



SOC 831

Qualitative Methods

S1 Evening 2017

Dept of Sociology

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General Information

Unit convenor and teaching staff

Unit Convenor

Tobia Fattore

tobia.fattore@mq.edu.au

Contact via tobia.fattore@mq.edu.au

W6A Room 837

By appointment

Credit points

4

Prerequisites

Admission to MPASR or GradCertPASR or GradDipPASR or MSocEntre

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.

Develop a critical appreciation of the ethical dimensions of research practice.

Obtain first hand experience in using qualitative research techniques, including observation, in-depth interviewing and focus group interviewing.

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

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

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 research will 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 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.
- Develop a critical appreciation of the ethical dimensions of research practice.
- Develop 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.

Research Report

Due: **End of Week 13**

Weighting: **45%**

Students will undertake a qualitative research report based on fieldwork they have undertaken throughout the semester. 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.
- Develop a critical appreciation of the ethical dimensions of research practice.
- Obtain first hand experience in using qualitative research techniques, including observation, in-depth interviewing and focus group interviewing.
- Develop an ability to apply the techniques of 'grounded theory' in qualitative data analysis and to collect and analyse qualitative research data.
- Develop 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: **15%**

Many of the seminars revolve around practical demonstration of qualitative research skills. From week to week students will be required to engage in these practical tasks to develop their skills as qualitative researchers. Students will be assessed on their participation in these activities and 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.
- Obtain first hand experience in using qualitative research techniques, including

observation, in-depth interviewing and focus group interviewing.

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

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.

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.
- Develop a critical appreciation of the ethical dimensions of research practice.

Delivery and Resources

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

There are no required texts for this course. The readings for each week can be accessed through the Macquarie University library (Unit Readings function)

However the following texts 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

- Understand when qualitative research methods should be used and when they are unsuitable.
- Develop a critical appreciation of the ethical dimensions of research practice.
- Obtain first hand experience in using qualitative research techniques, including observation, in-depth interviewing and focus group interviewing.
- Develop 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
- Research Report
- Seminar Participation

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.
- Develop a critical appreciation of the ethical dimensions of research practice.
- Obtain first hand experience in using qualitative research techniques, including observation, in-depth interviewing and focus group interviewing.

- Develop 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
- Research Report
- Seminar Participation
- In-class Exam

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

- Obtain first hand experience in using qualitative research techniques, including observation, in-depth interviewing and focus group interviewing.
- Develop an ability to apply the techniques of 'grounded theory' in qualitative data analysis and to collect and analyse qualitative research data.
- Develop 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
- Research Report
- Seminar Participation
- In-class Exam

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.
- Develop a critical appreciation of the ethical dimensions of research practice.
- Obtain first hand experience in using qualitative research techniques, including observation, in-depth interviewing and focus group interviewing.
- Develop 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
- 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

- Understand when qualitative research methods should be used and when they are unsuitable.
- Develop a critical appreciation of the ethical dimensions of research practice.
- Obtain first hand experience in using qualitative research techniques, including observation, in-depth interviewing and focus group interviewing.
- Develop an ability to apply the techniques of 'grounded theory' in qualitative data analysis and to collect and analyse qualitative research data.
- Develop 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

- 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

- Understand when qualitative research methods should be used and when they are unsuitable.
- Develop a critical appreciation of the ethical dimensions of research practice.
- Obtain first hand experience in using qualitative research techniques, including observation, in-depth interviewing and focus group interviewing.
- Develop 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 task

- Research Report