



London Interdisciplinary Social Science Doctoral Training Partnership

Advanced Research Methods in Social Sciences

Online Course Code & Title	LISS004 Introduction to Qualitative Research		
Convenor	Sarah Jasim		
Tutors	Sarah Jasim, Louise Eley, Silvie Cooper		
Institution	King's College London	Department	LISS DTP
Academic Year	2019-20	Term	Summer
Number of Sessions	8	Length of Session(s)	2 hours
Day, Date		Start : End	Online Course Link: Zoom
Monday 1 st June Sarah Jasim Tuesday 2 nd June Sarah Jasim Wednesday 3 rd June Sarah Jasim Thursday 4 th June Sarah Jasim		0900 : 1100	Please see SkillsForge for enrolment link
Monday 8 th June Silvie Cooper		1600 : 1800	Please see SkillsForge for enrolment link
Tuesday 9 th June Louise Eley Wednesday 10 th June Louise Eley Thursday 11 th June Silvie Cooper		0900 : 1100	Please see SkillsForge for enrolment link
Enrolment Link:	http://bit.ly/enrol-liss004 Click here to enrol on this online course – you may be prompted to log into SkillsForge		

Online Course Description:

This online course introduces PhD students to key principles and procedures in qualitative research methodology. It covers a range of methods, with a special focus on data collection and analysis, as well as hands-on methods practice to help further students' own research projects. The required pre-readings and pre-assignments for this online course will give students practical guidance on how to use qualitative methodologies from a variety of disciplinary perspectives. **As the class is highly interactive and participatory, students will be expected to have their video and audio switched on, discuss their own research and methods, engage with the readings, and undertake short pre-assignments aimed at improving their methodological skills. Pre-assignments must be completed before sessions, and students should come to class prepared to discuss these. We strongly encourage students to read all required readings before starting the course, and then refresh their knowledge of readings as they complete pre-assignments.**

Eligibility: Due to high demand, this online course is largely restricted to students from small departments that do not offer their own in-house qualitative methods training, or students who are required to undertake this training as a condition of their ESRC funding. Please email liss-dtp@kcl.ac.uk **before signing up** if this online course has not been recommended to you by your department or supervisor.



Course Outline:

I. The fundamentals of qualitative research

Pre-course Preparation: Read through Ritchie & Lewis (2003) to familiarise yourself with the course concepts. Answer the “six questions” from Mason (2018) and identify your potential data sources.

Required readings: Mason, J. (2018). Chapter 1, “Intellectual puzzles and research questions” and Chapter 2, “Choosing methods and planning your approach” in *Qualitative researching*.

Ritchie J. & Lewis J (2003) *Qualitative research practice: a guide for social science students and researchers*. London: Sage

1. Introductions and overview – Sarah Jasim

Arrive prepared to answer Mason’s “six questions” outlined in chapter one, and to identify your potential data sources.

Session 1 introduces students to the overall aims and requirements of the online course and provides an opportunity for students to discuss their own research questions, methods, and desired outcomes. The session will introduce students to a range of approaches to qualitative methodology, briefly outline qualitative software packages, and the basic question of how and why to choose a research method. We will also touch on the benefits of using qualitative approaches in mixed-methods study designs.

2. Knowledge and ethics - Sarah Jasim

Pre-Assignment: After completing the reading, write a short statement identifying what kind of knowledge you are interested in producing, and any ethical barriers you will have to address in your research.

Required readings: Rossman, G. B., and Rallis, S. F. (2017). Chapter 2, “The researcher as learner” and Chapter 3, “The researcher as competent and ethical” in *An introduction to qualitative research: learning in the field*.

Session 2 introduces students to foundational questions about the nature of knowledge production and the ethics of conducting social scientific research. Subjects covered include reflexivity, epistemology / ontology, research paradigms, and a discussion of research ethics and methodological rigour. We will also cover the issues of consent and researcher safety when undertaking qualitative research.



II. Data collection

3. Ethnography - Sarah Jasim

Pre-Assignment: After completing the reading, conduct an ethnographic observation of a place or phenomenon of your choosing. This can include online spaces, outdoor spaces (please observe social distancing measures) or intimate sites (within your household). Observe and take notes for 20 minutes and write a short reflection afterwards about the experience.

Required readings: Emerson, R., Fretz, R., and Shaw, L. (2011). Chapter 1, "Fieldnotes in ethnographic research" and Chapter 2, "In the field: Participating, observing, and jotting notes" in *Writing ethnographic fieldnotes*.

Session 3 introduces students to the practical aspects of conducting ethnography, with a focus on non-participant observation and notetaking, and the nature of ethnographic knowledge. We will also cover topics not covered in the readings, including participatory action research, and documentary analysis.

4. Focus Groups - Sarah Jasim

Pre-Assignment: After completing the readings, identify any possibilities where you might (not) use focus groups for your research, specifically thinking about what kinds of participants and settings you might choose and why.

Required readings: Liamputtong, P. (2012). Chapter 4, "Focus Groups" in *Qualitative research methods* pp. 74-97

Session 4 covers the basics of planning and conducting focus groups. We will briefly cover the main differences between using interviews and focus groups as qualitative data collection approaches, and then interview design and planning will be covered in more depth in Session 5. We will also conduct an online group exercise at the end of the session of facilitating / observing / participating in focus groups in online breakout sessions.

5. Interviews – Silvie Cooper

Pre-Assignment: After completing the readings, develop an interview plan and a list of questions. Students who have already received approval from their university's ethics committee have the option to conduct an interview, which can take place in person, over the phone, or via Skype.

Required readings: King, N., Horrocks, C., and Brooks, J. (2018). Chapter 4, "Designing an interview study" and Chapter 5, "Carrying out qualitative interviews" in *Interviews in qualitative research*.

This session covers the basics of interview design, including defining the sample, recruiting participants, structured and semi-structured interviews, designing research questions and scripts, building rapport, audio and video recording, and the importance of listening. Excerpts taken from classic interview-based studies will be provided in class, along with an in-class discussion of topics not covered in the readings, including online methods, focus groups, qualitative survey research, and mixed methods.



III. Data analysis

6. Content analysis - Louise Eley

Pre-Assignment: After completing the readings for next time, conduct a content analysis of some material you have collected for your own research. This can include either the field notes you developed for session three or the interview from session five (if you conducted one). Identify any overarching themes in the text/s and what they might reveal about the object of your research.

Required readings: Bazeley, P. (2013). Chapter 4, “Read, reflect, and connect: Initial explorations of data” and Chapter 5, “Codes and coding, principles and practice” in *Qualitative data analysis: Practical strategies*. (If you’re short of time, please prioritise pages 101-106 in Chapter 4 and all of Chapter 5)

This session covers the basics of content analysis, including becoming familiar with the data, conducting preliminary explorations, coding and memo writing. In class, we will undertake small group work in which we examine extracts from interview data, identifying themes and sub-themes related to one substantive research area. We will also discuss topics not covered in the reading, such as narrative analysis and grounded theory.

7. Discourse analysis - Louise Eley

Pre-Assignment: Choose an original text—perhaps a text you have already collected for your own research project, such as a news item, government document, or digital source—and conduct a discourse analysis of the material, analysing what the language reveals about the object of your study.

Required readings: Jørgensen, M. W., and Phillips, L. J. (2002). Chapter 1, “The field of discourse analysis” and Chapter 3, “Critical discourse analysis” in *Discourse analysis as theory and method*. (If you’re short of time, please prioritise pages 1-9 in Chapter 1 and all of Chapter 3)

This session covers the basics of discourse analysis, including distinct approaches to the concept of discourse, how discourse shapes the construction of ideology, power, and social relationships, the role of the analyst, critical discourse analysis, and intertextuality. In class, we will undertake small group work in which we critically examine a text to identify what it might reveal about its larger discursive field and about society.

8. Writing as method – Silvie Cooper

Pre-Assignment: After you have read, choose a favourite piece of qualitative social science writing and reflect on its writing style. How is it organised? Does it use metaphor, anecdote, or other creative techniques? How do the authors approach the literature review and theoretical argumentation? Write your own creative anecdote based on your research.

Required readings: Anzul, M., Downing, M., Ely, M., and Vinz, R. (2003). Chapter 2, “What is there about writing?” and excerpt on anecdote from Chapter 3, “Creating forms: Informing understanding” in *On writing qualitative research: Living by words*.

This session covers the basics of qualitative social science writing, including writing as an act of interpretation and knowledge production, writing and reflexivity, writing strategies, and narrative forms. In class, we will discuss students’ unique writing habits and share our own written work. We will also cover topics not included in the readings, including the challenges of co-writing, developing a literature review, and writing theory.



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Eligibility:

You must be a PhD student at either King's College London, Queen Mary University of London, or Imperial College London, using social science methodologies, and be based in a department that does not already offer this training.

Pre course preparation:

Each session requires reading – please see the sessions above for specific guidance on the reading each day.