



# SOCX831

## Qualitative Methods

S1 OUA 2017

*Dept of Sociology*

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## General Information

Unit convenor and teaching staff

Unit Convenor

Tobia Fattore

[tobia.fattore@mq.edu.au](mailto:tobia.fattore@mq.edu.au)

Contact via [tobia.fattore@mq.edu.au](mailto:tobia.fattore@mq.edu.au)

W6A Room 837

By email

Prerequisites

Corequisites

Co-badged status

Unit description

This unit will introduce you to the key techniques used by qualitative researchers; explain when and why they are used and give you the chance to try them out in practice. It is organised in four modules: getting started; observing; interviewing techniques; and analysis and writing. The research skills you develop in this unit have many possible applications including, but not limited to: in the bureaucracy, working for a public inquiry; testing public opinion for political parties; marketing a new product; campaigning in a social movement; understanding the impact of a new industry on your local community. All enrolment queries should be directed to Open Universities Australia (OUA): see [www.open.edu.au](http://www.open.edu.au)

## Important Academic Dates

Information about important academic dates including deadlines for withdrawing from units are available at <https://www.open.edu.au/student-admin-and-support/key-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
<a href="#"><u>Research Proposal</u></a>	25%	No	End of Week 5
<a href="#"><u>Research Report</u></a>	45%	No	End of Week 13
<a href="#"><u>Participation</u></a>	15%	No	Ongoing
<a href="#"><u>Online Exam</u></a>	15%	No	Week 14

### 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 submit 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.

## Participation

Due: **Ongoing**

Weighting: **15%**

From week to week students will be required to engage in practical tasks to develop their skills as qualitative researchers. Students will be assessed on demonstration of their participation in these activities through ongoing contributions to weekly discussion forums.

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.

## Online Exam

Due: **Week 14**

Weighting: **15%**

This test, available in Week 14, assesses your knowledge of the concepts covered throughout the semester, 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

Each week written lecture slides and notes will be provided. This will be accompanied by a practical activity relating to the topic for that week.

There are no required texts for this course. The readings for each week can be accessed from the Macquarie University Units Reading 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

<i>Week</i>	<i>Topic</i>
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	Discourse Analysis
Week 13	Writing and Wrapping Up

## Policies and Procedures

### Late Submission - applies unless otherwise stated elsewhere in the unit guide

Unless a Special Consideration request has been submitted and approved, (a) a penalty for lateness will apply – two (2) marks out of 100 will be deducted per day for assignments submitted after the due date – and (b) no assignment will be accepted more than seven (7) days (incl. weekends) after the original submission deadline. No late submissions will be accepted for timed assessments – e.g. quizzes, online tests.

### Extension Request

**Special Consideration Policy and Procedure**  
**(<https://staff.mq.edu.au/work/strategy-planning-and-governance/university-policies-and-procedures/policies/special-consideration>)**

The University recognises that students may experience events or conditions that

adversely affect their academic performance. If you experience serious and unavoidable difficulties at exam time or when assessment tasks are due, you can consider applying for Special Consideration.

You need to show that the circumstances:

1. were serious, unexpected and unavoidable
2. were beyond your control
3. caused substantial disruption to your academic work
4. substantially interfered with your otherwise satisfactory fulfilment of the unit requirements
5. lasted at least three consecutive days or a total of 5 days within the teaching period and prevented completion of an assessment task scheduled for a specific date.

If you feel that your studies have been impacted submit an application as follows:

1. Visit [Ask MQ](#) and use your OneID to log in
2. Fill in your relevant details
3. Attach supporting documents by clicking 'Add a reply', click 'Browse' and navigating to the files you want to attach, then click 'Submit Form' to send your notification and supporting documents
4. Please keep copies of your original documents, as they may be requested in the future as part of the assessment process

### Outcome

Once your submission is assessed, an appropriate outcome will be organised.

## OUA Specific Policies and Procedures

### Withdrawal from a unit after the census date

You can withdraw from your subjects prior to [the census date](#) (last day to withdraw). If you successfully withdraw before the census date, you won't need to apply for Special Circumstances. If you find yourself unable to withdraw from your subjects before the census date - you might be able to [apply for Special Circumstances](#). If you're eligible, we can refund your fees and overturn your fail grade.

If you're studying Single Subjects using FEE-HELP or paying up front, you can [apply online](#).

If you're studying a degree using HECS-HELP, you'll need to [apply directly to Macquarie University](#).

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\\_2016.html](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](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](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/](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://www.mq.edu.au/about\\_us/offices\\_and\\_units/information\\_technology/help/](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
- 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
- Participation
- Online 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
- Participation

- Online 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
- 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
- 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