



Qualitative Data Research

Professor Sheila Riddell (*Course Organiser*)
Professor Lydia Plowman & Deborah Fry (*Course Tutors*)

Credit Rating 20 credits, SCQF 11

Course Description

This module explores the philosophical and theoretical underpinnings of qualitative research and introduces students to the diversity of practice that is subsumed under the broad heading of qualitative research. It also engages with the practicalities of designing, implementing, analysing and writing up a research study which is based on a qualitative research approach. Attention is given to the contribution which qualitative research can make to education policy and to social policy more widely. Ethical issues are highlighted. A key concern throughout the module is to encourage participants to connect up general issues and framing perspectives with the day-to-day practice of carrying out qualitative research. To allow for a more interactive form of teaching, participants are asked over the course of the module to engage in a number of small investigative or analytical exercises that provide a focus for discussion. Participants are encouraged to examine the effects of their own world view on their approach to designing a qualitative study, interacting with research participants and analysing qualitative data.

Learning Outcomes

On completion of this course, students will be able to:

- demonstrate knowledge of the literature on qualitative research and the ability to draw on this literature appropriately to advance arguments
- display an analytical approach to issues in qualitative research and to the literature on qualitative research
- present a well-argued, personal interpretation of issues and controversies in qualitative research
- design and implement a small research project using a qualitative research approach, analyse the data collected and write the project up in a careful, thoughtful fashion

Teaching

The course has 25 hours of contact teaching time. This will be delivered in ten 2.5 hour classes.

These sessions feature a mixture of tutor presentations with guided discussion based on reading specific designated texts; practical activities (e.g. interviewing, observation); class and small group exercises. *It is expected that for almost all sessions participants will have completed preparatory readings and/or mini-research activities.*

Course Assessment

The assignment involves the design of a qualitative research project on a topic chosen by the student. In addition to sections on epistemology, research design and methods, research instruments should also be produced (e.g. semi-structured interview schedules, observation guides). The assignment should be about 4,000 words in length.

Course tutors

The course is taught by Professor Sheila Riddell (course organiser), Professor Lydia Plowman and Dr Debi Fry.

Course Content

Week 1 23rd September Professor Sheila Riddell

Discussion of course outline and materials. What is qualitative research?

Week 2 30th September Professor Lydia Plowman

Design issues: Choosing between different types of qualitative methods. Discussion of framework for a research proposal.

Week 3 7th October Dr Deborah Fry

Ethical considerations in qualitative research.

Week 4 14th October Professor Sheila Riddell

Designing and selecting samples. Mixed methods approaches.

Week 5, 21st October, Professor Sheila Riddell

Designing fieldwork.

Week 6, 28th October, In-depth interviews Professor Lydia Plowman

In-depth interviews.

Week 7, 4th November, Focus Groups Dr Deborah Fry

Focus groups.

Week 8, 11th November, Observation, Professor Lydia Plowman

Observation.

Week 9, 18th November, Professor Sheila Riddell

Analysing and generalising from qualitative data.

Week 10, 25th November, Dr Deborah Fry

Writing up qualitative data.

Reading

Specific chapters and journal articles will be recommended in each session. However, the books listed here are generally relevant for this course.

Ritchie, J., Lewis, J., Nicholls, C.M., Ormston, R. (2014) *Qualitative Research Practice; A Guide for Social Science Students and Researchers* London: Sage.

This is the principal course text and students are advised to purchase

Silverman, D. (ed.) (2011) *Qualitative Research: Issues of Theory, Method and Practice* London: Sage.

Denzin, N. K. and Lincoln, Y.S. (eds.) *Collecting and Interpreting Qualitative Materials* London: Sage.

Denscombe, M. (2003) *The Good Research Guide for Small-Scale Research Projects* Maidenhead: Open university Press.