# SOC 831

Qualitative Methods

S1 Evening 2013

*Sociology*

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General Information

Unit convenor and teaching staff
Unit Convenor
Tobia Fattore
tobia.fattore@mq.edu.au
Contact via tobia.fattore@mq.edu.au

Credit points
4

Prerequisites
Admission to MPASR or PGDipPASR or PGCertPASR

Corequisites

Co-badged status
SOCI1701: Qualitative Methods: Issues and Practices

Unit description
This unit provides students with an opportunity to develop practical skills collecting, analysing and presenting data to address essential research questions. The unit introduces participants to a wide range of qualitative research methods, including observation, participant observation, interviewing, the use of focus groups and unobtrusive research methods. Students will also learn how to organise and analyse qualitative research data. The unit adopts a hands-on approach to provide an opportunity to develop research skills and a critical perspective of the research process itself.

Important Academic Dates
Information about important academic dates including deadlines for withdrawing from units are available at https://students.mq.edu.au/important-dates

Learning Outcomes

1. Understanding of the nature of qualitative research procedures and what makes them distinctive.
2. Understanding of when qualitative research methods should be used and when they are unsuitable.
3. An appreciation of the ethical dimensions of research practice.
4. First-hand experience in using the techniques of observation and interviewing.
5. An ability to apply the techniques of ‘grounded theory’ in qualitative data analysis and to
to collect and analyse qualitative research data.

6. 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**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Weighting</th>
<th>Due</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Observation Exercise</td>
<td>20%</td>
<td>Tuesday 9th April</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Interview Task</td>
<td>30%</td>
<td>Tuesday May 14th</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Qualitative Methods Report</td>
<td>40%</td>
<td>Tuesday June 4th</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Seminar Participation</td>
<td>10%</td>
<td>Ongoing</td>
</tr>
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**Observation Exercise**

**Due:** **Tuesday 9th April**  
**Weighting:** **20%**

This assessment involves students choosing a place of social interaction, guided by a research question, and observe what happens. Students will reflect on their experiences and analyse the usefulness of the technique.

This Assessment Task relates to the following Learning Outcomes:

- Understanding of the nature of qualitative research procedures and what makes them distinctive.
- Understanding of when qualitative research methods should be used and when they are unsuitable.
- An appreciation of the ethical dimensions of research practice.
- First-hand experience in using the techniques of observation and interviewing.
- 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.

**Interview Task**

**Due:** **Tuesday May 14th**  
**Weighting:** **30%**

This assessment requires students to undertake an in-depth interview to develop their skills in social and qualitative inquiry. Students will be required to undertake an analytical account of their
experience, reflecting on the strengths and weaknesses of the technique.

This Assessment Task relates to the following Learning Outcomes:

- Understanding of the nature of qualitative research procedures and what makes them distinctive.
- Understanding of when qualitative research methods should be used and when they are unsuitable.
- An appreciation of the ethical dimensions of research practice.
- First-hand experience in using the techniques of observation and interviewing.
- 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.

Qualitative Methods Report

Due: **Tuesday June 4th**

Weighting: **40%**

Students will undertake an extended research report that examines the scientific status of qualitative research, evaluate their practical experiences of observation and interviewing and demonstrate their knowledge of qualitative data analysis.

This Assessment Task relates to the following Learning Outcomes:

- Understanding of the nature of qualitative research procedures and what makes them distinctive.
- Understanding of when qualitative research methods should be used and when they are unsuitable.
- An appreciation of the ethical dimensions of research practice.
- An ability to apply the techniques of ‘grounded theory’ in qualitative data analysis and to collect and analyse qualitative research data.
- 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.

Seminar Participation

Due: **Ongoing**

Weighting: **10%**

Students will be assessed on ongoing contributions to the seminars, based on the quality of their
This Assessment Task relates to the following Learning Outcomes:

- Understanding of the nature of qualitative research procedures and what makes them distinctive.
- An appreciation of the ethical dimensions of research practice.
- 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.

**Delivery and Resources**

The course is offered in a seminar format, comprising of a one hour lecture and one hour workshop each week.

There are no required texts for this course. The readings for each week can be accessed from e-reserve.

However we would recommend the following textbooks, that you may find useful for this course and as a resource for social research more generally.


**Unit Schedule**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Week</th>
<th>Topic</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Week 1: February 26</td>
<td>Introduction to Qualitative Research</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Week 2: March 5</td>
<td>Is Qualitative Research a Science?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Week 3: March 12</td>
<td>Designing Qualitative Research</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Week 4: March 19</td>
<td>Research Ethics and Politics</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Week 5: March 26</td>
<td>Different Approaches to Qualitative Observation as a Method</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Week 6: April 2</td>
<td>The Interview Technique</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Week 7: April 9</td>
<td>The Interview in Practice</td>
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Policies and Procedures

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:


In addition, a number of other policies can be found in the Learning and Teaching Category of Policy Central.

Student Support

Macquarie University provides a range of Academic Student Support Services. Details of these services can be accessed at: [http://students.mq.edu.au/support/](http://students.mq.edu.au/support/)

**UniWISE provides:**

- Online learning resources and academic skills workshops [http://www.students.mq.edu.au/support/learning_skills/](http://www.students.mq.edu.au/support/learning_skills/)
- Personal assistance with your learning & study related questions.
- The Learning Help Desk is located in the Library foyer (level 2).
- Online and on-campus orientation events run by Mentors@Macquarie.

Student Enquiry Service

Details of these services can be accessed at [http://www.student.mq.edu.au/ses/](http://www.student.mq.edu.au/ses/).
Equity 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.

IT Help
If you wish to receive IT help, we would be glad to assist you at http://informatics.mq.edu.au/help.
When using the university’s IT, you must adhere to the Acceptable Use Policy. The policy applies to all who connect to the MQ network including students and it outlines what can be done.

Graduate Capabilities

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
- First-hand experience in using the techniques of observation and interviewing.
- An ability to apply the techniques of ‘grounded theory’ in qualitative data analysis and to collect and analyse qualitative research data.
- 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
- Observation Exercise
- Interview Task
- Qualitative Methods Report
- Seminar Participation

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**

- Understanding of when qualitative research methods should be used and when they are unsuitable.
- An appreciation of the ethical dimensions of research practice.
- First-hand experience in using the techniques of observation and interviewing.
- 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**

- Observation Exercise
- Interview Task
- Qualitative Methods Report
- Seminar 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**

- Understanding of the nature of qualitative research procedures and what makes them distinctive.
- Understanding of when qualitative research methods should be used and when they are unsuitable.
- An appreciation of the ethical dimensions of research practice.
- First-hand experience in using the techniques of observation and interviewing.
- An ability to apply the techniques of ‘grounded theory’ in qualitative data analysis and to collect and analyse qualitative research data.

**Assessment tasks**

- Observation Exercise
- Interview Task
- Qualitative Methods Report
- Seminar Participation
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**

- Understanding of the nature of qualitative research procedures and what makes them distinctive.
- Understanding of when qualitative research methods should be used and when they are unsuitable.
- An appreciation of the ethical dimensions of research practice.
- First-hand experience in using the techniques of observation and interviewing.
- An ability to apply the techniques of ‘grounded theory’ in qualitative data analysis and to collect and analyse qualitative research data.

**Assessment tasks**

- Observation Exercise
- Interview Task
- Qualitative Methods Report

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**

- Understanding of when qualitative research methods should be used and when they are unsuitable.
- An appreciation of the ethical dimensions of research practice.
- First-hand experience in using the techniques of observation and interviewing.
- An ability to apply the techniques of ‘grounded theory’ in qualitative data analysis and to collect and analyse qualitative research data.
- 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**

- Observation Exercise
- Interview Task
- Qualitative Methods Report
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**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**

- Understanding of when qualitative research methods should be used and when they are unsuitable.
- An appreciation of the ethical dimensions of research practice.
- First-hand experience in using the techniques of observation and interviewing.
- 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**

- Observation Exercise
- Interview Task
- Qualitative Methods Report