



London Interdisciplinary Social Science Doctoral Training Partnership

Advanced Research Methods in Social Sciences

Course Code & Title	LISS234 Adapting Research Methods to Engage with the Public Sector: Lessons from Covid-19				
Convenor(s)	Dr Rhian Scott				
Institution	King's College London	Department		LISS DTP	
Academic Year	2022-23	Term		Summer	
Number of sessions	3	Research Platform	Qualitative Research (QuL)	Length of Session(s)	1.5
Day, Date		Start : End		Room Location	
Thurs 27th April 2023 Thurs 4th May 2023 Thurs 11th May 2023		14:00 – 15:30		Via Zoom	
Enrolment Links:	Available to book on SkillsForge from Tuesday 11th April 2023 . Click to log in and register: https://training.kcl.ac.uk/kcl/#/he/dev/eventDetails;em,providerCode=LISS,providerOrgAlias=kcl Questions? Visit our Training FAQ here: Frequently Asked Questions - LISS DTP (liss-dtp.ac.uk)				

Course Description:

There has been very little investigation into types of rapid-response online methods favored by the public sector during the Covid-19 pandemic. As such, there is a missed opportunity for academics to adapt their more traditional qualitative methods to meet public sector research needs and feed into policy making.

The course will cover an introduction to rapid response public sector research, followed by three key qualitative methods that are favored in government social research and policy making. These sessions will draw on my experience of conducting independent research (at a private insight and strategy consultancy) for the public sector during the first 19 months of the Covid-19 pandemic. During this time I designed and conducted research for a range of government departments, although the biggest learning curves were through projects conducted for DHSC and Cabinet Office. During the pandemic both departments would conduct rapid-response research, designed to test new ideas and interventions into the pandemic, with the public, to inform policy responses. There was a clear need for these methods to be 1) online and 2) able to provide a quick read on public opinion. Often these methods would be deployed over the course of a week, with fieldwork design happening on a Monday, fieldwork conducted Tuesday-Thursday and reporting and feedback provided on a Friday. As such, these methods provide a new take on more traditional qualitative methods and are arguably more responsive to public sector needs and the pace of policy formation.

Some methods are designed to provide high level insight on a new issue (e.g. public views on social distancing), whilst others are designed to 'deep dive' into certain behaviours (e.g. what is driving the public to uphold covid-19 measures in certain spaces and not others). More often than not, these methods are used to better understand behavioural change, i.e. what is preventing or enabling certain behaviours to happen during the pandemic to ensure safe behaviors are being practiced and upheld. At other times, methods are used to test messages with the public before they go 'live' to ensure their maximum impact and that key takeaway messages are clear. Methods can also be used retrospectively to understand the public's views on the latest government



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announcements (i.e. a statement or message issued by the Government – such as the weekly Covid-19 news updates), and what the public took the announcement to mean.

The sessions will cover the following methods.

- *Thurs 27th April 2-3:30PM 'Adapting research methods to engage with the public sector: lessons from COVID: Introduction'*
- *Thurs 4th May 2-3:30PM 'Fast-turnaround focus groups and strategies for boosting engagement'*
- *Thurs 11th MAY 2-3:30PM 'Online stakeholder workshops'*

Due to the confidential nature of the research, I will not be disclosing real life examples, instead I will be providing fictional scenarios to demonstrate how these research methods can be best used.

Each session will be structured as below (albeit this is flexible according to the needs of the specific session):

- *Introduction to government research – what it is and why it is carried out*
- *Overview of the method*
- *Comparison to traditional qualitative methods*
- *Introduction to the fictional research brief*
- *Demonstration of the method in action*
- *Group brainstorm and discussion*

The sessions will provide insights into ways of working with public sector partners, and their needs and preferences for qualitative research. It will provide real-life insights into these qualitative methods in action as well as detailed examples on how to conduct these methods and their different considerations (i.e. what resources and materials you need to prepare in advance, watch-outs for conducting the methods etc). By way of the methods being covered, the sessions will also provide important considerations for how best to adapt traditional qualitative methods into online methods.

Reading List:

NA

However there is small but growing body of literature that may be of interest to students:

- *Rapid response research: Vindrola-Padros, C., Chisnall, G., Cooper, S., Dowrick, A., Djellouli, N., Symmons, S., Martin, S., Singleton, G., Vanderslott, S., Vera, N., and Johnson, G., 2020. Carrying out rapid qualitative research during a pandemic: emerging lessons from COVID-19. Qualitative health research, 30(14), 2192-2204.*
- *Considerations for research conducted during Covid-19: Termblay, S., Castiglione, S., Audet L., Desmarais, M.H., and Pelaez, S., 2021. Conducting qualitative research to respond to COVID-19 challenges: reflections for the present and beyond. International Journal of Qualitative Research, 20, 1-8.*
- *Online group interviews: Dodds, S., and Alexandra, C., 2021. Adapting research methodology during COVID-19: lessons for transformative service research. Journal of service management, 32(2), 203-217.*

Eligibility:



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Open to all PhD students undertaking social science methodologies at KCL, IC & QMUL. Those undertaking qualitative research with an interest in policy and government research are most likely to benefit from the workshop.

Pre-course preparation:

NA

Number of students:

Minimum number required to run: 7 (this is small enough for a focus group/workshop discussion)

Maximum number of places available: 20 (to ensure that everyone gets the opportunity to share their experiences and views)