



## Qualitative Research Methods

**Course leader:** Francesca Cabiddu

**Instructors:** Francesca Cabiddu, Manuel Castriotta, Giacomo Del Chiappa, Cinzia Dessì, Michela Floris, Michela Loi, Elona Marku, Ludovica Moi, Maryia Zaitsava

### Aims of the course

The course provides training in core methods expected to be required by students intending to undertake qualitative research, together with an understanding of broader qualitative approaches/methodologies within which they may be utilized. The course objectives can be summarized as:

1. introducing students to qualitative research methods and discussing the appropriateness of these methods for different areas of research and types of research questions;
2. exposing students to insights in the practice of qualitative research, and encouraging them to experiment in the use of the fundamental methods for qualitative data collection and analysis;
3. sharing experience in collecting, analyzing, and reporting from qualitative research, and discussing the challenges and opportunities of publishing qualitative research.

At the end of the course, the students will be able to select and use properly the main approaches characterizing qualitative research in different situations. Moreover, they will be able to assess the rigour and trustworthiness of qualitative inquiry.

### Learning outcomes and competences

#### **Knowledge and understanding:**

- Articulate the key features and benefits of qualitative research and when and how it can be utilized.
- Assess the applicability of a range of core qualitative approaches to their own research topics and understand how these approaches can be applied to conduct effective research.

#### **Applying knowledge and understanding:**

- Implement a range of qualitative data collection techniques including interviews, observations, and documents.
- Effectively analyze and write up qualitative data in order to answer your research questions and disseminate your findings.
- Making judgments on the appropriate approaches to qualitative inquiry.

#### **Learning skills:**

- Conducting qualitative research, effectively address issues relating to validity, reliability and ethics.

### **Communication skills:**

- Present the findings from a qualitative study.

### **Assessment methods**

This course assessment has two components:

#### **1. Essay (70%).**

- **Details for writing the essay:** during the course, you will be asked to write up a short essay (working paper) of a maximum of 3000 words, excluded references. The goal is to analyze a research question suitable to be investigated through qualitative research methods. The research question should be linked to the topic of your doctoral dissertation. The essay should include the following sessions: (1) Introduction; (2) Theoretical Background – brief introduction to the topic of research and key references; (3) Methodology: research question, suitable method(s), research design, data collection procedure, hypothetical data analysis procedure; (4) Conclusions.
- **Evaluation criteria of the essay:** appropriateness of the selected method for the research question, the soundness and feasibility of the research design, and the overall quality of the manuscript. An excellent essay is characterized by an accurate and comprehensive data collection procedure, rigorous data analysis procedure, and insightful observations.

#### **2. In-class participation and other potential assignments (30%).**

- Students are expected to be highly committed and involved in the course. This implies reading carefully and critically the assigned articles, being able to discuss these readings, and engaging with in-class discussions of qualitative work. Therefore, a simple attendance will not earn students participation points.

### **Course contents**

The course lasts 24 hours and is organized into two modules, each having specific aims and sub-modules, which are detailed below.

#### **Module A: Qualitative Methods in Business and Management: “Qualitative research design”**

This module provides an overview of the most important qualitative research approaches, with the goal of training students in the basic requirements for conducting each. After a brief introduction to the course, this module is organized into 4 submodules focusing on: case studies, focus groups, taxonomy of literature reviews, and ethnography. A brief description of the objectives and content of each sub-module is provided below.

1. **Case studies:** Case study as a qualitative research method, is a comprehensive and in-depth investigation of a single phenomenon, individual, group, event or community. It is distinguished by its ability to provide detailed insights and nuanced understanding of complex issues within real-life context. The method draws on a variety of data sources, including interviews, observations and documents, providing a rich and holistic view of the object of study. Case studies contribute significantly to the development of theory and practical understanding in fields ranging from the social sciences to economics and education. [Yin, R. K. (2009). Case study research: Design and methods (Vol. 5). Sage].

2. Towards a Taxonomy of Literature Reviews: A literature review may be defined as a methodical process of gathering and integrating prior knowledge in a comprehensive manner (Callahan, 2014; Snyder, 2019). A well-executed and thorough review, when used as a research technique, establishes a strong basis for expanding knowledge and promoting the development of theories (Webster & Watson, 2002; Paul and Criado, 2020). A literature review may effectively answer inquiries by incorporating empirical facts and views from several sources, beyond the capacity of any one study (Post et al., 2020).
3. Ethnography: After a brief overview of the most common sampling techniques, the class will immerse itself in ethnographic research. Ethnography, as a qualitative research method originating in cultural anthropology, provides an in-depth exploration of the complexities of human behavior and social interactions within specific cultural contexts. We will examine ethnography, its evolution from traditional to contemporary practices, and its application across various disciplines. In particular, we will investigate participant observation and participatory methods.
4. Mixed-methods: Following an introduction to the foundations of mixed methods research, the three primary research designs—exploratory sequential, convergent parallel, and explanatory sequential—will be analyzed in detail, blending the theory and practice of academic writing within these approaches. The discussion will then focus on the key criteria that guide researchers in selecting the most appropriate design for their specific research objectives. To achieve these aims, the course will employ a combination of formal lectures and interactive class discussions.

### ***Module B: Qualitative Methods in Business and Management: “Qualitative data analysis”***

This module provides an overview of the most frequently adopted procedures and tools to analyse qualitative data. It is organized into 2 sub-modules focusing on: Gioia methodology and Computer assisted analysis with NVivo software.

1. Gioia Methodology: This methodology serves as a qualitative methodological approach for data analysis that adheres to the rigorous standards of trustworthy research, by offering a strong foundation for concept development, striking a balance between the often conflicting goals of inductively generating new concepts and meeting the high standards for rigor expected by top-tier journals (Corley and Gioia, 2011; Gioia et al., 2013; Gioia, 2021).
2. Computer assisted analysis with NVivo software: Nvivo is widely recognized as the most appropriate tool to conduct qualitative data analysis. It enables to efficiently handle different types of data, spanning transcribed interviews, videos, images, and bibliometric information imported from reference manager software (Sinkovics, 2016). Its flexible coding schemes empower users to explore qualitative relationships among concepts, categorize meanings or phrases by affinity, and assign them to appropriate themes (Backlund & Backlund, 2017). NVivo’s advantages include data and idea management, querying, visual modeling, and reporting (Bazeley and Jackson, 2013). It is also deemed as the best tool for facilitating team research within the same project (AlYahmady and Alabri, 2013). This module aims to equip students with some introductory concepts and guidelines to conduct their own research project using Nvivo software.

The course is completed with a mentorship session aimed at strengthening students’ capacity to design, conduct, and reflect on qualitative research through a collaborative and developmental process. Mentorship in doctoral education is widely recognized as a key factor in supporting students’

academic success, research development, and progression through the program (Mollica & Nemeth, 2014).

In this course, the mentorship session is designed to reflect on assignment results and to discuss doubts, critical questions, and future perspectives regarding the potential role of qualitative methods. The session is supported by a mentor who guides both individual and collective discussion, helping students enhance their awareness of the competences acquired and develop a sense-making process around that knowledge, ultimately improving their ability to integrate it successfully into their doctoral projects.

## Syllabus and Timetable

<b>Module A: Qualitative Methods in Business and Management: “Qualitative research design”</b>		
<b>Timetable and Rooms</b>	<b>Contents - Training methods and materials</b>	<b>Instructors</b>
26 May 2026 12.00 am – 13:00 am	<p><b>Introduction to qualitative method</b></p> <p><i>Contents</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• What is qualitative research?</li> <li>• The foundation of qualitative research</li> <li>• Research Design</li> </ul>	Francesca Cabiddu
12 June 2026 09:30 am – 13:30 pm	<p><b>Case studies</b></p> <p><i>Contents</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Introduction to the case study method</li> <li>• Empirical enquiry through the case study method. Introduction.</li> <li>• Single and multiple case study.</li> <li>• How to select the case.</li> <li>• Case study research design.</li> <li>• Multiple source of evidence.</li> <li>• How to conduct a case study.</li> </ul> <p><i>Suggested reading:</i></p> <p>Yin, R. K. (2009). Case study research: Design and methods (Vol. 5). Sage</p>	Cinzia Dessi
19 June 9:00 am – 15:00 pm (6 ore) 4 compulsory	<p><b>Mixed-method</b></p> <p><i>Contents</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The foundation of mixed methods</li> <li>• Exploratory sequential design</li> <li>• Convergent parallel design</li> <li>• Explanatory sequential design</li> <li>• How to shape a paper using a mixed method approach</li> </ul> <p><i>Mandatory Readings</i></p> <p>Creswell, J. W. e Plano Clark, V. L. (2011). Designing and conducting Mixed Methods Research. London: Sage Publications Inc.</p>	Giacomo Del Chiappa
23 June 2026 3:30 pm – 7:30 pm	<p><b><i>Towards a Taxonomy of Literature Reviews: Addressing the Challenges of Aligning Aims, Methods, and Theorizing Processes</i></b></p>	Manuel Castriotta

	<p><b>Contents</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• What is a literature review?</li> <li>• What are the available methodologies and how do they differ?</li> <li>• Can theoretical insights be gained from a literature review?</li> </ul> <p><b>Mandatory Readings</b></p> <p>- Callahan, J. L. (2014). Writing literature reviews: A reprise and update. <i>Human resource development review</i>, 13(3), 271-275.</p> <p>- Snyder, H. (2019). Literature review as a research methodology: An overview and guidelines. <i>Journal of business research</i>, 104, 333-339.</p> <p>- Paul, J., &amp; Criado, A. R. (2020). The art of writing literature review: What do we know and what do we need to know?. <i>International business review</i>, 29(4), 101717.</p> <p>- Torraco, R. J. (2005). Writing integrative literature reviews: Guidelines and examples. <i>Human resource development review</i>, 4(3), 356-367.</p> <p>- Post, C., Sarala, R., Gatrell, C., &amp; Prescott, J. E. (2020). Advancing theory with review articles. <i>Journal of Management Studies</i>, 57(2), 351-376.</p>	
3 June 2026 2:30 PM – 6:30 PM	<p><b>Ethnography</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Sampling techniques (E. Marku -1 hour) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>◦ Probability sampling methods</li> <li>◦ non-probability (purposive) sampling</li> </ul> </li> <li>• Ethnography (M. Zaitsava – 3 hours): <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>◦ Roots, epistemology, and seminal works</li> <li>◦ Observations craft, field notes, and interviewing in the field</li> </ul> </li> </ul> <p><b>Mandatory Readings</b></p> <p>- Grodal, S. (2018). Field expansion and contraction: How communities shape social and symbolic boundaries. <i>Administrative Science Quarterly</i>, 63(4), 783-818.</p> <p>- Malinowski, B. (1922). <i>Introduction: The subject, method and scope of this inquiry</i>.</p> <p>- Van Maanen, J. (2010). A song for my supper: More tales of the field. <i>Organizational research methods</i>, 13(2), 240-255.</p> <p>- Zaitsava, M., Marku, E., &amp; Di Guardo, M. C. (2022). Is data-driven decision-making driven only by data? When cognition meets data. <i>European Management Journal</i>, 40(5), 656-670.</p> <p>- Zilber, T. B., &amp; Zanoni, P. (2022). Templates of ethnographic writing in organization studies: Beyond the hegemony of the detective story. <i>Organizational research methods</i>, 25(2), 371-404.</p>	Elona Marku Maryia Zaitsava

<b>Module B: Qualitative Methods in Business and Management: “Qualitative data analysis”</b>		
<b>Timetable and Rooms</b>	<b>Contents - Training methods and materials</b>	<b>Instructors</b>
17 June 2026 9:00 am – 1:00 pm	<p><b>Gioia Methodology</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• A general overview</li> <li>• Understanding Gioia methodology</li> <li>• The pillars</li> </ul>	Michela Floris

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The data structure</li> <li>• The interpretive model</li> <li>• Analysis of relevant articles</li> </ul>	
30 June 2026 9:00 am – 1:00 pm	<p><b>Computer assisted analysis: Nvivo software</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Introduction</li> <li>• Create a project and importing sources</li> <li>• Approaches to coding in Nvivo</li> <li>• Running queries</li> <li>• Diagrams</li> <li>• Reports</li> </ul> <p><b>Mandatory Readings</b></p> <p>Moi, L., Frau, M., &amp; Cabiddu, F. (2018). Exploring the role of NVivo software in marketing research. <i>Exploring the Role of NVivo Software in Marketing Research</i>, 65-86.</p>	Ludovica Moi
<b>Mentorship session</b>		
15 July 2026 9:00 – 12:00	<p><b>Contents</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Introduction: role of mentorship in doctoral education and its relevance for qualitative research</li> <li>• Theoretical background on mentorship in PhD programs</li> <li>• Feedback on students’ assignments and research projects</li> <li>• Integration of qualitative methods into individual research design</li> <li>• Discussion of challenges, doubts, and emerging ideas</li> </ul> <p><b>Training methods and materials</b></p> <p>After a brief introduction by the instructor on the role and characteristics of mentorship in PhD programs, students are invited to present their work (assignments or research projects) and receive structured feedback. The session is organized as an interactive discussion, where participants critically reflect on how qualitative methods can be integrated into their own research.</p> <p>The mentor facilitates the discussion by providing methodological guidance, asking critical questions, and supporting students in clarifying their research design choices. Peer feedback is also encouraged to foster collaborative learning and reduce isolation.</p> <p>Students are expected to actively engage in the discussion, bring specific questions or difficulties, and outline possible next steps for their research. The expected outcome is the advanced integration of the module content into PhD students’ research plans.</p>	Michela Loi

### Suggested Readings

- Creswell, J. 2012. *Research design: Qualitative, quantitative, and mixed methods approaches* (4th ed.) Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage
- Denzin, N, and Lincoln, Y. 2011. *The SAGE handbook of qualitative research* (4th ed.). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage
- Lincoln, Y.S. & Guba, E.G. 1985. *Naturalistic Inquiry*. Newbury Park, CA: Sage.
- Lee, T. W. 1999. *Using Qualitative Methods in Organization Research*. London: Sage.

- Marshall, C. & Rossman, G. B. 2006. Designing qualitative research (4th ed.) Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
- Miles, M.B., Huberman, A.M. & Saldana, J. 2014. Qualitative data analysis: A methods sourcebook – Third edition. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
- Patton M. Q. 2002. Qualitative Research and Evaluation Methods, Newbury Park: Sage.
- Silverman, D. 2013. Doing Qualitative Research, London: Sage