



SOCX8035

Qualitative Methods for Policy

Session 2, Online-flexible 2026

School of Communication, Society and Culture

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General Information

Unit convenor and teaching staff

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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

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

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-time sensitive assessment (incl. 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. Special Consideration outcome may result in a new question or topic.

Assessment Tasks

Name	Weighting	Hurdle	Due	Groupwork/Individual	Short Extension	AI Approach
Participation	20%	No	Ongoing	Individual	No	Open
Research design/consultation exercise	30%	No	06/09/2026	Individual	No	Open
Policy Research Report	50%	No	08/11/2026	Individual	Yes	Open

Participation

Assessment Type ¹: Reflection task

Indicative Time on Task ²: 10 hours

Due: **Ongoing**

Weighting: **20%**

Groupwork/Individual: Individual

Short extension ³: No

AI Approach: Open

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: Professional task

Indicative Time on Task ²: 30 hours

Due: **06/09/2026**

Weighting: **30%**

Groupwork/Individual: Individual

Short extension ³: No

AI Approach: Open

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 Report

Assessment Type ¹: Problem-based task

Indicative Time on Task ²: 45 hours

Due: **08/11/2026**

Weighting: **50%**

Groupwork/Individual: Individual

Short extension ³: Yes

AI Approach: Open

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.

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
- [Academic Success](#) 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.

³ An automatic short extension is available for some assessments. Apply through the [Service Connect Portal](#).

Delivery and Resources

- **Class Times**

All students are required to listen to the pre-recorded lecture **prior** to attendance at the

on-campus seminar (for on-campus students) or making their contribution for the week's activity via the weekly Discussion Forums (for on-line flexible and OUA students).

On-Campus Classes

- Internal students are expected to attend these classes. However if any External or OUA students would like to attend the on-campus seminars, you are welcome to.

Discussion Forums for Online Flexible and OUA Students

From Weeks 1-12, there will be weekly activities for you to undertake. These can be found at the Discussion Forum section under each week's tab. It will be an expectation that you post to these forums. These activities are similar to the tasks undertaken by on-campus students and are designed to develop your skills as a qualitative researcher.

Prior to posting, it is essential that you listen to the weekly lecture, as the lecture provides the knowledge required to undertake the activity for the week. Read over the activity sheet, which will provide you with instructions as to what you will be required to do for that week, including what you should post for that week's Discussion forum.

Drop-in Zoom Sessions

There will be zoom drop-in sessions open to all students. These sessions provide opportunities to ask any questions or discuss any course related matters. The time will be organised once semester begins, so that we can work out a time that is most convenient to the largest number of students.

Policies and Procedures

Macquarie University policies and procedures are accessible from [Policy Central \(https://policies.mq.edu.au\)](https://policies.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 \(https://students.mq.edu.au/su\)](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.edu.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 connect.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 and maths support](#), [academic skills development](#) and [wellbeing consultations](#).

Student Support

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

Academic Success

[Academic Success](#) provides resources to develop your English language proficiency, academic writing, and communication skills.

- [Ask a Study Coach](#)
- [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 the [Service Connect Portal](#), or contact [Service Connect](#).

IT Help

For help with University computer systems and technology, visit <https://students.mq.edu.au/support/technology/service-desk>.

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 2026.04 of the [Handbook](#)