



# SSCI201

## Qualitative Inquiry in the Social Sciences

S1 External 2018

*Dept of Sociology*

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#### **Disclaimer**

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## General Information

Unit convenor and teaching staff

Unit convenor

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Contact via Contact via email

South Wing, Level 2, Australian Hearing Hub

By appointment

Tutor

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South Wing, Level 2, Australian Hearing Hub

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Credit points

3

Prerequisites

(15cp including SSCI100) and (admission to BSocSc or BSocScLLB)

Corequisites

Co-badged status

### Unit description

When informed by social theory and incorporated into a methodological framework, qualitative inquiry can garner valuable insights into the meanings, perceptions and contexts of social life. Researchers using qualitative approaches typically work with unstructured data, and study a small number of cases in detail. They gather data from a variety of human interactions and artefacts, including talk, behaviour, documents, places and objects. This unit asks: how can we design robust methodologies with qualitative methods to develop credible responses to interesting research questions? Building on SSCI100, this unit focuses on all elements of the qualitative research process, including the inductive logic of qualitative research design and analysis, as well as the interrelationships between these key elements of methodology. Specifically the unit covers the following elements: developing research questions appropriate for qualitative approaches; qualitative research design; key qualitative methods and method selection; instrument design; qualitative fieldwork; ethical challenges and responsibilities in qualitative research; data management, basics in qualitative analysis; and, communicating results. It pays particular attention to what is involved in ethically applying popular methods such as observation and interviewing techniques, and, thinking critically about data analysis.

## 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:

- Learn about the range of qualitative approaches and know when each should be used in social research.
- Gain first-hand experience in using qualitative research methods, including becoming familiar with the technologies used in social research.
- Demonstrate an understanding of the inductive logic employed in many social research projects that adopt qualitative methods
- Gain first-hand experience in developing the instruments and strategies qualitative researchers use to gather data.
- Develop proficiency in generic skills required to undertake social research with qualitative methods. These include: high-level information retrieval, critical reading and conceptual skills, problem development and writing skills; and assess research results.
- Demonstrate an understanding of the major problems confronting social researchers, especially: the scientific status of social science research; the strengths and weaknesses of different methods; questions relating to credibility; and ethical considerations in social research.

Actively develop skills in interpreting data and the results generated by social research in an ethical and responsible manner.

## Assessment Tasks

Name	Weighting	Hurdle	Due
<u>Online quizzes</u>	15%	No	Week 4, 8 & 12
<u>Research review</u>	20%	No	Saturday of week 7
<u>Research report</u>	45%	No	Saturday of week 13
<u>Course participation</u>	20%	No	Ongoing

### Online quizzes

Due: **Week 4, 8 & 12**

Weighting: **15%**

Throughout the semester, students are required to undertake three online quizzes. Each quiz will consist of 10 multiple choice questions and contribute 5 per cent toward the final mark for SSCI201. You will be asked to read each question and select the **BEST response** from the available options. These quizzes are designed to provide you with ongoing insights into how you are going in the course. It will draw on both lecture materials and course readings.

All quizzes will become available in the **Assessments** tab on the iLearn page. Each quiz will have a time limit of 10 minutes and can only be taken once. The first quiz will be available from Monday until Friday of Week 4. The second quiz will be available from Monday until Friday of Week 8. The third quiz will be available from Monday until Friday of Week 12.

**N.B.** In the event of technical difficulties, we ask you to take a screenshot (if possible) as supporting evidence and to lodge a OneHelp ticket ([https://mq.service-now.com/onehelp\\_public/](https://mq.service-now.com/onehelp_public/)). It is also your responsibility to contact course staff before the due date. We advise you to ensure that you can access the link to the quiz early in the week each quiz becomes available (without starting the quiz unless you want to).

On successful completion you will be able to:

- Learn about the range of qualitative approaches and know when each should be used in social research.
- Demonstrate an understanding of the major problems confronting social researchers, especially: the scientific status of social science research; the strengths and weaknesses of different methods; questions relating to credibility; and ethical considerations in social research.

## Research review

Due: **Saturday of week 7**

Weighting: **20%**

750 word critical review of a qualitative research project as reported in a journal article or short research report. The sources to be reviewed will be identified for students (i.e. students do not need to find their own report). The sources and a detailed assessment guideline will be release in week 2.

On successful completion you will be able to:

- Demonstrate an understanding of the inductive logic employed in many social research projects that adopt qualitative methods
- Develop proficiency in generic skills required to undertake social research with qualitative methods. These include: high-level information retrieval, critical reading and conceptual skills, problem development and writing skills; and assess research results.
- Demonstrate an understanding of the major problems confronting social researchers, especially: the scientific status of social science research; the strengths and weaknesses of different methods; questions relating to credibility; and ethical considerations in social research.
- Actively develop skills in interpreting data and the results generated by social research in an ethical and responsible manner.

## Research report

Due: **Saturday of week 13**

Weighting: **45%**

The major assessment for SSCI201 is a research report of **1,800 to 2,000 words**. You will be asked to exercise your social research imagination by analysing secondary data in relation to a specific research topic. Both the research topics and associated datasets for this task will be provided and become available on the SSCI201 iLearn page during the mid-semester break.

This task will require you to select a research topic (and its related dataset) from the options made available on the iLearn page. You will need to do some background reading on the topic and critically reflect on it. This task will also require you to analyse qualitative data using appropriate techniques that we cover in the course and write up your findings in the format of a report. More information about this task, the three options, how to present it and how to analyse data will be provided in the lectures, workshops and on the iLearn page.

On successful completion you will be able to:

- Gain first-hand experience in using qualitative research methods, including becoming familiar with the technologies used in social research.

- Demonstrate an understanding of the inductive logic employed in many social research projects that adopt qualitative methods
- Gain first-hand experience in developing the instruments and strategies qualitative researchers use to gather data.
- Develop proficiency in generic skills required to undertake social research with qualitative methods. These include: high-level information retrieval, critical reading and conceptual skills, problem development and writing skills; and assess research results.
- Demonstrate an understanding of the major problems confronting social researchers, especially: the scientific status of social science research; the strengths and weaknesses of different methods; questions relating to credibility; and ethical considerations in social research.
- Actively develop skills in interpreting data and the results generated by social research in an ethical and responsible manner.

## Course participation

Due: **Ongoing**

Weighting: **20%**

External students are required to listen to the lectures online and submit 300 to 400 word summaries to iLearn. External students are welcome to attend lectures in person, in which case their attendance will be noted and they won't be required to submit a summary.

A dedicated ilearn forum is set up for external students to engage in discussion and activities. Specific questions and/or tasks will be posted under the 'External Students Activities' tab under the topic description and resources for each week. These are designed to unpack key issues and give you a chance to practice aspects of qualitative inquiry first-hand. You can also pose your own questions about the weekly topic here and respond to other students' contributions.

Your participation grade will be based on:

- listening to and summarising at least 80% of lectures
- engaging in at least 80% of weekly forums
- making an informed contribution to forum discussion (which requires doing the readings!)
- completing set tasks and submitting exercises/summaries when required
- engaging respectfully with other students

**N.B. Your contribution to the weekly forum needs to be posted no later than 11am of the following Wednesday in order to be counted towards your participation grade.**

On successful completion you will be able to:

- Gain first-hand experience in using qualitative research methods, including becoming

familiar with the technologies used in social research.

- Demonstrate an understanding of the inductive logic employed in many social research projects that adopt qualitative methods
- Gain first-hand experience in developing the instruments and strategies qualitative researchers use to gather data.
- Develop proficiency in generic skills required to undertake social research with qualitative methods. These include: high-level information retrieval, critical reading and conceptual skills, problem development and writing skills; and assess research results.
- Demonstrate an understanding of the major problems confronting social researchers, especially: the scientific status of social science research; the strengths and weaknesses of different methods; questions relating to credibility; and ethical considerations in social research.
- Actively develop skills in interpreting data and the results generated by social research in an ethical and responsible manner.

## Delivery and Resources

**Lectures** will take place on Wednesdays from 11am to 1pm in E7B T5 from week 1-13. External students can access lecture recordings and visual materials used via ECHO360 on iLearn. External students are also welcome to attend lectures in person.

### iLearn

Important information about the weekly schedule for SSCI201, course readings and assessment are all available on the course *iLearn* page. This is where you will also find out if you do not have access, please contact IT help. You are required to check iLearn and your student email regularly for course updates and information.

An **external student forum** is available on iLearn. It includes a dedicated thread to upload your summary of the lectures.

### Turnitin and GradeMark

The written assessment for SSCI201 needs to be submitted via Turnitin. A link to Turnitin is available via the Assessments tab on the iLearn page. Please contact the convenor if you cannot find it (do not leave it until the day of the assessment). Assessments will be marked via GradeMark and returned to students electronically.

### Readings on Leganto

Weekly required and recommended readings are available through Leganto. You can access them by clicking on the 'Unit readings -Leganto' tab on the unit iLearn page.

## Unit Schedule

Week	Lecture Topic
1	Qualitative inquiry: A social science?
2	Situating the researcher in the field: Negotiating experience within and between cultures
3	Designing qualitative methodologies: Theory + method + data analysis
4	Interpretive practices: From symbolic interactionism to ethnography
5	Critical traditions of qualitative inquiry: From critical theory to feminism
6	Collecting data I: Interviewing practices
7	Collecting data II: Observational methods
	<b>Mid-semester Break</b>
8	Collecting data III: Investigating texts, objects & online sources
9	What is meaning? Interpreting texts through thematic analysis
10	Thematic analysis II: Working with codes and concepts
11	Interrogating texts and building theory: Discourse analysis & Grounded theory
12	Ethics as 'rigour' - Ethics, politics and qualitative inquiry
13	Writing and communicating results

## 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) (<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.)

Undergraduate students seeking more policy resources can visit the [Student Policy Gateway](https://students.mq.edu.au/support/study/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](http://staff.mq.edu.au/work/strategy-planning-and-governance/university-policies-and-procedures/policy-central) (<http://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 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](http://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](http://mq.edu.au/learningskills)) provides academic writing resources and study strategies to improve your marks and take control of your study.

- [Workshops](#)
- [StudyWise](#)
- [Academic Integrity Module for Students](#)
- [Ask a Learning Adviser](#)

## 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](http://ask.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/](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.

## Graduate Capabilities

### Creative and Innovative

Our graduates will also be capable of creative thinking and of creating knowledge. They will be imaginative and open to experience and capable of innovation at work and in the community. We want them to be engaged in applying their critical, creative thinking.

This graduate capability is supported by:

#### Learning outcomes

- Gain first-hand experience in using qualitative research methods, including becoming familiar with the technologies used in social research.
- Demonstrate an understanding of the inductive logic employed in many social research projects that adopt qualitative methods
- Gain first-hand experience in developing the instruments and strategies qualitative researchers use to gather data.
- Develop proficiency in generic skills required to undertake social research with qualitative methods. These include: high-level information retrieval, critical reading and conceptual skills, problem development and writing skills; and assess research results.
- Actively develop skills in interpreting data and the results generated by social research in an ethical and responsible manner.

#### Assessment tasks

- Research report
- Course participation

### Capable of Professional and Personal Judgement and Initiative

We want our graduates to have emotional intelligence and sound interpersonal skills and to demonstrate discernment and common sense in their professional and personal judgement. They will exercise initiative as needed. They will be capable of risk assessment, and be able to handle ambiguity and complexity, enabling them to be adaptable in diverse and changing environments.

This graduate capability is supported by:

#### Learning outcomes

- Learn about the range of qualitative approaches and know when each should be used in social research.
- Gain first-hand experience in using qualitative research methods, including becoming

familiar with the technologies used in social research.

- Gain first-hand experience in developing the instruments and strategies qualitative researchers use to gather data.
- Develop proficiency in generic skills required to undertake social research with qualitative methods. These include: high-level information retrieval, critical reading and conceptual skills, problem development and writing skills; and assess research results.
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- Actively develop skills in interpreting data and the results generated by social research in an ethical and responsible manner.

## **Assessment task**

- Course participation

## **Commitment to Continuous Learning**

Our graduates will have enquiring minds and a literate curiosity which will lead them to pursue knowledge for its own sake. They will continue to pursue learning in their careers and as they participate in the world. They will be capable of reflecting on their experiences and relationships with others and the environment, learning from them, and growing - personally, professionally and socially.

This graduate capability is supported by:

## **Learning outcomes**

- Learn about the range of qualitative approaches and know when each should be used in social research.
- Gain first-hand experience in developing the instruments and strategies qualitative researchers use to gather data.
- Develop proficiency in generic skills required to undertake social research with qualitative methods. These include: high-level information retrieval, critical reading and conceptual skills, problem development and writing skills; and assess research results.

## **Assessment tasks**

- Online quizzes
- Course participation

## Discipline Specific Knowledge and Skills

Our graduates will take with them the intellectual development, depth and breadth of knowledge, scholarly understanding, and specific subject content in their chosen fields to make them competent and confident in their subject or profession. They will be able to demonstrate, where relevant, professional technical competence and meet professional standards. They will be able to articulate the structure of knowledge of their discipline, be able to adapt discipline-specific knowledge to novel situations, and be able to contribute from their discipline to inter-disciplinary solutions to problems.

This graduate capability is supported by:

### Learning outcomes

- Learn about the range of qualitative approaches and know when each should be used in social research.
- Gain first-hand experience in using qualitative research methods, including becoming familiar with the technologies used in social research.
- Demonstrate an understanding of the inductive logic employed in many social research projects that adopt qualitative methods
- Gain first-hand experience in developing the instruments and strategies qualitative researchers use to gather data.

### Assessment tasks

- Online quizzes
- Research review
- Research report
- Course participation

## Critical, Analytical and Integrative Thinking

We want our graduates to be capable of reasoning, questioning and analysing, and to integrate and synthesise learning and knowledge from a range of sources and environments; to be able to critique constraints, assumptions and limitations; to be able to think independently and systemically in relation to scholarly activity, in the workplace, and in the world. We want them to have a level of scientific and information technology literacy.

This graduate capability is supported by:

### Learning outcomes

- Learn about the range of qualitative approaches and know when each should be used in social research.
- Demonstrate an understanding of the inductive logic employed in many social research projects that adopt qualitative methods

- Develop proficiency in generic skills required to undertake social research with qualitative methods. These include: high-level information retrieval, critical reading and conceptual skills, problem development and writing skills; and assess research results.

## **Assessment tasks**

- Research review
- Research report
- Course participation

## **Problem Solving and Research Capability**

Our graduates should be capable of researching; of analysing, and interpreting and assessing data and information in various forms; of drawing connections across fields of knowledge; and they should be able to relate their knowledge to complex situations at work or in the world, in order to diagnose and solve problems. We want them to have the confidence to take the initiative in doing so, within an awareness of their own limitations.

This graduate capability is supported by:

## **Learning outcomes**

- Learn about the range of qualitative approaches and know when each should be used in social research.
- Demonstrate an understanding of the inductive logic employed in many social research projects that adopt qualitative methods
- Gain first-hand experience in developing the instruments and strategies qualitative researchers use to gather data.
- Develop proficiency in generic skills required to undertake social research with qualitative methods. These include: high-level information retrieval, critical reading and conceptual skills, problem development and writing skills; and assess research results.
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- Actively develop skills in interpreting data and the results generated by social research in an ethical and responsible manner.

## **Assessment tasks**

- Research review
- Research report
- Course participation

## Effective Communication

We want to develop in our students the ability to communicate and convey their views in forms effective with different audiences. We want our graduates to take with them the capability to read, listen, question, gather and evaluate information resources in a variety of formats, assess, write clearly, speak effectively, and to use visual communication and communication technologies as appropriate.

This graduate capability is supported by:

### Learning outcomes

- Demonstrate an understanding of the inductive logic employed in many social research projects that adopt qualitative methods
- Develop proficiency in generic skills required to undertake social research with qualitative methods. These include: high-level information retrieval, critical reading and conceptual skills, problem development and writing skills; and assess research results.
- Actively develop skills in interpreting data and the results generated by social research in an ethical and responsible manner.

### Assessment tasks

- Online quizzes
- Research review
- Research report
- Course participation

## Engaged and Ethical Local and Global citizens

As local citizens our graduates will be aware of indigenous perspectives and of the nation's historical context. They will be engaged with the challenges of contemporary society and with knowledge and ideas. We want our graduates to have respect for diversity, to be open-minded, sensitive to others and inclusive, and to be open to other cultures and perspectives: they should have a level of cultural literacy. Our graduates should be aware of disadvantage and social justice, and be willing to participate to help create a wiser and better society.

This graduate capability is supported by:

### Learning outcomes

- Demonstrate an understanding of the major problems confronting social researchers, especially: the scientific status of social science research; the strengths and weaknesses of different methods; questions relating to credibility; and ethical considerations in social research.
- Actively develop skills in interpreting data and the results generated by social research in

an ethical and responsible manner.

## **Assessment tasks**

- Research report
- Course participation

## **Socially and Environmentally Active and Responsible**

We want our graduates to be aware of and have respect for self and others; to be able to work with others as a leader and a team player; to have a sense of connectedness with others and country; and to have a sense of mutual obligation. Our graduates should be informed and active participants in moving society towards sustainability.

This graduate capability is supported by:

## **Learning outcomes**

- Demonstrate an understanding of the major problems confronting social researchers, especially: the scientific status of social science research; the strengths and weaknesses of different methods; questions relating to credibility; and ethical considerations in social research.
- Actively develop skills in interpreting data and the results generated by social research in an ethical and responsible manner.

## **Assessment task**

- Course participation