# SOC 831

## Qualitative Methods

S1 Evening 2015

_Dept of 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 or GradCertPASR or GradDipPASR or MSocEntre or PGCertSocEntre

Corequisites

Co-badged status
SOCl1701: 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. Understand the nature of qualitative research procedures and what makes them distinctive.
2. Understand when qualitative research methods should be used and when they are unsuitable.
3. Develop a critical appreciation of the ethical dimensions of research practice.
4. Obtain first hand experience in using qualitative research techniques, including

https://unitguides.mq.edu.au/unit_offerings/52712/unit_guide/print
observation, in-depth interviewing and focus group interviewing.

5. Develop an ability to apply the techniques of ‘grounded theory’ in qualitative data analysis and to collect and analyse qualitative research data.

6. Develop 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>Research Proposal</td>
<td>35%</td>
<td>March 27 (End of Week 5)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Group Research Project</td>
<td>45%</td>
<td>June 5 (End of Week 13)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Seminar Participation</td>
<td>20%</td>
<td>Ongoing</td>
</tr>
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**Research Proposal**

Due: **March 27 (End of Week 5)**
Weighting: **35%**

Students will be required to undertake a research project involving qualitative methods for this unit. This research will be undertaken in small groups and form the basis of the major assignment for the unit - the individual research report. As part of this process students are required to submit a research proposal for their intended research. The proposal will outline the research question and summarise the intended research methods that will be used to address the question. Proposals will be assessed on whether the project is suitable for a qualitative approach, is feasible and uses the strengths of qualitative methods.

This Assessment Task relates to the following Learning Outcomes:

- Understand the nature of qualitative research procedures and what makes them distinctive.
- Understand when qualitative research methods should be used and when they are unsuitable.
- Develop a critical appreciation of the ethical dimensions of research practice.
- Develop 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.

**Group Research Project**

Due: **June 5 (End of Week 13)**
Weighting: 45%

Students will undertake a group qualitative research report throughout the semester. This assignment presents the results of the group research as an individual research report. As well as presenting the research question, study rationale, research methodology and analysis of findings, the report will also provide a critical evaluation of the research experience.

This Assessment Task relates to the following Learning Outcomes:

- Understand the nature of qualitative research procedures and what makes them distinctive.
- Understand when qualitative research methods should be used and when they are unsuitable.
- Develop a critical appreciation of the ethical dimensions of research practice.
- Obtain first hand experience in using qualitative research techniques, including observation, in-depth interviewing and focus group interviewing.
- Develop an ability to apply the techniques of ‘grounded theory’ in qualitative data analysis and to collect and analyse qualitative research data.
- Develop 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: 20%

Many of the seminars revolve around practical demonstration of qualitative research skills. From week to week students will be required to engage in these practical tasks to develop their skills as qualitative researchers. Students will be assessed on their participation in these activities and ongoing contributions to the seminars based on the quality of their participation.

This Assessment Task relates to the following Learning Outcomes:

- Understand the nature of qualitative research procedures and what makes them distinctive.
- Understand when qualitative research methods should be used and when they are unsuitable.
- Obtain first hand experience in using qualitative research techniques, including observation, in-depth interviewing and focus group interviewing.
- Develop an ability to apply the techniques of ‘grounded theory’ in qualitative data analysis and to collect and analyse qualitative research data.
• Develop 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 two-hour seminar format, comprising a lecture, group discussion and practice based workshop each week. Additional one-hour non-compulsory workshops and laboratories will be available for students to develop their qualitative analysis skills.

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</td>
<td>Introduction to Qualitative Research</td>
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<tr>
<td>Week 2</td>
<td>Is Qualitative Research a Science?</td>
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<tr>
<td>Week 3</td>
<td>Designing Qualitative Research</td>
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<tr>
<td>Week 4</td>
<td>Research Ethics and Politics</td>
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<tr>
<td>Week 5</td>
<td>Different Approaches to Qualitative Observation as a Method</td>
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<tr>
<td>Week 6</td>
<td>The Interview Technique</td>
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<tr>
<td>Week 7</td>
<td>The Interview in Practice</td>
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<tr>
<td>Week 8</td>
<td>Focus Groups</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Week 9</td>
<td>Content Analysis, Visual Techniques and Task-oriented methods</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Week 10</td>
<td>Introduction to Qualitative Analysis</td>
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</table>
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:


Disruption to Studies Policy: http://www.mq.edu.au/policy/docs/disruption_studies/policy.html The Disruption to Studies Policy is effective from March 3 2014 and replaces the Special Consideration Policy.

In addition, a number of other policies can be found in the Learning and Teaching Category of 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/support/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
**Student Enquiry Service**
For all student enquiries, visit Student Connect at [ask.mq.edu.au](http://ask.mq.edu.au)

**Equity Support**
Students with a disability are encouraged to contact the [Disability Service](http://disability.mq.edu.au) who can provide appropriate help with any issues that arise during their studies.

**IT Help**

When using the University's IT, you must adhere to the [Acceptable Use Policy](http://informatics.mq.edu.au/help/). The policy applies to all who connect to the MQ network including students.

**Graduate Capabilities**

**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**

- Understand the nature of qualitative research procedures and what makes them distinctive.
- Understand when qualitative research methods should be used and when they are unsuitable.
- Develop a critical appreciation of the ethical dimensions of research practice.
- Obtain first hand experience in using qualitative research techniques, including observation, in-depth interviewing and focus group interviewing.
- Develop an ability to apply the techniques of ‘grounded theory’ in qualitative data analysis and to to collect and analyse qualitative research data.

**Assessment tasks**
- Research Proposal
- Group Research Project
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**

- Understand the nature of qualitative research procedures and what makes them distinctive.
- Understand when qualitative research methods should be used and when they are unsuitable.
- Develop a critical appreciation of the ethical dimensions of research practice.
- Obtain first hand experience in using qualitative research techniques, including observation, in-depth interviewing and focus group interviewing.
- Develop an ability to apply the techniques of ‘grounded theory’ in qualitative data analysis and to to collect and analyse qualitative research data.

**Assessment tasks**

- Research Proposal
- Group Research Project
- 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**

- Understand when qualitative research methods should be used and when they are unsuitable.
- Develop a critical appreciation of the ethical dimensions of research practice.
- Obtain first hand experience in using qualitative research techniques, including observation, in-depth interviewing and focus group interviewing.
- Develop 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
- Research Proposal
- Group Research Project
- Seminar Participation

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
- Obtain first hand experience in using qualitative research techniques, including observation, in-depth interviewing and focus group interviewing.
- Develop an ability to apply the techniques of ‘grounded theory’ in qualitative data analysis and to to collect and analyse qualitative research data.
- Develop 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
- Research Proposal
- Group Research Project
- Seminar Participation

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
- Understand when qualitative research methods should be used and when they are
• Develop a critical appreciation of the ethical dimensions of research practice.
• Obtain first hand experience in using qualitative research techniques, including observation, in-depth interviewing and focus group interviewing.
• Develop an ability to apply the techniques of ‘grounded theory’ in qualitative data analysis and to collect and analyse qualitative research data.
• Develop 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

• Research Proposal
• Group Research Project
• Seminar Participation

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

• Understand when qualitative research methods should be used and when they are unsuitable.
• Develop a critical appreciation of the ethical dimensions of research practice.
• Obtain first hand experience in using qualitative research techniques, including observation, in-depth interviewing and focus group interviewing.
• Develop 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 task

• Group Research Project