SOCX224

Methods of Social Research

S1 OUA 2018

Dept of Sociology

Contents

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General Information

Unit convenor and teaching staff
Unit Convenor
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Prerequisites

Corequisites

Co-badged status

Unit description
Social research is essential in the contemporary world and an important field of employment for graduates in the social sciences and humanities. This unit gives students an opportunity to develop practical skills designing social and organisational research; and in collecting, analysing and presenting data to address research questions. You will consider the best research methods to use and the problems, limitations and traps likely to be encountered by inexperienced researchers. You will also consider the ethical issues in social research, and the impact of new information technologies on social research. A major emphasis in the unit is on the practice of social research. A series of task-based activities introduces major methodological techniques, basic qualitative and quantitative approaches, including interviewing, focus groups, textual analysis, and participant observation. Students also receive a basic introduction to SPSS. Research methods useful to community generated research are also explored. No knowledge of statistics is required. All enrolment queries should be directed to Open Universities Australia (OUA): see 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:

Learn about the range of qualitative and quantitative social research methods and know when each should be used in social research.

Gain first-hand experience in using social research methods, including becoming familiar with the technologies used in social research.

Demonstrate an understanding of the major problems confronting social researchers,

especially: the scientific status of social science research; the strengths and weaknesses of different methods; questions relating to validity and reliability; and ethical considerations in social research.

Be able to scope a research problem, prepare a research proposal in response to this problem and outline a program of research to address the issues being considered.

Develop proficiency in generic skills required to undertake social research. These include: high level information retrieval, critical reading and conceptual skills, problem development and writing skills; and skills in the preparation of research proposals, literature reviews and assessment of research.

Assessment Tasks

Name	Weighting	Hurdle	Due
Information Skills Modules	5%	No	By the end of Week 5
Literature Review	20%	No	End of Week 6
Research Proposal	40%	No	End of Week 12
On-line test	20%	No	Week 13
Participation	15%	No	Weekly

Information Skills Modules

Due: **By the end of Week 5**
Weighting: **5%**

As part of preparing for the Literature Review Task, students will be required to undertake four Information Retrieval Skills modules. These modules develop students abilities to search for a range of academic sources and assess the quality of such sources. Each module has a quiz testing skills developed in that module. The results of these quizzes will comprise 5 percent of the overall mark for SOC224.

Internal students will undertake these modules in the Workshops in Weeks 2 to 5. External students will be able to access the modules online and undertake them as self-guided modules.

On successful completion you will be able to:
• Demonstrate an understanding of the major problems confronting social researchers, especially: the scientific status of social science research; the strengths and weaknesses of different methods; questions relating to validity and reliability; and ethical considerations in social research.

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Literature Review

Due: **End of Week 6**
Weighting: **20%**

For this task, students are required to present a research literature review, which will provide some of the background for the research proposal undertaken later in the unit. Students will be required to:

- Provide a brief outline of a social research topic they are wanting to investigate.
- Provide bibliographic details of articles and/or books related to the topic
- Undertake a concise review of two of these studies

Further details will be presented in the Unit Outline.

On successful completion you will be able to:
- Learn about the range of qualitative and quantitative social research methods and know when each should be used in social research.
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Research Proposal

Due: **End of Week 12**
Weighting: **40%**

Students will be required to submit a research proposal outlining the research topic, background to the proposed study and a methodology for investigating their research question. The proposal should identify the research methods proposed and justify their use. In most cases, it will incorporate a summary of the revised literature review submitted earlier in the course.

Further details will be provided in the Unit Outline.

On successful completion you will be able to:
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especially: the scientific status of social science research; the strengths and weaknesses of different methods; questions relating to validity and reliability; and ethical considerations in social research.

- Be able to scope a research problem, prepare a research proposal in response to this problem and outline a program of research to address the issues being considered.

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On-line test

Due: **Week 13**
Weighting: **20%**

The on-line test examines concepts covered in the lectures and workshops. This includes questions about quantitative and qualitative methods, research design and social statistics. A few questions will involve interpreting research materials, including tables and charts. The exam will be accessed via the unit iLearn page.

On successful completion you will be able to:
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- Demonstrate an understanding of the major problems confronting social researchers, especially: the scientific status of social science research; the strengths and weaknesses of different methods; questions relating to validity and reliability; and ethical considerations in social research.

Participation

Due: **Weekly**
Weighting: **15%**

Each week students are expected to engage with on-line activities designed to develop practical research skills. All students will be assigned a mark for participation in these activities and discussion forums. The mark will be based on evidence that student's are completing the readings each week; and contribution to weekly on-line activities.

On successful completion you will be able to:
- Learn about the range of qualitative and quantitative social research methods and know when each should be used in social research.
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with the technologies used in social research.

- Demonstrate an understanding of the major problems confronting social researchers, especially: the scientific status of social science research; the strengths and weaknesses of different methods; questions relating to validity and reliability; and ethical considerations in social research.

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Delivery and Resources

The course comprises a one-hour lecture and a two-hour workshop each week. The workshops take the form of practical, skills-development sessions, involving demonstrations, discussions and research exercises, related to the methods discussed in the lectures.

Readings for each week will be made available through e-reserve. However students might consider purchasing Bryman, A. *Social Research Methods* Oxford University Press: Oxford. (Fourth of Fifth Edition are appropriate)

Additionally a workbook covering the exercises for each week's workshop will be made available on the SOC224 iLearn page.

Unit Schedule

Week	Lecture	On-line Activity
1	Introduction: Research in the social sciences	No Workshops
2	Research Traditions, Design and Questions	**Start of Activity program**. Selecting research themes and developing topics/ Scoping a research project
3	Research data and using secondary sources	Research development: Research questions and using existing data
4	Introduction to Qualitative research	Qualitative research methods I: Observation in practice
5	Collecting qualitative data	Qualitative research methods II: Conducting interviews
6	Analysing qualitative data	Qualitative research methods III: Working with focus groups

7	Qualitative research in practice - lessons from the field	Qualitative research methods IV: Analysing qualitative data
8	Introduction to Quantitative Social Research	Social statistics I: The Census, opinion polls and classifying data
9	Social surveys and sampling	Social statistics II: Working with social surveys and reading quantitative data
10	Writing social surveys: conceptualising and operationalising	Social statistics III: Introduction to SPSS
11	Quantitative data analysis I: Uni-variate analysis	Social statistics IV: Analysis with SPSS
12	Quantitative data analysis II: Choosing the right statistical test: Bi-variate analysis	Ethics in social research
13	Ethics in social research	Course Reflections and Wrap-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 (https://staff.mq.edu.au/work/strategy-planning-and-governance/university-policies-and-procedures/policy-central). Students should be aware of the following policies in particular with regard to Learning and Teaching:

- Academic Appeals Policy
- Academic Integrity Policy

- Academic Progression Policy
- Assessment Policy
- Fitness to Practice Procedure
- Grade Appeal Policy
- Complaint Management Procedure for Students and Members of the Public
- Special Consideration Policy *(**Note:** The Special Consideration Policy is effective from 4 December 2017 and replaces the Disruption to Studies Policy.)*

Undergraduate students seeking more policy resources can visit the Student Policy Gateway (https://students.mq.edu.au/support/study/student-policy-gateway). It is your one-stop-shop for the key policies you need to know about throughout your undergraduate student journey.

If you would like to see all the policies relevant to Learning and Teaching visit Policy Central (https://staff.mq.edu.au/work/strategy-planning-and-governance/university-policies-and-procedures/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/study/getting-started/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

Creative and Innovative

Our graduates will also be capable of creative thinking and of creating knowledge. They will be imaginative and open to experience and capable of innovation at work and in the community. We want them to be engaged in applying their critical, creative thinking.

This graduate capability is supported by:

Learning outcomes

- Gain first-hand experience in using social research methods, including becoming familiar with the technologies used in social research.
- Be able to scope a research problem, prepare a research proposal in response to this problem and outline a program of research to address the issues being considered.
- Develop proficiency in generic skills required to undertake social research. These include: high level information retrieval, critical reading and conceptual skills, problem development and writing skills; and skills in the preparation of research proposals, literature reviews and assessment of research.

Assessment tasks

- Information Skills Modules
- Literature Review
- Research Proposal

Capable of Professional and Personal Judgement and Initiative

We want our graduates to have emotional intelligence and sound interpersonal skills and to demonstrate discernment and common sense in their professional and personal judgement. They will exercise initiative as needed. They will be capable of risk assessment, and be able to handle ambiguity and complexity, enabling them to be adaptable in diverse and changing environments.

This graduate capability is supported by:

Learning outcomes

- Learn about the range of qualitative and quantitative social research methods and know when each should be used in social research.

- Gain first-hand experience in using social research methods, including becoming familiar with the technologies used in social research.

- Demonstrate an understanding of the major problems confronting social researchers, especially: the scientific status of social science research; the strengths and weaknesses of different methods; questions relating to validity and reliability; and ethical considerations in social research.

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Assessment tasks

- Information Skills Modules
- Literature Review
- Research Proposal
- On-line test
- Participation

Commitment to Continuous Learning

Our graduates will have enquiring minds and a literate curiosity which will lead them to pursue knowledge for its own sake. They will continue to pursue learning in their careers and as they participate in the world. They will be capable of reflecting on their experiences and relationships with others and the environment, learning from them, and growing - personally, professionally and socially.

This graduate capability is supported by:

Learning outcomes

- Gain first-hand experience in using social research methods, including becoming familiar with the technologies used in social research.

- Be able to scope a research problem, prepare a research proposal in response to this problem and outline a program of research to address the issues being considered.

- Develop proficiency in generic skills required to undertake social research. These

include: high level information retrieval, critical reading and conceptual skills, problem development and writing skills; and skills in the preparation of research proposals, literature reviews and assessment of research.

Assessment tasks

- Information Skills Modules
- Literature Review
- On-line test
- Participation

Discipline Specific Knowledge and Skills

Our graduates will take with them the intellectual development, depth and breadth of knowledge, scholarly understanding, and specific subject content in their chosen fields to make them competent and confident in their subject or profession. They will be able to demonstrate, where relevant, professional technical competence and meet professional standards. They will be able to articulate the structure of knowledge of their discipline, be able to adapt discipline-specific knowledge to novel situations, and be able to contribute from their discipline to inter-disciplinary solutions to problems.

This graduate capability is supported by:

Learning outcomes

- Learn about the range of qualitative and quantitative social research methods and know when each should be used in social research.
- Gain first-hand experience in using social research methods, including becoming familiar with the technologies used in social research.
- Demonstrate an understanding of the major problems confronting social researchers, especially: the scientific status of social science research; the strengths and weaknesses of different methods; questions relating to validity and reliability; and ethical considerations in social research.
- Be able to scope a research problem, prepare a research proposal in response to this problem and outline a program of research to address the issues being considered.

Assessment tasks

- Research Proposal
- On-line test
- Participation

Critical, Analytical and Integrative Thinking

We want our graduates to be capable of reasoning, questioning and analysing, and to integrate

and synthesise learning and knowledge from a range of sources and environments; to be able to critique constraints, assumptions and limitations; to be able to think independently and systemically in relation to scholarly activity, in the workplace, and in the world. We want them to have a level of scientific and information technology literacy.

This graduate capability is supported by:

Learning outcomes

- Learn about the range of qualitative and quantitative social research methods and know when each should be used in social research.
- Gain first-hand experience in using social research methods, including becoming familiar with the technologies used in social research.
- Demonstrate an understanding of the major problems confronting social researchers, especially: the scientific status of social science research; the strengths and weaknesses of different methods; questions relating to validity and reliability; and ethical considerations in social research.
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Assessment tasks

- Information Skills Modules
- Literature Review
- Research Proposal
- On-line test

Problem Solving and Research Capability

Our graduates should be capable of researching; of analysing, and interpreting and assessing data and information in various forms; of drawing connections across fields of knowledge; and they should be able to relate their knowledge to complex situations at work or in the world, in order to diagnose and solve problems. We want them to have the confidence to take the initiative in doing so, within an awareness of their own limitations.

This graduate capability is supported by:

Learning outcomes

- Learn about the range of qualitative and quantitative social research methods and know when each should be used in social research.

- Gain first-hand experience in using social research methods, including becoming familiar with the technologies used in social research.

- Demonstrate an understanding of the major problems confronting social researchers, especially: the scientific status of social science research; the strengths and weaknesses of different methods; questions relating to validity and reliability; and ethical considerations in social research.

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Assessment tasks

- Literature Review
- Research Proposal
- On-line test
- Participation

Effective Communication

We want to develop in our students the ability to communicate and convey their views in forms effective with different audiences. We want our graduates to take with them the capability to read, listen, question, gather and evaluate information resources in a variety of formats, assess, write clearly, speak effectively, and to use visual communication and communication technologies as appropriate.

This graduate capability is supported by:

Learning outcomes

- Gain first-hand experience in using social research methods, including becoming familiar with the technologies used in social research.

- Be able to scope a research problem, prepare a research proposal in response to this problem and outline a program of research to address the issues being considered.

- Develop proficiency in generic skills required to undertake social research. These include: high level information retrieval, critical reading and conceptual skills, problem development and writing skills; and skills in the preparation of research proposals, literature reviews and assessment of research.

Assessment tasks

- Literature Review
- Research Proposal
- Participation

Engaged and Ethical Local and Global citizens

As local citizens our graduates will be aware of indigenous perspectives and of the nation's historical context. They will be engaged with the challenges of contemporary society and with knowledge and ideas. We want our graduates to have respect for diversity, to be open-minded, sensitive to others and inclusive, and to be open to other cultures and perspectives: they should have a level of cultural literacy. Our graduates should be aware of disadvantage and social justice, and be willing to participate to help create a wiser and better society.

This graduate capability is supported by:

Learning outcomes

- Demonstrate an understanding of the major problems confronting social researchers, especially: the scientific status of social science research; the strengths and weaknesses of different methods; questions relating to validity and reliability; and ethical considerations in social research.

- Be able to scope a research problem, prepare a research proposal in response to this problem and outline a program of research to address the issues being considered.

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Assessment tasks

- Literature Review
- Participation

Socially and Environmentally Active and Responsible

We want our graduates to be aware of and have respect for self and others; to be able to work with others as a leader and a team player; to have a sense of connectedness with others and country; and to have a sense of mutual obligation. Our graduates should be informed and active participants in moving society towards sustainability.

This graduate capability is supported by:

Learning outcomes

- Demonstrate an understanding of the major problems confronting social researchers,

especially: the scientific status of social science research; the strengths and weaknesses of different methods; questions relating to validity and reliability; and ethical considerations in social research.

- Be able to scope a research problem, prepare a research proposal in response to this problem and outline a program of research to address the issues being considered.
- Develop proficiency in generic skills required to undertake social research. These include: high level information retrieval, critical reading and conceptual skills, problem development and writing skills; and skills in the preparation of research proposals, literature reviews and assessment of research.

Assessment task

- Participation