



Research Methods | SOP77101

Year	MPhil
ECTS Credits	10
Contact Hours	
Mandatory/Optional	Mandatory
Semester	
Module Coordinator	Dr Kat Chzhen and Dr Ruth Pritchard, Dept of Sociology, TCD
Contact Email	

Module Description:

This module provides an overview to research methods in the social sciences. Students will learn how to conduct an independent piece of research (dissertation) within the field of social change. Adopting an applied approach, the module will teach how to formulate research questions and how to tackle them competently by drawing on principles of social research methodology and practically employing methods of investigation like sampling, data collection and analysis. Highlighting the centrality of research design, the module will essentially cover both qualitative and quantitative research strategies and related methods. Furthermore, the module will discuss crucial aspects of research ethics and practical aspects in planning, organising, and crafting a professional research report.

Qualitative and quantitative research – while sharing important communalities in terms of research design – can differ in the ways how theory and data are related, how data is being collected, how data is analysed, and how empirical evidence is constructed. While qualitative methods usually deal with exploring and summarizing rich textual data retrieved for instance from in-depth and semi-structured interviews, quantitative research is usually characterized by measuring concepts and testing theories through statistical analysis of numerical data obtained for instance from standardised interviewing in surveys. Doing effective and good research but also consuming and understanding research of others requires profound knowledge in both approaches. Moreover, both approaches feature comparative research designs which are particularly relevant for research studying social change, the generalisability of findings by examining cross-national variation, and the relevance of institutional settings. The module will also refer to mixed-method strategies to discuss how qualitative and quantitative research strategies can form a powerful alliance in social research.



The module spans both Michaelmas and Hilary Term each of them comprising 11 weeks. Within each term half of the module will be devoted to both qualitative and quantitative research. In Michaelmas Term, students will get an introduction to principal methodologies of each approach. Based on that, Hilary Term will provide a more advanced, lab-based and hands-on treatment of methods of data collection and data analysis (like conducting interviews or analysing statistical data) to equip students with necessary skills to pursue their own dissertation research. In Hilary Term students will also work continuously on a *dissertation proposal* which elaborates a full research plan including research questions, literature review, theory, research design, data collection and analysis plan, and a timetable.

Learning Outcomes

On successful completion of the module students should be able to:

- Explain the key theoretical and conceptual issues in methodology in the social sciences;
- Deploy the main qualitative and quantitative methodological techniques used in sociology;
- Link methodological techniques to an overall research design;
- Discuss and critically evaluate their own and other people's research projects;
- Write a proposal for their own research projects.

Lectures & Tutorials/ Contact hours:

- Module Length: 22 weeks (Michaelmas Term and Hilary Term)
- Workload: Readings: 70hrs; Formative assessment (e.g. practice-based activities): 65hrs; Summative assessment (e.g. essays, journals): 65hrs. Total: 200 hours

Recommended Texts

- Agresti, A., & Finlay, B. (2014). *Statistical Methods for the Social Sciences*. Essex: Pearson Education.
- Bryman, A. (2012). *Social Research Methods*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Goldthorpe, J. H. (2016). *Sociology as a population science*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Field, A. (2016). *An Adventure in Statistics. The Reality Enigma*. London: Sage.
- Kumar, R. (2014). *Research Methodology. A step-by-step guide for beginners*. London: Sage.
- O'Leary, Z. (2004). *The essential guide to doing research*. London: Sage.
- Seale, C. (2012). *Researching Society and Culture*. London: Sage.

Assessment

- Semester 1: Coursework (40%)
- Semester 2: Dissertation proposal (60%)