



SOCI701

Qualitative Methods: Issues and Practices

S1 Evening 2017

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

W6A Room 837

By appointment

Credit points

4

Prerequisites

Admission to MRes

Corequisites

Co-badged status

SOC831

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	Hurdle	Due
<u>Research Proposal</u>	25%	No	End of Week 5
<u>Research Report</u>	45%	No	End of Week 13
<u>In-class Exam</u>	15%	No	Week 13 Seminar
<u>Seminar Participation</u>	15%	No	Ongoing

Research Proposal

Due: **End of Week 5**

Weighting: **25%**

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.
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group interviewing.

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Research Report

Due: **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 qualitative research methods discussed in the unit. 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 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.
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In-class Exam

Due: **Week 13 Seminar**

Weighting: **15%**

This short-answer test, to be undertaken in-class in Week 13, assesses your knowledge of the concepts covered in the seminars, focussing on the lecture material. Each question will be of

equal value.

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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.

Seminar Participation

Due: **Ongoing**

Weighting: **15%**

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

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- 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.
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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 (2013) *Social Research Methods* (Third Edition) Oxford University Press
- Alan Bryman (2015) *Social Research Methods* (Fifth Edition) Oxford University Press
- Kathy Charmaz (2014) *Constructing Grounded Theory* (2nd Edition) Sage Publishing
- Alan Morris (2015) *A Practical Introduction to In-depth Interviewing* Sage Publications

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	Ethnography and Observation
Week 6	The Interview Technique
Week 7	Focus Groups
Week 8	Content Analysis, Visual Techniques and Task-oriented Methods
Week 9	Introduction to Qualitative Analysis
Week 10	Grounded Theory
Week 11	Discourse Analysis
Week 12	Writing Qualitative Research
Week 13	Wrapping Up and In-class exam

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_2016.html

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

Complaint Management Procedure for Students and Members of the Public http://www.mq.edu.au/policy/docs/complaint_management/procedure.html

Disruption to Studies Policy (in effect until Dec 4th, 2017): http://www.mq.edu.au/policy/docs/disruption_studies/policy.html

Special Consideration Policy (in effect from Dec 4th, 2017): <https://staff.mq.edu.au/work/strategy-planning-and-governance/university-policies-and-procedures/policies/special-consideration>

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/

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.

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://www.mq.edu.au/about_us/offices_and_units/information_technology/help/.

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

Graduate Capabilities

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

- 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.

Assessment tasks

- Research Proposal
- Research Report

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

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

Assessment tasks

- Research Proposal
- Research Report
- In-class Exam
- 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

- 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.

Assessment tasks

- Research Proposal
- Research Report
- In-class Exam
- 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

- 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 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

- Research Proposal
- Research Report
- 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

- 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 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

- Research Proposal
- Research Report
- Seminar Participation

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

- 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.

Assessment task

- Seminar Participation