SOCI8035

Qualitative Methods for Policy

Session 2, Fully online/virtual 2020

Department of Sociology

Contents

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Notice

As part of Phase 3 of our return to campus plan, most units will now run tutorials, seminars and ot her small group learning activities on campus for the second half-year, while keeping an online ver sion available for those students unable to return or those who choose to continue their studies onli ne.

To check the availability of face-to-face and onlin e activities for your unit, please go to timetable vi ewer. To check detailed information on unit asses sments visit your unit's iLearn space or consult yo ur unit convenor.

General Information

Unit convenor and teaching staff
Convenor
Tobia Fattore
tobia.fattore@mq.edu.au
Room C330 Building C, Arts Precinct
By appointment

Credit points
10

Prerequisites
Admission to MPSP or MPASR or GradCertPASR or GradDipPASR.

Corequisites

Co-badged status
SOCX8035

Unit description
Social research is critical for evidence based policy making. This unit canvasses the use of qualitative research to inform public and social policy. Students will develop skills in conducting qualitative research and how it contributes to policy processes. This includes designing and conducting qualitative research and working with existing qualitative data to develop policy. The course will be structured around four modules. The first examines qualitative research designs for policy. The second introduces students to qualitative research methods and analysis, including qualitative analysis of policy documents. The third applies this knowledge to policy processes, including finding and using existing qualitative data sets; qualitative research as consultation; and the uses and misuses of citizen perspectives in policy processes. The unit concludes by considering how qualitative and quantitative data can be combined as policy evidence. Throughout, the unit will include expert speakers from the non-profit, government and academic sectors to provide insider perspectives on the use of qualitative data for policy making and to discuss the politics of research utilization. By undertaking this course, students will develop advanced skills in undertaking qualitative research and be able to apply these skills in a range of policy settings.

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:

ULO1: Understand the nature of qualitative research procedures, what makes them distinctive and how they can be used to inform policy development.

ULO2: Understand and practically apply qualitative strategies of inquiry, research methods and data analysis techniques.

ULO3: Develop a critical appreciation of the ethical dimensions of research practice.

ULO4: Obtain first-hand experience in using qualitative research techniques to examine policy issues and problems.

ULO5: Develop a critical appreciation of the politics of research utilization in different policy contexts.

ULO6: Obtain skills in critically evaluating the robustness of different forms of data.

ULO7: Be able to combine qualitative and quantitative data as sources of evidence for policy.

General Assessment Information

Assignment Submission

All written assignments need to be submitted using the turnitin link for each assignment. These can be accessed under the assessment tab on the iLearn page for the assignment.

Academic Honesty

Academic honesty is an integral part of the core values and principles of Macquarie University. It is a fundamental principle that all staff and students act with integrity in the creation, development, application and use of ideas and information. This means that:

- All academic work claimed as original is the work of the author making the claim.
- All academic collaborations are acknowledged.
- Academic work is not falsified in any way
- When the ideas of others are used, these ideas are acknowledged appropriately

Assessment Tasks

Name	Weighting	Hurdle	Due
Research Design/Consultation Exercise	30%	No	Week 6 (Sept 6)
Policy Research Presentation	20%	No	Weeks 12 and 13
Policy Research Report	40%	No	Week 14 (Nov 15)

Name	Weighting	Hurdle	Due
Participation	10%	No	Ongoing

Research Design/Consultation Exercise

Assessment Type [1]: Design Task
Indicative Time on Task [2]: 30 hours
Due: **Week 6 (Sept 6)**
Weighting: **30%**

Students will be required to develop a consultation strategy utilising qualitative research methods. The consultation strategy will outline the policy area or topic upon which consultation will occur; provide an overview of the consultation participants (the sample); outline the overall consultation strategy (research design); describe how information will be obtained from research participants (fieldwork and methods); and describe how the data obtained will be used to provide evidence to inform the policy topic (data analysis).

On successful completion you will be able to:
- Understand the nature of qualitative research procedures, what makes them distinctive and how they can be used to inform policy development.
- Understand and practically apply qualitative strategies of inquiry, research methods and data analysis techniques.
- Develop a critical appreciation of the ethical dimensions of research practice.
- Develop a critical appreciation of the politics of research utilization in different policy contexts.

Policy Research Presentation

Assessment Type [1]: Presentation
Indicative Time on Task [2]: 10 hours
Due: **Weeks 12 and 13**
Weighting: **20%**

An important skill in social research is the ability to present research in an engaging manner. This assessment task provides an opportunity to develop these presentation skills for social research. Students will give a 10-15 minute presentation (online students will do a virtual presentation) on their policy research, focusing on the themes identified from the analysis and recommendations. These presentations will be undertaken as virtual presentations during weeks 12 and 13.

On successful completion you will be able to:

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

- Develop a critical appreciation of the politics of research utilization in different policy contexts.

- Obtain skills in critically evaluating the robustness of different forms of data.

Policy Research Report

Assessment Type [1]: Qualitative analysis task
Indicative Time on Task [2]: 35 hours
Due: **Week 14 (Nov 15)**
Weighting: **40%**

Students will analyse a pre-existing corpus of qualitative data to write a report on a policy topic, in the form of a discussion paper/policy briefing. In addition, students will be required to identify and integrate relevant quantitative data to provide context information for the report. The report will require students to undertake qualitative data analysis and develop recommendations based on this analysis.

On successful completion you will be able to:

- Understand and practically apply qualitative strategies of inquiry, research methods and data analysis techniques.

- Obtain first-hand experience in using qualitative research techniques to examine policy issues and problems.

- Develop a critical appreciation of the politics of research utilization in different policy contexts.

- Obtain skills in critically evaluating the robustness of different forms of data.

- Be able to combine qualitative and quantitative data as sources of evidence for policy.

Participation

Assessment Type [1]: Participatory task
Indicative Time on Task [2]: 10 hours
Due: **Ongoing**
Weighting: **10%**

Throughout the semester students will undertake tasks to develop their qualitative research

skills. These will be undertaken outside class and discussed during the weekly online seminars. These include exercises relating to research design, ethics, practicing qualitative methods and data analysis. For External and OUA students, discussion of these activities will be the topics for the weekly discussion forums.

On successful completion you will be able to:

- Understand the nature of qualitative research procedures, what makes them distinctive and how they can be used to inform policy development.
- Understand and practically apply qualitative strategies of inquiry, research methods and data analysis techniques.
- Develop a critical appreciation of the ethical dimensions of research practice.
- Obtain first-hand experience in using qualitative research techniques to examine policy issues and problems.
- Obtain skills in critically evaluating the robustness of different forms of data.

[1] If you need help with your assignment, please contact:

- the academic teaching staff in your unit for guidance in understanding or completing this type of assessment
- the Writing Centre for academic skills support.

[2] Indicative time-on-task is an estimate of the time required for completion of the assessment task and is subject to individual variation

Delivery and Resources

The teaching program consists of the following:

- The course will be run as a series of weekly seminars combining both lecture content and applied exercises. The lectures will be pre-recorded and available on a weekly basis in the relevant week on the iLearn page. The applied exercises will be set-up as guided activities organised through the weekly Discussion Forums.
- The lecture components provide students with the knowledge base essential for undertaking qualitative research for policy. The practical tasks embed this knowledge and assist students to develop their qualitative research skills. These include exercises relating to research design, ethics, the practice of various qualitative methods, data analysis and interpretation and writing for policy. These will be undertaken in class.
- The seminar material will be structured around several modules. The first examines

qualitative research design for policy-making. The second introduces students to qualitative strategies of inquiry, research methods and qualitative analysis strategies including analysing policy documents using qualitative analysis techniques. The third applies these foundations of qualitative research to policy processes, including finding and using existing qualitative data sets; qualitative research as consultation; and the uses and misuses of citizen perspectives in policy processes.

- The final weeks of the course will be devoted to student presentations. The major assignment for the unit involves a research report based on analysis of transcripts and/or submissions to an existing policy inquiry. As the presentation of research is a key policy skill, students will also be required to present some of their analysis and recommendation. For students undertaking the course online, this will be submitted electronically.
- As this is a skills-based unit, attendance and active participation in the seminars/ discussion forums is a minimum expectation.
- Students will be required to read a series of set texts on a weekly basis that relate to the topic for that week. Weekly readings are available via the Leganto link in the SOCI8035 iLearn site.
- Related reading and research development tasks over the course of the unit.

Unit Schedule

Week	Topic	Seminar Activity
One	Introduction to Qualitative Research	Introductions Thinking like a qualitative researcher
Two	The use of qualitative research and evidence in policy processes	Assessing what is quality in qualitative research
Three	Qualitative Research Design	Developing a qualitative research design
Four	Consultations as Qualitative Research Strategy	Designing a consultation strategy Consultation assignment
Five	Research Ethics	Managing ethical dilemmas
Six	Observation / Using Existing Sources	Undertaking an observation Locating qualitative data

Consultation Exercise Due – September 6		
Seven	Qualitative Interviewing	Developing an interview protocol
		Undertaking an in-depth interview
Eight	Focus Groups	Conducting and assessing focus groups
Nine	Action Research	Designing a campaign
Ten	Introduction to Qualitative Analysis	Open coding
		Identifying categories
Eleven	Writing Qualitative Research	Developing Themes
		Writing qualitative research
Twelve	Research Utilisation and Dissemination	Communicating research findings
Thirteen	Policy Research Presentations	
Policy Research Report Due (November 15)		

Policies and Procedures

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.)*

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 published on platform other than eStudent, (eg. iLearn, Coursera etc.) 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 or if you are a Global MBA student contact globalmba.support@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 help you improve your marks and take control of your study.

- Getting help with your assignment
- Workshops
- StudyWise
- Academic Integrity Module

The Library provides online and face to face support to help you find and use relevant information resources.

- Subject and Research Guides
- Ask a Librarian

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

If you are a Global MBA student contact globalmba.support@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.

Changes since First Published

Date	Description
21/07/2020	Change of assessment date. There was an error in the previous date.