# Qualitative Research Methods for the Social Sciences with focus on Interviews and Observations

**Course Code:** FOSA002

**Credit points:** 7,5 hp

**Responsible department:** Sociology

**Main field of study:** Social science

**Level:** PhD-level

**Subject area:** Social science

**Grading scale:** U (fail), G (pass)

## Confirmation

The course syllabus was established by the Dean of the Faculty of Social Sciences on 2016-02-29 and is valid from 2022-05-17.

## Contents

The course is directed towards the development of a deeper understanding and practice of qualitative methods in the social sciences. The course focuses on qualitative research design (including trustworthiness and sampling), research ethics, and data collection methods, specifically interviews and observation. The course is divided into three themes.

Theme One: Qualitative research design

Common decisions in qualitative research design are addressed, including selection of research paradigm and strategy, data collection methods, criteria for assessing quality, and sampling strategies. In addition, the researcher's role and different aspects of ethics are discussed and problematized. Participants practice these choices and reflect upon their own and other participants’ choices.

Theme Two: Observations

Initially the concept of observation is introduced and problematized, as well as the advantages and disadvantages that come with these methods. Furthermore, participants train their skills in using observations through practical exercises and reflections of their own and other participants’ experiences.

Theme Three: Interviews

Interview techniques, including individual interviews and group interviews, are introduced. Initially interview methods are discussed and problematized as a method to collect empirical material, after

which participants practice interview methodology and reflect on their own and other participants’ experiences.

## Expected learning outcomes

For passing the course, the student should acquire knowledge and understanding to:

* be able to develop and motivate qualitative research designs in general and specific qualitative data collection methods,
* be able to select and motivate criteria for ensuring the quality of research methodology and analysis,
* be able to develop and motivate sampling strategies for qualitative research designs,
* demonstrate advanced knowledge regarding ethical guidelines for social science research concerning qualitative research,

For passing the course, the student should acquire skills and abilities to:

* apply relevant terminology in qualitative research,
* independently conduct qualitative interviews and observations,

For passing the course, the student should also be able to:

* independently assess and critically evaluate qualitative research in general and qualitative research based on interviews and observations in particular,
* independently evaluate, reflect upon and engage with the ethical dimensions of qualitativeresearch.

## Required knowledge

Admission to a doctoral program at the Faculty of Social Sciences. If there are vacancies, students from other faculties or universities can also be admitted to the course of.

## Form of instruction

Instructions consist of lectures, workshops, practical assignments and seminars. All seminars are compulsory. Teaching will be in English unless all participants are Swedish speaking.

## Examination modes

Examination consists of active participation in seminars, completion of assignments (individual and group) for seminars, and a final individual oral presentation and written assignment. Seminars are graded as pass or fail. If a student fails a seminar or an assignment, it requires the completion of an extra assignment. All assignments and seminars must be passed to pass the course. International students are assessed based on the ECTS scale.

Seminar assignments include preparing a research design as well as carrying out interviews and observations. This also includes a compilation of the raw notes from the interview or observation, the transcribed interviews and complete observation notes. These data will form the basis for seminar discussions, which aim to deepen further participants’ understanding of such methods. Instructions in detail are given at the beginning of the course.

## Academic credit transfer

Credit transfer is always examined individually.

## Course literature

Denzin, Norman K. & Lincoln, Yvonna S. (2017) *The Sage Handbook of Qualitative Research*. Sage. 5th Edition.

Edwards, Rosalind and Janet Holland. (2013) What is qualitative interviewing? Bloomsbury Publishing PLC.

Emerson, Robert M., Rachel I. Fretz, and Linda L. Shaw. (2011) Writing Ethnographic Fieldnotes. Chicago: [University of Chicago Press](https://www.adlibris.com/se/sok?filter=publisher%3AUniversity%20of%20Chicago%20Press). ISBN 9780226206837.

In addition, 10-15 research articles throughout the course.

## Reference literature

Charmaz, Kathy. (2014) “Crafting and Conducting Intensive Interviews” and “Interviewing in Grounded Theory Studies”. Chapters 3 and 4 in *Constructing Grounded Theory*.  Sage Publications.

Czarniawska, Barbara. (2007) *Shadowing, and other techniques for doing fieldwork in modern societies.* Liber*.*

Geertz, Clifford. (1994) “Thick Description: Toward an Interpretive Theory of Culture”. In Michael Martin & Lee. C. McIntyre (eds.), *Readings in the Philosophy of Social Science*, pp. 213-231. The MIT Press.

Hammersley, M. and Atkinson, P. (1995/2007) *Ethnography. Principles in practice*. Routledge.

Magnusson, Evan and Jean Marecek. (2015) *Doing Interview-based Qualitative Research*. Cambridge University Press.

O’Reilly, Karen. (2005) *Ethnographic Methods.* Routledge.

Rubin, Herbert J. och Irene Rubin. 2005. *Qualitative Interviewing. The Art of Hearing Data.* Routledge.

Wengraf, Tom. 2001. *Qualitative Research. Interviewing: Biographic Narrative and Semi- Structured Methods*. Routledge.