Unit Outline*

MGMT8792

Qualitative Methods in Management Research

F4 2010
Perth

Professor Simone Pettigrew

Business School
www.business.uwa.edu.au

* This Unit Outline should be read in conjunction with the Business School Unit Outline Supplement available on the Students web site http://www.business.uwa.edu.au/students
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UNIT DESCRIPTION

Introduction

Welcome to Qualitative Research Methods. This unit explores the techniques and philosophical underpinnings of qualitative research. Students will learn a variety of research skills that can be applied to a wide range of research tasks. This unit provides doctoral students with the skills required to engage in qualitative data collection and analysis.

This unit will prepare you for your doctoral research by providing you with the information you will require to
1. determine whether qualitative research methods are appropriate for your research topic;
2. design an appropriate data collection protocol;
3. analyse qualitative data; and
4. write a comprehensive research report

About your lecturer

Simone holds a Bachelor of Economics from the University of Sydney, a Masters in Commerce from the University of New South Wales, and a PhD from The University of Western Australia. She has taught at University level for 17 years and also engages in marketing consulting to private and government organisations. Prior to becoming an academic, Simone was employed in marketing positions in the energy sector.

Simone’s research interests are focused on consumer behaviour, particularly in relation to health and vulnerable populations such as children and seniors. She consults to various health agencies on projects relating to changing health-related behaviours. Simone is the Editor-in-Chief of the Journal of Research for Consumers (www.jrconsumers.com).

Unit content

This unit is an advanced study of the qualitative research methods used in organisational analysis and management research and writing. Topics include: (1) research objectives and contexts appropriate to the use of qualitative methods; (2) theoretical traditions in qualitative research; (3) sampling strategies; (4) intent and techniques for multi-method qualitative research; and (5) preliminary analysis of qualitative data, selection and use of supporting qualitative and/or quantitative methods, multi-method analysis of data, and presentation of research results. The effective use of several qualitative research methods is illustrated through a close reading of research papers drawn from several disciplines in management and social sciences.

The Goal of the unit

This unit aims to provide doctoral students with the knowledge and skills they require to effectively engage in qualitative data collection, analysis, and reporting. It constitutes the sister unit to the Quantitative Research Methods unit within the MBR.
Learning outcomes

On completion of this unit, you should be able to:
• Understand the benefits and limitations of qualitative research methods;
• Recognise and develop appropriate qualitative research questions;
• Identify the appropriate qualitative methodology(s) for specific research questions;
• Collect and analyse qualitative data; and
• Generate interesting, relevant, and informative accounts of human behaviour in the form of research reports and/or theses.

These skills are necessary for the use of qualitative research methods in academic, business, and social research.

Educational Principles and Graduate Attributes

In this unit, you will be encouraged and facilitated to develop the ability and desire to:
• Design effective research programs that can solve specified research problems (problem solving; think, reason and analyse logically and creatively)
• Conduct ethical and rigorous research (develop ethical awareness)
• Produce high quality research outputs (develop written English communication skills at a high level)

TEACHING AND LEARNING RESPONSIBILITIES

Teaching and learning strategies

Students will engage in learning through (1) interactive sessions during scheduled classes, (2) comprehensive reading prior to class, and (3) participation in active research for assessment. As this unit aims to provide students with the knowledge and skills they require to conduct rigorous research, it is essential that preparation, attendance, and in-class contributions are prioritised.

Teaching and learning evaluation

You may be asked to complete two evaluations during this unit. The Student Perception of Teaching (SPOT) and the Students’ Unit Reflective Feedback (SURF). The SPOT is optional and is an evaluation of the lecturer and the unit. The SURF is completed online and is a university wide survey and deals only with the unit. You will receive an email from the SURF office inviting you to complete the SURF when it is activated. We encourage you to complete the forms as your feedback is extremely important and can be used to make changes to the unit or lecturing style when appropriate.

Attendance

Participation in class, whether it be listening to a lecture or getting involved in other activities, is an important part of the learning process. It is therefore important that you attend classes on both weekends. More formally, the University regulations state that ‘to complete a course or unit students shall attend prescribed classes, lectures, seminars and tutorials’. Students are required to attend all classes across both weekends unless there are exceptional circumstances.
CONTACT DETAILS

We strongly advise students to regularly access their student email accounts. Important information regarding the unit is often communicated by email and will not be automatically forwarded to private email addresses.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Unit lecturer</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Name:</strong></td>
<td>Professor Simone Pettigrew</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Email:</strong></td>
<td><a href="mailto:simone.pettigrew@uwa.edu.au">simone.pettigrew@uwa.edu.au</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Phone:</strong></td>
<td>+61 8 6488 1437</td>
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**Lecture times:**
- Friday 16 July – 6-9pm
- Saturday 17 July – 9am-5pm
- Sunday 18 July – 9am-5pm
- Friday 13 Aug – 6-9pm
- Saturday 14 Aug – 9am-5pm
- Sunday 15 Aug – 9am-5pm

**Lecture venue:** BUSN:101 (UWA Business School)

TEXTBOOK(S) & RESOURCES

Unit Website

www.webct.uwa.edu.au

Required text


Other required readings are available on the unit website.
Software requirements

Within one week prior to the second weekend of classes, students are required to download the NVivo8 trial software available at http://www.qsrinternational.com/products_free-trial-software.aspx onto a laptop to bring to class. Please note that this should be completed at least 2 days prior to class to ensure any download problems are dealt with. Failure to successfully download the software will prevent you from participating in the data analysis session, which will impact your ability to complete your assignment.

Additional resources & reading material

The class schedule below includes lists of compulsory and optional readings and links to useful websites. All readings are available on WebCT.

Key dates

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
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<th>Perth</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Weekend one</td>
<td>16-18 July</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Weekend two</td>
<td>13 Aug – 15 Aug</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Research Plan (including ethics application)</td>
<td>25 July</td>
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<tr>
<td>Data collection assignment</td>
<td>27 August</td>
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UNIT SCHEDULE

Weekend I

Topics:

- philosophies and formulating research problems
- interviewing
- focus groups
- projective techniques
- observation
- introspection
- ethnography
- phenomenology

Required readings:

Myers textbook chapters: 2-5, 8, 10, 11.

Articles:

- O’Connor, H. & Madge C. 2003, “‘Focus groups in cyberspace”: Using the Internet for qualitative research’, *Qualitative Market Research*, 6, 2, 133-143.
Weekend 2

Topics:
- grounded theory
- coding (NVivo)
- theme generation
- case study method
- action research
- content analysis
- quality issues
- ethical issues
- writing techniques

Required readings:

Myers textbook chapters: 6, 7, 9, 13-18.

Articles:


Optional readings:

- Vaivio, J. 2008, ‘Qualitative management accounting research: Rationale, pitfalls and potential,’ *Qualitative Research in Accounting & Management*, 5, 1, 64-86.
Potentially useful websites:

- www.qualitativeresearch.uga.edu/QualPage/
- www.ualberta.ca/~iiqm/
- http://phenomenology.utk.edu/reading.html
- www.groundedtheory.com/
- http://rms46.vlsm.org/citations-gtm.html
- www.csun.edu/~hcchs006/gang.html
- www.emtech.net/actionresearch.htm
- www.glis.utexas.edu/~ssoy/usesusers/l391d1b.htm
- www.glis.utexas.edu/~palmquis/courses/content.html
- www.york.ac.uk/inst/spru/pubs/pdf/verbquotresearch.pdf
ASSESSMENT MECHANISM

The purpose of assessment

There are a number of reasons for having assessable tasks as part of an academic program. The assessable tasks are designed to encourage you to explore and understand the subject more fully. The fact that we grade your work provides you an indication of how much you have achieved. Providing feedback on your work also serves as part of the learning process.

This unit contains only individual assignments as the intention is for students to apply their proposed thesis topic to the research tasks. This gives students the opportunity to generate data pertaining to their topic of interest that may constitute a pilot study for their thesis.

Assessment mechanism summary

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Item</th>
<th>Weight</th>
<th>Due date</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Assignment 1 – Research plan</td>
<td>20%</td>
<td>Perth – 25 July</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(including ethics application)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Assignment 2 – Research report</td>
<td>60%</td>
<td>Perth – 27 August</td>
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<tr>
<td>Participation</td>
<td>20%</td>
<td>Ongoing</td>
</tr>
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Note 1: Results may be subject to scaling and standardisation under faculty policy and are not necessarily the sum of the component parts.

Note 2: The grade FC indicates failure to complete an identified essential assessment component and means failure of the unit.

Note 3: Your assessed work may also be used for quality assurance purposes, such as to assess the level of achievement of learning outcomes as required for accreditation and audit purposes. The findings may be used to inform changes aimed at improving the quality of Business School programs. All material used for such processes will be treated as confidential, and the outcome will not affect your grade for the unit.
Assessment components

Assessment 1 – Research plan and ethics application

You are to design a small qualitative research project using a combination of interview and internet data. At least two people should be interviewed for a minimum of 30 minutes each. Please note that interviewees are not to be your family members or friends. The internet data, wherever possible, should be comprised of individuals’ attitudes, thoughts, and feelings, rather than organisational reports or other official communications. A minimum of 10,000 words of internet data should be collected.

It will be necessary to obtain ethics approval for your project and the first draft of your ethics application should be submitted in class at the end of the first weekend.

While it is not necessary at this stage to conduct a detailed review the relevant literature, the work performed in the previous literature review unit will allow you to ensure that you select a qualitative research topic that is relevant, timely, and an extension of existing knowledge.

Your research plan will include the following:

1. Your research question.
2. A brief justification of your research topic, citing relevant references.
3. A description of your planned sample and other sources of data, including a justification.
4. An explanation of how sample members will be recruited and online data sourced.
5. An account of how data collection will take place (e.g., when, where, interview guide to be used, etc.).
6. Your completed ethics application, including appropriate information and consent documents.

Your research plan assignment may be no longer than 2,000 words (excluding the ethics application and information and consent forms). The assignment must be submitted by 5pm via WebCT on the due date. Please retain a copy of your assignment for your records. Assignments are to be double-spaced. State the word count on the assignment cover page. Please note that all assignments will be submitted to Turnitin to check for plagiarism.

Assessment 2 – Research Report

A standard academic research report/article contains seven sections: introduction, literature review, method, findings, discussion, conclusion, and list of references. This assignment requires you to develop a research report that contains each of these seven sections:

1. Introduction – a brief description of the research topic and a justification for its selection.
2. Literature review – a concise synthesis (not summary) of the relevant literature. The literature review must incorporate at least twenty (20) relevant academic references in your topic area (i.e., methodological references are additional). It is permissible to ‘recycle’ any previous submissions from your literature review unit.
3. Method – a detailed account of the research methods that were employed. This includes sample selection, data collection method, and data analysis method.
4. Findings (this would be titled “Results” in a quantitative study) – a discussion of the primary themes derived from the data. Please ensure this section is analytical, not descriptive. This should be the longest section of your paper (approximately 3,000 words).

5. Discussion – an analytical comparison of your research findings in relation to existing knowledge on the topic (i.e., your literature review). It is strongly recommended that you examine the Discussion sections of numerous academic articles in your field to gain an appreciation of the level of discussion required. Of particular importance is the clear statement of the contributions of your research relative to existing knowledge in the area.

6. Conclusion – a brief section that summarises the rest of the document.

7. References – provide bibliographic details of any references cited in the paper. Please note that the list of references is not included in the word count.

The assignment must be submitted by 5pm via WebCT on the due date. Assignments are to be double-spaced and no more 6,000 words in length. State the word count on the assignment cover page. Please submit your interview transcripts, other raw data, and NVivo list of nodes with your assignment. All interviewees will need to complete a consent form and the completed consent forms must be submitted with the assignment. Retain a copy of your assignment for your records. Please note that all assignments will be submitted to Turnitin to check for plagiarism.

Assessment 3

Participation is critical for learning in this unit. A participation mark will be awarded on the basis of students’ contributions to class discussions pertaining to the lecture content and the assigned readings. Please note that uninformed contributions that do not add to the learning of you and your peers will not count towards this mark.

Assessment Tips

Do

- Choose a research topic related to your thesis topic.
- Pick a research topic that lends itself to both data collection and a literature search.
- Spell and grammar check your work prior to submission. Pay attention to those squiggly lines and do something about them. In particular, be careful of confusing singulars and plurals.
- Get your ownership apostrophes right.
- Always finish the assignment a few days before it is due and leave a couple of days to refresh your mind before proof-reading your work.
- Ask open-ended questions in your interviews.
- Use extracts from your data as evidence in your assignment, but make sure they are concise, relevant, and not used too liberally. Extracts from online sources must be paraphrased to avoid recognition.
- Ensure that you analyse rather than summarise. This applies to your data analysis and your literature review.
- Paraphrase the literature as much as possible, using direct quotes only when necessary. Where you do use a direct quote, ensure that you use quotation marks and nominate the relevant page or paragraph.

- Ensure that you are citing your references correctly, including the way you punctuate around citations. A referencing guide is available at [http://libguides.library.uwa.edu.au/harvard](http://libguides.library.uwa.edu.au/harvard).

- Stick to the word limits stipulated. Words in excess of the limit will not be read and will not contribute to your mark. In addition, penalties will apply for excessive length.

- Plan your data collection activities in advance. Everything in qualitative research takes at least twice as long as you think it will. Create a realistic timeline and stick to it.

- Use Endnote to organise your references.

- Link your findings to the literature.

**Don’t**

- Generalise your findings to the larger population. This is a huge no-no in qualitative research.

- Ask your interviewees leading questions.

- Plagiarise or copy from the literature. As a rule of thumb, quotation marks should be used when a sequence of three or more key words is the same as in the original. When using direct quotes from the literature, ensure your quotation is exact and that you provide a page or paragraph number. If you have any concerns relating to plagiarism, please notify the lecturer as early as possible so that a more detailed explanation can be provided.

- Interview people you know well.

- Leave everything until the last minute (or the last week).

- Make statements of fact without providing a relevant reference.

- Be descriptive rather than analytical.

- Use the term "the researcher" when writing up your results.

**Submission of assignments**

Assignments are to be submitted via WebCT by 5pm on the due date.

**Student Guild**

Phone: (+61 8) 6488 2295  
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Website: [http://www.guild.uwa.edu.au](http://www.guild.uwa.edu.au)