



# SOCI701

## Qualitative Methods: Issues and Practices

S1 Evening 2015

*Dept of 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](mailto:tobia.fattore@mq.edu.au)

Credit points

4

Prerequisites

Admission to MRes

Corequisites

Co-badged status

Unit description

This unit explores the potentials and limits of qualitative methods in the social sciences. As well as exploring the theoretical issues of this approach, students will develop practical skills collecting, analysing and presenting data to address essential research questions. 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:

Students will understand the nature of qualitative research methodologies and methods and what makes them distinctive.

Students will develop an understanding of which research problems are most suitable for the use of qualitative methodologies and demonstrate when qualitative methods are most appropriately used.

Students will develop an appreciation of the ethical dimensions of research practice.

Students will have first-hand experience in using a range of qualitative research methods, in particular the techniques of observation, in-depth interviewing and focus

group interviewing.

Students will develop an ability to apply the techniques of 'grounded theory' to analyse qualitative data.

Students will develop a range of more 'generic skills' including being able to critically engage with texts; how to locate and retrieve information; concept development; collaboration within a group-work environment; and how to communicate ideas clearly through a variety of medium.

## Assessment Tasks

Name	Weighting	Due
<a href="#"><u>Research Proposal</u></a>	15%	March 27 ( End of Week 5)
<a href="#"><u>Qualitative Research Essay</u></a>	30%	May 1 (End of Week 8)
<a href="#"><u>Research Report</u></a>	45%	June 5 (End of Week 13)
<a href="#"><u>Seminar Participation</u></a>	10%	Ongoing

### Research Proposal

Due: **March 27 ( End of Week 5)**

Weighting: **15%**

Students will be required to undertake a research project involving qualitative methods for this unit. This project should relate to the research area they are investigating for their Masters of Research. As part of this process students will be required to submit a brief 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 qualitative research, is feasible and uses the strengths of qualitative methods.

On successful completion you will be able to:

- Students will develop an understanding of which research problems are most suitable for the use of qualitative methodologies and demonstrate when qualitative methods are most appropriately used.
- Students will develop an appreciation of the ethical dimensions of research practice.
- Students will have first-hand experience in using a range of qualitative research methods, in particular the techniques of observation, in-depth interviewing and focus group interviewing.
- Students will develop a range of more 'generic skills' including being able to critically

engage with texts; how to locate and retrieve information; concept development; collaboration within a group-work environment; and how to communicate ideas clearly through a variety of medium.

## Qualitative Research Essay

Due: **May 1 (End of Week 8)**

Weighting: **30%**

Students will be required 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, the scientific status of qualitative research and the types of knowledge created through qualitative methodologies. Students will be required to reflect on how a qualitative approach can inform their ongoing research agenda for their Masters of Research.

On successful completion you will be able to:

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- Students will develop a range of more 'generic skills' including being able to critically engage with texts; how to locate and retrieve information; concept development; collaboration within a group-work environment; and how to communicate ideas clearly through a variety of medium.

## Research Report

Due: **June 5 (End of Week 13)**

Weighting: **45%**

Students will undertake a qualitative research project throughout the semester based on the research proposal submitted earlier in the semester. This assignment presents the results of these investigations. The research will involve data obtained through the use of at least two qualitative research methods. As well as presenting the research question, study rationale, research methodology and findings, the report will also provide a critical evaluation of the research experience.

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- Students will develop an appreciation of the ethical dimensions of research practice.
- Students will have first-hand experience in using a range of qualitative research methods, in particular the techniques of observation, in-depth interviewing and focus group interviewing.
- Students will develop an ability to apply the techniques of 'grounded theory' to analyse qualitative data.
- Students will develop a range of more 'generic skills' including being able to critically engage with texts; how to locate and retrieve information; concept development; collaboration within a group-work environment; and how to communicate ideas clearly through a variety of medium.

## Seminar Participation

Due: **Ongoing**

Weighting: **10%**

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

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- Students will develop an understanding of which research problems are most suitable for the use of qualitative methodologies and demonstrate when qualitative methods are most appropriately used.
- Students will have first-hand experience in using a range of qualitative research methods, in particular the techniques of observation, in-depth interviewing and focus group interviewing.
- Students will develop an ability to apply the techniques of 'grounded theory' to analyse qualitative data.
- Students will develop a range of more 'generic skills' including being able to critically engage with texts; how to locate and retrieve information; concept development; collaboration within a group-work environment; and how to communicate ideas clearly through a variety of medium.

## Delivery and Resources

The course is offered in a two-hour seminar format, comprising a lecture, group discussion and practice-based workshop each week. Additionally a non-compulsory one-hour workshop will be available to students to develop their qualitative analysis skills.

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

However the following textbooks are recommended, 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
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](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](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](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/](https://students.mq.edu.au/support/student_conduct/)

## Results

Results shown in *iLearn*, or released directly by your Unit Convenor, are not confirmed as they are subject to final approval by the University. Once approved, final results will be sent to your student email address and will be made available in [eStudent](#). For more information visit [ask.mq.edu.au](http://ask.mq.edu.au).

## 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](http://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](http://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.