

**SCHOOL OF SOCIAL SCIENCE AND PUBLIC POLICY**



**MRES SOCIAL SCIENCE RESEARCH METHODS**

**FREE STANDING ELECTIVE MODULE  
DESCRIPTIONS FOR PGR STUDENTS**

**2018/2019**

## **SEMESTER ONE (2018)**

### **APPROACHES TO RESEARCH DESIGN AND PROCESS**

**(GRT-40023)**

**15 Credit Module**

**Assessment: One Research Proposal (3000 words):100% contribution to module mark**

**Module Leader: Siobhan Holohan: [s.holohan@keele.ac.uk](mailto:s.holohan@keele.ac.uk)**

Approaches to Research Design and Process' introduces you to the principles of social science research design, methodology and evidence gathering. You will start by considering the place of topics and questions in the research process. They will then move on to examine the logic of research design, and the place of causation within social science research. You will discuss the differences between types of research design (including experimental, cross-sectional, longitudinal, case-study, and comparative designs) and the consequences of these designs for the development of a methodology. The module will then explore different strategies for the gathering of evidence in the social sciences, including documentary research, interviews and focus groups, ethnography, and surveys. You will be invited to bring these components together in the development of a research proposal on a self-identified project. You will be encouraged to make this relevant to your subject-specific interests.

### **PHILOSOPHY OF THE SOCIAL SCIENCES**

**(SOC-40014)**

**15 Credit Module**

**Assessment: Essay (4000 words) 100% contribution to the module**

**Module Leader: Sorin Baiasu [s.baiasu@keele.ac.uk](mailto:s.baiasu@keele.ac.uk)**

This module provides you with an introduction to the philosophy of the social sciences and philosophical debates around methodology and methodological approaches to research. It includes a discussion of topics such as naturalism, falsification theory, paradigm shifts, the interpretive tradition, critical theory, and structuralism. Apart from an exploration of these topics, the module also covers the work of a range of key thinkers, including Durkheim, Popper, Kuhn, Weber, Adorno, and Foucault, who have informed the ways in which researchers think about social science knowledge. In introducing the module, we seek to ground discussion in first, the enlightenment idea of the search for science, and second, the ancient Greek, Platonic, theory of metaphysical truth. The module unfolds on the basis of this debate. Following the 5 taught sessions, you are required to complete a 4000 word essay on either a methodological problem in your own research or a topic relating to the material covered on the module.

## **RESEARCHER SKILLS (GRT-40024)**

### **20 Credit Module**

**Assessment Type: Personal Development Portfolio with evidence of practice-based learning (5000 words) 100% contribution to the module mark**

**Module Leader: Lydia Martens [l.d.martens@keele.ac.uk](mailto:l.d.martens@keele.ac.uk)**

In becoming an effective social science researcher, it is essential to consider what skills and attributes are crucial requirements for professional researchers. This module thus develops your research skills, and it does this partly by getting you to analyse and understand what is involved development of the social science researcher. In its delivery, the module works closely with the four domains of the Vitae Researcher Development Framework ([www.vitae.ac.uk](http://www.vitae.ac.uk)).

Here, the attributes of the effective researcher are mapped in terms of (A) Knowledge and Intellectual Abilities; (B) Personal Effectiveness; (C) Research Governance and Organisation and (D) Engagement, Influence and Impact. You will be encouraged to think about the selection of skills and attributes mentioned in these domains critically and reflexively, always keeping in mind the notion that research is a craft. It is acknowledged that self-development in social science research is an ongoing process that lends itself to personal development planning.

The module is organised in a way that provides you with general overviews, practice-based knowledge sharing sessions, skills and expertise sharing, small group work and IT training. The module draws on the expertise of researchers working across the social sciences at Keele. You complete independent work in the form of a portfolio that includes a personal development plan and examples from your own evidence-based practice learning

## **ETHICAL ISSUES IN RESEARCH (ETH-40043)**

### **10 Credit Module**

**Assessment Type: Essay (2,500 words) 100% contribution to the module mark**

**Module Leader(s): Jonathan Hughes [j.a.hughes@keele.ac.uk](mailto:j.a.hughes@keele.ac.uk) Julius Sim [j.sim@keele.ac.uk](mailto:j.sim@keele.ac.uk)**

This module aims to provide a critical understanding of key ethical issues in research across academic and professional disciplines in humanities, science, social science and health. The focus of the module is on ethical analysis of such issues rather than on specific regulatory and governance processes. The intended learning outcomes are:

- Knowledge of the philosophical basis of research ethics, informed by published work at the forefront of relevant academic and professional disciplines;
- An ability to critically analyse the core substantive issues in research ethics, and their application to specific academic and professional disciplines;
- An ability to analyse and resolve ethical conflicts in research through logical argument and original analysis of morally-relevant facts;
- Knowledge of the role, strengths and limitations of regulatory mechanisms in research ethics.

## **SEMESTER 2 (2019)**

### **QUANTITATIVE RESEARCH AND DATA ANALYSIS (GRT-40020)**

**15 Credit Module**

**Assessment:**

**One Research Proposal (4000 words) constituting 100% contribution to the module mark**

**Module Leader: Aneta Hayes [a.m.hayes@keele.ac.uk](mailto:a.m.hayes@keele.ac.uk)**

What is quantitative social research? What kinds of questions about the social world can we ask when using a quantitative research design? What challenges do quantitative researchers face in their work? How do we make social phenomena measurable? What makes quantitative social research produce reliable and valid results? What tools do quantitative researchers use, and what are their benefits? How do quantitative researchers report the outcomes of their research?

This introduction to quantitative research and data analysis builds on earlier work in the programme by developing and consolidating theoretical and practical knowledge of quantitative approaches to conducting social research. You will discuss the opportunities offered by a quantitative approach to doing research, and develop familiarity with the theoretical underpinnings of quantitative social research. You will focus on the problematic of operationalisation, sampling in survey research, and the structured ways in which data is numerically organised. You will also develop understanding of introductory statistical procedures used in the analysis of quantitative data. Practical work will include questionnaire design, data analysis and the writing of a quantitative research design.

The module will provide the opportunity to develop important transferable skills, and you will gain familiarity with the SPSS software, which is widely used in the analysis of quantitative data sets.

### **ADVANCED QUANTITATIVE DATA ANALYSIS (HLT-40002)**

**15 Credit Module**

**Assessment: One unseen exam (Computer-based open-book examination [2 hours] to assess proficiency in performing and interpreting appropriate statistical analyses in SPSS)**

**60% contribution to the module mark**

**One exercise (A series of short exercises and mini-essays to assess the theoretical aspects of the syllabus)**

**40% contribution to the module mark**

**Barred combination of modules, courses or programmes:  
Quantitative Data Analysis 2 (PTY-40022)**

**Entry requirements for module: Previous study of quantitative methods at M Level (e.g. Quantitative Research and Data Analysis or Statistics and Epidemiology) is advised. Participants should preferably be familiar with the use and interpretation of basic statistical analyses: chi-square tests; bivariate correlation; bivariate linear**

**regression; t-tests and their nonparametric counterparts; one way unrelated measures analysis of variance. A working knowledge of the SPSS package is essential**

**Module Leader: Julius Sim [j.sim@keele.ac.uk](mailto:j.sim@keele.ac.uk)**

This module is aimed at postgraduate students – on taught courses or research degrees – who already have a background in statistical analysis at M level. It covers more advanced analytic methods, such as extensions of the regression model, analysis of variance, and provides an introduction to multivariate data reduction techniques such as factor analysis. The material is taught using SPSS, and although the module encourages a sound understanding of statistical principles, the primary emphasis is on practical data analysis.

This module runs over five days and will be useful to students in the social sciences, health and psychology who wish to gain an advanced understanding of quantitative methods and proficiency in using a comprehensive statistics package.

### **QUALITATIVE RESEARCH METHODS (GRT-40021)**

**15 Credit Module**

#### **Assessment:**

**One review (2500 words): 60% contribution to the module mark**

**One report (1500 words): 40% contribution to the module mark**

**Module Leader(s): TBC**

What is qualitative social research? What kinds of work do qualitative social researchers engage in, and what questions about practice and process do they ask of their own work and that of others? What are the potential impacts of qualitative social research, for instance, on the people who make the research possible and those who fund it? What tools do qualitative researchers use in their work, and what are their benefits? What does it mean to produce good quality arguments and results about pertinent questions and problems in social life, when the research conducted falls in the broad remit of qualitative social research?

This introduction to qualitative social research methods engages with questions like this through a discussion of the principles and practices of qualitative social research. The module thus engages you in a theoretical and practical manner. It delivers an overview of the philosophical and theoretical underpinnings of different approaches to qualitative research. Examples of these (e.g. grounded theory, phenomenology, discourse analysis, ethnography) will be discussed in some detail, and located in the practice-based experience of the module leader.

You will examine how qualitative methodologies inform research design and explore the development of associated methods of investigations, such as interviewing, observation, and visual research. You will explore the principles and practices of different qualitative research methods and they will participate in an introduction to NVivo; software which is used by qualitative researchers in the management and analysis of their qualitative data.

An introduction to qualitative social science research forms an essential component of a masters' program in research training in the social sciences.

### **ADVANCED QUALITATIVE RESEARCH METHODS (GRT-40018)**

**15 Credit Module**

**Assessment:****One pilot Study (4000 words): 100% contribution to the module mark****Module Leader (s): TBC**

What challenges do qualitative researchers experience in the development of a focused and philosophically embedded qualitative research project? How are qualitative research aims and research questions developed? In the development of their work, how do qualitative researchers make decisions about the most effective and best ways of creating insight and knowledge on the questions, which they have posed? What challenges do they encounter when they are in the field, and what interaction skills are essential to engage effectively with their research population? In what ways can qualitative data be analysed, and how can this work be systematic as well as creative?

This module on advanced qualitative research methods is designed for students who want to deepen their engagement with methodological debates and expand their practical skills set in the conduct of qualitative social research. It is intended for those students with some knowledge and experience of qualitative research (i.e. those who have already taken a course in qualitative social science research methods and/or who have appropriate alternative training), and advances their understanding by providing opportunities for the translation of theoretical and philosophical knowledge into actual research practice. The module is delivered by stimulating group work on the development of qualitative research designs, in the identification of appropriate fieldwork tools, and in the work of comprehending the findings. This experience is then taken away in the development of students' own pilot projects. You will receive advanced IT training in NVivo; software used in the management and analyses of qualitative data.

This module provides excellent training for those who wish to specialise in qualitative social researcher skills, and will be invaluable for those intending to apply qualitative research principles and practices in the research of the MRes dissertation or PhD research.

**ETHNOGRAPHIC RESEARCH  
(GRT-40019)****15 Credit Module****Assessment:****One portfolio (4000 words): 100% contribution to the module mark****Module Leader TBC**

Ethnography is an approach to researching social life and culture that is foundational to the development of anthropology and symbolic interactionist sociology. Whilst classic ethnographic research often sees the combination of different methods for gathering data and developing insight, a combination of participation and observation in particular cultural settings is what makes ethnographic research distinct.

Today, ethnography is utilised in all the social science fields, and taking this option as part of your MRes, Masters or PGR training will be invaluable for gaining greater understanding of the theoretical and philosophical underpinnings of ethnographic research, as well as gaining practical experience of conducting observational work. The added bonus is that you will also gain practical experience of working in groups.

The module is delivered through lectures and small group work to stimulate theoretical learning. This is followed by discussion of the meanings and practical skills of observation as research practice. You will then prepare and conduct some observational work as part of a team. You will get the opportunity to present your work to the larger group and write about your theoretical and practical learning in a portfolio.

## **Using Theory in Social Science Research (GRT-40026)**

**Module Leader:** Mark Featherstone [m.a.featherstone@keele.ac.uk](mailto:m.a.featherstone@keele.ac.uk)

**Assessment:** One essay (4000 words) 100% contribution to the module mark

Using Theory in Social Science Research will critically unpack the relationship between methodology and theory and provide the tools for you to gain the confidence to apply theory to your research. In doing so the module will consider the differences between grand theory and general theory (and think about which is more suitable for your research) and teach you how to identify what theory/ies to employ in your research in order to build a critical account of the field of study