- Understand the nature of qualitative research procedures and what makes them distinctive.
- Understand when qualitative research methods should be used and when they are unsuitable.
- An appreciation of the ethical dimensions of research practice.
- First-hand experience in using the techniques of observation and interviewing.
- An ability to apply the techniques of 'grounded theory' in qualitative data analysis and to collect and analyse qualitative research data.
- A range of more 'generic skills' including how to read critically; how to locate and retrieve information; how to solve problems and develop concepts; how to work together with others; and how to communicate your own ideas simply and directly.

Seminar Participation

Due: **Ongoing**

Weighting: **10%**

Students will be assessed on ongoing contributions to the seminars, based on the quality of their participation.

On successful completion you will be able to:

- Understand the nature of qualitative research procedures and what makes them distinctive.
- Understand when qualitative research methods should be used and when they are unsuitable.
- First-hand experience in using the techniques of observation and interviewing.
- An ability to apply the techniques of 'grounded theory' in qualitative data analysis and to collect and analyse qualitative research data.
- A range of more 'generic skills' including how to read critically; how to locate and retrieve information; how to solve problems and develop concepts; how to work together with others; and how to communicate your own ideas simply and directly.

Delivery and Resources

The course is offered in a two-hour seminar format, comprising a lecture, group discussion and practice based workshop each week.

There are no required texts for this course. The readings for each week can be accessed from e-reserve.

However we would recommend the following textbooks, that you may find useful for this course and as a resource for social research more generally.

- Maggie Walter (2009) *Social Research Methods* (Second Edition) Oxford University Press
- Alan Bryman (2012) *Social Research Methods* (Fourth Edition) Oxford University Press

Unit Schedule

Week	Topic
Week 1	Introduction to Qualitative Research
Week 2	Is Qualitative Research a Science?

Week 3	Designing Qualitative Research
Week 4	Research Ethics and Politics
Week 5	Different Approaches to Qualitative Observation as a Method
Week 6	The Interview Technique
Week 7	The Interview in Practice
Week 8	Focus Groups
Week 9	Content Analysis, Visual Techniques and Task-oriented methods
Week 10	Introduction to Qualitative Analysis
Week 11	Grounded Theory
Week 12	Interrogating the Text
Week 13	Writing and Wrapping Up

Policies and Procedures

Macquarie University policies and procedures are accessible from [Policy Central](#). Students should be aware of the following policies in particular with regard to Learning and Teaching:

Academic Honesty Policy http://mq.edu.au/policy/docs/academic_honesty/policy.html

Assessment Policy <http://mq.edu.au/policy/docs/assessment/policy.html>

Grading Policy <http://mq.edu.au/policy/docs/grading/policy.html>

Grade Appeal Policy <http://mq.edu.au/policy/docs/gradeappeal/policy.html>

Grievance Management Policy http://mq.edu.au/policy/docs/grievance_management/policy.html

Disruption to Studies Policy http://www.mq.edu.au/policy/docs/disruption_studies/policy.html *The Disruption to Studies Policy is effective from March 3 2014 and replaces the Special Consideration Policy.*

In addition, a number of other policies can be found in the [Learning and Teaching Category](#) of Policy Central.

Student Code of Conduct

Macquarie University students have a responsibility to be familiar with the Student Code of Conduct: https://students.mq.edu.au/support/student_conduct/

Student Support

Macquarie University provides a range of support services for students. For details, visit <http://students.mq.edu.au/support/>

Learning Skills

Learning Skills (mq.edu.au/learningskills) provides academic writing resources and study strategies to improve your marks and take control of your study.

- [Workshops](#)
- [StudyWise](#)
- [Academic Integrity Module for Students](#)
- [Ask a Learning Adviser](#)

Student Services and Support

Students with a disability are encouraged to contact the [Disability Service](#) who can provide appropriate help with any issues that arise during their studies.

Student Enquiries

For all student enquiries, visit Student Connect at ask.mq.edu.au

IT Help

For help with University computer systems and technology, visit <http://informatics.mq.edu.au/help/>.

When using the University's IT, you must adhere to the [Acceptable Use Policy](#). The policy applies to all who connect to the MQ network including students.

Graduate Capabilities

PG - Discipline Knowledge and Skills

Our postgraduates will be able to demonstrate a significantly enhanced depth and breadth of knowledge, scholarly understanding, and specific subject content knowledge in their chosen fields.

This graduate capability is supported by:

Learning outcomes

- Understand the nature of qualitative research procedures and what makes them distinctive.

- Understand when qualitative research methods should be used and when they are unsuitable.
- An appreciation of the ethical dimensions of research practice.
- First-hand experience in using the techniques of observation and interviewing.
- An ability to apply the techniques of 'grounded theory' in qualitative data analysis and to collect and analyse qualitative research data.

Assessment tasks

- Research Proposal
- Qualitative Research Essay
- Group Research Project
- Seminar Participation

PG - Critical, Analytical and Integrative Thinking

Our postgraduates will be capable of utilising and reflecting on prior knowledge and experience, of applying higher level critical thinking skills, and of integrating and synthesising learning and knowledge from a range of sources and environments. A characteristic of this form of thinking is the generation of new, professionally oriented knowledge through personal or group-based critique of practice and theory.

This graduate capability is supported by:

Learning outcomes

- First-hand experience in using the techniques of observation and interviewing.
- An ability to apply the techniques of 'grounded theory' in qualitative data analysis and to collect and analyse qualitative research data.
- A range of more 'generic skills' including how to read critically; how to locate and retrieve information; how to solve problems and develop concepts; how to work together with others; and how to communicate your own ideas simply and directly.

Assessment tasks

- Research Proposal
- Qualitative Research Essay
- Group Research Project
- Seminar Participation

PG - Research and Problem Solving Capability

Our postgraduates will be capable of systematic enquiry; able to use research skills to create new knowledge that can be applied to real world issues, or contribute to a field of study or practice to enhance society. They will be capable of creative questioning, problem finding and

problem solving.

This graduate capability is supported by:

Learning outcomes

- Understand the nature of qualitative research procedures and what makes them distinctive.
- Understand when qualitative research methods should be used and when they are unsuitable.
- An appreciation of the ethical dimensions of research practice.
- First-hand experience in using the techniques of observation and interviewing.
- An ability to apply the techniques of 'grounded theory' in qualitative data analysis and to collect and analyse qualitative research data.

Assessment tasks

- Research Proposal
- Qualitative Research Essay
- Group Research Project
- Seminar Participation

PG - Effective Communication

Our postgraduates will be able to communicate effectively and convey their views to different social, cultural, and professional audiences. They will be able to use a variety of technologically supported media to communicate with empathy using a range of written, spoken or visual formats.

This graduate capability is supported by:

Learning outcomes

- Understand when qualitative research methods should be used and when they are unsuitable.
- An appreciation of the ethical dimensions of research practice.
- First-hand experience in using the techniques of observation and interviewing.
- An ability to apply the techniques of 'grounded theory' in qualitative data analysis and to collect and analyse qualitative research data.
- A range of more 'generic skills' including how to read critically; how to locate and retrieve information; how to solve problems and develop concepts; how to work together with others; and how to communicate your own ideas simply and directly.

Assessment tasks

- Research Proposal
- Qualitative Research Essay
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PG - Engaged and Responsible, Active and Ethical Citizens

Our postgraduates will be ethically aware and capable of confident transformative action in relation to their professional responsibilities and the wider community. They will have a sense of connectedness with others and country and have a sense of mutual obligation. They will be able to appreciate the impact of their professional roles for social justice and inclusion related to national and global issues

This graduate capability is supported by:

Learning outcomes

- Understand when qualitative research methods should be used and when they are unsuitable.
- An appreciation of the ethical dimensions of research practice.
- First-hand experience in using the techniques of observation and interviewing.
- A range of more 'generic skills' including how to read critically; how to locate and retrieve information; how to solve problems and develop concepts; how to work together with others; and how to communicate your own ideas simply and directly.

Assessment tasks

- Qualitative Research Essay
- Group Research Project

PG - Capable of Professional and Personal Judgment and Initiative

Our postgraduates will demonstrate a high standard of discernment and common sense in their professional and personal judgment. They will have the ability to make informed choices and decisions that reflect both the nature of their professional work and their personal perspectives.

This graduate capability is supported by:

Learning outcomes

- Understand when qualitative research methods should be used and when they are unsuitable.
- An appreciation of the ethical dimensions of research practice.
- First-hand experience in using the techniques of observation and interviewing.

- A range of more 'generic skills' including how to read critically; how to locate and retrieve information; how to solve problems and develop concepts; how to work together with others; and how to communicate your own ideas simply and directly.

Assessment tasks

- Research Proposal
- Group Research Project
- Seminar Participation