SOCX8035

Qualitative Methods for Policy

Session 2, Online-flexible 2024

Macquarie School of Social Sciences

Contents

General Information

Unit convenor and teaching staff
Unit convenor and Lecturer
Tobia Fattore
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Consultation by appointment

Credit points
10

Prerequisites
20cp at 8000 level or above; or admission to MPSP or MPASR or GradCertPASR or GradDipPASR or MPlan

Corequisites

Co-badged status
SOCI8035

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

Late Assessment Submission Penalty

Unless a Special Consideration request has been submitted and approved, **a 5% penalty (of the total possible mark) will be applied each day a written assessment is not submitted**, up until the 7th day (including weekends). After the 7th day, a mark of '0' (zero) will be awarded even if the assessment is submitted. Submission time for all written assessments is set at 11.55pm. A 1-hour grace period is provided to students who experience a technical issue.

This late penalty will apply to non-timed sensitive assessment (including essays, reports, posters, portfolios, journals, recordings etc). **Late submission of time sensitive tasks** (such as tests/exams, performance assessments/presentations, scheduled practical assessments/labs etc) **will only be addressed by the unit convenor in a Special consideration application.** A Special Consideration outcome may result in a new question or topic.

Assessment Tasks

Name	Weighting	Hurdle	Due
Policy Research Report	50%	No	November 3 (Sunday Week 13)
Participation	20%	No	Ongoing
Research Design/Consultation Exercise	30%	No	September 1 (Sunday Week 6)

Policy Research Report

Assessment Type [1]: Qualitative analysis task
Indicative Time on Task [2]: 45 hours
Due: **November 3 (Sunday Week 13)**
Weighting: **50%**

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: **20%**

Throughout the semester students will undertake practical tasks to develop their qualitative research skills. These include exercises relating to research design, ethics practicing qualitative methods and data analysis. These will be the basis of the 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.

Research Design/Consultation Exercise

Assessment Type [1]: Design Task
Indicative Time on Task [2]: 30 hours
Due: **September 1 (Sunday Week 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.

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[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:

- Each week a lecture will be pre-recorded and uploaded onto the iLearn page for the unit. These can be found under the weekly tabs on the iLearn page. The lecture provide students with the knowledge base essential for undertaking qualitative research for policy. **Students are required to listen to the lecture prior to the seminar for the week (for on-campus students) or for undertaking the weekly task/discussion forum post (for Online-Flexible/OUA students),** as we will be applying information covered in the lectures in the seminars/online activities, which aim to develop practical skills in undertaking qualitative social research.

- During Weeks 1-12, the weekly seminars involve undertaking applied tasks designed to develop students qualitative research skills. These include exercises relating to how to design research, develop ethical approaches to research, use of various qualitative research methods, undertaking data analysis, interpretation of different types of qualitative data, and how to write for policy. **As this is a skills-based unit, attendance and active participation in the seminars / on-line discussion forums is a minimum expectation.**

- **For students undertaking the course online (Online-Flexible and OUA students)** instructions regarding how to undertake these tasks will be provided to you on a weekly basis and **will often involve doing tasks outside class time**. The weekly discussion forums are the means by which you will report on and reflect on your weekly activity, including sharing reflections with others. **For on-campus students (Internal students)** these tasks will mainly be undertaken during the 2-3 hour on-campus seminar. Some weeks will require you to prepare in advance, however you will be notified of this.

- The course is structured around three modules. Weeks 1-5 are devoted to qualitative research design for policy-making. Weeks 6-9 introduce students to qualitative strategies of inquiry and research methods, including analysing policy documents using qualitative analysis techniques. Weeks 10-13 apply these foundations in qualitative research to policy processes, including qualitative data analysis for policy, finding and using existing qualitative data sets, using research to influence policy and research dissemination.

- 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 on the SOCI8035/ SOCX8035 iLearn site.

- To successfully complete the assessment tasks, students will be required to undertake

additional research on their policy area and apply course concepts covered in the lectures and weekly readings.

Unit Schedule

Weekly Overview

Week	Topic	Seminar Activity
One	Introduction to Qualitative Research	Introductions Thinking like a qualitative researcher
Two	The use of qualitative research as 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	Undertaking an observation
Research Design Exercise Due – September 1		
Seven	Qualitative Interviewing	Developing an interview protocol Undertaking an in-depth interview
Eight	Focus Groups	Conducting and assessing focus groups
Nine	Action Research, Task-oriented methods and alternative research methods	Action research in practice
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	Conclusion and Overview	NVivo Workshop
Policy Research Report Due - November 3		

Policies and Procedures

Macquarie University policies and procedures are accessible from Policy Central (https://policie s.mq.edu.au). 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
- Assessment Procedure
- Complaints Resolution Procedure for Students and Members of the Public
- Special Consideration Policy

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

To find other policies relating to Teaching and Learning, visit Policy Central (https://policies.mq.e du.au) and use the search tool.

Student Code of Conduct

Macquarie University students have a responsibility to be familiar with the Student Code of Conduct: https://students.mq.edu.au/admin/other-resources/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

Academic Integrity

At Macquarie, we believe academic integrity – honesty, respect, trust, responsibility, fairness and courage – is at the core of learning, teaching and research. We recognise that meeting the expectations required to complete your assessments can be challenging. So, we offer you a range of resources and services to help you reach your potential, including free online writing an d maths support, academic skills development and wellbeing consultations.

Student Support

Macquarie University provides a range of support services for students. For details, visit http://stu dents.mq.edu.au/support/

The Writing Centre

The Writing Centre provides resources to develop your English language proficiency, academic writing, and communication skills.

- Workshops
- Chat with a WriteWISE peer writing leader
- Access StudyWISE
- Upload an assignment to Studiosity
- Complete the 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

Macquarie University offers a range of Student Support Services including:

- IT Support
- Accessibility and disability support with study
- Mental health support
- Safety support to respond to bullying, harassment, sexual harassment and sexual assault
- Social support including information about finances, tenancy and legal issues
- Student Advocacy provides independent advice on MQ policies, procedures, and processes

Student Enquiries

Got a question? Ask us via AskMQ, or contact Service Connect.

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.

Unit information based on version 2024.02 of the Handbook